

THE SPIRE



Photo by Katherine Sims-Wilson

This month we welcome
more new members to the
Central Union Church
'Ohana and celebrate the
138th birthday of our church!

Central Union Church and Preschool
"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!"

November 2025
Vol. 95 - No. 11



Pastor's Page: What do you fear?

Rushan Sinnaduray, *Senior Minister*

Beloved Central Union
Church 'Ohana,

Advent is nearly upon us. On November 30, we will once again step into the season of waiting, watching, and preparing for Christ's coming. Each year, Advent invites us to light candles against the darkness, to sing songs of promise, and to lean into the hope that God is still breaking into our world.

This year, our theme is both timely and timeless: "What Do You Fear?: Insisting on Hope This Advent."

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with a simple but weighty phrase: "In the time of Herod..."

Those words remind us that Christ was born into a world marked by fear—

oppression, economic disparity, and uncertainty. And yet, in that fearful world, angels appeared with a startling refrain: "Do not be afraid."

Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi all knew fear. They did not deny it, but they did not let it have the final word. They asked questions. They held fast to courage. They trusted in good news. They said, "Here I am, Lord."

We, too, live in a world where fear is real. Fear of division. Fear of loss. Fear of the unknown. Fear can paralyze us, divide us, and even be wielded as a tool of oppression. But what if, instead of letting fear rule us, we chose to name it, face it, and transform it? What if our fears became the very soil where God's hope takes root?

This Advent, we will listen closely to the angels' voices and to the cries of our own hearts. We will name the fears that haunt us, but we will not stop there. Together, we will insist on hope—the gritty, resilient hope that Christ brings. A hope that does not deny the darkness but shines all the brighter within it.

Every candle we light, every carol we sing, every prayer we lift is an act of defiance against despair. It is our way of saying: fear does not get the last word. Hope does. Christ does.

This Advent, I invite you to walk this journey with us. Come as you are—with your questions, your fears, your longings, and your hopes. Each Sunday, as we gather in worship, light the candles of the wreath, and lift our voices in

song, we will discover together how God's good news still breaks into a fearful world. Whether you join us in person, online or in spirit, your presence matters. Together, as one church 'ohana, we will practice courage, kindle hope, and prepare room in our hearts for Christ who will be born into our world and into our hearts.

So come, beloved community. Bring your fears. Bring your questions. Bring your longing for good news. And together, let us insist on hope, trusting that the One who came into a fearful world still comes to us today with peace, joy, and love.

With hope in Christ,
Pastor Rushan



Church Council Update

Aloha Central Union Church!

The new Council year began following our September combined Annual and Budget Meeting. In place of our regular October meeting, we held a Council retreat led by Pastor Rushan – a meaningful time of reflection and planning for the year ahead.

Here are the Church Council liaisons assigned to support our committees and ministries:

- **Administration & Finance:** Brandon Lin
- **Budget:** Brandon Lin
- **Campus Buildings and Grounds:** Sam Failla
- **Central Union Windward Ministry:** Jocelyn Pratt
- **Community:** Nathan Wong
- **Diaconate:** Dusty Santos
- **Investment:** Paul Hayes
- **Faith Formation:** Colleen Ho’omana (Adult), Grant Itomitsu (Children & Youth)
- **Mind Body Spirit Ministry:** Carol Egan
- **Music:** Jane Fyrberg
- **Nominations & Governance:** Carol Egan
- **Personnel & Pastoral Relations:** Jocelyn Pratt
- **Pohnpei Ministry:** Maurina Ludwig
- **Preschool:** David Yee
- **Senior Services:** Joan Murata
- **Stewardship:** Jane Fyrberg
- **Welcome & Engagement:** (Membership & Fellowship): Brody McMurtry
- **Women’s League:** Joan Murata
- **World Missions:** Maurina Ludwig

COUNCIL MEETING UPDATE

Our monthly Council meetings are held in the Rewick Board Room at **5:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month**, except for a combined November/December meeting scheduled for **December 4, 2025**, to accommodate the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Upcoming meeting dates are **January 22, February 26, March 26, April 23, May 28, June 25, July 23, August 27**.

Council meetings are open to all Church members who wish to attend. In addition to our regular agenda, we invite members to participate in discussions inspired by Pastor Rushan’s vision that our church should be centered around a Spirit-led commitment. His four essential expressions to guide our mission are:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Worship and Music | 2. Faith Formation & Growth |
| 3. Radical Hospitality | 4. Living Out Faith |

To prepare, check out Pastor Rushan’s article “Reclaiming Our Sacred Why” in September 2025’s issue of *The Spire* and come to share what this vision means to you. Most meetings will include discussion on one of these themes, and topics will be announced ahead of time so you can join when it speaks to you.

If you have any questions or wish to reach me, please email council-chair@centralunionchurch.org. You may also contact any council member directly regarding their respective ministry areas.

The Real Estate Committee (REC) did not meet in August or October but convened in September to review a new conceptual proposal from the Retirement Housing Foundation (RHF) for a market-rate rental tower on the Makai portion of the Diamond Head side of the Honolulu campus. We last met on November 11 to receive an RHF update on senior rental housing plans.

NEW COUNCIL TREASURER

The Council is pleased to announce the appointment of **Brandon Lin as Treasurer**, succeeding Ciarra Sapigao. Mr. Lin earned his Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Stanford University and his Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School. He brings extensive experience in finance, having worked in investment banking with Credit Suisse First Boston’s Technology Group, as a founding member of the private equity firm SAIF Partners Group, and most recently as a hedge fund investment adviser. Brandon and his wife, Candy, relocated from California and joined our church family in 2025. The youngest of their three children is currently enrolled in our preschool.

Please join us in welcoming Brandon and expressing our gratitude for his willingness to serve in this important role!

Blessings,

David Yee
Council Chair



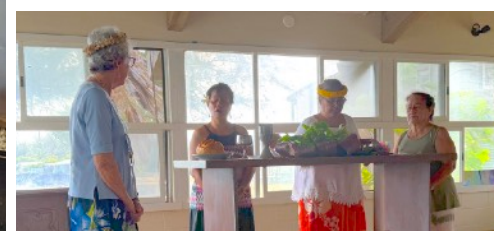
2025 Women's Retreat



Despite some initial doubts about whether a retreat would happen at all this year, about 30 women—CUC members and friends—gathered for the 36th annual Central Union Church Women's Retreat at Camp Mokule'ia on October 24-26. Longtime participant Jane Nagel shared the following with the recipient of the Retreat offering: "It was a beautiful weekend of singing, telling stories, faith discussion, swimming, painting, growing closer to God and our friends and worship. We are so blessed to be able to come together for these three days of beauty with other women of different faith backgrounds and cultures. Our final activity is always a service of communion and praise. The offering we collect always goes to a charitable organization that helps women in Hawai'i." A total of \$1,025 was collected at the Women's Retreat for the the Pū'a Foundation to support their work with women in transition from incarceration. Our spirits have been renewed by our time together and we hope to carry on the tradition next year with more women!

Poem by Marion Lyman-Mersereau for the 2025 CUC Women's Retreat

Throughout the night
the restless sea
demanded to be heard
but I couldn't understand a word
so she spoke louder
I thought she said something
about sea level rise
but her language proved elusive
clouds crowded her horizon
as if leaning in to listen
but they did not translate
they remained their silent gray selves
and just hovered over
the ocean's constant litany -
each wave that made its way
to the wall wanted to have its say
then the sun awoke
and began to color a new day
first touching the clouds
and tinting their eastern edges
with the season's pumpkin orange -
when it was time
each woman spoke and was heard
and even the wind-roughened sea
knew every word of every story
knew the tune of every song
another morning arrived
and the sun strained to shine
through the clouds
with a bright silver light
and its ancient story repeated itself
like the sea,
like us,
how we continue to rise and fall
and rise and fall
and rise always and ever again



Youth Fun & Funds!



FUN ... This fall, we've had several additions to our youth group! A team of them put their skills to the test at The Escape Game earlier this month and broke out with time to spare.

FUNDS ... This month, youth voted unanimously to donate \$3,000 to the Hawai'i Foodbank. These funds come from their earnings from their annual parking fundraiser. The donation is a faithful response to the loss of federal funding for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) which has heightened food insecurity for many families in Hawai'i.

Young(ish)

Our Young(ish) Adult Ministry has been holding a "Brunch Bunch" gathering on the fourth Sunday of the month. (They will not be brunching during the busy months of November and December). Usually we're heavy on the "ish" part of "youngish" so it was exciting to have a great turnout of young adults at our last gathering!

Please pray for our young-adult volunteer leaders who have been riding the highs and lows of life, trying to find balance in between and tend to this ministry. We are working on collecting feedback to help shape the next season of our ministry together. Pray for the young adults in our midst seeking to foster community with like-minded folks.

Connect with our Young(ish) Adult Ministry:
youngish@centralunionchurch.org



CUC in the Honolulu Pride Parade



Our small but spirit-filled group, sponsored by our Community Ministry, had so much fun in the Honolulu Pride Parade last month! Seven of us representing CUC made our way through Waikiki sharing smiles, laughs, greetings of "Happy Pride", even fruit snacks with the message "Love Never Fails to be fabulous." It brought us great joy to share God's love with the wider community! As a church that claims to welcome all, we must prove it by our love—especially for those who face unjust discrimination in our society. May we work to align our actions with our professed values and ensure that our support for the LGBTQ+ community endures through struggle as much as celebration.

See: "Message from Our Church Council Chair" on being an Open and Affirming (ONA) church in the June 2025 issue of *The Spire* (view online at bit.ly/june2025spire).



Lighting the Way in a Time of Challenge

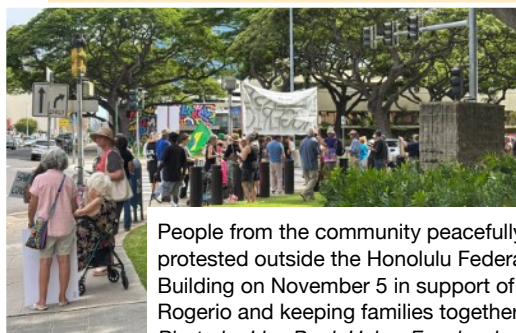
Earlier this month, our congregation received the news about someone in our CUC community who had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) here in Honolulu. For many of us, it is the closest we've been to the harsh impacts of the latest U.S. immigration policies.

In a letter to the congregation, Pastor Rushan shared, "I write to you today with a heavy heart. Our dear friend and drummer in our 11 AM worship service praise team, Rogerio Araujo, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). . . Rogerio is not only a gifted musician and artist—he is a cherished member of our church 'ohana, a man of faith and

kindness, and the beloved husband of Cheryl Bartlett, who sings alongside him in our worship band. This is a frightening and painful time for Cheryl and for all who love Rogerio. His absence is felt not only in our music, but in the spirit of our shared life. We grieve this injustice and stand in support of Cheryl as she navigates the uncertainty and emotional toll of this moment. We also recognize that Rogerio's detention is part of a broader reality—a political and immigration system that is deeply broken. Families are being separated. Citizens and long-time residents are being detained without warning. Human dignity is too often lost in the shuffle of policy and enforcement. As people of faith, we are called to respond—not with despair, but with compassion, courage, and conviction . . . Rogerio and Cheryl are part of our family. Their pain is our pain. Their hope is our hope. And together, we will walk through this valley with faith, compassion, and the unwavering belief that love is stronger than fear."



Let us pray for Rogerio's safety and release; for Cheryl's strength and peace; for wisdom and compassion to guide those in positions of power and authority. Let our prayers be persistent, not passive — prayers that rise like incense and move to make a difference.



People from the community peacefully protested outside the Honolulu Federal Building on November 5 in support of Rogerio and keeping families together.
Photo by Lisa Buck Haley, Facebook.

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." —Leviticus 19:33-34'

"Love your neighbor as yourself." —Mark 12:31

Did you know that there is a Thrift Shop at both our Honolulu and Windward campuses?

Thrift Shopping for the Holidays

It's a great place to get your holiday gifts & decor at bargain prices while being a thoughtful consumer and supporting our ministries!

Linn Garcia, Central Union Windward Ministry

Come and see the Thrift Shop at Central Union Windward!

We have a wide variety of items to catch your fancy. We invite you to peruse our four rooms of seasonal items, art work, furniture, collectibles, clothing, linens, small appliances, dishes, glassware, and so much more. The Windward Thrift Shop (located at 38 Kāne'ohe Bay Drive in Kailua across Aikahi Shopping Center) is open **Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 AM to 1 PM**. Donations are accepted during store hours. Furniture pickup is available upon request. Call the office at 808-254-3802 or Joan at 808-398-2691.

➡ The Honolulu Thrift Shop is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 AM to 3 PM and accepts donations during these hours only.



Now Accepting Donations for White Gifts

Rebecca Woodland, Community Ministry

Our annual White Gifts program will continue to carry out our mission of providing much-needed Christmas gifts for the social services and ministries we have faithfully partnered with for decades, so that they can offer Christmas gifts to the people they serve. The majority of White Gifts go to impoverished and disadvantaged adults and youth; some are homeless or in transition due to domestic violence, injustice, aging out of foster care, or other circumstances beyond their control. Now, more than ever, the importance of these gifts cannot be overstated.



Our revised method of collecting monetary donations has turned out to be a huge benefit for the agencies we serve as this “new” way of giving ensures that each agency receives exactly what their people need. Instead of purchasing and wrapping gifts, those who wish to participate can donate by cash or check, made payable to Central Union Church. On the memo line, write “White Gifts”. You may also **donate online** through our website: centralunionchurch.org/donate. Select “White Gifts” in the dropdown menu to designate your gift.



Submit your monetary donation anytime between now and December 19.

Only monetary donations will be accepted. We cannot accept gift items.

A team of savvy shoppers will then purchase suitable gifts with the available funds. The agencies submit a gift request form so we know what their needs are. In years past we have given 1,000+ gifts shared between eight to ten agencies. All gifts will be pre-sorted according to each agency before White Gifts Sunday. **Our White Gifts celebration will be held on Sunday, December 21, in one combined worship service at 10 AM in the Sanctuary.**

Thank you for your generosity! Mahalo for helping us to bring Christmas joy to the most vulnerable in our community. God bless you all!

Coming Up Next Month

Sunday, December 21, 11 AM, Women’s Building

After a combined 10 AM worship service in the Sanctuary —featuring our heartwarming White Gifts celebration and Christmas pageant—come join the merriment just steps away! Step into a wonderland of warmth, laughter, and holiday cheer as we gather for a whole-church celebration that’s merry, magical, and made for all ages.

- * Bring a plate of your favorite Christmas cookies (finger-food only, please)!
- * Sip on hot cocoa, coffee, and juice served by our Welcome & Engagement Ministry!
- * Enjoy festive music, sweet treats, and joyful conversation!
- * Reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and celebrate as one church ‘ohana!

Christmas
**OPEN
HOUSE**

12.21.25

11 AM-12 PM

Women’s Building

Enjoy holiday treats
and fellowship!



Whether you come dressed in jingle bells or holiday sweaters, with keiki in tow or cookies in hand, we can’t wait to celebrate the season with you! Let’s make this Christmas bright—with joy, aloha, hope and community! See you there—it won’t be the same without you!

LOOKING AHEAD

November 16: Advent Wreath Preparation

Following 11 AM worship service; food provided
RSVP: cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org

November 16: Service of Healing & Prayer

5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel



November 19:

Messy Church Advent Workshop

5 PM - Parish Hall - All ages welcome!

More info & to register online:

bit.ly/messy111925

FAITH FORMATION:

More info & to register online:

bit.ly/advent2025cuc



Nov. 20, Dec. 4, 11, 18 - Thursday mornings

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Nov. 25, Dec. 2, 9, 16 - Tuesday evenings

6:00 – 7:30 PM

November 23: The Church Has Left the Building

9 AM, Sanctuary + service opportunities to follow

November 30: First Sunday of Advent

December 7: Jazz Vespers “Improvising Hope”

5:30 PM, Atherton Courtyard

December 4: Church Council Meeting

5 PM, Rewick Board Room

December 14: 76th Presentation of Messiah

7:30 PM, Sanctuary - Free concert

December 21: Worship at 10 AM

White Gifts celebration

Holiday Open House to follow

6:30 PM - Service of Compassion and Hope

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23

JOIN US IN LIVING OUR FAITH BEYOND THE SANCTUARY!



THE CHURCH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

A Day of Worship and Witness

Join us as we live our faith beyond the sanctuary! We'll begin the day together in a combined worship service at 9 AM then we will participate in acts of compassion, justice, and care for our wider community through a variety of service projects for all ages and abilities.

Calling All Singers!



Sing in the Chancel Choir for our Christmas services on December 21 and 24! Rehearsals are on **November 16**, 1:00-2:30 PM, and **December 18**, 6:30-7:30 PM, in the Music Building. Contact our Director of Choirs with any questions: sarah-young@centralunionchurch.org.

Welcome New Members

On November 2, 2025, we received the following people into the CUC 'Ohana: Zhanwei "Frank" Gao, Jajun "April" Li, Casey Melvin, Ziwei Melvin, William Whitmore, Kristen Whitmore, Jerry Koizumi, and Brina Dorser.

Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of **Kay Allen** who died on October 25, 2025.





HANDEL'S MESSIAH



SUNDAY
DEC. 14, 2025
7:30 PM

Central Union Church
1660 S. Beretania Street, Honolulu

**The performance is FREE
and open to the public!**
Donations gratefully accepted.

centralunionchurch.org

FEATURING

DR. MARTINA BINGHAM,
soprano

A. EZINNE DAWSON,
mezzo soprano

RUSHAN SINNADURAY,
tenor

DR. CHRISTOPHER R. KELSEY,
bass

THE HAWAI'I NUI CHORALE

**MEMBERS OF THE HAWAI'I
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

DR. ALEC SCHUMACKER,
guest conductor