



THE SPIRE

The clock on the Sanctuary spire not only tells the time, but also the season, by its color.

It's currently lit in blue for Advent—a season of preparation and anticipation for the birth of Christ. Deep blue—the color of the night sky and the color associated with Mary—is the liturgical color for this church season.

Though it comes at the end of the Gregorian calendar, Advent is the start of a new year for the church.

There are four Sundays in Advent leading up to Christmas. Christmas Eve marks the beginning of the Christmas celebration which continues for the following “twelve days of Christmas.”



Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Aloha Central Union Church
'ohana,

Hau'oli Makahiki Hou. As we continue a new liturgical year in this season of Advent and as we

step into 2026, I find myself returning again and again to the words of Isaiah: *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:19)

There's something about the start of a new year that invites us to pause, breathe, and listen for God's voice. And as Epiphany dawns—a season when the light of Christ is revealed to the world—we're invited to open our eyes and hearts to the new things God is doing right here, right now, in our lives, in our church and in our world.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

We're about to embark on a journey together: anchoring ourselves in our sacred why. This isn't just a strategic move; it's a spiritual practice. It's about remembering who we are and whose we are. It's about asking, "What is God's purpose for us as a community?" and "How can we reflect Christ's light more fully in Honolulu and beyond?"

Before we rush ahead, let's take a moment to look back. Scripture is full of stories where God's people pause to remember—sometimes with gratitude, sometimes with lament, always with honesty. We celebrate the ways God's Spirit has moved among us, and we also name the places where we've fallen short or grown comfortable. This is holy work, and it prepares us to move forward with intention and hope.

To help us dig deeper, I'll be preaching a special sermon series through January and into February entitled **"Beacons of Grace: Lighting the Way Together."**

Each week, we'll explore a different aspect of our calling, guided by scripture and the light of Epiphany:

- * **"The Light Has Come"** (Matthew 2:1-12) • *We begin with the Magi, who followed the star to find Christ. Their journey reminds us that God's light often leads us beyond what is familiar, inviting us to seek, to wonder, and to worship.*
- * **"Lit from Within: Worship as Illumination"** (Isaiah 60:1-5) • *Worship isn't just something we*

do; it's how God's light gets inside us and shines out. When we gather, pray, and sing, we're illuminated from within - transformed by God's presence.

- * **"Anchored and Awake: Faith Formation in Deep Waters"** (Matthew 7:24-27) • *Jesus calls us to build our lives on solid ground. Faith formation is about digging deep, asking hard questions, and letting God's Word shape us - even when the waters get rough.*
- * **"Open Doors, Warm Light: Hospitality as Holy Welcome"** (Luke 14:12-14) • *True hospitality is more than a friendly greeting; it's a spiritual practice. Jesus invites us to open our doors and our hearts, making space for those who might otherwise be left out.*
- * **"Shining Forward: Living Our Faith in the World"** (Matthew 5:14-16) • *Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." Our faith isn't meant to be hidden. We're called to shine - through acts of compassion, and everyday kindness.*
- * **"The Lighthouse We Build: A Community Radiant with Grace"** (Philippians 2:14-16) • *Together, we're building something bigger than ourselves - a church that radiates grace, hope, and love. Like a lighthouse, we can help guide others safely home.*

Hope, Challenge, and a Little Bit of Risk

Isaiah's words remind us that God is always doing something new. That's both exciting and a little unsettling! Following God's call means stepping out in faith, taking risks, and sometimes letting go of what's comfortable. But here's the good news: we don't do this alone. The same Spirit that led the Magi, that filled the early church with courage, is with us now - guiding, empowering, and lighting our way.

This journey isn't just about programs or plans. It's about transformation - becoming more like Christ, together. It's about trusting that God's love is big enough to hold our questions, our hopes, and even our fears.

Lighting the Way—Together

So, let's do this together. Let's reclaim our sacred why, become beacons of grace, and light the way for each other and for our community. Whether you've been here for decades or just walked through the doors, you are part of this story. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us here at Central Union Church this year and beyond.

With aloha and anticipation,
Pastor Rushan

Celebrating Generosity

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray, Senior Minister

We give thanks for the extraordinary generosity of our members who go above and beyond their regular financial support of our mission and ministry. Recent special gifts include:

- ❖ A significant donation to help replace the handrails on the steps into Atherton Memorial Chapel
- ❖ A donation to install a new water fountain with a water-bottle filler at the rear of the Women's Building
- ❖ Several generous donations for our project to replace the paraments/hangings in the Sanctuary
- ❖ A beautiful Christmas crèche/nativity scene to display in the Sanctuary

These gifts reflect the deep faith and commitment of our donors and their willingness to support the mission and ministry of CUC in meaningful ways. We are truly blessed by their spirit of giving.



Message from Council Chair

Dear Members and Friends,

The recent Church Council meeting provided a moment of reflection as we enter the beautiful liturgical season of Advent.

It's worth noting that while we cherish this tradition today, Advent is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible. It is a practice that developed within the Christian church centuries after the New Testament events, tracing its roots back to early Christian communities in Gaul and Spain who used the time for fasting and preparation, much like Lent. By the 6th century, the season was formalized and, under leaders like Pope Gregory I, evolved into the time of joyous anticipation and hopeful waiting that most churches, including ours, observe today.

Advent at Central Union Church

We follow the tradition of Advent as a time of joy, celebration, and preparation. It is an opportunity to look back on where God has been with us and look forward with anticipation to what God will do. This season calls us to reflect on who we are in our community as followers of Christ.

As we look ahead, we must ask: Where are we headed? How can we, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, move forward in faith, hope, peace, joy, love, and service? We are using this time to listen for God's voice in our conversations and remain open to God's new direction for our church as we continue the good work He began in us.

We Need Your Input

The Church Council wants to hear from you. Whether you participate in person or online, how is our church doing?

- ◆ **What has been your point of frustration?**
- ◆ **What has been the best part of church life for you?**
- ◆ **What would you like the Church Council to address, improve, or change?**

I would love to hear from you. If you have questions or wish to share your thoughts, please send your email to council-chair@centralunionchurch.org.

Happy Holidays,

David Yee

Church Council Chair





The Church Has Left the Building

We are called to live our faith beyond the Sanctuary walls. That's exactly what we did on November 23 for "The Church Has Left the Building" Sunday. After one combined worship service, grounding ourselves in the Spirit's call to serve, we spread out to



*"You are now entering the mission field. The **real worship** begins when the service ends. The **real church** begins when the doors swing open."*

participate in acts cared for creation by making Genki Balls. Some cared for neighbors by assembling Aloha Kits and writing care cards and letters of advocacy. Some cared for creation and our shared spaces by cleaning church grounds and treating our trees

to protect them from the invasive Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle infesting O'ahu. While our church is no stranger to service and outreach, this intentional extension of our worship service into opportunities to engage in action was somewhat of a first! There was a great turnout (mahalo to all who participated)! We enjoyed not only putting our faith in action, but doing so together and working in community. We plan to make this a regular event, at least each November, and hope to expand our outreach farther into our neighboring community. A committee is being formed to plan future events of this kind. Let us know if you'd like to be part of coordinating the next one!

"Worship is not just what we say. It's what we serve. It's not just what we sing. It's what we share."



"A sanctuary is a space where God shows up... and God shows up in kitchens and classrooms, in coffee shops and crosswalks."



ADVENT: a time of getting ready

Messy Church: Advent Workshop

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

On Wednesday, November 19, we gathered in Parish Hall for food, fun, fellowship and worship at our Messy Church Advent Workshop. This marked our "let's get ready to get ready for Christmas" event and the fun was contagious. We decorated Christmas cookies, made hot cocoa mix, and created beautiful, one-of-a-kind Advent wreaths. We enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by our Youth Director, Melissa Thach, and a special Advent worship time where we learned more about the Advent season. If you are looking for a joyful and engaging worship experience —no matter your age— I invite you to Messy Church! Stay tuned for our next event!



Youth begin Advent with generosity

On the first Sunday of Advent, youth ventured to the mall to pick out gifts for others in need of a little extra generosity this holiday season. Through **The Salvation Army's Angel Tree program**, youth picked an Angel Tag listing someone's special Christmas wish and went shopping for the desired item. The Angel Tree program, which began in 1979, delivers gifts to keiki, kūpuna, and families in need across Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands each year.

The CUC Youth Group welcomes young people in grades 6-12. **Here's what's coming up!**

- ★**December 14:** Youth Christmas party from 12 to 2 PM
- ★**December 21:** Youth will meet for brunch from 11 AM to 1 PM
- ★**December 28:** NO youth meeting. Enjoy time with loved ones!

Contact **Melissa Thach**, *Youth Director*:
melissa-thach@centralunionchurch.org

What good can canned goods do?

Kristen Young, *Communications Manager*
Martha Balkin, *Community Ministry*

In past years, Community Ministry collected canned goods and pantry items with the CUC Food Pantry, a cart rolled from service to service. The Food Pantry is back! We have neighbors who are facing food insecurity all year round and they may be closer than we think.

With little announcement (just one little note in the *CU Weekly* e-newsletter) several goods came in last Sunday (mahalo!) and some of them went back out to someone in need that very same day.

Imagine someone in this situation going to a church, asking for a bit of help to make it through another day, and then being turned away. What might this say about the church? How would you want your church to respond?

During the week, our Church Office staff are the front line. They are often the face of the church between Sundays when the congregation is not gathered. It's not unusual for someone in need to come to the Church Office seeking help. They should be able to hope for kindness and maybe even some sort of nourishment from an organization that claims to follow Christ's teachings. Can we truly feed the spirit if we deny daily bread?

The truth is that there have been times when we've had to turn people away with nothing to offer and it doesn't feel great, especially as representatives of the church. As one church, we can't address every need and request for every individual out there, but if there's more we can do to engage and embrace those who come our way, we want to do it.

The plan is for the CUC Food Pantry cart to be out at each Sunday worship service. The hope is that we, as the CUC community, can keep it stocked similarly to how we might keep our own pantries stocked at home. See it empty, lacking options one

Sunday? Bring something the next Sunday to add to it! Buying yourself some canned goods? Grab an extra for the CUC pantry! It'll be an ongoing collection while also providing options to anyone who might come in need on a Sunday morning or during the week to the office where the cart will be kept.

This is NOT intended to replace Serving Aloha or become a food distribution or regular resource advertised to the wider community that we cannot sustain. The idea is to do what we can, share from our collective abundance, keep a few options on hand for those inevitable occasions when a neighbor

in need turns to our office for something as simple as a meal to eat. Staff members have also contributed items to the pantry. Having some goods available to offer will better equip staff (and any of us on campus) to extend generosity in more of these situations and represent Central Union Church with compassion.

We invite you to contribute to the CUC Food Pantry as you're able! If you are interested in helping with the Food Pantry cart beyond contributing goods (i.e. rolling the cart to transport between Sunday services,

organizing items), please let us know: cuc@centralunionchurch.org!

Recommended items to contribute:

- ✓ Non-perishable, shelf-stable, ready-to-eat
- ✓ Pull tops preferred
- Soups
- Canned tuna
- Vienna sausage
- Chef Boyardee
- Canned fruits/veggies
- Non-perishable snacks
- Fruit snacks (i.e. Welch's)
- Apple sauce
- Bottled water

No expired items, please! Any surplus of goods will be donated to the Serving Aloha food distribution.



Join the joyful celebration on December 21



WORSHIP + White Gifts

We'll come together for **ONE** combined worship service at 10 AM in the Sanctuary featuring our heartwarming White Gifts celebration and Christmas pageant. Come and worship and hear the Christmas story told through music! Kids can participate in the pageant as an angel or shepherd—no rehearsal needed. Just come by 9:50 AM, meet in the Von Hamm room at the main Sanctuary entrance.

All are welcome to the Christmas Open House!

After worship, 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!

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!



DONATE to White Gifts by December 19



Help to share joy with others this holiday season by making a **monetary donation** to our White Gifts project. Our savvy shoppers will use the funds to purchase gifts based on the needs of our partner agencies in the community. Many of these gifts go to adults and youth who are facing injustices and challenging transitions. Learn more and give online:

centralunionchurch.org/white-gifts-2025

LOOKING AHEAD

Preaching at Central Union Windward

Melissa Thach: December 7, 14; Christmas Eve; January 2026

Pastor Rushan: December 21

FAITH FORMATION: Advent Study *final sessions*

Nov. 20, Dec. 4, 11, 18 - 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Nov. 25, Dec. 2, 9, 16 - 6:00 – 7:30 PM

December 14: 76th Presentation of *Messiah*

7:30 PM, Sanctuary - Free concert

December 17: Serving Aloha food distribution

(last of the year)

December 18: Young(ish) Adults

Christmas Party for gens X/Y/Z

6-8 PM, Women's Building

Potluck! Games! Gift exchange!

youngish@centralunionchurch.org



December 19: CUPS Christmas Chapel program

December 21: ONE worship service at 10 AM

Service of Compassion and Hope

6:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel

The **Thrift Shop** will be **CLOSED** on **December 24 and 31** for Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve.

Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of **Beatrice "Bea" Terumoto** who died on Tuesday, November 25, 2025. Private services are pending.



LEARNING TREE

**SHOULD I GET VACCINATED?
WHAT'S THE REAL SCIENCE BEHIND VACCINES?**



January 11, 2026 • 10-11 AM

Bring your concerns, questions, and fears and learn about how vaccines have changed the course of history of infectious diseases and saved hundreds of millions of lives. Joe Elm will share his 50 years of medical and scientific experience in The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Laboratory at Leahi Hospital; the Department of Tropical Medicine in the John A. Burns School of Medicine; and the Disease Investigation Branch at the Hawaii State Department of Health.

POINSETTIA dedications for Christmas! • \$10 • Submit order by December 15 • bit.ly/cucpoinsettia

Celebrate Christmas WITH CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

CHRISTMAS EVE • Wednesday, December 24, 2025

5:30 PM Family Christmas Service – All are welcome! (*Sanctuary*)

8:00 PM Candlelight Service & Carols (prelude at 7:30 PM) (*Sanctuary & live stream*)

10:30 PM Candlelight Service & Carols (prelude at 10 PM) (*Sanctuary*)

6:00 PM Candlelight Service & Carols @ Windward campus (*38 Kāneʻohe Bay Drive*)

CHRISTMAS DAY • Thursday, December 25, 2025

10:00 AM Lessons & Carols (*Sanctuary*)

11:00 AM Pohnpei Ministry Service (*Atherton Memorial Chapel*)

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS • December 28, 2025

10:00 AM One Worship Service – Guest Preacher: Rev. Dr. Will Whitmore (*Parish Hall*)