

THE SPIRE



Carrying the
light from
Christmas
& Epiphany,
may we light
the way ahead.



The Work of Christmas Begins

Beloved Central Union Church 'ohana,

As we step into a new year, my heart is still full from the wonder, beauty,

and joy of the Advent and Christmas seasons. It felt as though every corner of our campus shimmered with life, every gathering pulsed with hope, and every voice—young and old—joined in a chorus of gratitude for God's love made flesh among us.

We witnessed the delight of our children and youth as they brought the story of Jesus' birth to life in our Christmas pageants on White Gifts Sunday and on Christmas Eve—moments of laughter, tenderness, and holy surprise. We welcomed back our Christmas Open House, revived and renewed, filling the Women's Building with music, cookies, conversation, and the unmistakable warmth of community. Christmas Jazz Vespers once again wrapped us in soulful sound and sacred stillness, reminding us that the Christmas story can be told in many keys.

Our Sanctuary swelled with harmony and history as we celebrated the 76th performance of Handel's *Messiah*—a testament to the generations who have offered their gifts so faithfully. And on Christmas Eve, the pews were full, the air electric with anticipation, and the Spirit unmistakably present. There is nothing quite like the moment when the lights dim, candles are lifted, and we sing "Silent Night" together. In that soft glow, it feels as though heaven is leaning close.

Even our staff Christmas party became a moment of grace and gratitude. Laughter echoed, stories were shared, and so many of you offered your time, talent, and treasure to help us celebrate the incredible team that supports the mission and ministry of our church with such heart and dedication. Your generosity was a blessing—it reminded us that ministry is never done alone.

As we turned the page into Epiphany, we embraced another beloved tradition: Star Words. Each year, these simple pieces of paper carry profound

invitations—guiding us, challenging us, and sometimes surprising us. My Star Word this year is **patience**. I'll admit, it's not the word I might have chosen for myself, but perhaps that's the point. Patience is the quiet work of trust. It is the

willingness to wait, to listen, to breathe, and to believe and trust that God is moving even when we cannot yet see the way. I have a feeling this word will be shaping me—and maybe challenging and stretching me—in the months ahead.

It is in this spirit that I return to the words of

Howard Thurman, who wrote:

"When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone...
The work of Christmas begins."

Thurman reminds us that Christmas is not an ending—it is a beginning. The pageants conclude, the candles are extinguished, the decorations are gently packed away, but the meaning of Christmas takes root in us anew. Now comes the real work:

... to find the lost,
... to heal the broken,
... to feed the hungry,
... to release the oppressed,
... to rebuild community,
... to bring peace among people,
... to make music in the heart.

This is the calling that carries us into January and beyond. This is the sacred work entrusted to us as followers of Christ and as a church committed to hope, peace, joy, and love.

May we enter this new year ready to live the Christmas story—not just remember it. And may the Spirit who moved so powerfully among us during the Advent and Christmas seasons, continue to guide, inspire, and renew us as the work of Christmas begins again.

With gratitude and aloha,
Pastor Rushan

White Gifts Success!

Rebecca Woodland, *Community Ministry, White Gifts Chair*

Thanks to your generosity, Central Union Church was able to provide Christmas gifts for more than 1,200 people in need in our community through local partners. All gifts were picked up by our partners before White Gifts Sunday, so they could be distributed before Christmas.

Based on personal conversations with representatives from each agency, gifts were purchased to fill the specific requests of the agencies and the people they serve. These agencies and ministries include Hale Kipa, Keauhou Shelter, HUGS, Hawaii Meals on Wheels, PACT, Fernhurst, O'ahu Mutual Aid, The Shelter, as well as others. Most of the gifts were destined for people who are homeless or in transition, living in shelters or temporary situations. Some are for kūpuna who are housebound, and young adults who have aged out of foster care.

To all who contributed financially to this White Gifts endeavor, THANK YOU! Special thanks to Ronny Lynn and the Community Ministry team, Leslie and Amy in the CUC accounting office, and all of you who made our 2025 White Gifts a great success. You are bringing joy to the lives of hundreds of individuals in need, some who would otherwise receive no Christmas gift. May God bless you all.



It Was a White Winter at CUPS

Alana Anderson, *Central Union Preschool, Advancement & Communications Manager*

Even without having to leave the campus, our CUPS keiki had the opportunity to enjoy a white winter! On December 5, between Atherton Chapel and the Sanctuary, snow was deposited on the grass for all to enjoy, signaling the start of the beloved CUPS tradition... Snow Day!

Snow Day was divided into two sessions for the keiki. First, each class spent time in the Music Room where Santa Claus and his elf were waiting. Singing songs and livening up the mood with his jolly smile and hearty laugh, our kiddos listened to Santa as he read his favorite Christmas story. And no Santa visit is complete without photos as the children gathered around Santa and smiled at parents, families, and our always ready photographer.

The second half of Snow Day was exactly that... playing in the snow right here on the CUC campus! Dressed in their warmest attire, some even donning a full winter outfit, complete with a beanie, gloves, and boots, keiki climbed to the top of the mound and squealed with joy as they rode the sled back down. Other keiki waited at the bottom of the hill, making snowballs or attempting snowmen of all different sizes and shapes. It was truly a beautiful morning as the snow glistened in the rising sun. To end the activities, the children drank warm cocoa and shared a giant gingerbread man cookie, thanks to our Preschool's Chef Kat. Once again, we'd like to send our deepest appreciation to the PTO board and PTO Snow Day sub-committee for organizing an amazing event for our CUPS keiki and families. What better way to welcome winter at CUPS than a typical beautiful day in Hawai'i while borrowing all the elements of a true wintry day?

A Faithful Response to Economic Injustice



In 2017, the United Church of Christ, through General Synod XXXI, named a hard truth: our economic systems do not serve everyone equally. Many of our neighbors remain excluded from fair financial services, while others are harmed by predatory lending practices that profit from vulnerability rather than support human flourishing.

The Church recognized that economic justice is not separate from our faith, it is an expression of it.

Out of that conviction, Generations United Federal Credit Union was established. GUFCU exists as a practical response to the call of General Synod: to support those who are historically underbanked or unbanked, and to offer a life-giving alternative to financial models that extract rather than restore.

This credit union is not about maximizing profit. It is about aligning money with mission.

When members of the United Church of Christ choose to save with Generations United Federal Credit Union, they participate in a quiet but powerful act of justice. Deposits are pooled and used to expand access to fair, responsible financial services, helping people build stability, avoid harmful debt, and move toward greater economic dignity.

In this way, saving becomes more than a personal financial decision. It becomes a form of stewardship, a way of loving our neighbors, and a commitment to the kind of world our faith calls us to help create.

By participating in Generations United Federal Credit Union, UCC members help:

- ❖ Extend fair financial access to those excluded by traditional systems
- ❖ Resist predatory lending practices
- ❖ Strengthening communities through shared resources and mutual care

This is not banking for its own sake.
It is banking as ministry.
It is money put to work in service of justice.

For those who feel called to support this mission, membership is open through the Join Now link at gufcu.org, or through the GUFCU mobile app available in the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.



Who Can Join Generations United Federal Credit Union

To qualify for membership, you'll need to be any one of the following:

- ✓ A member of the United Church of Christ.
- ✓ An employee of the United Church of Christ.
- ✓ A spouse of person who died while within the field of membership of this credit union.
- ✓ A member of the immediate family or household participating in the credit union.
- ✓ An employee or volunteer of the credit union; plus, any organization of such persons; and
- ✓ A corporate or other legal entity in this charter.

An eligible member can join Generations United by opening an account with as little as \$5.



Volunteer for Youth Fundraiser

Melissa Thach, Youth Director

February 6 and 7 is our annual youth fundraiser selling parking for the Punahoa Carnival. The money raised pays for all the fun activities we do as a group, as well as gives us an opportunity to give back to the community through donations. In the past we have donated to the Genki Ball project, relief funds for Maui and California fires, the Hawaiian Humane Society, Heifer International, the Hawai'i Foodbank, and more. We've also been able to support the start of Messy Church, our creative and intergenerational worship service, and donate to Central Union Children's Ministry.

This year, we will donate half the proceeds to Central Union to be used to maintain the Great Lawn. Every Wednesday, Central Union is a light in the community through our Serving Aloha food distribution ministry. Hundreds of people come for the drive-thru, which takes a toll on the lawn, so this

is just a small way to give back. Not to mention the fact that thousands of cars parking on the lawn for an (almost always rainy) weekend in February adds extra work for our Buildings & Grounds crew.

The other half of the money will pay for fun events (like our Kaua'i retreat July 23-27, 2026) and give us money to donate to community organizations. It's an intense (but fun!) couple of days—and we need all hands on deck. Youth who want to go to Kaua'i must sign up to work for at least 5 hours.

ADULT VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO NEEDED

throughout the day and evening to assist with parking. Help is also needed to pick up and drop off food for volunteers. If you're available and would like to support our youth, come help and enjoy some exercise and fellowship while you're at it! If you have any questions about volunteering or if you are able to help on the Friday or Saturday, please email me at melissa-thach@centralunionchurch.org.

College Scholarship Opportunities

The Central Union Church Women's League is excited to offer two scholarship opportunities to support students pursuing higher education. Awards in previous years ranged from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and prior recipients are welcome to reapply.

The **Kenneth O. and Doris A. Rewick Educational Aid Fund** is open to Hawai'i students enrolled or planning to enroll in accredited undergraduate, graduate, or specialized training programs beyond high school. Full-time, part-time, and online students are eligible.

The **Ruth C. Scudder Scholarship** is awarded to female students from Hawai'i with a Christian affiliation enrolled in the University of Hawai'i system. Preference is given to United Church of Christ (UCC) members and upperclassmen.

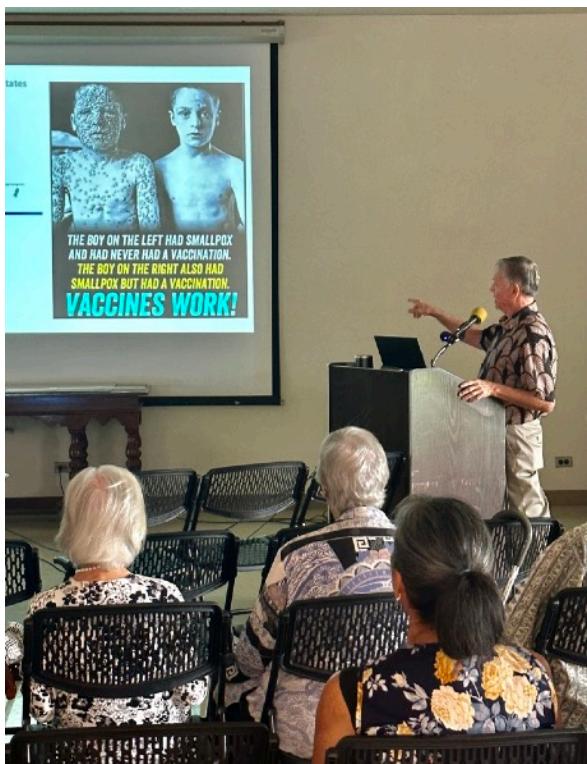
HOW TO APPLY:



1. Visit ScholarsApp.com to create an account and access more information. Applications are accepted exclusively through the ScholarsApp website.
2. Submit application by **February 28, 2025**. For questions, email cucwlscholarship@gmail.com.



Learning Tree: Why Vaccines Are Vital



Learning Tree relaunched this month with a presentation on why vaccines are vital. There are likely some in our communities who may not yet understand or trust the science. With the federal government changing vaccine requirements, it is important to have accurate information for our health. Church member Joe Elm, who has 50 years of professional medical and scientific experience, shared information to address common concerns and questions around vaccines, and to affirm their importance.

FACT: Among children born in the United States during 1994-2023, routine childhood vaccinations have prevented approximately 508 million cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and 1,129,000 deaths, resulting in direct savings of \$540 billion and societal savings of \$2.7 trillion.

While vaccines don't always guarantee complete protection from all diseases, they do stimulate the body's immunity and lessen the severity of response and risk of spread. As people of faith, we are called to love our neighbors. Protecting ourselves and others from preventable diseases is a very tangible way to care for our neighbors and communities.

If you have ideas for future Learning Tree topics, let us know: cuc@centralunionchurch.org.

Our Christmas Offerings in Action



Offerings from our three Christmas Eve services were to be divided equally among our Community Ministry, our World Missions Ministry, and the Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ. These three groups all work to bring Christ's hope, peace, joy and love to our world.

Our World Missions Ministry has decided to donate their portion to "Wai Nau" Aloha for Palestine Water Project. We'll have the opportunity to hear from representatives of the group Wai Nau who will share with us their ongoing mutual aid project in Gaza, detailing the current conditions of people internally displaced by the Zionist occupation. We'll have the chance to hear directly from

people on the ground in Gaza about how our offerings will be used and how we can offer support to Gazans.

This project aligns with recent resolutions from our wider church: "A Call to Education and Action Regarding the Crisis in Gaza" (affirmed by the 2024 'Aha Pae'āina of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ) and "Declaration for an End to Genocide in Palestine" (affirmed by the 2025 General Synod of the United Church of Christ). **Please join us for a Learning Tree presentation on February 22 at 10 AM in the Women's Building** to bear witness not only to the suffering of our neighbors, but also to resistance and solidarity in the face of brutality, and to see our offerings in action.



Photo via Wai Nau

You're Invited!

It's time to Dazzle with Central Union Preschool (CUPS)! Tickets are on sale for the 21st anniversary of Dazzle, a fundraiser gala on Friday, April 10, 2026, to support CUPS. This year's theme, **"Together We Can,"** reflects our belief in the power of unity and shared purpose. As the saying reminds us, *"Alone we can do so little; together, we can do so much."*

There are many meaningful ways that you or your company can help support Dazzle—by purchasing individual tickets, sponsoring a table, contributing to CUPS faculty, and donating items and experiences to the online and live auctions!

All funds raised support the Preschool's 5 Es:

- ♦ **Educational Opportunities**

Supporting faculty development

- ♦ **Environments**

Enhancing the campus

- ♦ **Endowment**

Investing in CUPS' long-term stability and future

- ♦ **Events**

Enriching community experiences

- ♦ **Economic Diversity**

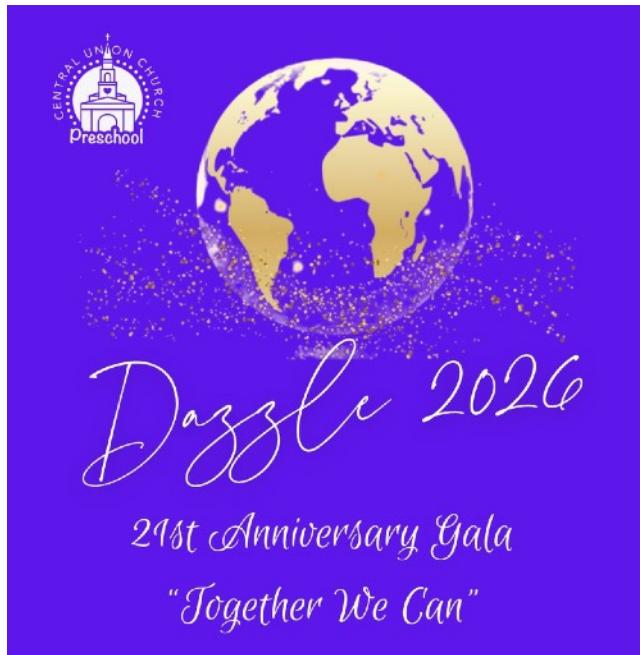
Sustaining our tuition assistance program which makes it possible for all keiki to attend CUPS

Enjoy extraordinary culinary tastings from local renown chefs, silent and live auctions (hosted by master auctioneer Mr. Eric Schiff), live entertainment with emcee Ms. Kelly Simek of KHON2's Living808, and camaraderie at the Alohilani Resort in Waikiki. It's sure to be a memorable evening.

Save by purchasing tickets at the pre-sale price (\$275) by February 15!

Every gift, in any form, is **100% tax-deductible**. For additional ways to get involved, please contact Alana Anderson at (917) 623-5913, via email at alana@centralunionpreschool.org, or visit the Dazzle website (bit.ly/dazzle2026) where you may purchase a table or individual tickets, sponsor a teacher, or contribute to the auctions.

MORE INFO & TICKETS: bit.ly/dazzle2026



Friday, April 10, 2026

5 PM: Dazzletini VIP Pre-Party

6 PM: Dazzle

Alohilani Resort

Alohilani Ballroom, 5th Floor

2490 Kalakaua Avenue

Honolulu, HI 96815



LOOKING AHEAD

Preaching

January – February 8: Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray
“Beacons of Grace: Lighting the Way Together”
January: Melissa Thach @ Central Union Windward

January observances

* 1/17: This January 17 marks 133 years since the **illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom**. The Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ (HCUCC) Reconciliation Working Group urges churches to remember the overthrow and Queen Lili'uokalani, and the apologies of the United Church of Christ for its complicity in the overthrow and the apology of the HCUCC for the complicity of some of its predecessors. In the spirit of reconciliation, may we recommit to the promises made in the apologies to join together in addressing past and ongoing injustices affecting the Native Hawaiian people.

* 1/18 worship: **Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday & Celebration of 50+ Year Members**

* 1/25: **Kalaupapa Sunday (HCUCC)**

We remember the forced isolation of an estimated 8,000 individuals due to government policies regarding leprosy. We honor their lives and all they overcame. January is Kalaupapa Month in Hawai'i.

January 18: Service of Healing and Prayer

5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel

February is Black History Month

February 1: Jazz Vespers “Love That Transforms”

February 6-7: Youth parking fundraiser

February 15: Service of Healing and Prayer

February 18: Ash Wednesday • Lent begins

February 22: Learning Tree - Wai Nau

Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of Robert Wiemer who died on December 14, 2025. Services are scheduled for Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 2:30 PM in the Sanctuary. Visitation begins at 2 PM.



Baptisms ~

Cruz Eikenberg was baptized into the universal church, and the body of Christ, on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

JAZZ VESPERS
A SERVICE OF MUSIC, POETRY, SCRIPTURE, AND PRAYER FOR THE SOUL.
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026 • 5:30 PM
Central Union Church • Atherton Memorial Courtyard

LOVE THAT TRANSFORMS

MESSY CHURCH
Wednesday, February 11, 2026 • 5-7 PM
Central Union Church Parish Hall

THEME: LOVE

RSVP: bit.ly/messy21126

Looking for a place where faith meets fun and creativity knows no bounds? Join us at the next Messy Church! From keiki to kūpuna, Messy Church is a space for everyone to explore God's love in engaging and hands-on ways. From arts and crafts to story time, music, and food, there's something for everyone. No matter who you are, no matter how old you are or where you are on your journey of life and faith, you're welcome to come, share, and grow with us at Central Union's Messy Church! February's theme is LOVE. Dinner will be served so please help us by [RSVPing](#)!

