

THE SPIRE



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

February 2026
Vol. 96 - No. 2



Pastor's Page: Ministry Is the Point

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray
Senior Minister

Dear Central Union 'ohana,

As a Minister, I've been reflecting on the word **ministry**. We use it often, sometimes so much that we forget what we mean by it. In our church, we add to the confusion by calling our committees and programs "ministries" – like Community Ministry, Welcome and Engagement Ministry, and Music Ministry. These groups are important; they help organize our life together and support the work we feel called to do in this moment. But sometimes, we confuse ministries (the noun) with ministry (the verb).

When I talk about ministry, I mean **the work we do together as God's people**. Ministry is how we live out our faith in real time – showing up for one another, listening for God's Spirit, and responding with compassion, justice, love, and hope. Frederick Buechner said our calling is found "*where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet*." That is ministry: active, lived, and embodied.

Our committees and programs – our "ministries" – give structure to our work, but they are not ministry themselves. They are the scaffolding, the framework, for the real work of the people of God. Ministry happens in conversations after worship, when you check in on someone missing from church, when you sit next to someone who is grieving, when you speak up for someone who has been overlooked, when you feed the hungry or when you welcome a stranger as if they belong. Committees can coordinate ministry, but they cannot replace it.

I often say: the church is not the building, campus, office, or organizational chart. Those things help us, but they are not who we are. The church is the whole people of God – gathered, growing, and sent. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson describes the church as "*a community of disciples called to continue the mission of Jesus in the power of the Spirit*." This means the people of God listening for God's call and responding with courage and with compassion. This distinction matters. The work of God's people – our work – is ministry. The programs and committees are how we organize that work and how that work gets done.

Programs can be helpful, creative, and inspiring, but they are not the point. Ministry is the point.

Programs can run without much faith or heart; ministry requires faith and heart every time.

Programs are measured by numbers; ministry is measured by impact and transformation.

Programs can be scheduled; ministry often interrupts us.

Programs can begin and change and end; ministry is ongoing.

When we confuse the two, we risk shrinking our imagination and believing the church exists just to maintain itself or a program or even a committee, rather than to join God's ongoing work of healing and renewal in the world.

Ministry is how we live out our faith together: **worship and music** that open us to God, **faith formation** that deepens our roots, **hospitality** that says "You belong here," **service** that meets real needs, and **justice** that refuses to settle for the world as it is. It is the everyday, holy work of being the Body of Christ here in our community and neighborhood.

There's a word we use in church circles – *ecclesiology* – which means the theology of the nature of the Christian church. In other words, it's the ongoing question of who we are as a church and what our purpose is. This isn't something we think about once and forget; it's something we revisit in every season of our life together. Each new moment, with its unique gifts and challenges, invites us to reflect on what it means to be the church here and now. This reflection is important because it keeps our community alive, responsive, and open to the movement of the Spirit, helping us discern how best to serve and grow together.

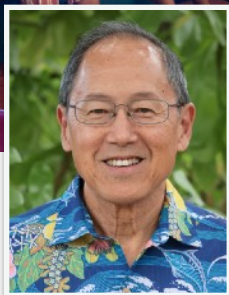
My hope is that we keep discerning together what it means to be church here in Honolulu, now – not because we're uncertain, but because we're alive and the needs of our world are always changing. The Spirit is still moving. Ministry is something we discover and discern as we go.

With profound gratitude for the ministry we share, together,

Pastor Rushan



Council Chair's Report: January 2026



Aloha, Congregation,

The Church Council is pleased to share this update on our ongoing efforts to enhance our church spaces for all ages. We invite input from all members—including youth, parents, and longtime congregants—on the interior design of the new Youth Room in Rooms 201/202. This proven space has hosted vibrant youth groups in the past and will foster engagement, friendships, and spiritual growth for our current youth in grades 6-12.

Updates on Preschool Expansion & Youth Group Room Relocation

We are expanding our Preschool Ministry with a new toddler classroom on the ground level of the Parish Hall (formerly the Youth Room). This meets the strong community need for quality childcare, especially for working families with 2- and 3-year-olds, while offering an entry point for Christian formation that can extend through the teen years.

Connected to this, **we are relocating our Youth Ministry to the dedicated space in Rooms 201/202.** This proven location has served youth well historically, even with groups larger than our current one, and provides an opportunity to refresh it for today's needs. We welcome ideas from anyone in the congregation to ensure it is versatile, welcoming, and supportive of friendships, emotional development, and spiritual growth. Please look out for more information to join our upcoming design workshop or email suggestions to council-chair@centralunionchurch.org and I will see that the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee Chair Rik Papa receives it.

These changes build on our Real Estate Committee's efforts, formed in spring 2023 after congregational approval on March 5, 2023, to enhance ministry, community service, and financial sustainability through better use of our facilities. The

Church Council approved \$93,207 in funding on July 3, 2025, for the toddler expansion and unanimously reaffirmed the plan, including commitment to a strong youth space, on January 21, 2026. An informal working group—including Buildings and Grounds members and preschool parents with general contractor experience—collaborated with the Preschool Director to assess demand, feasibility, and her capacity to manage the expansion. We confirmed high demand in our area, where Hawai'i lacks publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs, and verified that the space meets all licensing and certification requirements, drawing on its prior history as a classroom.

Upgrades are underway, with completion expected by summer 2026, and the expansion projected to add about \$95,000 in net annual revenue to support our long-term mission.

Benefits for Our Community:

- **Embracing All (Aloha—love and welcome):** We include families from toddlers to teens, building a unified faith community.
- **Transformation (Loli'ana—change and adaptation):** Repurposing spaces meets evolving needs and involves youth in shaping their area.
- **Care (Mālama—nurturing and stewardship):** This upholds our preschool legacy, ensures age-appropriate safety, and boosts family involvement in worship and ministries.

By stewarding our resources this way, we embody Christ's love while sustaining Central Union Church for generations. We appreciate your support and welcome any questions to foster open dialogue. Please send your email to council-chair@centralunionchurch.org.

David Yee
Church Council Chair

Mahalo from the Youth

Melissa Thach, *Youth Director*

On behalf of the Central Union Youth & Families, I'd like to say Mahalo Nui Loa to all those who volunteered with us for the annual Punahou Parking fundraiser over the first weekend of February. Friday was a gorgeous and very busy day (I logged 40k steps) and Saturday, though soggy, was full of opportunities for people to connect and spend time under the tents. Whether you brought lunch, took money, or directed cars, THANK YOU! We raised almost \$20k, half of which is being donated to maintenance of The Great Lawn, and the other half will go toward Youth activities and give us the opportunity to donate to community organizations doing good work. From all of us, thank you for your support!



Honoring 50+ Year Members



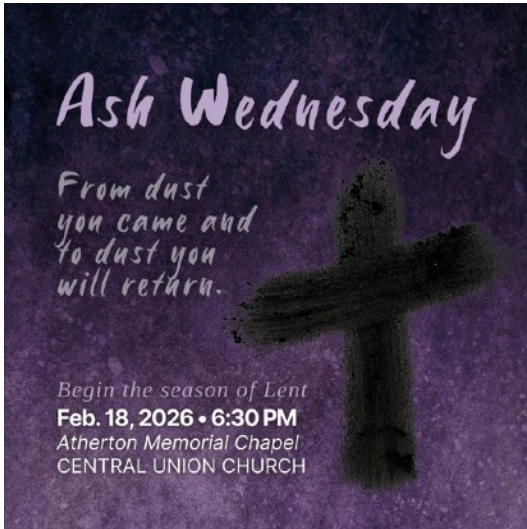
On January 18, we paused to honor a remarkable gift in our life together – the presence of those who have been part of our church family for 50 years or more. There are 153 of them, still alive today, that joined in 1975 or prior. Our longest, living member joined in 1942. Fifty years of worship and wonder. Fifty years of singing and serving. Fifty years of showing up, even when the seas were rough and the winds were strong.

These members have built their lives – and helped build this church – on the steady rock of faith. Their commitment has carried us through seasons of change, moments of uncertainty, and chapters of renewal. They have taught us, not through grand speeches,

but through the quiet, persistent witness of lives rooted in Christ. They remind us that faith is not a sprint but a lifelong journey. That resilience is learned over time. That hope grows deeper when shared across generations. And that the church is strongest when its foundation is shaped by those who have weathered storms and still choose love, still choose community, still choose grace.

To our 50-year members: you are our living beacons. You show us what it means to be anchored and awake – anchored in God's steadfast love, awake to the Spirit's movement in every season. We give thanks for your stories, your wisdom, your laughter, your prayers, and the way your faith continues to form us all.

Prepare for the Sacred Season of Lent



Every year, we join Christians around the world in marking **Ash Wednesday** – not as a day of shame, but as a day of truth-telling and hope. The ashes we receive often come from burning the palms from the past year's Palm Sunday as a beautiful reminder that our celebrations and our failures, our highs and our lows, all become part of the journey God uses to shape us. The ashes remind us of something honest: we are human. We are finite. We are dust. And yet we are beloved. Formed by God, held by God, and invited into transformation.

In the United Church of Christ, Ash Wednesday isn't about fear of judgment. It's about opening our hearts. It's about naming the places where we've fallen short, both personally and collectively, and trusting that God's grace is already at work, healing and renewing. We enter Lent not to earn God's love, but to remember we already have it. The ashes mark the beginning of a journey: a

journey toward justice, compassion, and deeper alignment with the way of Jesus. On Ash Wednesday, we wear ashes not as a burden, but as a blessing. A reminder that God meets us in our humanity and calls us into new life. **Ash Wednesday** begins the season of Lent which are the forty days of preparation before Holy Week and Easter. Start the Lenten season with us at our Ash Wednesday service on **February 18 at 6:30 PM in Atherton Memorial Chapel** and receive ashes which remind us that God's love is stronger than sin and death, and that in Christ, God stays in communion with us.

LENTEN BOOK STUDY:

Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again

This Lent, step into a thoughtful, engaging, and hope-filled journey through Scripture as we explore Rachel Held Evans' beloved book *Inspired*. In this four-week study led by Pastor Rushan, we'll look at how the stories of the Bible continue to shape, challenge, and encourage us today—especially as we walk through a season meant for reflection, renewal, and deeper faith. Together, we'll consider how ancient narratives speak into our modern questions, doubts, joys, fears, and experiences. Evans' writing offers both comfort and a gentle push toward curiosity, helping us rediscover the Bible not as a book to be mastered, but as a living, breathing source of wisdom that invites us into conversation with God.

Over our four weeks together, we'll...

- ❖ explore fresh and transformative ways of engaging Scripture,
- ❖ share meaningful conversations in community,
- ❖ deepen our spiritual practices during Lent, and
- ❖ support one another as we reflect on where God is moving in our lives.

Whether you've read the Bible your whole life or you're just beginning to approach it with new eyes, this group offers a welcoming space for honesty, exploration, and growth. All are invited – bring your questions, your stories, and your openness to discovery. Books will be available for purchase (\$10) from Pastor Rushan or through the Church Office. There are **Thursday morning (10:30 AM – 12 PM on February 19, 26; March 12, 19)** and **Tuesday evening (6–7:30 PM on February 24; March 3, 10, 17)** options available each week. Come when you can!

2026 LENTEN BOOK STUDY

February 19, 26; March 12, 19
THURSDAYS
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

February 24; March 3, 10, 17
TUESDAYS
6:00 - 7:30 PM

Rewick Board Room
CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

SIGN UP ONLINE!

bit.ly/lent2026study

FAITH FORMATION OPPORTUNITY

Learn Where Our Offerings Will Go



LEARNING TREE



"Wai Nau" Aloha for Palestine Water Project

Sponsored by CUC World Missions Ministry

Representatives from the group "Wai Nau" will share their ongoing mutual aid project in Gaza, detailing the current conditions of people internally displaced by the Zionist occupation. There will be an opportunity to hear directly from people on the ground in Gaza and learn how we can offer support to Gazans. CUC World Missions Ministry has chosen Wai Nau as the recipient of their portion of the 2025 Christmas offering.

**SUNDAY
FEB 22
10-11 AM**

Women's Building
CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

Please join our World Mission Ministry and wider community on **Sunday, February 22**, for a special **Learning Tree presentation at 10 AM in the Women's Building**. Representatives from the group "**Wai Nau**" will share their ongoing mutual aid project in Gaza, detailing the current conditions of people internally displaced by the Zionist occupation. We will get to hear directly from people on the ground in Gaza and learn how we can offer support to Gazans through this grassroots effort led in part by O'ahu residents.

CUC World Mission Ministry has chosen Wai Nau as the recipient of their portion of the 2025 Christmas offering—\$3,243.50. This project aligns with the Ministry's mission to send money/goods/missionaries throughout the world to spread Christ's Gospel; to educate; to create partnerships by acts of outreach nurtured with prayers, concerns, and encouragement. It also is a faithful response to 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). This is an opportunity to act on these resolutions, live out our faith, and learn how our offerings will be used to help our neighbors. Your mere attendance is a sign of solidarity in the willingness to bear witness to not only the suffering of our neighbors, but also their resistance; and to support and encourage life-affirming work.



Update on Cheryl & Rogerio

In November 2025, we received the news that our dear friend and drummer in our 11 AM service, Rogerio Araujo, the beloved husband of Cheryl Bartlett who sings alongside him in our worship band, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). He had been held at the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu up until this month, February 2026. Cheryl shares that after three months of incarceration, Rogerio is functional, but sad, angry, and traumatized.

In a recent online statement, Cheryl shared the following update: "Aloha Friends. Last night 2/5/2026, ICE, under the guidance of the current administration, removed my husband Rogerio from our much-loved Hawai'i home and sent him on a guarded journey to Brazil. There are no words.... I do want to thank all of the friends and loving community members who heard our story and shared support. Please continue to hear stories, share yours, and advocate for compassion, forgiveness, and the sanctity of marriage and family. I also want to thank my sweet Rogerio for caring for me and our family for so many years. Brave man. I will be leaving for Brazil in the next few days to be with my husband. He, and we, will need some time to heal. Your love, support, and prayers are truly appreciated." If you would like to help ease their financial burdens in this difficult transition, you are invited to donate through their online GoFundMe campaign set up by their friend: gofund.me/2e0c86d95



On Sunday, February 8, following the 11 AM worship service, members gathered forming a circle around Cheryl, wrapping her in love and prayers before her journey to Brazil. This was her last Sunday at Central Union for a while, but she intends to return to Hawai'i. Please keep Rogerio, Cheryl, and all families affected by ICE in your prayers.

Dare to Dazzle!

Support Central Union Preschool while enjoying the 21st annual Dazzle fundraiser gala!






















All funds raised support the Preschool's 5 E's:

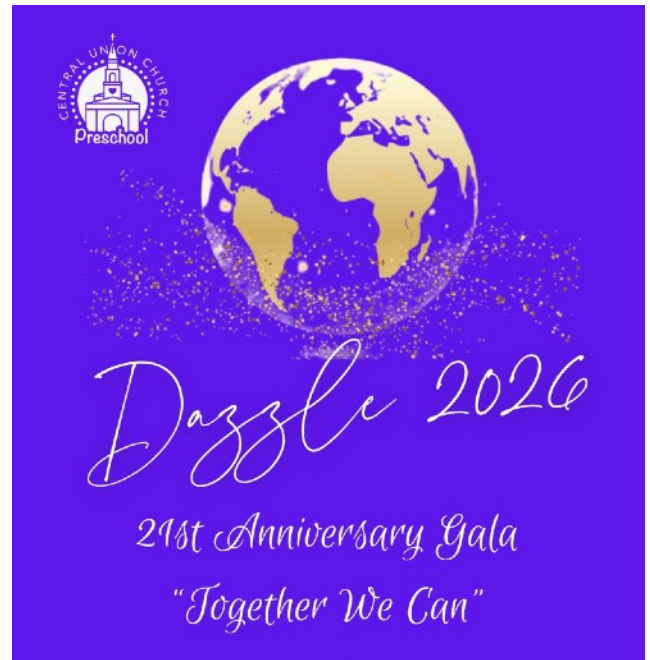
- ✦ **Educational Opportunities**
Supporting faculty development
- ✦ **Environments**
Enhancing the campus
- ✦ **Endowment**
Investing in CUPS' long-term stability and future
- ✦ **Events**
Enriching community experiences
- ✦ **Economic Diversity**
Sustaining our tuition assistance program which makes it possible for all keiki to attend CUPS

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

MORE INFO & TICKETS: bit.ly/dazzle2026

*Dazzle Eats....
Mahalo to Our 22 Chefs*

 MW RESTAURANT	 BEYOND PASTRY STUDIO	 EL CIELO BY MASA GUSHIKEN
 'ALOHI LANI RESORT WAIKIKI BEACH	 FEAST WAIKIKI BEACH	 TIKI'S
 THIS LIL PIGGY WAIKIKI BEACH	 ALOHA CULINARY GROUP	 RESTAURANT XO
 Koko Head WAIKIKI	 Roy's WAIKIKI	 pai HONOLULU
 KH Kapa Hale	 MUD HEN WATER WAI'ALEALE	 miro
 C4 TABLE WAIKIKI	 BRICK FIRE TAVERN	 THE PIG & THE LADY
 100 SAILS RESTAURANT & BAR	 Opfers Hawaii	 KOTI-SI



Friday, April 10, 2026

5 PM: Dazzletini VIP Pre-Party

6 PM: Dazzle

Alohilani Resort

Alohilani Ballroom, 5th Floor

2490 Kalākaua Avenue

Honolulu, HI 96815



LOOKING AHEAD

February is Black History Month

Central Union is honoring Black History Month through music in our Sunday worship services throughout February. The 9 AM service in Honolulu and the 10 AM service at Windward will include musical selections honoring the legacy, challenges, and rich cultural history of Black and African Americans and their significant contributions expressed through the musical arts. *Note: Prior to the 9 AM service each Sunday is the Gift of Music which begins at 8:45.*

February 11: Messy Church 5-7 PM Parish Hall

February 15: NO Service of Healing and Prayer as previously scheduled. Next one: March 15

February 18: Ash Wednesday Service 6:30 PM
Atherton Memorial Chapel (AMC)

Lenten Book Study (Thursdays / Tuesdays)
February 19, 26; March 12, 19 | 10:30 AM – 12 PM
February 24; March 3, 10, 17 | 6–7:30 PM

Lenten Sermon Series: “Tell Me Something Good”
February 22 – March 22 | 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM

February 22: Learning Tree 10 AM – “Wai Nau”
Aloha Water Project community presentation

March 1: Jazz Vespers 5:30 PM AMC

March 8: American Guild of Organists Concert
2 PM Sanctuary – featuring *Dr. Joy-Leilani Garbutt*

March 29: Palm Sunday 10 AM Service + Potluck

April 2: Maundy Thursday 5:30 PM Parish Hall
Remembering Jesus’ final meal with his disciples

April 3: Good Friday 7:00 PM Sanctuary
Remembering Jesus’ crucifixion and death

April 5: Easter Sunday | 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM
8:45 AM Gift of Music by The Honolulu Brass

Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of **Linda Fox** who died on January 18, 2026; and **Nick Nagel** who died on January 18, 2026. The memorial service for Nick Nagel will be held on Sunday, February 15, at 3:30 PM in Atherton Memorial Chapel with a reception to follow.

Baptism ~

Frank Liang was baptized into the universal church and the body of Christ, on Sunday, January 25, 2026.



Easter Flowers

The Flower Committee will adorn our worship spaces with lilies for Easter! If you'd like to donate and dedicate a plant, please submit the form below with a check made payable to “CENTRAL UNION CHURCH” with “Easter flowers” in the memo line by **March 29** to be listed in the bulletins on Easter Sunday, April 5!

2026 Easter Flowers - \$10 each

Name (Donor): _____ Number of Plants: _____

☐ To the Glory of Easter!

To order online instead: bit.ly/cucflowers ^

☐ In honor of _____

☐ In loving memory of _____

