



# THE SPIRE

***Easter morning***

People gather for fellowship outside Atherton Memorial Chapel following 7:00 worship, the first service of the day.

**Central Union Church and Preschool**

**"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!"**

**April 2026**

**Vol. 96 - No. 4**



## The Holy Mystery of a Church Potluck



**Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray**  
*Senior Minister*

Friends,

As you read this, I'm still holding on to the joy of our Palm Sunday potluck.

As I walked through the Women's Building that morning, I was struck by the sheer beauty of not just the tables and the food, but the spirit behind it all. The laughter, the talking story, the keiki darting between tables, people making sure everyone had a plate, others offering seconds before you'd even finished your first helping. And as I stood there taking it all in, I thought: ***This is church.***

I'm especially grateful to the entire Welcome & Engagement Committee, and all the volunteers whose planning, organizing, decorating, and joyful presence made our Palm Sunday potluck such a beautiful success. Their aloha was woven into every table and every smile.



### Each Bringing What We Can

A potluck is one of the most ordinary miracles of Christian community. No one is expected to bring everything or feed everyone. Each person brings what they can – everything from a beloved family recipe, a store-bought tray, a dish that took all morning, or simply their presence and their appetite. And somehow, when it all comes together, it becomes a feast.

It reminds me of the story of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus didn't ask the crowd to produce a banquet. He simply invited them to share what they had. A child's small offering of five loaves and two fish became the seed of abundance. In the sharing, in the trusting, in the offering of what seemed too small, grace was multiplied.

This is still how God works today. This is still how the church becomes the church.



### A Hawai'i Potluck Is Its Own Kind of Gospel

And of course, a potluck in Hawai'i is its own special kind of blessing. Where else can you find kālua pig next to pancit, kimchi next to haupia, fried rice next to mac and cheese? Every dish carries a story. Every recipe carries a lineage. Every table becomes a map of the cultures, migrations, and histories that have shaped these islands (and actually, this nation). Our Palm Sunday potluck was a living parable of aloha. It was a reminder that our differences don't divide us; they enrich each of us and the community.





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### A Big-Tent Church for a Big-Hearted God

Central Union has always been a big-tent church. It is a community where we bring more than food. We bring our faith journeys, our traditions, our cultures, our languages, and our ways of seeing the world. We bring our joys and our griefs, our hopes and our uncertainties. And when all of this is gathered together, it becomes something beautiful. It becomes the body of Christ. This is why we can say with conviction and joy: **“No matter who you are and where you are on your journey of life and faith, you are welcome here.”**

Because the tent is big, the table is wide and the love of God is larger still. And because every Sunday we are reminded that **“Love Never Faleith.”**

fellowship, where grace is tasted and shared. Every potluck is a small echo of that holy table.

### Becoming Church Today

In a world hungry for belonging, meaning, and hope, the church is called to be a feast of extravagant welcome. Not perfect or fancy, but shared. A place where each person’s offering matters. A place where abundance grows in the giving. A place where we practice the radical hospitality of Jesus, one plate at a time.



### If Not the Cross, Then the Table

Food was central to Jesus’ ministry. He taught at tables. He healed at tables. He welcomed the outcast at tables. He revealed God’s abundance at tables. He broke bread and said, “Remember me.”

If the central symbol of Christianity had not become the cross, it almost certainly would have been the table – the place where strangers become neighbors, where fear gives way to

As I think back on our Palm Sunday potluck, I’m grateful not just for the food we shared, but for the reminder that God is still multiplying loaves and fishes among us. This is who we are. This is who we are becoming. This is what it means to be church together. These are the simple acts that renew and revitalize the church.

In gratitude for the holy ministry that we share together,

Pastor Rushan



# Council Chair's Report: April 2026



David Yee, Church Council Chair, [council-chair@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:council-chair@centralunionchurch.org)

I recently received an inquiry from a church member concerned about our church becoming too involved in

political activism and advocacy. He was also worried that it would jeopardize our IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

The [CU Weekly](#) (on March 26, 2026) included an article inviting the choir and congregation to

join in a rally in support of "NO DICTATORS (NO KINGS on the mainland) PEACE MARCH" for Saturday, March 28, 2026. This was the catalyst for his inquiry.



I would venture to say most of our church members believe that we should be nonpartisan. That is my belief but I'm not sure where you draw the line. This led me to what is often referred to as the Johnson Amendment, a federal legislation that regulates what tax-exempt organizations such as churches can do in the political arena. According to the IRS website, under terms of the 1954 legislation (named for its principal sponsor, then-Senator Lyndon Johnson), churches and other nonprofit organizations that are exempt from taxation "are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any **political campaign** on behalf of (or in opposition to) any **candidate for elective public office**," according to the [IRS website](#).

The church as an organization must remain **nonpartisan** regarding **political candidates**.

President Trump is not a candidate for elective public office as he is the sitting President of the United States and is not eligible due to term limits to run again for the office of President. As of the March 28th "NO DICTATORS" rally, President Trump was not an announced candidate for any elective public office so does the Johnson Amendment even apply?

Whether churches "cross the line" by supporting the anti-Trump "No Kings" movement is a subject of intense debate, involving legal interpretations of tax law, the First Amendment, and the theological role of the church.

## ➔ Arguments for No Kings Participation:

Many faith leaders believe it is a matter of faith to oppose authoritarianism and advocate for democracy, immigrant rights, and the marginalized. They view this as standing in solidarity with those fearing the administration's tactics. This is issue advocacy, not prohibited political campaign intervention.

## ➔ Arguments Against Participation:

Critics argue that such activism politicizes the church, violates the separation of church and state, and threatens the tax-exempt status of the church if it becomes too partisan, particularly if it targets a specific candidate for election. This is a prohibited political campaign intervention and not issue advocacy.

While the debate is unsettled, our Church Council needs to have a position.

So, I wonder if any churches have landed in trouble for violating the Johnson Amendment? For the subject matter experts and attorneys, please correct me if I'm wrong, but despite the controversy surrounding the Johnson Amendment, the Internal Revenue Service has not been especially active in enforcing it. Since 2008, the Alliance Defending Freedom has organized "Pulpit Freedom Sunday," encouraging pastors to give explicitly political sermons in defiance of the law.

The IRS, however, has rarely moved to take away a church's tax exemption. According to the alliance, as reported by the Washington Post, only one of more than 2,000 Christian clergy deliberately challenging the law since 2008 has been audited, and none has been punished.

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At our next Church Council meeting on April 23, 2026, we will be asking ourselves where CUC should draw the line. I invite anyone interested to attend at 5:00 PM in the Rewick Board Room.

The starting point for Council discussion:  
**As a church...**

- ✓ **We do not support or oppose a particular political party (i.e. Republican vs Democrat).**
- ✓ **We do not support or oppose any candidate for elective public office.**

- ✓ **We do support or oppose, based upon CUC's beliefs and mission, specific public policy issues or administrative actions. We will be issue-based rather than person-based.**
- ✓ **We may speak out on social, moral, or ethical issues, even if those issues are central to a political campaign.**
- ✓ **We will frame our support or opposition as a matter of faith and directed to the congregation.**

## A Note of Thanks to the Flower Committee



As we reflect on our journey through Lent and celebrate the joy of Easter, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Flower Committee for their beautiful and meaningful work on the Altarscape in the Sanctuary. Watching the arrangement grow and develop throughout the Lenten season was a gift to our congregation—a visual reminder of the movement from reflection and longing to renewal and resurrection.

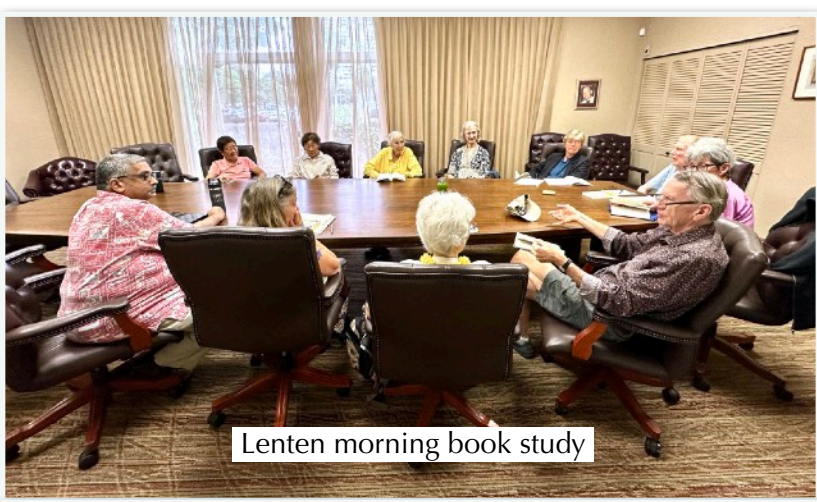
It is a blessing when members of our church grasp the shared vision of our worship life and offer their creativity and talents in service to it. Through your dedication and artistry, you helped deepen our worship and supported all of us as we grew in faith together. Mahalo nui loa for the care, prayer, and love you poured into this sacred work.



### ***Say it with flowers!***

**Got a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion coming up? Commemorate it with flowers at a Sunday worship service!**

Our Flower Committee creates floral arrangements for our worship spaces each week. You can give flowers in honor of someone with a printed dedication in the worship bulletin. Email: [flowers@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:flowers@centralunionchurch.org)



Lenten morning book study



Palm Sunday



Maundy Thursday



Good Friday



Easter Sunday

# Keiki Corner

**Cayanna Herrera**, *Director of Children's Ministries*

What's new in Children's Ministry? During Lent, our Godly Play Sunday school classes explored The Faces of Easter, the story of Jesus from his birth through his death and resurrection. Each week was like a continued story and by Easter Sunday we were excited to meet Jesus in a new way after his resurrection. In the coming weeks of Eastertide, our story will continue with the building story of Knowing Jesus in a New Way, from his resurrection to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost!

Our annual **Easter Eggstravaganza** family egg hunt kicked off with children scrambling for eggs with smiles, giggles, and full-on belly laughs! This year our donation drive is focused close to home with funds going to flood relief efforts here in Hawai'i through the [Lāhui Foundation](#). We will continue fundraising through Eastertide and Pentecost. So far, our donations are in excess of \$2,000!

➔ **To contribute to our Lenten and Easter flood relief project, go to [bit.ly/give2cuc](https://bit.ly/give2cuc) and select "Children Ministry - Lenten/Easter Project" in the dropdown menu. Or send a check to the church with "CM Easter project" in the memo line.**

Lastly, CUC's spring **Godly Play storyteller training series** is coming up soon. Storytelling isn't just for Children's Ministry! Did you know Godly Play has been used extensively in clinical settings including hospitals, hospice, and addiction recovery programs? Godly Play is also growing in other venues such as memory care and adult daycare programs and longterm care homes. There is even a growing effort to introduce Godly Play in correctional facilities and chaplain services for both active duty military personnel and VA programs. If you have a passion for any of these ministries and would like to learn how to incorporate Godly Play, please contact [cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org) to learn more!



Looking for a fun and engaging way to explore faith? **Come to Messy Church!** It's a fantastic opportunity for keiki to kūpuna to come together, get creative, and learn about God in a relaxed and informal setting. Messy Church is a unique way to experience church through creativity, hospitality, and celebration. April's Messy Church gathering will be on Earth Day and our theme is **Green & Growing!** Dinner will be served so please help us by [RSVPing!](#)



## LOOKING AHEAD

### April 10: Dazzle - CUPS fundraiser

5 PM: Dazzletini VIP Pre-Party

6 PM: Dazzle

Alohilani Resort in Waikiki

INFO & TICKETS: [bit.ly/dazzle2026](https://bit.ly/dazzle2026)



### Dazzle online auction OPEN

[dazzleauction26.ggo.bid](https://dazzleauction26.ggo.bid)

There are a variety of items to bid on. Get in your winning bid by **Tuesday, April 14 at 5 PM!**

### April 12: Holy Humor Sunday

### April 19: Service of Healing & Prayer @ 5:30 PM

### April 22: Messy Church "Green & Growing!"

5-7 PM in the Parish Hall - RSVP [bit.ly/messy42226](https://bit.ly/messy42226)

### April 23: Church Council Meeting @ 5 PM

### April 26: Learning Tree @ 10 AM w/ Pastor Rushan

### April 28: BYU Men's Chorus - In Concert

7 PM - Sanctuary - [GET TICKETS ONLINE](#)

### May 3: Jazz Vespers @ 5:30 PM

### Community Vigil for Peace

(to be rescheduled from March 14)

## SERMON SERIES

April 19, 2026

*Godspell*

The Gospel in Community

April 26, 2026

*Children of Eden*

Creation, Freedom, and Forgiveness

May 3, 2026

*Wicked*

Grace, Friendship, and the Cost of Discipleship

May 10, 2026

*The Prince of Egypt*

Deliverance and Divine Calling

May 17, 2026

*Pippin*

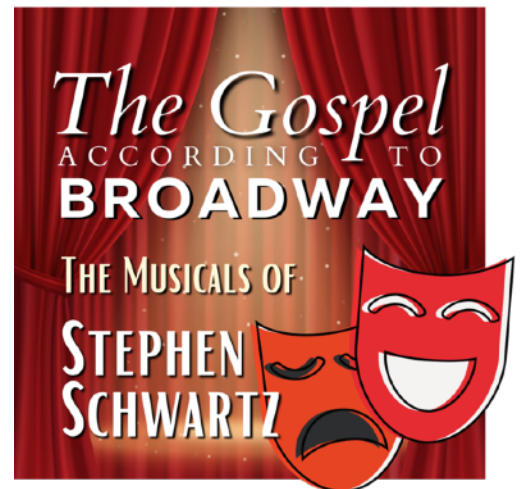
The Search for Meaning

## When Faith Meets the Stage

This spring we invite you to experience the good news in a fresh way through **The Gospel According to Broadway: The Musicals of Stephen Schwartz**. Drawing on beloved Broadway shows, this series explores how faith, grace, justice, and purpose are revealed through modern storytelling and song.

Rooted in the United Church of Christ's belief that God is Still Speaking, this series echoes Pastor John Robinson's reminder to the Pilgrims that "the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth from his holy Word." We listen for God's voice not only in Scripture, but also in the culture and stories that surround us today.

Join us as we discover how God continues to speak—on the stage, in community, and in our lives.



## LEARNING TREE

SUNDAY  
APR 26  
10-11 AM

Women's Building  
CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

CENTRAL UNION'S  
STRATEGIC PLAN:  
**Reclaiming Our  
Sacred Why**

Discover how our four pillars—**Worship & Music, Faith Formation & Growth, Radical Hospitality, and Living Out Faith**—are shaping the next chapter of our life together.

**Sunday, April 26 | 10 AM | Women's Building**  
*You're invited to a special Learning Tree gathering!*  
Join Pastor Rushan for an engaging conversation about **Central Union's Strategic Plan: Reclaiming Our Sacred Why**. We'll explore our Spirit-led vision for a future where we "worship deeply, grow faithfully, welcome radically, and live boldly". You'll have the chance to ask questions, share reflections, and learn how each of us plays a part in this journey. All are welcome. Bring your curiosity, your hopes, and your heart for the church we are becoming.