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THE SPIRE

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

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The Holy Rebellion of Gratitude

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray,
Senior Minister

Dear Central Union ‘ohana,

November is that time of year when we naturally pause to give thanks. But let’s be honest, it can be tough to feel thankful or hopeful right now. So many of us are exhausted. Between conflicts around the world and our own quiet struggles at home, things can feel incredibly heavy. Yet, as a church, we are called to point to the hope God promises, even when it’s hard.

Last month, I went to the Converging 2026 conference in Louisville, Kentucky. It was the reset my soul needed. One of the highlights was hearing the author Cole Arthur Riley speak. In her beautiful book, *This Here Flesh*, she talks about how practicing wonder is actually a powerful way to fight off despair. She writes, “Wonder requires a person not to forget themselves but to feel themselves so acutely that their connectedness to every created thing comes into focus.”

That really stuck with me. Wonder isn’t about just putting on a happy face or ignoring the bad stuff. It’s about paying close attention to where God’s Spirit is moving. When we practice wonder, we make room for joy. And as Riley reminds us, joy doesn’t erase our pain, it just holds it so it doesn’t completely consume us. That’s how we keep going while we wait for justice and peace.

The Apostle Paul knew exactly what this felt like. He wrote to a community going through incredibly hard times, and instead of telling them to just ignore their reality, he offered this prayer: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). A thankful heart simply makes room for the Spirit to do that kind of work in us.

So friends, let’s make this season of giving thanks more than just another holiday on the calendar. Let it be the attitude we carry into the days and weeks ahead as we journey into Advent. This year, our Advent series is entitled, **Until the Dawn: Actions for the Work of Advent**. Every year at Advent, we light candles and talk about hope. We wait for the good news of Christ’s birth. But we also know the world isn’t fixed yet. That tension, between what God promises and the messy reality we live in, keeps us longing for a better day. We are walking through the metaphorical night. It can feel scary when the path isn’t clear, but the night also brings gifts: rest, dreams, and a quiet intimacy with God.

Just like angels show up in the night calling us to be brave, we have work to do, too. As surely as the sun rises, God’s love is new every single morning. So, as we look toward the horizon, let’s put our prayers into action. Let’s speak up, take courage, build each other up, and deliberately choose joy. Until the dawn breaks and the whole world knows true peace, let’s keep moving, singing, and rejoicing, trusting that God is right there in the work with us.

In gratitude for the ministry we share,

Pastor Rushan

Prayer

God of the quiet night and the coming dawn,

I bring my whole self to you in this moment - my gratitude for the beauty in my life, and my exhaustion from the weight of the world. When the divisions around me feel too loud and the waiting feels too long, quiet my mind and settle my breathing.

Help me not to go numb. Instead, awaken my sense of wonder. Let me feel my connection to you and to all created things so acutely that despair loses its grip on my spirit.

Teach me the rhythm of resilient joy. Give me the grace to hold my sorrows and my struggles without letting them consume me, trusting that you hold them with me.

As I sit in this season of waiting, remind me that the night is not just a place of fear, but a place of rest, dreaming, and deep intimacy with you. Prepare my heart in the shadows so that I am ready for the light.

When the sun rises, give me the courage to do the work that is mine to do: to speak up, to build up, and to choose joy. Until the dawn breaks, keep me anchored in hope. Amen.



The Gift of Showing Up

Rev. Irene Willis Hassan,
Associate Minister

Culturally, we're entering a season that's often accompanied by increased generosity and gratitude. With that in mind, I've been thinking about one of the greatest gifts we can offer one another: our time and attention.

Time and attention is also the greatest gift you could offer CUC! One of the most consistent findings in church growth research is that personal invitations and relationships are the most effective way people discover and become connected to a church. Programs, worship services, and community outreach all have important roles to play, but people often find their way into a congregation because someone personally invites them, takes an interest in their lives, and helps them feel that they belong.

That's encouraging news for Central Union because we already have so much to offer! From Messy Church and Jazz Vespers to our many opportunities for worship, service, and fellowship, there are wonderful ways for people to experience God's love here. But the real gift of these ministries isn't simply what happens during the events themselves. It's what happens between people: the conversation that becomes a friendship, the familiar face that makes someone feel at home, or the invitation that helps someone discover a community they didn't know they needed.

As Pastor Rushan reminds us in his reflection this month, gratitude and hope aren't simply feelings we wait to experience. They're things we can practice through the choices we make. And I think one of the most meaningful ways we can put our gratitude into action is by **intentionally making time for one another.**

I know how full our calendars can become. Between work, family, responsibilities, and everything else competing for our attention, it's easy to think of church gatherings as something we'll attend if we happen to have the time. But what if we began making that time? What if we treated a church dinner, a fellowship event, or an opportunity to connect with someone new as something worth prioritizing, not out of obligation, but because we recognize the value of being together?

Our presence matters more than we sometimes realize. When we show up, we aren't simply attending an event. We're helping create the welcoming, joyful community we hope others will discover. And when we invite a friend, introduce ourselves to someone unfamiliar, or take time to hear another person's story, we participate in the kind of love Jesus calls us to share.

This is also an invitation to spend some time with me! I'm still getting to know the people and stories that make Central Union who it is, and I'd love to share a cup of coffee, hear what excites you about our church, or simply enjoy a conversation. I hope we'll all extend that same curiosity and generosity to one another, especially to those we haven't yet had the opportunity to know.

As we look toward Advent and the possibilities ahead, I'm excited about the new ministries and creative opportunities that may emerge from our conversations about Central Union's sacred *why*. But I also believe that some of the most important work of the church is already within our reach. We don't necessarily need another program to help someone experience God's love. Sometimes we simply need to make room for another person in our lives.

Jesus tells his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). That love takes intention, and sometimes it begins with something as ordinary as deciding to show up.

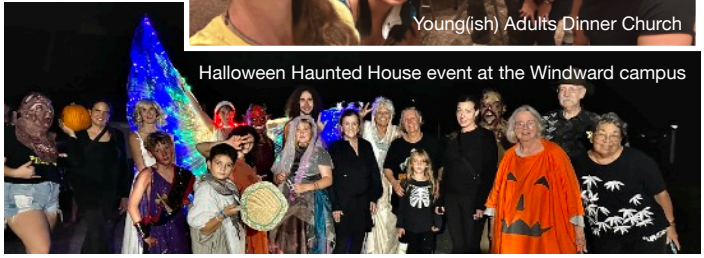
My hope this season is that we will continue growing in the depth of our relationships, our generosity toward one another, and our willingness to make space for new people. What a wonderful way to give thanks for this church: by investing ourselves in the community God is building among us.

With aloha,

Pastor Irene



Young(ish) Adults Dinner Church



Halloween Haunted House event at the Windward campus

Fall at CUPS

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



Back-to-School Picnic

The new PTO committee members have been hard at work, planning each holiday and cultural-inspired event to the fullest! With the theme of "Disney," the PTO organized an evening of games, activities, food, and camaraderie on September 18 to celebrate the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

While parents and siblings enjoyed sitting back and relaxing amongst familiar faces and new friends, our keiki visited a variety of stations. At the lei making station, colorful paper flowers were transformed into beautiful and vibrant lei to wear. The backpack tag station allowed our keiki to personalize tags with alphabet letters and Disney stickers. Tattoos were abundant at the tattoo station with our kiddos showing off arms full of cute designs and characters. There was even a custom photo backdrop for the perfect family picture! And for those who enjoy the outdoors, activities included steppingstones and blowing ginormous bubbles by The Bubble Guy!





Many thanks to the Back-to-School Picnic Committee who worked hard on creating a memorable evening for all!



Our CUPS Keiki in the Pumpkin Patch!

With more than 200 pumpkins spread throughout Atherton Courtyard and autumn decorations on the stage, our PTO created a festive setting for Pumpkin Patch 2026 on October 16. The lawn became a sea of orange and keiki chose pumpkins to take home and carve with their 'ohana. After parking their pumpkins in the designated "pumpkin parking" area, classes headed to the playground where fall games and activities awaited. Keiki decorated pumpkins, played pumpkin putt-putt, and rode inflatable barn animals. They also tested their coordination with pumpkin balancing, tried horse lassoing and a pumpkin ring toss, played beanbag toss, and bobbed for LucyGlo apples. At the end of the morning, parents headed home with a pumpkin chosen by their child and a delicious caramel apple topped with crushed cereal.





A very special mahalo nui loa to D. Otani for generously donating the pumpkins, LucyGlo apples, and caramel apples for everyone to enjoy. LucyGlo apples have pink flesh and a flavor that falls somewhere between an apple and a berry. It truly was a real treat for CUPS!

Trick-or-Treating the CUPS Way

With 29 themed tables, an interactive maze with "hot lava," and dancing to Danny Go, our CUPS 'ohana created a memorable experience at every stop along the Treat Trek held on October 23. Keiki had plenty to choose from: playing games for prizes, picking a Kit Kat or gummy bears, and taking photos with friends and CUPS staff in costume. The fun continued in the Women's Building, where festive music turned the room into a dance hall and everyone waved glow sticks. Each class joined the costume parade, giving keiki a chance to show off the costumes their parents had carefully put together.

The PTO also presented two awards: one for the class with the most tables and one for the most popular theme. Congratulations to Room 10, which hosted seven tables—including Mrs. Kunimura and her daughter Brailyn's hilarious "Two Crazy Cat Ladies" display. A special shout-out goes to the Peters 'ohana in Room 6, whose larger-than-life maze won the "Most Popular" award.











Mahalo to all the families who hosted tables and brought their Halloween spirit to Treat Trek!





Happy Birthday, CUPS!

In October 2026, we celebrated the 98th birthday of Central Union Church Preschool. Keiki were treated to Dole Whip after a special chapel service. **We give thanks for the ministry of nurturing keiki and we pray for the teachers, administrators, students, and families that make up the CUPS 'ohana!**



Apply for CUPS

Applications for the Central Union Church Preschool 2027–2028 school year are available now through **November 30, 2026**.

Applications for the **toddler 'ohana program** (2 years old) will be available in 2027 from January 5 through February 28!

Learn more at:
centralunionpreschool.org

Rainbow Jesus Rides for Pride

Melinda Dallass, Church Council Secretary

Aloha pumehana kākou,

This past October, I was blessed to take part in the Honolulu Pride Parade with Central Union Church as part of a group of eight churches with the purpose of sharing a message of love and the affirmation that the God who placed each sparkling star in the sky, who chose each perfect shade of blue to paint our Pacific waters, and who continues to awe us each day with the artistry and inspiration of Creation, loves each and every member of the LGBTQ+ community without limits or exceptions.



We brought with us a life-sized cutout of Jesus adorned with a rainbow sash holding a sign with a simple message of affirmation, "I'm cool with it." Reactions from people ranged from a chuckle to accusations of blaspheming Christ, but I recognized the reactions that mattered the most. These were the faces of the people who read that small sign and lit up with relief and joy, the ones whose tears came from years of begging to hear that message and only receiving words of condemnation, and the spark of hope that appeared on the faces of those who have given up on being welcome in a community of faith while being true to who they were created to be. In each of these reactions I recognized the deep, soul-level ache for reassurance that the God whose promises I had learned from my parents and my grandparents and kept in my heart for as long as I could remember did not see me as a mistake, or worse, an "abomination".

The first time I visited Central Union with my best friend in 2017, I came reluctantly. I had not been to a church in years and while I dearly missed gatherings with my faith family, the painful memories of losing nearly every member of the only community I had ever known, with the explanation of "loving the sinner and hating the sin", or something close to it, when they explained why they could no longer even be seen with me kept me in a deep fear of joining a church. I had barely made it through the experience the first time, and I couldn't risk a second time. I sat in the very back and avoided eye contact in case anyone figured out my secret and dragged me out of the sanctuary. When I heard the minister speak directly to the LGBTQ+ community, I was ready to run out the doors and never look back. But I heard him call out the harm done by the church and also say the first words about queer people I had ever heard from a pulpit that did not involve condemnation and disgust. I came back the following week, and the one after that and after that. God had answered my brokenhearted prayer I had repeated in secret for over ten years, and my deep gratitude for this gift of my CUC family only continues to grow.

Other LGBTQ+ people are also seeking a place where they can find a spiritual home where they are not simply tolerated or tepidly welcomed under the condition they never talk about the "gay thing" or become too visible in their queerness. They are desperately trying to find a place where they are joyfully celebrated as a beloved and wanted part of God's Creation. That's why I want Central Union to take steps toward becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) church. This is not just believing that LGBTQ+ people are welcome in our congregation, it is a public covenant and promise that we will actively and radically welcome LGBTQ+ people into every area of our congregation with no fine print. I hope we can further explore and dialogue as one congregation about what it means to show radical hospitality to LGBTQ+ people, share our questions honestly, and talk together about what it would mean to make that commitment public.

I think about the person who might walk into our sanctuary this upcoming holiday season feeling the way I did. I want them to know they belong before they ever have to wonder.

Building Resilience



Several members in our congregation have been exploring how CUC can build capacity as a hub for community resilience, which is the ability to plan for, prepare for, absorb, and recover from a disaster or crisis event such as a hurricane. As part of this effort, we hosted a Disaster Preparedness in Urban Honolulu event on October 19 for the wider community in partnership with Dr. Miku Lenentine of CERENE & O'ahu Hub Learning Community, Dennis Hwang of Sea Grant, and Della Au Belatti who is the Chair of the Public Safety Committee which includes emergency management. With a great mix of folks from the wider community present, we had an opportunity to increase readiness and connect more with our neighbors.



Boomers & Beyond

The Boomers & Beyond group continues to meet weekly to enjoy leisure pastimes in good company. If you're a senior (or know one) who's interested in connecting with others and engaging in stimulating activities, join Boomers & Beyond every Tuesday at 11:30 AM in the Central Union Church Women's Building. Bring your own lunch. Beverages provided. *(Pictured to the right: a pine-cone turkey, a seasonal craft made by our boomers earlier this month.)*

COMING UP: November 24
BINGO Thanksgiving Party



Learning Tree



Our Learning Tree program continues to offer opportunities for community education on the second and fourth Sundays (typically) at 10 AM, between our 9 AM and 11 AM worship services on our Honolulu campus. This month we learned about fire safety with fire inspectors from the Honolulu Fire Department's office of community relations. Here's what's coming up:

- **December 13: Alzheimers Association**
- **January 10: Serving Aloha & Hawai'i Foodbank**
- **January 24: Sound Fitness: Using Sound and Music to Support and Enhance Well-being**

COMING UP! November 22, 2026

Let's embody our call to be a church not confined by walls, but propelled by love. After one joint worship service at 9 AM in the Sanctuary, we'll participate in acts of compassion, justice, and care through service projects for all ages & abilities as we live our faith beyond the Sanctuary. Come to church dressed to serve!



ACTS OF SERVICE
- Packing disaster cleanup buckets
- Cookies for Veterans
- Advocacy letter writing
- Card writing
- Cleaning parking lots
- Cleaning Sanctuary
- Trash cleanup at parks
- Visiting homebound members
- Distributing care packs

LOOKING AHEAD

Thrift Shop (Honolulu) updated business hours:
Wednesdays & Saturdays from 9 AM – 3 PM
closed Wednesday, November 25

November 18: Messy Church Advent Workshop

November 20: Concert @ 7:30 PM *(Sanctuary)*
"Portraits of Villainy" - UH Mānoa Choirs

November 22: The Church Has Left the Building
9 AM - ONE worship service + activities to follow

God joins us in the work of Advent

November 29: First Sunday of Advent ~ *HOPE*

December 3: Church Council Meeting @ 5 PM

December 6: Second Sunday of Advent ~ *PEACE*
4 PM - Maluhia Holiday Concert *(Sanctuary)*
6 PM - Jazz Vespers *(Atherton Courtyard)*

December 13: Third Sunday of Advent ~ *JOY*
7:30 PM - *Messiah* Concert *(Sanctuary)*

December 16: Young(ish) Adult Christmas Party

December 18: Preschool Christmas Chapel

December 20: Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ *LOVE*
10 AM - ONE worship service *(Sanctuary)*
White Gifts Celebration & Pageant
11 AM - Christmas Open House *(Women's Bldg)*
6:30 PM - Service of Compassion and Hope
(Atherton Memorial Chapel)

December 24: Christmas Eve
5:30 PM, 8 PM, 10:30 PM - Services in Honolulu
6 PM @ Windward campus

December 25: Christmas Day
10 AM Lessons & Carols *(Sanctuary)*
11 AM - Pohnpei Ministry worship service *(AMC)*

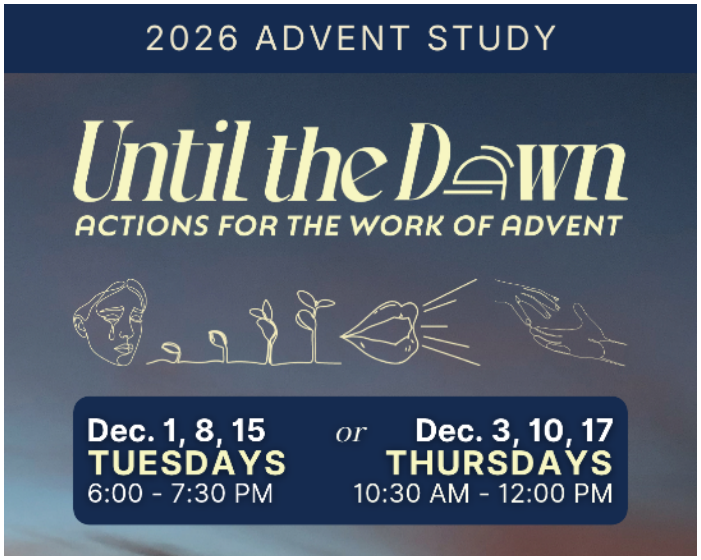
December 27: Sunday after Christmas
10 AM - ONE worship service *(Parish Hall)*
***10 AM** @ Windward campus**
11 AM - Pohnpei Ministry worship service *(AMC)*

~ Remembering our Saints ~

We were recently informed of the death of Zigmond "Zig" Palagyi on June 6, 2026.

Welcome New Members!

On November 1, 2026, we received into the CUC 'ohana: Joyce Ho, Mark Munoz, Christopher Merian, Yee Wing Merian, Douglas Rivelli and Kristi Rivelli.



Join our upcoming 3-week Advent study led by Pastor Rushan, exploring this year's theme, "Until the Dawn: Actions for the Work of Advent". In the midst of our busy holiday preparations, we recognize that the world is not as it should be, a tension that keeps us yearning for a world made new. This series focuses on the faithful actions we can take as we move through the metaphorical night with hope for tomorrow. Together, we will learn how to resist despair and put our prayers in motion. Pastor Rushan will use our Advent devotionals to guide the discussion through themes like crying out, starting somewhere, and speaking up. Free copies of the devotional are available every Sunday and from the Church Office. Join us on **Tuesday evenings (December 1, 8 & 15)** 6:00–7:30 PM OR **Thursday mornings (December 3, 10 & 17)** 10:30 AM–12 PM in the Rewick Board Room. No registration needed, just turn up at whichever time works with your schedule.

White Gifts



Through our annual White Gifts initiative, we will continue to provide requested items to the local social service organizations we have faithfully partnered with for decades, so that they can give Christmas gifts to the people they serve.

How to participate: Donate by cash or check made payable to Central Union Church (memo line: "White Gifts"). You may also donate online through our website: centralunionchurch.org/donate (select "White Gifts" in the dropdown menu to designate your gift). **Make your monetary donation by December 18**.

Our shoppers will then purchase suitable gifts with the available funds. In past years we have given over 1,000 gifts shared among ten agencies. We will celebrate our White Gifts project on December 20.