

The Spire



Central Union Church and Preschool February 2021
"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!" Vol. 91 - No. 2



Pastor's Page

Rev. Brandon Durán, Acting Senior Minister

Have you ever uttered a dangerous prayer?

I am not talking about the mealtime grace or a word of spontaneous praise. I am talking about the kind of prayer that invites the upending love of God into your life. It is the prayer that says to God, “I trust you.” We hear this prayer in various forms in stories throughout the Bible.

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel suddenly announces to Mary that she will conceive and that her son will be called the Son of the Most High. Mary is perplexed but comes to respond to God’s call with the prayer, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Decades later, her son echoes his mother’s prayer while alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, in the dead of night, troubled by what is to come, Jesus prays, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

These are short prayers without colorful adjectives or clever wordplay. They are simple and trusting, powerful and dangerous. They unmoor the expected routes and routines of life. They hold preconceived plans and personal preferences with open hands. These prayers signal an understanding that the Holy Spirit may have a bigger idea about the life choices we make.

And it’s not just Jesus and his mom that dare these dangerous prayers.

“Here I am, send me” – Isaiah 6

“Search me and know my heart; test me and see if there is any offensive way in me” – Psalm 139

“Speak for your servant is listening” – 1 Samuel 3

These are the gut-check (maybe a dash here?) prayers. They peel away the trappings of faith and move to the heart of the matter. *These are the prayers of Lent.*

In a matter of days, we will celebrate Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten season. It is common during Lent to give something up. This year, rather than choosing for yourself something to give up, I encourage you to dare a dangerous prayer. In the days before Ash Wednesday spend some time each day with the prayer, “God, what do you want me (deleted an extra word) to let go of for Lent?”

The scripture speaks a lot about letting go. It calls us to let go of anger and bitterness (Ephesians 4:31-32). It invites us to let go of habits that keep us from fulfilling our God-given potential (Hebrews 12:1). It encourages us to release crippling anxiety (1 Peter 5:7). And it cautions us about being so entangled in the past that we miss what God has for us in the here and now (Isaiah 43:18-19).

“God, what would do you want me to let go of for Lent?”

God may call you to give up chocolate. Or God may invite you to something a little more difficult, a little more dangerous. The life of faith is not easy but it is undoubtedly good and, as Frederick Douglass said “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”

Amen.

Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him." - Daniel 2:20-22

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." - James 1:17

I have never experienced a time of such tremendous change. Throughout the nation and the world, we all struggle to address the multiple crises that have arisen over the past year. And it means that we are learning to do things differently. We are learning to respond in a way that holds fast to our core values, while embracing ever changing modalities of operation. For me, a line from Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem "The Hill We Climb" has sounded over and over in my mind, "a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished". Maybe another way of saying this is the UCC campaign motto "God is still speaking". Each of these statements reflects the truth that all groups, organizations and yes, churches, like any living organism, must continually grow, evolve, adapt and change to be fully alive in the present. And as a people of God, our challenge is to change with the times and seasons, while continuing to hold fast to our mission to shine God's light throughout our world.

The Council has been working hard throughout the year and one major initiative has been to propose changes to our bylaws. As our governing document, the Bylaws need periodic review and revision not only to remain in compliance with Hawaii law but also to ensure an updated and flexible governance structure that allows the Church to operate in a way that is responsive to the challenges of our time. The bylaws committee will be conducting a webinar on February 14 at 11:00 am to introduce proposed changes to the bylaws. The bylaws will be distributed following the webinar for a period of comments and questions from the congregation. Please make attendance at this webinar a

priority. Information will be sent out through e-blast and by mail to those who are unable to access the information electronically.

Our ministries continue to be active despite the limitations imposed by the Covid pandemic. World Missions reports that school furniture has arrived in Kiribati. Community Ministry is continuing to provide a monthly meal (although not serving) to Next Step and Keahou Shelter. White Gifts, with an altered format this year, was very well received by the recipient agencies. Senior Services applied for and is awaiting the delivery of free Covid supplies (masks, hand sanitizers, etc.) for our seniors. Serving Aloha provides free food distribution to over 400 households per week. The Diaconate is keeping in touch with elderly and/or frail church members via phone calls or cards and the Deacons Scholarship Committee is currently reviewing new and renewing applications for those pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. Central Union Preschool resumed after winter break and the annual admissions observation process has been completed for applications for the upcoming school year.

The Pohnpeian Ministry is holding weekly worship and Central Union Windward is providing weekly worship and a weekly food pantry to the Windward community. The Women's League has reopened the Thrift Shop. The Youth Ministry held their Annual Kuhio School Supply Drive and Children's Ministry created a take home Advent Wreath Workshop Kit for our keiki during the holidays. Mind, Body, Spirit, Movement offers weekly Mindful Movement classes. Adult Education has hosted Learning Tree Annex courses and Weekly Centering Prayer. Our Music Ministry is active recording music for worship services and enabling the Chancel Choir for a special music event for Easter.

So many blessings pouring forth! Let God's light continue to shine in and through Central Union Church.



Youth Ministry Supports Neighborhood Students

Kristen Young, *Director of Youth Ministry*

For many years, the CUC Youth Ministry collected school supplies in the fall for students returning to learning after the winter break. With limited possibilities due to COVID, we asked for online donations to purchase school supplies and Youth Ministry volunteer Carol Asuncion packaged 166 individual care packages for students, which were then delivered to Kuhio Elementary School at the start of the new semester.

We give thanks to the donors who joined us in continuing this tradition at a time when teachers and students everywhere have been faced with greater challenges and steeper learning curves. If there is any way we might be able to support a youth/student that you know during this time, please reach out to CUC Youth Director, Kristen Young, kristen-young@centralunionchurch.org.



Meet Our New Accounting Clerk

Ashley Joy Cambe, *Controller*



Leslie Lui-Yuen has taken on a new venture. The staff are very happy for her and we will miss her dearly.

Thomas Nakasone joined us as our new Accounting Clerk on January 7, 2021. He earned his bachelor's degree in Business Management at University of Hawaii at Manoa. Prior to joining CUC, Thomas was a Staff Accountant at Elite Parking Services. Thomas also worked at Manoa Valley Church and Hawaii Meals on Wheels. He is a motivated individual and has jumped right into Leslie's seat.

Thomas is a daily runner, weekend golfer, and lover of vinyl music. Please join me in welcoming Thomas to the CUC 'Ohana.

CENTRAL UNION WINDWARD MINISTRY

38 Kaneohe Bay Drive, Kailua

February 2021

All are welcome to join us!

In-Person Worship Service

Sundays at 10:00 AM

Sermon by Kahu Richard Walenta & music by Dr. Tommy Yee



All attendees are required to sign in with contact information, have a non-contact temperature check, and follow the Covid-19 rules set by Central Union Church. CUW Members and friends will receive a weekly reminder, general guidelines and the CUC Covid-19 Certification via email several days before the service date. Printed guidelines are on the check-in tables at the back of the sanctuary and should be reviewed before being seated.

NO IN-PERSON WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14 DUE TO TERMITE FUMIGATION OF CAMPUS BUILDINGS. JOIN ZOOM FOR WORSHIP THAT WEEK.

Meeting ID: 845 1796 6040

Passcode: CUWindward

For more information, please contact us at cuwindward@gmail.com or by phone at 808-254-3802

Joda Derrickson hosts Zoom meetings each Wednesday

Details are listed below:

Topic: Contemplative Prayer

Date/Time: Wednesdays from 6:30-7:00 PM (HST)

Every week through May 12, 2021

Meeting ID: 843 8682 3920

Passcode: G7xTS9



THE QUEEN'S MEDICAL CENTER

CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS

We are looking for Volunteers to help with our
Vaccine Clinic and the Gift Shop

Interested in Joining us?

Contact us for more information: 691-4397

Complete Volunteers application online at

www.queens.org

Ash Wednesday

Drive-Thru Imposition of Ashes on February 17th

Ash Wednesday, which falls on February 17th this year, marks the onset of Lent, the 40-day period of fasting and abstinence. It is also known as the 'Day of Ashes', so called because on that day, the church invites all to have their foreheads marked with ashes in the shape of a cross as a sign of humility and mortality; and as a sign of sorrow and remorse for the pain we've caused.

This year, CUC will be offering a Drive-Thru Imposition of Ashes event from 9:00 to 9:30 am and from 5:30 to 6:30 pm on the 17th. Taizé music will stream through your car radio and you will be asked to pause in your car at 'stations' to meditate, center yourself, and to pray before receiving ashes.

All participants are required to wear a mask.



Remembering Our Saints

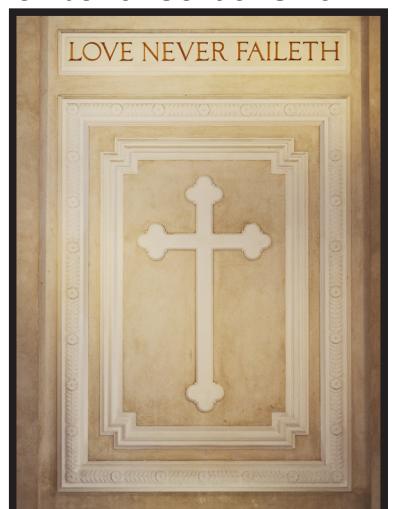
Sandra Wong, passed away on January 29. Sandra and her husband, Nathan became Members of Central Union in 1996. Please keep Nathan, and the entire Wong family in your prayers.

Sheena Winnie, passed away on October 17, 2020. Sheena became a member of Central Union in 1992. Please keep the Winnie family in your prayers.

Ahm Sepety, passed away on November 15, 2020. Please keep the Sepety family in your prayers.

Constance R. Black, passed away on December 8, 2020. Please keep the Black family in your prayers.

Harriet Moir, passed away on December 18, 2020. Please keep the Moir family in your prayers.



LOVE NEVER FAILETH