



Church Conference 2023



Church Conference 2023 was held on Sunday October 22. The theme of the meeting was #WeAre Wrestling, Engaging, Rising. The meeting was facilitated by the District Superintendent, Rev. Melissa Rynders. Rev. Rynders was assisted by Dobby, one of the ducks that accompanied the folks from the Desert Southwest Conference to the UMC/Youth 2023 conference in Daytona Beach, FL, this past July. The kids (and the adults with them) had fun taking pictures with Dobby and other ducks. They hid some of them and enjoyed it when others found them and re-hid them. District Superintendent Melissa Rynders has been bringing Dobby on her tour of the East District Church Conferences.

We discussed the past year at Cross in the Desert, and where we are going. The adoption of the Simplified Accountable Governance Structure (One Board Model) was approved and a slate of candidates for the board was presented and approved. Copies of the booklet and SAS fact sheets are available in the narthex.



Dobby at work helping to lead the meeting



Rev. Melissa Rynders and Pastor Gina Pollard with Dobby

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Pastor's Corner



Navigating the Holiday Season

The holiday season is fast approaching! Even if you love holidays, you can also feel a bit of stress and anxiety about navigating complicated relationships and conversations. Remember that God loves you, and that doesn't change!

1. Stay grounded in your faith: One of the most important ways to be a beacon of God's love during times of drama is to stay rooted in your faith. Remember your faith's teachings of love, forgiveness, and compassion. This will help you approach difficult situations with a calm and loving mindset. The holidays are essential to keep up with spiritual practices that keep you grounded and connected to God.

2. Practice active listening: Listening attentively to others involved is crucial when dealing with drama. Please give them your full attention, show empathy, and try to understand their perspective. This demonstrates your willingness to hear and validate their feelings, which can diffuse tension and foster understanding.

3. When possible, work to respond with love and kindness: Respond to drama with love and compassion instead of reacting impulsively or adding fuel to the fire. Treat others with respect, even if their behavior is challenging. Offer words of encouragement, acts of service, or even a simple smile. Doing so can help defuse conflicts and show others the transformative power of God's love.

4. Set healthy boundaries: *Establishing boundaries is essential for maintaining your well-being and effectively dealing with drama. Be assertive in communicating your limits and expectations, ensuring you are not taking on unnecessary stress or getting entangled in unnecessary conflicts.* Remember, caring for yourself is also an act of love towards others.

5. Seek reconciliation and forgiveness: The holiday season is a time for healing and renewal. If you find yourself caught in a conflict, seek reconciliation and forgiveness if it is safe to do so. Offer apologies when necessary and be willing to forgive those who have wronged you. By extending forgiveness and seeking reconciliation, you embody God's love and create a path for healing and restoration.

6. Embrace time spent with people who bring you joy and acceptance: It is all right to limit time with people you are uncomfortable with and with those around whom you will feel tense.

Remember, being a beacon of God's love during the holidays is not about ignoring or avoiding drama but responding to it to promote peace, understanding, and spiritual growth.



Happy Anniversary

Alice Easter	November 2
Liz Shelton	November 2
Karen Mischik	November 3
Romi Simons	November 5
Emily Nelson	November 12
Ruth Hummel	November 14
Bryan Crist	November 20
Gary Simons	November 21
Marriah Sweet	November 24
Bobbi Gamble	November 30

Jack & Judy Smith

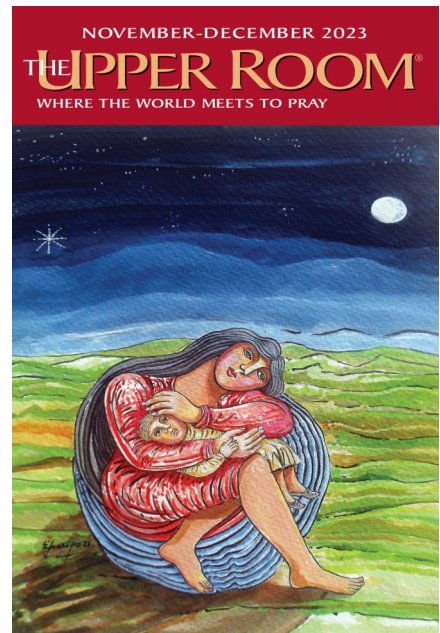
November 7

We apologize if we have missed your special day. It means that the office does not have your information. Please notify the office if we need to update your information.

Pray for military men and women

On Sunday, November 12th, the prayer team will hand out toy soldiers as you leave the sanctuary. Please take one or more and put it where you can see it daily. The purpose is to remind yourself to pray for our United States military men and women. These people give their lives and safety to protect our country and its citizens. Pray for protection and safety, comfort and the ability to stay focused on the task they have been given.

Have you been looking for a devotional? Did you know that *The Upper Room* is available in the narthex. Regular and large print versions are available. A small donation is appreciated if you are able, but feel free to take one even if you can't donate.



We had fun at the



Blessing of the Animals
October 1



We had ICE CREAM!



Rainbow Bridge Memorial Table



We enjoyed a cooler, beautiful afternoon for the pet blessing event. A short service by Pastor Gina preceded individual pet blessings. Pastor Gina was assisted in the individual blessings by Elizabet Weir. Our DS Rev. Melissa Rynders brought her dog Gizzy for a blessing. Everyone enjoyed meeting and greeting the myriad of puppies that attended!

AZ Golden Rescue brought their Ambassa-dogs, Emily from Foothills Animal Rescue brought Honey, who was available for adoption, and Liz from Safe Haven Dog Grooming provided the dogs with temporary tattoos and a little bling!



Elizabeth Weir with Hannah F. and her puppy Luna.

And, we had ice cream, even the dogs had pup cups!



Emily from FAR with a blinged out Honey!



Cindy from AZ Golden Rescue with some of the Ambassa-dogs.



Liz from Safe Haven giving Luna a tattoo.



CITD Financial Corner

It is a great privilege to discuss an essential aspect of our faith - stewardship. Our theme this year is "A Future With Hope". As we gather around the theme "A Future With Hope," we are reminded of the power of faith and the responsibility we hold as stewards of God's blessings.

Stewardship is the faithful management and responsible use of the resources that God has entrusted to us. This includes our time, talents, and, of course, our financial resources. Being your Finance and Stewardship Chair, I want to focus on the significance of giving and the pivotal role that pledges play in creating a budget for the coming year. I know talking about money is not a favorite topic in church, but let's face it, without money, we would not be able to worship together as a church.

Pledging is a cornerstone of our annual budgeting process, and it enables our church to plan and allocate resources effectively. Here's why pledges are so crucial in this journey:

Intentional and Prayerful Commitment: Making a pledge requires us to intentionally reflect on our financial resources and prayerfully commit a portion to support our church. It's a deliberate act of stewardship, a dedication to God's work and the hope it brings.

Strategic Planning: Pledges provide our church leadership with a clear understanding of the financial resources available for the upcoming year. This empowers us to plan our ministry programs, outreach efforts, and operational expenses strategically.

Encouragement and Accountability: Making a pledge encourages consistent giving and builds a sense of accountability. It's a promise we make not just to our church but to ourselves and to God, fostering spiritual growth.

Aligning Resources with Hope: Pledges help us align our financial resources with the hope and vision we share for our church's future. They enable us to invest in programs and initiatives that reflect our collective values and aspirations.

Financial Stability and Confidence: Predictable pledges ensure financial stability. They give us confidence that we can meet our financial obligations, from staff salaries to maintaining our facilities. When we have a firm financial foundation, we can serve with greater impact.

It's this last item where budgeting comes in. Currently, approximately 95% of our church's income comes from giving of which only about 2/3 is pledged. This means as we try to put the budget together for the following year, we are basically guessing/hoping for the other 1/3. Our experience is that we actually receive 100% and usually more of pledges so that really helps in our planning. If you've not pledged in the past, I encourage you to prayerfully consider it going forward.

We understand that every person's financial situation is unique. Pledging is not about meeting a specific dollar amount; it's about making a commitment based on your financial capacity. What matters most is your willingness to be part of this shared journey. We also know that personal situations can change. You can alter your pledge at any time during the coming year. So, your pledge is really better called an estimate of giving.

As we embark on this season of stewardship, let us pause to reflect on the blessings we've received, the hope we have in Christ, and the future we envision for our church. Prayerfully consider your commitment to the coming year, knowing that your contributions, however small or significant, make a profound difference in our faith community. I know for me personally, Cross in the Desert has been an integral part of mine and my family's life the whole time we've been in Arizona. I am personally committed to its future. We've been through some rough times, but I am convinced that it has "A Future With Hope".

May God's blessings be upon us all as we embrace this path of stewardship and faith, and may we indeed be stewards of "A Future With Hope".

Thank you! In His service, Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson CITD Finance Committee

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Prayer Corner

Dear heavenly and powerful Father. We come to you with such heavy hearts. Many thought and hoped major wars would cease after WWII. In our time we see and hear and pray about the war in Ukraine where Russia attacked their neighbor. Now we pray for the war where Palestine terrorist groups are once again attacking Israel. The attackers have killed people for no reason. They have closed their borders so that their own innocent people cannot flee to safety. We lift our arms to you in prayer night and day. May something come to change these horrible evil actions and people who seem to be filled with evil and we don't understand them. O God help us do what you call us to do to help innocent victims. In our country, we pray for politicians to be responsible and care for the people they represent.

We pray for all those in hospitals and care facilities, and suffering from diseases such as cancers. May they receive loving care and hold onto their faith in you. Thank you God for our fire people and our police people who help protect us and keep our communities safe. Thank you God for our schools to provide education for children and teens and young adults, May your light shine upon our efforts to recover from Covid and all the damage done to jobs and businesses and setting children back a year in their education. Help us hold onto our faith in you, and never give up to the evil voice. Give us hope and peace and the willingness to continue to work for what is right. Bless our churches and help us share the light of Christ to others.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer written by Rev. Sharon MacVean

PRAYER NOTES

THE JOHN 17 PRAYER BY JESUS (often called the High Priestly Prayer)

Some believe John wrote this prayer to provide important details about the life of Christ and Christian doctrine that might be lost upon his death. Scholars divided it into three sections 1. Jesus praying to God the Father and for Himself. 2. Jesus praying for his disciples that they would have unity as they continued their work 3. Jesus praying for all disciples, including us, to have unity with each other and in their Christian work. Jesus prayed for the protection and care of all disciples. Most of all Jesus prayed for unity among his followers including us.

East District Prayer Focus for November

First UMC, Gilbert
Rev. Ricky Casebolt
Pastor Adriana Hernandez

First UMC, Tempe
Rev. Paul Hyung Cho

Gold Canyon UMC, Gold Canyon
Rev. Fred Steinberg
Pastor Katharine Keller
Rev. Gary Capen





November Meetings of UWF



November 7	Mary Martha Circle	4:00 pm	Kathleen's house
November 9	Outreach Circle Meeting	11:00 am	Fellowship Hall
November 9	Leadership Team	3:00 pm	Fellowship Hall
November 11	Unit Meeting— Call to Prayer & Self Denial	9:00 am	Fellowship Hall
November 16	Bookworms United Book: <i>A Song Everlasting</i> by Ja Jin	10:00 am	Zoom
November 21	Devotions & Dinner	6:30 pm	Flower Child, Desert Ridge, 21001 N. Tatum Blvd., followed by Christmas shopping for our Wesley Family.
November 22	Palm Lakes Village Circle	not meeting this month	



On October 14 Cross in the Desert hosted the Desert Southwest East District United Women in Faith Annual meeting.

Our United Women in Faith provided a light breakfast and a Soup and Salad luncheon.

New District Officers were elected. Pastor Gina Pollard gave an opening and closed the day with Communion.

Rev. Khalif Smith, Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, was the keynote speaker.

This year Cross in the Desert put together 54 layettes for distribution to needy mothers of newborns. Disposable diapers were also donated. The layettes were blessed during the worship service on October 29th, and will be distributed in the Phoenix area.

Jeannine Diller coordinated the project, and thanked the congregation for their generosity in reaching out to their neighbors.



I-r Sharon MacVean, Alice Easter, Carolyn Halloran, Jeannine Diller, Mary Nell Woodward, Cathy Milford, Kathleen Boss, and Arvilla Jungman

United Women of Faith (UWFaith) event

November 11

Call to Prayer and Self Denial in the Fellowship Hall. UMFaith starts with a light breakfast at 9AM. There will be a free will Call to Prayer and Self Denial offering. The program is about marginalized people. Please bring feminine monthly pads to support our Middle School Period Poverty Project. Several stores carry teen size pads. There is also a basket for donations in the Fellowship Hall entryway. Please sign up in the Fellowship Hall after service or email citdunitedwomeninfaith@gmail.com



**Join us for a delightful
Friendsgiving celebration
at Cross in the Desert
Church on November 18,
2023, at 5:00 PM!**

As the holiday season approaches, we are excited to come together as a community and celebrate the spirit of gratitude and friendship. Friendsgiving is a wonderful opportunity to gather with old and new friends and share a delicious meal in a warm and welcoming environment.

Cross in the Desert Church is delighted to provide the centerpiece of our feast - a succulent turkey and a mouthwatering ham. We invite each of our guests to contribute to the meal by bringing side dishes and desserts to share. This potluck-style celebration allows us to experience the diverse and delicious flavors that our community has to offer.

Whether you are a long-time church member or brand new to the community, Friendsgiving is the perfect occasion to connect with others and forge meaningful relationships. It's a time to reflect on the blessings in our lives and express gratitude for our cultivated friendships.

We encourage you to bring your loved ones, friends, and neighbors to this special event. The more, the merrier! Sharing a meal strengthens our bonds and creates lasting memories.

Mark your calendars for November 18th, 2023, at 5:00 PM, and join us at Cross in the Desert Church for an unforgettable Friendsgiving celebration. We look forward to seeing you there!

If you have any questions or want to RSVP, please get in touch with our church office at 602-992-1960 or email us at info@crossinthedesert.org.



Special Christmas Gift Card Order

The Missions Committee is ready to help you with your Christmas shopping! Once again this November we are providing you an opportunity to order cards that are not usually kept in stock at the Missions Table. We have special order forms available for your orders, which must be prepaid by cash or check (unfortunately, although we sell plastic, we do not take plastic!). Remember that a gift card does not have to be a gift! You can buy cards for yourself to use as you shop, or dine and you will be supporting church mission projects. “But I shop on-line” you say. Great—we have Amazon cards! “Why should we buy gift cards at church?” you ask. The funds earned through gift card sales support CTD’s missional goals (e.g. our World Vision child in Sierra Leone, and our support of our sister church in Litoměřice, CZ.

See you at the Missions Table in Fellowship Hall. The deadline to place orders is November 26th.

Turkey Drive for PV Community Food Bank

10-12 POUND FROZEN TURKEYS.

The turkeys will be given out with the Family food Boxes

Drop off Location:

Please bring your frozen turkey donation to the food bank office at:

10862 North 32nd Street

Please drop off your donation Monday October 23 through Wednesday November 15, 2023 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

You will be provided with a 501c3 tax deductible receipt for your donation!



COMING EVENTS

Food, Fellowship & Fun

December 16th, 5:00 PM

Mark your calendars for an all church potluck. (Child care will not be provided.)

Join us for FOOD, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN.



- A ham will be provided.
- Bring a side dish, dessert or salad to share if you would like. Or a main dish if you don't like ham.
- Paper plates, plastic silverware and paper napkins will be provided. You are welcome to bring your own dinner service if you prefer "real dishes"

Mary Tassi will be playing some Christmas Carols. Plan to sing along, or sit back and enjoy the sounds of Christmas.

There may be a surprise or two that you won't want to miss!

There is no RSVP necessary, but you can tell Rhonda M. or Cathy M. if you will be joining us so we can be sure to have enough tables and chairs set up in Fellowship Hall.



Advent begins on December 3

Blue Christmas Service December 17th 5:00 pm



**Candlelight Service
December 24th 6:00 pm**

Desert Southwest Conference News



Plan Thanksgiving with Creation Care in mind. Emphasize plant-based main or side dishes (mushroom stroganoff is seasonal) or look for a humanely raised turkey. Use veggie trimmings for soup broth.

Browse a charity thrift store for new-to-you autumn decor, cloth napkins, serving dishes, and containers to send leftovers home with your guests. Freeze remaining leftovers for use later, or convert to a new dish, such as thinning mashed potatoes with milk and seasoning for potato soup.

Start your meal with a prayer of thanksgiving for the intricate web of life that sustains our every moment. In return, the Earth will thank you!

Author: Kate Kosse

Member of the DSC Earth Care Task Force

Conference Contacts

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East District Superintendent

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Lay Leader—vacant

Music Director

Thomas Hartwell

Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Vacant

Youth and Technology Coordinator

Kevin Joy

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