



The Oasis

February 2024

Cross in the Desert UMC

Where God's Love Transforms Lives, building a just and joyful community.

2024 STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

By: Karen Bulkeley

On January 13th, 21 faithful people attended the second annual strategic planning session to participate in the development of goals and objectives for 2024. After a time of prayer and discernment the group celebrated the successes of 2023. Pastor Gina led the group in a discussion to create a communication covenant to guide the rest of the day. The remainder of the day was dedicated to hard work narrowing down the goals we believe we are called to implement in 2024 to help CITD achieve its vision and mission. Special thanks to UWF for a wonderful soup and bread lunch to sustain us through the hard work!

Below please find the results of the group's hard work. Watch for this information to be posted in Fellowship Hall for your reference along with a copy of the detailed project plan which will be updated regularly to reflect the progress being made to achieve these goals by the end of the year.

Please review this plan prayerfully, asking God for guidance on how you personally can help CITD achieve these goals as we continue to work to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

CITD VISION

Where God's Love Transforms Lives, building a just and joyful community.

CITD Mission

Cross in the Desert is a place where people meet to discover Christ, grow together, inspire hope, and serve the community.

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Pastor's Corner



Dear friends –

Our theme for Lent this year is *Seeking: Honest Questions for a Deeper Faith*. This series provides us with an opportunity to engage in introspection, seek transformation, and ask honest questions that will lead us to a more profound understanding of our faith. We will use music, art, and teaching to help us dive in.

Often, we may find ourselves hesitant to ask certain questions related to our beliefs and spirituality. We may fear judgment or worry that asking questions reflects doubt or a lack of faith. However, embracing our doubts and questions can be an essential part of the spiritual journey. As theologian Paul Tillich once said, "Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith."

Just as Jesus engaged in a period of profound self-reflection and discernment, we too can use this season as an opportunity to ask ourselves the tough questions about our faith and seek the honest answers that will lead us to a deeper relationship with God.

So, what are some of these honest questions we can explore during Lent?

- 1. What do I truly believe?** Lent presents us with a chance to take stock of our beliefs and critically evaluate whether they align with our experiences, scripture, and the teachings of our faith tradition.
- 2. How does my faith inform my daily life?** It's easy to get caught up in the routines of life and forget to apply our faith in practical ways. Lent invites us to pause and reexamine the impact our faith has on our thoughts, words, and actions.
- 3. Why do I worship?** Understanding the reasons behind our worship can help deepen our connection with God. Are we worshipping out of habit, tradition, or genuine love and reverence?
- 4. What are my doubts and struggles?** Lent reminds us that it's okay to have doubts and struggles. Honest exploration of these areas can lead to profound growth and a more authentic faith.
- 5. How can I seek a deeper relationship with God?** This question prompts us to consider what practices, disciplines, or changes in perspective might nurture a closer connection with the Divine.

As we delve into these questions, let us remember that seeking answers may not always be straightforward or immediate. It is a journey that requires patience, humility, and an openness to the movement of the Spirit.

Grateful to be with you on this Lenten journey!

Pastor G

February Birthdays



Nancy Moller February 2
 Karen Cahill February 4
 JoAnn Call February 5
 Faith Doyle February 7
 Leeanna Moore February 8
 Dave Harlan February 10
 Karma Quammen February 11
 Chris Vaughan February 15
 Sherry Lindeman February 16
 Pam Dugarich February 19
 Cathy Milford February 21
 Jack Harvey February 22
 Maisie Goodwin February 26
 Dorothy Sanders February 26
 Bradleigh Foster February 28

Joe & Karen Mischik February 14
 Barry & Kathy Doyle February 17
 Curt & Heather Robinson February 24

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.



Have you seen me?
 Who am I?

Read the article on page 11 to find out more about what I represent!

Anniversary Sunday

On January 14th we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the signing of the charter for Cross in the Desert. We shared in singing *Family Song*, led by Jeff Bulkeley. The choir performed *Here I Am, Lord*, directed by former choir director Dick Bulkeley. Those songs were reprises from the 50th anniversary Jubilee Celebration. We watched a slide show featuring many memories of CITD. Pastor Gina honored charter members Dick and Martha Bulkeley, and others in the congregation stood according to the number of years they have been part of the CITD family. After the celebration we had delicious cake, made for the event by Karen Bulkeley.



(continued from page 1)

Goal 1: Provide opportunities to inspire the surrounding community and congregation to build relationships by meeting their specific needs.

Objectives

- a. Implement new congregational & community care model.
- b. Explore opportunities for reinstating a Parish Nurse program.
- c. Hold a community Health Fair.
- d. Research interest in forming a singles group designed to serve both congregants and community members.
- e. Hold at least one new educational event each quarter to which the community is invited.

Goal 2: Present a dynamic invitation to the community with a welcoming, inclusive campus.

Objectives

- a. Increase revenue by recruiting outside groups/entities to rent space on campus.
- b. Improve campus signage, both for those driving by and on the internal campus.
- c. Address campus upkeep, maintenance & repairs in a timely manner.
- d. Explore feasibility of installing a labyrinth on campus.

Goal 3: Increase opportunities for CITD to serve the community.

Objectives

- a. Increase opportunities for congregants and the community to participate in social justice activities.
- b. Explore opportunities to invite community organizations to use our campus for activities associated with issues such as mental health; grandparents raising grandchildren; parenting classes; and physical health.
- c. Increase communication to the congregation regarding service opportunities as well as the outcomes of service projects (e.g. Santa's Workshop; Foster Alliance partnership; UWF outreach).



Desert Southwest

UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION

Desert Southwest United Methodist Foundation will be joining us after worship on February 11 to talk about estate planning. That is something that is easy to postpone, but it's critically important to your loved ones. Anne Green and Judi Smith will offer ideas that you may be able to put to use in your own planning.

Desert Southwest United Methodist Foundation tells us that estate planning is never finished. If you have a will or a trust you may think you have done everything you need to. However, laws change; new opportunities present themselves; loved ones pass; other circumstances change. All of those situations can make the plan you worked on need a refresh. Plan to join the Foundation on February 11 after services to learn more.

Did you know that a will in the probate court is a public document? Anyone can pay to have a copy of your final plans. However, there are ways to assure privacy for your estate. If that interests you, plan to join the Desert Southwest United Methodist Foundation after services on February 11 and learn more.



CITD Financial Corner

I am very grateful and pleased to announce the status of our Stewardship Campaign, “A Future With Hope”. Our goal was 50 pledges with \$150,000 pledged. To this point we have received 50 Pledges with \$156,454.00 pledged. This is a 43% increase in the number of pledges in our last Stewardship drive and an increase of 17.7% in the amount pledged. These results for fiscal year 2024 are the highest numbers we’ve seen since the pledges for the fiscal year 2021. Thank you for your support!

Thanks to the efforts of Wanda Picciotti and the SPRC committee, I am also grateful and pleased to announce that Conference has agreed to provide us with \$10,000 in Equitable Compensation support to help pay Pastor’s salary for 2024.

It’s still too early to see the final results for 2023 in total, but we certainly ended the year looking much better than when the year began. We will also end the year having paid 3 months’ Apportionment for the year, which is more than expected. It’s obviously very short of our total commitment, but it does indicate to the Conference that we are continuing to try to support it.

I want to thank every one of you for making these positive things happen.

In His service,

Eugene O’Bryan, Chairperson
CITD Finance Committee
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SPREAD THE WORD!

We all know of friends, neighbors and family who are acting as caregivers. Be sure to tell them about this half day conference to promote tools for caring for themselves! There is no charge. RSVPs are appreciated.

YOU ARE INVITED TO
HEART KEEPERS:
Care for the Caregiver
Mini-Conference

February 10, 8a-12p, lunch provided
Hosted at Cross in the Desert UMC
12835 N 32nd St, Phoenix, AZ 85032




KEYNOTE:
Helping Caregivers Protect the Place they Cherish – Home



Special Guest Speaker: Charlotte Holiday, MBA
Arizona Lifespan Respite Project Coordinator



Prayer Corner

O Holy Father, our God and son Jesus Christ. Thank you for the holiday season in which we once again celebrated the birth of Jesus, and shared joy and hope with each other.

We pray now during the time leading to Lent to read and study the life of Christ, and what Jesus Christ has called all of us to do and be. At Easter, we celebrate how they killed Jesus and you, our God, raised him, resurrected him, to show us your power over sin and death. May that power overcome the sins of Russia, Hamas, and Iran so that the peace of Christ can come to this world and show us there truly is another way to live together. Our hearts are so heavy with loss of children and adults in senseless shooting and bombing. We pray for your power to overcome this evil. And also the evil, even in our own city, of teens who have lost their way and have turned to killing and other evils. We pray to stop the killing.

As we celebrated the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, we ask that all of us become more aware of subtle racism that still exists in our country. All people are your precious children regardless of differences. We pray for those in our military for their protection and strength. We pray for those in the hospital and in hospice to feel your love and that Christ is walking with them. Be with the families of those who have left this life. We pray for our children and the schools to be safe and for all these children to have a chance to learn important knowledge and be kept safe. May the schools stop any bullying and provide safety to all the children and teens. We pray for our churches, missionaries and all who work in ministry to provide the needs of people who have less than basic needs.

Help us see and breathe in the beauty of your creation all around us as flowers begin to bloom and trees begin to bud out. In your name we pray, Amen.

Prayer written by Rev. Sharon MacVean

Prayer Notes

Rev. Sharon MacVean

This month we will focus on John Wesley and his Covenant Prayer which is often used in worship during the first week of January as a guide to ground us in our faith during the new year.

John Wesley, believed in prayer at all times and certainly at morning and evening. His life of prayer was a way to live in the presence of Christ. He said prayer in public and private was the means of grace, particularly through reading and prayer. We know that he went out in the fields and to the mines to preach and share the love of Christ for which he was expelled from the Church of England.

Wesley's Covenant Prayer powerfully expresses his Christian commitment and his use of spiritual disciplines as a means of grace. Read and pray this covenant prayer as a guide to your own prayer life.

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low by thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine and I am thine. So be it, and the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Source: *Concerning Prayer* by Mary Kathryn Pearce

East District Prayer Focus for February

Red Mountain UMC—Mesa
Rev. Jennifer Lambert
Rev. Rula Colvin

Scottsdale UMC—Scottsdale
Rev. Jamie Booth

**Shepherd of the Pine UMC—
Overgaard**
Pastor Winona Dye





United Women in Faith

February Meetings of UWFaith



February 1 Leadership Team 3:00 pm Fellowship Hall

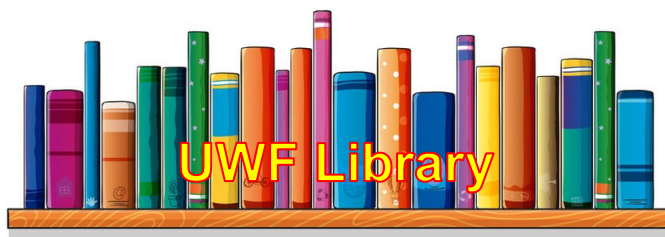
February 15 Bookworms United 10:00 am Zoom

Book: Israel - A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth
by Noa Tishby

February 15 Mary Martha Circle 4:00 pm Ada's House

February 20 Devotions and Dinner 6:30 pm

February 22 UWF Outreach 11:30 am Fellowship Hall



NEW TO THE LIBRARY

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

High Conflict by Amanda Ripley

Book feature of the month:

Israel - A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth by Noa Tishby

"A personal, spirited, and concise chronological timeline spanning from Biblical times to today that explores one of the most fascinating countries in the world - Israel."

Join us for zoom book club on February 15 at 10:00 for a discussion on Israel.

CITD's UWF will continue to supply feminine hygiene products to the three middle schools along the 32nd Street corridor. Join us as we address the issue of period poverty. There is a basket in Fellowship Hall to collect donations of sanitary napkins, which we distribute monthly during the school year. Thank you!



Introducing the New 2024 Leadership Board

Following the Church Conference vote in September 2023 to transition to a single board model for the administrative functions of the church, the new Leadership Board held its first meeting on January 30th. Using the 2024 strategic plan, the board will be working to align the ministry of the church with the mission and vision of the church in a way that encourages more people to engage directly in ministry work and less time having to focus on business meetings.

To help you stay informed on the work of the Leadership Board, look for the binder in Fellowship Hall that will be updated monthly with the board's meeting materials. You can also engage with the Board by using the forms also located in Fellowship Hall to submit your questions or comments. Of course, the members of the leadership board would love to talk to you directly to share with you what is happening or hear your ideas. And meetings are always open (except when an executive session is needed to discuss personnel or other sensitive issues) and you are encouraged to attend to learn more about CITD and how our mission and vision are put into action. Meetings are scheduled for the last Tuesday of the month. Details will always be on the church calendar.

Please thank the following members of the Leadership Board and feel free to ask them any questions that you have.

Karen Bulkeley, chairperson

Romi Simons, secretary

Jonathan Foster

Rhonda Mortensen

Eugene O'Bryan

Wanda Picciotti

Sophia Quinton

Ada Thompson

Mary Nell Woodward



It's Time for a New Church Directory

Please mark your calendar for Tuesday April 16th. Unique Church Solutions will be here that day to take photos for our new church directory. Watch for sign-up information coming soon!

MISSIONS



The Missions Committee continues to sell gift cards during fellowship time on the second Sunday of every month. Don't forget to bring cash or your checkbook to stock up on gifts for friends and family, as well as gift cards for places where you normally shop or eat. The profit from these sales goes to mission projects. We are also part of Fry's Community Rewards Program. If you do not have your Fry's V.I.P. card linked to Cross in the Desert, please talk to us at the Missions Table or ask Karen Mischik for more details.



The Foster Alliance

On January 25, CITD had five volunteers who participated in a mission service project at The Foster Alliance.

Following a tour of the facility, some of the volunteers decorated birthday gift bags, while others wrapped gifts and prepared gift bags for distribution to foster children. We plan to schedule more dates during the year, so you will have more opportunities to participate in this worthwhile cause.



Coming Events—Mark your calendar

Life Line Screening—Saturday May 4

There is a simple, convenient way for you to get preventive health screenings and learn your risk for stroke, heart disease and other chronic conditions. These painless screenings go beyond your regular checkup to identify dangerous plaque buildup or blockage, a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease. The screenings are accurate, affordable and will give you valuable information about your health that you can share with your doctor.

We are pleased to host Life Line Screening, who will be on site Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church to conduct these valuable screenings. These 4 vital screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete.

Register by calling toll free 1-844-591-7160, text the word "circle" to 216-279-1607 or online at <https://lisa.social/HC>.

Blood Drive—Sunday May 5

Save the Date! On Sunday, May 5, Vitalant will have their mobile blood donation unit parked at CITD from 8 am until noon. If you or someone you know would be willing to give the gift of life, please put this date on your calendar and watch for more updates.



This year's Lenten theme is "Seeking: Honest Questions for a Deeper Faith."

The Bible offers us many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: Nicodemus comes to him in the veil of night, he approaches a Samaritan woman at a well, he heals a man born without sight. In these stories, each person is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith. What unfolds is an exchange filled with questions and exploration. Often, an unveiling occurs—assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

On Wednesday evenings, we will use *visio divina* to view Lenten art and discover what we see as we move toward Resurrection Day.

Visio Divina, Latin for "divine seeing," is a method of meditation, reflection, and prayer through a process of intentional seeing. Visio Divina extends the 6th-century Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina by the use of visual imagery. Traditionally, Visio Divina was accompanied by Benedictine iconography and illuminations. However, different faith traditions have adapted the process over time, utilizing both secular and nonsecular images.

Join us for a soup and bread dinner and spiritual discussions with great conversations about seeking and find your faith. We will meet Wednesdays from February 21 through March 20; 5:15—6:45 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Please contact Arvilla Jungman if you are able to bring soup.

FOOD WITH FRIENDS POTLUCK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 5:00 PM

Join us for dinner and fellowship at the next potluck.

This month's theme is *Comfort Food from the Heart*. Plan to bring your favorite comforting dish to share, and your own table service. No child care provided.

Any questions? Contact Rhonda Mortenson



Tuesday Women's Bible Study

The Tuesday Women's Bible Study group will be starting a new study for Lent. Please join them on Tuesdays at 11:00 am beginning on February 20th.

The study guide will be "*What Makes a Hero? The Death-Defying Ministry of Jesus*" by Matt Rawle. The study offers us an image of what it looks like to be victorious over trials and temptations.



Desert Southwest Conference News

**CALLED TO
LEADING IN
GROWING IN**



THE CABINET OF THE DESERT SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

During this past church/charge conferences, the District Superintendents shared the news about a new campaign extending the 2023 Annual Conference #WeAre theme. The new campaign is #WeAreLOVE, and it is guiding the work and interactions between the District Superintendents and Bishop with our churches and each other. The campaign's focus is LOVE. Here are the details about what the campaign stands for.

#WeAre called to LOVE, leading in LOVE, and growing in LOVE!

- L = Listen to stories, be
- O = Open to change,
- V = Value diversity, and
- E = Embody belonging in our life and work of ministry.

The guiding scriptures for this campaign are Proverbs 3:3-4 and Romans 12:10.

You'll notice the new theme in our social media graphics, district newsletters, and messaging from now to Annual Conference 2024. Consider how this campaign might guide the ministry that *you* are involved in.

Conference Contacts

Bishop

Carlo A. Rapanut

Bishop's Assistant:

Julie O'Neal joneal@dscumc.org

Conference Lay Leader

Alberta Farnsworth

East District Superintendent

Melissa Rynders

Assistant: Jeannine Marinoni

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East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

Director of Communications

(Assistance with technology)

Christina Dillabough

cdillabough@dscumc.org



DSCUMC

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Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

Pastor

Pastor Gina Pollard

pastorgina@crossinthedesert.org

Financial Secretary

Alice Easter

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Lay Leader—vacant

Coordinator of Children’s Ministries

Vacant

Music Director

Thomas Hartwell

Youth and Technology Coordinator

Kevin Joy

Building and Grounds Concerns

Please contact the office by phone or email so the Trustees may be notified

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