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“Re-United: A Summer of Grace and Connection”

By Pastor Eun Ko

Dear Beloved Church Family,

I hope this letter finds you well and full of God’s peace.

As summer begins to wind down, I find myself reflecting with deep gratitude on the many ways I’ve experienced the beauty of connection over the past few months. Through the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, a meaningful family visit, and the recent Clergy Retreat, I have been reminded again and again of one of our most treasured theological foundations—Connectionalism.

From June 12-15, 2025, I had the opportunity to attend our Annual Conference at the convention center of the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas. Clergy and lay members from across our conference came together in worship, prayer, holy conferencing, and shared mission. It was more than a meeting—it was a reunion of hearts, a reminder that we are part of something larger than ourselves. We celebrated ministries, wrestled with challenges, and recommitted ourselves to the shared work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Left: Cindy, Halla, Pastor Ko, and Dottie spending time together after the daily session in the evening during Annual Conference.

Right: Pastor Ko and Halla after the Ordination Service.



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Re-United: A Summer of Grace and Connection cont.

Soon after, I had the joy of visiting my brother's family in Kansas City, accompanied by my mother who came all the way from South Korea. During our time together, I was struck by how the love of family mirrors the Church at its best—a place where we carry one another's burdens, share laughter, and draw strength from one another. It reminded me that the Church is not just an institution—it is a spiritual family knit together in love.



Pastor Ko with her mother and her brother's family during their visit to Kansas City and Kentucky state.

Most recently, I participated in a Clergy Retreat—a sacred pause for rest, renewal, and honest conversation with fellow clergy. The retreat was more than a time away; it was a holy reminder that we are not alone in ministry. The prayers, stories, and wisdom shared among colleagues were deeply healing and hopeful.

Group photo of the Western Jurisdiction Korean Clergy Retreat from July 1st to July 4th, 2025



All these experiences—Annual Conference, family visit, and the Clergy Retreat—might seem like separate events, but they are beautifully woven together by one core value: **Connectionalism**.

As United Methodists, we are part of something much larger than our local church. This beautiful truth is expressed in what we call Connectionalism—the idea that we are all connected through a shared mission, mutual support, and a common calling in Christ.

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Re-United: A Summer of Grace and Connection cont.

Through this connection, our churches don't stand alone. We worship together, serve together, and grow together. Our pastors are appointed through a system that seeks the good of both clergy and congregation. We pool our prayers, people, and resources to respond to the needs of the world—whether it's disaster relief, education, or global missions.

Connectionalism is more than structure—it is the living witness that we are the body of Christ, joined by grace, strengthened in love, and sent out in hope.

So as we prepare to enter the next season of ministry together, I invite you to reflect on the connections in your life—to God, to this congregation, to those who support you, and to those you're called to serve. Let us continue to build bridges, deepen our relationships, and trust that through every connection, the Spirit of God is at work.

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” — Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)

“그에게서 온 몸이 각 마디를 통하여 도움을 받음으로 연결되고 결합되어 각 지체의 분량대로 활동하여 그 몸을 자라게 하며 사랑 안에서 스스로 세우느니라.” — 에베소서 4:16
(개역개정)

With a grateful heart,

Rev. Eun Young Ko

First United Methodist Church of Tucson

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIRST CHURCH OF TUCSON IN JUNE & JULY!

The Annual Conference was held at the convention center of the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas from June 12 to 15, 2025. Pastor Ko, Dottie Poczulp and Cindy Turnbull participated as representatives of the First UMC of Tucson. Here, they are trying Korean dessert for the first time - They look great!



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Left: We are always grateful for the opportunity to open our church building to serve the community in many ways. This summer, we are delighted to welcome the Institute of Reading Development, which has been using our Social hall for their Summer Reading Program from July 12 to August 10, 2025, every Saturday from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

Right: We had a moment during the August 3rd worship service to bless the backpacks of An Khiet Lam, 2nd grader, and Halla Kang, 9th grader.



We are glad to offer this outreach to welcome our new and returning students during move-in week. Please, remember this ministry in your prayers. We will be serving free Eegee's, water, and healthy snacks - with warm hearts.

From Mustard Seed to Community Blessing: A Story to Inspire Your Church

by Christina Dillabough | Aug 4, 2025 |

<https://dscumc.org/blog/2025/08/04/from-mustard-seed-to-community-blessing-a-story-to-inspire-your-church/>

When three teachers from the Philippines arrived in Parker this summer, they expected a challenging transition. They were starting new jobs in a new culture, far from their families and support systems. What they did not expect was a warm welcome from a local church that wanted them to feel at home.

That welcome came from Parker United Methodist Church through a project called Planting Hope: Gift Cards for Migrant Teachers. It began when Rev. Dulce Vargas learned about the Mustard Seed Migration Grant from Global Ministries and UMCOR. She immediately thought about the teachers coming into the community.

"I thought it was a good idea to do something for them," Rev. Vargas said. "I talked with one of our members who is a teacher from the Philippines and asked, 'What were your biggest needs when you arrived here?' She told me it was usually things like kitchen and household essentials. So I thought a gift card would be best because it gives them the freedom to choose what they need most."

Meeting a Local Need

Parker, Arizona, is a rural town along the Colorado River. Like many communities, it has faced an ongoing teacher shortage. To meet that need, the local school district welcomed educators from the Philippines and India. These teachers bring valuable skills, but they often arrive without support systems and face cultural and financial challenges as they settle in.

To help bridge that gap, Parker UMC used the grant to provide each teacher with a \$200 gift card and supplemented that with a welcome bag filled with thoughtful items. The church partnered with the school district to identify and connect with the incoming teachers. The first group of teachers, Jeven, Reinalyn, and Jaysone, received their gift towards the end of July. (Pictured below with Rev. Vargas – photo courtesy of Parker UMC Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/parkerumc>)



A Ministry of Hospitality

This effort was about more than financial help. *"We want them to feel welcome, to know there is someone here who cares about them,"* Rev. Vargas said. Members of the Administrative Council, most of whom are teachers or retired teachers, along with Rev. Vargas, spent a few months discerning this project, but the application and grant process proceeded relatively quickly. When the gifts were delivered, the teachers smiled and expressed their gratitude. The stress of moving seemed a little lighter.

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From Mustard Seed to Community Blessing cont.

Why It Matters

For Rev. Dulce, this work grows from her understanding of the church's mission. Reflecting on what she learned in her Evangelism class and the book *See, Know, Serve The People Within Your Reach* by Thomas G. Bandy, she shared these words:

- *"Mission is what happens whenever the blessing of God intersects with human needs."*
- *"The church exists to impact the community, or communities, that surrounds it. The goal of mission is really not to generate faith. It is to generate hope."*
- *"The goal is not really to attract people to the church, but to bless people beyond the church."*

Those ideas shaped her vision for Planting Hope, letting these teachers know they are not alone. It is not about filling pews. It also gave the church a chance to live out its mission in a practical way, showing love in ways that make life a little easier for people who are new and far from home.

Your Church Can Do This Too

You do not have to be a large church to make a difference. Parker UMC showed what is possible with creativity and a heart for hospitality. The Mustard Seed Migration Grant from UMCOR can help your church do something similar.

Nan Rollings' Celebration of Life

Nan passed away peacefully on July 20, 2025, surrounded by her family, following recent brain surgery. Her deep faith, quiet strength, and generous spirit have left a lasting imprint on all who knew her.

A celebration of life service will be held in her honor at the First United Methodist Church in Tucson at 11 AM on Saturday, September 6, 2025, followed by a reception.

If you wish to make a donation in her memory, please consider the

University of Arizona Poetry Center (University of Arizona Foundation/Poetry Center P.O. Box 210150, Tucson AZ 85721), **Clínica Amistad** (P.O. Box 27284 Tucson, AZ, 85726) or **The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona** (3003 S. Country Club Rd., Tucson, AZ 85713).



THIS WEEK'S
ANNOUNCEMENTS & GATHERINGS

10AM SUNDAY SERVICE

Join us in person for our English-language service! Or you can watch it live online at <https://www.youtube.com/c/TucsonFirstUMC>.

한국어 사역

주일 오전 11시 30분에 한국어 예배가
현장예배와 온라인예배로 진행됩니다.
기도와 참여 부탁드립니다.

WEEKDAY GATHERINGS

Wanderers on a Spiritual Quest (WSQ)

-WSQ meets on Mondays at 4:30PM in the library.

Narcotics Anonymous (Underground)

-NA meets at 7:30PM on Monday evenings in the Arizona room.

-On the last Monday of the month, there is Medallion Night in the Social Hall.

Chancel Choir

-It's a great time to join the choir!
-The choir has resumed Sunday rehearsals at 9AM before the worship service.
-They will resume practice on Thursdays at 6:30 PM starting August 21st.

Progressive Book Study (PBS)

-PBS will resume meeting on **September 4th**.
-The current book is "The Fourth Gospel: Tales of a Jewish Mystic" by John Shelby Spong.
Questions? Call Rev. Gaston at (520) 323-1611.

August Meet'n'Eat

This is a fellowship time to visit with each other and see old and new friends. *All are welcome, everyone is invited!* The next Meet'n'Eat is on **Friday the 8th at 11:30 AM** at the Olive Garden on the northeast corner of Oracle/Wetmore ([300 W Wetmore Rd, Tucson, AZ 85705](#)). If you're interested in coming, please tell the church office or Shirley Murray at 520-297-4796 by Wednesday so she can reserve enough seating at the restaurant.

A Potential Side Effect of 21st Century Technology:



Submitted by Pastor Raven Gaston

GIVING TO FIRST CHURCH TUCSON



When you attend Sunday services in person, the offering box is in the narthex for your generous giving. Head to our website www.firstchurchtucson.org/give to give online. As always, you can mail in checks to the church office at the address printed on the front page. Alternatively, have your IRA advisor automatically make payments from your IRA.

When we give to God from our hearts, it is always enough. We see you, and we thank you for your commitment to making a difference in our community.

* * *

PRAYERS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

We offer our prayers for those in our community who are suffering, who are physically, mentally, & emotionally unwell, and for those caring for them.



We offer our prayers for these sister faith communities:

Patagonia Community UMC, Patagonia
Santa Cruz Valley UMC, Sahuarita
St. Francis in the Foothills UMC, Tucson

If you have a prayer request you would like to share in the Digest, please contact the church office at office@firstchurchtucson.org or (520) 622-6481.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Sejong Kim (Aug 1) Sang Ho Park (Aug 11)

Christopher & Stephanie Kang (Aug 7 - 55 years)
Byung & Young Kim (Aug 15 - 38 years)

(If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please let us know so we can update our records!)

Animal & Environmental Holidays for August 2025

By Diane & Victoria Russell

**Where There's
a Will...**



August - National Make-A-Will Month (Animal theme)

By including your pets in your family's will, you can ensure they will continue to receive the love and care they deserve, even after you are gone. In a will you can choose your pet's guardian, define their responsibilities, and provide the necessary funding.



August – National Water Quality Month

This month is dedicated to preserving the Earth's most valuable resource and keeping it safe to drink. Ways to help include: Be aware of your daily water usage, stop pollution from entering waterways, use natural fertilizers, avoid chemicals, and use nontoxic cleaning supplies.



August 8th – Nat'l Tarantula Appreciation Day

This day was created in 2019 by Palp Friction Tarantulas to celebrate and learn about these scary but gentle creatures. There are over 1,000 known species in the world with 29 species native to the USA. While all tarantulas are venomous, the venom in species in the USA are not considered dangerous.



August 13th – International Wolf Day

There are three species of wolves found in North America – the Gray Wolf, the Eastern Wolf, and the Red Wolf. The Red wolf is

considered the most endangered wolf in the USA. The Mexican wolf (subspecies of Gray wolf) was successfully reintroduced to Arizona and New Mexico in 1998.



August 15th – International Cotton Top Tamarin Day

Today, we celebrate these critically endangered primates found only in the tropical forests of Colombia. They weigh less than a pound and are nicknamed as the cutest monkeys in South America. They are critically endangered due to habitat loss from deforestation and illegal pet trade.



August 16th – International Homeless Animals Day

This day was created in 1992 by the International Society for Animals Rights to spread awareness about pet overpopulation and to create solutions to help save millions of homeless animals. It is estimated that there are 70 million homeless pets in the USA and about six million enter shelters.



August 29th – Forgive Your Foe Friday

Forgive your Foe Friday is a time to find enough forgiveness in your heart to relieve your anger you may be feeling towards other people or yourself by forgiving. This day is part of “Be Kind to Humankind Week,” which is a celebration of people who do kind acts for people around the world.



August 30 – National Holistic Pet Day

Created by Animal Advocate Colleen Paige of the Animal Miracle Foundation to raise awareness of the well-being approach to animal care. It includes good nutrition, exercise and mental stimulation. This day recognizes the importance of taking care not only of your pet’s body, but also your pet’s mind and soul.



August 30th-31st – International Bat Night

Bat Night was started in 1997 to raise awareness about the importance of bats in the ecosystem. There are more than 1,400 species of bats in the world with 47 species found in the USA. Most bats are insectivores or fruit eaters. Three species of “bloodsuckers” are found in Mexico and Central/South America.



August 31st – National Zoo Awareness Day

In 1982, animal lovers and conservationists established this day to highlight the important role zoos provide in protecting endangered species and educating the public about wildlife. Ways to celebrate include: visiting your local zoo, learning about animals, and supporting conservation efforts.



First Church Tucson is an inclusive multi-ethnic faith community and a reconciling congregation of the United Methodist Church. Established in 1879 as the first Protestant church in our city, First Church Tucson continues to pave the way in creating a faith community that embraces all peoples into the grace of God.

As a courageous family of faith, we celebrate the diversity of all God’s children, welcome everyone to share in God’s love and grace, and offer a sanctuary of hope.

We seek to be in ministry with all God’s people, regardless of gender, race, age, class, ethnicity, culture, country of origin, ability/disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation. We continue to work towards building a loving and faithful community in Tucson, and invite all of you to be part of it.