



First United Methodist Church
915 E 4th St, Tucson, AZ 85719
www.firstchurchtucson.org
youtube.com/c/TucsonFirstUMC

Pastor Ko (847) 345-8070 pastortucsonfirstumc@gmail.com
Office (520) 622-6481 office@firstchurchtucson.org
Office hours: Monday-Thursday 10AM-2PM

“Dreaming and Building the Kingdom of God Through the Music Ministry!”

By Pastor Eun Ko



Dear families of FUMC of Tucson,

As we step into 2024, I am filled with excitement about the journey we have ahead. Recently, as a part of our Covenant Board, the leadership body steering our church's decisions, I reflected on the remarkable ministry work we undertook in the past year. It was truly heartening to witness the love we poured into our mission to serve God and our neighbors.

Here are some highlights of our mission efforts:

- Equine Voices - \$644.20
• Salvation Army - \$250.00 + bags of donations
• Roskruge K-8 bilingual school - \$912.00, donation gifts of large amounts of school supplies, toys, clothing, art supplies and books.
• Subuiga church - \$4,540.00
• UMCOR: Ukraine - \$4208.86, Turkey earthquakes - \$2309.68, Libya floods - \$500.00, Morocco earthquake - \$500.00
• Global Assistance for Women and Children in Congo - \$ 1,900.00

What an amazing job and miracles we have achieved in the year of 2023! Praise to the Lord!

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Dreaming and Building the Kingdom of God Through the Music Ministry! Cont.

In addition to these missions, we have been partnering to offer free haircut services for homeless and low-income individuals at The Loving Church on the first Sunday of every month since June 2023. The purchase of an AED (defibrillator) for emergency resuscitation is also in the pipeline, with the funds already collected.

Amidst these impactful missions, I am honored to shine a spotlight on our music ministry. We actively support music scholarship students, encompassing each vocal part in the choir, pianists, music directors, and hybrid music students handling the bass guitar and keyboard in the praise band and choir as needed.

I feel blessed to have such faithful church members and associates associated with the First UMC of Tucson. Your generosity and contribution to our music ministry present a unique opportunity to sow the seeds of the Good News and the love of God here in Tucson.

As we embark on the new year, I encourage you to consider how you can contribute to our music ministry. Your support will undoubtedly play a crucial role in spreading the message of God's love.

Whatever resolutions you may have for the new year, may God bless and guide you, surpassing your expectations through the help of the Holy Spirit.

With love and blessings,

Pastor Ko



OUR MINISTRY IN THE CONGO (DRC)

On Sunday January 7, 2024, FUMC member Blaise Lolika shared about his recent trip and the dire conditions in his birth country. He and wife Nathalie's non profit, Global Assistance for Women and Children (GAWC) cares for innocent victims of severe trauma, such as this 5 year old and her mom (left). The child's father was beaten to the point of death, when he tried to shield his daughter from attack. Other tragedies were witnessed on this trip.

Our church's support has worked to show the most vulnerable that they are not abandoned! Blaise and Nathalie say thank you and request continued prayer:

- For health to continue the work. Blaise asks for divine help in dealing with trauma and pain, and for Nathalie's health and their 4 children.
- For GAWC team members on the ground, who risk their lives to give shelter, comfort, and desperately needed nutrition.
- For the Congolese people to be able to control their own future. Warring interests of neighboring countries and the theft of natural resources have destabilized the country and hurt its good citizens.
- For more donors from many sources to join the ministry. \$2,000 a month in 2024 is the current goal, in advance of another trip to bring hope and healing.

To learn more, text Blaise at 520-971-6607, or ask the church office.

What's Happening at First Church of Tucson!

Our beloved sister, Marilyn Dunbar passed away and had a funeral service on Saturday, Dec 16, 2023.



Our beloved sister, Martha Burkle, was recently discharged from a physical rehabilitation center and joined her family in Guadalajara, Mexico. However, unfortunately but peacefully she passed away with her family right after she arrived in Mexico around Dec 21, 2023.



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Our church choir had a Christmas party with a white elephant gift exchange after their annual Christmas Cantata on Dec 13, 2023. Thank you so much for your hard work!



The Sights, Smells, & Sounds of Christmas was held from 3-6PM on Dec 10th, 2023



Below left: Korean congregation choir at 10 am service.

Below right: Special music by Ahn's family and friends at 7 pm on Christmas Eve



Winter, a Time for Reflection

By Judith & Bruce Billings

Dear Friends,

This has been a most beautiful year! In **January**, two lovely granddaughters from Maine came to live in our guest house. Isabelle promptly found a barista job downtown that kept her busy mornings and evenings. She cared for her ferrets between times. We had to screen two crawl spaces under the house to prevent javelina and ground squirrels from moving in also.

Dozens of Meyer lemons ripened in **February**. Then the cassia took over. These seven-foot bushes, densely covered with brilliant yellow blossoms, form a hedge across the front of our house that can be seen from two blocks away. The fragrance is subtle and lovely. The Peruvian tree cactus by the front door put out spectacular huge white blossoms at night. Unfortunately, the bats that were expected to pollinate them didn't arrive. We also have seen fewer bees and birds.

In **March**, Judith dried purple and white pansy blossoms that were three inches across! At least a bazillion yellow and orange African daisies and California poppies covered huge swaths of both front and back yards. Then Mother Nature put long pale pink penstemons among them. What mortal would have dared that color combination? Bruce was the first to spot the seven-foot spar shooting up out of an agave in our back yard. It literally grew over night.

April also brought grapefruit blossoms so thick they looked like it had snowed. The hoop house sprouted triple pink poppies thanks to seeds from our sister-in-law, Loy. Several chairs in the front and back yards help us enjoy all this beauty when the heat and mosquitos permit. We froze many bags of spinach, chard and beet greens from the garden. They will be breakfast smoothies later. One prickly pear cactus burst out with eight hot pink blooms on each pad and another one had salmon pink flowers that were especially lovely against the deep blue sky!

May brought out the oleanders. In our yard they are 12 (poisonous) feet high with clumps of white flowers. Stephen and Perry put up the awning over the pond before the paloverde tree could shed its blossoms and cover the water like a yellow sheet. Pale lavender snapdragon-like flowers popped out of the desert willow outside our living room window. Judith gained a pacemaker that gave her back some valuable energy.

In **June**, several 5-petaled red-orange stepelia bloomed with many fist-sized buds coming along behind. They smell like rotten meat to attract flies needed for pollination, and look like a hand opening one finger at a time until they are nine inches across. We do not know why the insides are covered with fine white hairs.

Two large yellow canna lillies opened at the pond in **July**. The night blooming cerius vine on the paloverde tree blossomed big and white with yellowish centers. On July 17th, Tucson enjoyed its first

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summer rain. It was a windy, gully-washing torrent stripping leaves off trees and giving us a badly needed 3/4 inch. Some parts of Tucson experienced almost two inches! If that weren't enough, on the 29th we had hail! Granted, it melted before Judith could get her camera out, but it was scary hitting the windows. The wind knocked two verdin nests to the ground. They are grapefruit sized balls of twigs with a thumb-sized entry hole on the lower side. Inside is soft and fuzzy. We enjoyed seeing a cooper's hawk dip in our back yard pond and hummers take long baths in the front fountain.

August is a synonym for heat. The water from the cold faucet is warm enough to shower in. We leave it on the counter to become room temperature before drinking it. Waiting and watching the clouds build, hoping for lightening, listening for thunder and sighing when the cooling rain falls somewhere else, became a daily routine.

A **September** surprise! One perfect yellow water lily joined us on the 8.th. The gila wood peckers demolished April's prickly pear fruits. Nuts on the jojoba bush burst open. Since Judith no longer uses them in mesquite bread, the birds got a treat.

Just when we thought Nature had no more surprises this year, in **October** the beige stepelia, that has bloomed for each friend to whom Judith gave a cutting (but not for her), quietly produced several huge buds! Who knew they only come on new growth?

November found us enjoying two new house plants, a Christmas cactus with indescribable blossoms and a magenta Oriental lily. Both are hot house gorgeous and we hope to be able to keep them that way. Those of you who don't live in the desert, did you know that the winter sun shining through cactus needles makes them look red?

In **December** we notice the lizards are gone. Surprisingly, the bird feeder suction cupped to the kitchen window hasn't had any visitors yet. But we are hopeful. Bruce's ultra low blood count continues to show radiation induced bone marrow cancer. His doctors say the clinical trial is working, but it sure is slow. For fun, he does zig-saw puzzles. Judith keeps busy working on a Japanese crewel embroidery piece started in the late 1970s, a new quilt combining the log cabin pattern and appliqued butterflies, and spinning a tri-colored Jacob sheep fleece that's been in the cedar chest since the 1990s. So many textiles, so little time!

Life in Tucson is still very good for both of us and we hope it is for you, too.

Stay safe, be well, and pray for World Peace in 2024.

Big hugs from,

Judith and Bruce

** As Judith and Bruce reflect on the year 2023, why not take a moment to reflect on your own experiences from the past year? Consider planning intentional moments month by month, all while appreciating the beauty of nature.*

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

Women 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.

All God's Creation (AGC)

-AGC meets on Tuesdays at 3PM over Zoom.

[Zoom ID: 994 3610 1655](https://www.zoom.us/j/99436101655) [Passcode: 6226481](https://www.zoom.us/j/99436101655)

Chancel Choir

-Practice is on Wednesdays at 6:30PM in the Sanctuary.

-A shorter rehearsal is on Sundays at 9AM.

-We will welcome a new music director soon: Youngeun Kim!

Progressive Book Study (PBS)

-PBS meets on Thursdays at 3PM over Zoom.

The current book is "Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary" by Marcus J. Borg.

Questions? Call Rev. Gaston at (520) 323-1611.

[Zoom ID: 980 1573 8087](https://www.zoom.us/j/98015738087) [Passcode: 6226481](https://www.zoom.us/j/98015738087)

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)

-This support group meets at 7:30PM on Friday evenings in the Arizona room.

WSQ Book Study, Open to All - "The Prayer of Jabez"

On January 22, 2024, at 4pm -5:30pm Women on a Spiritual Quest (WSQ) will begin to study "The Prayer of Jabez." As we wait for that date (1/22/24), please find yourself a copy of "The Prayer of Jabez" by Bruce Wilkerson. *All are welcome to join us.*

Are you ready to reach for the extraordinary? To ask God for the abundant blessings He longs to give you? Join Bruce Wilkinson and Women on a Spiritual Quest to discover how the remarkable prayer of a little-known Bible hero can release God's favor, power, and protection. You'll see how one daily prayer can help you leave the past behind -- and break through to the life you were meant to live. Please join us.

Bring your own book! It can be found on Amazon and also at local used book shop "Bookmans".

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.

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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:

Catalina UMC, Tucson
San Pedro Valley UMC, Benson
Desert Skies 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.

BIRTHDAYS

Christiana Ageh (Jan 3)

Steven Yoo (Jan 8)

David Lopez (Jan 12)

Bob Hansen (Jan 17)

Michi Michalsky (Jan 18)

Chang Koo (Jan 20)

An Khiet Lam (Jan 21)

Bill Bensema (Jan 23)

Jim Goff (Jan 26)

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

January 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, January 12th at 11:30 AM** at the Olive Garden on the northeast corner of Oracle/Wetmore ([300 W Wetmore Rd, Tucson, AZ 85705](http://www.olivegarden.com/locations/300-W-Wetmore-Rd-Tucson-AZ-85705)).

If you're interested in coming, please call Shirley Murray at (520) 297-4796 by the Wednesday before so she can reserve enough seats at the restaurant.

Animal & Environmental Holidays for January 2024

By Diane & Victoria Russell



January – National Pet Travel Safety Month

Pets are our companions and are often part of our travel plans. Some travel tips include to always kennel or to use a safety harness to keep your pet safe during vehicle rides. Never leave a pet alone in a parked car or allow pets to hang their head out the window in a car while driving.



Jan 10th – National Cut Your Energy Costs Day

Created by the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance (CEEA) to encourage homeowners and businesses to help reduce energy costs. Ways to cut energy costs include weatherproofing your home, solar power, turn down thermostats, use LED lights, carpool/public transport, turn off lights, and unplug appliances.



Jan 14th – Feast of the Donkey

The donkey that journeyed with the Holy Family is honored today. There are several accounts of donkeys in the Bible; Jesus rode one on Palm Sunday when he went to Jerusalem, a donkey is said to be present at Jesus' birth. Take time to read about the donkeys of the Bible.



Jan 19th – Tenderness Toward Existence Day

This day is dedicated to exhibiting kindness, compassion, and understanding toward all living beings on Earth whether it be humans, insects, invertebrates, animals, or plants.



Jan 20th – Penguin Awareness Day

There are about 18 known species of penguins. They are cute flightless birds that are peaceful but face many dangers. Threats include predators, habitat loss, reduced food availability (due to commercial fishing), disease, and climate change. They need our help to keep from going extinct.



Jan 21st – Squirrel Appreciation Day

Wildlife rehab specialist Christy Hargrove created this day in 2001 to foster kindness toward these cute creatures and to raise awareness of how important they are to the environment. There are about 285 squirrel species in the world.



Jan 26th – World Environmental Education Day

Created in 1972 by the UN Conference in Sweden for the Human Environment. The goal of this day is to raise awareness about participation on both a local/global scale to identify environmental issues and to actively help solve them by conserving/protecting the environment.



Jan 27th – National Geographic Day

On January 27, 1888, the National Geographic Society was formally founded. Today, the National Geographic continues to pursue its mission “to increase and diffuse geographic knowledge while promoting the conservation of the world’s cultural, historical, and natural resources.” Today we honor over 100 years of the “National Geographic Magazine”.



Jan 28th - Int'l Reducing CO₂ Emissions Day

Created by the United Nations to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The amount of Co₂ that is coming from human activity that includes using fossil fuels, agriculture, and transportation needs to be reduced to help battle climate change. Recycling, adjusting your thermostat, & LED bulbs would help.



Jan 31st – International Zebra Day

There are three types of zebras in the wild; Grévy’s zebra, plains zebra, and the mountain zebra. They are known for their black and white stripes. This day is about spreading awareness to help protect zebras. The Red List of Threatened Species lists the Grévy’s zebra as endangered.



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 welcome all of you to be part of it.