



The Oasis

July 2025

Cross in the Desert UMC

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

Congratulations Reverend Gina Pollard!

On Sunday, June 22, we welcomed and introduced Reverend Gina Pollard to the congregation. Gina was commissioned as a Provisional Elder on June 14, 2025 at 8:08 pm at the Desert Southwest Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. This milestone event culminated years of hard work in meeting all the requirements on the road to ordination, which will follow in two years. This journey, which continues, involved classes, many papers, and a thesis in order to earn her second MDiv degree from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO). Be sure to let her know how much we appreciate all her hard work! More pictures on Page 10.



Leadership Board Chair Eugene O'Bryan presented Rev. Pollard with flowers and a gift.



In This Issue.....

Pastor's Corner.....	2
Birthdays, Anniversaries.....	3
General News.....	3,4,7,8,9,10

Missions.....	4
Prayer Ministry.....	5
UWFaith.....	6
Conference.....	11

Pastor's Corner



Grace and peace to you from the Divine!

This month, we've been reflecting on the Book of Esther, a powerful story of courage, faith, and, most importantly, perseverance. Esther's journey reminds us that staying on the path set by God, even when fraught with uncertainty and danger, is crucial to fulfilling our divine purpose.

Esther's life took an unexpected turn when she was chosen to be queen, a position she didn't seek or expect. This wasn't a path she chose for herself, but one orchestrated by God. Faced with the threat of genocide against her people, Esther was placed in a position of immense responsibility. Fear and doubt could have easily paralyzed her. She could have chosen the seemingly safer path, remaining silent and protecting her position. But Esther persevered, and her story serves as a powerful example for us all.

Esther's courage didn't come from a place of absolute certainty. Her famous words, "If I perish, I perish," reveal the very real danger she faced. But those words also demonstrate a powerful commitment to the path before her, which she believed God had laid out. She fasted, prayed, and sought guidance, and then, despite the risk, she approached the king. Her perseverance, rooted in faith, saved her people.

How often do we face unexpected twists and turns in our lives? Perhaps it's a sudden illness, a job loss, or a relationship breakdown. How frequently does fear or doubt tempt us to stray from the path we believe God has set before us? We may not face challenges as dramatic as Esther's, but the principle remains the same: perseverance is key.

When we encounter obstacles, it's easy to become discouraged. We might question God's plan or wonder if we've missed a turn somewhere. But just as Esther sought guidance through prayer and fasting, so must we maintain a strong connection with the God. This connection will sustain us through difficult times, providing the strength and wisdom to stay the course.

This doesn't mean the path will be easy. There will be moments of uncertainty, fear, and even apparent failure. But it is through these challenges that our faith is refined and our purpose clarified. These challenges are not roadblocks, but stepping stones towards our divine purpose. Remember, God's plan is bigger than our immediate circumstances. By staying the course, trusting in God's guidance, and persevering through adversity, we can fulfill the unique purpose for which we were created.

Let us pray for the strength and courage to emulate Esther's unwavering commitment to the path before us, knowing that God walks with us every step of the way.

Pastor Gina



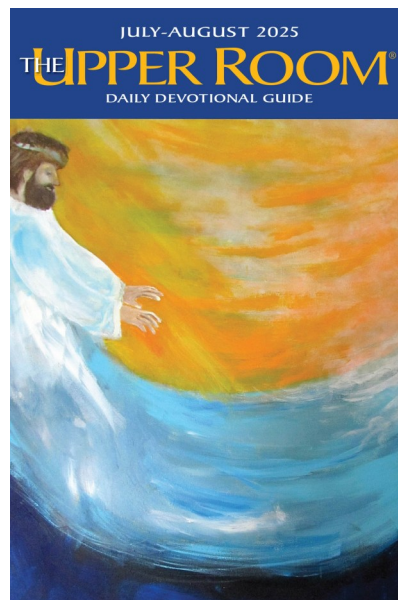
Beverly Ashcraft	July 2
Diane Ingold	July 2
Fran Kirk	July 3
Curt Robinson	July 5
Beth Bulkeley-Brown	July 7
Marlene Thompson	July 8
Charlotte Osborn	July 9
Wendy Pleake	July 11
Suzy Zarkovich	July 11
Rod Gaylor	July 16
Gina Pollard	July 16
Gretchen Miller	July 20
Heather Foster	July 23
Margaret Bridgewater	July 25
Jeannette Delster	July 26
Junior Harlan	July 26
Mary Tassi	July 30



Dave & Rosalie Wagner

July 5

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 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.

On Pentecost Sunday, June 8, we celebrated with pancakes. Also Kristin O'Shaughnessy organized an event where we had an opportunity to write postcards to our elected officials. We could thank them, encourage them, or otherwise communicate our feelings!

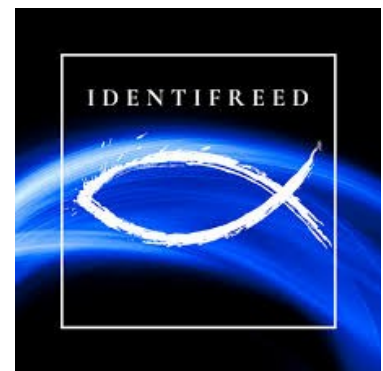




Way to Go!

When the orange bags for June were returned and taken to the food Bank, we had donated 260 pounds of goods. Many thanks from the Food Bank!

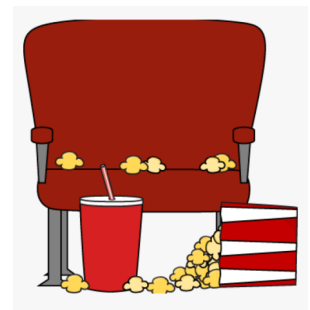
Please place any donations of clothing or hygiene supplies in the labeled bin in the lobby of Fellowship Hall.



Back by popular demand—Summer Saturday Movies. Mark your calendar to join us in the youth room (comfy couches) for fun and fellowship. Rhonda Mortenson would love to hear from you if you have a favorite movie suggestion!

July 19	3:00 pm
August 16	3:00 pm
September 13	3:00 pm

Summer Saturday Movies




New Series

Bible Study for the Busy

*No prep but your heart.
No homework but living the Word.*

Online Thursdays at 7:00pm



- First session is June 5th
- Register for or share the Zoom link found in the Oasis or on our Facebook events.
- Study is 7-8 pm with an optional half hour “parking lot” fellowship afterwards.





Prayer Corner

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS -

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

"PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU...." JOHN 14:27

What is it like to have peace with God? Do you believe with all my heart that everything in your life will fall into place when we are at peace with God? Is it even possible?

Sometimes we think that our mistakes and poor decisions keep God from loving and forgiving us. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. God is constantly wooing us to come to him to experience his love and mercy and peace no matter what we do.

God does not judge our obedience or disobedience or our righteousness. Thank you, Jesus. God looks to the obedience of his son, Jesus, to determine our righteousness. Jesus took our sin and gave us his righteousness. It was a heavenly exchange! Yea!! We are perfect in God's eyes not based on what we do, but on what Jesus did and what we believe about that.

Because of what Christ has done, we can now come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will find God running to meet us, ready to embrace us, love us and tell us everything is going to be okay. Just like in the Prodigal. Right? And there at the throne of the mighty God we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it most (Hebrews 4:16).

PRAYER: FATHER, SHOW US HOW MUCH YOU LOVE US AND GRANT US PEACE. WHISPER YOUR LOVE INTO OUR HEARTS THAT WE MAY KNOW YOU ARE WITH US ALWAYS. IN CHRIST'S MIGHTY NAME WE PRAY. AMEN

East District Prayer Focus for July

Dayspring UMC—Tempe

Rev. Jeff Procter-Murphy

Rev. Michael Long

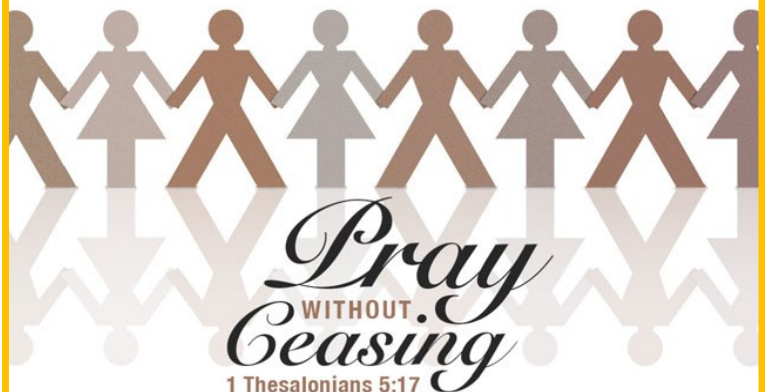
Rev. Shirley Wells

Desert Chapel UMC — Apache Junction

Pastor Philip Tesarek

Desert Foothills UMC—Phoenix

Rev. Robert Payne





United
Women
in Faith

July Meetings of UWFaith

July 3	UWF Leadership Team—Zoom	10:00 am
July 15	Devotions & Dinner Vegan and Vine, 502 E. Thunderbird	6:30 pm
July 17	Bookworms United - Zoom Book— <i>Even As We Breathe</i> by Annette Sauanooke Clappsaddle	10:00 am



United Women in Faith – Ice Cream Sundaes

July 20, 2025 – 11:00 a.m.

(during Fellowship Time)

Come and Enjoy some ice cream, and good Fellowship



faith, hope and love - Back to School is just around the corner. A back-pack filled with new pencils, plenty of paper, new crayons, and much more is all part of going back to school. Out of the reach for some families,

Wesley Community and Health Center provides back-packs filled with these items for the children in Wesley programs. CITD United Women in Faith contributed a "lot" of items to fill those back-packs, thanks to money raised at our Spring Tea and the generous contributions from members of the congregation.

May it provide support and give hope to children, allowing them to grow and to thrive.



Outreach Circle of United Women in Faith make baby layettes every year for needy mothers. They need some donations to make this happen. They have plenty of diapers but could use footed sleepers and onesies, size newborn or 3 month. Please bring your donations to the narthex.



Save the Dates: October 4, 2025 – East District Celebration, Payson UMC

October 25, 2025 – Conference Celebration, Willowbrook UMC, Sun City

CITD Leadership Board

The Leadership Board wishes to acknowledge and congratulate the now Reverend Gina Pollard as she was commissioned as a Provisional Member at Annual Conference. I know there is going to be more information in other submissions to the Oasis so I'm leaving it at that.

Together We Can Capital Campaign Status:

As of	6/19/2025
Goal	\$215,000.00
Received Funds	\$169,952.18
% of Goal	79.0%
Total Funds Spent or Committed	\$123,866.41
Money currently available to spend	\$46,209.89

Projects completed:

- Painted Sanctuary lobby, hallways, and interior
- Replaced Sanctuary lobby, hallways, and interior flooring
- Painted Guthrie exterior, Fellowship Hall/Office exterior, gazebo and painted over turquoise
- Provide HVAC replacement for Kitchen/Library
- (note: Guthrie NW HVAC replaced by CITD Foundation)

Projects underway/delayed:

- Working on Digital Sign
- Grass replacement and further landscaping improvements delayed for a bit for various reasons

If you have questions, concerns, or want to get involved, please reach out to me or any member of the Leadership Board: Mary Nell Woodward, Romi Simons, Brooke Henry, Jonathan Foster, Rhonda Mortenson, Ada Thompson, Wanda Picciotti, and Kristin O'Shaughnessy.

In His service,

Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson
CITD Leadership Board
Cell: 602-363-4115
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Outreach Building

The worn carpet in the Outreach Building was replaced on June 21st. The old carpet was stained and ripped. We now have a nicer area to offer the groups that use our Community Room and the 12 Step room. This was another much needed improvement made thanks to your donations to *Together We Can*.





**41st Annual Conference of the
Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church**

June 12-15, 2025

Report of Delegates - Rhonda Mortenson and Romi Simons

AND LET IT BEGIN WITH ME

This year's Annual Conference was held at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The four days were packed with worship, prayer, music, work, fellowship, learning, appointments, commissioning and a special appearance by Elvis! The theme was "A Healthy Church for a Healthy World: And Let It Begin With Me." This reminds us that personal healing, health, and spiritual grounding are the foundation for a church that can truly transform the world. Highlighted scriptures were Jeremiah 17:14 and Psalm 51:10.

On Day One, Bishop Carlo gave each person a small pebble, reminding us that just like that pebble can create expanding ripples when thrown in the water, we too must do the inner work of healing so that our collective ministry can ripple outward in love and strength, affecting everyone around us.

The Consent Calendar was approved as presented. Included in the calendar were various recommendations from the Council on Finance and Administration. Some of the recommendations included mileage calculation, retirement contributions for retired clergy, and other personnel matters.

UMC Churches which have closed are: First UMC of Eloy, Velda Rose, Nueva Esperanza, Spirit of Hope, and Maryvale Bridge. Each church presented a video to remember them through storytelling, pictures and blessings. Bishop Carlo Rapanut said, "Lifting up our hearts, we join in thanksgiving for their shared memories." Conference leaders offered words of gratitude and formally moved for closure of these churches according to the Book of Discipline, paragraphs 2549.1a and 2549.4b. A vote was taken and passed.

New church starts/fellowships were reported, as follows: North District – Green Valley and Pasifika; East District – Tempe First UMC, reaching out spiritually to local area; Huli Ma'Oni'Oni' Tongan United Methodist Fellowship, meeting at Velda Rose; and Un Nuevo Aliento (A New Breath); West District – 2 Lay Persons Assigned in Yuma to continue meeting with Natives at the Spirit of Hope church; AZ Korean Fellowship; and Sedona UMC continues to grow rapidly; South District – Grace UMC in Douglas; and Menlo Park UMC in hopes to encourage Hispanics.

Two new members of the New and Vital Faith team were introduced – Rev. Ki Yong Lee and Rev. Tweedy Sombrero Navarette will be resource coordinators for Korean American and Native American ministries.

Retiring ministers were recognized: Rev. Gary Kennedy, Rev. Ki Yong Lee, and Rev. Fred Steinberg. Videos of each minister were shared.

Bishop Carlo will now be Bishop of both the New Mexico as well as of the Desert Southwest Conference. He will be a busy man; many prayers are extended to him and his family as he handles two conferences.

The Laity session was amazing. Ev Taylor, PhD., Leadership Development Team, Clergy and Lay Leadership Development Committee, led the session. It was entitled *LET ME DO ALL THE GOOD I CAN – Healthy Leaders for a healthy church for a healthy world*. He presented several really good topics about leadership. He had ten tangible ways to lead volunteers. He also defined a healthy leader and characteristics of a healthy church leader, including credible, emotional and cultural intelligence, who do leaders lead, how they lead, their management skills, and how they manage change. He emphasized that having regular group celebrations is not only motivating and stress reducing, but fun! This presentation was quite eye-opening, to say the least!

(Continued on Pg. 9)

One of the break-out sessions was entitled “It’s More than Death,” led by our own Pastor Gina! She helped the group discover how grief can be experienced in other situations of loss, such as moving to a new city, division between parent and child, or even the loss of a family pet. Four key spiritual practices that can cause faith to grow include knowing your own belovedness, listening deeply, choosing joy, and metabolizing trauma. She said, “Grief is common – we know how to gather things, but not how to let go.” Phenomenal information from Gina - thank you for sharing!

On Day Two, there was much legislative work to be accomplished. There were four Constitutional Amendments voted on:

Ballot #1 - Worldwide Regionalization

Ballot #2 - Paragraph 4, Article 4 Ratification

Ballot #3 - Paragraph 5, Article 5: Racial Justice

Ballot #4 - Paragraph 35 of UM Constitution

Also voted on were resolutions regarding whether the UMC should continue to support corporations for fossil fuels overseas, and continuing CORR Ministry. The results of these votes will be posted on the conference website after all conferences have completed voting in the coming months. We also discussed the conflict of interest issue regarding our Conference’s Chancellor. For this last item, it was decided to table the vote until next year’s Annual Conference.

The Reconciling Ministries is now known as WARM – Welcoming, Affirming, Reconciling Ministries Committee. This committee has been established to be proactive in building relationships, learning, and living into all that is now possible for ministry with and for LGBTQIA+ persons. There truly was a WARM spirit at this conference, giving us hope that there will be a bright future for all persons, no matter their gender affiliation.

Which leads to this --- during the Friday afternoon plenary session, the Desert Southwest Conference adopted a resolution brought from the floor entitled “A Resolution in Response to the Southern Baptist Convention’s Call to Abolish the Right to Gay Marriage.” The resolution was introduced by Legislation Coordinator Rev. Michael Patzloff and passed by a majority vote. The resolution states the Conference’s clear opposition to that action and reaffirmed its commitment to the full inclusion and legal equality of LGBTQIA+ persons.

Quoting directly from the resolution: *We, the members of Desert Southwest Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, strongly denounce the Southern Baptist Convention’s call to abolish same-sex marriage rights, recognizing it as an unjust action rooted in fear rather than faith, and exclusion rather than love.*

One more thing to share – the 2025 mission project for Conference was to help the North District raise funds to help the 1 in 5 children in Nevada who go hungry every day. Their hope was to raise \$30,000 to help six local churches support food ministries. When Annual Conference started, about \$3,200 had been raised. As of Sunday afternoon, churches and individuals had donated \$24,225.74. June 30th will be the last day to contribute. Please ask if you are interested about where to donate funds.

Day Three was spent learning and celebrating. The day started with an inspirational message and lesson from keynote speaker Kara Lassen Oliver about *Sustaining Faith in a Vulnerable World*. There were also several choices of learning from breakout sessions focusing on the individual healthy body, mind, and soul.

The night marked a defining step in ministry for eleven individuals whose lives have been shaped by a call and confirmed by the Church. We celebrated the commissioning of our very own Reverend Gina Pollard!

(Continued from Pg. 9)

Day Four concluded the Conference. We began by worshipping together. Then the appointments of the pastors who will serve the congregations and ministries in the coming year were announced. We continued by sharing Holy Communion with the Great Thanksgiving presided by Bishop Carlo Rapanut. We were then sent off to be a healing, hopeful, justice-seeking congregation.

We encourage each of you to go to the conference website to watch the daily recaps from the conference. All sessions were recorded and can be found on the conference website dscumc.org/ac or can be found on YouTube under Desert Southwest Conference.



Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut, Bishop Sharon Olewine, and DS Melissa Rynders at the commissioning of Rev. Gina Pollard



Rev. Pollard with her mother, brother and sister-in-law after the ceremony





A New Chapter for the Conference Office Property

by [Christina Dillabough](#) | Jun 26, 2025 | [Conference Newsletter](#), [Featured-News](#)



After more than three decades of serving as the administrative home of the Desert Southwest Conference, the Conference Center building in Phoenix has been listed for sale. This decision reflects our commitment to faithful stewardship, long-term sustainability, and creative ways of supporting mission and ministry across the Conference.

As technology has improved and ministry needs shifted, so has the way we serve. Most of our Conference staff primarily work remotely, and the building sees very little use. Rather than continuing to invest in a space that no longer fits how we serve, we are exploring how to use our resources more effectively to support mission and ministry.

In 2022, the Annual Conference approved a minimum sale price of \$2.5 million. A professional appraisal completed in early 2025 estimated the current market value between \$2.6 million and \$3.6 million. With rising maintenance costs (\$100,000+ per year) and major repairs anticipated, such as a required \$250,000 elevator replacement, the Board of Trustees determined that this was the right time to take action.

The Board of Trustees, in consultation with Conference leadership, will oversee the process and finalize any sale. If the sale is completed before the 2026 Annual Conference, details will be included in the next Trustees Report. If not, an update will be provided, and the Annual Conference will have the opportunity to weigh in.

Conference Contacts

Bishop

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Conference Lay Leader

Alberta Farnsworth

East District Superintendent

Melissa Rynders

Assistant: Jeannine Marinoni

jmarinoni@dscumc.org

East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

Director of Communications
(Assistance with technology)

Christina Dillabough

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Music Director
Thomas Hartwell

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Building and Grounds Concerns
Please contact the office by phone or email so
the Property Team may be notified