



The Oasis

November 2025

Cross in the Desert UMC

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

CITD Leadership Board

Thanks to all who attended our annual Church Conference meeting on October 19th with our District Superintendent, Melissa Rynders, to conduct our necessary annual business. I'm sure we still have some copies of the report if you missed getting one.

You may have noticed, especially if you've been here in the evening, that we have a problem with our parking lot lights. Unfortunately, we've had some vandalism where someone cut all the wires at each pole. We've filed a police report and an insurance claim and will try to get it fixed as soon as possible.

The Leadership Board has been studying the book "Followers Under 40" by Rachel Gilmore and Kris Sledge this year. Next year we plan to study the book "How We Learn to Be Brave" by Mariann Edgar Budde. The book is available on Amazon in various forms and other sources if you would like to join us.

Our Apportionments are currently 20.83% paid. Our goal is to try to reach 25%, which would be a big improvement over recent years. Our average giving is running at about \$4400/week. The Financial Review for 2024 is currently underway and should be completed soon.

Planning for 2026 is well underway. Pastor Gina has prepared a draft ministry plan for 2026. Four members of the Leadership Board will be working with her to finalize it for presenting at our January Strategic Planning Session. Others are working on the 2026 Budget. All are welcome to participate in our 2026 Strategic Planning Session scheduled for January 10th if you would like to join in.

Our next Leadership Board meeting is planned to be an in-person meeting on November 25th at 7:00 PM. I want to remind you that our meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

If you have questions, concerns, feedback (positive or negative) 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
eobryan@cox.net

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Pastor's Corner



Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again when much of the country is blanketed in vibrant colors, and the crisp air reminds us that fall has arrived. Here in Arizona, the change of seasons is a bit more subtle. The air cools just enough to make evening walks comfortable again, and the sunsets seem to deepen in hue. While we may not rake piles of leaves, nature still whispers, "Change is happening."

Even when it feels like nature is slowing down, this season can herald profound growth. Many plants and trees use the cooler months to rest and strengthen their roots in preparation for new life to come. In much the same way, God invites us into seasons where things may seem quiet on the surface, yet transformation is occurring deep within. It's a time to listen, refocus, and prepare our hearts for what's next.

As we look toward the Christmas season, this is also a time of preparation for our church community. Just as we ready our homes for guests, we prepare our hearts and our sanctuary to welcome new faces—people who may be seeking hope, connection, or a reminder that they are loved. This season could be the perfect opportunity to try a new tradition, serve in a new way, or approach our interactions with a spirit of openness and hospitality.

Let's embrace the quiet beauty of this season and allow God to do the unseen work of renewal within us. May we root ourselves in grace so that, when the time comes, we can bloom with joy and generosity.

With peace and anticipation,

Pastor Gina



Birthdays

Alice Easter	November 2
Liz Shelton	November 2
Romi Simons	November 5
Stephen Parrott	November 12
Ruth Hummel	November 14
Bryan Crist	November 20
Gary Simons	November 21
Marriah Sweet	November 24



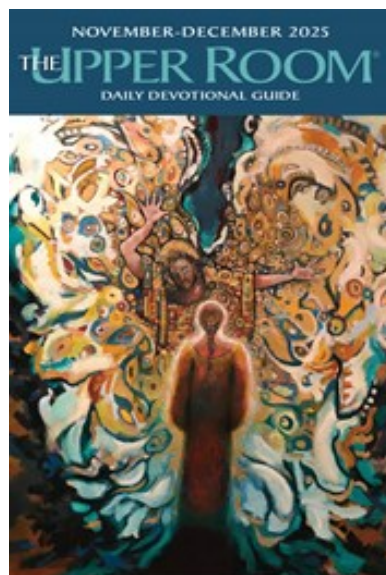
Jack & Judy Smith

November 7

Jim & Pam Dukarich

November 27

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.

The Men's Walk #269 will be January 29-February 1 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

The Women's Walk #270 will be February 12-15 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

Apply today. There are brochures and applications in the narthex.

Questions—Contact Pastor Gina or Mary Ann Crist.





Here's the status of the Together We Can Capital Campaign funds as of October 23, 2025:

As of	10/23/2025
Together We Can General Capital Campaign	
Goal	\$ 215,000.00
Received Funds	\$ 176,137.18
% of Goal	81.9%
Total Funds Spent	\$ 138,577.49
Total Funds Committed	\$ 700.00
Money left to be spent	\$ 37,559.69
Together We Can Designated for Digital Sign Expenses First from CITD Foundation	
Received Funds	\$ 45,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$ 8,402.65
Total Funds Committed	\$ 25,207.95
Money left to be spent	\$ 11,389.40

Projects completed:

- Painted Sanctuary lobby and hallways
- Replaced sanctuary lobby and hallways flooring
- Painted Guthrie exterior
- Painted Fellowship Hall/Office exterior
- Painted gazebo and paint over turquoise
- HVAC replacement for Kitchen/Library
- Painted Sanctuary interior
- Replaced Sanctuary interior flooring
- (note: Guthrie NW HVAC replaced by CITD Foundation)
- Replaced carpet in Outreach Building (except Police Room)
- Replaced carpet in the Police Room in the Outreach Building
- Removal of tree next to preschool building

Projects being worked on:

- Grass replacement and further landscaping improvements
- Digital Sign

We are currently evaluating and prioritizing the next projects to be addressed. If you have any questions or input, please see or contact Eugene O'Bryan at 602-363-4115



WHY IS THE PARKING LOT SO DARK?

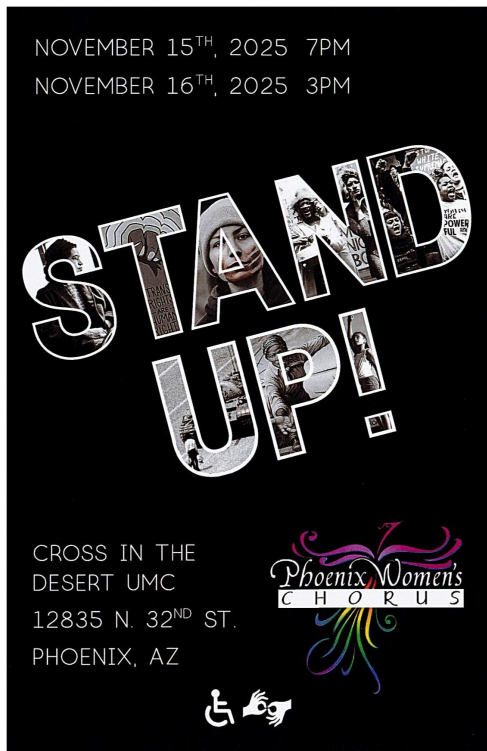
If you have come to an evening meeting recently you may have noticed that the main parking lot is unusually dark. Sometime during October we were victims of vandalism. Someone cut the wiring in all of the light poles. If you come to the church after dark for any reason, please be careful! We are in the process of dealing with the insurance company.

We all need to be partners in keeping up our campus, so if you see something that seems wrong, or needs repair, please notify Pastor Gina or the office so we can address the issue in a timely manner.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING



Invite all your friends and neighbors to join us for this fun event! Pet puppies, win a door prize, eat hot dogs and get to know the church community!



The Phoenix Women's Chorus invites you to our annual fall concert! Centered around protest songs from eras throughout history, **Stand Up!** will feature some familiar favorites, mixed with some newer compositions. You'll hear songs that celebrate our nation's diversity, that call for justice, and that rejoice in the love of one's community.

Tickets available at <https://www.azpwc.org/>



Cross in the Desert Church Blood Drive

Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025
Time: 8 a.m. - Noon
Location: Vitalant Bloodmobile in Parking Lot

Reserve your donation time, visit vitalant.org (Enter Sponsor Code: P1846), scan QR code or contact Church Office at (602) 992-1960.

Donate in November and you'll be entered for a chance to win one of two \$10,000 gift cards.

For more information visit us at vitalant.org or call 877-258-4825. Because of you, life doesn't stop.



GIVE BLOOD!
and
SAVE A LIFE



In October we collected 140 pounds of good and supplies for the PV Community Food Bank.



Thanks for supporting our World Vision child through your donations to the Missions Team. Moigua Ansu is 11 years old and lives in Sierra Leone, Africa. He is in primary school studying grade 5. World Vision staff are monitoring his well-being and currently his health is good. World Vision is helping his community by building a new water source with safe water, and teaching sanitation and hygiene. They also have a domestic violence prevention campaign. Be sure to include Moigua and his family in your prayers.



40th ANNUAL BAZAAR & CRAFT SALE

Friday November 7— Noon to 6 pm

Saturday November 8—9 am—3 pm

CrossRoads UMC

7901 N. Central Ave at Northern

All proceeds benefit the men and women with special needs who live at Lura Turner Homes, a Phoenix non-profit founded in 1965 by Methodist deaconess Lura Turner.

PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS -

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

READ PHIL. 4:4-5

What emotions do you feel as you contemplate the approaching holiday season? Peace, joy, and thankfulness? Or is the mere thought of the 2025 Thanksgiving and Christmas season already stressing you out because of all the shopping that needs to be done, the cooking and cleaning and guests and gifts and parties?

We're all commonly encouraged to remember the true spirit of the holy-day season and that is why I think Phil. 4:4-5 is so important for us. **Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice.** When things are going as we like, we can easily rejoice in the lord and be thankful, can't we? However, when things aren't going so well, rejoicing and being thankful then, not so much.

But, when things aren't going so well - we can still have an attitude of thanksgiving towards God. What we need to do is, remind ourselves that God loves us. Really, truly loves us with the purest of love and when we get that and believe in God's immense love for us when life goes sideways and it often does, we will be able to trust that the mighty God will accomplish good for us through those trials. We will also be able to have an attitude of gratitude through the trials of life. Because when someone truly loves us, as God does, we know He has our best interests in mind.

To help me keep my eyes on Jesus thru the coming holy-day preparations, I got a jar and paper and I am going to write **AT LEAST** one thing each day I have to be grateful for. Then when the jar is filled to overflowing on New Year's Day, I am going to dump them out and read each one and praise God for all He has done for me. I think that will start my 2026 off just perfectly.

I encourage you, later tonight or tomorrow before all the holiday crazies begin, to get a jar, start a gratitude journal or just make a daily list of all the good things God has given you and put that list or journal or jar where you can see it often. So when the holiday crazies begin we will not struggle with whether God loves and cares about us. We can visibly see and remember all the things God has blessed us with. This just might help each one of us to have an attitude of gratitude and trust through Thanksgiving Day and Christmas and beyond.

WALK WORTHY

PRAYER

Glorious and mighty God, we come before you now in an attitude of gratitude for all you have done in each of our lives. Just as the Pilgrims faced enormous struggles to persevere through the first Thanksgiving, we ask that you strengthen and be with each of us as we face our own challenges. Surround us with a hedge of protection against the world that we may be comforted and embraced in your presence now and always. In Jesus of Nazareth's name we pray. Amen.

East District Prayer Focus for November

The Fountains, a UMC—Fountain Hills

Rev. David Felten

Tongan UMC—Mesa

Pastor Taike Lolohea

UMC of Casa Grande—Casa Grande

Pastor Steve Gregory

PRAY
without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17

COME JOIN US UPCOMING EVENTS...

November

POSTCARDS & PANCAKES



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16 | 11:00 AM-12:00 PM

Postcards & Pancakes – Sunday, November 16 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join us after worship for another round of postcard writing and pancake flipping! This fall's **Postcards & Pancakes Party** invites our church family, friends, and neighbors to share their voices with state and national representatives.

With a vote just in our rearview mirrors, we'll focus on encouraging our leaders to act in the best interests of Arizonans. Postcards, prompts, and pancakes will be provided—just bring your good will (and stamps if you have some to share). All are welcome!

Dinner and Dialogue November 20 at 6:00 pm



Friendsgiving Potluck!

Saturday November 22 at 5:00 pm

Mark your calendar and save the date for a fellowship meal to celebrate Thanksgiving. Know a friend who will be alone for the holiday?

Be sure to invite family and friends to join us.



Saturday November 29 10:00 am

Come help us decorate the sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas season! Please contact Julie Wagner if you will be able to join the gang of decorating elves.



ADVENT

What Do You Fear?

November 30	Sunday	First Sunday in Advent	10:00 am
December 3	Wednesday	Community Coffee	11 am—1 pm
December 3	Wednesday	Advent Study	5:30 pm
December 7	Sunday	Second Sunday in Advent	10:00 am
December 10	Wednesday	Advent Study	5:30 pm
December 14	Sunday	Third Sunday in Advent	10:00 am
December 17	Wednesday	Advent Study	5:30 pm
December 20	Saturday	Food With Friends	5:00 pm
December 21	Sunday	Fourth Sunday in Advent	10:00 am
December 21	Sunday	Blue Christmas Service	5:30 pm
December 24	Wednesday	Christmas Eve Service	6:00 pm
December 28	Sunday	First Sunday of Christmas	10:00 am
January 4	Sunday	Epiphany Sunday	10:00 am



Coming in January...

January 10th

9:00 am until 3:00 pm

2026 Ministry Planning Session

Plan to come and share your ideas for
2026 at CITD!





United
Women
in Faith

November Meetings of UWFaith

November 1	UWF Planning Meeting	10:30 am	Bring a sack lunch
November 6	UWF Leadership Team	10:00 am	Library
November 15	UWF Unit Meeting	10:00 am	
November 18	Devotions & Dinner	6:30 pm	
Meet at Flower Child at Desert Ridge, then Christmas Shopping for Wesley Community Center			
November 20	Bookworms United	10:00 am	Zoom
Book — <i>River Sing Me Home</i> by Eleanor Shearer			

Congratulations to Gretchen Miller, who was elected conference Treasurer at the Desert Southwest United Women in Faith Annual Celebration at Willowbrook UMC on October 25.

November Unit Meeting (United Women in Faith):

Everyone is invited to attend

Fellowship Hall November 15, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

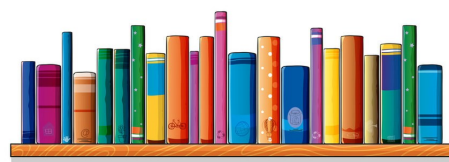
World Thank Offering Program

Speaker from Wesley Community Center, Maria Luz Saldana, Youth Services Director

A soup lunch will follow.

Attention Readers!

It's time to get your reading list for 2025 completed and turned in to Ada Thompson by November 15.



Save the Date!

December 6

Installation of Officers and Brunch





Desert Southwest Conference

The United Methodist Church

Excerpts from Bishop Rapanut's Pastoral Letter of October 28, 2025:

Beloved Desert Southwest and New Mexico Conference United Methodists,

Greetings in the name of Jesus, the Bread of Life.

This coming weekend on November 1st, 42 million Americans who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will not receive their benefits because of the ongoing government shutdown. This is according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website that says that "the well has run dry." SNAP is a federal program often called "food stamps" that provides low-income families with monthly benefits in order to afford healthy food. This will yet be another dire effect of the shutdown which is already in its fourth week. affects our personal and community lives. In Matthew 14 we find the disciples going to Jesus with the need to feed a hungry multitude in the midst of their own hunger. Their proposition was to send the crowd away to find food for themselves to which he responds, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (Matthew 14:16, NRSVUE) and from the little food that they could find, the multitude was fed.

Beloved, this is our call to action at this time. **Give them something to eat.** feed the multitude.

October 31st is traditionally celebrated as Halloween with an exorbitant amount spent on costumes worn and candies to be given away.

- What would it look like if rather than spending on candies and costumes, we would donate money instead to local food pantries, many of which are ran from our churches?
- If you can't forego giving out candies and dressing up because of tradition, which I respect, what about matching the amount you spend on them and donating that to food pantries?
- What about instead of giving out candy, you would give basic, healthy grocery supplies to children and families who come to your door? Or perhaps a gift card to buy groceries or gas? Maybe do that on top of giving out candy if you are able.
- If there are families affected by the shutdown in your own congregations and communities, ask them what they need and see how you and the church can come alongside them.

In the Desert Southwest Conference, we are convening and strategizing with food pantries and ministries throughout the Conference about how to meet this need. Here's how you can take part: [learn more and register to join the zoom on this link](#).

Beloved, I pray that we would be the answer to the very words we regularly pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." May we the church be to our hungry siblings the embodiment of Jesus, the bread of life who promised that whoever comes to him will never be hungry and whoever believes will never be thirsty (John 6:35). May it be so.

Sincerely, Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut

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

jmarinoni@dscumc.org

East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

Director of Communications

(Assistance with technology)

Christina Dillabough

cdillabough@dscumc.org



Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church
12835 N. 32nd Street
Phoenix, AZ 85032
Phone: 602-992-1960
E-mail: citd@crossinthedesert.org
Website: <https://www.crossinthedesert.org>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CrossintheDesertUMC>



Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

Pastor

Rev. Gina Pollard
pastorgina@crossinthedesert.org

Youth and Technology Coordinator
Kevin Joy

Administrative Assistant

Julie Wagner
citd@crossinthedesert.org

Music Director
Thomas Hartwell

Financial Secretary

Alice Easter
finance@crossinthedesert.org

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