



The Oasis

April 2026

Cross in the Desert UMC

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



Hosanna!

Cross in the Desert opened Holy Week with a procession of waving palms to commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem! We partnered with Cross Roads UMC for combined Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. This led to jubilant celebrations of the resurrection on Easter Sunday!



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Pastor's Corner



Dear Beloved Church Family,

As we step into April, my heart is still full from the beauty of our Easter celebration. What a glorious morning it was to proclaim together, "He is risen!" The joy on your faces, the voices lifted in praise, and the fellowship we shared reminded me once again why we gather—to celebrate the resurrection power that changes everything. Christ's victory over death continues to transform our lives, not just on Easter Sunday, but every single day.

Spring has arrived in the desert with its own unique splendor. The wildflowers are painting our landscape in brilliant colors, and the temperatures are perfect for enjoying God's creation. This is our golden season here in Phoenix, when the harshness of winter's chill has passed and we haven't yet entered the intensity of summer heat. Let's take time to appreciate these beautiful days—they're a gift from our Creator.

As the seasons change, we're also experiencing transitions in our church family. Our winter visitors are beginning their journeys back to their summer homes, and we want you to know how much you've blessed us during your time here. Your presence, your service, your fellowship, and your faithful worship have enriched our community. We pray for safe travels and look forward to welcoming you back when the desert calls you home again this fall. You remain in our hearts and prayers even when miles separate us.

For those of us who call Phoenix home year-round, now is the time to prepare—both practically and spiritually—for the summer months ahead. As we ready our homes and adjust our schedules for the heat, let's also prepare our hearts to be the church throughout the quieter summer season. This is an opportunity to deepen our relationships, serve our community, and grow in faith together.

May this April be a month of gratitude for the resurrection, appreciation for the beauty around us, fond farewells to traveling friends, and intentional preparation for the season ahead.

In Christ's love,

Rev. Gina



April Birthdays

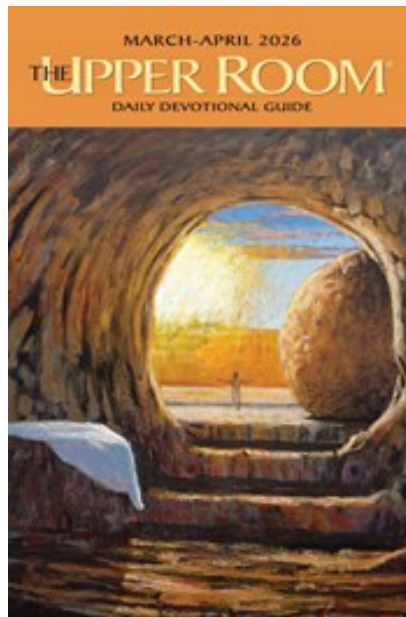
Jack Robinson	April 1
Ray Roop	April 2
Elizabeth Robinson	April 5
Rachelle Skarr	April 5
Millie Tobias	April 13
Robert Sanders	April 14
Hank Hendrickson	April 17
Tony Menendez	April 18
Dave Delster	April 19
Daisy Pleake	April 20
Phillip Miller	April 21
Ada Thompson	April 21
Becky Gaylor	April 22
Rhonda Falknor	April 23
Kristin O'Shaughnessy	April 27
Naomi Mills	April 30
Jeff Moore	April 30

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Gary & Romi Simons

April 10

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.



The *Upper Room* makes a perfect devotional, so be sure to pick one up today. It is available in a large print version as well as a regular print compact version that is perfect for pocket or purse.

A small donation is appreciated if you are able, but feel free to take one even if you can't donate.



There is a Chrysalis Flight scheduled for July 10-12 at Christ Community United Methodist Church in Avondale.

Chrysalis is for teens age 14-18. Questions Contact Mary Ann Crist or azemmaus.org.



I'm very happy to report that we are now at 96.6% of our General Capital Campaign Goal so we are well on our way to meet or exceed our goal of \$215,000 by the end of the year. Projects outside the original Together We Can Campaign have also run through the Together We Can designated account, but we're keeping the reporting separate below. Our 96.6% progress does not count the other \$198,000 in additional projects funded by the CITD Foundation.

Summary of Together We Can Status as of	3/19/2026
Together We Can General Capital Campaign	
Goal	\$ 215,000.00
Received Funds	\$ 207,672.18
% of Goal	96.6%
Total Funds Spent	\$ 148,787.97
Total Funds Committed	\$ -
Money left to be spent	\$ 58,884.21
TWC 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
TWC Designated for Sewer Expenses First from CITD Foundation	
Received Funds	\$ 120,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$ 120,000.00
Total Funds Committed	\$ -
Money left to be spent	\$ -
TWC Designated for Repaying Preschool from CITD Foundation	
Received Funds	\$ 33,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$ 33,000.00
Total Funds Committed	\$ -
Money left to be spent	\$ -

Projects in progress:

- Digital Sign

- Grass replacement and further landscaping improvements

If you have any questions or input, please see or contact Eugene O'Bryan at 602-363-4115

CITD Leadership Board

We will be sharing with Mission Bell UMC when our new Pastor comes in July. Both of us have our service times at 10:00 AM. The plan is for one of us to move to 9:00 AM, and the other move to 11:00 AM so that he has time to travel between the two locations. Final determination on this will be made soon. We should be ready to announce which time slot we will have and when this will be implemented on Sunday, April 12th.

Please see the Together We Can Campaign details elsewhere in the Oasis, but I do want to say that we have reached 96.6% in achieving our original \$215,000 goal. Our grass replacement landscaping project is still progressing as we are continuing to meet with the landscape architect firm to finalize plans. You will also start to notice preparations such as spraying the grass to kill weeds and then to kill the grass. The digital sign still appears to be in the stage of getting approval with the city of Phoenix. Hopefully, this will get resolved soon.

If you have any 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, Ada Thompson, Rhonda Mortenson, Wanda Picciotti, Kristin O'Shaughnessy, Philip Botts, or Melanie Konski. This is also a reminder that Leadership Board meetings are open for you except when we are in Executive Session.

In His service,

Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson
CITD Leadership Board
Cell: 602-363-4115
eobryan@cox.net



Community Outreach

Thanks to everyone who brought their orange bags on March 8. The Food Bank was thrilled to receive 365 pounds of food and goods through your generosity!

National/International Outreach

Thank you for your support of UMCOR on Sunday March 15th. You donated \$ 1,013 to be sent for the administrative costs of UMCOR. This allows donations later in the year to go 100% to disaster response.



Uptown Phoenix Denny's Salutes Bus Boy's' 48th Anniversary

Denny's at Seventh Street and Camelback Road, Phoenix, celebrates hardworking and customer favorite Barney M's 48th year as the longest serving bus boy in Denny's corporate history. The public is invited to this momentous occasion, **2 to 9 p.m., Wednesday, April 8th, 2026**. Founded by Methodist deaconess Lura Turner, this ministry has served the Valley's special needs community for over 60 years. To support this central Phoenix non-profit, Denny's donates 20 percent of all dine-in and take-out purchases to Lura Turner Homes.

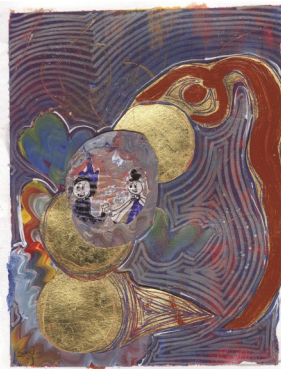
From Max McQueen: Greetings from Lura Turner Homes for Adults with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. Above is information regarding Barney Mullen, a long-time resident of Lura Turner Homes, a central Phoenix ministry for adults with special needs. Methodist deaconess Lura Turner founded this non-profit in 1965. That means that for over 60 years, Lura Turner Homes has benefited GREATLY from the faithful support of numerous local churches and social service organizations. For 48 of those years, Barney has been a bus boy at the Denny's on 7th Street and Camelback Road, Phoenix. He is such a beloved employee the restaurant is known as "Barney's Denny's" in the neighborhood. Turns out, Barney has worked longer at the same Denny's than any employee in the company's corporate history. To celebrate this accomplishment, Barney invites EVERYONE to this special occasion. So on Barney's behalf, I ask that you forward this invitation via all the ways you communicate with your church family. Thank you and God bless you,

Sincerely, Max McQueen, Executive director, Lura Turner Homes for Adults with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities

LTH's Office phone: 602-943-4789; Max McQueen's email: maxm@luraturnerhomes.org.

Many thanks to the Lenten Study soup makers. They nourished our bodies while the artwork, scripture and discussion nourished our minds and souls.

We had an amazing variety of delicious soups lovingly prepared by Carol, Arvilla, Ada, Julie, Wanda, Cathy, Kristin, Phillip, Kathleen, Mary Nell, Mary, Karen, and Rose. And to Alice, who brought fresh bread every week. Each of you is much appreciated.



Postcards and Popcorn

Several gathered after church on March 8th to write postcards to elected officials. Comments were expressed on several of Arizona bills being considered regarding changes in the voting process. Cards were written to both Arizona officials and U.S. Congressmen.







COME JOIN US UPCOMING EVENTS...

MINDFULNESS RESET SESSION

A FREE COMMUNITY EVENING OF MEDITATION, MOVEMENT + PRESENCE



 THURSDAY, APRIL 9TH
 7:00 - 8:00 PM
 CITD SANCTUARY
 ALSO LIVESTREAM ON YOUTUBE

LED BY MARIEL WILK / OPEN TO ALL — BRING A FRIEND!



Food with Friends Potluck

Saturday April 18 at 5:00 pm

Join us in Fellowship Hall for a potluck meal. Bring a dish to share and your own table service. Contact Cathy Milford if you have any questions

Save the Date!

May 16th 7:00 pm

May 17 1:00 pm

The Phoenix Women's Chorus returns for performances of

Wild, Wild Women

Ticket information will be on their website

<https://www.azpwc.org/>



PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love.

Courage is a strength or power to meet a scary circumstance head on. It's what we call upon whenever we confront a difficult, frightening, painful or disturbing situation when our resources are pushed to the absolute limit and our first instinctive reaction is to run.

Courage comes into play when morality and spirituality are at stake. Moral or spiritual courage is what motivates us to do the right thing, to right a wrong, to take a stand for some deeply held moral principle or spiritual value despite the personal price or public opinion. This kind of courage is exemplified by Jesus' crisis of courage in the Garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me."

True courage comes only from total surrender to Jesus Christ, from placing our lives entirely into His hands and declaring, "Do with me what you will." Only when we have let go of our own lives can we be truly courageous for God. Only when we are not clinging to our rights, our ambitions and our security can we boldly face any and every danger for His sake and change the world for Christ.

This is the kind of courage we are called to pursue, a courage that shrinks from nothing because we know our life is entirely in God's hands. Cultivating this kind of courage in this life cannot be done in our own strength. Courage is only cultivated when we lay our lives at His feet without reserve - when we offer our life to Him a living sacrifice, holding nothing back.

True courage is available to every child of the King and it is ours for the asking. Get alone with your King and freshly consecrate your life to Him. When you place yourself entirely in His hands you will be able to face any and every challenge or difficulty with a courage that will baffle and astound the world.

WALK WORTHY

PRAYER: We turn to you, our God and thank you for loving us just as we are. You fill us with your love and goodness because you created us. May we bring life to our world and may you be satisfied with us. In Christ's mighty name. Amen.

East District Prayer Focus for April

Red Mountain UMC —Mesa
Rev. Sandra Lynn Johnson

Scottsdale UMC—Scottsdale
Rev. Jamie Booth

Shepherd of the Pines—Overgaard
Pastor Winona Dye

PRAY
without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17



UWFaith continues to collect and distribute feminine products to middle schools. Donations are appreciated and can be placed in the basket at the entrance to Fellowship Hall. All donations help in our effort to support our schools and young women.

The **Leadership Team** will meet Thursday, April 2 at 10 am in the CITD library.

Mary Martha will meet on Wednesday, April 8, 9:30 am, at the home of Carol Monsma. Carol will present the program, and we will celebrate Ada, Becky, and Celia's birthdays.

Devotions and Dinner will meet at Picazzo's Healthy Italian Kitchen, 4669 E Cactus Rd, on Tuesday, April 21 at 6:30 pm.

Bookworms will meet on Thursday, April 16 at 10:00 via ZOOM. The book for April is *The Girl With the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare. You can find the link in "It's Happening Here." Join us for a lively discussion. New readers are always welcome!

April 26 in United Women in Faith Sunday - The worship service will highlight our mission work to improve the lives of women, children, and youth.



United Women in Faith
 Unit Celebration
 Saturday, May 2 ~ 10:00 am
 CITD Fellowship Hall



Celia Stober, Kathleen Boos, Mary Nell Woodward, Ada Thompson, Kathy Seward, Kathie Hazen, and Carol Monsma with their harvests.

Mary Martha Circle

The March meeting of Mary Martha Circle featured a visit to an urban garden at the home of Celia Stober. Members were all able to harvest vine-ripened tomatoes to take home!





East District
Desert Southwest Conference
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



AND LET IT BEGIN WITH ME
JEREMIAH 17:14 | PSALM 51:10



West District
Desert Southwest Conference
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

March 6, 2026

Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church
12835 N. 32nd St.
Phoenix, AZ. 85032

Dear Members and Friends of Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church:

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

After a time of consultation and prayer, Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut intends to appoint Pastor Tu’ulauena Lolohea to serve two churches, effective July 1, 2026. Pastor Lolohea will serve as pastor of Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church, less than full-time, and also as pastor of Mission Bell United Methodist Church in Glendale, AZ., less than full-time. Pastor Tu’ulau currently serves as pastor of the Sanctuary Campus of St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Tucson, AZ.

Pastor Tu’ulau is an enthusiastic, community-based pastor who loves to meet those in his current church as well as those on the outside who might become part of his church. He has a heart for pastoral care and is always seeking ways to encourage leaders to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Pastor Lolohea has a passion for finding ways to help churches connect their faith to their daily lives and connect with the greater community around them. He and his family are looking forward to involving themselves in the lives of both Cross in the Desert and Mission Bell.

The Bishop and Cabinet are praying for you as you take time to honor and celebrate Rev. Gina and then welcome Pastor Tu’ulau into your presence. We pray you will know and feel God’s presence and peace in all that you do.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Melissa Rynders,
East/West District Missional Strategist and Superintendent

cc: Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut, Julie O’Neal, Rev. Gina Pollard, Pastor Tu’ulauena Lolohea



Solidarity Fund: The Annual Conference Mission Project

Published on Mar 05, 2026 Annual Conference East District Newsletter Justice and Community Development News North District Newsletter South District Newsletter West District Newsletter

The theme for this year's Annual conference is "We Are the Church Together," based on Acts 2:42-47 and Ephesians 4:11-16, the second in our vision of becoming "A Healthy Church for a Healthy World."

As we think about being a healthy church this year, we hope to provide tools for our churches to provide resources for their congregations and neighbors. This year's annual conference mission project directly aligns by providing funds for churches to be the true hands and feet of God as we protect and care for those most impacted by the threats and fears to immigrants. The Solidarity Fund is one tool that churches can act on our call to faithfully serve our neighbors.

We already have requests to support congregations serving those most impacted – so your help is truly needed!

We have both a monetary and participation goal this year, set based on previous projects and with the intent to literally show our community what a healthy church really looks like:

- We hope to grow the Solidarity Fund to at least \$40,000 by the end of June.
 - To show our solidarity as a unified body, our goal is to receive at least 1,800 individual donations, roughly 10% of our annual conference membership.
- Because our collective action is an important witness to show the love of our members and the love of God.

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: Christina Dillabough
cdillabough@dscumc.org

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Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

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Julie Wagner
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Financial Secretary

Alice Easter
finance@crossinthedesert.org

Youth and Technology Coordinator

Kevin Joy

Music Director

Thomas Hartwell

Building and Grounds Concerns

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