



The Oasis

February 2026

Cross in the Desert UMC

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

CITD Leadership Board

The Leadership Board and other members of the congregation met to work on Cross in the Desert's 2026 Ministry Plan, "Love in Action", based on Romans 12:9-10 which urges Christians to live their faith through genuine, active love: be sincere, hate evil, cling to good, show brotherly affection and honor others above themselves. Specific actions were identified for the following goal areas: Welcoming, Serving, and Loving. Captains were recruited for each goal area with the idea of recruiting teams and identifying the top three actions items for each. Look for more information as these begin taking shape and prayerfully consider your participation in these activities.

As you should all be aware of by now, Pastor Gina is being reassigned as a full-time Associate Pastor to Paradise Valley United Methodist Church effective July 1, 2026. Pastor Gina will continue to be our Pastor though June 30th. In the meantime, your Leadership Board will be working closely with our District Superintendent, Rev. Melissa Rynders, on the pastoral needs for our next appointment.

The Leadership Board approved new Safer Sanctuaries Guidelines. As Christians and United Methodists, we are concerned for the care and well-being of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care. More details on these guidelines will follow separately, which will include training requirements and background checks.

We paid \$21,551.31, or 45.83%, of our assigned Apportionments for 2025 which was the highest percentage in recent years. Most of this was thanks to the "tithing" plan from the CITD Foundation. The Foundation works from any donation made to the church and then pays an additional 10% that is used for Apportionments. The source of the \$21,551.31 was as follows: \$16,344.00 from CITD Foundation, \$4,147.31 from the General Fund, and \$1,060.00 from the Angel Tree donations.

I would like to thank the members of the Leadership Board who just finished their term: Romi Simons, Brooke Henry, and Jonathan Foster. I would like to welcome Philip Botts and Melanie Konski to the Leadership Board and thank Mary Nell Woodward, who agreed to serve one more year. Thanks also to the rest of the Leadership Board who are continuing to serve (all current Board members listed below).

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

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Pastor's Corner



Staying the Course, Staying Tethered

These are unsettling times.

The world feels louder, sharper, and more unpredictable than many of us remember. Headlines change by the hour. The ground beneath us can feel unsteady. Fear has a way of sneaking into our conversations, our prayers, and even our sleep.

And yet—into moments just like these, Scripture offers us something steady.

The prophet Micah does not give us a complicated roadmap for uncertain days. Instead, Micah offers a clear, grounding call:

“What does God require of you
but to do justice,
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

When the world feels like it’s shifting beneath our feet, Micah reminds us that faith is not about chasing certainty or predicting outcomes. Faith is about staying the course. It’s about choosing, again and again, to orient our lives toward justice, kindness, and humility—especially when fear tempts us to turn inward or pull away.

Doing justice means we refuse to numb ourselves to the pain of others. We stay attentive to who is being harmed, excluded, or silenced, and we ask how our love, our voice, and our presence might matter.

Loving kindness means we lead with compassion, even when it would be easier to harden our hearts. It means choosing generosity over suspicion, mercy over judgment, and grace over fear.

Walking humbly with God means remembering that we do not walk this road alone. We stay tethered—to prayer, to community, to the deep assurance that God’s presence does not disappear when the world feels unstable. Humility keeps us grounded. It reminds us that we don’t have to have all the answers to remain faithful.

At Cross in the Desert, staying tethered to God looks like continuing to show up—for worship, for one another, for our neighbors. It looks like telling the truth about our fears while refusing to let fear be the loudest voice shaping who we are. It looks like trusting that God is still at work, even when the path ahead is unclear.

So let us stay the course.

Let us keep walking the ancient, faithful path Micah lays before us.

Let us remain rooted in love, anchored in hope, and tethered to the God who walks with us—now and always.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Gina Pollard



*Happy
Anniversary*

Emma Goodwin	February 1
Nancy Moller	February 2
Paula Paris	February 3
Karen Cahill	February 4
Leeanna Moore	February 8
Dave Harlan	February 10
Karma Quammen	February 11
Sherry Lindeman	February 16
Pam Dugarich	February 19
Cathy Milford	February 21
Jack Harvey	February 22
Maisie Goodwin	February 26
Dorothy Sanders	February 26
Bradleigh Foster	February 28

Curt & Heather Robinson

February 24

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.



Lenten Sermon Series—Tell Me Something Good

Ash Wednesday	February 18	7:00 pm
Lenten Study and Soup Suppers		5:45 pm

February 25

March 4

March 11

March 18

March 25

Palm Sunday	March 29	10:00 am
Maundy Thursday	April 2	6:00 pm
Good Friday	April 3	6:00 pm

at Cross Roads UMC

Easter Sunday	April 5	6:30 am 10:00 am
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HAPPY 38TH ANNIVERSARY TO OUR FOUNDATION

CITD Foundation was established January 15th, 1988, for the purpose of creating a 501(c)(3) corporation for the benefit of CITD and a vehicle to receive donations. Due to the generosity of George and Blanche Tabler, who were charter members of CITD, their estate provided the initial gift of \$50,00.00 in real estate and \$150,000 in a trust fund that they designated for capital improvements. The funds have grown dramatically to provide benefits for CITD in many ways.

It has continued to exist over the years and has funded various projects from youth scholarships, parking lot resurfacing, and recent \$120,000 expense for the remediation of plumbing issues. And, most recently, the Foundation funded \$33,000 to reimburse capital improvements made by our preschool tenant. Therefore, you can see the need for a foundation to ensure the long-term financial health and stability of the church, allowing it to fulfill its mission without relying solely on the operating budget.

How the Foundation operates is quite simple. Because we are 100% invested in DSUMF who then combines investment power with WESPATH. We not only get the benefit of socially responsible investing but also the power from pooled assets of other faith-based entities. CITD earned 12.9% in return on investment in 2025. DSUMF also has experts who can assist you with estate planning.

Decision making of how funds are spent is by the Board when considering Grant Requests. The Foundation has not made a fund-raising effort in many years and has not competed with the TOGETHER WE CAN campaign. That said, we will always welcome any donations that come our way.

Your 2026 Board of Directors is Aaron Francis, President, Curt Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Directors Kathleen Boos, Dave Delster and Cathy Milford. Currently, there are three vacancies on the Board which should be filled. Please contact Rev Gina or a Board member if you wish to serve. Your help and input are welcomed and needed.

The future of the Foundation is up to you. The Board of Directors establishes spending goals each year but has not identified specifics beyond that. What do you want from your Foundation? Simply continue to be the safety net of the Church. Do you want it to sponsor specific projects? Do you have a fundraising idea you want the Board to try? There are opportunities, but we need to hear from you about your wishes. Every one of us should endeavor to find a way that will support the foundation to invest in the future of our church and community.

It is important for you to know that the Foundation operates under the regulations provided in the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act and all Board members agree to do so by signing a Code of Conduct document. All documents of the Foundation are open to you to examine as you wish.

As Jesus teaches generosity: **"Give, and it will be given to you."**



Projects outside the General Together Campaign projects have also run through the Together We Can account, but we're keeping the reporting separate below. Here's the status of the Together We Can Capital Campaign funds as of January 23, 2026:

As of	1/23/2026
Together We Can General Capital Campaign	
Goal	\$ 215,000.00
Received Funds	\$ 192,762.18
% of Goal	89.7%
Total Funds Spent	\$ 145,115.07
Total Funds Committed	\$ -
Money left to be spent	\$ 47,647.11
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
TWC Designated for Repaying Preschool from CITD Foundation	
Received Funds	\$ 33,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$ 33,000.00

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

2026 Ministry Plan

LOVE IN ACTION

Romans 12:9-10 is a New Testament Passage urging Christians to live their faith through genuine, active love: be sincere, hate evil, cling to good, show brotherly affection and honor others above themselves. With this passage as a centering focus, the Leadership Board and interested CITD members worked with the theme, "Welcoming, Loving and Serving for all People". The working groups came up with 3 main goals for our CITD Ministry in 2026:

- Creating a Culture of Radical Hospitality
- Embody Christ's love through authentic relationships
- Serving: Hands and Feet of Christ

Living this vision together requires us to set goals, share mission moments and progress with an annual review at church conference in the fall.

There was a lot of discussion, evaluation and reflection, but to make the CITD 2026 Ministry Plan workable, the team prioritized specific actions for each of the goals. Members in this meeting have volunteered to assist in the development and implementation of specific actions and plans. You may be contacted to assist in a specific area. If you have questions please chat with Leadership Board Members, friends or Pastor Gina.

Welcoming

Revamp and volunteer at the welcoming table for attendance and accessibility services each Sunday
Spring Fair/Blessings/ Classes/ Non-Profits (TBD)

Serving

Support First Responders in our community and Global Minds Preschool.
Continue to look for, and engage in, opportunities to engage with the community outside the church to bring love and help.

Loving

Visitor Follow-up, Congregational Care and Transportation

Over the past two years we have had a Strategic Plan and items on that plan will continue to be addressed and activities continued. The 2026 Ministry Plan will work in conjunction with our strategic plan.

Meeting Summary submitted by Wanda Picciotti

"Let love be genuine: love one another: outdo one another in showing honor"

Leadership Board Approves Updated Safer Sanctuaries Guidelines By: Karen Bulkeley

Did you know that, since 2010, CITD has had Safer Sanctuary guidelines in place? Some of you may be asking, "what are Safer Sanctuary Guidelines, and why do we need them?"

For many years, the United Methodist Church has required local churches to have in place guidance to help leaders and volunteers understand how to prevent abuse, protect themselves from false allegations, and learn what and how to report suspected maltreatment of children and youth. More recently the UMC has advised churches of the need to add protections for vulnerable adults. At the January Leadership Board meeting updates to our existing guidelines were approved to align with these expectations. Additionally, a section on addressing bullying was added to the guidelines.

Here are a few highlights of the guidelines:

- All staff and volunteers who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults must attend training and complete a criminal background check before working with these populations. The training is now available through an online portal, and once the training is complete, a background check will be initiated by an independent party. Information on whether or not the prospective volunteer has passed the background check will be relayed

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Annual Report to the Church Congregation: Foundation Funds Utilization in 2025

Stewardship of Resources for Our Collective Mission to Inspire Philanthropy and Promote God's Love.

Dear Congregation,

We are pleased to present a detailed account of how the funds from our Foundation accounts were invested and spent during the year 2025. It is our duty and commitment to maintain transparency and demonstrate our fiscal responsibility in stewarding the resources entrusted to us.

As you can see in the illustration, the Endowed Funds and Unrestricted Funds are invested with Desert Southwest United Methodist Foundation. These accounts are invested in areas that will ensure both the growth and stability of our financial resources while aligning with our values and mission. The core values of our portfolio are Christ-Centered, socially responsible investments as well as diversified across various sectors to mitigate risks and maximize returns.

Please contact Foundation President Jeff Bulkeley if you have questions, concerns or have interest in serving on the Foundation Board of Directors. We welcome your participation and feedback.

CITD Foundation Financial Summary for 2025

2025		1/1/2025	12/31/2025
DSUMF Restricted		\$323,880.86	\$179,713.93
DSUMF Unrestricted		\$296,218.44	\$296,176.08
InterFaith Savings		\$5,818.51	\$8,844.45
Total		\$625,917.81	\$484,734.46
Contributions			\$200.00
Grants			
A/C Unit			\$13,437.00
Digital Sign			\$45,000.00
Foundation Brochures			\$550.00
Operating Expenses			\$15,000.00
Sewer Repair			\$120,000.00
Apportionments			\$19,344.00
Total Grants			\$213,331.00
Approved, payable in 2026			
Pre School Payoff			\$33,000.00
Apportionments			\$3,300.00
Total Approved, Not Paid			\$36,300.00



Heart Keepers: Care for the Caregiver *Reframing the Caregiver Experience*

Caregivers give endlessly—but who takes care of *them*? Join us for **Heart Keepers**, a half-day mini conference designed to restore, encourage, and reframe the caregiving journey with hope and purpose.

This year's program features a powerful keynote from **Duet: Partners in Aging**, "*Finding Meaning and Hope in Your Caregiving Journey*," along with an interactive, guided self-care experience led by **Mariel Wilk**, expert in mindfulness, somatic movement, and subconscious reprogramming.

The morning includes light refreshments, community connection, inspiring speakers, and a shared lunch. Whether you are a caregiver or support someone who is, this **free** gathering offers space to breathe, reflect, and be renewed.

Get registered today: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/heart-keepers-reframing-the-caregiver-experience-tickets-1979098010425?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Mark your calendar and plan to join us.

Paradise Valley Community Food Bank thanks us for our latest Orange Bag Sunday! We were able to donate **300.5** pounds of food. Plan for the next event. Orange bags will be distributed on Sunday March 1, and will be collected on Sunday March 8. Shop the sales and increase your impact in reaching out to our community.



Food with Friends

Saturday, February 21 at 4:00 pm

Bring a dish to share and your appetite as we fellowship together!



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confidentially back to the church. This process is repeated once every three years for continuing volunteers. Individuals new to the church must wait six months before volunteering to work directly with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Staff and volunteers should be adhering to the "Rule of Three" at all times. This means that there should be three people together at all times for church activities, if participants include children, youth or vulnerable adults.

This includes accompanying an individual to a restroom or providing transportation on behalf of the church.

Staff and volunteers are required to follow state law to report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children or vulnerable adults.

Everyone has the responsibility to treat each other with respect and refrain from bullying, including cyber-bullying. Individuals who witness victimization are called on to stop it and/or report the concerns to a trusted leader or the pastor.

Current volunteers who are working with children, youth or vulnerable adults are encouraged to speak to their leader/coordinator to learn more about training and background checks. The complete Safer Sanctuaries Guidelines can be found on the church's website, or you can see me for more information.

PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

Thanks to modern technology we learn what is happening as it happens which can be distressing.

Sometimes we may long for the "good old days". The days we grew up in may seem like a much simpler time. But, just because we didn't hear about the problems, doesn't mean they didn't exist in the "good old days".

Were the ancient of days really that good? (Genesis) All the same unthinkable things that are in our headlines now were happening thousands of years ago. Abel and Cain, brother killing brother and in Genesis 37 a boy named Joseph, Jacob's beloved son, is sold into slavery by his brothers.

It's disheartening to know that "things" haven't changed much in thousands of years. Maybe none of us has sold anyone into slavery or committed murder. But, perhaps one or two of us has participated in gossip or been prideful? Scripture is clear, gossip and pride are as great a sin as murder. It is all the same to God who tells us he cannot look on any sin. What is the problem that the world cannot seem to stop sinning?

Because it's a heart problem. Sin is a product of the heart problem. Things cannot change until hearts change. There is only one who can change hearts and that's Jesus the Christ. When empty, broken hearts are filled with the love of Christ, sin will fade for there is no room for it where God lives. "Things" cannot and will not change until hearts change. It's really quite simple, Jesus is the always solution.

Let's pray for God to open hearts to him for when hearts are changed then and only then will "things" change.

WALK WORTHY

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus - come! Be with us as we do what we can to make things better, even as we pray for you to change the hearts of those who are so very lost and hardened to your will and your ways. Please lift the veil today that they may see you and turn from the evil one. Make yourself famous now, God as we pray for release and comfort for all the victims of the heart's problem. Set us all free.

In the awesome name of Jesus the Christ of Nazareth, we pray. Amen.

East District Prayer Focus for February

Desert Mission UMC —Scottsdale
Rev. Michael Patzloff

East District Korean Ministry

First UMC—Gilbert
Rev. Kristin Hansen
Pastor Adriana Hernandez

PRAY
without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17



United
Women
in Faith

February Meetings of UWFaith

February 5	UWF Leadership Team	10:00 am	Library
February 11	Mary Martha Circle	9:30 am	Library
February 17	Devotions & Dinner	6:30 pm	
February 19	Bookworms United	10:00 am	Zoom
	Book	<i>The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store</i> by James McBride	

February United Women in Faith Events

UWFaith Leadership Team meets on Thursday, February 5 at 10:00 am in the Library. ZOOM link is available, contact Mary Ann Crist, macrist249@hotmail.com.

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Mary Martha is meeting Wednesday, February 11 in the church library at 9:30 am.

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Devotions and Dinner is meeting Tuesday, February 17 at 6:30 pm at Hula's Modern Tiki, 5450 E High St. #101. New members are always welcome. RSVP to Linda Moore, lamphx25@gmail.com.

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Bookworms will meet Thursday, February 19 at 10:00 am to discuss *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. New members are always welcome. We meet by ZOOM and the ZOOM link can be found in the current *It's Happening Here*. Hope to see you! Contact Ada Thompson with questions, AdaLThompson@hotmail.com.



The letter that follows is a heavily redacted version due to the length of the letter. You are strongly urged to read the unedited version on the conference website at

<https://dscumc.org/blog/2026/01/28/what-does-the-lord-require-a-pastoral-letter-grounded-in-micah-61-8/>

What Does the Lord Require? A Pastoral Letter grounded in Micah 6:1–8

To the people of God in the Desert Southwest and New Mexico Conferences and beyond

Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the One who hears the cries of the oppressed and calls us to walk in the ways of justice, mercy, and humility.

In recent days, our siblings in Minneapolis have endured immigration raids that have led to senseless deaths, unrest, and violence. Families have been torn apart. Children have watched parents taken away. Children themselves have been taken away. Indigenous neighbors, immigrants, and communities of color continue to face harassment, intimidation, and fear. The weight of these events presses heavily upon our collective spirit.

Into this moment, the prophet Micah speaks with piercing clarity. Micah's words are not abstract ideals. They are a summons—a divine insistence that faith must take shape in the world, especially when human dignity is under assault.

Do Justice

Love Kindness

Walk Humbly with God

Standing in Solidarity Across Our Region

A Word to Those Who Have a Different Perspective

Appealing to Our Common Humanity

A Call to the Church

Church, this is our moment to embody the Gospel. Let our sanctuaries be places of refuge. Let our prayers be bold and unrelenting. Let our advocacy be grounded in love and courage. Let our witness be clear:

We stand with the immigrant.

We stand with Indigenous communities.

We stand with people of color.

We stand with all who are harmed by violence and harassment.

Micah reminds us that God is not impressed by empty rituals or pious words. God desires a people who live justice, breathe kindness, and walk humbly. May we be such a people.

A Prayer for This Moment

God of justice and compassion,

Hold the grieving, protect the vulnerable, strengthen the weary.

Expose the roots of violence and uproot the systems that harm.

Give us courage to act, wisdom to discern, and humility to follow your way.

Make us instruments of your peace and partners in your justice.

We pray for Minneapolis, as we pray for Las Vegas, for Phoenix, for Tucson, for Yuma, for Las Cruces, for El Paso, and for every community across our country where families live under the shadow of enforcement that disregards human dignity.

Bring an end to the raids, the fear, the violence, and the trauma inflicted upon your children.

Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amen.

Beloved, may we move forward with resolve, tenderness, and holy courage. The work is hard, but we do not walk alone. The God who calls us to justice walks beside us, before us, and within us.

Your fellow disciple,

Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut

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Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

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