



# The Oasis

March 2026

Cross in the Desert UMC

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



## Lent: Listening for Good News

Each year the Church enters the season of Lent, a sacred forty-day journey (not counting Sundays) that begins on Ash Wednesday and leads us to Easter. In the rhythm of the Christian calendar, Lent is a bridge season—carrying us from the ordinary patterns of life into a time of intentional reflection, renewal, and preparation for resurrection joy.

The number forty echoes throughout scripture: forty days in the wilderness, forty years in the desert, forty days of prayer and discernment. These biblical seasons were never simply about hardship; they were about transformation. Lent invites us into that same holy rhythm—

a time to pause, to listen more closely, and to notice where God is already at work.

This year at Cross in the Desert, our Lenten theme is **“Tell Me Something Good,”** inspired by *A Sanctified Art*. At first glance, that might sound surprising for a season often associated with repentance and reflection. But perhaps that is exactly the point. Lent is not about dwelling in despair; it is about learning to recognize good news—even in wilderness places. It is about trusting that grace is already stirring beneath the surface of our lives.

Throughout these weeks, we will be asking one another—and asking God—that simple, hopeful question: *Tell me something good*. Not as denial of the world’s pain, but as a spiritual practice of holy noticing. Where is love breaking through? Where is hope sprouting unexpectedly? Where is mercy taking root?

Scripture reminds us: *“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord”* (Psalm 27:14). Lent teaches us that waiting is not empty time. Waiting is listening time. Waiting is noticing time. Waiting is the soil where good news grows.

As we walk this Lenten path together, may we discover that even in reflection, even in repentance, even in the quiet, God is still speaking good news. And may we have the courage to hear it, share it, and live it.

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# Pastor's Corner



Lent: Staying Close While We Wait

*"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in God's word I put my hope." (Psalm 130:5)*

Lent teaches us a special kind of waiting.

It's not the impatient, clock-watching kind of waiting. Instead, it's a holy waiting that sits in the wilderness and trusts God is still at work, even when we can't yet see the good news.

Lent starts in the wilderness. It starts with ashes and honesty. It starts with recognizing that we are fragile, loved, and in need of grace.

But Lent isn't only about repentance. It's also about hope.

This season moves between promise and fulfillment, between Good Friday and Easter morning, between the ache of what is and the good news we hope for. We know resurrection is coming, but we don't rush. We walk step by step through the wilderness with Christ.

Many of us know what it's like to wait for healing, clarity, justice, or peace. Waiting can make us feel anxious and uncertain. Lent doesn't rush us past these feelings. Instead, it invites us to stay present, to pray, to return, and to stay close to God.

Waiting can make us feel vulnerable or anxious. It can tempt us to distract ourselves or tune out.

But Lent calls us to stay present instead.

The good news of our faith isn't that we avoid hard seasons. The good news is that we're not alone in them. God doesn't wait for us at the end of Lent, calling from far away. God walks with us through it—in the silence, in the questions, and in the places where certainty feels thin.

Lent teaches us to anchor ourselves in presence, not just in outcomes.

Prayer becomes less about getting answers and more about staying connected. Scripture is less about information and more about shaping us. Worship is less about performance and more about grounding ourselves in God's steady love.

When we stay close to God, something changes in us. Even before the good news comes, we start to trust that it will. Even before the stone is rolled away, we believe life is stronger than death.

As we wait and work for good news in our lives and in our world, may we discover the truest good news: God is already here, walking with us, holding us, and shaping us into people of resurrection.

Grace and peace,

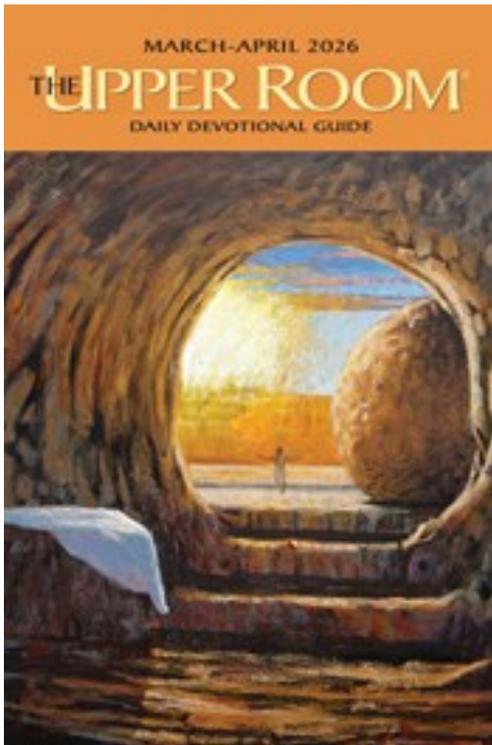
*Rev. Gina Pollard*



Ari Henry	March 1
Noah Foster	March 2
Kathie McCarty	March 4
Dorothy Wilson	March 5
Brody Cahill	March 10
Vivian Gayner	March 12
Arlene Roop	March 12
Karen Lonon	March 21
Julie Wagner	March 21
Sue Wilson	March 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.



The newest *Upper Room* has arrived! It will make a perfect Lenten 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. Both sizes are located on the print display rack in the northeast corner of the lobby.

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

## Tell me something about the story of the logo

Branding & Design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Photography by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

As we developed the logo and branding for this theme, we wanted the visuals to feel earthy, like roots firmly planted in rich soil. We started with tree imagery, photographing tree roots and bark textures.

We imagined the ways Jesus' teachings can ground and root us in the good news, but also push us to grow and expand like branches reaching to the sky. As we discussed the scriptures in the series more and more, we realized that at the core of Jesus' teachings are not esoteric ideas, but people. Time and again, Jesus refocuses our attention on people—often those who are harmed, judged, oppressed, or hungry. And so, in the tree icon, the branches are also abstract people with arms outstretched. Their interwoven connection produces good fruit. The roots of the tree icon frame the typography above and below, which is meant to resemble a book or the Bible. In the typography, the word "good" is emphasized with circular letter shapes; the two "O's" form the symbol for infinity. When we are grounded in the good news, the goodness of God can infinitely flourish and grow.



### **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

## 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

Plans are under underway to make the lobby more welcoming to visitors to our church. Matching fitted red tablecloths have been purchased and installed to update the look of the area. The next step is to train volunteers to man the table on Sunday mornings from 9:30 am until 10:00 am. Kay Caris will be assembling a team, and may be asking you to volunteer one Sunday per month.

Another important link in welcoming our guests are the Greeters. This is a wonderful way to get to know everyone, and to be the first to welcome a new person. Since our main greeter is a winter member, we will be looking for people to fill in beginning May 1st. If this is for you, please contact Mary Nell Woodward, who is the greeter coordinator.

And of course another major project to welcome people to Cross in the Desert is the digital sign project, which is currently underway. Hopefully we will be starting to see its construction beginning soon.

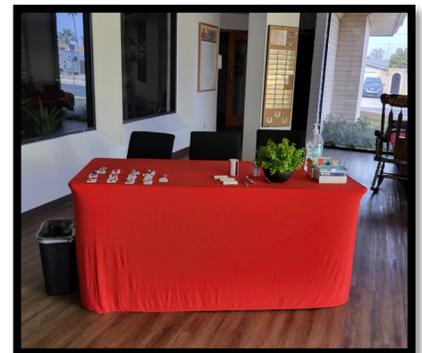
### Serving

In support of Global Minds Preschool the Serving Team provided coffee and donuts to the preschool staff and parents on February 11th! They 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

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



### **Community Outreach**

#### **March is Food Bank Month**

- Pick up your Orange Bag on Sunday March 1
- Return your filled Orange Bag on Sunday March 8
- Please fill your bag with non-perishable food items, hygiene items, or snack items for the Backpack program.

## CITD Leadership Board

The Leadership Board report for February will be very short since we did not have our regular meeting. We met with our District Superintendent, Rev. Melissa Rynders, to discuss our status and desires for a new Pastor. As of writing this, we don't know who our new Pastor will be, but I'm anticipating that we will be finding out very soon.

Please see the Together We Can Campaign details elsewhere in the Oasis, but I do want to say that we have crossed 90% in achieving our original \$215,000 goal. In addition, thanks to the CITD Foundation, other projects totaling \$198,000 have passed through the Together We Can Designated Fund.

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,

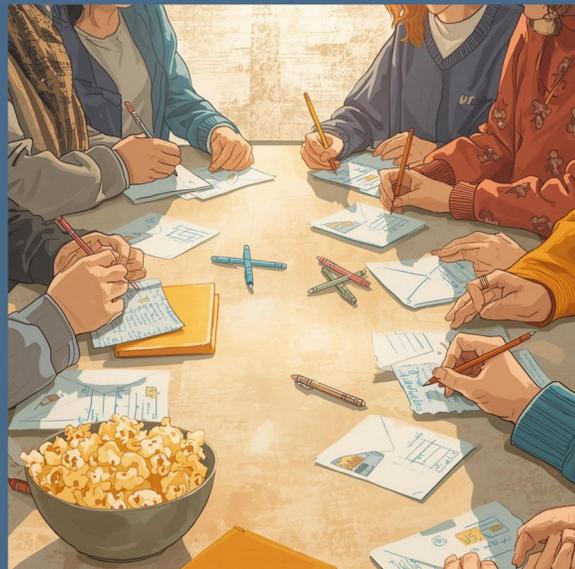
Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson  
CITD Leadership Board  
Cell: 602-363-4115  
[eobryan@cox.net](mailto:eobryan@cox.net)

## Popcorn & Postcards

March 8th  
11a - 12p

Join us for a community event  
to connect and engage!

Review current AZ House legislation,  
write postcards to elected officials,  
and enjoy popcorn.





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. Note that we are now over 90% on our goal in addition to the other \$198,000 in additional projects funded by the CITD Foundation. Here's the status of the Together We Can Capital Campaign funds as of February 24, 2026:

As of	2/24/2026
<b>Together We Can General Capital Campaign</b>	
Goal	\$ 215,000.00
Received Funds	\$ 194,197.18
% of Goal	90.3%
Total Funds Spent	\$ 145,115.07
Total Funds Committed	\$ -
Money left to be spent	\$ 49,082.11
<b>TWC Designated for Digital Sign Expenses First from CITD Foundation</b>	
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
<b>TWC Designated for Sewer Expenses First from CITD Foundation</b>	
Received Funds	\$ 120,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$ 120,000.00
<b>TWC Designated for Repaying Preschool from CITD Foundation</b>	
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



## Food with Friends Potluck Saturday March 21 at 5:00 pm

Join us in Fellowship Hall for a potluck meal. Bring a dish to share and your own table service. We'll see what goodies the leprechaun has in his pot and if he is up to any mischief!

If you have any questions contact Cathy Milford.

# PRAYER

## LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

On a scale of 1 to 10 along the journey from being self-centered and prideful to being God-centered and humble where would you place yourself?

In John 13 Jesus washes the disciple's feet. Peter says, no, you will never wash my feet. Jesus replied, unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Peter's refusal serves as a reminder of our need for the cleansing Jesus offers and the sinful pride of those who reject Jesus' cleansing ministry.

Peter's actions appear to be prompted by humility. But, Peter is appalled that Jesus should ever take such a low position as to wash his feet. Perhaps Peter's response comes out of his own sense of unworthiness before Jesus. Or, if we look a bit closer, it may be an expression of intense personal pride. Peter is offended by Jesus' actions. He knows that if he were the teacher, he would never consider stooping to wash someone's feet because it would be beneath him. Peter shows this same pride later on when he offers to lay down his life for Jesus; he doesn't want to lay down his life for him. And that rooster crowed three times....

This is a revelation of the sinful pride of our own hearts, which is false humility, when we are really insisting on our self-sufficiency. We do not want to admit to anybody that we need anything. Maybe Peter doesn't want to acknowledge his need to be washed, especially, of letting Jesus do this menial act for him. It humiliates him. Peter stands as an example of the pride in our own hearts that may resist Jesus' ministry to us.

We must stand in utter humility in order for God to minister to us. All human pride must be brought low before Him before we can receive what God wants to give us from His hand.

### WALK WORTHY

**PRAYER:** Lord, forgive us for the pride that sometimes can be disguised as humility. We desperately need you to minister to us all. Help us to empty ourselves of ourselves so you can fill us with the Joy of the Spirit and step aside for others. Amen.

#### East District Prayer Focus for March

**Grace UMC —Mesa**  
Rev. Sharon Pajak

**Huli Ma'oni'oni Fresh Expression—Mesa**  
Pastor Lopeti Ma'umatapule

**Iglesia Aliento UM New Church Start—Phoenix**  
Rev. Flor Granillo  
Pastor Luis Nazario

**Journey UMF—Maricopa**  
Pastor Gary Williams

PRAY  
*without ceasing*  
1 Thessalonians 5:17



**March 8 at 12:30 pm**

We invite you to gather, pray, reflect, and put your faith into action.

For more than 155 years, United Women in Faith members have taken action to turn faith, hope, and love into work on behalf of women, children, and youth in every corner of the world. As an annual part of our action, United Women in Faith invites women to gather and participate in A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial.

We will be having a simple soup and bread lunch.

Gifts to *A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial 2026* will support vulnerable children through the work of National Mission Institutions. NMIs help children through low-cost early childhood education, after-school programs, enrichment programs, mental health support, guidance for the transition to adulthood, reunification with family, and more.

**The Future is Now: Invest in Our Children**

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The **Leadership Team** will meet is Thursday, **March 5** at 10 am in the CITD library.

**Mary Martha** will meet at Celia Stober's home on Wednesday, **March 11** at 9:30 am. The program will be from our program book done by Carol Monsma.

**Devotions and Dinner** will meet at Café Zupas, 21001 N. Tatum Blvd., at Desert Ridge Marketplace on Tuesday, **March 17** at 6:30 pm. Gretchen Miller will be leading a Pledge Service.

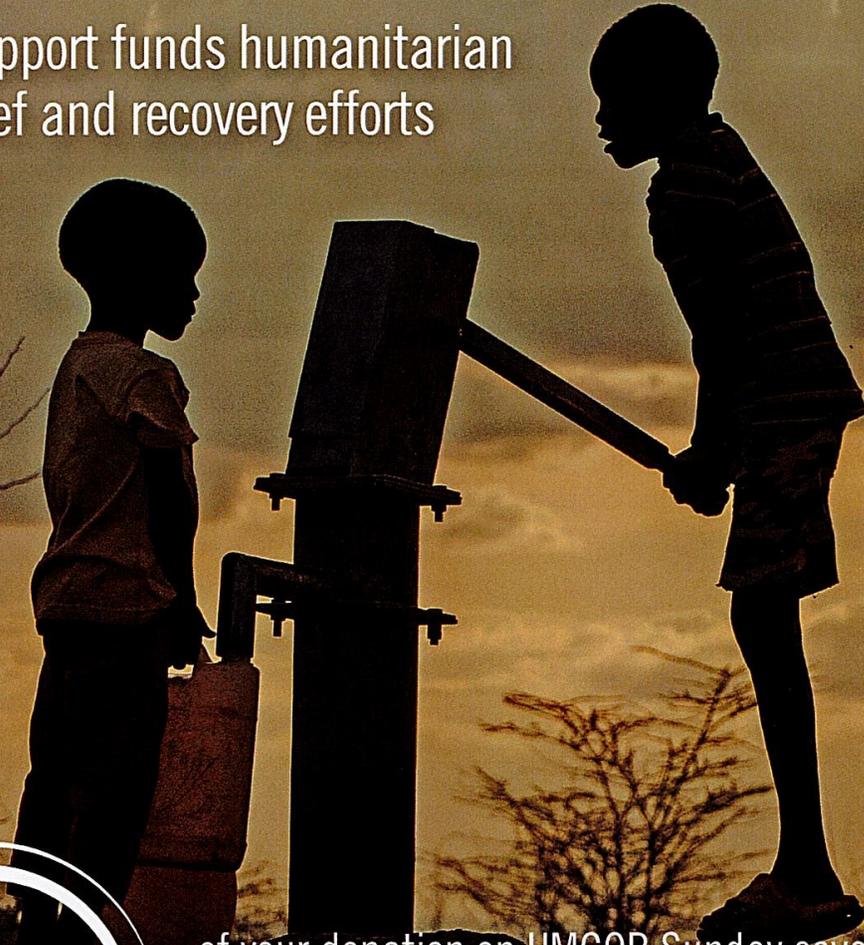
**Bookworms** will meet the Thursday, **March 19** at 10:00 am on ZOOM. The book for March is *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray. The Zoom link is published in the previous Friday email, which is available on the website, or you can contact the office at 602-992-1960.

UMCOR Sunday is March 15th. We will be having a special offering for the Administrative costs of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.



# UMCOR SUNDAY

Your support funds humanitarian relief and recovery efforts



100%

of your donation on UMCOR Sunday cover the operational cost of UMCOR so that every dollar received for emergency appeals will go directly to communities in need.

**UNITED** IN **IMPACT**



## DSC Announces Formation of Solidarity Fund & Lenten Match

by [Rae Lathrop](#) | Feb 19, 2026 | [Asylum, Refugee, Immigration, Conference Newsletter](#)

Grounded in our United Methodist call to love our neighbor and seek justice, the Desert Southwest Conference has established a Solidarity Fund to provide humanitarian aid in response to the crisis brought forth by unprecedented inhumane enforcement of immigration policies and the fear and trauma it has caused.

The UMC Social Principles are clear:

*“We affirm the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants and refugees, including displaced and stateless people. ...*

*We recognize that displaced people are particularly vulnerable as their in-between status often provides them with few protections and benefits, leaving them open to exploitation, violence and abuse. We urge United Methodists to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into their congregations and to commit themselves to providing concrete support, including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment and other kinds of support.*

*We oppose all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants or refugees. Additionally, we decry attempts to detain displaced people and hold them in inhumane and unsanitary conditions. We challenge policies that call for the separation of families, especially parents and minor children, and we oppose the existence of for-profit detention centers for such purposes.”*

### **the UMC Social Principles**

In many of our communities, the threat and reality of enforcement has left many living in fear and without resources to care for their families. We know that detention and deportation leaves family members behind. We know that these families still need to pay rent and other important bills, while they work to understand ways that they will continue to support themselves. We know that the fear and trauma to which immigrant communities are subjected to has caused heads of household, as well as other contributors to families' economy, to lose their jobs, lose hours at work, or reduced their ability to travel in their communities.

The need for this fund is urgent and immediate. The Solidarity Fund is now open to receive donations, and the application for churches to apply for this fund is open now.

In the coming weeks, we'll share more about this fund and the ways it will be shared across the conference. For now, we have a short-term challenge: A generous matching gift from the **Board of Global Ministries** commits that the first **\$5000** will be matched directly. We hope to raise this during this matching amount during the Lenten Season as our community unites over a season of Prayer, Repentance, Fasting.

Your generosity is a faithful act of solidarity with our immigrant siblings and neighbors, affirming the sacred worth of every person.

Signed: Rev. David Harriss, Pastor Edgar Vergara, Raymond Spooner

### **Conference Contacts**

**Bishop:** Carlo A. Rapanut

**Bishop's Assistant:** Julie O'Neal [joneal@dscumc.org](mailto:joneal@dscumc.org)

**Conference Lay Leader:** Alberta Farnsworth

**East District Superintendent:** Melissa Rynders

Assistant: Jeannine Marinoni [jmarinoni@dscumc.org](mailto:jmarinoni@dscumc.org)

**East District Lay Leader:** Trinity Donovan

**Director of Communications:** Christina Dillabough

[cdillabough@dscumc.org](mailto:cdillabough@dscumc.org)

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### **Cross in the Desert UMC Staff**

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**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