



The Oasis

September 2026

Cross in the Desert UMC

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

CITD Leadership Board

I reported on our church goals for July 2026-June 2027 last month. The Leadership Board will be trying to track our progress on our goals monthly. We may not always get everything we should, so please feel free to let me know if we need to add accomplishments. These will be reported to the conference next July. These goals are intended to guide our shared work as a congregation and help us reflect on where we are seeing progress, where we still need growth, and how we can serve faithfully in the year ahead. We already have people focused on each goal, and we hope you will be able to help if asked. If you are interested in helping with any of these goals or with another area of ministry in the church, please let us know.

Month	Church Goal 1	Church Goal 2	Church Goal 3
July - set new goals	Welcoming: Opening Doors Wide To create a culture where every person who encounters Cross in the Desert-whether in worship, online, or in the community-feels seen, valued, and embraced as a beloved child of God.	Loving: Building a Community of Care To embody Christ's love in authentic relationships-within our congregation and beyond so that every person experiences belonging, compassion, and spiritual growth.	Serving: Hands and Feet of Christ To serve our community with compassion and justice, reflecting God's love in tangible ways that transform lives and systems.
August	• Landscape Project completed • Digital sign approved by City of Phoenix Working on revamping kids' busy bags	• Women's Bible Study continuing to meet • Bible Study for the busy • Summer Movies • Birthday cake celebration for the month	• Provided transportation services to a member who needed it • Working on changes for city bus passes

A key decision that was made was to join Mission Bell UMC for a combined service at their location to celebrate their 50th Anniversary at 11:00 AM on October 25th. There will be a combined choir. The service will be followed by a luau-style meal.

If you have any questions, concerns, feedback or would like to get involved, please reach out to me or any member of the Leadership Board: Ada Thompson, Rhonda Mortenson, Wanda Picciotti, Kristin O'Shaughnessy, Philip Botts, Melanie Konski, or Carol Monsma. Leadership Board meetings are open to you except when we are in Executive Session.

Thank you for your continued prayers, participation, and support.

In His service,

Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson

CITD Leadership Board

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Pastor's Corner

Let Go and Let God

Have you ever given yourself to God but only on your terms?

Maybe we pray, *"God, I need You in my life. I need You in my spiritual life."* But when it comes to our relationships, our work, our finances, our plans, and our problems, we say, *"I've got this, God. Just let me handle those parts."*

Then, when things don't go the way we planned, we wonder why God allowed it to happen. Sometimes, we may even blame Him.

But perhaps the problem isn't that God isn't working. Perhaps the problem is that we never truly surrendered. Pride can blind us into believing that we are capable of doing everything on our own. We want God to be part of our lives, but we still want to remain in control. We give Him certain areas while keeping others tightly in our own hands.

But God doesn't ask for part of us. **He asks for all of us.**

Scripture reminds us that unless the Lord is with us in what we are building, our efforts can become frustrating and exhausting. We can work harder, plan better, and try to control every detail, but without God at the center, we may find ourselves striving instead of trusting.

That is why we need to **let go and let God.**

Let go of the need to control every outcome.

Let go of the fear that everything depends on you.

Let go of the pride that says, *"I can handle this on my own."*

And let God lead.

Give Him your ministry. Give Him your family. Give Him your relationships, your career, your finances, your dreams, your disappointments, and even the problems you don't know how to solve.

Surrender doesn't mean we stop working or taking responsibility. It means we stop trying to be God in our own lives. We trust Him enough to let Him lead, even when His direction is different from our plans.

Today, my prayer is:

Almighty God, I give You my all. I surrender my ministry, my family, my finances, my relationships, my dreams, and my problems into Your hands. I no longer want to follow You only on my terms. I want You to be Lord over every area of my life. Shine Your light through me so that everything I say, everything I do, and everything I build will bring glory and honor to Your holy name. Teach me to trust You, surrender to You, and follow You even when I don't understand. Amen.

Pastor Tuulauena Lolohea



Becky Bussey	September 1
Cindy Tigges	September 2
Jane Fricker	September 3
Allison Goodwin	September 6
Hannah Falknor	September 9
Ellen Odart	September 10
Jack Smith	September 12
Tom Falknor	September 13

Jonathan & Heather Foster September 4

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.



Upcoming Walk to Emmaus Events

Men's Walk October 1-4, 2026
Lakeview United Methodist Church, 10298 W. Thunderbird Rd.
Sun City.
Lay Director Scott Mathe

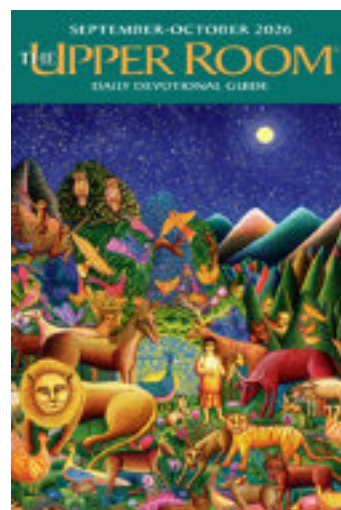
Women's Walk October 8-11, 2026
Lakeview United Methodist Church, 10298 W. Thunderbird Rd.
Sun City.
Lay Director Toni Berg

If you would like to be a pilgrim, or sponsor a pilgrim, please contact Mary Ann Crist or the church office. There are applications in the Narthex.



Chrysalis Flight 40
January 15-18, 2027

Lay Directors Kelly Capps (W) & Timmy Hoskinson (M)
Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave., Avondale, AZ



The Upper Room

The Upper Room daily devotional is available on the welcome table in the lobby. Please leave small donation if you are able.



United Women in Faith

"Arizona Tea"

Saturday, September 12 ~ 2:00 pm

CITD Fellowship Hall

Join us for a Bible Study: *Why Engage in Social Action*

Cost: \$10, funds go to Indentifreed

Menu includes:

Arizona Iced Tea

Chicken Salad in Lettuce cups

Cucumber Sandwiches

Dessert

Tickets will be available after Worship on September 6 or contact Mary Ann Crist, 623-229-1532

Final Showing of the Summer



Saturday, September 26

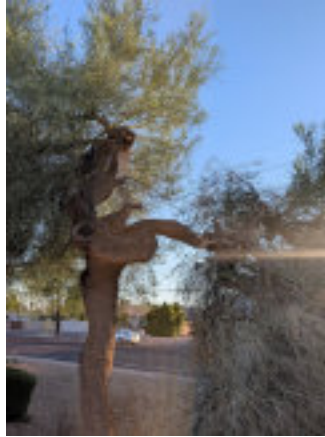
Double Feature

Doors Open at 1:45 pm

See Rhonda Mortenson with questions or
movie suggestions!

Storm Damage on Campus

2026 has been an active monsoon season, with 3 storms hitting the Paradise Valley area within a four day period. Arriving on the campus on August 10th, we were greeted by a lot of tree damage. While we had been praying for rain and appreciate the moisture, a little less wind and dust would be nice.



Landscaping Project

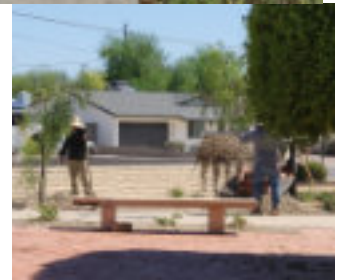
The long awaited landscaping project is complete! Several unhealthy trees were removed, and all the grass was removed except around the entrance to the preschool. A complicated part of the project was to repair and/or relocate the irrigation lines, many of which passed under sidewalks. Also many root balls were dug up and removed. We now have a fresh, welcoming appearance to our campus. Thanks to all those who spent hours in the planning of this project, and to Dave Delster who coordinated the installation. Photo creds to Dave Delster.



Left: the grass is gone
Right; Left circle is the huge pile of roots, right circle is some of the irrigation work

. Middle row shows new trees and plants, and the landscapers moving tons of rock.

Bottom row shows the finished look.





Summary of Together We Can Status as of:	8/18/2026
Together We Can General Capital Campaign	
Goal	\$215,000.00
Received Funds	\$218,417.18
% of Goal	101.6%
Total Funds Spent	\$211,836.40
Total Funds Committed	\$6,282.27
Money left to be spent	\$298.51
TWC Designated for Digital Sign Expenses First from CITD Foundation	
Received Funds	\$45,000.00
Total Funds Spent	\$8,402.65
Total Funds Committed	\$31,787.95
Money left to be spent	\$4,809.40
TWC Designated for Sewer Expenses First from CITD Foundation	
Funds received and spent	\$120,000.00
TWC Designated for Repaying Preschool from CITD Foundation	
Funds Received and spent	\$33,000.00

I'm very happy to report that we are now at 101.6% of our General Capital Campaign Goal as of August 18th! Our 101.6% progress does not count the other \$198,000 in additional projects funded by the CITD Foundation through Together We Can. We continue to have significant needs that need to be addressed so please continue to contribute as you are able. We've made huge improvements to our campus, but there is much more to do. While the campaign was to run through 2026, the Leadership Board decided we will keep Together We Can going to support capital improvements going forward. Thanks so much for what you have done!

The landscape project is complete, and we received approval for our digital sign from the city. The sign is being built, and we need to address the electrical requirements, but I think we're close to a final resolution to our digital sign.

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



Food With Friends will be back in October!

Mark your calendar for October 17th at 5:00 pm. Start to think about what favorite recipe you want to share with the group, as we fellowship.



Community Outreach Spotlight



"The PV Community Food Bank is an **all-volunteer** nonprofit 501(c)(3) charity serving individuals and families who live within the *Paradise Valley Unified School District (PVUSD)* boundaries. The district covers 98 square miles and includes the Palomino neighborhood, the lowest income, and highest poverty rate community in the Northeast Valley. It also includes 17 Title 1 schools. The food bank relies on private cash contributions and food donations from individuals and businesses, without relying on government funding." (from the PV Community food Bank July 2026 Newsletter)

So, how does Cross in the Desert support this community outreach program?

Orange bags are handed out to the congregation on a regular basis to be filled with non-perishable food items. These bags are filled and returned to the church on the designated Sunday. The bags are then delivered to the food bank. Monetary donation to the church marked for the food bank are sent on a quarterly schedule. Our last collection on July 5th was over 500 pounds!

WOMEN'S RETREAT

Rest. Refresh. Renew.

Mugs and Muffins Soul Care

YOU ARE WORTHY. YOU ARE LOVED. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

OCTOBER 17, 2026

8 AM - 4 PM

DOVE OF THE DESERT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Contact: 602-740-9737

SPONSORED BY **WOW** WOMEN OF WORTH

FAITH • FELLOWSHIP • FUN • FRIENDSHIP

A poster for a Women's Retreat event titled "Mugs and Muffins Soul Care". It features a warm, inviting design with a mug, a muffin, and a heart. The text includes the date (October 17, 2026), time (8 AM - 4 PM), location (Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church), and contact information (602-740-9737). It is sponsored by WOW (Women of Worth) and includes the tagline "Faith • Fellowship • Fun • Friendship".

LIFE LINE SCREENING
The Power of Prevention

You're invited to a Life Line Screening event!

Life Line Screening is the nation's leader in Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease Risk Screenings.

Trusted by over 11 million customers.

Screenings are simple and painless. Get peace of mind or early detection.

Who should attend: Anyone age of 40+

Special Pricing for \$129

- Carotid Artery Disease Screening
- Peripheral Artery Disease Screening
- Atrial Fibrillation Screening
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening

4 ways to book your appointment...

Scan here:

Call 800-324-9450 and use promo code: HABC001

Visit: [LLSA.SOCIAL/HABC](https://llsa.social/habc)

Text the word "Circle" to 216-279-1607

These tests cannot detect all risk factors for all conditions, such as not including the presence of coronary artery disease.

Those with abnormal results should discuss possible next steps with their family health care provider and return trip to discuss the risk and benefits of any additional testing or procedures.

A poster for a Life Line Screening event. It features a smiling woman in blue scrubs. The text includes the event title, a description of the screenings, and four ways to book an appointment: scanning a QR code, calling 800-324-9450, visiting the website, or texting. It also includes a disclaimer about the limitations of the tests.

PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

"And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating what he had done." Genesis 2:3

It's Labor Day! Hard to believe the last official day of the summer season is here. For many Americans it is a day off from work, a chance to cook-out and hang-out.

A day off from labor was not a new concept when President Cleveland signed a bill into law designating the first Monday in September "Labor Day" in 1894. As we Judeo-Christians know, this concept of a day of rest was first declared by God. God showed us by resting the seventh day after creating the world and He deemed the day of rest holy. He didn't call it Labor Day - He called it the Sabbath.

Sabbath is not a day of tribute to workers, it's a day of tribute to their Maker. It's a day to rest our body while renewing our mind by making the focus of the day our Maker and our relationship with Him. The Sabbath should put our focus on the opportunity to meet with God.

What does your Sabbath typically look like? Are you truly focused on God, beyond perhaps an hour or so of worship at church?

We are created in God's image and he modeled for us a way of life that makes sense for how we are created. At the end of each day, stop. Refresh yourself by taking time to think a bit about your day and to notice where God was in it and where you were blessed. And after six days, take a whole day off and spend it pausing and reflecting on how really great and good God is. God gives us seven days a week, we can give him at least one.

Dear Lord, we want to honor You by practicing Sabbath rest. Show us how to live this way. Meet each one of us in our time of contemplation, reflection and worship. In Jesus mighty and sacred name we pray, Amen.

Valley District Prayer Focus for September

Mission Bell UMC - Glendale Pastor Tu'ulauena Lolohea

New Song UMC - Surprise Rev. Misty Howick

Peace in the Desert Church: An ELCA and UMC Congregation
- Scottsdale Rev. Christopher Wurpts
Rev. Adele Resmer
Rev. Leah Bergstrom





The **Leadership Team** will meet Thursday, September 3 at 10 am in the CITD library.

Mary Martha will meet on Wednesday, September 9 at 9:30 am in the CITD library.

Devotions and Dinner will meet at Valle Luna, 16048 N Cave Creek Rd., on Tuesday, September 15 at 6:30 pm.

Bookworms will meet on Wednesday September 16 at 9:00 am via ZOOM. The book for September is *Highway of Tears* by Jessica McDiarmid. You can find the link in "It's Happening Here." Join us for a lively discussion. New readers are always welcome!

DISTRICT ANNUAL CELEBRATION

October 3, 2026

Red Mountain UMC
2936 E. Power Rd, Mesa

9:30 am to 10 am Registration - \$20 per person upon arrival.

This fee will include fellowship, light breakfast, and lunch.

Please register before September 22 with Pam Ripley at: pdripleyaz@gmail.com

Please include: First & last name; Email address; Personal phone number; UWFAITH unit/church; Any diet needs

Please wear your name tag and bring a closed water container and coffee cup.

MISSION PROJECT: *Cash Donations to Wesley UMC Homeless Ministry*

DESERT SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Saturday, October 24

St. Matthew United Methodist Church
2540 W. Baseline Road, Mesa

9 am to approximately 3 pm

Check-in begins at 8:30 am

Registration fee is \$20

[Click Here to Register](#)

There will be two workshops during the day. When you register, you will be asked to number the three choices in order of your preference.

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The workshop choices are:

- Stepping Forward in Faith, led by Lorraine Shaw
- Activating the Flame, led by Clair Hart
- Social Action and the Charter for Racial Justice, led by Yvonne Daniely

Johanna Eubank jmaeub@gmail.com and Debbie Pallack dpallack@aol.com

Celebration Registrars



Life Line Screening will be back on the CITD campus on Friday, October 9th. They offer simple screenings for stroke risk and heart disease. appointments are made through their website lifelinescreening.com.



Combined Service for Mission Bell UMC 50th Anniversary

Sunday, October 25th at 11:00 am

Be ready to help Mission Bell UMC celebrate their 50th anniversary on October 25th! At this time there are plans for a combined choir for the service, which will be followed by a luau style meal.



We are pleased to announce that The Phoenix Women's Chorus has chosen CITD as their home concert venue for the 2026-2027 season! We look forward to having them back this year. They are planning performances on November 21st and 22nd.



Desert Southwest Conference

The United Methodist Church

Published on Sep 02, 2026 Bishop Carlo's Blog

"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?" (Psalm 13:1-2)

Beloved in Christ,

With weary hearts, we find ourselves grieving yet another act of gun violence. Vincent Anthony Siqueiros, 42, and Cameron Davis Capara, 33, have lost their lives to this senseless act of violence that struck Venture-N, a longtime LGBTQ+ bar in Tucson. Authorities are investigating the shooting as a possible hate crime after reporting that the suspect carried a note listing several LGBTQIA+-associated businesses.

We mourn the deaths of Vincent and Cameron and pray for their families, friends, and all who knew and loved them. We stand with our siblings in Tucson and the broader LGBTQ+ community as they face the grief, pain, fear, and trauma caused by this violence and as they continue to ask if any place is truly safe for them.

As United Methodists, we affirm that every person is created in the image of God and is of sacred worth. Therefore, we reject hatred, prejudice, and violence directed at any people. Our Social Principles call us to resist violence in all its forms and to build communities where every person can live free from fear.

And if I may speak plainly: I am tired of writing statements like this.

I am tired of hearing about lives lost to senseless yet preventable gun violence. I am tired of watching families bury loved ones while leaders offer thoughts and prayers without the courage to pursue meaningful change. I am tired of seeing communities traumatized by acts of hatred and violence that continue to repeat themselves with alarming regularity.

And so I call us to action.

This tragedy reminds us why our vision of "A Healthy Church For A Healthy World" is so important. A healthy church stands with and protects those who are targeted, comforts those who mourn, and works to promote healthy communities that are rooted in justice, safety, and love.

The United Methodist Church has long recognized gun violence as a public health and moral crisis and has called for common-sense measures that protect life, including universal background checks, safe storage requirements, stronger licensing and accountability measures, and restrictions on weapons designed for mass killing. These are not partisan positions. They are life-affirming commitments rooted in our belief that every human life is sacred.

The healthy world we envision is one where hatred and violence will not be incubated. Beyond condemning violence after it happens, our call is to address the conditions that allow such violence to continue and demand that we protect vulnerable communities by confronting hatred wherever it appears and enacting policies that reduce the likelihood of these tragedies occurring again.

May God strengthen us to be advocates, peacemakers, and agents of transformation so that no more lives are lost, no more families grieve, no more communities are shattered, and no more statements like this ever need to be written after yet another preventable tragedy.

May the God of justice and peace comfort the grieving, protect the vulnerable, and move us from lament to action.

In Christ's love and solidarity, Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut

Conference Contacts

Bishop: Carlo A. Rapanut

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East District Lay Leader: Trinity Donovan

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