



The Oasis

January 2023

Cross in the Desert UMC

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



STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

JANUARY 7, 2023

9:00AM-4:00PM

FELLOWSHIP HALL

Everyone is invited!

See page 4 for details



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Pastor's Corner



When I was in fourth grade, we moved again. Twice. The parsonage we moved into on July 1st was unsafe, so by Thanksgiving we were in a new parsonage full of interesting features. For instance, I had the front bedroom/office, which meant it had a closet, but the closet was connected to the entry closet. Both had a rod for hanging stuff, but there were also shelves to separate the two closets, shelves that were open on both sides. It was a great house for hide and seek with my brothers.

That year, Christmas fell on a Sunday, just like this year. As you can imagine, my family had a lot of rules around Christmas on Sunday. Gifts were to be opened after Christmas lunch. We could go see what Santa brought, but only after we had eaten and were dressed and ready for church. It was not a normal Christmas morning.

After my parents woke me up, I went to my closet to get my robe or slippers or something and saw the most amazing sight: a beautiful red velvet dress with a white velvet bow, perfect for a princess or some rich little girl who lived in someplace fancy (certainly not some small town in Kansas). I could not figure out why it was hanging in my closet.

When I went out to the kitchen for breakfast, I was still puzzling about the dress. My excited family greeted me with smiles and Christmas greetings, but were concerned by my downcast look. What was wrong? When I explained there was a beautiful dress in my closet and I couldn't figure out who it belonged to, my older brother burst out in laughing and began calling me stupid and such. My parents just hugged me and said it was for me.

The entire story came out: my mother had made the dress, inspired by a failed velvet dress when I was in first grade and the fact that she wanted me to have something special for church on Christmas morning. My older brother was my height, so mom had made him try the dress on so she could hem it correctly. The entire family, except maybe younger brother, Gary, was in on the dress that my dad placed in my closet through those open shelves.

The rest of that Christmas is largely forgotten in my mind. The wonder stays. How was I worthy of such a dress? Nothing else that day compared to walking into church, feeling so beautiful and grown-up and wondering if anyone else noticed.

Have you felt the wonder of Christmas this year? Have you felt worthy of the message of the angels? Does God really love you this much? Can you walk into the new year with your head held high, confident that because of God's love, because of God-With-Us, anything can happen, even miracles?

I wish you all a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year. Let's make it a year of hope, of grace, of joy.

Pastor Galene

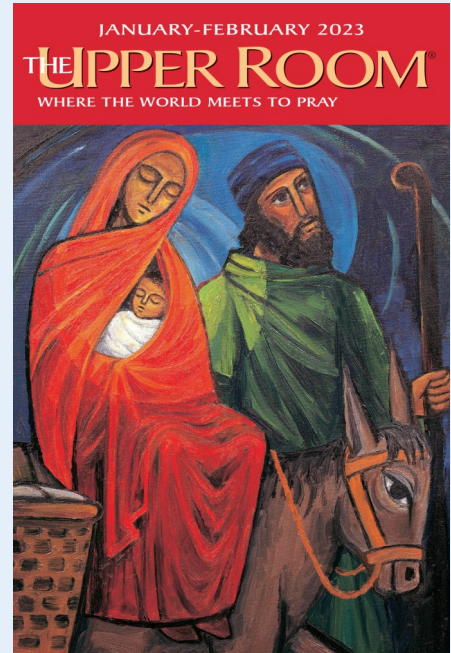




| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Haley Falknor | January 3 |
| Rylan Francis | January 6 |
| John Easter | January 9 |
| Judy Smith | January 13 |
| Cassandra Carpenter | January 14 |
| Myla Dudek | January 20 |
| Heidi Gustafson | January 21 |
| Jim Bussey | January 22 |
| Sandra Brown | January 23 |
| Wes Picciotti | January 23 |
| Arvilla Jungman | January 25 |
| Eileen Wixon | January 27 |
| Steve Cahill | January 28 |
| Peter Dudek | January 28 |
| Kathleen Boos | January 29 |
| Charlie Diller | January 29 |
| Galene Boyett | January 30 |

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 January—February issue is available in the narthex

We apologize if we have missed your special day. It means that the office does not have the information. Please notify the office if we need to update your information.

A Great Big Thank You!

I want to thank everyone for the good wishes and gifts, both during Pastor Appreciation Month in October and now at Christmas. The cards were especially touching with your kind words. Also, from the staff and from me, many thanks to our Staff-Parish Relations Committee for all the little gifts throughout the year. You try so hard to make us all feel appreciated.

Pastor Galene

THANK YOU!

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

JANUARY 7, 2023, 9:00AM-4:00PM in FELLOWSHIP HALL

Listen with openness to the Holy Spirit and to each other. "I sought the Lord, and He answered me." —Psalm 34:4a

Strategic planning is an important part of the creation, development, and growth of any organization. Ministries that are interested in church growth are not exempt from planning. Church planning helps the organization map out strategic steps to achieve its mission and vision. Churches can experience a level of success without a plan, but those who invest the time and resources into developing a specific strategy and plan can achieve success at a much quicker pace. ([4StepstoChurchPlanting.pdf](#) ([thegl.org](#)))

Strategic Planning usually has two purposes: 1. The activity of seeking God's Will for a ministry or church; and, 2. The decision to act in faith on what has been discerned. (<https://www.ecfvp.org>)

During our strategic planning session, we will build on the vision and mission statements developed earlier this year and we will answer three central questions:

1. Where are we as a church?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How do we get there?

Everyone is encouraged to attend this important day of planning and discernment. Lunch will be served. At the end of the day we should have identified several specific, attainable goals as well as the persons/committees responsible for working toward those goals. There will also be plans for how we will track and monitor progress toward our goals.

Please let Karen Bulkeley (ksbulkeley@gmail.com) know that you plan to attend so that the room can be set up to accommodate all attendees and enough food provided. I hope that each of you will prayerfully consider participating in this important activity.



Employee Changes

As the sun set on 2022, some personnel changes occurred at Cross in the Desert that will be very noticeable as we begin 2023.

December saw the resignation of Linda Moore, who had been our Administrative Assistant for 6 years. Linda was unable to return after several surgeries, and she will be missed. Julie Wagner will continue to fill in until the position is filled.

In January Connie Bruhn, our Coordinator of Children's Ministry, will be leaving to accept another position. Connie has been "Miss Connie" to our kids for 8 years, and will be missed.

SPRC is planning a farewell celebration for Connie on Sunday, January 8th during Fellowship Time. This is in conjunction with the Day of Service Event. Be sure to attend and thank Connie for her service here at Cross in the Desert.

ReLaunching CITD

After more than two years of meeting as often as twice a month, the ReLaunch Committee wrapped up their work in December. Here is a summary of the final project plan used by the committee to help relaunch Cross in the Desert following the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the work is not finished. Many items are a work in progress and will continue to be addressed by the hard working standing committees and staff of the church. Please take a moment to thank the following members of the ReLaunch Committee who worked very hard over the last 2 years; Karen Bulkeley, Chairperson; Dinah Brooks; Romi Simons; Dwight Peck; Ray Roop; Sharon MacVean; Connie Bruhn; Allison Goodwin; Pastor Galene Boyett; Linda Moore; and Arvilla Jungman.

ReLaunch Project Plan Summary for Strategic Planning

| Recalibrating: Imagining the possibilities and opportunities to reorient the church and the way things are done. | |
|---|--|
| STRATEGY | TASK |
| 1. Develop effective leaders across all aspects of the church: spiritual; administrative; outreach; etc. | 1.1 Leadership Committee develop a plan for identifying, recruiting and training new leaders. |
| | 1.2 Current leaders actively mentor and train potential legacy leaders for their assigned ministry/administrative areas. |
| 2. Re-imagine worship that is accessible, inclusive, creative, and welcoming | 2.1 Study effectiveness of current worship service such as worship times/days; components/styles of worship; inclusivity; streaming/online accessibility, etc. |
| | 2.2 Study effectiveness of current worship service such as worship times/days; components/styles of worship; inclusivity; streaming/online accessibility, etc. |
| 3. Create a welcoming, recognizable and safe physical campus | 3.1 Develop list of repairs and necessary enhancements needed for the church campus along with a plan to prioritize and complete the identified needs. |
| | 3.2 Develop proposal for more effective and appealing signage. |
| | 3.3 Identify and implement "quick" fixes that tell the community we are a church, we are open and we welcome everyone. |
| | 3.4 Add mural(s) to campus to increase visibility and vibrancy of campus. |
| 5. Enhance opportunities for spiritual growth for all age levels | 5.1 Identify themes throughout the year to be studied in worship, Sunday School, Bible Study, etc. as a corporate church |
| | 5.2 Research feasibility of all-generation VBS |
| | 5.3 Expand UWF reading program to larger congregation (women & men) |
| 6. Undergird all activity of the church with prayer | 6.1 Evaluate current prayer ministry activities to determine what is effective and identify potential opportunities to expand outreach and participation. |
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| Relating: The church is in the relationship business: relationships with one another and with Jesus. Through relationships more people are introduced to Christ and become disciples and disciples become disciple makers. | |
| STRATEGY | TASK |
| 1. Shift from a "friendly" church to a "relational" church that engages in extravagant and radical hospitality | 1.1 Identify and implement methods for extending hospitality to persons watching online worship. |
| | 1.2 Develop and deliver classes for current members on effective relationship building. |
| | 1.3 Establish an Evangelism or equivalent committee whose primary responsibility is to coordinate relationship building with the community and visitors. |
| 2. Build relationships with community groups using church facilities | 2.1 Deliver "welcome goodies" to groups that have recently returned to campus. |
| | 2.2 Invite more outside groups to use facilities for their meetings & events |
| | 2.3 For each event sponsored by the church, personally invite members of the community groups to participate. |

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Prayer Corner

O holy God, our creator and the one who fills the universe with love of his creation. May the birth of your son, Jesus Christ, once again bring healing, hope and love to our world. Our world groans today in much pain for countries ruled by dictators, for the Ukraine that has been horribly attacked by the Russians, for all the people affected by the Covid virus and by the evil that has come to our economy and our people. We pray night and day for those without shelter and living on the streets. May your mercy and love be known to them. Dear loving God and Jesus our Savior, we lift up to our children, youth, and young adults so that they can learn and grow and also come to know your love and purpose for their lives. Our hearts go out to those who are sick and in hospice, and those who are struggling in relationships and marriages, and those who are caught up in addiction of terrible drugs and alcohol. Help us stop the flow of drugs across our border. We are in conflict and undecided as to how to work out our border situation of so many thousands of illegal immigrants rushing into our country. We pray you will give guidance and knowledge to our government leaders at state and national levels to ascertain the best process to deal with this issue. O merciful God, we pray to live lives that reflect your love and glory and to follow your will and plans for our lives. May the light of Christ shine brightly as we seek to do what you call us to do. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Prayer written by Rev. Sharon MacVean

PRAYER NOTES

Rev. Sharon A. MacVean

Author, Pete Greig opens his book, How to Pray, a simple guide for normal people, with this remark from his teen-age son. "When one of our sons heard that I was writing a book about how to pray, ' he said O but that's easy You just say Dear God chat him for a bit and then say Amen" In some ways he was right. We can tend to make prayers more complicated than they need to be. This book is written for those who would like to grow and go a bit deeper in their relationship with God. The word prayer comes from a Latin word that means life is precious. The greatest person who ever lived was a man of prayer. He prayed before choosing disciples and prayed all night for other decisions. One of the first guides to choose a somewhat quiet place so that you might also be able to hear God. At one of the seminars we held at CITD, the speaker taught us a simple guide that I often use. This guide is **ACTS**.

A stands for adoration, telling God what he has done for you

C stands for confession—what mistake you made or what resentments or what you might have said differently

T stands for thanks -thanks for what God has done for your family or thanks for your friends and church and what you may want for them

S stands for supplication or what we call intercession—the things you are asking God to do, praying for the people in the hospital or at your church or family with a disease such as cancer, or in the world such as for Ukraine or our president to make wise choices.

If you have a different guide for prayer, please share it with me.

East District Prayer Focus for January

Shepherd of the Pines UMC,
Overgaard
Pastor Winona Dye

Song of Life UMC,
Queen Creek
Rev. Jody Topping

Spirit of Joy UMC, Coolidge
Pastor Tracy Perry

St. Matthew UMC, Mesa
Rev. Brooke Burris Wilkerson



United
Women
in Faith

January Meetings of UWF

| | | | |
|------------|-------------------------|----------|-----------------|
| January 5 | UWF Leadership Team | 3:00 pm | Fellowship Hall |
| January 12 | Outreach Circle Meeting | 10:30 am | Fellowship Hall |
| January 12 | Mary Martha Circle | 6:30 pm | |
| January 17 | Devotions and Dinner | 6:30 pm | |
| January 19 | Bookworms United | 10:00 am | Zoom |

Book: Pick out a Cork O'Conner series book by William Kent Krueger to share




 UWF Christmas Tea & Installation of Officers
 Sunday, December 11 - 3:00pm
 Fellowship Hall
 Bring a wrapped, definitely not new gift
 for a
 White Elephant Gift Exchange
 Join us for an afternoon of fun!




UWF officers (from left): Ada Thompson, President and Program Resources; Judy Smith, Palm Lakes; Sharon MacVean, Nominations, Arvilla Jungman, Outreach, Bookworms, and Social Action; Mary Nell Woodward, Spiritual Growth and Mary Martha; Mary Botts, Nominations; Jeannine Diller, Nominations; Mary Ann Crist, Membership & Communications; Kathleen Boos, Shoebox; Alice Easter, Church Women United; and Ruth Hummel, Outreach. Not pictured: Linda Moore, Secretary and Dinner & Devotions; Becky Gaylor, Treasurer.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

What a fun month December has been. The kids have been excited to once again serve as Acolytes. Our month started off with Noah Foster and today was Bradleigh Foster. Our Christmas Eve service will be John Keck, who is new to our church. His parents are very excited to be joining in more activities and see their children grow here. Our other acolyte is Daisy Pleake, who will begin in January. Lois Keel and Heather Foster will help guide them as they go into this children's ministry. As they gain confidence, they are talking about helping with greeting, liturgists and with offerings. Please keep them encouraged also as they are walking around during greeting time, smile, fist bump and learn their names.

This past Saturday, our kids had their Christmas party of decorating cookies and making an ornament. Inside their ornament, is a ribbon that is the exact height they are right now. They are excited to see how much taller they will be at Christmas 2023. Pretty sure they ate more frosting than got onto their cookies, but they had fun. Then for January 1st, our children voted on having a game party for their church time. So you won't see them, but they will all be here.

Now that I have resigned from the children's ministry, please think about how you can help to fill the vacancies we will now have: three additional teachers will be needed as well as someone to watch the kids in the nursery. January is the month we always begin our planning for Vacation Bible School, Unless it is changed, we are using Cokesbury's *Food Truck Party* theme. It is a great topic to carry on the theme from this past summer of *Come to the Table*.

Thank you so much, Connie R Bruhn
Coordinator of Children's Ministries



Connie's Goodbye Letter

How does a person even start off a letter to let my church know I'm not stepping away, but getting even busier? I have spent more years than I think I even realize, serving such precious children at CITD, many of whom are now in college. Actually, some have finished college and into their careers. We have had a flourishing youth group during my years as Youth Director. However, for now, I will cover my years in the children's ministry.

During the last couple of years, I have been teaching at two different Preschools, one of which has captured my heart. I have been teaching the two year olds, both foster care children and neighborhood kids. Family Care Kids Preschool is located on 7th Avenue, just south of Glendale and is part of Christian Family Care Preschool, who at one time tried to rent out and renovate the Guthrie Bldg. Our building here was too small for their needs and they remodeled a building next to First Christian Church.

After, teaching for nearly a year, I had thought I'd retire and continue at CITD. But those plans changed when I saw a need for more leadership at Family Care Kids. I was offered a very good position just over a week ago to be Co-Director beginning December 15th and was thrilled to accept. My heart is in foster care and giving trauma kids all that I have to offer them to become confident, self-motivated kids.

Because of these children, I have decided it would be best to resign at CITD and further work with my trauma kids. I want to thank you for the opportunity for a decade to raise up some strong Christian children & teens. Enjoy every part of their lives in the months to come. I'll see you from time to time.

Thank you friends.

Connie R Bruhn, Coordinator of Children's Ministries

MISSIONS



Santa's Workshop returned to Parsons Village on December 16th. After a two year hiatus due to the pandemic, about 35 very excited children were able to choose Christmas gifts for their adult family members! The kids were divided into three groups and rotated between making a craft, enjoying a story and a snack, and best of all—shopping with a personal shopper who helped them select gifts and wrap them. The Missions Committee wants to thank Karen Bulkeley for organizing the event! All the volunteers who attended were blessed by seeing how excited the kids were to choose a gift to give. Thanks to all the personal shoppers, the group guides, story tellers, crafty people, wrappers and taggers, and most of all, to all of you who donated gifts. As a team you all made this outreach event happen!



Thank you to everyone who brought socks for the sock drive! CITD was able to donate 341 pairs of socks for the Shoebox Ministry's Christmas Drive.



As we begin 2023 there is still need in our community. Please continue to support the Paradise Valley Community Food Bank. This can be done by depositing non-perishable items in the food cart in the narthex, or by adding a few extra dollars in your offering envelope.

There is also need internationally, as the war in Ukraine continues. UMCOR funds are being poured into Ukraine, and the needs in other parts of the world continue with weather related disasters. Please consider a donation to UMCOR. Your donation can be directed to:

- International Disaster Response, Advance #982450
- U.S. Disaster Response, Advance #901670
- Ukraine Disaster Response, Advance #14053A
- UMCOR Where Most Needed, Advance #999895



(Continued from page 5)

ReLaunch Project Plan Summary for Strategic Planning

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| <p>3. Develop and implement robust strategies for fostering relationships with persons who come to campus for special events.</p> | <p>3.1 Each planning committee will make a plan to extend extravagant hospitality to all visitors who attend a special event and to follow-up with each visitor.</p> |
| <p>4. Enhance small group ministry to include groups that will appeal to persons whose needs/demographics may not currently be met.</p> | |
| <p>5. Re-connect with church members who may have become disconnected during the pandemic</p> | <p>5.1 Identify what gains and losses persons have experienced and identify whys to address identified needs (e.g. grief group).</p> |
| | <p>5.2 Develop and implement system to identify persons who have not been seen for awhile and reach out to them in a meaningful and relational way.</p> |
| <p>6. Provide timely opportunities for "newly gathered" persons to develop connections and relationships within the church.</p> | <p>6.1 Complete a meaningful connection with each new person who participates in worship</p> |
| <p>7. Utilize a variety of communication methods to share mission and vision of CITD and how that is being implemented through worship, missions, and spiritual growth.</p> | <p>7.1 Implement comprehensive communication plan</p> |
| <p>Recommitting: A fresh understanding, devotion, and obligation to the mission field to build authentic relationships, meet needs, and introduce people to Jesus.</p> | |
| <p>STRATEGY</p> | <p>TASK</p> |
| <p>1. Identify our "mission field"</p> | <p>1.1 Gather and evaluate demographic data</p> |
| | <p>1.2 Complete basic analysis of data</p> |
| | <p>1.3 Based on data analysis, identify the geographic boundaries of our mission field</p> |
| <p>2. Identify primary mission focus (passion) of CITD</p> | <p>2.1 Complete inventory of all mission-focused activities currently happening</p> |
| | <p>2.2 through surveys or focus groups, identify the mission-focused passions of current members</p> |
| | <p>2.3 host series of tours at agencies in the community.</p> |
| <p>3. Develop a budget that prioritizes our commitment to our mission field</p> | <p>3.1 Continue to assess current budget and identify opportunities to pay apportionments.</p> |
| | <p>3.2 Develop multi-year plan to decrease percentage of budget that is spent on administrative and facility costs and increase percentage of budget spent on the mission field.</p> |

Day of Service—January 8th—During Fellowship Time

This is your chance to explore all the different ways you can get involved at CITD! And you can check them out all in the same place, at the same time! Don't miss this opportunity to find something perfectly suited to your skills or interests.

Desert Southwest Conference News

Annual Conference Supports Our Ministry

The Desert Southwest Annual Conference supports its churches and pastors in many ways. As we begin a new year, we should remember how we have been blessed.

First, we must remember the prayers and conversations with Rev. Susan Brims, District Superintendent until June 20, 2022, and with Rev. Melissa Rynders, District Superintendent as of July 1, 2022. Nor should we forget the prayers and concern of our bishops: Bishop Robert Hoshibata until his retirement as of September 30, 2021, Bishop Grant Hagiya until his retirement as of December 31, 2022, and now, Bishop Carlo Rapanut as of January 1, 2023.

Next, there is a lot of training available for our various ministries, including a monthly leadership talk via Zoom and recorded webinars for all our major committees and teams.

Nor should we forget the many financial blessings we have received in recent years.

In 2020, Cross in the Desert received a \$5,000 tech grant to help with upgrades to the AV system in the sanctuary. We also received \$5,000 equitable compensation to help pay for moving expenses for our new pastor, Rev. Galene Boyett.

In 2021, the Annual Conference paid one month of our apportionments for \$4,304.67. With this help, we were able to pay 2/3 of our apportionments for the year.

In 2022, the Annual Conference once again paid one month of our apportionments for \$4,382.17. We also received \$10,000 from Equitable Compensation to help pay our pastor.

In 2023, we will receive another \$10,000 to help support our pastor's compensation. Also, we have applied for and will be one of the churches working on the Church Cartographer project, to help us find other sources of income (besides contributions) through better use of our buildings and resources.

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

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East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

Director of Communications

(Assistance with technology)

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Cross in the Desert UMC Staff

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Lay Leader—vacant

Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Connie Bruhn

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Kevin Joy

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Communications—Dinah Brooks

Music Department

Music Director — Nicosia Garrison

One Flock Choir Accompanist—Mary Tassi

Bell Choir Director—Julie Wagner

Building and Grounds Concerns

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