



2024 Strategic Planning Session—January 13

Plan to attend the 2024 Strategic Planning Session on January 13th from 8:30-3:00 in Fellowship Hall.

- Billie Fidlín, Director of Justice and Outreach for the Desert Southwest Conference will speak on civil dialog—making space at the table for disagreement.
- Celebrate all the successes of 2023
- Help develop our goals and objectives for 2024
- Lunch provided by UWF

Please RSVP to the church office by January 10th for planning purposes. For questions, please contact Karen Bulkeley.



In This Issue.....	
Pastor's Corner.....	2
Birthdays, Anniversaries.....	3
General News.....	3,4,5,8,9,10
Finance.....	5
Prayer Ministry.....	6
UWF.....	7
Missions.....	9
Conference.....	11

Pastor's Corner



As Cross in the Desert celebrates our 60th anniversary, we are reminded that considering the circumstances of the last few years, we are blessed to be able to move forward in our work. This remarkable milestone allows us to reflect on the past, acknowledge our present, and look forward to the future with renewed faith and hope.

The theme of our anniversary celebration is "Forward in Faith and Hope." Throughout our journey, we have faced challenges, celebrated victories, and grown together as a community of believers. Now, as we embark on this new phase in our church's history, we are poised to build upon the foundation laid by our predecessors. With unwavering faith in God and a hopeful spirit, we eagerly anticipate the beautiful things that lie ahead.

Looking back at the past, we remember those who came before us—those who labored tirelessly to establish this church and create a faith-filled environment for us all. Their dedication, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to God's work have paved the way for us to gather here today. As we celebrate this milestone, we express gratitude for their vision and inspiration.

As a congregation, we are proud of the positive impact we have made in the lives of our members and the community around us. From providing spiritual guidance and support to engaging in acts of service, our church has been a beacon of hope and love. Our collective efforts have changed lives, uplifted spirits, and brought joy to the hearts of many.

As we look ahead, we are encouraged by the prospects of growth and transformation within our church. We recognize that the world is ever-evolving, and our faith must be dynamic and adaptable as we face new challenges. "Forward in Faith and Hope" reminds us to embrace change, to remain steadfast in our beliefs, and to approach the future with optimism, knowing that God is always with us.

We will have a commemorative worship service on January 14, 2024, at 10:00 AM where we will reflect on our journey, express gratitude, and set our intentions for the future.

Let us embrace the opportunity that our 60th anniversary presents—a chance to strengthen our bonds, deepen our faith, and warmly welcome all who seek salvation and belonging. Together, let us move "Forward in Faith and Hope," confident that God's guidance will lead us to new heights.

Thank you for being an essential part of our church's history, present, and future. We are blessed to have each and every one of you as part of our loving community. May we continue to walk together, "Forward in Faith and Hope," for the next 60 years and beyond.



Haley Falknor	January 3
Rylan Francis	January 6
John Easter	January 9
Judy Smith	January 13
Heidi Gustafson	January 21
Jim Bussey	January 22
Ryker Joy	January 22
Sandra Brown	January 23
Wes Picciotti	January 23
Arvilla Jungman	January 25
Eileen Wixon	January 27
Steve Cahill	January 28
Linda Lulkovich	January 28
Kathleen Boos	January 29
Charlie Diller	January 29

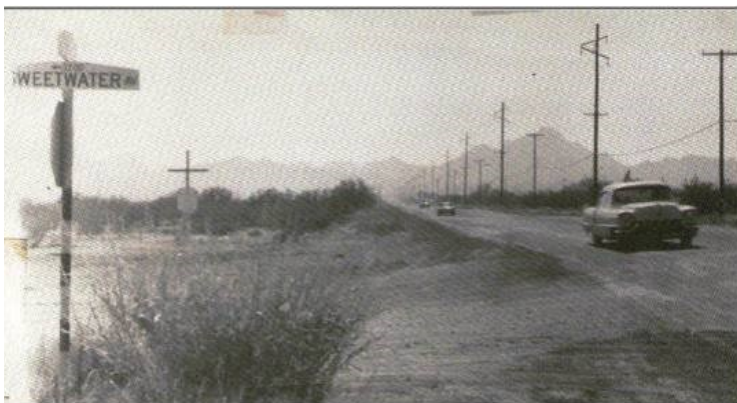
Cross in the Desert

January 12

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.

Anniversary Celebration

Cross in the Desert observed its Charter Sunday on January 12, 1964. As 2024 dawns we prepare to celebrate 60 years of ministry in the North Phoenix community. North Phoenix has changed a lot since 1964, when literally we planted a cross in a piece of desert to establish our presence at the corner of 32nd St. and Sweetwater! We are blessed to have 2 charter members still actively participating here. We will celebrate the anniversary during worship on January 14th.



Food with Friends

January 20th, 5:00 PM in Fellowship Hall

Mark your calendars for an all church potluck.

Join us for FOOD, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN.

(Daycare will not be provided.)

- Breakfast for Dinner theme
- Bring a breakfast dish, side, fruit, etc. to share if you would like.
- Paper plates, plastic silverware and paper napkins will be provided.

You are welcome to bring your own dinner service if you prefer “real dishes”

We plan to play a game or two of bingo so bring your daubers and good luck charms!

There is no RSVP necessary, but you can tell Rhonda M. or Cathy M. if you will be joining us so we can be sure to have enough tables and chairs set up in Fellowship Hall.



Introducing Dinner and Dialogue

The first meeting of Dinner & Dialogue will be held Thursday January 25th
6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall.

This event invites people from various backgrounds to come together and listen to each other in real time over a meal. By pulling topics from current events and areas of individual concern, participants will be invited to share their experiences with the issues in the news. We want to build bridges and reduce loneliness. Building bridges reduces loneliness with the potential for increasing productivity and personal well-being.

Additionally, we want to ensure that Cross in the Desert continues to be known as a safe place for those who want to find a spiritual community to call home.

More details will be coming soon.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

No finance update this month as we prepare the budget for 2024, and close the books for 2023. Watch for news in the February Oasis.

Christmas at Cross in the Desert



A band of crafty elves decorated the sanctuary, preparing the way for worship during Advent.

Then the word became flesh on Christmas Eve!





Prayer Corner

O Holy Father, may the light of the Christmas star shine in all our lives. We need the hope of Christmas with the birth of Jesus. Thank you God for sending Jesus to be our Messiah. We stumble and fall, and come back to you for guidance and healing. We are far from perfect, God, and we are so grateful to have a Savior. Walk with us and help us reach out to you, and stop trying to do everything on our own power.

We pray for comfort and peace for those who are ill and affected by disease. We pray for families and all the children. God, please help us continue to support police and relief workers, and work against the violence. Help our country learn and know that mental illness is a big problem that people don't cause themselves to have. May we provide care and healing for those people, Help us stop hiding from this problem.

God please be with Ukraine—this is such an ugly and unnecessary war.

Be with Israel that was attacked by Hamas.

Be with us all God in this new year, working hard to keep our church strong and faith strong.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

Prayer written by Rev. Sharon MacVean

Prayer Notes

It seems the early church believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They traveled and took their message with them.

The Samaritans heard and believed the message and were brought into the church even though before they were considered inferior.

Even Gentiles became included. Such came the importance in Christianity. to express “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”.

All are one in Christ Jesus The success of the church's mission is dependent upon Christianity unity.

Let us hold unity as our important goal.

Rev. Sharon MacVean

East District Prayer Focus for January

**Paradise Valley UMC—Paradise
Valley**

Rev. Jonathan Arnpriester
Rev. Loye Ashton

Payson UMC—Payson
Pastor Michael Eaton





United Women in Faith

January Meetings of UWF

January 4	Leadership Team	3:00 pm	Fellowship Hall
January 11	Outreach Circle Meeting	11:00 am	Fellowship Hall
January 11	Mary Martha Circle	4:00 pm	Mary Nell's House
January 16	Devotions and Dinner	6:00 pm	
January 18	Bookworms United	10:00 am	Zoom

Book: *The Reading List* by Sara Adams

UWF Christmas Tea—December 10, 2023

The United Women in Faith gathered on December 10th to joyfully share tea, cookies, and sing accompanied by the dulcet tones of Mary Tassi! As they sang their favorite Christmas songs, they raised money to support their ongoing project to “End Period Poverty” in the middle schools along the 32nd Street corridor. Incoming President Judy Smith led the group in a fun version of the *Twelve Days of Christmas—Arizona Style*.

The new officers for 2024 were installed during the event.



left—Incoming President Judy Smith leads the group in *Twelve Days of Christmas—Arizona Style*

Right—Installation of 2024 UWF officers



The ladies enjoyed their tea at the beautifully decorated tables!

INTRODUCING THE “#CITD LOVE DUCK”



At the 2023 Church Conference, District Superintendent Melissa Rynders presented CITD with our own “Love Duck”. She asked that we use the duck to spread love and blessings, and to remember our sister church Journey UMF.

In that spirit, beginning in December watch for our purple Love Duck hiding around the CITD campus. If you are lucky enough to find the Love Duck you are encouraged to complete several small tasks:

1. Say a quick prayer for CITD and Journey UMF;
2. Take a moment to write a special blessing CITD has brought to you on the paper provided with the Love Duck;
3. Take a picture of you with the Love Duck and pass it on to Pastor Gina or Phillip Botts, along with information on what you chose to identify as the blessing CITD has given you, for posting on social media. (If you don't want your picture or other identifying information on social media, send information on your blessing and ask that you remain anonymous);
4. If you're comfortable, post your picture and blessing on your personal social media account(s) using #CITDLoveDuck and #WEAreLove
5. Hide the Love Duck in a new place for someone else to find!

Let's join with our fellow East District United Methodist Churches to spread love, blessings, and ducks!

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW LEADERSHIP BOARD

By: Karen Bulkeley

In October, at Church Conference you voted to move from a traditional administrative structure to the simplified, accountable structure model for conducting the business of the church. This vote happened after many months of study, discernment, and prayer. In moving to this new model it is hoped that the business of the church will become more streamlined and more members will be freed up to do the truly important business of the church: to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

First, I would like to thank the brave individuals who have agreed to join me on this exciting journey. This model is often referred to as the One Board Model. For the time being, CITD will be referring to our board as the Leadership Board. The 2024 Leadership Board members are: Karen Bulkeley, Eugene O'Bryan, Wanda Picciotti, Jonathan Foster, Mary Nell Woodward, Romi Simons, Ada Thompson, Sophia Quinton, and Rhonda Mortensen.

As a refresher, the Leadership Board will be combining the work of the Church Council, Board of Trustees, Staff-Parish Relations, and Finance. All other existing committees will continue to operate as usual including: Missions, Prayer, and Foundation. It is our hope that this modification will allow for more opportunities for the friends and family of CITD to find a place to serve the church and the community and that these experiences may become more fulfilling as we reduce bureaucracy and focus on the prime objective of service.

At this time, the plan is to conduct Leadership Board meetings on the last Tuesday of the month at 7:00PM, just like the Church Council has been meeting for many years. The Leadership Board meetings will be open meetings. You can find announcements of the meeting date and time on the church calendar. You are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings. The only time a meeting may briefly close to non-committee members is to discuss confidential personnel issues.

If you ever have any questions about the Leadership Board, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of the board members.

MISSIONS



The Missions Committee continues to sell gift cards during fellowship time on the second Sunday of every month. Don't forget to bring cash or your checkbook to stock up on gifts for friends and family, as well as gift cards for places where you normally shop or eat. The profit from these sales goes to mission projects. We are also part of Fry's Community Rewards Program. If you do not have your Fry's V.I.P. card linked to Cross in the Desert, please talk to us at the Missions Table or ask Karen Mischik for more details.



Stay tuned for an upcoming volunteer opportunity with The Foster Alliance, formerly known as Arizona Helping Hands. The Missions Committee is scheduling a date and time at their facility, and we will be recruiting volunteers to join us. They are located near 32nd Street & Thunderbird, and their mission is to support foster families.

Coming on February 10th! Self-Care for Caregivers Workshop

Find some respite in the midst of caregiving challenges at Cross in the Desert's free upcoming half-day conference on Saturday, February 10, 2024, from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Acknowledging the unspoken struggles faced by caregivers, we aim to provide a rejuvenating space for self-reflection and learning. Recognizing that the term "burden" does not encapsulate the depth of love and dedication caregivers bring to their roles, our conference endeavors to lighten the load and offer valuable insights.

Join us for an enriching experience where you can engage in healing mindfulness and somatic exercises, gaining tools to navigate the multifaceted challenges of caregiving. Our guest speaker, an expert in the field, will underscore the significance of prioritizing your well-being within the caregiving equation.

Additionally, connect with local organizations dedicated to supporting caregivers, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding. To ensure we cater to your needs, please RSVP in advance. Lunch will be provided, making this conference a holistic and nurturing experience.

East & West Districts Leadership Conference 2024

February 3, 2024 8:30 am—12:30 pm

Cross in the Desert UMC

This year's topic is Conflict Management & Rebuilding Trust

In our workshop, we will explore the five conflict management styles, take an informal conflict management style assessment, and explore ways to manage conflict. Then we will explore the role of trust, credibility, and power in organizational culture, and consider what individuals and organizations can do when trust breaks down.

Rev. April Casperson serves as the Director of Enrollment Management at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and a diversity and inclusion consultant. She previously served as Director of Diversity and Inclusion for the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is an ordained deacon passionate about diversity and inclusion, vocational discernment, and the organizations and systems that recruit, educate, and equip leaders for thoughtful, intentional ministry. Rev. Casperson previously served as VP of Institutional Advancement at Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

Please contact Jeannine Marinoni at the District Office with any questions at jmarinoni@dscumc.org.

Registration fee is \$30.00



Speaker: *Rev. April Casperson*, Director of Enrollment Management Methodist Theological School in Ohio

Desert Southwest Conference News

FROM THE PULPIT – Oppose the Death Penalty Now!

by [Paul Bullis](#) | Jan 2, 2024 | [Conference Newsletter](#), [East District Newsletter](#), [Prison Reform/Death Penalty Task Force](#)

Rev. Jim Ek recently preached a powerful sermon on the death penalty at **St. Matthew UMC, Mesa**. He encouraged everyone to write to their governor and representatives to support commuting death sentences of prisoners on death row in order to save lives now. A video of the sermon can be found on <https://dscumc.org/>. These resources may be used in e-newsletters, worship services, social justice meetings, or wherever they may help people learn more about why it is crucial to oppose the death penalty and support commuting death sentences.

In addition, the Conference website has the [addresses](#) of the Governors of the states touched by the Conference, plus links for identifying your state representatives, and [a sample letter](#).

Rev. Jim Ek's sermon, entitled "[Living United Methodist Principles: Embracing Compassion and Justice](#)," argues that we should be alarmed by the state sanctioned killing by our own state governments as they execute prisoners on death row. **Rev. Ek** notes the **United Methodist Church's** official stance against the death penalty and recognizes that some may disagree with that stance. **Rev. Ek** asks those who may disagree to consider that our faith supports the sanctity of life; that the **United Methodist Church** places great emphasis on justice and mercy; and that we need to advocate for change in order to save lives. Our Annual Conference recently passed a resolution calling for commuting the death sentences of those on death row. **Rev. Ek** urges us to write our governor and representatives to oppose the death penalty now!

Conference Contacts

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Lay Leader—vacant

Music Director

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Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Vacant

Youth and Technology Coordinator

Kevin Joy

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