



The Oasis

January 2026

Cross in the Desert UMC

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



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***Get ready to launch
Cross in the Desert
into the New Year!***



Pastor's Corner



A New Year: Centered in What Matters Most

A new year begins quietly—not with fireworks, but with an invitation. It gently calls us to pause, release what no longer serves us, and remember who we are and whose we are.

As we start this year together, let us resist the urge to hurry or measure ourselves by what we accomplish or how perfectly we perform. Instead, we turn our hearts toward hope and ask a simple, searching question: **What matters most?**

The gentle wisdom of the book, *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, will inspire our opening sermon series. Through its tender conversations and quiet truths, this story invites us back to the essentials—love, courage, kindness, belonging, and the grace of walking together.

Each week, we will reflect on these themes through scripture, prayer, and our shared stories—listening for how God is shaping us into people grounded in compassion and hope. This series is meant to steady us, remind us we are never alone, and help us begin the year feeling centered rather than scattered.

A new year does not ask you to become someone entirely different. It simply offers space to heal, to grow, and to trust that God is already at work in and among us. Whether you feel hopeful, weary, joyful, or uncertain, you belong here.

As a community, let's step into this year with care. Let's be curious instead of afraid, generous instead of guarded, and rooted in the love that holds us steady. And let's keep coming back, again and again, to what matters most.

With deep hope for the year ahead,

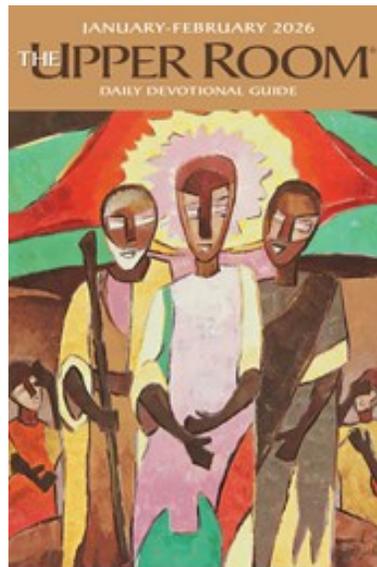
Rev. G

Pastor, Cross in the Desert United Methodist Church



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.

Haley Parrott	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
Wes Picciotti	January 23
Arvilla Jungman	January 25
Stephen Cahill	January 28
Linda Lulkovich	January 28
Kathleen Boos	January 29



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 Men's Walk #269 will be January 29-February 1 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

The Women's Walk #270 will be February 12-15 at Christ Community UMC, 104 W. Western Ave, Avondale.

Questions—Contact Pastor Gina or Mary Ann Crist.

Pastor Gina is serving on the Spiritual Team for Walk #270. Kristin O'Shaughnessy will be a Pilgrim on Walk #270. Please bring any Agape for them, or any other team member, to the office before February 12th. Thank you.



Santa's Workshop was a BIG Success!

Thank you to everyone who participated in Santa's Workshop this year. The workshop is now closed until next year to give the elves some rest! Whether you participated by donating a gift or went down to Parsons Village to help, you have made a huge difference to the 55 children that attended. This is how we show our community who we are at Cross in the Desert! Below is an excerpt from an email received by Karen from Lynn Hernandez, the Resident Service Mentor at Parsons Village-Phoenix, Arizona.

The entire event was wonderful, and everyone was blessed with the many gifts, desserts, wrapping supplies, tables etc that you provided to make the event possible, but what meant most of all was that everyone of you brought your Heart!

I was amazed and overjoyed to watch every youth be touched by everyone's kindness and personal interest that was given to each one of them.

I know these kids well. They were excited at the gifts they received, and were beautifully wrapped for their parents, but the way each individual was personally talked to and treated special with kindness, respect and love will be the memory that impacts them for years to come.

Thank you from all of the youth here at Parsons, and a very personal thank you from me, for blessing these kids who are such a blessing to me!



Shopping with their personal shopper!



Refreshment time!



Lots of wrapping!





Blessed Christmas Eve



This special Christmas Eve started with Rev. Gina Pollard welcoming those attending. The Advent Candles were lit by four generations of the Bulkeley family. The senior Bulkeleys are charter members of CITD. Dick and Martha Bulkeley were joined by son Jeff and his wife Karen, granddaughter Allison Goodwin and husband Nick, and great granddaughters Maisie and Emma. Then the Christ Candle was lit by Rev. Gina Pollard and Rev. Michael Hartwell (the father of Music Director Thomas Hartwell). The choir was singing and the bells were ringing to proclaim the birth of Jesus!



PRAYER

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

We are only a few days into 2026. January 1 was a new day and a new year. Are you one of the many folks who made resolutions December 31? Maybe you resolved to get a new job, buy a home, take a trip, be more patient, go on a diet?

It is our tradition to make New Year's resolutions. It is kind of ingrained in us, the thought of a new year as a new beginning with a new outlook and desire to do things differently or to change something about our lives or ourselves. The "magic" of midnight of the New Year seems to bring with it the hope that we can be better people that our life can be happier and we can start over.

No one knows for sure, but it is believed that the prophet Jeremiah wrote the Book of Lamentations. The Book of Lamentations can be a difficult one to read because it seems so heavy, so sad sometimes. But, it is clear that Jeremiah's anguish was great over the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon or what we know today as Iraq and that is why he used a series of five laments or funeral dirges to mourn the loss or "death" of the city. However, the prophet's words also offer great hope to all of us. Jeremiah proclaims that the Lord's mercy and compassion are new every morning. Lamentations 3:22-24

As Christians, it is not the "magic" of midnight of December 31 that changes our lives or ourselves. It is God himself who does that. God himself forgives us for all our sins and he even goes one better by forgetting everything. As Jeremiah said, "God's mercy and compassion are new every morning." And we can seize the day as new creations in Christ. And tomorrow if things don't go exactly as we would like them to, we don't have to wait until December 31, 2026 to hope for a new beginning as tradition dictates because with Christ each day is a new beginning for us.

PRAYER - Great and glorious God, thank you so very much for giving us a chance to start over each morning. To begin again each day to become more like you in everything we think, say and do. Father, keep us well and safe as we strive to follow only you. In Christ's mighty name we pray. Amen

WALK WORTHY

East District Prayer Focus for January

Chandler UMC—Chandler
Rev. Candace Lansberry

Cross in the Desert UMC—Phoenix
Rev. Gina Pollard

Cross Roads UMC—Phoenix
Rev. Deontez Wimbley

PRAY
without ceasing
1 Thessalonians 5:17



United Women in Faith

January Meetings of UW Faith

January 8	UWF Leadership Team	10:00 am	Library
January 14	Mary Martha Circle	9:30 am	Library
January 15	Bookworms United	10:00 am	Zoom
Book of your choice this month. Come with suggestions for future books.			
January 20	Devotions & Dinner	6:30 pm	
January 31	Chili 4 Missions	12:00-3:30 pm	

Chili 4 Missions



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author

Join United Women in Faith for a Chili dinner and then take a bowl home for later.

Saturday, January 31, 2026

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm (dine in Fellowship Hall)

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm (take-out orders available for pick up)
(for orders placed before dinner)

Dine in - \$15.00/person

Take out - container size and price TBD

All proceeds will be given to United Women in Faith to benefit women, children, and youth around the world.

UW Faith Christmas Brunch and Officer Installation took place on December 6th. Guest Speaker Rachelle Jack gave an informational and inspirational talk on the school-to-prison pipeline.



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Building and Grounds Concerns

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