

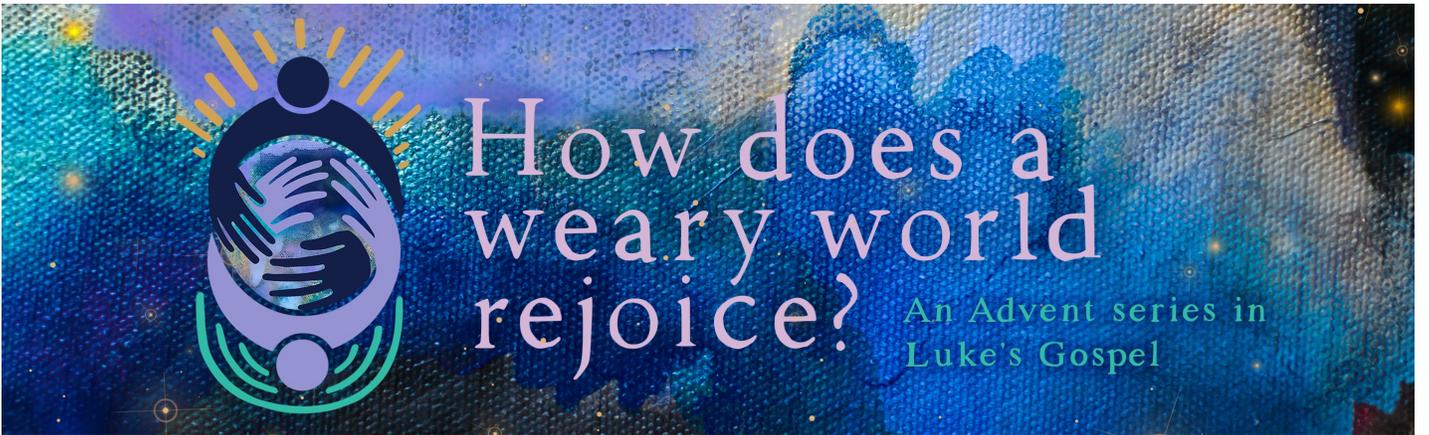


The Oasis

December 2024

Cross in the Desert UMC

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



Advent at Cross in the Desert

December 1	First Sunday of Advent	10:00 am service	<i>Are You Weary?</i>
December 8	Second Sunday of Advent	10:00 am service	<i>Finding Joy in Connection</i>
December 15	Third Sunday of Advent	10:00 am service	<i>Allowing Ourselves to be Amazed</i>
December 15	Blue Christmas Service	5:30 pm service	<i>A Service for the Weary</i>
December 22	Fourth Sunday of Advent	10:00 am service	<i>Stories of Hope</i>
December 24	Christmas Eve	6:00 pm service	<i>Making Room</i>
December 29	First Sunday of Christmas	10:00 am service	<i>Rooting Ourselves in Ritual</i>

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Pastor's Corner



Dear Beloveds,

As we enter the year's final month, it's a natural time for reflection and gratitude. December brings the beauty of winter, the warmth of gatherings, and a renewed sense of hope and peace that echoes through our hearts.

Peace is a vital aspect of our spiritual journey. December often comes with hustle and bustle, but it also offers an opportunity for quiet contemplation. As we seek moments of calm amidst the chaos, I invite you to take time for prayer, meditation, or a walk in nature. Let the stillness around you settle your mind and heart. During holiday preparations, let us find peace in our surroundings and within ourselves.

As we celebrate the season with our own traditions, let us honor the diversity of our community. Whether you observe Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or simply prepare for the New Year, remember that these celebrations all share foundational values: hope, love, and peace. In our gatherings, let's prioritize creating environments of acceptance and joy, where everyone feels valued and included.

In the spirit of peace, I encourage each of you to reach out to someone who may be struggling this season. A simple message of kindness can bridge gaps and create connections.

A Prayer for Us All

As we close this year, let us hold each other in prayer. May we be ever grateful for the love and support surrounding us and strive to extend peace to those we meet. Let us remember that we are all connected, not just during this particular season but throughout our lives.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful December filled with grateful hearts and peaceful spirits. May the New Year ahead bring hope, renewal, and new opportunities to grow in love and community.

With love and blessings,

Pastor G





December Birthdays

Helen Holloman	December 3
Eugene O'Bryan	December 4
Tim Foster	December 8
Joy Moore	December 8
Tucker Pleake	December 9
Dick Bulkeley	December 12
Thomas Hartwell	December 18
Sam Miller	December 19
Kay Caris	December 23
Tyler Pallante-Bulkeley	December 24
Bob Hood	December 27
Sandy Hansen	December 28
Jonathan Foster	December 31

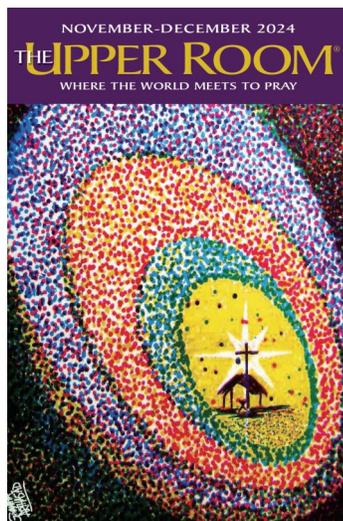


Charlie & Jeannine Diller	December 19
Augustine & Madhu Gavini	December 22
Bob & Jewell Hood	December 22
Paul & Suzy Zarkovich	December 24
Dick & Martha Bulkeley	December 28

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.



Pastor Gina served as a Poll Chaplain on Election Day.



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.



I'm so grateful for your help with what we've been able to achieve in such a short time. As of the writing of this, we are currently at \$168,411.58 in funds received or pledged. This is 79.0% of the way to our goal of making \$215,000 by the end of 2026.

We have already received \$125,787.18 of the funds. This is allowing us to begin making progress on the many items we wish to address. We spent \$18,097.00 on painting the exteriors of the Guthrie Building and the Fellowship Hall Building and on painting the narthex and outer hallways in the Sanctuary. Hopefully, you've noticed the improved looks.

We've also talked about the fact that we have partnered with the Desert Southwest United Methodist Foundation in this effort. We have opened an account with them that will allow anonymous and/or more complicated, tax-advantaged donations. If you wish to know more about that, please contact:

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agreen@dsumf.org
Office: 1-602-798-8202
Cell: 1-847-778-0556
www.dsumf.org

Thanks, again, for your support!

In His service,

Eugene O'Bryan, Chairperson
Together We Can Capital Campaign
Home: 602-788-0742
Cell: 602-363-4115
eobryan@cox.net



Honoring our “Angels” Christmas Fund-raiser Coming Soon



You probably noticed that we did not do the Luminaria fund-raiser for All Saints Day this year. A variety of conflicts and circumstances just made it impractical to accomplish. However, it is an opportunity to try something a little bit new and different! This year we will be collecting donations in honor of the Saints (i.e. Angels) we have lost and don't want to forget this Christmas season. Each honoree will be remembered with an individual Christmas ornament that will be displayed in the Sanctuary starting with the Blue Christmas service on December 15th. After the Christmas Eve services you will be encouraged to take each ornament you sponsored home with you to add to your own tree so you can continue to remember your friends and family this Christmas and for many Christmases to come.

An individual ornament will be made for each \$10 donation. As with the Luminaria fund-raiser, all proceeds will go toward meeting our apportionment commitment. You may honor as many people as you would like but we ask that there be just one name per ornament. Donations and the name(s) of your honorees MUST be to the church office and/or provided to Karen Bulkeley no later than December 11th. Look for order forms and more information after worship or see Karen for more information.

Living into the Life of a Leader Workshop

**12/7/24
9:00-1:00**

Who Should Attend:

- Current & newly elected Leadership Board and other committee members
- UWF Leaders, task force members, small group leaders
- Individuals eager to know more about how they can live into their own leadership abilities.

Prayer Corner

LET'S TALK ABOUT JESUS....

Elizabeth Weir, S.D.

LUKE 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward all."

Jesus is the reason for the season - Amen? Amen.....

Yes, Jesus is the reason for the season and it is a wonderful time for us to celebrate, a time to dance for joy for the great God came to earth to show us how much he loves us in a way that we could understand. Can you feel the difference in the air? People are just a bit nicer, they smile just a bit more, there is a happiness in the air for these few weeks every year that just isn't there the other 11 months.

It is difficult sometimes dealing with the worldly commercialism of Christmas and we all know folks who only come to church on Christmas Eve. But, these things should not discourage us. Maybe this will be the year that old Scrooge down the street who complains about your kids or that mean boss who wouldn't give you a raise or the rude driver who cut you off this morning is touched and comes to know Christ this Christmas Eve. The mighty God can and does change lives and hearts in the blink of an eye. Oh, yes, there will be some people getting into Heaven who we think shouldn't be there. But, we should be praying for more and more and more to get in. And when they do - hallelujah! God's angels will sing and heaven's trumpets will sound. The way the angels and trumpets sounded for us the day we fell in love with Christ. And if most in the world are only happy and nice to one another around Christmas then at least for a few weeks out of the year the world feels how we feel to know Christ.

The parties, the gifts, the cookies, a candlelight service and silent night can all be fun and tiring and joyful and reverent, but we, all of us must keep our eyes on the prize, keep our eyes on Jesus, keep our eyes on that man because he is what it is all about. There is nothing more important than Him! Nothing.

Jesus is the reason for the season. He is the reason we do what we do He is our reason to live. If we keep him at the forefront of all we do this holiday season we truly will have a Christ-centered, blessed Christmas. May God bless us all.

Glorious God, with all the noise and busyness of the season, help us to remember the simple Christmas message - you love us. May we walk worthy to honor and to be deserving of your love. In the sacred name of Christ. Amen.

East District Prayer Focus for December

Velda Rose UMC—Mesa
Rev. Ann Lyter

Wesley UMC—Phoenix
Rev. Towanda N.T. Connelly

White Mountain UMC—Show Low
Pastor Andrew Devereaux





United
Women
in Faith

December Meetings of UW Faith



December 5	Leadership Team	3:00 pm
December 8	Christmas Party & Installation of Officers	3:00 pm
December 12	Mary Martha Circle Mission Project	
December 19	Bookworms United (Zoom)	10:00 am



Junque in the Trunk

The *Junque in the Trunk* event held on November 9th was a successful fundraiser for the group. Many items changed hands, and it is true that your junk may be someone else's treasure.



United Women in Faith's Christmas Party And Installation of Officers

Sunday December 8, 2024

3:00 pm in Fellowship Hall

Bring a White Elephant Gift and cookies to share.



Santa's Workshop

For many years, CITD has sponsored a Santa's Workshop for the children residing at UMOM's Parson's Village. Parson's Village is a permanent, low-income apartment complex located in Sunnyslope. This year's Santa's Workshop is scheduled for **December 13th from 6:30-8:00PM.**

What is Santa's Workshop? It is an evening of fun that provides an opportunity for children residing at Parson's Village to "shop" for Christmas presents for their parents or other important adults in their life. In the past some children have told us that they have never been able to give a gift to their parent before.

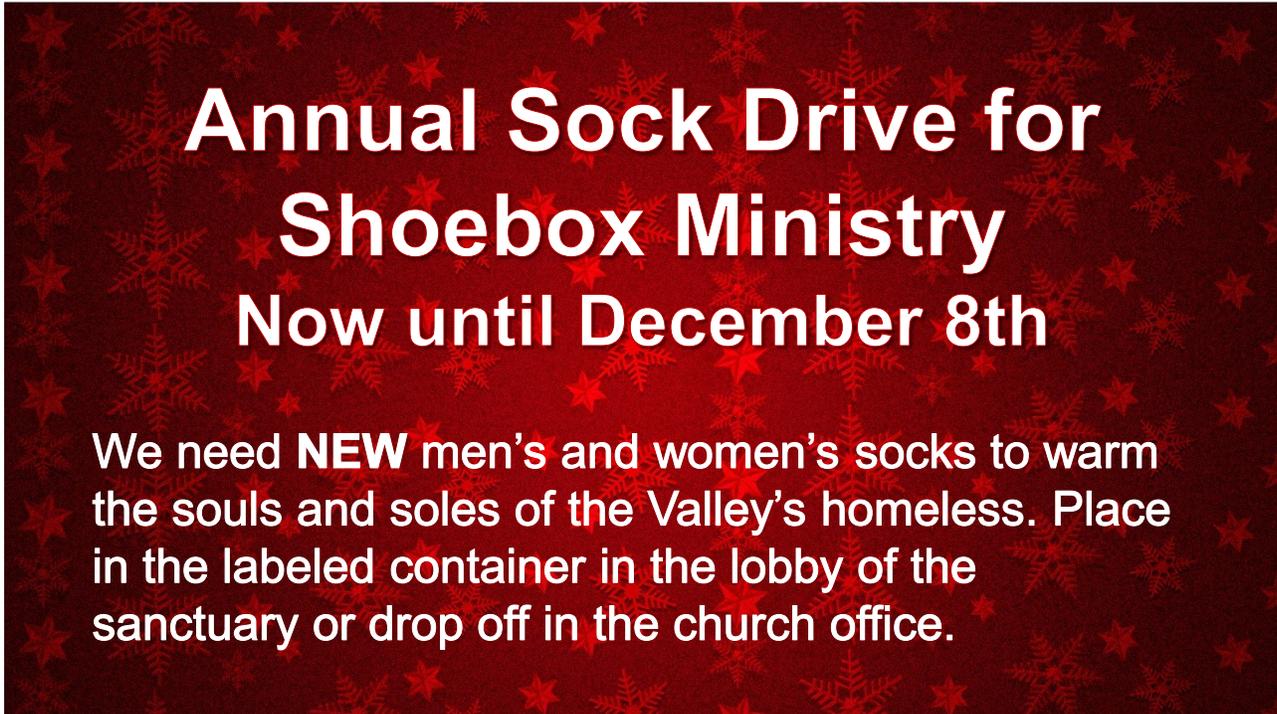
How can you help? Volunteers and Donations are needed. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

Bring 1 or more UNWRAPPED ADULT gifts valued between \$20-\$25 to the church **on Sunday December 8th** and place them under the tree.

Sign up at the Missions Table to donate other items such as gift tags, bows, or snacks.

Volunteer to attend Santa's Workshop and help the children shop; wrap their gifts; and/or help with other tasks.

Don't miss this big event that brings Christmas cheer to children and adults alike! Please see Karen Bulkeley after service to sign up to help or email ksbulkeley@gmail.com.



Annual Sock Drive for Shoebox Ministry Now until December 8th

We need **NEW** men's and women's socks to warm the souls and soles of the Valley's homeless. Place in the labeled container in the lobby of the sanctuary or drop off in the church office.

MISSIONS



GIFT CARDS

If you have not yet picked up your special Christmas order gift cards from the Missions team, please get them at the Missions table after church or at the church during office hours. Our regular inventory will be restocked and ready for purchase on December 1 and 8. On January 12 we will resume our monthly sale. Don't forget that we can now accept debit and credit card payments for your purchases.



Compassionate • Human • Innovative

Please join the Missions team as we volunteer our services at The Foster Alliance on December 4 from 1-3 pm. To sign up, see Karen Mischik at the Missions table or call her at 480-980-0286.



Thank you to all the heroes who donated blood in the Vitalant mobile unit on November 9th. There were a maximum of 16 slots available on the schedule. Out of 13 donors who were registered that morning, there were 12 successful donations received. Your efforts to save lives are truly appreciated!



Paradise Valley Community Food Bank Needs Donations!

The shopping cart in the lobby of the worship center is always available for your non-perishable donations to the food bank. Help make the holidays festive for a hungry family.



NEWS FROM THE ROSE GARDEN

The summer of 2024 was long hot summer as we all know, but the roses are putting out new growth in spite of it. I will be trimming them back and fertilizing as soon as temperatures cool down a bit. They also seem to be suffering from a rose virus that we'll be treating.

Next year due to health infirmities Jack and I are forced to retire from the rose care. We love roses and have enjoyed care of the church rose garden for six years. We will be happy to advise the new caretaker if needed.

Sincerely, Jack and Judy Smith



FOOD WITH FRIENDS **CHRISTMAS PARTY**

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 21
5:00 PM

Join us in Fellowship Hall for an evening of fun, fellowship and good food.

There will be a potluck!

Ham will be provided, so please bring a favorite side dish or dessert to share, and your own table service.

Reminder: No childcare is available.



Desert Southwest Conference News



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

UMC scholarship application opening January 2025

by [DSC Communications](#) | Nov 21, 2024 | [Conference Newsletter](#), [Featured-News](#)

Did you know that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (HEM) awards an average of \$5.5 million to help United Methodist students in the U.S. and abroad pursue their dreams through higher education? Students can get a reminder notification when the scholarship application opens on **Jan. 6, 2025** by adding their name here: <https://www.gbhem.org/scholarships/apply-for-scholarships/>



Conference Contacts

Bishop

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Conference Lay Leader

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East District Superintendent

Melissa Rynders

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East District Lay Leader

Trinity Donovan

Director of Communications

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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