



W I S E

Congregation for Mental Wellness

Welcoming | Inclusive
Supportive | Engaged

Church of the Palms

United Church of Christ
Sun City, AZ

www.thepalms.org

Important Phone Numbers

National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line
1-800-950-6264 <https://www.nami.org/help>
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800.273.TALK
Veteran's Crisis Line 800.273.8255 *press 1*
Pastoral Care—Pastor Jim Alexander
623.792.5295

The Church of the Palms' W.I.S.E. focus will be combined for November and December. Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's will be experienced differently than ever before in our lifetime because of COVID 19, traveling restrictions, sizes of groups recommended for safety. Amid celebrations and losses, we all come with anticipation and hopes of something to touch our souls as only the Divine can.

"PROMISES" and reminders of God's continued presence can comfort and embolden our choices of how to respond to the myriad of emotions that holidays bring. Most of us own our nostalgic tendencies during this season. That brings sorrow and joyful memories. So let's go exploring about God's "PROMISES" for eight weeks.

Please read the overview and scripture ties for each week and pray that Emmanuel will open you to new ways of celebrating the holidays of 2020. God *is* with you!

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I is for Initiator: "Psalms 42:1 "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after thee, O God."

God was/is and will be the initiator. Rev. Charles Christopher, a wise spiritual mentor for me, taught me the patterns so clearly woven in the Hebrew scriptures of God's interaction with humans: Call/Lure, Response, Redemption. God initiates the lure, we respond (or we don't). As humans, we respond with our best effort and intent. Sometimes we know we have hit the mark and other times we know we didn't carry out our response as we hoped. God extends redemption ... love and mercy. Whether we missed the mark or responded in a complete and full way ... God initiates another Call/Lure. A beautiful cycle of interaction with The Divine. In her marvelous book *In Wisdom's Path: Discovering the Sacred in Every Season*, Jan Richardson writes:

*"Here,
In the center of my chest,
their constant dwelling:
the persistent yearning
the insistent craving
the unbidden imagining
the desire awakening
the daydream, the night dream
the reverie unfolding
the language of longing
drawing me home.*

There is something mysterious and magical that draws us to this season: longing for deeper connection, deeper understanding, more meaningful rituals. There is a constant dwelling, the language of longing. God is calling, God is luring us. May I be unabashed at honoring what I hear in my soul.

A RITUAL TO GUIDE US THROUGH THESE HOLIDAYS

Kay Klinkenborg offered a ritual to assist us during these unusual holidays at the Nov. 10 Tuesday Breakfast in Your PJs. This ritual acknowledges God is the ultimate "LIGHT" and is never absent from us, even when we can't see it or feel God's presence. She suggested each home make an "altar" for "HONORING AND MEMORIAL." An altar is a place to honor, to have a place to focus thoughts, a place you go with intention. Chose a location: center of dining room table, end table, any room in your home. You can place the items on the table, or a tray or plate. Use two battery-operated candles or tealights to place on your altar: one to honor those who cannot be physically present with you, the second to Memorialize the one(s) you have lost this year or in past years.

Select photos, ornaments, mementos, any item that speaks to you of these persons in your life. Let your creativity flow. Have a small tablet or piece of paper and pen on which to write a memory, gratitude, etc. Each message you capture will be a blessing. Choose to pause at the altar as you feel led — once a week, daily, or particularly on the holiday. Remember to "temper," as Shea Darian has taught us in our grief times; pace yourself, don't make this a compulsion. Some questions to consider during this blessing time at the altar:

What are memories that are special? What ways did this person bring light to my life? What blessings do I wish to send them? What blessing have I received from them?

There are 2 free, LED tealights for each household in the church office. They are the gift of Life Long Learning Board and the Care Team of the Church of the Palms.