

Embrace the Future: Be Intentional.

THE PALM LEAF

The Church of the Palms, UCC
14808 North Boswell Boulevard, Sun City, Arizona

A LETTER FROM PAUL

AUGUST 2024



Last month I wrote about five things we should not say. If you missed last month, go to the website and read them. When tough things happen to others or to us, what can we say to bring Jesus into the room? Here's my top five things to say.

Say... "I don't know, let's explore that together." Often, I find people of faith utterly petrified by engaging in conversation over a text that might challenge their faith because they feel they might not have "the right answer."

Tim Brown talks about this experiment... Go to a person of a different faith: Buddhist, Sikh, or Atheist. The point is to engage with someone different than you and invite them to read something, an essay, or a passage with you, but let them choose. And go with whatever they choose.

So, let's say they pick a passage from the Qur'an. Read it and let it come into conversation with your faith. The result I believe will be having a great discussion about faith and values, getting to know why we think the way we do, while also learning more

about how the other person thinks. So often people of faith think they only have something to impart on people with other worldviews and nothing to learn. You and I have much to learn about the world and about faith.

Say... "That's interesting! Tell me more..." Too often people of faith only utter this phrase if they're talking about gossip. "That's interesting! Tell me more!"

But what if we said it when people came to us with a different perspective on God? What if our first reaction to hearing something that may not line up with what we've come to believe isn't a rebuttal, but an invitation to hear more?

When we have been taught that questioning is bad, we invite others to claim the narrative. Instead, we should invite people to tell us more about their thoughts and beliefs. And, yes, share our own. But too often we're all too eager to do the latter and not interested in the former because we might actually have to think.

Say... "That doesn't fit with my faith..." It's amazing to me that people of faith can censor their TV's so that their kids won't see a sex scene, but they'll spend thousands of dollars on a birthday party for a two-year-old.

A LETTER FROM PAUL CONTINUED...

What is really obscene here?

I want us to think and ask if our faith has anything to say about how we live. And if so, what? My end desire is for civil conversation.

Say... "I struggle with what is written in the Bible, too..." I'm a pastor who struggles with the Bible. I think every person of faith should wrestle with the Bible. Converse with it. Engage it. Don't look at scripture like an encyclopedia that just gives "answers;" view it as a conversation partner!

When we look at the Bible as simply a reference book, we don't engage it. But if we engage it, then when someone with a different worldview brings up the scripture that it's hard to accept, we can say, I struggle with what is written in the Bible, too. There are a lot of verses in which I can't find purpose.

And it doesn't hurt my faith to say that it doesn't make sense because I don't believe that the authority of the Bible is dependent upon the absolute inerrancy of every verse.

You see, I make a distinction between story and history. I make a distinction between fable, myth, and fact. And I admit that scripture can hold all of these and more... and that that doesn't have to impede its ability to have truth. The Bible is full of truth not inerrancy. Struggling with the Bible, admitting that a certain verse is weird can bring Jesus into situations.

Say... "That's not Okay..." We need to speak out when people who represent the faith say things that are outrageous and downright dangerous. Where is the public outcry from people of faith against those TV preachers who claim America's problems are based on gay marriage? Those statements are not okay.

If we hear this extremely vehement nonsense and keep quiet, can we be surprised that people think this is what all Christians believe? We need to reclaim the narrative.

We need to decry the powerful TV preachers when they make ridiculous comments like, "God wants you to be monetarily rich." I think God would want the hungry fed, want people in pain healed, want immigrants welcomed, want girls in developing countries educated, want pollution cleaned up before God would want me to have more money in the bank!

One final thought: I think that we, too often, only engage the world and those around us with a defensive stance as if we have something to prove. Engage life in a meaningful way, in a way that calls faith into practice; in a way that invites questions and not just reciting something from memory. Listen not to respond, but to learn. Engage this world in a challenging way and I believe God will engage us and show up where we least expect it.

In summary:

Say:

- 5) *"I don't know, let's explore that together."*
- 4) *"That's interesting; tell me more."*
- 3) *"That doesn't fit with my faith."*
- 2) *"I struggle with what is written in the Bible, too."*
- 1) *"That's not okay."*

Shalom, Paul



Notes from your Executive Board at The Church of the Palms

Both our Constitution and Bylaws state: “The Executive Board shall have ultimate responsibility for accomplishing the church mission and assisting all Boards, Teams, Committees, and Work Groups in achieving their respective missions and objectives.” It further states: “The Executive Board, as elected by Church membership, acts on behalf of the congregation between annual meetings.”

This will be my last year serving as Chair of the Executive Board. Being on the Executive Board has given me a wider perspective on how much ministry goes on at The Church of the Palms. It is very heartwarming to be able to witness all the various ministries that go on from our many boards and teams.

The Church of the Palms is a Social Justice church. I am impressed that many of you started coming to this church so you could be involved with Social Justice. You do not just *talk the talk*. You *walk the walk*. The love, acceptance, and care seen by you as you do your part of the ministry here continues to warm my heart. Our church has many highly active and effective Social Justice ministries. They include:

1. LGBTQ+ Equity
2. Othering & Belonging
3. Creation Justice
4. Criminal Justice / Prison Ministry
5. Homelessness Teams (Includes I-Help and Feet-N-More Ministries)
6. Palestinian Human Rights
7. Immigration and Refugees
8. Neighbors-In-Need
9. Legislative Advocacy for all the above

I encourage you to visit various teams and boards at our church. It will give you a wider perspective of all the ministries including Social Justice issues that are being addressed regularly by our church. I feel honored to have this church as my church home.

Rev. Dr. Phillip Ladd, Chair of the Executive Board



National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line
1-800-950-6264 <https://www.nami.org/help>
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800.273.TALK
Suicide/Crisis Hotline TEXT 988
Translifeline 877.565.8860
Veteran's Crisis Line 800.273.8255 press 1
Pastoral Care - Pastor Jim Alexander 623.792.5295
<https://thepalms.org/Tools2Thrive>

For years I have cited a statistic that science has found 464 other species besides humans who practice homosexuality. That number has now blossomed to over 1500 observed species.

Why is this important? Because for many centuries the argument against the diversity of gender preference has been that it is "unnatural." For heterosexuals, who are surely the dominant group of humans, homosexuality seems "unnatural;" but for homosexuals or bisexuals, that is not the case. When we find other species where gays and lesbians practice same-sex attraction, then that tells us something additional about the diversity of gender preference in nature as a whole.

And all this tells us something about God as well, for as Thomas Aquinas alerted us in the 13th century, "a mistake about creation results in a mistake about God." Thus we need to consult science before we pronounce on many topics of ethics and morality. Ignorance about nature results in ignorance about God, and can create havoc in our churches and theologies.

Many Christians and Christian institutions have told us that, in effect, God is homophobic and does not tolerate sexual diversity. But that would seem not to be the case at all, as we study human populations where about eight percent of people are gay or lesbian all around the world. Furthermore, as Seneca woman and Franciscan Sister Jose Hobday told me years ago, most spiritual directors to the great chiefs in America were gay or "two-spirited," and it is recognized among her people that gays are more spiritual than straight people. This is true in Celtic and many other traditions as well.

A recent study about animal same-sex-behavior concludes that the entire topic is underreported.* Common bottlenose dolphins, giraffes, African elephants, penguins, beetles, lesbian sea gulls, swans, and numerous other species display gay sex.

Josh L. Davis, in his book, *A Little Queer Natural History*, published by University of Chicago Press, demonstrates how "sex in the natural world is wonderfully diverse," and includes split gill mushrooms with over 23,000 mating types. "The diversity we see in our own species needs no justification and represents just a fraction of what exists in the natural world."

Those who pontificate from a place of homophobia, be they popes or politicians passing homophobic legislation, ought to operate from a place of modesty and humility in the face of Creation's vast diversity.

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<https://dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org/2024/07/01/pride-month-sciences-latest-findings-on-sexual-diversity-among-numerous-species/>

Visit [Dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org](https://dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org) to view source and additional links as well as to register for FREE.



August Worship Themes

August 4th

John 6:1-15 tells the story of the feeding of the 5,000. Pastor Paul will be preaching and sharing three different ways to interpret this miracle of Jesus.

August 11th

How do we shape our community? Pastor Paul will be preaching. Come as your authentic self. Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2.

August 18th

How to become wise and not just a wise acre. Pastor Jim will be preaching from 1 Kings 3:14.

August 25th

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18 is the lectionary passage from the Hebrew scriptures. What if we decided to not make fear the dominant factor in our lives? What if, rather than fear, we chose service? "As for me and my house, we will choose the Lord." Pastor Paul will be preaching.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Jerry Lovell 1

Pat Clarke 7

Philip Maher 7

Abby Atkins 7

Bonnie Wyman 11

Chuck Eckstein 13

Pat Thorpe 14

Linette Stenberg 16

Carl Adrian 19

Terry Starr 19

Karl-Heinz Feiste 22

Ruth Humes 22

Pat Seaborg 24

Mindy Nemecek 26

Carolyn Modeen 28



"Either you run the day, or the day runs you."

—Jim Rohn



The Pets of the Palms Ministry

Welcome to the Pets of the Palms Ministry!

Our mission is to honor, support, and cherish the beloved companions of our community through three essential pillars: The Rainbow Bridge Pet Memorial that celebrates the lives of cherished pets, the Pet Medical Fund to ensure access to care for those in need, and the Pet Sitting Support to provide peace of mind for pet owners in our community when needed. There are current opportunities to get involved and to share adorable pictures of your fur-baby!

- **Pet Sitting Support**

We are putting together a directory of church members who are willing and able to pet-sit for members who find themselves unable to care for their pet(s) due to unforeseen circumstances. If you would like to be added to this directory, please use the QR code below to fill out the form, or pick up a paper copy of the form in the Narthex at the Pets of the Palm table.



- **Featured Pets of the Palms**

We will be celebrating the Palms Pet of the Month each month in the Narthex! If you are interested in having your pet be featured in an upcoming month, please send a picture along with the following details: Pet Name, Pet Age, Pet Breed, Pet Nickname (if applicable), and Pet's favorite toy to Jessica Hermann, at jessica.res4@gmail.com.

**To learn more about and/or join The Pets of the Palms Ministry, please visit the table in the Narthex and/or contact Jessica Hermann at jessica.res4@gmail.com. We are excited to share more about our mission in the coming months!

~Jessica R. Hermann~

BEAUTY HUMOR AND SPIRIT SALON

An uplifting interlude in your day
Hosted by Nancy Tsuchiya

BEAUTY HOLDS MEANING

My dear partner Dott McDaniel shared something with me that she applied in her workshops and counseling:
"We must actively look for and seek out all that encourages us, nurtures and inspires us, and is beautiful to us. If we are just passive, most of what floats by is merely dross; and drags us down rather than lifts us up."

**Humor is a profound re-set button.
When we laugh, we let go and relax.**

**Self-effacing humor is the best!
When we laugh at ourselves, others can more easily laugh at themselves, and everyone enjoys a new perspective. Silly and paradoxical things play around us all the time. Laugh and let go.**

Do you mark the little (and big) miracles in your week when just the right object, the right idea, or the right information, comes to hand to solve a problem you couldn't get a handle on?

*Do you share these events?
Do you want to share these events?*

Beauty, humor, and Spirit have intrinsic value... During the week, collect these ideas and Moments, perhaps in a bowl, and bring them to the next Salon. This Medicine Circle meets weekly on Wednesdays at 10:00a in The Interfaith Chapel for Healing, beginning August 7th.

LGBTQ+ Ministry

Thank you all for making Open and Affirming Sunday the best yet! That Sunday was a beautiful celebration of the LGBTQ+ community with story sharing, powerful testimonies, an inspirational sermon and lots of love! If you missed the service, be sure to check out the recording on The Church of the Palms website!

Below, the LGBTQ+ Ministry Team is sharing some exciting upcoming opportunities to be get involved in our ministry and local LGBTQ+ community!

Story Circles for LGBTQ+ Family & Friends with Georgia Feiste, Deb Bontadelli, Andy Jordan, Rev. Susan Princehouse, and Rev. Shea Darian—A community-building experience for LGBTQ+ Family & Friends of a loved one who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic, non-cisgender, nonbinary. Reflecting on artistic offerings and a story prompt around a common theme, in turn we will share brief personal stories in small groups as others listen attentively in engaged silence. We conclude together in the larger circle to reflect on common threads that emerge between stories and connections made between tellers. Come to learn more about the story circle tradition and process and imagine how Story Circles might offer a place of meaning, hope, healing, and belonging for us in the future. Please reach out to any member of the LGBTQ+ Ministry to learn more about upcoming dates!

Save the Date for Upcoming Events!

•Gay For Good August Event is pending release!

Please use the QR code to the right to stay up to date with their volunteer opportunities!

•Pride Parade: Sunday October 20th

•Transgender Day of Remembrance

Saturday, November 9th 2:00-4:00p



Each month in the Palm Leaf, we will feature a bite-sized learning opportunity to continue our LGBTQ+ education journey! This learning opportunity can include a highlight of an organization that we love to partner with, a TV/Movie/Book recommendation, current event update, etc.

Learning Opportunity – August 2024

Heartstopper (on Netflix!)

Heartstopper is a British coming-of-age romantic comedy-drama television series on Netflix, written and created by Alice Oseman and based on her webcomic and graphic novel of the same name. The series primarily tells the story of Charlie Spring, a gay schoolboy who falls in love with classmate Nick Nelson, whom he sits next to in his new form. It is a beautiful coming-of-age story that celebrates gay love and reminds you that being exactly who you are, is exactly what the world needs.

The next LGBTQ+ Ministry Team meeting is Monday, August 12th at 2:00p. Please contact Georgia Feiste if you are interested in joining!

~Jessica R. Hermann~



Well, our summer break is almost over and some schools start back August 1st and the others around August 7th, 2024.

The Pantry volunteers are excited and ready to get back to business. We will start packing on Thursday August 8th. So, once again our shelves need to be loaded with food items and ready to go for the 2024-2025 school year.

At this time, when you go shopping, please consider purchasing the following items.

- ◆ Jif-to-Go
- ◆ Austin/Lance type crackers
- ◆ Pop tarts/Toaster pastries
- ◆ Protein bars/3 grams or more protein

If you cannot get out to shop and would rather make a monetary donation, please make your check out to *HART Pantry* and I am sure that your church office will see that we receive them.

Let's all make this year another successful one and see that our At-Risk Teens have the nutrition necessary to do well in school and not have empty tummies over the weekends.

Mickey Foster - Fundraising

OH! A FEW MORE THINGS!...

Thanks from the Mission & Outreach & Dysart Community Center—Because of your generous donations Dysart Community Center did not have to purchase much water for the children attending their summer camp for fun and enrichment. In addition to the cases of water given, \$350 was contributed so that additional water could be purchased. We are so grateful to you for your spirit of giving.

Lastly, NEEDED SCHOOL SUPPLIES AT DYSART COMMUNITY CENTER:

School supplies seem to get more expensive each year, so the children attending Dysart Community Center can always use any donations contributed by members of The Church of the Palms. The following items are gratefully accepted: *Coloring pens, copy paper, pens and pencils, binders, notebooks and notebook paper, scissors and small calculators.*

Congregational Meeting Results



The Church of the Palms membership met on July 28th, 2024 after worship and voted to approve the new Constitution and Bylaws. New copies of the documents are available on the website; thepalms.org. Thank you to all who helped shape our new Constitution and Bylaws.

-Church Office

Vaccine Recommendations!

**By: Jayne Peak,
Faith Community Nurse**

- Tetanus** – Every 10 years, one including coverage for pertussis
- Influenza** – Yearly, preferably in September or October, over age 65 one should have the high-dose vaccine
- RSV** – Once after age 60
- Shingles** – One set of two vaccines after age 50
- Prevnar** – Once after age 65
- Pneumovax** – Once after 65

Prevnar and Pneumovax may be indicated every five years for those with lung or heart disease.

MY DOG ATE A BEE



HE NOW LOOKS LIKE GOOFY

The 2024 Summer Film Festival presented by the *Social Justice Leadership Team*



Want to spend some time with church family members and friends watching a film/video and learning about the social justice issues being addressed by The Church of the Palms? Want to cool off from the heat and enjoy air conditioning produced by our solar panels? Want to enjoy popcorn and soft drinks provided by the Social Justice Leadership Team? If the answer to any of the above is "Yes" you are in luck!

On Fridays, from 1:00 to 2:30p, which started in mid-July and will run through the end of August, members of the Social Justice Leadership Team will present a video/film related to one of our social justice ministries. Time will be provided for discussion and Q and A about the film/video and the ministry provided by our church.

The August Schedule:

August 2nd; Immigration/Refugees

Are asylum seekers and refugees treated fairly by our Justice system? **"Immigration Nation"** shows how your local vote affects this important issue!
-Larry Cornelius

August 9th; Homelessness

The movie is **"The Soloist."** Los Angeles columnist Steve Lopez (Robert Downey Jr.) has reached an impasse in his life. His marriage is on the rocks, and he's disillusioned with his job. Then, while wandering through L.A.'s Skid Row, he spots a homeless man (Jamie Foxx) playing a two-stringed violin with a virtuoso's skill. Lopez initially thinks of the man, named

Nathaniel Ayers, as just a story idea. But as he begins to unravel the mystery of Ayers' strange fate, Lopez realizes that a change is happening within himself (Run time: 1h57m).

-Max Klinkenborg

August 16th; Criminal Justice

"The13th" is a primer on the historical context and moral urgency behind many of today's most pressing public issues: Mass incarceration, the war on drugs, police brutality and private prisons. This documentary is named for the 13th Amendment ratified in 1865, which abolished slavery but contained a loophole: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States." That clause depends on a just court system in which every person accused of a crime is treated fairly and equitably. Is that the case?

-Nancy Nonini

August 23rd; LGBTQ+ Equality

"Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community" is a 1984 American documentary film about the LGBTQ+ Community prior to 1969 Stonewall riots. It was narrated by author Rita Mae Brown, directed by Greta Schiller.

-Mark Makowski

August 30th; Creation Justice

"The Plastic Wars:" A PBS (Frontline) documentary on the dangers of plastics in our environment. This video explores how free enterprise and our addiction to the use of plastics is destroying our environment. The documentary focuses on what needs to be done and our role in turning the tide.

-Terry Starr/John Durbin



The Church of the Palms

Changing Times -- Our Mission Table in Fellowship Hall has a few things that might not have caught your eye.



Do you ever burn your fingers just opening your car door handle so you can jump in and start the a/c? We have something for that. Check out the padded door handle covers (photo below) that go on the outside of the car to protect your fingers when you open the door. They really work. Check out your seat belt and see if your shoulder pad protector is still in good shape. Slide it down over the hot metal clip before you grab it and clip yourself in. These are inexpensive items that really work. There are some of these items on the table and in the attached photo.

So now you're back home and ready to sit down for your lunch. Soup? Sloppy salad? Catsup? These do a job on your clean shirt. Bibs? We have some regular ones, but I hear that men don't feel comfortable wearing them. We have a solution for you on our table also. Check out the Dignity Bibs (photos to the left) made from a man's shirt front. Here's a picture of one, modeled by our own Pastor Paul! They are wash and wear, easy upkeep. Work great if you're in a wheelchair too.

If you have questions, or can't find what you need, just look for one of our Sewers sitting nearby sipping coffee on Sunday morning, or call the Church Office to get in touch with us. We are in the Board Room every Wednesday from 9:00 to 11:00a. Pop in for a goodie and conversation.

~Love & Prayers,
Needles & Pins Gals



GIFT CARDS FOR NEW LIFE!!

Mission and Outreach invites you to support New Life Center in August. New Life Center in Goodyear is Arizona's largest domestic violence and sexual assault refuge, serving more than 1000 children and adults each year.

Their mission is to help eliminate domestic and sexual violence through support services, education and expertise. This year New Life Center is in need of gift cards for their clients. Gift cards to grocery stores, Amazon, Target, Walmart, UBER or gas stations would be greatly appreciated and used by these survivors as they embark on a safe journey for themselves and their children. You can purchase gift cards through our RaiseRight program (formerly Scrip), through another vender, or donate any amount to Mission and Outreach and

we will purchase the cards for you! Linda Hofmann will be available on select Sundays in August in the Narthex if you would like to purchase your gift cards through RaiseRight.

Please contact Linda with any questions. If you would like to donate via cash or check, please note that the donation is for New Life Center on your check or envelope.

THANK YOU FOR BEING THE CHURCH!!





THE CHURCH OF THE PALMS
Presents



BALANCING ACTS

An 8 wk Evidence-Based Program to Decrease Fall Risk

Strategies to improve balance

Walking Activities to improve dynamic balance

Tips to avoid falls at home

Discussions & Videos

When: September 23 - November 18

Mondays & Thursdays 10:00 - 11:30 am

Optional Testing Friday September 20 - 9 am to noon in 15 min increments -
sign up required (used to compare progress - 3 tests that determine fall risk)

Where: The Narthex

Who: Anyone that would like to improve their balance and decrease their fall risk.

The program can be performed seated/Assistive devices permitted

Dress: Loose clothing. Shoes should be enclosed.

Bring: One pair of adjustable leg weights 2-4 lbs. "Optional but helpful"

For example on Amazon: Henkelion 1 Pair Adjustable Ankle Weights, ea 3 lbs \$22.99
(4-5 Extra sets of weights will be available to borrow)

MYTHS ABOUT FALLS

"Falls are a natural part of aging"

"If I limit my activity, I won't fall"

"Falling happens to other people - not me"

Given by Pat Thorpe, Physical Therapist, Ret, Certified in Fall Prevention & Tai Chi for Seniors

August 1-31

Friday, 2-Office Closed
1:00p Summer Film Festival BR
Documentary: *Immigration Nation*

Sunday, 4
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 5
9:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS
10:00a Lifelong Learning Mtg BR/HY
1:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 6
9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's OS
11:00a Fellowship Mtg BR

Wednesday, 7
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a Beauty Salon Circle CHP
11:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS

Thursday, 8
Time TBD Feet N More Shower Trailer OS

Friday, 9-Office Closed
1:00p Summer Film Festival BR
Film Title: *The Soloist*

Sunday, 11
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 12
10:00a Executive Board Mtg BR
1:00p I-HELP KH
2:00p LGBTQ+ Mtg KH

Tuesday, 13
10:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS

Wednesday, 14
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a Beauty Salon Circle CHP
11:00a Creation Justice Mtg BR/HY

Thursday, 15-September Palm Leaf Due!

Friday, 16
1:00p Summer Film Festival BR
Film Title: *The 13th*

Sunday, 18
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH
2:00p Story Circle for LGBTQ+ Comm KH

Monday, 19
9:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS
1:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 20
9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's OS

Wednesday, 21
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a Beauty Salon Circle CHP
11:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS

Friday, 23
1:00p Summer Film Festival BR
Documentary: *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community*

Sunday, 25
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 26
1:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 27
10:00a Blood Drive KH
10:00a Feet N More Shower Trailer OS

Wednesday, 28
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a Beauty Salon Circle CHP
11:00a Personnel Mtg BR

Friday, 30
1:00p Summer Film Festival BR
Film Title: *The Plastic Wars*

SA=Sanctuary; B2L=Bridges to Learning; HY=Hybrid; KH=King Hall; BR=Boardroom; OS=Offsite;
A=Narthex; CHP=Chapel; PP=Pastor Paul's Office; MR=Music Room; BRC=Behle Resource Center