



# THE PALM LEAF

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

### A LETTER FROM PAUL



All three of my children were unique when they were first born.

Michael was born a couple weeks late. But, once he came out, he would smile at the hospital every time he heard my voice.

I'd be across the room and say something, and Michael would smile and try and find me. The nurses kept saying that newborn babies just don't smile and that it must be gas. They couldn't convince me. That boy was smiling!

Nathan was ten pounds, eight ounces when he was born. What made him seem even bigger was the fact that all the babies born that day in the hospital were all in the five-pound range. The church had given us literally over a thousand diapers of which were for sized all normal newborns (10lbs and under). None of them would fit over his thighs. The women's shelter got the blessing of those gifts, and I went to the store for ones that fit.

When Ruthie was born, she cried any time anyone held her, except Wendy. We had lots of grandma-types in the church

## JANUARY 2025

who told us "babies just love me." So, we'd drop off the kids at their house and Wendy and I would go out for a movie or dinner. Upon our return, we would be met in the driveway by a frantic granny. "There's something wrong, she stopped crying!" Then hasn't would take Ruthie and instantaneously Ruthie would stop crying. It happened so many times that the joke at that church was that Ruthie was attached to Wendy with Velcro at the hip!

Do you remember your experiences around newborn babies? What do you remember?

You and I have another baby in our arms today...baby Jesus. What are we going to do with baby? His timing might not fit perfectly into our schedule. He might be proclaiming a message we don't want to hear. Is baby Jesus looking for our voice across a crowded room? Will his birth inspire us to give to the needy? He's not just someone you can put down, he's attached to you at your heart and soul.

Shalom, Paul



As I prepare to step down from my role as Chair of the Executive Board, my heart is

filled with gratitude and reflection. It has been an incredible journey and I am deeply thankful for the trust and support of the pastors and the congregation.

This role has also been a time of personal growth for me. I have continued to learn valuable lessons about leadership, resilience, and the power of community.

There were challenges along the way, but with the unwavering work of our boards, teams, committees, and pastors, we have navigated them with grace and determination. I am profoundly grateful to our congregation for your unwavering commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Your dedication to affirming these principles has not only enriched our community but also strengthened our shared values. As we often say, "Jesus did not reject people and neither do we." Our congregation's continued activism for social justice is a testament to our collective belief in creating a more just and compassionate world. Together, under superb pastoral leadership, we have made significant strides in fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. I am inspired by your passion and resilience, and I am hopeful that

As I pass the baton to our new Chair, I am confident in their ability to lead us forward. They bring fresh ideas and a strong commitment to our mission. I am excited to see how they will guide us in continuing our journey of growth and service.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to both Pastor Paul and Pastor Jim. Your faith, love, and guidance have been a constant source of strength and inspiration for all of us. While I am stepping down from my role as Chair, I remain committed to our wonderful community and look forward to serving alongside you in new ways. Thank you for this incredible journey. Here is to the future, filled with hope and promise.

our efforts will continue to bring about meaningful change.

Phil Ladd, Chair of the Executive Board



## January Worship Themes

January 5

Second Sunday after Christmas. Pastor Paul will be preaching. What can we learn from the Wise quys? Read Matthew 2:1-12.

January 12

Read Isaiah 43:1-7. Anxiety can drag us down. How can we deal with our worries in healthy ways? Pastor Paul will be preaching.

January 19 Read John 2:1-11. It's a new year but will we live in a new way? Mary suggests that the servants, "Do whatever he (Jesus) tells you." Are we going to take that suggestion ourselves? Pastor Jim will be preaching.

January 26

Pastor Paul will be preaching. What are community memories and why do they matter? Read Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 and Luke 4:16-21.

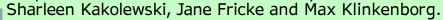


Chris Bauknecht 3 Pam Clark 9 David Klingensmith 9 Kurt Hofmann 9 Leslie Work 10 Susan Hershberger 10 Carol Reynolds 10 John Herrick 13 Judy Savage 16 Jamie Krauss 18 Judd Rinsema 20 Raymond Larson 20 Frank Bauknecht 21 Sandy Krueger 21 Deb Bontadelli 24 Elaine Klauser 27 Leah Huse 31

#### When can you run four red lights, drive down the center of the road and not exceed two miles per hour?

When can you run four red lights, drive down the center of the road and not exceed two miles

per hour? Answer: When you are driving an entry in the Glendale Hometown Christmas Parade. Last Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, the Shower Trailer volunteers took the church truck and the Feet-N-More trailer to Glendale to be entry #89 in a fun filled parade down Glendale Avenue. Fortunately, we were not behind the equestrian entries. The church truck had a wreath on the front, a Christmas tree and Santa Claus in the back. We had a banner on each side prepared by Paul Hiles (one of the banners is in King Hall). We gave candy canes, rubber duckies and bars of soap to the spectators. Volunteers were Terry Starr, Lee Duguid,







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

Let me introduce you to a friend and former retreat leader at The Church of the Palms,
Kaitlin Curtice. She is an Indigenous award winning author, poet, speaker/retreat leader and tribal
member of the Potawatomi Nation. She is the founder of Liminality Journal (a monthly inspirational
blog) which offers spiritual insight and writing devotional interactive experiences. Kaitlin has three adult
books and two children books out in print available through bookstores. This January essay was printed
on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in Liminality Journal. -Kay Klinkenborg

#### The Comfort of Global Prayer

Kaitlin Curtice Dec 10, 2024

The Comfort of Global Prayer is about as expansive an idea as I can bring to you today, and I'm happy to leave it as that.

I will touch on my ideas within this big idea, but I want you to take some time with it, too.

There are portals of prayer and spirit all around us, and I find comfort in knowing that is true all over the world, this globe we were born to, this globe we will pass away in that holds all of us, all of our stories.

So, our global prayers are held here, too.

As I've shared before, I was recently in Northern Ireland, and it was my first time traveling internationally alone. I found that this reality automatically created a sense of awareness in me—not just that I am a young woman traveling alone and have to watch out for myself (of course that's true), but that I felt this thin space happening, a connection to all the people and places I was coming into contact with every moment of every day.

I was experiencing a visceral kind of liminality, and I'm grateful for that. When we travel to other places, to new places especially, we are thrust into a childlike wonder if we let ourselves get there. We explore culture, religion, language, stories, fashion, food, everything becoming a teacher to us.

In Ireland I was learning how people there pray, all and each of them, how they view their world, their environment, the challenges to all of it.

I was learning to pray differently in the presence of a beech tree that befriended me. I was learning how goats pray when they are hungry, or how we show up in exhausted gratitude to a big meal at the end of a busy day. I was learning why we pray to Saint Brigid, why we pray at holy water wells, why we pray when we are sad or lost, afraid and hoping for peace.

Prayer is everywhere, and when we look, when we walk through the portals, we learn something about ourselves, about The Sacred.

And a way that we experience global prayer is through poetry.

Think about the ways prayer shows up in our lives.

Stay in the spiritual fire. Let it cook you. This is a prayer that Rumi prayed for all of us.

To begin, begin. This is a prayer Wordsworth prayed over us.

Now I become myself. May Sarton prays.

A prayer-blessing of Saint Brigid finds us:

May Brigid bless the house wherein we dwell. Bless every fireside, every wall and door. Bless every heart that beats beneath its roof. Bless every hand that toils to bring its joy. Bless every foot that walks portals through. May Brigid bless the house that shelters us.

A Potawatomi prayer from James Thunder, of the Forest County Potawatomi:

I pray to our Creator that we look back so that we may see ahead. Let us examine our lives so that we are respectful to our fellow humans and to nature. Let us respect our children and, above all, let us live our lives in accordance with our beliefs.

Let us share our natural resources for the good of our People. Let us work for clean air and water and pray for the courage to stand up to those who would abuse our Mother Earth.

And from Joel Cross (@asoulcalledjoel), a prayer of holding this day:

Whatever happens this day, may you use it to awaken your heart. May your energy be directed by your highest intentions to find deeper connections, greater authenticity, and more love.

I think by now we've established a few things here:

- 1. That prayer is beautifully simple but can become complicated as well
- 2. That we can misuse prayer to harm ourselves and one another
- 3. And that prayer teaches us what it means to be human

So as we hold the realities of what's happening around the world, may we find some comfort in the ways we show up to The Sacred, to God, to The Divine, Kche Mnedo (The Great Spirit), whoever or however.

#### May we wrap prayer around us like a blanket, to hold and bless, to tend and love.

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The Church of the Palms' Mission and Outreach Team is collecting donations of soup (ramen, cans, etc.) each Sunday

through February 9<sup>th</sup> for the Valley View Community Food Bank. Our sister congregation, United Church of Sun City, has challenged us to a friendly rivalry to see who can donate the most. Let's DO THIS!



On behalf of the staff, thank you for all the kind remembrances this Holiday season!

Faul





A Pastoral Letter to the United Church of Christ

On Unity and Justice

Read the <u>full pastoral letter</u> in UCC News with additional reflection on Christian unity, justice, and a vision for the future, as well as a prayer.

United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

In the aftermath of the United States presidential election and the days of campaigning leading up to the election of the 47<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, the political divide in the country was evident. This political divide over critical social issues is not new; however, the polarization on the issues has created a chasm where there once was an aisle. More critically, this division is evident in the church, where diversity is broad and runs deep. This has always been so in the United Church of Christ, across the mainline churches and in the church at large. There is an inherent diversity in the church which includes political diversity.

The political divide poses a threat to the unity of the church. While there is value held in identifying that "unity does not mean uniformity," the political narratives of the day are quite different from those seen in the recent past, particularly given the rise of white Christian nationalism, a religious ideology and political movement that uses Christianity as a foundation for a hate-filled xenophobic, misogynistic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric.

White Christian nationalism itself is not new and is based on white supremacy. "The Christian nationalist movement is largely white, reflecting the long entanglement of nationalism and racism that is our collective inheritance since the earliest days of America's colonial settlement. In white nationalism this history is sanitized, removing the sins of genocide, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and all the many ways in which racism has saturated and sustained our society, thereby removing any felt need for repentance or repair." Addressing this religious ideology is a priority.

The ministry of Jesus was one that prioritized those on the margins of society. His ministry was bold and prophetic, speaking to and against the religious norms of his day, which perpetuated injustices and oppressed "the least of these." Jesus brought a message of love. When asked by his disciples about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37b-39). This is love which compels us to action.

The call to love our neighbor as ourselves begins in loving each other in the church. While not an easy task, the possibilities are yet before us to live beyond the many issues which are evident and to love each other in all the rich diversity of humanity and the church. The politics of our day ought not to divide us in ways that create harm, foster hate, and hinder the ability of others to love and serve God. The love of God has the power to transcend and transform the frailties and fragilities of our human existence.

The call to love our neighbor as ourselves extends beyond the walls of the church, into our communities and into the world. Our action on behalf of those in our communities is based on love. Jesus called us to love across the great divide that is our differences. This call remains urgent today, as the church is called to be salt and light in the world.

Karen Seoya I Ohomoc

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson General Minister and President

Rev. Dr. Bentley DeBardelaben-Phillips
Transitional Executive Minister

Shaw K Prestemon

Rev. Shari Prestemon

Acting Associate General Minister

Council of Conference Ministers

#### **Beehives Buzz in The New Year**

Happy New Year. It's time for the beehives to gather together in 2025.

Let's welcome back all the snowbirds who have returned for the warmth in our Arizona climate and those who remain here year-long. The Church of the Palms' Beehives, from A to Z, will gather in King Hall on Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup> and February 9<sup>th</sup>.

This is during the fellowship hour beginning at 11:00a. The groups will bee delighted to bee together, renew friendships, bee with new members, rejoice or console each other as needed.

#### Why are there beehives?

It's a concept—A new name for an old idea of knowing and helping those in your neighborhood. It builds on the phrase "Be the church." Beehives are colonies that are social and cooperative. Hives help everyone find a group. The beehives focus on our members. The hives are based on the ABCs. Each hive has group leaders who will help create the relationships for the hive, integrate new members into the hive, and support other hive members in their joys and sorrows.

#### Who are the hives and their leaders for 2025?

Hive A and B—Marilyn Bricks

Hive C-D-E-Pat & John Durbin, Larry & Deanna DeLong

Hive F-G-H—Donna Hermann and Sally Heathcoat

Hive I-J-K—Judy Jondahl

Hive L and M—Donna & Martin Meadows, Ray & Judie Larson

Hive N-O-P-Q-Ernie & Barbara Otto

Hive R-S-T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z—Judd & Linda Rinsema, Vanessa Stiller

#### Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest NW Valley I-HELP Success Story

Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest I-HELP and many other agencies have seen an increase in unhoused young adults (18-26). According to Ghimire (2023), Arizona has the highest increase in youth homelessness in the United States. The Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) reported an increase in unhoused young adults by 44.9 percent compared to 2020. Arizona ranks 4<sup>th</sup> for unsheltered homeless populations and 5<sup>th</sup> for the most significant increase in homeless individuals. Rental unaffordability is the main factor. However, family environment plays a huge role in young adults experiencing homelessness due to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and substance abuse in the home (Ghimire, 2023). Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of reasonably paying jobs, more resources, and more shelters for the young adult population in the state of Arizona experiencing homelessness.

Jane (name changed for privacy) is one of the many young adults experiencing homelessness in the state of Arizona. She came to Arizona from another state when she was 18 years old. Jane was hopeful that she could find employment and affordable housing in the state of Arizona. Instead, she found herself isolated, without financial resources, unhoused, no access to medical care, hungry, and without the support of her family and friends back home. Jane came into I-HELP for a safe place to sleep at night, food, water, and the support that she needed to begin her journey in Arizona. Once she realized that she was safe and could trust her case manager, Jane began to work on her case plan. Working with her case manager and The Phoenix Rescue Mission, Jane was able to get all her identifiable documents (ID, Social Security Card, and Birth Certificate). She received access to both medical and mental health services, glasses (through the Lions Club and The Church of the Palms), clothes, shoes, and food security. Jane even found temporary employment. After a few months in shelter, Jane started struggling with being without her family. With the support of her case manager and The Phoenix Rescue Mission, Jane started working on her family relationships by reaching out to her mother, aunt, and grandmother. Eventually, her mother started calling her on a regular basis. The case manager and Jane (together) began to call her mother to share with her Jane's accomplishments. Jane's mother agreed to allow Jane to come home with the understanding of the supports Jane would still need. The case manager and Phoenix Rescue Mission was able to reunite Jane with her family. She was extremely happy and excited to go home. Jane contacted her case manager to say thank you and that she was going to the beach that day with her siblings. Something Jane was not able to do for two years. We wish you the best.

"A house is a home when it shelters the body and comforts the soul."

-Phillip Moffitt



#### The Church of the Palms Launches Social Justice "Action Through Advocacy" Ministry



We have all heard the adage "Instead of giving someone a fish, teach them to fish." That is fine as far as it goes. However, in most cases, it won't help if the man doesn't have a fishing rod. The United Church of Christ national organization has been, and continues to be, a leader in advocating for policies that protect the marginalized and forgotten in our society. To paraphrase the motto of the national organization, "If a single decision in the halls of the U.S. Congress or a State Legislature can either enhance or undo literally millions of acts of Christian caring, we have a moral

obligation to do what we can to influence such decisions." It is in this spirit that our The Church of the Palms is taking steps to increase our education and advocacy efforts. As part of our Social Justice Ministries (which address homelessness, LGBTQ+ issues, refugees, Neighbors-in-Need, Criminal Justice Reform, Palestinian Human Rights, and care for creation), we are launching a new ministry we call the "Action through Advocacy Ministry." Through this new ministry we plan to play an active role in educating and helping shape policies and legislation which either help or harm those for whom we work so hard to serve. Be looking for a message in the weeks ahead from the Social Justice Leadership Team letting you know how you can be a part of our new social justice ministry.

## **Prison Ministry** {CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM}: Save the Date!

If you missed the last Re-Entry Simulation, you won't want to miss this opportunity! Come experience what it is like to be thrown into the chaos after release from prison.

Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00a. More details to follow!

Interested in becoming a Pen Pal with a woman in Perryville Prison? Come to a special meeting to find out what it's like to start a relationship with a lonely woman experiencing our criminal justice system.

Join us, Friday, Jan 31st, 2025 at 1:00p. You'll be glad you did!

## SUN CITY CHURCH DONATES OVER 400 HANDCRAFTED ITEMS TO PHOENIX INDIAN CENTER FOR CHRISTMAS

The "NEEDLES & PINS" Craft Group at The Church of the Palms shared with The Phoenix Indian Center homemade gifts for Christmas distribution. Bobbie Chapman and Kay Klinkenborg, members of the church, delivered the items to Ashlee Craig, Prevention Specialist for the center.

Handmade items included:

- 275 crocheted soap bags (cotton bags that hold a bar of soap making it a washcloth/soap in one hand)
- 100 hand crocheted/knitted hats
- 3 full-size afghans and an adult bib
- 11 quilted baby blankets
- 17 crocheted hot pads and dish cloths

Needles and Pins Craft Group meets every Wednesday from 9:00–11:00a at The Church of the Palms located at 14808 N Boswell Blvd, Sun City. Anyone interested in participating in this group is free to attend. Their work is not limited to Wednesday, these avid artists and other supporters of the craft group work on items at home during the week.

The church began connections with the Phoenix Indian Center in July of 2022 and continues to look for additional ways to be of service and assist the Phoenix Indian Center.

Since 1947, the Phoenix Indian Center has been providing continuous service to the Phoenix-Metropolitan area. "We are a 'gateway' for American Indians and others seeking assistance with job readiness and employment services, others seeking assistance with job readiness and employment services, prevention services, youth programs, and language and culture seeking assistance with job readiness and employment services, prevention services, youth programs, and language and culture revitalization. Our doors are open to people from all tribal backgrounds, including non-Natives."

They are committed to "educating the larger community about the beauty and culture of our traditions." Their activities (open to the public) can be followed on: https://phxindcenter.org/



#### THANK YOU TO ALL WHO BLESSED US WITH THEIR CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS...

From Victoria McWilliams, in memory of her husband Tom McWilliams.

From Suzanne Boisclair, in memory of The Grady's—Boisclair's.

From Penny & Bob P, Robert J, & Holli G, in memory of Rainy Johnson (Beloved Mother).

From John Claiborne, in memory of David Wonner.

From Janet & Mike Williams, in memory of Stacey Williams.

From Janet Camilli, in memory of her mother Alice, father (NAME), & husband Lou.

From Pat & John Durbin, in memory of the Durbin & Wilson Family.

From Jessica Hermann, in memory of her father Mike Hermann.

From Ellen Merchant, in member of her daughter Emily Merchant.

From Joyce Dass, in memory of Violet Hobbs.

From Jeannie & Bill Brandenberger, in memory of their Parents and brother Larry.

From Bonnie Green, in memory of her Family & Friends over the years.

From Carol Reynolds, in memory of her husband Clint Reynolds.

From Anita Paulson, in memory of her son Scott and husband Chuck.

From Sally Heathcoat, in memory of her husband Charles Heathcoat & in honor of her sons, Curt & Craig Heathcoat.

From Terry Starr, in honor of her family both on earth & in Heaven.

From Nancy Nonini, in memory of Rich Nonini.

From Renee & Terry Olthoff, in memory of their parents Warren & Bea Mayer & Chancy & Amelia Olthoff.

From Mary Hoy, in memory of Karen Miller & Barbara Luce.

From Charlotte Harger, in memory of Paul Harger & in honor of Jennifer & Katelin Fitts,
Andrew & Ashley Harger.

From Bert O'Neill, in memory of her daughters Nicki & Julie, son Scott, & husband Bill.

From **Steve & Jane Zukowski**, *in memory* of their parents & in honor of their children, grandchildren, & great-grandchildren.

From Andy Jordan, in honor of his father Andrew Strong and his mother Merle Strong.

From Sandy Weis, in memory of her husband Dick Weis.

From Diane Seeley, in memory of her parents, Anita & Norman Seeley.

From Rev. Paul & Wendy Whitlock, in memory of Penny & in honor of Ernie.

From **Pat Anderson**, for the ongoing Ministries at The Church of the Palms for her Christmas Blessing donation.

From **Leah Hus**e, for the ongoing Ministries at The Church of the Palms for her Christmas Blessing donation.

From **Diana Graettinger**, for the ongoing Ministries at The Church of the Palms for her Christmas Blessing donation.

From Jay & Kathy Kolb, for the ongoing Ministries at The Church of the Palms for their Christmas Blessing donation.

## Jan 1-15

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Wednesday, 1—Office Closed

**Thursday, 2** 3:00 Inspirit Bible Study BRC

Friday, 3—Office Closed

Saturday, 4

Worship Sunday, 5 10:00a Worship Service 11:00 Fellowship Hour

Monday, 6 10:00a Lifelong Learning Mtg BR/HY 1:00p Advocacy Ministry Team Mtg B2L 4:00p I-HELP

**Tuesday, 7** 9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS 2:00p Operations Mtg BR

Wednesday, 8
9:00 Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a VEC Mtg NA or KH

Thursday, 9
11:00a Jan Alexander's
Memorial Service SA
2:30p Choir Rehearsal MR
3:00 Inspirit Bible Study BRC

Friday, 10—Office Closed
12:00p Criminal Justice Mtg BR/HY
1:00p Social Justice Mtg BR/HY

Saturday, 11 9:00a Advent Pack up & Clean up day

> Worship Sunday, 12 9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR 10:00a Worship Service 11:00 Fellowship Hour

Monday, 13
10:00a Executive Board Mtg BR
2:00p Trustees Mtg BR/HY
2:00p LGBTQ+ Ministry Mtg KH
4:00p I-HELP

**Tuesday, 14** 10:00a Ministry Council BR/HY

Wednesday, 15 9:00 Needles & Pins Craft Group BR 10:00a Evangelism & Growth Mtg BRC

## Jan 16-31

Thursday, 16 2:30p Choir Rehearsal MR 3:00 Inspirit Bible Study BRC

Friday, 17—Office Closed

Saturday, 18 11:30a Lunch with a Bunch OS

Worship Sunday, 19 9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR 10:00a Worship Service SA 11:00 Fellowship Hour KH

> Monday, 20 4:00p I-HELP BR

**Tuesday, 21** 9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS

Wednesday, 22 9:00 Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 23 2:30p Choir Rehearsal MR 3:00 Inspirit Bible Study BRC Friday, 24—Office Closed

Saturday, 25 9:00a Annual Meeting SA

Worship Sunday, 26 9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR 10:00a Worship Service SA 11:00 Fellowship Hour KH

> **Monday, 27** 4:00p I-HELP BR

> > Tuesday, 28

Wednesday, 29 9:00 Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 30 2:30p Choir Rehearsal MR 3:00 Inspirit Bible Study BRC

Friday, 31—Office Closed 1:00p Pen Pal Mtg BR/HY Led by Nancy Nonini