

The Palm Leaf

The Church of the Palms, UCC

14808 North Boswell Boulevard Sun City, Arizona 85351

Imagine!
Doing Justice,
Loving Kindness,
Walking Humbly
with God.

A LETTER FROM PAUL

FEBRUARY 2025



Our theme this year is *"Imagine! Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, and Walking Humbly with God."* Requirements.

I have to admit that I don't like them. It's not a comfortable word for me. God's requirements aren't the means to earn

God's favor. Rather, God's requirements are the means by which we show our gratitude for God's grace which has brought healing into our lives. Like it or not, I have to give the requirements. What is required of you, of me? Micah 6:8 is very specific about what is required with those who are in relationship with God.

"What does the Lord require of you (and me)?" The Lord requires of you and me to do justice. Now, an entire year's worth of sermons would be insufficient to describe what God's justice is all about. Nevertheless, let me just say a few words. To put it as simply as I know, God's justice is a matter of "righting" wrongs - that is, correcting the wrongs done to people around us. Particularly the ones that have been heaped upon the weak, the poor, and the oppressed. Charity is God's love in the moment while justice is that love extended out into the future.

"What does the Lord require of you (and me)?" The Lord requires us to love kindness. The Hebrew word used here, *hesed*, means so much and is difficult to translate because no single word in English captures its meanings. Translators use phrases like "loving-kindness," "loving mercy," "a loyal love." *Hesed* is not primarily something people "feel." It is something people DO for other people who have no claim on them.

"What does the Lord require of you (and me)?" The Lord requires us to walk humbly with God. This is the foundation to do justice and love kindness. To walk humbly with your God is to nurture that relationship that you have with God so that it's a growing and energizing relationship. So that when those opportunities come along to do justice and love kindness, you don't weigh the alternatives - you do them as part of your nature!

At the heart of Christianity, my friends, is our humble walk with God. Because when all is said and done, the only thing people want to see in Christians is God. And if they don't see God in us - if they don't sense that we're walking with God, that we know God, that we care about God, that we love God, they won't believe anything else we say! We'll be talking about these things this year.

Shalom, Paul

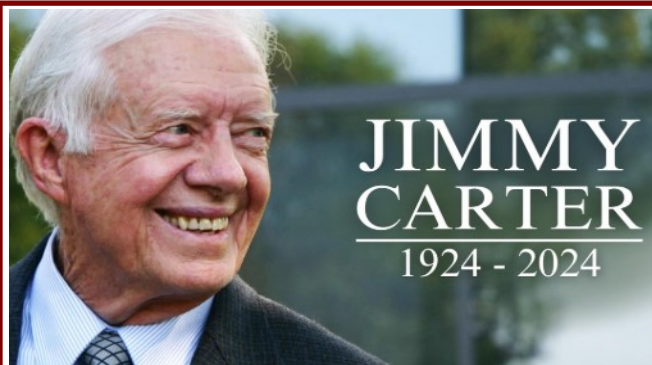
Notes from your Executive Board at The Church of the Palms, UCC

As I am writing this article in early January, I want to say, first of all, that it has been my privilege to have served on the Executive Board as Vice-Chair for Ministry for the past two years. While Chairing the Ministry Council's monthly meetings and attending numerous Ministry Team meetings I have seen just how active The Church of the Palms is in caring for our members and friends, and for the larger community and the world. Virtually all of our recent new members at The Church of the Palms have been drawn here because they want to be part of these ministries of love, justice, and extravagant welcome.

Since former President Jimmy Carter's death last month I have been reflecting a lot about his life and work. I remember going to a campaign rally for him in PA when he was running for President. But what I have been most impressed with is how he has expressed his faith in the years since he left the presidency, through his work with the Carter Center and Habitat for Humanity. His faith was much more than an assent to a series of beliefs—it was lived out in service to individuals and communities near and far. Some have described his brand of Evangelical Christian faith as a dying brand, as something very different than the Christian Nationalist doctrine many are embracing today.

Senator John Thune shared a story about Jimmy Carter's faith perspective. In his younger days Jimmy had talked with a Southern Baptist missionary about what made him so successful. The missionary said he kept two loves in his heart—"One love for God, and a love for the person standing in front of me at any particular time." Jimmy took that to heart, and it showed in how he lived out his long life. May our love for God be shown in our love and care for the persons or situations that are in front of us daily. May this be an ongoing resolution for each of us in this new year.

Rev. David Klingensmith



“We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.”

-Jimmy Carter

February Worship Themes:

February 2nd - Pastor Paul will be preaching. Read Jeremiah 1:4-10. How do you know if it's God's voice you are hearing or something else?

February 9th - Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. If you are looking for God, love someone. Pastor Paul will be preaching.

February 16th - Pastor Jim preaches from Luke 6:17-26. When Jesus shared these teaching with the disciples, it seemed a little backwards to them. What do you think?

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

February 23rd - Pastor Paul returns to the pulpit. What's so golden about the Golden Rule? Read Luke 6:27-38

February Birthdays

Eric Lewis 4

Lynette Nickelson 5

Allan Gott 7

Linda Kehl 11

Ann Plaziak 11

Claudia Fenton 14

Marcia Hollingsworth 18

Shari Kanehl 22

Donna Elianow 22

Kay Klinkenborg 23

Judy Jondahl 27



A Letter from Rev. Shea Darian, Doing Grief Community Healing Project

Dear Faith Community,

I write with love and gratitude - not to say farewell. I am still here, a member of The Church of the

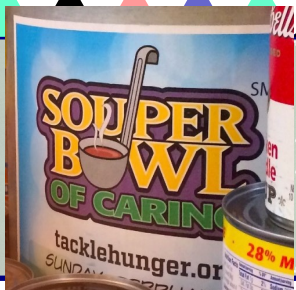
Palms and still doing my work here in Sun City – now at Banner Olive Branch Senior Center. I will often be elsewhere on Sunday mornings, but I will be with you in worship from time to time when I'm able.

It was a difficult decision to move the Healing Project out of the Interfaith Chapel for Healing – a holy space that served as the birthing room for this ministry. But, know this: No matter where the Healing Project goes and grows in the future, Church of the Palms will always have the distinction of being the place where it all started.

Thank you to each of you who have served as midwives for the healing project: for telling me to keep breathing as the labor progressed, for taking your turn to hold the baby in its infancy, and providing your own special kind of care: Making prayer shawls, presenting programs, writing a press release, offering planning or funding support, chapel are, set up, clean up, hospitality, making a handmade item for the chapel, or simply saying, "Thank you for doing this work."

You have bestowed upon this ministry many gifts. I pray the Healing Project leaves you with something of value, too.

A bounty of love and gratitude, Shea



The Church of the Palms' is collecting donations of soup (ramen, cans, etc.) each Sunday through February 9th 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!!



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>

The new year has begun. New opportunities and new challenges. Sometimes the expectations we put upon ourselves to "get it right" or to "be better" with certain aspects of our lives can cause anxiety and stress. Here are some ideas that may help you to center and settle into the year ahead.

Visualize your mind as a room full of televisions, each on a different channel. Some are loud, some are quiet, but all together are distracting and chaotic. Your joy is to find the TV playing your favorite show and turn all the others off!

Imagine (or look at a photo) of a distant mountain landscape. Take it all in! Now, begin to focus your attention on the mountaintop. Begin to zoom in to the top of the mountain and imagine that you are walking on a trail to the very top. Visualize the details, colors, textures, sounds, and smells of the scene. Focus on the most microscopic of details around you. Breathe in deeply - Exhale completely - Allow your brain to focus on the calm of the smallest leaf or pebble on the trail. Continue your calm breathing and continue to focusing on the smallest of small details and take in the peace.

Light a candle within a darkened room. Focus only on the light of the flickering flame. As the wax begins to melt, envision your worries, stresses, tense muscles from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet melting with the wax. Allow yourself to gently move with the movement of the flame. Close your eyes and continue the movement and envision yourself as the light. Take a cleansing breath and extinguish the candle.

Sometimes we have so much pent-up energy that we are physically and mentally unable to feel at peace or calm until that energy is released. You can [click here](#) to discover some energy burning exercises that are just right for you.

In the words of Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer:

You've got to accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
And latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between.
You've got to spread joy up to the maximum,
Bring gloom down to the minimum,
Have faith or pandemonium's
Liable to walk upon the scene.

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



Eddie (*name changed for privacy*) came into I-HELP in 2022. He came into the program, worked on his case plan, and found housing. Unfortunately, he found himself homeless again in 2024. Eddie was able to maintain his housing until his rent was raised in October of 2024. He knew he would not be able to keep up with rental increases and reached out for help. Eddie returned to I-HELP in November of 2024 to save money, get a job, and have a safe place to sleep while he gets back on his feet. Eddie wanted to find part-time work to supplement his income because with his limited income, it was going to be a huge task to find adequate housing that he can afford. Working with his case manager, Eddie came up with short-term goals that would help him end his homelessness. Eddie began looking for work and applying for positions close to the area where he wanted to live. Eddie was hired by City of Surprise. Yes, he is now a city employee and very proud of his accomplishment. Eddie began to apply for as many housing opportunities as he could. Finally, an opportunity opened for him. Eddie is now in his own place, with a new job, and a new outlook on life. Congratulations Eddie!

Needles & Pins Craft Group

The dedicated members of the Needles and Pins Craft Group have been hard at work this year, knitting, crocheting, quilting, and sewing beautiful items for our craft table. We made \$1,800 from selling our wares from our little tables and this allowed us to contribute to several worthy causes:

- \$200 in soup for the Souper Bowl contest with other churches
- \$200 to purchase water bottles for children in the Dysart School District.
- \$1,000 toward the purchase of a truck to pull the Shower Trailer.
- \$300 for scholarships to Dysart Summer Camp.
- \$200 for water bottles for children riding the bus home after school.
- \$250 for school supplies for Dysart School District students.
- \$100 for Hurricane Relief efforts.

In addition to these donations, we created Prayer Shawls for Rev. Shea Darian's grief groups and provided hats and scarves for I-HELP guests. Our largest endeavor each year is preparing handmade items for the Phoenix Indian Center's Christmas distribution. This year, we contributed: 275 crocheted soap bags with soap), 100 crocheted and knitted hats, 17 hot pads and dishcloths, 11 baby quilts, three full-sized afghans. Beyond our core group of five members who meet every Wednesday from 9:00a–11:00a, many others in the congregation contribute by creating items at home. Their donations, which include earrings, leather goods, aprons, paper crafts, afghans, and more, help us expand our efforts and support additional causes. If you'd like an item in a specific color or have suggestions for something new, please let us know—we'd be happy to accommodate your requests whenever possible. It's been an honor to serve you this year.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity.
Love & Prayers, Needles & Pins Gals

Many thanks to friends
of The Church of the
Palms for your kind
thoughts and prayers
on the death of
my son, Paul on
December 4th, 2024.
They meant so much
to me, and all
were appreciated.

~Charlotte Harger



HART Pantry

Happy New Year!

I have some exciting news for our church friends! We are having an Applebee's Flapjack Fundraiser. The event has changed to a different Applebee's location, so please don't go to the

usual Glendale or Peoria location. Our pancake breakfast will be at the Applebee's located in Surprise on March 1st, 2025. Their address is **13756 W Bell Rd, Surprise, AZ 85374**. In the past, these breakfasts have been a fun time for our volunteers, and we love serving and meeting with all of you who continue to contribute to our cause! Please save March 1st as HART Pantry breakfast morning and join us from 8:00a to 10:00a. HART Pantry Board members and volunteers will be selling \$10 tickets, but of course you can purchase tickets that morning as well.

This year our food list is pretty much the same as last year.

- Pudding or fruit cups
- Protein bars/three grams or more protein
- Pop Tarts/Toaster pastries
- Austin/Lance type crackers
- Peanut butter 10-16oz jars
- Jif-to-go peanut butter

Reminder to all that if you cannot shop for the above items, please consider a monetary donation and one of us will shop for you.

Every year there are more Kiddos in need of weekend food, and they look to us adults for help. I look forward to seeing some of you at the Surprise Applebee's on March 1st, 2025!

Mickey - Fundraising/Board Member

Did you know that new pages have been added to The Church of the Palms website specifically for the [Criminal Justice Reform Team](#) and the [LGBTQ+ Team](#) ? You can click on the links above to see the pages. To access the criminal justice page on a regular basis, click on the "Social Justice" icon on the Home Page of the website and scroll down to "Click here to visit our Criminal Justice Reform Team page. To view the LGBTQ+ page, simply click on the LGBTQ+ icon on the Home Page of the website.



The children served by the center and their families enjoyed their annual Christmas party where 50 children

received new bicycles. Families also received board games to enjoy at their homes.

In addition, the children also received toys and clothing. A local food truck provided hot dogs, hot chocolate and dessert at no charge. Tutors are needed to work one-on-one with reading and reading comprehension with those children who are slow readers.

This year the center will be working on good health and hygiene. Sample or regular sizes of deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary items, mouthwash, combs and brushes are being collected for use before school for those children whose families cannot provide them. Shorts or leggings in sizes small to extra large are also needed for those who have toileting accidents.

Donations of computer paper, paper towels and toilet paper also allow the center to utilize funds to serve the youth and adults by offsetting expenses for those necessary items.



FIELD TRIP: Arizona State Legislature – Morning of February 10th

Imagine The Church of the Palms strengthening our role as a social justice-oriented faith community and engaging in even more meaningful social justice advocacy. As part of this vision, we successfully launched the Social Justice Advocacy Team this last Saturday, January 25th. Much more to come.

We have a great opportunity to tour the state capitol (“the heart of the beast”) and visit the Arizona State Legislature on Monday, February 10th. We have been invited to join the Arizona Lutheran Day at the Legislature. We will leave The Church of the Palms parking lot in our bus promptly at 7:45a.m. and return at approximately 2:00p.m.

This is a chance to share some rousing company with fellow church members on the bus, see how the legislature functions, meet with your elected officials, and be treated to a free breakfast and lunch.

To participate you need to register for the event with Lutheran Social Services (<https://lamaz.org/lutheran-day-2025>) and sign up with us at sign up table following our Sunday service on February 2nd. You can also email or text Tom Theisen at tomtjd@yahoo.com 619-630-0427. If you register, you will also be invited to the orientation program at 3:00p.m. on Thursday, February 6th.

ALSO, please mark your calendars for a short Request to Speak training on March 2nd following the Sunday service. Treats will be provided!

Lifelong Learning presents...

Unconscious Bias

When? February 26th @ 10:00a

In the Behle Resource Center

Lynette Turner will present an introduction to unconscious bias and will provide awareness training to help attendees recognize their own unconscious biases and provide information on the various biases present in our culture. How bias affects our actions will also be discussed.

Understanding bias promotes awareness, improves decision-making and builds better relationships.

John Amaechi, organizational psychologist says that “unconscious bias is not a reflection of our character, but it is a reflection of our programming.

We can reprogram our minds to be more inclusive.” Please join us for this educational opportunity to further enhance your life journey.



In Concert
Sunday, February 16
3pm

Desert Garden United Church of Christ
18818 N. 128th Avenue

Sun City West

Free Will Offering
Reception Follows



Re-Entry Simulation Through Our Lens

February 22nd, 2025 10:00a—12:30p

*The Church of the Palms, UCC
14808 N Boswell Blvd, Sun City, AZ 85351*

The goal of this simulation is for participants to gain an understanding of the significant struggles and challenges faced by both men and women attempting to navigate the system upon their release from incarceration. Over the course of two hours, participants experience the first month post-release life.

To Register, please click [HERE](#)
The cost is free but the experience? Priceless.

Lunch will be provided.

*Please R.S.V.P. no later than February 17th
to Nancy Nonini at nnonini19@gmail.com.*



—Prison Ministry—

Why is this woman smiling? She's in Jail!

Come find out. At our Re-Entry Simulation, you will experience fun and frustration in trying to navigate the maze that is returning to life outside of prison. Past participants have found this an eye-opening challenge. Just two hours will bring you a new perspective on the obstacles we set up when we so easily

“other” the formerly incarcerated. On this Saturday, right away you will receive your assigned unique situation upon release from prison. Then you have four tries to fulfill the requirements to stay out of prison in the first month. If you are lucky enough to get a job, how do you get there without a driver's license? Or how do you get time off to make your scheduled visits to your parole officer or urine drug tests? Obviously these four people couldn't do it! But one woman is still smiling—because this is just a game to us. When you have been incarcerated, it is your life sentence. Please join us for this fun, impactful experience!

Saturday, Feb 22nd, 2025 from 10:00a to 12:30p in King Hall, presented by our partners, Arouet. [Register Here](#) by Feb 17th, email Nancy at nnonini19@gmail.com or sign up in the Narthex.



I'm Baaaack! My apologies for being invisible for a couple of months, moving can be grueling!

Firstly, an astonishing article on pbs.org indicates that the world is producing 57 Million tons of plastic pollution every year!

This plastic goes from the deepest oceans, to the highest mountains to the insides of people's bodies. Simply stunning!

To read more about this, [click here](#).

Secondly, to follow up on the above, one wants to ask "Why is it so difficult to recycle

plastics?". Princeton University Department of Chemistry [explains](#).

Lastly, when considering the above, and knowing that plastics have now been found in newborn infants (and truthfully, we don't know the long term effects of that!), the answer seems simple to me. We need to stop using them. Take the time we can to educate others and encourage each other to do a little bit better every day. Together, we can make a dent. Every dent is progress in knocking a hole in the plight of plastics.

Next month, we'll look at some ways to eliminate some plastics. In the meantime, I pray we can all be a bit more observant and aware of the choices we make and hopefully convert those choices into habits.

~ Peace,

Shari Kanehl



The above links can also be accessed by typing in the following:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/the-world-is-producing-57-million-tons-of-plastic-pollution-per-year-new-study-finds>

<https://chemistry.princeton.edu/news/earth-day-chemspainer-plastic-is-not-your-enemy/>

Saturday, 1

Worship Sunday, 2

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

Monday, 3

10:00a Lifelong Learning Mtg BR
4:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 4

9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS

Wednesday, 5

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
9:30a CDE Beehive Activity OS

Thursday, 6

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

Friday, 7—Office Closed

10:00a Palestine/Israel Session BR

Saturday, 8

Sunday, 9

9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship/Beehive Hour KH

Monday, 10

7:45a Field Trip to the AZ Legislature OS
10:00a Executive Board Mtg BR
4:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 11

10:00a Ministry Council Mtg BR/HY
1:00p Care and Support Ministry BR

Wednesday, 12

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
10:00a VEC Mtg NA

Thursday, 13

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

Friday, 14—Office Closed

9:30 Palestine/Israel Session with Daoud BR
12:00a Criminal Justice Team Mtg BR/HY
1:00a Social Justice Team Mtg BR/HY

Saturday, 15

March Palm Leaf Deadline

Sunday, 16

9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH
11:45a Evangelism lunch for Greeters BR

Monday, 17—Office Closed

President's Day

4:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 18

9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS

Wednesday, 19

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 20

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

Friday, 21—Office Closed

Saturday, 22

8:00a Prison Ministry
Re-Entry Simulation KH
Led by Nancy Nonini

Sunday, 23

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

Monday, 24

4:00p I-HELP KH

Tuesday, 25

10:00a Blood Drive KH

Wednesday, 26

10:00a Unconscious Bias Class BRC
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 27

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

Friday, 28—Office Closed