



The Palm Leaf

■■■■■■■■ A SEASON FOR EVERY MATTER ■■■■■■■■

The Church of the Palms

14808 N Boswell Boulevard
Sun City, Arizona 85351



A Letter from Paul

August 2026

A Letter from Paul

August Reflections: Lessons from a Journeyman's Journey

In July 1985, I began my first pastoral job at Saddleback Christian Church in Mission Viejo, CA. I was a college junior, and we were a small group of about 50 people meeting in an elementary school multipurpose room – one family had fourteen kids – talk about instant youth group!

Four decades later, I am grayer, I laugh a lot more, and I have more people to look after, but I am still doing this work. I am no superstar; I am a journeyman. But if you do anything for forty plus years, you learn a few things. Here are a few insights I've gleaned along the way:

- **Embrace the Gray:** When I started, I saw many theological issues in stark black and white. Today, my opinions are about as gray as my hair. Faith isn't about rigid certainty right and wrong; it's about expanding our hearts to offer an extravagant welcome to all.
- **The Big Picture Matters:** In the scope of eternity, a delayed church renovation or the color of our decor is inconsequential. What matters is our collective commitment to dismantling oppression and standing up for the vulnerable.
- **Focus on the Long Haul:** I've preached a few great sermons and a hundred gosh-awful ones. None of them individually made much difference. People are transformed by the cumulative tone of a community working steadily for social justice over time, not by single episodes.
- **Love Covers It All:** People will overlook almost any fault if they know you genuinely care. Show up for each other, and you build a community for life.

Ultimately, the Gospel boils down to principles a kindergartener can grasp: *Love them all, seek justice for all, and forgive them all.* It's incredibly simple, but it isn't easy.

Shalom, Paul

Executive Board

at The Church of the Palms, UCC

One of the greatest joys I have experienced through serving with The Church of the Palms is witnessing what happens when people come together around something they truly care about. There is something incredibly powerful about sitting beside others who share your hopes, your compassion, and your desire to make our community and world a little better.

Through our ministries and outreach, we see this every day. People bringing their unique gifts, experiences, and passions together in support of causes that matter deeply: creating inclusive spaces, caring for our neighbors, advocating for dignity and justice, supporting those experiencing hardship, and making sure people know they are not alone.

But we also recognize that this work is not always easy.

When we look at the challenges facing our communities and our country, it can sometimes feel overwhelming. When the fight for basic human rights, compassion, and dignity feels never-ending, it is natural to feel tired. It is natural to wonder if what we are doing is enough.

In those moments, I hope we remember this: we were never meant to carry these burdens alone. Community is one of the greatest gifts we can offer one another. When we come together, the weight becomes lighter. One person does not have to hold all the hope, do all the work, or have all the answers. We each pick up a piece, and together we continue moving forward.

Being involved in ministry is not just about what we give. It is also about what we receive: friendship, encouragement, purpose, and the reminder that there are people walking alongside us who care just as deeply.

And sometimes, caring deeply also means knowing when we need rest. Taking a break does not mean you care any less. Resting, reflecting, and allowing others to support you are all part of sustaining this work for the long journey ahead.

Wherever you are right now, whether you are ready to jump in, looking for where your passions fit, or simply needing a moment to breathe, please know there is a place for you here.

The work of compassion and justice has never belonged to one person. It belongs to all of us, woven together through our shared commitment to love our neighbors and care for our community.

Thank you to everyone who continues to show up in big ways and small ways. Your kindness, your voices, and your willingness to care are what make The Church of the Palms such a meaningful place.

Together, we will continue moving forward. Together, we will continue choosing hope. Together, we will continue to live out our faith.

Jessica Hermann,
Ministry Council Chair

August Worship Themes

August 2: Pastor Paul will be preaching. Our scripture is Matthew 14:13-21 – The feeding of the 5,000+. There are at least 3 ways to view this miracle, and Pastor Paul will examine them.

August 9: Read Matthew 14:22-33. How did this miracle happen? Pastor Paul will have some insights on what happens when Jesus gets into the boat with us.

August 16: Mark preaches: Matthew 15: 10-20. Our common table is not about how we set the table, but who is invited.

August 23: Read Matthew 16:13-19. Pastor Paul will be preaching. How are Christians supposed to live in a multi-religious community? The short sermon is: Our deeds say so much about what we believe. (But, come for the longer version of the sermon as well).

August 30: Pastor Paul will be preaching. There are two different types of time – what the Greeks called Chronos (sequential, mechanical time) and Kairos (the appointed time for God's purpose, justice, and intervention). Read Exodus 12:1-14.



Jerry Lovell 8/1
Sandi Askew 8/2
Abby Atkins 8/7
Pat Clarke 8/7
Phil Maher 8/7
Gordon Schneider 8/10
Bonnie Wyman 8/11

Chuck Eckstein 8/13
Pat Thorpe 8/14
Linette Stenberg 8/16
James Siebert 8/19
Terry Starr 8/19
Karl-Heinz Feiste 8/22
Ruth Humes 8/22

Mindy Nemecek 8/26
Kathy DeBeer 8/27
Elizabeth Johnson 8/29
Warren Pinter 8/29
Lynette Turner 8/29

PACK THE SACKS

On the first Sunday of every month, TCOTP packs 50 lunches for the Surprise Resource Center. These lunches are then given to individuals and families who need a little extra help throughout the month. We will pack sacks on August 2, after worship.

Donations needed are:

Chicken or Tuna salad lunch kits (with crackers included), Fruit cups, Granola or protein bars, individual bags of chips, individually wrapped packages of sweet treats (cookies, Rice Krispies Bars, etc.) Bottled water.

If you can help supply any of the above, please let Sandy Weis (815-541-9810) know. Your help with this much-needed project is greatly appreciated!

A Moment for Music



As I approach my one-year anniversary as the Director of Music and Worship at The Palms, I have reflected on what makes this church so different from other churches that I have either worked at or attended. We all know the obvious answers to this question. We are an extremely warm and welcoming congregation with a deep sense of community. We are open and affirming. We are led by two nurturing and loving pastors who help make us better humans every day. And of course, our

ministries.

As you may have suspected, there is one ministry in particular that is near and dear to my heart – the music ministry. Yes, I did say ministry. Music here at The Palms is a ministry, and it is an extremely important part of our Sunday worship services. Music is important to each of us for different reasons. It can bring one joy, it can bring one peace, and for many of us, it can bring us closer to God. As written by American poet and philosopher Khalil Gibran, “Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life, bringing peace, abolishing strife.”

One thing that I have the utmost respect and pride for here at The Palms is that the congregation members completely support our music ministry. Our choir, our organist, and our special music participants are all volunteers from our wonderful congregation. I can honestly say that this is the first church I have ever been involved with that does not hire outside help for their music ministry.

Now, as you may have guessed, this is where all of you come in! I would like to invite each one of you to join our music ministry. You can do this in many ways, such as joining our Sanctuary Choir or participating in special music and small groups. Are you worried that you do not read music or that you do not have prior choir experience? That is not a problem. We have plenty of members of our choir who joined without prior choir experience or musical knowledge. Our purpose is not to be perfect, but to support each other, have fun, and worship God together.

Sanctuary Choir rehearsals are on Thursdays starting September 3 from 1-2:30pm and on Sundays from 9-9:45 am. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak to me after the service. I hope to see some new faces this season!

Jennifer Hoppe

Each summer we always look forward to Our Favorite Hymn Sing

Make sure you stop by the Favorite Hymn Barrel, load up a hymn request form with your favorite hymns, and place the forms in the barrel. Then come to church each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. as Jennifer and Wendy lead us in song.



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 877-330-6366
Translifeline 877.565.8860
Veteran's Crisis Line 800.273.8255 press 1
Pastoral Care - Rev. Mark Makowski 623.792.5295
<https://thepalms.org/Tools2Thrive>

Recently, Pastor Paul and Wendy traveled to Maui to celebrate 40 years of committed partnership. While they were away, I expected a quiet Sunday with familiar summer pastoral duties and a worship service that would unfold just as planned. I had prepared what I believed was a strong message, gathered a faithful team of members, and looked forward to meaningful music and worship.

But as the saying goes, "Be careful what you wish for." Who could have planned for the air conditioning to stop working and the sound system to fall silent? Another familiar reminder came to mind: we make our plans, and God gently invites us to discover grace in what actually unfolds, and laughs.

So we did the most faithful and hospitable thing we could do. Members stood outside in the morning heat to greet people as they arrived, letting them know the sanctuary would be uncomfortably warm and encouraging each person to make the choice that was safest and best for them.

When worship began, 49 of us remained and shared in the discomfort together. Except for the overhead lights, the scene brought back memories for some of us. My childhood church had no air conditioning. When summer heat filled the sanctuary, we went to the earliest service and quietly prayed that the priest would show mercy by keeping things brief. Bulletins were converted to fans, and many sat by the open door.

And that is what we did. We kept it brief. Yet what unfolded may become part of Service at the Palms lore. Those who attended will each tell the story in their own way. Some may remember it as one of the most meaningful services they have experienced. Others may remember a solo song offered with a clear and honest voice, the new piano carrying a surprisingly beautiful sound, worship words and special quotations taking on deeper meaning, scripture read with energy, a message delivered from the heart rather than the page, or cool water from the cart tasting almost like the spring of everlasting life.

However the story is shared, it will remain a reminder that even when our best-laid plans fall apart, the Divine can still meet us with something holy. In that warm sanctuary, we were invited to set aside ego, perfection, and control, and to receive a new lesson in Christian hospitality. The Spirit of Life was present among us, teaching us that love can grow stronger when we practice care together, especially in difficult conditions. Be rooted in Love. Grow in the counter field of Love.

Pastor Mark



Sustainability Accountability. I've come to realize this month that it doesn't always mean the same for each of us. I received an invitation to attend an online seminar. There are 3 dates available, and depending on when you read this newsletter, you may be able to attend. The dates are 7/25, 7/28 or 7/30. You can register at BeyondPlastics.org/training. The seminar is about learning how to be a steward in your area.

Having gotten the invitation, I started doing a little digging about various initiatives in different states. What I found was "interesting". One website (climatepolicydashboard.org) says that Arizona doesn't have a Climate Action Plan. (Nor does VA, where I live). So, I went to each state individually and found that while there may not be one specific office to handle all climate issues, many states have different offices to oversee specific initiatives. For example, Arizona has a website <https://resilient.az.gov>. Here are some facts I found regarding Arizona's clean climate initiatives:

- AZ ranks among the top five states for solar-powered generation
- It's home to one of the largest nuclear power plants and the third largest power plant of any kind in the US, generating 37% of in-state electricity from nuclear power. (Honestly, I'm not sure how I feel about this one).
- 25% of electricity comes from renewables and just under 40% from natural gas and coal.
- There are currently nine policies "Enacted" or "In Progress"
- Greenhouse gas emissions are going down. From 2021 with approx. 110 million Metric Tons to 2025 with approx. 100 MMT's. It's projected to go further downward into 2050. The biggest drop has been in Transportation.
- Maricopa County has a program where vouchers can be obtained to swap your gas-powered lawn care equipment for battery electric. These are obtained from the Maricopa County Campaigns and Programs www://Maricopa.gov/5913/Campaigns-and-Programs
- Surprise has implemented a pilot program using IoT-connected smart bins to collect plastic recyclables, which are then turned into free 3D printing filament.
- ASU Circular Plastics Micro factory takes hard-to-recycle plastics, turning them into pellets to be used to manufacture new products. As of the writing of the article, I saw that over 1,100 tons of plastic waste have been kept out of local landfills!

Good news is out there, folks! We just have to go in search. If you have a topic or comment, please reach out to me at kabestik1@gmail.com, and I'll consider it for a future article.

~ Be the Light, Shari K



Lead with action at the Church of the Palms

We show up. At Church of the Palms, love isn't just a word we use on Sundays — it's how we march, how we speak out, and how we hold space for each other. That's why we stand proudly for LGBTQ+ rights. Justice means everyone, no exceptions.

This is a home for LGBTQ+ people and their families. It's care that affirms you, ceremonies that celebrate your milestones, and a community where you can breathe, heal, and belong.

Summer update: Our LGBTQ+ Committee is taking the summer off to rest and recharge, returning after Labor Day. The doors stay open, the welcome stays strong, and we're still right here with you. Because everyone deserves a community in their corner. We've got your back.

Mark Your Calendars

- Phoenix Pride Festival Oct 11, 2026
- Transgender Day of Remembrance Labyrinth Walk: Nov 20, 2026, 9:00 AM
- Transgender Day of Remembrance Reading of Names: Nov 21, 2026, 2:00 PM

Join Us at Phoenix Pride 2026! Sunday, October 11, 2026 | Downtown Phoenix | Church of the Palms will be showing up with love this fall as we celebrate the 45th Annual Phoenix Pride Festival and Parade!

Event Details:

- Parade: Sunday, October 11, 2026 — Step-off at 10:00 AM
- Route: 3rd Street from E. Portland to Taylor St, ending at the festival
- Festival: Gates open 12:00 PM at the Arizona Center in downtown Phoenix
- What to expect: 2,000+ parade participants, decorated floats, 150+ performers on multiple stages, 300+ vendors, food, community resources, KidSpace, and more

Church of the Palms at Pride. While our LGBTQ+ Committee is on summer break and reconvenes after Labor Day, our commitment doesn't pause. We'll be there in October to celebrate with a booth — because justice isn't real until it includes everyone. Volunteer at our booth — We'll share God's love. More details coming in September's newsletter.

Phoenix Pride has been organizing for 44+ years to celebrate our LGBTQ+ community. This year marks 45 years of community, visibility, and pride. Let's paint downtown in color and show our neighbors that love lives here.

We've got your back. S.E.E. you there! Support. Engage. Empower.

Marie Johnson



CARE Corner

**Brought to you by The Church of the Palms'
CARE & SUPPORT Ministry Team**

Update on our homeless ministry

On Thursday, July 23rd at the Surprise Regional Library, the City of Surprise presented an update on its plans to address the unhoused population in Surprise. Representatives from various agencies were present. Seth Dyson facilitated the meeting.

The Church of the Palms was well represented with Judd and Linda Rinsema and me in attendance. Among the churches present at the meeting, we demonstrated our identity. A community committed to social justice issues.

The meeting was informative and clearly spelled out the City of Surprise's commitment and partnership with various agencies. Seth made it clear that the City of Surprise would not be putting its efforts and resources into an I-Help 2.0 program. Let me introduce some of the contacts and agencies with whom the City of Surprise is partnering.

For the unhoused veterans, the City of Surprise has an excellent ex-vet resource in Omar Lopez. He is the Veteran Resource Navigator. His direct phone is 623-222-1658 and his email is omar.lopez@surpriseaz.gov

The newest partnership is with the Native American Connections. Lindsay Brown is the Director of Housing Services. Her phone is 602.254.3247 ext. 1014. Her email is l_brown@nativeconnections.org

Home Base, Phoenix Rescue Mission, The Salvation Army, Deep Within and St. Vincent de Paul were also represented.

In addition to these resources for the unhoused, it was added that food needs continue to rise. We should be proud of the efforts we have made in this area.

I appreciated the knowledge gained from this meeting. Our commitment to the unhoused will have many opportunities.

The Surprise Community and Resource Center (Grand Opening) is September 3, 2026 at 12641 West Santa Fe Drive. Ribbon cutting at 10 am and Open House at 11 am.

Mark

Save the Date:

Surprise Community & Resource Center Grand Opening
12641 W. Santa Fe Dr.

September 3, 2026 | Ribbon Cutting at 10:00 AM | Open House 11:00 AM

New Planter Pots Add Beauty and Safety to Our Entrances



You may notice something new as you arrive for worship: large, beautifully planted pots now grace each main entrance of the church. These additions were thoughtfully selected and placed through the combined efforts of our Safety Committee and the Trustees, who worked together to enhance both the appearance and security of our campus.

Beyond their welcoming look, which will soon be enhanced with appropriate plants, the planters serve an important protective purpose. Their placement creates a barrier that helps prevent vehicles from driving directly toward the doors, adding an extra layer of safety for everyone who enters our building.

We extend heartfelt thanks to the members of the Safety Committee and Trustees for their care, planning, and dedication. Their work helps ensure that our church remains both a beautiful and secure place for all who gather here.

A Note from the Community about our Library –



I was hugely impressed with the Banned Books Library article in the Independent. You've done a great thing. I stopped today to check it out. Appreciated the insert in each book explaining where and why the book was banned.

Thank you for witnessing your faith!

-Ross Fewing (A Sun City Neighbor)

Greetings from HART Pantry!



Well, believe it or not, it's back-to-school planning time. The Board met yesterday and decided to start packing our food bags on August 13th for the 2026-27 school year! All of our wonderful volunteers are being notified by Carol, and they can't wait to join us on Thursdays in August. I think most of us have enjoyed our summer break but also miss seeing our packing buddies. As always, HART Pantry needs your donation of food items to help replenish the pantry shelves. Tom/Brenda are busy preparing shipment orders to arrive in the next few weeks. So that being said, here is my first wish list for the year:

- Jif-to-go (please no jars of peanut butter)
- Protein bars (3 grams or more protein)
- Breakfast bars
- Pop-Tarts
- Instant oatmeal packages
- Ramen-type noodle packs

As always, thanks for your donations and continuing to support our cause of feeding at-risk teens!

August Calendar

Saturday, 1

Sunday, 2

10:00a Worship Service SA

11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 3

10:00a Life Long Learning Meeting BR

Tuesday, 4

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

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture

Psalm 105 BR

5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 5

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 6

10:00a Worship Team Meeting BRC

Friday, 7—Office Closed

Saturday, 8

Sunday, 9

10:00a Worship Service SA

11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 10

Tuesday, 11

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture

Psalm 133 BR

5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 12

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

10:00a Evangelism and Growth Meeting NA

Thursday, 13

Friday, 14—Office Closed

Saturday, 15

Sunday, 16

10:00a Worship Service SA

11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 17

9:00a Blessing Board Meeting BR

Tuesday, 18

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

5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 19

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

9:00a VEC Meeting NA

10:00a "Let's Talk" BRC

Thursday, 20

Friday, 21—Office Closed

Saturday, 22

Sunday, 23

10:00a Worship Service SA

11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

11:00a New Member Information BR

Monday, 24

Tuesday, 25

10:00a Blood Drive

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture

Psalm 124 BR

5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 26

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 27

Friday, 28 – Office Closed

Saturday, 29

Sunday, 30

10:00a Worship Service SA

11:00a Fellowship Hour

Tuesday, 31

9:00a Shower Trailer @ Bicentennial Park

5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

SA=Sanctuary; B2L=Bridges to Learning; HY=Hybrid; KH=King Hall; BR=Boardroom; OS=Offsite; NA=Narthex; CHP=Chapel at The Palms;

PP=Pastor Paul's Office; MR=Music Room; BRC=Behle Resource Center; PT=Patio; LB labyrinth; MG Memorial Garden

The shower Trailer schedule can be found on our website, www.https://thepalms.org/shower-trailer/