



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

September 2026

Building a Peace Rooted in Justice

In Matthew 25, Jesus famously calls his followers to care for "the least of these"—to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, and visit the imprisoned. Crucially, the passage opens with the judgment of whole nations. This isn't just a mandate for individual charity; it is communal, systemic, and deeply political. ***Jesus is not merely asking if individual hearts are kind, but what kind of societies we build together.***

As a congregation, we embody this calling through our commitment to our Mission Statement: ***Sharing God's Unconditional Love, Justice, and Extravagant Welcome.*** Caring for those who suffer is vital, but living out this mission means we must also confront the root causes of that suffering. If asking structural questions causes friction, that isn't a failure—discomfort is often the natural byproduct of truth spoken aloud.

PEACE-MAKING IS DIFFERENT FROM PEACE-KEEPING

This aligns directly with the Beatitudes, where Jesus declares, *"Blessed are the peacemakers."* Notably, he does not bless the peacekeepers, the conflict avoiders, or those who preserve quiet by ignoring harm. Keeping the peace often means suppressing tension—avoiding tough conversations, dodging systemic issues, and maintaining a comfortable status quo. But when injustice is present, silence is never neutral; it actively preserves the harm.

As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from a Birmingham jail cell, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice." Living into an extravagant welcome requires us to move beyond mere politeness. Genuine peacemaking demands that we unmask and dismantle the root causes of division, even when doing so requires uncomfortable conflict. May we have the courage to be those peacemakers together.

Shalom, Paul



Executive Board

at The Church of the Palms, UCC

As we step into a new season and welcome the quiet beauty that fall brings, I would like to share some updates and encouragements with our church family.

If you've walked through our entrances recently, you've likely seen the beautiful new large planters now in place. While they certainly add a touch of charm to our entryways, they also serve an important purpose: enhancing the safety of our congregation. We are deeply grateful to our Safety Committee for their thoughtful work in bringing these to life. Their efforts help ensure that our church remains a safe, nurturing space for all who gather here.

Fall is a season of gentle transition; a time to reset, reorganize, and re-root ourselves. As we move into this new chapter, I invite you to take a few moments to prepare both practically and spiritually:

- **Refresh your rhythms:** Summer often brings more flexible schedules. Fall is a wonderful time to re-establish routines that help you feel grounded, whether that's returning to a devotional practice, joining a small group, or carving out quiet time for reflection.
- **Reconnect with community:** Many ministries and programs begin ramping up again. Consider revisiting a group you love or exploring a new one that sparks curiosity or joy.
- **Prepare your home for the season:** Even in Arizona, fall brings subtle shifts. Tidying up your space, decluttering, or adding small touches of warmth can help create an environment that supports rest and renewal!
- **Look ahead with intention:** Take a moment to review upcoming church events, service opportunities, and gatherings. Planning ahead helps us stay connected and engaged as a community.
- **Embrace the spirit of change:** Fall reminds us that transformation is natural and beautiful. Let this season encourage you to release what no longer serves you and welcome what brings growth.

I am thankful for each of you and the unique light you bring to our progressive, loving community. May this season bring renewal, clarity, and warmth.

With gratitude,

Jessica Hermann

Ministry Council Chair

September Worship Themes

September 6: Pastor Paul preaches. Communion Sunday. Read Matthew 18:12-20. Rather than pointing fingers at others, we need to realize that we're the lost sheep Jesus is looking for.

September 13: Pastor Paul preaches. One word sermon: Home. (Is Pastor Paul really going to preach a one word sermon? Come and find out!). Read John 14:1-13, 23.

September 20: Pastor Mark preaches. Matthew 20: 1-16 God's Economy provides enough for everyone. It's called abundance.

September 27: Pastor Paul preaches. Read Matthew 21:23-32. Is this gonna be on the test? What is a test for a good sermon? A good life? Actions speak louder than words.



Beth Georges 09/01

Susan Leino 09/02

Debbie Williams 09/02

Susan Princehouse 09/04

Diana Graettinger 09/09

Donna Meadows 09/09

Jan Eckstein 09/12

Arloa Hymans 09/15

Timothy Kluge 09/15

Barbara Plona 09/17

Yvonne Bentley 09/24

Kathy Abramowitz 09/27

Stephen Schuellein 09/29

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 September 6, 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!

Good Grief! You've Changed!

You likely remember the exact moment the world shifted—the devastating phone call, the quiet hospital room, the empty chair at dinner, or the text you dreaded ever receiving. It is the overwhelming silence that hits when a person who defined your daily life suddenly exists only in your memory. It's a common story at The Palms.

Most people view grief as a purely emotional arc: you weep, you ache, you miss them, and eventually, time mends the heart. Neuroscience, however, reveals a far more complex biological reality. Deep loss doesn't just trigger sadness; it fundamentally alters your brain's structure and function. It reshapes your memories, skews your perception of time, shifts your identity, and rewires how you forecast the future. You aren't just mourning a person—your brain is forcibly attempting to construct a new reality where they no longer exist, permanently altering who you are in the process.

Psychologists refer to one of grief's most painful aspects as the "continuing bond." While your logical mind understands they are gone, your emotional brain has not updated its map of reality. You still reflexively reach for your phone to text them or expect to hear their voice when good news breaks.

This happens because the brain builds loved ones directly into its internal prediction network. Over time, your brain learns:

- *When I need support, I go to them.*
- *When something exciting happens, I share it with them.*
- *When life is difficult, they are my anchor.*

They become built into your brain's core emotional architecture. When they disappear, your neural network experiences a systemic failure—the world your brain constantly prepares for no longer exists.

Grief is far more than an abstract feeling. Neuroimaging reveals that the pain of social rejection and profound loss activates the same brain regions as physical injury. This is why grieving individuals frequently experience phantom physical symptoms:

- Deep body aches and chronic pain
- Persistent exhaustion and lethargy
- Severe brain fog and inability to focus
- A disorienting loss of self

In a literal sense, your brain is treating loss as a physical trauma, desperately trying to adapt to an unrecognizable environment.

After a loss, memories often become hyper-vivid. You might suddenly recall the exact cadence of their laugh, their subtle habits, or mundane moments that now feel invaluable.

This occurs because the hippocampus—the brain's memory hub—works alongside emotional centers to preserve connections to vital people. The deeper the bond, the stronger the underlying neural pathways. Losing someone close doesn't feel like losing information; it feels like losing a piece of your personal history, because part of your brain's timeline was built directly around them.

When a loved one dies, you don't just lose them—you lose the specific version of yourself that existed alongside them. Relationships don't just link two people; they form distinct identities. You manifest differently with a childhood friend than with a colleague or parent. When a key relationship ends, your brain must reorganize its fundamental sense of self. Psychologists call this "identity reconstruction." You are not just learning to navigate life without someone; you are discovering who you are in their absence.

Prolonged grief isn't a sign of weakness; it is a sign of a brain struggling to reconcile two conflicting realities. Your emotional brain insists, "*They belong here,*" while your logical brain counters, "*They are gone.*" Running these two competing versions of reality simultaneously creates intense psychological distress, forcing the brain to confront this gap at every trigger.

Many fear moving forward because they equate healing with forgetting. But the brain doesn't erase meaningful bonds—*it evolves them*. Over time, the connection shifts from an external presence to an internal blueprint. Their wisdom influences your choices, their humor shapes your perspective, and their voice becomes part of your inner compass.

While tragedy should never be romanticized, neuroscientists recognize a phenomenon known as post-traumatic growth. Following profound loss, the brain can gradually build new pathways rooted in:

- Heightened empathy and compassion
- Richer emotional awareness
- Realigned personal priorities
- Deeper gratitude for life and remaining relationships

You cannot return to who you were before the loss, because that version of you belonged to a world where they were still here. The true path of grief isn't about moving on—it is about moving forward as someone new, carrying the love, the memories, and the transformation with you. On your journey, this new adventure, we walk with you at The Palms.

Shalom, Paul

LGBTQ+ MINISTRIES

Action Is Our Prayer at The Church of the Palms. We don't just talk about love at The Church of the Palms — we live it.   

It's in the way we show up for one another, raise our voices for justice, and create room for every story at the table. That's why we stand boldly, joyfully, and without question with our LGBTQ+ siblings and their families. Justice includes everyone. No footnotes. No exceptions.

This is your home: a place for sacred affirmation, for weddings and milestones celebrated with pride, for pastoral care that sees and honors you, and for a community where you can finally exhale, heal, and belong.

Fall update: After a summer of rest and renewal, our LGBTQ+ Committee is back after Labor Day — refreshed and ready to continue this holy work. But make no mistake: our welcome never took a break. The doors are open. The heart of this church is open. And we are still right here, with you. Because no one should walk alone. Because everyone deserves a community in their corner. At The Church of the Palms, 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

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! Members of The Church of the Palms will be attending to meet with other organizations and churches — sharing who we are and building new bridges of love and justice. We'd love for you to come with us! All are welcome to join. Your voice, your presence, and your heart help make our welcome  known.

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

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. Get Involved! Feeling called to help? The LGBTQ+ Ministry Team needs you — your voice, your skills, your energy. Whether you can lead, serve, or help with one event, your time changes lives. Jump in. Contact Georgia Feiste: lgbtqplusteam@gmail.com or Marie Johnson: mariejohnson60@outlook.com

Love & Peace Marie Johnson





CARE Corner

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

From Our Nurse:

Adult Vaccine Recommendations

Which vaccines are recommended for me? It would seem that all healthcare providers would be in agreement on this, but unfortunately, that is not the case. The following information comes from the CDC and is in accordance with most providers.

The influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone who does not have a history of a serious or life-threatening reaction to a prior flu vaccine. Ages 65+ should get the high-dose influenza vaccine, as should those younger than 65 with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart or pulmonary disease. Some feel that if they felt ill for a couple of days following a previous flu shot, they should no longer get one. Actually, this does not mean the vaccine "gave" you the flu (that cannot happen) but that your immune system is reacting well to the foreign substance, a normal response.

A COVID vaccine is also recommended yearly. The makeup of this is continually being refined to match with current strains.

Pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine is recommended once after the age of 50. Many providers recommend it be repeated at age 65, especially with certain underlying conditions.

An additional vaccine called Prevnar (PCV15 or PCV 20) is recommended one time for those 65+.

Shingles vaccine, a series of 2 shots, is recommended for those over the age of 50. A common myth is that you don't need it if you've already had shingles. Unfortunately, this is not true. The virus remains dormant in your body and can be reactivated at any time.

Tetanus immunization should be updated every 10 years. If you had routine childhood vaccines including pertussis prevention, then you just need the Tetanus/Diphtheria (Td) vaccine every 10 years.

Rightway Pharmacy will have a vaccination clinic for Covid/flu at The Church of the Palms on Sunday, October 11, after worship. See Bobbie Chapman for registration forms.

"When Love Doesn't Feel like it's Enough: Living with the Diagnosis of Dementia in Your Family"

On Saturday, October 3 from 10:00 to noon, the Care and Support Ministry will sponsor a workshop focusing on dementia and support for caregivers. The workshop will look at what dementia is, provide tools for caregivers to care for the person with dementia as well as their own self-care, and how to get additional support.

The speaker will be Jack Register, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and therapist. Jack is the founder and Clinical Director of the Catharsis Counseling Center in Phoenix. He is completing his Ph.D. through Yeshiva University in New York. Please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex by Sunday, September 20, if you wish to attend this informative workshop.



Sustainability

I'm going to step onto the springboard here and dive way over the line - again - into something we don't normally consider "sustainability". Primarily, our Sustainability efforts focus on how to effectively protect the planet God gave us. We discuss pollution of land, water, and air, as well as how various foods, cooking utensils, containers, etc all impact our physical health. How can we sustain God's earth if we don't care for ourselves, right? Well, what if we don't have the right mindset to do so?

Since moving to VA (which I love) – the peace of my own backyard with deer, squirrels, chipmunks, groundhogs, rabbits, and a plethora of birds seem unending. Some of them so tiny they're barely taller than the blades of grass (yeah, it's probably time to mow...) I am amazed and thankful every day that God has seen fit to plop me here for retirement. On the other hand, we have experienced significant losses. My husband's best friend of over 45 years from the Army, one of my best friends from High School, my brother-in-law, and most recently and most devastatingly, my 21-year-old son. All within about 15 months after arriving here. I think as we get older, we experience more losses like these, but it doesn't get easier. How then do we sustain our own mental health and faith?

I was reading a book called "Walking with Henry" by Rachel Anne Ridge and realized how, over this time, I've not put sufficient effort into sustaining my relationship with God. I said from the start that leaving my church would be the hardest part of moving, and I still stand by that. But in the process, while I listened to some of the on-line services, I've strayed a bit. I've become lax in prayer ("God knows what's on my heart, even if I don't say the words"). I've failed to continue any studies. I have not been a good steward to sustaining my *own* spiritual health. It happens so slowly that you don't realize it, until you *do*. So, I have committed to some changes, to sustain myself, my loved ones, my church and community, and to reset my relationship with God.

This doesn't mean I'm finding a local church; you're stuck with me, for good or bad. But I need to make a more systemic effort to fill the space that miles have created. Rather than just reading "feel good" books or fantasies, I need to focus more on studies. Books that challenge my faith, make me think, and bring me closer to God. I need to grow my faith, not just sustain it, and be more attuned to how He is working in my life and how I can work for Him. I'm about halfway done with "A New Kind of Christian" by Brian McClaren.

Here is my challenge to you. Aside from church on Sunday (or Monday for online folks), how have you challenged yourself to deepen your faith? Daily prayers? Meditation? Small groups? Reading a book about walking a donkey? (Yes, Henry is a donkey). Maybe pursuing more serious studies regarding religion and faith? I believe I am going to do a deep dive into the Beatitudes. One of my most profound moments was when I was in Israel, standing on the Mount where Jesus delivered the Beatitudes. I can still see it in my mind. For me, it's time to renew.

Feel free to share your thoughts.

~ Be the Light, Shari (kabestik1@gmail.com)



If you need help paying your energy bill, a new state program called Power AZ is offering \$640 in assistance to eligible customers for a limited time. The program is available until Sept. 30, 2026, to residents who may not qualify for other low-income

energy assistance programs. Some households may also qualify for a one-time crisis payment of up to \$500. For questions about LIHEAP, or for assistance completing a LIHEAP application, contact the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program service line at 1-866 494-1981.

New Neighborhood Meditation Group Begins



A new neighborhood meditation group is gathering in the chapel on the **third Sunday of each month, from 2:00–3:30 p.m.** All are welcome to attend.

Rooted in **Buddhist principles yet fully non-sectarian**, the gathering offers a gentle, accessible space for quiet reflection and shared presence. Each session will include a brief introduction, **20 minutes of guided meditation**, a time for response, and open discussion. The group's leader brings experience in both **Christian and Buddhist meditation practices**, offering a thoughtful bridge for participants from all backgrounds.

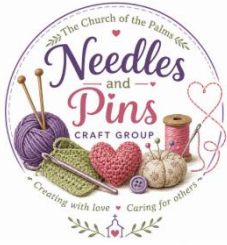
A **free-will offering** will be received to support the ministries of the church. Come settle into stillness, breathe deeply, and explore a practice that nurtures peace within and among us.

Meditation Experience: Resonance of Light Led by Rev. Lynette Turner September 17, 2026, 10:00 a.m. Chapel of The Church of the Palms

Resonance of Light is a 60-minute immersive meditation experience designed to gently guide participants into deep relaxation, spiritual grounding, and inner spaciousness. Throughout the session, the pure tone of a quartz crystal bowl will weave through the room, creating a vibrational field that supports calm, clarity, and connection.

We will begin by settling the body and breath, then move into a guided meditation that relaxes each part of the body from head to toe. The crystal bowl's tone will rise and fall like a soft current, helping participants release tension, quiet the mind, and open to the presence of peace. After the guided portion, we will rest in silence, allowing the sound to continue its work within us. Gentle reflection, breathwork, and grounding practices will help integrate the experience, leaving participants centered, refreshed, and spiritually renewed. This session is open to all — whether you are new to meditation or returning to a familiar practice.

Needles and Pins Craft Group



Look at all the new items on the Needles and Pins Craft Table!

Art teacher Ellen Merchant has created some outstanding new earrings, while artist Georgia Feiste has added a delightful selection of creative greeting cards to her rack—featuring some adorable boys and a few brunettes!

And topping off the new selections are two stand-up totes made by quilter Sandy Nachand. They're perfect for hobby projects, but they're also sturdy and stylish enough to use as a purse.

Stop by the Craft Table in King Hall and take a look at all the new treasures!

Bobbie



RECITAL


Kathryn Grumley
Soprano


Jennifer Hoppe
Piano

An afternoon of beloved opera arias and
musical theater

**SEPT. 26TH
3PM**

**CHURCH OF THE PALMS
14808 N BOSWELL BLVD.
SUN CITY, AZ**

***SUGGESTED DONATION
\$15***



September Calendar

Tuesday, 1

9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS
 10:00a Life Long Learning NA
 10:00a Othering and Belonging Meeting BR
 2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
 Psalm 149 BR
 5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 2

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
 10:00a Evangelism and Growth NA

Thursday, 3

10:00a Worship Team Meeting BRC
 1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, 4—Office Closed

Saturday, 5

Sunday, 6

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

Monday, 7 – Office Closed for Labor Day

Tuesday, 8

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
 Psalm 114 BR
 5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 9

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 10

1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, 11—Office Closed

11:00a Millie Carlson Memorial SA/KH

Saturday, 12

Sunday, 13

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

Monday, 14

10:00a Executive Board Meeting BR
 2:00p LGBTQ+ Ministry Meeting BR

Tuesday, 15

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, 16

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR
 10:00a "Let's Talk" BRC
 2:00p Operations Council Meeting BR

Thursday, 17

10:00a Meditation Experience CHP
 12:00p Criminal Justice/Prison Reform BR
 1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, 18—Office Closed

Saturday, 19

Sunday, 20

9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
 10:00a Worship Service SA
 11:00a Fellowship Hour KH
 11:15a Board of Trustees Meeting BR
 2:00p Neighborhood Meditation Group CHP

Monday, 21

Tuesday, 22

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
 Psalm 124 BR
 5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 23

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 24

1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, 25 – Office Closed

Saturday, 26

9:00a Beehive Breakfast KH
 3:00p Recital SA

Sunday, 27

9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
 10:00a Worship Service SA
 11:00a Fellowship Hour
 11:00a New Member Information BR

Monday, 28

Tuesday, 29

2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
 Psalm 78 BR
 5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 30

9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group 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 Church of the Palms

Feet & More Shower Trailer Ministry



September Schedule



- Sept. 2,** 9:00am to 12:00pm - Untarian Universalist
17540 Ave. of the Arts, Surprise
- Sept. 3,** 9:00am to 12:00pm - Santa Teresita
14016 N Verbena St. El Mirage
- Sept. 4,** 12:30pm to 3:30pm - St. John's Lutheran Church
7205 N 51st Ave., Glendale
- Sept. 8,** 9:00am to 1:00pm - Bicentennial Park
16705 N Nash St., Surprise
- Sept. 11,** 9:00am to 11:00am - St. John's Lutheran Church
7205 N 51st Ave., Glendale
- Sept. 17,** 9:00am to 12:00pm - Santa Teresita
14016 N Verbena St. El Mirage
- Sept. 18,** 12:30pm to 3:30 pm - St. John's Lutheran Church
7205 N 51st Ave., Glendale
- Sept. 22,** 9:00am to 1:00pm - Bicentennial Park
16705 N Nash St., Surprise
- Sept. 25,** 9:00am to 11:00am - St. John's Lutheran Church
7205 N 51st Ave., Glendale

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