

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 — *November 2026*

Two Letters from Paul

Things For Which I Am Thankful

As the desert heat finally softens into crisp autumn air, our sanctuary fills with the joyful warmth of returning winter visitors and lifelong friends alike. This Thanksgiving season, my heart overflows with gratitude.

I am thankful for the cooler weather that invites us out to gather, for the vibrant community we share, and for the simple, profound gift of each other. In a world that often feels fractured, finding shelter in one another's presence is a sacred grace.

I am thankful, too, for the sacred privilege of voting—for the ability to raise our voices, participate in our democracy, and advocate for our neighbors. Most of all, I am thankful for the quiet, stubborn hope born anew within us each day. Together, we are reminded that God's goodness continues to bloom, holding us all in love.

Rooted in Our Calling, Whatever the Outcome

This election season feels pivotal for the future of our communities, our nation, and our world. Tensions are high, and many of us carry deep anxiety about what lies ahead. Yet, regardless of who wins or loses on election day, our primary calling remains unchanged: we are called to be the church.

No election result can alter our foundational purpose or silence our gospel witness. Our mission statement stands as our steady anchor: Sharing God's Unconditional Love, Justice, and Extravagant Welcome.

In the days ahead, our community will continue doing what we have always done—feeding the hungry, standing with the marginalized, practicing radical hospitality, and building bridges of peace. Presidents and politicians come and go, but the enduring love and justice of God abide forever. Let us walk into the future together, courageous, grounded, and unwavering in our faith.

Shalom, Paul

Executive Board
at The Church of the Palms, UCC

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when God's children dwell in unity!" Psalm 133:1

Did you vote early? If not, what are your plans to vote on Tuesday, November 3? Our voice is not only important, but also crucial.

And now on to the holidays! As Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded to pause and recognize the many blessings God has given us. Amid our busy schedules and changing seasons, gratitude invites us to slow down and reflect.

Thanksgiving also reminds us of the blessing of community. We are not meant to walk through life alone. Our church family is a place where we can encourage one another, share one another's burdens, celebrate together, and serve our neighbors with love. The Church of the Palms is especially thankful as we celebrate through the Joyce and Roy Spaulding Memorial Thanksgiving Dinner. We feed our Church and community with wonderful food and loving fellowship!

November is a month of remembrance and thanksgiving. This season, may we look for opportunities to express our gratitude — not only with words, but through acts of kindness and generosity. A meal shared, a prayer offered, a phone call made, or a helping hand extended can be a meaningful reflection of Christ's love. And as we give thanks, may we remember those who are lonely, hurting, or in need, reaching out to them with compassion.

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed, joyful, and gratitude-filled Thanksgiving!

Victoria McWilliams, Executive Board Chair

November Worship Themes

November 1: All Saints Day. Pastor Paul preaches. Communion Sunday. Romans 16:1-16. The roll call of the saints sounds a lot like us. We are the saints.

November 8: We will be honoring our veterans. Pastor Paul preaches. Matthew 25:1-13. What would God write about us if God kept a diary? A Divine Diary? A Jesus Journal?

November 15: We will be honoring our clergy - retired and active. Mark preaches. Matthew 25: 14-30 Fear buries us and courage to love is worth the risk

November 22: Thanksgiving Sunday. Pastor Paul preaches. Reign of Christ Sunday. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Who are the least of these?

November 29: 1st Sunday of Advent. Lighting of the first Advent Candle. Pastor Paul preaches. Where do you find Hope?

Happy November Birthday

Rudy Schnabel 11/03

Jeannie Brandenberger 11/05

Gweneth Johnson 11/05

Ernest Otto 11/05

Suzanne Boisclair 11/06

Ellen Merchant 11/07

Jessica Hermann 11/08

Linda Hofmann 11/08

Sandra Nachand 11/10

Pam Caron 11/11

Tammy Genty 11/11

Mary Ann Maes 11/12

Bonnie Adrian 11/15

Cynthia Reese 11/15

Valerie LeBlanc 11/17

Barbara Talbot 11/19

Andy Strong Jordan 11/22

Bonnie Green 11/26

Bob Krueger 11/26

Carl Gruber 11/30

Martin Meadows 11/30

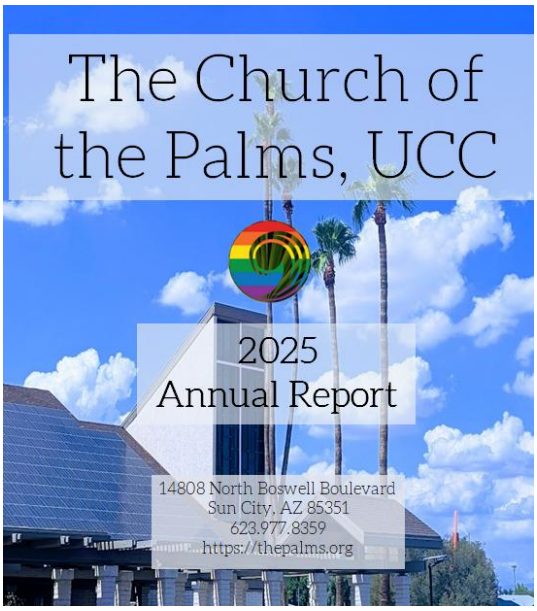
Pack-a-Sack

On the first Sunday of every month, The Church of the Palms 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 November 1, 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!



Annual Meeting Reminder — Ministry & Team Reports Needed



As we prepare for our upcoming Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 20, 2027, at 9:00 AM, it's time for all ministry, team, board, and committee leaders to submit their annual reports. These reports help tell the story of our shared ministry over the past year—celebrating what we've accomplished, noting challenges, and highlighting the faithful work happening across our community.

If you're unsure what to include or would like a refresher on the format, you're welcome to look at last year's Annual Report for guidance. Reviewing past reports can be a helpful way to remember the tone, structure, and level of detail that works well. Please follow the link to our church's website to see a copy of last year's annual report.

https://thepalms.org/wp-admin/post.php?post=10544&action=edit

Thank you for taking the time to prepare your report. Your leadership and your willingness to share the work of your ministry help us reflect on where we've been and look forward to where God is calling us next. Let's make this year's Annual Meeting a clear and meaningful snapshot of our life together.

Please use the Chart below to help you know where to send your report:

Ministry Council Reports go to Jessica Hermann jessica.res4@gmail.com

- Life Long Learning Team
- Worship Team
- Social Justice Team
- Welcome Team (Evangelism)
- Fellowship Team
- Care & Support Ministry Team

Operation Council Report go to Phil Ladd drphilladd@icloud.com

- Board of Trustees
- Personnel Board
- Blessings Board

Reports need to be submitted by December 1, 2026, please.

LGBTQ+ MINISTRIES

Church of the Palms Newsletter — November 2026

A Season of Gratitude and Love in Action

At Church of the Palms, love is more than something we talk about on Sunday morning — it's how we show up for each other every day. 🏳️‍⚧️🌈😇

This Thanksgiving season, we give thanks for every story, every family, and every beautiful journey that is part of our church. We are especially grateful for our LGBTQ+ family and allies who make this community so vibrant, caring, and full of grace.

Here, there are no conditions on love and no exceptions to justice. This is a spiritual home where you are fully celebrated — where weddings, anniversaries, and life milestones are honored with joy, where pastoral care respects exactly who you are, and where you can breathe deeply, heal, and know that you belong.

Giving Thanks and Remembering Together in November

As we gather around tables of thanksgiving this month, we also gather in love to honor a sacred tradition — **Transgender Day of Remembrance.**

In a season focused on gratitude, we pause to remember with love and dignity our transgender siblings who have lost their lives to violence. We speak their names with care. We light candles in their memory. We give thanks for their lives, and we recommit ourselves to building a world where every person is safe, valued, and free to live as their authentic, beloved self.

Please join our church family for two special moments of reflection and community:

- Labyrinth Walk of Remembrance and Gratitude — **Friday, November 20, 2026, at 9:00 AM** — A quiet, meditative walk to give thanks, to pray, and to hold space for one another.
- Transgender Day of Remembrance — **Saturday, November 21, 2026 at 2:00 PM** — A heartfelt service of music, prayer, and community as we honor each life by name.

Everyone is welcome. Come exactly as you are. At The Church of the Palms, no one walks alone — we have your back and we hold your heart with gratitude. ❤️

Save The Dates:

- Labyrinth Walk — Nov 20, 2026, 9:00 AM at the Church

- Transgender Day of Remembrance — Nov 21, 2026, 2:00 PM at the Church

Phoenix Pride Festival 2026 — Summary

The 45th annual Phoenix Pride Festival took place on Sunday, October 11th at the Arizona Center, 455 N 3rd Street in downtown Phoenix. The parade kicked off at 10 a.m. at Portland Street and traveled south on 3rd Street to Taylor Street, ending at the festival entrance.

The parade was colorful, intimate, and engaging. Participants included transgender community organizations, a vocal Pro-Palestinian contingent, church groups such as the Sun City Unitarians and Desert Palm UCC, choral groups including Phoenix Gay Men's Chorus and Voices of the Desert, many corporate groups, and political campaigns. James Seibert walked with the Kris Mayes campaign, and Adrian Fontes was especially memorable for greeting people across the street. Floats ranged from antique fire trucks to simple banners and flags, with groups handing out fans and candy along the narrower route. Security was present, and no counter-demonstrators were observed.

The Arizona Center provided a surprisingly effective festival site, with sponsored tables and chairs along the walkways, built-in canopy shade, and several open businesses. The Arizona Center parking garage offered convenient access. Sponsors included medical providers, HRC, local artists, and AMC, which drew the longest line for prizes. Weather was sunny and spectacular, in the low 80s, contributing to a lively, happy, and relaxed atmosphere.

The one notable downside was limited bathroom availability. Overall, the event was a joyful, safe, and affirming celebration of visibility, support for the LGBTQ+ community and allies, and a public witness to belonging, resilience, and joy.

Want to Help?

Our LGBTQ+ Ministry Team always welcomes new friends and helping hands, especially during this season of giving. Whether you have a little time or a lot, your presence makes a difference.

Contact Georgia Feiste: lgbtqplusteam@gmail.com
or Marie Johnson: mariejohnson60@outlook.com

CARE Corner

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

Cold & Flu Season Is Coming — Let's Keep Our Community Healthy

As we move into the colder months, we also enter the stretch of the year when colds and flus tend to make their rounds. It's a good time to pause, take care of ourselves, and look out for one another so we can keep our whole community feeling well.

A few simple habits make a big difference. Washing your hands frequently—especially after being in public spaces—helps stop germs from spreading. Covering your coughs and sneezes is another small act of kindness that protects those around you. And if you're feeling under the weather, the most helpful thing you can do is stay home, rest, and give your body time to recover. Watch worship online instead of in person if you are unwell.

Taking care of yourself also means staying hydrated, getting plenty of sleep, and listening to what your body needs. Many people also choose to get a seasonal flu shot, which can reduce the severity of illness and help protect vulnerable members of our community.

Let's work together to keep everyone healthy and supported as we head into the winter months. A little prevention goes a long way—and we're grateful for everyone who helps make our shared spaces safe and welcoming.



Come help decorate the church for Advent and Christmas

Saturday, November 28

Come join in the fun on Saturday, November 28, starting at 9:00 AM. There will be trees to trim, garland to hang, nativities to place, and wreaths to hang. If you are unable to stand for long periods of time, we can find you jobs that you can do sitting down. We will crank up the Christmas tunes and have a great time. Hope to see you there!



Happy November! Fall is here, colors are changing, and we're all awaiting the midterm results. Regardless of where we sit politically, there's plenty of anxiety. Prayers for everyone to find some good in whatever comes.

Sustainability is such a big task. This month I wanted to look at what's happening in the corporate world. When I worked for CSAA, I was involved with the Sustainability resource group and saw how companies reviewed processes, supply chains, and equipment choices to reduce waste and increase recyclability. I loved that work.

But I've wondered whether corporations are still pursuing those goals as the current administration cuts DEI and Sustainability programs, labeling them "progressive left" or "socialism." Unfortunately, some larger companies have scaled back those departments to avoid being seen as too "woke." The good news is that many are reframing the same practices through cost savings and profit: remanufacturing items in the U.S. to avoid tariffs, reusing parts, and adopting "circularity" as the new term for recycling.

Below are a few examples from an HBR.org newsletter titled *"The Politics of Sustainability Have Changed. The Business Case Hasn't."* I found them interesting.

The car maker Renault has a new department called "The Future is Neutral" to collect old car parts and put them in new cars. They are designing their cars to be 85-90% recoverable, meaning the parts can be reused. (my opinion: this process is going to need some buy-in from the general public. How many times I heard "I don't want used parts, my car was new when I bought it", (even though it's 5 years old now). It was hard to get people to understand that manufacturer parts, from the same make/model vehicle, are, virtually, the same part you just lost.) I'm not dissing the process, I like it, but I can see a lot of folks being rankled. What do you think? What if it were your car?

1. Advocate Health helped realize $3.5 Million in benefit annually by refurbishing certain medical supplies. This avoided costs for waste disposal and tariffs on new virgin product.
2. Some companies are re-selling used clothing, netting some $1.8-$1.9 million of annual net benefit by getting to sell the same product twice. However, with just under 7% of all extracted natural resources being recycled/reused, there's still a long way to go.
3. Decarbonization and Energy Efficiency: As companies become more efficient and less wasteful, benefits are being seen in both the bottom line and our planet. That's a win-win. While the current administration slashed some of the restrictions placed on big companies in the past, some of those same companies are seeing the benefits of those restrictions and haven't taken advantage of those rollbacks. Decarbonization was a big win. A pharmaceutical company achieved $206-415K cost reduction per delivery route through decarbonization. A Company utilizing LED lighting saw $2.1 Million annually in cost savings.

No matter what you call it, a duck is still a duck. Maybe it's not called "sustainability", but "cost effectiveness". Whatever it is, this "duck" is making progress, and I can take some solace in that.

Thoughts? Requests? Reach out to me: kabestik1@gmail.com

Urgent Update: Nassar Land Registration Denied

Support for the Nassar family farm - Tent of Nations – is one of the ongoing ministries of our church.

The Nassar family, who are Palestinian Christians – own a 100 acre farm located south of Bethlehem in the West Bank, and have been in the Israeli court system for 35 years struggling to maintain control of the land purchased by their family in 1916. Some of you were present when Daoud Nassar spoke at our church to share his story and their commitment of non-violent resistance to the injustice they are facing.

On October 8, 2026, after 3 years of hearings, and 35 years in Israeli military and supreme courts, the military committee of the Civil Administration, denied the application of the Nassar family to register their 100 acre farm located southwest of Bethlehem as is required by Israeli law.

The committee rejected the family's application requiring that they must register not only their own 100 acre farm, but an additional 100 acres of surrounding land which belongs to neighboring owners. This demand places an unreasonable and unjustified burden on the family: requiring it to register land it does not own.

Even more alarming, the committee declared that the land's current classification in 1991 as "State Land" belonging to Israel would remain in effect until the entire area of approximately 200 acres, including the family's property is registered simultaneously. This makes their farm more susceptible to Israeli settler and military intimidation.

In sum, the family fears that rejection of the registration, imposition of new conditions to register the land, and increasing restrictions on access to their land are being used to dispossess them of their land.

In addition, the increasing Israeli settler violence in the West Bank creates deep concern for the safety of this family and all the Palestinian communities in the West Bank living under daily threats to their lives. The Social Justice Leadership Team of our church ask for your prayers for this family whom we know. If you would like to advocate for or support the family in other ways, please contact Beth Moore (ebmoore1@live.com) or Martin Meadows (mtmeadows79@gmail.com), leaders of the Palestine Human Rights Ministry work at our church.





Join us for a free music recital featuring the talented students of **Jennifer Hoppe's Studio** on **Saturday, November 7 at 1:00pm**. Come enjoy an afternoon of beautiful music and support these dedicated young performers. All are welcome.



On September 27th, the Criminal Justice Reform/Prison Ministry Team organized a trip to experience *The Exonerated*, a presentation by "The Black Troupe Theatre, Inc." in Phoenix. Members of the troupe presented the true stories of six wrongfully convicted people who spent years on death row for crimes they did not commit. The presentation was powerful, deeply moving, and concerning all at the same time. *The Exonerated* celebrated the resilience of those who refused to give up hope and the strength required to survive, confronted the flaws of the American justice system, and exposed the devastating impact of wrongful convictions on the defendant, their family, and the victims of the crime. One particularly disturbing fact we learned is that nearly all wrongly convicted individuals receive no assistance - financial, emotional, or other support when they are released.

If you would like to support the Innocence Project's "Exoneree Fund" to help prove wrongly convicted people are innocent or to help provide necessities like healthcare and housing once they return home, you may use this link to donate: https://innocenceproject.org/exoneree-fund/. This was a timely event since right after we attended the play, there was a botched execution and now a suggestion of making an execution available for public viewing. Let's hope the church can bring compassion and wisdom to the criminal legal system.

Thanksgiving at The Palms: A Tradition of Welcome



Once again, The Church of the Palms will open its doors to the community for a Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday, November 26, 2026. This annual gathering is rooted in three joyful commitments: offering an extravagant welcome, honoring the memory of Joyce and Roy Spaulding, and simply having fun together.

Last year, we lived out that extravagant welcome by serving 293 plates of food—a beautiful accomplishment made possible only through the generosity of volunteers who cooked, set up, served, and cleaned with such grace. Many of our guests could have prepared their own Thanksgiving meal, but our culture tells us this holiday is meant to be shared. For Sun City residents who live far from loved ones, the chance to sit at a table with others is a gift beyond measure. We've already had community members stop by the church in August asking to make reservations because they wanted to make sure there was a place at the table for them.

If you would like to help or learn more about this ministry, please connect with Wendy Whitlock and keep an eye out for our sign-up station in the narthex.

Needles and Pins Craft Group

The Needles & Pins Craft Group occasionally receives special orders. Recently, we received a request from Jana Foley for a Where's Waldo hat to complete her Halloween costume. She'll wear it to West Valley Community Center's Trunk or Treat, passing out candy to the kids.

Then someone wanted a baby doll for her granddaughter's first birthday, and Sandy Nachand sewed one up for her.

And then someone else asked for a poncho to be made for her.

So if you have a special "something" you'd like made, ask one of the craft ladies and we will see what we can do.









World AIDS Day serves as an important reminder that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to prevent new HIV infections and provide essential services to all

people living with HIV globally. In 2026, we will commemorate the 38th World AIDS Day with the theme, "Ending AIDS starts with access"

The first World AIDS Day took place in 1988, providing a platform to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and honor the lives affected by the epidemic. There has been significant progress in addressing HIV and AIDS thanks to advancements in medical research, increased access to treatment and prevention, and a broader understanding of the virus.

The Church of the Palms will have an outdoor Labyrinth Walk on Monday, December 1, 2026, at 9am. Join Pastor Mark to commemorate our loved ones and friends who have died from AIDS. We continue to walk to demonstrate our solidarity with all living with HIV/AIDS.

World AIDS Day, on December 1, commemorates lost lives and reaffirms commitment to ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with the U.S. government's response focused on the global PEPFAR program and domestic efforts through Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE), PrEP access, research, and reducing stigma. Key U.S. government initiatives include PEPFAR, which has enabled millions of babies to be born HIV-free and supported vulnerable children, and the NIH, which funds critical research. DOMESTICALLY, the U.S. provides free PrEP medication through Medicare and supports pilot programs for broader access, while striving to end stigma and discrimination against people with HIV.

November Calendar

Sunday, 1
9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 2
9:00a Sacred Spaces Labyrinth Walk LB

Tuesday, 3
9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS
10:00a Othering and Belonging Team BR
2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
Psalm 70 BR
5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 4
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 5
10:00a Worship Team Meeting BR
1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Saturday, 7
10:00a Deep Listening
1:00p Recital Jennifer Hoppe Studio SA

Sunday, 8
9:00a Choir Rehearsal
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH

Monday, 9
10:00a Executive Board Meeting BR
2:00p LGBTQ+ Ministry Meeting BR
1:00 VEC BR

Tuesday, 10
10:00a "Let's Talk" BRC
10a Ministry Council Meeting BR
2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
Psalm 123 BR
5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 11
VETERAN'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 12
10:00a Lifelong Learning Meeting BR
1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Sunday, 15
9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour KH
1:30p Neighborhood Meditation Group CHP

Tuesday, 17
9:00a Men's Fellowship @ George's Café OS
2:00p InSpirit Sacred Reading/Scripture
Psalm 100 BR
5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 18
9:00a Needles & Pins Craft Group BR

Thursday, 19
10:00a Social Justice Leadership Team BR
1:00p Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal MR

Friday, 20– Office Closed
9:00a Sacred Spaces Labyrinth Walk LB

Saturday, 21
2:00p Transgender Day of Remembrance SA

Sunday, 22
9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour
11:00a New Member Information BR

Tuesday, 24
10:00a Care and Support Team BR
5:00p AA Big Book Study (Closed Mtg.) BR

Wednesday, 25
10:00a Thanksgiving Set-Up

Thursday, 26
11:00a Thanksgiving Dinner

Friday, 27—Office Closed

Saturday, 28
9:00a Advent Decorating

Sunday, 29 1st Sunday of Advent
9:00a Choir Rehearsal MR
10:00a Worship Service SA
11:00a Fellowship Hour

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/