



Yeah, but what does it *mean*? The Genealogies of Jesus Tell a Far-reaching Story

Rembrandt, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1646).

By PASTOR ERIC O. LEDERMANN

Anyone who has read the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and the end of Luke 3 will notice that they don't match. That's because in ancient times genealogies were only recorded for great people — royalty, prophets, and, maybe, military heroes. For one, there were no county clerks or hospital records like we have today. Lineages were passed down orally, if at all. For a peasant like Jesus, it's clear with these genealogies that Matthew and Luke were up to something.

Jesus' significance is not established by wealth or power, but by his place in the biblical story of salvation and renewal.

Anna Case-Winters suggests in her commentary on Matthew's gospel that the author is making his messianic claim about Jesus, that he is of the line of King David. Some believed that the messiah would be a mighty king who would defeat the Roman empire and re-establish the rightful kingdom of Israel. But there is also a contrast here between Jesus, of royal blood, and King Herod, who is not Jewish and has no royal blood. He is just a puppet king to do Rome's bidding.¹

But the genealogies offer something else. Unlike Luke, Matthew includes sever-

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This issue of the
UPC NEWS & Current Events
is brought to you by...
the word...

Discipleship

From the Old English *discipul* (fem. *discipula*), meaning "one who follows another for the purpose of learning," especially "the personal followers of Jesus Christ during his life, the twelve Apostles chosen or called by him to be his immediate associates." The Old English borrows from the Latin *discipulus*, meaning "pupil, student, follower." In the Christian Testament "disciple" is a translation of the Greek *mathetes*. In Hebrew, the word is *talmid* (similar to the Talmud, which the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and a primary source of Jewish law and theology). Literally, to be a disciple is to "follow," to mimic one's teacher until the lessons become part of the student's being. To follow Jesus is, literally, to be like him.

GENEALOGIES

Continued from page 1

al women in his list. This is highly unusual. Further, four of them are Gentile women. A theme that runs through Matthew's gospel is that the covenant with Abraham was not just for Abraham, or the Jewish people who would eventually be born from his grandson, Jacob. For Matthew (and the writer of Genesis), God's promise has global implications. Through Abraham all nations would receive God's blessings.

Further, the women were "socioeconomically, politically, or culturally powerless, and all fulfilled their role in Israel's salvation history by overcoming obstacles created by people in authority unwilling to fulfill their responsibilities."²

Unlike Mark's gospel, which jumps right into Jesus' ministry without any historical connection, both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies connect Jesus to the history of the Jewish people. Jesus, at least for Matthew and Luke, is the fulfillment of God's promises. Further, Jesus is the fulfillment of the whole human story (especially evident in Luke's genealogy goes back to the beginning of creation and the first human, Adam). Luke then establishes his ultimate claim by adding: "Adam, son of God."

Jesus' significance is not established by wealth or power, but by his place in the biblical story of salvation and renewal. His genealogy "retells and interprets the Biblical story. ... God's purposes are, accordingly, wide-ranging and inclusive"³—unlike the

narrow and exclusive gospel we often hear from the more conservative wing of the Christian Church.

The entire birth narratives we have in Matthew's and Luke's gospels are not, nor have they ever intended to be, historical representations of actual events. They were written in code for followers of Jesus, to remind us of the purpose of the Jesus movement. Like the creation narratives in Genesis, the birth narratives remind us not of "how" God did something. They were written to remind us that God did something and why God is still doing things. Why? Because God's ultimately intends to bring hope where there is hopelessness, peace where there is heartbreak, joy where there is sorrow, and love where there is evil (the traditional themes of the season of Advent).

May each of us receive God's blessings, lean into the love God has revealed to us through Jesus, and seek to embody the radical inclusivity of God's holy reign. Blessings on your Advent season, and may you have a merry Christmas season. ■

*Be of good courage
and know that you are loved!*

¹ Anna Case-Winters, Matthew in Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 23.

² Case-Winters, 25, quoting Amy-Jill Levine, The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History: "Go Nowhere among the Gentiles" (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 277.

³ Warren Carter, Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 53.



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MONTHLY DRIVE 'n' DROP

October 1, 2023 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Normally First Sunday of each month! Drop off at church!

Here are the items needed for TCAA and UPC Refugee Ministry



TCAA needs

- breakfast items
- towels/washcloths
- baby wipes
- travel snacks
- canned goods

REFUGEE needs

- laundry & dish soap
- shampoo
- conditioner
- body wash & lotion
- snack items

Financial contributions may be sent to the office.
Make checks out to "TCAA" and reference "Food Pantry"
or to UPC and reference "Refugee" in the memo

UPC NEWS & Current Events is published monthly.
Submissions of announcements, stories, op-eds,
and reflections on recent events at UPC are
welcomed.

Requirements:

Announcements: 500 words or less
Articles/Reflections: 1200 words or less
Letters to the Editor: 750 words or less
Submissions may be edited for content,
grammar, and space available.

**Send submissions
by the 20th of each month to:
newsletter@upctempe.org**



By BEVERLY PHILLIPS

Years ago when greeting card companies first started using the words “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas” I was offended—along with many other Christians! Afterall, I thought that Christmas was the only “holy day” in December. Because of that offense I would never, ever, ever send anyone a card that said, “Happy Holidays.”

Recently my position was weakened when I learned that other faiths also celebrate holy days in December. In researching December holy days, I found a wide range of both religious and secular holidays and the ways they are celebrated. Most of the celebrations include candles, special food and gift giving. My list is not exhaustive but it is interesting and I

hope entertaining.

Germans celebrate Krampusnacht on December 5, 2023 by dressing up as the Krampus to search for naughty children who will get coal in their stockings.

Swedes celebrate St. Lucia’s Day on December 13 with girls wearing white robes and crowns of candles.

Jews celebrate Chanukah (Hannukah) the “Festival of Lights” this year from December 7-15.

Buddhists celebrate Bodhi Day on Dec. 8 to mark the enlightenment of Buddha.

Mexicans celebrate Feast Day of Our Lady Guadalupe on December 12 with parades and roses and prayers.

Christians celebrate Advent from December 3 -24, 2023 waiting for the coming of the Christ child.

Christians celebrate St. Nicholas Day on December 6, 2023 honoring the legendary saint who put coins in people’s shoes.

Secular holiday Festivus December 23 created as a parody of the commercialism surrounding Christmas.

Citizens of the British Commonwealth celebrate Boxing Day on December 26, as a general day to enjoy family and friends.

Zoroastrians celebrate Death of Prophet Zarathustra on December 26.

Scotts celebrate Hogmanay New Year’s Eve along with the rest of the world.

If you enjoy googling subjects that are new to you, there is much good googling on the subject of these holidays. Happy holidays and merry Christmas! ■

2024-25 Presbyterian Planning Calendar

Your Photos Tell the Story of Your Congregation

Presbyterian News Service

By way of photo submission, Presbyterians are invited to tell the world the ways their church, worshiping communi-



The Presbyterian Planning Calendar for 2024-25 will feature photos on the cover and throughout the monthly calendar pages showing the best of what our churches are doing in mission and ministry. Your photos are invited!

ty, mid council or organization is carrying out the Matthew 25 Invitation.

The Presbyterian Planning Calendar, a beloved publication of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is once again seeking photo submissions from congregations and worshiping communities, mid councils, camps, conference centers and education centers for use in its 2024-25 edition. The deadline to submit photos for the upcoming Presbyterian Planning Calendar is Feb. 14, 2024.

Images to be considered for the Presbyterian Planning Calendar should feature church members and friends engaged in activities including worship, mission service, creativity and the arts, and direct outreach. Calendar planners

ask that staged photos of groups of people and photos of people sitting at conference or dining tables be avoided.

The format of the calendar is “landscape,” meaning photos should be wider than tall. They should be high-resolution photographs: A minimum resolution of 2000 x 1500 pixels is requested for best printing. Please include a caption and photo credit with each image. If children are pictured, please ensure the use and distribution of your photo complies with your safe church policy.

Photos should be submitted online using a form found [here](https://www.pcusa.org/submit-photo). If you have questions or need to submit materials in a different way, please contact the planning calendar manager, Jackie Carter, by email at jackie.carter@pcusa.org or by phone at (502)-569-5772. ■

UPC Shining Example Caring for Migrants

Reflection on the PW's USA Mission Experience to the Border

By CHRIS CASANOVA

PW USA Mission Experience Participant

Presbyterian Women's USA Mission Experience to the Border Region of Arizona and Mexico was both an enlightening and spiritual experience for me. I was one of 18 women from across the country who were selected to attend the two-week trip during October for the purpose of hearing first-hand from immigrants and immigration mission workers on both sides of the border.

The primary goals for the trip were to:

- Increase awareness of the indigenous peoples in the region
- Learn the history of migration between Latin America and the U.S.
- Understand the challenges for migrants and those who help them
- Experience first-hand life in the border region

We began our journey in Phoenix, where we studied the rich history of Native Americans in Arizona. Within the first few days of the trip, UPC stood out as a lighthouse church that plays an active role in the community. Many thanks to Cheri Hardy, Helen Griffin, Suzanne Niemann, and Jo Lewis for volunteering to be readers for the Roots of Injustice/Seeds of Change activity that demonstrated the many injustices colonization imposed on our Native American siblings. Jo was able to share her vast knowledge and experience by providing up-to-date information about local tribes, pronunciation of traditional names, and clarification of historical events.

Then a tremendous thanks goes to Holly Herman for lining up a slate of presenters that prepared the participants for our trip to the border. The speakers included an immigration attorney on the complexities immigrants face when seeking asylum in the US, Lutheran Social Services, Joe and Selena Keesecker on their Eloy Detention Center ministry, and Mimi Phillips from Centre de Esperanza.



Celebrating with the Presbyterian Women of Lirio de los in Valles Presbyterian Church.

Holly also spoke of the many ways she coordinates the refugee ministry here at UPC. We heard from Farshid, who shared his immigration story and emphasized the loving welcome he, and his family, received here at UPC. One take away message Farshid emphasized was that a church does not need to provide a castle to welcome new immigrants. A safe place that helps with basic needs, with love and a smile is all that is needed to feel welcomed in a new country. The panel was completed by Catherine May, who explained what to expect while visiting Frontera de Cristo in Agua Prieta. Catherine's knowledge and experience of the border region put many at ease who had no idea what to expect in Mexico and the Sonoran Desert.

Three days of our trip was spent in Agua Prieta as we explored life at the border as well as the migrant experience. We were hosted by Mark Adams and the staff of Frontera de Cristo.

We visited Café Justo y Más, where we were able to watch the coffee beans be roasted. We had lunch at the Children's Enrichment Center, a recipient of the 2021 PW Thank Offering Grant. We visited CAME, a migrant center and spoke with migrants awaiting their trial for a chance to seek asylum in the US, and we experienced a two hour walk in the Sonoran Desert to the US Wall with staff from CATPSIC Drug Rehab where we learned about Water for Life (Agua

Para La Vida) which provides barrels of water for border crossers. On our final day in Mexico, we shared tamale-making, worship and dinner with women from Lirio de los in Valles Presbyterian Church of Agua Prieta. Our adventure ended, in Tucson, where we visited Casa Alitas, a migrant welcome center and shared in Sunday worship at Southside Presbyterian Church.

We did all this plus so much more. All along the way my heart was full of joy and thanksgiving to be a member and representative of UPC and the Synod of the Southwest. Every day there was an opportunity to answer questions about the beauty of the southwest or share a story about how the UPC congregation supports migrants. And every day I learned more about the beauty of the southwest and the needs of migrants and those who support migrants on their journeys. Two big take aways from this trip was I know much and I know nothing. I was charged with sharing my story with my community. My community was so much of the story, so I bring to you, my UPC community, this message: more of us need to expand our knowledge of the truth, beauty, desperation, and hope of the border region. We know much, but we know little. Let us continue to be God's hands, to spread God's love, to share the stories of our migrating siblings. ■



Image credit unknown. No copyright infringement is intended.

Honor your family, friends, and those dear to you

By **NANCY MARTIN** and
ROANN MONSON
Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons is happy to help you honor people close to your heart this time of the year. You may want to lift up a family member or friend whose memory is special to you at Christmas, for example. Or you may want to honor someone you know by giving them a lovely plant to show you care. This could be a great opportunity to show your gratitude or recognition to those whom you value for their hard work and/or help when you need it.

Think about someone who puts their heart into preparing for worship every week. Remember “it takes a village.”

Aren’t we thankful for so many people on staff or on the Worship Committee, as well as various board members. Remember the folks who lead caring missions... and the list goes on. It is an honor to be blessed with beautiful music, a clean campus, weekly bulletins, and monthly newsletters, keeping all of us aware of important news.

Can you believe it? Christmas is approaching on Dec. 25th! On December 3rd, 10th, and 17th, the Board of Deacons will have a table on the patio after worship to accept your donation of \$12.00 for a poinsettia plant in honor of or in memory of loved ones and/or someone “special” to you. Your plant will be placed in the sanctuary for the Christmas Eve service on Dec. 24th at 6:00 p.m.

You may pick up your plant after the Christmas Eve service, or, if you would like to donate it to a home-bound church member, please indicate that when you sign up.

You can give cash or a check (payable to “UPC Deacons” with “Poinsettia” in the memo line) when you sign up, drop off or mail your donation to the church office. You can also give online by clicking the “Donate” button in the upper right at upctempe.org—contact Nancy Martin at (480) 241-9296 to let her know if you pay other than on Sunday morning.

The Deacons are grateful for your support and we pray that you have a blessed Christmas holiday. ■



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Building Congregational Vitality • Dismantling Racism • Eradicating Poverty

Learn more at:
pcusa.org/matthew25

Xeriscape Project Forges Ahead

By HELEN GRIFFIN
Landscaping Trustee

It finally happened! Our xeriscape design was unveiled Thursday, November 16th. Twenty-eight people attended to see the plan and to hear our designer PJ explain it. In good Presbyterian fashion, many questions were asked about procedure, plants and materials selected, and potential water savings. The group gave a nice round of applause.

The design maps are on the west wall of the sanctuary. Please take an in-depth look at them. Hopefully, you will also be

impressed. If you have questions, contact Helen Griffin, Carol Rickel, or Steve White.

Moving forward, we will complete the project in three phases. These phases are shown on the display of the maps. Since this is far more than we originally envisioned, we will need to have our chosen landscaper rework his estimates. We will continue to work with city rebates for turf replacement as well as apply for money from the Water Efficiency and Education Grant. Fund raising within the congregation will also occur.

The design plan will be sent to the

city for approval after a few tweaks are made. Within 15 days, the city must let us know if the plan is approved or needs revisions. Once the design is approved, we can proceed with applying for rebate and grant money. Due to needing warm weather to allow for the best grass removal, we will hopefully begin in May, 2023.

It's been a long haul! Thank you for your continued encouragement to accomplish something good for our church and the earth. ■



A Presbyterian in the US Senate Who Answers to a Higher Calling

By MIKE FERGUSON

Presbyterian News Service

U.S. Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, one of 11 Presbyterians in the Senate, spent an hour with the Rev. Jim Wallis Tuesday talking about how his faith has helped carry him this far. Coons appeared as part of the Center of Faith + Justice's "Higher Calling" series.

Coons, who grew up in the Red Clay Creek Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, completed his graduate studies at the Yale Law School and the Yale Divinity School at the same time. "I often kid my friends he is the only theologian senator I know," Wallis said, until Georgia voters elected the Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock as one of their senators in 2021. "Chris Coons is a public servant who knows what the phrase 'higher calling' means."

Coons said he'd been reading Wallis' work for decades, beginning in *Sojourners* magazine. "I hope conversations like this can be commonplace, not rare," he told Wallis while seated in Georgetown's Riggs Library along with a large number of students, faculty and others.

He said he didn't understand Presbyterianism "within the Reformed tradition" until he attended divinity school. At Red Clay Creek Presbyterian Church, his mother and father were "very active," and the church offered "a great youth group. I was indifferent and didn't pay much attention, but I absorbed in action what my parents' faith meant to them."

During the mid-1970s, his mother welcomed a refugee family from Vietnam. "My mom never talked about putting faith into action. She just got to work welcoming them," Coons said. In time, each of the refugee family's five children, who were about the ages of Coons and his siblings, earned undergraduate and graduate degrees.

One Sunday, Coons' father volunteered to accompany a visiting preacher to the maximum-security prison in Smyrna, Delaware, where he developed a rela-

tionship with a man named Paul, who was serving a sentence for murdering his abusive father. On furlough weekends, Paul was welcomed into the Coons household.

"I had a chance to visit Paul later," Coons said. "He said the kindness and trust my father showed him changed the trajectory of his life."

Those actions undertaken by his parents "defined for me who is our neighbor," Coons said. "That was because of our church."

Nowadays his wife, Annie, works up to four days a week helping to vaccinate people in prison, caring for sex workers and helping those who are addicted. She spent a recent Sunday on "a tough corner in Wilmington. I was worried about it, but she said, 'Stop it,'" Coons said. "This is what I'm supposed to be doing."

Coons spent a semester of his junior year in college studying at the University of Nairobi in Kenya and serving as a volunteer relief worker. "It transformed my view," Coons told Wallis, recalling his host family's "radical hospitality and unbelievable kindness. I'd never been in a household that prayed 10 times a day."

In 2010, Coons won election to the Senate, where he attends the weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast and has twice co-hosted the National Prayer Breakfast. He told Wallis he's preached at half the Presbyterian churches in Delaware as well as at others. "It's the most challenging and rewarding experience I've ever had," he said. When he was considering ordination in the PC(USA), the thought of reading Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek and passing ordination exams in both helped lead him along his current career path instead.

"Ministry shouldn't be defined by a clerical role," Wallis said. "I would say your work in the Senate and the way you do it is your own kind of ministry."

Coons identified current and former colleagues including Johnny Isakson, Orrin Hatch, Mike Lee and John Bar-



U.S. Senator Chris Coons of Delaware is a longtime Presbyterian. On Tuesday he talked with the Rev. Jim Wallis about his faith formation. PHOTO: Courtesy of Senator Coons

rosso as "people I would not have gotten to know" without the weekly prayer breakfast, open only to senators and closed to staff and the media.

"Almost every senator I know wants to get things done," Coons said. "There is a lack of trust because we spend no time together." He named just three opportunities for holding extended conversation among senators: traveling together, working out in the gym and attending the weekly prayer breakfast. "Those are places we can be vulnerable together," he said.

With Coons' packed schedule and all the pressure he and others are under, how, Wallis wondered, does he stay spiritually centered and humbled?

Coons said he reads Scripture nearly every day and feels grounded at the church he now attends, First and Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. "I try to find brief minutes of calm here and there in the craziness of the day," Coons said. He chairs a Senate subcommittee that considers Biden administration requests for billions of dollars in financial aid in war-torn and drought-stricken regions. "If this fails and ... children starve, I feel like it's all my fault," Coons said. "Being humble is the easy part. Accepting that I am forgiven — that's the hard part, and that's where faith comes in for me personally." ■

October 2023 Session Updates

By **BRIGITTA KUIPER**

Clerk of Session

The October Session meeting was held on October 24, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with prayer by Ruling Elder Joan Grey.

Highlights from the October Session meeting include:

Received correspondence soliciting applications for 2024 General Assembly participants.

Received the Monthly Finance Summary for September. September revenues and expenses are on budget.

Received an update on the UPC Planning Process by Ruling Elder Paul Green. Retreat to discuss the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis opportunities, threats and associated actions will be held in late January 2024. Elders, deacons, trustees, and paid UPC staff will be invited to attend.

Held "First Reading" on Pastor Eric's 2024 Sabbatical Proposal. First Reading of an issue is held for discussion purposes,

to answer any questions and for possible modifications prior to a Session vote. Session discussed the sabbatical proposal, as per Pastor Eric's terms of call contract. A vote by Session is scheduled for the November 2023 Session meeting.

Held "First Reading" on Proposed Membership Status Changes. All 3,000+ UPC members have been added to the Realm Database, from the paper rolls. During the transition, it was noted that approximately 26 members are no longer affiliated with UPC and over 400 members are still considered inactive members. After an extensive review of these individuals by Session, Deacons and long-time UPC members, the recommendation is to update those membership statuses. The vote by Session is scheduled for the November 2023 Session meeting.

Held "First Reading" on MSJP's Proposal for Refugee Housing. MSJP developed draft guidelines and criteria for determining future refugee housing requests, as swift decisions are often times necessary. A vote by Session is scheduled

for the November 2023 Session meeting.

The meeting closed with prayer by Ruling Elder Catherine May.

Any questions? Please feel free to contact Pastor Eric or a member of Session. ■

2023 Session Members

RE Paul Green, *Administration Ctte/ Nominating Ctte/*

RE Joan Grey, *Worship Ctte*

RE Lawn Griffiths, *Congregational Involvement and Outreach Ctte*

RE Vicki Jacobs, *Christian Education Ctte*

RE Catherine May, *Mission, Social Justice and Peacemaking Ctte*

RE Katie Ranes, *Stewardship Ctte*

RE Alan Sweeney, *Administration Ctte/ Personnel Ctte*

RE Sara Trower, *Worship Ctte*

RE Molly Winkler, *Finance Ctte*

TE Eric Ledermann, *Moderator*

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Whole or Ground Beans

MEXICO

PW December Happenings

Making the holiday season special for those in need



By SUE SCHNEBEL

Angel Tree: PW is delighted to partner with Temple Elementary School District to provide holiday gifts to make 50 children's wishes come true through the generosity of the UPC congregation. Wrapped gifts must be received by December 10th

Sweet Treats: Once again PW will have sweet treats available for purchase

along with some handmade crafts on December 3rd. You may purchase items after church service or at the end of the Annual Christmas Concert that afternoon. Proceeds will go toward our mission work.

Santa's Workshop: The elves are busy at the North Pole so PW is looking for helpers to put together gift bags for those in need. This year we will be providing PAZ and Justa Center with mylar blankets, socks and treats. A local elementary school will receive backpacks filled with school supplies and we will provide 100 middle school aged girls at the Welcome Center with gift bags as well. Join us on Saturday, December 9th in Fellowship Hall at 10:00 am for some food, fun and holiday fellowship. ■



During the Holiday Season more than ever our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our mission work possible. And in the spirit, we sincerely say to PW and the UPC congregation - Thank You and Best Wishes for the holiday season and a Happy New Year.



A Reflection of the Border Wall

By CHRIS CASANOVA

PW USA Mission Experience Participant

As I walked along the border wall, on both sides of the border, during our last day in the Douglas, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico area, a series of opposing words came to me. I share with you, both a picture from the US side of the border and from the Mexican side of the border. This was a powerful, visual dichotomy. May the God of Hope hear our prayers.



US SIDE: Lonely, Dim, Desolate, Destruction, Ugly, Dirty, Wasteland, Death, Anger, Pushing, Mean, Empty, Isolation, Cruel, Hate, US



MEXICO SIDE: Community, Vibrant, Beauty, Creation, Beautiful, Clean, Town, Life, Joy, Reaching, King, Full, Integration, Caring, Welcome, We

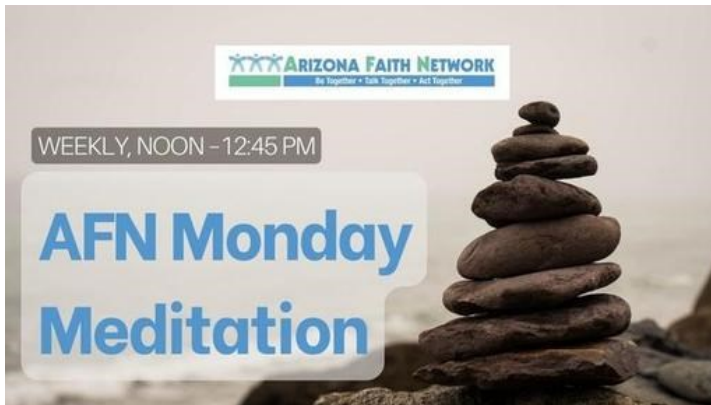
Deacon Honorary Plant Program

Would you like a flower or plant displayed during worship to recognize a special person, a wedding anniversary, someone who passed away, or a special occasion?

Contact Deacon Jey Young at JeyYoung@cox.net, and let him know who you would like to honor or memorialize. Be sure to include:

- the Sunday you prefer for your recognition;
- whether you want to keep the flower or plant, or have it given away; and
- send a check for \$15 paid to the UPC Deacons with “honorary plant fund” in the memo line. You can also pay online at www.upctempe.org/donate (let Jay know if you plan to pay online)—choose “Deacon Honorary Plants” from the fund options. ■





Monday Meditation with Vasu Bandhu

Mondays 12:00 pm—12:45 pm, Virtual on Zoom

Start your week with some guided meditation led by Vasu Bandhu, AFN's Interfaith Manager. He serves the Buddhist community as Bhikkhu (monk) in the Dhammapada Sangha (Zen Buddhism), assisting in the practice and teaching of the principles, ceremonies and rituals. RSVP: <https://form-usa.keela.co/monday-meditation>



URI Global Prayer Gathering

Every Friday Morning 7:15 am—7:45 am (Zoom)

Participants are invited to offer brief described prayer intentions, either aloud or using the chat box, which will be read aloud near the end of the session. Respecting the various paths, all are encouraged to offer prayer intentions in the language of faith or spiritual expression that is most comfortable for them. If you would like the Zoom link, have questions, or would like to suggest a participant, please contact Sally at smahe@uri.org.



Join the anti-hunger and food systems advocacy calls with the Arizona Food Bank Network and the Arizona Food System Network, held the first Friday of each month. More information and recordings of past calls are available at: <https://www.azfsn.org/>



All are welcome to join this group! We hear monthly from key community leaders.

The Social Justice Commission is the branch of AFN which engages in justice and advocacy work. Our current mission focus is Criminal Legal Reform. Other advocacy areas we currently engage in are race and economic equity, migrant justice and relief and environmental justice.

The Commission meets the first Thursday of every month from 8:30 am to 9:30 am via zoom.

RSVP: <https://form-usa.keela.co/social-justice-commission-meeting-rsvp>

Learn more about the Arizona Faith Network by subscribing to the newsletter at:

www.arizonafaithnetwork.org/subscribe

Dinner for Six to Eight

Begin Meeting in January 2024

By MARGARET BRANSON

Would you like to get better acquainted with others from UPC? Join the next group of "Dinner for Eight," beginning in January of 2024.

What is Dinner for Eight? Dinner for Eight is a great way to meet folks from church that you may not already know. It's also a good way to get to know your church family better. Groups plan their own meals and get together once a month for four consecutive months. You share meals at participants' homes, at local restaurants, the church, or wherever the host or group decides. The emphasis is on fun and fellowship, so you don't have to be a gourmet cook to participate.

How does it work? To participate in this wonderful way of getting to know each other better, visit the signup table in the courtyard after worship the next couple of Sundays, or contact Margaret Branson at mlherbst90@gmail.com or (224) 406-1507. Dinner groups are encouraged to be creative in the meals they enjoy together.

Who cooks the meals? The host is responsible for providing the meal. Consider picking a dinner "theme night" (e.g. Italian night, backyard barbeque, soup night, etc.). Some groups may also choose to visit local restaurants or other venues.



I don't have room to host a dinner, or I really can't cook! The purpose is for you to spend time together getting to know each other and include everyone. Your group may choose to repeat a host home or eat out. We want everyone to feel that they can participate.

How are the groups formed? As Dinner for Eight groups are formed, we try to put people together so that each group has, at most, eight adults. Groups may be comprised of all couples, two couples and four singles, one couple and six singles, etc. It all depends on who signs up. The mystery is part of the ex-

citement!

What happens after our last gathering? Hopefully, you will have had a rewarding experience and look forward to similar experiences. After the last gathering, you may decide to sign up for another round of Dinner for Eight with a different group, or your group may wish to stay intact and continue as a small group. Through Dinner for Eight, many have built lasting connections with siblings in Christ that they might not have been likely to meet otherwise. ■



Rise & Shine Bread
Baking things better.

*Thanks to all our UPC bakers!
Please invite your friends to become a baker
for the food insecure in our area.*

*Contact Andrea White at
info@riseshinebread.org or (480) 580-3021.*

Worship Volunteer Schedule

Below is the schedule of worship volunteers for the next month. If you are listed and have a conflict, you are asked to please find a replacement and then contact Ruling Elder Sada Reed, co-chair of the Worship Committee.

To volunteer or get on one of the rotations, contact Joan Grey! Thank you!

December 2023

Sanctuary Readiness Team..... Larry Seubert

Dec 3—1st Sunday of Advent

Liturgist Faye Gardner
Children's Moment Faye Gardner
Worship Tech Jim Niemann, Chris Trella

Dec 10—2nd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist Nob Ichishita
Children's Moment Chris Casanova
Worship Tech Jim Niemann, Sada Reed

Dec 17—3rd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist Helen Griffin
Children's Moment Helen Griffin
Worship Tech Jim Niemann, Bianca Osorio

Dec 24—4th Sunday of Advent

Liturgist Phil Million
Children's Moment Pastor Eric
Worship Tech Sada Reed, Jim Niemann

Dec 24—Christmas Eve

Liturgist VACANT
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech Sada Reed, Chris Trella

December 2023—January 2024

Sanctuary Readiness Team..... Larry Seubert

Dec 31—1st Sunday after Christmas/Epiphany

Liturgist..... VACANT
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech..... VACANT, VACANT

Jan 7—Baptism of Jesus

Liturgist..... Phil Million
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech..... VACANT, Chris Trella

Jan 14—2nd Sunday in OT/2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Liturgist..... VACANT
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech..... VACANT, VACANT

Jan 21—3rd Sunday in OT/3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Liturgist..... VACANT
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech..... Chris Trella, VACANT

Jan 28—4th Sunday in OT/4th Sunday after Epiphany

Liturgist..... Nob Ichishita
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech..... VACANT, VACANT

UPC Book Club — Dec. 29 at 7pm

The Measure by Nikki Erlick

"A story of love and hope as interweaving characters display: how all moments, big and small, can measure a life. If you want joy, love, romance, and hope—read with us." —Jenna Bush Hager

It seems like any other day. You wake up, pour a cup of coffee, and head out.

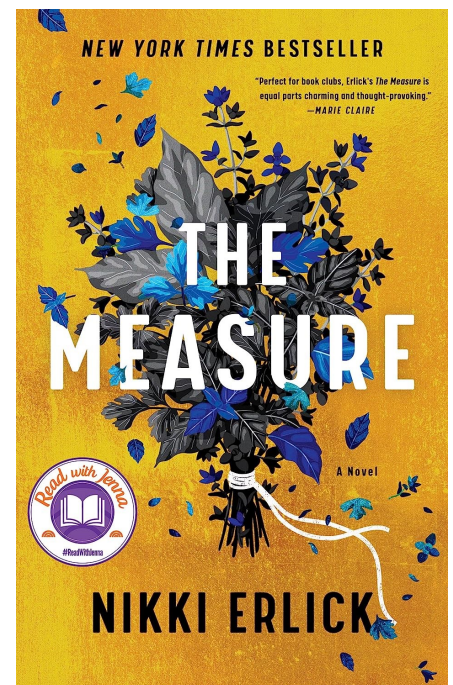
But today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. This box holds your fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live.

From suburban doorsteps to desert tents, every person on every continent receives the same box. In an instant, the world is thrust into a collective frenzy. Where did these boxes come from? What do they mean? Is there truth to what they promise?

As society comes together and pulls apart, everyone faces the same shocking choice: Do they wish to know how long they'll live? And, if so, what will they do with that knowledge?

The Measure charts the dawn of this new world through an unforgettable cast of characters whose decisions and fates interweave with one another: best friends whose dreams are forever entwined, pen pals finding refuge in the unknown, a couple who thought they didn't have to rush, a doctor who cannot save himself, and a politician whose box becomes the powder keg that ultimately changes everything.

Enchanting and deeply uplifting, *The Measure* is a sweeping, ambitious, and invigorating story about family, friendship, hope, and destiny that encourages us to live life to the fullest. ■





1 Laura Knorr
5 Jason Knorr
6 Stephanie Liska
Larry Gardner
10 Wendy Sevlie
Sindy Ledermann

14 Clarissa Knorr
19 JoJo Fraser
21 Robyn Hardesty
26 Nob Ichishita
28 Pam Overton
31 Marge Cawley

If you see a birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please let the office know as soon as possible.

Stay Informed on All-Things-Presby!

PC(USA) News

Available in a daily or weekly digest format. www.pcusa.org/newsupdates

Presbytery of Grand Canyon Weekly E-focus Newsletter

News and views from our presbytery. pbygrandcanyon.org/subscribe-to-efocus.

PC(USA) Office of Public Witness

Housed across the street from the U.S. Supreme Court in what is referred to as "the God Box," the OPW is the PC (USA)'s advocacy and information center in Washington, D.C. Sign up for OPW Alerts and be an advocate! www.votervoice.net/pcusa/home. Learn

more about the OPW at:

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/washington.

Presbyterian Historical Society

Organized in 1852, the PHS is the oldest denominational archives in the U.S. and serves as the national archives for the PC (USA) and its predecessor denominations. PHS exists to collect, preserve, and share the story of the American Presbyterian and Reformed experience. www.history.pcusa.org.

The Presbyterian Outlook

An independent magazine covering all things Presbyterian — \$19.95/year, 18 issues (pres-outlook.org).

Presbyterians Today

Award-winning denominational magazine published by the PC(USA). Also available in a free twice monthly e-newsletter.

Get a free 1 year subscription!

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today



Monthly prayer guide...

- ✘ All of creation, and for the strength of our leaders to stand up for environmental conservation.
- ✘ Those affected by natural disasters around the world.
- ✘ Communities bearing the weight of poverty, prejudice, and violence in their streets and neighborhoods.
- ✘ Those struggling with mental and physical illness.
- ✘ Migrants, especially those separated from families and those dying in the desert in a desperate search for a better way of life.
- ✘ LGBTQIA+ persons who continue to

- suffer from prejudice, marginalization, and discrimination.
- ✘ Elected & community leaders, that they can bring peace to our nation and world.
- ✘ The people of Ukraine.
- ✘ The people of Israel and Palestine, that peace make break out instead of war, that hostilities may end and understanding begin, that people and leaders may see one another as fellow creations of God rather than enemies.
- ✘ Religious leaders of all kinds, that they may have the courage to preach and teach love, compassion, and restorative

justice.

- ✘ UPC Officers: elders, deacons, trustees (see a full list at www.upctempe.org/leadership).

Prayer requests may be sent to your neighborhood deacon or Pastor Eric at pastoreric@upctempe.org.

If you have a prayer request you would like shared during Sunday worship, text it to (480) 256-8216 on Sunday morning.

UPC Calendar

Submit corrections, additions, or deletions to the church office at
(480) 966-6267 or upc@upctempe.org.

Check online for updates or to subscribe on your computer or device:
www.upctempe.org/calendar

December 2023

Fri, Dec 1

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 2

- 9:00 am Baseball Card Show (FH)

Sun, Dec 3

- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
- 11:00 am Children's Bible Time (Rm 3)
- 11:00 am Youth Fellowship (Rm 9)
- 11:00 am Adult Christian Education (Z)
- 3:00 pm Choir Christmas Concert (FH)

Mon, Dec 4

- 4:30 pm ACE Team (ZP)
- 7:00 pm Administration Committee (ZU)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 5

- 7:00 pm PW Christmas Tea (FH, K)

Wed, Dec 6

- 9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
- 10:15 am Office Calendaring Meeting (CR)
- 3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)
- 5:15 pm Wednesday Night Dinner (FH)
- 6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (S)
- 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (S)

Thu, Dec 7

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 7:00 pm CE Committee (ZU)

Fri, Dec 8

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 9

- 7:00 am Men's Breakfast for I-HELP (FH, K)
- 8:00 am Men's Breakfast (MR)

Sun, Dec 10

- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
- 11:00 am Children's Bible Time (Rm 3)
- 11:00 am Youth Fellowship (Rm 9)
- 11:00 am Adult Christian Education (Z)

Mon, Dec 11

- 6:30 pm CIO Meeting (Z)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 12

- 7:00 pm Finance Committee (ZU)
- 7:00 pm Worship Committee (ZP)

Wed, Dec 13

- 9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
- 3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)
- 5:15 pm Wednesday Night Dinner (FH)
- 6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (S)
- 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (S)

Thu, Dec 14

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 7:00 pm MSJP Committee (Z)

Fri, Dec 15

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 16

- 10:00 am Saager-Kolmos Memorial (S, FH, K)

Sun, Dec 17

- PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering*
- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
- 11:00 am Children's Bible Time (Rm 3)
- 11:00 am Youth Fellowship (Rm 9)
- 11:00 am Adult Christian Education (Z)
- 1:00 pm Chancel Choir Christmas Caroling

Mon, Dec 18

- 6:30 pm PW Kayenta Circle (MR)
- 7:00 pm Board of Deacons (ZU)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 19

- 6:00 pm Trustee Potluck (MR)
- 7:00 pm Stated Session (ZU)
- 7:00 pm Board of Trustees (ZU)

Wed, Dec 20

- 9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
- 12:30 pm Chinle Circle (MR)
- 3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)
- 5:15 pm Wednesday Night Dinner (FH)
- 6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (S)
- 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (S)

Thu, Dec 21

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 11:00 am Tempe Interfaith Fellowship (ZP)
- 5:30 pm TIF Longest Night Service & Meal

Fri, Dec 22

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sun, Dec 24

- Christmas Eve*
- PC Christmas Joy Offering*
- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
- 6:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship (S, Z)

Mon, Dec 25

- Christmas Day*
- Full-time Staff Holiday*
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 26

- Office Closed—Observance of Christmas*

Wed, Dec 27

- Office Closed—Observance of Christmas*
- 9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
- 3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)

Thu, Dec 28

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 1:00 pm PW Online Bible Study (Z)
- 2:00 pm Memorial Service: Elaine Murray (S, K, FH)

Fri, Dec 29

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
- 7:00 pm Friday Night Book Club (Z)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sun, Dec 31

- New Years Eve*
- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)

January 2024

Mon, Jan 1

- New Years Day*
- Full-time Staff Holiday*

See CALENDAR on page 16

Location/Room References:

(CH)-Choir Room (CR)-Conference Room/Office (COR/Rm7)-Community Room (FH)-Fellowship Hall (HSR)-High School Room (MSR)-Middle School Room (K)-Fellowship Hall Kitchen (L)-Lounge (MG)-Memorial Garden (MR)-Meeting Room (N)-Nursery (PO)-Pastor's Office (Rm#)-Room Number Indicated (S)-Sanctuary (Z)-On Zoom

UPC NEWS & Current Events

University Presbyterian Church
139 E Alameda Drive
Tempe, AZ 85282

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UPC NEWS & Current Events (USPS 652-720) - November 2023

Published monthly by University Presbyterian Church • 139 E Alameda Dr, Tempe, AZ 85282 • (480) 966-6267 • www.upctempe.org • Email: upc@upctempe.org.
Periodicals Postage paid at Tempe, Arizona.

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CALENDAR

Continued from page 15

4:30 pm ACE Team (ZP)
7:00 pm Administration Committee
8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Jan 2

Office Closed: Observance of New Year's Day

Wed, Jan 3

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
10:15 am Office Calendaring Meeting (CR)
3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)

Thu, Jan 4

8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
7:00 pm CE Committee (ZU)

Fri, Jan 5

3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Jan 6

Day of Epiphany

9:00 am Baseball Card Show (FH)
9:00 am Chancel Choir Winter Retreat

(Choir room)

Sun, Jan 7

9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
11:00 am Children's Bible Time (Rm 3)
11:00 am Youth Fellowship (Rm 9)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education (Z)

Mon, Jan 8

8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Jan 9

7:00 pm Finance Committee (ZU)
7:00 pm Worship Committee (ZP)

Wed, Jan 10

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)
5:15 pm Wednesday Night Dinner (FH)
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (S)
7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (S)

Thu, Jan 11

8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
7:00 pm MSJP Committee (ZU)

Fri, Jan 12

3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Jan 13

8:00 am Men's Breakfast (MR)
9:30 am 2024 Annual Leadership Planning Meeting (FH)

Sun, Jan 14

9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
11:00 am Children's Bible Time (Rm 3)
11:00 am Youth Fellowship (Rm 9)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education (Z)

Mon, Jan 15

*Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Full-time Staff Holiday*

7:00 pm Board of Deacons (ZU)
8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Jan 16

6:30 pm CIO Committee (ZP)
7:00 pm Board of Trustees (ZU)

Wed, Jan 17

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (ZU)
12:30 pm Chinle Circle (MR)
3:45 pm Worship Planning Team (ZU)
5:15 pm Wednesday Night Dinner (FH)
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (S)
7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (S)