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Compassion Fatigue

By PASTOR ERIC O. LEDERMANN

Caregivers know it well. Medical and care professionals know it all too well! Really, anyone who works or volunteers in any helping or caregiving profession, you know: that includes teachers, classroom helpers, psychologists, homeless advocates or shelter workers. You may become extremely exhausted or experience sleepless nights. It can often be accompanied by headaches, anxiety, stomach issues, muscle aches, or irritability. Or, the opposite may be true: you begin to feel numb, experience a loss of purpose, hopelessness, emotional disconnect, or even self-hatred. It's called "compassion fatigue."

One author suggested, "The classic symptom is a decline in the ability to feel sympathy and empathy, and accordingly, act from a place of compassion. Sympathy is 'I *care about* your suffering,' empathy is 'I *feel* your suffering,' and compassion is 'I *want to relieve* your suffering.'" They go on to suggest that a decline in all three is "replaced by an outwardly impassive detachedness."¹

I've wondered, especially in recent years, if it can happen to people who are

overloaded on the latest news: the border crisis, Gaza, the latest shooting, the homeless epidemic, people still falling through the cracks of our medical and insurance industries. The list is endless. I wonder if there is such a thing as caring too much.

It has been suggested that journalists covering traumatic stories can suffer from compassion fatigue, experiencing symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).^{2,3}

Last month *Time Magazine* published an article suggesting that we are all at risk of compassion fatigue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd, and the news in general. Michelle Trent, executive director of The Compass Center in South Dakota, told *Time* that their clients were coming to her counseling center saying, "We can't watch the news anymore. We can't do this anymore."³

The article suggested that anyone who identifies with those in a news story may develop compassion fatigue. One example included those of Middle Eastern descent being affected by the war in Gaza and

Inside this issue...

Can You Hear God Crying	3
Israel-Palestine Crisis	4-5
Christ in the Rubble Service	6
MRTI's Corporate Engagement History ..	7
November Session Updates	8
Presbyterian Women Give Thanks	9
2023 Christmas Concert.....	10
Arizona Faith Network Events	11
New Year Prayer.....	13
Jan—Feb Worship Volunteers.....	13
January Birthdays	14
Jan—Feb Calendar	15-16

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

Savior

c. 1300, *saveour*, "one who delivers or rescues from peril," a title given to Jesus. In the Christian sense, from Late Latin *salvatore*, meaning "a savior, preserver." the Latin noun is a translation of Greek *sōtēr* "savior." In English, it replaced Old English *hælend*, literally "healing," likely a loan-translation from Latin, a noun use of the present participle of *hælan*. Middle English also had *salvatur* "Jesus Christ," also "a rescuer" from the Latin. In Jewish and Christian theology, a savior is often promised to bring the people out of suffering and restore order.

COMPASSION FATIGUE

Continued from page 1

Israel, even if they are not experiencing the war firsthand.³

Trent said that triggers vary among different people, but it's important to be aware of how you're feeling and maybe even take a break from the news and social media. Though, she notes, there is a difference between ignoring a situation and taking the time to recharge. Shifting gears for a bit can be an important step to healing from compassion fatigue, like getting outdoors, connecting with people, getting good sleep.

We have a perfect example of this in Jesus. More than once Jesus slips away from the crowds to go up a mountain to pray. Prayer is often a form reconnecting, recentring, and recharging. Taking the time to take care of yourself is vital to mental health as well as being able to continue in the ministries to which God has called us through Christ.

In Luke 5.12-15, Jesus heals a man of a skin disease. The author then writes, "Now more than ever the word of Jesus spread abroad; many crowds were gathering to hear him and to be cured of their diseases." Then, in verse 16, the author writes, "Meanwhile, he [Jesus] would slip away to deserted places to pray." In other words, this happened many times. It happens again at the Transfiguration.

Though not on a mountain, Sunday morning worship is at least partially intended to be such a time of reconnection, recentring, and renewal. As we sing hymns, share in

prayer, listen to scripture and sermon, and fellowship with one another, it is a wonderful time to just be and be filled once again.

If you're feeling particularly fatigued by all that's going on, take Michelle Trent's suggestion and take a break from the news, social media, or even from volunteering. If you're a caregiver, ask for help so you can get a break. But recognize that it is not an "escape." Rather, it is a momentary "respite."

Jesus' model of going up the mountain to pray was always with the intent of coming back down. He would go and pray (that is, reconnect with God and God's intentions through him) so that he could come back down and continue teaching and healing and inviting.

Trent says it's important to be aware of how you're feeling, especially during stressful or emotionally difficult times. If you aren't feeling like yourself or reacting more strongly than usual to difficult situations—like snapping at others or getting unusually angry—you may be experiencing compassion fatigue.³ Maybe it's time for a break! ■

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

¹Can Vet J, "Moving from compassion fatigue to compassion resilience Part 4: Signs and consequences of compassion fatigue," *National Library of Medicine*, vol. 61, no. 11, November 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7560777> (accessed Dec. 27, 2023).

²River Smith, Elena Newman, Susan Drevo, Autumn Slaughter, "Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists," *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma*, Columbia Journalism School, July 1, 2015, <https://dartcenter.org/content/covering-trauma-impact-on-journalists> (accessed Dec. 27, 2023).

³Jamie Ducharme, "The Whole World Is at Risk for 'Compassion Fatigue,'" *Time*, November 8, 2023, <https://time.com/6332107/compassion-fatigue-risk> (accessed Dec. 27, 2023).



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MONTHLY DRIVE 'n' DROP

January 7, 2024 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

Can You Hear God Crying?

She is crying with us...

By REV. BEVERLY JANE PHILLIPS

Many people heard God crying at Ground Zero in the days and months after the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11. The Reverend Betsee Parker heard God crying and felt that she had walked in on a very private place of God.

As soon as she heard about the attack Betsee, an Episcopalian Priest who lived in New York City, put on her clerical collar and went to what remained of the Twin Towers. She walked through the rubble and bodies and blessed anyone who needed it. As she walked she saw bits and pieces of human beings and soon joined a group of chaplains who blessed each body part as it was brought to the morgue in an ambulance. Each of these ambulances was met with an honor guard. This went on for months.

She said that what she did was done by chaplains of all religions which she called interfaith not interdenominational. It was shortly after the attack that she first heard God crying. As chief medical officer, each morning she would walk

through Memorial Park where all the body parts were kept and said prayers for those who were there. She said, "This was just a simple ritual that I had. It took me all day to get up to the end of the site because so many people needed to talk, and we would have so many ambulances coming in with more body parts. I couldn't even walk the site in eight hours sometimes. So, I always started at Memorial Park, which I saw as the heart of the Pit—the heart and soul of God—you know the locus, the nexus—all those words, the junction where God was.

"This particular morning I heard a very deep, very frightening moaning sound as I walked through Memorial Park. It frightened me because I hadn't heard it before, you'd think I didn't know what it was, but I did know.

"I knew that I was hearing God weeping."

As time went on many other frontline workers admitted to her that they had heard the same sound in the same place and recognized the origin of it—that it was God crying.

I have been reading about sacred tears and Scripture passages that proclaim that God does cry. What this story of Betsee Parker says to me, and I hope to you, is that God is with us in all the tragedy we see today in Israel and Gaza, in the Ukraine and Russia. According to the Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker, there are currently six major wars and twelve minor wars being waged.

It may be that there has never been a time in human history when God was not weeping over sickness, brutality, and suffering of the creatures whom She loves more than we can even imagine. But right now in these days of so much conflict in which innocent people are killed and maimed, it strengthens my spirit to think that God is with us so deeply that She is crying with us.

Can you hear God crying? ■

¹ Kimberly Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley, eds., *Holy Tears, Weeping In The Religious Imagination*. Princeton University Press (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, UK, 2005), 287.

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. ■



PC(USA) Webinar Touches on Multiple Aspects of Israel-Palestine Crisis

By SCOTT O'NEILL
Presbyterian News Service

More than 250 participants logged in to watch the first in a scheduled series of webinars devoted to the ongoing crisis in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. Rabbi Alissa Wise, the lead organizer of Rabbis for Ceasefire, and the Rev. Fursan Zu'mot from the Arabic-speaking Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL), led participants through an hour-long discussion that touched on humanitarian issues, differences between Christian Zionism and antisemitism, and the school of hatred seemingly being perpetuated from the ongoing conflict. Watch the webinar here.

Wise kicked things off, apologizing for a crackling voice borne from “screaming in the streets for a ceasefire for too many days.” Wise acknowledged the Israel Palestine Mission Network, whom she called “beloved friends” cultivated from working with Presbyterians a decade ago on the divestment issue and years of witness and advocacy for Palestinian rights.

She started with an up-to-date assessment of life in Gaza.

“Eighty percent of Palestinians are displaced. That’s over 2 million people. The entire infrastructure is destroyed — medical services, roads, clean water — all the basic infrastructure to life is being systematically destroyed as we speak,” said Wise. “Eighteen thousand lives have been lost in Gaza in addition to the 1,200 lost in Israel on Oct. 7th. That includes 7,000 children. It’s hard to say that number.” Supported by a recent CNN report, Wise also noted infectious diseases are starting to spread among the population. An outbreak of jaundice suggests Hepatitis A is on the rise, as well as upper respiratory infections.

Wise then shifted focus to discuss the idea, or narrative, that anti-Zionism is equal to antisemitism. It’s a claim she

called “dangerous” and something she’s been organizing against for over a decade, harkening back to work with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on divestment.

“One of the main things I was doing then was combating this idea that for Presbyterians to align your values with your investments was antisemitism, as some Jewish communal leaders claimed. What you’re seeing now in Gaza are that people are protecting Israel from accountability by likening the critique of Israel with antisemitism,” said Wise. “There is nothing inherently antisemitic in critiquing Israel. Israel is not a Jew; it is a government that must be held accountable for its actions and human rights abuses.”

She referenced the Hebrew biblical concept of *Tochacha*, which she translated as “sacred rebuke” while noting that the rebuke is actually an act of friendship. She cited examples as to what it means for Presbyterians to practice *Tochacha*.

“What I said to Presbyterians back in 2012-2014 was about divestment but right now it calls for a ceasefire or a call for restricting military funding for the Israeli government as a form of sacred rebuke. What I’ve seen inside the Presbyterian Church in my years of working with you is a sense of ongoing commitment to ensuring that Jews, Christians, Muslims and people of all faiths continue to stay interdependent and build solidarity between each other.”

Zu'mot, who lives in and was speaking from Jerusalem, declined to speak about the politics of the situation, preferring to speak about what he sees daily in Israel. He noted the fear is being experienced by Arabs brought on by a growing



PHOTO: Gayatri Malhotra via Unsplash

“school of hate.”

“The problem that Arabs living in Jerusalem are experiencing is the speech of hate being shared by Jewish leaders and rabbis, in addition to the government and political parties. Religion is being used as a tool to justify what is happening and that is frightening because it’s not about religion,” said Zu’mot.

Instead, Zu’mot thinks religion can be a solution to the problem — if we can live into the morality that is given to us through religion. “I think that would help us really to see each other as human, not less than human. Today we see some people see themselves as superior and why we are seeing hatred growing in the community. The speech of hate is growing to a point that makes me as a person, as a pastor, as a religious leader in my community, feel afraid. My wife is a pharmacist, and she works in the Jewish community giving medication to patients. One of the patients recently yelled at her

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CRISIS

Continued from page 4

in a very strong and harsh tone saying, “You Arabs should all die.””

The situation has devolved to the point where Zu’mot is thinking of following some of his congregation members to the United States, Canada or Australia.

“But why should I go to Australia when I was born here? I have ancestors that go back 1,800 years to this land, and now I’m thinking of leaving? From a humanitarian aspect, it’s a fearful situation. I’m afraid in the old city because when I walk in, it is full of soldiers.”

What’s needed to bring about peace?

Wise says it is going to take risk and sacrifice to get to the other side of this

conflict, but even now people are losing family, relationships and friendships. Nevertheless, there are direct actions that can be taken now.

“Our primary concern right now is ceasefire, stopping the bombs falling and ensuring that not another child is buried under the rubble, or another Palestinian starves to death or dies from lack of medical attention. That is our most urgent concern right now,” said Wise.

“But we need to hold that in tandem with what we’re fighting for. What do we want to see on the other side? For me, I feel like I want to challenge us in this moment to push past our grief and despair and put in more energy. I think there’s room for more direct action, like I’ve been part of mobilizing hundreds of Jews for civil disobedience. I think interfaith actions, Christians coming together to challenge Christian Zionism and going along with the idea that Christians as a whole support counteracting Islamophobia and antisemitism. Write op eds in your papers, organize actions and protests that can be joining in other Jewish Voice for Peace protests. But get into the street and figure out your lane. I just think we need to be throwing everything at the wall right now because it’s that level of emergency.”

Zu’mot’s final message was a plea for hope.

“People today don’t have rea-



The Rev. Fursan Zu'mot

sons to live in Gaza. Israel controls their water, electricity, air and movement. They can’t go to Egypt, and they can’t get into Israel. There are 2.1 million people living in a highly populated, condensed area. What do you expect them to do? The highest income for a good working person will be 100 U.S. dollars a month for the whole family. They are in poverty, and they are in need. So give them reasons to live and to find a way of living and then you can expect a different result. They are dying slowly.” ■



Rabbi Alissa Wise



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pcusa.org/matthew25

'Christ in the Rubble' Service From Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem Draws Large Online Crowd



A "Christ in the Rubble" service was held December 23, 2023, at Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. PHOTO: Doug Hicks

By **MIKE FERGUSON**
Presbyterian News Service

Several hundred people online joined a few dozen worshipping in person Saturday at Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, for "Christ in the Rubble," a service of lament for the people of Gaza. Several partners of Christmas Lutheran Church, including the PC(USA)'s Israel/Palestine Mission Network, carried the 90-minute service, which can be seen here, here or here.

Christmas Lutheran Church's pastor, the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, said in his sermon that if Jesus were born today, he would be born "under the rubble."

"In our pain, anguish and lament, we have searched for God and found him under the rubble in Gaza," Isaac said. "Jesus became the victim of the very same violence of the Empire. He was

tortured. Crucified. He bled out as others watched. He was killed and cried out in pain: 'My God, where are you?' In Gaza today, God is under the rubble."

"And in this Christmas season, as we search for Jesus, he is to be found not on the side of Rome, but our side of the wall—in a cave, with a simple family. Vulnerable. Barely and miraculously surviving a massacre. Among a refugee family. This is where Jesus is found."

"When we glorify pride and richness, Jesus is under the rubble," Isaac said. "When we rely on power, might and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble. When we justify, rationalize and theologize the bombing of children, Jesus is under the rubble."

"This is his manger. He is at home with the marginalized, the suffering, the oppressed and displaced. This is his manger."

It's a manger, Isaac said, that is "about resilience."

"The resilience of Jesus is in his meekness, weakness and vulnerability," Isaac said. "The majesty of the incarnation lies in its solidarity with the marginalized."

It's resilient "because this very same child rose up from the midst of pain, destruction, darkness and death to challenge empires, to speak truth to power and deliver an everlasting victory over death and darkness," Isaac said.

Isaac said he was in the United States just after Thanksgiving "and I was amazed by the amount of Christmas decorations and lights" and "all the commercial goods." He couldn't help but think: "They sing about the Prince of Peace in

their land while playing the drum of war in our land."

"This is our message to the world today," Isaac said. "It is a gospel message, a true and authentic Christmas message, about the God who did not stay silent but sent his Word, and his Word is Jesus, born among the occupied and marginalized. He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness."

Portions of the service were conducted in Arabic, including some of the liturgy as well as beautiful versions of hymns including "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Three scriptures were read: Lamentations 3:21-26, 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 and Matthew 2:13-18, Matthew's account of the holy family fleeing to Egypt, which was read in Arabic.

One of those worshipping in person at Christmas Lutheran Church was the Rev. Frank Chikane, a member of the African National Congress in South Africa and moderator of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs for the World Council of Churches. Bringing greetings at Isaac's invitation, Chikane said it was "a privilege to be here with you to share in this service" as part of a delegation that included representatives from South America, the United States, Canada and Latin America.

"We are here at this critical moment in your history to be in solidarity with you," Chikane said. "We are here ... to listen, to pray and to share in your pain" because "if one part of the body of Christ suffers, the rest suffers."

"It was a risky thing to say, 'We are going where the war is,'" Chikane said. "If our brothers and sisters are affected, we must be with them, and that's why we are here. May God bless you. Amen."

Worshippers were dismissed with a benediction that included these words: "Give us the strength to be mediators of peace and reconciliation." ■

Commemorative Anniversary Book Traces MRTI's Corporate Engagement History

By SHANI E. MCILWAIN AND
KATIE CARTER

Special to Presbyterian News Service

Half a century ago, Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) was created in recognition of the church's unique opportunity to advance its mission faithfully and creatively through the financial resources entrusted to it. MRTI implements the General Assembly's policies on socially responsible investing (also called faith-based investing) by engaging corporations in which the church owns stock.

This year, in recognition of its 50th anniversary, the team worked diligently to create a resource book, "Reflections on 50 Years of the Presbyterian Church as Investor," to help document what has been done and help future committee members serve effectively. It also serves as a memoir of sorts for the many faithful members and chairpersons who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the mission and vision of MRTI is carried forth.

The book outlines how through MRTI's work with corporations, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a unique opportunity to advance its mission faithfully and creatively through the financial resources entrusted to it. The General Assembly's investment policy identifies specific concerns that MRTI is to promote: the pursuit of peace; racial, social and economic justice; environmental responsibility; and women's rights. MRTI then prioritizes issues on these concerns from General Assembly directives, PC(USA) policy and requests, and efforts by ecumenical partners, mid councils, and congregations. The book also outlines various tools MRTI uses in its engagements, including correspondence, dialogue, voting shareholder proxies and recommending similar action to others, and occasionally filing shareholder resolutions.

The Rev. Bill Somplatsky-Jarman, former lead staff person to MRTI, reflect-

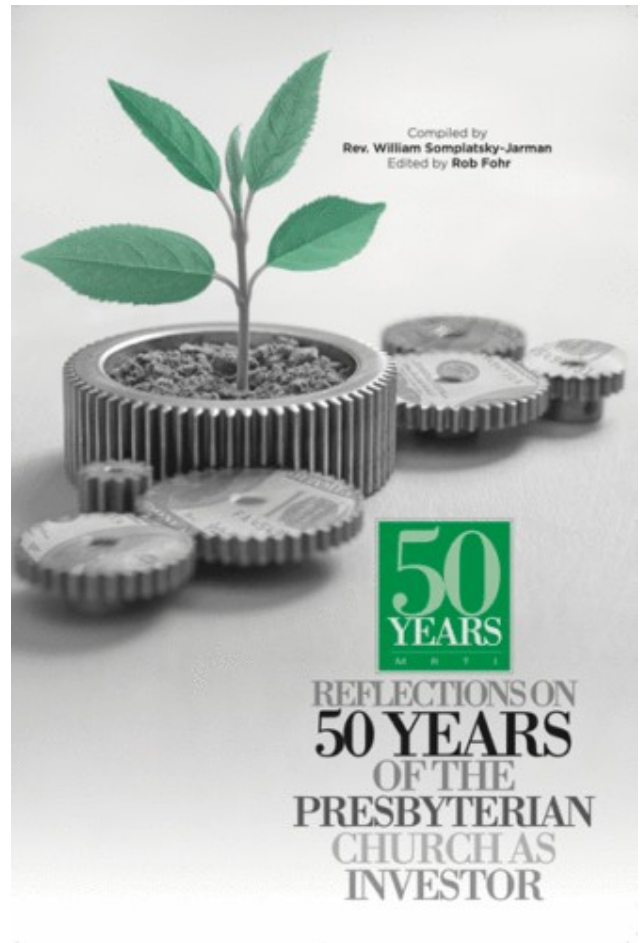
ed by saying:

"When I started as lead staff to MRTI in 1984, apartheid in South Africa was center stage. Years of engagement with banks and companies had produced minor changes, but not an end to apartheid. The 1984 General Assembly adopted a policy on the use of divestment as an ethical strategy, identifying seven criteria for using divestment. MRTI was busy applying this policy to South Africa, and in 1985, my first General Assembly on staff, the assembly moved forward with divestment of four companies, and later added 12 more.

"Since then, MRTI engaged companies on a host of issues such as environmental and health and safety standards for both employees and international suppliers, mortgage lending practices, pay equity and equal employment opportunity, child trafficking, and climate change. While the committee and issues changed during my three decades plus on staff, MRTI's effectiveness did not change. Neither did its commitment to following PC(USA) policy and the seven criteria for divestment."

The Rev. Kerri Allen, chair of MRTI, stated, "MRTI understands that our role as a committee is guided by the Holy Spirit. As Reformed Christians, we seek to be aware and attentive to what is taking place in the world around us, focused on how we might have a positive material impact. With that sensitivity, coupled with our belief, faith, and practice, we prayerfully discern the best way to embody justice and love in our work."

Rob Fohr, former director of Faith-Based Investing and Corporate Engage-



ment, reflected, "My time serving as the lead staff person to MRTI was a highlight of my career. We have encouraged companies in a variety of industries to improve their policies and practices on a wide range of issues, from human trafficking prevention and chemical safety to human rights in conflict-affected and high-risk areas as well as environmental justice and the climate crisis. We established the [MRTI Guideline Metrics framework](#) and carefully followed General Assembly policy to become the first entity to recommend selectively divesting from companies for environmental reasons only.

"Through it all, MRTI has been a faithful ambassador of Presbyterian values to publicly traded corporations, and I am excited to see that continue under the

November 2023 Session Updates

By **BRIGITTA KUIPER**

Clerk of Session

The October Session meeting was held on November 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with prayer by Ruling Elder Lawn Griffiths.

Highlights from the November Session meeting include:

Ratified a motion by the Membership Commission receiving Phil and Jean Witherspoon into membership at UPC.

Received the Monthly Finance Summary for October. There was an additional expense of \$6,625 for an approved HVAC system replacement.

The UPC planning process continues. A 2024 Annual Planning meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, January 13, 2024, from 9:30 a.m. to noon in the Fellowship Hall.

Approved Pastor Eric's 2024 Sabbatical Proposal. Look for future communi-

cations from Session about the sabbatical and coverage of pastoral duties during this time.

Approved members status changes, after an extensive review of membership. 24 Members were removed from membership; 1 Affiliate Member was removed from membership and 454 Inactive Members were removed from membership. UPC's rolls are now current after much work by Pastor Eric and Lori Saager.

Approved MSJP's Proposal for Refugee Housing. Additionally, MSJP, with assistance from others, will begin work on a Guest Code of Conduct for Session's consideration.

The meeting closed with prayer by Ruling Elder Alan Sweeney.

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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PW Christmas News Alert

By SUE SCHNEBEL

On Saturday, December 9th, 26 elves left the frigid North Pole weather to visit UPC to help those less fortunate have some holiday cheer. Before their work began, the elves got into the giving spirit inspired by Cynthis Rylant's holiday classic, *Silver Packages*. The story follows a young, poor Appalachian boy who waits every year for the Christmas train to receive a silver package from a benevolent passenger. Just like the story, the

elves were preparing packages to be distributed to the needy.

After scrumptious treats and fellowship, the elves engaged in a rousing game of Winter BINGO and a challenging round of Winter Family Feud with winners receiving silver-wrapped prizes.

With spirits high, the elves went to work. 20 backpacks were filled with school supplies for a Tempe elementary school for those entering mid-year. PAZ and Justa Center's packages included

warm socks, a mylar blanket and a yummy treat. 100 middle school-aged girls at the Welcome Center had bags filled with hair scrunchies, a bracelet, lip balm, hand lotion and, of course, some edible treats.

With farewell hugs and the exchange of holiday wishes, the elves dispersed heading off to their next holiday adventure with joyous hearts knowing that someone would get a "silver package" this holiday season. ■



PW Angel Tree

PW wishes to thank the UPC congregation for their continued generosity in helping to make Christmas bright for children in need.



UPC 2023 Christmas Concert

PHOTOS: Bonny Henry



ARIZONA FAITH NETWORK

Be Together • Talk Together • Act Together



Monday Meditation with Vasu Bandhu

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

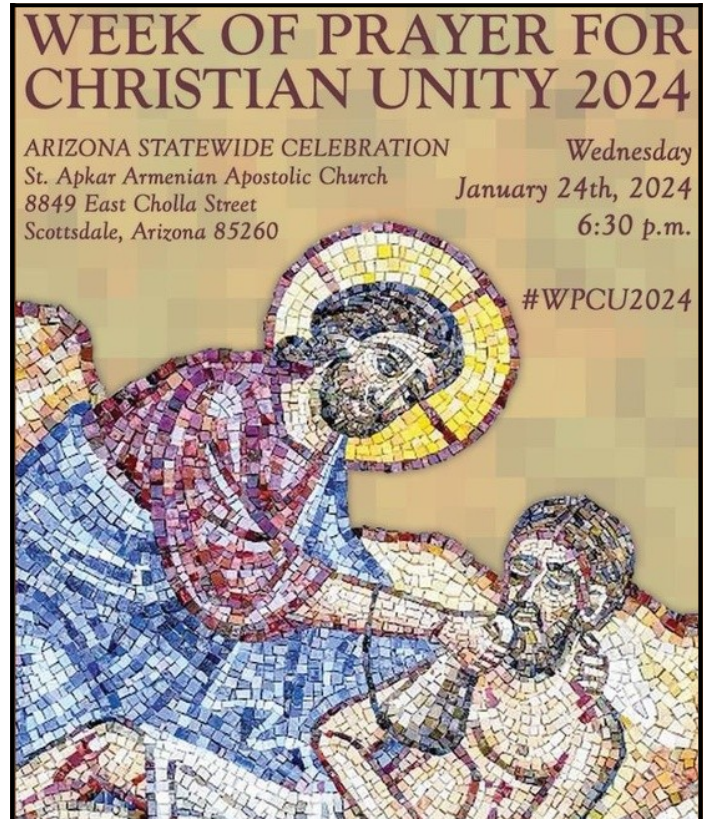
Start your week with some guided meditation led by Vasu Bandhu, AFN's Interfaith Manager. He serves the Buddhist community as Bhikkhu (monk) in the Dhammapada Sangha (Zen Buddhism), assisting in the practice and teaching of the principles, ceremonies and rituals. RSVP: <https://form-usa.keela.co/monday-meditation>



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.



Arizona Statewide Celebration

Wednesday, January 24, 2024—6:30 pm

St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church

8849 East Cholla Street, Scottsdale, Arizona 85260

Interfaith Leaders Breakfast

"Creating Communities of Belonging"

February 22, 8 am - 11 am

Central United Methodist Church
1875 N Central Ave, Phoenix, AZ

Interfaith Leaders Breakfast— "Creating Communities of Belonging"

Thursday, Feb 22, 8:00 am—11:00 am

Central United Methodist Church

1875 N. Central Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85004

Join people from diverse religions for breakfast as we share about the trauma informed care training, the "Creating Communities of Belonging" Project. [Registration](#)

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

MRTI

Continued from page 7

leadership of Katie Carter.” In October, Fohr joined the Presbyterian Foundation as Vice President of Strategic Alignment and Mid-Council Relations.

Carter, the new director of Faith-Based Investing and Shareholder Engagement, says, “I am grateful for the opportunity to follow Bill and Rob in leading MRTI. We have our work cut out for us. The climate crisis is only becoming more urgent and global conflict is only increasing. We are also seeing unprecedented attacks to shareholder rights and the ability to engage companies on environmental, social and governance issues.

“In recent years, MRTI has engaged with communities impacted by corporate actions such as communities in New Orleans impacted by climate change and coastal erosion. We look forward to continuing those community engagements and having them inform our corporate engagements as MRTI continues to bring Presbyterian values in front of companies.”

MRTI’s new associate for Corporate, Community and Church Engagement, Simon Doong, will be joining the team in January 2024.

Somplatsky-Jarman also said, “At my last General Assembly in 2016, Ruling Elder Charles Johnson of Blackhawk Presbytery made a succinct and accurate

description of MRTI’s work to the Assembly that I will not forget. He stated that MRTI members and staff are ‘...missionaries in the capital markets which is an enormous and immense mission field in a way that the Presbyterian Church can have a powerful and prophetic voice in the direction of our companies, our capital markets and our corporations. We often don’t get the chance to be at the table, but God has blessed this denomination with sufficient resources to put us at the table and be taken seriously by these companies, and in the future we

can do a tremendous amount of work to change and structure this nation in a way that we would like.’ That’s MRTI in a nutshell.”

Featuring reflections like those of Somplatsky-Jarman, Fohr, Allen, and Carter, the resource book provides a wealth of insight into the PC(USA)’s past corporate engagement efforts with the hope to inform future work.

To obtaining a copy of the 50th Anniversary book, contact Dawn Nashid at Dawn.Nashid@pcusa.org. ■



The Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment and staff are pictured at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville, Kentucky. PHOTO: Contributed.



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.*

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK

(1-800-273-8255)

Talk to someone.

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States.

En Español: 1-888-628-9454

Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

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!

January 2024

Sanctuary Readiness Team..... Larry Seubert

Jan 7—Baptism of Jesus

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

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

Liturgist Nancy Franz
Children's Moment VACANT
Worship Tech VACANT, Sada Reed

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

Liturgist Jean Luce
Children's Moment Helen Griffin
Worship Tech Chris Trella, Jim Niemann

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

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

WANTED: Those interested in learning about audio and video production and serving as worship techs. Contact Chris Trella at ctrella1@gmail.com or Jim Niemann at jim.niemann@cox.net.

February 2024

Sanctuary Readiness Team..... Larry Seubert

Feb 4—5th Sunday in OT/5th Sunday after Epiphany

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

Feb 11—Transfiguration Sunday

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

Feb 14—Ash Wednesday

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

Feb 18—1st Sunday in Lent

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

Feb 25—2nd Sunday in Lent

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

*New
Year
Prayer*

Holy One,
Spirit that blew across the deep
and ruffles the still waters in our soul,
move in and through us as we begin a new year of
teaching, learning, questioning and growing.
Immerse us in holy curiosity,
that we may be brave enough to accept our questions
and kind enough to share the questions of others.
Soak us in the knowledge that we are loved
not for our achievements or accolades
but because we are your children,

*called good from before our birth,
and valued as we are beyond all measure.
Make us thirsty for justice,
that we may boldly face blatant and subversive oppressions
in our community
with unwavering conviction.
Make us thirsty for truth,
that we may shed light on that which is hidden
and right the wrongs long kept in the dark.
Make us thirsty for righteousness,
that we may work together to repair broken relationships
and build up fractured communities with empathy and compassion.
Gather your people, Holy One,
that we may strive together—
asking big questions,
wrestling with hard answers,
and never ceasing in the work
of helping and healing the world.
Amen.*

By the Rev. Laura Brekke Wagoner (2015)
from liturglink.net



1 Paula Murray	15 Bob Knox
8 Joe Simmons	28 Carl Smith
12 Joni Jacobs	29 Holly Herman
14 Martha Walker	
Kathleen Davison	

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

January 2024

Mon, Jan 1

New Years Day

Full-time Staff Holiday

- 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)

Thu, Jan 18

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 11:00 am Tempe Interfaith Fellowship (Z)

Fri, Jan 19

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

Sun, Jan 21

- 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 22

- 6:30 pm PW Kayenta Circle (MR)
- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Jan 23

- 7:00 pm Stated Session (S, ZU)

Wed, Jan 24

- 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 25

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 1:00 pm PW Online Bible Study (Z)

Fri, Jan 26

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

Sun, Jan 28

- 9:30 am Worship Service (S, ZU, YouTube)
- 10:45 am Annual Congregational Meeting & Luncheon (FH)

Mon, Jan 29

- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Wed, Jan 31

- 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)

February 2024

Thu, Feb 1

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

Fri, Feb 2

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

Sat, Feb 3

- 9:00 am Baseball Card Show (FH)

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

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CALENDAR

Continued from page 15

Sun, Feb 4

- 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, Feb 5

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

Wed, Feb 7

- 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, Feb 8

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

Fri, Feb 9

- 3:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)

8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Feb 10

- 8:00 am Men's Breakfast (MR)

Sun, Feb 11

- 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, Feb 12

- 8:30 pm AA Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Feb 13

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

Wed, Feb 14

- 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)
- 7:00 pm ASH Wednesday Service (S)

Thu, Feb 15

- 8:00 am TOPS (MR, COR)
- 11:00 am Tempe Interfaith Fellowship (Z)

Fri, Feb 16

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

Sun, Feb 18

- 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, Feb 19

President's Day

Full-time Staff Holiday

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

Tue, Feb 20

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

Wed, Feb 21

- 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)