



DECEMBER 2025-JANUARY 2026

The Epistle

A newsletter for the community of
St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Advent & Christmas, 2025

The church's new year begins with the first Sunday of Advent, November 30! We're excited to share what's happening at St. Paul's during the coming season.

Christmas Through The Lens of Hollywood (Worship Series during Advent)

In addition to entertaining us, some times movies have the ability to touch our hearts. (For example, who doesn't feel a sense of nostalgia and goodness watching Frank Capra's "It's A Wonderful Life"?) This Advent season, we invite you to be sure to join us each week in worship as we reflect on how the traditional themes of Advent (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love) are viewed through the lens of some of Hollywood's favorite Christmas movies:

11/30 - It Is A Wonderful Life

12/7 - The Redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge

12/14 - The Transformation of the Grinch

12/21 - Rudolph and Mary: A Tale of Two Christmas
Songs



Advent Activities (Sunday Mornings)

We have special activities set for each Sunday morning, beginning November 30! We hope you'll join us as we have

- Refreshments and fellowship time in Brummet Hall
- Children's and/or family activities in Brummet Hall
- A special scavenger hunt based on the five movies we will be referencing during worship.

Christmas Eve Services **Wednesday, Dec. 24**

11am: "Tidings of Comfort and Joy"
(Traditional Worship)

An intergenerational traditional service for people of all ages, featuring our Early Bird Choir. Join us for Christmas carols, Scripture readings, and a reflection on the greatest gift of Christmas - Jesus Christ.

5:00PM: "Tidings of Comfort and Joy"
(Contemporary Worship)

A contemporary, interactive service led by our worship band Grace Multiplied and pastors Rev. Ron Bartlow (St. Paul's) and Rev. Beth Rambikur (Christ Church). Join us for Christmas music, a fun telling of the Christmas story, and reflections on "comfort" and "joy."

9:00PM: "A Cozy Christmas of
Songs & Stories"

A casual worship experience of candlelight Christmas Eve in the A-Frame building on our church campus led by our Sanctuary Singers. This more intimate service will be an update of the ancient tradition of "Lessons and Carols," featuring an eclectic mix of readings and songs that capture the good news of Jesus' birth.

All services will feature a traditional singing of "Silent Night" to candlelight.



Christmas Caroling at Fellowship Square – Sunday, December 14, 3:30–4:15 p.m.

Our youth and choir will lead carols, songs, and bells as we share Advent hope with the residents indoors and in the Villa 4 courtyard. All are welcome to come and sing, supporting this joyful outreach.

What's Coming in Worship in January

Telling the Truth (with Faith, Hope, and Love)

(January worship & sermon series)

Old Testament expert Walter Brueggemann once wrote that "the prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, grieve in a society that practices denial, and express hope in a society that lives in despair." As we start the new year, we're going to risk telling the truth in church; lamenting, protesting, and complaining about what is wrong, but doing so with hope that God has an alternative for us to pursue together. As we work through the series together, in addition to reflections upon the Bible and our Christian tradition, members will be invited to participate in the very act of dreaming a vision for a better future and committing to pursuing that vision together.

- 01/11 – The Truth Will Set You Free
- 01/18 – Jesus, Martin, and the Marginalized
- 01/25 – How Might We Heal Our Nation's Divisions
- 02/01 – Your Church is Dying
- 02/08 – What's Next? Part 1 – Hope for Tomorrow
- 02/15 – What's Next? Part 2 – The Power of Habit

Want to go deeper? In addition to the weekly sermons being rooted in our Christian Scriptures, you may want to check out some of these resources that are part of the development of this series:

- *The Prophetic Imagination* by Walter Brueggemann
- *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman
- *Homegrown Mystics: Restoring Our Nation with the Healing Wisdom of America's Visionaries* by Bruce Epperly
- *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg
- *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* by Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heitzel
- *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* by Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsey, and Alexander Grashow

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRIES



WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT THE BIBLE

a Milestone Ministry class for kids & adults

9 children and 10 adults attended this 5-week series of interactive classes held in October. We walked through each book in the Bible and highlighted a verse and learned more about it in memorable way with "creative interruptions." Parents found it well organized, enjoyed bonding with their kids in this new way and found their kids looked forward to the class every week. Everyone learned about the organization of the Bible and it's authors, And parents even learned some new things! All agreed they look forward to more intergenerational Milestone Ministries in the future.



Spring Children's Ministry Volunteer Training

Friday, January 23rd
in B7
1:00 - 4:00 pm

Sunday,
Nov. 30th
at the 9:30 am
service



Save the Date
for VBS 2026:
March 16th - March 20th
9:00 am to 12 noon

Cost is \$25/child
and \$60max/family.

Registration for volunteers will begin January 7th. Registration for children will begin February 1st. Register on our website!



Contact Heather Stein for information on Children and Family Ministries or any events on this page. 520-296-6149 or FamilyMinistries@StPaulsUMCTucson.net



Shared Youth Ministry: *Belong - Believe - Serve*



The last two months:

In October and November, our youth stayed busy growing in faith, friendship, and service. We discussed culture and diversity and held our first Q&A session for the 2026 Service-Learning Trip. We observed Comet Lemmon and Saturn with the help of church members who set up telescopes. We learned about gardening and caring for creation in Derek's yard, and students even took home small plants. Our group also began rehearsing Christmas carols to share at Fellowship Square this Advent. **Youth joined the South District outdoor event, which highlighted teamwork challenges,** and later shared an honest "Can I Ask That?" conversation with our pastors about faith, family, and life. **On Sunday mornings,** students continued our Echo the Story Sunday School lessons, exploring stories such as Exodus, the Commandments, the Promised Land, Judges, and Ruth.

Upcoming Local Youth Group Events

- Dec 7: Youth Advent Caroling Rehearsal 2nd Session
- Dec 14: Advent Community Service at Fellowship Square and Youth Christmas Party.
- Dec 21: An Advent reflection and decorating Christmas cookies.
- Dec 28: Pickleball, bonfire, and reflecting time at Desert Skies UMC.
- January 4: No youth group.
- January 11: New Year reflection, goal-setting, and fun teamwork games.
- January 18: MLK Weekend gathering, conversations about faith, justice, and community.
- January 25: An annual hike to Picacho Peak State Park.

SUMMER 2026 TRIPS:

- **Middle School:** 4-day expedition to the Grand Canyon. Date: June 10-13
- **High schoolers:** An international **Service-Learning Trip to Honduras.** Date: June 28th - July 5th. Thank you for supporting our youth and upcoming fundraising events. Stay tuned!

Would you like to lead a one-time workshop? Your expertise, insight, time, and gifts would be greatly appreciated. For more information or to share suggestions, please email Luis at youthdirector@tucsonumcyouth.com

Leadership Training (November)

The Kansas Leadership Center teaches that "When everyone leads the toughest challenges get seen and solved." (They have a book titled the same!) The church, rooted as it is in ancient theology as well as seeking out modern best practices, often demonstrates the best of communal leadership, as people come together with their different skills, expertise, and vision to lead forward in pursuing common mission, vision, and values.

Church leaders from St. Paul's, both those chosen to serve by our members in our administrative boards as well as others who are committed to the church's health and want to be a part of supporting it, gathered together for a special gathering and training on Saturday, November 8. Together we learned from and reflected upon lessons from:

- Andy Stanley, who guided us to consider the "Five Disciplines of an Outward-Facing Church."
- Dan Heath, who provided an introduction to a two-step process for leading change rooted in his most recent book *RESET: How to Change What's Not Working*.
- Kaye Monk-Morgan, CEO of Kansas Leadership Center, led us through what happens "When the Faith Community Leads," giving guidance to how our congregation is an organization of shared leadership and can leverage that shared leadership for greater vitality.
- Debi Nixon and Yvonne Gentile from Church of the Resurrection, who discussed "The Art of Hospitality" and its impact on the health of a local congregation.

Our leaders gathered again on Sunday, November 23 to spend more time in reflection on the learnings of the day and how they may positively influence the mission and ministries of St. Paul's UMC.

Remember that we are all the body of Christ, as we all have a role to play as leaders within our organization, as God calls us to give of our selves and our spiritual gifts. Watch for notices about other leadership events and join us when you are able.

Administrative Leadership Changes

Our annual charge conference was held in late October, and included the regular election of administrative leaders for 2026. We express our gratitude and thanks to those who have served terms of leadership (these usually run three to four years) and are coming off of their respective roles in the new year, including:

- Phil Bentley
- Debbie Kruse
- Joann Hubbard
- Ed Eaton

We're grateful to welcome these new administrative leaders in 2026:

- Dennis Krantz and Christine Everett (as Lay members of Annual Conference they will represent our church at the annual conference session as well as serve as important points of contact between conference and congregation)
- Jackie Callen and Nancy Dryden (as part of the Staff Parish Relations Committee they help with the Human Resources needs of our congregation)
- Kathleen Batson, Kyle Cipra, and John Danloe (as Trustees they will help with the wise care and stewardship of our church's physical properties)

The full listing of our church's administrative leaders is published in our annual conference materials, which are available via the office.



Volunteers Wanted!



Did you know that this church runs on volunteers? While there are staff to coordinate different things, the bulk of the ministries on the campus are done by volunteers. We are always on the lookout for people to help out with coffee fellowship and other food based events, reading or singing in worship, being present with our children and youth, leading a Bible or book study, helping serve our community in the food bank, coaching with Upward, or even just stuffing envelopes for mailings! Be on the lookout for announcements for specific things or reach out to the church office if you are interested in sharing your time with the church!

A Thank You From Cheryl Smith and Genita Salvagio

We are so grateful to all who helped us once again to be able to help families from our church plus those from Dietz K-8, Henry Elementary, and Robles Elementary. We will be able to feed 11 families for Thanksgiving and Christmas from each school and for 2 families from our church.

This has always been a generous church and once again you have reached out to help families from schools and our church. Over 25 years, we have met and known so many people from St. Paul's who have helped families with food, clothing, blankets, book drives, school supplies, socks and undies, and more.

Over the years, Cheryl and I have been able to call on so many church members to help in many ways and you said yes. Yes to delivering school supplies, food boxes, yes to helping on Drop Off Day and more. You always say yes if you were available.

Through these years, we have had the best liaisons at the 3 schools. Ruth Doran at Henry Elementary, Julie Wanat at Dietz K-8, and Evelyn See at Robles. They sent us the following comments:

Evelyn See at Robles: "Your congregation is absolutely amazing!"

Julie Wanat at Dietz K-8: She was so grateful as always and tearing up because this will help the families.

Ruth Doran: She shared with the Principal who in return included St. Paul's in his staff letter. Ruth said that they are appreciative of all that St. Paul's has done for their families.

We are so grateful for all in this congregation for your prayers for the ministry that carried us through the many years. What a blessing you all have been to so many families, here and at the schools, and to both Cheryl and I.