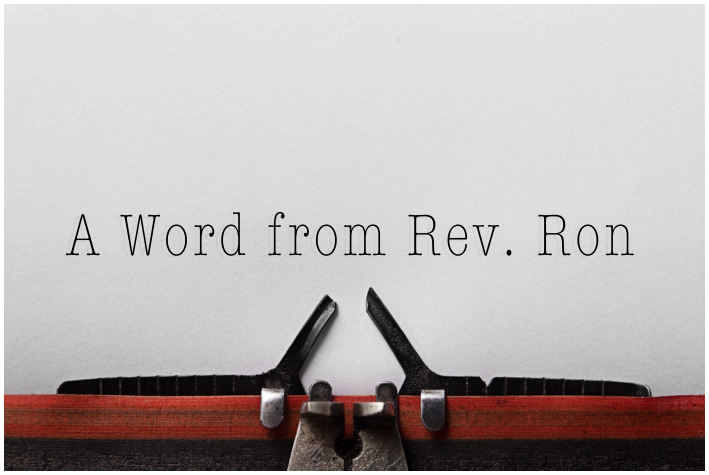
APRIL / MAY 2026

The Epistle

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



"Are you tired? Worn out?
Burned out on religion?
Come to me.
Get away with me and you'll recover your life.
I'll show you how to take a real rest.
Walk with me and work with me—
watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me
and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

–Matthew 11:28-30, The Message

I am excited to share that I am taking a three month "renewal leave" this summer, and thank our congregation's staff and leaders for the chance. While I seek Jesus in all times and places, I'm excited to pursue finding him in some quieter settings this summer.

United Methodist clergy serving in full-time appointments are allowed to request "a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment" (¶351). While similar to what other careers might call a "sabbatical leave," our annual conference calls these "renewal leaves" because the Book of Discipline has a different definition of sabbatical leave that removes clergy from their current appointment. Our SPRC, Church Council, and superintendent reviewed and approved my plans for a summer sabbatical this past fall.

"Be still, and know that I am God;"
–Psalm 46:10a, NIV

Often times our clergy take these leaves for personal renewal, including our superintendents, who are all encouraged to take such a leave during their service to the annual conference (which itself may be up to six years!). I have been in active leadership as an appointed pastor in The United Methodist Church since September, 1998, and have only taken one renewal leave (in 2018). I'm looking forward to a time away from the responsibilities and duties of daily ministry, continuing to pursue my spiritual and professional growth through a variety of experiences.

[Jesus] said to them,
"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place
and get some rest."
–Mark 6:31b, NIV

Over the summer, I am committed to the following experiences as sources of educational and spiritual growth and renewal:

- A week in May visiting Portland, Oregon, working with the organization "The Hearth," focusing on skills of storytelling to enrich my preaching and leadership;
- A week in May back in Washington, D.C. to finish my final class at Wesley Theological Seminary (for a doctoral degree);
- Half a week driving from Tucson through New Orleans, toward;
- Three weeks in June in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, on the site of a busy regional United Methodist camp and retreat center, focusing on reading, physical exercise, and relaxation;
- A week in Napa Valley, California, in July, where I am taking part in a five day "boot camp" at the Culinary Institute of America (though it is more fun to tell people I'm going to a "CIA boot camp" for the week!).

Lynn and I will be together for some of these experiences (road trip and Lake Junaluska), and may even take our kids on one of them (Napa Valley, though they won't be joining me in the CIA kitchens!), and some of them will be personal opportunities for growth and renewal. (Lynn is also pursuing some experiences apart, including a Renovare Spiritual Retreat and a week long visit with family in Florida.)

concluded on next page

Pastor's Page, continued

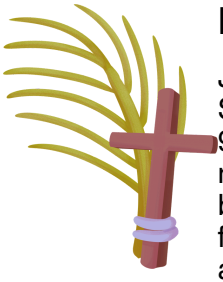
We will have an amazing variety of clergy filling in on Sunday mornings, and I have some of our local clergy filling in for any emergency pastoral care that might emerge that exceeds the capacity of our volunteers or staff. Our church's staff and leaders are already aware of my leave and prepared to assist and/or lead in my absence. I will be returning in August to lead our congregation in another year of ministry. (And if you wish, you can plan to join me in celebrating my graduation in 2027 by joining us on an Alaskan cruise! See more information later in this newsletter.)

Throughout the leave, I intend to spend time immersed in books, sermons, and Scripture, re-engaging my deep love for the stories and teachings of our faith outside of the pressures that ministry can present. I'm looking forward to this time of renewal!

One additional note: Because of the timing of this leave, this will be the last newsletter I contribute to for a while. Obviously, I will be absent in the June/July newsletter, and the August/September one will go to print before I have returned.

See you in Church
(at least through May)!

What's Coming in Worship

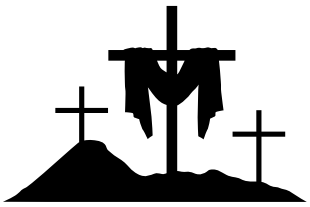


Palm Sunday – March 29

Join us for some celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter services at 8, 9:30, and 11, with fellowship and refreshments in Brummet Hall between services! And don't forget to either join us at St. Paul's at 12noon or Christ Church at 6:30pm on Friday, April 3, for a Good Friday commemoration.

Good Friday - April 3, 12noon

The semi-colon (;) is a punctuation mark that comes between two complete thoughts. In some ways, Good Friday is a semi-colon; a break between what has been and what will be.



Easter Sunday - April 5

Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, Lead Courageously

(Post Easter worship & sermon series)

After Easter, we'll spend three weeks considering the Biblical grounding and real world application of the new vision statement of The United Methodist Church: "The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections."

- **4/12:** Holy Humor Sunday returns as we reflect on *"(Live, Laugh,) Love Boldly"*
- **4/19:** *"Serve Joyfully"*
- **4/26:** *"Lead Courageously"*

Summer Worship Schedule

Worship during our summer months of May, June, and July will be on the following temporary summer schedule:

9:00am - Traditional worship
10:30am – Contemporary worship & Children's Sunday School

May Preachers

Our guest preachers for the month of May will be:

- Director of the Wesley Foundation at the UofA, Rev. Mel Roberts,
- retired pastor, Rev. Judy Boroto,
- South District Superintendent, Rev. Javier Olivares,
- Director of New and Vital Faith Ministries of the Desert Southwest Conference, Rev. Rachel Gilmore.

True North Vacation Bible School was a Success!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our 2026 Vacation Bible School a huge success! We appreciate everyone who was able to be with us for the week, those who helped out behind the scenes, those who provided scholarship support, those who provided supplies and those who kept us in prayer. We had 32 children and even more (34!) volunteers who experienced the love of Jesus in a hands-on, very interactive way. We played games, sang songs, enjoyed a daily puppet show, made crafts, learned about science, heard Bible stories, and learned scripture while surrounded by the wilds of Alaska. Every lesson and activity led children (and adults!) closer to Jesus and the Bible and everyday we learned that we can always... Trust Jesus!

We need table hostesses for our 2026 Women's Tea

Table hostesses need to decorate a table for eight (round or rectangular) to fit the theme of a favorite book. Tea and light snacks will be provided. Contact Heather to be a hostess today!

Save the Dates!

Easter Family Worship
April 5th at 9:30 am

Travesty at the Tea Party
Women's Tea
May 2nd 2-4 pm

Creative Prayer
Saturdays, June 6th - July 25th
at 10 am in the A-Frame

SPLASH!
Summer Sunday School
Sunday, June 7th - July 12th
during the 10:30 am service

Sign Up Today for our Women's Tea: Travesty at the Tea Party (a murder-mystery event)

Registration is now open on our website to attend our annual tea party. This event is FREE but space is limited and last year we had a full house! Invite your mom, daughter, sister, friend or neighbor to enjoy an entertaining afternoon of tea, snacks, and mystery. This event is open to all ages and kid-friendly tables will be included. This event will be in Brummet Hall on Saturday, May 2nd from 2 - 4 pm.

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:

Our youth shared many fun and meaningful experiences together over the last two months. They watched and reflected on Mission: JOY, joined Wesley Cup (District event), visited the science center, helped with a fundraiser, hiked at Picacho Peak (with a few making it to the summit), and enjoyed games, volleyball, soccer, and bowling. Students learned about joy, teamwork, trust, love, and staying close to God.

We also reflected on true love in Christ, love that sacrifices for others. During Lent, students used the curriculum 24 Hours That Changed the World for Youth by Adam Hamilton in Sunday School to learn about Jesus' final hours through Scripture, video, and discussion. They talked about the Last Supper, Gethsemane, Jesus' trial, and Jesus before Pilate, and what these moments teach us about love, courage, truth, and staying faithful to God in hard times.

SUMMER 2026 TRIPS:

- **Middle School:** 4-day expedition to the Grand Canyon. Date: June 10-13. ***Register teens here:***

Invitation: We are looking for 1–2 women leaders, volunteers or chaperones for this trip to the Grand Canyon. Please reach out to Luis if you are interested and available.

- **High schoolers:** An international Service-Learning Trip to Honduras. Date: June 27th - July 5th.

Thank you for supporting our youth and upcoming fundraising events (car wash on March 29).

Upcoming Youth Group Events/Gatherings

- March 29: Service event with Iskashitaa, harvesting fruit for Tucson families.
- April 12: Sunday School discussion with Scripture, video, and Kahoot.
- April 19: Service project at New Spirit Community Garden.
- April 26: Jumping Cholla Trampoline Park outing.
- May 3: Pool and volleyball party at Highland Vista Park.
- May 10: Echo the Story reflection for Mother's Day weekend.
- May 24: End-of-the-year cooking party at Desert Skies.
- May 31 or TBD: Astronomy workshop for Grand Canyon trip preparation.

Would you like to lead a one-time workshop? Do you have any suggestions or comments? They would be greatly appreciated. Please email Luis at *youthdirector@tucsonumcyouth.com*

Alaskan Adventure Cruise (July, 2027)

You are invited to join with others from our local churches as St. Paul's, St. Mark's, and Green Valley United Methodist Churches join together to offer an amazing opportunity of fellowship and adventure: an **Alaskan 12 Night Mountain Panorama Adventure Cruise!**

Join us for an adventure that begins by travelling the interior of Alaska by bus and rail! We will arrive in Alaska on July 11, 2027 and spend five nights visiting the interior: from Anchorage we travel north to Talkeetna and Mount Denali, then south to the port city of Seward.

In Seward we will board Royal Carribean's *Anthem of the Seas* for a seven night cruise through the interior passage, visiting Hubbard Glacier, Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan, and then end our adventure in Vancouver, British Columbia and return home.

This 12 night Alaskan adventure is co-hosted by Educational Opportunities. Rates for these twelve adventures nights, based on double occupancy – so bring your partner or a friend! – are:

$3498 (interior room w/ virtual balcony),
$3698 (Ocean view room), or
$3798 (Balcony room).

(Note: airfare is not included, but currently is available for approximately $700.)

More information on the trip, including brochures and information sessions at the church, will be available soon, and registration is already active!

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!

We could use your help! While the pastor is a large part of the worship service, the rest of the Sunday experience is handled by volunteers like you! If you would like to help out on Sunday mornings with anything ranging from reading scripture to passing out bulletins to helping out the AV team, playing an instrument, or singing in the choir/praise team, please let us know! We would love to have you! You can mark your sign in sheet with your choice or get to the online form by using the QR code.

Charitable Giving Updates

2026 has already shown to be a great year for charitable giving from our church. We started off the year with a request from the Altar Valley School District, where Robles Elementary resides, asking for our help with some shoe donations. I am happy to report that you, the congregation, absolutely stepped up and gave them so many shoes, along with gift cards to shoe stores in their area, and over $1500 for them to buy new shoes for their students. These are kids in our own local area who have new shoes thanks to us!

Following that shoe drive, we collected pasta and sauce for our partner, ICS (Interfaith Community Services). Megan loaded up her car and delivered the donations over to their eastside office at New Spirit Lutheran Church. They weighed our donations and the grand total ended up being 380 pounds of pasta and sauce! These are local families in our area who will be helped by these donations.

The church office has been handing out Fry's Food gift cards when they are available, and Megan passed out $1000 worth of gift cards between December 2025 and March 2026. These gift cards can be used for both gas and groceries and have been a huge help to those who have come to get them. Because of such a high demand and repeat requests, Megan has had to limit them to one per person per month.

Our food bank has continued chugging along, passing out food to families ranging in size from 1 to 6 and above! As the only food bank on the east side of Tucson that is open 5 days a week, they are almost always busy! There is a great group of volunteers who help by passing out the food, organizing the donations we receive from grocery stores and others in the community, and who go and pick up the donations from the grocery stores. They can always use more help, so if you would like to help, please let us know!