

enter his gates with
THANKSGIVING
and his courts with praise

— PSALMS 100:4 —

**Annual
Congregational
Meeting**

**Sunday, November 17
@ 12:30pm**

**Thanksgiving Eve
Worship Service**

November 27 @ 4pm

Turkey dinner served
immediately following
worship. Tickets \$5.

Dear Church Family,

As we enter the month of November, our hearts naturally turn toward Thanksgiving. It's a season that invites us to pause and reflect on the countless blessings we've received. This year, I'm especially reminded of the profound gratitude we owe to Jesus Christ, whose love and sacrifice have transformed our lives in ways we could never imagine.

The Apostle Paul encourages us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is

God's will for you in Christ Jesus." No matter what challenges we face, we can find reasons to be grateful because of the hope we have in Him. His promises are steadfast, giving us a future filled with purpose and peace.

Let's also remember the love of God that binds us together as a family. In these times, the support and warmth of our church community become even more precious. As the Bible says in Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Together, we can face any trial, uplifted by the love that flows from God to us and through us to others.

This Thanksgiving, let's make it a point to express our gratitude—not just in words but in actions. Reach out to those in need, share your blessings, and shine the light of Christ in our community. Remember Jesus' command in John 15:12: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

May God's promises continue to give you hope and a future. Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed and joyful Thanksgiving.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Todd Mathison



Todd Mathison, Lead Pastor
Denton Bennett, Associate Pastor
Susan Westland, Chaplain
Renee Bennett, Pastoral Intern

5946 E. University Drive, Mesa, AZ 85205
480-830-5024 | Office Hours: M-Th, 8am-4pm
VictoryLutheran.com



Welcome Pastor Denton Bennett

November marks the beginning of a new season of ministry at Victory: the arrival and installation of Pastor Denton Bennet as our Associate Pastor. It's been quite a journey to arrive here, but the time — and person God has called — has finally arrived!



Pastor Denton begins serving at Victory on November 6. **His installation will be the weekend of November 30 and December 1, during all four of the weekend services, with light refreshments served after each service.** Rather than a stand-alone service, we are doing it this way so that as many people as possible may be part of this special weekend.

**Save the Date!
Installation
Nov. 30 & Dec. 1**

In every thriving congregation, the installation of a pastor stands as a cornerstone for spiritual growth and communal unity. A pastor is not merely a leader; they are

shepherds entrusted with guiding the flock, nurturing faith, and fostering an environment where each member can flourish in their walk with God.

Scripture underscores the significance of pastoral leadership. Hebrews 13:17 reminds us, "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account." This verse highlights the responsibility pastors bear in safeguarding the spiritual well-being of the congregation.

Installing a pastor brings clarity and vision to the ministry's mission. Ephesians 4:11-12 states, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." A dedicated pastor equips the congregation for service, building a strong, resilient church body.

Moreover, a pastor embodies compassion and guidance, essential for navigating life's challenges. Proverbs 11:14 affirms, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." A pastor offers wise counsel, helping members find direction and solace in times of need.

Let's keep Pastor Denton and his family in our prayers during this time of transition. His wife, Jennifer, is an ordained pastor in the LCMC—our network of congregations—and they have three children at home who will also be navigating some significant changes. As Pastor Denton begins his journey with us, let's open our hearts and warmly welcome him and his family, embracing them as vital members of our ministry team here at Victory.



Thanksgiving Eve Worship @ 4pm Followed by Dinner @ 5pm

Thanksgiving is a time when groups of family and friends gather to celebrate all that we are thankful for. At Victory we have a wonderful opportunity to do that together as a church family! Enjoy a buffet style meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, several sides, and pie for dessert. Meals "to go" available. A limited number of meals are available at \$5.00 per person. Sign up and pay at the designated table in the lobby. All proceeds from ticket sales will go to Victory's Food Pantry. Volunteers needed for setup, cleanup and kitchen help. (Please contact the church office at 480-830-5024 to volunteer or for tickets sales.)

HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF

Samaritan's Purse
FOR DISASTER RELIEF



Help Those in Need



WAYS TO GIVE

- Mark "Hurricane Relief" on your check/envelope
- Online at VictoryLutheran.com
- Scan the QR Code
- TEXT TO GIVE
Text "Hurricane" and the amount to 888-897-5573

All donations will go directly to Hurricane Relief via Samaritan's Purse.

SCAN THE QR CODE
with your smartphone

Hurricane Relief Fund Update

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Hurricane Relief Fund last month. Your donations have helped us raise **\$3,530** to aid those in need and will go directly to hurricane relief via Samaritan's Purse. Thank you for supporting this important cause. Samaritan's Purse is responding to both Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, with multiple disaster relief bases in North Carolina and Florida.

Learn more at:
samaritanspurse.org

COUNCIL CORNER



QUESTIONS ABOUT ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS?

Q&A Sessions available:
(Room B5)

Saturday:

Nov 2 & 9 from 5-5:30pm

Sunday:

Nov 3 & 10 from

9-9:30am

10:30-11am



Dear Victory Church Family,

November is always an exciting month here at Victory Lutheran Church. It is nice to see familiar faces returning to in-church worship from cooler regions, from northern states, or from Arizona's higher elevations.

And I look forward to our annual meeting which is always held in November. It is a time to reflect on God's many blessings that we have enjoyed this past year. It is also a time to look forward to next year, and beyond. As we have been in transition the past two years, sometimes our journey has felt like a rollercoaster, but as it is written in Romans 8:31, "What

then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" God is indeed for us and therefore, our future is secure and exciting.

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, November 17 at 12:30pm in the Worship Center. The meeting agenda, 2025 budget, and nominating committee ballot will be available two weeks prior to the meeting. Council members will be available for **Q&A Sessions** in between services two weeks prior in Room B5 (see schedule above). Please stop by if you have any questions, comments, or just to say hello and meet your Council members.

We also have exciting news about Christ the Victor Lutheran Church, which is the church that Victory planted in Florence, AZ. Victory still owns this property. Back in 2017, our congregation voted to enter into a "Lease/Purchase" Agreement. Now, Christ the Victor Council is proposing to purchase the property. It is indeed an exciting time for both Christ the Victor and Victory. We will give you an update at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Please continue to pray for Victory Lutheran Church, pray for our pastors, staff, council, and leadership.

Mission: VLC is to serve and glorify God by being and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Vision: VLC is a joyful and loving community that transforms and deploys Christ-centered disciples who lead others into God's mission frontier empowered by the Holy Spirit.

For your information, church financial information is available in the church office. On behalf of your church council, we thank you for your prayers and support.

Andrew Lund, Church Council President

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR LOVED ONES...

Nancy Ahrens

Henry Behrens

Jan Bjerke

Barbara Blue

Robert Blue

Theresa Buelteman

Al Caruth

Gayle Dibley

Pat Duschek

Anne Epple

Bob Farrar

Thomas Geary

Paul Graczyk

Ron Greenup

Nancy Hedges

Herb Himrich

June Hultgren

Don Jorgensen

Shirley Kirking

Colleen Knop

Sharon Lemke

Don Lindenmoyer

Clarice Lynch

James Mabbutt

Bill MacEnulty

Michael McCabe

Lois Minturn

Reed Newstrom

Tate Peters

Mike Pilato

Delores Rabjohn

Jan Ryum

Joyce Sampson

Wayne Sampson

Julie Schmaltz

Nancy Sell

Bob Smith

Lane Smith

Geri Sommer

Roger Syverson

Peter Thoreson

Mari Ann Thorley

John Weins

Beatrice Wheeler



In remembrance of our loved ones, the weekend of November 2 & 3 we honor those who have "Gone home to the Lord" within the past year.

Sermon Series Continues: TIMELESS CALL

November 2 & 3 – Elijah & the Widow – 1 Kings 17:1-16 (Communion at all Services)

We witness God's boundless provision and compassion through the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, how He cares for the forgotten and the suffering. See how this divine care is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, bringing salvation and hope to all. Celebrate God's unwavering faithfulness, culminating in the gift of His Son, our Savior, who has redeemed us and provided the ultimate deliverance.

November 9 & 10 – Jonah – Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10

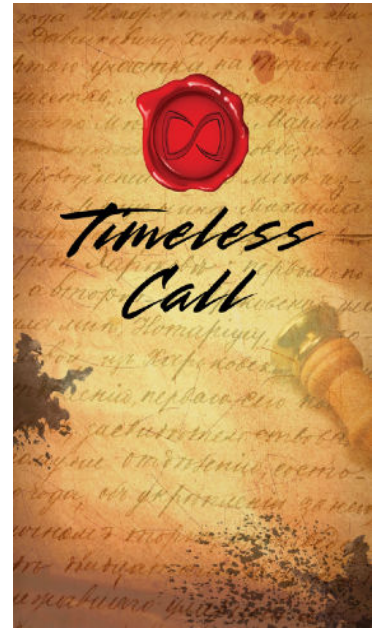
Like Jonah, we may (often) attempt to flee from God's calling, only to have Him mercifully intervene in our lives. God's relentless grace not only redirects us back to His purpose but also equips us to become messengers of His salvation to others. Embrace God's interventions in our daily struggles as He aligns our hearts with His will so that we may positively impact those around us.

November 16 & 17 – Isaiah – Isaiah 6:1-8

We see Isaiah's awe-filled vision of God's holiness and the Apostle Peter's transformative encounter with Jesus, as recorded in Isaiah 6 and Luke 5. Both men, confronted with the divine, recognize their own unworthiness yet are cleansed and commissioned by God to carry forth His message of salvation. We, too, are called to embrace this God's invitation and respond with hearts willing to say, "Here I am, Lord, send me."

November 23 & 24 – Jeremiah – Jeremiah 31:31-34

God promises a new covenant where His laws are inscribed on our hearts and He forgives our sins. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, establishing a covenant that purifies us and renders old sacrifices obsolete. By embracing this new covenant daily, we can experience true transformation, and live in the freedom and assurance of God's enduring presence and forgiveness.



PIZZA & PACKING PARTY!

ALL ARE INVITED!
SATURDAY, NOV 16,
5:00PM

Sign up at the Welcome Center

Operation Christmas Child

Pizza & Packing Party! November 16, 5pm

We are asking each person to bring 10-20 items to help fill the boxes together. Items needed: Toys, toothbrushes, school supplies, soap, t-shirts, etc. and monetary donations to cover shipping welcome too. Sorry no food or liquid items allowed. If you can't bring items join us anyway to pack boxes, pray over them for God's little ones and enjoy some pizza. Sign up at the Welcome Desk.

Sign up online or welcome desk

November 12
@ 1pm

**Dementia | Alzheimer
Care Partner Seminar**

Educational Series with
Tools & Resources

Meets
2nd Tuesdays of
the month @ 1pm

VICTORY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Dementia/Alzheimer Educational Seminar

Tuesday, November 12, 1:00-2:30pm

In Session 2: The Senior GEMS, we will focus on what our loved ones can do and use that knowledge to make our caregiving journey easier and more fulfilling for us and our loved ones.

Adult day care is available for anyone you bring that will be needing an activity while you attend the seminar. Please sign up at the Welcome Desk so that we may plan appropriately for those who will attend.



**VLC Women's Ministry
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON
Saturday, December 14 @ 11am**

Here it is that time of year again when we are so thankful for all the blessings God bestows and we charge right into the season of celebration and joy that is Christmas.

We are supporting "Jacob's Hope" this year. They offer specialized care for substance-exposed newborns. As a nonprofit 501c(3) specialty care nursery, Jacob's Hope provides 24-hour medical care to infants experiencing withdrawal symptoms at birth. This critical care facility bridges the gap between the hospital NICU and home, offering immediate, short-term medical care for infants. Jacob's Hope is more than just a medical facility; it is a sanctuary designed to provide a home-like setting for healing.

So please join us and bring a friend. **Tickets go on sale November 23** and will be on sale before and after each worship service through December 8th.

Note: We are doing things a little different this year. The Women's Ministry **Installation of Officers** will take place at Victory's 9:30am Worship Service on Sunday, December 8th.

Christmas Lights BUS TOURS

DECEMBER 3, 5, 10, 12, 17 @ 5:30PM

LIMITED SEATING. COST \$5.

MERRY AND BRIGHT!

Join us as we tour some beautiful residential light displays! The bus will leave Victory at 5:30pm and return to have cookies and cider. Sign up and pay at the Welcome Desk. Limited to 28 seats on bus. Cost \$5.00.

November 24, 2024 - 3pm

VLC CONCERT SERIES
Europe: A Musical Tour
Alisson Unglaub & Kristin Holton Prouty
Violin, Piano & Organ

**VLC CONCERT SERIES
Europe: A Musical Tour | Violin, Piano & Organ
Sunday, November 24, 2024 @ 3pm**

Join violinist Alisson Unglaub and pianist and organist Kristin Holton Prouty for an evening of music that spans the European continent. "Europe: A Musical Tour" features pieces for violin and piano, and violin and organ, highlighting the diverse musical traditions of Europe.

Experience classical works from various countries, showcasing different styles and cultures. From the melodies of France to the rhythms of Spain, this concert offers a musical journey without leaving your seat. Come and enjoy the artistry of two talented musicians as they bring Europe's rich musical heritage to life.

All concerts are 3pm on Sunday*

December 15
Christmas Concert - Victory Choir & Bells

January 19
East Valley Chorale

February 16
East Valley Pops Orchestra

March 9
Main Street Brass

March 30
Moravian Music Concert

***April 18 - 4 & 6pm**
Good Friday Cantata



For more information about our upcoming concerts, scan the QR code above or visit VictoryLutheran.com/concert-series



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<p>ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING November 17, 2024 @ 12:30pm</p>		<p>The Book Club November 26 @ 1:30-3:00pm Love to read books? The Book Club meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday from 1:30-3:00pm. We will discuss this month's selection, "The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction" by Linda Gordon. Please come prepared to discuss the monthly book selection.</p>	
<p>3 COMMUNION WEEKEND ALL SAINTS WEEKEND 7-11am Morning Fellowship, FH 8am Worship & Communion, WC 9:30am Worship, WC 11am ContemporaryWorship,WC 12:30pm Discovering Victory New Member Class, B7 Q&A Pre-Meeting Sessions after each service in B5</p>	<p>4 9-11:30am Food Pantry 9:30am Hearing God's Voice, FH 12:30pm GriefShare, C4 1-3:30pm Stephen Ministry Training, B7</p>	<p>5 4pm Confirmation Class, LR 6:30pm Women's Bible Study, LR 7pm AA Men's Meeting, FS</p>	<p>6 9-11:30am Food Pantry 9:30am Women's Ministry Board Meeting, FS 12:30pm Al-Anon, C4 1pm Men's Bible Study, LR 1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC 8pm AA Meeting, FS</p>
<p>10 7-11am Morning Fellowship, FH 8am Worship & Communion, WC 9:30am Worship, WC 11am ContemporaryWorship,WC Q&A Pre-Meeting Session after each service in B5</p>	<p>11 9-11:30am Food Pantry 9:30am Hearing God's Voice, FH 12:30pm GriefShare, C4 1-3:30pm Stephen Ministry Training, B7 3pm Council Meeting, FS</p>	<p>12 9:30am Esperanza Study, FS 10am-1:30pm Family Promise Bus Tour (off-site) 10:30am Wayne & Joyce Sampson Memorial, WC/FH 1pm Dementia Seminar, CH 1:30pm Mary Study, meet in home 2pm Naomi Bible Study, FS 4pm Confirmation Class, LR 6:30pm Women's Bible Study, LR 7pm AA Men's Meeting, FS</p>	<p>13 9-11:30am Food Pantry 12:30pm Al-Anon, C4 1pm Men's Bible Study, LR 1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC 8pm AA Meeting, FS</p>
<p>17 NEW MEMBER COMMISSIONING BLESSING OF THE SHOEBOXES 7-11am Morning Fellowship, FH 8am Worship & Communion, WC 9:30am Worship, WC 11am ContemporaryWorship,WC 12:30pm Annual Congregational Meeting, WC</p>	<p>18 9-11:30am Food Pantry 9:30am Hearing God's Voice, FH 1-3:30pm Stephen Ministry Training, B7</p>	<p>19 8:30am-2:30pm Quilters, FH 3pm Foundation Meeting, B7 4pm Confirmation Class, LR 6:30pm Women's Bible Study, LR 7pm AA Men's Meeting, FS</p>	<p>20 8:30-11:30am Quilters, FH 9-11:30am Food Pantry 12:30pm Al-Anon, C4 1pm Men's Bible Study, LR 1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC 8pm AA Meeting, FS</p>
<p>24 7-11am Morning Fellowship, FH 8am Worship & Communion, WC 9:30am Worship, WC 11am ContemporaryWorship,WC 3pm Concert Series, WC Violin, Piano & Organ</p>	<p>25 9-11:30am Food Pantry 1-3:30pm Stephen Ministry Training, B7</p>	<p>26 1:30-3:00pm Book Club, B7 4pm Confirmation Class, LR 6:30pm Women's Bible Study, LR 7pm AA Men's Meeting, FS</p>	<p>27 FOOD PANTRY CLOSED 12:30pm Al-Anon, C4 4pm Thanksgiving Eve Worship 5pm Thanksgiving Dinner, FH (Ticket Required) 8pm AA Meeting, FS</p>

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	UPCOMING EVENTS
<p>DECK THE HALLS! Volunteers Needed December 3 @10am We need lots of helping hands to decorate our campus for Christmas! Sign up at the Welcome Desk. </p>	<p>1 OFFICE CLOSED 11am S.A.F.E. Singles Event Boca Taqueria (off-site)</p>	<p>2 COMMUNION WEEKEND ALL SAINTS WEEKEND 8am Men's Bible Study, FS 4pm Worship, WC Q&A Pre-Meeting Session after service in B5</p>	<p>UPCOMING EVENTS</p> <p>DECEMBER 3 Decorate Church @ 10am</p> <p>DECEMBER 3, 5, 10, 12, 17 Christmas Lights Bus Tours @ 5:30pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 5 Prayer & Praise Service 10am in the Chapel</p> <p>DECEMBER 9 Women's Luncheon, 11am</p> <p>DECEMBER 10 Dementia Seminar @ 1pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 11 Advent Communion Service, 4pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 15 Christmas Concert, 3pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve Worship 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm 9pm with communion</p> <p>DECEMBER 25 Christmas Day Worship 10am with communion</p> <p>DECEMBER 31 Book Club @ 1:30pm</p>
<p>7 10am PRAYER & PRAISE WORSHIP SERVICE, CH 11am Al-Anon Meeting, FS 11:30am Stephen Ministry, C4 4pm I-HELP, C4 12:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Mesa Arts Center (off-site) Bus leaves at 11:15am</p>	<p>8 OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>9 8am Men's Bible Study, FS 4pm Worship, WC Q&A Pre-Meeting Session after service in B5</p>	<p>DECEMBER 24 Christmas Eve Worship 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm 9pm with communion</p> <p>DECEMBER 25 Christmas Day Worship 10am with communion</p> <p>DECEMBER 31 Book Club @ 1:30pm</p>
<p>14 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, FS 12:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Mesa Arts Center (off-site) 4:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Bingo Night (off-site)</p>	<p>15 OFFICE CLOSED 5:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Silver Star Theater Variety Show(off-site)</p>	<p>16 NEW MEMBER COMMISSIONING BLESSING OF THE SHOEBOXES 8am Men's Bible Study, FS 4pm Worship, WC 5pm Shoebox Packing Party, FH</p> 	<p>DECEMBER 25 Christmas Day Worship 10am with communion</p> <p>DECEMBER 31 Book Club @ 1:30pm</p>
<p>21 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, FS 11:30am Stephen Ministry, C4 12:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Mesa Arts Center (off-site)</p>	<p>22 OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>23 8am Men's Bible Study, FS 4pm Worship, WC</p>	<p>YTD STATEMENTS</p> <p>Year-to-Date Statements will be mailed out the first week of November. If you have corrections, please email Kathy so that we may fix them before the end of the year. Thank you! kmichel@victorylutheran.com</p>
<p>28 OFFICE CLOSED</p> <p>HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</p> 	<p>29 OFFICE CLOSED</p>	<p>30 8am Men's Bible Study, FS 4pm Worship, WC</p>	<p>CH = Chapel CY = Courtyard FH = Fellowship Hall FS = Fireside Room LB = Lobby LR = Luther Room PC = Prayer Chapel WD = Welcome Desk WC = Worship Center C4 = Community Room</p>



Thanks-Giving



“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.” - Romans 1:8

If you look closely at the verse (above), you will note St. Paul says that their ministry is making an impact around the world. The same can certainly be said about this congregation. Lives are being changed in the name of Jesus, not only at Victory here in Arizona, but also through our partner agencies all the way to South Africa.

Did You Know? If you are 70 ½ or older, you can give any amount up to \$100,000 each year from your IRA directly to Victory without having to pay income taxes on the gift. Your gift can satisfy all or part of your **Required Minimum Distribution** and you will see the impact of your generosity today. No matter your age, you can designate Victory as the beneficiary of all or a percentage of your IRA. As a tax-exempt religious organization, we receive your gift tax-free.

Consider these advantages:

- ▶ Avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to Victory
- ▶ Satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year
- ▶ Reduce your income, even if you do not itemize deductions
- ▶ Make a gift that is not subject to the deduction limits on charitable gifts
- ▶ Leaves a lasting legacy while furthering the mission work of Victory
- ▶ Available for donors who's age is 70 ½ and older
- ▶ The charitable rollover must take place before December 31st



If you choose to name Victory as a beneficiary, follow these simple steps to complete your gift:

- ▶ Contact your IRA administrator for a change-of-beneficiary form, or simply download a form from your provider's website.
- ▶ Name Victory Lutheran and the percentage of the gift. Return the form to your administrator.
- ▶ Let us know! We want to ensure that your generous charitable intent is carried out.

Contact the church office at 480-830-5024 to find out about the many advantages of using your IRA to make a gift to Victory.

FAMILY PROMISE BUS TOUR Come and Learn! November 12, 10am-1pm

Ted Taylor, Director of Family Promise, will personally give us a tour of the Scottsdale Day Center facility on Earl Dr. This location, which opened in early 2020, houses administrative offices, social worker offices, day center facilities for the families, and so much more! You will be amazed.

Join us to take an in depth look at how Family Promise of Greater Phoenix is helping families and their pets stay together and hear the plans to help those experiencing homelessness even more in the coming year.

Bus will depart Victory Tuesday, November 12 at 10:00am. Lunch will be provided. Anticipated return time is 1:30pm.

There are only 28 seats available on the bus so be sure to **SIGN UP** at the Welcome Center to reserve your spot!

An Unexpected Fruit

Prayer: Lord help us reconcile what we've seen in people's suffering.

As part of the 2024 South Africa Mission Team, that prayer has stuck with me.

We see the suffering and want to do something, but then we go home and they are still left dealing with it. What can we do? We start off by looking at hope and seeing the answer to prayer and sharing our own stories. Pastor Todd suggested, "Part of what we can do when we get back is to communicate some of our experience to others." So, when I returned back home I began to share the experience with a loved one who is incarcerated. Over the course of a week I emailed, sent photos and included condensed 30 second video clips of the trip. In return, my friend shared with me how he was deeply moved by what he had seen. Included here is the letter he wrote.

Eileen Hernandez, Director of Communications

To the Congregation,

In the Arizona Department of Corrections, it is said, and rightly so, that the prisoners run the prisons. The inmates in this state have seen fit, for several decades now, to operate these facilities along racial boundaries. The day to day life of the prisoner is lived in a completely segregated society. One's race dictates where he may sit in the chow hall and with whom he may eat, what section of the rec field he may occupy and with whom he may exercise, even who he may befriend. Experience has taught the convict that without a strict and unforgiving code, the prison yard would quickly devolve into chaos. Therefore, the consequences for disregarding these rules would shock the free person with their brutality.

I am approaching my fourteenth consecutive year of incarceration in this system. Upon arrival, the first-time felon is placed under the instruction of an older, more experienced convict for his indoctrination into this new world. I have often been this teacher.

Just recently I was instructing a new arrival, a youth, in the rules and regulations of his new segregated institutional life. When I saw a certain expression darken his features I told him not to worry, that in time he would come to accept these rules, then, by increments, become numb to them, until finally, he'd come to promote them. Once he lost a bit of his humanity, I explained, he'd come to see the wisdom in racism. I actually spoke these words with my own



ORCHARD: AFRICA
www.orchardafrica.org

mouth. And up until a few days ago . . . I believed them.

Then my dear friend, Eileen, returned from Africa. I began receiving what would ultimately be seven short videos and five emails. Each video was 30 seconds long. The emails arrived with attachments containing five pictures each. I was struck with awe at such selfless demonstrations of kindness and service. I saw the joyful hopping and clapping of the children, their excitement at being the centers of attention, I heard their joyful chatter. And my heart was softened. Here in this place of concrete and iron bars, steel security mesh and chain link fence, to my shame, I almost cried.

I scrolled through the pictures and found myself inexplicably returning over and over again to one photo in particular. It was a picture of two men, one black and one white, walking together hand in hand. The first time I saw it I was shocked. They

were holding hands! It was almost incomprehensible to me. The image didn't arouse my contempt, as one would expect. It wasn't base or crude, but pure, as if they themselves were also children. I felt as if I had caught sight of a flash of light from another kingdom — that this is what it will be like in heaven! Even now, the feelings and thoughts exceed my ability to express them. It's as if I had witnessed the stroke of a feather used to demolish a wall — the wall of a hardened heart. And that part of my own humanity, lost to me years ago, was restored.

Only days ago I was present at a meeting where I described the

sights and sounds of your mission and how they made me think and feel. I extended the offer to view these pictures and videos to anyone who cared to. Since then, men of other housing units have been sneaking past security devices and slipping through sally gates to get to my building. So far, none who have seen these proofs of your noble ministry have failed to be deeply moved.

So I've composed this humble letter to thank you. And to assure you that your ministry has touched more people than you may have thought, in more far away places than you may have expected.

May God bless you and smile upon you. May God turn his face to shine upon you. And give you peace.

Arthur C. - Arizona State Prison Complex



Pastor Joseph & Pastor Todd Mathison

I-HELP - A Channel for God's Grace Bev Locke, VLC Coordinator for 13 years

In 2010, the City of Mesa, Mesa United Way, and Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest joined forces to address the growing number of single, homeless women in Mesa. Their collaboration led to the creation of the Interfaith Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP), with local congregations recruited to support this mission. Initially, the program was minimal, providing shelter only a few nights a week. By December 2010, ten churches were on board, allowing I-HELP to offer shelter year-round. Women would sleep on army cots in church spaces, the only emergency shelter available for women at that time.

Victory Lutheran Church became a dedicated partner, joining the program in 2011. With the support of the Victory Lutheran Church Women (VLCW), the church provided essentials like sheets, towels, and blankets. Initially, a van brought up to 25 women to Victory every other Thursday, where they would set up cots and bedding before settling in for the night. A volunteer oversaw the arrivals and departures, ensuring the church's doors were open and closed safely.

The program quickly expanded through the efforts of compassionate congregations and volunteers. Victory's involvement grew to include not only shelter but also sack lunches, meals, and inflatable beds to replace the cots as they wore out. LSS-SW increased case management services to help participants develop plans for returning to stability. **Over the years, I-HELP has served more than 2,000 women, helping many regain a stable life.**

Victory became a preferred location for participants, offering amenities like showers, Wi-Fi, TV, comfortable beds, and nutritious meals. The church provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner during each stay, along with a safe, welcoming environment, including a secure patio for group gatherings. The women came to refer to their time at Victory as a "stay at the Hilton." Volunteers ensured that each guest felt treated as an honored guest, contributing to a comprehensive program that involved up to 20 volunteers each month.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges, reducing the number of participants from 25-30 to about 12. Health precautions were implemented, with linens taken to a laundromat for thorough



cleaning. While other churches temporarily suspended their

involvement, Victory continued to welcome women, adapting the program to allow 15 participants to stay two consecutive nights twice a month. This arrangement helped them attend appointments or interviews without the burden of daily relocation.

Through it all, the program remained a model of how a congregation can share God's love in tangible ways. The case manager from Lutheran Social Services used Victory's facilities for private meetings with participants to discuss their progress. Witnessing the strength, resilience, and faith of the women has been a humbling experience for volunteers, who were enriched through their service and the relationships formed along the way.

However, change is inevitable. As of October 31, 2024, the City of Mesa will no longer provide stable funding for I-HELP, redirecting

federal grant money to a centralized "bricks and mortar" shelter. This shift will allow clients to receive services in a single location, reducing the need for daily moves. While this transition will benefit the women in some ways, they will miss the personalized care provided by the congregations. The program's assets will be redirected to other local ministries and charities, including I-HELP in the West Valley, to continue supporting people experiencing homelessness.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who has contributed to this ministry over the years.

Your time, talent, and generosity made it possible for Victory to go above and beyond, providing not just shelter but also grants for education, training, licensing, and other support to help participants rebuild their lives. Together, we have made a difference in many lives, and the spirit of I-HELP will live on through other programs and initiatives at Victory and beyond.



**NOVEMBER
2024**

S.A.F.E.

SINGLES ACTIVITY FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

**SIGN UP REQUIRED FOR ALL EVENTS IN ORDER TO HELP WITH PLANNING AND SETUP.
ALL TICKETED EVENTS MUST BE PAID AT TIME OF SIGN UP.**

Boca Taqueria (Off-Site)

Friday, November 1 @ 11:00am | 1249 N. Greenfield, Mesa

Enjoy an alfresco lunch of salads, soups, tacos, or house specials on a misted patio. Our reservation is under the name of "Victory Lutheran." We will alternate dinner one month, lunch the next month to help satisfy everyone's time preferences.



Board & Card Games

We usually meet the 1st Tuesday of the month. However, November 5th is Election Day and Victory's Fellowship Hall is a voting site. We are taking a break in December and will resume Board & Card Games in January 2025.



Mesa Arts Center "Out to Lunch" Concert Series (Off-Site)

1 E. Main Street, Mesa

Thursday, November 7, 14, 21 & December 5 @ 12:30-1:30pm

Relax and enjoy captivating live music in a beautiful, shady outdoor setting. Each week is a different sound, and style in this concert series. Lunch items available for purchase. Bring your favorite, comfortable folding chair or blanket. Transportation will be provided ONLY to the first event on November 7th. Bus leaves at 11:15am. Cost for transportation is \$5.00.



Nov 7 - American Highwaymen
Nov 14 - Buffett's Margaritaville
Nov 21 - Take It Easy, Songs of the 70's
Dec 5 - The Pickup Lines



MESA ARTS CENTER

Bingo Night (Off-Site)

Thursday, November 14 @ 4:30pm | Sunland Village, 4601 E. Dolphin Street, Mesa

Join us for the 2nd Thursday of each month. Doors open at 4:30pm for you to get a light meal, pick out your lucky seat and purchase your Bingo cards. Game begins at 6:30pm sharp! No admission after 6:30pm.



Feed My Starving Children (Off-Site)

November and December we will NOT be making our usual monthly visit, as our pre-arranged slot reservation falls on November 27, which is the same day of Victory's Thanksgiving Eve Worship at 4:00pm followed by dinner at 5:00pm. December 25 — well, we all know why we won't be here on that day! Join us again in January 2025.



Silver Star Theater Variety Show (Off-Site)

Friday, November 15 @ 5:30pm | 5247 E. Brown Road, Mesa

The Silver Star Band performs a little bit of something for everyone! Featuring music from the 1930s to the 1970s, the show incorporates different styles and genres from Rock n' Roll to Country, Big Band to Broadway, and Blues to "Pop" favorites, all with hilarious comedy as well as much more! We will meet outside the theater.

Note: Tickets for this event are now closed.



enter his gates with
THANKSGIVING
and his courts with praise
— PSALMS 100:4 —



**ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING**

■ ■ ■
November 17, 2024
@ 12:30pm



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WORSHIP SERVICES

SATURDAY 4pm Traditional
SUNDAY 8 & 9:30am Traditional
11am Contemporary

