



*happy new year*  
**2026**

**Dear Victory Family,**

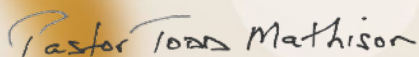
The turning of the calendar always invites reflection. New Year's resolutions come easily; deeper peace does not. As we step into a new year—unknown days, uncharted challenges, and unexpected gifts—the apostle Paul offers a prayer-shaped promise: rejoice, pray honestly, give thanks freely, and entrust what you cannot control to God. The result, Paul says, is not the absence of difficulty, but the peace of God that transcends all understanding—a peace that guards hearts and minds when life does not go according to plan.

As many of you heard the final weekend of December, I want to share again why our upcoming Winter Study has changed. I recently learned that I will be undergoing scheduled open-heart bypass surgery on January 22. This was not news I anticipated receiving, and I am still adjusting to it. In the weeks leading up to surgery, I'll be paying close attention to stress and pacing myself wisely. I will continue working and preaching, but with a lighter schedule, and I will step back from teaching the Winter Study. After surgery, I'll focus fully on recovery for a number of weeks.

Because that timing would likely interrupt the Romans study partway through, we felt it was wise to postpone it for now. The good news is that we had already planned strong follow-on studies on Spiritual Gifts and Adult Confirmation, and those will move forward as scheduled. During this time, Pastors Denton and Renee will be preaching more, and our staff team has planned carefully for this brief season. You will be well cared for.

Most of all, I want you to know this: I am genuinely at peace. In a steady and very real way, I am experiencing the peace Paul describes—grounding, sustaining, and deeply reassuring. I trust that God will use this season to deepen my compassion and shape me into a more understanding pastor, able to walk alongside you in ways that are already familiar to so many. Thank you for your prayers, your kindness, and for walking with Anne and me into this new year—trusting not in what we know, but in the God who holds us fast.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,



Pastor Todd Mathison

**"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!....Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

Philippians 4:4-7



Todd Mathison, Lead Pastor  
Denton Bennet, Associate Pastor  
Renée Bennett, Discipleship Pastor  
Dirk Duhlstine, Chaplain

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



# Welcome!

Meet our new  
**CHURCH  
CUSTODIAN**  
**Daniel Curran**



We look forward to  
having Daniel work at  
Victory beginning  
Monday, January 5th.

## Dear Victory Lutheran Church,

I am a proud and devoted husband and father who values faith, family, and service. My wonderful and beautiful wife, Deajenae and I have been married for 10 years, and together we have seven children, with another on the way! Our children's names are Maricella, Ezekiel, Stella, Lucia, Dominic, Gianna and Cecilia. Six of the seven are still living at home and are under 10 years old which makes our home a very lively place filled with energy, laughter, learning, and growth. Parenting a young and growing family has shaped my daily life and continues to teach me patience, humility, and the importance of showing up with love and consistency.

Family is central to who I am, and being a father has deeply influenced my values and work ethic. I believe strongly in leading by example, whether at home, in the workplace, or within the community. Creating a stable, supportive, and nurturing environment for my family is one of my highest priorities, and those same principles guide how I approach my responsibilities and relationships. My marriage of a decade reflects a commitment to partnership, teamwork, and perseverance through every season of life.

Growing up in Arizona has given me a strong appreciation for community, resilience, and service to others. These values align closely with my faith and my desire to contribute meaningfully wherever I am called to serve. I am grateful for the opportunity to work at Victory Lutheran Church and to be part of a community focused on joyful and loving worship, compassion, and care for others. It is my hope to support the mission of the church through faithful service, a strong work ethic, and a heart for helping people feel welcomed and supported. I look forward to building relationships, growing in faith, and serving alongside this church family.

*Daniel Curran*

JOIN US

## PRAYER & PRAISE

4:00 pm

Wednesday, January 7

A welcoming space to worship, pray,  
and experience God's presence.

VICTORY

## PRAYER & PRAISE WORSHIP SERVICE WED, JANUARY 7 @ 4:00PM

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to come before the Lord in reflection, prayer, and worship. Please join us as we create space to ask God difficult questions and listen for His answers. This service is open to everyone—especially those who have never attended one before. You are welcome to pray silently, simply listen, or rest in God's presence. Come as you are and enjoy a beautiful time of community and worship. Music will be led by Pastor Dirk Duhlstine, offering an opportunity to worship God together through song as we re-center our faith for the year ahead.



# FORWARD TOGETHER

## FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP IN THIS SEASON

Pastor Todd Mathison

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a story called the Parable of the Talents. It teaches us that being faithful is not about holding on to what we have but about using it wisely. The strongest warning is not for the servant who tried and took a risk, but for the one who was afraid and did nothing.

Victory Lutheran Church has been given many good gifts. We have faithful people, inspiring worship, clear Bible teaching, caring leaders, and generous givers. The question is not whether we have been given much—we have. The question is whether we will use those gifts in the right way. As leaders, our goal is not to stay comfortable or avoid risk, but to live in a way that would lead Jesus to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

At our Annual Meeting last November, it was noted that Victory has been spending more than we receive for the past two years and that this approach will continue into 2026. While the 2026 spending plan was formally approved, I recognize the need to explain the purpose and reasoning behind it more clearly. Here is the story.

Victory is in year two of a three-year plan approved by the Church Council to intentionally spend more than we receive for a short time. This did not happen by accident, and it was not caused by a crisis. It was a careful and prayerful decision. The Council chose to use some of our savings to support ministry during a time of pastoral and staff change that would lead to growth.

This plan was never meant to last forever. The Council does not believe that spending more than we receive is sustainable over the long term. This approach has not been about carelessness, but about using what God has given us wisely and faithfully for a specific season—just as we seek to do in every season.

At the end of 2023, Victory had over \$600,000 set aside for regular ministry expenses. Rather than holding all of those funds indefinitely, the Council prayerfully chose to use a portion of them for ministry, which is why the money was given in the first place. Even with this intentional use, Victory still has over \$400,000 in savings. Staff will continue to monitor spending carefully, and the Council will prayerfully review the 2027 budget as we move forward together.

**“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”**

Matthew 25:21



continued



# Frequently Asked Questions: Victory's Ministry and Finances



## Is Victory Lutheran Church broke?

**No.** Victory is financially stable. We currently have over \$400,000 in savings set aside for regular ministry expenses, in addition to nearly the same amount reserved for designated purposes. We are intentionally using a portion of these funds to support ministry growth in this season. This is not about survival; it is about faithfully and wisely stewarding the resources God has entrusted to us.



## Why are we spending more than we receive right now?

**This approach is part of a three-year plan approved by the Church Council.** It is temporary and closely monitored. The purpose is to support ministry during a season of pastoral and staff transition, not to create long-term challenges. Faithfulness means wisely using what God has given us, rather than holding back out of fear.



## Is the staff overspending the budget?

**No.** As of November 30, 2025, staff spending was 7% under budget, which is \$94,055 less than planned. This shows careful and responsible spending.



## How can we afford our pastoral staff?

Victory currently has four pastors—two full-time and two part-time. At the same time, we are taking intentional steps to manage costs responsibly.

For 2026, overall staff costs have been reduced by 3%. In addition, we have adjusted staffing roles in practical ways:

- ▶ The Chaplain position has been reduced to half-time.
- ▶ The AVL Coordinator position has been reduced to part-time.

These were difficult decisions, made carefully and prayerfully to steward our resources well and protect the long-term health of the church.



## How can we afford Victory @ Leisure World?

**Victory @ Leisure World is set up to support itself.**

- ▶ We do not pay rent at Leisure World Café.
- ▶ The first six months of the pastor's small stipend are already paid for outside the budget.
- ▶ Giving there has covered its monthly costs.

This means it does not take money away from the rest of the church.





**As of December 28, year-end giving brought us very close to covering all of our 2025 ministry expenses!**



**What have we spent the extra money on?**

**The spending has been intentional and planned.**

- ▶ 2024 Year One focused on building appropriate staffing during a time of significant change. We also launched our Contemporary Worship Service in April.
- ▶ 2025 Year Two focused on stabilizing staff and investing in Victory Forward growth and outreach.
- ▶ 2026 Year Three is focusing on expanded outreach, seeing ministry results, and growing our mission.

*Victory Forward* represents over \$114,000 of the 2026 budget and directly supports the mission and direction approved by the Church Council.



**Has giving at Victory decreased?**

**No.** Giving at Victory has remained steady over the past two years. In fact, giving increased by nearly 7% in 2023 and has continued at that same level since then. This steady support reflects the faithfulness and generosity of our church family and makes our shared ministry possible. Our prayer and our plan are to continue growing stewardship and generosity so that our ministry can expand and reach even more people.



**How did our finances end up this year?**

We are deeply thankful. **As of December 28, year-end giving brought us very close to covering all of our 2025 ministry expenses**, and gifts still being received in these final days of the year may bring us to fully fund our ministry. Once our fiscal year books officially close, we will share the confirmed numbers.



**What should I remember most?**

What is already clear is this: God moved His people to respond with generous and grateful hearts. As we close the year, we give thanks to God for His indescribable gift in Christ and for the generous hearts He continues to shape among us. Your giving flowed from gratitude, not obligation, and the year-end response was a genuine testimony to God's work in this congregation.

Because so many of you stepped forward—many with generous stretch gifts—our shared mission is strengthened, the reach of the Gospel continues to expand, and Victory is well positioned to keep moving forward together. We do so not driven by fear, but grounded in faith and hope, stewarding God's gifts with care and responsibility while trusting Him to use this church to share the Good News of Jesus today and in the years ahead. To God alone be the glory.

## **LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

Council minutes and the latest financial reports are always available in the front office.

***"Being transformed by our joyful and loving church"***

- New Sermon Series (p. 4)
- Discovering Victory (p. 14)
- Christmas Concert (p. 12)
- Christmas Eve Worship (p. 16)

***"Building relationships and serving with others in God's family"***

- Dementia/Alzheimer Care Partner Seminar (p. 17)
- GriefShare (p. 18)
- Prayer & Praise Worship Service (p. 2)
- Quilters Group (p. 18)
- S.A.F.E. Singles Ministry (p. 19)
- Small Groups (p. 15)
- Victory Book Club (p. 18)
- VLC Concert Series: U32 Jazz (p. 8)



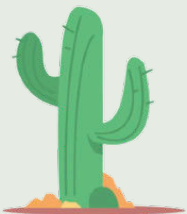
DISCOVERING  
VICTORY

DISCOVERING  
COMMUNITY

Discovering  
LIFE

DISCOVERING  
REACH

DISCOVERING  
GROWTH



***"Extending God's love and Good News locally and globally"***

- Family Promise (p.13)
- Women's Ministry Luncheon (p. 9)  
"Shop With A Cop"

***"Deepening faith daily through God's Word and prayer"***

- Year-End Giving Campaign Update (p. 5)
- Spiritual Gifts Class (p. 15)
- Adult Confirmation Class (p. 8)
- Estate & Planned Giving Seminar (p. 17)



## NEW SERMON SERIES:

# DISCOVERING LIFE

It is easy to assume that life's most meaningful chapters are behind us, but what if this season could be the most fruitful, purposeful, and fulfilling of all? In *Discovering Life*, we walk with Jesus at the very beginning of His ministry as He calls ordinary people into an extraordinary life with God, challenging us to move beyond settling for less. This series invites us to discover the life Jesus offers right now and to listen anew for His call into deeper faith, renewed purpose, and Spirit-led living in this present season.

**January 3 & 4, 2026**

### **"Step Into The Journey" - Matthew 4:18-22**

Jesus issues a personal, timely, and life-changing invitation—not to a program, but to Himself—calling us to follow Him and trust that He is the One who will shape our lives. Discipleship is not about striving harder, but about abiding deeper in Christ, the true Vine, who forms us by grace and bears fruit through us. And as Jesus' call leads us to the Table, we are invited to receive His life given for us and to prayerfully ask, "What is my next step with Jesus in 2026?"

**January 10 & 11, 2026**

### **"Step Out & Invite" - John 1:40-46**

The gospel most often spreads through simple, personal invitations—one friend bringing another to meet Jesus, one life changed at a time. When people encounter Christ, they naturally want others to experience that same grace, and faith grows as invitations are extended around tables, in conversations, and through everyday relationships. This message calls each of us to take a clear next step: prayerfully and intentionally invite one person to Victory this year, trusting Jesus to do what only He can do.

**January 17 & 18, 2026**

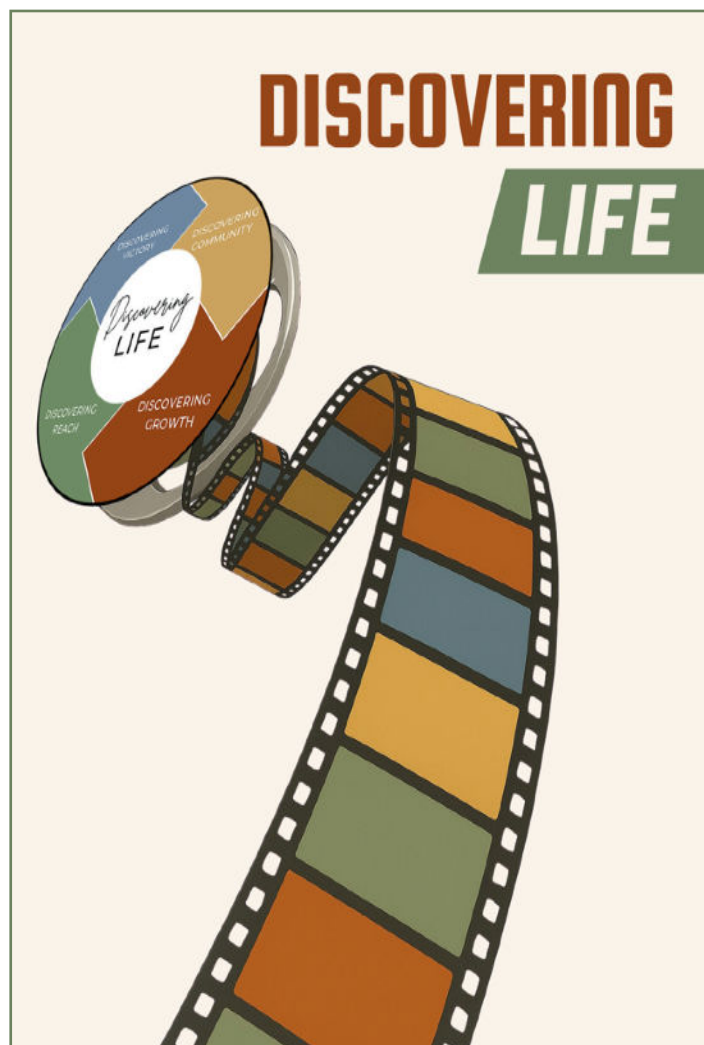
### **"Step In & Connect" - Acts 2:42-47**

God never designed the Christian life to be lived alone; faith grows best when it is shared, practiced, and lived out with others. While authentic community requires risk—being honest, vulnerable, and open to the possibility of rejection or losing our independence—those very risks are the pathway to deeper faith and lasting spiritual growth. God invites us to step into a radically counter-cultural way of life by connecting with others in genuine Christian community, trusting that God meets us and shapes us most powerfully when we walk together rather than alone.

**January 24 & 25, 2026**

### **"Step Up & Grow" - Colossians 2:6-9, 11-15**

The Christian life is a daily, ongoing journey of learning to live more fully in Christ, letting our lives be shaped by who he is and what he has already done for us. As we remain rooted in Christ, our faith grows strong and steady—not through self-effort, but through a deepening trust in the saving work that has set us free and given us new life. We are invited into everyday practices of Scripture and prayer, not as religious tasks, but as the means by which God anchors us, grows us, and empowers us to live confidently as disciples of Jesus in the world.







## U32 JAZZ: The Music of Dave Brubeck Sun, January 18 @ 3:00pm

Step into the imaginative world of Dave Brubeck, one of the most influential and coolest voices in jazz history. Brubeck broke rules and expanded possibilities—bringing odd time signatures like Take Five into the mainstream, blending classical form with swing, and proving that jazz could be both deeply intellectual and irresistibly fun. His music is filled with groove, lyricism, and joy.

Union32, a Phoenix-based jazz quintet, brings Brubeck's music to life with fresh, original arrangements that honor the spirit of the classics while adding new colors, energy, and conversation between the players. Expect familiar melodies, unexpected twists, and the kind of dynamic interplay that makes live jazz so exciting.

Set in the warm, resonant space of Victory Lutheran, this concert is an invitation to listen deeply, tap your foot, and rediscover why Dave Brubeck's music still feels bold, curious, and alive—and why Union32 is the perfect group to guide you through his world.

Join us Sunday, January 18, 3pm for this first concert of 2026. Bring a friend and plan to stay for the reception following!



## Adult Confirmation Class Mondays, Jan. 26-Feb. 16 4-Week Series @ 10am & 6pm

Adult Confirmation is a fun, interactive 4-part series taught by Pastor Denton and Pastor Renée. We will explore what it means to be a Lutheran Christian by digging into scripture to better understand what discovery Martin Luther made that changed his life and how this Biblical theology applies to our lives today.

Whether it has been many years since you attended Confirmation and or maybe you never have, this promises to be a fun and interactive class providing you with some tools to better understand what makes us Lutheran Christians. Come join us to find out!

SIGN UP at the Welcome Desk.

In Luther's Small Catechism, all the commandments can be summed up in the first: "You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." This explanation reverberates throughout the rest of his explanations of the commandments; each one starts, "We should fear and love God so that..."



## Christmas Luncheon 12.13.25

This year's guest speaker was Amy Sailor with the Mesa **Shop with a Cop** program and special musical entertainment by the *Tremble Clefs*. *Shop with a Cop* is a community-driven holiday initiative that pairs local police officers with children who are facing difficult circumstances, offering them a joyful and supportive shopping experience. Beyond the shopping, the program helps build positive relationships between youth and law enforcement, creating moments of connection, trust, and encouragement.



### WINTER SCHEDULE

(October-April)

2nd Tuesday of the Month

#### Esperanza Bible Study

2nd Tuesday @ 10:00am, Room C5

Sandy Tran, Chair

763-291-5837

#### Mary Bible Study

2nd Tuesday @ 1:30pm

Meets in home (call for location)



Gayle Schmidt, Chair

612-867-2679

Current study is  
"Bad Girls of the Bible"  
by Liz Curtis Higgs.  
Books available for  
purchase in the front office.





SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<p><b>UN-DECORATE THE CHURCH JANUARY 7 @ 10AM</b></p> <p>A HUGE thank you to everyone who helped decorate this season.</p> <p>Now it's time to put all the decorations away and we need your help!</p>			
<p>4</p> <p><b>COMMUNION WEEKEND</b></p> <p>8:30-11am Morning Fellowship, FH</p> <p>8am Worship &amp; Communion, WC</p> <p>9:30am Worship, WC</p> <p>9:30am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>11am ContemporaryWorship,WC</p> <p>11am Children's Church, NR</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p>12:30pm GriefShare, C4</p> <p>2pm Memorial Service for Vern Barlow, WC</p> <p>4pm Confirmation Class, C1</p>	<p>6</p> <p>6:30pm "Seekers" Small Group, B7</p> <p>7pm AA Men's Meeting, C5</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p><b>10am Un-Decorate Church</b></p> <p>10am Men's Bible Study, C1</p> <p>12:30pm Al-Anon, C4</p> <p>1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p><b>4pm Prayer &amp; Praise Worship Service, CH</b></p> <p>6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>8pm AA Meeting, C5</p>
<p>11</p> <p>8:30-11am Morning Fellowship, FH</p> <p>8am Worship &amp; Communion, WC</p> <p>9:30am Worship, WC</p> <p>9:30am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>11am ContemporaryWorship,WC</p> <p>11am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>12:30pm Discovering Victory, B7</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p><b>10am Spiritual Gifts Class, FH</b></p> <p>12:30pm GriefShare, C4</p> <p>4pm Confirmation Class, C1</p> <p><b>6pm Spiritual Gifts Class, FH</b></p> 	<p>13</p> <p>10am Esperanza Bible Study, C5</p> <p><b>1pm Dementia/Alzheimer Care Partner Seminar, CH</b></p> <p>1:30pm Mary Bible Study, meets in home</p> <p>7pm AA Men's Meeting, C5</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p>10am Men's Bible Study, C1</p> <p>12:30pm Al-Anon, C4</p> <p>1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>8pm AA Meeting, C5</p>
<p>18</p> <p>8:30-11am Morning Fellowship, FH</p> <p>8am Worship &amp; Communion, WC</p> <p>9:30am Worship, WC</p> <p>9:30am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>11am ContemporaryWorship,WC</p> <p>11am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>12:30pm Discovering Victory, B7</p> <p><b>3pm U32 Jazz Concert, WC</b></p> <p><b>7pm Spouse Whisperer (off-site)</b></p> <p><b>Bus leaves @ 5:30pm</b></p>	<p>19</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p><b>10am Spiritual Gifts Class, FH</b></p> <p>12:30pm GriefShare, C4</p> <p><b>1:30pm Estate &amp; Planned Giving Seminar, B7</b></p> <p>4pm Confirmation Class, C1</p> <p><b>6pm Spiritual Gifts Class, FH</b></p>	<p>20</p> <p>8:30am-2:30pm Quilters, FH</p> <p>3pm Council Meeting, B7</p> <p>6:30pm "Seekers" Small Group, B7</p> <p>7pm AA Men's Meeting, C5</p>	<p>21</p> <p>8:30-11:30am Quilters, FH</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p>10am Men's Bible Study, C1</p> <p>12:30pm Al-Anon, C4</p> <p>1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>8pm AA Meeting, C5</p>
<p>25</p> <p><b>BLESSING OF THE QUILTS</b></p> <p>8:30-11am Morning Fellowship, FH</p> <p>8am Worship &amp; Communion, WC</p> <p>9:30am Worship, WC</p> <p>9:30am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>11am ContemporaryWorship,WC</p> <p>11am Children's Church, NR</p> <p>12:30pm Discovering Victory, B7</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p><b>10am Adult Confirmation, FH</b></p> <p>12:30pm GriefShare, C4</p> <p>4pm Confirmation Class, C1</p> <p><b>6pm Adult Confirmation, FH</b></p> 	<p>27</p> <p>7pm AA Men's Meeting, C5</p> <p>1:30-3:00pm Book Club, B7</p> <p><b>4:30pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event Dinner at Wendy's (off-site)</b></p>	<p>28</p> <p>9-11:30am Food Pantry</p> <p>10am Men's Bible Study, C1</p> <p>12:30pm Al-Anon, C4</p> <p>1pm Bell Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>6:30pm Choir Rehearsal, WC</p> <p>8pm AA Meeting, C5</p> <p><b>9am S.A.F.E. Singles Event Feed My Starving Children Bus leaves @ 8am</b></p>
<p><b>Family Promise Host Week: January 25 - February 1, 2026</b> →</p>			



# Office Hours: Mon-Thurs, 8am-4pm, 480-830-5024



THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	2 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	3 <b>COMMUNION WEEKEND</b> 8am Men's Bible Study, C5 4pm Worship, WC
8 9:30am Women's Ministry Board Meeting, C1 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, C5	9 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	10 8am Men's Bible Study, C5 4pm Worship, WC
15 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, C5 3pm Foundation Board Meeting, B7	16 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> <b>4pm S.A.F.E. Singles Event</b> <b>Arizona Balloon Classic</b> <b>Bus leaves @ 2:45pm</b>	17 8am Men's Bible Study, C5 4pm Worship, W
22 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, C5	23 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	24 <b>BLESSING OF THE QUILTS</b> 8am Men's Bible Study, C5 4pm Worship, WC
29 10am Prayer Group, B7 11am Al-Anon Meeting, C5	30 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	31 8am Men's Bible Study, C5 4pm Worship, WC

## UPCOMING IN FEBRUARY

**February 1**  
Starting Point, 12pm

**February 8**  
Unglaub Duo Concert, 3pm

**February 9**  
Estate & Planned Giving Seminar, 1:30pm

**February 10**  
Dementia Care Partner Seminar, 1pm

**February 17 & 18**  
Quilters, 8:30am

**February 18**  
Ash Wednesday  
4pm & 6pm

**February 24**  
Book Club, 1:30pm

**February 25**  
Lenten Worship, 4pm  
Soup Supper, 5pm



## DONATION STATEMENTS

will be mailed out in January. If you winter in Arizona, to ensure you receive your donation statement, please confirm or update your Arizona mailing address.

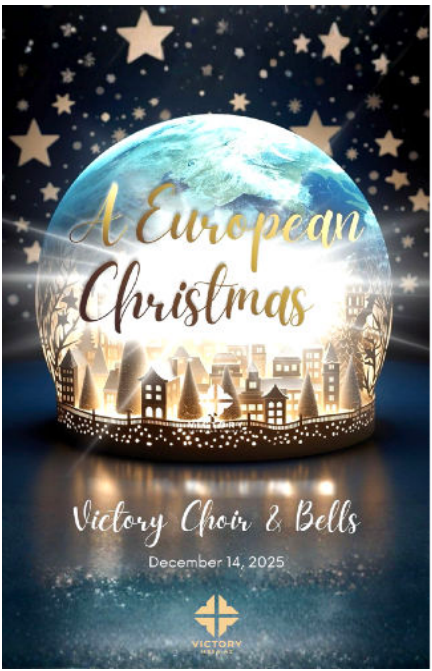
Email Kathy at:  
kmichel@victorylutheran.com

C1 = Luther Room  
C4 = Community Room  
CH = Chapel  
CY = Courtyard  
FH = Fellowship Hall  
LB = Lobby  
PC = Prayer Chapel  
WC = Worship Center

**Family Promise Host Week: January 25 - February 1, 2026**



Christmas Concert 12.14.25



Scan QR code  
to watch again!  
Share this video  
with a friend.







**SIGN-UPS begin January 10th!**

## **FAMILY PROMISE @ VICTORY**

### **UPCOMING HOST WEEK: JANUARY 25 - FEBRUARY 1, 2026**

#### **ABOUT FAMILY PROMISE:**

##### **WE STOP HOMELESSNESS BEFORE IT STARTS**

We help at-risk families with past rent and deposit assistance so they can remain in a home together and never have to experience homelessness.

##### **WE KEEP A FAMILY TOGETHER**

We keep the family together (including their pets), because in times of crisis, that's where people find the strength that leads to success.

##### **WE STAY WITH A FAMILY**

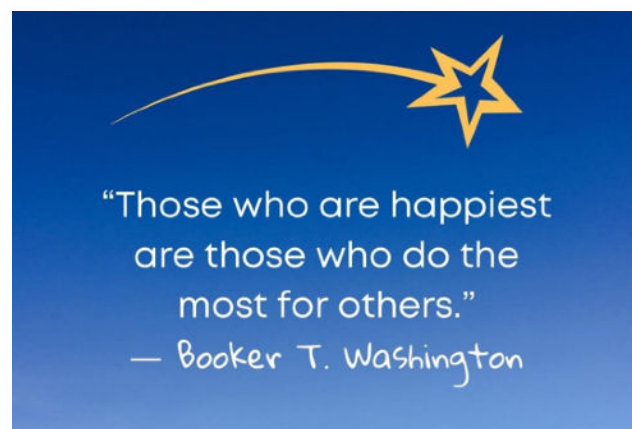
Through our Stabilization Program, we support families after they leave our emergency shelter to ensure they become self-sufficient and can stay in their home long-term.

##### **WE PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY**

We have over 3,000 volunteers and 38 faith congregations that help provide overnight shelter and show love and kindness to homeless kids and their parents when they need it most.

##### **WE ARE FINANCIALLY RESPONSIBLE**

Because of our community partnership model and a 60-day shelter protocol, our average costs are less than half the typical family shelter. More than 75% of every gift goes directly to our work with homeless families.



#### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

##### **Setup 4:00-5:00pm &**

##### **Takedown 6:30am-7:30am**

Volunteers set up the accommodations on Sunday afternoon. This includes blowing up the beds, making them, and arranging the rooms for the families. Likewise, when the families leave, the following Sunday morning, volunteers take down and repack all the beds.

##### **Meal Volunteers, 5:00pm-7:00pm**

Dinner is a hot meal and can be prepared at volunteer's home and brought in or at the church. Other volunteers help setup the meal and are encouraged to have dinner and fellowship with the families.

##### **Overnight Hosts, 7:00pm - 6:30am**

These volunteers join the families for dinner. After dinner they may participate in activities with the children.

##### **Laundry Helpers**

These volunteers pick up laundry mid-week or on Sunday. Return washed and folded.

*As we wrap up 2025 and look ahead to 2026, I am deeply grateful for every member of the Family Promise community. Your generosity, prayers, and advocacy are turning challenges into opportunities, uncertainty into security, and worry into joy. From all of us at Family Promise, thank you for making these holidays brighter for families across Arizona. May your season be full of peace, love, and joy, and may we continue to walk together in hope in the year ahead.*



Ted Taylor, Family Promise Chief Executive Officer

## Discovering Victory: Your Invitation to Go Deeper

**Three Sundays. One incredible opportunity to discover what God is doing at Victory Lutheran Church.**

Whether you've been part of Victory for decades or you're still exploring what it means to call this place home, Discovering Victory is designed for you. This isn't just a membership class—it's the beginning of an intentional discipleship journey, and everyone is invited.

**Join Us Sundays!  
January 12, 19 & 26  
12:30-2:30pm**

### Who Should Come?

If you've been attending Victory and wondering, "What's next for me here?"—this class is your answer. If you're considering membership but want to learn more first—perfect, come discover. If you've been a member for years but never took this class—we'd love to have you join us. And if you simply want to understand Victory's heart, mission, and vision more deeply—you belong here too.

Here's what's important: **this class is not required for membership, and it's not restricted to those who are new.** It's simply the first step in our discipleship pathway as we live out our mission: To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### What Will You Discover?

Over three engaging Sundays, you'll gain clarity about who Victory is, what we believe, and how you can take your next steps in following Jesus.

**Week 1 (January 12)** - Pastor Denton will share Victory's story, our core values, and the vision that drives everything we do. You'll understand not just what we believe, but why it matters for your spiritual journey.

**Week 2 (January 19)** - Pastor Denton will explore our Lutheran distinctives—the theological foundations that shape how we worship, serve, and grow together. You'll discover the richness of grace-centered faith and how it transforms everyday life.

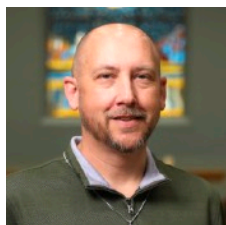
**Week 3 (January 26)** - Pastor Renee will open the door to getting involved. You'll explore ministry opportunities, discover your gifts, and see how you can make a meaningful impact right where God has placed you.

Each session creates space for genuine community, honest questions, and deeper friendships. You'll leave with a clearer picture of your place in God's mission through Victory Lutheran Church.

### This Is Discipleship

Discovering Victory isn't just about learning information—it's about transformation. It's where intentional faith formation begins. It's where you move from spectator to participant, from attendee to disciple-maker.

Don't miss this opportunity to discover—or rediscover—what God is doing at Victory. Your next step in discipleship starts here.

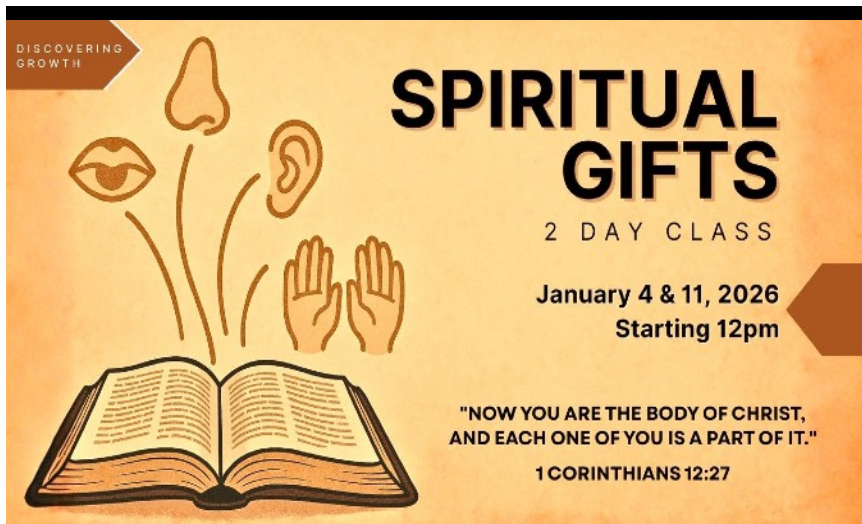


To register sign up at the Welcome Desk or scan the QR code below.

Pastor Denton Bennet  
dbennet@victorylutheran.com  
480-830-5024 xt. 115







## Discover Your Purpose! Join our 2-Week Spiritual Gifts Class January 12 & 19 @ 10am & 6pm

Pastor Renée Bennett will be teaching a two-part Spiritual Gifts class with a morning and evening session to choose from.

### Here is the WHY

God does not want you to be unaware of His Calling on your life! We all have spiritual gifts. Spiritual Gifts are God's Provision for the Holy Spirit to minister to His people through His people (that's us!)

We are the **ONLY VESSELS** the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish His work here on earth.

### 1 Corinthians 12:4

*"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."*

### 1 Corinthians 12:21

*"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'"*

We are God's creation. He made each of us with a purpose. He gave each of us a unique combination of gifts, abilities and calling. Though we are all different, we have one thing in common. Each one of us was created to worship! God has a plan for you. Do not be ignorant of your gifts! Our gifts are meant to build up the Body of Christ, the Church. Come and learn how God has uniquely shaped you and pray about what your gifts can mean to Kingdom Building here on earth.

**SIGN UP at the Welcome Desk.**



We are better together isn't just a catchy cliché, it's scriptural. Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." We are made to be in community with other believers to share food, fellowship and the Word, and sometimes to just be present. In our small group there are times when we sit in silent prayer and other times when we are laughing at what life is throwing our way. We lift each other up. We walk beside each other when life gets hard and we celebrate with each other when we receive good news. Romans 1:11-12 "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."

When we meet together and encourage each other we are living out what God has called us to do. Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Are you in a small group? What are you waiting for? Can't find one that meets when you are available? Why not start your own? We have information on our website that can help get you started!

Renée Bennett  
Discipleship Pastor  
480-830-5024 xt. 121

[rbennett@victorylutheran.com](mailto:rbennett@victorylutheran.com)





# Christmas Eve 12.24.25







**Unlocking  
your Legacy**

By Mark Johnson  
Development Consultant  
Recognized for his expertise in  
Estate planning and charitable gifting

## Estate & Planned Giving Free Seminar

**Date: January 19, 2025**  
**Time: 1:30pm - 3pm**  
**Location: Victory Lutheran Church  
Room B7**



## Estate & Planned Giving Seminar Sponsored by VLC Foundation January 19 @ 1:30pm

Don't miss this opportunity to shape your legacy and leave a lasting impact! Our presenter, Mark Johnson, is recognized for his expertise in estate planning and charitable gifting. He has presented numerous Estate Planning Workshops in churches around the country and has been a featured speaker at many conferences. Learn about the different aspects of Estate Planning and why you should plan. As you delve into the intricacies of estate planning, you'll find a multitude of compelling reasons to secure your legacy:

- Biblical Perspective on Estate Planning
- Avoid Probate
- Reduce Estate Taxes
- Leave Gifts for Your Favorite Charity
- Individual Consulting Opportunity
- And Much More!

Sign up at the Welcome Desk or register online for Victory Lutheran Church's Estate & Planned Giving Seminar!

## Dementia/Alzheimer Care Partner Seminar

As you may know, the neurological condition known as Dementia that affects the brain, causing loss of memory, thinking, and reasoning has life altering effects of many individuals and families. This is a powerful three-part series on Dementia Education.

**Session One, January 13**, deals with brain changes that happen during the dementia journey. We will learn how dementia affects each area of the brain and how we, as caregivers, can work with the disease instead of against it.

**Session Two, February 10**, deals with how we can learn to 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.

**Session Three, March 10**, teaches us to master three techniques that will make our days go by faster and will help keep our loved one happy and entertained.

Each session also includes a question-and-answer section at the end of each seminar. **Adult day care is available should anyone have the need for it.** Please sign up at the Welcome Desk so that we may plan appropriately for those who will attend.

**Sign up at the Welcome Desk.** Questions? Contact Lynda Buechner at [lyndabuechner@gmail.com](mailto:lyndabuechner@gmail.com)



**Session 1: JAN 13**  
**Session 2: FEB 10**  
**Session 3: MAR 10**

## Dementia | Alzheimer Care Partner Seminar

Educational Series with  
Tools & Resources

**Meets  
2nd Tuesdays of  
the month @ 1pm**



## GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP JANUARY 5-MARCH 30, 2026 MONDAYS, 12:30-2:30PM

**Register online at:**

<https://find.griefshare.org/groups/280206>

A program for help in your journey through grief after the death of a spouse, child, family member or friend. GriefShare is a special 13-week seminar and support group designed to help you rebuild your life after losing a loved one. Our group is led by caring people who have experienced grief and desire to help you through the difficult days ahead. We know it hurts and we want to help. Each weekly session is designed to be "open," meaning a person can begin attending at any time.

If you would like more information you can find more info about GriefShare on their website at [griefshare.org](http://griefshare.org) or you may contact Suellen Palya at 480-325-3410 or [suellenpalya@yahoo.com](mailto:suellenpalya@yahoo.com).



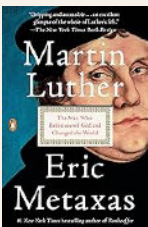
## VICTORY QUILTERS — JANUARY 21 & 22 @ 8:30AM We made over 259 quilts in 2025!

Quilters will meet Tuesday, January 21st from 8:30am-2:30pm and Wednesday, January 22nd from 8:30-11:30am. We donated over 58 quilts this holiday season to the Food Pantry. The Good Life Park Resort donated 43 quilts to add to what we have made. Thank you, Good Life! Your quilts are beautiful. Thank you also to those who donated sheets that we use for backing the quilts. The weekend of January 24-25, the pastors will bless the quilts during services.

Why not stop by this month and see how we assemble these quilts? Consider joining us in this outreach ministry. Well done, Quilters!! If you have questions, call Dottie Cisek at 480-250-6668.

## VICTORY BOOK CLUB

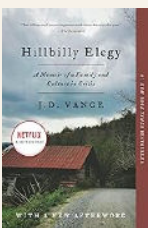
Love to read books? The Book Club meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday from 1:30-3:00pm. Please come prepared to discuss the monthly book selection.



### **"Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World" by Eric Metaxas**

A biography of the most influential man in modern history, the young monk who hoped to spark an academic debate but instead cracked the edifice of Western Christendom and dragged medieval Europe into the future.

**Led by Judeen Hendrickson, January 27, 2026**



### **"Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis" by J.D. Vance**

A passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans—and the inside story of how upward mobility really feels.

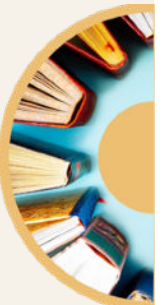
**Led by Dottie Cisek, February 24, 2026**



### **"No Bigger Than a Minute: Love and Hope Against All Odds" by Sheri Rose Gentry and Nadia Geagea Pupa**

A true story about faith in the most hopeless situation. In Haiti in 1988, the author Sheri Gentry, a young idealistic missionary, risked heartbreak and ridicule to adopt a three-pound newborn whose mother was dying.

**Led by the Author's Mother, Karen Jeske, March 24, 2026**





**HERE ARE THE EVENTS YOU CAN SIGN UP FOR THIS MONTH**

*Note: We must purchase tickets 2-5 weeks in advance to get group discounts for some events.*

**Arizona Balloon Classic (Off Site – Bus)**

**Friday, January 16, 4:00 pm (Bus leaves at 2:45 pm), Wild Horse Pass Festival Grounds, Chandler**  
Hot air balloons of all shapes, sizes and colors. Races, precision tasks, and evening desert “glows” set to music. 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Food Festival, entertainment and vendors. (It’s chilly after sunset so wear layers and/or bring a blanket, and a lawn chair.)



**No refunds in the event of bad weather**  
(but you can use your ticket on your own either Saturday or Sunday).

**Sign up & pay \$17 (ticket & bus) by January 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Mark Cordes Is The Spouse Whisperer (Off Site – Bus)**

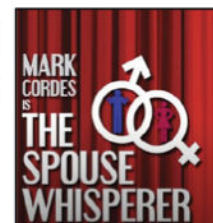
**Sunday, January 18, 7:00 pm (Bus leaves at 5:30 pm)**

**Apache Junction Performing Arts Center, 2525 S Ironwood Dr, Apache Junction**

Mark Cordes is an inventive comedian and humorist, hailed by critics as a “One Man Laugh Factory.” “The Spouse Whisperer” takes the audience through hilarious insights into relationships from first date to exploring all the ups and downs of marriage.

**Sign up & pay \$30 (ticket & bus) by Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**Plus Couples Event!**



**Dinner at Wendy's (Off Site – No Bus)**

**Tuesday, January 27, 4:30 pm Reservation, 4433 E Main St, Mesa**

Great burger, chicken, and combo choices, plus salads. Something cheap after all the holiday expenses! What’s important is that we get together to enjoy each other in fellowship, so ...

**Sign up by Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>.**



**Feed My Starving Children (Off Site – Bus)**

**Wednesday, January 28, Packing Session 9:00-11:00 am (Bus leaves at 8:00 am)**

**1100 W Grove Parkway, Tempe**

We make this mission trip to the Christian based, nonprofit organization on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month. You can stand and package the food, or sit and label it. Let’s have a good showing – our goal is 10 volunteers a month.

**FREE BUS for this event! Sign up by Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>.**



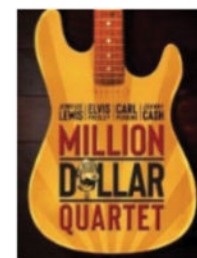
**Million Dollar Quartet (Off Site – Bus)**

**Wednesday, February 4, 7:30 pm (Bus leaves at 6:15 pm)**

**Phoenix Theatre Co, 1825 N Central Ave, Phoenix**

One night, one legendary moment in music history – revisit the electrifying night in 1956 when Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis unexpectedly converged at Sun Studio. This Tony Award-winning jukebox musical tribute showcases the spontaneous energy and raw talent of these icons who have left an indelible mark on the music world.

**Sign up & pay \$60 (ticket & bus) by Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>.**



**All About Broadway (Off Site – Bus)**

**Saturday, March 7, 2:00 pm (Bus leaves at 12:45 pm)**

**Queen Creek Arts Center, 22149 E Ocotillo Rd, Queen Creek**

Hear songs by Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, & Rodgers & Hammerstein, & current hits from Hamilton, Mamma Mia, Neil Diamond's Beautiful Noise, Phantom of the Opera, Wicked, Moulin Rouge, Smash & many more! All with a live 10-piece orchestra!

**Sign up and pay \$32 (ticket and bus) by Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>.**

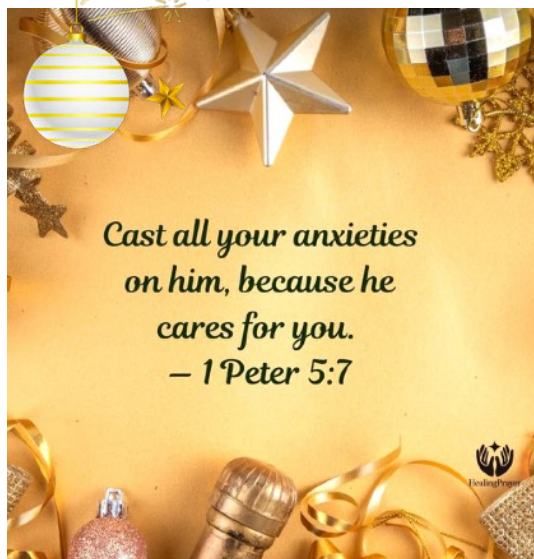


**NOTE: All tickets will be handed out on the bus or in the lobby of the event site.**



**VICTORY**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

5946 E. University Drive  
Mesa, AZ 85205



*Cast all your anxieties  
on him, because he  
cares for you.  
– 1 Peter 5:7*



## WORSHIP WITH US!

### TRADITIONAL

Saturdays 4pm  
Sundays 8am Communion Weekly  
9:30am Worship

### CONTEMPORARY

Sunday 11am

### CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Sunday 9:30 & 11am

### WATCH US LIVE!

Sundays 9:30 & 11am

### DAILY HOPE

Subscribe to our daily devotional by  
texting the word **victory** to **888-897-5573**

