

# COMMUNITY CHURCH *of the Verdes*



## A 40 Year History

1980-2020

## PASTORS

<b>Robert Scott</b>	<b>1980-1984</b>
<b>Mark Tjepkema</b>	<b>1984-1990</b>
<b>John Geske (Interim)</b>	<b>1990-1991</b>
<b>Dwight Cumbee (Part-time)</b>	<b>1991-1997</b>
<b>Dwight Cumbee</b>	<b>1997-2003</b>
<b>Jud Souers (Interim)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
<b>Kathryn and Richard Pyke (Interim)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
<b>Bill Snyder (Interim)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
<b>Lloyd Powers (Interim)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>
<b>Kevin Brown</b>	<b>2004-2009</b>
<b>Ron Wilson (Interim)</b>	<b>2009-2011</b>
<b>Cathy Northrup</b>	<b>2011-present</b>



### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*The Community Church of the Verdes is an inter-denominational Christian congregation committed to the spiritual nourishment and growth of all members, friends and visitors through regular worship, thoughtful education and faithful community in order that we may attempt to be obedient disciples of Jesus Christ as we serve others here and in the world.*



Dear Friends,

**As God's people, we are the church.** As First Peter 2 puts it, "Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'"

Yet as God's people, we also make a special place in which to worship God, **a building which we call the church.**

This church, Community Church of the Verdes, began with a small number of God's people. It also began worshipping in the Rio Verde Country Club before it could build an actual building for the church. But the Lord blessed this church, over and over again, with people of faith, resources, and a spirit of worship in community, and so here we are, with a church campus of a sanctuary, chapel, administrative building, and memorial garden, and approximately 450 members, over 40 years later.

This history book was put together by our Church Archivists, Bruce and Cobe Frobes, first for our 36 year history and now updates for our 40 year history. We are grateful for their work.

We hope you enjoy hearing the story of God's people in this place. May it inspire the church to go forward in faith for the next 40 years, at least, or until the Lord comes again to take us to the holy temple, the holy church, in heaven, with all his people of all times and all places.

Grace and peace,

The Reverend Doctor Cathy Northrup

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## The beginnings...

1980—2000

Rio Verde Community Church was formed in early 1980. Until then, the closest churches were in Fountain Hills, only accessible over a rough, rocky trail through the Indian reservation. Traveling up Rio Verde Drive and past Pinnacle Peak, the nearest places of worship were in the Tatum Road/Shea Boulevard area.

The following couples were founding members:

Dick and Joan Humm  
Don and Lorraine King  
Charles and Merle Kittleson  
Darwin and Aggie Kramer  
Mort and Marcia Mosiman  
Ray and Patti Oldham  
Red and Phebe Smith

In February of 1980, each couple gave \$40 to provide the first cash balance for a new church. When John and Jane Mooty heard of the venture, they donated two lots, each to be sold and the proceeds used to establish a capital structure for the church.

The director of the Evangelistic Association of Arizona counseled the founding group, loaned them hymnals, offering plates and communion service materials. He also suggested a minister, Reverend Robert Scott, who was hired at a salary of \$15 per Sunday plus \$10 per-trip car expense. Reverend Scott was a retired Army chaplain, serving in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during the 1944 invasion of Europe.

The first Rio Verde Community Church service was held February 17, 1980, in the dining room of the original Rio Verde Country Club building. The pulpit was a lectern resting on one of the dining room tables.



*Worship at the Country Club*

A small organ and a piano were located in the "pit," the term applied to the small dance floor three steps down from the dining room level. Aggie Kramer played the piano and directed the choir, who were assembled in the bar

area of the club. During the winter months, Betty Gaskill was the organist.

There was no space available for choir practice since the club was open daily. Aggie arranged for a men's quartet at first, then gradually expanded to as many as 12 men



*Aggie Kramer*

and women during the busy season. Choir members came to her house on Wednesday afternoons to practice around her piano. There was no budget for music so they begged, borrowed and copied anthems until the church could afford to buy proper arrangements. Some choir members hadn't sung for years, and some didn't know how to read music. Basic music mini-lessons were given along the way. A few members taped their parts and replayed them at home to practice.

As early as 1975, a group of Catholic residents began car-pooling to churches in Scottsdale and Fountain Hills. Some services were conducted in member's homes here. They formed their own church, St. Dominic Mission, and began using the clubhouse.

Community Church members moved tables aside and set up chairs for their service, and St. Dominic parishioners reset the dining room after their services. From the beginning, a singular distinction of church activities in this community has been the extraordinary cooperation between churches as they have shared worship facilities.

### **-INCORPORATION DATE-**

The church was formally incorporated on December 1, 1980. Ellis Kopp, an attorney and member of St. Dominic Mission, volunteered his services to draft the necessary documents. He would not accept any payment so some members of the church presented him with an "unofficial" gift of a case of premium Scotch.

The first full year of financial reports show total offerings of \$8,777, salary and expenses of \$3,555, and a benevolence contribution of \$400. In 1981 the pastor's salary was increased to \$50 plus \$25



*Easter Service*



travel expenses per Sunday. Attendance reached 57, a record high. That fall, the Kramers suggested the first Christmas outreach program. Six needy families were assisted.

In 1982 the first Easter services were on the northeast patio of the original clubhouse. That same year John and Jane Mooty gave a set of hymnals.

When Maree Lee Eger, a former professional singer, joined the choir in 1983, she helped organize and catalog the music files.

In late 1983, the choir decided to hold a box dessert social at the Rio Verde Ranch to raise funds for robes. Bidding on the boxes was lively as the whole community was caught up in the spirit of giving. A box that contained a plate of brownies and two cream puffs sold for \$185. More than \$6,000 was collected, enough to robe the Community Church choir and the Community Chorus as well!

In the fall of 1983, the first piano and the first organ were purchased with the help of contributions from St. Dominic Mission and the Rio Verde Community Association. Upon completion of the Oasis Community Center, services were moved to what was then the Saguaro Room, the main dining room in that building. Easter sunrise services began to be conducted from the north side of the Oasis. Folding chairs occupied the patio with most of the congregation sitting in golf carts parked on the golf course.



*Reverend Mark Tjepkema*

Reverend Scott retired as pastor, and Reverend Mark Tjepkema was hired in late 1984. His salary and expenses in the winter months were \$200 per week. June through September he was paid a retainer of \$150 per week since no regular services were held during that time. Pastor Tjepkema's full-

time job was chaplain for Friendship Village in Tempe. He referred to the Rio Verde Community Church congregation as his "youth group."

#### **-SUNSHINE ACRES-**

Members believed that the church should do more than the Christmas family outreach program. Reverend Tjepkema suggested that the church adopt Sunshine Acres Children's Home in Mesa. The first contribution to them was for a stove, a sink and counter covering for their kitchen so they would pass the Health Department inspections. Harriet and Dick Price provided liaison with this project for sev-



*Sunshine Acres Choir*

eral years. Later, Pat Hemmer served in this capacity with continued assistance from the Prices. In the spring of 1987, the children of Sunshine Acres presented their first musical program during church services. During these years, our working relationship has expanded and matured into a partnership that enriches both of us with its abundance and satisfaction.

Church attendance grew. In 1985 the term "Building Fund" first appeared in the church balance sheet account. At that time the amount was \$100,000, primarily from the sale of the two donated lots. In November of 1986, church minutes show that, for the first time, the building fund would become a budget item in 1987. It was also agreed by the trustees that the location of a future church building should be investigated. Average attendance that year was 125 with a high of 192 one Sunday. Nearly 30% of the budget was going to benevolence programs.

#### **- SEED MONEY-**

Jane Mooty announced a "seed money" challenge at the March 1987 annual meeting. The Mootys pledged to match any donations (up to \$200,000) made by members of the community to the church building fund in the following four weeks. This stunning announcement triggered a whirlwind of fund-raising activity, led by a building fund committee of Herb Asseltine, chairman, Harold Bonnell, George Eger, Bob Moe, John Pringle and Bill Wells.



*John & Jane Mooty*

In three weeks, \$305,750 in donations and pledges were secured. St. Dominic Mission was asked if they wished to share in owning the church building, but the bishop's office preferred not to be involved in actual ownership. However, a mutually satisfactory agreement was reached to share the facilities and expenses, and St. Dominic parishioners did participate in the fund drive.

The present church site was purchased in late 1987. By the end of that year, the building fund was \$735,533. Church membership was 194 members and associate members.

A worship committee, chaired by Dr. O. W. Zimmerman was formed to determine the order of worship and the arrangement and fixtures needed for the new building. Rose Stevens, as Secretary of the church Board of Trustees, asked Margaret Geving to help as co-chair of a church history committee.

George Eger and John Pringle were co-chairmen of the building project. The building committee included Fred

Reese, Aggie Kramer, Margaret Geving, Earlene Jeter, and Jack Minert. Groundbreaking was on March 27, 1988.

Alexander and Sons constructed the building at cost and on schedule. The first services were Christmas Eve 1988. The building was nearly debt-free at the dedication service in January of 1989.



*Memorial Garden*

In January 1990, land for a columbarium, or memorial garden, was donated by the developers. Niches were sold on a basis that provides perpetual care and maintenance. This addition was dedicated May 27, 1990. Ecumenical services were held in the garden on All Saint's Day in November and Memorial Day Sunday.

The design of the columbarium won the commercial category first place award for the Rio Verde Landscaping Department in 1991, as judged by the Arizona Landscape Society.

Much of this history is drawn from the thorough records kept by Rose Stevens, church historian at the time. Rose began this effort in 1988 and continued it for ten years. She also established the first church library in 1990 in the chapel of the newly constructed church. In late 1991, Dottie Millett and Laura Miles were instrumental in expanding the library to the second floor room directly above the chapel. Mary and Bob Zicarelli and Dottie and Keith Millett contributed the bookshelves and, Marcia and Mort Mosiman, added many reference books.

In December of 1990, Pastor Tjepkema resigned and moved with his wife to the Lynchburg, Virginia area. Reverend John Geske served as interim pastor until a search committee, headed by Frank Schiel, recommended Dr. Dwight W. Cumbee in May of 1991. Dr. Cumbee had served as a hospital chaplain, a seminary professor, was the executive director of pastoral counseling centers and a pastoral psychotherapist. He had a B.A. degree for the University of Richmond, a Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Doctorate from St. Andrews University in Scotland. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in



*Rev. John Geske*



*Dr. Dwight W. Cumbee*

1955 and held ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ since 1985. Dr. Cumbee's wife, Cheryl, was also an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church and a pastoral counselor.

Since 1992, the Community Church and St. Dominic Mission have enjoyed a pulpit exchange Sunday. Both congregations value this positive expression of ecumenism. The principal priests serving St. Dominic have been Father Paul and Father O'Dea. In addition to the Christmas Outreach project and Habitat for Humanity effort, St. Dominic Mission also supports St. Vincent de Paul outreach through the Church of the Ascension in Fountain Hills.

Throughout the history of our church, benevolence and outreach programs have been a priority item.

Membership increased nearly 100% to 504 members and associates. The families assisted by the Christmas program increased from 23 in 1992 to 60 in 1999. St. Dominic membership increased from 96 family units in 1990 to 210 in early 2000.

#### **-HABITAT FOR HUMANITY-**

The church initiated an effort that fully funded and built one Habitat for Humanity house in 1995. Since then the communities similarly provided five more homes in the last five years – a record unmatched by any other town in the United States. The Benevolence and Outreach Committees screened and approved aid to numerous other charitable organizations on a year to year basis.

In 1994 our developers again gave property to the church. This time, it was 1.4 acres of land between the church and the Post Office to make it possible for future expansion of church facilities.

#### **-STEPHEN MINISTRY-**

A Stephen Ministry program was started in 1995. This is a Christ-centered, one-on-one ministry of compassion offered to those in need. As of 2000 five Stephen Leaders and 36 Stephen Ministers had been trained.

Dr. Cumbee officially became our full-time pastor on September 1, 1997.

A vibrant and expanding education program strengthened relationships in both Verde communities. Dwight and Cheryl Cumbee and lay readers began leading discussion groups and Bible studies. Outside speakers and retreats enriched our total religious experience. The church was developing a creative model for future growth.

An annual church potluck picnic and softball game at the Rio Verde Ranch became a fall tradition.

In early 1996, attendance increased enough that two services were tested, from February through Easter. This was necessary again in 1997.



Trustees and the long-range planning committee began investigating ways to accommodate the growing congregation. Church members Ken Skold and John Torseth, architects specializing in school and church design, were instrumental in serving on a feasibility study committee. The trustees hired CCBG Architects, Inc., of Phoenix to create a possible expansion concept. Project architect Eric Huffman was assigned to work with the group.

A Church Expansion Committee was formed. They visited eight churches and had more than 50 meetings with Eric Huffman and his associates to establish the campus design. The new construction was proposed to be directly north of the existing building. The NOW II fund raising committee, co-chaired by Dave Gillman and Lin Lundgaard, was formed to explore the availability of pledges.

On December 2, 1997, a special meeting of the congregation was held to affirm the trustees' recommendation to begin building if adequate funds were received. It was voted to proceed. As was the case with the building of the first sanctuary, financial support was swift. Eight lead-donor couples, pledging at least \$100,000 each, committed a total of \$1,369,000 toward an immediate expansion of the church.

#### -NOW II-

The NOW II committee generated additional pledges, for a total of \$2,061,000 by the spring of 1998. NOW II committee Members were: Ed Carpenter, Dave Gillman, Leone Eidsmoe, Lin Lundgaard, Val Michel, Mel Middents, Dick Nordholm, Dave Ramsey, and Lee Weinberger. Sixty-four non-member families pledged as a part of this effort. As in the original church fund drive, St. Dominic Mission members were generous in their donations.

The final design called for a 600-seat sanctuary, including the choir (maximum capacity of 690). Also included was the ability to add a 160-seat balcony if the need should arise. A new 120-seat chapel (maximum capacity 155) was added between the old and new sanctuaries. The former chapel was converted to an expanded church library, which then contained 828 books.



*Noah's Ark*

The church became the home of Noah's Ark, a dramatic work of art. John Peterson constructed the ark in 1996 and the Rio Verde Woodcarvers, facilitated by Bob Brooke, created the multiple pairs of animals and birds.

A Liturgical Arts Committee was formed from the Expansion Committee to interview and select the stained glass artist and the interior furnishings. They visited many

churches and interviewed clergy to gather ideas.

In February of 1998, an Allen Renaissance R-370 digital organ was purchased. (It has now been moved to the new structure.)

In April 1998, in recognition of the growing number of church members outside Rio Verde, a possible change of name was explored. Many choices were considered and a survey of members was conducted. A decision was made to continue with the present name.

In anticipation of the new construction, the Protestant and Catholic congregations entered into a five-year agreement to continue the present sharing of building usage and expenses with an option for an additional five years.

Father O'Dea said to Dr. Cumbee during the construction period, "We are proud to be considered as partners in this marvelous venture." Dwight's response was immediate, "You are partners, in every way – and we're glad of it!"

In the fall of 1998, the first phase of construction began with the addition of offices on the south side of the building where the original patio was located. Alexander Homes did this work.

Bids were sought for the new sanctuary construction. The Expansion Committee found that the area-wide surge in construction had substantially increased estimated



*June 13, 1999*

building costs. It was tempting to eliminate the proposed chapel and other elements of the project. In consultation with our partners at St. Dominic, the Trustees re-visited all parts of the design with the architect and the contractor.

A decision was made to establish the NOW III committee to launch a fund drive for the \$600,000 needed to properly complete the original design. Interim financing was arranged, if it were needed.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Sunday, June 13, 1999. Dr. Cumbee and Father O'Dea shared in the brief service. Construction began in August, 1999. Work progressed on schedule with few delays or mishaps. The church's construction representative, Ed Gutknecht, or Buck Buchanan, were on-site each day.

By mid-March, six weeks before our dedication service, the entire project was fully funded!

The efforts of many people and the prayers of both congregations resulted in a church campus that reflected the past, and anticipated the future. Our buildings provided the capacity for a wider physical and spiritual base, served and bonded the Verde communities and beyond. From this firm foundation, we strengthened our benevolence and outreach for the Glory of God. Hallelujah!

# The Church continues...

## 2000-2016

On April 9, 2000, two weeks prior to Easter, the pews of the newly constructed sanctuary were filled. The Dedication Service was held that day. Three months into the 21st



Century, the total church campus was now complete!

It was the goal of the Building Expansion Committee chaired by Don Gibbs to "create a

home base for the next 15 to 25 years from which we can carry out God's mission to reach out to those less fortunate than we through our benevolence programs." In the beginning, there were any number of separate and distinct ideas on how this goal could be accomplished, but in the end all were in agreement. Mary Zicarelli and Jane Lundgaard were part of this decision-making process, as was Peggy Maggio, the St. Dominic's ad hoc representative. George Eger provided his experience on the original Church building committee. Ken Skold worked the design with CCBG Architects and the contractor. Ed Gutknecht, the construction guru, in his role as owners' representative along with Buck Buchanan, kept the whole process going. These were added: the steadying voice the pastor, Dr. Dwight Cumbee, and a solid group of contributors.

New hymnals, some in large print, and the new piano, generously donated by Dottie and Dave Hollatz, were now part of this beautiful worship space which also included stained glass windows and tapestries depicting love, sharing, Jesus, and Christian history. Just as a new organ was installed on Sept 7, 1999, the Music Committee hired a very talented Tom Wojtas as our organist. And the Membership Committee reported that there were over 500 members supporting the mission of Rio Verde Community Church at the end of 1999.

In the Pastor's Annual Report of 1999, Dr. Cumbee wrote: "This is the 20th year of our life as an organized congregation of Christians. In this relatively short time period there have been hundreds of faith disciples of Jesus that have given of themselves, their resources, and their talents in the development and growth of Rio Verde Community Church."

On May 3, 2001, the church commenced a three-week pulpit exchange arranged by the Board of Trustees in 2000 with North Leith Parish Church of Scotland, located just outside Edinburgh. Their pastor, Ian Gilmour traded responsibilities with Dwight Cumbee and the Cumbees worked and vacationed in Scotland. Pastor Gilmour presented a workshop to our church on "Celtic Christianity and Native American Spirituality," a subject he had explored for a number of years.

The Stephen Ministry program, led by Mary Jane Hilbun, was entering its sixth year of existence in 2001. They had trained twenty-nine Stephen Ministers and five Stephen Leaders. To help them do a better job, they conducted Continuing Education classes with outside speakers on Grief, Loss, Depression, Prayer, and Alzheimer's disease. After Mrs. Hilbun left for California, Vicki Beseke assumed the leadership of Stephen Ministry.

A Sunday school for youngsters 3 through 8 was introduced by the Education Committee with much thought and leadership by Vicki Beseke. This addition to church activities was partly the result of the Wojtas family participating at that time. Tom and his wife Debby along with children Tommy and Abby.



*The Wojtas Family*

Ron Sonneburg, Chairman of the Benevolence and Outreach Committee, expressed that the goal of the committee was to facilitate fulfillment of that portion of our mission statement that states "we attempt to be obedient disciples of Jesus Christ as we serve others here and in the world". During 2000, the congregation once again responded well to the February Outreach fund-raising effort. Total contributions were in excess of \$52,000. The four ministry recipients were: Friends of the Orphans, Hospice of the Valley, 91st Psalm Christian School and Southwest Leadership Conference. In preparation for 2002, the Committee reviewed fifteen agencies and met with eight. The five chosen for major gifts were 91st Psalm Christian School, Friends of Orphans (Mexico), Save the Family, Southwest Leadership Foundation's The Bridge and Unlimited Potential. A goal of \$60,000 was set for the 2002 program.

The Education Committee initiated a new women's Bible Study, which met at 8:30 am on Friday morning under the leadership of Jane Wilson, Interim Associate Minister at First Presbyterian Church in Fountain Hills.



Leading up to the completion of the new sanctuary, the Building Committee, upon learning of a structural integrity issue, trimmed some items from the building budget. One of the trimmings was an acoustical treatment for the inside of the new sanctuary with a cost of \$16,000. On May 2, 2001, Hampton Braun sent out a letter asking for a \$400 investment from 40 people. On May 18, 2001, it was reported that \$12,000 had been raised. The remaining funds needed to "enhance our sound environment" were soon raised.

At the Annual Meeting, March 17, 2002, Board President Mel Middents gave a special thanks to the great church staff, namely Dwight Cumbee, pastor, counselor; Tom Wojtas, organist and pianist; Aggie Kramer, Director of Music and the ad hoc committees (which were not chaired by a trustee) for their major contributions...Dick Oliver and Marilyn McQueen and their Long Range Planning Committee; Don Gibbs heading up the Construction Committee; Pat Hemmer board liaison with Sunshine Acres; Mary Zicarelli and Ken Skold and their Liturgical Arts Committee.

President Middents also pointed out that it was an exciting year as the following things occurred. There was a meaningful month of May with Rev. Ian Gilmour of Leith, Scotland in the pulpit exchange, a rectifying of the acoustical problem, an addition of 72 niches to the Memorial Garden, and a conversion of the original sanctuary into a multi-purpose facility, namely Founders Hall. Further, during the year the church observed the start of another class for nine new Stephen Ministers, the commission of 3 textile portable wall hangings for the Chancel area, and the acceptance of a new cross and candleholders from an anonymous donor.

On February 10, 2002, the Founders Hall Celebration honored the founders of the church. Approximately 120 people attended and enjoyed sandwiches, cake, punch and coffee which were served by the Fellowship Committee.

Ken Skold, Chair, Liturgical Arts Committee, announced that work was progressing for the textile hangings on the free-standing wall in the Chancel. Susan Lockhart, a sculptor with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation met with the committee to discuss the possibility of creating a vertical sculpture for the niche in the free-standing wall. On April 7, 2002, a choir breakfast was held, and at that time, Aggie Kramer, and Tom Wojtas were honored for their invaluable contributions to the music of the church. Also during the winter months of 2001-2002, the members were treated to several programs including the "Amabile String Quartet", "Operatunity" and the "Phoenix Boys Choir".

The 9/11 tragedy and the weak economy slowed the growth of Tonto Verde and resale turnover at Rio Verde created a slowdown in membership growth. The Member-

ship Committee led by Dick Berg initiated a program to contact residents outside of our two communities.

Pastor Dwight Cumbee noted in his message in the 2002 annual report some positive "happenings" in the following activities. The Long Range Planning Committee, under the leadership of Dick Oliver and Marilyn McQueen, provided the Board of Trustees with information and vision that would be invaluable as the new Board developed a strategic plan for the church.

The Benevolence and Outreach Committee reported over \$52,000 was contributed to ten agencies. Major gifts of \$5000 or more were given to Friends of the Orphans, Southwest Leadership (The Bride), 91st Psalm Christian School, Save the Family and Unlimited Potential.

Lee Weinberger, President of the Board of Trustees, opened the March 16, 2003 Annual Meeting with the following words: "This is a time for thanks. We owe thanks to so many people who have given so generously of their time and their treasure to make the past year a very special one in the life of the church."

There were three objectives achieved during the previous 12 months. First, there was an incorporation of greater variety in our services, i.e. sacred dance, solos, duets, a quartet, instrumentalists and even an artist; second, documentation of the church's policies and procedures; and thirdly, improving member communications with a monthly newsletter.

The goal for February Outreach program in 2003 was \$60,000. The final accounting was \$67,000.

The Men's and Women's Bible classes completed a study of the book of "Isaiah" and "The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Life." The Thursday evening group discussed "Listening for God: Contemporary Literature and the Life of Faith." Under the leadership of Karen Zaske, the Education Committee offered several study opportunities in addition to three Monday evening lectures.

A women's retreat was held at the Lutheran Retreat Center. "Journey Into Wholeness: Connecting Mind, Body and Spirit" was facilitated by Dr. Cheryl Cumbee and Cheryl Larson.

The Stephen Ministry Team, with the cooperation of St. Dominic Mission, sponsored a "Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts--A Lenten Offering Workshop in March." A Stephen Minister wrote a testimonial: "As a result of my Stephen Ministry training and my first experience with a caring relationship, I have learned that the joys of care giving can go well beyond delivering love and care to an officially assigned care receiver. It can become a way of life, affecting the manner in which I relate to family, friends, and others. God touches me in meaningful ways as I touch others--the



result is joy."

The Performing Arts Series 2002-2003, supported by the Music Committee, included the "Orpheus Male Chorus"; A "Community Chorus Of The Verdes" Christmas concert; and "The Verdes Variety Cavalcade."

The House and Property Committee, headed by Val Michel, noted that Founders Hall proved to be a very necessary and versatile facility. Starting with the successful coffee gatherings after church, to the receptions, the lectures, to theatre, to banquets it is obvious that Founders Hall was a very unique location for members to enjoy fellowship.

In 2003, faced with declining attendance and membership, the Rio Verde Community Church Board recognized the need to replace Pastor Cumbee who was well beyond retirement age. Bill Snyder and Lloyd Powers, retired ministers living in Rio Verde, agreed to provide pastoral care to the church community until an interim pastor could be retained. A search committee of was appointed by the President of the Board to find and recommend a successor to Cumbee. Later that year, the Reverend Judson Souers came on board as the interim senior Pastor.



Rev. Jud Souers

In the 2003 Annual Report, Lee Weinberger, President, Board of Trustees, announced that a search for a new pastor had been initiated. He also thanked the Trustees who always met the challenges of different situations with thoughtful, charitable considerations and prayerful decisiveness. On this occasion, Mr. Weinberger opened the Board meeting with the following prayer: "Heavenly Father, bless your servants, this Board of Trustees, that in our deliberations we may do your will as we seek to provide direction and guidance to the congregation of your faithful. May we deliberate with caution, but act with decisiveness; and yield with graciousness or oppose with firmness---all in good humor and charity through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

The Performing Arts Series in 2003-4 included special musical events beginning with "Red Mountain Brass", Scottsdale Community Chorus "Sweet Adelines, International and the "Russian Balalaika Singers and Dancers".

Val Michel presented a short chronology of the history of the Church Library. The first seventeen books were cataloged in 1989. In 2000, the library was moved downstairs to the new space which was four times the original space. And finally in 2004, the 21 year old computer used in the

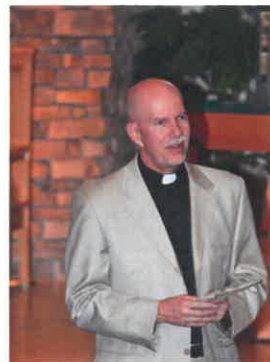
library "stopped." A new computer was purchased to support the collection of 1,400 books and collection of video tapes.

The physical plant experienced several changes during 2003 as new conference rooms were constructed in Founders Hall, and the sound system was redesigned, rewired, and reprogrammed to separate the chapel and sanctuary systems. In addition, high speed internet from Cox was installed in the library, administrative wing and main sanctuary. Also, finally, a new sign was constructed at the corner of Avenida Del Ray and Danny Lane.

Once again the Benevolence and Outreach Committee was thrilled to exceed the February Outreach goal and \$62,000 was distributed to ten agencies. During February four speakers spent time in our pulpit. They were Dee Campbell of "Friends of Orphans," Janice Parker of "Save the Family," Chuck Westerlund of "Southwest Leadership Foundation," and Dave Goodall of "Ecumenical Chaplaincy for the Homeless," in a direct effort to educate the congregation.

#### -YEAR OF TRANSITION-

Called the "Year of Transition" by President Don Johnson, 2004 was a time of interim leadership until the Pastoral Search Committee selected Dr. Kevin Brown. This committee also included Vicki Beseke, Mike Conway, Don Gibbs, Gloria Johnson, and Lin Lundgaard. Because of their concerted efforts, the church now embraced a new future under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Brown. The Browns purchased a home in Rio Verde. During the 14 months between Senior Pastors, the church community was ably served by Reverends Kathryn Pyke, Jud Souers, Bill Snyder, and Lloyd Powers. All of them shared their ministerial gifts and talents with the congregation. The Search Committee (name changed to Pastor/Parish Committee) remained intact and continued for an additional year as a support for the new pastor.



Rev. Kevin Brown

#### -NEW BEGINNING-

In his 2005 Annual Report remarks, Board President, Don Johnson said "I wish to thank the Board of Trustees for all the support they offered me this past year. While we had our share of ups and downs, we have come out on top and now look forward to a 'New Beginning' under the leadership of Dr. Kevin Brown."

In his first Annual Report as Senior Pastor, Dr. Rev.

Brown wrote, "As I write this document, we have only been in the Verdes for three weeks and I am still very much in the 'look-listen-learn' stage of ministry here." Gail Sumner, Worship Committee Chair, welcomed Pastor Brown and his wife, Belinda, into our church family and community. "This is a day of new beginnings, a time to remember and move on; time to believe what love is bringing."

The Stephen Ministry was now in their 9th year of existence. Forty caring church members were now trained spending countless hours providing care to people who needed pastoral support in overcoming obstacles such as: depression, grief, loss of all sorts, adjustment to retirement and/or moving to a new lifestyle and community, acceptance of declining health and loss of family members.

With the Founders Hall building now 17 years old, the House and Property Committee, headed by Kermit Beseke, spent the year achieving some major accomplishments.

- The board room was enhanced by adding teleconferencing, high speed internet and video capabilities.
- The entrance at Founders Hall was modified including a shrubbery change and an access door under the balcony stairway.
- Numerous water leaks in the sanctuary, chapel and Founders Hall were repaired.
- The exterior wood surfaces of Founders Hall received a much needed sealing and staining.
- Two of the older air conditioners in Founders Hall failed and were replaced.
- The sanctuary sound system was upgraded to a new central processor to add more input capability.
- Two additional channels of wireless microphones were added to the sanctuary.
- The older audio processor was installed in Founders Hall and four wireless microphone channels were added.

In 2004, the Harvest Home Annual Picnic was held at Rio Verde Ranch and along with good weather, great entertainment by western singer Jim Roehr and wonderful food supplied by the attendees, all enjoyed a wonderful evening of fellowship. After worship, fellowship hour was now well received and supported by many volunteers throughout the year.

The very important work of the Education Committee, led by Jane Lundgaard, included two discussions with Rev. Jud Souers. Approximately, 50 people discussed



*Fellowship*

their reaction to the Mel Gibson directed movie, *The Passion of Christ*. The two Monday Night Lectures were very well received with President Raphael Bear of the Yavapai Nation and Rabbi Norman Cohen of Minnesota as the speakers.

In the 2006 Annual Report under President's Comments, Dick Berg wrote: "2005 was a year of discovery and realization. We discovered we had a great new pastor Kevin Brown whom we greatly appreciate and, we realized member contributions were not covering minimum church expenses. The good news--bad news scenario required action on the bad news." Dr. Brown informed the Board that operating fund only had a balance of \$485.00!

The Finance Committee went to work and engineered a monetary turn around by identifying a three step process for fiscal stability. Step one in the process was to communicate to the congregation information about our continuous general fund deficit. That message was communicated in a church-wide meeting in December of 2005. The second step was to institute the "Living Our Mission" (LOM) finance campaign. The third step was to emphasize and aggressively grow the amount of funds in the Church's Endowment Fund. Adding to the complexity of issues was the required switch to an outside firm to handle the accounting so proper financial detail was available to the committee chairs. Bob Holthe and treasurer Jerry Olson were very involved in that effort.

In 2005, Rio Verde Community Church celebrated twenty-five years of existence and supported eight agencies of which six operate locally and three operate globally. Moving into 2006, the Benevolence and Outreach Committee headed by Paul Erickson stated "Our church is now in the midst of our 'Living Our Mission' campaign. To insure our congregation wasn't facing two competing campaigns, we eliminated February Outreach. Instead, Benevolence and Outreach funding came from 'Living Our Mission' donations."

With the building of the new sanctuary in 1999 and the aging of the other structures of the church campus, significant repairs and improvements became a reality. Major accomplishments of the House and Property Committee during 2005 were:

- The parking lot was repaired, resurfaced and repainted.
- The speakers in the main sanctuary were replaced with a new speaker system.
- To bring the facilities in compliance with a 2005 fire inspection, a new fire monitor panel was added in Founders Hall, eight signs/lights were replaced and Emergency lighting was replaced.

- The "Stations of the Cross" wood carvings were mounted on the 14 pillars in the courtyard. These carvings were the created by Ken Skold and Bob Brooks.

It was in 2005 that the decision was made to support sanctuary events, memorial services and even some Sunday services with video or multimedia presentation capability. The estimate to do it right was \$170,000. Also the House and Property Committee recognized that the Memorial Garden needed to be expanded.

John Holmes reported at the 2005 Annual Meeting that we welcomed 35 new members into the church compared to 17 in the previous year. "This is a total of 52 new members since Kevin and Belinda's arrival in February 2005. Overall attendance is up 17% over the previous year."

This wonderful growth in membership and attendance continued into 2006. Dr. Brown thanked Tricia Wolber and the Membership Committee as the membership base expanded by over ten percent. In addition, worship attendance was up 18% over 2005.

However, to encourage membership involvement the church needs a variety of activities that appeal to a cross-section of potential members. The Rio Verde Community Church in 2006 offered a wide-variety of such activities.

- Worship Committee
- Music Committee (Choir)
- Benevolence and Outreach
- Education Committee
- Facilities Committee
- Stephen Ministry
- Finance Committee
- Performing Arts
- Youth Sunday School
- Fellowship Committee

Kermit Beseke, 2007 President, Board of Trustees, commented at the Annual Meeting, "As you look at the financials you'll see that for the past two years the Facilities Fund (our general fund) has had a surplus; in previous years the general fund frequently ran a deficit. You'll also see that our Living the Mission Finance Campaign (LOM), which is entering its last year, will achieve results better than anticipated."

The Board of Trustees had designated a substantial amount of the LOM extra funds to pay for the construction of the Memorial Garden expansion. The first part of the expansion, purchasing the property, was complete; the next phase, construction, was just beginning. The construction phase estimates were more complex and expensive than anticipated. But it was indicated that there was enough columbaria space in the garden to support approximately

one year demand. The Board was optimistic that it will be completed in time to satisfy future demand.

Dr. Brown's Pastor's Report to the congregation in the 2007 Annual Report presented his "professional" practice while leading the church as its senior minister. "My professional practice is to operate in threes; I try to plan three months ahead for worship; I try to think three weeks ahead on sermons; and I try to plan three years ahead for the Church as an institution. So, when I first arrived in February 2005, I looked around and asked myself... 'What do we need to do in the next three years?'"

He went on to write in his report: "It did not take long to discern an answer: Strengthen Our Foundation. The church had come through some difficult times and participation in education events was low, the coffers were bare, the buildings needed work, and worship attendance was way down. So, we attacked those areas through various means, including thoughtful attention to worship practices, the Living Our Mission capital campaign, and the development of the Center for Spirituality and the Arts. As a result of those endeavors, today we are debt free and have a reserve in the bank, the buildings have been painted, re-carpeted and outfitted for use in the 21st century, worship attendance hit a new high in 2006, and we are seeing ever increasing numbers of attendees at our various education events. These last three years have seen tremendous achievements."

The Treasurer, Gerald Olson, reiterated Dr. Brown's comments in the 2007 Annual Report. "The Church has no debt and reserves are adequate." Kermit Beseke, President, in his annual report of 2007 reminded the congregation of the Board engineered three step turn around program. Step one was to communicate to the congregation about the continuous general fund deficit. The second step was to institute the Living Our Mission Campaign (LOM). The third, and yet incomplete step, was to emphasize and aggressively grow the amount of funds in the Church's Endowment Fund.

The Living Our Mission Finance Campaign (LOM) set a goal to raise \$980,000 beyond normal operating receipts over a three year period (2006-2008) to retire the debt, renew church assets, extend the Christian mission and position for the future. At the end of 2007 the amount pledged was \$1.25 million and after only two years the fund received about \$1.1 million in actual contributions. During 2007, the Board of Trustees agreed to apply some of the upside funds from this campaign to support the purchase of property and expansion of the Memorial Garden.

The next year, Mr. Beseke was able to report that the majority of the construction for the Memorial Garden ex-



pansion was complete. Also, the LOM capital campaign was oversubscribed. This allowed the church to perform necessary repairs to buildings, install technology which allowed it to move into the 21st century in an appropriate manner, and provide artistic, educational, benevolence, and spiritual resources beyond expectations.

In April 2008, Aggie Kramer, a founder of the church and Director of Music Ministry for 28 years, retired and was named Music Director Emeritus. Tom Wojtas was named her successor. Pastor Brown informed the congregation that the program attendance reached new levels; for the previous three years the annual attendance at worship remained above 12,000, a feat accomplished only once prior to 2006. The atmosphere at the Rio Verde Community Church was very upbeat at the end of 2008.



*Aggie Kramer*

Leading into 2009, the great recession hit the United States, and many non-profit organizations like churches were challenged financially. The Board of Trustees was tested by financial reality. For a substantial time during the year, contributions did not match budget expectations so the Board took decisive action to cut expenditures wherever possible.

President Gene Knorr commented, "If the health of the life of a church is measured in small part by the works of the members of the congregation, then the Rio Verde Community Church can consider its spiritual foundation strong and stable. From the growth of the bell choir to the resounding success of the programs of the Center for Spirituality and the Arts to the re-strengthening of the Stephen Ministry program to the continued commitment of the members of the various committees and ministries within the Church, this community of faith continues its spiritual journey through Jesus Christ in a committed and hopeful fashion."

A key milestone in 2009 was the reaffirmation of the Rev. Dr. Kevin C. Brown as Pastor of Rio Verde Community Church on his fifth anniversary with the Church. Other milestones were the affirmation and renewed contract of Tom Wojtas as the Director of Music Ministry and the uploading of the sermons on line for church members to hear them when they were unable to attend the service.

Mr. Knorr also commented in the 2009 Annual Report: "This year also tested the resolve of the Board of Trustees in meeting the challenges facing church congregations in a slow economy. For a substantial time during the year con-

tributions did not match budget expectations so the Board took decisive action to cut expenditures wherever possible. With additional contributions during December, fiscal 2009 ended with a financial surplus on the books."

The years 2008-2010 saw an examination of the strength, potential growth and future needs of the community church. To conduct such an examination in a structured way, the Board of Trustees appointed a team in 2008 to develop a new mission for the congregation. That team represented a cross section of the church membership, to really analyze the history, goals and aspirations of members in the community. Members of the team included Dr. Kevin Brown, Ann Carrier, Marilyn Creason, Lily Jean Haddad, Gene Knorr, and Ron Wax.

The Team met numerous times and spent a great deal of time and effort to review church goals, talk with members of the congregation, and study materials on church mission and vision. The goals and key points worked out by the committee were approved by the Board in 2010 and then discussed with and approved by the entire Rio Verde Congregation.

The Vision Statement of the Community Church in Rio Verde became:

- To **create** nurturing opportunities for inspiring people to serve the community.
- To be a **welcoming** and friendly Church perceived as a unifier and a "beacon of light" in the community.
- To be **present** to the person standing beside us.
- To **enable** members to honor and serve Christ in meaningful ways according to their gifts.
- To **encourage** an environment that empowers individuals and creates a passionate congregation.
- To be **vigilant** that ministries are relevant to a wide range of ages.
- To **reward** accomplishments and celebrate achievements.
- To **establish** a permission-giving church structure which frees congregational imagination and creativity.

As it turned out, that 3M exercise provided an important foundation for the church call committee to know what to look for in a new pastor after Dr. Brown announced that he was leaving to accept a new call in Seattle, Washington.

The Center For Spirituality and the Arts continued to bring speakers and musical events shared by the entire community. Some of these events included John Denver Tribute, Dr. Linnel Cady, Dr. Diana Butler-Bass, Dr. Charles Forsberg and Scottsdale Chorus (Sweet Adelines). This activity, lead by David Lowell, was profitable for the second year in a row.

In April 2010, Rev. Brown reported to the Board that attendance for the first quarter dropped off quite a bit compared to previous years. He said it was too early to make final predictions for the year, but there was little doubt that overall worship attendance was down. The "good news" was that it was a reflection of participation within the entire Verdes communities rather than a singular issue for the Church.

There also was a transition in leadership of Stephen Ministry. Based on attendance and active participation, there were 20 active Stephen Ministers with 12 care receivers. Dr. Brown said despite the number of reported participants being down, it was an honest number and the *esprit de corps* of the group was very high. Finally, he noted that sometimes crisis and "pruning" can be very beneficial in the long run. The new Program Leaders going forward would be John and Cary Pasnau.

On Sunday, October 3, 2010, the church bid farewell to Pastor Kevin Brown and his wife, Belinda. Approximately 135 people gathered at the Rio Verde Country Club for a delightfully attractive and tasty brunch. Musical arrangements by Tom and Debby Wojtas, were the highlight of the morning. Guests also participated in the Liturgy of Dismissal.

During that time of transition, President Knorr and Tom Wojtas met to plan how to maintain stability of the church and worship services without a full time pastor. It was decided that throughout the transition, President Gene Knorr would step down from the choir each Sunday and give the announcements and general welcome, and welcome the visiting pastors. Tom made sure that there was a steady stream of recognizable music to provide a strong continuity of the music program during the time of transition.

2010, despite being a year of transition in pastors, was full of exciting opportunities for the congregation. Milestones included the celebration of over five years of effective ministry of the Rev. Dr. Kevin Brown, a two month period of interesting and varied supply of pastors sharing their messages, and then the call of Rev. Ron Wilson as Interim Pastor---all surrounded and supported by the working committees of the church and the music leadership of Tom Wojtas.

In the fall of 2010, the Board of Trustees appointed the Pastoral Search Committee chaired by Anne Carrier. It included: Marilyn Creason, Bill Hoffman, Earlene Jeter, Todd

Korb, Dale Lewis, Tricia Wolber, and John Zicarelli. This committee came together as a team rapidly. They devoted a good deal of time to creating a search process that proved to be very effective towards reaching their stated goals. Each member took on specific tasks. They studied the files of information on previous searches at our church and other churches. They asked for advice and information from the ICCC and the UCC national organizations. Materials were composed and posted with appropriate denomination periodicals and web sites, including our own. There also was an updating of the church profile which was shared with applicants. In addition, they developed a system for sharing application information amongst the committee. As a result, meeting discussions were more efficient.

Chairperson Anne Carrier further described the search process. "Most important was our strong wish to include as much input from our congregation as possible. We developed a plan for 'Listening Sessions' which were composed of small groups. Prior to the sessions, each participant was asked to contemplate the questions which would comprise our discussion. Our Committee served as discussion leaders and scribes for each group. Through this process we reached nearly 100 members of the congregation. From these discussions we were able to develop a thorough search criteria which reflected the thoughts and wishes of the congregation. In addition, frequent Search Committee updates were made during church services. We wanted to be as transparent to the Congregation as possible."

"We received ninety applications for the position of Pastor (Minister) of our Community Church. After weeks of communication with applicants by mail and by Skype, we narrowed our search to three final applicants. We invited those three, with spouses, to visit Rio Verde. After spending time with each and introducing them to key people such as our Director of Music, it became very clear that our choice was Reverend Doctor Cathy Northrup. Cathy accepted the offer and began her ministry on August 1, 2011. "

While the very complete process of searching for a new pastor was proceeding in 2011, the church continued to be busy with its mission. Margaret McMillian, Treasurer, re-



Rev. Ron Wilson



Rev. Northrup & Nell Bigley



ported that in 2011 "Our church's finances are stable and day to day expenses are being met. However, we do not have an adequate amount in our Facility Operating Reserve Fund to enable us to cover large capital expenditures."

During 2011, a Finance Committee was created. The purpose of the Committee was "to assist in the financial affairs of the church, working with the Board of Trustees to advise, develop, oversee and maintain prudent and practical finance policies, which will enable the church to continue to meet its needs, now and in the future". The new Finance Committee members were Joel Davidsen, Chair, Bill Bunker, Curt Hage, Lee Hamilton, Lee Weinberger, and John Zicarelli. Finally, the Board recommended a change of the name of the church in November 2011. The congregation approved the name change from Rio Verde Community Church to Community Church of the Verdes, and it was made official in December 2011.

The Spring 2012 Newsletter contained a "From the Pastor's Desk" article by The Reverend Doctor Cathy Northrup. In her opening paragraph she wrote, "As I look back on the 10 months I have been your pastor, I feel great joy. This call is truly a 'match' as we pastors sometimes say; that is, what you wanted and needed in a pastor, and what I can bring here, match. Neither of us is perfect or complete, but together, we make a great team for the kingdom in this place at this time!"

In her final paragraph noted "So there it is---the Cliff Notes version of my call. I hope this helps you know me better as I continue to get to know each of you. I look forward to the summer here and then to the next 10 months, and to repeating the cycle for years here with you. May God bless you this summer, even as God blesses this church and the Verdes."

#### **-NAME CHANGE-**

Board President Nell Bigley's comments in the same newsletter noted, "The church found itself with many changes during the past eight months, months filled with hopes and promises and lots of successes. There have been disappointments along the way like losing long time friends, illnesses and higher golf handicaps. But surely our cup is full and overflowing!!" She continued, "A new pastor answered our call and with that the new membership voted to be more inclusive in our name. Thus we have Rever-



*Rev. Northrup's Installation*

end Dr. Cathy Northrup, Pastor of the Community Church of the Verdes!"

In the spring of the 2011 season at Rio Verde, the concept of a prayer shawl ministry was introduced to Sherrill Beck. She did a little investigating of the concept and found that this was a growing group, mostly ladies in churches throughout the country who knit or crochet shawls to be given to church members when they are ill or ailing for comfort. Sherrill invited friends to join her in the endeavor. The shawls are 20 inches wide and 60 inches long. They are knit or crocheted in different patterns and different colors. Original concepts are encouraged.

Soon these ladies were turning out shawls for anyone in need. When Dr. Cathy Northrup came to the congregation, she was very supportive of the concept. A small budget was formed to cover yarn. There are also contributions of yarn and support given by members. Labels are printed and stitched into each shawl crediting the Prayer Shawl Ministry of the Verdes. Today Dr. Northrup takes the shawls on her visits to hospitals and to homes.

Shawls are also provided to Hospice of the Valley as needed. They are very grateful. There is a small rack where prayer shawls are displayed and blessed near the pulpit which is changed out regularly. As of 2016, over 500 shawls have been distributed.

Although the crafters work at it all the time, they meet in the chapel on the second Friday of every month. The ministry has always welcomed anyone who cares to be involved.



*Prayer Shawls*

In the spring 2012, responding to a directive from the Board of Trustees, based on a recommendation of the Finance Committee, a committee was formed to undertake a Capital Campaign fund raiser with a goal of \$500,000. The committee of Anne Carrier, Dean Eggebraten, Jim Justus, Dick Larsen, Marilyn McQueen, Bob Nyman, Carolyn Terwilliger, and Lee Weinberger, Chair, began its work in late spring of 2012 with a goal of completing the campaign by March 31, 2013. Thanks to the generosity of the congregation, the \$500,000 was achieved and exceeded before the end of the year 2012. A total of \$575,000 was raised by the end of the campaign. A major portion of the funds were used correcting serious structural problems on the sanctuary and chapel as well as support of our Music Ministry by replacing our 100 year old grand piano and thirty year old-choir robes.



After a decade since the completion of the construction of the sanctuary in 2000, the Facilities Committee was faced with a daunting task of addressing "loose stucco" on both sides of the Sanctuary and Chapel. They found that the stucco finish was releasing from the concrete block wall because of too short a nail and too few nails. In the fall of 2013, Wally Lange, Chair, Facilities Committee announced that a contract had been signed with Division Nine Contracting for the restoration of the stucco on the Sanctuary and the Chapel. Mr. Lang, Don McGivern and many others worked tirelessly to bring this project in under budget.

While the outside of the church was being attended to, a brand new Shigeru Kawai Concert Grand Piano weighing 1104 pounds and 9'0" in length was being delivered to the main sanctuary on March 14, 2013. It came from Japan and the piano was dedicated in front of the congregation on Palm Sunday, March 24th. In addition, Gene Lentz and Glynn Rossa, members of the St. Dominic Catholic Mission, and Joel Davidsen and Lee Weinberger, members of the Community Church of the Verdes' Finance Committee, negotiated a mutually acceptable five year contract effective July 1, 2012 which provides for our two churches to continue to share our facilities. This continued the close relationship which the churches have always enjoyed.

Also in the spring of 2012, the Spring Fling dinner turned out to be a big success. Following dinner a panel of accomplished members consisting of Aggie Kramer, Bob Mason, Earlene Jeter, and Verna Alexander joined together on the Fellowship Hall stage to answer questions regarding life in Rio Verde during its formative years. Everyone in the audience was captivated by the colorful stories from some of the earliest residents.

#### **-MEMBERSHIP PROFILES-**

A new feature was added to the periodic Newsletter in 2012. Dr. Northrup along with the Membership Committee agreed to producing member profiles telling their interesting life stories and tales they can tell. Hamp Braun agreed to interview folks and write their stories. The first member profile appeared in the September 2012 featuring Gene Knorr. Another innovation was the introduction of a list of birthdays and anniversaries of members sent as an email blast each month. Finally, at year-end, 2012, the Concert & Lecture Series featured "The Verdes Variety Cavalcade" by Tom Wojtas Productions. The performances included music, light comedy and songs conceived and performed by Tom Wojtas as well as a group of professional musicians (singers, instrumentalists) and people from the Verdes community. The show was done in a radio style setup featuring both holiday and non-holiday material.

In her 2013 Pastor's Report Reverend Northrup wrote, "I am writing to ask you to continue to help the church move forward: we have a strong base, but if we are not moving forward, we are moving backward, and we don't want to do that. When I was called here, I told the call committee my philosophy of ministry was to 'love, listen, and challenge.'" She went on to say she has included loving and listening in her work for the first 2 1/2 years. "Now is the time to truly move forward in ministry." The board solicited input and she hoped to set up "listening groups" to get congregational input.

The Operating Fund Statements of Receipts and Disbursement for 2013 showed a remarkable growth in the receipts from 2011 thru 2013, from \$315,000 to \$394,000. The Community Church of the Verdes Endowment Fund, established May 18, 2000, reported a year 2013 ending balance of \$178,672 after a 5% distribution. The Board made a change in 2013, there would not be any special fund raising, rather, Mission would be included in the annual budget.

The 2013 spring Concert and Lecture Series began with a lecture by M. Zuhdi Jasser, M.D. "Islam Vs. Islamists". Dr. Jasser is a Phoenix resident and is a nationally known activist and the Founder and President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AFID). He spoke on the threat of radical Islam in this country. The final two events were Dick Durrance, a nationally known percussionist and The Marlins, a group of four brothers who sing and play a variety of instruments. In the fall, there were two lectures and a finale with the Phoenix Boys Choir (Christmas Concert).

Terrie Bunker, Mission Committee Chair, in her report of November 2013, reminded church members of the many activities of her committee over the summer including the water for the world program. The funding for the project came from our Church Endowment Fund with a matching grant from the Legacy Foundation. Many days, when it was over 100 degrees, several of our members and our ministers were busy handing out water and reusable water bottles containing Godly messages to homeless people in Phoenix.

Peter Mattingly, President of the Board of Trustees for 2014, said "Not only was 2014 a year of growth for our church, but during the year your Pastor and Trustees set in place a foundation that will produce growth for years to come." In September 2014, Rev. Northrup presented the Trustees with a Ministry Plan that candidly assessed the Church's strengths and weaknesses. The Plan made several recommendations to strengthen the Church and ultimately the Trustees approved those recommendations which in-

cluded:

- Creating the position of Parish Associate to assist our Pastor during the busy time of the year and to expand our Bible based teaching programs and pastoral visitations. Our church has been especially fortunate that Michael Northrup accepted this position. He has been hard at work with his usual Christian enthusiasm and energy.
- Reaching out to the community as a whole through the new Alpha programs aimed at those who are not involved in the church, but still ask the "big questions" of life. This has been well received.
- Expanding personal outreach through our Membership Committee, which is now conducting personal visits to welcome new residents to the community.
- Strengthening our worship services with outside musicians to supplement our excellent choir on a periodic basis. We will also use additional audio visual technology as appropriate.
- Adding an additional administrative position to supplement the tireless efforts of Beth Biebrich to assist with bookkeeping issues (Kathy Hofstrom).

Mr. Mattingly also presented a table showing the growth of membership from 2011 through 2014. At the end of 2011 the membership roster boasted 418 members...at the end of 2014, the membership had climbed to 444.

#### **-PARISH ASSOCIATE-**



*Michael Northrup*

Michael Northrup wrote in his first Annual Report statement that his first few months as the part-time Parish Associate were filled with a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities. The highlights included working with the Harmony Committee in establishing direction for the next year and in recruiting speakers for the first three

months of 2016; assisting the Christian Education Committee in securing lecturers for the 2015-16 season; assisting Pastor Cathy Northrup with the eight sessions of the Revelation class on Thursday afternoons, and the Alpha series on Sunday evenings; cleaning up the library with donations of books and other material to the Fountain Hills Library and to Goodwill; plus counseling, hospital visitation, and other duties assigned by the Pastor.

With major structural issues taken care of and plans for minor improvements set to go, the Facilities Committee Chair, Wally Lange, announced the complete repainting of the wood and metal trim on the exterior of Founders Hall. This had been postponed until the sanctuary was completely recovered. The Memorial Garden wall had to be repaired

when a substantial amount of stucco on the exterior of the west wall began to crumble off of the base material. The final item was the replacement of our damaged air and heating units on the sanctuary roof. Thanks to this committee, the facilities are in excellent condition and enjoyed by many going into the church's 35th year of existence.

In the 35th year since the founding of the church in Rio Verde, 2015, Curt Hage, President, Board of Trustees explained the role of overseeing the mission and ministry of the church. "Our focus is on continuing the work of the Ministry Plan approved last year. The plan has grown in its ministry this year including the formation of small groups to engage in deeper discussions and study of the Bible and topics of Christian living. It is our hope that these small groups will provide an opportunity for members to discuss more deeply their concerns about how we Christians are called to live a new life in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Mr. Hage went on to write, "As our membership grows, so do the demands on staff time and resources. We extended the services of our Parish Associate to 6 months from October 1 to May 15..." He further wrote that "There are so many activities that it wouldn't do justice to try to name them all. They are all important in fulfilling our mission and ministry...We are making great progress in our Christian ministry and outreach, and we have much more to do--our future is exciting!" The membership in 2015 increased to 459.

One of the activities in the 2015 calendar year that "excited" the members was the growth of the Concert, Lecture & Harmony events. A full sanctuary watched the January 30th presentation by the church's very own Music Director...Tom Wojtas Production - The Verdes Cavalcade 2015 (concert).

The Christian Education Committee continued hard work in providing as many opportunities as possible for those seeking to learn. Michael Northrup led a Tuesday morning class on the Old Testament. Reverend Northrup led a Wednesday morning group in studies of the topic of prayer follow up next spring (Linda Carpenter stepped down from leadership of this after many faithful years); Ed Carpenter led a men's group meeting on Thursday morning. Also, another group met on Thursday afternoon.

As the church entered its 36th year of existence, Curt Hage, President of the Board of Trustees, asked the members to rejoice in the growth of the membership that brought new faces, new talent and new energy to the congregation. In addition to the membership increasing, the mission programs expanded, and more people volunteered to perform the many aspects of the ministry, and there was

continued growth in the financial support.

In the Summer 2016 newsletter, "From the Pastor's Desk..." Pastor Northrup wrote, "I was in a conversation with a church member not long ago who was surprised to find out how much goes on here at the church during the year. When new officers begin serving, some of them say this same thing; they simply did not know how much occurs."

Pastor Northrup continued, "Take worship, for example, something that is quite visible, but many folks only see what happens in Sunday worship. They don't know all that goes into it. Tom Wojtas and I plan worship six months ahead of time at least, and we meet each week for an hour to review it, plan it, and discuss issues. The choir or trio practice weekly. Tom finds instrumentalists willing to come. Ushers, tellers, lectors, fellowship servers, and others are recruited by our Worship chair, our Fellowship Chair, and the office. AV persons keep the equipment in top shape and operate it for each service. The church is unlocked, and HVAC is set by volunteers. Bulletins are planned and printed.....and much more."

Lots of volunteer time is dedicated to planning and conducting educational events and concerts: facilities use and upkeep; mission work, visits, and giving; financial record keeping; fellowship events; visitor and new member follow up and visitation; and more.

In the Fall/Winter 2016 newsletter "From the Pastor's Desk," Pastor Northrup reminded the congregation of the process of a Ministry Plan presented each fall to the Board for their approval. "This keeps our focus on the ministry for that year, for we can never simply 'maintain'; an organization is either living or dying, and we certainly are living! I write the plans after I seek and obtain input by members and staff, and others, and after prayer."

The plan for 2016 focused on goals to improve our great church but most especially to broaden our ministry of calling persons to be disciples of Jesus and growing in discipleship together:

- 1) Final approval of the church sign on the corner of Forest Road and Avenida del Ray,
- 2) Reaching out to Trilogy,
- 3) Expanding our music,
- 4) Growing technology usages in worship,
- 5) Increased mission giving.

Pastor Northrup mentioned in the Newsletter, "The sign has been on my 'to-do' list since I arrived here, and it is my prayer that 2017 will see it go up".

With respect to the music expansion goal, an effort was begun in 2016 to enrich our music base by adding, from

time to time, spirituals, other wonderful traditional hymns not in our hymnbooks, and more "contemporary" music in the bulletin.

"We aren't changing our music, just expanding it," wrote Pastor Northrup. "I should note that what I am calling 'contemporary' is largely only music from the 1980s rather than the loud praise music current today in many churches. The 1980s 'contemporary' is the kind of music many of our new residents know, as they are in their 50s and 60s, so we want to be aware of that. Many of us here also love that music, but still want to keep the great hymns of the faith, and our choir in the season, and our trio in the summer."

In addition, the Pastor discussed the expanded use of screens in the sanctuary during services and special events.

Finally, she wrote, "A year after I arrived, we started putting our Mission giving directly into the budget, starting at 10% and growing each year. I would like us to continue and increase that giving this year, focusing on children and families. We work with Christian organizations that show good results, but also keep in touch with our inner city needs in Phoenix and persecuted Christians worldwide. We also continue each year to give members more opportunities to do hands on mission."

The Board announced the support of a new mission with Endowment monies in late 2016. Margo Spencer, Mission Trustee, informed the congregation that "Stop Hunger Now" would be a "hands on mission" for all in the church family and for all residents in Rio Verde, Tonto Verde, Fountain Hills, and the Foothills. On Saturday, December 3, 2016, volunteers met at the church and packed meals to be distributed abroad for children of various needs.

Another mission supported by the church is to contribute to the Pad Project through an organization called "TooLittleChildren".

Our volunteers gather to make washable, re-usable sanitary pads for girls and women in impoverished areas of Kenya. This can make the difference of dropping out or graduating from high school. In Kenya, graduating from high school is often the difference between having a career and a bright future, or going hungry.

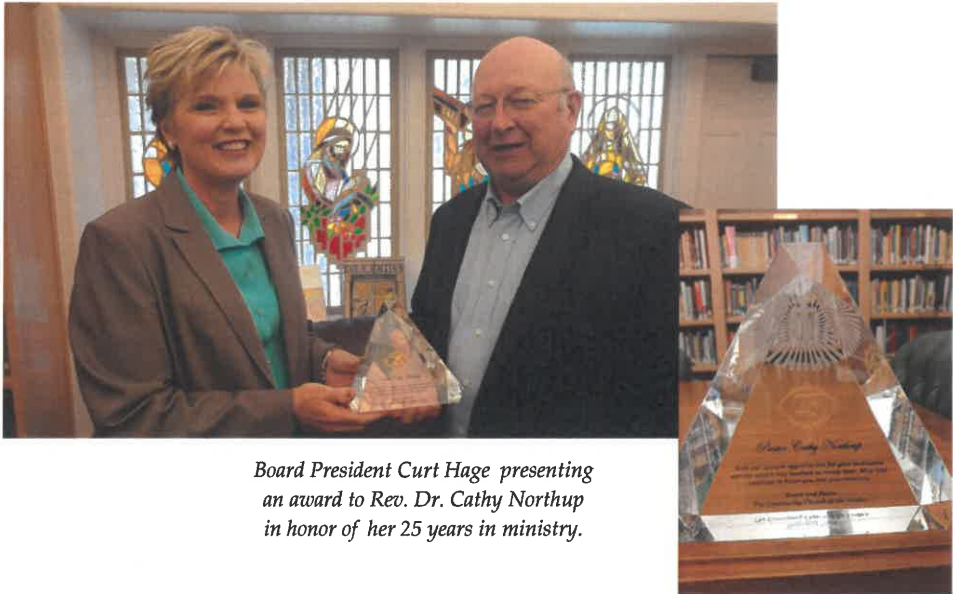


*The Pad Project*



Twenty years after the completion of the church campus, the Community Church of the Verdes has utilized it's wider physical base to serve with greater vitality and to bond the Verde communities and beyond. The strength of the church's witness is surpassing the dreams of its generous members over the past 40 years.

A church history that will be continued with the guidance of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Hallelujah!



*Board President Curt Hage presenting an award to Rev. Dr. Cathy Northup in honor of her 25 years in ministry.*



# The Church continues...

2017-2020

## -IN THE YEAR 2017-

In the Summer 2017 newsletter, Pastor Cathy wrote the following: "Dear Friends, When I asked for input on sermon ideas a bit earlier this year, one of the ideas suggested to me by member was this. Take a headline from that week's paper, and talk about how to apply the Bible to it. Talk about how to incorporate the Bible into everyday living. Talk about the attitude we should have toward current events." Pastor Cathy answered, "I liked this idea very much because it serves the purpose of connecting the Bible to our faith and life. It reminded me, too, that preaching is not simply about giving information, it is about offering strength and guidance for life. Practically, however, the idea presents a few problems. First, I plan worship quite a bit ahead of time with Tom Wojtas, our Music Director, and while we are both flexible if that needs to be the case, it is difficult to hold planning on everything until a day in the week before Sunday in which I would find a headline to address; we want it all to fit together as well. Second, while I do preach on topics, the way I was taught to preach was to begin with God's Word and exegete it, that is, see what is in it through analysis, rather than beginning with experience and then going to the Bible. This can lead to the danger eisegesis, that is, putting something into the text that we want to say."

Michael Northrup joined the pastoral staff as Parish Associate in 2017. He wrote in his Parish Associate Report for 2017, "The Lecture series, Harmony presentations and Bible Studies have all been well attended with a wide variety of topics addressed.

Those interested in further study of the scriptures have had opportunities throughout the week to build and expand on what they learn in the Sunday morning sermons."

Parish Associate Northrup wrote in the Summer 2017 newsletter, "Here we are in 2017, in post-modernity, and some cultural observers even label these as post-Christian times in our nation. Where do we turn for absolute truth? How can we be assured of eternal life, of the return of Christ, of God's help in our everyday lives? We turn to the scriptures, God's thoughts to us, so we can know, understand and believe all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3)."

Michael continued to write, "This past spring three of our Bible study participants (Karen Carlson, Jim Peterson, and Gary Esch) took it upon themselves to speak to the

congregation regarding our Bible study offerings. It was such a blessing to Cathy, me, Ed Carpenter, and the Christian Education Committee that it was their idea. These members have learned and grown by their study of the scriptures, and wanted to share that with many more in our wonderful congregation. As we enjoy the summer months, and look forward to the fall and another season in the Verdes, let me encourage you as they did, please think



about taking advantage of the Biblical teaching provided by Cathy, Ed Carpenter and myself. At least we have two very qualified instructors, (Cathy and Ed)...and before you know it, I'll be up to speed as well."

Michael reviewed the opportunities for study. On Tuesday mornings, he led the focus of two important first century letters which enable us to more practically apply the Word in our daily lives. Cathy Northrup offered both Biblical and topical classes. On Thursday mornings, Ed Carpenter taught the Gospel of Mark at the Community Center, with a faithful group of twenty in attendance weekly.

The Monday afternoon lecture series featured the following presenters:

Doug Napier from Alliance Defending Freedom discussed the legal challenges confronting many Christians today.

Steve Prieb from Wycliffe Associates detailed the great advances made recently in Bible translation and outlined the ambitious goal of having a New Testament available in the heart language of all people groups by 2025.

Dr. Craig Barnes, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, discussed the future prospects for the mainline churches in the United States.

The Harmony presentations covered a wide-range of pertinent topics:

Rio Verde resident Jeff Gibbs gave a very informative and sobering presentation on Human Trafficking.

Dr. Kolbaba, author and physician from Chicago, shared about the numerous miraculous events recounted by over 25 other physicians as detailed in his book, Physicians' Untold Stories.

Dr. Kimberly Bussey's presentation Is It In Our Genes? focused on the latest advances in genetics for cancer therapies.

At the close of 2017, Treasurer, Jerry Minarik, reported, "I am pleased to report that the finances are stable as revenue continued to exceed disbursements in a healthy manner. Lee Hamilton, Finance Committee and Chair of the Endowment and Memorial Garden Funds reported that the Endowment portfolio appreciated 16.41% nearly 2% points better than the weighted average of the market indexes. The Endowment Fund portfolio grew from \$178,313 to \$207,573. The Memorial Garden Fund was also the benefactor of several generous gifts plus the purchase of several niches and plaques and a very good stock market. The Memorial Garden Fund grew from \$230,722 to \$291,471."

Curt Hage wrote in his President's Report for the Community Church of the Verdes Newsletter for Fall/Winter 2017 that "we are continuing our negotiations with St. Dominic Catholic Mission to renew our cooperating lease. Our two congregations have worked together from the inception to share worship facilities and it is our sincere desire to continue that long established tradition." Hage also wrote "the board has reviewed and adopted the updated Mission Plan submitted by Rev. Dr. Cathy Northrup. The plan calls for continuation of our mission focus, our congregational outreach, focus on attracting new members to our congregation from within Rio/Tonto Verde Communities, Trilogy and the residents along the Dynamite Drive corridor. It includes continued enhancement of our worship experience with new audio/video technology – including a significant upgrade to be installed in 2018."

President Hage mentioned that a family copy was available of the updated "Community Church of the Verdes – A 36 Year History."

"Cobe and Bruce Frobes have done an excellent job of updating the history of our church. It is full of valuable insight regarding the development of the dream of our early residents to have a place to worship and recognize this community would be a community of people of different denominations. I hope you will find it as interesting and exciting as I did."

#### **-GREAT NEWS FOR CHRISTMAS-**

On Sunday, December 17, 2017, Reverend Dr. Cathy Northrup sent an email to the congregation as follows:

"Dear Friends, Thanks be to God! I am pleased to send you the announcement below from our Board of Trustees President, Curt Hage. I want to personally and professionally thank Curt for his great leadership, and Terry Palmer, Tim Gabrielse, and Lee Weinberger for their good negotiating work on this issue on our behalf. The church is blessed by a strong Board, vital committee members, and the wisdom of leaders who have served in the past and still con-

tinue to serve and use their important experience. I am grateful to John and Jane Moody for their vision for this church in this community which we seek to live out."

"Cathy, we are pleased to announce that agreement has been reached between Community Church of the Verdes and St. Dominic Mission to extend our lease to share worship facility for the next five years ending December 31, 2022."

President Curt Hage also mentioned in the letter to Cathy "We offer a sincere THANK YOU to the members of the negotiating teams from both congregations – Terry Palmer, Lee Weinberger, and Tim Gabrielse from Community Church of the Verdes and Glynn Rossa and Gene Lentz from St. Dominic Mission. We also say THANK YOU to Pastor Cathy Northrup and Father John McDonough for their support and guidance in this process. Most importantly, we THANK GOD for providing an answer to the many prayers asking for resolution in this matter."

#### **-IN THE YEAR 2018-**

On March 18, 2018, Trustee President Curt Hage, who served five years as a trustee and 3 years as President, opened the Annual Meeting by declaring "God's blessings are abundant as we reflect on the good things that have happened this year. Our mission programs have expanded, participation in Bible Studies has increased, more people are volunteering to perform the many aspects of our ministry, and we continue to have growth in our financial support. In addition, we added two new programs, Alcoholics Anonymous and PAL (Parents of Addicted Love Ones.)"

Mr. Hage thanked all the volunteers in the congregation. "Serving coffee and refreshments for our after service fellowship, organizing new member contact programs, hosting new member orientation receptions, singing in the choir, arranging for our lecture series, organizing concerts, Harmony series coordination, serving for our Welcome Back Party and our Spring Fling, checking on alarms that sound off in the night for potential fire and unauthorized entry, Stephen Ministry, prayer shawl ladies, pad project workers, manning the audio/video control booth for our services and other events, packing food packages for feeding the hungry."

In the 37<sup>th</sup> year since founding of the church in Rio Verde, it became apparent that action was required to set in place "security plans."



Mr. Hage reported "With the reminder of increasing tragedies of violence in schools and churches in the other parts of our country, the Trustees have participated in Sheriff Department briefings and training sessions. We are also partners with churches in Fountain Hills to share information on incidents that might signal a threat to any of us. We have installed a direct 911 call service at strategic places in our facility. Our most effective defense is awareness. We know who belongs here and who might be a stranger. Please report any suspicious behavior to an usher." And finally, Mr. Hage extended a thank you to Todd Korb and Wally Lange for their service on the Board of Trustees. Todd served as Chair of the Technology Committee and helped prepare for a major upgrade in the audio/video system. Wally looked after performance of the alarm systems and for safety of members moving about the campus. And Brian Benzel was thanked for his term as Chair of the Education Committee.

Pastor Cathy was in her seventh year, and every year giving and membership increased, except in 2017 giving to the church increased but the membership did not grow. She mentioned in her Pastor's Report that this membership decrease "is due to a variety of reasons such as death and people moving out of the community." Also, "Younger retired folks moving into our area do not always immediately and out of habit go to church. Also some wish to attend only, but not commit to membership. It is a different generation. We need to invite them, welcome them, share our faith with them, and show them the value and the importance of Christian life. We also need to ask ourselves: are we good witnesses, that is, do our words and deeds witness to the fact that we are Christians?"

In the Annual Report for 2018, Pastor Cathy wrote the following report:

"Justifiably so, the Annual Report to the Congregation from the Board is largely inward looking. That is, it reports to you about our membership, giving, finances, activities, programs and more. This is, again this year, good news, though we, as all churches, do have challenges. Growing the church in numbers and in younger members, and attracting the folks from Trilogy continue to be our clearest challenges. But if we focus only on that, we can be drawn into negative conversations about what 'we should do' to 'fix it' or 'what we should change.'"

"I am blessed to hear from folks who have had to move away from Rio Verde about how much they miss this church. These are not simply older people who are looking back with rose colored glasses."

"They are often younger people who attended here when they lived here, perhaps not even joining, but coming here

because they appreciate the music, the atmosphere, and the community feel here."

"So while I am open to examining ourselves and change, I also don't want us to forget who we are, and what is good. We are blessed."

In the Winter 2018 Newsletter, Pastor Cathy wrote "Community Church of the Verdes is a year-round church. We have worship services every Sunday and more, and many programs continue through spring, summer, fall, and winter. We are here for the residents of the Verdes and the foothills who live here year round. We are also, in a way, a seasonal church, a kind of winter chapel. The majority of our people attend worship and take part in programs January through May, followed by October through December, and our least busy months are June-September. This is because a lot of people come to the Verdes and the foothills to get away from colder weather to the north in the fall, winter, and spring." She went on to say, "I was reminded of this when I came upon an article recently about Episcopalian summer chapels in the northeastern United States." She wrote how this article says "the people that go to these chapels are really faithful." Cathy finished her Winter 2018 article by writing, "These comments in the article made me think. As a year-round church, we represent the full time nature of faith, worship, ministry, education, fellowship, and mission. I love that this is who we are, God's people from January through December. As a seasonal church, a winter chapel, however, perhaps we can help some people actively cultivate the spiritual when they are here, and be the vehicle through which they discover Jesus anew or for the first time. What an opportunity for evangelism that is! Let us find joy in both roles."

Board President Bob Brabec wrote in the 2018 Annual Report that "Our Community Church of the Verdes had another fine year." There was an unexpected turnover during 2018 but Kathy Hofstrom stepped in and worked full time to keep the church on track. Mr. Brabec also thanked the many volunteers who stepped in to help.



Judy Stansbury

The new staff person, Judy Stansbury, began in January 2019, and came with a strong resume and a familiarity with the Verdes.

Our church structures continue to age and repairs were needed. Facilities Committee Chair, Bob Dietsche, reported that early last year the board decided it was time to replace the carpeting in our sanctuary.



Following the carpet installation, the pew upholstery was steam cleaned and the front doors to the narthex and the chapel were refinished. And a second project was to repair and reseal the roofs on all 3 buildings.

Mr. Dietsche also noted that in 2019 it will be necessary to repair and paint Founders Hall, repair and paint all the exposed wood on the campus, and repair, seal, and restripe the parking lot.

A statistical summary of the growth in membership was displayed in the Annual Report for 2018:

Community Church of the Verdes	
At December 31 <sup>st</sup>	Members
2012	431
2013	436
2014	444
2015	459
2016	466
2017	463
2018	475

Jerry Minarik, Treasurer, indicated that the finances of the church are stable as revenue continues to exceed disbursements in a healthy manner. Spending is being managed to slightly more than budgeted and should continue in the foreseeable future.

As reported by Lee Hamilton, Finance Committee, the Endowment Fund and the Memorial Garden Fund gave a good account of themselves in calendar year 2018. During that year, the Trustees took a distribution of \$9,000 from the Endowment Fund to further the church mission. The total distribution for the past seven years has totaled \$58,700. The Fund was started in the spring of 2000, but with the stipulation that no distribution could be taken until the value reached \$100,000.

Parish Associate, Michael Northrup wrote, "We are currently in the midst of our eighth season at the Community Church of the Verdes, and I'm delighted to be a part of the life and ministry of this church. I continue to work closely with the Christian Education and Harmony Committees with a view to providing the best opportunities for individual study of the Scriptures, fellowship and personal

growth."

"We continue to make available four classes per week: Tuesday morning (Michael), Wednesday morning (Cathy), Thursday morning (Ed Carpenter) and Thursday afternoon (Michael). In-depth study of challenging books such as Job and Romans have been presented by Cathy and Ed, while Michael has offered studies on the lives of important figures in the Bible, such as David, as well as a study of the parables in the gospels."

"The successful concert series has provided the funding for excellent speakers for our three lectures and three Harmony presentations. Our lectures have assisted us in keeping our brain healthy and active as we age as well as giving us a better understanding the culture trends nationwide regarding the lives of Millennials with 'Delayed Adulthood'."

"The Women's Retreat in January was a highlight of the year with 66 in attendance. The theme was 'Being Titus 2 Women' as wives, mothers, and grandmothers, and was led by Campus Chaplain from Bethel College in Minnesota, Laurel Bunker."

#### -IN THE YEAR 2019-

In the President's Report for 2019, Bob Brabec wrote: "Our church remains busy. The more people we have serve on these committees the better will be their work. Under the Board are a number of committees, each chaired by a Trustee. (The exception is that Finance is chaired by a church member, with the Treasurer as a member.) These are the committees, with subcommittees and working groups. And we are open to new ideas....."

**Education** (Sunday School, Lectures, Retreats, Bible Studies, Classes); Scholarship Committee, Performing Arts Committee, Harmony Committee, Library Coordinator, Archivist.

**Worship** (Lectors, Ushers, Lilles and Poinsettias, Christmas Decorations, Communion Stewards); Wedding Coordinator, Condolence Committee, Flower Committee, Communion Table Prep Committee

**Mission** (Giving recommendations, monthly drives, hands-on mission)

**Finance** (Budget, Endowment, Insurance, Tellers); Audit Committees

**Facilities** (Care and maintenance of all church facilities); Memorial Garden Committees

**Fellowship** (Sunday fellowship, events)

**Technology** (Phones, computers, Founders Hall and Sanctuary technology, indoor lighting) AV Team, Website coordinator

**Membership** (New member events, weekly visitors, badge table, membership roll)

Other opportunities for service include: Choir, Bell Choir, Stephen Ministry, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Prayer Team, Pad Project, AA, PAL.

Reverend Northrup reported in the 2019 Annual Report, "here are the accomplishments of the past and current Boards and members and staff over eight years:"

**Finance:** Established a Finance Committee; Revitalized the Endowment Fund; Revitalized the Memorial Garden Fund and made it self-sustaining; Established the Scholarship fund; Moved all accounting in-house; Had a successful Capital Campaign and used what was not spent to establish a Capital Reserve Fund; Planned yearly Capital Budgets; Did a Capital Reserve Study; Growth in giving each year.

**Education:** Established new Bible studies; Established new classes; Began Spiritual Themes in Literature program; Gave out scholarships through Scholarship Committee, newly established; Growth in attendance for concerts and Harmony events.

**Staffing:** Hired a sexton; Hired a Financial Assistant; Hired a Parish Associate.

**Pastoral care:** Increased pastoral role in visitation; Revitalized Stephen Ministry program; Expanded Prayer Shawl program; Published two volumes of "Stories of Loss, Stories of Faith."

**Facilities:** Major renovation of stucco; Numerous facility improvements and maintenance.

**Marketing:** Changed the name of church from Rio Verde Community Church to Community Church of the Verdes; Changed sign at corner of Danny Lane and Avenida del Ray; Put up a sign at Forest Road and Avenida del Ray; Established e-blast communication and improved website.

**Mission:** Changed name for Benevolence and Outreach to Mission; Incorporated mission in budget; Established a number of hands on experiences; Pad Project, sandwich making for Justa Center, Food packing events; Gave to mission through the Endowment Fund.

**Music:** Bought a new piano for sanctuary; Purchased new choir robes.

**Other accomplishments:** Established a Policy and Procedures book, incorporating old policies and making new ones, such as for Facilities, Worship, Personnel; Named a new archivist and published a 36 year history; Established Technology Committee (for phones, computers, AV sys-

tem; Expanded use of audio and video technology in worship services; Published an art book; Welcomed AA to our space; Established PAL (Parents of Addicted Love Ones) group meetings; Increase in membership in most years.

Board of Trustees Treasurer, Jerry Minarik, reported in the Annual Report for 2019 the following: "After the close of our 2019 year financial year, I am pleased to report that the finances of the church are stable as revenues continue to exceed disbursements in a healthy manner. For the first time in my 6 years as your Treasurer, revenues were less than budgeted by \$18,350. Spending is being managed to slightly more than budgeted and should continue for the foreseeable future." Mr. Minarik also wrote: "I need to thank many of you who donate your time and assistance to the needs of your Church, insuring its smooth operation. My job would be more difficult without the input from the Finance Committee, especially its Chairperson David Ness and Board of Trustees President, Bob Brabec. Also a big thank you to our office staff, Kathy Hofstrom and Judy Stansbury, and the many weekly volunteer tellers."

Also in the Annual Report for 2019, Parish Associate, Michael Northrup, wrote: "It is a pleasure to be able to report in as we enjoy our ninth season here in the Verdes. Educational opportunities continue to abound via the diligent work of both our Christian Education and Harmony committees. Bible study classes are available during the spring and fall seasons at four different times each week. Cathy, Ed Carpenter, and I team up to provide offerings on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings, with an additional afternoon class on Thursdays. Also through the summer, I facilitate a Thursday afternoon class, which enjoyed a DVD series called 'That the World May Know', with Ray Van Der Laan. This included a look at the archaeological remains in modern day Turkey and Greece of the Biblical cities of Athens, Phillippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. In addition, the video of the tour group was coupled with Biblical accounts of what occurred at those location as recorded in Acts 15-20."

Michael continued, "Our concert series funded our three Academic Lectures as well as our three Harmony speakers, and we enjoyed another season of very well-attended and informative presentations. Included in our 2019 line-up was a presentation detailing some innovative mission work in Africa, as well as an expansive talk regarding what extraordinary work God is doing around the country via 'ordinary' Christian believers who are striving to make a difference in their communities."



"The Community Church of the Verdes Endowment and Memorial Garden Funds both had a very good calendar year 2019" as reported by Lee Hamilton, Finance Committee and Investment Manager of the Endowment Fund and The Memorial Garden Fund. "The investment markets were very strong and gifts to the Funds were generous. The Endowment Fund portfolio grew from \$231,120 to \$280,209 (21%) while the Memorial Garden Fund grew in value from \$278,282 to \$361,362 (30%).

These increases were a realized net of the withdrawals that were taken to extend the mission of the church and to cover the expenses for the care and maintenance of the Garden. For the calendar year 2019, the Trustees took a distribution of \$9,300 from the Endowment Fund to further the church's mission. The total distribution since the start of when the Trustees began taking distributions eight years ago now total \$68,000. It is anticipated that when the books are closed on calendar year 2019, the total distribution amount will stand at \$79,100."

Finally, in the 2019 Annual Report, Bob Dietsche, Vice President and Facilities Trustee, reported: "2019 was another challenging year for your Facilities Committee."

Signage in and around the church campus was updated to meet the needs of our membership as well as visitors. The main valves supplying water to the sanctuary sprinkler system were replaced over the summer.

Additionally, the following work was completed:

- All exposed wood was treated and painted in June.
- Founders Hall was painted after sealing the cracks.
- In June the parking lot was repaired, cracks sealed, surface re-coated and re-stripped
- Issues with the phone system required that we convert to COX phone systems.
- Three air conditioners were replaced in 2019.
- A new Texas Ebony tree was planted in our courtyard.



New sign installed July 2019 at the entrance off of Avenida Del Ray

In the summer 2019 Newsletter, Pastor Cathy mentioned new resources on the church website. "The first is a column I write every other week for the *Fountain Hills Times*. (On the weeks the column is not in the paper, there is a small ad for the church).

The column also includes a quiz written by member Ken Vos, and member Jim Peterson offers editing for us. The Board hopes to keep the church before the public in this way, encouraging faith and inviting newcomers. The second and new resource is my blog. I make an entry each week. While the column is more a mini-series, the blog is more conversational and informal, and allows people to see into my life as a pastor."

Pastor Cathy continued, "I don't teach a weekly Bible study in the summer. I use the time I would do that to plan and prepare for my October through May studies.



I do, however, lead a monthly book discussion on *Spiritual Themes in Literature*."

"We step up organizational work as well. Our Administrative Assistant Judy Stansbury is great at this, and we are getting a number of necessary and important, but behind the scenes, projects completed."



Finally, church member, Michele Mulleady, wrote an article about the Justa Center.

"The nation's first and currently, the only, day-center exclusively serving the growing population of homeless seniors age 55 and older is right here in Phoenix. Justa Center began in 2006 by Pastor Scott Richey and members of the United Methodist Church. They developed programs and services after asking homeless seniors what they needed to help their journey back into housing. It started with a need to have somewhere they come every day to be safe, out of the weather, and have access to needed resources."

The Community Church of the Verdes "supports this mission by making and delivering sandwiches and bagged lunches each month. We do this on the third Thursday of each month at 9 am in Founders' Hall."



*Sandwich making and delivery  
for the Justa Center*



#### **-IN THE YEAR 2020-**

Board President, Bob Dietsche, opened his President's Report for 2020 with the following words.... "In spite of the challenges of 2020, our Community Church of the Verdes met most of and in some cases, exceeded our expectations" He went on to say, "Coronavirus was the main issue which we faced in 2020. This pandemic will continue to present us with more challenges as well as opportunities this coming year. Our Board of Trustees and church staff stayed on top of the constant changes to protocols and guidelines so that everyone remained healthy. We implemented these at our worship service, Bible studies, as well as other meetings at our church campus.

On March 19, 2020 the Board of Trustees sent an email to all members and friends of the church:

"Dear Members and Friends of The Community Church of the Verdes: The Church Board of Trustees want to advise you of decisions we have made concerning the Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Pandemic. We're sure all of you are well informed of how dangerous and easily the virus can spread. It is well known that the elderly and medically compromised are the groups most susceptible to suffer severe complications from contracting the virus. Of course it

is these groups which make up the vast number of the Verdes' community.

Therefore, for the health and well-being of our community, the board has decided to immediately implement the following measures which will remain in effect until further notice:

1. Pastor Northrup, a lector, music director and trio, and an AV person will record Sunday Worship Service with no congregation physically present. We plan to put on the website the entire service for your viewing sometime after the service, as we are taking care of necessary licensing to include the music so that all legal requirements are met. As always, the bulletin is also posted on the website, so you can use that to follow along. The audio and print versions of the sermon are also posted. Please worship with us "virtually."

2. We have been in consultation with community leaders, who are acting on national, state, and county guidelines. Therefore all meetings on Church Campus including PAL, AA, PAD Project, Bible Study (4), Stephen Ministry, Prayer Meeting in the Chapel are suspended. Any and all other meetings of groups of 10 or more may not use the Church Campus. Please consider using conference calling as an alternative.

3. Doors to the Sanctuary and Chapel will be locked effective now until further notice.

The Administrative Building and church will remain open during regular office hours. Please know that Pastor Northrup and the Board are always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

As a church, we do believe we are in a unique position, and as such, we offer this scripture: 'Matthew 8:23-27 – Jesus Calms the Storm.'

The email continued "We continue to pray to God for wisdom and guidance. Please pray for the Pastor, staff, Church Board, and our neighbors as we navigate these trouble waters. Also please continue to love your neighbors by seeing how you can assist those who live near you.

In Christ we remain,

*Bob Dietsche, President, Darrel Brenner, Vice President and Mission Trustee, Dan Larson, Treasurer, Sandy Palmer, Secretary and Fellowship Trustee, Tom Mulleady, Technology Trustee, Peter Allen, Education Trustee, Cheryl Wenthe, Worship Trustee, Larry Pearson, Facilities Trustee, Rog Severson, Membership Trustee, and Pastor Cathy Northrup."*



On May 21, 2020, Bob Dietsche sent the following notice to members and friends of the Community Church of the Verdes:

"I am glad to announce, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, that we will reopen the sanctuary for worship for those who want to attend on Sunday, May 31, 2020 at 8:30 am.

We, of course, will follow the safety protocols established by the CDC, state, and local authorities, and we will apply them in this way:

1. We recommend, but not insist, that everyone wear a mask for your protection as well as others around you.
2. Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be required. Every other pew will be roped off for this purpose.
3. Gloves will not be required, but you may wear them if you would like.
4. Hand sanitizer (stations) will be located at the entrance for your use. Access to the church will be limited, so come to the front doors, and you will be directed how to enter.
5. We will maintain social distancing during the Passing of the Peace. Use whatever method you prefer. A suggestion would be hands together in a praying gesture and a slight bow.
6. Bulletins will be available which the ushers will have out. All music for the service will be printed in the bulletin. Therefore, hymnals will not be available at this time. The bulletin will be available on line as well so you will be welcome to print yours out ahead of time, or use your iPhone or iPad during worship.
7. Communion will be served on the first Sunday of the month as usual, but we will be taking precautions. The wafers will be separate, and the juice will be individual glasses.
8. Baskets will be placed in the sanctuary for offerings.
9. Live streaming will continue, as well as a recording of the service for viewing at a later time.
10. Fellowship will resume at a later date.
11. The restrooms will be open, but the water fountains will be shut off."

On June 23, 2020, Bob Dietsche, Board President, and Cheryl Wenthe, Worship Committee Chairperson sent the following announcement to the Congregation:

"Dear Members and Friends of Community Church of the Verdes, If you live in Rio Verde, Tonto Verde, or Verde River, you may have already received a message from your community association regarding the most recent Maricopa County regulation regarding face coverings.

If you live in Fountain Hills or the foothills, you may also be aware of the regulation. The Board of Community Church of the Verdes is also aware of the regulation. We

have recommended wearing masks, and provided them to many through the women of our church and community sewing masks. The Board has also funded the material to make the masks. The new regulation ups the standard of *recommending* face coverings, to *requiring* face coverings in 'public accommodations'."

"Though the Board is not made up of lawyers, and we are certainly not issuing a legal opinion, we are aware that churches are generally distinct from 'public accommodations' and do have certain federal protections. Notwithstanding that, the Board of the church is in unanimous agreement that, in light of the unique population of Rio Verde and the foothills, and to be consistent with all of our community, we also will require persons indoors in our facilities to wear face coverings. This includes those attending worship, attending meetings or studies, and coming by the church office. Also, we will ask folks to remember the practice of social distancing."

"Given the nature of their work, the worship team will not wear face coverings but remain on the chancel, as they have been doing, though they certainly may choose to wear face coverings when they are not speaking or singing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me."

In Christ,

Bob Dietsche,, Board President

#### -DURING THE PANDEMIC-



Over 6,000 facial masks were made by the women of the church and community. They were then distributed to the Verdes residents. Additionally, Pastor Cathy and others delivered many to various mission agencies and care facilities throughout the area.

We partnered with Verde Cares, Rio Verde Fire Department, and Safeway Pharmacy personnel to set up and run a POD in the church parking lot to administer COVID vaccines to the community in early 2021, along with a follow up dose three weeks later.





In Pastor Northrup's report for 2020 she wrote: "In my Annual Report last year, I wrote about past accomplishments of the church which furthered our inner strength ('running the church') and our outer strength (advancing the kingdom of God and the good news of Jesus Christ), I went on to say that our focus for the coming season of 2020-2021 was on these three areas: membership, marketing, and mission. Then, along came COVID-19 and all that followed! The whole world changed, and our world changed.

We did not put these three areas away, but we had to do some creative re-thinking for this new situation. We decided first that, as the church, we would focus on the core functions of the church. One such function is worship. We are keeping that strong, blessed especially this year by our Music Director and a quartet of wonderful singers to lead music who are very willing to work.

Further, given that we hired an AV Operator some time ago and updated our AV system just before that, we are able to stream worship online for those who choose not to come in person. Another core function is Bible Study. Michael Northrup, Ed Carpenter, and I continue our weekly studies.

Yet another function is pastoral care. Though hospitals and care homes have been locked down or limited visitation, I seek to use email and the phone a lot. The Membership Committee is also helping to keep us connected through phone calls. Finally, a core function is mission, so we made the commitment to help others, giving all of our mission money as budgeted to agencies in need. In addition to giving money, many members serve God by volunteering in numerous ways to various social agencies."

Parish Associate Michael Northrup wrote this about his experience in 2020. "Despite the many challenges presented to us during the last year, we were still able to teach God's Word on a regular basis, and for that we can be thankful. When we were unable to meet last spring due to lock downs, I was encouraged by Bob Dietsche, Board President, to write a daily e-mail to the members of our Tuesday and Thursday Bible Study classes. I did so five days a week for over two months, which enabled us to study the Word together and remain connected."

Mr. Northrup went on to write, "We met on Thursday afternoons through the summer undertaking a study of the Book of Proverbs, which proved to be a productive time of learning"

"The decision by the Board early in 2020 meant that the lecture series presented by the Christian Education and the guest speakers offered by the Harmony Committee had to be canceled for this season. Fortunately, both committees have maintained contact with the six scheduled speakers

and the majority have agreed to return next season to do their presentations. Harmony has had some Zoom committee meetings and even had one potential speaker give a presentation to the committee via Zoom. Members of both committees continue to offer ideas for potential speakers for the coming years."

The Treasurer's Report for 2020 was presented by Dan Larson. "After the close of our 2020 financial year, I am pleased to report that the finances of the church are strong as revenues continue to exceed disbursements in a healthy manner.

Revenues were greater than budgeted by \$114,350. Spending is being managed to slightly more than budgeted and should continue in the foreseeable future."

Mr. Larson went on to report, "We were blessed to have several beneficial insurance policies, appreciated stock transfers, and many very generous contributions to our general fund."

In the Facility Committee Report, Facilities Trustee, Larry Pearson, outlined the challenges his committee faced in 2020 to keep our facilities functional, operational, and beautiful. "A combination of roof repairs and sealing of the Founders hall parapets corrected the problem." Roof leaks were a problem. "We also experienced a lot of bats entering Founders Hall and the administrative office last summer. We successfully removed the bats, and sealed off the points of potential entry. One of our rooftop heat pump units failed late in the year. That unit was replaced in January 2021."

"We now have a Memorial Garden Committee (Darrel Brenner, Bob Nyman, Jim Justus, and Steve Crane) that manages, maintains, and oversees necessary improvements to the Memorial Garden.

The committee got right to work getting Board of Trustees' approval for and implementing a plan to upgrade the memorial wall by replacing the existing plaques with newly engraved plaques and placing them in a framing system like that used on the columbaria in Garden 2.

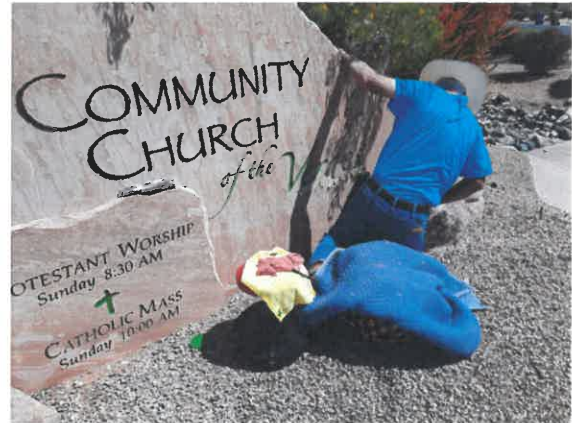
This will greatly improve the appearance and functionality of the memorial wall. We hope to begin renovation in late March or early April (2021.)

The committee has also arranged for the replacement of the Memorial Garden entrance plaque. Special thanks and recognition to Dale Newcomb for his love, hard work and commitment to the Memorial Garden over his many years of service."



*In early 2021, Carol Foti joined the staff as our Financial Assistant.*

Lee Hamilton, Finance Committee Member, reported on the Endowment and Memorial Garden funds, "Gifts to the Funds by our congregation were generous". Also he reported, "The Endowment portfolio grew from \$280,209 to \$323,076 (15.3%) while the Memorial Garden Fund appreciated from \$361,362 to \$401,597 (11.1%). These increases were realized net of the withdrawals that were taken to extend the mission of the church and the expense for some overdue care and maintenance of the Garden".



*Plaque Wall Before*

*The church signs were cleaned and repainted*



*Plaque Wall After*



*Old Entrance Plaque*



*New Entrance Plaque*



# OUR STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

## THE SANCTUARY

(Descriptions written by Bob Mason)

### The Chancel Main Window

This collage of stained glass beauty reflects several biblical themes. The rainbow reminds us of God's covenant with Noah and all creation (Genesis 9).



The clouds and the mountains speak of God's presence, an association made in many biblical accounts.

The river brings to mind the words of the Lord according to Isaiah, "I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 35:6).

The desert plants and grasses in the forefront reflect the prophet's words, "...the desert shall rejoice and blossom" (Isaiah 35:1).

### The Nave

The six square windows, three on the east and three on the west, continue the desert-in-the-bloom theme. "The Lord...will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord" (Isaiah 51:3).

The plants portrayed here have symbolic meaning in the Christian life.

The three east windows are described front-to-back:

The Christmas rose has long been associated with Christ Child. The carol, "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" and the title, "The Rose of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1) speak to us of the Messiah.



The Palm branch is a symbol of triumphant rejoicing. "So they took branches of palm trees went out to meet him, shouting "Hosanna!" (John 12:13).

The Passionflower, an American climbing vine, symbolizes the suffering of Jesus. It is so-named because it is likend to Christ's wounds, the crown of thorns and other marks of suffering.

The three west windows are described front-to-back:

The Orange branch symbolizes both the purity of the bride (the blossom) and the fertility of the family (the fruit). It also grows today in the Holy Land.

The Olive branch symbolizes both hope and peace. The dove brought back to Noah a "freshly plucked olive leaf" (Genesis 8:11), a sign of hope. The olive branch may be known as a symbol of peace.

The Lily speaks of humility and purity. Another title ascribed to the Messiah was "The Lily of the Valley" (Song of Solomon 2:1). The Easter Lily is also a symbol of Christ's resurrection and ours.

The two long vertical windows were inspired by the words from Exodus 13:21 speaking of the Lord's guidance to the children of Israel as they wandered in the desert, "The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day...and in a pillar of fire by night..." The cloud is depicted in the west window and the fire is shown in the east window.

### The Narthex

The windows here include more generalized Christian introductory symbols since they are in the place of entry into the sanctuary. Above the main exterior doors is the Dove, with an olive sprig, symbolizing the dove's return to Noah's Ark (Genesis 8:11). This also denotes peace, forgiveness and the anticipation of new life.

Above and to each side of the main doors





are symbols for God, the Creator, the Star of David, and for Christ, the Lamb of God.



In the window above the interior doors leading to the nave is a simple square cross, reminiscent of a Maltese cross, one of the many beautiful forms of the cross.



the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Two other windows in the upper reaches of the narthex area represent God as the Alpha and



### The Resurrection Chapel

The main window behind the altar speaks of the Risen Christ, which will be shadowed by the structure of the cross outside.

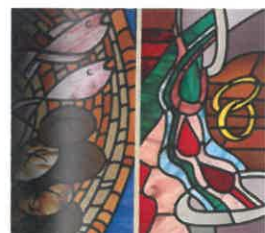
Flanking the entrance to the Chapel is a figurative design of the Nativity and the Three Magi. Also depicted are the star, the gifts, the animals and the representative shepherd.



In the nave windows to the north are representations of Christ's miracles. There we can see the calling forth of Lazarus from his tomb, the giving of sight to the blind, the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes and the changing of the water into wine.

In the nave windows to the south are reminders of Jesus' teaching ministry. There he is remembered as the boy in the Temple, in the Sermon on the Mount, as he taught from a boat on the Sea of Galilee and in the institution of the Lord's Supper in the upper room.

May these works of art speak meaningfully to all who worship in this House of God. May the light and messages of these windows enlighten our souls.



*For more details about our church art and stained glass, refer to the book "Our Faith Reflected in Art" available in our library.*

*A walking narrated tour is available upon request in the church office.*

**COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE VERDES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS 1981-2020**

Peter Allen	John Holmes	Pat Muilenberg
Illa Alexander	Dick Humm	Tom Mulleady
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Herndon Harding	Bob Moe	Mary Zicarelli
Floyd Head	Dick Morris	O.W. Zimmerman
Pat Hemmer	Mort Mosiman	

\*Served as President



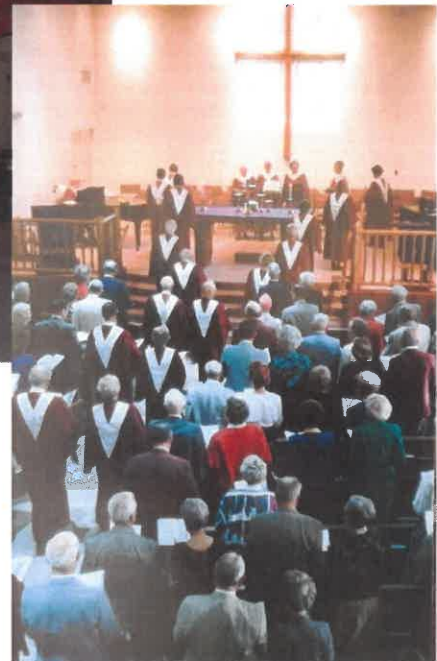
## Board Members Over the Years



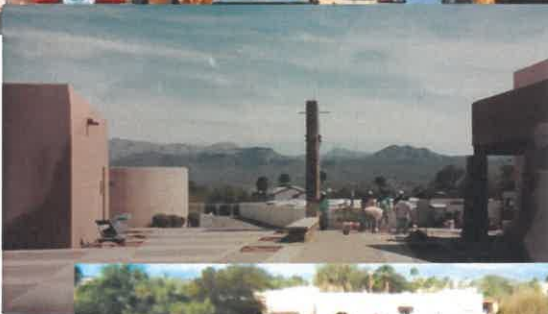
*Our Current Board 2021-2022*



## Original Sanctuary & Current Founders' Hall

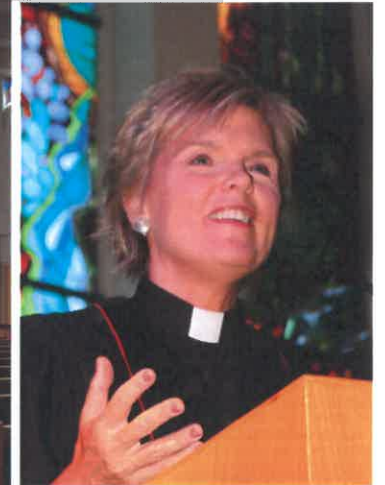


## Construction of New Sanctuary





## Current Sanctuary





## Music





## Fellowship in Christ



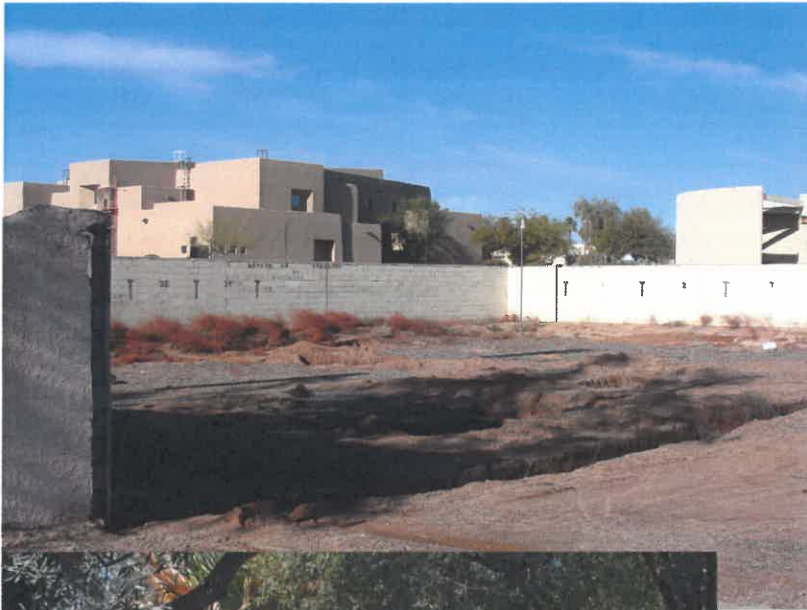


## Fellowship in Christ

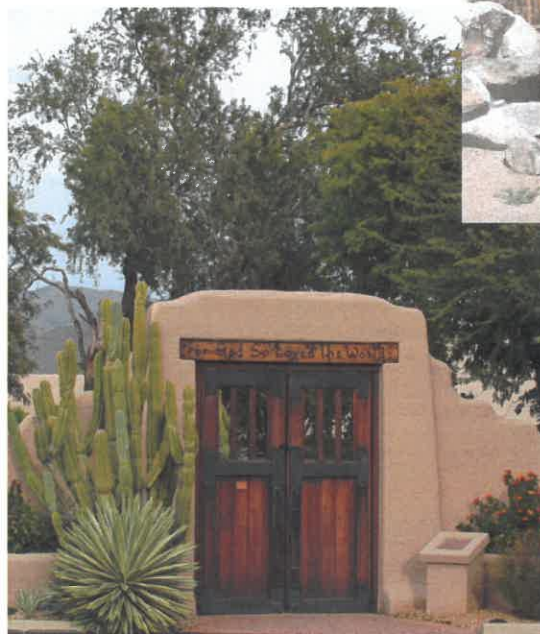




## Memorial Garden



Memorial Garden  
Dedicated May 27th 1990  
†  
Whosoever Liveth  
And  
Believeth In Me  
Shall  
Never Die





# 2020 - Coronavirus Pandemic

## A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words



*History of The Community Church of the Verdes*

*Compiled by*

*Marilyn McQueen and Bob Mason*

*1980-2000*

*Cobe and Bruce Frobes*

*2000-2016*

*2017-2020*

*In preparation of this book, every effort was made to authenticate dates, events and names. If there are errors or omissions, we apologize and would appreciate being advised.*

*-- Cobe and Bruce Frobes*

*Additional editing support was provided by*

*Rev. Dr. Cathy Northrup*

*Bob Dietsche*

*Judy Stansbury*

*Technical Preparation and Printing Production*

*By Judy Stansbury, Office Manager*

*Community Church of the Verdes*

*25603 N. Danny Lane*

*Rio Verde, AZ 85263-7129*