

Catalina UMC's Outreach: Connecting & Growing in Tucson

Last August, the Desert Southwest Annual Conference (DSC) sent Pastor Mike, Laurie Campbell, and me to Salt Lake City for training on reaching new people in relevant ways. This brainstorming led to events like *Queers & Coffee*, our Trunk-or-Treat partnership with Club Zeus, and the upcoming Lenten Queer Bible Study. Since then, I've been working with a coach to develop actionable steps, and last week, Laurie, new church member Vickie Austin, and I attended a follow-up training in Phoenix to assess our progress and realign our next steps. What follows is an update on the progress we've made so far.

One of Catalina's goals is to *"connect with the community by showing up where they are (Pride, coffee shops, and other local events)—to see where God is already at work and how we can form partnerships to support God's work."* This means that rather than assuming what the community needs, our first step is to be present, listen deeply, and discern how Catalina can be a meaningful presence. Over the next six months, my focus is on listening, learning, and relationship-building through two key efforts:

1. **Holding 50 one-on-one conversations** with community leaders, like local schools, neighborhood associations, faith communities, and LGBTQ+ organizations. I've also begun working from a coffee shop a couple of days a week, inviting people for conversation or prayer. Through these conversations, we'll gain a deeper understanding of Tucson's needs and explore meaningful ways Catalina can engage. I'll continue to share some of what I learn in our Catalina Cares e-news.
2. **Organizing a core team for outreach at local events**, including St. Philip's Plaza (March 29), Cyclovia (April 6), and Heirloom Farmers Market at Rillito Park (May TBD). These events will allow us to meet new people and learn what people may be looking for in a church.

Will these efforts grow our church? Time will tell—but stepping outside our walls follows the example of Jesus, who ministered in marketplaces and villages rather than staying in the Temple. It's also deeply Methodist, reflecting John and Charles Wesley's work of reaching people where they were.

I was recently encouraged by [*MyCom Church Marketing Podcast: Reaching Your Church's Next Generation*](#), featuring Rev. Rachel Gilmore, DSC's Director of New & Vital Faith. She spoke about ways to engage younger generations—many of which our Outreach Team is already putting into practice.

Catalina's future is unfolding before us, and I'm excited to see where God leads. Together, let's keep showing up, listening, and extending Christ's love in our city. I invite you to pray for these efforts, join us at events, and journey with us along the way—because this work belongs to all of us!