

UCC@ASU Update

by Andrew Ponder Williams, Campus Minister

We are delighted to share an update with our Southwest Conference friends. We are humbled and encouraged by the incredible outcomes we are experiencing despite the present challenges we all know so well. This partnership of the Southwest Conference and Desert Palm United Church of Christ is resulting in new and exciting ways for us to learn how to be the church in inspiring ways.

Students are very comfortable with and encouraged by our accessible virtual format and authentically inclusive theology and witness. Here are some highlights we want to share:

Bringing New Persons into the UCC

We have about 20 active students at the time of this writing and only three of them have prior experience and connection with the UCC. For all these students new to our denomination they are finding a safe and nurturing spiritual home with us.

About Our Students

Our students are finding great hope and purpose through spiritual and theological reflection. The depth of our conversations is inspiring. Our students represent multiple cultures, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. We also have an encouraging retention rate. Approximately 78% of students who visit us once become active weekly participants. Although we are only six months old, we already have students from multiple ASU campuses and have nearly as many students from the West Valley campus as the Tempe campus.

Developing Leaders for the Church and Community

UCC@ASU is fully led by our students. We have formed a Leadership Circle in which all students who are interested in vision work for our future and planning are supporting our growth. About half of our students are involved in the Leadership Circle. Many of our newest students are the most involved as they are very thankful for the supportive and safe spiritual community and want to welcome others into our shared ministry.

What We Offer-All on Zoom at this Time

LGBTQ Interfaith Forum

On the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 we offer a forum for students who identify at LGBTQ and as people of faith. This is a safe place for us to share our experiences in a safe and nurturing environment.

Online Worship

On the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm we have our worship service with a time of considering how the spirit is at work in each of our lives, group prayer, scripture, discussion, a brief message, and prayer requests for us each to share and pray with each other about for the month ahead.

Weekly Small Group

Every Thursday at 6:30pm is our weekly small group where we share highs and lows, announcements, and have a discussion topic about faith or share our experiences and interpretations of scripture.

Collaborations

We have and continue to partner with Out@ASU and the Rainbow Coalition on virtual events to specifically support the LGBTQ community on campus. We are also partnering with other Mainline campus ministries on some shared witness opportunities around topics where we have common ground.

Council of Religious Advisors

We are active members in the official ASU religious body and are actively working through ecumenical and interfaith channels to challenge our peer religious entities to be inclusive and committed to justice. Just this month Andrew is presenting to the over 40 members of CORA about how the UCC is distinct in our witness and inclusivity.

How to Connect with and Support Us

Invite Andrew to guest preach in your online worship service (we very much look forward to preaching in-person when it is safe down the road)

Connect young adults and college students from your congregation with us

Reach out to us with any other ways you feel called to support us

Contact Andrew Ponder Williams for more information

andrew@desertpalmucc.org

How We Are Called to Support Your Ministry

Reach out to Andrew if you would like to learn more about our ministry with the hopes our story will inspire you to offer ministry to the young adults in your contexts.