

SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE UCC COCAM-B ANNUAL REPORT

COCAM-B acts on behalf of the Conference's to support the covenant relationships with local churches. The post-pandemic period has been quite active. Below is a summary of the work of COCAM-B in the past year:

CHURCH SUPPORT

As many will recall, COCAM-B administered hybrid grants for local churches to upgrade equipment for streaming church services and events. Although most applications for these grants were processed during 2021-2022, in the past year COCAM-B continued to receive applications and process the grants. Many local congregations provided feedback to the Conference about the usefulness of the grants. The consensus is that the grants made significant and positive difference in the life of many congregations.

NEW CHURCHES

The SWC formally covenanted with First Samoan CCCTOLT/EFKAS as a new local church in our Conference. We celebrated our covenant relationship in a service at First Samoan's Whitman church.

New Hope UCC of Phoenix launched on April 2, 2023. Dr. Rev. Myra Taylor and her husband, David, moved from Chicago to plant a progressive church in Phoenix with the intention of ministering to the Black community. The Conference supported this new church with grant funds and will continue to support New Hope according to conference guidelines in the future. In the coming year, New Hope will follow the SWC and Manual on Church process with the expectation that New Hope will covenant with SWC as a local church at next year's annual meeting.

Arizona Marshallese Church is in formation. COCAM-B has worked through formation issues with the church leadership, assisting in locating facilities, obtaining insurance coverage and many of the other technical aspects of forming a new church.

2023 CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES

EFKAS Phoenix AZ UCC – 2008 15 years

Sun Lakes UCC – 1983 40 years

Shadow Rock Congregational UCC – 1973 50 years

Desert Heritage Church – 1963 60 years

Church of Beatitudes – 1958 65 years

CLOSINGS

After a long and thoughtful period of discernment, First Congregational Church of Flagstaff closed. At a service of closing, First Congregational Church of Flagstaff distributed its contributed reserves to community partners it had long supported.

Congregacional Unida in Albuquerque, NM has closed.

NEW PASTORS

Rev. Derrick Elliott was installed as the pastor at Sun Lakes United Church of Christ. He serves jointly at Desert Heritage Church in Mesa and also is an Air Force Chaplain Reserve Chaplain.

Rev. Tina Campbell was installed as transitional minister and pastor at Black Mountain UCC.

Rev. Louis Mitchell was installed as pastor at Rincon UCC.

Rev. Johnson Jetton was installed as pastor at Phoenix Marshall Ministry

OTHER

The United Churches Fellowship in Nogales remains unresolved. The SWC took title to the property after the church closed. The ELCA has conducted a feasibility study for restarting ministry in the location and appears likely to conclude it will not contribute financially to ministry at this time. The SWC is reaching out to local churches in the conference about possible ministry in the building.

After First Congregational of Tempe closed several years ago, the terms of the sale of the property required the purchaser to remove the stained-glass windows on behalf of SWC. That has not happened despite repeated efforts. The conference is preparing a final letter to the owner before making decisions on any next steps.

The UCC national setting MESA referred a fitness review from another conference to the SWC. COCAM-B assisted COCAM-A in the fitness review by providing process guides.

Respectfully submitted,

Brendan Mahoney
COCAM-B Chair