

**Rev. Dr. Kevin A. Johnson retired September 24, 2023, as co-founder with Micheal P. Shear of Bloom in the Desert Ministries United Church of Christ (Bloom) in Palm Springs, California.**

**21 years of Palm Springs Community-Based Ministry**

- 2002: Kevin “Rev. Kev” A. Johnson and Mike Shear shared a life-altering vision, quit their jobs, sold most possessions, and moved to Palm Springs in summer 2002 intentionally to prove an out gay male pastor could start a liberal Protestant church and be an effective pastor.
- June 16, 2002: Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago, commissioned the Rev. Kevin A Johnson and Michael Shear as “missionaries to the West” specifically for LGBT-inclusive Methodist Christian ministry, offering welcoming and healing for persons rejected or displaced by church rejections of the LGBT community.
- September 2002: “Rev Kev” and Micheal Shear cofounded Bloom in the Desert Ministries (Bloom) in Palm Springs as the first self-identified Reconciling Ministries liberal historic protestant ministry in the Coachella Valley.
- September 18, 2002: The ministry first gathered as a Bible Study group with the theme: “The Bible is not a Weapon of Mass Condemnation.” Rev. Joe Brownrigg and Sarah Ann Brownrigg, recent new residents to LaQuinta, showed up as the two original Bloomers. Although relocated to Santa Fe several years ago, they still consider themselves the grandparents of Bloom.
- 2004: Bloom incorporated as a California Religious Corporation in 2004, with three purposes: worship, education, and social action.
- 2004: United Methodist Church General Conference (international rule makers) continued rejecting gays and lesbians for clergy and marriage with increasing intensity, so the growing Bloom congregation decided to identify more clearly with the United Church of Christ – a historical Protestant denomination missing from the west valley and home or several Bloom regular leaders.
- October 29, 2005: The fledgling congregation affiliated with the national United Church of Christ as an Open and Affirming Peace and Justice congregation, also becoming the first church of the historic Mayflower-born American Christian denomination in Palm Springs’ history.
- 2003-2004: Early collaboration with Dr. Wayne Kinney, founder of Well in the Desert and Bloom congregants established “Sandwich Mondays” sandwich making ministry providing portable supper augmenting local community lunch programs for unhoused and working poor area residents.
- Served for two years on a city council Palm Springs Homeless Task Force.
- 2003: Began Palm Springs community activism as a volunteer in the “Save our Mountains/No on Palm Hills” campaigns to prevent development on the Chino Cone and the open space in the mountains above Von’s shopping Center.
- 2003-2006: Rev Kev joined other local clergy supporting low-wage worker empowerment through labor organizing efforts for casino and hospitality low-wage

workers. Collaborated with UNITE HERE union, plus Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice and Interfaith Worker Justice organizations.

- Rev. Kev and Bloom congregants supported organizations and participated in numerous vigils for Transgender Day of Remembrance, peace, immigration reform, women's rights, anti-bullying, and gun safety,
- 2015-2016: Leading the way, Bloom was the first church in the state of California to endorse the "Compassion & Choices" California End of Life Option Act legislation, which became law June 9, 2016.
- Summer 2004: Collaborated with local peace activists, politicians, and an ecumenical coalition producing the Palm Springs appearance of the traveling "Boots on the Ground" memorial, in the wake of the Iraq invasion and continuing United States Afghanistan war-making. On the Palm Springs Leisure Center grounds hundreds of boots representing fallen military and dozens of shoes representing civilian contractors were arranged in poignant rows. Activist Cindy Sheehan began her anti-war actions that day as she drove from her home and donated her son, Casey's (1979-2004) boots to this event. Casey was KIA in Iraq that April.
- 2008-2013: Rallied local interfaith and ecumenical support for marriage equality in California and nationally while collaborating directly with George Zander and Paul Zak
- Served as a local clergy representative with George Zander and others on the first Palm Springs Harvey Milk Breakfast organizing committee.
- 2013-2014: Elected to John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital board of governors.
- For more than 15 years, published thought provoking "Words of Faith" quarterly and "Valley Voice" columns in the Desert Sun.
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- Served as a local clergy representative on the first Palm Springs Harvey Milk community breakfast organizing committee.
- 2007: Peace Day Award Winner as the local Veterans for Peace chapter recognized Rev. Kev as a "peace and justice activist," primarily as recognition for work supporting installing international Peace Poles at Coachella Valler High School and Cathedral City Library.
- Led local interfaith religious and business coalition to collaborate with Palm Springs mayor and Parks and Recreation commission, city maintenance to fund and plant an International Peace Pole in the downtown Village Green on January 18, 2008. "May Peace Prevail on Earth" is printed on the pole in 12 languages, including Cahuilla for the first time ever, plus Braille. More than 200,00 Peace Poles are planted around the world by local groups in association with the international Peace Pole Project.
- 2009-2012: Rev. Kev led a local religious coalition in three-year collaboration with Inland Congregations United for Change to work with Palm Springs Planning Department and Commission, mayor, and city council to change zoning laws to comply with the United States Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). This action now welcomes religious gatherings places, including small churches,

mosques, synagogues, and temples in throughout Palm Springs' zoning districts as other similar places for gathering. Prior zoning allowed "churches" only in a few areas zoned as industrial and required expensive permitting application processes for other city zones.

- 2014 to present: Rev. Kev and Bloom's Social Action and Missions ministry group to create the annual Bloom in the Desert Community Justice Award. Nine awards promoting unsung justice leaders in the Coachella Valley area for project and lifetime achievements in actions of peacemaking, health advocacy, environmental activism, farmworker organizing, LGBTQ youth empowerment, marriage equality, and food insecurity.
- 2015: Created with Rabbi David Lazar the ongoing annual Palm Springs pride Interfaith Pride Kabbalah Shabbat service on the Friday night of Palm Springs Pride weekend.
- February 5, 2017: First United Methodist Church, Kenosha Wisconsin, officially and liturgically apologized to "Rev. Kev" for summarily firing him in 1981 for being gay with a service of repentance and reconciliation.
- June 14, 2018: Rev. Kev included among the honoring of Palm Springs' 80 Outstanding Voices recognition in conjunction with the celebration of the city's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- February 11, 2019: Received City of Palm Springs Human Rights Commission Community Service Award for promoting human rights "Close to Home." City Hall ceremony also included commendations from Riverside County and a U. S. Congressional recognition from Congressman Raul Ruis.
- 2002 to 2023: Active participation in the West Valley Interfaith Association (WVIA), Mid-Valley Interfaith Council, and its successor Desert Interfaith Council.
- 2013-2020: San Francisco Theological Seminary studies begun at age 60 and graduated with a Doctor of Ministry degree in executive leadership at age 66. Doctoral Dissertation Project website [www.gaypastorwelcome.com](http://www.gaypastorwelcome.com) is the first website dedicated to assisting local churches welcoming out gay pastors. 90 video interview clips from 12 gay clergy and a seven-month assimilation program are features of the work.
- June 2023, Adjunct Faculty, San Francisco Theological Seminary – Redlands University, San Anselmo, California, Gospel and Global Media, Sumner Intensive Term,

**In earlier life:**

1991-2002: Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Quicksilver Assoc. Inc. Business communications and training production company. Chicago, Illinois.

Member Chicago Executives Club communications committee.

Representative to Women's Business Development Center small business council.

Vice President Chicago Meeting Planners International Board of Directors.

1988-1991: Independent Contractor Film and Video production, Chicago, Illinois.

1982-1988: Vice President, Executive Search Consultant, Banking and Accounting for commercial industry, Chicago, Illinois.

1979-1982: Associate Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Kenosha Wisconsin.

1976-1979: Student Associate Pastor, Grace United Methodist Church, Piqua, Ohio.

1972-1975: Protest Chaplain, Camp Phillips Boys Scout Camp, Haugen, Wisconsin.

**Ordination:**

2013, September: Granted Ministerial Standing and Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ. SCNCUCC SE Assn. Ministry Committee advocate: Rev. Dr. William (Bill) R. Johnson.

1979, June: Ordained United Methodist Elder (In Good Standing through 2013)

1976, June: Ordained United Methodist Deacon (Probationary Standing)

**Education:**

2013-2020: San Francisco Theological Seminary/University of Redlands Graduate School, graduate Doctor of Ministry, executive leadership track, San Anselmo, California.

1976-1979: United Theological Seminary, Graduate Master of Divinity, President of Student Body, 1978-1979.

1971-1975: University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, graduate Magna Cum Laude Bachelor of Education for High School Speech, First UW-EC Speech Department student to be honored with both departmental awards: 1975 Best Speech Student and Best Speech Student Teacher.

**Personal:**

Married Micheal P. Shear December 14, 2013, in a backyard ceremony with Rev. Patricia Walton presiding. Larry Loubet and Ronald Podolnick, witnesses. Approx. 140 guests. Hosts Wayne Sinclair and John DiNapoli, Palm Springs.

Retired October 1, 2023. Retirement Sunday service September 23, 2023. Palm Springs City Council resolution, presented by Mayor Lisa Middleton declared September 23, 2023, Rev. Dr. Kevin A Johnson Day.

Eagle Scout with Bronze Palm; God and Country Religious Emblem, Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow, National Camping School graduate.

Hometown: Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Born September 9, 1953. Eau Claire County. Sacred Heart Hospital, Dr. Roland Buckley.

Parents: Beatrice L (Reinhardt) Johnson and Archie (Archibald) M. Johnson.

**Bloom in the Desert Ministries United Church of Christ, Plam Springs, California,**

**Our Vision:**

Bloom chooses to build a loving, safe, inclusive faith community that is intellectually challenging, emotionally supportive and filled with the strength, integrity, and social responsibility that spirituality inspires.

**Our Mission:**

Guided by teachings of Jesus Christ, Bloom is a community of believers that strives to uplift and heal one another. We gather to worship God, witness our faith in the living of our lives, and uphold one another in Christian living. United in our diversity we are inclusive and embracing. We agitate for God's peace and justice in our community and around the world.

**Our Core Values:**

We are a people of God's extravagant welcome.

We are a people of covenant.

We work toward a just and loving world through service and generosity.

We listen for the still-speaking God.

We encourage a life of inquisitive and thoughtful searching.

We are grounded by Christian faithfulness.

We celebrate the joy in life.

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