

THE CROSSWORD

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A PUBLICATION OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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TOGETHER IN CHRIST

from Pastor Nathan Erb

I've always loved church gatherings. My parents were active members of their congregation, and if the church had an event, we were there. Soup suppers, chili suppers, sausage suppers, pancake breakfasts, fundraisers, choirs, Christmas caroling, church decorating, Sunday school, confirmation, small groups—you name it, we did it. It did not hurt that many of my friends were there, so no matter what the real reason for the gathering was, I always knew I would have a good time!

This kind of “togetherness” is beneficial! God created humans with a need for community. Being together has many profound benefits, both in good and bad times. This is certainly part of what it means for the church to be together. But there is a deeper “togetherness” to which we belong.

The Apostle Paul writes to new Christians in Ephesus who were considered Gentile believers. Gentile means “not Jewish.”
(Remember, God's plan for salvation was always to be revealed

THROUGH the Jews, not just FOR the Jews.) However, you can imagine that many of these people felt like outsiders. They did not know the customs or traditions; they did not know the history or the “rules.” All of those things, however, were secondary. Paul writes: *“But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace. He made the two groups one by destroying the wall of hostility that divided them when he abolished the law of commandments and regulations in his flesh. He did this to create in himself one new person out of the two, in this way making peace.” (Ephesians 2:13–15)*

Each person who comes to Holy Cross brings a lifetime of stories, experiences, ideas, regrets, and successes with them, all of which have shaped them into who they are today and many of which can or will be beneficial to our congregation as a whole. Our doors are open to all, and we should welcome everyone into our midst. But it is also worth noting that our collective identity—

our togetherness—is not based on who we are or what we bring to the table. We are founded on Jesus Christ and His Word.

“So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household. You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the Cornerstone. In him, the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him, you too are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19–22)

Thank God for bringing us all together! I pray that we can all work together to care for one another and our community. That the lessons and experiences we share with one another will enrich our lives. That by helping each other, we would also receive the help we need. But I thank God most of all for bringing us together; His love brings us and keeps us together, and, in Christ, we'll be together forever! +

Pastor Nathan Erb

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

Community. In June, your Board began its monthly meeting discussing this word. In the Mission Statement of our Constitution we find, “We will share the love and forgiveness of Our Lord Jesus Christ with one another, our community and the whole world...” So, what is our “community”? How do we define it? And why is a definition important?

There is a natural inclination to identify Trumbull as our community since this is the town in which our church is located. Many of our members are from Trumbull. But not all. My family lives in Shelton, and we have members who live in a multitude of towns within driving distance of Trumbull. So then, is our community upper Fairfield County or the Bridgeport-metropolitan area?

Without going down a rabbit hole of many other ways to interpret our community, suffice it to say that community can be interpreted in any number of ways. Location is one of them. But we sometimes use other criteria: belief systems, culture, history, etc. We may not always realize that we are doing it.

Sometimes we refer to our own congregation as a community of believers. There was a time when our community was rather

homogeneous, comprised primarily of those with German heritage. In fact, we – the LCMS – started out as The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States. Germans are often stereotyped as being reserved, sometimes to the extent of being considered unfriendly. When I was learning German I remember being taught the importance of the words for “friend” (*Freund*) and “acquaintance” (*Bekannte*). The



words are not interchangeable. Carry this mindset into the church and one can understand from where the unfriendly characterization may have come.

Fast forward to today’s Holy Cross community. Those of German heritage or who grew up in the LCMS are becoming the minority. Jokes about green Jell-O salads – a staple at Midwest LCMS potlucks - now fall flat. Today’s Holy Cross community is much more diverse in terms of religious backgrounds and cultural heritages. Responding to this change has challenged us, as a congregation, to be more welcoming. And we’ve done a good job at adapting. In fact, soon you’ll see a new Welcome Center in our narthex!

(Continued on page 3)



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THE CROSSWORD

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

Cheers to the Class of 2023! These graduates filled out the “Graduate Information” form to share the news of their achievement. We’re sure your families and friends are proud of you—so is your Holy Cross family!

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE



Tyler Mayeran

Son of Cheryl Mayeran and Bill Mayeran, Tyler graduated from Bridgeport Military Academy in Bridgeport. He is planning to take a gap year to explore opportunities in aviation and the fire service.

COLLEGE GRADUATE

Michael Antoniou

Son of Susan Antoniou, Michael graduated from American Military University with a BA in Management–School of Business.



ADVANCED DEGREE



Stephanie Helminger

Stephanie received a Master of Arts in Education (curriculum and instruction) from the University of Saint Joseph in Hartford. Stephanie shares, “I continue to love teaching second grade in Trumbull.”

PRESIDENT’S JOURNAL

(Continued from page 2)

But how does that welcoming spirit extend outside the walls of our facility? If you polled the Trumbull or surrounding populace, would those polled identify us as an active member of the community? Or are we just a congregation that happens to be located on Main Street? If we are to thrive as the Holy Cross community, we must reach out to – and welcome – the various communities in which we exist.

As we continue implementing our new operating structure, you will hear about opportunities to extend the name of Holy Cross within the community in its myriad of definitions. But as with any movement, we will be most successful if this begins with each of us, individually. So, how are you bringing Holy Cross to your communities?

P.S. Back to the Board of Directors for a moment. We still have open positions! My question to you is this: who amongst us do you believe should be serving on the Board? Do something about it. Encourage them to step up!

GOD IN NATURE

The connectivity we all share is like that of a special tree

from Cliff Schrock

Up to mid-June of this year, the main thing I knew about sequoia trees was that I wanted to meet one. From my youth I was fascinated by their awesomeness. Sequoias are the heavyweights and the grand old species of the tree world. They can grow to more than 300 feet tall, 35 feet in diameter, and more than 100 feet in circumference. Most astounding: sequoias can live more than 3,000 years! Yeah, there are sequoias that have been on this earth since before Jesus Christ was among man, but as I would learn, the sequoias grow in a way that reminded me of Christian connectivity.

Getting to see a sequoia grove is problematic. They exist in just two areas of the world, and in the U.S. only grow in the western part of the country. There are just 75 groves covering 48,000 acres of the California Sierra

Nevada, and it is estimated there are fewer than 20,000 naturally occurring giant sequoias with a diameter greater than 10 feet.

Growing up in Illinois I'd heard all about the old, massive General

Sherman tree in California's Sequoia National Forest. It was 2,000 miles away at that point and I never actively thought about getting out to see it. Then Mary and I moved out to Connecticut and the distance



A Giant Sequoia towers high above in Yosemite National Park.

increased to 3,000 miles. My business trips never took me to within driving distance of the mystical trees, but my time finally came when we had to travel to the San Francisco area for our godson's wedding in June. Prior

to the wedding, we spent a few days at Yosemite National Park, which is north of the Sequoia National Forest. Yosemite itself contains a group of giant sequoias in the Mariposa Grove. I had hoped to see

the General but it would have been an eight-hour round trip drive from our Yosemite location, time we couldn't afford.

Mariposa would have to do, and it was quite satisfactory. The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias is in the southern end of Yosemite. As should be done for special parts of the U.S., the Mariposa Grove is protected public land, one of the first parcels the country protected. Some of America's early preservationists convinced the U.S. Congress and President Lincoln to protect the sequoias from tourism, logging and development that would likely have

decimated them. That was the Yosemite Grant Act of 1864; it protected the grove and four square miles around it.

There are several special trees at Mariposa that are named due to

their appearance: the Clothespin Tree, which has a split trunk that looks like a clothespin; the Bachelor and Three Graces; the California Tunnel Tree; the Faithful Couple (two trees that grew together); and the Grizzly Giant. The Grizzly is more than 200 feet tall, 28 feet in diameter and 96 feet in circumference.

As our hearty group of hikers began walking through the grove, it got to read key information about how the trees grow. In addition to the dimensions that boggle the mind, we learned that sequoia roots don't primarily grow

straight down, a common-sense conclusion on how the trees create a foundation that supports their immense girth and weight. The root system doesn't run deep, but instead spreads horizontally outward. In this manner, the roots of one tree interconnect with others around it, thereby reinforcing each other.

As we walked around the grove, that information took on a dual meaning. First, the info made viewing the trees' physical stature make sense in how they grow so straight and tall. But, second, being in God's creation made me

think how the trees' connectivity is similar to how Christians have a connectivity below the surface that makes us all stronger and unites us in our Christian walk. Seeing the singular stature of the sequoia is a spiritual experience, another trigger that caused me to think of how the Holy Spirit is our spiritual bond as well. By the time we had finished our long hike, the connection between ourselves and nature and God had shown an interconnection that was easy to discern, understand, accept and appreciate. +



BUILDING BLOCKS

from Holy Cross Christian Preschool

Our summer camp sessions have begun and are completely full! The children are having a blast building with special blocks, splashing in the water bucket, racing cars, blowing bubbles, riding trikes and kicking large balls through hoops! Our theme this summer is Fairy Tales. Along with reading the stories we are learning about size, building houses, growing beans and building bridges.

During the month of August, the preschool is closed until the last week when we begin to prepare for the new school year. We will have a parent-and-child

orientation on August 31, from 9 to 10 a.m. and school will begin the next day on September 1. Our 3-year-old class is currently filled for the 2023-2024 school year, but we have spaces available in our 4-year-old and Pre-K classes. Please tell your friends and neighbors about our wonderful school!

Wishing you all a safe, healthy and fun summer!

IS THE CHURCH A BUILDING?

“The church is not a building.” Have you ever heard someone say this? I know I have! This statement is true on its surface—the church is the whole people of God, called from among every nation to belong to the Body of Christ. The church is also the gathering of these people in a specific location around the Word and Sacraments that Jesus has instituted for us. When people say, “The church is not a building,” what do they mean by that statement, and is the sentiment expressed true or false?

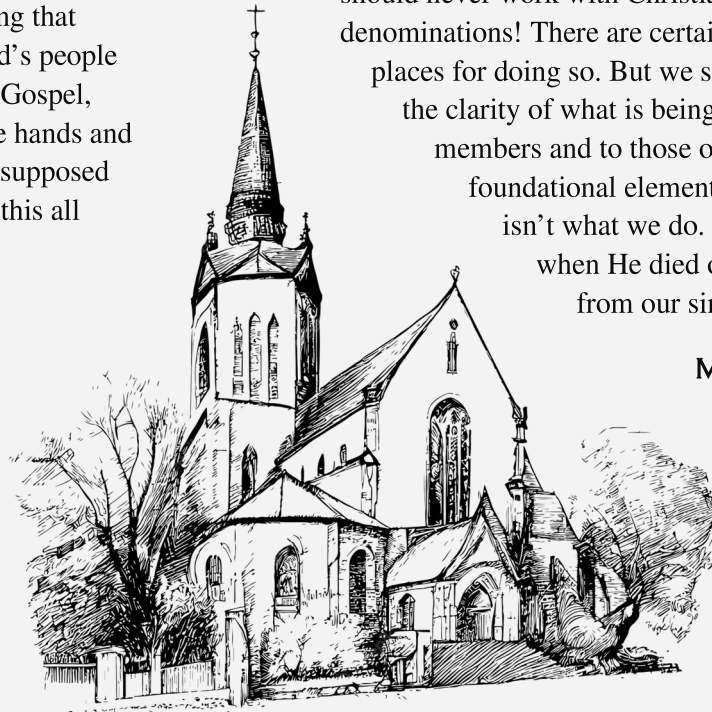
MYTH 1: THE CHURCH IS ABOUT *DOING*

Sometimes when we pit the church building against the church people, we are suggesting that Christians are most fully being God’s people when they’re out there sharing the Gospel, ministering to others, and being the hands and feet of Jesus. Christians are surely supposed to do these things. Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). And Jesus’ final command before He ascends into heaven is, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

A healthy church should be doing things that share Jesus’ love and care with their members and those in their community because this love for neighbors is the natural response of those who are being sanctified and made more like Christ day by day. Even so, doing these good works is not what makes us the church. It indicates the presence of the church, but it is a result of the church existing, not the defining factor. Many organizations provide services of care in their communities—feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and assisting people in finding jobs or other resources they need. These organizations are not churches just because they care for people. A church exists where God’s Word is faithfully taught and where the Sacraments are rightly

administered.

We must keep this distinction in our minds so we do not slip into error. Emphasis on what the church does can lead us to works-righteousness—looking to what we are doing as the indication of our standing before God. Or this emphasis can lead us to compromise the content of our faith out of a desire to be ecumenical or appear more friendly. If we think that doing good deeds for others makes us the church, then we may be willing to associate with organizations that do similar acts of service but do not preach the Gospel. I am not suggesting that we should never work with Christians from other denominations! There are certainly appropriate times and places for doing so. But we should always consider the clarity of what is being taught both to our own members and to those outside the church. The foundational element that makes us the church isn’t what we do. It’s what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross to save us from our sins.



MYTH 2: THE CHURCH IS INTANGIBLE

Another reason why some might say the church is not the building is because they do not see the church as something with a tangible presence. In

traditions with a low view of the Sacraments, where Baptism and Communion are seen as memorials or symbolic acts of man, there is very little theology to tangibly locate the church in a geographic place. Even before the pandemic, some of these churches were meeting online and even celebrating Communion online. If the only thing the church has to unite it is the disembodied Word of God, then certainly anyone can have the Word of God with them in their living room, and there is no need to gather together.

Of course, Bible-believing Christians will recognize that Jesus commands us to meet together. He instructs His people, “For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20). And we read in Hebrews 10:23–25,

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The Word of God is foundational to our identity as the church, and Jesus unites His Word to physical things in the Sacraments. We recognize that Jesus gives us His true body and blood in the bread and the wine. This shows us that our God is not one of distant philosophies or mere spiritual truths. He comes to us in real, tangible ways. Jesus took on humanity and became one of us, walking this earth and touching and healing people not only of their physical infirmities but their greatest spiritual sickness—sin. Now Jesus is reigning, King over all of creation, and He comes to us just as truly and just as tangibly every time the Body of Christ participates in His Supper. In this meeting with Jesus, we are also forgiven of our sins.

Saying “the church is more than a building” is a bit like saying “Jesus is more than bread and wine.” Of course, these statements are true on the surface, but they minimize something miraculous and beautiful that God does for us by giving us the church. Participating in Jesus’ body and blood together connects us both to Christ and to one another, and we become the church—the Body of Christ—through this sacred meal. Bread

and wine are not always Jesus’ body and blood, just as a building is not necessarily a church. But the gathering together around Jesus’ Word and Sacrament are what it means to be the church.

GATHERING TOGETHER FUELS SENDING OUT

It is always dangerous to place gathering together in opposition to being sent out into the world. For God’s people, it is not one or the other. One comes first, and the other naturally follows. The church building symbolizes the rooted, safe, and connected nature of what it means to be God’s children, just as a family’s house comes to embody their concept of home. A family can move to a new house, and a congregation can change where she meets. But the dwelling together as a family is just as essential in God’s family as it is for any family.

WHEN WE GATHER TOGETHER
AROUND THE WORD AND
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AS CHRISTIANS.

In Revelation 21:2–4, we see this image of the new Jerusalem, the ultimate hope of the church:

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

God will dwell with His people forever. Our churches are embassies of this kingdom of God that Jesus taught us is already at hand. When we gather together around the Word and Sacraments, “the dwelling place of God is with man.” We should always consider the gathering of the church to be central to our identities as Christians. The caring and evangelistic impulse flows naturally from time spent gathered together around God’s Word. Through this time in God’s presence, the Holy Spirit equips the Body of Christ to take the message of hope out into the world. +

Written By Christa Petzold. *Original article can be found at*
blog.cph.org/read/is-the-church-a-building

A Study in Acts

from Cliff Schrock

ACTS 26:1-32

We're down to three chapters to complete our methodical review of Acts, which means we've seen in 25 chapters how the author, Luke, has wanted Christian Believers everywhere to learn about how the church grew, plus he wanted the unbelieving world to see how Believers triumphed even through persecution. Paul's inspiring faith through persecution and threats has been the main thrust since Chapter 13, and as 25 ended, for the umpteenth time in the book, Paul has been challenged to testify about his faith and defend his message. Chapter 26 continues from the end of 25 with Paul standing before King Agrippa and his sister, Bernice. After you have read Chapter 26, please pick up with the following summary of events.

As Chapter 26 begins, Agrippa had been told by Festus that he had found nothing wrong about Paul's actions and words but Agrippa wanted to hear Paul for himself. So with everyone assembled in the audience hall, Agrippa gives Paul permission to speak.

In our worship and hymn book, there is the hymn "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling," and it has the line, "If you cannot preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus..." In this defense Paul again shows the accuracy of that line. He has a well thought out and structured defense that hits all the key points like a seasoned defense lawyer: butter up the "court" with compliments and appeal to the king's good will (Paul says Agrippa is the best judge to listen to him because he is familiar with the Jewish customs and controversies); despite that Jewish expertise, Paul doesn't take chances and reviews his life

story from youth to persecutor of Jews to now a champion for Jesus in verses 4 to 23; he says his actions have only been for the hope God promised to their ancestors, which is a good thing; he explains he was in error to persecute Christians and corrected his life when confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus, a sacred commission divinely inspired, which showed Paul wasn't motivated out of selfish conceit but God's direction to be a messenger; it was to this cause that Paul delivered his messages on his vast travels; and it is his accusers who have lacked foresight by trying to silence him, all he's done is followed what the prophets and Moses said would take place.

The final verses of Chapter 26 – 24 to 32 – are a microcosm of the conflict listeners had with Paul. Festus says in 24 that Paul has been studying so hard that he's gone insane, a mad genius, so to speak. But Paul says it's just the opposite. He speaks the truth and the king is learned about such matters and will understand. Paul directly asks Agrippa if he believes the prophets. One Bible commentary says about the king's reply: "Some read Agrippa's statement as ironical, 'Do you really think that in such a short time you could convince me to become a Christian?' he seems to say. Others think he was almost ready to believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, but stopped short of salvation by refusing to take Jesus Christ into his heart."

Paul's reply to Agrippa in verse 29 shows the sincerity and common sense Paul used to his advantage, that he prays to God for all to be saved and wishes no one ill will.

Not needing to hear more, Agrippa stood up, as did all those with him, and they affirmed to each other that Paul didn't deserve to die, let alone be imprisoned.

The final comment in the chapter is Agrippa's to Festus in which he says Paul could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to the emperor. Again, from a commentary, "Perhaps Paul had made a mistake in appealing to the emperor. Yet since King Agrippa knew Paul was not guilty of any crime punishable under Roman law, he should have set him free by asking him to reverse his appeal to the emperor. Politically, however, this would have again created problems with the Jews." Thus, Paul's appeal has determined his future...he goes to Rome. +

Sources | Harper Study Bible; The Everyday Bible: New Testament; Egermeier's Bible Story Book; The Acts of the Apostles, Neal M. Flanagan.

Next Edition: Acts, Chapter 27, which describes the transfer of Paul and the other prisoners to be sent to Rome under heavy guard and subsequent decision to set sail for Italy.

Celebrating this Month

JULY

It's fun to be recognized on your special day! Even more so, it's special to know others are praying for you. It is our hope that as you spend time in daily prayer, you will remember your fellow Holy Cross members on their special day.

BIRTHDAYS

Date Name

- 1 Karli Chirgwin
- 6 Robert Kravecs, Jr.
- 7 Owen Martineli and Edith Skoog
- 8 Justin Fanning
- 9 Logan Deloge
- 10 Karl Dale
- 13 Jacob Nyitrai
- 15 David Festi
- 16 Marie Morris
- 17 Cindy Ciccía, Christine Flammann,
Gunther Naumann and
Rebecca Turner
- 18 Grace Ely, Stephanie Liptack and
Amanda Sjoblom
- 20 Charlene Hron and Jon Testani
- 22 John Connic and Karl Schipul
- 23 Joelle Cyr
- 26 Pastor Nathan Erb
- 27 Lorraine Finch, Keith Janssen and
Michele Van Wart
- 31 John Roman

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

- Rosemary Adomako-Ayisi
- Donna Bogen
- Carl Carlson
- Nicole Ciccía
- Caitlyn Dale
- Karl Dale
- Loralai Dale
- Audrey Erb
- Charlotte Erb
- Kerry Geffert
- Jenzy Halls
- Ethan Rentz
- Dan Senft
- Barbara White

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

- 5 Kerry and Karen Geffert
- 9 Charlie and Maura Senft
- 11 Dieter and Ingrid Leibold
- 11 Rob and Rebecca Veteri
- 13 Chad and Stephanie Helminger
- 21 Nathan and Elisabeth Erb
- 23 Cliff and Mary Schrock
- 26 Paulo and Ashley Gomes

If there is someone that should be on one of these lists, but isn't...please alert the office so we can update our records!

Celebrating this Month

AUGUST

It's fun to be recognized on your special day! Even more so, it's special to know others are praying for you. It is our hope that as you spend time in daily prayer, you will remember your fellow Holy Cross members on their special day.

BIRTHDAYS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
2	Nate Helminger
4	Tina Kristy and Ulrich Danne
5	Ashley Testani
11	Julia Antoniou, Daisy Benson and Jackie Dale
12	Kristine Liptack
13	Ace Hackney
14	Charlotte Fanning
15	Judith Chirgwin
16	Ella Romano
17	Jace Broadbin and Bill Magyar
18	Donna DiLalla and Jake & Stella Hackney
19	Tim Morris
20	Gio Broadbin and Norah Kravecs
21	Tim Benson, Jr. and David Schiller
24	Natalie Benson
25	Paul Vaitkus
28	Ashley Gomes
31	Nora Cyr, Debbie Riccio and Andrew Sylling

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
1	Judith and Keith Chirgwin
6	Matt and Jennifer Rentz
18	Timothy Sr., and Daisy Benson
19	Mary and †Otto Atkinson
19	Joel and Marcia Wilson
30	Mike and Sabine Bonnar
30	John and Cheryl Connic

† At Rest with the Lord

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

Susan Antoniou
Ryan Blanchard
Amy Cardone
Pastor Nathan Erb
Christine Flammann
Charlene Hron
Halle Hwang
Keith Janssen
Shane John
Robert Kravecs
Bill Magyar
Owen Martineli
Marie Morris
John Roman
Tim Senft
Monika Seyal
Michele Van Wart
Lia Veteri

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