
THE

CROSSWORD

June 2023

A PUBLICATION OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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SERVING IN LOVE

from Pastor Nathan Erb

After Jesus rose from the grave and before he ascended into heaven, he took his disciples to a mountaintop to give them his final instructions before he left the earth. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them everything I've given you."

But where did Jesus get this authority, and why was it given to him? "That's obvious," you might think. "He's Jesus!" True, but God was also gracious enough to reveal the reason. In Philippians 2:6–9, Paul says of Jesus, "Though he was by nature God, he did not regard equality with God as a prize to be displayed, but emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant." When he was born in human likeness and his appearance was like that of any other man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name."

It turns out that the activity God values most is service, because he himself is a servant to us. That may appear to be a little backward. But, from the act of creation to the grace shown to Noah, the promise to Abraham, the covenant with Moses, the mercy shown to David, and finally the sending of His son to die in our place, God has been loving and serving us from the beginning.

As a result, it should come as no surprise that service is one of the best ways to live out your faith.

Last month, I discussed the first of Holy Cross' three identity statements, "Growing in Faith."

This month, let's explore the second: "Serving in Love".

When it comes down to it, the words "serve" and "love" could be considered synonymous. Serving, assisting, and putting their needs ahead of your own is the primary way a person shows love for another. "There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends," Jesus said, and that is exactly what he did. Before Paul offers the words you read above, he

encourages us to "have the mind of Christ." **To love Christ is to follow in his footsteps and imitate him in loving service to others.** While this includes meeting people's immediate needs, the greatest service we can provide is to share our faith and the hope we have in Christ.

SERVICE AT HOLY CROSS

You can serve the people of Holy Cross in a variety of ways. You can serve on any of the Sunday morning teams to ensure that everything is ready for the congregation when they arrive for worship. You can volunteer in our Sunday School, teaching our youngest members the truth about God's Word and Christ's love. You can help us care for the property and grounds that God has provided for us. You can check in on our homebound members or those who are ill, hospitalized, or could use a helping hand. Consider praying

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PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

Last January, you, the members of Holy Cross, took a leap of faith with me and the Board of Directors to reorganize our administrative structure. You may have questions about the implementation of this new Board structure, and how it has improved the running of Holy Cross.

I will admit to you that our implementation is still a work in progress; however, that was to be expected. Changes to long-held mindsets and procedures do not occur overnight. I am very proud of the work our Board has done to date to adjust to our new environment, but honestly we could be even better with a full Board. We still have openings for a Vice President and two Directors. **Is God calling you to fill one of these positions?**

Meanwhile, we are making progress on presenting additional opportunities for you to become involved in your church. Some have already begun, such as our Sunday School program, and Men's and Women's Groups.

I am happy to announce a group of teams and committees that will operate under our new structure. Some will look familiar; some are new. Some titles will change as identities are developed. Some groups are active the full year; some for a short period each year.

Our new structure is intended to be flexible so that we can quickly respond to new needs and opportunities. This also allows

each of us to plug in as our interests and time permit.

So, without further ado *[drumroll please]* your opportunities to be engaged...

Worship Ministry Team

Coordinate with Pastor on matters related to worship services and events in the sanctuary.

Includes these teams:

Altar Guild – Oversight of the nave area.

Worship Enhancement Team – Oversight of the sanctuary to enhance worship.

Music Team – Assist the Music Director on matters of performance, recruitment and maintenance.

Group Ministries Team

Intentional gatherings of members to support social, service and scriptural activities.

Teams:

Women's Ministry

Men's Group

Youth Group

Kid's Ministry

Rock of Agers

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HOLY CROSS

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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SECRETARY Michele Van Wart
TREASURER Chad Helminger
FINANCIAL SECRETARY Jon Halls
BOARD MEMBERS Dan Senft
..... Pat Deloge

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Sunday Worship | 9:30 a.m.

(Followed by Fellowship)

Sunday School & Bible Class | 10:45 a.m.

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THE CROSSWORD

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Community Impact Team

Encourage member participation in community, regional, national and worldwide efforts of mercy and service.

Teams:

Covenant to Care for Children

Gbarnga Mission

CROP Walk

Care & Compassion – Assist the Shepherds with member support through meals, transportation, etc.

Local Impact – Encourage engagement at the local, regional and LCMS District levels.

Missions – Provide liaison to LCMS mission initiatives.

Education Team

Coordinate with Pastor on the delivery of Christian-based learning opportunities for all ages.

Teams:

Sunday School – Select, organize and teach curricula for our youth.

Adult Programs – Work with Pastor to provide opportunities for Christian growth throughout the week.

Preschool Resource – Work with Pastor, the Preschool Director and the Board to ensure the purpose of the Preschool is achieved and to serve as a resource for the school's growth.

Communication Team

Raise awareness and appreciation of Holy Cross and its various ministries, programs and events.

Teams:

Audio Visual – Employ best practices to record and stream worship services.

Social Media – Raise awareness of Holy Cross via appropriate social media.

Social Events Team

Plan opportunities for members and visitors to come together in social settings to grow as a community of Christians. Small teams will form as needed.

Teams:

Kitchen Committee – Responsible for maintaining the Fellowship Hall kitchen in proper, stocked order.

Fellowship – Arrange and recruit member assistance for appropriate refreshments at church functions, including Sunday morning coffee fellowship.

Facilities Committee

Maintain, protect and improve all church buildings and grounds.

Subcommittees:


Facilities Improvement – Maintain and improve our church building and parsonage.

Facilities Use – Oversee and enforce church policies regarding the use of the building, grounds and equipment.

Gardening Group – Oversee the beautification of church grounds.

Does this list seem overwhelming? Would you believe that many, if not most, of these groups are carryovers from our previous commission-based structure? They are simply “repackaged” to allow you greater flexibility for involvement – a focus on actions rather than meetings.

Watch for more information on how you can participate in one or more of these groups. But if you can't wait, send me an email. Or if you have a burning idea for a team or activity, let's talk.

We voted for a new structure to keep Holy Cross a vibrant, active Christ-centered congregation. Now is your opportunity to make this happen. These teams, groups and committees can't function without members. Where is God calling you to use your time and talents at Holy Cross? 

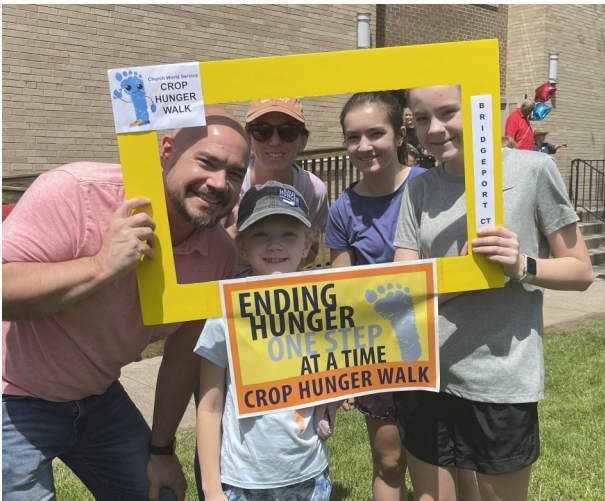
HOLY CROSS SERVES

CROP Walk and Men's Workday

Holy Cross members recently participated in two service opportunities. On May 7, we joined hundreds of others for the Bridgeport CROP Walk. We walked a 2.5-mile route to raise awareness and funds for those in our community who require assistance in obtaining food.

On May 27, Holy Cross men joined forces to begin tackling items on our property and grounds checklist. Dead bushes were removed, lights were cleaned and bulbs replaced, exterior portions of the building were given a much needed cleaning, and a new tree was planted!

Thank you to everyone who helped by participating in or donating to these causes!





BUILDING BLOCKS

from Holy Cross Christian Preschool

It is hard to believe that our school year is almost over! We will be saying goodbye to many special friends, but we know that we are always connected through the love of Jesus. We have a special song that we sing at graduation that expresses this perfectly:

*“We’ll be friends forever,
Jesus and you and me.
He ties our hearts together
and friends we’ll always be.”*

Our graduation will be at 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, June 15, in the sanctuary. Through music and poems, the children will display all they have learned during the year. The graduates will all be presented with Bibles. It is our prayer that the seeds of faith that have been planted here at preschool will grow and blossom throughout their lives.

To celebrate the end of the school year, we will have a school-wide pizza and popsicle party on June 14!

Preschool enrollment opportunities: Our summer camp has a few spots available if you know of anyone who may be interested. We are also still accepting registration for the 4-year-old and Pre-K classes for the 2023-2024 school year.

Have a safe and blessed summer!

WE’RE ON FACEBOOK!

Check out our school’s Facebook page to see pictures and descriptions of all our exciting activities!

[www.facebook.com/
HolyCrossPreschoolTrumbull/](http://www.facebook.com/HolyCrossPreschoolTrumbull/)

Quarterly Financial Report

The Board of Directors is providing you with this quarterly financial update from January - March 2023.

INCOME STATEMENT

	Actual	Budget
Total Income	\$74,120	\$89,198
Total Expenses	<u>\$(110,315)</u>	<u>\$(115,676)</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$(36,195)	\$(26,478)

BALANCE SHEET

	Mar 2023	Dec 2022
Checking Account	\$137,408	\$175,151
Loans	\$(205,003)	\$(209,780)

- Our total income falls short of the budget we agreed to in January. If this trend continues, it has the potential to impact our programs this year.
- Because of careful cost management, total expenses have been slightly less than budget. Our contributions will determine how we prioritize projects for the parsonage and church facilities.
- Our cash balance has decreased because our expenses have outpaced our giving/income.

As always, we appreciate your generosity. We ask that you prayerfully consider how you might help, and that our giving and stewardship be directed by God's purpose for Holy Cross and the ministry He has entrusted to us.

about any of the teams listed in this month's President's Journal and how you can serve our congregation in love!

There are a few seats available on the Board of Directors. **Perhaps you have leadership or strategic planning skills that can help the people of Holy Cross and future generations live out the faith that has been given to us—to Grow in Faith, Serve in Love, and Be Together in Christ.**

SERVICE IN THE COMMUNITY

We are currently exploring and discussing ways that Holy Cross can better serve the greater Trumbull community. Do the people of Trumbull, Bridgeport, Monroe, and other surrounding cities know the name "Holy Cross"? More importantly, do they know the name "Jesus"? What are some ways we can get to know and meet the needs of those around us, which may lead to an opportunity to share our faith with them? If you have ideas or are currently involved in areas of service in which Holy Cross might be able to participate, please share them with me.

We already work with Covenant to Care to help families in need by giving them gifts at Christmas and Easter as well as backpacks, school supplies, and other necessities. We will be collecting food and clothing on a regular basis to donate to organizations that directly care for people in need. Perhaps you know someone who would benefit from some free yard work or house projects. We want to be able to help them in a loving way by offering our assistance.

SERVE BY GIVING

We recently shared our Quarterly Financial Statement ([reprinted on page 5](#)) with you. You voted in January to approve a budget that would allow us to provide more ministry opportunities to our members and communities. The truth is that we are falling behind financially. Please consider how you might be able to serve our congregation (and thus our community) by reviewing your current giving. In addition, see the article "Follow Him in Generosity" on page 7 for guidance on your financial giving.

Consider also Paul's message to the Corinthian church on the subject of giving.

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. The ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing with many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:6–15, ESV)

To summarize Paul's message, your giving to Holy Cross is both an investment in our members' spiritual lives and an act of worship - as you learn to trust that God will provide for all of your needs.

Giving, as Paul stated, is a matter of the heart. This holds true for any way you may be called to serve. God loves a cheerful giver, and we will never demand anything of you, coerce you into giving more than you can cheerfully give, or manipulate you into serving in ways that don't bring you joy. However, I encourage/challenge you to serve and give in ways that stretch (and thus strengthen) your faith. Trust in God and follow our Lord Jesus in the way of service, and I am confident that God will bless you and others through you. ☩

Paster Nathan Erb

Follow Him in Generosity

Provided by LCMS Stewardship Ministry:
lcms.org/stewardship

Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity. “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:15). We cannot give our lives for the salvation of the world, of course. Praise God, that job’s already done! But with hearts full of thanksgiving for what Jesus has given us, we can follow His example of generous giving. And Jesus’ generosity is not merely an example. Our Lord also commands us to act according to our gifts: “The one who contributes, [let him give] in generosity” (Rom. 12:8).

So, when we bring offerings to the Lord, we should strive to heed His command and follow the pattern He has established for us. Jesus did not give us leftovers. He gave His best. We should not give leftovers, either, but the first and best of what He has given us. Jesus did not give as an afterthought — He gave according to the plan of salvation God established from the foundation of the world. So, when it comes to our own offerings, we should make a thoughtful plan to give generously, in proportion to the way He has blessed us. Like the Macedonian Christians, who gave according to their ability, and even beyond their ability (2 Cor. 8:3), we should honor the Lord by giving a generous portion of the income that God provides us.

We should also give freely, just as Jesus gave freely for us. There is no compulsion involved in our works of love and our offerings to the Lord. We do not give grudgingly, but willingly and cheerfully, each “,as he has decided in his heart“as the Lord says (2 Cor. 9:7). There is no New Testament ceremonial law involved here. Rather, we are free to give as generously as our Savior has given for us!

In the same way, our Lord teaches us to give generously out of our love for Him and for our neighbor. Jesus shows us that genuine love is always love “in deed” (1 John 3:18). It is love that sees our neighbor in need and gives generously to help him. It is love that hears the Word of the Lord and does what it says. If we truly love, we give generously. If we give without love, our giving is not truly following Jesus.

Finally, we follow Jesus in generosity when we support His Gospel ministry and other works of mercy. The people of Israel gave generously to construct and support the operation of the tabernacle, for that was the place where the Lord received the Old Testament sacrifices, through which He bestowed the forgiveness of sins on His people. So, they gave abundantly, so abundantly they had to be told to stop giving! (Ex. 36:5–6). In the same way, we should bring generous offerings to support the Lord’s work. We support our congregations in the preaching of His Word, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which bestow His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation, and we take care of those who are poor and needy.

Our Savior calls us to follow His example in generous giving. Let us then, with thankful hearts, rededicate ourselves to following Him in generosity. +

A Brief Guide to Giving Faithfully

Trust in God. Before you give anything, consider all that God has given you. He has promised and will continue to provide for your needs.

Give First. Examine your household's finances. Decide on an amount to offer to God before budgeting for bills and other expenses. Some adhere to the biblical "tithe" model of offering 10% of income. You can go up or down from there, depending on your situation, but it's a good place to start. Fill out the remainder of your budget, trusting that God will provide.

Commit. Once you've decided on an amount, commit to giving it on a regular basis. Many people have found that using the online option is beneficial. You can set up your offering to be given automatically on a schedule that works for you and keeps you accountable to your commitment.

A Study in Acts

from Cliff Schrock

ACTS 25:1-27

With just four chapters of Acts remaining in this study, events continue to play out with Paul still being put to the test as he is examined by authorities. Emerging as a fascinating figure is Felix, the governor, who has been wise and even-handed and fair and made sure Paul's rights haven't been abused. Felix knows that all the accusations brought against Paul haven't been proven by any evidence, so he's deferred a ruling until he can hear from the Roman tribune Lysias, who was not present to testify. Felix adjourned the trial, an adjournment that lasted two years, and Paul was given comfortable conditions while remaining in custody. He was allowed enough access to friends to be at ease and was treated well. Such courtesy showed that Felix didn't think the charges against Paul were so egregious and rose to the level of sedition that he needed to be under tighter security. After you have read Chapter 25, please pick up with the following summary of events.

As Chapter 24 had ended, we see that two years have passed in Paul's trial. He's been kept safe and comfortable, but now his benefactor, Felix, has been replaced by Porcius Festus, who has kept Paul imprisoned as a favor to the Jews. As Chapter 25 starts, just three days after Festus came to Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem to have the chief priests and other Jewish leaders once again come out against Paul, and they boldly request that Paul be handed over to them to be transferred to Jerusalem. In actual fact, there was a plot, as had happened before, to ambush Paul along the route and kill him. Festus coolly says, no, Paul is staying in Caesarea

and Festus will be going there soon. He tells the Jews in authority to come there, too, and they'll be allowed to state their case against the Christian leader.

Eight to 10 days later, Festus made the trip to Caesarea, followed by a group of Jewish accusers. The day after he arrived, Festus took his seat of power and ordered Paul to come forward. After Paul arrived, his accusers came out to begin presenting their case. The problem was they couldn't back up their serious accusations with any proof. Luke, the author of Acts, doesn't describe the accusations but Paul makes the simple statement anyway that he hasn't committed an offense against the law of the Jews, emperor or the temple. Festus has inherited a bad situation and has tried to keep a balancing act with the Jews and at this point suggests that Paul may want to go to Jerusalem and be tried in front of Festus on the Jews' charges. Paul doesn't see a reason to go that route and says there has been nothing to stick against him; he's willing to die if he has been guilty of anything that is punishable by death. But when Paul says he's willing to be tried in front of the emperor, that's a relief to Festus and he easily grants the request.

From verse 13 to the end of the chapter, we are to learn a lot about King Agrippa and his sister Bernice. They arrive at Caesarea while Festus is there, with plans to stay several days. Festus gives them a complete rundown of his knowledge of Paul's "case," and in doing so gives us a bit more information about the Jewish accusations, including the detail that Paul had mentioned Jesus, who had died and risen, according to Paul's witnessing. This report intrigued Agrippa who told Festus he would like to hear Paul speak, which Festus said would happen the next day.

At the appointed hour a day later, Agrippa and Bernice make a grand entrance flanked by the military brass and prominent officials. When everyone is set and the scene ready for Paul, Festus orders him to be brought in. With Paul in their midst, Festus openly says he's heard the claims against Paul but has found no guilt with him, certainly nothing that deserved death, but because Paul asked to speak in front of the imperial majesty, Festus arranged for Agrippa to come. Festus is also wanting to do things properly and make a record of the examination. He said, "it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him." +

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

Next Month: Acts, Chapter 26, which describes for us, once again, the beautiful and meaningful way Paul can defend himself while witnessing, which he does with much acclaim before Agrippa.

Celebrating this Month

JUNE

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 Erica Carola and Ethan Rentz
- 2 Halle Hwang
- 6 Virginia Gaffney
- 7 Donna Senft
- 10 Monika Seyal
- 12 Mary Schrock
- 14 John Buck
- 15 Carl Carlson
- 16 Amanda Fitzmorris
- 17 Savannah Fitzmorris
- 18 Amy Cardone
- 20 Jena Cerone
- 24 Tim Senft
- 25 Audrey Erb, Barbara Marinaro,
and Paul Schipul
- 26 Marissa Rodriguez
- 29 Pat Deloge and Kathryn Struzik

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

- 5 John and Pat Deloge
- 6 Bill and Christine Flammann
- 11 Gary and Peggy Liptack
- 14 Harald and Marion Dale
- 15 John and Adela Buck
- 20 Doris and †Ronald Dietman
- 24 Vinny and Debbie Riccio
- 26 Dan and Donna Senft
- 27 Jim and Lorraine Finch
- 27 Gary and Donna Jackson
- 29 Edith and †Billie Skoog

† At Rest with the Lord

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

- Peter Antoniou
- Carol Burns
- Jessica Connic
- Parker Deloge
- Diane Dietman
- Gabriella Ely
- James Ely
- Amanda Fitzmorris
- Kelley Geffert
- Ace Hackney
- Paul Hagberg
- Kevin Halls
- Madison Herr-Feeney
- Donna Jackson
- Gary Jackson
- Lucy Kravecs
- Norah Kravecs
- Robert Kravecs
- Jim Leslie
- Cheryl Mayeran
- Danny Nyitrai
- Nicole Ramirez
- Anita Schoch
- Mary Schrock
- Maura Senft
- Joey Vaitkus
- Taylor Van Wart—Szinavel
- Zach Wendling
- Joshua Wilson

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!