

THE CROSSWORD

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A SPIRIT NOT OF FEAR

from Pastor Nathan Erb

Paul begins his second letter to Timothy, a young pastor, with these words of encouragement: *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power, love and self-control."*

2 Timothy 1:5-7

As a "young" pastor (or at least to this congregation), these words are encouraging to me as well. And it appears that my journey thus far is similar to Timothy's in some ways. I am grateful for the faith of my grandmothers (Alma and Lorna) and mother (Celeste), as well as my father and grandfathers. It is a reminder to be thankful for faithful people from our past who, in many ways, continue to influence our path toward tomorrow. Consider these people in your own lives! Consider the legacy of faith that exists at Holy Cross. Whether you have been a member for a long time

or are just getting started, we can safely say that we would not be here if it were not for those pillars of faith that we are building on.

Notice I did not say "built" upon because that implies that the work has already been completed.

Unfortunately, for many congregations that are shrinking, that appears to be the prevalent thought. However, if the work

has been completed, there is nothing else to do.

This is simply not the case. It was certainly not what Paul had in mind when he wrote to Timothy. "Timothy, you should certainly give God thanks for all he has done in the past through faithful servants. They persisted in the Gospel, and you and the

congregation you serve are the result of their efforts. And it is for this reason that you must continue working. Take that glowing ember and fan it into flame. Yes, a raging fire may appear frightening, but God has given you a spirit of power, not fear, to bring the light and heat of God's love to a new generation."

Have you ever tried to warm yourself with a candle? It keeps your hands warm, but not your entire body. And the heat produced by that tiny flame is only sufficient for one or two people. Have you ever been so close to a fire that you had to take a few steps back? This is the gospel's power—not to limit the number of people who can approach it, but to increase the number of those who will gather around it and be warmed by its presence.



(Continued on page 8)

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

Last month a Town Hall was held to update the congregation and obtain feedback. This was the first Town Hall since our change in organizational structure, so it was an opportunity to convey what's working and what is still a work-in-progress.

What's working? Holy Cross! We continue to build on the momentum created by Pastor Erb's arrival. Our services are now streamed using 21st century technology. We had a successful spring Sunday School and have a growing Adult Bible Class. Women's and Men's Ministries are bringing together more and more of our members and visitors. The bells are back! And although we are not flush with funds, we (actually, our church staff) are keeping expenditures within income. All in all, there is a renewed spirit at Holy Cross.

Yet there is still work to be done. Last January we changed our governance structure from one of separate commissions to an oversight board. This is still a work-in-progress. To be honest, it's a frustration for me. Not because of those on the Board, as they are each extremely dedicated to our work. But with three open spots on the Board, we are not reaching our full potential. I ask you to continue to prayerfully consider who you believe could be

serving on our Board, and then encourage them to step up.

A member asked how the work of the old commissions is being accomplished under the new structure. During this transition, much of that work has been accomplished by a dedicated group of members. However, it's now time to engage more members. The next time you are at church, look at the bulletin board display in the hallway. There you will find a dozen different ministry teams and committees looking for members to move Holy Cross forward. Some involve short-term or periodic activities while others are of longer duration. Where does the combination of your time and talents best fit? Imagine what we could accomplish if only half of our members joined at least one team or committee!

Our building was, of course, a major topic of Town Hall discussion. More precisely, the undercroft (basement) and our restrooms. It has been a year now since we cleaned out the undercroft, but the issue goes beyond new tile and paint. Despite a few discussions with outside consultants, we still don't have a good handle on the cause of the downstairs mold levels. We do, however, believe that this will be a big-ticket item to address.

Meanwhile, the conditions of our 50-year-old restrooms continue to deteriorate. As anyone who owns an older home knows, there comes a point when deferred maintenance can no longer be deferred. This seems to be where we find ourselves at Holy Cross. We have a solid theology and strong worship culture, but a well-maintained facility is also important to welcoming visitors and potential new members.

Thus, with your support, we will look at options for renovating our restrooms. This does not mean the undercroft issue will be ignored. We will continue to seek expert advice as to the best procedural methods and try to understand likely expenses.

The question then, is how to pay for these repairs. First, we must have faith! Faith that we are moving in the right direction. But it does not stop there. "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2: 17) Yes, we circle back to engagement. An engaged membership will help Holy Cross to meet our challenges and grow.

There are many ways in which you can be engaged at Holy Cross. Now is the time. Sign up. Make it a priority. Heed James' words. +



HOLY CROSS

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Sunday Worship | 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Class | 10:45 a.m

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THE CROSSWORD

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HOLY CROSS WEEKEND SEPTEMBER 23-24TH



Sell your own items or volunteer to help. Visit holycrosstrumbull.com/tag-sale to learn more.



Join with "old" friends, and welcome our new members with food and fun!

HOLY CROSS SERVES

Covenant to Care for Children Back-to-School Ministry

from Mary Schrock

Starting the school year can be overwhelming to any child, and the added stress of wondering where he or she will get a backpack and school supplies can cause anxiety. Children that are in the caseload of Holy Cross' "adopted" DCF social worker – Mimose Ulysse-Laurenard – don't have the means or the parental support to do back-to-school shopping at Wal-Mart, Staples or Target. That's where YOU, as Holy Cross members and friends, stepped in to support this annual Covenant to Care for Children ministry project! Collectively, we provided our social worker with 32 new backpacks filled with more than 20 different school supply items. Donations were received, sorted and counted between July 9 and August 13, backpacks were stuffed with the supplies by a team of 12 on August 16 and blessed during our August 20 worship service, and Mimose began deliv-

ering them to the children the week of August 21. An estimate of the in-total donation of all backpacks and school supplies was more than \$2,400! You helped to give each backpack recipient not only a good start to the new school year, but a bit of extra love and self-confidence. Thank you for supporting this important social ministry project. +



Want to help with *next year's* back-to-school project?

Purchase a backpack(s) that you may see on sale between now and early winter, and donate it to Holy Cross for the July 2024 collection.



BUILDING BLOCKS

from Holy Cross Christian Preschool

After the completion of another successful summer camp our school was closed for the month of August, but the teachers were eagerly planning and

preparing for our new school year! The 2023-2024 school year began on August 31 with a one-hour Open House for the children and parents, followed by our first full day of school on Friday, September 1.

We are excited to welcome back children from this past school year and get to know new children. While the preschool is nearing full enrollment, we do have a few spaces available. Please tell your friends and neighbors about our wonderful school! +

LOOKING FOR A GREAT PRESCHOOL?

We still have a few spaces available for the new school year. For information, contact our director, Michele Glennon, at 203-268-6471 or preschool@holycrosstrumbull.com.



New!
Sunday
School
starts October 1st!

New format
PreK-8th Grades meet in the Fellowship Hall
Sundays after church (10:45am)

A Study in Acts

from Cliff Schrock

ACTS 27:1-44

Chapter 27 in Acts is the penultimate section of this inspiring book that details how the Christian church was begun after Christ rose from the dead. And as has been the case in so many of the chapters, the incredibly strong and devoted Apostle Paul is the key focus in this chapter, which continues the strange trial journey Paul has been on, a sort of never-ending story, if you will. Paul's inspiring faith through persecution and threats has been the main thrust since Chapter 13, and as 26 ended, Paul had been challenged to testify about his faith and defend his message. Chapter 26 concluded with Paul standing before King Agrippa and his sister, Bernice. After you pause now to read Chapter 27, please pick up with the following summary of events.

As Chapter 27 begins, please recall that the final verses of Chapter 26 – 24 to 32, to be precise – were a microcosm of the conflict listeners had with Paul at trial. Festus said Paul had been studying so hard that he'd gone insane. But Paul said it was just the opposite. He spoke the truth and the king learned about such matters and would understand. Paul directly asked Agrippa if he believed the prophets. His reply seemed to say, "Do you really think that in such a short time you could convince me to become a Christian?" But it's possible to think that Agrippa 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. Agrippa eventually stood up and replied that Paul didn't deserve to die, let alone be imprisoned.

Agrippa had the final comment in Chapter 26 in saying to Festus that Paul could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to the emperor, which is true, but since King Agrippa knew Paul was not guilty of any crime punishable under Roman law, he could have set him free by asking him to reverse his appeal to the emperor, but, of course, that would have created problems with the Jews. But Paul's appeal is still in place and he must travel to Rome, a trip that will be full of adventure in the form of a two-week storm.

Early in Chapter 27 we learn that not just Paul but other prisoners were to be transported to Rome, and they were put in the hands of a centurion, who would have been in command of a hundred soldiers. Such a force was charged with getting the entire group to Rome for trial. The detail of the journey is given in verses 1-26 and centuries later it's fascinating to learn the centurion was named Julius, and that also on board was Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. Such great reporting by Luke, the writer! Paul was treated kindly by Julius. The ship took port at Sidon, went past Cyprus on the lee side (the side away from the wind), also past Cilicia and Pamphylia and arriving at Myra. It was there that the parties switched ships.

Luke had been reporting sailing difficulty with adverse wind in particular, and at a place called Fair Havens, Paul commented that continuing in these conditions to Crete could be very dangerous. The Day of Atonement was already passed, so navigation at that time of year, mid-September, would be dangerous. But Julius was listening more to the ship pilot and owner and when a favorable southerly wind began blowing, the travelers set off. But soon after a strong northeaster (New Englanders are familiar with them) came upon the ship. Luke writes that cloud cover didn't dissipate for many days and in the violent conditions the crew did everything it could to keep the ship safe.

At this point, Paul did a startling thing. He said to the ship's crew that his warning should have been heeded – rather



“Saint Paul Shipwrecked” by Gustave Dore. Public Domain

avoid hitting land in the dark, the crew dropped anchor, four of them.

Paul warned everyone to stay with the ship because to try and escape by lifeboats would not allow them to be saved. The sailors were only thinking of themselves, wrote one Bible commentary, in spite of the fact that the rule of sea has always been that sailors must look first to the passengers, even if they drown as a consequence. Paul intervened and the soldiers cut the rope of the boat they had lowered for themselves.

Prior to the break of day, Paul encouraged everyone on board to eat after such a long period of fasting amid their fear. He says reassuringly that “none of you will lose a hair from your heads.” He himself takes bread to eat and in a spiritual act blesses the bread and shares it with the 275 others onboard. After eating, to lighten the ship for navigation reasons, the wheat product is tossed into the water.

As the morning continued, the crew didn’t recognize the land nearby but they attempted to steer the ship into a bay. They were hoping

bold to take that moment to say “I told you so” – but he follows that with announcing that only the ship will be lost in the storm, no one will die. He knew this because, as he says, “...last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.’ ” Paul calls for courage and predicts the ship will run aground on an island.

Verses 27 to 44 describe the destruction of the ship, which occurred around the 14th evening at sea. The boat had been drifting across the sea of Adria (aka Adriatic Sea) and at midnight the crew believed they were nearing land, which was affirmed by taking measurements and seeing that the sea bottom was shallowing out. To

possibly beach the ship so they steered it as close to the shore as possible. But instead the ship struck a reef, became stuck, and due to the violence of the storm the stern was broken up.

In a failure to think creatively, the soldiers’ bright plan was to kill all the prisoners so none could escape. But the centurion, Julius, who was determined to save Paul, did not allow the murderous scheme to take place. Instead, he ordered anyone who could swim to do so to reach the shore. All others were told to float onto shore using planks and other items that would stay above water. That ensured Paul’s guarantee that all would be saved. +

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 28, the final chapter in the book, which describes the conclusion of the shipwreck and Paul’s arrival and life in Rome.

A SPIRIT NOT OF FEAR

(Continued from page 1)

I will preface the following statement with this: I will make mistakes, I will not always say the right things, and I am a sinner as great as, if not greater than, anyone else. But God has placed me here, and you have called me here, not to have a spirit of fear but one of power. A power entrusted to me and driven by the faith God has given me to lead you and continue to build on what you and those before you began to build.

It can be frightening to take a step into the future where nothing is known or guaranteed. But faith is not the absence of fear; it is walking through it, knowing that

we are following in the footsteps of someone who faced tremendous hardship, adversity, and even death and came out unscathed. More than that, resurrected to new life!

Paul continues: *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his*

prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:8–10

Holy Cross has been a raging fire in the past! Thank God for the countless people who have tended to it over the years. But if you have ever tended a campfire,

you know that a spark turns into a fire, then slowly fades back to embers. If we are honest with ourselves, I would say Holy Cross is currently an ember. It has been burning slowly and steadily and has not burned out. Thank God for that. It is time to start fanning it once more. Indeed, many have already begun to do so. Our board of directors has led us to a new governance structure that will benefit us in the future. We are establishing new ministries for men, women, and children. We have a preschool full of families, many of whom have stated that they do not currently attend church. We have hosted brand new events that have drawn significant crowds. We now have a new media system that allows us to reach a wider audience. We have noticed some new faces in our pews. I thank God for everyone who is currently putting their "muscles" to work and providing oxygen to the glowing ember. I can see a tongue of fire appearing. Keep up the good work!

But if we want this flame to rekindle, we must not be afraid. God has given us a spirit of power and love. As we give thanks for what was and those who came before us, let us not grow weary or fearful, but rather move forward in faith. This includes both supporting and participating in the new efforts of those who are creating opportunities. This includes trying something new. This includes praying about and acting on opportunities to study and apply God's Word. This includes faithful (even sacrificial) financial offerings so that we can invest in the people God brings into our midst so that they, too, may believe in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and contribute to the strengthening of His church on earth.

You, dear brothers and sisters, have been given a spirit of strength, not weakness; of faith, not fear. So, by the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, let us walk forward in faith and watch as God transforms our glowing embers into a roaring fire of his love. +

Pastor Nathan Erb

Celebrating this Month

SEPTEMBER

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 Luke Schipul
- 4 Michael Bonnar
- 4 Michelle Anastasio Festi
- 9 Diane Sederquest
- 13 Sabine Bonnar
- 13 Cole Veteri
- 14 Myrtle Anderson
- 14 Doris Bernt
- 17 Sarah Ely
- 18 Christopher Carola
- 19 Laurie Vaitkus
- 20 Nancy Sabol
- 20 Jared Ely
- 22 Peter Messerschmitt
- 22 Charlie Senft
- 23 Michael Halls
- 23 Rebecca Veteri
- 24 Bret Helminger
- 24 Matt Rentz
- 25 Tim Benson, Sr.
- 25 Dan Nyitrai
- 25 Jessica Nyitrai
- 26 Adela Buck
- 27 Rosemary Adomako-Ayisi
- 30 Andrew Sjoblom

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!

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

- Anna Berger
- Judith Chirgwin
- Jena (Conte) Torres
- Joelle Cyr
- Blake Deloge
- Logan Deloge
- Pat Deloge
- Laura Dowling
- Ethan Festi
- Lorraine Finch
- Virginia Gaffney
- Ashley Gomes
- Kristine Liptack
- Tim Morris
- Jacob Nyitrai
- Debbie Riccio
- David Schiller
- Amanda Sjoblom
- Edith Skoog
- Kathryn Struzik
- Jonathan Testani
- Rebecca Turner
- Sadie Veteri

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

- 2 Ryan and Heather Fanning
- 5 Paul and Laurie Vaitkus
- 6 Daniel and Julianne Nyitrai
- 29 Jon and Jenzy Halls