

Pastor's Report for December 2022 Council Meeting
November 23 – December 20, 2022

It's been a busy month at Mount Cross as we prepare for Christmas.

- We gathered on Wednesday, November 23 for the Thanksgiving Eve Holden Evening Prayer Service and Pie Social.
- I'm pleased that the Advent Theme, "What Can't Wait?" has generated good conversations among church members and been a helpful question for people to ponder.
- Sermons
Nov. 27, Advent 1: "The Daily Grind"
Dec. 4, Advent 2: "Welcome to the Water, Welcome to the Table"
Dec. 11, Advent 3: "Not the Whole Enchilada, but Plenty of Joy"
Dec. 18, Advent 4: "And They Said Yes"
- Many thanks to Carol Browning and Joe Zimmerly for directing our *Jesse Tree* program on December 11, and for all those who helped and participated. It was a lovely preparation for Christmas, as well as a good showcase for our Music Ministry.
- The new adult education offering, "ROOTED", on Wednesday evenings, that I experimented with in the fall has had good attendance and positive energy, so I will continue it in the second half of our program year.
- In addition to responding to pastoral care needs in the congregation, I presided at a funeral for a community member at Ivy Lawn and provided grief support to the family.

I anticipate joyful celebrations of Christ's birth at our Christmas Eve (12/24 at 5 p.m.) and Christmas Day (12/25 at 9:30 a.m.) services.

Thank you to all who so generously sign-up or answer the call to serve as worship assistants, technology helpers, or hospitality providers throughout the year!

I will be away the afternoon of December 25 – January 4. Deacon Cecelia will be away through January 1. Evonne Kuchera and Susan Prosser have graciously agreed to be on-call to receive any emergency pastoral care requests. They will then contact Pastor Lynn Enloe or The Rev. Kate Lewis to respond, as needed.

I was asked to lead the pre-ordination retreat for new priests in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles January 10-12 and preach at their ordination January 14 at the Cathedral of St John in LA. I will be away from Mount Cross that week, although accessible by phone and email. I will be here for Sunday worship on January 15, but Deacon Cecelia will preach.

Thank you, Church Council, for all your work and all your prayers for our congregation throughout the year. God bless you! Please submit your annual reports and/or have your committees submit their reports no later than Wednesday, January 18. Our annual meeting is Sunday, January 29.

Pastor's Report for the November 2022 Church Council Meeting October 19-November 22

Since the last Council meeting, we have commended our beloved church member, Marion Cole, to the arms of God, celebrated Reformation Sunday, honored all the saints and all Mount Cross members who have died this past year, and welcomed new members through Holy Baptism, Affirmation of Baptism, and transfer of membership. My ministry this month has centered around pastoral care and preparation for these services, as well as regular Sunday worship, ongoing faith formation programs, and administrative work.

As Thanksgiving Day approaches on Thursday, I give thanks to God for the collaborative and generous spirit that permeates the Mount Cross staff, Council, and general membership. The energy and joy at Mount Cross are noticed by newcomers. One frequent visitor to our Sunday worship recently said to me, "It feels like Easter here every Sunday." That is good news, as every Sunday is meant to be a "little Easter."

Other Notes:

- I completed most of my role on a committee working to develop regulations for licensing Lay Ministry in the Diocese of Los Angeles. I continue to work with the planning team for a day-long discernment gathering in the spring.
- I attended Ventura County Interfaith's annual "Feast of Faiths" on October 23 and offered the prayer before the meal.
- Joe Zimmerly and I continue to alternate leading Preschool chapel services. The theme for October was "God Creates.". The theme for November is "God Provides."
- It was a privilege to welcome Pastor Abel Arroyo Traverso, Assistant to the Bishop for Faith Formation for the Southwest California Synod, as our guest preacher on Reformation Sunday.
- I was away Nov. 7-14 and grateful to all those who filled in for me in various capacities. Pastor John Santoro preached and presided at Sunday worship on Nov. 13. Pastors Lynn Enloe, Bill Knutson, and Kate Lewis were graciously on-call for pastoral emergencies but, thankfully, were not needed.

Advent begins on Sunday. I hope members of the Church Council will be able to participate in as many of our seasonal offerings as possible.

- Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m. for the 4 Sundays of Advent Nov. 27, December 4, 11, 18
- Sunday, November 27, 11:00 a.m. - Advent Wreath Making and Potluck at Mt. Cross with St. Columba's
- December 3, 8:30 a.m.-Noon - Work Day to spruce up the property for the season
- Sunday, December 4, 2:00 p.m. - Viewing the Film *Emanuel* at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Thousand Oaks. Carpool leaves Mount Cross at 1:15 p.m.
- December 11, 4:00 p.m. - Advent/Christmas Program for all ages, featuring our Youth and Music Ministry
- Sunday, December 18, after worship - Make sandwiches for Harbor House and trim the Mount Cross Christmas Tree
- Saturday, December 24, 5:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve service with Carols, Candles, and Communion

- Sunday, December 25, 9:30 a.m. - Christmas Sunday Worship
- Sunday, January 1, 9:30 a.m. - Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion
- Friday, January 6, 7:00 p.m. - Epiphany Star Service followed by a Dessert Potluck

I will be away December 26-January 4. The Rev. Kate Lewis, an Episcopal Priest and Director of Chaplain Services at St. John's hospitals in Oxnard and Camarillo, will preside at the Sunday service of Lessons and Carols on January 1.

Pastor's Report for October 2022 Council Meeting
September 21-October 18, 2022

I will miss the October Council meeting, as I am attending *TheOasis*, the Professional Leaders Conference for the Southwest California and Pacifica Synods in LaQuinta, California. The theme is "Grief: Reflecting on Loss, Love, and Leadership."

Baptisms and New Members: I request Council approval to receive the following new members on All Saints' Sunday, November 6:

Elliot Ripley, Baptism

Laura Ripley, Affirmation of Baptism

Abigail Ripley, Baptism

Henry Ripley, Baptism

Emily Schweers, Baptism

Joan Erickson, Affirmation of Baptism

Brian, Amanda, and William Honda, by transfer from another ELCA congregation

Becky and Dave Gilberston, currently associate members, would like to become full members by transfer from another ELCA congregation

As we welcome new members on November 6, we will also remember those members who have joined the Communion of Saints, including Lucille Miley whose service was on October 6.

Change of Role with Child Development Center: The by-laws of the newly, separately incorporated CDC, require the Mount Cross Pastor or "designee" to be a voting member of their Board of Directors. In the past, the Pastor has served in an ex-officio role with voice but no vote.

Adult Education: Rooted, the new adult education offering on Wednesday evening is going well. It is a mid-week pause for parents of *Fun with Faith* children and others to stop, connect with each other, discuss scripture, and pray. All the other Bible studies continue to meet regularly, under lay leadership or my leadership. I am also teaching a 3-week class on Sundays October 16, 23, and 30 from 11-12 called *Following Jesus*.

Ministry Intern Possibility: I have been approached by a Luther Seminary student who is preparing to be an ELCA Deacon (Word and Service) with an emphasis on climate justice. He would like to do his required full-time six month internship (possibly beginning in August 2023) at Mount Cross in conjunction with the Abundant Table or another organization working on environmental issues. The total cost for the required stipend and fees is estimated at \$15,000 plus housing. The student has an impressive resume and would contribute a lot to Mount Cross, as well as learn a lot from us.

Community Ministry: I assisted with two funerals this month outside of Mount Cross.

Regular Ministry: All other congregational care, worship, and denominational responsibilities continue. I am grateful to be engaged in this ministry along with a wonderful staff and committed church members.

**Pastor's Report and Deacon's Report for September Church Council Meeting
August 16, 2022 – September 20, 2022**

Our wonderful and joyful worship in the park and picnic officially concluded summer at Mount Cross. Thank you to all Council members who made invitation calls to church members and friends listed in our directory, and thank you to all who helped make the event happen. It was a beautiful Camarillo day, and the majestic Shamel Ash tree made a lovely canopy over our altar.

Our Fall programs resumed the week of September 12. In addition to our CYFM programs (see Joe Zimmerly's report), and our 3 Bible studies (Tuesday morning Women's; Wednesday evening all; and 1st and 3rd Thursday Men's), we are experimenting with a new program I am calling "ROOTED" for parents of Fun with Faith children and all interested adults. The first week was off to a good start.

On August 17, I attended a *Faithful Innovation* webinar hosted by Luther Seminary called "Getting Clear on the Why of Your Church." Churches across the country are facing existential questions about survival. In the face of tremendous cultural change regarding church affiliation and attendance (exacerbated by the pandemic) congregations need to do a lot of soul-searching about our core purpose. We were encouraged to start conversations in our congregation about why we are Christians and what difference it has made in our lives to be followers of Jesus. Being disciples of Jesus and helping others to become disciples of Jesus is our why. Wanting to lead by example, I used the September newsletter to share a little bit about why I am a Christian and what difference it makes to me. Here is an excerpt of what I wrote:

I am a Christian because Jesus invited me into his open, gentle, and humble heart offering rest, grace, guidance, strength, and a deeply meaningful life. He was and continues to be true to his word. As I follow Jesus, I notice my own heart expands. I care more for others; I want all people to experience belonging and love; I appreciate the beauty of the earth and the wonder of life; my priorities become clear; I recognize the world's empty promises; I find friends and companions with whom I can share burdens and joys; and I can face risk, suffering, evil, and death through the lens of the cross, trusting in the ultimate victory of goodness and life. Although I doubt I'll get beyond beginner status, I aspire to embody Jesus' way of self-giving, down-to-earth love and service wherever I find myself. Knowing Jesus has led me to encounters with the most wonderful people, from living Christian saints to holy men and women of other faiths. I have learned that God-shaped people and places are full of gratitude, generosity, compassion, justice, and joy. I want to be around them forever.

I hope you, as Church Council members, will practice answering the questions: Why are you a Christian? What difference has following Jesus made in your life?

I continue with Sunday worship and preaching, pastoral care, committee work, staff supervision, and collaboration with the Child Development Center. It was great to return to preschool chapel this week. My service to both the Southwest California Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles will increase this year. For the synod, I will continue mentoring a candidate for the diaconate and will also take on supervising a candidate for Word and Sacrament. For the diocese, I am helping to create a system for licensing lay leaders and will be part of the planning team for two discernment gatherings in the spring for Episcopalians interested in serving in lay or ordained leadership roles.

Life and ministry feel very full. Some days I wonder how it all gets done. Some days it does not all get done, but the grace of Christ always charts the course and fills in the gaps. Thanks be to God!

Below is a report from Deacon Cecelia Travick Jackson as she comes close to her one year anniversary serving with us. She is also on staff for the synod. Talk about a full plate! God bless Deacon Cecelia.

Report Church Council

(Excerpts from) ELCA CONSTITUTION As of April 2022

MINISTRY OF WORD AND SERVICE

7.54.01. Ministers of Word and Service shall be known as deacons.

7.61.02. Responsibilities. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall: a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service; b. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world; c. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad;...

Ministers of Word and Service are relatively new to the ELCA; therefore, it is good to be reminded of what a deacon is and their call to service. I have the pleasure of walking and serving in these worlds. It is especially

gratifying to experience the connection and interconnectedness of these worlds. I serve in my local church (Mount Cross), I serve in the Southwest California synod as an Assistant to the Bishop, I serve on the Board for California Lutheran Homes (St. John's Manor), Deacon formation committee for the Rostered Ministers' Gathering in 2023, and the Deacon Dialogues book discussion group, and newly added, in October I will bring a monthly worship service to one of our assisted living communities in Camarillo and I also provide pastoral and spiritual guidance to this same residential home. In each of these groups and gatherings I speak publicly and boldly of adult senior citizens and their gifts especially the gifts that through God's Grace only age and experience can bring.

I will break down each of these areas and my contributions since my ordination on December 12, 2021.

Mount Cross

What this report will not include is time spent on sermon preparation, reading, phone calls to congregation members, e-mails, texts, other work-related correspondence.

The following are recurring meetings and responsibilities

- **Weekly Staff Meetings**
- **Weekly Meetings with Pastor Julie for Pastoral care and counseling**
- **Attend Monthly Care team meetings**
- **Attend Monthly Mary Circle Bible Study**
- **Monthly Submission to the Grapevine**
- **Chair Monthly Senior Adult Ministry Committee Meetings**
- **Preside and Preach Monthly Chapel Service**
- **Assist in Sunday Worship Service**
- **Assist Sunday Drive Through Communion**
- **Contact person when Pastor Julie is away**
- **Preach at Mount Cross three times a year**

Following are the tasks related to Diaconal Ministry

December 2021

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
12/15-Bible Study and Dinner 12/18-Hanging of the Green 12/19-Christmas Concert 12/23-Tech rehearsal for New Hope Lutheran 12/24 Two Christmas Eve Services 12/26-Guest Preacher-New Hope 12/30-Funeral	12/15-Synod Executive Council 12/21-Budget and Finance Committee		

January 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
1/6 – Take down Christmas decorations from church 1/9 – Attend new member class	1/4- Planning for Policy & Governance meeting 1/5 – Policy and	1/4 -Practice Epiphany for Deacons 1/6 – Deacons Epiphany Worship Service	1/2-Pastoral call to grieving family in the community

<p>1/9—Cemetery interment for Mount Cross member</p> <p>1/30-Annual meeting</p>	<p>Governance meeting</p> <p>1/14-Policy and Governance meeting</p> <p>1/18-Budget and Finance meeting</p> <p>1/19-Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p> <p>1/20- Mutual Ministry meeting</p> <p>1/21-Pre-nominating committee meeting</p> <p>1/25-Budget and Finance meeting</p> <p>1/29-Synod Council meeting</p>		
---	--	--	--

February 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
<p>2/18- made 3 home communion visits</p>	<p>2/2 Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p>		<p>2/20-pastoral care visit to person just</p>

<p>2/26 Funeral for Mount Cross member</p>	<p>2/3 Mutual Ministry</p> <p>2/4, 2/5, 2/9 – Policy and Governance</p> <p>2/7- Meeting with Pastor Toni</p> <p>2/16-Executive Council</p>		<p>released from hospital</p>
--	--	--	-------------------------------

March 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
<p>3/2- Ash Wednesday service</p> <p>3/4- Funeral for Mount Cross Member</p> <p>3/5-Funeral for Mount Cross Member</p> <p>3/13-Pastoral care meeting with member of the congregation</p> <p>3/16-Lenten Service</p>	<p>3/8- Executive Council</p> <p>3/9-Mutual Ministry</p> <p>3/9-Lenten Service</p> <p>3/10-Mutual Ministry Meeting</p> <p>3/11- Nominating Committee</p> <p>3/15-Policy and Governance</p>	<p>3/24- 3/27 Deacon Bridge (formation) Event</p>	

3/30-Lenten Service	3/19-Council meeting 3/30-Meeting with Pastor Toni		
---------------------	---	--	--

April 2022

<p>Mount Cross 4/6-Lenten Service</p> <p>4/7-Channel Island Colloquy</p> <p>4/9-Help decorate church for Palm Sunday</p> <p>4/12-Christm Mass</p> <p>4/14 Maundy Thursday Service at St Columba's followed by planning meeting for Good Friday and Holy Saturday</p> <p>4/15-Stations of the Cross-St. Columba's</p>	<p>Synod 4/5-Executive Council</p> <p>4/12-Meeting with Bishop</p>	<p>ELCA</p>	<p>Wider Community</p>
---	---	--------------------	-------------------------------

4/15 Tenebrae service at Mount Cross			
4/16- Great Vigil of Easter-St Columba's			
4/28-Channel Islands Conference Assembly			

May 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
5/2 Bishop's Colloquy	5/17 Candidacy Cultivation Experience	5/18 Ministers of Word and Service- A Time to Gather	5/16 – 5/20 Festival of Homiletics
5/3 First Call Theological Education	5/25-Synod Assembly Logistics Meeting		
5/4 Channel Island Colloquy			
5/7 Funeral for Mount Cross member	5/31-Have sample sermon completed for Synod Assembly		
5/9 Liturgical Ministry Training			
5/14 Pastoral care Assisted Living Visit			

5/14 Pastoral care Home Visit- Communion			
5/16-5/20-Festival of Homiletics			
5/18- Pastoral Care Assisted Living Visit			
5/22-Confirmation Sunday			

June 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
6/2 Active Shooter training	6/2 Channel Islands Conference Assembly		
6/5-End of Life Issues- Grief			
6/7-Pastoral Care hospital visit	6/10 Boundaries Workshop		
6/16-Pastoral Care home communion visit	6/11 Synod Assembly 6/12 Visitation to Simi Valley Lutheran Church		
6/24-Funeral for Mount Cross member	6/14 First Call Theological Education		

	<p>6/21 Meeting with Pastor Jaeger</p> <p>6/22 Meeting with the Bishop</p> <p>6/23 Meeting with Pastor Abel</p> <p>6/23 The Haven Stillpoint Religious Presentation</p> <p>6/30 First Call Theological Education- Afternoon Tea</p>		
--	---	--	--

July 2022

<p>Mount Cross</p> <p>7/18-Pastoral Care hospital visit</p> <p>7/24-End of Life Issues-Palliative and Hospice Care</p> <p>7/25-Pastoral Care Home Communion Visit</p>	<p>Synod</p> <p>7/1-Zoom tutorial with Claudia</p> <p>7/3-St. Luke Lutheran Church (Woodland Hills)</p>	<p>ELCA</p>	<p>Wider Community</p>
--	--	--------------------	-------------------------------

7/28-Adult Senior Dinner and Social	<p>7/6- Meeting with Pastor Abel</p> <p>7/8-Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church Bellflower</p> <p>7/20-Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p> <p>7/27- Meeting with Pastor Abel</p>		
-------------------------------------	---	--	--

August 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
<p>8/8-8/12- VBS with therapy dog Sunshine</p> <p>8/13-Pastoral Care visit with congregation member</p> <p>8/27-Funeral for Congregation Member</p> <p>8/29- 30 First Call Theological Education</p>	<p>8/3-Meeting with Rev Danielle and Pastor Abel</p> <p>8/7-St Matthew Lutheran Church North Hollywood</p> <p>8/17 Meeting with Pastor Javier and Pastor Abel</p>	<p>8/25-Elected to the bord of California Lutheran Homes-St John's Manor</p>	

	8/19-Synod Deacon Gathering event		
	8/20-Synod Council Retreat		
	8/31 Meeting with Pastor Javier and Pastor Abel		

September 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
9/6- Meeting with local care facility	9/1-Pandemic Pastoring Webinar	9/8- Deacon Pre-Gathering to Rostered Ministers Gathering	
9/11-Channel Islands Fall Conference Assembly	9/21-(scheduled) Meeting with Bishop Brenda	9/27-(scheduled) All Region Ministers of Word and Service	
9/13 In-person meeting with local care facility	9/21-(scheduled) Meeting with Pastor Abel		
9/13 Pastor care and home communion visit with congregation member	9/24-(scheduled) First presentation on Grief Series		
<i>The remainder of September has</i>			

<i>yet to be scheduled</i>	with Reverend Danielle 9/29 (scheduled Fe y Esperanza in South Gate)		
----------------------------	--	--	--

Pastor's Report for August 2022 Council Meeting July 19 – August 16, 2022

I was on vacation for the first part of this reporting period. I returned July 30, grateful for time away with family and refreshed for a new season at Mount Cross. Thank you to Mount Cross staff and Church Council members for supporting my vacation times and for taking on extra responsibilities in my absence.

As we look towards a new program year while still in uncertain times, I've been reflecting on what is most needed from us as leaders in the Church. This is not a comprehensive list, but these are a few of the qualities I am trying to cultivate in myself:

Trust in the Good Shepherd: Jesus is the ultimate leader of his Church. We can trust he is guiding us and forming us to serve in the ways that are most needed. We access divine guidance through prayer, worship, and deliberate conversations with each other. We take sabbath time and encourage each other to do the same.

Clarity about Purpose: Now is the time to be very clear about what it means to be the Church. Why are we here? To love God and love others; to grow as disciples of Jesus and make new disciples of Jesus; to be rooted in God's grace to joyfully witness and serve.

Discernment: While there are a lot of things we *could* do, what is it that we *should* do here and now? We listen and look for where the Holy Spirit is already at work among us and support that work. We recognize our limitations and wait for God's provisions, knowing if we are called to particular courses of action, God will equip us for those actions.

Flexibility: This is a time for being flexible. We may need to experiment with programs and approaches, with a willingness to let go and try something new.

Patience: So often patience is what love looks like in any given moment. We need to be patient with each other and ourselves as we do the best we can to meet our own needs and the needs of others.

Some recent highlights

- Vacation Bible School: VBS was wonderful – great job Joe Zimmerly and all CYFM staff and volunteers!
- Guest Preachers Grant: I requested and received a \$1500 grant from the Mount Cross Endowment Fund for guest preachers to expand the diversity of preaching voices we hear at Mount Cross. The grant allowed us to bring Pastor Chryll Crews, on staff for the synod as Director of Evangelical Mission, to Mount Cross as our preacher on July 30.
- It was an honor for me to help celebrate Mia Fernandez Quinceanera on August 6.
- Summer hikes with the Women's Bible Study were enjoyable and meaningful.

Looking Ahead

- Thank you to the Church Council for undertaking phone calls to the whole Mount Cross community in the next month.
- Worship in the Park on Sunday, September 18.

Pastor's Report for October 2022 Council Meeting
September 21-October 18, 2022

I will miss the October Council meeting, as I am attending *TheOasis*, the Professional Leaders Conference for the Southwest California and Pacifica Synods in LaQuinta, California. The theme is "Grief: Reflecting on Loss, Love, and Leadership."

Baptisms and New Members: I request Council approval to receive the following new members on All Saints' Sunday, November 6:

Elliot Ripley, Baptism

Laura Ripley, Affirmation of Baptism

Abigail Ripley, Baptism

Henry Ripley, Baptism

Emily Schweers, Baptism

Joan Erickson, Affirmation of Baptism

Brian, Amanda, and William Honda, by transfer from another ELCA congregation

Becky and Dave Gilberston, currently associate members, would like to become full members by transfer from another ELCA congregation

As we welcome new members on November 6, we will also remember those members who have joined the Communion of Saints, including Lucille Miley whose service was on October 6.

Change of Role with Child Development Center: The by-laws of the newly, separately incorporated CDC, require the Mount Cross Pastor or "designee" to be a voting member of their Board of Directors. In the past, the Pastor has served in an ex-officio role with voice but no vote.

Adult Education: Rooted, the new adult education offering on Wednesday evening is going well. It is a mid-week pause for parents of *Fun with Faith* children and others to stop, connect with each other, discuss scripture, and pray. All the other Bible studies continue to meet regularly, under lay leadership or my leadership. I am also teaching a 3-week class on Sundays October 16, 23, and 30 from 11-12 called *Following Jesus*.

Ministry Intern Possibility: I have been approached by a Luther Seminary student who is preparing to be an ELCA Deacon (Word and Service) with an emphasis on climate justice. He would like to do his required full-time six month internship (possibly beginning in August 2023) at Mount Cross in conjunction with the Abundant Table or another organization working on environmental issues. The total cost for the required stipend and fees is estimated at \$15,000 plus housing. The student has an impressive resume and would contribute a lot to Mount Cross, as well as learn a lot from us.

Community Ministry: I assisted with two funerals this month outside of Mount Cross.

Regular Ministry: All other congregational care, worship, and denominational responsibilities continue. I am grateful to be engaged in this ministry along with a wonderful staff and committed church members.

**Pastor's Report and Deacon's Report for September Church Council Meeting
August 16, 2022 – September 20, 2022**

Our wonderful and joyful worship in the park and picnic officially concluded summer at Mount Cross. Thank you to all Council members who made invitation calls to church members and friends listed in our directory, and thank you to all who helped make the event happen. It was a beautiful Camarillo day, and the majestic Shamel Ash tree made a lovely canopy over our altar.

Our Fall programs resumed the week of September 12. In addition to our CYFM programs (see Joe Zimmerly's report), and our 3 Bible studies (Tuesday morning Women's; Wednesday evening all; and 1st and 3rd Thursday Men's), we are experimenting with a new program I am calling "ROOTED" for parents of Fun with Faith children and all interested adults. The first week was off to a good start.

On August 17, I attended a *Faithful Innovation* webinar hosted by Luther Seminary called "Getting Clear on the Why of Your Church." Churches across the country are facing existential questions about survival. In the face of tremendous cultural change regarding church affiliation and attendance (exacerbated by the pandemic) congregations need to do a lot of soul-searching about our core purpose. We were encouraged to start conversations in our congregation about why we are Christians and what difference it has made in our lives to be followers of Jesus. Being disciples of Jesus and helping others to become disciples of Jesus is our why. Wanting to lead by example, I used the September newsletter to share a little bit about why I am a Christian and what difference it makes to me. Here is an excerpt of what I wrote:

I am a Christian because Jesus invited me into his open, gentle, and humble heart offering rest, grace, guidance, strength, and a deeply meaningful life. He was and continues to be true to his word. As I follow Jesus, I notice my own heart expands. I care more for others; I want all people to experience belonging and love; I appreciate the beauty of the earth and the wonder of life; my priorities become clear; I recognize the world's empty promises; I find friends and companions with whom I can share burdens and joys; and I can face risk, suffering, evil, and death through the lens of the cross, trusting in the ultimate victory of goodness and life. Although I doubt I'll get beyond beginner status, I aspire to embody Jesus' way of self-giving, down-to-earth love and service wherever I find myself. Knowing Jesus has led me to encounters with the most wonderful people, from living Christian saints to holy men and women of other faiths. I have learned that God-shaped people and places are full of gratitude, generosity, compassion, justice, and joy. I want to be around them forever.

I hope you, as Church Council members, will practice answering the questions: Why are you a Christian? What difference has following Jesus made in your life?

I continue with Sunday worship and preaching, pastoral care, committee work, staff supervision, and collaboration with the Child Development Center. It was great to return to preschool chapel this week. My service to both the Southwest California Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles will increase this year. For the synod, I will continue mentoring a candidate for the diaconate and will also take on supervising a candidate for Word and Sacrament. For the diocese, I am helping to create a system for licensing lay leaders and will be part of the planning team for two discernment gatherings in the spring for Episcopalians interested in serving in lay or ordained leadership roles.

Life and ministry feel very full. Some days I wonder how it all gets done. Some days it does not all get done, but the grace of Christ always charts the course and fills in the gaps. Thanks be to God!

Below is a report from Deacon Cecelia Travick Jackson as she comes close to her one year anniversary serving with us. She is also on staff for the synod. Talk about a full plate! God bless Deacon Cecelia.

Report Church Council

(Excerpts from) ELCA CONSTITUTION As of April 2022

MINISTRY OF WORD AND SERVICE

7.54.01. Ministers of Word and Service shall be known as deacons.

7.61.02. Responsibilities. Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every minister of Word and Service shall: a. be rooted in the Word of God, for proclamation and service; b. advocate a prophetic diakonia that commits itself to risk-taking and innovative service on the frontiers of the Church's outreach, giving particular attention to the suffering places in God's world; c. speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world, witnessing to the realm of God in the community, the nation, and abroad;...

Ministers of Word and Service are relatively new to the ELCA; therefore, it is good to be reminded of what a deacon is and their call to service. I have the pleasure of walking and serving in these worlds. It is especially

gratifying to experience the connection and interconnectedness of these worlds. I serve in my local church (Mount Cross), I serve in the Southwest California synod as an Assistant to the Bishop, I serve on the Board for California Lutheran Homes (St. John's Manor), Deacon formation committee for the Rostered Ministers' Gathering in 2023, and the Deacon Dialogues book discussion group, and newly added, in October I will bring a monthly worship service to one of our assisted living communities in Camarillo and I also provide pastoral and spiritual guidance to this same residential home. In each of these groups and gatherings I speak publicly and boldly of adult senior citizens and their gifts especially the gifts that through God's Grace only age and experience can bring.

I will break down each of these areas and my contributions since my ordination on December 12, 2021.

Mount Cross

What this report will not include is time spent on sermon preparation, reading, phone calls to congregation members, e-mails, texts, other work-related correspondence.

The following are recurring meetings and responsibilities

- **Weekly Staff Meetings**
- **Weekly Meetings with Pastor Julie for Pastoral care and counseling**
- **Attend Monthly Care team meetings**
- **Attend Monthly Mary Circle Bible Study**
- **Monthly Submission to the Grapevine**
- **Chair Monthly Senior Adult Ministry Committee Meetings**
- **Preside and Preach Monthly Chapel Service**
- **Assist in Sunday Worship Service**
- **Assist Sunday Drive Through Communion**
- **Contact person when Pastor Julie is away**
- **Preach at Mount Cross three times a year**

Following are the tasks related to Diaconal Ministry

December 2021

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
12/15-Bible Study and Dinner 12/18-Hanging of the Green 12/19-Christmas Concert 12/23-Tech rehearsal for New Hope Lutheran 12/24 Two Christmas Eve Services 12/26-Guest Preacher-New Hope 12/30-Funeral	12/15-Synod Executive Council 12/21-Budget and Finance Committee		

January 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
1/6 – Take down Christmas decorations from church 1/9 – Attend new member class	1/4- Planning for Policy & Governance meeting 1/5 – Policy and	1/4 -Practice Epiphany for Deacons 1/6 – Deacons Epiphany Worship Service	1/2-Pastoral call to grieving family in the community

<p>1/9—Cemetery interment for Mount Cross member</p> <p>1/30-Annual meeting</p>	<p>Governance meeting</p> <p>1/14-Policy and Governance meeting</p> <p>1/18-Budget and Finance meeting</p> <p>1/19-Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p> <p>1/20- Mutual Ministry meeting</p> <p>1/21-Pre-nominating committee meeting</p> <p>1/25-Budget and Finance meeting</p> <p>1/29-Synod Council meeting</p>		
---	--	--	--

February 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
<p>2/18- made 3 home communion visits</p>	<p>2/2 Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p>		<p>2/20-pastoral care visit to person just</p>

2/26 Funeral for Mount Cross member	2/3 Mutual Ministry 2/4, 2/5, 2/9 – Policy and Governance 2/7- Meeting with Pastor Toni 2/16-Executive Council		released from hospital
-------------------------------------	---	--	------------------------

March 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
3/2- Ash Wednesday service 3/4- Funeral for Mount Cross Member 3/5-Funeral for Mount Cross Member 3/13-Pastoral care meeting with member of the congregation 3/16-Lenten Service	3/8- Executive Council 3/9-Mutual Ministry 3/9-Lenten Service 3/10-Mutual Ministry Meeting 3/11- Nominating Committee 3/15-Policy and Governance	3/24- 3/27 Deacon Bridge (formation) Event	

3/30-Lenten Service	3/19-Council meeting 3/30-Meeting with Pastor Toni		
---------------------	---	--	--

April 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
4/6-Lenten Service	4/5-Executive Council		
4/7-Channel Island Colloquy	4/12-Meeting with Bishop		
4/9-Help decorate church for Palm Sunday			
4/12-Christm Mass			
4/14 Maundy Thursday Service at St Columba's followed by planning meeting for Good Friday and Holy Saturday			
4/15-Stations of the Cross-St. Columba's			

4/15 Tenebrae service at Mount Cross			
4/16- Great Vigil of Easter-St Columba's			
4/28-Channel Islands Conference Assembly			

May 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
5/2 Bishop's Colloquy	5/17 Candidacy Cultivation Experience	5/18 Ministers of Word and Service- A Time to Gather	5/16 – 5/20 Festival of Homiletics
5/3 First Call Theological Education	5/25-Synod Assembly Logistics Meeting		
5/4 Channel Island Colloquy			
5/7 Funeral for Mount Cross member	5/31-Have sample sermon completed for Synod Assembly		
5/9 Liturgical Ministry Training			
5/14 Pastoral care Assisted Living Visit			

5/14 Pastoral care Home Visit- Communion			
5/16-5/20-Festival of Homiletics			
5/18- Pastoral Care Assisted Living Visit			
5/22-Confirmation Sunday			

June 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
6/2 Active Shooter training	6/2 Channel Islands Conference Assembly		
6/5-End of Life Issues- Grief			
6/7-Pastoral Care hospital visit	6/10 Boundaries Workshop		
6/16-Pastoral Care home communion visit	6/11 Synod Assembly 6/12 Visitation to Simi Valley Lutheran Church		
6/24-Funeral for Mount Cross member	6/14 First Call Theological Education		

	<p>6/21 Meeting with Pastor Jaeger</p> <p>6/22 Meeting with the Bishop</p> <p>6/23 Meeting with Pastor Abel</p> <p>6/23 The Haven Stillpoint Religious Presentation</p> <p>6/30 First Call Theological Education- Afternoon Tea</p>		
--	---	--	--

July 2022

<p>Mount Cross 7/18-Pastoral Care hospital visit</p> <p>7/24-End of Life Issues-Palliative and Hospice Care</p> <p>7/25-Pastoral Care Home Communion Visit</p>	<p>Synod</p> <p>7/1-Zoom tutorial with Claudia</p> <p>7/3-St. Luke Lutheran Church (Woodland Hills)</p>	<p>ELCA</p>	<p>Wider Community</p>
---	--	--------------------	-------------------------------

7/28-Adult Senior Dinner and Social	<p>7/6- Meeting with Pastor Abel</p> <p>7/8-Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church Bellflower</p> <p>7/20-Meeting with Bishop Brenda</p> <p>7/27- Meeting with Pastor Abel</p>		
-------------------------------------	---	--	--

August 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
<p>8/8-8/12- VBS with therapy dog Sunshine</p> <p>8/13-Pastoral Care visit with congregation member</p> <p>8/27-Funeral for Congregation Member</p> <p>8/29- 30 First Call Theological Education</p>	<p>8/3-Meeting with Rev Danielle and Pastor Abel</p> <p>8/7-St Matthew Lutheran Church North Hollywood</p> <p>8/17 Meeting with Pastor Javier and Pastor Abel</p>	<p>8/25-Elected to the bord of California Lutheran Homes-St John's Manor</p>	

	8/19-Synod Deacon Gathering event		
	8/20-Synod Council Retreat		
	8/31 Meeting with Pastor Javier and Pastor Abel		

September 2022

Mount Cross	Synod	ELCA	Wider Community
9/6- Meeting with local care facility	9/1-Pandemic Pastoring Webinar	9/8- Deacon Pre-Gathering to Rostered Ministers Gathering	
9/11-Channel Islands Fall Conference Assembly	9/21-(scheduled) Meeting with Bishop Brenda	9/27-(scheduled) All Region Ministers of Word and Service	
9/13 In-person meeting with local care facility	9/21-(scheduled) Meeting with Pastor Abel		
9/13 Pastor care and home communion visit with congregation member	9/24-(scheduled) First presentation on Grief Series		
<i>The remainder of September has</i>			

<i>yet to be scheduled</i>	with Reverend Danielle 9/29 (scheduled Fe y Esperanza in South Gate)		
----------------------------	--	--	--

Pastor's Report for August 2022 Council Meeting July 19 – August 16, 2022

I was on vacation for the first part of this reporting period. I returned July 30, grateful for time away with family and refreshed for a new season at Mount Cross. Thank you to Mount Cross staff and Church Council members for supporting my vacation times and for taking on extra responsibilities in my absence.

As we look towards a new program year while still in uncertain times, I've been reflecting on what is most needed from us as leaders in the Church. This is not a comprehensive list, but these are a few of the qualities I am trying to cultivate in myself:

Trust in the Good Shepherd: Jesus is the ultimate leader of his Church. We can trust he is guiding us and forming us to serve in the ways that are most needed. We access divine guidance through prayer, worship, and deliberate conversations with each other. We take sabbath time and encourage each other to do the same.

Clarity about Purpose: Now is the time to be very clear about what it means to be the Church. Why are we here? To love God and love others; to grow as disciples of Jesus and make new disciples of Jesus; to be rooted in God's grace to joyfully witness and serve.

Discernment: While there are a lot of things we *could* do, what is it that we *should* do here and now? We listen and look for where the Holy Spirit is already at work among us and support that work. We recognize our limitations and wait for God's provisions, knowing if we are called to particular courses of action, God will equip us for those actions.

Flexibility: This is a time for being flexible. We may need to experiment with programs and approaches, with a willingness to let go and try something new.

Patience: So often patience is what love looks like in any given moment. We need to be patient with each other and ourselves as we do the best we can to meet our own needs and the needs of others.

Some recent highlights

- Vacation Bible School: VBS was wonderful – great job Joe Zimmerly and all CYFM staff and volunteers!
- Guest Preachers Grant: I requested and received a \$1500 grant from the Mount Cross Endowment Fund for guest preachers to expand the diversity of preaching voices we hear at Mount Cross. The grant allowed us to bring Pastor Chryll Crews, on staff for the synod as Director of Evangelical Mission, to Mount Cross as our preacher on July 30.
- It was an honor for me to help celebrate Mia Fernandez Quinceanera on August 6.
- Summer hikes with the Women's Bible Study were enjoyable and meaningful.

Looking Ahead

- Thank you to the Church Council for undertaking phone calls to the whole Mount Cross community in the next month.
- Worship in the Park on Sunday, September 18.

Pastor's Report for July 2022 Council Meeting

Although we are wearied from constant tragedies in our national news and an increase in COVID cases in our congregation, there is a spirit of perseverance and joy at Mount Cross. It's been nice to get outdoors and into the community a bit more this past month. The informal parking lot party on the 4th of July to view the fireworks brought us together with a lot of our neighbors. The Beach Day on July 10 was a successful and refreshing multi-generational gathering, the Women's Bible study has been going on monthly hikes, and the staff had a retreat afternoon at the Ventura Botanical Gardens. Mount Cross was represented in the Camarillo Interfaith Friendship group. The meetings concluded last week, but hopefully this will be an annual program of Ventura County Interfaith.

I will miss meeting with you this month. I am on vacation July 13-29. We are blessed to have a wonderful staff to fill in the gaps. Please welcome supply pastors the Rev. Melissa Maxwell-Doherty and the Rev. Bill Knutson. In the case of a pastoral emergency, please call Deacon Cecelia. She has access to Pastor Lynn Enloe and Rev. Susan Klein, if needed.

God bless you.

Pastor's Report for June Council Meeting
May 18-June 21, 2022

This has been a full month at Mount Cross, as all months seem to be. I am grateful for the caring, wisdom, and generosity continuously displayed in our congregation. In addition to my regular pastoral, administrative, and worship responsibilities, this past month I have been involved in synodical (Lutheran) and diocesan (Episcopal) service, tried to lead faithfully in a time of heart-break from national gun tragedies, and been encouraged by the Mount Cross youth, an ELCA study of "Now is the Time", and participation in local interfaith community.

Synod Service: Joe Zimmerly and I were part of the planning team for the Synod Assembly held June 11 in Glendale (and online). Joe was one of the Zoom hosts. I was responsible for working on the "script book" in advance of the Assembly and tracking amendments and new business during the Assembly. My commitment to this project concluded after the Assembly. Thank you to Deacon Cecelia for giving one of the messages at the Assembly, and to our Mount Cross delegates: Melissa Henry, Brian Stouch, and Allison Johnson. Congratulations to Allison Johnson on her election to Synod Council!

Diocesan Service: I was asked to serve on a Commission on Ministry committee on lay ministry for the Diocese of LA, beginning this month. I expect the commitment to be about one year, requiring 5-8 hours each month. The purpose is to strengthen lay ministry and determine avenues of education and licensing for people serving and leading in the Episcopal Church through lay ministries.

Gun Violence: Christian faith demands that we mourn with those who mourn and renounce the powers of evil that seek to destroy the children of God. Along with several Mount Cross members, including two of our newly Confirmed youth, I attended a prayer vigil at Padre Serra Church on May 22 for the victims of the Buffalo, NY shooting. Just two days after that, the Uvalde, TX shooting occurred. We held a family-oriented prayer vigil at Mount Cross on May 26, around the image of a broken heart. Thank you to Joe Zimmerly, Carol Browning, and Amy Vega for their help with the vigil. Our Peace and Justice Team had a table with action steps to help reduce gun violence after Sunday worship on May 29 and June 5. We observed "Wear Orange" Sunday on June 5, along with Pentecost, to bring awareness to gun violence, and I addressed the tragedies in my preaching. Amy Vega asked the Ventura County Sheriff's Department to bring some active shooter response training to the pre-school teachers and opened the workshop up to church members (June 2). Several Church Council members, worship assistants, and church staff attended. It motivated Jeanne Kuchera-Sikoff to volunteer to help set-up a Security Team at Mount Cross.

Encouragement: Even in the midst of tragedy, God provides encouragement. Jeffrey Saner, Marli Saner, and Reagan Burke were Confirmed on May 22. They inspired us with their faith stories and helped us realize what a gift it is to belong to a church with members spanning ten decades. I was also encouraged to learn more about the anti-racist statements and efforts in the ELCA through the 5-part study I completed called "Now is the Time." Locally, the Ventura County Interfaith Community is sponsoring "Interfaith Friendship Groups." I am part of one of those groups, as are a few other members of Mount Cross. Building relationships across differences of any kind feels especially important now, as we need to counteractive the divisiveness plaguing our communities, country, and world. I'm finding it to be joyful and refreshing to meet and learn from people of other faiths.

I will be on vacation July 13-29.

The Peace of Christ be with you.

Pastor Julie Morris

Pastor's Report for the May 2022 Church Council Meeting

As we continue in the Great Fifty Days of Easter, it feels like spring-time at Mount Cross. There are signs of joy and new life on our campus and in our congregation. We baptized the baby sister of one of our preschool students last Sunday and welcomed the family to Mount Cross, our prayer garden is erupting with color, "Spring Training" for worship assistants brought renewed energy and even some new volunteers, and the Church Council is meeting in-person for the first time in over two years!

Trusting the good news of the Gospel, that goodness is stronger than evil and life is stronger than death, helps us meet our struggles and sad days with hope. We commended Linda Frantz to the arms of God when we gathered for her service on May 7, we continue to be a caring community offering practical and spiritual support to many individuals and families enduring times of illness and grief, and we are taking steps to educate ourselves on how to be a church that bears the light of Christ in a world where heart-breaking news does not seem to stop. As we meet this month, we are still reeling from the racially motivated mass shooting in Buffalo and the hate-driven attack on a Taiwanese congregation in Orange County. We need the strength and courage that knowing Christ brings us, and we need each other.

In addition to regular worship, teaching, meetings, and pastoral care responsibilities, some things I've been involved in this past month include:

- Joe and I are serving on the Synod Assembly Planning Team. The Synod Assembly is meeting June 11 at the Lutheran Center in Glendale.
- I attended the Lutheran Bishop's Colloquy in El Camino Pines May 1-2. It was my first time at the camp (loved it), and I appreciated the workshop "Finding Hope in Exhaustion."
- I attended the Episcopal Clergy conference May 2-4 in Riverside. The theme was "Exile, Return, and Renewal." The presentations focused on leadership in uncertain times.
- The Ventura County Interfaith Community invited me to present on the topic, "Sacred Space" on a Zoom webinar April 26. I talked about hallmarks of Christian sacred space, using Mount Cross as an example. The event included two other presenters. It was recorded. Here is a link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZORuE1cowU>
- I am participating in a Zoom study on the ELCA's *Declaration to People of African Descent*. It meets two hours a week for 5 weeks on Zoom. Four others from Mount Cross are also attending this course. Over 90 people, clergy and lay, from across the country registered for the study. My hope is to bring something similar to our congregation. For the declaration, go to https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Slavery_Apology_Explanation.pdf

Looking forward, we are blessed that three young people will be confirmed next Sunday, May 22, and we will celebrate graduations for students of all levels, and the conclusion of a successful preschool year, on Sunday, June 5. Don't forget to wear red that Sunday too, for Pentecost!

Thank you, Church Council, for your diligent work on behalf of the congregation.

With you in Christ's service,
Pastor Julie

Pastor's Report for April 19, 2022 Church Council Meeting

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!



Holy Week was a graced time. We celebrated the Great Three Days (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil) with St. Columba's Episcopal Church. On Easter Sunday at Mount Cross we had a **full sanctuary** for the first time since the pandemic began. 181 people attended our in-person Easter worship service and we had 35 "Peak Live Viewers" on Facebook. Thank you to all who helped us offer reverent and Spirit-filled Holy Week and Easter services, including the choir, musicians, Carol Browning, many, many worship assistants, the Altar Guild, Jim and Susan Prosser for the flower cross, Todd Ebright for hanging the banners, Bill Dawson and his Tech Team, Deacon Cecelia, Joe Zimmerly and the youth for a wonderful Easter Breakfast, and the Learning Committee for a fun Egg Hunt.



Pastor's Report for March 22, 2022 Council Meeting

It has been a very busy month. In times like this the challenge is not to lose sight of what church is all about: experiencing and sharing the grace of Christ. One thing that keeps me going is the real experience here at Mount Cross of being a community sharing in God's work *together*. Thank you for being present, engaged, creative, and willing to roll up your sleeves and get things done.

Our combined Ash Wednesday service at 7 p.m. on March 2 with St. Columba's was well-attended. A good number of Mount Cross people also attended the noon Ash Wednesday service at St. Columba's indicating, I think, the need to offer daytime services on our holy days for those who do not drive at night. We are partnering with St. Columba's for Holy Week services and have made sure there are daytime options. See the schedule below.

We had three memorial services in eight days. We commended Howard Wullschleger, Mary O'Donnell, and Don Stevenson to the mercy of God. Many thanks to our musicians, worship assistants, altar guild, and Helping Hands for their caring ministries during times of grief.

Wednesday night Lenten programs are off to a good start. About 20 people are attending the "Embracing an Adult Faith" class on Wednesdays at 5p.m. We cancelled the Thursday Zoom repeat of the class because too few were attending. The soup suppers are delicious and it's nice to eat together before Holden Evening Prayer. The theme of the Holden messages is "Word of God, Word of Life." We are hearing from different people about their favorite Bible passages. Thank you to the Saner family, Miriam Hoffman, Allison Johnson, Matt Fisher, and Jim and Susan Prosser for sharing with us.

Joe Zimmerly and I have been asked to serve on the Synod Assembly planning team.

I'm looking forward to our Leadership Retreat on Sunday, March 27 from Noon-5p.m. Thank you for attending.

Holy Week and Easter Schedule

Palm Sunday, April 10

9:30 a.m. worship at Mount Cross with a palm procession and the reading of the Passion. (Also livestreamed)

Maundy Thursday, April 14

Noon at St. Columba's for those who need a daytime service.

*7 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship at Mount Cross. We remember the last supper, hear Christ's commandment to love one another, celebrate the gift of Holy Communion, and strip the altar in preparation for Good Friday. (Also livestreamed)

Good Friday, April 15

Noon Stations of the Cross outdoors at St. Columba's Episcopal Church.

*7 p.m. Service of Tenebrae (Latin for "darkness") at Mount Cross. Candles are gradually extinguished as we read the Passion, interspersed with hymns and musical interludes to aid our

contemplation of the suffering and death of Christ. There will be an opportunity to reverence the cross. (Also livestreamed)

The Great Vigil of Easter, Saturday April 16

7 p.m. at St. Columba's Episcopal Church. Meet at the outdoor fire pit for the lighting of the new fire of Easter. We will process into the church to hear the foundational stories of our faith, proclaim the Easter Gospel, and celebrate Holy Communion on this night when Jesus passed over from death into life.

Easter Sunday, April 17

9:30 a.m. Easter Sunday worship at Mount Cross followed by an Easter breakfast. (Also livestreamed).

Pastor's Report for February 2022 January 18, 2022 – February 13, 2022

Welcome 2022 Church Council! Thank you for offering yourselves to share in the leadership of the congregation. Congratulations and thanks to all, including our staff, for a good annual meeting.

Mount Cross Story Corps

As I announced at the annual meeting, I would like to gather stories under the title *Mount Cross Story Corps*. In your spheres of ministry, please be on the look out for stories that help gauge the vitality of our congregation, especially related to stories of God's presence and provision; stories of caring, welcoming, and connecting within the congregation; and stories of members giving, serving, and faith-sharing with people outside the congregation. When you hear of or witness a story, please send it my way.

Worship

- Sunday Worship continues at 9:30 a.m. - in the sanctuary, outside, and livestreaming - with wonderful musicians and worship assistants.
- The Worship and Music Committee met January 19 and will meet again Feb. 23.
- The Council was installed on Sunday, February 6 at our 9:30 a.m. service. Joy!
- Sermons: January 23 ("What Are We Doing Here?"), January 30 ("Some Love for Our Amygdala"), February 6 ("Here I am!"), February 13 ("A New Kind of Community")

Pastoral Care

- Beginning with a class of 10, we prepared 6 children for Holy Communion in January and 3 came to the Lord's Table with us on January 23. We hope to officially welcome the other 3 to the Lord's Table very soon.
- Following the "Exploring Membership" class, I have been meeting with newcomers and those interested in joining Mount Cross. Pending Council approval, at our Sunday worship service on Feb. 27 we will receive through transfer from another Lutheran

congregation Lyndsay, Amanda, and Owen Montour and Dave and Becky Gilbertson (as Associate Members). We will baptize Brendan Jr. and Jordan Garrett and receive their parents, Brendan Sr. and Jennifer Garrett, as members. Patricia Lewis and Cheryl Wolfe will join the congregation by affirming their baptism, and Jeanne Kuchera Sikoff will renew her membership through the affirmation of baptism. Jeanne Eby will be baptized at one of the Easter services and Doug Wilde will be received by transfer.

- Howard Wullschleger entered into eternal life on February 1. His service will be Saturday, February 26 at 2 p.m.
- Don Stevenson entered into eternal life on January 5. His service will be Saturday, March 5 at 2 p.m.
- I continue, along with Deacon Cecelia, the Care Team, and other caring volunteers, to visit, call, text and be available as much as possible to those who need pastoral care in the congregation or preschool. If you are aware of any need, please let me know so I can offer spiritual support.

Christian Formation

This month, I facilitated Men's Bible study on January 20; Women's Bible Study on 1/18, 1/25, 2/1, and 2/18; Wednesday Evening Bible Study on 2/2 and 2/9. The Rev. Susan Klein has been assisting with the Wednesday evening Bible study. I was glad to attend Mary Circle on 2/1. Also, Joe and I alternate weeks leading chapel for the preschool and teaching the Confirmation lesson.

Hybrid Ministry

I completed a 6-hour mini course (2 hours each on 1/6, 1/13, and 1/20) on "Hybrid Ministry in the Post-Pandemic Church" through Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead Learning Hub for Christian Leaders. I presented on "Upper Room Zoom at Noon" and our experience with virtual choirs. The consensus is that digital ministry is here to stay. Going forward, it is up to us to decide what is most appropriate for our context. We will need to ask ourselves which format (in-person only, virtual only, or both) we want to use for each of our programs and services, keeping in mind stewardship of our human, financial, and technological resources. For most churches, online services will not grow the church in numbers but can increase accessibility for those who are already members and offer a way to be present to those who will likely never come to our church.

Re-Opening

The Re-Opening Committee met on Thursday, February 3 and decided to keep current guidance in place but remind people that there is no longer a requirement to serve food in individually packaged servings. As the County indoor mask mandate for vaccinated people expires on February 16, we need to decide how to implement that at Mount Cross. We are looking for guidance on indoor singing at this stage of the pandemic. The next Re-Opening Committee meeting is Thursday, March 3.

Administration

I meet weekly with the staff as a whole (Tuesdays at 1 p.m.) and individually with each staff member for check-ins (typically with Deacon Cecelia on Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m., with Joe on Wednesdays at 11:45 a.m., with Carina on Thursdays at 1 p.m., and with Carol on Thursdays at 4 p.m.).

Tracy Blois (Learning Committee Chair) and I completed Joe Zimmerly's annual ministry review on February 10. The review will be sent to the Personnel Committee and put in his personnel file. **Summary:** Joe is an agent of growth - children, interns, congregation (new members), and community. He far exceeds expectations. He is a servant leader, and we are blessed to have him on our staff.

Looking Ahead to Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

- Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, March 2**. We are hosting the combined service with St. Columba's at Mount Cross at 7 p.m. The service will also be livestreamed. St. Columba's will also offer Ash Wednesday services at 7:00 a.m. and Noon for those who are not able to attend the evening service. I will participate in the noon service, as well.
- On the **Wednesdays in Lent** (March 9, 16, 23, 30, and April 6), we'll host St. Columba's for a Lenten Class at 5 p.m. (taught by me, Fr. Greg, and Rev. Susan), Soup Supper at 6 p.m., and Holden Evening Prayer at 7 p.m. The Lenten Class is called *Embracing an Adult Faith* where we will explore a richer understanding of issues in contemporary Christian practice and theology, featuring theologian Marcus Borg. (The class will also be repeated on Zoom on Thursdays at 11:00 a.m. each week.)
- **Holy Week services**
Maundy Thursday, April 14 Noon at St. Columba's, 7 p.m. at Mount Cross (and livestreamed)
Good Friday, April 15, Noon Stations of the Cross at St. Columba's, 7 p.m. liturgy at Mount Cross (and livestreamed)
Easter Vigil, April 16, 7 p.m. at St. Columba's
Easter Sunday, April 17, at Mount Cross, service times TBA

Help Needed

1. **Interfaith Friendship:** Mount Cross has been asked to participate in a county-wide Interfaith Friendship Project. We need to identify a Mount Cross lay representative or two who would be willing to help facilitate a friendship group in their home. The program begins with an interfaith mixer on May 15th at 4:00pm. The friendship groups will meet weekly for 4-5 weeks, and then there will be a celebration dinner on June 26 at 4 p.m.

2. **Holden Messages:** I am looking for 5 people, couples, or families to give the short messages at our Wednesday Holden Evening Prayer services in Lent. The theme is: “Word of God, Word of Life.” The invitation is to share one of your favorite Bible passages or Bible stories and tell why it is meaningful to you. 5 minutes is a good length of time. It doesn’t have to be brilliant, just real. I am available to help.

Vacation and Continuing Education Plans for 2022

- I will be away on vacation for one week Feb. 14-21. On Sunday, Feb. 20 Deacon Cecelia will preach and Rev. Susan Klein will preside.
- According to my contract, in addition to my vacation, I can be away up to 4 more Sundays each year for children’s activities, college move-ins, college family weekends, etc. if I pay for the supply clergy. I am taking one of those Sundays on March 6 for my daughter’s musical performance out of town, Pastor Ron Cox will preach and preside.
- I will use one week of continuing education May 2-7. May 2-4 is the Episcopal Clergy Conference in Riverside, and I will take a short course (Topic TBD) May 5-7. I will be at Mount Cross on May 8, but there will be a guest preacher (TBA).
- I will be away on vacation for two weeks July 15-29. Pastor Ron Cox will cover July 17, Deacon Cecelia will cover July 24, possibly assisted by a minister of Word and Sacrament.
- Yet to be scheduled: 2 weeks’ vacation, 1 week continuing education, and up to 3 family Sundays, if needed.

A Prayer for the Mission of the Church

Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ’s mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, 75).

Pastor’s Report for January 2022 Council Meeting December 21-January 18, 2022

The Christmas Season

Despite the on-going stresses of the pandemic and the recent surge in COVID cases, Mount Cross celebrated the Christmas season with joy. Remembering that worship was completely virtual last Christmas Eve, in-person worship at our 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. Christmas Eve services this year was especially heart-warming. The first Sunday after Christmas arrived quickly (Dec. 26) and Carol Browning, along with Guy Ervin and several volunteer musicians, helped us continue to dwell in the wonder of Christmas through a service of *Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion*. As a way of bringing the season into our homes, I included an article in the January newsletter encouraging church members to honor the Epiphany tradition of blessing their homes on or around January 6. I’ve heard from some people who choose to do so that it

was a simple yet meaningful spiritual moment in the season. Thank you to all who donated poinsettias to make the church festive and beautiful, and thank you to all who helped set up, maintain, and take down the Christmas decorations! A special thank you to all the members of the Altar Guild, guided by Carol Broderick, for their extra service during this busy time of year

Worship

Worship continues to happen in three spaces simultaneously each Sunday morning at 9:30: in the sanctuary, streamed into the outdoor pavilion, and livestreamed on Facebook. We are utterly and gratefully dependent on Bill Dawson and his tech team for helping us do this. We hope to get new Moorpark College interns again for their spring semester, but they would not start until early February. The hours have changed for *Come to the Table* drive-through/walk in Holy Communion. Communion is now distributed to our livestream viewers from 11-11:30 a.m. Sunday mornings.

Christian Formation

All Christian formation programs resumed the week of January 9. I am facilitating the Tuesday morning Women's Bible study this month, following the *Gather* study. The Rev. Susan Klein is the guest leader of the Wednesday evening Bible study. I am alternating leadership of the Men's Bible study (the first Thursday one of the group members leads it; the third Thursday I lead it). I am teaching an Introduction to Holy Communion class for ten children January 12 and 19, and sharing pre-school chapels and Confirmation classes with Joe Zimmerly.

Exploring Membership at Mount Cross

Four people attended our exploring membership class and several others expressed interest but were unable to attend. Many thanks to Karen Cherry and the Welcome Team for assisting. I have received applications for membership from the Mantour family, Jeanne Sikoff-Kuchera, Cheryl Wolfe, and Patricia Lewis. We will joyfully welcome them (and possibly others) as official Mount Cross members at our Sunday worship on February 27.

Pastoral Care

I, along with Deacon Cecelia and members of the Care Team, continue to serve the pastoral needs of the congregation. We take initiative in reaching out to people and are responsive to requests and referrals. We commended Lois Watts, a long-time Mount Cross member, to God's eternal care at her funeral service on December 30 and buried her at Conejo Mount Cemetery on January 9. We were saddened by the death of Don Stevenson on January 5, and continue to hold his family in our prayers. In life and in death, we belong to the Lord (Romans 14:8).

Good work, 2021 Church Council

As we prepare for our Annual Meeting and some transition in congregational leadership, please know how grateful I am for the excellent service of the 2021 Church Council, the extraordinary leadership of Becky Riley and the Executive Committee, and the constant, reasoned guidance

from our Re-Opening Committee. Keith Selbrede will soon conclude his many years of service as our Treasurer. I thank him for his conscientious care for the finances of the church, his faithful and spiritual approach to budgeting, and his patience in on-boarding me to the financial processes of the congregation. Well done, Keith. Thank you and God bless you!