



Pastor's Report for March 2026 Council Meeting
Feb. 25 – March 14, 2026

Lent at Mount Cross is off to a strong start, with Wednesday Soup Suppers and Holden Evening Prayer both drawing good attendance. Various ministries, along with helpful individuals, have sponsored the soups, along with set-up and clean-up. People appreciate the creation care messages at Evening Prayer. Thank you to Carol Browning and all our musicians, and to our speakers – Christie Johnson (2/25), Gordon and Melissa Henry (3/4), Jim Dinges (3/11), Rachel Zook-Brimer (3/18), and Dave Gilbertson (3/25)! Offerings to the Ventura Land Trust have been generous. About 12 people have been attending the Creation Care course after worship on Sundays. Rather than conclude on March 22, we will skip that Sunday so people can attend the informational meeting about calling Pastor Marc. Instead, “Calling a Wounded Earth Home” will conclude with a brief wrap-up after the Special Congregational Meeting on March 29. Sunday Sermons in Lent so far: “From Careless to Careful” (2/22), “Unsettled” (3/1), and “Sister Water” (3/8). Thank you to Pastor Ralph for preaching and presiding on 3/15!

Holy Week and Easter are fast approaching. Please plan to attend the Great Three Days services with the Three Congregations and then celebrate Easter grandly with Mount Cross on April 5 at 9:30 a.m. Postcards with our Holy Week and Easter Schedule, see below, will be mailed to all who normally receive our newsletter. Thank you to Carina McVeigh for the design.

<h1 style="margin: 0;">Holy Week & Easter 2026</h1>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Palm Sunday March 29, 9:30 a.m. Mount Cross Lutheran Church (102 Camino Esplendido)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Good Friday April 3, 7:00 p.m. Camarillo United Methodist Church <i>Alternative Service Time:</i> 2:00 p.m. at St. Columba's Episcopal Church</p>	
<i>We will join as Three Congregations for the Great Three Days</i>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Maundy Thursday April 2, 7:00 p.m. St. Columba's Episcopal Church (1251 Las Posas Road) <i>Alternative Service Time:</i> 2:00 p.m. at Mount Cross Lutheran Church</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Easter Vigil April 4, 7:00 p.m. Mount Cross Lutheran Church</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Good Friday Children's Service April 3, 4:30 p.m. Mount Cross Lutheran Church</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Alleluia! He is Risen!</i> Easter Sunday April 5, 9:30 a.m. Mount Cross Lutheran Church</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Easter Breakfast before and after worship Children's Easter Egg Hunt! Don't forget to bring a flower to add to the cross!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Good Friday Cross Procession April 3, 5:00 p.m. Begin at Mount Cross. Together, we will walk 2 miles to Camarillo United Methodist Church (291 Anacapa Drive).</p>		

Pastoral Care: In addition to pastoral visits, calls, emails, and texts, I am working with two couples preparing for marriage. I typically meet with each couple 4 times – 3 sessions focus on the Prepare and Enrich pre-marital counseling program and 1 session focuses on ceremony planning. I officiated at the funeral of Nancy Kent-Barber (Kathleen Jones' mother-in-law) at Conejo Mountain Cemetery on Saturday, February 28, and I am working with Jean Scott to plan Alan Scott's memorial service on Saturday, April 4 at 2 p.m. at Mount Cross. Thank you to all in our congregation who pray for and reach out to people who are struggling in any way.

Studies I've facilitated this month: Creation Care on 2/22, 3/1, and 3/8; Women's Bible Study on 2/24, 3/3, and 3/10; Rooted on 2/25, 3/4, and 3/11; and Men's Bible Study on 3/5.

Meetings I've attended this month: The Colony Estate regarding parking lot (3/4); Three Congregations (3/5); CDC (3/10); and Executive Committee (3/12).

Webinars: On Feb. 26, I attended a 90-minute "Intergenerational Small Groups" webinar from GenOn Ministries. Deacon Cecelia and Melissa Henry also attended this. We are hoping to experiment with intergenerational small group experiences on occasional Wednesday evenings, combining Fun with Faith and Rooted, and inviting all who may be interested. On March 12, I attended an hour-long webinar "What is Full Communion?" presented by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Office of the Episcopal Church.

Out in the Community: The Crop Walk on 3/8 was great fun with other Mount Cross members and several Camarillo churches. Early reports suggest about \$30,000 was raised to respond to local and global hunger.

Looking Ahead: PLEASE save the date for our All-Church Leadership Retreat 11 a.m – 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 31st. This was re-scheduled from early February.

Time Away: I will be away April 17-May 15, including 4 Sundays. 2 weeks will be vacation, 1 week will be continuing education ("Stepping Up to Supervision" from Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead Program; and a preaching course from Backstory Preaching, both online), and 1 week will be remote work. Pastor Marc will preach and preside on 4/19 and 5/3; Pastor Ralph will cover 4/26 and 5/10. Because he is the only other exempt employee, Pastor Marc's cell phone number will be on my office voice mail to call in the case of pastoral emergencies. He will have the numbers of Deacon Cecelia, Pastor Ralph, Rev. Susan, Fr. Michael, and Pastor Elbert to call, if needed, as well as our Care Team and Health Ministry Nurse. I will attend the Zoom Council meeting on 4/21, Staff meeting on 5/5, Executive Committee on 5/7, and will be in touch with staff and the Executive Committee as needed.

Thank you, Church Council, for your faithful and generous service! God bless you and your families.

Pastor's Report for February Council Meeting
Reporting Period January 12 – February 24, 2026

Faith Formation programming resumed for the new year the week of January 12, including Women's Bible Study, Men's Bible Study, Fun with Faith, Rooted, and Confirmation.

The **Annual Meeting** on February 1 went well, featuring a pot-luck, slide show, and the beautiful Annual Report book. You can access it here <https://bit.ly/MC25AR>. Thank you all who worked on the budget and helped prepare for the Annual Meeting and/or pot-luck! And thank you to all who have agreed to serve on Council this year! The Council was installed as part of the worship service the following Sunday, February 8.

The **All-Church Leadership Retreat**, originally planned for Saturday, February 7, was postponed to ensure fuller participation. With several Council members unable to attend and RSVPs coming in lower than hoped, Council President Ken Riley and I felt that rescheduling — likely to sometime in the spring — would bring us all together more successfully. We will need to decide on a new date at the upcoming Council meeting. Although the Leadership Retreat did not take place on February 7, we continued with our planned participation in the **Rise Against Hunger** event at Camarillo United Methodist Church. As with last year, participants were inspired to be part of a group that assembled 15,000 meals in just over 90 minutes!

Ash Wednesday services at noon and 7 p.m. were well-attended overall and by Mount Cross members specifically. I received feedback that people found the services to be meaningful and healing.

Lent: I have chosen “**From Careless to Careful**” for our Lent 2026 theme, with a special emphasis on caring for creation, with these guiding questions: How have we been careless with the gifts and graces God has given us? How can we be more careful stewards of our faith, health, relationships, and planet? The Mount Cross Wednesdays in Lent tradition of soup suppers followed by Holden Evening Prayer will continue this season on Wednesdays Feb. 25 and March 4, 11, 18, and 25. At each prayer service, there will be a brief message given by a member or friend of the congregation focusing on their relationship with God's creation. Following worship on Sundays in Lent, I will lead a course called, “Calling a Wounded Earth Home.” It encourages us to ask, What kind of people do we need to be to face the challenges of climate change?

Intergenerational Covenant Update: On January 22, I met with representatives from FFF (Amanda Honda and Pastor Marc), Senior Ministry (Deacon Cecelia), and Worship and Music (Becky Riley). Although we had planned to adopt a shared draft covenant at that meeting, upon further reflection — and with what felt like the Spirit's nudging — those present reached full consensus that the Intergenerational Covenant approach is not what Mount Cross most needs right now. What we need are genuine intergenerational

relationships and people willing to take the initiative to get to know one another across generations. My hope is that we can adopt this as a congregational priority for 2026.

Pastoral Care: During this reporting period I made several pastoral visits, calls, and connections, including beginning marriage preparation with two couples. We continue to grieve the loss of one of our pillars. **Alan Scott** was interred on February 17, 2026 at Conejo Mountain. His family feels the love and support of the congregation and is planning his memorial service for Saturday, April 4 at Mount Cross, with a reception to follow on the patio.

Administrative Work: Meetings always abound. Since my last report, I have attended two CDC Board meetings, two Three Congregations planning meetings, an Executive Committee meeting, and a Staff Meeting (now held monthly rather than weekly, with staff connecting as needed between formal meetings). Additional meetings included a 60th Anniversary planning meeting and ongoing playground discussions. My sincere hope is that we will have a proposed design for the new playground ready to share at **Spring Sing on Saturday, March 21.**

Sunday Sermons:

- January 18: *"Eureka!"*
- January 25, RIC Sunday: *"The Wide Net"*
- February 1: *"We Will Not Grow Weary"*
- February 8: *"The Cauldron of Light"*
- February 15: *"Down the Mountain"*

Special Treat: Thanks to a generous gift card from a church member, the staff who attend our staff meetings — Pastor Marc, Carina, Deacon Cecelia, Carol, and myself — were able to go to Lure Restaurant on February 10 for lunch. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the hard work done in preparation for the Annual Meeting and to begin our new year by sharing a meal together.

Wider Church involvement has included serving on the Synod Assembly Planning Team. I will also host the Channel Islands Conference Clergy in the Mount Cross sanctuary on Thursday, March 26 from 10–11:30 a.m.

Community Involvement: I attended the **805 Undocufund** training on January 29 to be able to better support the immigrant community, and I have agreed to serve on the Advisory Board for the Ventura chapter of **CLUE** (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice).

Away Day: I will be away Sunday, March 15. It is one of my “buy out” Sundays. Pastor Ralph will be preaching and presiding. Many thanks to him!

Reminder: We combined the February and March newsletters. The deadline for the April newsletter is March 19. We will mail out a postcard around March 18 with the Holy Week and Easter services schedule.

Pastor's Report for January 2026 Council Meeting

(December 16, 2025 – January 11, 2026)

Advent and Christmas: Our Advent and Christmas seasons were meaningful and joyful. The theme was "The Power of Yes." Thank you to all who embraced our theme and said "YES" to worshipping on Sundays, loving Christ in our families and neighbors, and serving Christ in those who are most in need. Thank you also to all those who made our season extra special, especially our Music Director, Carol Browning, our Accompanist, Jessica Helms, all our musicians, all worship assistants, the Altar Guild, and Beth Spadaro for directing the "Mary Said Yes" children's pageant on December 21.

Caroling with the Confirmation Class and others is always a highlight of the season. We caroled on December 17. Pastor Marc and I both participated in the Child Development Center's Christmas Program on December 18. It was also good to gather with St. Columba's and Camarillo UMC for a Blue Christmas service on December 21 at 2 p.m. at Cam UMC.

We held one Christmas Eve service at Mount Cross at 4:30 p.m. The sanctuary was full with 213 people and 9 people were in the PLC. We also advertised St. Columba's 11 p.m. Christmas Eve service where I preached and their 10:30 a.m. Christmas Day service where I assisted. Only 3 Mount Cross members attended those services. Sunday, December 28 we offered a service of Christmas Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion.

Funeral: I officiated at the funeral for Crockett Gardner, the mother of the Rev. Susan Klein, on Tuesday, December 30th at St. Aidan's Malibu. Carol Browning served as the musician. We continue to extend our care and prayer to Susan and her family.

Vacation: Thank you to Pastor Marc for being on-call for pastoral care while I was away Dec. 31-January 10 and for being the preacher and presider on Jan. 4. Thank you to Pastor Ralph and Deacon Cecelia for also responding to pastoral needs in my absence, and to Pastor Ralph for preaching on the day I returned, Jan. 11.

Worship Assistant Training: Holding an all-church worship assistant training was an idea that came out of the Worship and Music Committee last year. We implemented it on Sunday, January 11 after worship. The attendance was good (30 people) and it included a pot-luck lunch. Many thanks to the new "leads" for each worship assistant role (Bryan Honda, Acolytes; Marni Engh, Lectors; Gerri Tomlinson, Communion Assistants/Assisting Ministers; Gordon Henry, Ushers/Greeters; and Carol Broderick, Altar Guild) and to Gordon and Melissa Henry for helping coordinate the pot-luck.

Looking Ahead: Our Annual Meeting is Feb. 1 after worship. Our Leadership Retreat is Saturday Feb. 7 from 10 am- 2pm, followed by the Rise Against Hunger service project from 3-5 pm.