

Pastor's Report for August 15, 2023 Church Council Meeting
July 19 - August 15, 2023

I was away the first week of this reporting period, enjoying good time with family and friends, including birthdays for two of our daughters. Paul and I have entered a new era of parenting. It's hard to believe we are now officially parents of three young adults, as our youngest daughter turned eighteen at the end of July. Many thanks to The Rev. Dr. Colleen Windham-Hughes from CLU for presiding at worship and preaching on Sunday, July 23.

The second week was a wonderful VBS whirlwind (see Joe's report). Mount Cross VBS is a real gift that we offer the community, and it is a blessing for me to be part of it. Thank you to the many, many helpers and to Joe Zimmerly for his leadership.

The rest of the month has consisted of worship planning, preaching preparation, visits, committee and team meetings, and planning for the fall.

I am especially looking forward to the Discipleship Experience I am co-leading with Chrissy and Kevin O'Farrell. Fifteen parents of young children in our congregation are joining together to grow closer to Christ and each other. They are committing to daily prayer, weekly worship, monthly gatherings, and service. Some of them (along with me and others in the congregation) will be attending a Via de Cristo retreat Sept. 28- October 1 in Frazier Park. See <https://www.californiavdc.org/> for more information about this three-day retreat. I will need to take Sunday, October 1 as one of my "buy out" Sundays. I hope this Discipleship Experience experiment, lasting from September 2023-May 2024, will become an annual offering at Mount Cross as a pathway for those seeking spiritual growth and increased connection and leadership in the congregation. Please pray for the Discipleship Experience.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Team for their wisdom and care as they have been guiding the congregation through the process of discernment, and I want to thank the congregation for their thoughtful and faithful work in exploring becoming an RIC congregation. The RIC Team offered two excellent programs this summer helping people to understand what the Bible says and doesn't say about LGBTQ+ issues. On July 30, they screened the Matthew Vines video and facilitated discussion about it. On August 14, they welcomed Roman Catholic priest and biblical scholar, Fr. Patrick Mullen, for an in-person presentation. Both forums were well-attended. I am heartened by the sincerity, prayerfulness, and genuine love with which people are engaging this important matter. I am reminded of the saying the Christian Church has always tried to live up to: "Unity in things essential; liberty in things non-essential; charity in all things."

As always, thank you to our Executive Committee, Church Council, Staff, Committee Chairs, and members for being generous in giving and serving Mount Cross and the wider community.

Glory to God whose power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:2-21).