

Pastor's Report  
July 23 – August 20, 2024

Given that we have spent the last four Sundays reflecting on Jesus as the Bread of Life, it is fitting to say we have had a full and satisfying month at Mount Cross! Last Sunday, it was a joy to welcome Donald Kolibas and the Jackson family as new members of our congregation and to baptize Graham Prosser and Dane and Gavin Jackson. We also celebrated Guy Ervin III, who received a well-deserved standing ovation as he stepped into retirement. It was a moment of deep appreciation for his years of service to Mount Cross. We will miss him. We blessed prayer shawls and the healing ministries of our congregation, with Nurse Evonne and I praying individually for those who requested healing for themselves or their loved ones. I could not imagine a better way to spend my final Sunday before beginning my sabbatical - and all of this following the previous week's fabulous Vacation Bible School. My cup is overflowing!

FYI: You will see the following letter to the congregation in September's newsletter:

*Dear Mount Cross Community,*

*My sabbatical begins this month. I will return to Mount Cross on the first Sunday of Advent, December 1. Thank you for the prayers and support you have offered as I set out for a season of becoming more deeply rooted in God's grace.*

*I have a variety of plans for this time away, including prayer, meditation, reading, walking, traveling, cooking Blue Zone vegan meals, taking a few classes, and spending extended time with family and friends. Paul and I are glad to have the opportunity to support our three young adult daughters during their significant transitions—one moving away to college, another relocating for her first post-college job, and the third beginning graduate school and planning a June 2025 wedding.*

*We will be traveling to Europe with my parents, where we will visit key Luther sites, connect with family in Vienna, and explore the birthplaces of my grandmother in Czechia and my mother in Croatia. I will be praying for you in all the beautiful churches and cathedrals along our way. We will also spend time with Paul's parents in Nevada, and hopefully have some down time in the peaceful landscapes of southern Utah.*

*I understand that my absence will add extra responsibilities to our staff and the Executive Committee. I am thankful beyond words for their care for me and their dedication to Mount Cross. My heartfelt thanks also goes to Pastor Scott Maxwell-Doherty for his willingness to serve at Mount Cross during my sabbatical, ensuring continuous pastoral care and Sunday leadership. I am equally grateful to the many volunteers who have stepped up to lead programs and projects this fall. It is a great comfort to know that Mount Cross is in capable hands—both human and divine.*

*Although I will miss you all and our wonderful signature event, Make Bake Celebrate, you will remain in my heart and prayers throughout this time apart. May God be with you until we meet again.*

*Peace and Blessings,  
Pastor Julie Morris +*

The staff and Executive Council have access to the "Sabbatical Coverage Plan" document, which I will present in detail at the August 20 council meeting. This plan outlines how we will continue our ministries and support one another during my absence.

There are several other noteworthy events from the past month. We gathered as a community to honor the life of Gordon Russell at his funeral on August 17. I continue to be immensely grateful for the Helping Hands ministry. We could use more volunteers to help with moving tables and setting up and cleaning up after funeral receptions. It has also been a season of weighty pastoral care and visitation for me, where I've had the privilege of walking alongside many of our members through challenging times.

On a lighter note, Carol Browning hosted our first "Open Mic" night on June 26, which brought out the creativity and talent within our congregation. The "Stories Around the Campfire" event, in collaboration with St. Columba's, was another highlight. Our regularly scheduled Men's and Women's Bible studies have also continued to be a source of spiritual growth and connection for our members.

I'm pleased to report that both Joe and I attended the Parent Orientation for our preschool. Enrollment is completely full, and the energy and dedication of the CDC board are strong, ensuring a vibrant year ahead for our preschool community.

As I prepare to step away for my sabbatical, I am confident that Mount Cross is in capable hands. I look forward to sharing the Sabbatical Coverage Plan with you and am grateful for the collective effort that will keep our ministries thriving.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our congregation!