



**HOLY
CROSS**
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



OUTREACH:
Evangelism

WWW.HOLYCROSS-CHURCH.ORG

Helping People Know, Live, and Share the Love of Christ



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FROM THE LEAD PASTOR

Training In Righteousness



“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

Would you consider yourself zealous for good works? I am not sure that I would either. Yet this is the type of person who Christ is looking for. If we are to be the type of purified people that Christ wants for His own possession, then we should pay attention to this passage of Scripture. The first sentence reminds us that this process all starts with God and comes from His great grace. We have spent this past year at Holy Cross learning about outreach and evangelism that is characterized by trying to bring salvation to all people. The next part of the sentence instructs us about what we will be focusing on this year in 2025, namely – discipleship. The key phrase that we see about discipleship in this verse is “training us”, as we are reminded how God helps us grow spiritually. This is the Greek word: “paideuó”. It means to train, to educate, to discipline, to instruct, to correct. The Bible Hub defines its usage and background as follows:

Usage: The verb “paideuó” primarily refers to the process of training or educating, often with an emphasis on discipline and correction. In the New Testament, it is used to describe the way God disciplines His children, akin to a father training his child. This discipline is not merely punitive but is intended for growth, maturity, and righteousness.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, “paideia” was a comprehensive system of education and training that aimed to cultivate virtue and wisdom in young people. It involved not only intellectual instruction but also moral and physical training. The concept of “paideuó” in the biblical context carries a similar holistic approach, emphasizing the development of character and faith through divine discipline.

In Western Culture we often think of discipleship in the context of learning only, but this is not the intention of discipleship or the Biblical training that we see in this passage of Scripture. Learning and knowledge are certainly a part of the process but only some of the components of discipleship or being trained in righteousness. As we explore discipleship together in this New Year, it is my prayer that we will all allow the God of the universe to purify us for His own possession so that we may live upright and godly lives waiting for our blessed hope!



Rev. Jeff Niederstadt, Lead Pastor

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Evangelism

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10



One of the most important events of the past year involved our hosting Pastor Greg Finke and his wife Susan as they spoke to us about “Joining Jesus on His Mission”, or How to Be an Everyday Missionary. This is not complex; because Jesus is already at work in the lives of the people we know and meet every day, all we need to do is 1) enjoy people, and 2) seek, recognize, and respond to what Jesus is already doing in the lives of the people we are enjoying. [Joining Jesus on His Mission, Greg Finke, p. 54.]

This is at the core of our approach to Evangelism, which was our key focus in 2024. It builds on our core value of Compassion, and sets the stage for Service, another core value, and one which leads to Relationships (a third core value), and creates the opportunity, over time, to share the Love and saving Grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This congregation lived this out in numerous ways in 2024, as described more fully in the pages of this Annual Report. Highlights include the continued commitment to serve people with food insecurity through Ruby’s Pantry the 2nd Saturday of each month; providing for physical needs of young mothers and families via CarePortal, which also saw an increase in churches “joining Jesus” (and us) on this journey; Children’s ministry activities including “The Great Jungle Journey” for VBS; a youth summer Servant Event in Colorado; a weekend with the Apple of His Eye ministries including an evangelism walk in the community; ongoing Creative Women’s sessions including women from Adult and Teen Challenge; and much work on our facility by volunteers in the Courtyard and with third parties helping pave the back parking lot and repair and replace our roof. Thank you! And this is only a sampling. We also continued support for missionaries Suresh in India and Ethan and Amanda Hutton in Costa Rica, who visited us last December.

We also give thanks for the many blessings received through Pastor Jordan and Katie, who were with us for 2 ½ years before taking a call to his home state of Nebraska. Their faithful service and friendship impacted many people, within and outside of Holy Cross, and programs like “Kids 4 Truth” and his contributions to Discipleship expanded our ministry.

God has much for us to do as his hands and feet, operating from this place, from our homes and in our daily lives. And he provides the means; we just need to be open and aware and willing. May it be that we live our lives Helping People Know, Live, and Share the Love of Christ. May our prayer be “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Matthias". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mark Matthias

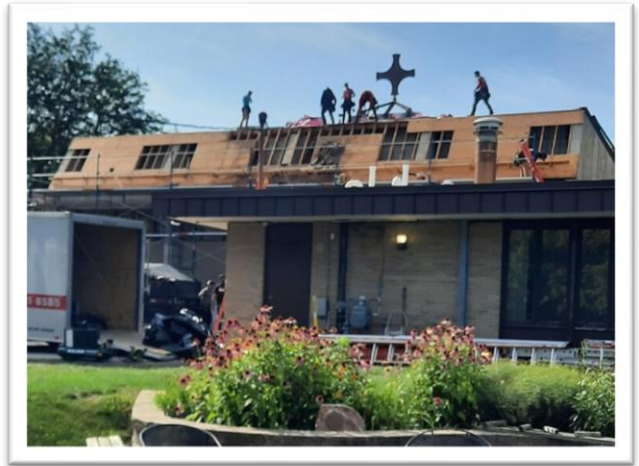
STEWARDSHIP

Facility Projects Completed in 2024

“Do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father.”
Colossians 3:17

Roofing Project

- Repaired water damage, interior and exterior
- Installed new shingles on sloped Sanctuary and Parish Hall roof
- Insulated and vented attic space over Sanctuary
- Modified electrical circuits in ceiling to accommodate future electrical needs for Sanctuary
- Came in under budget (\$139,505 cost vs. \$150,000 budgeted)
- Set up a yearly roof maintenance program



Parking Lots

- Resealed and restriped south parking lot jointly with RCLS
- Regraded and repaved north parking lot with repairs to garage apron
- Installed new concrete aprons at entrances to both lots

Courtyard Project

- Installed irrigation system for watering grass
- Installed conduit for electrical and sound system wiring

New Signage @ Parking Lot Entrance and Exit

- Thank you to Jim Voca for the design, construction, and installation of the new parking lot signage

New HVAC Systems @ Sanctuary & Office/Conference Room

- Thank you to Jay Gatzlaff and Joe Keyes for their expertise and installation of units

Interior Improvements

- Upgraded east restrooms
- Reorganized storage areas and conference space
- Installed electrical service to garage



Thank you to all who supported God’s work with their time, talents, material gifts, and prayer! Special recognition goes to Joe Keyes, our brother in Christ now residing in his heavenly home, who worked on so many of these projects.

Sanctuary Upgrade Proposal

**“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.”
Psalm 29:2**

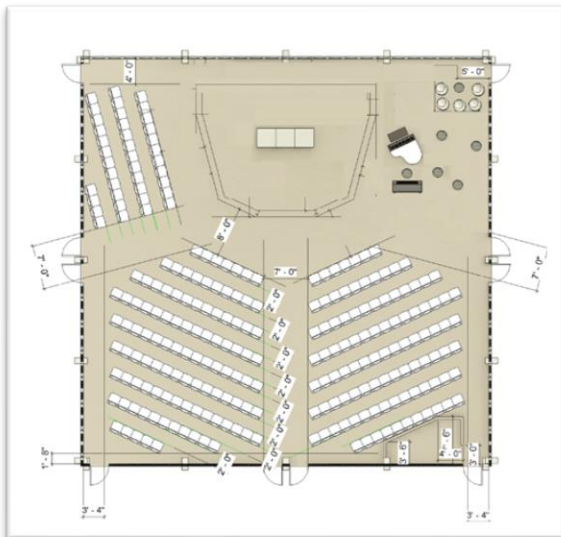
Holy Cross’ Sanctuary serves as the heart of our corporate worship, where we gather to glorify Almighty God. However, this space has not undergone any significant improvements in many years. As stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us, we are called to ensure that our worship environment is conducive to reverent and joyful worship of God through Jesus Christ.



Holy Cross is seeking God with regards to the Sanctuary, desiring that it remains a welcoming and inspiring space for generations to come. A team has spent the past 2.5 years praying, researching, and planning to offer a proposal for upgrading the Sanctuary.

In 2024 Holy Cross contracted with Churchfront for growth in Worship, Worship Technology, *and* for help in developing the plan for upgrading the Sanctuary (see page 12 for more on Churchfront).

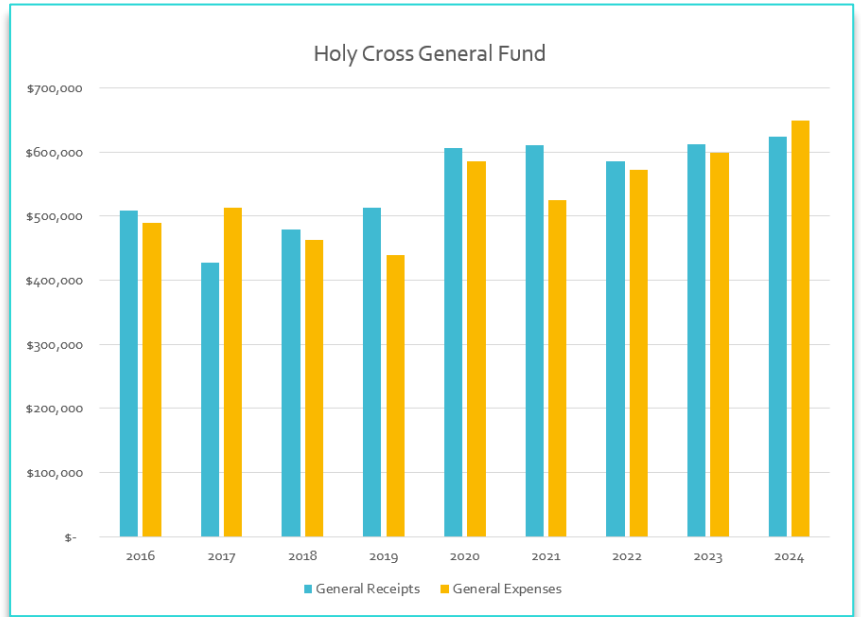
By upgrading the Sanctuary, we aim to honor God, enrich our worship in Spirit and Truth, and better serve our congregation and community. The Proposed Investments chart (Bottom Right) shows the current recommendation from the Executive Council to the congregation for upgraded lighting, replacing pews with chairs, and replacing the current screen and projector with a screen and projector in both front corners of the Sanctuary. We pray that this project will glorify Him and support our mission of Helping People Know, Live, and Share the Love of Christ.



Proposed Investments		Option A-Phase 1
Lighting/Installation		\$32 K
Chairs		\$18 K
Screens & Projectors		\$46 K
Electrician		\$23 K
LED Wall		
Platform		
PA System/eDrums/WING		
Churchfront Labor		\$26 K
Integration Equipment		\$21 K
TOTAL		\$166 K

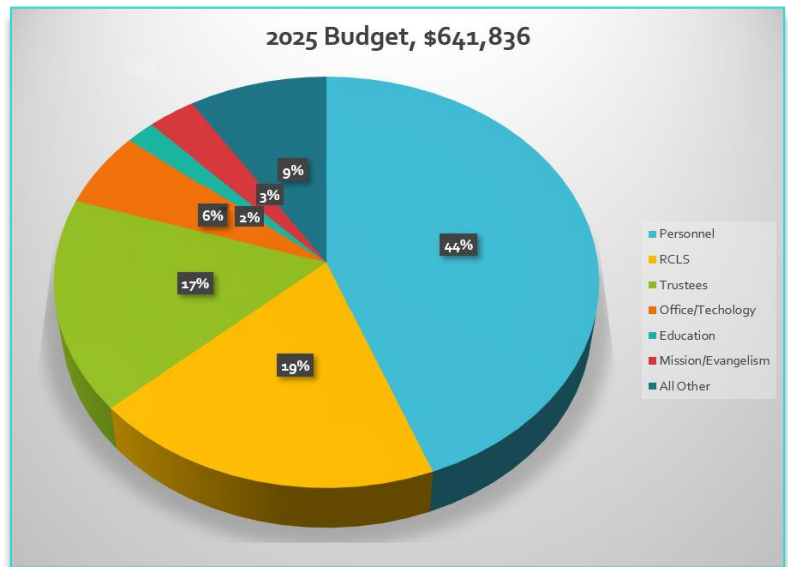
2024 Financial Highlights

- 2024 General Funds gifts up slightly 0.6% from 2023 and were \$623,142
- 2024 General Fund operated with a net deficit of \$25,763
- Designated gifts very strong, \$98,208 excludes Ruby’s Pantry and CarePortal. Raise the Roof was \$58,001. Other notable are Good Samaritan, Suresh, and Youth
- Still in a strong position for our ministry, 12/31/2024 balances:
 - Checking \$111,433
 - Designated \$159,172
 - Unrestricted savings/ investments \$5,729
 - Regedahl (Youth/Children) \$85,565 at LCEF
 - LCEF Debt \$60,786



2025 Budget Challenges

- 2025 Financial Ministry Plan (budget) \$641,836 – assumes a 3% revenue increase
- Full year budget with one Pastor, Worship Ministries leader, and part time worship assistant, bookkeeper, custodian, and office administrative assistant
- RCLS support flat, direct support down slightly offset by increased student financial aid support
- Includes some maintenance or replacement of sound equipment
- Includes annual maintenance cost for roof, HVAC, and outdoor yard projects, as well as about \$10,000 of small expense projects – Welcome Center redo, access security improvements, etc.
- Ongoing commitment to outside missions such as POBLO, Southern MN LCMS District, Joining Jesus, etc.



DISCIPLESHIP



Discipleship is the process that the Holy Spirit uses to grow us up in Christ so that the Holy Spirit can use us to build each other up in Christ. Holy Cross' Discipleship Team includes Sherri Emedo (*Team Lead*), Brenda Stowe (*Associate Lead*), Shirley Sjoberg (*Fellowship Lead*), Karen Hutton (*Welcome Team Lead*), Ernie Freudenburg (*LifeGroups Team Lead*). Denise Frey provides insights for our Welcome ministry, and Sheila Parks schedules Dorothy Day meals for our Service Team.

The **Welcome Team** regularly schedules Greeters for each Sunday. To find out more about joining the team, please write that on your Sunday morning Connection Card. We would love to have you!

Creative Women is a monthly gathering of Holy Cross women and women from Minnesota Adult and Team Challenge. New crafters and special craft ideas are always welcome. Please indicate your interest on our Sunday morning Connection Card.

Saints Alive is Holy Cross' senior ministry. In 2024 we gathered monthly on the second Thursday. Most recently, we gathered to sing Christmas carols at two local nursing homes.

Our **LifeGroup** small group ministry consisted of five host homes this last fall meeting to be inspired, discuss, and support one another using season 4 of "The Chosen." 43 people registered. In 2025, we are planning to form LifeGroups around the content of season 5 of "The Chosen."

On May 19, a **Summer Family Kick-off** picnic was held after the Connecting Hour. Our patio area served as a wonderful venue for games that were set up for the children. Nearly 60 persons attended.



Chester Woods served as the sight for the annual Holy Cross campout in August. Over a half dozen families spent the weekend together enjoying fellowship, food, and fire. Many others joined for a Saturday evening congregation picnic at Shelter 4, after which we worshiped God together at the newly constructed amphitheater.

Holy Cross continues to provide the 4th Friday of the month evening meal at **Dorothy Day House**. Sheila Parks schedules Holy Cross volunteers. If you have never participated in this rewarding outreach, please indicate your interest on our weekly Connection Card. Money is available to help with expenses. About three persons are needed each month to make the meal.

Holy Cross' second annual **New Year's Eve Party** provided fellowship and games with about 35 in attendance. There was lots of laughter, conversation, and appetizers as the old year drew to a close.

OUTREACH

Who's Your ONE?

We began 2024 as a Holy Cross family with 30 Days of Prayer, dedicating the year to the Lord and asking for His guidance and favor in our lives. Every weekday the Sanctuary was set apart for 30 minutes to devote ourselves to this endeavor and we each focused on praying for one specific individual in our lives who needs to hear about the Good News of Jesus. Devotionals and other materials were made available to guide us through the 30 days as we brought our "One" before the Throne of Grace.

Pastor Jeff also instructed us throughout January in four distinct areas of evangelism, which included:

- 1) Invite Others
- 2) Tell Your Story
- 3) Create Relationships
- 4) Share The Gospel

This focus served as an important precursor to upcoming studies, fostering a habit of turning our hearts and minds to engage with sharing the Good News—in specific, personal, and intentional ways.



Joining Jesus

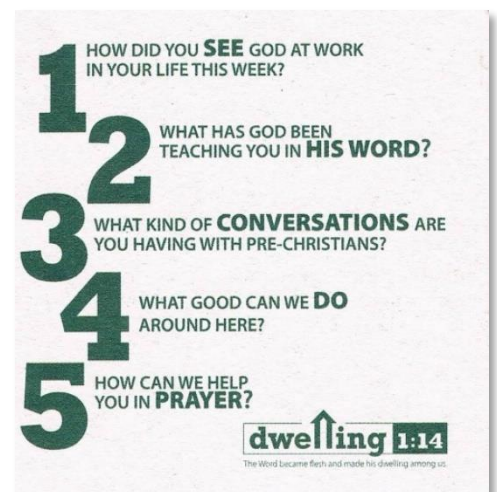


2024 proved to be a year of exploring the many ways that we as followers of Christ can Join Jesus on His Mission within the context of our own personal journey. We began during the season of Lent with the study "Joining Jesus Show Me How: How to Disciple Everyday Missionaries". This prepared us for our Joining Jesus Mission Discovery Weekend in April where Dr. Greg Finke himself visited our congregation for an in-depth discipleship training in evangelism.

We learned five reflective questions that we can use to help us more consciously engage missionally with our surrounding environment (see *image to the right*).

Throughout the rest of the year, we participated in small group studies,

were encouraged by monthly Fully Alive newsletter reminders to continue Joining Jesus, and attended monthly Zoom call meetings with Dr. Finke as discipleship touchpoints. As 2024 ends, we look forward to continue Joining Jesus on His Mission in the upcoming year, including within the context of family. *See back cover for more details.*



Apple of His Eye



At the end of September, Holy Cross welcomed evangelist Steve Cohen, a Jewish follower of Jesus and founder of the Apple of His Eye Mission Society, for a special weekend-long Evangelism Seminar. Steve’s testimony served as a reminder to us of the importance of engaging others—Jews and Gentiles—in conversations about Jesus. (“How can they believe unless they hear?” Romans 10:14) He encouraged us by stating that if we know the Apostle’s Creed and can ask the question, “What do you think of Jesus?”, then we are adequately equipped to begin to share the Gospel with anyone around us.

We had the opportunity to put into practice Steve’s instruction (the same method of street evangelism that got him started) by attending the local farmer’s market. We spontaneously opened dialogue with shoppers passing by and handed out some Gospel-centered thought-provoking materials. One of the conversations even led to a man receiving a copy of the Bible.

CarePortal



CarePortal

Through CarePortal we share the love of Christ by serving and blessing families in our community who are in need. In 2024, we responded to 153 requests and served 445 children, equating to an economic impact of \$101,839. Here is some feedback from the social workers:

- “Thank YOU for all you do for the families. We just love CarePortal.”
- “Thank you once again for your compassion and for making such a positive impact. It is support like yours that makes a difference.”

Ruby's PANTRY

Ruby's Pantry

In 2024, volunteers from the community surpassed the number of Holy Cross volunteers. This tells us that we are becoming known in the community, and at RCLS, as a great opportunity for those who want to serve. Many families in the community were blessed with the food we were able to provide. To God be the glory!

Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Income	0	\$989	\$989	\$985	\$922	\$956	0	\$805	\$951	\$930	\$980	\$603
Blessing Boxes	0	5	5	5	3	15	0	6	8	13	7	4
Total Shares	0	401	400	399	372	397	0	328	388	385	399	245

WORSHIP @ HOLY CROSS

Excelling in Worship

“Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!”
Psalm 103:5

What does it mean to be Excelling in Worship?

Worship is our personal response to God’s greatness, most profoundly shown through His saving work in Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is rooted in Scripture and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We excel in worship when we genuinely rejoice in God’s presence, express our love to Him through prayer and praise, and focus on His infinite worth. God delights when we hunger for a deeper awareness of His presence, when we joyfully declare His majesty, and when we are open to receiving from Him.



Resurrection Sunday



Mother's Day Intergenerational Choir



RCLS Chapel



Worship in the Courtyard



Reformation Day Intergenerational Choir



PraiseHym

Churchfront’s Worship Accelerator Program

In 2024, Holy Cross partnered with Churchfront to grow in our worship of God. Teams in the Worship Ministries engaged in worship theology and continue to access training resources. Coaching calls with Luke Jackson, our Churchfront Coach, centered around three key goals:

1. **Excelling in Worship:** Strengthened volunteer spiritual growth, improved PraiseHym’s musical engagement, recruited and trained new team members, and enhanced sound and video quality both in the Sanctuary and on hclc.tv.
2. **Team Leadership Development:** Empowered leaders to manage ministries effectively and improved file storage and graphics use.
3. **Sanctuary Upgrades:** Planned improvements to the platform, display system, audio, seating, and lighting.

Coach Luke visited Holy Cross for three days in May and September, providing essential training, equipment troubleshooting, and strategic planning. Insights from the Churchfront Conference in October further bolstered our unity, technology use, and communication. These efforts have been a boost to Holy Cross as we deepen our worship, better connect with God, and enhance community engagement.

Leading People into the Presence of God

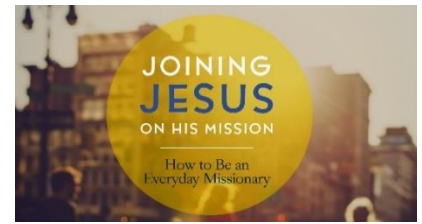
“Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!”
Psalm 95:6



January 2024



February and March 2024



Lent 2024

2025 Worship Nights @ Holy Cross – You're Invited!

Join us for powerful Worship Nights as we glorify God, declare His salvation through Jesus, and offer ourselves as living sacrifices for His purpose. These nights are a special time to gather as a community, invite guests, and spend extended time expressing our devotion to God.

✦ A Great Start to 2025!

We launched the year with an inspiring Worship Night on January 12th, kicking off “21 Days of Prayer”.

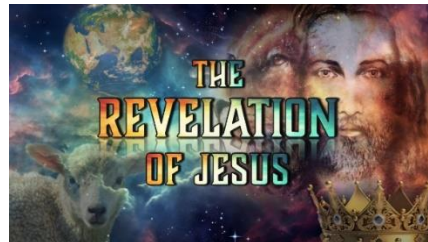
✦ Upcoming Worship Nights – Save the Date!

- 📅 **June 8:** Worship Night @ Holy Cross
- 📅 **August 16:** Worship Night @ Chester Woods Campground
- 📅 **November 2:** Worship Night @ Holy Cross

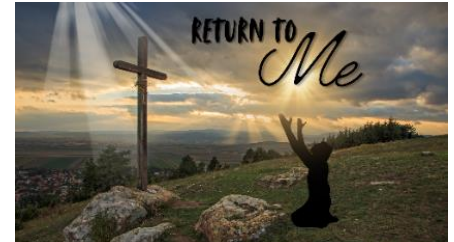
Come and be part of these inspiring evenings as we celebrate God and draw closer to Him. We are excited to see you there!



April 2024



May - September 2024



October 2024



November 2024




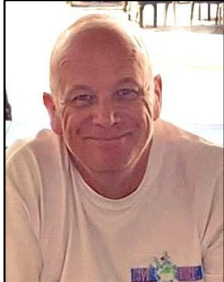
















Advent 2024



December 2024

2024 LEADERSHIP TEAM

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable,
 always abounding in the work of the Lord,
 knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”
 1 Corinthians 15:58

<p>EXECUTIVE OFFICERS</p>	 <p>Mark Matthias President</p>	 <p>Doug Happel Vice President</p>	 <p>Roger Lindahl Treasurer</p>	 <p>Jo Dean Secretary</p>	
<p>TEAM LEADS</p>	 <p>Kevin Kelle Lead Elder</p>	 <p>Brandon Marsh Elder Associate Lead</p>	 <p>Sherri Emedo Discipleship Team Lead</p>	 <p>Brenda Stowe Discipleship Associate Lead</p>	 <p>Denise Frey Outreach Team Lead</p>
	 <p>Ken Schultz Finance Team Lead</p>	 <p>Sandy Abenstein Trustees Team Lead</p>	 <p>Laura Rhee RCLS Representative</p>	 <p>Dan Johnson RCLS Representative</p>	<p>Vacant Positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Associate Lead • Personnel Team Lead • Volunteer Team Lead
<p>STAFF and VOLUNTEER STAFF</p>	 <p>Pastor Jeff Niederstadt Lead Pastor</p>	 <p>Pastor Jordan Schut Associate Pastor</p>	 <p>Cindy Wessel Director of Worship</p>	 <p>Ernie Freudenburg Connecting Coordinator</p>	 <p>Diane Straka Technology Coordinator</p>

ELDERS REPORT

The 2024 Team of Elders included Kevin Kelle (Lead), Brandon Marsh (Associate Lead), Tim Gerber, Dan Johnson, Joe Keyes, Dan Kuball, and Adam Morrisey. The Elders serve Christ and Holy Cross by providing spiritual nurturing and oversight, individually and corporately. We invite anyone who would like prayer from the elders or who may have questions about their faith in God or how we worship Him to contact one of the elders or pastor.

EACH ELDER SHALL BE CONCERNED ABOUT AND PROMOTE THE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF THE CONGREGATION AS A WHOLE AND ITS STAFF AND MEMBERS INDIVIDUALLY.
(FROM HOLY CROSS ELDERS HANDBOOK)



A Tribute to Elder Joe Keyes

May 29, 1959 – January 8, 2025

Weekly average worship attendance varied between 120 and 140 (see graph below). This is about 10% lower than in 2023. Online attendees averaged around 40, slightly more than in 2023. Two funeral services were held in 2024.

During 2024, two individuals were baptized from two different families. Holy Cross received 14 new members. Eight members were removed from the rolls. For a historical perspective:

Year	Members added	Members removed	Net Gain
2024	14	8	6
2023	17	6	11
2022	11	3	8
2021	15	8	7
2020	8	4	4
2019	50	1	49
2018	20	7	13
2017	20	37	-17
2016	13	4	9
2015	11	102	-91

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

1 Peter 5:1-3

Individuals who are interested in serving Christ and Holy Cross as an elder are encouraged to contact one of the elders or pastor.

Joining Jesus Continued

Launch Seminar: February 22-23, 2025

JOINING
JESUS
AS A FAMILY

How to Raise Your Children
to be Followers of Jesus

@ Holy Cross this Lent

Ash Wednesday, March 5, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, March 14, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 21, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 28, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 4, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 11, 6:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, March 17, 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday, March 18, 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 20, 8:00 & 9:30 a.m.



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