

Fully Alive!

COMMUNICATING AND CELEBRATING THE MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF HOLY CROSS

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THE MEANING OF LIFE

What is the meaning of life? What is your purpose? Why do you exist? These are all applicable questions that people consider at the end of one year and the beginning of another. Has my life had meaning? How can my life have more meaning? We are exploring the book of Ecclesiastes as we begin this New Year in 2025. It is often considered a rather depressing book of the Bible, but I believe it will be tremendously inspiring for us as we lay aside our selfish hopes and dreams and find the eternal purpose that we have been created for.

Solomon was the wisest man whoever lived and he wrote in this book what he learned as he considered all of his accomplishments, achievements, and accolades. He was the smartest, richest, most powerful, and prestigious person on the earth. He had more opportunity for pleasure or leisure than anyone else. Yet he found over and over again that these things were temporary and meaningless and ultimately prevented him from lasting purpose and contentment. In light of his discoveries, we will go on a quest at the beginning of this year to examine and explore where true meaning

and purpose come from and how we obtain them.

Each week in the month of January during worship we are talking about different subjects which Solomon identified for us that lack lasting meaning and purpose. We will explore why they lack meaning and then identify where and how we find true lasting purpose and meaning in our lives. It is an opportunity to evaluate what you have been chasing after and to see if you're heading in the right direction. Even if you caught that thing that you are chasing after, would it bring lasting meaning in your life? Let's explore together in the book of Ecclesiastes what Solomon has already learned—there is nothing new under the sun.

What will 2025 hold for you? Much of what happens in this world and in our lives is beyond our control. What you can control is what you do with your life to pursue meaning. What will that be for you this year? Will you allow your 2025 to distract and deter you or will you commit your plans to the Lord so that they will succeed? As we study the book of Ecclesiastes, I challenge you to find something in your life that is worthwhile in God's eyes and

to pursue it with excellence. Then, regardless of what happens in this year, you can know that you have been faithful to work as unto the Lord. As we focus on discipleship in 2025 as a church, I can't help but think about Jesus and His response to living His life with purpose. As far as we know Jesus didn't seek to find meaning in life through His circumstances or activities. He indicates that He found His purpose in being obedient to the Father. His aim was to be the best, most obedient disciple responding positively to everything the Father asked Him to do. As you know, He lived a perfect life and never failed at keeping any of it. That won't be our year but that shouldn't keep us from trying to complete the goal of being obedient to the Father. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." (John 5:19)

~Pastor Jeff Niederstadt

LETTER FROM THE HOLY CROSS PRESIDENT

Dear Holy Cross Family,

When you receive this, we'll have just begun our 21 Days of Prayer, designed to help us dedicate our New Year fully to the Lord. Fellow Holy Cross members wrote the daily devotions. One of the scripture verses from the devotional, Proverbs 27:17, reminded me how important it is that we continue to meet with fellow believers, where we can give and receive Christian wisdom and encouragement in our daily walk. Please consider actively participating in these opportunities.

The weekend of January 18-19 there are two chances for you to join us at Holy Cross to hear an update regarding the Sanctuary Project. We'll be looking for feedback regarding the current thinking of the project team and the Executive Council, for

which an initial phase could start this summer. Any project of this significance would require the vote of the congregation, which could occur at our Annual Meeting.

The Annual Meeting, incidentally, is on February 2 at 11 am, where we celebrate all the blessings the Lord has provided in the past year 2024, perform any business functions required of a body such as this, and look ahead to the exciting things in store in 2025. We have much to be thankful for—faith strengthened, the Word preached and Sacraments delivered, and grace and mercy given to many within and outside our walls. I encourage you to put these dates on your calendar, and plan to join us.

Blessings In Christ,

~Mark Matthias, Holy Cross President

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.”

Proverbs 27:17

WORSHIP NIGHT

Many "Jesus followers" know much about how God calls us to worship Him, but we often forget or don't take the time to worship in spirit and in truth.

On Sunday, January 12, we gathered at Holy Cross to focus on Jesus and remember some of these truths:

- God calls us to sing to Him, to minister to Him, to bless Him.
- We may come to God only with faith in Jesus' death and resurrection.
- God calls us to take time to reflect on His glorious character and to worship Him in response.
- God invites us to open our hearts to Him, to worship Him with sincerity.
- God longs for His children to "be real" with Him, to honestly pour out our hearts to Him.

- God invites us to confess our need for Him, to admit our dependence on Him, to express our love for Him.
- God calls us to recall His works and thank Him for them.
- As we worship God, we can celebrate Jesus' victory over the grave and His promise to come again.

And many more!

So let's do it, by God's grace and for His glory! Let's worship God like this every day, but especially when we gather together.



RCLS UPDATE

School is back in session after everyone enjoyed a nice holiday break. Third quarter ends on Thursday, January 23, and the following week we will celebrate National Lutheran Schools. The theme for this year is “Endure” and based on Hebrews 12:1-3:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

Many student activities are planned for this week, including a special chapel and fun activities. Monday, children are invited to dress up like a superhero or strong person. On Tuesday, kids will show off their

wacky styles. Wednesday will be class choice. Thursday is Joyful Day! Children can wear their Joyful shirts or wear/bring something to school that brings them joy. To cap off the week, Friday will be Hawaiian Day and children will wear tropical gear. We thank all the faculty and staff for all the hard work that goes into planning this week!

Save the date for the RCLS Basketball Tournament on February 14-16.

Many teams from around the area will join us for this annual tournament, which was started in 1984 by Dr. Robert Meyer. It’s also a great opportunity to come hear the RCLS pep band! Good luck to all of our Bobcat athletes and thank you to our volunteers and musicians!

~ Laura Rhee, Holy Cross Rep for RCLS



UPDATE ON THE “SANCTUARY UPGRADE” PROPOSAL

The Holy Cross Council will have two opportunities to share with the congregation current thoughts and directions in continuing Building for Eternity (Sanctuary 2.0): Saturday, January 18, from 3-5 pm and Sunday, January 19, at 10:45 am during Adult Connecting Hour. The Council will present purpose, goals, and possible actions that can be taken to fulfill the mission here at Holy Cross. As many of you already know, there has been a lot of investigation and discussion in upgrading the Sanctuary. Our purpose here at Holy Cross is to better honor God, excel in worship, and prepare for ministry opportunities as we continue to keep doctrine Biblically focused.

These are our goals. How do we achieve them? Considerations include lighting

redesign, addition of two new corner screens/projectors, replace pews with chairs, redesign of the worship platform, provide LED display panels at the worship platform, and install a new sound system.

Please plan to attend one of the meetings. The Council will provide an endorsed direction, present funding models, and solicit congregants’ input as this process continues to be refined.

Please pray for God’s guidance and unity of His Spirit with regards to the future of this space, as we also give thanks for the blessings He has bestowed on our congregation!

~Sandy Abenstein, Trustee Team Lead

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your (His) plans will be established.”
Proverbs 16:3

ILLUMINATION STATION: GETTING TO KNOW OUR FAMILY @ HOLY CROSS

SPOTLIGHT ON MATT & JENNIFER HEINS FAMILY!

Matt was baptized and confirmed at Holy Cross. Jennifer was baptized at Christ Chapel, Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. She was confirmed at Zoar United Church of Christ in Waldorf, MN. They met online prior to me moving to Rochester. Matt has lived in Rochester since the 8th grade. His family have been members at Holy Cross since their move (parents Joe and Arlynn). Jennifer moved to Rochester for work not



long after college. She went through confirmation classes at Trinity Lutheran Church prior to their wedding there in the Fall of 2008. Both Matt and Jennifer work for Mayo Clinic. Matt is a Quality Specialist and Jennifer is an Application Analyst for the Office of Administrative System Transformation. Jennifer and Matt have two daughters. Aubrey was baptized at Trinity Lutheran Church and was confirmed at Holy Cross this October. She is a freshmen at John Marshall, loves to crochet, read, and hang out with friends. Norah was baptized at Holy Cross. A 6th grader at Dakota Middle School, she loves all types of animals, playing with friends, and creating art. She will tell you her favorite home-cooked meal is goulash. Their family loves to travel. The girls have been to every state park in Minnesota. There are 64 parks in MN. They try to do Friday Night Movie nights (getting harder as the girls are getting older) and love going to the movies. The girls are involved with American Heritage Girls (AHG). AHG is a Christian scouting group here in Rochester. Someday the Heins family would love to visit Japan. Jennifer serves as the Treasurer and Registrar within the girls AHG troop. Aubrey has enjoyed learning the Screen Tech role and running the screen during worship, as well as helping out during Vacation Bible School (VBS). Norah is all about helping neighbors and enjoys VBS.

**“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16**

JOINING JESUS CONTINUED

When I originally asked Pastor Greg Finke if Joining Jesus was an evangelism process or if it was more geared toward discipleship, he said that it was a good question and it really would depend on how it was implemented. That is one of the main reasons that we are continuing in our Joining Jesus relationship in 2025, because we know that discipleship is just as important as outreach, and the Joining Jesus curriculum highlights the opportunity for both. These resources teach us to engage with our neighbors, friends, coworkers, and families to build relation-

ships with them. After building relationships we are encouraged to share the Gospel with them at an appropriate time and invite them into a discipling relationship. This relationship is facilitated through small groups or continued interactions in like minded activities with opportunities to connect and discuss God’s Word. Outreach and Discipleship are both part of the Joining Jesus curriculum and we hope that you will make it part of your life as a follower of Jesus. Look for more opportunities to join Jesus in 2025.

~ Pastor Jeff Niederstadt



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

MATTHEW 22:39

21 DAYS OF PRAYER



Pastor Jeff has led our congregation in a daily prayer emphasis for the last three years running during the month of January. A pre-made journal with a different theme for every day has been available to us. In his report for this year, Pastor stated that he still had not located a ready-made journal. We have the topic of "Discipleship" for 2025. I asked Pastor if we could not

just make our own. Do you have any idea what came next?

He spoke of the possibility of myself taking the lead on the initiative. For a day's prayer thought, I intended to solicit input from members of our church. Each person was given a Bible verse to study and write two paragraphs about it. The first paragraph

was to write down any ideas or reactions they had to the text, and the second was to consider a real-life situation of which the text might have triggered a memory. Everyone who gave this opportunity a thought has my deepest gratitude. The prayer journals are available at the Welcome Center.

Every one of us has a favorite setting and method for praying. I learned what mine is three years ago, during the January 21 days of prayer emphasis. For me, I have to journal to stay focused, and it is best if I can do the journaling on a computer. I know; that sounds weird! What is your favorite setting and method for focused praying? Join us for prayer weekdays in the Sanctuary from 12-1 pm. Let us use these next 21 days to pray together and find out.

~ Ernie Freudenburg
Holy Cross Connecting Coordinator

POBLO UPDATE: CHRISTMAS PARTY

Happy Birthday, Jesus! POBLO International Friendship Center celebrated the birth of Jesus with several parties, the largest of which was held at Trinity Lutheran Church on Saturday, December 21. One never knows how many will come, 50 or 125?, making it hard to plan, and always a surprise! This year was a wonderful event, with sugar cookie decorating, kids crafts, snowflake bead ornaments, the story of Jesus birth, singing carols, learning about our holiday customs, and pizza. 35 children's gift bags were given out, each containing stocking stuffers and a children's Bible, thanks to a Thrivent Action Team grant. About 100 international friends, both old and new, from at least 12 different countries came to enjoy the event. Syrian friends brought a large cake with a nativity scene on it, so we all sang Happy Birthday to Jesus. We pray that God's love, peace, and joy will fill the hearts of our international friends and their families this new year.

~ Katrina Meyer
Director of POBLO, Rochester



"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14

CAREPORTAL UPDATE



CarePortal continues to grow in Olmsted County—in all ways! More churches, more businesses, more individuals, and more requests. This all adds up to more children and adults in poverty being served. Praise God!

In 2024, Holy Cross members received 264 CarePortal requests and met 153 of them, serving 445 children and 205 adults. The economic impact was \$101,839, which includes the cost of volunteer hours and the value of the items we provided. Well done!

~ Denise Frey
CarePortal Ambassador—Olmsted County

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
Acts 20:35



COUNCIL CORNER: HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Council met Tuesday: December 17, 2024

Joining Jesus “Take Ten”: Council “took ten” and discussed how God is working, marveled at his great timing and orchestration of all things.

Devotions and Prayer: Keeping with the 2024 Holy Cross focus of Evangelism, Cindy Wessel shared the devotion “Common Ground”, based on the story in Acts 17:16-34, with verse 23 as the key. Like Paul, we can proclaim our God even among obstacles. We can be effective witnesses for Christ when we first look for common ground to agree upon as a starting point in our conversations.

Reports: Due to the busy agenda, most staff and team reports were not discussed. Council members had been asked to preview reports allowing the majority of the meeting time be available to work through the Unfinished and New Business topics.

Finance: Please see Treasurer’s report in this newsletter.

Elders: Attendance figures reported for worship services in November: an average of 140 in person weekly; online units worshiping via hclc.tv averaged 29. Thanksgiving Eve, which was also the start of Advent, had 45 in worship. A funeral service was held on November 20 for Harriet Rudd.

Sanctuary Upgrade Plan & Assessment: After a lengthy discussion, including questions, concerns, and comments, a unified consensus was reached. Council approved the Motion to endorse Phase 1, contingent on Congregational approval and a Financial plan. Two Informational meetings are scheduled for the congregation concerning the proposed Sanctuary Renovation plan. Details of the plan, design, phases, and other info will be communicated, allowing time for your

questions and comments. Both meetings will provide similar information, giving you the opportunity to attend one of them. Please attend either meeting—or both! Saturday, January 18, from 3-5 pm and Sunday, January 19, during Adult Connecting Hour (refreshments at Welcome center after Worship).

Ministry Plan 2025—Draft 1.1: Top two goals have been drafted and several objectives listed within the various Ministry areas. The status of this works-in-progress plan will be finalized at the next EC meeting.

2025 Financial Ministry Plan/Budget: Roger presented the first “pass-through”. The budget is a work-in-progress and will be discussed further and finalized at the January EC meeting.

~ Jo Dean, Holy Cross Council Secretary

TREASURER REPORT (THROUGH NOVEMBER 2024)

	November 2024	YTD 2024	Prior YTD
General fund receipts	\$47,452	\$546,804	\$524,639
General fund expenses	\$47,302	\$601,957	\$553,909
Inflow/(outflow)	\$150	-\$55,153	-\$29,270

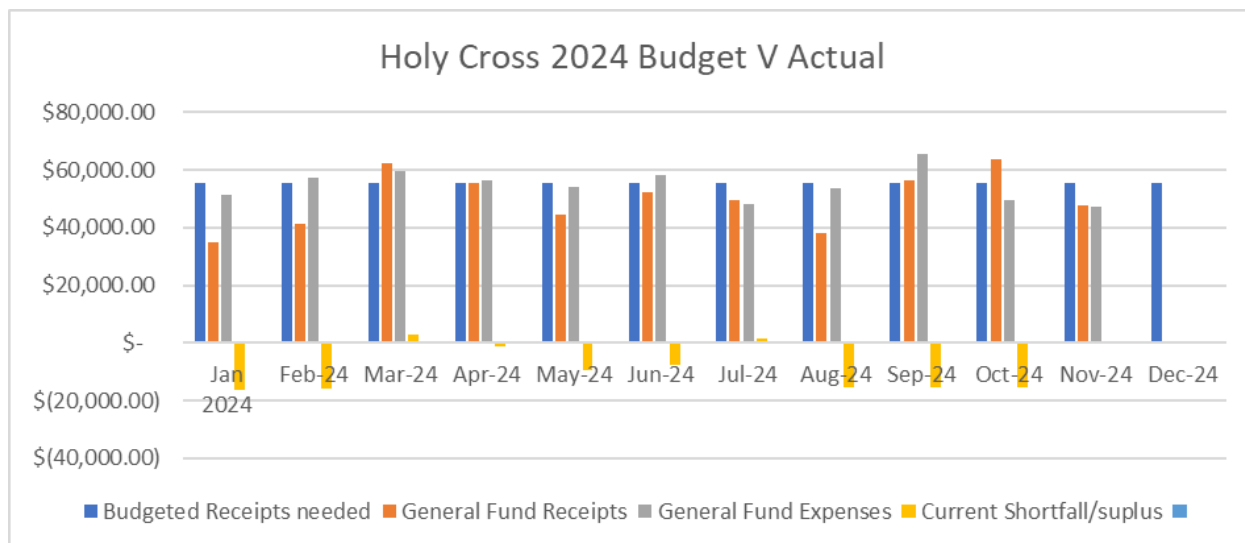
November receipts were strong at \$47,452 or \$11,363/week. YTD gifts average \$11,634. Budget need is about \$12,769/week. November was first month without Associate Pastor expenses and is likely a good approximation a new normal spend. In November we started depreciation on the Roof and HVAC previously installed. This will add about

\$900 monthly to depreciation expense. We put that in savings for eventual replacement.

I anticipate December receipts will exceed expense by around \$25,000, which has occurred in the past with special year-end gifts. This will leave a current year deficit, however, we had run several surpluses

coming into 2024, so we remain with a reasonable cash balances for operating. We continue to have designated and undesignated savings which I will highlight in our annual report.

~ Roger Lindahl, Holy Cross Treasurer



DISCIPLESHIP PLAN 2025

In 2024 we focused as a congregation on Outreach and Evangelism with our “Who’s Your One” campaign and our Joining Jesus and Apple Of His Eye events. This year we will be highlighting being and making disciples for Jesus Christ. There will be opportunities for Life Groups and Connecting Hour studies as well as opportunities for further study about the end times with an online class offering and a class for couples to engage with one another as they learn through a marriage course. We will also have additional opportunities to grow as a disciple and

disciple maker within specific areas of ministry throughout the year. Watch for more information and make plans to attend these offerings by putting them on your calendar now.

- Adult Connecting Hour: Created To Be God’s Friend (Lessons from the life of Abraham)—starting Sunday, January 12, 2025
- An End Times Masterclass with Joel Richardson (Zoom)—first Monday of the month starting February 3, 2025 from 7-8 pm

- Joining Jesus Launch Weekend—February 22-23, 2025
- Alpha Marriage Course (Dinner Included)—Sunday evenings starting February 23, 2025 from 4-6 pm
- Fridays In Lent: Joining Jesus As A Family—starting Wednesday, March 14, 2025

Mid-January Issue of Fully Alive!

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Annual Meeting

Sunday

FEBRUARY 2, 2025
11 AM



Annual Report 2024



Outreach:
Evangelism

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