



**HOLY
CROSS**
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Annual Report 2023



**STEWARDSHIP
OF THE
*Gospel***

WWW.HOLYCROSS-CHURCH.ORG

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



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From the Lead Pastor

Give Thanks



**Praise the Lord in song, for He has done glorious things;
let this be known throughout the earth. Isaiah 12:4-5**

As we look back at 2023, I give thanks to God for what He has done and accomplished through you, the people of Holy Cross. I am so thankful to be part of a wonderful, caring congregation that has engaged our community in such meaningful ways. As many of you know, our theme for 2023 was Stewardship, and we were able to both learn and live out that theme in some amazing ways. In the stewardship of your time, you gave countless hours to ministries like Ruby's Pantry and CarePortal. In the stewardship of your finances, you gave beyond our expenses for the year, and in the stewardship of your talents and services, you helped create a plan for Sanctuary upgrades and future work in the ministry of the church. Some of you may know that on a monthly basis last year, we were largely below expenses in our giving, but in the month of December alone, the congregation gave above and beyond our monthly expenses, with enough excess to cover previous shortages! "Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." Psalm 106:1

Give thanks with a grateful heart; Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

One of the challenges that came our way in 2023 was the loss of our wonderful Office Administrator, Mary Ann Mullady. This was difficult and painstaking for the staff, but thankfully we had multiple wonderful volunteers step up to help and be willing to serve one or two days a week. This allowed us the much-needed help that we desired, as well as time to look at the instructions and systems that were part of the position while we searched for a replacement. We looked for a replacement for most of the year and then, in the last quarter of the year, the Lord provided an amazing new Administrator – Jessica Kuck. The Lord does not always provide in our time and in our way, but He is always faithful to give us what we need. The Office Administrator position is a great example of His providential care. In our own ways and strength, we would have liked to hire someone immediately, without any delay or sacrifice. The Lord had a better plan which allowed us to see the tremendous talents and sacrifice of several other ladies and then brought us just the person we needed at just the right time.

Give thanks with a grateful heart; Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son

Our Trustees team has been hard at work all year and has become a prominent part of the ministry of Holy Cross over the last couple of years – some of it out of necessity and some of it by design. Just in the past year we have either completed or started projects for heating and air conditioning in the Sanctuary, air conditioning in the Parish Hall, electrical conduits and irrigation for the Courtyard, signage for the Parking Lot, roof repair and upgrades for the Sanctuary, and more. Most of this has been out of necessity in maintaining an aging building, but the Sanctuary upgrade has been by design for the glory of God and the comfort of His people. We will be discussing more about this as we proceed in this new year. We are trusting in God's faithfulness for all of these projects, including both the roof and the Sanctuary.

Give thanks with a grateful heart; Give thanks to the Holy One
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son



Rev. Jeff Niederstadt, Lead Pastor

From the Pastor of Discipleship

Stewarding the Gospel



**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:22-23**

The book of Lamentations is a peculiar work. It is appropriately named for its predominant theme of lament. Within its tragic chapters there lies a small seed of Gospel, shown in the above verses. The author, Jeremiah, does not refrain from praising God for his faithfulness. He has been profoundly impacted by the Gospel.

As Christians, we believe the Gospel is a life-saving message, one that conveys the hope of eternal life. When that Gospel is present in our lives, it becomes a life-changing message. This past year has shown me the life-changing work of the Gospel in our church. As we reflect on our disciplined lives, I'd like to share some of those stories with you.

- Living in a world which teaches us to pursue what pleases us, it's easy to get wrapped up in our own desires. Week to week to week many gather at Holy Cross to hear from God and His Word when they could spend Sunday morning pursuing any personal project. This past year, multiple members have shared with me that they actively locate the words they hear from life lessons on Sunday mornings in the context of their work lives. When we hear the Gospel message, we are driven to live it out at work, home, and everywhere we go. Living our faith will not always be welcomed by our peers, yet members of Holy Cross are living and sharing Christ within their spheres.
- An adolescent teen participates in intentional time of service. These formative years are often focused upon finding yourself, discovering who you are. Instead of reflecting on these self-serving pursuits, a teen experiences what it means to steward the Gospel by washing windows and pulling weeds. Through days spent giving of one's time for the sake of others, the message of faith becomes clear in a new way. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; we live that love as a witness of God to others.
- The love of a child. Seeing an adult whom they admire going through a sad time, a child runs up and gives a big hug. "I love you." With simple actions and words, they steward a Gospel of God's love to us adults who are prone to forget it in our times of grief.

Our lives are lived as stewards of the same Gospel which strengthened Jeremiah. God works in us through every stage of life. I recently witnessed this in the waters of baptism. On January 15, 2024, Katie and I said goodbye to our twin boys who were born prematurely. We saw God's faithfulness on display as they were promised faith through the Holy Spirit's work in water and the Word. Though their lives were short, they too were stewards of the Gospel.

God our Father is present in our lives and this church. He gifts faith, works miracles, and changes our lives as we know, live, and share the love of Christ. You are stewards of God's Gospel who share with the world a steadfast love that never ceases. You are evidence that His mercies never come to an end. Every morning, our God is great in His faithfulness. May we continue to steward His life-changing Gospel in 2024.

Jordan Schut

Rev. Jordan Schut, Pastor of Discipleship

Stewardship

Excelling in Worship

God is working in and through people at Holy Cross as we are helping people know, live, and share the love of Christ. Holy Cross is looking with forward thinking regarding the space where we worship God corporately.

Why upgrade the Sanctuary?

- Build on the reconciliation and unity from Family of Christ and Holy Cross merger
- Prepare for fruit from recent Outreach, Discipleship, and Stewardship emphases
- Allow for expanded Livestream and video opportunities
- Respond to Spiritual and Numerical Growth
- Anticipate ongoing results of current Evangelism emphasis

We want to be ready for what God will do next!

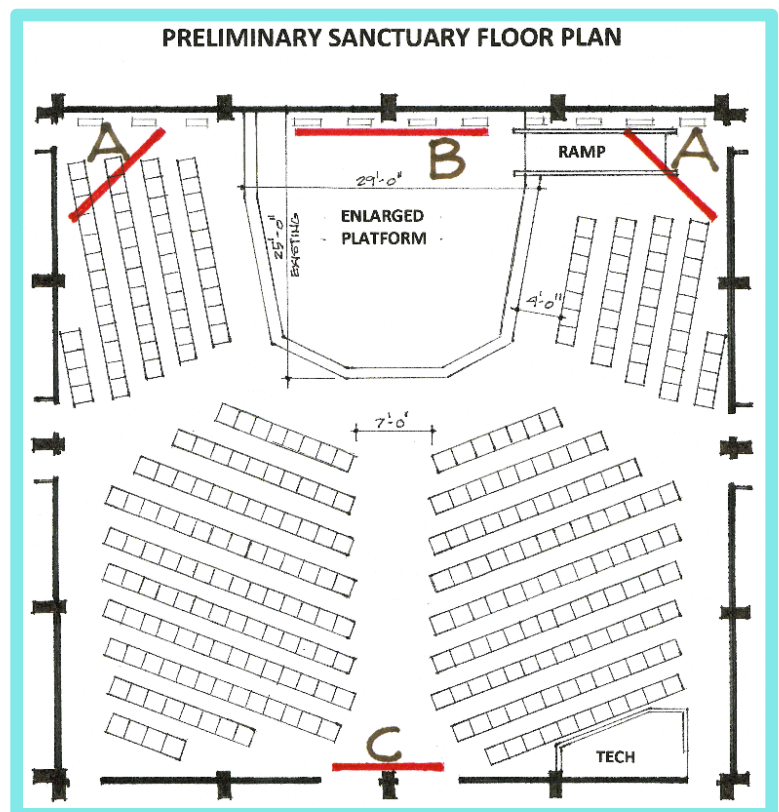
It is vital that we keep our focus on Jesus in worship as we effectively utilize the resources He's blessed us with and welcome the people God brings to Holy Cross. The spiritual possibilities are endless! Exciting facility possibilities are diagramed below.

Proposed Sanctuary Upgrade

- Roof Repairs; Shingle Replacement
- Front Screens & Projectors
- Larger Confidence Monitor
- Sanctuary Lighting
- Enlarge Platform
- Sanctuary Chairs

KEY

- A – Front Corner Screens
- B – Front Display Screen for Visual Images and Video
- C – Rear Confidence Monitor

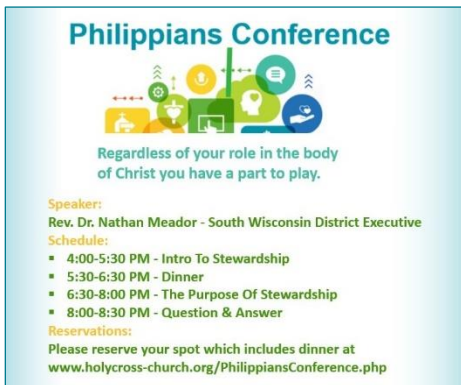


Holy Cross has contracted with the company, Churchfront, to receive coaching and training for our Worship Ministries, in addition to guidance throughout the proposed sanctuary upgrade project.

The future of Holy Cross is a divine adventure for God's glory as He leads more people to know His amazing love so they, together with us, would be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:17-19)! Please pray for God to lead us in this project.

Highlighting Stewardship in 2023

Philippians Conference



"In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."
2 Corinthians 5:19

Holy Cross sponsored the **Philippians Conference** on October 1, 2023. The Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador, South Wisconsin District Mission Executive, presented an introduction to Stewardship during our Connecting Hour. Later that day he facilitated a 4-hour Stewardship workshop, which included a dinner. We, and area churches, were invited to come and find out more about growing in the grace of stewardship in our lives as Christians.

We learned that God introduced stewardship to us very early in His Word! "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15 ESV; *underlines added for emphasis*). The NLT uses the words "tend and watch over it". LCMS defines stewardship as the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes. Stewardship is work and worship.



We are to reflect the will of God to the created world. God reconciled us to Himself through Christ Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We are called by God to be **Stewards of the Gospel** now – in any means given us (purposed to us) by our Almighty God and Father. When we do so, we reflect God and His will to others.



Financial Peace University

Dave Ramsey's **Financial Peace** course was offered during our Connecting Hour this fall. John Beise led video sessions and discussions, along with Ryan Ledebuhr (son of Bob and Jude) and Tim Gerber. The course taught how to live like no one else now, so that we can Live *and* Give like no one else later!



Dave Ramsey states there are 2,500 verses in Scripture that refer to handling money and possessions. Did you know that in Luke 14:28-30, Jesus taught his followers to make a budget? Check it out! Bottom line: We strive to be **good stewards**, ultimately **to promote the Good News**.

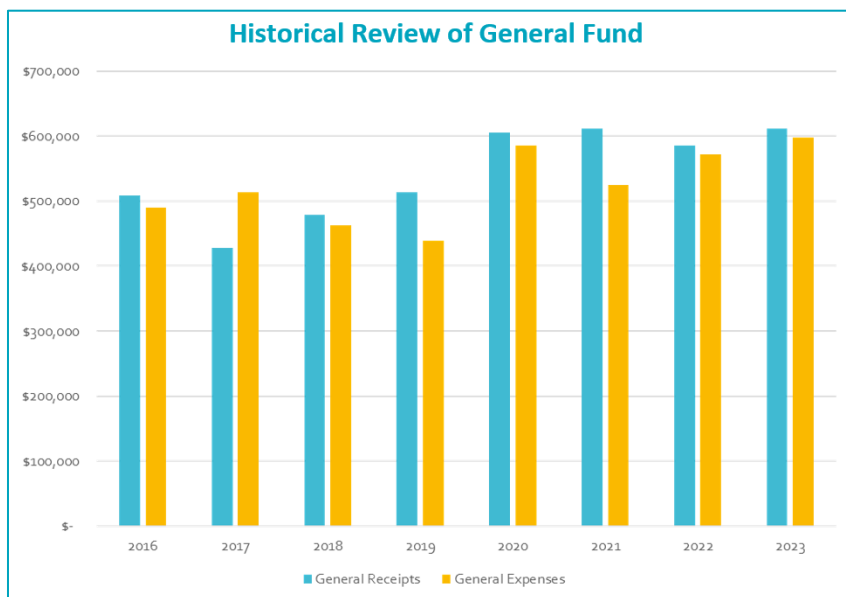


Financial Highlights

- 2022 General Fund operated with a net surplus of \$13,500. Praise God!
- 2023 General Funds gifts increased 4.5% from 2022 and were \$611,455
- Designated gifts very strong, \$44,996; excludes Ruby's Pantry and CarePortal (highlighted separately); includes Suresh, Building Fund, Youth, VBS, and many other mission activities
- Very strong in "dry powder" funds to continue our ministry

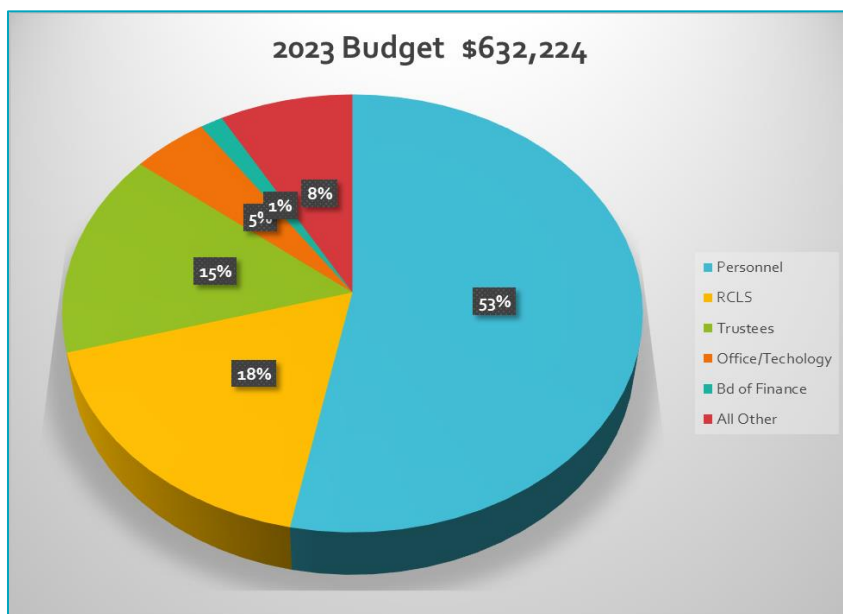
12/31/2023 Balances

- Checking \$123,439
- Designated \$180,757
- Unrestricted savings/ investments \$111,048
- Regedahl (Youth/Children) \$85,418 at LCEF
- LCEF Debt \$67,498



2023 Budget Challenges

- **2024 budget \$664,982 - up from a \$607,585 2023 spend**
- Full year budget with two Pastoral staff, includes part-time Bookkeeper, Custodian, and Office Administrative Assistant; Office Admin open for all 2023
- RCLS support up 8.4%, formula based on students and membership ratios across member churches
- Continues path of Holy Cross Vision on vibrant ministry in children, youth, connecting internally and reaching beyond our walls by CarePortal and other Outreach
- Requires trusting God to stir our hearts and provide resources needed to accomplish the Ministry Mission and Vision, 7%+ general fund giving increase; will need combined new members plus member increase
- Typical slight under-spending of budgets (\$21,000 in 2023); all ministry teams use funds judiciously and leverage with volunteers



Outreach

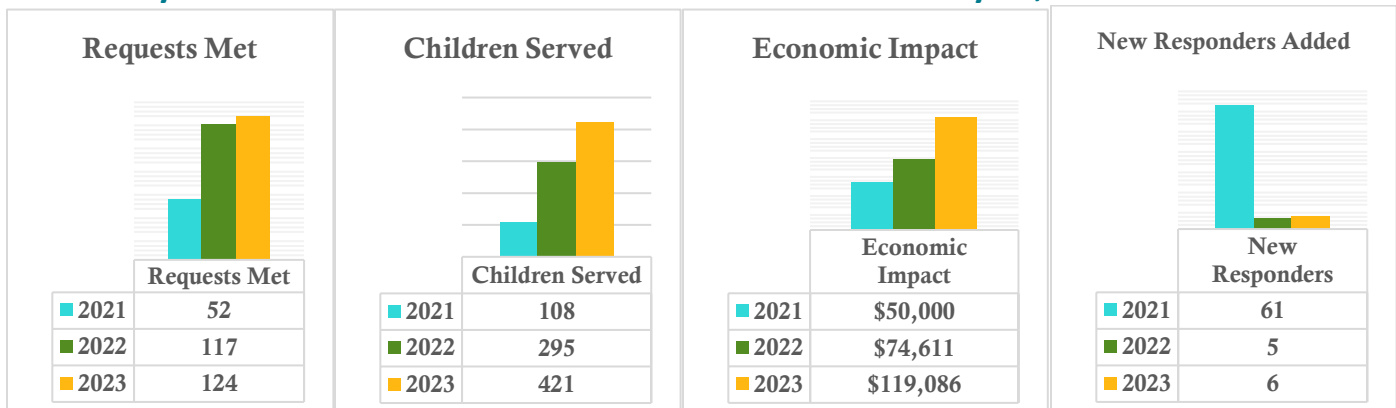


CarePortal in Olmsted County celebrated serving over 1,000 kids at the end of 2023 – and Holy Cross served over 82% of those kids, representing 293 local families. Churches are working together, social workers are being blessed, and meaningful, lasting relationships are being created. God is using CarePortal to help us serve some of the most vulnerable children in our community – and He is doing it with amazing compassion as we share our love of Jesus with the families we serve.

Here is some of the feedback received from social workers in 2023:

- “What an absolutely wonderful group of people! Definitely the sun shining through on a dreary day! Thank you so much again! It is such a strong message of hope that is spread through kindness like this!”
- “Those kids really appreciate the beds more than you know!”
- “Wow, I’m blown away by Holy Cross’ generosity! Thank you so much for supporting this family!!!”
- “Our community is lucky to have your church!! My day was made seeing you’re able to help them so much!”
- “You guys are amazing!”
- “I cannot be more thankful for the timely response and assistance my clients have gotten from those working with CarePortal.”
- “Mom was in tears knowing that someone wanted to help her son despite never meeting him. You’re entertaining angels unawares. Truly, thank you with all my heart.”

Holy Cross CarePortal Numbers since Launch on February 25, 2021



Through Ruby’s Pantry, Holy Cross served a total of 4,213 shares (average 1.5 share per car). Seventy-three blessing boxes were provided for those who were unable to pay for a share. The income from Ruby’s Pantry provided \$2,709 as seed money for CarePortal.

Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Income	389	496	587	618	392	600	769	798	705	785	974	790
Blessing Boxes	5	12	0	13	0	2	11	12	3	0	2	13
Total Shares	348	400	399	342	250	345	378	335	330	335	396	355

Discipleship



2023 HOLY CROSS MINISTRY GOALS

Strengthen what we have begun
Build our base
Increase engagement



Fellowship Team in 2023

- Schedule volunteers to have treats after worship services
- Line up refreshments or organize meals for special events
- Shirley Sjoberg to be 2024 team lead
- Thanks to Ken and Lousette Schultz for all their behind-the-scenes help with Fellowship

Welcome Team in 2023

- Greeter Ministry established
- Welcome packets and gift bags
- Developed schedule for Greeters
- Connect Elders with new worshipers
- Desiring more Greeters to serve once a month or as substitutes
- Karen Hutton is the team lead

Discipleship:
 The process the Holy Spirit uses to grow us up in Christ in order to build others up in Christ.



Education Team in 2023

- Work with staff for Sunday morning Kidz Alive, Youth, and Connecting Hour
- Work with staff for Kids4Truth
- Providing meaningful confirmation ministry
- Pastor Jordan is the team lead



Service Team in 2023


















- Helped with ministry fair on Sept. 10
- Organize Sharing Tree at Christmas
- Care Card ministry
- Need to further define the role of service and recruit a team lead
- Desire to offer a Spiritual Gifts Inventory class
- Develop a database of service opportunities at Holy Cross



LifeGroup Team in 2023

- 8 "Chosen" LifeGroups
- 2 "The Power of Your Story" LifeGroups
- Continue to monitor established, short term, and LifeGroup clubs.
- Plan to add missional LifeGroups in 2024
- Monthly Creative Women group with ladies from Teen Challenge
- Ernie Freudenburg is team lead

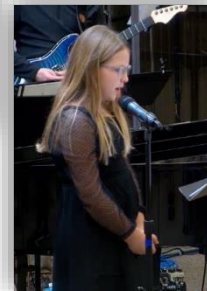
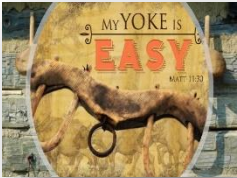
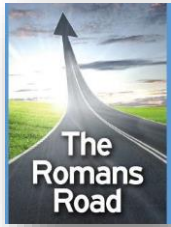
2023 Leadership Team

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

Worship @ Holy Cross

Leading People into the Presence of God

Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into His presence with singing!
Psalm 100:2



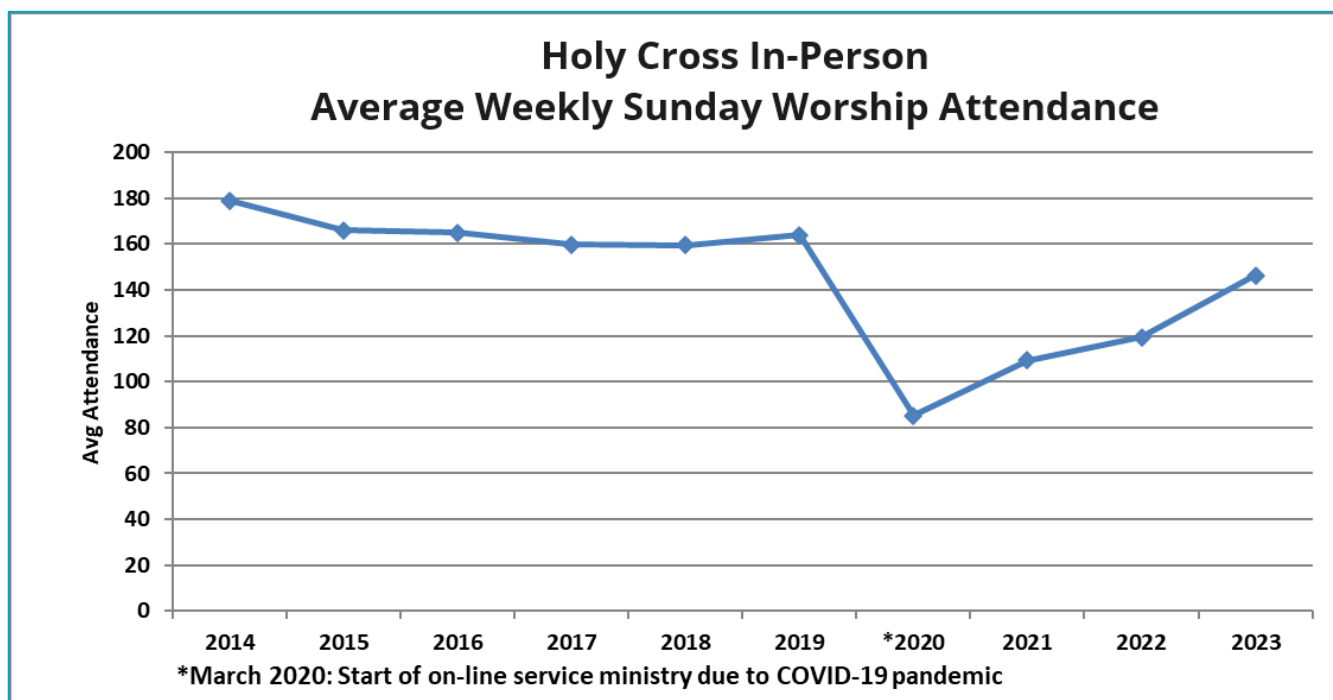
Elders Report

The 2023 Board of Elders (BOE) includes Brandon Marsh (Associate Lead), Tim Gerber, Dan Johnson, Kevin Kelle, Dan Kuball, Adam McClung, and Adam Morrissey (Lead position was vacant). The BOE serves Christ and Holy Cross by providing spiritual nurturing and oversight, individually and corporately. Individuals who are interested in serving Christ and Holy Cross in this way are encouraged to contact one of the pastors or elders.

**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)

Weekly average worship attendance continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing from a low of 85 in 2020 to 146 in 2023 (see graph below). These current numbers do not include online worshipers. It was observed that there were usually around 24 connections to the live Sunday worship service on hclc.tv. It is not known how many individuals were present with each connection, but if you assume there were either one or two viewers per connection (average of 1.5 viewers), that adds an additional 36 worship participants per service. Online worship continues to be an important part of the Holy Cross ministry.

During 2023, Holy Cross received 17 new members. Six individuals were baptized from three different families.



Core Identity

Holy Cross Mission Statement

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

Our Vision:
God's Love in Action

Come as You Are – You Are Welcome Here

Find Peace and Healing – Discover Grace, Mercy, and Compassion

Grow in God's Word – Be Transformed by the Truth of Jesus

Share Life Together – Be Devoted to the Fellowship of Believers

Serve Others – Impact Your Community and Beyond

Our Values:

Deeply held beliefs that guide how we do ministry!

Grace - Grace invites everyone to consider Jesus

The Bible - The Bible is the indisputable authority and gives us everything we need to know and believe for Christian faith and life

Relationships - God uses relationships to nurture our life in Jesus

Prayer - God's guidance and blessing are sought through prayer

Service - To follow in the footsteps of Christ is to live a life of service

Compassion - Jesus looked on people with compassion

Our Measure:

A person who Knows, Lives, and Shares the Love of Christ Reflects the 5 Rs.

Receive - Knowing the Love of Christ begins when we receive him as our Savior and Lord.

Remain - Living the Love of Christ means continual growth in our relationship with Jesus.

Relate - Living the Love of Christ means learning to relate our life in Jesus to the people and world around us.

Rejoice - Living the Love of Christ means rejoicing in the presence, power, and purpose of God.

Respond - Sharing the Love of Christ means using our God-given gifts and resources to fulfill our mission.

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:18

From the President

Justice, Love & Humility



And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8

Dear Holy Cross Family,

I love the above passage from Micah – it boils down the Lord’s intent for us to three simple things, namely justice, mercy, and a humble walk with the Lord. The Lord is looking at your heart and your actions. Jesus reinforced these values with his teaching and his example.

Holy Cross has made a strong commitment to live in this fashion, and our 2023 Annual Report cites many ways in which this is evident. For our signature community-facing ministries, CarePortal saw us extend justice and mercy by serving over 420 children in need with nearly \$120,000 in support and donated items. Ruby’s Pantry saw excitement and engagement with up to 70 volunteers on a given Saturday. In addition, you provided help to POBLO, Dorothy Day, MN Adult & Teen Challenge, Suresh in India, and more, including internally to our Holy Cross family members in need.

Walking humbly with our God included heeding the call to Stewardship, which showed in your financial giving and your giving of time and talents. In this way, growing numbers of children and youth were served in programs and events like VBS, Kids4Truth and Kidz Alive/Youth Now Christmas; in our Worship Ministries including PraiseHym, Sights and Sounds for Christ and Video Team; and in volunteers supporting our staff and facilities, or serving in the office until an assistant could be identified and hired. Our challenge is to maintain and grow these activities such that more and more people see God’s Love in Action and are drawn to join us.

Our Vision for the future can also be glimpsed in Micah’s words above. In the call-out box is the Holy Cross Vision, which describes what we want people to see in us at Holy Cross. Is this yet evident? Is there more we can do to make it so?

Our heart-call is to see all people as God’s children and worthy of care and compassion. Our prayer is that contacts turn into relationships, which allow your love to show. This includes sharing the Gospel message of Hope as the Lord provides opportunity.

Our Vision: God’s Love in Action

Come as You Are – You Are Welcome Here

Find Peace and Healing – Discover Grace, Mercy, and Compassion

Grow in God’s Word – Be Transformed by the Truth of Jesus

Share Life Together – Be Devoted to the Fellowship of Believers

Serve Others – Impact Your Community and Beyond


There will be more “vision” to come, including a re-working of our 5 year plan. I look forward to working with you to “act justly and love mercy” and to build relationships where, in humility, we allow God to speak through us. Blessings on your 2024!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Matthias', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Matthias

Joining Jesus

How to Be an Everyday Missionary



JOINING
JESUS
ON HIS MISSION

At Holy Cross this Lent

Ash Wednesday, February 14, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 23, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 1, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 8, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, March 15, 6:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, March 28, 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday, March 29, 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 31, 8:00 & 9:30 a.m.

Coming Soon! Joining Jesus Launch Event – April 19-21, 2024



**HOLY
CROSS**

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

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