



Fully Alive!

COMMUNICATING AND CELEBRATING THE MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF HOLY CROSS

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THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

Many people are familiar with the verse in Galatians 3:13 which says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, 'cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" It is an amazing and wonderful verse which indicates that as Christ followers, we have been redeemed from the curse of the law because Jesus took that curse for us.

What most people don't realize is that the very next verse explains why Jesus took that curse: "The purpose was that **the blessing of Abraham** would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith." What Paul is saying is that the Jews are already sons and daughters of Abraham and are part of his inheritance and blessing through their physical descent, but what Jesus did was to make that same blessing and inheritance available to the Gentiles. That means you and I are sons and daughters of Abraham and have access to those blessings and inheritance.

That is one reason that no matter what shakings or troubles come upon the face of earth, we don't have to be afraid, because we are not slaves – we are the seed. As a follower of Jesus you

are an heir, and you have a heavenly Father to whom you are able to cry out, "Abba".

All of the **blessings of Abraham** are part of the inheritance, but the primary blessing that we see Paul mention, that which we need most of all is the Spirit. This Spirit is given to all those who have faith in God like their spiritual father Abraham did. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are a son or daughter of the Most High. You are a child of the King. Your heart carries the presence of God like the ark of the Lord. I believe that in this year we will see this distinction be made clearer than ever with whom His favor rests. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus will be marked by the **blessing of Abraham** and sons and daughters of the King.

Although we are living in one of the most tumultuous times in recent history, God is able to protect and even bless His people in the midst of the storm. God certainly demonstrated this when dealing with Egypt and protecting Israel in the land of Goshen. He is certainly capable of doing the same thing with believers on the face of the earth regardless of where they live. God is not bound by geographies or space. He is able to provide for and protect His people

regardless of where they live or work. If He has certain instructions for you or your family, certainly heed them, but we do not need to fear as an heir of Abraham. The Lord says to "occupy" until He comes. Continue to walk in faith, live in purity, and share the Gospel until He returns.

Many pastors and leaders nowadays give instructions, warnings, and prophecies for the coming year. One of the encouragements that I thought had much truth and great light was from Tomi Arayomi. I am not familiar with his ministry and don't know much about him, but he shared something that resonated with me in his word for 2024. He called it the "Rise Of The Incorruptibles". You may not be able to control your external circumstances in this next year, but you can guard the purity of your soul.

Arayomi's theme verse was 1 Peter 1:22-23: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

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(CONTINUED) THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

Our aim as Christ-followers is to live in that sincere love with a pure heart as we guard the incorruptible seed inside our lives. When we live in that way, then God will move heaven and earth to provide for His

people. You have nothing to fear. You only have a heart to steward over and an eternity to gain. You are a child of the Most High King and a seed of Abraham, the

father of our faith. Perfect love casts out fear. Be free of fear today.

~Pastor Jeff Niederstadt

LENT 2024 - JOINING JESUS: SHOW ME HOW

The way Jesus discipled people is simple and results in unschooled, ordinary followers participating in the mission of the Father and discipling others to do the same. Holy Cross wants to regain the clarity and simplicity of how Jesus discipled people in the gospels so that we can disciple our children, friends, neighbors or fellow church members to get up, follow Jesus, and join him on his mission, too.

As a congregation, Holy Cross will experience "Joining Jesus: Show Me How," an exciting way to support each other in seeking the Kingdom and joining Jesus in everyday life.

Mark these important dates on your calendar; these are great times to invite someone to join you.

Ash Wednesday

Feb. 14 - Yes, Valentine's Day! God loves YOU!!; Worship Him at 6:30 p.m.

Fridays in Lent: Supper AND Joining Jesus
Feb. 23, Mar. 1, 8, and 15 at 6:00 p.m.

Palm Sunday

March 24 at 9:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday

March 28 at 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday

March 29 at 6:30 p.m.

Resurrection Sunday

March 31 at 8:00 and 9:30 a.m.

Joining Jesus with author and guest speaker, Greg Finke
April 12, 13, and 14

See <https://www.dwelling114.org/> for more information on Joining Jesus.

~Cindy Wessel, Director of Worship



DISCIPLESHIP CORNER: FROM DISCIPLED TO DISCIPLER

We live in a world steeped with the value of education. You can find any number of books, articles, and podcasts all about how to excel at any passion or begin a hobby "for dummies". As someone who loves taking in information, I attest that learning does not equal action. To engage in doing something, we need some level of knowledge, but knowledge must be practiced and applied. The same is true of our lives as disciples.

Simply knowing does not propel us into action. When you find yourself at your lowest point, whom do you call? If you

needed help this evening, many of us picture someone who would drop what they are doing to help. Those people are examples of living action. They give us glimpses of what it means to act as one who is accessible.

Being a disciple does not mean you have everything figured out and always give a perfect account of faith. Being a disciple does mean we live imperfect lives that are covered by the grace of our Savior, Jesus. You have access to your Father in heaven on account of what Christ did for you by laying down His life and rising again.

You have access to your Father, and you have access to active disciples around you. As you learn faith, watch and imitate what your fellow children of God do. Like children on the playground, we learn from each other. When we follow the examples of fellow disciples, we grow a community which engages in the work of the Holy Spirit. You are a disciple. You are living faith in action. You model discipleship to those learning from you. As Christ disciplined the twelve, you grow from disciplined to discipler.

~Pastor Jordan Schut

RCLS UPDATE

After a long winter break, the hallways of RCLS are again bursting with students. January promises to be another busy month! Students have begun auditions for the spring musical (drum roll please.....). RCLS will be presenting "The Little Mermaid Jr." Save the date for performances on the evenings of March 15 and 16 and a matinee showing on March 17!

Basketball season is off to a great start! The teams continue to practice hard and have several upcoming games, including

the RCLS Invitational Tournament, which will be held on February 16-18. As a time-honored tradition, the all-school pep rally will precede the beginning of the tournament!

National Lutheran Schools Week is right around the corner on January 21-27. The theme this year is Connected: Connected to Christ, Connected to the Father, Connected to the Spirit, Connected to the Church, and Connected to His Commission. It is based upon John 15: 1-5: "I am the

true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." RCLS will also incorporate dress-up days, a special chapel service, a service event, and celebrations in individual classrooms to mark this celebratory week.

~Laura Rhee, Holy Cross Rep for RCLS



POBLO UPDATE FROM KATRINA MEYER, DIRECTOR OF POBLO ROCHESTER

POBLO International Friendship Center, Rochester is a local mission supported by you! Thank you!

POBLO, People of the Book Lutheran Outreach's mission is to meet the physical, social, and spiritual needs of immigrants and international friends in Rochester by sharing the love of Jesus in practical and culturally relevant ways. Our volunteers help us to reach out to immigrants and refugees, Mayo Clinic patients and researchers and their families, and other internationals in Rochester.

One of the ways POBLO does this is through English classes. We currently have 17 classes per week, including Beginning English, Conversation Classes, Medical English, Bible Reading Class, Sewing Class, Arabic Bible Study, plus tutoring! Some are in-person at Trinity, Redeemer, and a Salvation Army building downtown. Some are online. In addition, we offer interpreting and translation services to the Arabic community. We have fun together on field

trips, potlucks, home visits, movies, holiday parties, and inviting students to church. Also, we have a food ministry where we distribute food to needy international families. We serve on average 40 families a month with food distribution.

"We no longer need to travel great distances to share God's love with people from across the world; we simply need to walk across the street." In 2022 and 2023, we've had students from 28 different countries! One student wrote, "POBLO is just like a big and warm family, it's home away from home."

One of the ways we share God's love is by sharing about the birth of Christ. Ministry in glimpse, in December we held a Christmas party and had 110 guests hear about Christmas' beginning and

customs, sing songs, decorate cookies, and make crafts like snowflake bead ornaments. One of the students came in wanting to know why there were camels in the nativity outside the church.

We love our students and have so much fun together. Pray for hearts to be touched by God's love!

For more information, send an email to John Gayed: john@poblo.org



SHOWING GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION—2023 CHRISTMAS CAROLING

On a sunny Wednesday, Dec. 13, a group of intrepid singers (Jo Dean, Karen Keyes, Karen and Kevin Kelle, and Cindy Wessel) hopped into Jo's freshly washed sleigh and tooled around the neighborhood in search of an audience for Christmas Carols. It wasn't really that random – we had a pre-arranged flight pattern and timetable, with a serial audience of Vonnie Weeldreyer, Harriet Rudd, and Kevin and Marion Clark expecting our arrival.

At the appointed times, we approached each residence with an opening carol, then proceeded to chat and sing, sing and chat, until our time was up. It was a blessing to spend time with some of Holy Cross' long-time and faithful members whom we'd not seen in a while.

Kevin Clark shared with us that "God is a God of second chances", and his bride, Marion said, "No matter where you are, you can still witness to others about Jesus."



Following a pitstop for some rest and a change of sleigh and crew, a new set of six carolers (Tim and Jeanne Block, Jane Link, Kristin and Rich Sellentine, and Shirley Sjoberg) took off the next day, continuing to share the good news of the birth of our Savior. This crew's first stop was at Rochester West Health Services, where we were cheerfully greeted by residents eager to get into the holiday spirit and make a joyful noise. We passed out caroling books and, as we began singing and playing our carols on a guitar and harmonica, the crowd of residents grew, along with the voices singing carols of our Messiah and King. We don't know who was blessed more, the residents by our caroling or we carolers by the joy and voices of the residents as they sang along with us.

But soon it was time to "dash away" to our next stop, The Homestead, to visit and Christmas carol with Carol Lofquist's mother, Judy. Upon our arrival, to our surprise, we found Judy in the front lobby area all

ready to sing along with our caroling! First we had a wonderful visit with her, and then we carolers and Judy began lifting our voices in songs of Jesus' birth. The facilities chaplain joined in the singing and as we sang carols like "O Come All Ye Faithful", a few other residents did COME to join us and sing along. What a special time for all, singing about God's greatest gift for us, Jesus!

As dinnertime arrived for the residents, our caroling ended, we packed up our instruments, books, and our festive hats, and "dash away we did" until next year!



HOLY CROSS BRUNCH FOR RCLS BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Picture this: a hush falls over the arena as the ball is dribbled down the court. The clock ticks down, 5 seconds left. He looks up, the hoop in his sight, and shoots in that direction. With a hope and prayer, the ball flies through the air, until....

Find out when the RCLS basketball tournament begins!

You may have similar memories from playing or watching basketball. Some of you have those memories from the gym at RCLS. As a congregation, we want to give

back to the many students and families that gather for the annual RCLS invitational next month. On **Sunday, February 18**, Holy Cross will host a **brunch** after worship for families of RCLS and visiting schools. Prepare your egg bakes, rolls, and a mug of coffee, and break bread together with the tournament participants before they make their own memories on the court.

We will also have a sign-up available to help with **concessions** throughout Sunday. One of the biggest needs from years past

was people to serve the fabled nachos, hot dogs, and popcorn that are core components of the spectating experience. Serve alongside us as we give back to the school that has equipped so many with faith in Christ and a passion for sports.

The tournament will occur from February 16-18. Feel free to support our school on any day, then show up with Holy Cross on February 18 as we show out to students and families how we care about them as a community of faith.

LETTER FROM HOLY CROSS PRESIDENT, MARK MATTHIAS

"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3

In January, it is common to reflect on the past year and look ahead at what is to come. In your Executive Council this is no different. We are summarizing the work of 2023 and outlining plans for the coming year(s), which we believe align with God's

calling for his people at Holy Cross.

Have you ever considered being part of the Council? The Council coordinates and provides leadership and direction for the ministries of the congregation in order to achieve its Mission and Vision. Those on it are people like you – with a heart for Jesus, for his people, and for our mission – Helping People Know, Live, and Share the Love of Christ. We prayerfully seek the

Lord's guidance to lead this body of believers forward to accomplish his will.

Please consider whether this might be your calling. Five roles are open for 2024 at this time. We represent teams in Discipleship, Outreach, Facilities (Trustees), Finance, Personnel, and Volunteer ministries, in addition to including Elders and Officers. We meet monthly via zoom. See Mark Matthias or Jo Dean with questions or interest.

NIGHTLIFE NEWS

The early days of winter feature some of the shortest days of the year. While early and prolonged nights leave many of us wishing for days past, nights are when NightLife continues to thrive. It's fitting that we return from our Christmas break around Epiphany, a season to celebrate the light of Christ that shines through every darkness. Christ is on the move with the NightLife of our church.

We continue to connect with our sister LCMS churches to plan youth events. Upcoming events include Air Insanity on February 4, organized by Redeemer Lutheran Church, and Tubing at Ironwood

Springs on February 25 (rescheduled), organized by Grace Lutheran Church.

Youth in grades 7-12 are invited to join for any events. If you have not been, also check out regular NightLife gatherings on Sunday from 6-8pm at Holy Cross! Pastor Jordan and the crew are eager to check in with teens and learn what is going on in their lives. More info is available on the Holy Cross youth page.

Coming this summer: NightLife will be gearing up for a new servant event! Plan to join us the week of June 9-14 for Adventures in Colorado. Youth in grades 7-12 will journey to Lutheran Valley Retreat,

a camp grounded in our Lutheran Christian faith and located in the mountains of Colorado. We will serve alongside other teens in caring for a beautiful space which God uses for His kingdom work. Be a light in this world as we brighten up this NightLife! Stay tuned for details to come.

PRAYING WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS OF THE WORLD

As we begin this New Year, it's not too late to join in 30 Days of Prayer in the Holy Cross sanctuary, every weekday from 12:00-12:30 pm through February 1.

The Fully Alive Team asked Julie Folkert, one of the regular participants in the noon prayer, to share why the time has been meaningful to her:

"This dedicated time provides a space to come to God, lifting up prayers for those who have yet to experience the presence of Jesus in their lives. Whether in silent contemplation or gathered in group prayer, we share our concerns with God, offering praise and worship through songs.

"Scripture encourages us to 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

These prayer gatherings are opportunities to intercede for our families and friends, drawing near to God without the distractions of the world, finding solace for our souls in the quiet moments spent in His presence, and fellowshiping with others."

In contemplating the upcoming year, consider how God is guiding your heart. Is it a desire to deepen your relationship with Jesus, seeking peace for your soul, or perhaps praying for your loved ones to experience a more intimate connection with God? Come pray about it!

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake."

Psalms 23:2-3



CAREPORTAL UPDATE

CarePortal®

We have served over 1,000 children in Olmsted County (over 350 families) since we began our CarePortal ministry three years ago! Churches are working together, social workers are being blessed, and meaningful lasting relationships are being created with the families we serve. Through CarePortal, we are learning to relate our life in Jesus to the people and community around us!

We have two Community Champions now. These are businesses with a heart for Jesus who have joined us in our ministry to serve vulnerable kids in our community. Welcome Tony Zucco from American Family Insurance and Mark Nelson from Service Pros Plumbing. If you have any insurance or plumbing needs, please check out the services our Community Champions offer!!

Our gift-in-kind donations are also growing and thus we recently doubled our storage

space at Classic Storage – who continues to provide CarePortal with a 38% discount on rental fees. This storage space is available for all the CarePortal churches to use, and a search continues for a Community Sponsor who will cover all our storage rental fees.

If you know a business owner (or individual) who might want to become a CarePortal Community Champion or Community Sponsor, have them contact Denise Frey at denise.frey@careportal.org.

Save the Date - Holy Cross Response Team Training will be held during Connecting Hour on February 25 and March 3. This is required training for anyone participating in CarePortal deliveries – and highly recommended for the entire CarePortal response team and anyone else interested in learning more about CarePortal. Participating in deliveries is not a requirement for attending.



Praise God for His mighty power at work within us!!! And thank YOU Holy Cross!

~Denise Frey,
CarePortal Ambassador–Olmsted County

HOLY CROSS 2024 CAMPOUT



Mark your calendars for the 2024 Holy Cross Campout at Chester Woods. It is not too early to book your camping reservation for the weekend of August 16-18. Reserve your spot by going to www.olmstedcounty.gov/residents/parks-recreation and then follow the links to get to Chester Woods.

GIVING TREE 2023

We are Grateful for All the Gifts Purchased for Our Giving Tree

Our Christmas Giving Tree was designated to bless our local MN Adult and Teen Challenge and our local Women's Shelter. Participants were encouraged to purchase items from the wish list that these two organizations needed and wanted. Twenty-three gifts were placed

under the tree provided by 14 participants. We have given these presents to the groups. Our Discipleship Team is thankful for such an enthusiastic response. We know that at this time of year, many organizations need our gifts. Surely, a part of our stewardship is to prioritize what we are going to support with the gifts that God gives to us to manage.

"All glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or imagine."
- Ephesians 3:20



FALL LIFEGROUPS

Season 4 of "The Chosen" is being shown in two Rochester theaters beginning February 1. We encourage you to take advantage of the three theatrical performances in February.

Holy Cross is planning on offering "The Chosen" LifeGroups beginning the week of April 1. There are eight episodes in Season 4, and our LifeGroups will view, discuss, and fellowship focusing on one episode at a time.

If you would be interested in hosting a LifeGroup for Season 4, please contact Pastor Jordan or Ernie Freudenburg.

~ Ernie Freudenburg



COUNCIL CORNER: HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Council met on Tuesday: December 19, 2023.

Devotions and Prayer: Continuing our focus on Stewardship for 2023, Pastor Jeff shared a devotion on God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Based on 1 Corinthians 12:2-3, every 'thing or item' that pulls us away from God is a sin of idolatry. Unfaithful stewardship is a matter of idolatry, when led astray by items/idols we fail to confess that Jesus is Lord of our life. The Holy Spirit helps us by leading us to God and in confessing that Jesus is Lord - with our lips, our lives, and our stewardship.

Pastor Jeff's Report: Pastor stated the sermon theme in January, 'Who's Your One?' ties in nicely to the 30-Days of Prayer (Jan. 3 - Feb. 1) focus of evangelism. Who is your one person that God is putting on your heart to share the Gospel with?

Pastor Jordan's Report: Pastor highlighted the recent privilege of worshipping together with Circuit Pastors. They heard a presentation by Stan Tordsen of SAGES Ministry, who mentioned Ernie & Kathy

Freudenburg's help organizing and supporting this ministry geared to elderly adults.

Director of Worship Report: Cindy Wessel reported we are in the process of onboarding with Churchfront, a company selected to provide coaching for the Worship Ministries and assistance with the Sanctuary renovation project. Cindy also stated there will be a **Night of Worship** on Friday, January 19, 2024.

Treasurer's Report: Roger Lindahl reported general fund giving for November was \$42,289 and expenses were \$50,753, with a deficit of (\$8,463). November receipts were \$10,572/week which is below the average of \$11,500/week forecast to cover 2023 expenses. Appreciation of and encouragement in giving were both discussed.

Elders: Brandon Marsh reported attendance levels for November. Averaging 140 /week (plus online over 25), the RCLS band joined us in worship on November 19 with 266 present. 100 persons worshiped in person on Thanksgiving Eve.

Outreach: Adam McClung highlighted 355 shares and 12.62 blessing boxes were distributed on December 9 during the Ruby's Pantry distribution. CarePortal: Nine queen mattresses were donated. Many deliveries included chairs, tables, couches, beds, and various baby gear. Please know that extra hands (and muscle) would be greatly appreciated. Let Adam, or Denise Frey, know if you'd be willing to be on a 'call list' to help with deliveries. Or you may write this down on a Connection Card. Thank you!

RCLS: (Reps Laura Rhee and Dan Johnson) reported that Mr. Kyle Williams has been hired as the new RCLS Facilities Manager. The Call Committee for Principal will begin reviewing candidates soon.

Council Discussions: Topics included the Budget status update for 2023; the draft 2024 Ministry Plan - in preparation for the Annual Meeting; the draft agenda for the Holy Cross 5-year planning workshop scheduled for Saturday morning - January 27, 2024; and the draft Budget for 2024.

~ Jo Dean, Holy Cross Council Secretary

Mid-January Issue of Fully Alive!

Non-Profit Org.

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Annual Report 2023



Stewardship
of Grace

www.holycross-church.org

Annual Meeting

Sunday
February 4, 2024
11 AM

Following worship-Lunch served