

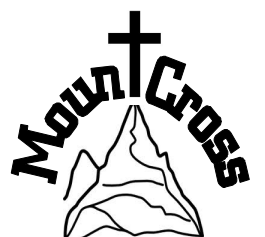
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# Mount Cross Chronicle

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March 2025

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**Lutheran Church**  
(ELCA)

601 E. Highway 260  
Payson, AZ 85541

Phone: 928-474-2552

[www.mountcross.org](http://www.mountcross.org)

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## **Sunday Worship/Communion Service**

9:30 a.m.

Livestreamed  
*Online Worship Service*

Mount Cross Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/MountCrossPayson>

Mount Cross YouTube Link

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=payson+mount+cross](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=payson+mount+cross)

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Pastor

Rev. Carl Sirotzki

928-474-2552

608-370-1284 (emergencies)

[pastor@mountcross.org](mailto:pastor@mountcross.org)

Music Director

Daria Mason

[daria1024mason@gmail.com](mailto:daria1024mason@gmail.com)

Accompanist

Angeline Ng

Office Administrator

Lenore M. White

[secretary@mountcross.org](mailto:secretary@mountcross.org)

Custodian

Keri Morris

## ***Pastor's Musings & Ponderings***

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord..." (Acts 3:19, NIV)*

This year, Ash Wednesday is on March 5<sup>th</sup>. This marks the beginning of Lent. Using ashes as a sign of repentance is an ancient Jewish practice, that is mentioned in both the Old and New testaments. Beginning with the early Christian Church, this practice then became an external mark of penitence. Ashes also remind us of our human mortality. When we receive the ashes in the sign of the cross on our foreheads and hear, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," we are reminded of our human mortality. Likewise, we are also reminded of our baptism when the sign of the cross was made on our foreheads. Ashes also serve as a reminder of our need to repent as well as a sign of cleansing and renewal.

The ELCA says this about Lent, "Lent is the forty-day season (excluding Sundays) of penitence and preparation for the Three Days of Holy Week and Easter." Over the years, I have been asked why Sundays during Lent are not considered to be part of the forty days. I think the easiest answer is that Sundays are always celebrated as feasts of the Resurrection.

"*Burying the alleluias*" usually occurs during or at the end of worship on Transfiguration Sunday, which we will do on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Alleluias will return on Easter Sunday. But why do we "bury" the alleluias? We do this to symbolically remind us that the time of Lent is a time of repentance and meditation. It serves as a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sake.

On Ash Wednesday, we will host a noon service which will include communion and the Imposition of Ashes. Then, at 7:00 p.m., Mount Cross will host the Ecumenical Ash Wednesday service which will also include communion and the Imposition of Ashes.

During Lent here at Mount Cross, we will have soup suppers and the Holden Evening Prayer service on Wednesdays with supper at 5:00 p.m. and worship at 6:00 p.m. This year, we will also hear powerful dramatic monologues during Wednesday worship. We will first hear from the paralytic who was lowered through the roof, followed by Peter's mother-in-law, Martha, Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene.

Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion is on April 13<sup>th</sup> and Easter on April 20<sup>th</sup>. If you would like be a participant in reading the gospel on Palm Sunday, please let me know as soon as possible.

Peace,

*Pastor Carl*

Philippians 1:3-4



Our  
STATEMENT . . . †

ChristConnectingCommunity

Please note: hosts are needed for the Mid-week Lenten soup suppers on April 2<sup>nd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>. If you or a group of you would like to host please let Sharon Vaplon know or contact the church office.



## 2025 Lenten Schedule

Sunday, March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Transfiguration of Our Lord – Message: <i>“Burying the Alleluias”</i>	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Ash Wednesday Mid-day Service – Mount Cross	12:00 p.m.
	Ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service – Mount Cross	7:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 9 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Soup Supper – Hosts: Worship & Music Committee	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
	Lenten monologue: The Paralytic	
Sunday, March 16 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Soup Supper – Hosts: Altar Guild	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
	Lenten monologue: Peter’s mother-in-law	
Sunday, March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 26 <sup>th</sup>	Soup Supper – Hosts: Bells/Praise Choir	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
	Lenten monologue: Martha	
Sunday, March 30 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Soup Supper – Hosts: ?	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
	Lenten monologue: Lazarus	
Sunday, April 6 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Soup Supper – Hosts: ?	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
	Lenten monologue: Mary Magdalene	
Sunday, April 13 <sup>th</sup>	Palm/Passion Sunday	9:30 a.m.
Thursday, April 17 <sup>th</sup>	Maundy Thursday Service – Mount Cross	6:00 p.m.
Friday, April 18 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday Mid-day Service – Mount Cross	12:00 p.m.
	Ecumenical Good Friday Service – Community Presbyterian Church	7:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Sunday Service – Mount Cross	9:30 a.m.
	Easter Sunday Brunch	10:45 a.m.





Mount Cross Financial Report (January 2025)

2025 Approved Budget . . . . .	\$335,793.00
Income . . . . .	\$29,686.00 (8.84% of 2025 budget)
Expenditures . . . . .	\$26,766.00 (7.97% of 2025 budget)

Total given to the Mortgage Fund during January 2025 . . . . .	\$1,920.00
Total paid out in 2025 for mortgage . . . . .	\$2,865.00

*Please note: above amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.*

Total income received from Thrivent “Choice Dollars” in 2025	
Mount Cross. . . . .	\$265.00

Our January contributions exceeded expenses, so we started the year off well. Thank you to those who faithfully support Mount Cross with their contributions.

Yours in Christ,  
Financial Team

This year, Mount Cross’ participation in the SouperBowl collection on Superbowl Sunday resulted in \$1,317.33, an increase of \$421.33 over last year’s \$905.00. The money collected will be sent to the Deacon’s Food Pantry.



Non-perishable food in the amount of 35 items were delivered to the Deacon’s Food Pantry. This was an increase of more than double from the 2024 donations.

Thank you, Mount Cross, for the generosity that you show through giving a local organization that assists those who are hungry in the community.



Lent begins on Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> . We will again use the pink pigs as a vehicle for you to donate checks (written to Mount Cross with World Hunger in the memo line) or cash as gifting sources during the 40 days of Lent. Our gifts will be collected on Palm Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>.

The entrance table just inside the sanctuary has copies of the *Lent Study 2025* and pink pig boxes for depositing “World Hunger” money and be found on the fellowship tables in the back of the sanctuary.

# Women of the ELCA

This is the last “WELCA News” as we are no longer involved in this group. It is due to lack of interest and attendance at our meetings. We are now asking for your input as to what you may wish to see in Women’s Ministry in the future. Pastor Carl and I will be brainstorming on what we can do in the future, thus your input is critical.

For years Eloise Jones has led the Women’s Bible study sessions, with me as a substitute. In the case of Eloise, we owe her a huge thank you. She put a great deal of time in preparing for the monthly sessions. We are suspending the monthly meetings during Lent.

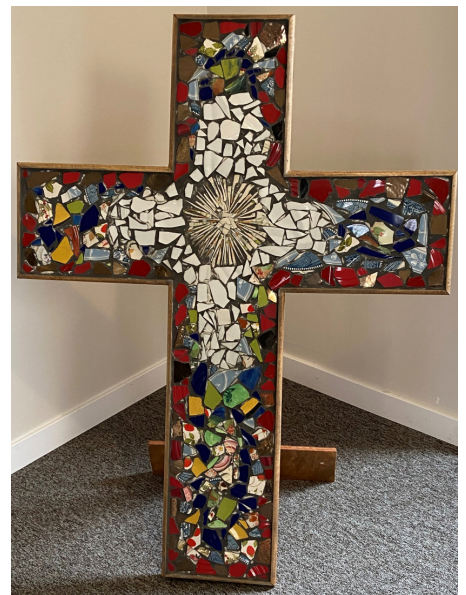
As we look at the future of Mount Cross ministries, many things ended when Covid hit, and there has been a lack of interest ever since. If we want to have a viable church, it is our responsibility to be involved in making our church a vibrant exciting worship center. Each of us, as members, share that responsibility. So what do you, as congregation members, wish to be known as in our community?

*Alice Natale*  
WELCA president



From this....

to this!



**Please bring flat plates and saucers** of ceramic, china, or Corelle ware during Lent. They will be broken and used for the mosaic cross that will be revealed on Easter Sunday. If you would like to volunteer to either break plates and/or help with designing the broken pieces for the cross, please let Pastor Carl know as soon as possible. **Do not bring in bowls or cups because of the curvature or plastic dishes due to the composition.**

## Pastor Carl’s weekly schedule

Monday: Sabbath (day off)

Tuesday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Friday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Saturday: By appointment

Thursday: study, prayer time

(not in office on Thursdays, but available by phone, emergencies)





As we enter the Lenten season, let us use this time to do some introspection.

Am I kind to those we meet?  
Do I feel ill will towards someone who has offended me?  
If so, have I truly forgiven them?  
Am I critical of others?  
Do I feel envy?

May we ask God to give us insight when looking within ourselves and assist us in striving to become more like the example He has provided to us through His son, Jesus.

Hello dear siblings in Christ,  
I pray you are doing well and shining with the light of Christ.

It has been some time since my last newsletter sharing with you about my life and ministry as an ELCA Global Missionary. But, I am glad to finally share some big news with you, both here and in my newsletter.

I have moved from Zambia in southern Africa to Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Madagascar. I actually moved to Madagascar one year ago this week! As you can imagine when one moves to a new country and begins a new call, the last year has been quite hectic yet full of interesting and challenging ministry.

You will find more information, photos, and news in my February 2025 Newsletter (*see the following two pages or access through this link*):

<https://alongwithpastorkristin.blogspot.com/2025/02/february-2025-newsletter.html>

Also, if you would like to get to know all the ELCA Global Missionaries, the directory is now online here: [https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2024\\_Global\\_Mission\\_Personnel\\_Directory.pdf](https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2024_Global_Mission_Personnel_Directory.pdf)

Finally, please keep our siblings in Christ in Madagascar in your prayers. We are in the midst of rainy season, which means most people are out in the fields, cultivating rice, casava, and other vegetable. Also pray for the Malagasy Lutheran Church Healthcare System, as they are one of the many life-giving programs in Madagascar who had received support from USAID that has now been cut. Thankfully, the ELCA continues to support this necessary healthcare system here in Madagascar.

Grace and peace and the love of God be with you,  
Pastor Kristin Engstrom  
ELCA global missionary in Madagascar

**God's work.  
Our hands.**



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

What can you do to be a part of God's work? The simple answer...just look around you and see where your talents lie.

Do you enjoy chatting with people and making them feel welcome?

Perhaps you could become involved with the Congregational Life Team or become a greeter or usher at the Sunday service.

These groups are integral to making people feel at home.

For more information about becoming:

- ♦ a team member for Congregational Life, contact Nancy Kellett (520-425-7430)
- ♦ a greeter/usher, contact Sharon Vaplon (928-970-0860)



#### March Birthdays

- 3 Jean Petrie
- 4 Ray Wiebe
- 6 Tony Andretta
- 9 Barb DeYoung
- 14 Sharon Vaplon
- 23 Jo Sirotzki
- 24 Audrey Ricker
- 27 Karen Ritterbusch

#### March Wedding Anniversaries

- 5 Jeff/Susan Nafziger
- Bill/Jean Petrie

#### March Baptismal Anniversaries

- 15 Tony Andretta
- 26 Patience Linkey





## ALONG WITH PASTOR KRISTIN

Pastor Kristin Engstrom, ELCA Global Missionary

February 2025

### Catching Up on News from 2024: On the Move (Again)

I have been serving as an ELCA global missionary since 2016. It is hard to believe it has been nine years since I first packed three suitcases to begin a new life in Senegal, West Africa. As a pastor and global missionary, I have committed to go where God and the church call me. In 2023, God and the ELCA once again called me to a new country and to be in relationship with a new church. In February 2024, I arrived in Madagascar to begin a new call as the ELCA Country Representative. I will also be the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) Country Coordinator when the program resumes in Madagascar. In my nine years as an ELCA global missionary, I have served in Senegal, Zambia, and now Madagascar—all in the Africa region.



Welcome reception by Malagasy church leaders and project leaders supported by the ELCA.

Over the past year, I have travelled throughout Madagascar to get to know the people and ministries of the Malagasy Church. I have been welcomed into Church Council meetings, witnessed leadership elections at the National Church Assembly, learned from seminaries, inclusive schools, and vocational training centers, visited healthcare, development, and gender justice projects, preached sermons, and ate many shared meals.

The Malagasy Lutheran Church has five million members and is one of the fastest growing Lutheran churches in the world. Madagascar is also one of the poorest countries in the world. So, the church is focused on their mission to share the gospel holistically. Over the past year, it has been wonderful to learn from the faithful leaders in Madagascar, as we walk together in the God's gospel mission.



### Accompanying Pastor Kristin

My work as an ELCA Global Missionary is possible thanks to the generosity of many congregations and individuals in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Thank you! You can contact me at [kristin.engstrom@elca.org](mailto:kristin.engstrom@elca.org). You are also invited to support me as an ELCA Global Missionary here.

I have a blog at <https://alongwithpastorkristin.blogspot.com>, where you can find previous newsletters and occasional updates from Madagascar.



Pastor Kristin Engstrom

I serve as the ELCA Country Representative with the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and will also be the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) Country Coordinator when the program resumes in Madagascar. I have been an ELCA global missionary since 2016, serving first in Senegal and then Zambia, before coming to Madagascar.

I'm originally from the midwestern United States, and served as a parish pastor in northern New Jersey for six years prior to beginning my call with ELCA Global Mission.





## 2024 Year in Review

I wasn't able to send a Newsletter in 2024 to share about my new call in Madagascar. I have included photos below that show some of the ministries of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.



Malagasy Lutheran Church = Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy  
Foibe = Head Office



MLC Communication Office & Radio Station:  
Rev. Yves, center, Communications Coordinator.



Welcomed in worship at Toliara synod in southern Madagascar. The boat is a welcome gift, symbolizing the journey missionaries take to arrive in Madagascar. ELCA missionaries have worked in southern Madagascar since 1888.



Visit to SEFAM, the MLC Nursing and Medical Tech Training School. The MLC Health System is the 2nd largest in Madagascar, after the government health system. L-R: Theologian Saholy, Rev. Kristin, Rev. Themba, Dr. Hanitra (SEFAM Director)



Professors at Betela Seminary on graduation day. There are 5 regional seminaries and 1 Masters level school of theology in MLC. ELCA supports 2 seminaries and the school of theology.

Betela Director, Pastor Albert is 3rd from left. Mahjanga Synod Pres. Tsiri is in the center.

## Spiritual Growth Opportunities

### Worship Services

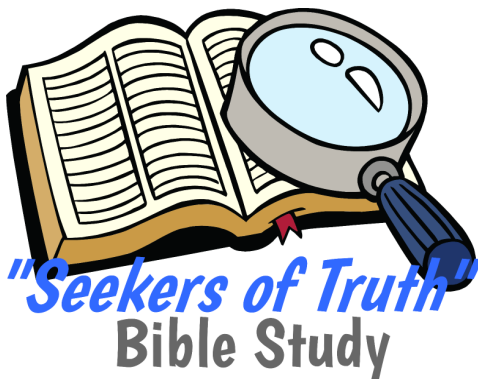
Weekly in-house communion & worship service held in the sanctuary; live stream of the service is available on Facebook.

Sundays, 9:30 AM

### Seekers of Truth Bible study

This is a monthly Bible study which will be focusing on the parables of Jesus. All are welcome to attend.

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, 10:00 AM in the Ponderosa Room.



Seekers of Truth is a small Bible study and fellowship group for women and men, which is held on the third Thursday of each month in the Ponderosa Room at 10:00 a.m. March 20<sup>th</sup> is the date for this month's meeting.

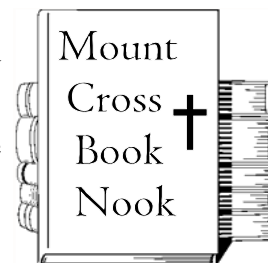
The group is currently studying the parables of Jesus.

All are welcome to attend. All you need is a Bible. The formal discussion period of the meeting generally lasts about an hour and is followed by a time for sharing and support. If you have questions please contact Sue Bobek, the group discussion leader or Jan Bartoli, the group facilitator.

In March, a "freebie" table will be set up in the narthex and items will be on the table that you may pick up for your personal library or to read and pass on to someone else.

The library cart will be stocked with Lent and Easter oriented books. Please feel free to peruse those items and borrow one that interests you.

Your Librarian,  
*Eloise Jones*



## Your Cross To Bear



Whatever your cross, whatever your pain,  
there will always be sunshine, after the rain.

Perhaps you may stumble, perhaps even fall;  
But God's always ready, to answer your call.



He knows every heartache, sees every tear,  
a word from His lips, can calm every fear.



Your sorrows may linger, throughout the night,  
But suddenly vanish, by dawn's early light.

The Savior is waiting, somewhere above,  
to give you His grace, and send you His love.

