
Mount Cross Chronicle

December 2023



601 E. Highway 260
Payson, AZ 85541
Phone: 928-474-2552
www.mountcross.org

Sunday Worship Services

9:30 a.m.

Worship/Communion Service

Livestreamed

Online Worship Service

Pastor
Rev. Carl Sirotzki
474-2552
pastor@mountcross.org

Music Director
Daria Mason
daria1024mason@gmail.com

Accompanist
Angeline Ng

Office Administrator
Lenore M. White
secretary@mountcross.org

Custodian
Keri Morris

Pastor's Musings & Ponderings

"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (NRSV)

I don't know about you, but for me, November just seemed to fly! I hope that you all had a blessed Thanksgiving. November is a special month for me, as Jo and I celebrated our 37th wedding anniversary, I celebrated my 8th ordination anniversary, and then we celebrated our son and his wife's (Matt and Christine) 9th wedding anniversary.

Advent begins December 3rd and marks the beginning of the new liturgical year, which this year is B. Liturgical Year B, focuses primarily on the Gospel of Mark, however, we will also be hearing from John.

Do we look at Advent and Christmas as something we just lump together or do we truly see Advent and Christmas as two separate seasons? When most of us think about Advent, do we just look at Christmas as being only four weeks away and that means presents? Hopefully, Advent is so much more than that. Advent is a time of waiting, hope, and expectation. Advent also offers us a time to reflect. To reflect on what Christmas, the birth of our Savior really means to us. Advent also reminds us to prepare and look forward to the expected return of Jesus Christ.

Let's face it, Christmas does have various appeals to different people. While thinking about Christmas, listening to the variety of Christmas music, shopping for presents, watching holiday movies, or planning get-togethers can be a lot of fun, but they can never outshine the star the shepherds saw nor can any of those things exceed the significance of our Savior's birth.

As we enter this season of Advent, let us remember and hold in our hearts that to hope in God is not to simply wait but to "keep alert." Let us always keep in mind that to hope is to know that the coming of Christ doesn't happen one day out of the year, but happens during the course of our daily lives along with all of its joys and burdens. It is throughout our everyday lives that we can see how Christ is with us every step of the way.

I pray that we always celebrate and worship the fact that the light of Jesus Christ continues to shine on in the darkness, that the darkness will never be able to overcome the light, and that we can never be separated from God's unconditional love. Blessings to you and your families today, tomorrow, and always!

Peace,
Pastor Carl
Philippians 1: 3-4



Our
STATEMENT . . .

† ChristConnectingCommunity



As we enter the Holy Season of Jesus' birth, and we look at the present day issues around the world, we need to fall on our knees, as Jesus did, asking the Father to give us peace, and love.



Mount Cross will not be serving the Payson Community Kids supper in December, due to the school calendar. We will resume in January.

The PCK program is in need of homework helpers and supervisors. If anyone is interested in volunteering at the after school program, you can call the Payson Community Kids Office at 928-478-7160 for more information.



The Quilters will be meeting only once during December at 9:00 a.m. on the Wednesday the 13th and will be held in the log building.

The plan for this month is to "lay out" the various material squares in eye-catching colors and patterns for future quilts. If you have an artistic flair and enjoy putting things together in an appealing way, you are welcome to join in for a great time of fellowship and creativity.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>
December 3 rd	1 st Sunday of Advent Worship Service (theme: <i>The Voices of Advent</i>)	9:30 a.m.
December 6 th	Advent Supper – hosts: Scott Stallard/Marlu Allan	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Advent Service (theme: <i>The Gifts of Advent</i>) – sanctuary	6:00 p.m.
December 10 th	2 nd Sunday of Advent Worship Service (theme: <i>The Voices of Advent</i>)	9:30 a.m.
December 13 th	Advent Finger-food Supper – hosts: Dorothy Gieseke/Barb Howe/Jean Petrie	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Advent Service (theme: <i>The Gifts of Advent</i>) – sanctuary	6:00 p.m.
December 16 th	Handel's Messiah concert – sanctuary	7:00 p.m.
December 17 th	3 rd Sunday of Advent Worship Service (theme: <i>The Voices of Advent</i>)	9:30 a.m.
December 20 th	Advent Finger-food Supper – hosts: Altar Guild	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Advent Service (theme: <i>The Gifts of Advent</i>) – sanctuary	6:00 p.m.
December 24 th	Christmas Eve Worship Service (theme: <i>The Voices of Advent</i>)	3:00 p.m.
December 31 st	New Years Eve Worship Service	9:30 a.m.

Mount Cross Financial Report (January – October 2023)



2023 Approved Budget	\$326,229.00
Income	\$212,459.00 (65% of 2023 budget)
Expenditures	\$192,052.00 (59% of 2023 budget)
Total given to the Mortgage Fund during October 2023	\$29,020.00
Total paid out in 2023 for mortgage	\$28,650.00

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

Total income received from Thrivent "Choice Dollars" in 2023
Mount Cross. \$449.00

October brought us into the first month of being served by a "permanent" pastor. Welcome, Pastor Carl! A 2024 budget was worked on by the Church Council and they were able to come up with a total budget amount of approximately \$8K less than the 2023 budget.

Stewardship packets have been placed in your church mailbox, so please pick up the information and prayerfully consider how you will serve the church with the gifts God has given you, either of your time and/or financially. Commitment Sunday will be held on December 10th. Your commitment cards and your "time & talent" sheets may be returned prior to the date by either mailing it, dropping it by the office, or putting it in the collection plate and will be held for Commitment Sunday. Mount Cross disciples continue to be generous with their contributions, and as we approach the final month of the 2023 year, we would like to thank you for your continued support of Mount Cross.

Yours in Christ,
Financial Team

2023 Credit for Contributions

Please note: If you have any funds that you plan on giving and want credited to the 2023 year, the contribution would need to be received prior to December 30th. Any monies received after that day will be credited to the 2024 year.

God's work.
Our hands.



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

This came as an email, citing The Little Book of Prayers by St. Teresa of Avila.

*"Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work. Yours are the only feet with which he can go ab out the world. Yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world.
CHRIST HAS NO BODY ON EARTH NOW, BUT YOURS."*

In this season of giving, what can you do for Christ? Look around, there is something for all of us.



ELCA Good Gifts catalog are available in the narthex for you to use to provide ideas and answers for your CHRISTmas gift list.

There are hundreds of ELCA projects in 80 countries around the world that your gifts help fund. Gifting of farm animals helps provide ongoing food sources for many of the people who live in those countries. You can also choose to the gift of education, as the people are taught how to care for the animals and grow crops. Education also includes providing children with school supplies or vocational training for adults. There are many options to select from and you can view them and order online at <https://goodgifts.elca.org/all-gifts>.

Free Advent calendars and devotionals can also be found on the *Good Gifts* table, which you can use for yourself or family members.



Concert Band & Jazz Ensemble

Directed by Mr. Michael Buskirk



Tuesday, December 12th, 2023
7:00 p.m.
Mt. Cross Lutheran Church
Free admission & refreshments



**PAYSON
CAMPUS**

Eastern Arizona College, Payson Campus
 201 N. Mud Springs Rd. Payson, Arizona 85541
 (928) 468 - 8039 - www.eac.edu

Eastern Arizona College does not discriminate in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities on the basis of race, creed, color or national origin, sex, disability, or age. Approved for veterans benefits. Tuition is waived for Arizona residents who are 55-plus. Tuition waiver does not cover class or lab fees, books, or out-of-state tuition.



Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Sunday
December 24th
3:00 PM



REMINDER

Attention Committee Chairs: Annual Report time is just around the corner.

Reports for committees not reporting financial detail are due to the church office no later than Friday, December 15, 2022.

Committees requiring end of year financial statements from the bank, your reports are due to the church office no later than Friday, January 12, 2023, in order to allow for receipt of year-end financial statements.



The office will also have shortened hours on December 18th, 19th, and 20th; the hours for those day will be 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.



December Birthdays

- 4 Jan Bartoli
- 12 Sue Hess
- 17 Nancy Kellett
- 18 Patience Linkey
- 19 Helen Swenson
- 29 Bill Lee

December Anniversaries

- 12 Ernie/Nancy Kellett
- 26 Jim/Virginia McCall

December Baptisms

- 6 Gail Bensen
- 7 Mavis Denofsky
- 17 Lori Andretta
- 21 Eloise Jones
- 30 Jan Bartoli

Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to remember a loved one during the Christmas season, purchasing a Poinsettia to decorate the altar for Christmas, please complete the form found in your December 3rd Sunday bulletin, place in one of the envelopes provided, and either place in the offering plate or bring/mail to the church office. If writing a check, please make it payable to: Mount Cross Lutheran Church with "Poinsettias" written in the memo line. If you would like your poinsettia, you may pick it up after the Christmas Day service. This year the price is \$15 each and we must have your order by December 18th.

Directed by Beth Christensen

Presented at

PAYSON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
Saturday, December 16, 2023 11:00 A.M.

MT. CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH
Saturday, December 16, 2023 7:00 P.M.

PAYSON FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
Sunday, December 17, 2023 4:00 P.M.

Charitable Offering to cover expenses

Some of you will know me and for others this is the first time. My name is Karen Ritterbusch and I have been a Mount Cross parishioner since 2002. I remember that year well, because it started off with a happy note being introduced to Mount Cross by retired Pastor Ed Blair, who made us feel very welcome. Also, both my husband and I were able to retire to Pine. However only a few months after our move my husband was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent several surgeries and treatments. Through lots of prayer he is now 80 years old.

Less than 6 years later, I too was diagnosed with cancer and underwent 2 surgeries and treatment. We both survived not only those journeys, but quite a few more since that time.

I'm not here to go on and on about our life stories, as we all realize that in this life we have all suffered in one way or another or may still be carrying wounds and worries for ourselves or loved ones.

In early May of this year, due to extreme levels of stress and my desire to self titrate off of a medication that I had been on for years since cancer, I started to literally fall apart both physically and mentally. I could not sleep, relax, or think of anything positive even though I've always thought of myself as a very self-motivated and optimistic individual. My anxiety levels and depression were at the top of the scale and at that point the mind tends to think negatively. I made appointment after appointment with doctors hoping they could come up with a reason for my steady health decline, but nothing was found. The fact that I was born with a congenital heart valve defect along with a dysfunctional nervous system didn't seem to register with anyone. Also, the chemo I was given years prior further affected my nervous system. Doctors I saw believed nobody should be in this condition after a slight titration from a medication and stress. During this time, I was prescribed an anti-depressant for sleep which also was used for anxiety. I stayed on that medication for 2 months per doctors instructions and I started to develop severe tremors in my legs and hands and suffered 2 seizures. I was flown to a hospital in Phoenix for further evaluation. After several brain scans and additional tests, I was sent home with the diagnosis of epilepsy along with prescriptions for more pills. I never took those pills, as I felt a strong sense this was not the source of my problems. With everything going on, I prayed that God would guide me into wellness and give me some answers. **He has been answering those prayers one by one and is the real reason I'm standing here today giving Him all glory, praise and honor.** I continue to improve through alternative modalities and my health has been getting better with each day. As I recover, my energy levels are poor and some days I remain in bed, but I have faith this too will eventually pass. All of the symptoms have disappeared (mainly due to a severe reaction to the anti-depressant I was prescribed) and no, I do not have epilepsy.

I made a promise that if God's Will was to make me well again I would give testament to his Almighty power, goodness and love. Dave's 2nd bout of another cancer was diagnosed in 2019 and we once again turn to prayers and our faith that God will be right next to us. We all have to leave this world when our time comes, but if it's not our time and if a health crisis comes up with you or a loved one, or any kind of trauma that you can't see yourself get out of, be sure to call upon Him who promises to hear all prayers. Give your burdens to God for he has said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I now have learned to give my concerns to Someone who can really do something about them...not me!

For years I felt my purpose here was to help others to the best of my ability and I believe I fulfilled that desire until doing so nearly killed me with my own health issues. I'm now older and praying that God will show me what His Will is for me now. For one, I would love to return to helping in different ways here at Mount Cross when I feel completely healed.

Thank you all who have been praying for both Dave and I.

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

WELCA Bible study

This is a monthly Bible study using the studies found in the WELCA publication "Gather". All women are welcome to attend.

2nd Thursday of the month, 10:00 AM in the Ponderosa Room.

Seekers of Truth Bible study

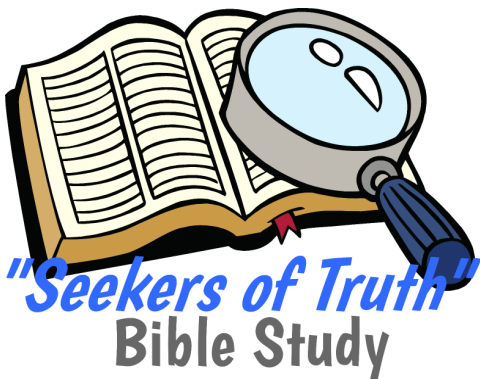
This is a monthly Bible study which will be focusing on the 13 letters of Paul. All are welcome to attend.

3rd Thursday of the month, 10:00 AM in the Ponderosa Room.



The monthly WELCA (Women of the ELCA) Bible study will be held in the Ponderosa Room on Thursday, December 14th, at 10:00 a.m.

Gather's annual Advent devotional focuses on "The Magnificat, Song of Mary" (see Luke 1:46b-55). In her song, Mary, the mother of Jesus, praises God for turning the world upside down, or perhaps it should be said, "turning the world right-side-up!"



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. December 21st is the date for this month's meeting.

The group is currently studying the 13 letters of Paul in the New Testament.

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.

Pastor Carl's weekly schedule

Monday: Sabbath (day off)

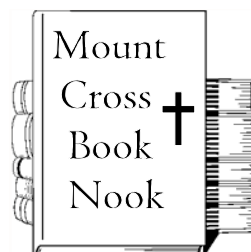
Tuesday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Thursday: study, prayer time (not in office, but available by phone, emergencies)

Friday: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Saturday: By appointment



Every book pertaining to Christmas in our church library has been pulled off the shelves and placed on the library cart.

I know this is a busy time of the year, but maybe if you took some time to relax with a good book you could get more things done.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas
& a Happy and Healthy New year!

Your Librarian,
Eloise Jones

Women of the ELCA

Our Bible study has been written by Pastor Meghan Aelabouni who serves in Palestine. She has focused on Holy Places in her studies. Living in Palestine, is both difficult and inspiring. She is living where Jesus walked, looking at places he touched, and teaching Christianity to folks who may not embrace this faith, while also serving as spiritual leader to the Christian Palestinians. Focusing on Holy Places that are in Palestine gives us a view of God living on earth through his son, Jesus. We are connected to God. For Christians and Jews, that is our God. For the Moslems, it is Allah. All three religions see this place as Holy Ground.

Bringing that forward to our world, where our connection to God must be built through our lifestyle and our faith, where do you see God? Is it when the church bell rings and symbolically we know that Christ has entered the church? Is it when you hear beautiful music, like Handel's Messiah or Beethoven's 9th, that you realize man is given talent to share with others, showing the Magnificence of God. Is it when you look over the great forest that we live in, and know in your heart that God created so much beauty in the world? Is it when you look upon the universe, realize we are only a speck in the universe of God's creation and wonder why he created us in his image on this rather small planet, when there are so many other places he could have placed us?

I love the desert. It is life stripped down to the simplest reality. It is possible to see God everywhere. I also love getting up, opening the blinds, and embracing God's love and the new song of morning. After a day's work, or contemplation with God in prayer and reading, a beautiful sunset is another gift provided by God. Yes, on this earth he experienced life as we live it, but it is his loving grace that keeps us going.

Find your sacred place of holy, make the connection with God, build your faith, and then share with others. You are embraced with God's Love.

Alice Natale
WELCA president

Stewardship *time*

A pledge card and a *time and talents* sheet has been placed in your church mailbox. The *time and talent* sheet is important for you to share which skills or interests you may have within the realms of church activities. The stewardship card assists in committing to the sharing of your funds for the ongoing support of the church and its activities during the 2024 year. When involved in church, whether through *time and talent* or monetarily, will assist in furthering the church's ministries. Please prayerfully consider your giving for the 2024 year. Commitment Sunday is Sunday, December 10th. Your envelope with the completed pledge card/time & talent sheets can be returned to the office in advance either by dropping the items by, mailing in, or placing in the offering plate.



Praise Choir rehearsal times will be changing, beginning in January of 2024. Practices will remain on Thursdays, but Praise Choir will be held at 4:15 p.m. and Bell Choir will continue to be at 5:30 p.m.



Council

Barry DeChaine (3 year term)
Barb Howe (3 year term)
Wayne Peterson (3 year term)
Alice Natale (1 year term)
Sharon Vaplon (1 year term)

Memorial Committee

Mary Havenor (3 year term)
Sharry Lien (3 year term)

Congratulations and welcome, newly elected/re-elected members!

Many thanks to Sharry Lien for accepting nomination for reelection for Memorial Committee and Sharon Vaplon for Council. Sharon will be fulfilling Tom Spencer's term.

A warm welcome to these newly elected members: Barry DeChaine, Barb Howe, and Wayne Peterson for Council. Alice Natale has agreed to return to the Council for one year; her willingness to become a member of Council after only a year of being away from serving on the Church Council is a blessing. She will be filling one of the two years left from Carrie Backe's term. Mary Havenor will be joining the Memorial Committee.

Also, much appreciation to Ron Nelson, the outgoing member of the Council, for his willingness to serve on Mount Cross Council! Due to health reasons and encouragement from his doctor, Gary Greer has resigned from Council. We would like to thank Gary for his years of service in the position of acting secretary and more recently, Council president!

Budget of \$318,013.00 for the 2024 year was approved.

The updates made to Mount Cross' constitution (based on the *ELCA's model constitution for congregations*) and by-laws, to bring them into compliance, were accepted; this acceptance of the updated constitution and by-laws have now become official after a year of awaiting Synod approval.

CONTRIBUTING IN 2024

This year, your contribution envelopes for 2024 are going to be handled differently. It has been decided that envelopes for the coming year will be created in-house. There were a few factors involved in this decision. There are many contributors who are paying once a month, so there isn't a need for a packet with weekly envelopes and some are sending their contributions through their bank's bill pay system, thus do not need envelopes.

The in-house created envelopes will be tailored to the individual contributor. You will find a banded set of envelopes, based on your giving style, which will be placed in your church mailbox toward the end of December. If you give monthly, you will receive 12 envelopes plus some extra for Advent and Lenten midweek giving. If you give weekly, you will receive 52 plus extras for the special offerings. Those giving via their bank bill pay will receive only a few for additional special offerings.

It is felt that this will be more cost effective for the church and it is hoped that this will be easier for everyone and their usage of envelopes.