
Mount Cross Chronicle

February 2024



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

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

Psalm 51:10

The weather in February has always proven to be a challenge for Jo and I for a long time. Although we understand February weather can be challenging here in Payson, I can honestly say we won't be missing the blizzards and sub-zero temperatures we had known growing up in the Midwest. However, February does give us a number of important dates such as Ground Hog Day, Valentine's Day, President's Day, Mardi Gras Day/Fat Tuesday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, and of course, George Washington's birthday! Hmm...it seems I may have missed another important day or should I say days? Of course, how could I forget, LENT!! Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of the forty days of Lent, comes to us this year on February 14th, yes, that is also Valentine's Day.

However, the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday, is Transfiguration Sunday. It is on this Sunday that we, in essence, will “bury” the Alleluias. This means that during Lent, we will not sing or use Alleluia in our worship. It has long been the tradition of the church to refrain from saying or saying “Alleluia” until Easter morning.

In addition to the Ash Wednesday Ecumenical Service in the evening, we will also have an Ash Wednesday service with the Imposition of Ashes here at Noon. The ritual of using ashes reminds Christians that we are mortal and that we are sinners repenting in dust and ashes which goes back to an Israelite tradition. During Lent, we acknowledge that we are mortal and will one day die, we confess and repent for our sins and need to be washed clean with the baptism of Easter.

Starting Wednesday February 21st, there will be a meal at 5pm and service at 6pm. We will continue to use the Holden Evening Prayer Services on those Wednesday evenings during Lent. What I have always liked about the Holden Evening Prayer is that it maintains a certain solemnness in its beauty that creates a reflective and contemplative atmosphere for all those who attend. The Holden Evening Prayer was written by Marty Haugen in the late 1980s while he was a musician for Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center located in the state of Washington.

During Lent, many of us continue to practice a form of fasting. Fasting can be a very meaningful experience, but if you choose to do this during Lent, please make sure you are fasting safely, especially if you have any health issues, so check with your health care provider before fasting. In addition to fasting, other practices that people take part in during Lent are prayer and a form of fasting/repenting by “giving up” or refraining from things of pleasure or extravagance such as certain foods, usually treats and other things of pleasure or extravagance that we enjoy (watching TV, going to movies, buying things, etc.).

I would like to propose another Lenten discipline. Instead of giving something up, try adding something to your Lenten practices such as prayer or serving in a church ministry. I do not remember who or where I first heard this idea, but I found this to be very meaningful. What I discovered and possibly you will too, was that I continued the practice even after Lent.

Pastor Carl



Our  STATEMENT . . . ChristConnectingCommunity



We must pray for the ending of hate and the ending of not hearing God as that still, small voice.



Our sloppy Joe supper for the Payson Community Kids' after school program will be held on Thursday, February 29th, with set-up at 4:15 p.m.

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.

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



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

We need volunteers within our church. A church is dependent upon our members to keep it going. Think about what your special talents are and then volunteer.



SuperBowl Sunday is just around the corner, so please begin to keep in mind the date of February 11, 2024, as a day to assist in tackling hunger...not just a day to watch your favorite team make football tackles on the field. This goal can be met in two ways: financially – giving money toward the cause and kept within the Payson community, or providing non-perishable food that will be transported directly to the Deacon's Food Pantry. Here at Mount Cross, we will be collecting both and reporting our giving to the national organization, tacklehunger.org.

**OFFICE
HOURS**

Office Closed
Monday, February 19th
in observance of
Presidents' Day
Federal holiday.

Mount Cross Financial Report (January – December 2023)



2023 Approved Budget	\$326,229.00
Income	\$268,525.00 (82.3% of 2023 budget)
Expenditures	\$224,589.00 (68.8% of 2023 budget)

Total given to the Mortgage Fund during December 2023 \$2,689.00
 Total paid out in 2023 for mortgage \$34,380.00

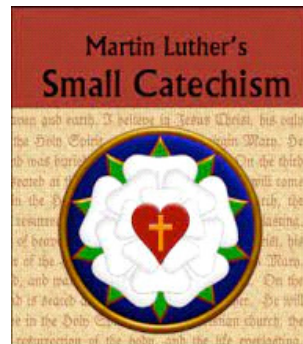
Please note: above amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

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

A new year has begun and we thank the Lord for the blessings that have been bestowed upon this church by the generous disciples during the 2023 year. We thank those who have faithfully supported Mount Cross with their contributions during this past year.

Yours in Christ,
Financial Team

SPECIAL Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 11th immediately after the service. Please stay to vote on an upcoming expenditure that requires congregational approval.



Confirmation classes will be held each Sunday, beginning on February 11th after the service. The very first class will meet immediately after the special congregational meeting.

All ages are welcome to attend; you may choose to attend to refresh your knowledge of the Lutheran faith, or as a newcomer to the Lutheran faith.



Lent begins on Wednesday, February 14th. 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, March 24th.

A small table in the narthex has copies of the *40 Days of Giving* Lenten Study Guide and pink pig boxes for depositing “World Hunger” money. These materials are available for your use during this Lenten season.

Each month I look for a thread of what I can write. This month our Bible study is focused on Scripture and Nature. We read the Bible, but do we consider all aspects of what is written?

To quote the author, Sara Olson Smith, “All scripture is inspired by God” a quote from 2nd Timothy, 3:16. As we look at this concept, think of a compound word that contains both TEEO (the word for God) and PNEO (a word for blow, exhale or breath out). The word is inspired by meaning the scripture is the living, breathing word of God. Much of our Scripture gives us ideas for understanding many things in life, starting with Hope. Does nature enter into this, yes. God refers to the heavens, the earth, the plants and the animals and the water. If you do not know this, start reading the Bible from the beginning. Make notes of the reference to nature.

Looking at our younger generation, many are seeking understanding of the world and how we got to the age of remote control of our lives. Many things are easy, other things become a nightmare if something goes wrong. Little human contact is happening today for many things in our lives. You can simply push an app, and move into selecting whatever your mental needs are at that moment. Can we inspire Hope if we do not interact with each other, or with God? I wonder. It seems like we have no time for that.

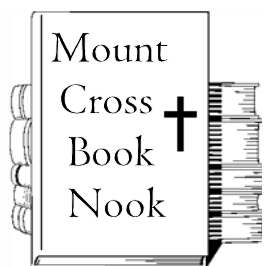
Volunteering in the library gives me a chance to see what young folk are reading. It often involves fantasy books, cartoon books, or occasionally a love story or science fiction. Did we go wrong with no fairy tales, no “suppose” to our thinking? Do we have time to relate to anything beyond the facts?

The author of our study cites “using the beginning of scripture as a way to understand what is not logical.” Most of Genesis is the matter of Good over Evil, or punishment for not making the right choices in the Garden of Eden. Much of Genesis is about things that our imaginations must grasp.

I occasionally hear people say things that we are not right with God, so he is punishing us. Storms, poverty, famine, and war. Is this God’s way of letting us know we are in trouble? John 3:16 does not say this. He gave us his Son to suffer for our sins, which means we can change our lives and seek redemption.

As members of the Lutheran Church we believe that God is a loving God. This gives us hope.

Alice Natale
WELCA president



This month, a table will be set out that will feature “freebie” books. You are welcome to peruse what is available and provide a new home for one of the books displayed on the table. Be sure to check it every week, as more books will be added as space becomes available. When finished, pass it on to a relative, a friend, or the local library.

On the library cart you will find books pertaining to Lent. Yes, Easter is just around the corner.

If you are returning a book, place it in the box on the top shelf on the cart. The weatherman is predicting a real cold spell this month, so what better time to curl up in a cozy chair and have a good read.

Your Librarian,
Eloise Jones



February Birthdays

6	Carrie Backe
12	Mary Walker
21	Diana Fletcher
25	Cathy Stewart
26	Gary Greer

February Wedding Anniversaries

11	Mike/Alicia Roberts
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February Baptisms

10	Tonnie Dice
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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, February 8th, at 10:00 a.m.

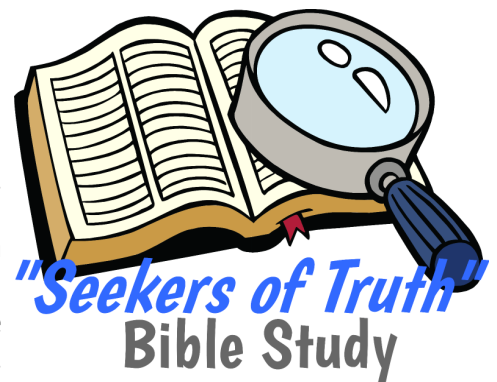
The subject of Gather's Bible study for winter/spring 2024 is "Scripture and Nature: Teachers of Faith" by Rev. Sara Olson-Smith. The February session will focus on "Creatures: Our Siblings in Praise and Trust."

We'll look at biblical animals (some adorable, some terrifying) from ravens and lions to a big fish, paired creatures on the ark, and that sneaky serpent in Eden. Stories of human and animal interactions in Scripture help to reorient our relationships with the creatures in our world, while pulling us into deeper trust in God.

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. February 15th 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.



Ruth Ann Richard's Celebration of Life Service
Saturday, February 3, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

Potluck lunch will take place in the log building
after the service.

Greetings my siblings in Christ from green, green Zambia,

It is rainy season here in Zambia. Even though the rains came a month late and seem to have paused for a couple weeks, it is still green or emerald season, as it is called here in Zambia. We hope that the rains will start again and continue for at least another month, so that the farmer's crops will keep growing and we will all have food to eat.

I am happy to share with you my February 2024 Newsletter. You'll find news about a Reformation visit and celebration in the Copperbelt District of north-central Zambia, as well as a young adult climate advocacy and education project (the first young adult project of its kind in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia)! You can also download and view the Newsletter at my blog:

<https://alongwithpastorkristin.blogspot.com/2024/02/february-2024-newsletter.html>



Finally, please keep the people of Zambia and especially here in the capital of Lusaka in your prayers. We are in the midst of a cholera outbreak. This can happen easily during rainy season, when the sewers overflow and drains are clogged, but it is especially bad this year. The practices put in place during COVID are helping us as well, as we wash our hands whenever we move into a new space or greet people. Churches are also doing deep cleaning before worship and limiting worship time.

May you all know and trust that God is with you, and with all our siblings around the world.

Mulungu, a ku daliseni.

Rev. Kristin Engstrom



I want to send a PERSONAL NOTE OF THANKS for the INCREDIBLE blood drive that Mount Cross hosted on Monday, January 22nd! The blood drive was an AMAZING SUCCESS and we are so grateful for our partnership with Mount Cross Lutheran Church and your support with hosting this lifesaving event!

There were 98 donors that registered to donate at the blood drive. Of those, there were 7 donors that were deferred, 3 donors that had 'quantity not sufficient' (this is typically due to the blood clotting prior to the blood donation being completed). We collected 74 units of whole blood and 14 donors that donated power red cells. All in all, there were 88 Successful donations at the blood drive!

THE LIVES OF 250 PATIENTS IN NEED COULD BE IMPACTED BY THIS BLOOD DRIVE! This is a very challenging time to collect the much needed blood products. This blood drive will make a significant impact on our current need for blood!

We look forward to our next Payson Community blood drive on Monday, April 22, 2024.

Lori Bone Hilliard

Senior Account Manager

Vitalant (formerly known as United Blood Services)



2024 Lenten Schedule

Wednesday, February 14 th	Ash Mid-day Service – Mount Cross sanctuary	12:00 p.m.
	Joint Ash Wednesday Service – Community Presbyterian Church	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 18 th	1 st Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, February 21 st	Fingerfood Supper	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 25 th	2 nd Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, February 28 th	Fingerfood Supper	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 3 rd	3 rd Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 6 th	Fingerfood Supper	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 10 th	4 th Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 13 th	Fingerfood Supper	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 17 th	5 th Sunday of Lent	9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, March 20 th	Fingerfood Supper	5:00 p.m.
	Mid-week Lenten Service (Holden Evening Prayer)	6:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 24 th	Palm/Passion Sunday	9:30 a.m.
Thursday, March 28 th	Maundy Thursday Service – Mount Cross	6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 29 th	Good Friday Mid-day Service – Mount Cross	12:00 p.m.
	Ecumenical Good Friday Service – Payson United Methodist	7:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 31 st	Easter Sunday Service – Mount Cross	9:30 a.m.



O gracious Master,
 infuse in our hearts the spotless light of Your Divine Wisdom and open the eyes of our mind
 that we may understand the teachings of Your Gospel.
 Instill in us also the fear of Your blessed commandments,
 so that curbing our desires of the flesh,
 we may lead a more spiritual life,
 both thinking and doing everything to please You.

For You, O Christ, our God,
 are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies;
 and to You we give the glory,
 together with Your eternal Father,
 and with Your all holy, life-creating Spirit,
 now and ever, and forever.
 Amen.

