

From your Interim Coordinator – April 26, 2022

It is hard to believe that this coming Sunday marks the beginning of May! It is nice to be past the bulk of the rainy and cold weather and get a chance to be outside in our yards enjoying nature and God's magnificent creation.

Last Sunday, April 24, 2022, we held a Service of the Word led by your Transition Team. Margo Jensen presented some thoughts and led the congregation in discussion of the Living Lutheran article "They May Not Come Back – And Here's Why" that had been handed out at the last Transition Team worship service in March. If you were unable to attend, you may watch a video recording of this service on the Holy Cross YouTube channel at; <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiHbmFBDWLG1W-jcI8jRhOQ>

This coming **Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 10:00 AM**, we will celebrate May Day with a Service of the Word and Sacrament led by our Interim Pastor Curtis Zieske. Prior to Holy Communion we will seat ourselves around small tables and have conversation with fellow members, including your Church Council and Transition Team. Please join us if you are able, to celebrate Spring and the renewed life in Christ here at Holy Cross Lutheran Church.

For those of you who missed last Sunday's service, I have included Margo's remarks beginning below, along with the three questions she presented for discussion. If the Spirit moves you, please send your thoughts and comments into the church office by either regular or electronic mail. We will be collating everyone's responses and sharing with the Transition Team Remember that your opinion matters and every voice counts. Together, we are the body of Christ, fed to do his mission here on the corner of Sunnyview & Lansing.

In closing, please continue to pray for your Church and your leadership as they make decisions concerning both the near and long-term future of Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Do not hesitate to reach out via email or phone with your questions or concerns.

Truly Your Servant in Christ, Bryan Struve, Interim Coordinator

Message presented on Sunday, April 24, 2022 by Margo Jensen

Good Morning! I am Margo Jensen and a member of the Transition Team.

The Transition Team continues to meet, gather information, discuss, and wrestle with where Holy Cross goes from here. Most of us, probably like most of you, would like to think we can just continue as we always have. That when we

call a new pastor, we will return to the vibrant, doing church we have always been. That we will be able to continue our missions of helping the homeless families of Salem and supporting our local community in the many ways we have over the years.

Unfortunately, it has been made clear as the Transition Team has pursued our task, that we probably are not going to be able to do so. We have multiple challenges that make it difficult to just call a pastor and call it good. Some of those are:

- Our membership has declined to a point where our financial base is unsteady.
- The number of members who do the daily, weekly, & monthly “running of the church” is not enough to continue indefinitely.
- There are 4 ELCA congregations in Salem and all of them are struggling to some extent or another.
- We are only able to afford a part-time pastor...While Pastor Patricia was here, she was a part time pastor. When we called her it was a full-time position, but became part-time. The number of pastors interested in a part-time call is very low. Churches have waited multiple years for a part-time pastor.
- Our building is too large for our congregation, both in usage and maintenance. We use it a lot for the community, but not as much for ourselves. The maintenance issues remain the same, however.
- As the article “They May Not Come Back and Here’s Why” indicates, most families and/or individuals are not looking for a church to join (or any other formal institution for that matter).

But let’s be clear. It is not all gloom and doom. We do have some strengths that may be able to help us overcome some of those challenges.

- Our building is used a lot by many groups from the Salem community, in a variety of ways.
- We have intentionally established, positive relationships with a number of community partners
- We have worked closely with Family Promise/IHN, in fact we were one of the founding congregations.
- Mano a Mano
- Salem Leadership Foundation

- Churches as Neighborhood Centers (CaN)
- Washington Elementary School
- Christ the Good Shepard and Saint Mark Lutheran Churches, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
- Manantial De Aqua Viva (Fountain of Living Water) worships here
- Stronger Together (a collaboration of East Salem Churches of a variety of denominations.

We are out there in the community. We may be small, but we have connected closely with the community. It is one of our strengths.

So as the article suggests, to remain vibrant as a congregation we must be willing to think outside the box. To do things in a very different manner than how they have been done before. **We** need to do things differently. **We** need to make choices that will lead us down a new path. Holy Cross probably needs to look very different from what it does now. As the article we read and the Transition Team's work is suggesting, now is that time to look at how we go forward in a very different way.

So, what I have just laid out may feel very uncomfortable to you. I know it does to me. I like things "the way they have always been". I'm not sure if I have the energy or the creativeness or the ideas or the willingness or all the things it would take to make some major changes. And I would assume you may be feeling the same way. That is understandable and to be expected.

The Transition Team wants to make something perfectly clear. No one is at fault for where we find ourselves today. Individually, we all do what we are able. We celebrate what each and everyone of you does for Holy Cross. We have had skillful, thoughtful and talented pastors over the years and we celebrate all that they have been able to do for Holy Cross. The world, in spite of us or the work we have done, is changing. Sure, the pandemic pushed some of those changes along. But even without the pandemic things have been changing.

The Transition Team has, in general, discussed some possible directions that we might choose to take. But the Transition Team is not a decision making team. Like everything we do here at Holy Cross, these big decisions belong to you. We aren't going to make any decisions today, nor will we in the next month or two. But it is time to start discussing what are some possibilities moving forward...and we need all of you to participate in those discussions. We know that these can be difficult discussions but, we also know that they can be empowering.

Today, as promised, we would like to spend a little time reflecting on and discussing the article “They May Not Come Back and Here’s Why” that is found in the March 2022 Living Lutheran. It may have been a while since you read it so *let me give you a brief overview of the article:*

When in-person worship resumed last year, congregations across America saw significant decreases in their attendance rates. While some churches grew, it is much more common to see a significant decrease. It is believed that the pandemic accelerated a cultural shift that has already been happening. And I think we have seen that here, at Holy Cross.

From the time of the Revolutionary War to the late 1960’s we were a country of voluntary association. During this long Age of Association, it was the norm to choose a congregation to join and to support it with donations. Congregations and service clubs followed a pattern of joining, organizing, participating and serving. It is what many of you remember and participated in if you grew up in a church.

In the late 60’s we started moving to an Age of Authenticity. People started leaving the voluntary associations and institutions. If they left their church, they often chose not to join another church. In general people are not joining churches, service clubs, or other traditional institutions as they did in the past. Things are more fluid and people identify less with institutions and more with individual choices and deeper connections. This is evident in many different ways in our society.

Because of this shift, churches now find themselves questioning how they can keep the core practices of their Christian faith and community but change to reach people in a new way.

Transition Team – Review Questions & Feedback from the article;
“They May Not Come Back – And Here’s Why”

- 1) *Age of Association and Age of Authenticity.* Based on the article, what is your understanding about the differences between the 2?
- 2) How do you feel Holy Cross has been affected by this cultural change?
- 3) What are Holy Cross’ Strengths and Challenges? Make lists

Worship at Home - Holy Cross Lutheran Church
May 1, 2022 – Third Sunday of Easter

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.
Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

In the waters of baptism, we have passed over from death to life with Jesus Christ, and we are a new creation. For this saving mystery, and for this water, let us bless God, who was, who is, and who is to come. We thank you, God, for your river of life, flowing freely from your throne: through the earth, through the city, through every living thing. You rescued Noah and his family from the flood; You opened wide the sea for the Israelites. Now in these waters you flood us with mercy, and our sin is drowned forever. You open the gate of righteousness and we pass safely through. In Jesus Christ, you calm and trouble the waters. You nourish us and enclose us in safety. You call us forth and send us out. In lush and barren places, you are with us. You have become our salvation. Now breathe upon this water and awaken your church once more. Claim us again as your beloved and holy people. Quench our thirst; cleanse our hearts; wipe away every tear. To you, our Beginning and our End, our Shepherd and Lamb, be honor, glory, praise, and thanksgiving, now and forever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal and all-merciful God, with all the angels and all the saints we laud your majesty and might. By the resurrection of your Son, show yourself to us and inspire us to follow Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

READINGS AND PSALM *God speaks to us in scripture reading and song.*

Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

Paul's conversion, baptism, and preaching

Psalm 30

You have turned my wailing into dancing. (Ps. 30:11)

Revelation 5:11-14

The song of the living creatures to the Lamb

John 21:1-19

Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Our hearts burn within us while you open to us the scriptures. *Alleluia.* (Luke 24:32)

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 391 “THIS JOYFUL EASTERTIDE”

APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Holy One of new beginnings, fill us with new life. Send us into the world as you sent your apostles Philip and James, to invite people to come and see your wondrous acts in Christ. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Revive ecosystems along coastlands that have been devastated by natural forces and human negligence. Reestablish plant and animal life that purifies air and water and that feeds humans and other living creatures.

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Accompany laborers who get little rest from their work. Give them hope when they struggle to produce what they need. Give all who labor fair treatment and just wages. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Restore all people who cry to you for help (*especially*). Turn their mourning into dancing, clothe them with joy, and put a testimony of healing and praise on their lips. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Be present to faithful ones who are persecuted for following you. Sustain them by your faithfulness, and give them strength in the name of Jesus.

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Join our voices with angels, creatures, and all the saints in praising Christ and bestowing upon him all blessing and honor and glory. Reveal Christ's glory to us and through us in our worship. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

OFFERING PRAYER

Living God, you gather the wolf and the lamb to feed together in your peaceable reign, and you welcome us all at your table. Reach out to us through this meal, and show us your wounded and risen body, that we may be nourished and believe in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

✠ GREAT THANKSGIVING

When our congregation gathered for the celebration of Holy Communion, we heard again the story of God's mighty acts and of the love shown us in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With thanksgiving we remembered that "in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

The people of our congregation were given assurance of our Lord's presence through the gift of his Holy Spirit. Now we bring to you this same bread of life and this same cup of blessing, that you may be strengthened through your participation in the body of Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

At this time, you may remember the gift of holy communion with your own bread and cup.

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, generous God, for in this bread and cup
we have tasted the new heaven and earth where hunger and thirst are no
more. Send us from this table as witnesses to the resurrection,
that through our lives, all may know life in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

BLESSING

God, the Author of life, Christ, the living Cornerstone, and the life-giving
Spirit of adoption, † bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**
Go in peace. Tell what God has done. **Thanks be to God.**