

E-BLAST, Friday June 19th

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

These blessings we wish for you and pray for you, as we find ourselves navigating through a global pandemic, a national movement crying out for racial justice and the local Bush wildfire that has already destroyed more than 115,000 acres of the Tonto National Forest. We lift our prayerful voices to God for healing, relief and safety. There are moments when it feels like the world is spinning out of control. “How long, O God? How long?” How much more can we endure? And yet, if we stop and sit quietly in the presence of God, we can hear the loving, calming voice of God reassuring us, “Be still and know that I am God... I am with you and will never leave you to face these or any of life’s trials alone.” THANKS BE TO GOD.

Thank you for completing the recent survey regarding returning to in-person worship at Mount Cross. We received approximately 60 responses.

27% indicated a willingness to attend now without restrictions.

52% indicated a willingness to attend under CDC guidelines.

14% indicated a desire to wait until a vaccine is in wide use.

Additionally, 67% are looking to worship in the sanctuary.

16% favored service outside the church.

17% will continue online worship.

We have heard your preferences, and in response to this feedback and the continued uptick of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Arizona, Gila County and Payson and with a desire to minimize the potential for virus spread and bring as much of the congregation together as possible, the Congregational Council voted unanimously that beginning June 21st, in addition to continuing our online worship service at 9:30am we will also offer an outdoor service – **Mount Cross Worship Under The Pines** – which will have an 8:15am start time and will meet in

front of the log building. The outdoor service will be led by Pastor Cliff Hanus, while the online service will be led by Pastor Linda. For the outdoor service, there are 8 picnic tables with attached benches for seating. You might want to bring your own folding chair to create whatever distance from others that will make you comfortable. Please be aware that on Thursday the mayor of Payson declared that wearing a mask in public is now mandatory. Furthermore, there will be two ushers to greet you and offer any assistance that you might need. They will be masked and gloved out of care and concern for you. Additional masks will be available, if needed, with hand sanitizer, as well. An offering basket will be placed in an easily accessible location for your offerings. Paper bulletins will be used. We ask that you to take yours home with you.

Know that while we are taking precautions to keep you safe, especially in an outdoor setting where it is believed that the COVID transmission rate is 1/1000 of what it is indoors (and meeting outdoors also makes cleaning/disinfecting the area so much easier), there is always an inherent risk that you are taking when gathering together in-person. As Christians, each of us is responsible for the welfare of others. Thus, if you are feeling sick, please stay home. If you feel uncomfortable about returning to in-person worship at this time, please stay home. Another consideration is if you are in the high risk category.

As mentioned, online worship will continue to be offered. Our tech team is working to add more participatory elements to the service (lector, prayer leader/reader, etc.), for which we are grateful!

In addition to the outdoor Sunday worship, we'll be hosting ***Morning Devotion and Joyful Conversation***, in person, in front of the log building, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9am. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, we'll continue to host from our home. We will no longer offer Monday devotions, as we will finally be taking the day off to get some Sabbath rest.

Naturally, we will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in Arizona, Gila County and Payson. Should the trajectory of infection and hospitalizations cause us to pause and reexamine our practices or if there are new mandates from local, state or federal governments, we will definitely continue to keep everyone informed as to any modifications needing to be made regarding worship and ministry from Mount Cross.

Finally, most importantly, if you, or anyone with whom you have had contact is diagnosed with COVID-19, it is imperative that you contact the pastors immediately.

May God be our guide, shield, strength, comfort and peace through these most challenging days.

With hope and faith in God's presence and promises,

Pastors Linda and Cliff Hanus

Mount Cross Congregational Council