



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SENIOR PASTOR May 2010

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another (John 1:16).

LOOKING BACK ON 2009-10

These opportunities and challenges stand out for me as I look back on the past year.

I will share them in a way that fits our mission. As you know, our mission is to be “a growing and caring community in Christ,” where those involved are growing in faith, caring for others, and experiencing community.

That means, we strive to be

“**Growing in Faith**” – through Worship, Bible Study, and Prayer, so that Christians of all ages and in all vocations “know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John 4:16) with an ever-increasing trust in God.

✠ WORSHIP

✠ BIBLE STUDY

✠ PRAYER

1. Our Fine Arts ministries continue to enrich our worship life. **Children’s Choir** added 15 new participants this year. It brings me great delight to see the younger ones among us praising the Lord with voice and chimes.
2. It became very clear to me this year that **Journey to the Cross** needs to be an annual event because of the unique way that Holy Week and Easter come alive for those who *tell* the Gospel story and those who *hear* the Gospel story during this one-hour tour.
3. This is a great time to thank everyone in our **Prayer Ministries**. Did you know that in the past 4 months alone, 17 people have received a prayer shawl? This shawl is a beautiful hand-crafted reminder of God’s care and our prayers on their behalf.
4. This fall, adults set aside four weeks to focus on MyPlace in our annual **Spiritual Growth Campaign**. I am always encouraged by the dedication of our members to set aside these weeks to grow in faith as community in Christ. Our children find that Akaloo is their version of small group ministry. This year they added **Akaloo World Impact Emphasis** to support God’s work in Haiti in a kid-friendly and deeply spiritual way.
5. I am also praising the Lord for the prayer and care that others are now receiving because of our new **Worship Card**. Guests and Members alike regularly share prayer requests, appreciation, and other needs on this weekly attendance card.

“Caring for Others” – through Service, Witness, and Generosity by meeting others’ physical and spiritual needs according to Jesus’ great command “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Such care is characterized by a spirit of compassion, generosity, and mercy, and includes leading people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

✝ SERVICE

✝ WITNESS

✝ GENEROSITY

1. Holy Cross has a great way of involving all generations in **witness and service**. This past summer, 18 youth and 6 adults rehabbed homes in El Paso, Texas, and built two homes in four days while serving in Anapra, Mexico, and while 39 confirmation youth rehabbed homes in Grand Rapids. Even though our three teams to Haiti in January and February did not “go” as planned, our preparation allowed us to gather supplies and funds for others to use in earthquake relief. The support of our congregation for all of these servant endeavors was breathtaking. Those of us who intended to go to Haiti and those who went to Mexico and El Paso were reminded that we serve as God directs!
2. Your **generosity** is exemplary. In the midst of an economic downturn, we ended 2009 with a \$32,150 surplus. In 2010 thousands of dollars were raised for Haiti and Haiti Relief. And new ovens and chairs were funded in 2010, all the while keeping up with our weekly budget – Praise the Lord!!
3. The members and staff of Holy Cross rose to the occasion of **caring for those in need** due to loss of jobs, health issues, and the struggles of life. Unemployment Ministry, Meals Ministry, Food Pantry, and Grief Care blessed even more people this past year. I can’t tell you how many times I heard someone tell me how blessed they were to be part of such a caring congregation!!

“Experiencing Community” – through Healthy Relationships, Holy Manners and Servant Leadership according to the biblical call for Christians of all ages and in every vocation to “live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18). In this community, Christians work for, experience, and celebrate healthy relationships and meaningful friendships characterized by unity, peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

✝ HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

✝ HOLY MANNERS

✝ SERVANT LEADERSHIP

1. This year we launched our Servant Leader Workshop Series. These events are designed to help youth and adults grow in knowing themselves better so they can **enhance their relationships** and their **ability to lead** at home, work/school and church. This year we added workshops on Holy Manners and Discovering Your Conflict Management Styles.
2. It was my privilege this year to **share Holy Manners** with delegates at the Michigan District Convention, the All Pastors Conference, and in workshops with two local churches. God’s work in our midst is helping others. They now have a tool to move beyond wishing for peace to striving for peace in home and congregation.
3. I’d like to share an “aha moment” with you. Last month I saw for the first time how long ago God sowed the seeds for servant leadership and holy manners at Holy Cross. While the phrase and ministry emphasis “Experiencing Community” is relatively new for the congregation and homes of Holy Cross, it has been the **hallmark of MOPS** since its beginning. This year they celebrate

10 years of ministry to preschool moms. I am celebrating their gift to Holy Cross, 10 years of modeling healthy relationships for home and church!!

For more insights and details on what happened at Holy Cross in 2009-10, I invite you to see Ministry Highlights (pages 4 to 7) and Update On The Four Emphases (page 8).

Now I invite you to join me in considering an exciting future for our community in Christ!

LOOKING FORWARD IN 2010-11

God only knows what is ahead of us in this new year of ministry, which begins next month. I will share some blessings that are appearing on the horizon. It is not a fully worked out plan. That's okay, because we need to leave room for God to lead and direct. So here goes:

1. **Greater Community Impact.** For three years we have been seeking new ways to share the love of Jesus with those living in the neighborhoods around Holy Cross. God has answered our prayers. Holy Cross can now help public school children in need via a new ministry called "Hand 2 Hand." Starting this fall, we will provide a backpack of food for school children at Bursley Elementary who do not have enough to eat over the weekend. This is our first step to an even greater community impact. Where will God take us next?
2. **Continued Emphasis on Spiritual Growth.** As leaders and staff, we are clearly focused on helping everyone at Holy Cross *discover* and *take* the next step in their discipleship journey. We want to help people grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. And we want to help people live out that faith by caring for others and experiencing community. To help make this real, look for an even greater emphasis on small group ministry for children, youth, and adults.
3. **Greater Use of Technology.** For nearly five years we have discussed replacing our deteriorating Church Sign. I would like to have a task force report and a congregation survey on "Options for a New Church Sign" to you no later than September. A new website is also on the horizon. I must say that I am catching the vision of enhanced ministry thanks to improved technology. With this in mind, we are striving to move into the new world of web design that can enhance and expand our ability to be "a growing and caring community in Christ."
4. **Growing Leaders.** It appears that God has positioned Holy Cross to share what we have learned about the blessings of "experiencing community" and intentional development of servant leaders. In light of our newfound position, we have invited Dr. Tim Elmore (see www.growingleaders.com) to lead Holy Cross and our Ministry Partners into the next generation of Servant Leadership for youth and adults. Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 26, 2011!

Senior Pastor, Scott Sommerfeld

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Growing in Faith – through Worship, Bible Study, and Prayer, so that Christians of all ages and in all vocations “know and rely on the love God has for us” (1 John 4:16) with an ever-increasing trust in God.

1. **Worship Ministries** – *Greeters, Welcome Center, Ushers, Scripture Readers, Altar Guild, Sound Techs, Children’s Choir, Joyful Noise Camp, Teen Choir, Youth Praise Team, Stick Ministry, Chancel Choir, Praise Team, Handbell Choir, Orchestra*

Worship Highlights

- 15 new children sang praises in our growing **Children’s Choir**.
- **Continuous Communion** improved worship timeliness while maintaining reverence.
- **3 new Communion Liturgies** were introduced in our 8:30 service.
- The **Lenten Series on Prayer** included a variety of interactive experiences & included a new **Service of Healing**.
- New **Easter banners and room-darkening curtains** were added to the sanctuary.

2. **Bible Study** – *Sunday School, Akaloo, VBS, Confirmation, HS Breakfast with Jesus, HS Filter, Milestone Ministry, Adult Education, Women’s & Men’s Bible Studies, Small Groups, New Member Class, Financial Peace University, Senior’s Bible Study*

Bible Study Highlights

- 181 people experienced **Journey to the Cross**, an interactive retelling of the Passion story.
- Through the **Akaloo World Impact Emphasis**, kids learned how to impact their world through a Children’s Spiritual Growth Campaign.
- **Parent Time**, a new component of 7th & 8th grade Family Confirmation, brought 15 to 25 parents together weekly for conversation about parenting and spiritual growth.
- The **Spiritual Growth Campaign – MyPlace**, involved 233 participants in small groups to find their place to serve in God’s great design.
- Our new **Sunday School Welcome Stations** allow us to welcome and receive children, enhance safety, and improve recordkeeping.

3. **Prayer** – *Sunday Altar Prayers, Prayer Chain, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Staff Prayers*

Prayer Highlights

- Our new **Worship Cards** give greater opportunity to gather prayer requests.
- The **Lent Series** focused on “**Prayers of the Passion**” & included our first “**Service of Healing**.”
- **Lenten E-devos** (e-mailed devotions) provided prayer starters that encouraged growth in our personal prayer life.
- Through the **Prayer Shawl Ministry**, 17 people were blessed with the gift of a handmade prayer shawl.

- Special **Prayer Workshops** in November 2009 taught a variety of prayer methods.

Caring for Others – through Service, Witness, and Generosity by meeting others’ physical and spiritual needs according to Jesus’ great command, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Such care is characterized by a spirit of compassion, generosity, and mercy and includes leading people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. **Service** – *Food Pantry, Blood Drives, Back-to-School Supplies, Thanksgiving Baskets, Christmas Adopt-a-Family, Kids’ Time, Confirmation Service to Others, CityServe, Haiti Mission Support Team, First Impressions Team, Mission Trips, Meals Ministry, Holy Cross Helpers, Card Ministry, Nursery, Caring for the Church Building & Grounds, Office Help, Printing & Collating, College & Military Care Packages, Funeral Luncheons, Unemployment Ministry*

Service Highlights

- Our **Food Pantry**, in partnership with Love Inc., provided 430 families with 2,174 bags of groceries and our members gave \$4,100 for gift certificates.
- The **Meals Ministry** provided families with 75 meals.
- Though cancelled, our **Haiti Mission Trips** raised \$33,228 for the new orphanage, \$6,550 for Earthquake Relief and \$4,000 for future mission projects. In addition, thousands of medical supplies and clothing items were donated to relief efforts.
- The **Habitat BBQ Cook-Off** in August was attended by 200 people and raised \$3,400.
- In June 2009, 77 **CityServe** participants raised \$3,000 for GRASP while working to improve housing conditions for residents in Grand Rapids.
- We are supporting **Habitat for Humanity** in April & May 2010 by working at the home site and our children are collecting coins in their “house” banks.
- The **Unemployment Ministry** supported and encouraged 14 people with monthly meetings in 2009.
- 18 High School Youth and 6 adults built 2 houses in 4 days & served in Juarez and El Paso on the Mexico Mission Trip.
- Through the **Helping Hands Servant Event**, 39 youth and 12 adult crew leaders worked on improving homes in Grand Rapids.
- Our First Impressions Team added a **New Member Breakfast Reception** to welcome the 18 households received in November 2009 and March 2010.

2. **Witness** – *Workshops, Partnership with Redeemer Lutheran Church (Grand Rapids), Epiphany Outreach Event, Lutheran Blind Ministry, Lutheran Urban Outreach, Evangelism Resources*

Witness Highlights

- In partnership with the Michigan District, a **Witness Workshop** was held in October that taught various witnessing methods compatible with different personality styles.
- **Witness Resources** were provided for Journey to the Cross and Easter.
- Holy Cross **partnered with Redeemer**, an inner-city congregation in Grand Rapids, on several events including CityServe, Harvest Lights, and the Lutheran Blind Ministry.
- The **Epiphany Children’s Celebration**, held at Redeemer and supported by Holy Cross, reached out to Hispanic families in Grand Rapids.

- The Adult Bible Class provided 33 **Foreign Language Bibles** in 5 different languages (Persian, Punjabi, Nepali, Urdu, & Spanish) for distribution in Grand Rapids.

3. Generosity – *3rd Grade “Money Matters” Milestone, Financial Peace University, Holy Cross Foundation “In God We Trust” Series, Annual Stewardship Emphasis*

Financial Stewardship Highlights

- Our cup overflowed with a **2009 Surplus of \$31,250**.
- Through generous giving, above and beyond our weekly offerings, we were able to purchase **2 new ovens and 136 chairs**.
- We made a **5 year commitment to the “Future is Now” Campaign** to support missions and church worker scholarships. We increased our first fruit giving to District \$4,000 a year increase, a 20 percent increase.
- The **Foundation Board** sponsored **“In God We Trust,”** a seminar on medical and money matters, attended by over 80 people.

Experiencing Community – through Healthy Relationships, Holy Manners, and Servant Leadership, according to the biblical call for Christians of all ages and in every vocation to “live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). In this community, Christians work for, experience, and celebrate healthy relationships and meaningful friendships characterized by unity, peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

1. Servant Leadership – *Vestry Board, Board of Deacons, Foundation Board, Daily Shepherd Board, Staff Meetings, Marriage Ministry, Servant Leader Workshops, MOPS*

Servant Leadership Highlights

- 27 couples attended the **Marriage God’s Way Seminar** presented by Pastor and Heather Biermann from Faith Lutheran Church, Grand Blanc.
- We are celebrating the **10 year anniversary of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers)**. This ministry has supported and equipped hundreds of moms and families.
- A **Discovering Your Conflict Management Style**, Servant Leader Workshop was attended by 45 leaders.

2. Holy Manners – *Vestry, Deacons, Staff, Small Groups, District Workshops*

Holy Manners Highlights

- 55 Leaders gathered together to develop **Holy Manners for Holy Cross** (a Servant Leader Workshop).
- The **Spiritual Growth Campaign** helped apply Holy Manners to small groups and families.
- Pastor Sommerfeld taught **2 Local Holy Manners Workshops** at St. Mark, Kentwood & St. Matthew, Grand Rapids.

3. **Healthy Relationships** – *Confirmation Ministry, High School Ministry, Oasis, Women’s Ministry, Men’s Ministry, Small Groups, Gathering 4..., Seasoned Crowd, Golf League, Softball Leagues, Fellowship Dinners, Sunday Morning Breakfast*

Healthy Relationship Highlights

- **Colors** Personality Profiles were taken by over 200 participants as part of the Spiritual Growth Campaign
- **Fellowship Dinners** were enjoyed by 75-100 members weekly.
- In **Grapple** 5th & 6th graders experience community together in their 1st small group setting.
- The 25 men and boys who attended the **Father/Son Campout** in September enjoyed outdoor activities at Camp Concordia.
- 76 adults were entertained at Gathering 4’s “**A Night Out**” in March and 88 women recharged at the **Women’s Ministry Pottery Night** in January.

UPDATE ON “THE FOUR EMPHASES”

In January 2009, Holy Cross members completed two professional surveys: Family Needs Survey and Natural Church Development Survey. Your feedback gave us clear direction for the coming years, which I shared under the topic “Four Emphases for 2009-12” at the May 2009 Congregation Meeting.

Now it is time to review our progress in 2009-10.

Equipping Servant Leaders (for every vocation)

As mentioned above, we started the Servant Leader Workshop Series and offered two new workshops for youth and adults: Holy Manners and Conflict Styles. Year-round emphasis on growing servant leaders for home and all of life also took place in weekly staff meetings, board meetings, MOPS leadership meetings, and among service teams.

Encouraging Personal Spiritual Growth (through Bible reading, prayer, etc.)

Your feedback indicated a desire to grow in prayer. We responded by offering a fall workshop, Lenten worship – “Prayers of the Passion” – with unique prayer experiences each week, adding “prayer starters” to Lenten E-Devos, expanding the prayer shawl ministry, our first Service of Healing, and increasing weekly prayer requests from worshippers via our new Worship Card.

Enhancing Corporate Worship: The “Experience” and The “Space”

Worship Leaders and Pastors focused on adding variety, honoring time, and enhancing the worship space. Three new liturgies were learned at early service and a new monthly worship format was added to late service. Service length returned to 60 minutes or just 10 minutes longer for Communion Sundays. Continuous Line Communion now adds the reverence of kneeling at the altar and allows us to have only one format for communion distribution. Banners have returned to the worship space and new room-darkening curtains were also added for Good Friday Worship.

Expanding Technology Usage (for increased excellence in ministry)

This spring, “Sunday School Check-in Stations” were added for the safety and care of our children. Our new scanning system and protocols help us keep children safe while at Sunday School and safely returned to the care of their parent/guardian. There was no incident that triggered this change, just our ongoing concern for our kids. A new Message Center is newly in place at the Church Office Entrance to welcome and direct those entering our building each day. This enhances our hospitality to members and guests, especially when the office is closed.

I believe that we have been faithful to these Four Emphases in 2009-10 and that many lives have been blessed. The good news is that your insights that formed these Four Emphases continue to guide all we do. And there is more to come! These same themes are restarted as 2010-11 goals on page 3 of this report.

Senior Pastor, Scott Sommerfeld