



Love • Transform • Serve

RAYS of HOPE JOURNAL

October 2025, Volume 43, Issue 10

Mission Statement

Cross of Hope is a Spirit-centered community that shares in Christ's love through worship, education and outreach to develop and strengthen relationships with God.

Director of Preschool Ministry

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" Matthew 19:14



**Trisha McClain,
Director of Preschool Ministry**

What a blessing it is to welcome a member of Cross of Hope's congregation to our school staff. Trisha, as you know, serves the church as a member of the worship team, and has spent many years investing in our elementary students as a kindergarten teacher. God worked out all the details as only He can because if Trisha had not spread her wings to hone her teaching craft, I would not have been hired as kindergarten teacher. I love how faithful God is to honor Trisha's heart and lead her back to Cross of Hope!

We are thrilled that she brings with her up to date knowledge of New Mexico's preschool requirements as she spent the past year supporting new preschool teachers across the state. Our staff will thrive under her direction, and our families will benefit from her expertise. I know she will be an outstanding partner as we engage our community, and strive for excellence together at Cross of Hope School. Trisha will begin her adventure as our Director of Preschool Ministry on Monday, September 29. Welcome back to our sweet family Mrs. McClain!

Blessings,
Susan F. Rivera, M. Ed
Director of School Ministry



Cross of Hope Lutheran Church and School

6104 Taylor Ranch Road NW

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This Journal of Cross of Hope Lutheran Church is published each month for the enrichment of the mission ("Loving God • Transforming Relationships • Serving Others"), for the life of the people of God at Cross of Hope and our community.

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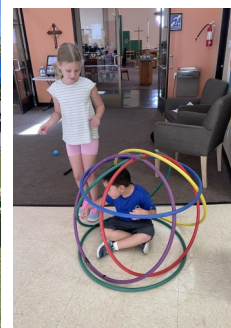
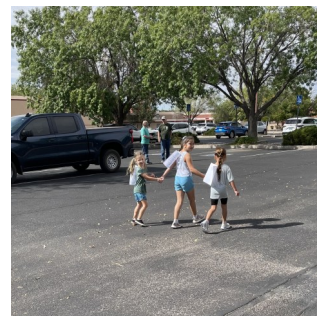
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Monthly Book
Suggestions

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School News



Field Day =Fun Day

School continued on page 3

WE WANT YOUR NEWS ITEMS

Deadline is 10th of the month for the following month's edition. Send E-mail articles to office@crossofhope.org, lbagby@crossofhope.org, or deliver to church office.

Stewardship

Stewardship involves your time, talent and treasure. Contact the church office for assistance in getting started in any of our ministries. Please remember Cross of Hope in preparing your will.

Care Outreach

Transportation

Medical Appointments
Other Appointments
Necessary Errands



Emergency Meals

Family Emergency
Illness
Death

Assistance is available:

- www.crossofhope.org/forms
- Email: care@crossofhope.org
- In the Great hall
- Call COH office (505)897-0047x102



Love • Transform • Serve

School News

School continued from page 2



Join us for Balloons Aloft

October 3

6:45am

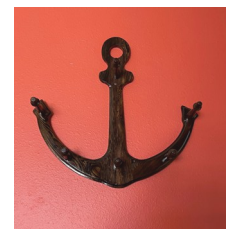
Cross of Hope Parking lot

Coffee, hot chocolate, donuts and more!



Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8



School continued on page 4

New School Staff

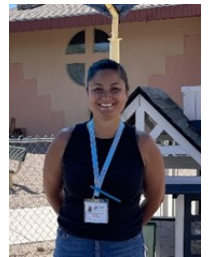
School continued from page 3

God is at work bringing us talented and joyful new staff members. If you see them, welcome them with open arms.



Dea Evans is our new kindergarten teacher (she started in January 2025). She used to work with Nancy Lacher (as is true for several of our other teachers). Dea had left APS where she had taught grades 1 through 4 during her career. Nancy approached her with the proposition of teaching kindergarten. Dea was so excited about the prospect! Of course, she said ‘yes.’ She always wanted to teach kindergarten but the opportunity never presented itself. Dea is happy to be at Cross of Hope of Hope and hopes to stay. We are happy to have you doing what you always dreamed of.

Amber Griffith is an Educational Assistant (EA) in the pre-school. Amber came to us via a rather indirect route. Our pre-school was recommended by friends when it was time for her son to start the school. During that time Amber subbed a few times. She had an interest in pre-school education and had been attending CNM. During this time Courtney (a former leader in the preschool) asked if she was interested in being an EA, even though she did not know about Amber’s interest. Amber says it was a “God thing.” Indeed. You would agree if you also knew that Amber had a background working for the Department of Defense! After Courtney approached Amber, she completed her EA requirements with the state.



She is enjoying her new role, particularly watching the children progress as they grow. Amber simply said, “I love it!” Guess that says it all. Hope you keep enjoying every day.



Krissy Castillo also works in the pre-school as an EA. She comes to us after spending time raising her two beautiful children (of course they are). She gained an appreciation for early childhood development and the foundational role faith plays in their growth. She feels “it is a joy and an honor to be part of a community that partners with families to plant seeds of faith in these” little ones.” So glad you can do some farming and seed planting with us!

Jenn Vola is our new second grade teacher. She came to us via an ad in Indeed. Jenn had taught at Emmanuel Lutheran but left since she needed more money to buy a house for herself and her two boys. The jump to APS had a significant salary increase. However, her class had 25 boys! Needless to say, it was difficult. Jenn feels it is her ministry to teach. She started looking again and found Cross of Hope. While the pay does not compare to APS it is “doable.” In addition, she feels supported by the whole staff – something she has not experienced for a long time. Welcome Jenn. We are thrilled to have you.



Rebecca Lovato is our new Educational Assistant (EA) in the elementary school. She actually does double duty by helping during lunch. Rebecca used to drive past Cross of Hope, reading the marquee and wondering what it would be like. After her mother passed away, she started job hunting. She had experience working at All Angels Episcopal School as an EA for 2- and 3-year-olds. About two years ago the family moved to Rio Rancho and she worked in day care for newborns to two years old. Well, our marquee brought to us. Rebecca said she “loves being here.” She works mostly with the third, fourth and fifth graders along with teaching the children the basics of Chrome Books. (She gets to learn along with the students.) We are so glad you are here!

New School Staff continued from page 4

Pastor Adam will love that you are a soccer fan! Hope you will continue fulfilling God's plan for you to work with children right here at Cross of Hope. Welcome to our community.

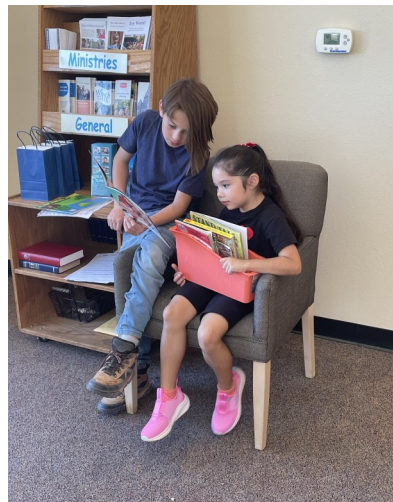
Dave Becker is our special treat. He teaches music on Friday morning. He feels this is his dream retirement since he gets to share his love and knowledge of music with our "enthusiastic students."

Dave comes to us via Music on the West Side in Rio Rancho where he taught classes after school, weekends and during the summer. Dave learned about Cross of Hope via his predecessor for whom he subbed occasionally. When she left Susan Rivera asked him to take the role of music teacher.

Music has been part of Dave's life since he was five years old. He sings, plays the guitar and had been in several bands. His full-time job was security management at the Albuquerque Journal. So, he helps keep an eye on our security.

He feels it is important to build public speaking and performing skills, so he has each student perform individually. In the higher grades he focuses more on teaching how to play the 'recorder' and reading music. These are such transferable skills for anyone's future.

Dave loves to see students' faces light up. The kids really love him. Dave loves all sports, particularly softball. Additionally, he fills in as a substitute teacher where he can. One of the good things about a church run school, he said is everyone is "on the same page" regarding God.



Fourth and fifth grade "Reading Buddies"
with the kindergartners

**There will be no school on
October 10 - Fall Break
October 13 - Indigenous People Day
October 14 - Preschool Professional Development
Elementary school will be in session on October 14.**

Council Corner

By Ron Cordova



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Council News

Your COH Council met to kick-off the 2025/2026 Fiscal Year with the election of new Council Leadership (above).

The Council reviewed the Evangelical Governing By-Laws and Protocols to follow in serving our Church and Schools effectively. Your council looks forward to serving our Church and School community.

Council Continued on page 7

Council continued on from page 5

Solar panel project update from the council:

- Permits have been submitted and approved
- Equipment ordered
- Installation to begin soon

A brief financial update was presented and our financial position remains strong for church and school.

Please know the council will continue to be present between Sunday services (Council Connection) to greet you, and answer or discuss any issues that you may have, so please stop by.



The Mission of Cross of Hope Faith Connections Group

To provide an opportunity for all people to share Christ's love and authentic community in a small group setting where lives are transformed through growth in faith and service to others.

COH Small Group Ministry

Say What!?

The grace of God can often sound scandalous to our modern ears. I wonder if it's always been that way and perhaps that's the point. This fall we'll encounter some parables from the Gospel of Luke that might have us responding, 'say what!?' Our Making Faith Connections small groups will wonder together while we share the journey through life and faith as followers of Jesus. Need a small group? Contact RC Jordan at media@crossofhope.org

October

- 5 – Mustard seed faith
- 12 – One in ten
- 19 – Persistence as faith
- 26 – Set free

November

- 2 – Love your enemy
- 9 – Silly question
- 16 – The end is near!
- 23 – How many kings?

It's Almost Tea Time!

By Lynne Bagby

Time to pull out your tea hats, purchase your tickets and prepare for another fantastic celebration.

The Banner Babes are ready to celebrate our Military and First Responders with a tea in their honor on November 1.



Tickets will go on sale during fellowship time October 19 and October 26. Tickets will also be available through Sherrie Simek or Diane Carrico. This year we promise to have some stunning door prizes and of course, our raffle items include something for everyone!



WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

The Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's® is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research.

Nancy Lacher is fundraising this year's event to honor those in our congregation.

Saturday, October 25, 2025 at Mariposa Basin Park, Albuquerque NM 87109.

You can sponsor by donating to Team of Hope and/or register to walk too.

[Team of Hope](#)

Link: (https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2025/NM-NewMexico?team_id=1009344&pg=team&fr_id=18763)

Contact Nancy directly for more details at 505 934-0401 or by email at nlacher@crossofhope.org

Lunch Bunch



The Lunch Bunch will gather together on

Wednesday, October 8 at 12 noon

El Bruno's Restaurante and Cantina

8806 4th St.

Los Rancho, NM 87114

RSVP to Florence Begay

At 505-363-5827 or email

florencebegay2011@gmail.com by October 1



Happy Hope-r The Ropp's



Susan

Mike

Birthdate: Jan. 12, 1968	Sept. 26, 1967
Birthplace: Beatrice, NE	Rapid City, SD
Married: June 29, 1991	Where: Beatrice, NE
Children: Thomas (Tom) & Kate	
Occupation: Data Scientist	Electrical Engineer
Hobbies: Music, photography, animals, travel	Music, writing music, fictional writing, travel

We see and hear the Ropp's because they perform during Sunday's church services. We know the entire family is incredibly talented, but now you can learn more about their talents.

Susan grew up on a farm. Her dad, Dewane, was a farmer. They grew grains and raised hogs. Her mother, Darlene, taught in a one-room schoolhouse and also was a music teacher. She also taught the Bethel Bible series. Dewane sang with a Barber Shop group, along with the church pastor. Susan's brother Scott now directs that same group. Dewane played the tuba, and Darlene played accordion. The family attended St. John Lutheran Church and Scott is still active there. Scott actually played at our church once when he was visiting. Dewane passed away in 2019 and Darlene in 2024. Scott has taken over running the farm.



Susan was baptized, confirmed and married at St. John's Lutheran Church in Beatrice, Nebraska. Susan and Mike's twins, Tom and Kate, were baptized at this church too.

Susan received her B.S. in music and biology from the University of Nebraska in 1991. She went on for an M.S. in Molecular Virology at the University of Nebraska completing it in 1993. Her final educational stop was at Georgia State University where she earned her Ph.D. in Molecular Genetics. Susan is currently employed by the New Mexico Department of Health and works for the CDC Foundation.

Now we wonder what does a Data Scientist do? The Ropp's arrived in New Mexico for a job Mike had taken with Sandia Lab. It was the summer of 2020 and we were in the midst of COVID. Susan knew her skills could be put to good use with the NM Health Department. She reached out and started working before they were unpacked (some of those boxes are still waiting patiently) as a COVID Coordinator. This entailed gathering information on the number of COVID cases and provide that data on what to anticipate so it could be communicated to the public and clinicians.

Ropp's continued from page 9

(We saw these charts on the computer and also on TV during the pandemic.) Currently, she is involved with information on respiratory diseases. Additionally, she has co-authored numerous technical articles.

Susan and Mike said their caravan from South Dakota was quite a sight to see. There were three vehicles with trailers attached. The family has five cats, four dogs and two horses. Susan has always had a love for animals and Kate takes after her. Oh, don't forget the musical instruments! So, one trailer had the instruments, one for the horses and one the cats. The dogs were in the back of the pickup truck. Just knowing that is enough to make your head spin. Bear in mind this was a 22-hour drive. They had to stop every few hours to let the horses out of the trailer to stretch their legs and get fresh air. Dogs and cats are easier to travel with!

Mike's dad, Wendell (called 'Pat' from the day he was born, since it was St. Patrick's Day) was an Orthopedic Surgeon in Scottsbluff, NE. He attended Indiana University where he completed his pre-med requirements and met Barbara, Mike's mom. Viet Nam was in progress. He joined the Air Force where he completed his M.D. He treated returning troops with injuries and got experience treating a variety of conditions. The family moved around quite a bit until Pat established Orthopedic Associates with some colleagues in Scottsbluff.

Mike said he was actually born at Ellsworth Air Force base in South Dakota. Mike has an older brother, Brad, who lives in Michigan and a younger brother, Ben, who lives in Colorado. Barbara was a community health nurse for 20 years. She was active in Stephen Ministry. Mike grew up in the Methodist church and then joined the ELCA Lutheran church.

Mike received a B.A. in Music from the University of Nebraska in 1991. He returned to school and earned a M.S. in Electrical Engineering from Georgia Tech (formally called Georgia Institute of Technology) in 1996 and later a Ph.D. also in Electrical Engineering in 1998. Additionally, he is a PE (Professional Engineer) and a Fellow in IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers - a professional association).

I could refer you to Mike's on-line biography but instead I will summarize. Mike's experience is in research and education in power engineering, power electronics and photovoltaics. He has authored numerous publications and holds eight patents. He is active in standards creation. Mike is very active in IEEE.

Susan and Mike met at the University of Nebraska. Susan went on for her Masters degree, completing the thesis work while Mike began his Master's at Georgia Tech. Georgia Tech had a program in solar energy which is Mike's area of interest. After receiving his Masters and Ph.D. degrees they moved to Brookings, South Dakota. Mike spent 11 years teaching and working at South Dakota State University. In addition, he owned his own company, Northern Plains Power Technologies, for 15 years. During this time Susan filled the role of Vice President. Over the years Mike had a relationship with Sandia Labs and they wanted to hire him. The kids were graduating from high school, so this was a perfect time to accept their offer. The family relocated to New Mexico in 2020, and Mike became a Principal Member of Sandia's Technical Staff.

Mike works with what is called a "Self-Healing Power System." For example, if there is a hurricane resulting in a power outage, the system figures out what the problem is and how to get it back up and running. They use fundamental ideas to deduce what the problem can be because they are not getting hints as to the cause. They rely on their professional knowledge and experience.

On a totally different note, Mike has authored a children's book for middle school aged children entitled, "Einstein's Shadow." If you want a copy, ask Mike. He has a few

Ropp's continued from page 10

Mike and Susan have twins, Tom and Kate (Katherine). Tom is 27 minutes older than Kate. Most of you know Tom since he is the Music Director at Cross of Hope. He assumed this job when he was a sophomore at the University of New Mexico. Tom continues in this role as he pursues his M.S. in Film Scoring from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He should complete his degree in the spring of 2026. This degree will require him to make connections for individual jobs.

Kate is currently attending Texas Tech in the Veterinary Medicine program. That probably isn't a surprise considering all the animals she grew up with. She has three more years in Vet school. Susan thinks she will specialize in large animals. We can see Kate when she is on break and comes home for a visit. We typically see her playing the violin and trumpet.

The Ropp's found Cross of Hope in 2020 during the peak of COVID. Tom reached out to the Lutheran House at UNM asking about churches in the area with an active music ministry. He was given Pastor Adam's name. At the same time, Susan wrote letters to churches asking about their music program and a need for brass musicians. Pastor Adam was the only one who responded. Since it was during COVID, the Ropp's began immediately by accompanying services online.

Mike mentioned this is the first church they have attended that did not have a pipe organ. Can you imagine!? I have never attended a church with a pipe organ!

If you are curious about the electrical power grid and energy storage, Mike is your person. If you want to know more about medical disease data, Susan is your person. You could spend many hours talking with Mike and Susan. They are easy to find – at church making beautiful music for us every Sunday.

Seek out the Ropp's and let them know how glad we are that they are a part of our music ministry. I continue to be amazed at how gifted this family is and what a gift they are to Cross of Hope. Besides, what they do in their professional life is very interesting. They help us in unseen ways. Thank you Ropp's one and all!



Camp@Cross of Hope

Join us on Wednesdays

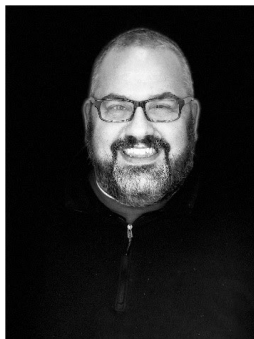
5:30 - 7:30pm



We always enjoy games, dinner, Bible study, campfire songs and s'mores!

Please register using this link. <https://www.crossofhope.org/register-for-campcoh/>

The Wednesday Camp@COH is for children, youth and families. Many of the activities are those children experienced during the summer at Cross of Hope's Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp.



The Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp Board of Directors is happy to announce that Dave Gunnlaugsson has been selected as the next Executive Director of RTLCL.

Dave brings a deep passion for RTLCL, a heart for service, and a strong leadership background to this role. For the past 13 years, he has served with the Mobile Pack team at Feed My Starving Children, and he has also held a pastoral role at Hosanna Lutheran Church. Dave is a seasoned speaker at youth events and camps across the country, where he is known for his genuine connection with people and his joy in sharing the love of Jesus.

This is an exciting new chapter for Rainbow Trail. We are in a healthy and vibrant place—financially, in vision, with our strategic and site plans—and we're continuing to move forward with the land exchange project, which is on track for completion in early 2026.

Boy Scout Troop 126

Cross of Hope Lutheran Church Charters The Boy Scout troop 126 and Cub Scouts Pack 12. The highest award one can receive in Scouting is the Eagle Scout award. Very few in Scouting, less than two percent earn the Eagle Scout award. A scout must complete all steps of the Eagle prior to turning 18.

This fall Troop 126 has six Boy Scouts that have earned the Eagle Scout award: Jonas C, Michael R, Peter C, David C, Dillon C, Andrew S. This is credited to Cross of Hope chartering the scouts, the hard work of the individual scouts, and the dedicated leadership involved in the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts of America.



Over the years that Cross of Hope has chartered Troop 126, there have been well over 100 Eagle Scout Awards Earned.

Thank you Cross of Hope.

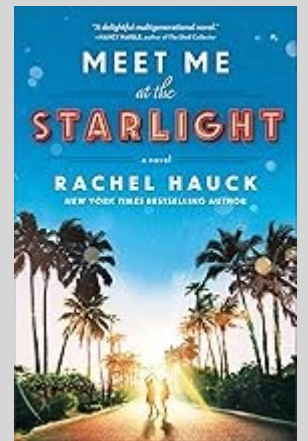


Additional Book Suggestion from page 16

Toni Kovarik recommended a book she read this past summer:

Meet Me at the Starlight by Christian author Rachel Hauck.

This book captivated me! If you enjoy books about strong women finding their purpose, Florida beach towns, the 80's, the 30's or roller skating, there will be something for you to smile about in this easy read. New Mexico even has a place in this one."

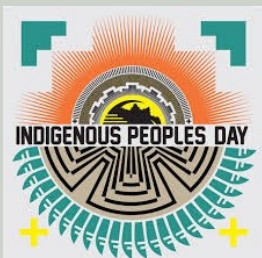


(Written under the above pseudonym by former COH Member Suzanne Dougherty Crider.

Kathy Albin	4
Marisol Wickert	5
RC Jordan	9
Milo Kouri	10
Janet Conlon	12
Renae Johannsen	12
Dee Gutierrez	13
Deney Perkins	14
Jan Anderson	19
Amy Ellis	20
Marc Johannsen	21
Gabriela Cortinas	25
Adam Berndt	26
Kathy Gorman	28
Anthony Girard	29
David Pressel	29
Keri Sutter	31



	Day	Years
David and Toni Kovarik	1	48
Michael and Patrice Leddy	16	43
Marc and Renae Johannsen	18	29
Chris and Julie Morgan	22	42



The Church office will be closed on October 13 for Indigenous People Day.

New Mexico Ramp Project



In the beginning . . .



How shall we do this?



Materials



Great start



Leveling off!



Family affair



More wood!



It's complete!

Thank you Carlene Hobbs for the beautiful picture story of our latest build!

Pet Blessings and Food Drive



In the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, be invited to bring your pets to the Church lawn

Sunday, October 5. between 10:00 and 10:30am for a "Blessing of the Animals"

Well-behaved creatures may attend worship with Bart at the discretion and responsibility of their owners.

Cross of Hope will also be hosting a Pet Food Drive for

**Watermelon Mountain Ranch
October 5**

Watermelon Mountain Ranch also takes pet litter, old blankets, and pet pads. Please bring anything you wish to contribute to the church on October 5.



When you need these services, please think of *Rays of Hope* sponsors.
We thank them for their continued support in offsetting the costs (by \$10 per month) associated with producing Rays of Hope each month.

thrivent

Matthew J Klandrud, ChFC®, RICP®, CKA®

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**Symphony Orchestra of
 Albuquerque
 Fall Concert 2025**

Dates and Locations:

October 12, Sunday 2pm
 Heights Cumberland Presbyterian Church
 8600 Academy

October 19, Sunday, 2:30pm
 St. John XXIII Catholic Community Church
 4831 Tramway Ridge Dr. NE

**Susan Rivera, Director of School Ministry
 Cross of Hope Lutheran Church and School**



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Cross of Hope Care Outreach

Transportation
 Medical Appointments
 Other Appointments
 Necessary Errands



Emergency Meals
 Family Emergency
 Illness
 Death

Assistance is available:

- www.crossofhope.org/forms
- Email: care@crossofhope.org
- In the Great Hall
- Call COH office (505)897-0047x102



CROSS OF HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Mission Statement

Cross of Hope is a Spirit-centered community that shares Christ's love through worship, education and outreach to develop and strengthen relationships with God.



Rev. R. Adam Berndt, Pastor

505-897-0047 • office@crossofhope.org
www.crossofhope.org

Facebook Page: Cross of Hope Church

Onsite Worship Times:

Sunday - 8:45 a.m.
Sunday 10:45 a.m.

Devotions: Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.

October Book Suggestions

by Dee Gutierrez

Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert (expanded edition) - Rosaria Champagn Butterfield

"In April of 1999, I felt the call of Jesus Christ upon my life. It was both subtle and blatant, like the peace inside the eye of a hurricane. I could in no way resist and I in no way understood what would become of my life."

Life of Christ - Fulton J. Sheen

An appealing blend of philosophy, history, and Biblical exegesis, from the best-known and most-loved American Catholic leader of the twentieth century, Life of Christ has long been a source of inspiration and guidance.

Twelve Ordinary Men: How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You - John MacArthur

The twelve disciples weren't the stained-glass saints we imagine. On the contrary, they were truly human, all too prone to mistakes, misstatements, wrong attitudes, lapses of faith, and bitter failure. Simply put, they were flawed people, just like us. But under Jesus' teaching and touch, they became a force that forever changed the world.

There is an additional book recommendation from Toni Kovarik (page 11)