



RAYS OF HOPE JOURNAL

August 2026, Volume 44, Issue 8

Love • Transform • Serve

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.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah". Matthew 17:4



Creating Community

This summer was filled with opportunities where communities were created and God's love was experienced. In this Rays of Hope you will see pictures of community created at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp where Boden, Addy, Benny, Halle, Zach, Greta, and Isaac experienced the presence of God in their weeks of community in the Colorado Mountains. You will catch glimpses of the Spirit moving through our Vacation Bible School for Kids with Special Needs where blessing upon blessing was shared by campers, volunteers and families. Thank you for your support and prayer for these ministry opportunities. The picture above is from sunrise on hike day this year from the porch of Columbine, the main lodge. Every year I find myself there looking out over the Rockies and echoing the disciple Peter, "how good Lord to be here!" I am moved to whisper this reflection, this confession as I share the music time of VBS for Kids with Special Needs. I am inspired by the Spirit's energy and grace weaving between us all as we sing of God's love together as it shines with the joy on everyone's face. Special places that create special communities that bear so clearly the radiant love of God. Also in echo of the story of Jesus' Transfiguration from which this scripture is from, we could not remain on the mountain top nor extend the VBS experience beyond the life-changing moment in time it was meant to be for us.

Cross of Hope Lutheran Church and School

6104 Taylor Ranch Road NW

Albuquerque, NM 87120

Phone: (505) 897-0047

E-mail: office@crossofhope.org

Web: www.crossofhope.org

cohcouncil@crossofhope.org

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.

Pastor: Rev. R. Adam Berndt

Production Editors: Lynne Bagby
RC Jordan

Editorial Staff: Lynne Bagby
Mary Bresnahan
Beth Cretsinger
Marge Reed
Linda Willoughby

Contributors: The Nurse's Corner
Monthly Book
Suggestions

Reporter and Writer: Mary Bresnahan

Photographers: Lynne Bagby
RC Jordan
Greg and Nancy
Morrison
Marge Reed

Council Communication: Sherrie Simek
Council President

School News

**Open Enrollment for
Cross of Hope School continues.**

**Check out the school site for exciting events:
Crossofhopeschool.org**

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



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)897-0047



Love • Transform • Serve

Welcome Back to School!

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22–23

As we begin another school year at Cross of Hope School, our hearts are filled with gratitude and anticipation for all that God has planned.

We are excited to welcome new and returning students, families, staff, and church members as we continue partnering together to nurture children in faith, learning, and love.

This year's verses remind us that Christ is the source of everything we do. As we stay rooted in Him, we pray that His Spirit will produce abundant fruit in the lives of our students, families, teachers, and congregation. Our desire is to deepen our understanding of who Jesus is, grow in unity as a school community, and equip children to share His love with the world.



Our school is looking forward to another outstanding year of academic excellence and spiritual growth. All staff will be growing together through the devotional *Remain in the Vine* by Dominique Okonkwo as we seek to strengthen our faith and serve our students with Christ's love and in unity with one another. We are excited for a wonderful year of learning, discovery, and joyful community. Families can look forward to chapel, service projects, family events, field trips, and hands-on learning experiences that create lasting memories while pointing children to Jesus.

One exciting addition this year is the completion of our new Preschool Director's office. By thoughtfully converting our former resource room into a dedicated office space, we have created a place where families can be welcomed, teachers can receive coaching and support, and important ministry conversations can take place.

This new space reflects our commitment to investing in our staff, strengthening partnerships with families, and continuing to grow a preschool ministry rooted in excellence and Christ's love.

School continued from page 3

As always, we invite our church family to partner with us. Your prayers, encouragement, and involvement make a lasting impact on the lives of our students and staff. Whether through volunteering, attending school events, or simply lifting our ministry up in prayer, you are an important part of what God is doing at Cross of Hope.

Thank you for your continued support of our school ministry. We look forward to an incredible year of growing together, bearing fruit for God's kingdom, and celebrating His faithfulness every step of the way. We look forward to serving alongside each of you throughout the year!

Blessings,
 Trisha McClain and Susan Rivera, Directors



Community continued from page 1

Whether or not we make it back to camp or VBS continues as it has next year, our lives are forever marked by the communities that were created, the stories we share, the songs we sing and the memories we hold dear. Take a look at the pictures; ask those you recognize to tell you a story; notice how God is calling you into community; share the love of God with those around you.

Peace,
 Pr. Adam



Photos from Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp in Colorado

Council Corner

By Todd Olsen

Our Constitution and Bylaws are being modeled after the ELCA Rocky Mountain Synod Constitution and Bylaws. The changes will be available for church members to review on our website. Greg, Sherrie and Pastor Adam have been working on this project to review and amend our governing documents.

Hard copies will also be available for our church members. These documents will be presented at our annual meeting and the membership will vote to approve.

School enrollment for the upcoming school year is 41 elementary students and 24 preschool students. Susan Rivera and Trisha McClain have been working with the staff to prepare for the upcoming school year. Trisha has done extensive work to be sure we are complying with state regulations. Teacher roles and responsibilities are being aligned with the student population to deliver the best possible educational experience. The team is also working on an after school program to provide a safe and stimulating environment for children in need of this service.

Property Update

By Sherrie Simek

We are grateful to Margie Reed for her many years of love and care for the gardens and grounds surrounding Cross of Hope. Margie has made the decision to "retire" from all volunteer roles with Cross of Hope including gardening. Throughout the seasons, you would see Margie out weeding, pruning, putting dirt down, and whatever was needed to keep the gardens in tip-top shape. Under her care, our gardens have blossomed (pun intended). Anyone who has walked or driven onto our grounds has had their day brightened by blooming flowers and birds chattering in the bird bath. Even in the dead of winter when the plants and flowers lay dormant building their strength to burst forth in glory in Spring, the gardens were filled with joy and delight with seasonal decorations.

We say thank you, Margie! Enjoy retirement, maybe you and Bob can grab lunch together these days!

If you have an itch for gardening or landscaping work, come see Pat Benchik, John Lacher, or Rudy and Sherrie Simek. We are always looking for extra hands to help us out.





Kristyn St-Martin	2
Saylor Torres	4
John Lacher	7
Forrest Uppendahl	17
Bonnie Arseneau	18
Geoff Bokan	18
Debra Gonzales	18
Kathy Smith	18
Ignacia Wickert	19
Fran Hveem	20
Ruth Hinkel	23
Toni Kovarik	23
Dolores Hughes	25
Isaac Williams	25
Jeanette McNealy	28
Cecelia Pepper	29
Rudy Simek	31



Let's Make It Memorable

Our friend, Forrest Uppendahl will turn 90 this month!

Please send him your well-wishes and cards:

10001 S. Oswego Street, #353
Parker, CO 80134

Sheri and Robert Phillips will be going to Colorado on August 16 to celebrate with Forrest. She will be happy to deliver cards by hand. Please give them to her at church before then, at Lunch Bunch, or to the Welcome desk (attention Sheri Phillips).



	Day	Years Married
Leof and Susan Strand	3	58
Don and Beth Cretsinger	4	63
Janet and Wayne Conlon	7	50
Jason and Laurie Adams	8	28
Steve and Staci Spinks	17	35
Todd and Kathy Bramley	19	37
Gary and Fran Hveem	20	65
Dennis and Linda Milks	24	52

Special Needs Vacation Bible School



Special Needs VBS
Cross of Hope
2026

Through God's calling and unwavering faith, Patty Westerfield envisioned a place where individuals with special needs would discover God's love, grow in His Word, and experience the joy of belonging. Since its inception this ministry has transformed lives. Many of the participants have shared that this is the highlight of their year.

Cody Broyles has decided to step down and pursue his passion for music. He published his first CD a little over a year ago. Cody participated in the first ever Special Needs Bible School at the age of four. This entire community has enjoyed sharing Cody's musical talent and love of God.



Pictures courtesy of Patty Westerfield and Toni Kovarik

Lunch Bunch



August 12, 2026

12:30 pm

BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse

10000 Coors Blvd Bypass NW

Please RSVP: Florence Begay 505-363-5827

email florencebegay2011@gmail.com

Heart Strings



Members of COH unable to worship
with us on a regular basis.

Please contact these Church members
and let them know we care and are
praying for them.

Gary and Fran Hveem

884 Evening Primrose Lane
Bernalillo, NM 87004

Joanny Wilson

10008 Ashland St NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114

Charlie and Gini Murphy

548 Eastlake Dr.
Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Diane Pressel

543 Whisper Pointe St SW
Albuquerque, NM 87121



*"The word is near you,
in your mouth and in your heart."*

Romans 10:8

This summer we are exploring the good news of God through the point - counterpoint of the books of Romans and Matthew in a faithful way that does not set up the duality of 'good-bad' but rather holds the tension of the present good news of God to lift us up on the journey. Grab a friend. Come and worship. Explore together in small group on Sunday's at 9:30am as we learn and grow together in life and faith.

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.*

Would you like to be part of a small group?
Drop in 9:45am for small group after
worship and join in on discussions to dive
deeper into the texts for the day and
connect with others in faith!

If you are looking for better times or options
for participating in a small group, email RC
Jordan at media@crossofhope.org.



Happy Hope-r

The Kouri's



By Mary Bresnahan

Kevin

Birthdate: September 29, 1983
Birthplace: Albuquerque, NM
Married: September 11, 2009
Children: Proud parents of Jacob, 11; Noelle, 6
Occupation: IT at CNM
Hobbies: Camping, biking, anything outside

Melanie

June 15, 1984
 Roswell, NM
Where: San Diego, CA
 Sonographer for Perinatal Associates of NM
 Travel, watching live sports, learning to play guitar

Kevin's parents are Mike and Penny. They live in Albuquerque and were both born here. They spent some time living in Dallas, Texas but moved to Albuquerque when Kevin and Melanie had children. Jacob and Noelle are their only grandchildren.

Mike is in sales and was a sales manager for Nationwide Paper. (As many of you might know, paper comes from our neighbors to the north, Canada, and has for many years.) He is now in sales management at Tri-West Fencing.

Penny was a stay-at-home mom. Kevin has an older brother, Josh, who is a Methodist minister at St. John's in Albuquerque. He is getting married in May. Kevin also has a younger brother, Kyle, who lives in Virginia.

Kevin works at CNM as the Chief Technical Officer. He has been there since 2016. He makes sure that all the IT systems work properly. We discussed the role of AI in his job. He explained that it makes him more productive. He stated that you have to figure out how AI can work for you. That will be the key to maintaining your job.

Melanie's family lived in Roswell and Farmington. Did you guess it? They were involved in the oil and gas business. Her parents are Larry and LeeAnn Foutz. Larry was a "pipeliner" working for Transwestern Pipeline (previously part of Enron. If you are old enough, you might remember the scandal around Enron which left employees without a job and no earned benefits. Several of the top executives ended up in jail.) After this debacle, the family moved to Arizona and Larry took over his dad's turquoise processing company.

LeeAnn was also involved in the oil and gas business. Her boss encouraged her to go to Northern Arizona University (by paying for her education). She earned a B.A. in Business. When the company owner died, LeeAnn became the president. She still holds that title. You must know she has to be special for this to happen. LeeAnn traveled between Farmington and Arizona. Finally, everyone moved to Arizona.

Kouri's continued on page 10

Kouri's continued from page 9

Larry and LeeAnn currently reside in Dewey, Arizona. LeeAnn is working full-time and Larry is mostly retired.

Melanie has a sister, Jennifer, who is four years older. She lives in Denver, Colorado.

Melanie took advantage of the NM college lottery and attended New Mexico State receiving a B.S. in Nutrition in 2007. She changed majors' numerous times. Five months after graduating she went back to NMSU for a major in ultrasound. She has been working for Perinatal Associates of NM, a high-risk OB practice, since 2012. She is very happy there and appreciates the management since she can work part-time (two days a week). Having talked about AI impacting Kevin's profession, it seemed I should ask Melanie what impact she might foresee. At this point she doesn't see any impact.

While at NMSU Melanie was involved with the Wesley Foundation, a Methodist youth group. She knew both of Kevin's brothers. In 2008, there was a 'Super Bowl' party Melanie attended and there was Kevin. They were introduced by mutual friends. At this point Melanie was back in school studying ultrasound which she completed in May of 2009. Kevin was working on a degree in Business which he later completed at UNM.

Upon graduation, Melanie had a job offer in Manhattan, Kansas. So off she went, with Kevin joining her. Kevin found a job with the Army Welfare and Recreation Department (AWRD) at Fort Riley. They got married in San Diego since it was a place Melanie's family often visited and she liked a lot.

Life went on and by 2012 they were both homesick and Melanie wasn't enjoying her job. In addition, they wanted to spend time with Kevin's grandmother before she passed away. (Noelle carries her great grandma's name, June.) Melanie had secured a job with Perinatal Associates. Once they returned to Albuquerque, Kevin went to CNM for an associate's degree in IT and to UNM for a bachelor's degree Business Administration.

When asked how they found Cross of Hope they explained that in 2020 (during COVID) Jacob was starting kindergarten. They were looking for a school close to home. Cross of Hope had what they were looking for. They became friendly with Pastor Adam and his family. At the time they were attending First Baptist down the street from Cross of Hope. As Kevin so graciously put it, now they are "stuck." The two families have become very close – "like family." They camp together. Noelle is in the Cross of Hope first grade class and Jacob is starting middle school this year at St. Pius.

When asked what keeps them at Cross of Hope, Kevin said "Adam won't let him leave." He helps wherever he can. They find the church is full of great people who are welcoming. The 'older' people (whatever that is supposed to be) are accepting of their kids. It is a small community.

The Kouri's typically attend the second service – but sometimes the first. If you don't know them already, seek them out for a delightful conversation. Jacob is engaged in soccer and Noelle looks like a little doll. Other than that, Jacob and Noelle didn't have much to contribute. Oh, they do have a lovely retriever, Echo.

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



Valley Consulting Group

7620 Jefferson St NE, Ste 3
Albuquerque, NM 87120-6065
valleyconsultinggroup@thrivent.com

27931C RS:2

Cross of Hope Church and School
Congregational Council Team
cohccouncil@crossohope.org

Pastor Adam Berndt, Sherrie Simek -
President Greg Morrison - Treasurer,
Jessica Williams - Secretary, Bob Arseneau,
Laura Burton, Ron Cordova, Art Kavanaugh,
Todd Olsen.

Susan Rivera, Director of School Ministry

Cross of Hope Lutheran Church and School



6104 Taylor Ranch Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120-6039

esdirector@crossofhope.org

School (505) 897-1832



Family Promise Garage Sale



August 8
10am- 2pm



Help us prepare for our big move by paring out
outflow items! Clothing, Clothing, gifts, and more!
All done with a smile!

Montgomery Church of Christ parking lot
4121 Mesilla St NE

Trisha McClain, Director of Preschool Ministry

Cross of Hope Lutheran Church and School



6104 Taylor Ranch Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120-6039

psdirector@crossofhope.org

Preschool (505) 899-0928

CROSS OF HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

6104 Taylor Ranch Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Mission Statement

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Rev. Adam Berndt, Pastor
505-897-0047 • office@crossofhope.org
www.crossofhope.org

FaceBook Page: Cross of Hope Church

Onsite Worship Times:

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.
Sunday - 10:30 a.m.

July Book Suggestions

By Dee Gutierrez

The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World- Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chair of The Elders, and Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with his daughter, the Reverend Mpho Tutu, offer a manual on the art of forgiveness—helping us to realize that we are all capable of healing and transformation.