

# Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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713-686-8254

Rev. Jim Berggren

March 30, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Lent

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## WORSHIP SERVICE

### PRELUDE

### GATHERING SONG

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

ELW 807

### INVOCATION

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen.*

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: *Amen.*

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

C: *We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.*

P: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of V Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

C: *Amen.*

### PASTORAL GREETING

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also, with you.**

P: Let us pray, together.

C: *God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

## **SCRIPTURE LESSONS**

**March 30, 2025 – Fourth Sunday in Lent**

### **FIRST READING: Joshua 5:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” And so, the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

### **The Passover at Gilgal**

<sup>10</sup> While the people of Israel were encamped in Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup> And on the morrow after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup> And the manna ceased on the morrow, when they ate of the produce of the land; and the people of Israel had manna no more, but ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

*The word of the Lord.*

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

### **THE PSALM**

**Psalm 32**

### **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ

God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

*The word of the Lord.*

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:**

*Return to the Lord, your God.  
Return for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow in anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love,  
and abounding in steadfast love.*

### **THE HOLY GOSPEL    Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32**

#### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.<sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable:

#### **The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother**

<sup>11</sup> And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; <sup>12</sup> and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup> So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup> And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am

no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”<sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.<sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;<sup>23</sup> and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry;<sup>24</sup> for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

<sup>25</sup> “Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.<sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant.<sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’<sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,<sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’<sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.<sup>32</sup> It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

*Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.*

**YOUTUBE VIDEO – <https://youtu.be/cssq-Vd4gic>**

## **Sermon Rev. Jim Berggren**

**LENT 4C. 3-30-26, Luke 15.11-32**

### **PRODIGAL FATHER**

The Sunday School lesson was about the Prodigal Son. At Sunday dinner, Mom and Dad asked Junior to tell them the story. Junior said, “They called him the Periodical Son, because he only came around when he wanted money. He spent half his money on wine, women and song, and then he wasted the rest!”

Here are some questions for you. How many of you are the first-born, the eldest child in your family? Now how many of you were the baby? Now, from the first group, how many of you thought the baby got away with stuff you never could

have? And now from the second group, how many of you wish that I had a good second question for you? See, that sibling competition is always there. One of the most common sentences that I hear at funerals and memorial services are spoken by the children of the deceased person. “I was Mama’s/Papa’s favorite child.” It is almost always a family in-joke, with a few feelings tossed in, recognizing our natural desire to want to be “the favored one.”

Today’s Gospel from Luke, is very familiar and always called the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Why does that little immature twerp always get top billing? Really, I’d like to know! The whole story is made up of three parables about three parties: The parable of the younger son, the parable of the older son, and the parable of the loving father. The younger son throws his own wildly intemperate party in another land. The elder son never thought of a party until he saw little brother go off the rails, And the Father throws a huge lavish party of homecoming and reconciliation, hoping that EVERYONE in the family and in the village community, will enjoy and remember forever.

Each child knows their parents, sees and understands their parents in a different way. In our family, over time, three of our most beloved dogs died. Our grief at the loss was so painful that we decided to avoid it in the future by not inviting dogs into our home. But both boys wanted a dog. Shane, the eldest, understood the rationale for not getting a dog; the financial cost, the time expenditure, the clean-up duties, the space needed for exercise, the emotional investment, the lifelong commitment to another precious, but dependent being, and the possibility of parental disapproval.

Josh did not care about all of those good reasons. He drove 30 miles to a puppy mill breeder and brought home a beautiful baby German Shepherd. Shane was appalled. Aghast, he said, “Why did you do that? Mom and Dad said ‘no’. They won’t let you keep him!”

Josh said, “Oh yes, they will. They will see Charlie and fall in love. If you want a dog, go get one. It’ll be ok.”

(That little brother gets by with everything.)

Our triple parable is replete with interpersonal tension. During this time, when a father died the estate was settled by the oldest son, Junior, who gets two-thirds of the estate and the other third is split by the other siblings. 2 sons? A two-thirds, one-third split. In this case, the youngest, Sonny, asks for his third before the death of his father. That is a bold assertion of the fact that, at least at the time, the boy would rather have the father’s stuff, than the father himself. The word for the ‘property’ being split is *bios*. The father is asked to split his life.... land, livestock, produce, everything. It is kind of like a reverse mortgage. The estate is settled before anyone

dies. Dad no longer has anything, but he can stick around as long as he is alive as a dependent. A third of his life is going to run away to see the world. Two-thirds of his life will stay home with him and assume ownership of the remaining property, in the person of his responsible eldest son, Junior.

The youngest liquidated his third and skipped town. This is a sharp break with father, brother and the whole community, actually punishable by death in some societies. Village hostility would be substantial.

The loss of property, the loss of face and the loss of social standing would reflect on the whole community. The elder brother, Junior, could have stepped in to help his father save face, but he didn't. After all, now he is in control of two-thirds of the family fortune. And conveniently, it wasn't his idea. Plausible deniability. His father trusts him with that. Many fathers would not. Village families would worry that perhaps their own children might get similar ideas.

Meanwhile, young Sonny, hanging out with pagans has fallen into hard times. The money ran out, and he's got a temp job feeding pigs. The pig-gig is as low as you can go in the eyes of Jewish law. He should go home and appeal to his brother for help, because his father has nothing to give. The boys took it all, remember? But Sonny decides to go to his father, and ask to be his part-time slave. A hired hand. A seasonal employee, working and therefore eating, only in harvest time. He prepares his beggar's speech, and rehearses it while walking home.

Father sees him coming and runs to intercept him before he enters the village. Sonny is in immediate danger from hostile villagers. Of course, Dad is running to welcome his child, but mostly he is getting there first, to pre-empt a hostile village reaction. He signals to all with a kiss and embrace that this boy is under his protection.

This boy is not to be rejected, despite what he has done. He repented and returned and the father has taken the full shame that should have fallen on this son. Certainly, we trust, the father will punish him appropriately.

Like with the best robe? A signet ring which pressed into wax on a legal document is like a credit card, new sandals, and a party for everyone with the fatted calf on the menu. Cooked meat will spoil if not eaten soon. A party featuring a whole calf implies a large gathering, The whole village invited. Showing up, they signal their acceptance of the father's wish to bring Sonny back into the home and the village. Balance has been restored. Joy, music and dancing commence along with relief at the reconciliation of Father and Sonny.

But wait. Junior is mad. He comes in from a hard day's work and hears music, fun and celebration. What is going on and why wasn't he told? He's the

boss! Where did the robe, the ring, the new shoes, and the fatted calf come from? His hard-earned, sweat-stained assets? (That were a gift, an early inheritance.) Junior, a model of propriety, whom the village has always respected, is suddenly and uncharacteristically insulting his father and refusing to enter the house or the party. He doesn't use the title, 'father'. He doesn't acknowledge the fact that Sonny is his brother. His father is begging him to love his brother, but he disdainfully calls his brother, 'your son', to the old man. With his refusal to join the party, once again the villagers are insulted but this time the hurt comes from Junior, the good boy.

The father loves both Junior, the good boy and Sonny, the bad boy. Relative terms. Both have tried to throw their own parties on their own terms and it just didn't work out for them. The Father's party includes all of his children. He comes out to welcome us to the party whether we come from the far country or the near fields. In some sense he has lost both children. He seeks, receives, forgives and celebrates all his children. The greeting is the same. Welcome home, Child of God. Let the party begin!" Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling*

**ELW 608**

## **INSTALLATION OF COUNCIL OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS**

### **APOSTLES' CREED**

P: God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

**C: 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.**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**THE LORD’S PEACE** (Please share the Peace with a neighbor)

**THE OFFERING**                      *“Praise to The Lord, The Almighty”*                      Lobe Den Herren

**THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE**    *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*                      ELW Hymn 142

**THE OFFERING PRAYER**

**All pray together:** God of grace, your love reaches to the heavens, and your abundance to the depths of the seas. Bless what we offer to your service: our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts. Let us overflow with gratitude and generosity, now and always. Amen.

**AGNUS DEI**

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
have, mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
grant us thy peace.

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

P: 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 is my body given for you. Do this in 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 for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION**

**POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

The Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in Eternal Life.

**POST COMMUNION SONG**    *Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise*



**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**Presider:** Nourishing God, at this table you have refreshed us with holy gifts of food and drink. Strengthen us for service and send us out to embody your good news of liberation and healing for the sake of the world. In the name of Christ, we pray.

**Congregation:** Amen.

**THE BLESSING**

**SENDING SONG**

*Restore in Us, O God*

**ELW 328**

**GO IN PEACE, IN SERVICE**

*C: Thanks be to God!*

**PSALM 19:14**

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*



- ♣ **Lynn Ballard**
- ♣ **Alberto Basurto**
- ♣ **Billy Carty**
- ♣ **Glenda Chavez**
- ♣ **David Dupleth**
- ♣ **Maureen Fredrickson**
- ♣ **Eliseo Gonzales**
- ♣ **Anna Gardner**
- ♣ **Eliseo Gonzales**
- ♣ **Mike Hodges**
- ♣ **Nancy Lancaster**
- ♣ **David Magrill**
- ♣ **Kenneth Magrill**
- ♣ **Tracy Makris**

- ♣ Gloria McGarvey
- ♣ Jeremy Mitchell
- ♣ Geraine Moore
- ♣ Dorothy Preuss
- ♣ Steve Schulze
- ♣ George Schwalm
- ♣ Jaime Urbanski

**Family and Friends of Sandra Williams  
upon completion of her life's mission.**



## **COUNCIL MEETING**

Council meeting will be Sunday, **April 27<sup>th</sup>** 2025,  
at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

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## **USHERS**

**Month:** March      **Team #** 05      **Leader:** Barbara Neumann

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## **LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS**

### **MARCH**

- 2 Reader — Jay Fort  
P/E — Julie Kilkenny
- 9 Reader — Steve Schulze

P/E — Penny Schick

16 Reader — Ike Thompson  
P/E — Sharon Wagner

23 Reader — Russell Ritcher  
P/E — Alice Braun

30 Reader — Linda Cuzzort  
P/E — Wendy Lambeth

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

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## **LENTEN DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS**

The Lenten season is here and the daily devotion booklet  
"The Way, the Truth, and the Life" is available in the Narthex and Atrium.

The daily messages are based on writings from Henri Nouwen.  
They are short but very meaningful and such a lovely way to prepare  
for the season. Please pick up a copy. Thank you.

Sharon Wagner

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## **COFFEE FELLOWSHIP**

Each week after Sunday service there is a Coffee Hour in the FLC.  
Coffee, tea and even hot chocolate are provided.  
Please sign up to bring goodies (cookies, coffee cake, etc.) to snack on.  
The sign-up sheet is in the FLC.

Thank you.

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## PRAYER VIGIL

This Lenten Season we would like to take time to reflect on the gifts we have received and the sacrifices that have been made in Christ's name.

On Saturday, **April 19<sup>th</sup>**, there will be a Prayer Vigil to do just that.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Atrium; we would like to have people sign up for a given time slot between 9:00 am and 6:00pm. You can come to church and pray in the Chapel or you can commit to pray in your own home.

Hopefully we can have continuous prayers throughout the day!

Wendy Lambeth

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## LENTEN SERVICES IN 2025

Lenten services will be held on Wednesdays at 12:00 noon in the Atrium the following dates:

**March 12, 19, 26, and April 2 & 9**

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## LENTEN STUDY

### FOR WEDNESDAY NOON SERVICES

This year we will explore the Lenten study series **Words from the Cross** written by Pastor Jim Berggren.

#### Lent 1

March 12: "Today you will be with me in Paradise." *Luke 23:43*

#### Lent 2

March 19: "Woman, here is your son."  
Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother."  
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" *Matthew 27:46b*

#### Lent 3

March 26: "I am thirsty." *John 19:28b*

**Lent 4**

April 2: “It is finished.”

*John 19:30a*

**Lent 5**

April 9: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

*Luke 23:46*

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**LENTEN MEALS**

Each Wednesday after our noonday Lenten service there will be a light lunch in the FLC.

Our theme this year will be “bars”. Each week the basics (potatoes, tacos, etc.,) will be provided, with members contributing the “add-ons”.

There will also be an ice cream bar each week.

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** : Baked Potato bar

**March 26<sup>th</sup>** : Taco bar

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>** : Pasta bar

**April 9<sup>th</sup>** : Sandwich bar

Please contact Wendy Lambeth to let her know what you’ll be bringing (so we won’t end up with 5 bags of cheese and no ice cream toppings)!

Wendy’s cell: 713-854-1573

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**INSTALLATION OF  
COUNCIL OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Holy Cross 2025 Installation of Council Officers and Council Members will be Sunday, **March 30**, during the service.

Church Council

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## **HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES**

Palm Sunday	<b>April 13</b>	9:30 am –WC
Maundy Thursday	<b>April 17</b>	6:00 pm –FLC
Good Friday	<b>April 18</b>	7:00 pm –WC
Easter Prayer Vigil	<b>April 19</b>	9:00 am –6:00 pm
Easter Day	<b>April 20</b>	
Easter Sunrise		7:00 am –WC
Easter Breakfast		8:00 am –FLC
Pre-service Organ Concert		9:00 am --WC
Traditional Worship Service		9:30 am –WC

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### **IT'S EASTER LILY TIME!**

Easter Lilies may be purchased **today!**  
They may also be purchased **April 6<sup>th</sup>** or **13<sup>th</sup>**.

These plants will be used to decorate our Sanctuary on Easter Sunday. The plants are \$10.<sup>00</sup> each and can be dedicated to "in Memory of", "in Honor of", or "to the Glory of God". Forms for ordering can be found in the Narthex or the Atrium. Just complete the form and place in the basket. Thank you.

Sharon Wagner

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## **SPRINGFEST MARKET**

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The SpringFest Arts and Crafts Market is on Saturday, **April 5<sup>th</sup>**  
from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Come support local and small businesses.

Vendors are still needed so if you have a crafty friend,  
ask them to join us. Thanks!

Upcycled Crafty Ladies

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## **FRIENDSHIP CLUB**

The Friendship Club will **NOT** be meeting on April 19,  
because it falls on Easter weekend.

Our next meeting will be Saturday, **May 17**.  
We will have a pot-luck at the church.

Nancy Beamesderfer

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<b>SAFEGUARDS SAFETY TRAINING</b> <b>HOLYCROSS COUPON CODE FOR 15% DISCOUNT: HCLC2025</b>			
<b>CLASS</b>	<b>DAY</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Adult CPR *CPR only (\$79) *CPR + First Aid (\$92)	Sunday	1/19/2025	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Sunday	2/16/2025	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Sunday	3/16/2025	1 pm — 4:30 pm
Adult & Pediatric CPR *CPR only (\$85) *CPR + First Aid (\$99)	Saturday	1/11/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	2/08/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	2/22/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	3/08/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
Basic Life Support (BLS) (for Healthcare Providers and Professional Rescuers) (\$89)	Friday	1/10/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	1/18/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	1/25/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Friday	2/07/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	2/15/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Friday	3/07/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	3/15/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	3/22/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm
CPR Instructor Course (\$299)	Saturday	1/04/2025	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Friday	1/31/2025	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	3/01/2025	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Friday	3/28/2025	9 am — 5:30 pm

Classes are in the Youth Room, Media Room and in the Annex.

You can sign up online for classes by going to

[www.safeguards-safety.com](http://www.safeguards-safety.com) and choosing “Register for Classes.”

Or call 713-854-8085 for more information

Congregation members and their families will receive a discount of 15% for any class by using the above-mentioned coupon code when signing up.

John Lambeth



