

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

January 18, 2026

2nd Sunday after Epiphany

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

ELW 733

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 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

THE KYRIE

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

This is the Feast

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

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

P: Let us pray, together.

C: **Holy God, our strength and our redeemer, by your Spirit hold us forever, that through your grace we may worship you and faithfully serve you, follow you and joyfully find you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

January 18, 2026 – Second Sunday after Epiphany

FIRST READING: Isaiah 49:1-7

The Servant of the LORD

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name. ² He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. ³ He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." ⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." ⁵ And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— ⁶ he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." ⁷ This is what the LORD says— the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel— to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM Psalm 40:1-11

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: ³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

ELW Pg. 151

*Alleluia.
Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia.*

THE HOLY GOSPEL: John 1:29-42

John Testifies About Jesus

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

John’s Disciples Follow Jesus

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

PR. JIM’S SERMON: <https://youtu.be/OgjAagCa2NE?si=o7ugdOpboPtrHgBK>

EPIPHANY 2A, 1-18-26, John 1.29-34

BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD

Epiphany is the church season that celebrates God, revealed through the human nature of Jesus, Immanuel, the person named, “God Is With Us!” Epiphany is like our first faltering excursions into public speaking. SHOW AND TELL.

Remember? You bring something to class that excites you, or you like very much, and you present it to the class. Hopefully your loving involvement with what you are showing and telling, will overcome your stage fright. Your self-concern will fade into the background as you lift up and point to your Grandpa’s pocket watch, or your pet turtle, or the fossil that you found in the field. It’s not about you. You are introducing something new to someone else. You are not the celebrity. What you are showing and telling, is.

Billie Burke was a well-known famous actress. She had acted in the silent movies, and she played the part of the Good Witch of the North in the *Wizard of Oz*.

While on a transatlantic cruise, she saw a gentleman at the next table, miserable with a cold and seasick. She sympathetically asked, “Are you uncomfortable?” He nodded.

She said, “Here’s what you need to do. Take two ounces of whiskey, a tablespoon of honey and squeeze a lemon into it. Take two aspirins with it, and go to your stateroom for a nap under lots of blankets to sweat the cold out.” “I know what I’m talking about. I’m Billie Burke from Hollywood.”

The gentleman smiled weakly and said, “It is nice to meet you and thank you so much for your excellent advice. I’m Charles Mayo from the Mayo Clinic.”

It’s not part of our competitive nature to strive to be number 2. But if Number One, is the salvation of the world from sin, I’d be honored to be on that team anywhere in the line-up; Waterboy is fine!

In 8th grade football, I was strong but small. Definitely not line or backfield material. Too small. Not a fast runner, I was perfect for warming the bench. Out of coach’s pity, I got to play the last play or two, of half-a-dozen losing games. Quarterback was number one on the team, and I could see that I was not *ever* in the running for that position.

I worked out and ate a lot and tried to build up for freshman year. I stated my intention to try out for the Center position. It was not a coveted position. No glamor. Near zero possibility ever, of a heroic game-winning play, BUT, every play, I controlled the ball. The Quarterback and the Kicker didn't get the ball unless I delivered it, perfectly and on time. All movement on the field of play started with me. The only plays that I didn't like were the running plays up the center, because invariably, I'd be left trying to breathe, on the bottom of a half-ton pile of boys. The only way out of that, was to work a double shift. Hike the ball and then get through the line fast, to block a linebacker. Being lazy would crush me. But at least I had the privilege of handling the ball on each offensive play.

John the Baptizer is amazing! People are flocking out into the wilderness to hear him preach. Will he be the Messiah that they are looking for? No, he doesn't point to himself. He is introducing a new act!

We tend to characterize John, as eccentric, and maybe just a little off; around the bend. He says, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Who would have thought that a dusty camel-skin-attired, locust and honey eating, social critic, could offer a sensitive insight like that? He looks too weird. Who would have thought that an adamantly, politically neutral Essene would even attempt to navigate the turbulent expectations of a Messiah, who rules by dying in the subservient role of a Sacrificial Lamb?

John starts out in the wilderness, with, "Make straight the Way of the Lord." This John guy must know something. He is calling on us to build a road for a conqueror to fix the nation, and that is an impossible task, in the gnarliest geography and topography you can imagine! Build a road for a Lamb. Let me introduce you to the Lamb of God. Not just a fixer of a nation, but the Savior of Creation.

John can look at a wild, untamed, unclean, dangerous wilderness and see the salvation of Israel. He can look at Jesus and see beyond the usual expectations for a Messiah, and see in a simple human, the soon-to-be sacrificed Lamb of God, who gives atonement with God to the whole world.

Sadly, we don't always factor John's prophecy and his understanding of Jesus's mission into God's plans. He knows who, and what is supposed to be happening. The details of HOW this could possibly happen so people would understand, is in God's future plan, which is mysterious and unpredictable: An unlikely convergence of seemingly random events.

Imagine dropping a 1,000-piece jigsaw, fresh out of the box, into a fifty-foot silo. It lands, not perfectly assembled, but unbelievably, you can see the pattern clearly.

The revealing of the Lamb of God, the perfect sheep, who takes away the sin of the world, begins with a wild donkey who has never been tamed or ridden; for all practical purposes a worthless animal. Jesus commissions this impossible animal for a ride into Jerusalem on Passover. I'll bet the first five minutes of that ride were some rodeo fun. Only God could last 8 seconds on that one! But I guarantee, it would seem like an eternity to the donkey!!

About that donkey. A donkey, a mule, is the hybrid offspring of a jack, *equus asinus* and a female horse, a mare. It is an unusual hybrid animal; most definitely not *Kosher*. A donkey big enough to ride and not yet broken, indicates a first-born mule. Normally, any first-born male animal is required by Law, to be given back to God in sacrifice. It would become food for the

priests. But there is a problem. Hybridization. The donkey is by Mosaic Law, unclean, and cannot be presented as a sacrifice.

A donkey cannot be butchered and eaten because it does not chew a cud and it does not have split hooves. The donkey is the only non-kosher animal whose firstborn is considered holy. Probably because donkeys carried the riches of Egypt during the Exodus. Smart and adaptive, they were likely family members, just like our beloved pets.

He must be redeemed, and until that happens, he can't be ridden or used as a pack animal or an essential draft animal to pull a plough. Clean or unclean, he is the smartest and most valuable creature in your stable. He can do a multitude of tasks. Wild in the field, he is already working, by his very nature guarding other more vulnerable herds from predators, with his large teeth, his slashing hooves, his unearthly braying, and extraordinary intelligence. Wolves know better than to challenge a donkey. But he can't be useful until he is redeemed by something of equal value.

Most rabbis would accept a fine sheep as the substitute sacrifice. So, it becomes clear. **This firstborn donkey will be redeemed by the firstborn Son of God. This transaction is sanctioned by the Great High Priest of all Creation, Jesus, the Christ, "who makes all things holy." 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The unredeemed creature/creation is saved, released into righteousness, and freed for mission through the sacrifice of the finest sheep of all, the Perfect Lamb of God.** It is a deeply layered metaphor, requiring a life jack-et for buoyancy! Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!!" Wow!

It is counter-intuitive. Christ is the Lamb of God, not of ours. God has brought his best offering to us. Perhaps God's second-best offering to us was free will. And we can see how that turns out! So, God figures, "I wouldn't give you anything that I wouldn't do first. Free will goes both ways, and My Free Will is to finish Abraham's faithful sacrifice of his son which I cut short, by providing a sacrificial ram. My Son, will be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

God offers the best without holding back. And John the Baptist introduces God's most perfect offering... TO US. This is John's Show and Tell moment. The implication is clear.....Out of the whole Gospel experience, at the very beginning, only John knows, that Jesus is born to die sacrificially on behalf of: Not just you or me, or a preferred nation, or a spiritual and favored pep club, but for the whole universe.

Jesus the Lamb of God, finishes off the sacrifices of the temple, and their presumptions of bribing successful transactions out of God. As Jesus said, from his sacrificial cross, "It is completed." Jesus put religion out of the accounting business. God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it to change His love. Annual atonement and grinding guilt, is in the past, in the old creation. We live in judgement and atonement now, second by second, breathing the joy-filled air of grace.

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!!! Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

As with Gladness Men of Old

ELW 302

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

“Stand Up For Good”

M. Dunn / B. Pape

THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*

ELW Hymn 142

THE OFFERING PRAYER

All pray together:

God of glory, great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior. 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:

Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Jesus Calls Us; o'er the Tumult

ELW 696

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.*



- ♣ **Ken Beamesderfer**
- ♣ **Pr. Jim Berggren**
- ♣ **Jim Fritze**
- ♣ **Eliseo Gonzales**
- ♣ **Paul Houghton**
- ♣ **Joyce Huey**
- ♣ **Lane Kelly**
- ♣ **Nancy Lancaster**
- ♣ **David Magrill**
- ♣ **Jeremy Mitchell**
- ♣ **Geraine Moore**
- ♣ **Ed Peterman**
- ♣ **Dorothy Preuss**
- ♣ **Lupe Romero**
- ♣ **Wayne Schaper**
- ♣ **Steve Schulze**
- ♣ **Scott Spates**
- ♣ **Jaime Urbanski**
- ♣ **Bennie Valites**
- ♣ **Michael Williams**

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **January 18, 2026**,
at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: January

Team # 3

Leader: Linda Cuzzort

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

JANUARY

4 Reader — Jay Fort
P/E — Wendy Lambeth

11 Reader — Ike Thompson
P/E — Penny Schick

18 Reader — Alice Braun
P/E — John Stokes

25 Reader — Mallory Hileman
P/E — Russell Richter

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

TO ALL GROUP LEADERS

Crafty Ladies, Choir Rehearsal, Early Learning Center (ELC), Fellowship Club,
Food Pantry, Hymn Selection, Lutheran World Relief (LWR),
Men's Breakfast, Roundtable Group, Ruth Circle, WELCA, etc.

2026 CALENDAR REQUEST FORMS

Once again, you are kindly reminded that
you must fill out a Calendar Request Form
to schedule your meetings/events in 2026,

on the forms located on the table in the Atrium.

**Anything not written on the calendar
may lead to a conflict in scheduling.**

This applies to anyone and/or any group that meets and uses the church facilities,
and if any church related group or circle meets somewhere else
and would like to be scheduled on the church calendar as well.

Your meetings/events will be announced in the Sunday News,
Crossties Calendar and on the Church website.

Sussy Terry

Office Manager & Events Coordinator

ATTENTION HOLY CROSS MEMBERS

Following the Church Safety Protocol, please contact Sussy if you would like to
make a reservation to use the church facilities for private events.

You must to fill out a Calendar Request Form as well.

UPDATE YOUR DIRECTORY

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Scott cell: 713-806-4605

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TEMPEL, Bill

Cell: 281-799-1862

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Missouri City, TX 77459

wildbill0927@yahoo.com

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE

- 9:30 a.m.** *Traditional Worship service with Rev. Jim Berggren —WC*
Sunday School / Nursery is available for small children during the service
— Crib Room
- 10:30 a.m.** *Coffee fellowship following the service —FLC*
- 11:00 a.m.** *Council meeting —FLCA*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

19 Mon	20 Tues	21 Wed	22 Thurs	23 Fri	24 Sat
<u>CROSSTIES DEADLINE</u>	<p><i>10—12 pm ELC</i> <i>Jesus Food —YR</i></p>	<p><i>10—12 pm ELC</i> <i>Jesus Food —YR</i></p> <p><i>10 am Roundtable</i> <i>Group ---VR</i></p> <p><i>11 am Choir practice</i> <i>—CL</i></p> <p><i>12 pm Bible Study</i> <i>--AT</i></p> <p><i>6—8 pm Basketball</i> <i>Team Sumit —FLC</i></p>	<p><i>6:30—8 pm</i> <i>Basketball Team</i> <i>Nguyen —FLC</i></p> <p><i>8 pm AA Women</i> <i>mtg. —FLCA</i></p>	<p><i>7—9 pm</i> <i>Bayou City</i> <i>Band practice</i> <i>—FLC</i></p>	<p><i>6 pm Saturday</i> <i>Informal service —AT</i></p>

AT =Atrium, CL=Choir Loft, CR=Choir Room, FLC= Family Life Center, FLCA=Annex,
 KiM= Kids in Motion, MR=Media Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room
 BLS=Basic Life Support, SST=Safeguards Safety Training, UCL=Upcycled Crafty Ladies