

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

January 25, 2026

3rd Sunday after Epiphany

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

Thy Strong Word

ELW 511

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

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: **Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

January 25, 2026 – Third Sunday after Epiphany

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:1-4

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future, he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ³You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

A Church Divided Over Leaders

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among

you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”

¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ Crucified Is God’s Power and Wisdom

¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

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: Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” ¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he

saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

PR. JIM'S SERMON: <https://youtu.be/eNMcmDgOCNQ>

EPIPHANY 3A - 1-25-26, Matthew 4.12-22

John, the Dipper, baptized many people in the Jordan River, with the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!" It was a general, all-purpose announcement of salvation....soon.....especially to those who are downtrodden, and persecuted by the kingdoms of men. It was an encouraging message.

For the leaders who were collaborating with enemy Rome, who were prosperous, callous, and unaware of the sorrows, struggles and hunger of the common people that they governed, John was interesting entertainment; in their minds, a benign distraction for the masses.

Here is a word to the wise. It was relevant back then and it is relevant today. Watch the news cycle very carefully. Influencers and advertisers pay for your news. Take it to the bank: Whenever there is a big BREAKING NEWS story in the media, look for the other stories you are being distracted from.

John got to meddlin'! He got specific about the darkness and moral depravity that typified the behavior of the zero-conscience leadership of the country. John preaches a word of caution. "Look," he says, "Herod has thrown out the rule book for civilized society! He has moved his niece into his conjugal bed, and she is already married to his half-brother." It is going to take 12 fingers to chart that family tree!" That was just the news that the Herods of the world were trying to use John to distract people from. John goes off the rails and makes that news front page. Herod.....Repent!!!

Herod's poor innocent princess is offended by the loud-mouthed Baptizer, and has John thrown in jail, and eventually beheaded, but that is another sordid pornographic tale, which adds the niece sister-in-law's daughter to an already, very shallow gene pool.

Power hates Truth. The mouth of John's faithful witness is silenced and it is time for Jesus to enter upon his work. Initially aligned with John, with John's arrest, Jesus goes back to the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, continuing the proclamation of the identical prophetic message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!" Jesus begins to gather together a faction, comprised of John's disciples, and recruitment of his own disciples as well.

Rabbinical recruitment is a little unusual. Normally, rabbis didn't call disciples. It was considered bad form to go out and hunt for people to enlist. One's greatness of teaching was supposed to naturally attract students. But John had begun a movement, and events were moving forward rapidly. It seemed like revolution could happen any time. There was probably a waiting list of people who secretly asked themselves, "How can I be a part of renewing this world? How can I do my part in shedding light in this present darkness?" A lot of volunteers....some with less than pure motives. How do you weed out the political zealots and the groupies?

Big changes are afoot. Israel is fly-over country in a potential conflict between Persia and Rome. Territory, trade route security, and war loom in the collision of the East and West. Generally, for Israel, someone else is in control (usually Rome.) The fishing industry is steady, but markets are precarious. Sardine exports are in high demand in Rome but transportation and preservation are problems. The whole vocational situation for Jewish citizens is up for grabs.

So Jesus is recruiting. He fishes his future disciples out of the sea that they are fishing fish out of, and says, "You can fish like me, for people."

Jesus does not start fishing for people in strange seas, with exotic baits and perfected techniques for persuasion. We mistakenly think that that is how evangelism is supposed to occur: How one really fishes for people.

Jesus reaches out to people in the fabric of family relationships. Siblings, parents, children, co-workers. Jesus touches people as a friend and known companion in the middle of the workaday world; fishing, teaching, fetching water, cooking, clerking and building. He offers the opportunity to do what you are great at doing, in a new context, in a new arena, with a higher goal of focus on service to God and the world. What Jesus asks us to do in fishing for people is not to create a false conflict and then impose peace upon it. It is to show the joy of enhancing what someone already does well.

Singer, was a ten-year-old cat when I was born. He kept me warm in the cold winter of '49 and '50 sharing my crib. When I was ten, I kept him warm as he died in my arms under the dining room table. He was a blond longhair, and consequently was plagued with hairballs and indigestion.

Mom heard that a daily tea-spoon of cod-liver oil would help with the problem. So, we began a torturous routine of chasing Singer, swaddling his struggles in a thick towel, and forcing the fishy oil down his throat. I wore Grandpa's welding gloves to avoid shredded arms. One day in the middle of this grueling medical procedure, the bottle of oil got knocked over, so we dropped Singer, stopped the whole process, and prepared to clean up the mess. Coming back from the kitchen with towels, we found Singer, contentedly lapping up the oil. Singer loved cod-liver oil. It was the method of application that he didn't appreciate. Later, nursing him back from the injuries of a barnyard fight with a coyote, we discovered that he liked Vicks VapoRub, too.

Jesus meets each of us where we do the worst and where we do the best. All he asks is, "Follow me, and I will do the rest." "You catch fish well. I'll help you catch people, too. You bake and cook well. Follow me and I will make you like yeast, where just a little bit, makes the whole world rise. You are only salt. I will help you flavor every situation in which you find yourself." What we do well.....indeed what we even do poorly or just adequately.....while following Jesus.....that becomes a gift to the world. When following Jesus, we are enhanced and enhancing in every situation!!!

One of the best models for evangelism that I know is the disciple, Andrew. He knows people, he loves people, he meets people and he brings them together. He's not flashy but he's steady and solid. You say to him, "I need something." And Andrew says, "I know a guy." Andrew knows people. He makes connections. He develops relationships.

Recall that in last week's Gospel of John, it is Andrew that introduces his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. He is the first home evangelist of the Jesus Movement.

In a huge crowd, he locates one child with a full backpack of five loaves and two sardines., He wants to share his food with the hungry rabbi. Andrew brought him to Jesus who enhanced that small gift to a meal feeding 5000 men plus their wives and children. Andrew was the first food distribution activist evangelist of the Jesus Movement.

Andrew brought some visiting Greeks to Jesus when Philip didn't know what to do with them, and so he was the first foreign ambassador evangelist of the Jesus Movement. He worked where he found people without acclaim, simply bringing them to Jesus with their current concerns, abilities, gifts and issues.

Presbyterian Pastor Clarence E. Macartney, considered one of the kings of American sermonizing, made a trip to Rome to St. Peter's Cathedral, where the words of the Lord are printed, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Pastor Macartney said, "I read those words and I saw more words, "Thou art Andrew, the man who brought Peter to Christ."

Pastor Macartney went on to preach, "The church does not need more theology, more philanthropy, or more organization. The church does not need another Paul. One Paul does forever. The church does not need another Simon Peter. God made but one and then broke the die. But the church does need many, many more Andrews!"

The kingdom of heaven is still at hand in this world. We seek the rule of God in every heart, a gentle invasion of love and peace. And Jesus is still helping you and me, his co-workers, enhance the experience, the talents, and the joy of the people around them. We can catch people, too. Here is Jesus. Let's go fishing! Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

ELW 582

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

“Sing Praise to God”

R. Aarons

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 **I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light** ELW 815

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**
- ♣ **Lin Worsham**

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **February 22, 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

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.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Holy Cross Congregational meeting will be Sunday, **March 22**, 2026.

Please send your reports to Sussy by Sunday, March 8.

Church Council

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

The Fellowship Club will be meeting at Don Jose Mexican Restaurant, located at 5305 Antoine, at 3:00 pm Saturday, **February 21**.

Please mark your calendars and make plans to join us for some good fellowship and good food!

Nancy Beamesderfer

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

We are looking for volunteers to support our Sunday School and Nursery!

To give our weekly teachers the opportunity to attend services,
we are building a rotation.

Whether you can help **once a month or even once a quarter**, we need you.

The role is simple: supervise 2–4 children, bring them in for Bible Time, and lead a small activity. It's a low-pressure way to serve our church family.

Please reach out to Wendy Lambeth or Julie Richter if you can help!

Julie Richter

SAFEGUARDS SAFETY TRAINING			
HOLYCROSS COUPON CODE FOR 15% DISCOUNT: HCLC2026			
CLASS	DAY	DATE	TIME
Adult CPR *CPR only (\$79) *CPR + First Aid (\$92)	Friday	1/23/2026	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Sunday	2/8/2026	1 pm — 4:30 pm
Adult & Pediatric CPR *CPR only (\$98) *CPR + First Aid (\$108)	Saturday	1/31/2026	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	2/14/2026	1 pm — 5:30 pm
Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers and Professional Rescuers (\$89)	TEMPORARILY DISCONTINUED WILL RETURN IN LATE FEBRUARY / EARLY MARCH		
CPR Instructor Course (\$299)	Friday	2/20/2026	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 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

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*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

26 Mon	27 Tues	28 Wed	29 Thurs	30 Fri	31 Sat
<p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel —WC</p>	<p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel —WC</p>	<p>9—12 pm ELC Dinosaur Show —YR</p> <p>10 am Roundtable Group ---VR</p> <p>11 am Choir practice —CL</p> <p>12 pm Bible Study --AT</p>	<p>6:30—8 pm Basketball Team Nguyen —FLC</p> <p>8 pm AA Women mtg. —FLCA</p>	<p>7—9 pm Bayou City Band practice —FLC</p>	<p>1—4:30 pm SST Adult & Pediatric CPR MR/YR</p> <p>6 pm Saturday Informal service —AT</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