

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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713-686-8254

Rev. Jim Berggren

February 1, 2026

4th Sunday after Epiphany

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!

ELW 873

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: **Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

February 1, 2026 – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

FIRST READING: Micah 6:1-8

6 Listen to what the LORD says:

“Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. ²“Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.³“My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. ⁴I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. ⁵My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.” ⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM

Psalm 15

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

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. ¹⁹ For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the 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: Matthew 4:12-23

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

PR. JIM’S SERMON: <https://youtu.be/qXdRNYbaykU?si=WYcKS93o9I660PPo>

EPIPHANY 4A 2-1-26, MT 5.1-12

ENJOY, SHARE, CELEBRATE

The Beatitudes are a Manifesto from Jesus to his disciples, and in Matthew, the opening lines of Jesus' first lengthy teaching sermon. His words are a descriptive, 'State of the Universe', address. These words are indicative.....not imperative. Their tone is not a matter of "You Should Be!!!" Jesus does not operate out of scarcity. He is the all-fullness of everything. The proper tone for understanding Beatitudes is "You Are, therefore...." If they were imperative prescriptive, they would be humanly impossible. Jesus would seem to be saying, "For a really good time, be poor, sad, self-important and a hungry doormat." Instead, Jesus describes the normative nature of human struggle, and sin, and sorrow, and in the same sentence pronounces God's divine promise and protection for us in the midst if those difficult and uncertain times. It's Gospel, not Law. So, this is who we are and how we operate. Maybe it will be helpful to you. Every condition mentioned here is a precursor condition anticipating the next thing, the most noble anticipation, the Kingdom of Heaven, a very near condition.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: Literally, short of breath. Think of the panic of asthma or emphysema here. COPD. Among other fancy medical terms, it also describes COPD.... Crushed and Overwhelmed to the Point of Dependence. At that point the smallest kindness is CPR in the midst of a life-threatening blockage. Appreciate it. God is the Eternal pulmonologist who breathes the spirit into us with every creative breath.

Blessed are those who mourn: Lost and lonely, and they know it and feel constantly a profound sense of emptiness. That is necessary for the appetite to reconnect. Anticipate breathlessly, God's gifts of new connections and relationships in different and better situations. New reliance on God and other people.

Happy are those who are Meek: Interestingly, personal self-aggrandizement is not a blessing. It is more like a curse.

In the spring of '88, I was asked by the graduating Senior Class of Eagle County High School in Gypsum, Colorado, to deliver the Baccalaureate sermon. I was so proud. I felt like this invitation was one of the truly significant moments of my ministry. Then one of the seniors, Karl, one of my confirmands who I totally respected, told me that the seniors made their decision to select me, by assigning classmates to pick one Sunday, and go, in teams to attend a number of the churches in Eagle Valley. Their purpose was to time the sermons. The pastor who gave the shortest sermon was chosen to deliver the graduation sermon. I won. So much for pride.

Happy are those who are Meek: They are in a tandem yoke with Jesus, harnessed, under helpful control, not timid, but obedient and eager, even under duress, or in weakness. Meekness is strength of character, the ability to suit up and show up no matter how you feel. Faithfully keep on trucking. Meekness is a bridle on a strong and beautiful steed.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: One has to know about personal unrighteousness to do this. To have a deep and healthy sense of personal sin and personal responsibility. There is no going back to the Garden and no perfectibility. Those ideas are very popular these days in our secular culture, and they don't resemble any kind of Biblical

faith, unless, of course, you intend to promote the more dubious practices of idolatry. Jesus doesn't put on a new coat of varnish over dry-rotted wood. He raises from the dead. Always search yourself. Don't try to justify yourself. You can't fill yourself up with Happy at the gas station, but Emptiness will invite spiritual sustenance.

The Merciful will be happy too: They look like fools in an aggressive and competitive world. For 'The Merciful,' everybody else has the right-of-way or the benefit of the doubt. Everyone would like to think that they are always right. They may even display papers and proofs to back up that fantasy. But seriously, it won't hurt you too badly, if the guy in the hot rod Camaro just cut into your lane to get ahead of you. Maybe, he is taking a sick child to the hospital. Call it, 'innocent until proven guilty.'

People, both friends and strangers, will do you wrong. It might be that their act was unintentional, and they are not even aware of its effect on you. We assume that we know the intentions of those with whom we interact. I can assure you, that we don't read minds very well. So, be kind and merciful. Is the 'Right of Way' important enough to die for?

Fulfilled and happy are the Pure in Heart: empty of personal agenda. To wish for one thing only; that God has his way. Focus. Get Clean---Katharsis. God has a good plan. I don't. Knowing that, I still seek to impose my agenda upon the world around me.

When I graduated seminary, Bishop Wahlberg offered to present my name for a call to 3 different congregations. Two were large and had building programs. The other was small, and struggling, on the north side of Houston. I asked him to put my name in there, afraid to tackle a building program in a first call. I was adamant about the 'no-building-program' plan. Fifty-four days into being a pastor, 54 days after arriving in my first parish of Holy Trinity, on Saturday, August 23, 1975, half of the church building burned down. I called the Bishop, from the convenience store, next to the massage parlor, across the street. There was probably panic in my voice. "Phil, I'm at the pay phone on Canino Road, watching firemen chop holes in the roof of my burning parish hall."

There was silence on the other end of the line. Then the Bishop calmly said, "Bergy. There are two things I need to tell you. The first I've always wanted to say to someone, but the opportunity never arose, and I know you can handle it, when I tell you that I'm sure it wasn't your fiery preaching that lit it up!"

"Secondly, and more to the point, the next time you have a big plan, be sure and let me know, before you tell God about your plan. I want to be there to watch!"

Purge yourself and in that emptiness, God will fill you. Pray to God to give you your next best intuition or decision.

Peacemakers will always be happier: not fomenting controversy so as to enjoy the drama. Eric Berne in his classic book, "Games People Play," describes a sad little game that people play, called, "Let's You and Him Fight." Those who disarm gossip instead of passing it along will be happy; Not addicted to adrenaline, and yet, not glossing over the call to honest and authentic interactions. Adjusting realistically to prevailing conditions. Adapters. Those who make war

are by definition those who refuse to negotiate, adjust or adapt.

You will be blessed also if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake: not just any persecution. Persecution when you are standing up for fairness and getting hammered for what you honestly believe. We say cancelled these days. Being disrespected because of your point of view or your way of seeing the world and finding meaning in it, is instructive. You can expect maybe slander, personal attacks, ad hominem statements. "I disagree because you are ugly or stupid or phobophobic." So, what. Rejoice. You know whose you are and who you are! And the results are.....

You are the salt of the world. You will flavor the world around you. People need you to help their lives be at least palatable, if not exciting and zesty. Like salt, your absence would be obvious.

You are the light of the world... you can provide hope for those who are lost in their dark night. You can be the one happy point in their otherwise miserable day. It only takes a tiny candle to make darkness disappear. This text is not how to be happy... This is how to empty yourself so that happy can come in. This is not forcing life...It is accepting life.

And it just gets better in escalating increments as Jesus speaks: He starts with BLESSED: Happy or centered; the sense of serenity even in the midst of calamity. Calm Acceptance. In today's culture 'blessed' might be more easily understood as "EXTREMELY COOL". Extremely Cool are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, the disingenuous, the peacemakers and the persecuted. Extremely cool in two ways: They can handle whatever life tosses at them. And. We admire their grace under pressure.

Extremely cool is a stance toward life. It is a way to be. Ontological. It is not a feeling or an activity.

Jesus follows up with REJOICE and BE GLAD. Rejoice is more of a shared feeling than a condition or stance toward life. If you are blessed you can't help sharing that. Those who enjoy life wish to share it. And BE GLAD. Outward gratitude. Enjoy and share and celebrate in worship and service!!! It is a cascading Holy Trinity of Blessedness:

1. We are alive and can find joy, in all circumstances.
2. We are together to share life, in all circumstances.
3. We celebrate God who gave us these gifts.

In God's regard of us, we are Blessed with:

1. Ontology/We have Being.
2. Sociology/We are in Community.
3. Doxology/We Worship.

Or simply:

BLESSED ARE YOU, WHO

1. “Enjoy life.
2. Share life.
3. Celebrate life with holy gratitude.” Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

power point

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”

Rachel 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

Rise Up, O Saints of God!

ELW 669

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**
- ♣ **Marilyn Thigpen**
- ♣ **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: February

Team # 04

Leader: Julie Kilkenny

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

FEBRUARY

- 1 Reader — Charlotte Jaster
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer
- 8 Reader — Ruby Schaper
P/E — Alma Byerly
- 15 Reader — Scott Wegner
P/E — Sharon Wagner
- 22 Reader — Nancy Beamesderfer
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer

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 PART II

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

Please send your 2025 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
- 1:00 p.m.** Private family event —WC/AT/Fountain area
- 5—6 p.m.** Girl Scouts meeting —FLC room

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

2 Mon	3 Tues	4 Wed	5 Thurs	6 Fri	7 Sat
<p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel —WC</p>	<p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel —WC</p>	<p>9 am Men's Breakfast</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>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