

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday in Lent

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate

ELW 722

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: **Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

March 15, 2026 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Samuel Anoints David

The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’”³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

⁴ Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.”¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel

said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM Psalm 23

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

The word of the Lord.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

ELW Pg. 142

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

THE HOLY GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ⁷ “Go,” he told him, “Wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

¹⁰ “How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.

¹¹ He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So, I went and washed, and then I could see.”

¹² “Where is this man?” they asked him.

“I don’t know,” he said.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So, they were divided.

¹⁷ Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. ¹⁹ “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

²⁰ “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had

decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.²³ That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”

²⁵ He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

²⁶ Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

²⁷ He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses!²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”

³⁰ The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

³⁴ To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

⁴¹ Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

PR. JIM’S SERMON: <https://youtu.be/mAhfyd3sI1g>

LENT 4A 3-15-26 JOHN 9

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

The disciples, eager puppies, good students all, say, “OK Jesus, here’s a test case; (their little organization kinda looks like a rabbinical school so they are pretending to be lawyers without having taken their LSAT, much less a Bar Exam).

“Why’s that beggar blind? Did he sin or did his parents?” It’s a case of attempting to infer backwards from a problem to its probable cause. How do you know the world? Where does meaning coalesce and emerge? Is there a one-to-one ratio between sin and suffering and can I head off future pain at the pass, by an enhanced, hyper-effective religious transaction in the present?

Those are all epistemological questions in theology and philosophy. How do we know things? How do we perceive and understand our universe? How do we effect changes in it?

Lazy thinking will settle on the first tenuously related contingency or event, prior to the observed effect. If one is not obvious, then a person is free to superstitiously make up a “cause” to trigger the “effect.”

The game was close, and the coach sent in his best pitcher. The pitcher wound up like a coiled rattlesnake and unleashed a 97-mph fastball. The batter swung before it left the pitcher’s hand. The bat met the ball with a satisfying crack. The ball sailed into the outfield bleachers. The homer hit a loyal fan in the head. The concussion blinded the fan. Was he blinded by the ball, or the bat? Did the batter or the pitcher blind him? Maybe it was the coach, or the franchise owner that hired the coach that put in the pitcher that threw the ball that the batter hit.

“The disciples ask, “The man is blind.....so who committed the sin, that caused that problem?” One way we make sense of the universe is through noting the relationship of behavior and outcome, crime and punishment, or cause and effect. It is convenient to try to organize the world causally. The map corresponds to the territory often enough, to be at least minimally useful. It is like a topographical map of a mountain you pick up at the Forest Service before your hike. You can read it and see, based on the elevations and distances, about how long it will take you to walk a mile, but you’re clueless as to the underbrush, the boulder fields and the bears.

In reality you are partially blind, but you think you can see because you have a rudimentary map. But there is more in the beautiful randomness that can’t be mapped. You can’t make grace happen with a neat formula. You can’t blame bad things on specific sins.

But someone’s hurt so someone must have sinned. What did you do to make that bad thing happen in your life? Job’s friends just loved to ask that dumb and tedious question. Jesus discounts this lazy logic. “Blaming the victim won’t wash. That person is already hurting. You want to kick him, too, huh?” Suffering is to be met with compassion, not judgement.

The disciples ask Jesus to teach Epistemology. How do we know the world? Why do things happen? Does the ‘before’ cause the ‘after’? Color code the causes. We’ll avoid the effects. Why is the beggar blind? Did he drink too much canned heat, or under the sink cleaning products, or did his mother have a disease, caused by bad behavior? Those are moralistic questions, based

on ugly assumptions! Jesus' is operating out of healing grace, not divine punishment. He makes a mud poultice out of spit and clay dust (kind of reminds me of a Creation story.) He smears it on the blind man's eyes and tells him to wash up in a pool named "Sent". I'm guessing that was very uncomfortable for the blind man at first until he washed the dirt out of his eye sockets....and NOW HE CAN SEE!

Immediately, things get complicated.

He is interrogated about his miracle of sight. His neighbors turn him in.....for being able to see. They are not sure it is even him. They never really looked at him when he was blind. Didn't want to stare, ya know. And why not? At that time, he couldn't look back!

The religious authorities haul him into court, but they have no evidence against him so they go after Jesus for breaking the Sabbath. They had Jesus on 3 counts of 1st degree aggravated, willfully and maliciously breaking the Sabbath. 1. He made mud ointment. No practicing pharmacy on the Sabbath. 2. He picked it up and put it somewhere else. No farming or plowing on the Sabbath. (Moving a chair across a dirt floor is prohibited, because it is technically plowing.) 3. He used it for healing purposes. No doctoring on the Sabbath. And the beggar can only say, "I don't know. I just got here. Funny thing, I can see now."

The religious court said, "You weren't really blind." "Subpoena the parents."

They don't know anything, except that "well yeah, he was blind, and now it looks like he can see." They say, "Talk to him, we don't want to get involved". They may be upset because it was common then to blind a child and then live off their beggarly income. Now somebody else in the family is going to have to get a job.

The court brings him back for a second round of abuse, "A sinner like Jesus can't make a blind man see." The blind man says, "All I know is I was blind and now I see." Just the facts. It looks clear to the court that 1. Sinners can't teach, 2. Sinners can't pray, 3. Sinners can't heal, and 4. Sinners can't forgive. The court appears to be blindly indicting itself. Pay attention here: *Every judgment we make is a judgment of our own condition. "You are cheating," says the cheater. "You stole," says the thief.*

"Funny how you notice that", says the person who is no longer blind.

The man, formerly blind, refuses to cave into the pressure applied to him. The great journalist, H. L. Mencken said, in the 1920's, that if (quote) "the right pressure was applied, Congressmen would cheerfully be in favor of polygamy, astrology, or cannibalism." (unquote) Two out of three ain't bad. He also said, "The urge to save....is almost always a false front for the urge to rule." Remember that when you watch the news.

The ex-blind beggar was on solid ground. He was speaking only from his experience. He hadn't actually even seen Jesus, yet. He was blind, but he probably would never forget his voice. Whoever it was that healed him, it worked. He is now a grateful disciple. He will worship this mystery. He questions the Court, "Would you like to worship him with me?"

The ex-blind beggar took the offensive. He refused to answer questions. He asked questions instead, which is Contempt of Court. "Why do you want to know, you want to be his disciples too?" The Pharisees, blinded by the light kick him out of the temple for good. Of course, he was never allowed in there before, because he was blind, so he won't be missing much there.

Jesus came to heal the world, not condemn it. We may say, “I’m ok. I’m fine. Relationships, health and finances, secure enough, business as usual. I don’t need to bother Jesus with healing right now.”

Maybe not. But John’s central teaching rings out. Losing your sight is a tragic thing, but far worse is having healthy eyes and being spiritually sightless. The twin themes of this chapter are a play on physical blindness and spiritual blindness. Jesus finds the man twice, and cares for him twice. Once in his blindness and once more in his sightedness. Jesus’ care is always ongoing.

The man is loyal to the one who healed him and will worship him, even under duress. Perhaps his new vision will always give him more trouble than his old comfortable blindness. But the gift opened him to God’s strange and wonderful and mysterious surprises.

It’s a funny story. Every time the Court says, WE KNOW, this or that, they get farther from the truth. Every time the beggar says, “I don’t know,” he gets closer to the truth. Every time physical blindness is spotlighted, spiritual blindness is lifted up as a twin theme, an even more oppressing condition. Its crescendos to the final question of the pharisaic opponents, “Are we also blind?” Hmmmmm.....

Perhaps we all are. Sometimes it is hard to see with our hearts. Business as usual distracts and blinds us. It’s not that we are bad. We are inattentive or unresponsive. We miss the richness and joy surrounding us. But like the healed blind man, we follow the God which we haven’t yet seen, but we know His Voice, and, we know he has loved, saved, awakened, and healed us for service.

Here’s mud in your eye. Go wash up and see! Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

There Is a Balm in Gilead

ELW 614

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.**



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

Now, Lord

ELW 201

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider:

God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Be Thou My Vision

ELW 793

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**
- ♣ **Jim Berggren**
- ♣ **Pat Boessling**
- ♣ **Jim Fritze**
- ♣ **Paul Houghton**
- ♣ **Joyce Huey**
- ♣ **Bruce Jaster**

- ♣ **Charlotte Jaster**
- ♣ **Lane Kelly**
- ♣ **Bryan Kile**
- ♣ **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, **March 15, 2026**,
at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: March

Team # 05

Leader: Barbara Neumann

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

MARCH

1 Reader — Alice Braun

P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer

8 Reader — Jay Fort
P/E — Julie Kilkenny

15 Reader — Ike Thompson
P/E — Sharon Wagner

22 Reader — Linda Cuzzort
P/E — Penny Schick

28 Reader — Mallory Hileman
P/E — Alma Byerly

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

ATTENTION HOLY CROSS MEMBERS

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

You must fill out a Calendar Request Form as well.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING PART II

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

Church Council

LENTEN SCHEDULE - 2026

LENTEN SERVICES will be held on Wednesdays

at 12:00 noon in the Atrium the following dates:

FEBRUARY 25, MARCH 4, 11, 18 & 25,

followed by a light meal after the services.

LENTEN MEALS

This is the schedule for the Lenten Meals:

- 2/25 Council
- 3/04 Choir
- 3/11 Ruth Circle
- 3/18 Fellowship Club
- 3/25 Men's Breakfast Group

LENTEN STUDY

for Wednesday Noon Services

This year we will explore the Lenten study “**Killing Jesus**”

by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard.

Pastor Jim Berggren

EASTER LILIES

Order forms for Easter Lilies will be available
March 1st, through the 22nd.

Lilies will be used to decorate the Sanctuary Easter Sunday.

They will be \$10.⁰⁰ each and may be picked up after the Easter Service.

Lilies may be dedicated

"In Memory of", In Honor of" or “To The Glory of God".

Order envelopes will be available in the Atrium and in the Narthex.

Complete the order form and place in the basket. Thank you!

Sharon Wagner

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

The Fellowship Club will be meeting Saturday, **March 21**,

at the Hunan Chef located at 8404 I10W at 3:00 pm.

Please let Nancy know by **March 18**, if you plan to attend call/text **281-814-4153**;

email nbeamesdefer@comcast.net.

Hope to see you there! Nancy Beamesderfer

EASTER EGG HUNT

We'd love to continue the HCLC Easter Egg Hunt Tradition, (scheduled for

Saturday, March 28th, at 3:30 p.m. after the Springfest)

but **we need volunteers, including a Coordinator!**

Can you help?

Contact Wendy Lambeth for details (wklambeth@comcast.net)

Julie Kilkenny

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 4th**, 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 a.m. to 6 p.m. 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
