

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

March 29, 2026

Palm / Passion Sunday

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

ELW 344

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: **Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord and with their lives praise him as Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

March 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday

FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. ⁵The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious; I have not turned away. ⁶I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. ⁷Because the Sovereign LORD helps me; I will not be disgraced. Therefore, have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! ⁹It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me?

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM Psalm 31:9-16

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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: Matthew 27:11-54

Jesus Before Pilate

¹¹ Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

¹² When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³ Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” ¹⁴ But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

¹⁵ Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶ At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” ¹⁸ For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹ While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

²⁰ But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

²¹ “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

²² “What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

²³ “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

²⁵ All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷ Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

³² As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). ³⁴ There, they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵ When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁸ Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴ In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (Which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵² and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

PR. JIM’S SERMON:



PALM/PASSION SUNDAY, 3-29-26

HARD PARADE

Witness the exhilaration, the enthusiasm, of a mass of humanity, moving in all one direction, shouting as one, led by the cantors of chaos. Is it a peaceful demonstration? Is it a martial display? Is it a riot? Is it a celebration of springtime joy? What child does not thrill to the diaphragm skin of the bass drum as it pulses while marching past, the drum’s diaphragm stimulating the onlooker’s diaphragm actually altering cardiac rhythms? Perhaps the answers to those questions depends on the expectations of the participants. The parades of today’s world, run from happy springtime celebrations with festive bands and floats celebrating joyful themes, to nuclear weapons on 26-wheeler flatbeds, rumbling through public squares to threaten a clear point.

When Caesar came back to town from a successful military engagement, it was with a

triumphal march, complete with branches and garments thrown before the marchers. Every time land was conquered and battles won, there would be a homecoming parade, a demonstration of power, and of hero-worship.

Each triumphant parade had to upstage all previous ones. Prisoners of war were collected to lead the parade. They were racially diverse and therefore human novelties to backward observers lining the road: Africans, Jews, Arabs, Gauls, Celts, Vikings, all proof of victory and human subjugation. They would be publicly put to death, or pitted against trained gladiators and wild animals, tortured for entertainment or simply enslaved.

By 20 BC, only the Emperor had the privilege of this hard-hearted parade. People would shout, "Hail, Caesar," and a bull would be dressed up and led in the parade to be sacrificed to the gods at the parade's ending point. A priest marched with the bull, carrying a double-bladed axe for the sacrifice. The bull would be killed and bled out over a screen under which the Caesar and others would walk, being baptized in the blood of the bull. That ceremony was called the taurobolium. Nowadays it is less messy. We just pour Gatorade over the winning coach, a remnant of an ancient pagan religious ceremony.

The Emperor's face would be painted red, like Jupiter's statue, so that it would be obvious that he stood in for the greatest god in the pantheon. Surely you remember instances of statues with faces painted red, being torn down. An unknowing reference to actual behavior during historical mob-ruled rebellions.

The emperor would go to the capitol, the head place of the kingdom and preside over ceremonies. He would be offered wine but would pour it out on the sacrificial bull or the altar, the blood of sacrifice.

With no parade permit even possible, Jesus' procession into Jerusalem, (ultimately, to the cross,) happens at the same time and from the opposite direction as the courtly arrival, of Pontius Pilate, which has been staged to make a military point to the Passover Pilgrim crowd. Don't mess with Rome.

Jesus' parade is an anti-imperial counter-procession. A celebration. Not an intimidation. It follows the same formula, all the way to Good Friday. He is taken to trial accompanied by the special guard, dressed in purple and a mat of thorns, jammed on his head like a crown. The scalp wounds bleed profusely, painting his face red. Opponents shout, "Hail, king of the Jews, while his executioner walks beside him. He is not taken to the capitol, the head, but instead to Golgotha, the skull. He is offered ceremonial wine, but refuses it. His blood will be poured out instead. And then he will sit on his throne.

When Titus returned after destroying Jerusalem and the Temple, he placed Vespasian on his right and Domitian on his left. Both became notorious persecutors of Christians. Jesus ascended to his throne with a convicted social bandit on each side, outcasts all. His subversive procession ends here, a hard parade exposing systems of power and privilege. How does that usually turn out? Whistle blowers always become targets of the enraged entrenched.

The hard parade to the cross was a deep disappointment. It took a miracle for it to become God's appointment for us, a New World!

When the people along the road saw Jesus riding a colt, they immediately thought that Jesus would enter the city defiantly to crush the established order. He would stage a showdown. “HOSANNA”, “Save us, now!” Invaded, enslaved and hungry, they were preoccupied with political and economic power. They had none. They missed what was happening. God is at work. Always. And in surprising ways, turning disappointments into appointments.

Parades are all about influence, managing perception, and making an impression. The imperial parades of the Roman state religion were about influencing the gods and controlling the people through fear.

Jesus’ Palm Sunday Parade was about servanthood and self-sacrifice. It was a parade of humility. A Humble Parade, almost a contradiction in terms. Martin Luther once said that we needed to have goat sense. He would tell of seeing two mountain goats meeting on a narrow ledge. Instead of head-butting for dominance, one will lay down and allow the other to walk over him. Jesus was not exhibiting the expected style of a revolutionary leader. There is nothing more dangerous and uncontrollable to vested power structures, than a free God.

Origen of Alexandria in the 3rd century said that the devil believed the cross was his best weapon. It turned out to be Jesus’ ultimate trophy. God used the most profound tragedy to produce a triumph. I pray that I can remember that, when life deals out difficult disappointments.

Jesus took that risk. Machiavelli advised the Medici’s that there was “nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

A lady had submitted many job applications. Finally, an employer called her with a job but asked, “Can you pick lemons?” She answered, “You bet! I’ve been married 3 times and my new car won’t run.” There are multiple opportunities to make choices. Sometimes the outcomes are frustrating or disappointing. But it is all in God’s hands. He brings us our future. Our future is open. Our disappointments are God’s appointments. We can meet God in our disappointments and make those appointments to join in his humble parade.

Marian Anderson was probably the greatest operatic contralto of all time. She struggled through many, many, many disappointments, seeing them as appointments with God and his wonderful world.

She started singing in the church choir when she was five. Her father bought her a piano when she was eight, but there was no money for lessons, so she taught herself how to play. Her father sold coal and ice at the Reading Terminal in downtown Philadelphia. He died at age 37 from a head injury suffered at work. Marian, 12 years old, helped her mother raise her two younger sisters, and they moved in to her grandfather’s home. He was born a slave and moved to South Philly after the Emancipation Proclamation. A year later he died. She kept singing through these crushing disappointments. She had higher appointments.

Marian was such a great vocalist that she was sponsored for a European tour and was a hit there. Nevertheless, no hotels would let her stay in Princeton, N.J. for a concert at the university, because of her skin color. Albert Einstein loved her voice, gave her lodging, and she was always and often, a welcome guest in his home. She gave a concert at the White House for

the Roosevelts and the King and Queen of England.

Easter Sunday, 1939, her agent Sol Hurok, a renowned organizer and director of ballet, opera, and symphonic events, booked her at Constitution Hall in Washington DC. Washington DC was segregated then, and Constitution Hall didn't have segregated public restrooms, so she was denied that venue. Mr. Hurok got busy and spoke to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, and they arranged the Easter Concert to be held at the feet of Abraham Lincoln's Memorial. 75,000 people attended, including most of Congress, the Cabinet, and the Supreme Court. What an amazing appointment grew out of a crushing disappointment!!!

One day, Sol Hurok was talking with Marian backstage after a performance. A reporter interrupted them, and asked her to name the greatest moment in her life. Sol knew of at least a hundred answers she could give at her level of renown, and international honor. He knew of her many great disappointments, as well, and she could be proud of her many appointments. He was curious about what she would say.

She told the reporter that the greatest moment of her life was the day she went home and told her mother, "You don't have to take in washing anymore."

God is with us and we are all in that life-long hard parade, the palms-to-passion procession. Jesus led the happy parade at the start of the week. It was a delightful challenge to the hard parade of conquering armies. But it was a disappointing hard parade at the end of the week for Jesus and his followers. But it was at the end of the week, not the beginning, that the saving work was done. All of the disappointments, culminate and stop at the Cross. It is there, that we are appointed His beloved children, adopted, nourished, honored and loved in all of our parades. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY **My Song Is Love Unknown** Green Hymnal

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 **“Fairest Lord Jesus”** **Pr. Jim / Rob**
arr. T. Smith / D. Hustad Piano / Organ duet

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

THE OFFERING PRAYER

All pray together:

O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus’ name. 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

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

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW 264

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**
- ♣ **Bryan Kile**
- ♣ **Nancy Lancaster**
- ♣ **David Magrill**
- ♣ **Jeremy Mitchell**
- ♣ **Geraine Moore**
- ♣ **Ed Peterman**
- ♣ **Dorothy Preuss**
- ♣ **Tillie Remmert**
- ♣ **Lupe Romero**
- ♣ **Wayne Schaper**
- ♣ **Steve Schulze**
- ♣ **Scott Spates**
- ♣ **Marilyn Thigpen**
- ♣ **Jaime Urbanski**
- ♣ **Bennie Valites**
- ♣ **Susan Wiles**
- ♣ **Michael Williams**
- ♣ **Lin Worsham**

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **April 19**,
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

29 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 church or private events, please contact Sussy.

You must to fill out a Calendar Request Form or send an email. Thank you!

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

WOMEN'S MORNING STUDY GROUP

Ladies, join us for a new monthly study starting **Saturday, April 18!**

We will meet on the **3rd Saturday** of each month from **9:00 am to 10:00 am** in the **Annex**. Our first series will focus on the *Women of the Bible* examining the lives of biblical women to discover spiritual lessons, focusing on their faith, struggles, and roles in God's story.

Come enjoy coffee and a bite during our time of fellowship and growth as we dive into God's Word together. We hope to see you there! Invite a friend.

This is open to all women.

Contact Alma Byerly 713-870-1297 with questions.

Join us in the Celebration of

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES IN 2026

Palm Sunday	March 29	9:30 a.m. —WC
Maundy Thursday and Stripping of the Altar —WC	April 2	6:00 p.m. —Gym

Good Friday	April 3	7:00 p.m. —WC
Saturday Informal Service	April 4	6:00 p.m. —AT
· Prayer Vigil		9:00—6 p.m.
Easter Day	April 5	
· Easter Sunrise service		7:00 a.m. —WC
· Easter Breakfast		8:00 a.m. —Gym
· Pre-service Organ Concert		9:00 a.m. —WC
· Easter Traditional Worship		9:30 a.m. — WC

Kindly reminder:

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

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 —Gym*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

30 Mon	31 Tues	1 Wed	2 Thurs	3 Fri	4 Sat
<p><i>11—12 pm</i> <i>ELC Chapel</i> <i>-WC</i></p>	<p><i>11—12 pm</i> <i>ELC Chapel</i> <i>-WC</i></p>	<p><i>9 am Men's Breakfast</i></p> <p><i>11 am Choir practice</i> <i>-CL</i></p>	<p>6:00 pm -Gym MAUNDY THURSDAY and Stripping of the Altar -WC</p> <p><i>8 pm AA Women</i> <i>meeting -FLCA</i></p>	<p>--ELC closed--</p> <p>7:00 pm -WC GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE</p>	<p><i>6 pm Saturday</i> <i>Informal service</i> <i>-AT</i></p>
<p>AT =Atrium, CL=Choir Loft, CR=Choir Room, FLC/ Family Life Center = GYM, FLCA=Annex, KiM= Kids in Motion, MR=Media Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room BLS=Basic Life Support, SST=Safeguards Safety Training</p>					