

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

April 5, 2026

Easter Day

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME / ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING SONG

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

ELW 365

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen.*

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: *Amen.*

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

C: *We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.*

P: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthens 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: **God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

April 5, 2026 – Easter Day

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:1-6

“At that time,” declares the Lord, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people.”² This is what the Lord says: “The people who survive the sword will find favor in the wilderness; I will come to give rest to Israel.”³ The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

⁴ I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again, you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful. ⁵ Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit. ⁶ There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, ‘Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.’”

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:1-4

Living as Those Made Alive in Christ

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

The word of the Lord.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

ELW Pg. 151

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia.

THE HOLY GOSPEL: John 20:1-10

The Empty Tomb

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Congregational response: **Praise to you, O Christ.***

PR. JIM’S SERMON:



EASTER DAY A, 4-5-2026, John 20. 1-10

One of my childhood friends, now Dr. Rasmussen, always had a heart full of love for God's Creation. It is no wonder that he went to medical school and became a doctor. As a child, he rescued stray animals, fed them, healed them if they were injured and patched them up, and released them back into the wild world, if they were able to survive.

As one of my older classmates, at New Gottland Elementary School, Jerry was the definition of a kind person. He didn't tease or bully. He was mellow, a healing person in his interactions with our fascinating world.

One foggy morning, Jerry found an orphaned litter in a culvert, near the body of a mama skunk that had been hit by a car. He organized an impromptu rescue squad. Everyone on a five-mile stretch of the Township section-line road, got a baby skunk to try and save, starting with eye-dropper feeding sessions.

We got our skunk. We named her Thumper, because she'd stamp her front feet with her tail in the air. That was typical defensive behavior, but baby skunks aren't developed enough to actually spray. If you see an adult skunk do that.....RUN!

We all had the same idea. Keep the polecats until their musk glands were developed at about two months, and then release them. But Thumper became a house pet. She built a nest in the music closet, out of Mom's shredded sheet music. Unbelievably, Mom thought that was cute. Six decades later, I can open a box of music in storage and still smell Thumper.

Everything was fine until that fateful Sunday dinner after church, where I learned the meaning of divine retribution. I had been admonished in every tone of voice, except "telephone", "Do not feed the animals from the kitchen table, or *"You'll be sorry!"* But they were begging; so I slipped Lady a chicken bone. She dropped it. Thumper and Herr Sigmund von Schnapps, the dachshund who attacked Santa at the school Christmas Pageant, began a battle for possession of that fowl femur. Snarling, stamping, there's the round-off.....*I was sorry!!!*

You know that stuff about tomato juice? Don't believe it. Three boxes of baking soda helped a little. The next morning Dad took me to the vet's office with Thumper for a scent-glandectomy. I rode in the back of the pickup. The vet told me to go outdoors and play! The other kids would talk to me if I kept my distance. Most of them had dogs who had encountered skunks, but a human could describe the experience better. Collateral effects....part of farm life....smellin' bad's, a lot better'n losing a finger or a hand by getting too close to machinery.

And our dear Thumper, darling Polecat de Parfum? She would still stamp her feet, throwing herself into her round-off spray position, and nothing bad would happen and we'd laugh, at first with relief, and then with joy as she learned to do her trick for treats, just to make us smile and pet her. What we reflexively feared in the "natural order" of things, (what we always knew was absolute truth) had become a game of joy, a deeper relationship that the natural order could ever muster or sustain.

To paraphrase St. Paul, "Oh skunk, where is thy stink?" The stink of death is sin and the power of sin is the Law, but the skunk is just playing with us. She is our pet! We are not her

victim! And we know, 'cause we've been sprayed with the water of death, and lived to tell about it. "Death has been swallowed up in victory.... Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57. Death is just a little subset of Eternal Life. The Past is a just subset of the Present. The Present is the doorway to God's Future. The past is forgiveness, the present is atonement, the future is open reconciliation. A new way of being.

This is something like what we do in the celebration of newness and freedom at Easter. We are acknowledging with serious but joyful play, that we are already in the Kingdom of God, on the other side of slavery and death. We are celebrating freedom and newness, as conditions of the future Kingdom, while we still live under the rule of the powers that put Jesus to death. We are playing the Easter game as we join in the laughing of the redeemed and the dancing of the liberated, the joy of the hopeful, even though we still live under the same old, deadly conditions of last Friday, conditions where even God is suffering great pain on behalf of a broken and bleeding humanity.

The game of Easter calls us to be in the role of conquerors while we still feel victimized. To joyfully mock the powers that subject our world to suffering. To disdain evil, sin, death, hell and wrath with a big NEVERTHELESS. These conditions do not apply in the inconceivable new Easter Resurrection reality.

One day at the Holy Trinity parsonage on Merriwood, I glanced at the oak tree in the front yard, and there was a cicada struggling to emerge from its old dead exoskeleton, as a new creature. For years I had been fascinated by the empty shells of cicadas but I had never seen one actually emerge from its no-longer-useful home. What an opportunity! I pulled up a lawn chair to watch this miraculous metamorphosis.

An epic struggle commenced! Shrugging and flexing and straining. I wanted to help, but I didn't dare interrupt a natural process that has worked well since the Late Triassic Period for the over 200 million years, cicadas have been doing this dance. After a half-hour of heroic exertion, one wet wing stretched out of the shell. It slowly unfurled, and then opened all the way, and as the wind caught it, the wing began to dry. Ten minutes had passed.

This was taking much longer than I thought it would. I could empathize with this mortal struggle I witnessed. By now, I had a proprietary interest in my "pet" cicada. But, I was exhausted just watching. It was hot. I needed to stretch and get something to drink. I hurried in the house, got a tall glass of ice water, and grabbed a book, because this process was going to take a while longer.....

Settling into the chair I looked at the tree to see the progress of Cecil the Cicada. He was gone. All that was there were his old clothes. That was a lot to ponder. Maybe he was shy and didn't want to change in front of anyone. Maybe I wasn't worthy to see this resurrection. Maybe we get to see the 'before' picture, and then we see the lifeless shell, but right now we can only hear the song of the beauty and wonder of life being raised. Cecil was singing loudly and jubilantly!!!

His husk had a neat slit down its back, through which he had escaped, pulling new wings,

new eyes, and new legs out of that dry shell, and taking flight. I could hear them all singing in the trees. I'll bet none of them could have told you or were even worried about, where they left their old clothes.

All the disciples saw when they got to the tomb on that Sunday morning was a couple of piles of old clothes, neatly folded and left behind. And the angels' song calling them into the future.

The empty tomb is good news about the universe and about God. It proclaims that the world is not just a complex machine, or a tiny whirling ball in the backwaters of an insignificant galaxy. The empty tomb says that universe and God are more than that. They are home. At its heart, the universe and God are not just something, but some ONE. The Resurrection, the empty tomb, has raised all of Creation in Christ. That is breathtaking news.

Easter isn't just about dying and beating death. It's about the power of belief in a world of lost hope. No situation is beyond God's redeeming power. He does not forsake or forget us. And, "since you have been raised with Christ," as St. Paul wrote, "set your hearts on things above."

He is risen! So, we are risen, with Him! Indeed!

HYMN OF THE DAY

He Lives

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 **“The Easter Song”** Anne Herring

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 *Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider:

Lord Jesus, in a wonderful sacrament you strengthen us with the saving power of your suffering, death, and resurrection. May this sacrament of your body and blood so work in us that the fruits of your redemption will show forth in the way we live, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG **I Know That My Redeemer Lives!** **ELW 619**

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.*



- ♣ **Pat Boessling**
- ♣ **Jim Fritze**
- ♣ **Paul Houghton**
- ♣ **Joyce Huey**
- ♣ **Bruce Jaster**
- ♣ **Charlotte Jaster**
- ♣ **Bryan Kile**

- ♣ Nancy Lancaster
- ♣ David Magrill
- ♣ 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

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Installation of Holy Cross Officers will be Sunday, **April 19**, during the service in the Worship Center.

Church Council

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **April 19**, at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: April

Team # 06

Leader: John Wenger

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

APRIL

5 Reader — Scott Wegner
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer

12 Reader — Jay Fort
P/E — Wendy Lambeth

19 Reader — Russell Richter
P/E — Julie Kilkenny

26 Reader — Alice Braun
P/E — Linda Cuzzort

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!

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.

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

The Fellowship Club will be meeting at the church
for a pot luck on Saturday, **April 18 at 4:00 p.m.**

Please bring your favorite dish to share
(and maybe the recipe if it's not a family secret).

We will be eating at 5:00 p.m.

Sure hope everyone comes to enjoy some good fellowship and good food.

Nancy Beamesderfer

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

7:00 a.m. *Easter Sunrise service with Rev. Jim Berggren –WC*

8:00 a.m. *Easter Breakfast –Gym*

9:00 a.m. *Pre-service Easter Organ Concert*

9:30 a.m. *Easter 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*

5—6 p.m. *Girl Scouts meeting –Gym room*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

6 Mon	7 Tues	8 Wed	9 Thurs	10 Fri	11 Sat
<p>Easter Monday -Office closed-</p> <p>No ELC today</p>	<p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel -WC</p>	<p>10 am Roundtable Group -VR</p> <p>11—12 pm ELC Chapel -YR</p> <p>11 am Choir practice -CL</p> <p>12 pm Bible Study --AT</p>	<p>1 pm Ruth Circle meeting -FLCA</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, ELC=Early Learning Center,
 FLC= Family Life Center = **GYM**, FLCA=Annex, KiM= Kids in Motion, MR=Media Room,
 VR=Volunteer Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room,
 SST=Safeguards Safety Training (CPR classes)