

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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Rev. Jim Berggren

May 17, 2026

7th Sunday of Easter

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME / ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING SONG

God Is Here!

ELW 526

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: **O God of glory, your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to your right hand. Unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

May 17, 2026 – Seventh Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING: Acts 1:6-14

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James, son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all

joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM **Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35**

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

Suffering for Being a Christian

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

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 17:1-11

Jesus Prays to Be Glorified

¹⁷ After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom

you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

⁶ “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

PR. JIM'S SERMON:



EASTER 7A, 5-17-26,

John 17.1-11

WE ARE ONE

Jesus prays for us, “Protect them...so that they may be one, as we are one.”

Equality is a Divine Gift. We are all equal in God’s heart. There is no way to make God love you more or love you less. Equity is a flawed human compulsion to play God and make everyone the same. Equity presumes to improve on the divine gift of Equality.

The Unity of God, Jesus and us believers is a divine gift. We are One in the Spirit. We are One in the Lord. Uniformity is our compulsion to play God and make everyone the same. Uniformity presumes to modify the divine gift of Unity. Uniformity is our attempt to make everyone think and act the same. God in His infinite wisdom created over 350,000 species of beetles. How boring would it be if they were all June Bugs?

So... Greetings from your local pastoral representative of the Episcathluthamethabapterian Church. We are not non-denominational. We are multi-omni-poly-denominational. You got a name brand religion? Well, let’s get together and say we agree on everything, because Jesus is a nice guy, and that’ll be a Christian witness to an insane and vicious pagan world in the 21st century. Here’s a news flash.... The pagans don’t like us and they don’t want us around. Christians and Jews are the most persecuted groups in the world. And we think we can create unity in the Lord, and that will be a witness. That thought and that aspiration is a luxury for persons not facing persecution.

You can NOT create unity in the Lord!!! Sorry, that job has already been taken care of by Jesus in John 17:11. We just have to live into it. Unity has been pronounced. If we don't experience that as a reality in our ministries, it simply means that we are not yet responding to Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. I would hate to think that Jesus' prayers are not working because of my obstinacy. God is protecting us. We can trust the goodness of his unifying nature.

Most mainline church leaders are in a full-blown linear panic because we have been hijacked by Cultural Christianity, and Secular Rationalism, both of which are ten commandments short of a Moral Code. It's easy to get taken in. It is like the axe. Right before it takes the first slashing chunk out of the tree, it says to the tree, "I'm just like you. My handle is wood." don't get taken in by false consensus.

It was about six decades of intense gospel peroxide-and-hairspray dependency which eventually morphed into masked social justice warriors. Instead of standing up against the paragons of Cultural Christianity, we have admired their success and tried to copy their marketing strategies. Mainline churches are busier than an octopus on roller skates on a frozen pond. We have seminars, commissions, think tanks, coalitions of correctness, and assemblies trying to tease out the real reason for the success of the Baal gods of the culture. Plain and simple? Greed, a rockin' music budget, pandering to consumer self-image, and sophisticated marketing, promising success in everything.

In the 90's the ELCA decided to open an African-American Mega-Church in Houston, targeting particular neighborhoods. They convened meetings with all the Lutheran pastors on the southwest side of town to explain that the ELCA was going to start an African-American MegaChurch on the south side of town. The new south beltway would feed this proposed church. The presenter claimed to be the most important mission developer in the country, because he controlled the biggest budget in the church.

They asked for input. Trying to be helpful, I prepared a detailed map with eight African-American mega-churches already in place, in the closest 20 square miles. I detailed their properties and reported membership numbers in the tens of thousands. I had met and worked with several of those pastors, co-presiding at weddings and funerals. The neighborhood was saturated with successful mega-churches, and beltway properties had been sold for over a decade.

The presenter called me a racist. A former member of a congregation that I had served, an esteemed economics professor at Texas Southern University, spoke to my credibility, and then angrily left. I was then asked how I would make a church like that happen. I said, "You will probably have to get Eddie Murphy for the Senior Pastor, and Chris Rock for Programming and Outreach, and Quincy Jones for the Music Director." "That'll beat the competition."

The presenter raged at me, "You're not serious. No church on the southeast side of Houston could ever support staff like that!"

I incredulously asked, "Southeast? Where are you planning to plant this new church?"

He said, "Our projections are right here, the southeast side of Houston, of course."

“Is that where you think we are?” I was puzzled. The answer, “Of course.”

“We are in southwest Houston,” I offered, “You need to talk to the pastors in Pasadena and Baytown. That’s the southeast side of Houston.” And I left.

As a Church, we so much wanted to stem the rising tide of declining membership, and aging demographics in all denominations, even in bowling teams and civic clubs, that we were caught up in the hopes and dreams of mega-churches, which are few and which have limited life-spans. Uniformity has an expiration date. Unity is forever!

In the 90’s and subsequent Oughties and Teenies, everybody wanted to clone the perfect mega-church in the style of the now non-existent Crystal Cathedral. The inherent insincerity of the effort expended to do such a thing mostly made it not happen.

There was only one First Community Full-Service Community Church of the Community. If you didn’t like bowling there, you’d just have to find a normal AMF alley like the rest of the unbelievers. Wow....Biblewood even had a McDonald’s. “Hey, gimme a Holy Ghost McDouble, Sonny Fries, and a Diet Vanilla Jehovah Shake.” One of the members was bragging to me that it took three armored cars to pick up the offerings after services: Until the pastor’s indiscretions brought the congregation to its knees. Some of their members were our friends They came to me weeping. I advised them, “You are the church. Not the pastor. Pull your loving believers together and keep the faith in that place no matter how large or small the crowd!”

The world’s biggest monster concert (holds all the records) was in Boston in 1872. It made Woodstock look tiny. Boston built a temporary Coliseum, 600 feet by 350 feet, bigger than two football fields, made to hold 60,000 spectators and 22,000 musicians. Johann Strauss was paid \$100,000, to direct a musical extravaganza featuring, “The Blue Danube,” and parts of Verdi’s “Il Travatore.” For the opera’s “Anvil Chorus,” 100 anvils weighing between 100 and 300 pounds, were shipped in from Birmingham, England. Hit with a sledge, each anvil produced a different tone. The Boston Fire Department played them. There was an orchestra of 2000 instruments, a chorus of 20,000 voices and 100 sub-conductors, spaced out for 100’s of yards, some that Strauss couldn’t even see. He asked the producer, Patrick Gilmore, “How will I conduct this mess?”

Gilmore said, “Get up on the scaffolding and raise your arms. Don’t worry, we’ll fire a cannon to start.”

Strauss mounted the scaffolding and directing the assembly of musicians with his violin and bow, said, “There broke out an unholy racket.” The world’s largest Blue Danube Waltz.

Which brings to mind the number of people and hours of preparation involved each week in the Sunday worship hour when we give glory to God: pastors, musicians, printers, typists, proofreaders, copiers, ushers, greeters, talkers, listeners, pray-ers, counselors, givers, counters, folders, singers, communion preparers, church cleaners and worshippers all converged on that time and place in a week to produce a best effort toward an event designed to bring glory to God. There will break out a holy racket! Isn’t that a beautiful unity? Who even remembers a Blue Danube festival in 1872? Who could forget faithful weekly worship which will have more of a

lasting effect on the world than most any other event. Billions of people know about small but effective worship experiences all over the whole world. We have unity in faith and purpose.

Mainline denominations thinking themselves canny and cunning, have consumed huge amounts of energy by convening large commissions to make grandiose claims of unity with those with whom we are already unified. C'mon... don't try to sell me something that's already mine. Here's an important news flash for the Great Ecumenical Unifiers of Christendom. It is not ecumenism when the representatives of two different Christian denominations talk with each other or share in ministry together. That is simply two members of the same family, the Body of Christ, acting like they should. Ecumenism is finding someone who never heard of Christianity, and finding common ground with them for service to God's Universe instead of trying with Superior Tolerance to find a common thread and announce Uniformity.

“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

I Come with Joy

ELW 482

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,**

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:

Holy One, through this meal you have made your home among us and are making all things new. Send us now to speak peace to anxious hearts, to love our enemies, and to bring your healing to the nations. In the name of Jesus.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing

ELW 389

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.*



- ♣ **JR Abrego**
- ♣ **Pat Boessling**
- ♣ **Jim Fritze**
- ♣ **Paul Houghton**
- ♣ **Joyce Huey**
- ♣ **Bryan Kile**
- ♣ **Nancy Lancaster**
- ♣ **David Magrill**
- ♣ **Geraine Moore**

- ♣ Ed Peterman
- ♣ Dorothy Preuss
- ♣ Lupe Romero
- ♣ Wayne Schaper
- ♣ Myrtl Slade
- ♣ Scott Spates
- ♣ Jaime Urbanski
- ♣ Bennie Valites
- ♣ Susan Wiles
- ♣ Michael Williams

**Family and Friends of Anne Martin
upon completion of her life's mission.**

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be today, **May 17**, at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: May

Team # 03

Leader: Linda Cuzzort

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

MAY

3 Reader — Mallory Hileman
P/E — John Stokes

- 10 Reader — Ruby Schaper
P/E — Steve Schulze
- 17 Reader — Jay Byerly
P/E — Alma Byerly
- 24 Reader — Julie Kilkenny
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer
- 31 Reader — Alice Braun
P/E — Sharon Wagner

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!

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

Cheers to 50 years!

Rev. James Berggren – Sunday, June 7

Let's count his years by friends and supporters, not by years!

Holy Cross wishes him all the courage and confidence to shine in his own unique way for the next 50 years! And another 20 years at Holy Cross!

Please consider a donation to celebrate his outstanding accomplishments at Holy Cross and those of his vast career experiences. Donation envelopes and donation box will be next to our sign-in sheets in the Atrium. **No donation is too small.**

Donations accepted through Sunday, May 31. Make checks payable to Marsha Thompson. Should you have any questions please contact Nancy Beamsderfer (281-814-4153) or Marsha Thompson (281-935-4988)

VBS

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

June 22—26, 2026

(Mon—Fri 9:00 am — 12 noon) AGES 3 — Completed 5th Grade

Lots of fun! Bible stories, music, crafts, science, service projects

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

Questions? Contact Wendy Lambeth 713-854-1573

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*

