

Holy Cross Lutheran Church (HCLC)
Minutes for Council Meeting – January 18, 2026

The January 2026 Church Council meeting was called to order by Vice President Jay Byerly on Sunday, January 18, 2026 at 11:08 a.m. Pastor Berggren opened with a prayer.

In attendance were: Pastor Jim Berggren, Jay Byerly, Anita Cooper, Ricki Finstad, Julie Kilkenny, Wendy Lambeth, Russell Richter, Penny Schick and Hans Sunder. Nancy Beamesderfer attended as a special guest. Council President Stephen Schulze was not in attendance.

The first item for Council consideration was Pastor Berggren's presentation of the request for his annual **parsonage allowance** of \$45,100 for 2026. A motion to approve this allowance was made by Wendy Lambeth, seconded by Russell Richter and passed by Council.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Berggren updated Council on his activities for the month. He remarked on the busy month of December. He had the pleasure of representing Santa at the HCLC Sip'n Shop and also at a Houston Police Dept. toy distribution. In addition to regular Saturday and Sunday services, there were Wednesday noon Advent services and Contemporary Theology seminars on Wednesday nights. Pastor Berggren thanked the congregation for their prayers during and after his medical procedures in late December. He has started preparations for Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18th. Other activities included making phone calls and visits to parishioners; providing counseling and ministering for prayer requests; outreach to the community; weekly Wednesday Bible Study; and various church ministry meetings.

The **minutes** from the October 2025 and November 2025 meetings were submitted by Secretary Julie Kilkenny and approved by Council. (There was no Council meeting in December 2025.)

In response to questions from previous meetings Treasurer Finstad began his report by distributing a handout with his research on how HCLC staff salaries compare to other (similar size) churches in Houston. There was some discussion, and Vice President Byerly tabled further discussion for a future meeting. Treasurer Finstad then continued with the **Treasurer's Report**. December 2025 offerings were \$28,974, (as compared to \$15,228 in November and \$31,958 in October). Expenses for the month of December were \$33,973, which was \$4,999 greater than offerings. Year-to-date expenses of \$395,939 exceeded offerings of \$273,469 by \$122,470, leaving an average monthly deficit of \$10,205. Average monthly offerings were short of budget amounts by \$10,563/month; Treasurer Finstad noted that actual expenses were within .99% of budget amounts. The checking account balance at

12/31/25 was \$54,891, not including restricted funds. Treasurer Finstad gave a summary of investments and other items in his report. Council approved the Treasurer's Report.

Committee Reports and Old Business:

Outreach: Ms. Lambeth reported that the Visitors' and New Member packets, which she, Pastor Berggren and Julie Richter have been working on, were nearly complete. She remarked on the importance of publicizing HCLC Lenten activities.

Buildings and Grounds/Maintenance: Mr. Byerly noted that repairs to the FLC (Gym) kitchen refrigerator have been completed.

Other Old Business: Hans Sunder presented his concerns about the world economy and the potential effect on HCLC investments. He distributed a handout to Council members, which included a breakdown of Telge funds and forecasts of various types of investments. He asked Council and the FRC to consider additional ways to protect Holy Cross against adverse market impact. Several members recommended that Mr. Sunder, as well as certain Council members, be present at the Financial Review Committee meeting(s) at which this is discussed.

New Business:

Building Use Request: Council approved several requests for the use of church facilities: Food Pantry (cooking classes and Thanksgiving Meal-in-a-Bag) and Bayou City Blues Band.

Lenten Preparations:

- Council approved Nancy Beamesderfer's request to contact various groups within the congregation to be responsible for lunches following the mid-week Lenten services. Council will take the first week (February 25th). Ms. Beamesderfer will coordinate groups for the following Wednesdays (March 4, 11, 18, 25), as well as Maundy Thursday (April 2).
- Ms. Lambeth asked Council to approve payment for 2-3 banners for Lent and Easter. A motion was made, seconded and approved by Council.

Nominating Committee/Congregational Meeting Part II:

- Mr. Byerly noted that the Nominating Committee did not have a Council Liaison in place. Ms. Lambeth volunteered for this position (and was approved by Council) and pointed out that a list of nominees needs to be presented at the next Council meeting. She also noted that the Congregational Meeting must be scheduled and publicized with proper notice to the congregation.

- Mr. Byerly suggested a deadline of March 8th for committees to submit reports to be included in the packet for the Congregational meeting.

Other New Business: Council discussed the need to develop a contract and written job description for church staff, a project that was cut short by COVID. Members discussed the importance of clarifying and putting into writing responsibilities, expectations, sick leave, vacation, etc. Council felt that having a committee for this project would be appropriate and help ensure a fair workplace environment.

The February Council meeting was scheduled for Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

The March Council Meeting was scheduled for Sunday, March 15, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

The Congregational Meeting Part II was scheduled for Sunday, March 22, 2026 after Worship (and also before the Saturday, March 21st service at 6:00 p.m.).

Upon motion to adjourn, the meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Kilkenny,
Secretary, Church Council