

*Our mission statement:
Celebrating God's love
by worshipping God,
caring for each other,
and serving in community.*

Crossties

*"Sharing the
Ointment for Jesus'
Feet, Giving God
our Very Best"
Cf. John 12:3*

September 2026	<i>Holy Cross Lutheran Church</i>	Vol. 32 No. 9
<u>Bergy's Babble: "Who Is He?"</u> In this pre-election time of partisan, self-serving polling, where the answers reflect the hopes of the pollsters, but not necessarily the truths, of political reality, Jesus takes a poll. Speaking to his disciples, he inquires, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" A variety of speculative opinions are put forward, all of them positing reincarnations of former faith heroes, mostly prophets. Additionally, high on the wish list of all right-thinking people, is the rise to political dominance and worldwide rule, of the candidate favored by the majority. The common, "Son of Man" phrase, asks the theoretical question, "Who do people generally identify as the best that humanity has to offer?" Jesus accepts these polling results. After all, they are just opinions! His next statement is, "That is what THEY say. Now what do YOU say?" Simon Peter ingeniously reframes the entire discussion with his answer, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." Brash and impetuous, Simon Peter swings at a lot of pitches, but his answer to Jesus, his confession of faith is a brilliant homerun!! He redirects the question from "What does humanity have to offer?" to the identification of Jesus as the Anointed Son, the Best that Living God has to offer!" Amazing. What indeed does humanity have to offer that even compares minimally to what God has to offer? ... /// ...		

... /// ... Bergy's Babble

This incredible dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, takes place in Caesarea Philippi, basically a Roman, Rest and Recreation City, a retirement enclave for Gentile citizens. In the old days, Caesarea Philippi was a main venue for Baal worship, and then it became a worship center for the god Pan. It was a place of entertaining PANDemonium, (which was the capitol of hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, [Pandemonium, a place of all demons) as long as you didn't PANic, with sudden, unreasonable, hysterical fear. Caesarea Philippi, was a city caught in the thralls of various BAD descriptions of God. Bad descriptions of God cause people to perform outrageous rituals such as infant sacrifice, temple prostitution, slavery of the innocent, and the slaughter of unbelievers, practices still carried on the world today. Bad ideas of God produce corresponding bad behavior!

Simon has said, "You are Christ, Son of the Living God. Jesus comes back with, "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church!" There is an inside joke here. You know Peter had recently taken a lot of ribbing from his fishing buddies. That's what fishing partners do. It was one of those "Hold my beer" moments, when he jumped out of the boat into high seas. "Hey. If he lives, we'll laugh about it later." What deranged person gets out of a boat in a raging storm? "Hey Simon, you dropped like an anchor. Can you teach me how to sink? Do you give sinking lessons? Was that the Rock Back-Float or the Skipping Stone-Stroke you did out there? It looked a little bit like the Pebble Paddle! Or perhaps the Boulder Butterfly." "We're not taking you for Granite because that's not Gneiss." After all of that teasing, Simon probably could have used a little encouragement.

Jesus lifted up Simon Bar-Jona, out of the drowning chaos. Now he lifts him up in status. He is no longer a faithless sinker.

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... /// ... Bergy's Babble

He has landed on the Ground of Being and is now a stable foundation for the future of the Movement. Simon names Jesus, as "The Son of the Living God." Jesus in turn blesses Simon, by renaming him, Peter the Rock, the foundation upon which the Jesus movement will be built.

Peter has discovered in Jesus the nature of God the Father. God is loving and compassionate, serene in what is normally experienced as adversity, and always doing the work of redemption. God the Father, is not a killer, but instead a life-giver. Other sons of gods, the forgotten emperors of the ages, reflect quite the opposite images.

Jesus, accurately named by Peter as the Son of the Living God, is the standard by which we live our lives. Maybe that is why there is so much chaos in our society today. Everyone is using their own reference point. As it is repeated in Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." No conscience. No moral compass. Just *Lord of the Flies*, marries *Animal Farm*, and has human hell as a baby: Anarchy crushed by tyranny. All of the utopian fantasies and movements in the world with their urge to purge, have done an amazingly efficient job of assaulting and killing to achieve their ignorant, anti-historical ends. One hundred million people died in the 20th century, at the service of just one utopian vision, filtered through four major cultures. In contrast, Jesus didn't hurt or kill anyone. He didn't force anyone to believe a certain way. He invited people into a better context for living life and enjoying his Creation. 'Ism' is the most dangerous suffix in the world, if it is not filtered through the life of Christ, the Son of the Living God, who never hurt or killed anyone, and instead gave his life for everyone.

John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. His heroic protagonist the Pilgrim, was a man named "Christian."

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... /// ... Bergy's Babble

Christian was travelling to the Celestial City with a crushing, exhausting load strapped to his back. Each step was a struggle.

The load he carried, was the weight of his own sin. Arriving at the foot of the cross of Jesus, as Bunyan put it, "his burden tossed from off his shoulders.....and began to tumble.....until it came to the mouth of the tomb, where it fell in and was seen no more." Great theology!!!! That grace is beyond human comprehension even as it defines our God. No dictator, tyrant or Caesar ever did something like that!!!!

Bad definitions of God, bad descriptions of God, bad expectations of God, promote bad behavior. God is watching. He sees what concerns us the most! Everyone has a God. Their God is their ultimate concern.

The question comes to us through the centuries: "Who do you say that I am? What is your Ultimate Concern?" The future of humanity, all of heaven and earth depend on how each of us answer that question. Who is He?

See you in worship..... BERGY

FROM
THE
PASTOR 



TRUNK OR TREAT

Saturday, October 31st.

More information to follow.

Julie Richter



**Holy Cross Lutheran Church (HCLC)
Minutes for Council Meeting – July 19, 2026**

The July Church Council meeting was called to order by President Stephen Schulze on Sunday, July 19, 2026 at 11:04 a.m. Pastor Berggren opened with a prayer.

In attendance were: Pastor Jim Berggren, Stephen Schulze, Jay Byerly, Anita Cooper, Ricki Finstad, Julie Kilkenny, Wendy Lambeth, Bert Martin, Russell Richter, and Penny Schick.

The **minutes** from the June 2026 meeting were submitted by Secretary Julie Kilkenny and approved by Council.

The **Treasurer's Report** was presented by Ricki Finstad.

Mr. Finstad reported that June 2026 offerings were \$18,638, which was \$1,176 greater than May. June expenses were \$31,000, which was \$5,024 greater than May. June expenses were \$12,362 greater than offerings. Year to date expenses of \$163,396 exceeded offerings by \$41,854, a deficit of \$6,976/month. The checking account balance at 6/30/26 was \$53,957, not including restricted funds. Treasurer Finstad gave a summary of investments and other items in his report and noted that the annual insurance premium, normally paid in June, is not reflected in these numbers. Council approved the Treasurer's Report.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Berggren updated Council on his activities for the month. He remarked on the success of VBS and thanked all the volunteers who made it a fun week. He thanked Anita Cooper for her service on the Early Learning Center (ELC) Board of Directors and announced that Linda Hemphill will serve as the new HCLC representative on the ELC Board (2-year term).

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He reported that he and Wendy Lambeth met with HCLC member George Zemanek about establishing a youth program for middle and high school kids at Holy Cross (Mr. Zemanek was instrumental in establishing a youth program at the church where he works as paid staff).

Pastor Berggren's other activities included weekly Bible study, making phone calls and visits to parishioners; providing counseling and ministering for prayer requests; outreach to the community; and various church ministry meetings.

Committee Reports and Old Business:

Buildings and Grounds/Maintenance:

- President Schulze reported that the replacement water circulation pump for the sanctuary A/C should arrive in the next week.
- Alan Lambeth has been working on the leaks in the gym ceiling; he suspects there are some missing and worn rubber washers; he replaced these and will wait for the next rain to evaluate. He also repaired a leaky window in the Annex hallway.
- Council revisited discussion of landscaping ideas and a several quotes for replacing the shrubs that were removed along the north wall of the sanctuary in the Westview lawn. Ms. Kilkenny suggested getting separate bids for the proposed work: 1) a bid to grind the stumps and prepare the soil, which could be done now, and 2) installing new plants when the weather cools.
- Ms. Kilkenny received Council approval for tree work to be done on the Westview lawn and Telge lot before hurricane season ramps up.

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Food Pantry:

President Schulze updated Council on a conversation he had with a Pantry representative about additional electricity costs after the new refrigeration units were installed, including the possibility of installing solar panels. Pantry officials would like to review the agreement with HCLC and how the added refrigeration units would affect the current agreement.

Vacation Bible School (VBS):

Ms. Lambeth gave a brief recap of VBS 2026. She was very pleased with the camp, and reported that approximately 30 campers attended. Enrollment fees and other funds raised enabled the purchase of shelving for the Learning Resource Center and additional walkie talkies. She expressed thanks to the many volunteers who worked hard to make VBS a success. She noted that they expect to cap enrollment for 2027, at 40 campers, so additional volunteers will be needed. Next year's camp dates will be June 21-25, 2027.

Youth Ministry:

Pastor Berggren and Wendy Lambeth met with Holy Cross member George Zemanek to discuss establishing an outreach ministry geared toward **middle and high school students**. The group Mr. Zemanek developed at his other church was a way for several churches to pool resources and bring together youth to “hang out” in a relaxed setting, play games, watch movies, etc. The group at HCLC will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday evenings of the month. Mr. Zemanek and Pastor Berggren would be the sponsors on site, facilitating the discussion of topics of interest and devotionals.

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- Council discussed plans to publicize the meetings, coordinate RSVPs and snacks, and recruit volunteers. Mr. Zemanek suggested a pool table would be a welcome addition for the kids, and Ms. Lambeth asked Council and the congregation to be on the lookout for a used pool table.
- Council scheduled the annual **Blessing of the Backpacks** worship service for Sunday, August 16, 2026.

Home Visitation: Pastor Berggren reported that work continues on the Home Visitation ministry. He is meeting with Alma Byerly who is looking into resources to help train volunteers for this group.

New Business:

Upcoming Events: Council discussed the schedule for the following events:

- Blessing of the Backpacks: Sunday, August 16, 2026 during worship service
- Wednesday Youth Gatherings: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, 6 – 8 pm
- (begins September 9th)
- Stewardship Services: Saturday, October 24 and Sunday, October 25, 2026
- WELCA ThankOffering Service: Saturday, November 21. and Sunday, November 22, 2026
- Blessing of the Animals Service: TBD
- Fall Potluck Open House: TBD
- Vacation Bible School 2027: June 21-25, 2027

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Other New Business: Council briefly discussed a flyer Pastor Berggren received from a company that provides market research services for churches.

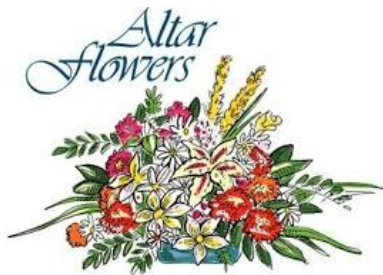
The August Council Meeting was scheduled for Sunday, August 16, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Kilkenny,
Secretary, Church Council



In the month of August:

Altar Flowers were given by
Nancy Beamesderfer
in loving memory of her parents.



YOUTH PROJECT

Come together in faith and friendship
to our new Youth Project meetings.

We will meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday,
starting **September 9th**, 2026,
from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Youth Room.

Additional information will be available
on the church Website: **holycross.us**.

Pr. Jim Berggren



It's going to be a bushel of fun!

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

will meet

Saturday, **September 19th** - 4 PM

Harris County Smokehouse
19811 Northwest Freeway - Houston, TX 77065

Marsha Thompson

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

Please join us on Saturday, **October 3, 2023**
for the Blessing of the Animals.

Pastor Berggren will be near the West parking lot
at the Fountain Courtyard
from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon to give our pets a blessing.

There will also be a **short service at 10:15 a.m.**
in the Fountain Courtyard
for those who would like to participate in the service.

We hope to see you and your furry, scaley, feathery,
(*or whatever the case may be*) friends!

READINGS and PSALMS

SEPTEMBER 2026

DATE	1st READING	PSALM	2nd READING	GOSPEL
9/06/2026	Ezekiel 33:7-11	119: 33-40	Romans 13:8-14	Matthew 18:15-20
9/13/2026	Genesis 50:15-21	103:8-13	Romans 14:1-12	Matthew 18:21-35
9/20/2026	Jonah 3:10—4:11	145:1-8	Philippians 1:21-30	Matthew 20:1-16
9/27/2026	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32	25:1-9	Philippians 2:1-13	Matthew 21:23-32

USHERS

Month: September **Team #** 03 **Leader:** Linda Cuzzort

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

09/6	R	Bert Martin
	P/E	Nancy Beamesderfer
09/13	R	Jay Fort
	P/E	Julie Kilkenny
09/20	R	Shannon Martin
	P/E	Penny Schick
09/27	R	Ike Thompson
	P/E	Sharon Wagner

R = Reader P/E = Prayer and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

**CHURCH OFFICE
HOURS**

Monday—Thursday: 9— 4 p.m.
Friday: 8:30 a.m. — 2:30 p.m.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You may sign up for flower
arrangements in the Narthex.
Suggested donation is \$70.⁰⁰



COUNCIL MEETING

Next Council Meeting will be Sunday, **September 20**, 2026,
at 11:00 a.m. in the FLCA.



Birthdays in the month of September:

02	Selvin Jr. Young	22	Scott Spates
05	Kenneth Dinges	23	Mitchell Walton
06	Jim Berggren	25	Norma Hines
12	Will Byerly		Angie Eckermann
15	Chris Hileman		Lucinda Moore
18	Pat Boessling	26	Susan Giesecke
	Jay Byerly	27	Ken Polzin
	Ricki Finstad		Bill Tempel
	Pastor Ed Peterman	29	Michael Giesecke
20	Sarah Allcorn		Evan Neumann

*If your name is not listed or if this is incorrect information
please contact the Church Office so that the list can be corrected.*



The homebound, disabled,
long-term ill and
prolonged recovering.

- † Dolores Abrego
- † Alberto Basurto
- † Candy Berggren
- † Elvin Bethea
- † Pat Bethea
- † Barney Boeker
- † David Dukleth
- † Joyce Huey
- † Gloria McGarvey
- † Nancy Lancaster
- † Todd Miskel
- † Larry Polzin
- † Wayne Schaper
- † Rosie Stork
- † Bennie Valites



*Prayer Request emails are sent
out often.*

*If you would like to receive
them please contact:*

Renee Allcorn
allcornr@gmail.com
or call at (713) 254-8638

Fred Abrego
Ken Beamesderfer
Nancy Beamesderfer
Susan Caradec
Jessica Coleman
Paul Houghton
Bryan Kile
Ernest Luker
David Magrill
Jeremy Mitchell
Geraine Moore
Ed Peterman

Dorothy Preuss
Lupe Romero
Scott Spates
Patricia Steapp
Ann Taylor
Bill Tempel
Becky Terry
Dave Trickett
Jaime Urbanski
Bennie Valites
Susan Wiles
Michael Williams

TREASURER'S REPORT

If you have any questions call
Ricki Finstad at 713-465-5968

JULY 2026

Receipts	\$ 28,463. ⁷⁵
Expenses	<u>55,801.⁰³</u>
Balance	(\$ 27,337. ²⁸)

Operational receipts

Year-to-date received	\$ 156,005. ⁷¹
Expenditures year to date ..	<u>225,197.³⁷</u>
Balance	(\$ 69,191. ⁶⁶)

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

JULY SERVICES

Saturday Informal service	: 11
Sunday Traditional service	: 55

Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Spring Branch

*A Congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)*

7901 Westview Dr.
Houston, Texas 77055
Tel. (713) 686-8253
E-mail: hclc@holycross.us

*"Holy Cross Lutheran Church is a community of Christians
gathered by God's grace and reaching out through God's love."*

TELEPHONE EXTENSIONS

100	Church Office	
101	Sussy Terry	Office Manager & Events Coordinator
103	Rev. Jim Berggren	Senior Pastor
104	John Lambeth	Bookkeeper

SATURDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

Informal Service 6:00 p. m. —AT

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

Traditional Service 9:30 a.m. —WC

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

ELC (713) 461-5535

email: holycrosselc4@gmail.com

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Jim Berggren — Senior Pastor
email: jlberggren@holycross.us

Sussy Terry — Office Manager & Events Coord.
email: hclc@holycross.us

John Lambeth — Bookkeeper
email: finance@holycross.us

Robert Carty — Musical Director / Organist
email: robcarty1@outlook.com

OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Steve Schulze President

Jay Byerly Vice-President

Julie Kilkenny Secretary

Ricki Finstad Treasurer

