

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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713-686-8254

Rev. Jim Berggren

September 6, 2026

15th Sunday after Pentecost

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME / ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING SONG

Earth and All Stars!

Insert

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 Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

September 6, 2026 – Pentecost 15A

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11

⁷ “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so, hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. ⁸ When I say to the wicked, ‘You wicked person, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. ⁹ But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.

¹⁰ “Son of man, say to the Israelites, ‘This is what you are saying: “Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?”’¹¹ Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?’

The word of the Lord.

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

THE PSALM Psalm 119:33-40

SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14

Love Fulfills the Law

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Day Is Near

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

The word of the Lord.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

*Alleluia.
Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia.*

THE HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

CHILDREN'S SERMON

PR. JIM'S SERMON:



PENTECOST 15A,

9-6-2026, Matthew 18.15-20

CONFLICT

The first NASCAR race to be televised from beginning to end was the Daytona 500, on February 18, 1979. It was a classic. On lap 31 out of 200, the Allison brothers, Bobby and Donnie were trading the lead with Cale Yarborough in 2nd place. They crashed and all ended up in the infield. Donnie Allison and Cale Yarborough were able to get back in the race soon. Bobby Allison finished buried in the pack. Donnie regained the lead at about lap 125. Then Cale got the lead at lap 178 with 22 laps to go. They jousting for 21 laps putting on a heart-stopping show, with 3500-pound weapons going 150 mph.

In third place almost a lap back was Richard Petty, dueling for position with Waltrip and our Houston good old boy, A. J. Foyt. Two months before this race, Richard Petty had almost half of his stomach removed, due to ulcers. He was driving badly hurt. One tough son-of-a-gun.

On the last lap, Yarborough tried to pass Donny Allison for first place. They got into a deadly duel, slamming each other until they both crashed into the infield. Petty, Waltrip and Foyt were 20 seconds behind and didn't even see this conflict. As they flew past the checkered flag with a photo finish, they were First, Second and Third. While Petty drove to the winner's circle with his pit crew, Bobby stopped to see if his brother was OK. Cale charged his car and hit him in the face with his helmet. Bobby managed to get out of his car, and the way he put it, "Cale started beating my fists with his nose."

The Allison brothers commented, "We're not friends but we're not enemies. We'll always remain respectful competitors."

Yarborough commented, "We were friends as soon as it was over."

This famous conflict, was witnessed by 120,000 spectators in Daytona, and 15 million television viewers.

Whenever two or three are gathered..... there will be *conflict*. That is not news. People with free will, and different backgrounds are likely to disagree and have different viewpoints about stuff. No big deal. Unless, of course, we are so invested in our own worldview that nobody else's way of looking at things, matters. For most people, how to stack the dishes is a more important than nuclear disarmament. For a dispassionate observer with no dog in the fight, there are a hundred ways to stack dishes and a hundred strategies to deal with weapons of mass destruction. However, that dispassionate observer, remaining neutral, will now be considered a pariah to the participants in the initial conflict. "How could you not care about either of our viewpoints???" The conflict grows. The initial combatants are now allies against

that horribly indifferent third party! It is called triangulation.

Tricky stuff. Especially if you are trying to help a couple of friends through a bad spot in their marriage. I don't know of a single police officer who doesn't groan with dismay at the prospect of being called to calm down a domestic dispute. It is one of the most unpredictable and dangerous situations in police work. Sometimes the wife is a victim to a persecuting abusive husband. But when the rescuer First Responder arrives, the dynamic changes. The husband becomes the new victim.....of law enforcement. The wife, former victim now tries to rescue the husband and as a team they have made the officer the new persecutor.

Conflict resolution. People get unhappy about things. It is true in religion. It is true in business and politics. It is true at the drive-thru window of the fast-food burger emporium. I order the cheeseburger with everything, but dry. So here it comes with no lettuce, tomato, cheese or onions, (the regular stuff) but with enough ketchup and mayo, to launch a battleship in a pink sea. One place gave me a bun with mustard, ketchup, and mayo, but no meat or cheese. I had to put on scuba gear to swim through the condiment swamp. So, the next day I'm going to bring my dry-cleaning bill. They act like they don't understand.....Conflict. Once I got a taco with sour cream spread on the outside of the shell. I went up to the counter and asked why they did that. They said, "You asked for sour cream on the side!"

Sam Donaldson was an equal opportunity journalistic pest. Over his career he hassled presidents of both parties. Sometimes it seemed like he was particularly hard on Jimmy Carter. During the energy crisis they visited a village in India which had solved an energy problem by throwing all of the cow manure into a pit and siphoning off the methane gas for fuel needs in the village. As they stood around the odoriferous hole in the ground, Donaldson asked, "If I fell in, you'd pull me out, wouldn't you, Mr. President?" Carter replied, "Certainly, Sam, after a suitable interval."

There should be a framework: A mutually agreed upon process to deal with problems of conflict such as these. Sometimes life seems to move from conflict to conflict. There should be a basic shared understanding about how to deal gracefully with such issues.

Good news! There is! Jesus points out, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one." That's it. Conflict resolved; no extra steps. That's all of today's Gospel that you need to know about. I am convinced that the whole object of the first interview that Jesus describes is an attempt to define and determine the ownership of the problem, to share in the burden of it, and to reconcile, restoring both parties to joy in communal living. That's the object. Forgiveness and restoration. Discipling, not discipline. If you think you are right all of the time.....you will be wrong, most of the time! You will be living in an information-free zone of your own design.

But somebody has to take the first step. The injured party, the one who is feeling offended, is called upon to take the initiative. After all, the 'offender' might not even be aware that there is a problem. I am convinced that the whole object of the first interview is an attempt to define and own the problem, and to share in the burden of it.

Professor Abraham Heschel once spoke to a faculty about the relationship of religion and ethics. One faculty member during the question session asked, “Why do I need religion? I am a good person. I treat others decently. I lead an honest life. What can religion possibly offer me?”

Heschel replied, “That is the difference between you and me. You are a good person. I am not.” Recognizing our own personal culpability in any conflict is critical in building healthy relationships.

If I am aware of and affected by what I see as the bad behavior or the brokenness of another, I am the one who is particularly called upon to pray upon that and address it. It starts with self-examination. The first sentence, you might consider speaking that leads toward reconciliation is descriptive. “This is how I am hurting.” If the first sentence comes out accusatory, (“This is how you hurt me,”) then the conversation probably won’t go too well. It takes guts. It takes making ourselves vulnerable. It takes sharing our deeper feelings and perhaps failings with someone else in an attempt to get to the source of conflict. The first interview that Jesus speaks about is not to determine who is right and who is wrong. It is an opportunity to share a problem and restore a relationship. Always allow room for every person involved to save face. Bullies battle to the death. Sisters and brothers battle for life, because they love each other and are not cowards.

This passage of scripture has been abused. It is an example of Gospel forgiveness and grace that has been converted almost immediately into legal strategy. “If you get mad at someone, yell at them. If they don’t listen bring your two best friends and a tape recorder and yell louder. Then if they don’t listen, tell everyone and get everyone to yell at them and then kick’em out.” Matthew 18:15-20 is specifically included in the constitutions of most churches. It is called “church discipline,” and carries all the baggage of negative experiences of discipline and none of the joy of discipling.

The discipline that Jesus describes is **not** about bringing someone under control so they will act better. It is bringing oneself under control in relation to the other. The object of the process is not an escalation until someone wins. It is not to try a case in court, but to seek reconciliation and understanding. When two or three seek reconciliation Christ is there and it will happen. If the “problem assessment” reveals that forgiveness and reconciliation is not the goal, probably Jesus won’t bother to make himself known there. He hasn’t been invited. After all, we have already decided and Jesus didn’t get a vote. We are all sinners, but we also all carry God’s image. God cries. He weeps every time someone opts out of those truths!! You have a problem with John Doe??? Celebrate. It is a blessing. It guides me to understand my more basic problem with myself. I know that is a hard standard but it gets easier the more we practice applying it.

You want to have a marriage or enjoy a family, or get along at work, this is a life skill. It is not particularly a religious issue at all. If we don’t learn to communicate in this way we are guaranteed to feel pain in relationship. This is the best way to handle a problem at work. I’ve seen it work in a prison setting. It makes being an informed consumer in a retail dispute work better. I am learning to enjoy a Crow Sandwich with Humble Pie Dessert. That can be good eatin’. It can instruct, nourish and heal.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. We are anointed, and our cup runneth over.” Psalm 23 describes a reconciling meal. The Good Shepherd makes it possible to feast with our rivals, opponents, and enemies: To love them and pray for them as Jesus instructs.....no.... actually, mandates in the same manner that He mandates both Baptism and Communion.

At one time, I was studying the manual for how to get a commercial driver’s license. Just in case it was more cost-effective to rent a tractor and trailer, to haul Christmas trees to Houston, from Oregon. One of the amazing things that I read was a caution to truck drivers. Cars will cut you off and change lanes unpredictably. Other drivers on the road will do incredibly dangerous things. You must be alert and never get emotionally upset. Never forget, you are the professional driver on the road. As a professional you protect your fellow travelers. Take pride in your responsibility.

In conflict, Jesus calls upon us to bring to the table, the tact, love and Christian grace of a professional human being. We have a mandate as professionals to act that way. We understand that God made other people in HIS image, not ours. He didn’t give us relationships so that we could impose our image on others by controlling them, but in order that we might find through the other person, the Creator himself. In Christian love, as the relationship with the other person is enhanced, your relationship with God is enhanced. To do less is spiritual malpractice.

Norton Wright, Director of Sesame Street, comments on how reconciling conversations build civilization. Quote, “We feel very strongly that the young child has got to learn to deal with others—his family, his neighbors, and, eventually, the society as a whole. The child who doesn’t get along with the people on his block when he’s 5 may be burning it down when he’s 15.” It all starts and is then resolved in the first step, with courageous, soul-searching, fun discovery in communication.

As a community the Christian congregation is blessed with grace through the cross of Christ. We can rejoice in the midst of all the confusion that human dysfunction inflicts, that we have the privilege of bearing and forgiving and bringing grace into human living. Jesus stands with us in the midst of all conflict and peace. I am a sinner, a grateful sinner. Grateful for God’s forgiveness and yours. It is all in the delightful conversation between people and with God. May we always be able to talk about it. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY God, When Human Bonds Are Broken

ELW 603

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 OFFERTORY RESPONSE *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*

THE OFFERING PRAYER

All pray together:

God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always. 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:

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG **Go, My Children, with My Blessing** ELW 543

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.*



- ♣ 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
- ♣ Jim Schwabenland
- ♣ Scott Spates
- ♣ Patricia Steapp
- ♣ Ann Taylor
- ♣ Bill Tempel
- ♣ Becky Terry
- ♣ Dave Trickett
- ♣ Jaime Urbanski
- ♣ Bennie Valites
- ♣ Susan Wiles
- ♣ Michael Williams

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **September 20**, at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: September

Team # 03

Leader: Linda Cuzzort

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

SEPTEMBER

6 Reader — Bert Martin
P/E — Nancy Beamesderfer

13 Reader — Jay Fort
P/E — Julie Kilkenny

20 Reader — Shannon Martin
P/E — Penny Schick

27 Reader — Ike Thompson
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.

YOUTH GROUP

Come together in faith and friendship to our new Youth Group 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.

Pr. Jim Berggren

It's going to be a bushel of fun!

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

will meet

Saturday, September 19, at 4 PM

Harris County Smokehouse

19811 Northwest Freeway - Houston, TX 77065

TRUNK OR TREAT

Save the Date!

Saturday **October 31st**.

Trunk or Treat. More info to follow.

Julie Richter

ALTAR FLOWERS

**Altar Flowers were given in Honor and in Celebration
of Pr. Jim's Birthday.**

Safeguards Safety Training

Holy Cross Lutheran Church - 7901 Westview Drive, Houston, TX 77055

Call John Lambeth @ 713-854-8085 to register, or register online:

<https://events.humanitix.com/host/634c6d6ed7a0c9053d9f6f58>

Class		Price	Day	Date	Time
Adult CPR					
	CPR Only	\$74	Sunday	13-Sep	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
	CPR + First Aid	\$92	Sunday	18-Oct	1:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Adult & Pediatric CPR			Saturday	1-Aug	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
	CPR Only	\$98	Saturday	5-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm

	CPR + First Aid	\$108	Saturday	10-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Basic Life Support		\$94			
			Friday	4-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	12-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	19-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	25-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	9-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	17-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	24-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Friday	30-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
CPR Instructor course		\$299	Friday	2-Oct	9:00 am - 5:30 pm
RCP para adulto, niño y bebé					
	RCP solo	\$49			
	RCP + primeros auxilios	\$59	Saturday	26-Sep	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	31-Oct	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
			Saturday	5-Dec	1:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Holy Cross Congregation Members receive a 15% discount. Use coupon code: HCLC2026					

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

2—5 p.m. Bayou City Band practice —Gym

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

7 Mon	8 Tues	9 Wed	10 Thurs	11 Fri	12 Sat
LABOR DAY <i>Office closed</i>	<i>Preschool resumes</i>	10 am <i>Roundtable Group —Annex</i> 11 am Choir <i>Rehearsal —CL</i> 12 pm Bible <i>Study —VR</i> 6—8 pm Youth <i>Group meeting --Youth Room</i>	 12:30—2:30 <i>Food Pantry Cooking class —Gym kitchen</i> 8 pm AA <i>Women mtg. —Annex</i>		 1 —5:30 pm SST Basic <i>Life Support — MR/YR</i> 6 pm Saturday Informal <i>service —AT</i>

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)