

THE CROSSWORD

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I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

from Pastor Nathan Erb

“God did not give us local churches to become country clubs where membership means we have privileges and perks. He placed us in churches to serve, to care for others, to pray for leaders, to learn, to teach, to give, and, in some cases, to die for the sake of the gospel.” — Thom Rainer, “I Am a Church Member”

On April 21, we are beginning a sermon series called “Every Member Matters.” There is a lot to unpack in just those three simple words. Let’s go in reverse order.

MATTERS

3rd person present: be of importance; have significance.

There are a few ways we can understand present-tense verbs. In this case, “matters” doesn’t mean you are only important in this present moment, but continually. No matter when you joined the church, how long you have been a member, or even if you join another church, you have worth and significance in the kingdom of God and in your local congregation.

There are numerous ways to understand this truth. First, you are infinitely significant because God creat-

ed you, loves you, and sent Jesus to die for you. This could technically be said about every person who has ever lived. You matter to God, and so you matter to the church!

That’s the second way we interpret this truth. You are an important part of Holy Cross! Christ describes his church not as a gathering of people but as a body. Our bodies have many different parts, and each plays a different role, but every single part of the body is significant.

If you’ve ever gotten a splinter in your pinky, you understand this. You have nine other functioning digits, but when one of them is out of commission, it affects everything you do.

Maybe you’re a pinky in the church. Maybe you are a hand. Maybe you are the lungs. Every member matters to the whole body. One cannot say to the other, “We don’t need you,” be-

cause then the body would not be complete.

MEMBER

noun: 1. a person belonging to a particular group. 2. an essential piece of a complex structure.

I have a Costco membership. I had to pay money to get it. Because I’m a member, I have access to all the exclusive deals they offer. If you don’t have a Costco membership, sorry, you can’t receive any of their benefits.

I’ve never been a member of a country club, but I’ve had friends who were. Because of my relationship with them, I’ve been able to benefit vicariously through them, but I never really belonged.

Some people view church membership in that sort of way. That in order to belong to the church, you have to pay your dues or put in a certain amount of time. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Constitutionally, we do distinguish voting members from others, but

(Continued on page 3)

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

Thrivent (the marketing name for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans) is a member-owned organization that offers a variety of financial products and services to help individuals and families achieve their financial goals. The roots of today's Thrivent can be found in two Lutheran fraternal organizations – Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood. One of the key benefits of becoming a member of Thrivent is access to a wide range of member benefits.

Financial Planning Services – The heart of Thrivent, their advisors work closely with members to develop comprehensive financial plans tailored to their specific needs and goals.

Financial Products and Services – Thrivent offers a range of insurance (life, disability, long-term care), investments (mutual funds, annuities, retirement accounts) and banking solutions to help members grow their wealth and achieve their long-term financial goals.

Member Events and Resources - Thrivent hosts a variety of educational workshops, seminars, and webinars throughout the year to help members learn more about financial planning, investing, and retirement planning. Members have access to a variety of online resources, including articles, calculators, and tools, to help them make informed financial decisions.

Community Support - Thrivent is committed to giving back to the community and offers members opportunities to get involved in volunteer projects and charitable initiatives through its **Thrivent Action Teams** program. Members can apply for grants to support their own volunteer projects. Holy Cross has received well over \$1,000 in the past year to help with projects and activities.

Thrivent Choice – Members with particular investments can donate to causes they care about via funds earned through their Thrivent products. Here again, Holy Cross has received donations totaling over \$1,000 in recent years.

Money Canvas – Gain confidence and control over money decisions with Thrivent's free budget coaching program.

Dari by Homethrive – Caregivers need support. Thrivent offers caregivers resources including a comprehensive library of articles, podcasts and videos, and the ability to connect with licensed, credentials experts on caregiving and aging.

Identity Monitoring & Protection – Members can monitor their personal information for unusual activity through a plan offered by Experian ProtectMyID.

Health Discounts – Reduce your costs for dental, vision, prescription and hearing services with a special discount program.

The member benefits offered by Thrivent are designed to help members achieve financial security, plan for the future, and make a positive impact in their communities. Simply put, Thrivent is dedicated to helping its members thrive financially and personally.

The support that Holy Cross has received through the years has had a notable impact on our activities supporting our own congregation and our community as well.

EXPLORING THE MEMBER BENEFITS OF THRIVENT

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Sunday Worship | 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Class | 10:45 a.m.

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THE
CROSSWORD

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I AM A CHURCH MEMBER (CONTINUED)

when it comes to the things that truly matter—the gifts that God gives to his people—they are available and accessible to you in abundance and at no cost to you.

One of these gifts includes belonging. In most groups you may belong to, you have chosen to be a part of them based on similar interests, hobbies, skills, etc. Despite the diversity of backgrounds, likes and dislikes, skills, hobbies, and interests within the church, we find unity in Christ alone.

Back to the body analogy. The lung has a different function than the heart, but both need each other, and the whole body benefits from their different functions. And so, though all members of the body are different, they are all one body.

That’s what it means to belong to the church. Without you, we would not be complete, and we would not be whole.

EVERY

determiner: used to refer to all the individual members of a set without exception.

Take note of those last two words. No one in our church body is more important than another. God loves every person. Christ died for every person. You are loved by God without exception. There is nothing that can separate you from God’s love in Christ Jesus.

This also means every member, from the youngest to the oldest, from the newcomer to the lifelong member, matters equally.

Every member matters.

Maybe you don’t feel that is true. And there could be a variety of reasons why that’s the case, but if that’s true for you, I’m sorry.

If I have done or said something that has caused you to feel that way, I’m sorry. I’d love a chance to talk with you about what you’ve experienced so we can move forward together.

If you feel excluded in some way because of what someone else has said or done, I’m sorry. That’s certainly not what we want anyone to feel. I’m available to talk with you and see where we can find resolution and restoration.

In some instances, you may not feel like you belong because you have excluded yourself. If that’s the case, I want you to know that you are always welcome and that you belong. I’d welcome a chance to talk with you more about why that is without judgement. But also, in love, I encourage you to reengage. Because we aren’t the same without you. The body needs you!

I look forward to exploring this more with you in our series, “Every Member Matters.” ⊕

Pastor Nathan Erb



BUILDING BLOCKS

from Holy Cross Christian Preschool

Our focus for the month of April is the **season of spring and insects**. We will plant bean and pumpkin seeds and the children will predict which seed will sprout first. As we watch these plants grow, the children will learn what all plants need to grow. Exploring the insects that God created is always fun, and we will talk about what makes an insect an insect. The children will get to see the **metamorphosis of a caterpillar to butterfly** with live caterpillars!

Our April Bible story theme is “**Jesus is Always with Us.**” We will learn about the Emmaus disciples, Jesus’ Ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Registration for the 2024-2025 school year is ongoing. We have both full-time and part-time options. Class sizes are limited so register early! To set up a tour and/or obtain a registration form, please contact Michele Glennon at preschool@holycrosstrumbull.com or phone her at 203-268-6471.

RECENT EVENTS

PALM SUNDAY BRUNCH

On Sunday, March 24, 2024, our Youth hosted a Palm Sunday Brunch fundraiser in preparation for their upcoming Summer Mission Trip.



PANCAKE DAY

On Sunday, February 11, 2024, we gathered together to begin the Lenten Season with the traditional celebration of Pancake Day, and burned last year’s palms to use on Ash Wednesday.



View more photos at holycrosstrumbull.com/recentevents

SERMON SERIES BEGINS APRIL 21

EVERY MEMBER MATTERS.



We're all a part of something. We choose most of the groups we're a part of and the people we associate with because of our similarities. In the church, God brings different people together, from all walks of life, and unites us as the body of Christ. Being a member of the church is unlike anything else!

This sermon series will help us understand what it means to be a church member and why every member truly matters.

Learn more, including how to order a companion book, at the link below.

HOLYCROSS.LIFE/EVERYMEMBER

Celebrating this Month

APRIL

It's fun to be recognized on your special day! Even more so, it's special to know others are praying for you. It is our hope that as you spend time in daily prayer, you will remember your fellow Holy Cross members on their special day.

BIRTHDAYS

Date Name

1	Nicole Hackney
7	John Anantharaj
7	Paul Hagberg
8	Bobby Kravecs
9	Donna Bogen
10	Donald Erickson
11	Kelley Geffert
12	Stephanie Helminger
13	Gary DiLalla
14	Marion Dale
23	Anita Schoch
23	Richard Van Wart
23	Sadie Veteri
24	Sheryl John
25	Jenzy Halls
28	Lillian Gagliardi
28	Jennifer Rentz
29	Dan Senft
30	Jessica Connic
30	Amanda Weldon

If there is someone that should be on one of these lists, but isn't...please alert the office so we can update our records!

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

Doris Bernt
DJ Broadbin
Cheryl Conte
Jennifer Deloge
Jim Finch
Nicole Hackney
Valerie Huydic
Kaylyn Hwang
Thomas Hwang
Cristina Kristy
Jack Messerschmitt
Audrey Paray
Emily Rentz
Luke Riccio
Kim Romano
Samantha Sylling

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

4	Joe and Amy Cardone
8	Carol and †Robert Burns
8	Ronald and Julie Sjoblom
17	Robert and Jesse Kravecs
22	Josh and Cristina Kristy
24	Patsy and Ingrid Cerone
28	Chris and Jennifer Deloge

† At Rest with the Lord