



The HOLY CROSS WORD

Words of news, information, humor and
inspiration from Holy Cross

DECEMBER 2021

"Share the Hope"

VOL. LXV, NO. 1

HEAD TO THE HEART

Unlike the secular New Year, the Church's New Year ushers in a Hope that doesn't disappoint

Happy New Year!

No, I'm not trying to get a head start on 2022. At the stroke of midnight, when December 31 becomes January 1, the ball will drop, the band will play, confetti cannons will explode and people will usher in the New Year with boisterous fanfare. Instead of dwelling on the failures of the past year, we instead make new resolutions with the eager expectation that THIS YEAR we will make good on the promises we make to ourselves. We welcome the New Year boldly!

The First Sunday in Advent is also the First Sunday of the Church year. In complete contrast to the secular holiday, the new year in the church begins quiet and unassuming. There isn't a crowd gathered, or trumpets to pronounce its arrival. Instead, and quite intentionally, rather than lights and fanfare, the year begins in darkness.



Advent is a time of reflection and anticipation. We humbly reflect on our sinful condition and the darkness it brings to our lives. We as a people are steeped in sin, and despite our best efforts to overcome, we cannot. We discover a bitter reality, that on our own, and despite our good intentions – we are powerless to help ourselves.

But there is hope! The prophet Isaiah assures us, *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned."* [Isaiah 9:2]

The light of Christmas has not yet arrived, but it's on the horizon. We anticipate the promise of God's Messiah; the one who will bring light and life to all. The church year gives us space to contemplate on this as we prepare our hearts and minds to receive Christ as He comes to us.

John reveals the fulfillment of this prophecy is Jesus when he tells us *"In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."* [John 1: 4-5, 9]

Advent reminds us that God has made a resolution; one that He has kept and will keep forever. Christ has already come – He has brought life and immortality to light through His death and resurrection. Christ is here now – as we receive Him in His Word and Sacraments. Christ will come again – and when He does it will be a brand new day – a new life that will never know the darkness of sin again.

So light your lamps in the darkness, and look out for the bright light of Christ to come.

Pastor Nathan Erb

Pastor Nathan Erb



Wednesdays, December 1, 8, 15

7:00 p.m. – Advent Midweek Worship with the theme
“The Fullness of Time”

Sunday, December 5

10:00 a.m. – Worship: First Communion for our Confirmation Youth

Sunday, December 12

11:00 a.m. – Decorating the Sanctuary
Gingerbread House Making Activity

Friday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Worship Service
10:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Worship Service

Saturday, December 25 – The Nativity of Our Lord

10:00 a.m. – Christmas Day Worship Service with Holy Communion



**Like Holy Cross
on Facebook!**

*After you “Like” us, you’ll
see postings of upcoming
events, pictures from
events and other notices.*



CHRISTMAS ALL YEAR LONG

Words by C.S. Lewis

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.”

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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH—LCMS

Sunday Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.

Adult Bible Class precedes Sunday Worship at 9:00 a.m.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Holy Cross congregation is to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). We will share the love and forgiveness of Our Lord Jesus Christ with one another, our community and the whole world so that we can take part in the joyous privilege of “making disciples of all nations” through the power of the preaching and teaching the Word of God, administering His Sacraments, and joining together in service fellowship according to the confessional stand-

NEWSLETTER NOTES

Our next deadline is...

The next issue of The Holy Cross Word is the January edition. The deadline for articles is Friday, December 10. Please take

note of this

earlier

deadline,

due to the

Christmas

season,

and plan

ahead to pub-

licize events with your fellow Holy Cross members. You can submit articles to the newsletter mailbox, (outside the church office), or send them via e-mail to:



office@holycrosstrumbull.com.

FINANCIAL NOTES**2022 offering envelopes available later this month**

The boxes of **2022 offering envelopes** will be on the back narthex table in mid December. Please do not use these new, pink envelopes until 2022. If you do not see your envelopes, please speak with me or e-mail me at financialsecretary@holycrosstrumbull.org.

Many of our members utilize online giving, which can be a very efficient, touchless option if you are unable to attend worship in person. The new year is always a good time to reflect on your blessings and relationship with God as you commit to your new year of giving.

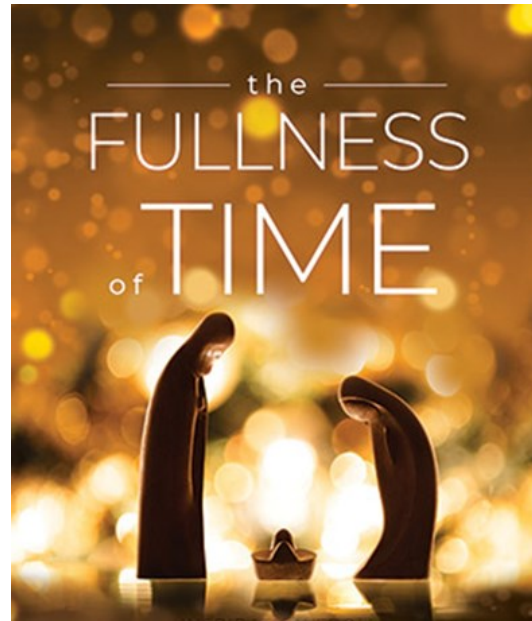


Year-end Contributions: In the course of year-end tax planning, you may find yourself considering a special one-time donation. As you contemplate year-end gifts, please keep the church in mind, and remember that to receive tax credit for 2021, any contributions must be received on or before Friday, December 31.

---CHAD HELMINGER
Financial Secretary

“Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.”

- Deuteronomy 16:17



Midweek Advent Services

Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15
at 7:00 p.m.

Celebrate Advent through a weekly devotional time with your Holy Cross family.

Scripture readings, prayer, songs and a meditation will help you to draw closer to God during this special season of the year.

Our liturgy will be Holden Evening Prayer

Look on the narthex table for "The Fullness of Time" devotion booklets, as well as Advent devotion booklets for families and an Advent sticker activity for young children.

FEED NORTHEAST 2021

Congrats Holy Cross! You passed the goal of 500 and triggered a \$500 bonus

Some opportunities just shouldn't be passed up. In late September we learned of an opportunity through the Thrivent Northeast Member Network to help combat food insecurity in our area. Though most of us are not faced with not knowing from where our next meal will come, it is a real issue in our greater community. The Thrivent Feed Northeast 2021 program would help combat these fears at a time when most of us will be sitting around a table overflowing with food.

The basics of the Feed Northeast 2021 program were: 1) create a Thrivent Action Team to take on a food collection project; 2) collect at least 500 items to be donated to a local soup kitchen or food pantry; 3) do this between October 1 and October 31; and 4) if we were one of the first 100 to complete this challenge, our designated agency would receive a check for \$500. For Holy Cross this seemed like an easy task; we have generously supported food drives over the years.



Bridgeport Rescue Mission's (BRM) current Great Thanksgiving Project, whereby they hope to reach 7,000 struggling families, seemed like the perfect match for Feed Northeast. This project collects frozen turkeys and the "fixins" to provide Thanksgiving dinners for these families.

With the support of Kendra Norman, Social Ministry Commission Director, a Thrivent Action Team was quickly applied for and approved by Thrivent. Action Teams receive \$250 in "kick-start" funds to support a project; having no administrative costs, these funds could purchase turkeys. By the first Sunday of October our drive had gone public. Through the great generosity of our members, we reached our goal of 500 on Sunday, October 17!

Holy Cross shared the Thrivent theme to "live generously" with the collective donation of food items given to the Bridgeport Rescue Mission (BRM). Cans of vegetables and cranberry sauce, boxes of stuffing and frozen turkeys were collected in the narthex during October and delivered to BRM in early November. Below, Kendra Norman gets ready to unload her car with help from Brandon, who oversees the BRM donation center.



Praise God that our early success means the Bridgeport Rescue Mission is receiving an additional \$500 from the Thrivent Northeast Member Network! But wait! There's

more! We still had two more weeks to collect food. Holy Cross was able to deliver to BRM 772 items weighing in at 766 pounds! And those \$250 kick-start funds are enabling us to supplement our donation with frozen turkeys and additional canned goods.



When you sit down to your holiday meals, please continue to remember those who battle food insecurity daily. Know that you have helped to change their lives. In addition to you, we thank Thrivent and the Thrivent Northeast Member Network for its ongoing support of projects that can make a difference in our community.

---KERRY GEFFERT



Christmas Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve | 7 pm and 10 pm
Candlelight Worship

Christmas Day | 10 am
Worship Service with Holy Communion



COVENANT TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

Gifts, winter hat & mitten/glove sets due – unwrapped – by December 12

Christmas spirit filled the narthex on November 21 as members of our Holy Cross family showed their love of the children we support through Covenant to Care for Children (CCC). The annual “Giving Tree” was filled ornament tags that listed a child’s name, his/her age, gender and gift suggestion or hat & mitten set.



As you may remember, our “adopted” DCF social worker is Mimose Laurenard and Holy Cross is matched with her through the Adopt-A-Social-Worker program through CCC. Mimose currently has 32 children in her caseload, ranging in age from 1 to 18, and each child will receive a gift that he/she wishes for, as well as a winter hat/mitten set. For many of these children, it will be the only Christmas gift that they receive. That meant 64 tags on the Giving Tree! But the blessing to share is that even prior to November 21, I had already received donations of hat/mitten sets and some of our members had reached out to me requesting to be matched to a child. That meant the original count of 64 ornament tags for the “Giving Tree” was reduced to 43!

If you took one of these tags, agreeing to buy the suggested gift, please remember that the gifts are due at the church, unwrapped, by Sunday, December 12. I did apply for and got approved for a Thrivent Action Team to offset the cost of all the gift-wrapping supplies, but if you would like to include a gift bag with the gift you are donating, that would still be appreciated.

Thank you in advance for your generosity for the children on the “Giving Tree” poster. Even though you don’t know these children, you are sharing your love with them, and that is a wonderful and heart-warming gift.

Yours in Christ,
 ---MARY SCHROCK

HOLY CROSS CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

Someone's coming, someone special...that someone special is Baby Jesus, our focal point this month

December is the special time of Advent followed by the joyous celebration of Christmas! We will be busy in school with many preparations and events that are special to the Christmas holiday. Thanksgiving began the celebration of God's blessings and Christmas confirms His love for us. At preschool we will focus on the birth of our Savior, Jesus! The children will be exploring all aspects of the Christmas story: the angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, the wise men and, of course, the birth of baby Jesus in a stable.



We will be learning and singing special songs about the precious Christ Child's birthday. The children are learning that their Redeemer came into the world as a baby but grew up to be a man who died on the cross and rose again for them and the whole world! What a great reason to rejoice!

All the children will participate in our annual Christmas Play. This will be held in our sanctuary on Friday, December 23 at 9 a.m. We all look forward to sharing this special event with the families of the preschool children.

Registration for the 2022-2023 school year will begin on January 10. Please tell your family and friends about our school!

All of us at the preschool would like to wish the congregation a very blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with God's peace, joy and good health!

In Jesus' Name,
---MICHELE GLENNON
Preschool Director

THANKS A BUNCH!

Do you know of someone who did something special as a volunteer here at Holy Cross? This column is the spot to identify him or her! If you have an item to include in this monthly "thank you" column – to recognize the gifts of time and talent that someone provided to do God's work in our church and community – please e-mail it to the church office or jot it down and put it in the "newsletter" mailbox. This month we recognize:

Elisabeth Erb, for making the Kid's Busy Bags and updating them each week. These bags are on a book rack behind the last pew and always available for little ones to borrow during the church service.

Kerry Geffert, for spearheading the food collection for the Bridgeport Rescue Mission's Great ThanksGiving project. Thanks also to **Kendra Norman** for helping Kerry to load up their cars and deliver the food to the Mission. And big thanks to **all those who donated food** to this successful project. See the article and pictures on page 4.



Let us all thank **Jim** and **Lorraine Finch** for supplying all the beautiful flowers for the altar each Sunday during the last spring, summer and fall growing seasons. They feel honored to be able to do this, but the flowers do require continuous care. If you see them please give them recognition, encouragement and your personal thanks.

Susan Antoniou and **Elisabeth Erb**, for coordinating Holy Cross' collection of shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Twenty-two shoe boxes filled with small toys, games, coloring books, crayons, personal and hygiene items were donated and blessed during the Worship service on Nov. 14.

David and **Mary Ann Schiller**, for picking up the communion wine that was ordered from Bottom Line Liquor in Trumbull.

Sherry Duff and **Greg Dowling**, for continuing to record the Sunday Worship services and uploading the recording to our YouTube channel. Thanks also to **Gary Messerschmitt** for preparing the Holy Cross website for the uploads and making the service links "live."

EVANGELISM AND YOU

Monthly director's report on things to know and even things to do

This month I'd like to begin my report with the pleasure of announcing I will be joined on the Evangelism Commission by Doris Bernt, DJ Broadbin, Tina Curto and Elisabeth Erb. My thanks to them for saying yes to assisting me with the commission duties. Elisabeth kicked things off by putting together our current display case arrangement with an Advent theme. See her handiwork (done in tandem with Mary Schrock) prior to going into the sanctuary.

As I've written consistently in this column since September, an area I hope the commission can be effective is in helping Holy Cross members realize their evangelism skills and assist in bringing them out. This objective is something that hasn't really been targeted in many, many years but it was mentioned by Pastor Erb as something he would like to see the commission do. In church services and Sunday morning adult Bible classes, he has reminded us that we should be reaching out to people we know from church who we haven't seen in a long time, and simply asking in Christian brotherly love that we miss them and hope to see them at church soon.



In tandem with that I would like to use this column "podium" to evangelize and encourage members to get engaged in their church and come to the 9 a.m. Bible class Pastor Erb leads every Sunday. The topics we've covered usually tie in with the readings for the day, and the conversations are engaging and stimulating. The study leads into the 10 o'clock worship experience. On the face of it, being at church for two hours for a study and worship might seem a challenge for anyone who has just been at church for

an hour on Sundays for many years, but overall the benefit of helping Holy Cross transition to this new schedule outweighs the inconvenience. Let me encourage you to give the class a chance. At least give it a one-time shot and see if you can work in the Bible study whenever your schedule allows. Then you can hopefully increase your frequency and become a regular.

A reminder that the Greeter program and narthex display case fall under the Evangelism Commission. If you are interested in engaging in either activity, please let me know.

Lastly, this **month's featured tracts** in the narthex are: Look for tracts that help you understand being a good steward of your income and financial contributor to your church.

---CLIFF SCHROCK
Director of Evangelism

CHRISTIAN SYMBOL

The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World — He brought light and life to a dark world (see John 1:4-5). On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.

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Share the Hope Fund

In memory of Sally Ciccio, Joe's Mother

Mary Atkinson
The Bogen Family
John and Pat Deloge

IN THE MAILBAG

From Ingrid Leibold

To My Holy Cross Family:

Thank you to all my friends and members of Holy Cross for thinking, caring and praying for me when I had my knee operation. I was really moved by all the wonderful cards I received from all of you. I thank God, and thank you for praying for me to get me where I am now. I am doing very well.

Yours in Christ,
---INGRID LEIBOLD



LEARN FROM & BE INSPIRED BY SCRIPTURE

The Holy Cross Word monthly “Bible study on paper”: Acts, Chapter 8

Acts, Chapter 8, 40 verses—This chapter concludes a section on how the church was born and how it grew through Christian leaders and followers being tested, sometimes in a starkly challenging way. The chapter begins a look at how persecution of the church caused it to scatter and spread. Please pause now to read the full Chapter 8 of Acts (use an aid such as BibleGateway.com if needed).



Chapter 8 analysis—

Chapter 7 had been Stephen’s incredible address to his accusers ending with the Jewish leaders condemning him to death by stoning. On board to see this happen was Saul, the harsh persecutor of Christians. Stephen had been the first person we know of who died for testifying about Jesus. In the first verse of Chapter 8, Saul said the events that had brought Stephen’s death were a “good thing.”

The Christian persecutors took Stephen’s death as a rallying cry and encouragement to try to inflict more harm to the community of believers. That they did, but by doing so, it had the benefit of spreading the Christians outward as missionaries and their message about Christ was extended outward. This then is the second stage of expansion of the new church, the first being in the Jerusalem area.

A group of believers saw that Stephen was buried and mourned, but after that the Jews, and mainly Saul, did their best to destroy the Christian church. Saul went door to door, dragging out men and women and putting them in prison. This would have occurred around the time Pontius Pilate was recalled back to Rome. Although the disciples remained in Jerusalem, many believers didn’t stick around for this potential abuse and went to Judea and Samaria, but no matter where they were, they delivered the message of Jesus and His resurrection.

One of the seven deacons, Philip, was one of those who went to Samaria, where he was quite effective in performing miracles and healing the weak and crippled. A man named Simon, however, had been in Samaria and had captured the attention of all classes of Samaritans because of his ability to do magic, which was seen as some kind of supernatural power. Simon and Philip became friends and Simon admired Philip’s ability.



Philip Teaches the Ethiopian

The apostles heard that the Samaritans had accepted Christ and been baptized; John and Peter traveled there to help them receive the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw how the two had the power to help others receive the Holy Spirit, he desired that power and offered them money to teach him how to do so. Peter was outraged and said Simon’s heart was not right and that he needed to change it and pray to God to change him. Simon asked for prayer for him, after which Peter and John returned back to Jerusalem.

After this, an angel said to Philip to get ready to go to Gaza via the desert road (it is thought this refers to a pathway from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to Hebron to Gaza). When Philip went he had the famous encounter with a eunuch from Ethiopia, who was a financial officer for Candace the queen of the Ethiopians. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship and at this moment was in his chariot reading from the book of Isaiah.

Encouraged by the Spirit, Philip went to the chariot and heard the eunuch reading from Isaiah and asked if he understood what he was reading, which was Isaiah 53:7-8. The officer pleaded that Philip tell him who the prophet was talking about in the verses and Philip did so, revealing the story of Jesus. Now being enlightened to the fulfillment of Isaiah, the eunuch spotted some water and insisted that the chariot be stopped and that Philip baptize the eunuch right then and there.

Miraculously, afterward the Spirit removed Philip from the officer, who never saw Philip again. The officer continued home, now full of joy and happiness. Philip, meanwhile, next appeared in the city Azotus and he witnessed about Jesus in the stretch of towns from Azotus to Caesarea, which is the western coast of Palestine.

In Chapter 9 we will learn how the zealous persecutor Saul was converted and began preaching for Christ.

Sources: Harper Study Bible; The Everyday Bible: New Testament; Egermeier’s Bible Story Book; The Acts of the Apostles, Neal M. Flanagan.

Next month: Acts, Chapter 9.

---CLIFF SCHROCK

CELEBRATING DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Dec. 2: Riley Riccio
 Dec. 3: Audrey Paray
 Dec. 5: Christy Halls
 Dec. 7: Jim Finch
 Dec. 8: Patsy Cerone, Jr.
 Roberta Crocker

Dec. 10: Joanne Bogen
 Zachary Wendling
 Dec. 12: Cole Dowling
 Jordan Matthews
 Dec. 13: Sarah Bogen
 Dec. 27: Manfred Schlaich
 Dec. 31: Effie Solaz

THIS SEASON OF PREPARATION

Make your preparations "Advent"-urous

Advent — the first season of the liturgical year — includes the four Sundays and weeks prior to December 25. Advent dates from the fourth century, when it lasted 40 days and included fasting and solemnity, much like Lent.

Advent is from *Adventus*, Latin for "coming," referring to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and also His second coming. Preparing for Christmas at home during this Advent season is a joyful and meaningful tradition that draws family members closer to God and each other.

The traditional colors of Advent are purple for penitence or blue for hope. Buy or make an Advent wreath and use candles of your choice: four blue, four purple, or three blue or purple and one pink. If you have a fifth spot, add one white Christ candle. During meals or devotions, light only one candle the first week. Add another for each new week (the pink candle traditionally marks the third week), concluding with the white candle (if you have one) on Christmas. The increasing light reminds us we're getting closer to celebrating Christ's light coming into the world.

Another way Christians often anticipate Christmas is to use special Advent calendars with "doors" to open — one per day until Christmas. Each "door" may suggest a Bible reading and a family activity. Families may sing carols, say a prayer or read a brief Christmas story.

In whatever way to mark each day of Advent, it's key to remember that God comes to us in many and various ways. He speaks to us through the prophets and saints. He comes and speaks to us when we are listening. He comes in the beauty and mysteries of nature. Most of all, God comes in the person of Christ, speaking to his listeners face to face.

Pastor Edmund Steimle put it this way: "The Christian story is a story of God coming into the middle of life, of our lives, opening the dialogue with us."

That's what Advent is really all about: God visiting the earth in person to speak with anyone and everyone who is ready to do so.

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CHURCH CHUCKLES

