



The HOLY CROSS WORD

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

DECEMBER 2020

"Share the Hope"

VOL. LXIV, NO. 1

FROM OUR VACANCY PASTOR

Christmas Traditions

There is no season of the year that combines more traditions than Christmas. Many of these traditions originated with and still flow from the celebration of Jesus' birth. Space prohibits an exhaustive explanation how each began, but here is a brief summary.

Christmas Trees – Although the ancients frequently brought greenery into their homes at the time of the winter solstice, Germans are traditionally credited for bringing in trees. Martin Luther is attributed for adding candles (lights) to the tree. The tradition came to America around 1840 or so by German settlers in Pennsylvania. If your tree is anything like ours, it is decorated according to your family traditions where each ornament tells a story.



Ornaments were originally apples, and then other round objects. Today, anything goes. Most trees are topped with either a Bethlehem star or an angel. Chrismons (Christian symbols) are used in many churches today - a tradition that began in 1957 at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia.

Christmas Cards began in earnest with the development of postal systems. The first cards appeared in London in 1842 and ever since have linked families and friends together as they celebrate the Nativity of our Lord.



Gift Exchange – Exchanging presents goes back thousands of years. Christians adopted the practice motivated by the story of the wise men who presented three gifts to the infant Christ. Scriptures don't say how many men there actually were, and the names of Gaspar, Balthazar and Melchior didn't appear until the 6th century in Ravenna, Italy. In England, Boxing Day follows Christmas. It's not an athletic event as I once thought, but rather the opening of the church's alms boxes and gifting the funds to the poor.



Christmas Carols – Although there are German and French carols, most carols we sing today come from England. It is unclear when the first carols were written but the majority we sing seem to have been written in the 19th century. Everyone has their favorites – mine is an African American spiritual, "Go, Tell It On The Mountain." What's yours?

Many of the above traditions are practiced in some manner by peoples worldwide. But for the Christian, the celebration of Christmas focuses on the anniversary of Christ's birth. The highlight is when the faithful gather at worship where the traditional message is joyfully proclaimed, **Unto you is born a Savior – Christ the Lord!** Unto you and me came One who would die on a cross and be raised again for the forgiveness of our sins thereby reconciling us to God! Hymns and carols are sung – "Silent Night" by candlelight is everyone's favorite. All the other traditions – trees, ornaments, gift exchanges, cards - take on additional meaning and importance stemming from the celebration of Jesus' birth. Yes, Jesus Christ is the "reason for the season!"



*Unto
you
is Born
a Savior!*

---BILL MEYER
Vacancy Pastor



Sunday, November 29 – The Season of Advent begins

Wednesdays, December 2, 9, 16

7:30 p.m. – Advent Midweek Worship – Holden Evening Prayer liturgy, with the theme “Testimonies to the Coming King”

Saturday, December 5

10:00 a.m. – Special Congregational Voters’ Meeting via ZOOM

Thursday, December 10

7:00 p.m. – Board of Directors’ online meeting

Thursday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

7:30 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship: Lessons & Carols

Friday, December 25 – The Nativity of Our Lord

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



HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH—LCMS

Sunday Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.

5995 Main Street, Trumbull, CT 06611

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Website: www.holycrosstrumbull.org

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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 standard of the Lutheran Church (Article III).



For Our Readers:
The Holy Cross Word is best viewed in its full-color format on the church website, holycrosstrumbull.org

Like Holy Cross on Facebook!



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



WORDS FOR THE SEASON

Written by Dutch Christian writer Corrie ten Boom

“Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.”

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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 11.

Please take note of this *earlier* deadline, due to the



Christmas season, and plan ahead to publicize events or share news 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.

Prepare
the way
of the
LORD.

Midweek Advent Services

Wednesdays
at 7:30 p.m.

Our liturgy will be
Holden Evening Prayer

Our theme this year is
"Testimonies to the
Coming King"

Dec. 2

The Testimony of
a Lawyer

Dec. 9

The Testimony of
a Dreamer

Dec. 16

The Testimony of
a Scholar

If you plan to attend any
of the midweek services,
be sure to sign up via
the "Welcome" page of
the Holy Cross website—
holycrosstrumbull.org.
A link will take you to
the midweek sign-up.

FROM OUR FINANCIAL SECRETARY

**A reminder of year-end giving details, with a notice that
2021 offering envelopes will be available early this month**

The boxes of **2021 offering envelopes** will be on the back narthex table in early December. Please do not use these new, green envelopes until 2021. 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. *"Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you."* – Deuteronomy 16:17

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 2020, any contributions must be received on or before Thursday, December 31.

Christmas/Advent Giving: Even if you cannot attend worship in person, you can still make your Christmas and Advent gifts to the church in celebration of your blessings during this special season by (1) mailing your gift to the church or (2) using online giving. When using online giving, simply enter the gift amount in the field by the Special/Holiday line when submitting your gift online.

---CHAD HELMINGER
Financial Secretary

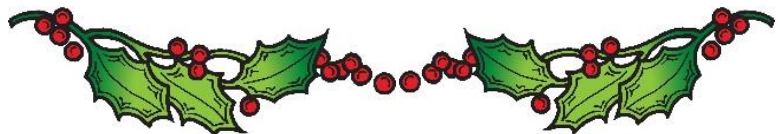
Christmas Worship Schedule

Please take note of our Christmas service time changes for 2020



**Christmas Eve at 7:30 p.m. —
Candlelight Worship: Lessons & Carols**

**Christmas Day at 10:00 a.m. —
Worship Service with Holy Communion**



COVENANT TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

Gifts, winter hat & mitten/glove sets due – unwrapped – by December 9

How can I thank you all for your loving Christmas spirit and support of the Covenant to Care for Children “Giving Tree!” This spirit was seen in action both before and after the Worship service on November 15. Before...I already had Holy Cross members contact me to make sure they could get matched up to a child in the caseload of our “adopted” DCF social worker, Mimose Ulysse-Laurenard. On November 15...I was told that after worship Holy Cross members and friends stood in line, while remaining six-feet apart, to take their turn to select an ornament tag that listed the child’s name, his/her age, gender and gift suggestion. The days following....and once this project was posted on Facebook on the evening of November 15, even more Holy Cross members e-mailed me to be matched up to a child(ren), agreeing to buy and donate a gift.



There were 60 tags on the “Giving Tree” this year, with 18 of them being taken before the morning of November 15. As of November 17, only 12 tags remained, and it’s my prayer that as you read this article, all 12 tags were taken. 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 Wednesday, December 9. If you are not attending in-person worship due to COVID, please be in touch with me so that I can arrange to get the gift you are donating. Due to COVID, I have to wrap all gifts myself. It’s imperative that these gifts have a minimal amount of handling by people. Our social worker has to deliver the gifts “curbside style” as she is not allowed to go into the homes of any of the children in her caseload.

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

Our daily activities will emphasize all aspects of the birth of Baby Jesus

Someone’s coming, someone special! 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.

This year, the children are very into nature...so we have been collecting branches, sticks and cardboard boxes and will make our own Christmas tree!

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!



I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire Helminger family for putting the Preschool classroom back together after the blood drive on October 24. It was done perfectly!! Many thanks!

Registration for the 2021-2022 school year will begin on January 19. 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 health!

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



**How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heav’n.
No ear may hear His coming; But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

Verse 3 of “O Little Town of Bethlehem”: Public domain

A "WE ARE FAMILY" THANK YOU

One of our youth – Joseph Vaitkus – receives the Eagle Scout rank

On September 17, I received the highest honor in the Boy Scouts of America – the Eagle Scout rank. I started my journey toward this achievement in 2014 and it has been a long road to get to this accomplishment.

My Eagle Scout project included building six wheelchairs for small children, which were then donated to Rehabilitation Associates. I developed the design of the chairs, was in charge of fund-raising material for the project, and ultimately created a team to build the final chairs. The purpose for the Eagle Scout project is to show leadership in a group to complete a service.

I do not currently have a date set for the ceremony. I am going to wait to have the ceremony at a later date when it is safer to do so because I would like to invite many people. In the meantime, I just wanted to thank my church family for supporting me throughout my journey, helping me whenever they could through guidance or donations for my Eagle Project. I appreciate all of you very much.

---JOEY VAITKUS



CROP WALK

It wasn't a normal "group walk," but Holy Cross was able to meet its financial goal

As you had seen from both the online and bulletin announcements, the 2020 Annual CROP Walk for World Hunger was a "virtual" event on Sunday, October 18. Participants were able to do their "walk" in their own neighborhood, go to a high school track or even walk along the beach. Holy Cross had five walkers who stepped forward and stepped out: Carol Burns, Donna, Marissa and Alexis Rodriguez, and Mary Schrock.

Thanks to donations from Holy Cross members and friends, I'm happy to report that our congregation's final total for this "virtual" event was \$1,135.00! We surpassed our \$1,000.00 goal. Thank you!

---CAROL BURNS



A ONE-YEAR REMEMBRANCE

**Submitted by Mary Atkinson,
in memory of her husband Otto Atkinson,
who died in December 2019**

If we could have one lifetime wish,
One dream that could come true.
We'd pray with all our hearts for
Yesterday and you.

To your grave we wander, flowers
We place with care.

Only God knows the heartache as
We turn and leave you there.

A million times we've missed you,
A million times we've cried.

If our love could have saved you,
You never would have died.

---Author Unknown



General Memorial Fund

In memory of Karim Seyal

Bob and Janet Enko

Share the Hope Fund

In memory of Joyce Roman

Ron and Doris Dietman

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:

Stephanie Helminger and **Kendra Norman** for coordinating the Red Cross Blood Drive that was hosted by Holy Cross on Saturday, October 24.

Laurie Vaitkus, Joey Vaitkus, Donna Bogen, Sarah Bogen and **Kerry Geffert**, who all served as volunteers at the October 24th blood drive.

The **Helminger Family** for setting up the Preschool classroom after the blood drive was over and the Fellowship Hall was deep-cleaned.



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

WORDS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

What makes Christmas “happen” for you?

Where does the joy of the season come alive in you? The celebrations? The candlelight service? The music of the Advent season? Perhaps you find it in the shopping and gift-giving. Maybe you see the love of the season in the sparkling eyes of a child, smell it with the aroma of cookies baking, or hear it through the words of your favorite Christmas hymn or carol.



Whatever it is, during this holiday season with all its frenzied festivities, stop and remember that night in the stable, those mingled smells of animals and hay, that pain and subsequent joy in the birth of one small child. Breathe deep and feel with Mary, with Joseph, the shepherds, the angels. Feel the birth of Jesus. What is it to experience such joy, such peace? Verbally express to someone close to you what the birth of Christ means to you at this point in your life. Be joyful!

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CHURCH CHUCKLES

