

THE CROSSWORD

December 2022

A PUBLICATION OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Vol. LXVI, No. 1

A SEASON OF FIRSTS

from Pastor Nathan Erb

There is a first time for everything. Every great story you've ever finished reading started with the first word. Every wall that has been built started with the first brick. We can recall the first time our child said a word, or took a step. You might have fond memories of your first friend, or the first day in a new school, or the first day of a job you still have.

Holy Cross has had a few firsts in the past few months that are worth noting. Ironically, however, I'm going to start with the last of the firsts—first.

THE CROSSWORD

Upon reading this publication you may have already noticed a change. "The Holy Cross Word" newsletter is now "The Crossword." Much more than simply a name change, *The Crossword* will slowly morph from a traditional newsletter—which aims to inform the reader—into something more like a magazine or journal—which aims to transform the reader.

Important information that you need to know will still be shared during Sunday morning announcements, via email campaigns, and our social media outlets. We certainly want you to be well informed about everything that is happening at Holy Cross.

The vision for *The Crossword* is to unify our congregation around a common theme, and under that theme provide resources, stories, and opportunities for you to grow in your faith, your love for God, and your service to your neighbor. I would love for this publication to be something you return to throughout the month, because it adds value to your life, teaches you God's Word, challenges you to follow God's commands, and refreshes you with the Gospel.

Going forward, we would also love to have additional contributors. Hearing from different voices and perspectives is important. If you have an interest in writing, please let us know, and we'll begin working on ways to utilize your gifts!

WORD OF LIFE

The theme for each month is also being utilized in our Worship service. Each Sunday we will read a chosen verse to focus on for the month that is related to the theme. Meditating on a particular verse from Scripture is a powerful practice that gives time for God's Word to sink in. Using a simple formula I've used for a while in my own devotions—we want to THINK, PRAY, and DO. Ask a question about the verse. Engage with God intellectually. Then pray about what you've just thought about, which can lead you then to action.

In future editions of *The Crossword* you'll find more ways to interact with our theme verse, our theme in general, and suggestions on how to make it a part of your life, teach it to your children, and share it with others.

BAPTISMAL REMEMBRANCE

It's important for all of us to be

(Continued on page 7)

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

Kerry Geffert

A needed change in governance is coming, easing ways to be involved in leadership

December is customarily a month for looking back, providing a review of the past year. This article won't be one of those. Instead, I prefer to take this opportunity to look ahead and provide a glimpse of what can lay ahead for our congregation.

If you have served on one of our Boards or Commissions over the past 10-plus years, you know the challenges we have faced in filling positions. We have a habit of recycling members for our Board of Directors (yours truly included). Even a small committee like our Audit Committee has been difficult to fill without the dedicated, repeat service of a few individuals.

Basically, we have a governance system that no longer functions well. It worked when the church played a central role in day-to-day society. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case (a discussion for another day).

When I agreed to become President again, I did so for two reasons. One was to support Pastor Erb as he began his ministry at Holy Cross. The other was to finally bring our governance structure into the 21st century. The latter is no small feat;

to be honest, it would be easier to limp along with a dysfunctional governance structure. But we would limp along at our congregation's peril. To be honest, with our current level of vacancies, we already are fleeting with a constitutional inability to make important decisions.

Let's use 2023 to make things better. I'm going out on a limb to write that I plan to have a Board-endorsed reorganization plan ready

for congregational review next month – prior to our Annual Voters Meeting (AVM) – allowing for opportunities for feedback. Then, subject to revisions/amendments, I hope we can approve an updated Constitution & Bylaws at the AVM and begin its

implementation in the coming months.

Am I proposing a revolution? By no means! In some ways, revisions may more closely reflect how some activities are currently being managed. What will not change is our mission and our adherence to the LCMS. Nor will the function and responsibilities of the Congregation change.

(Continued on page 5)



HOLY CROSS

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Nathan Erb

pastor@holycrosstrumbull.com

Elisabeth Erb - Music

musicdirector@holycrosstrumbull.com

Michele Glennon - Preschool

203-268-6471

preschool@holycrosstrumbull.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT Kerry Geffert
 VICE-PRESIDENT
 SECRETARY Michele Van Wart
 TREASURER Greg Dowling
 FINANCIAL SECRETARY Jon Halls
 DISCIPLESHIP
 EDUCATION
 EVANGELISM Cliff Schrock
 PROPERTY Dan Senft
 SHEPHERDS Cindy Ciccia
 SOCIAL MINISTRY Kendra Norman
 TECHNOLOGY Gary Messerschmitt
 WORSHIP Pat Deloge, Donna Senft

5995 Main Street, Trumbull, CT 06611

203-268-4555

office@holycrosstrumbull.com

Sunday Worship | 10:00 a.m.

Bible Class | 9:00 a.m

WWW.HOLYCROSSTRUMBULL.ORG

THE CROSSWORD

MANAGING EDITOR

Cliff Schrock

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Mary Schrock, Nathan Erb

THE WORD OF LIFE

Cliff Schrock

The theme for this month's Word of Life is patience. Paul writes in Romans 8:25: "if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

Romans was written to Christians in Rome. The Believers there were a mix of Jews and Gentiles gathered in an assortment of homes and other meeting places. Paul was in Corinth when he wrote the letter, around 56 AD, on his third missionary journey. The first 11 chapters of Romans focus on doctrine, and in this chapter the topic is salvation. God gives us Believers the power to live a Christian life.

Leading up to verse 25, Paul has been writing about suffering on a daily scale, but those sufferings, he says, are "nothing compared to the great glory that will be given to us" (verse 18). He explains that we have been saved and now we have hope for how God's salvation will make us free. It's a hope for something that hasn't happened yet, we haven't seen, which leads to the great acclamation in verse 25: "...if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." +

Some key words this month are:

HOPE

The reference here is to a favorable and confident expectation of something unseen and in the future. Hope can be problematic, such as when we hope when we don't get something we ask for. But in this usage of hope it's for the most common hope, a happy anticipation of good.

WAIT

Quite simply in this reference the meaning is to expect something eagerly. And to "wait for" in this verse is not a solo effort but we do so with a group of Believers.

PATIENCE

Patience works in tandem with waiting. Waiting is not often done calmly, however; we can be agitated and unable to wait calmly but Paul uses the word patience for a purpose to emphasize waiting with endurance.

KEY WORD aid from "Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words"

COVENANT TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

Mary Schrock

Christmas spirit filled the narthex on November 20 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 with 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 36 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. In the weeks leading up to November 20, we had

already received 16 donations of hat/mitten sets, meaning the original count of 72 ornament tags for the "Giving Tree" was reduced to 56!

EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T KNOW THESE CHILDREN, YOU ARE SHARING YOUR LOVE WITH THEM, AND THAT IS A WONDERFUL AND HEART-WARMING GIFT.

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 11. We have Thrivent Action Team funds to offset the cost of all the gift-wrapping supplies, but if you would like to include a gift bag with your gift, 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. +

NOTEWORTHY

News, Notes, & Acknowledgements from the Holy Cross Community

FROM THE WORSHIP COMMISSION

Christmas Decorating: Please join us in adorning our church for the Holy Season on Sunday, December 4, immediately following the service.

Many Hands Make Light Work: Sanctuary cleaning will take place at 9 a.m., on Saturday, December 3. Please join us so that our sanctuary will shine prior to Christmas decorating.

Pat Deloge, Donna Senft

FROM THE EVANGELISM DIRECTOR

Have you extended yourself lately? With the commission's tasks being performed normally, this month's quick report focuses on a simple but critical element of sustaining church growth: members pitching in and "extending" themselves to help perform the tasks that keep the church going well into the future.

Future Holy Cross leadership would benefit from having a combined effort of its newest members and those longtime members who have been reluctant

to extend themselves and volunteer for either leadership or supportive roles. Doing so would provide stability for our church growth well into the future.

But instead of reading from me drumming in that message, please read from a commission member, Elisabeth Erb, who responded to my question about "why do you think it's important for church members to extend themselves" with this comment:

"It is important to extend ourselves as church body members because it is what we are called to do. It's tempting to sit on the sidelines out of comfort and familiarity, but doing so risks the church turning inward and becoming self-serving. Having active members is important to keeping a church body strong and helping it grow. Jesus says 'Go and make,' not 'Sit and wait.' " Amen!

Cliff Schrock

GBARNGA MISSION

THANK YOU, Holy Cross! Your cash and check donations in the last several weeks enabled us to exceed our goal of making a \$500 donation to Gbarnga Mission in Liberia!

Also, another Holy Cross family has pledged to sponsor a mission student, so we have met the goal of two additional families to sponsor students.

The Social Ministry Commission hopes that you will prayerfully consider supporting Gbarnga in the coming months and years. We pray that you will continue to use your blessings to serve others.

Kendra Norman

THANK YOU

Doing a theme in the display case can be as simple or as complicated as the designer decides. We want to thank Kendra Norman for doing an October-November theme on the Gbarnga Mission. She did a beautiful job and even donated a couple of Luther items she had gotten for the Reformation.

Please speak with the Evangelism Commission if you are interested in taking a turn at being a display case "designer."

We love to hear from you!

If you have any news, notes, or acknowledgments that you'd like to share with the congregation...please let us know! Submissions are due by the 10th of the month preceding the edition date. Email office@holycrosstrumbull.com

BUILDING BLOCKS



from Holy Cross Preschool

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.

All preschool children will receive an Advent chain activity with a corresponding devotional booklet to take home and enjoy with their families. Each class will have their own special Advent calendars for use in the classroom.

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 at 9 a.m., on Thursday, December 22. We all look forward to sharing this special event with the families of the preschool children.

Registration for the 2023-2024 school year will begin on January 9. 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! +

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

(Continued from page 2)

However, what can change is our mindset. There can be many opportunities for involvement, without the burden of long-term commitments. There can be strategic plans for collaboration, allowing us to try new things while being respectful of our history and traditions. There can be opportunities (dare I say calls?) for new blood to lead Holy Cross into the future.

Finally, why am I telling you this now? One, I don't want you to be surprised. But most importantly, I would like you to start thinking about how you, as a member of

Holy Cross, can participate in this new structure. This is a need for new leadership – positions for the Board are open! Talk with me if you are curious or have an interest in serving. Also, I would like you to begin thinking about ways in which you can use your God-given talents to advance the mission of Holy Cross. There will be many tasks that will require many hands – yours included.

Blessings to you and your loved ones during this Holiday Season! +

A Study in Acts

ACTS 19:1-41

In this section of Acts in which the spread of the Christian church is shown expanding overseas and to “the ends of the earth,” we continue to focus on Paul the Missionary and the fact the message he was preaching was and is universal and for everyone.

At the end of Chapter 18, we read about Apollos, a Jew who came to Ephesus. He was an educated person who was well versed about the Scriptures and was enthusiastic when talking about the ministry of Jesus Christ. He received instruction about baptism, in particular. As chapter 19 starts, Apollos is in Corinth and Paul is traveling to Ephesus. In the city was a temple to Artemis. Paul met up with about 12 “disciples” and discussed baptism; interestingly, they said they had been baptized into “John’s baptism,” which Paul explained was of repentance and of the One who was to come. As a result, Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus.

Paul then made himself known in the city. For three months, he spoke about God’s kingdom in the synagogue but received little support; instead, he engaged in daily debate at Tyrannus’ lecture hall. For about two years, Paul used the hall with the disciples on a regular basis, where he could speak without being interrupted in a comfortable setting, similar to a school; in this way, both Jews and Greeks from Asia heard the word, and many were converted to Christianity.

God used Paul as a tool at Ephesus, and he performed miracles in the name of Jesus, healing the sick. Those who were too sick to see Paul were healed because their

friends brought handkerchiefs and aprons for Paul to touch, and when they were returned, and placed on the sick, they were healed. Paul also cast out evil spirits in the name of Christ.

This obviously impressed everyone about God’s great power but some tried to mimic Paul’s success. Seven brothers, sons of a Jewish priest, considered themselves magicians. They observed Paul in action. Thinking they could cast out spirits, too, they tried with one man who was possessed. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know,” the spirit replied, “but who are you?” The spirit caused the man to attack the brothers and they fled. That incident drew great attention and increased respect for Jesus’ power. Those who had been practicing magic were intimidated, confessed their errors, and rejected superstitious behavior. In a major acknowledgement of God’s power, city residents who had purchased books on magic to “practice it” brought them all and burned them in a bonfire, a huge sacrifice given that books were rare and expensive. The books were worth 50,000 silver coins. Believing in Jesus meant they did not need “magic” books and didn’t want to be tempted by them.

Not all in Ephesus were convinced of Jesus as Savior, even after all they had seen through Paul, who told them there were no gods made with hands. These nonbelievers preferred to worship at the temple of Diana; travelers took an image of Diana home with them as souvenirs. This was a huge business for silversmiths; one of them, Demetrius, was so upset to see people turning to Christ that he called a meeting of other silversmiths and got them riled up. The group flooded the city streets in a frenzy and yelled about the greatness of Diana. The entire city was abuzz and two of Paul’s disciples, Gaius and Aristarchus, were captured. Paul wanted to assist them but was warned to stay away for fear he would be harmed. This went on for a couple hours. Some of the rioters didn’t even know what was happening, they just joined the crowd in yelling Diana’s name. One city official, however, the town clerk, finally spoke sense to the crowd and told them that they should release the men, they had done no harm, and to return home in peace before doing something they would regret. +

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 20 which records the final stages of Paul’s third missionary journey.



Oh come to us,
abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel

ADVENT MIDWEEK

Wednesdays 7:00 pm

Soup Supper at 6:15 pm

Nov 30, December 7, 14, 21

CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24 | 5:00 & 8:00 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25 | 10:00 am

A SEASON OF FIRSTS

(Continued from page 1)

reminded of who we are in Christ through our Baptism, but on the second Sunday of each month we will remember our Baptisms in a unique way. Those who have Baptism Birthdays in the current month will be prayed for by name and receive a blessing for strength and faith to continue to live out the Baptismal grace you have received. Read the article on page 8 entitled ***Remember You Are Baptized*** for a more in depth look at why Baptism is so important, and why we want to intentionally remember our Baptisms regularly.

MORE FIRSTS TO COME

I'm excited to see how God can use all these "firsts" to grow His Kingdom, and I know there will be many more "firsts" to come. Any journey begins with a first step, and we pray that God would keep us faithful to the calling he has given us as His church.

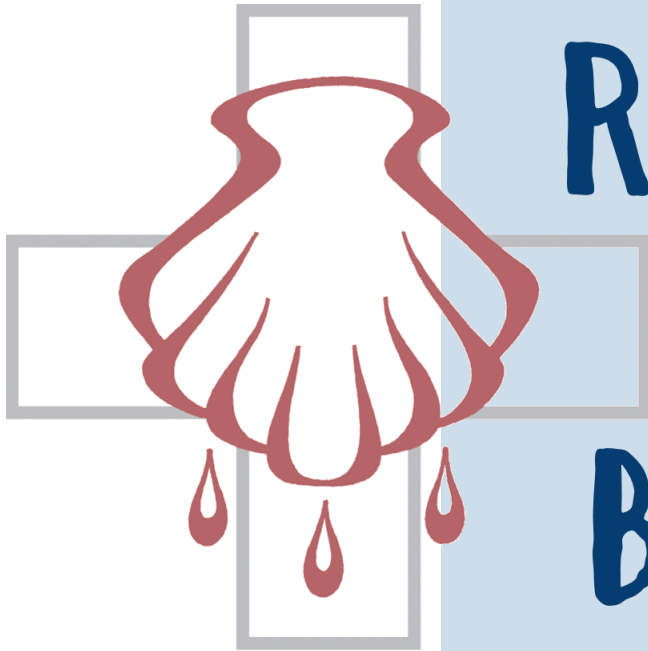
Be sure to read the President's Journal article which highlights an important shift we will need to make in order to be faithful to our calling as the body of Christ to

love and serve our neighbors, and proclaim the Gospel. Every Christian has been called to use their gifts. Every member is important! No gift is too small; no one is insignificant. God has uniquely positioned you at Holy Cross to contribute. Begin praying now about how that will be true for you.

May Jesus, who is the First and the Last, bless you and keep you!

In God's Grace,

Paster Nathan Erb



REMEMBER YOU ARE BAPTIZED!

BAPTIZED INTO
YOUR NAME
MOST HOLY
O FATHER, SON
AND HOLY GHOST
I CLAIM A PLACE
THOUGH WEAK
AND LOWLY
AMONG
YOUR SEED
YOUR CHOSEN HOST
BURIED
WITH CHRIST
AND DEAD TO SIN
YOUR SPIRIT NOW
SHALL LIVE
WITHIN

"BAPTIZED INTO YOUR NAME MOST HOLY"
LSB 590

Every Ash Wednesday, as you come forward to have ashes imposed on your forehead in the sign of the cross you hear **“Remember, you are dust, and to dust you will return.”** It is a somber reminder of our mortality. However, we know that the dust is not our final destination. Because Christ died for our sins and was raised to new life, and in your Baptism you are united to Christ’s death AND resurrection - we have a future to look forward to beyond the grave. Your identity is not based on anything in this life, even your mortality. Instead your identity is firmly rooted in Christ.

So, while the Ash Wednesday statement is still true, we have a promise from God to cling to. When you hear “Remember you are dust,” you can say in return, “Yes, and I also remember that I am Baptized!”

Your Baptism is the most important part of who you are. This is why, at Holy Cross, we will be remembering our baptism monthly. And we will specifically pray for those whose Baptism birthdays fall in that given month.

We learn in Colossians 1:13 that God has “delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” Jesus Christ.

This happened in your Baptism. You were transported in those waters to the cross and the empty grave where, by faith, you died and rose with Christ. Without Baptism, without Christ’s redemption we would be lost in darkness forever. But thanks be to God for His Mercy and Grace. Thanks be to God that He gives us His name. Thanks be to God you belong to Him! +

Celebrating this Month

DECEMBER

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

- 2 Riley Riccio
- 3 Audrey Paray
- 5 Christy Halls
- 7 Jim Finch
- 8 Patsy Cerone, Jr.
- 8 Roberta Crocker
- 10 Joanne Bogen
- 10 Zachary Wendling
- 12 Cole Dowling
- 12 Jordan Matthews
- 13 Sarah Bogen
- 27 Manfred Schlaich
- 31 Effie Solaz

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

- 1 David & Michelle Festi
- 6 Gary & Kristen Messerschmitt
- 21 Gunther & Ursula Naumann
- 29 David & Mary Ann Schiller

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

- Julia Antoniou
- Michael Antoniou
- Mathew Benson
- Timothy Benson Sr.
- Kevin Conte
- Harald Dale
- Jacqueline Dale
- Cole Dowling
- Greg Dowling
- Jared Ely
- Heather Fanning
- Savannah Fitzmorris
- Ethan Gagliardi
- Jake Hackney
- Stella Hackney
- Sophie Martineli
- Christine Matthews
- Jessica Nyitrai
- Luke Schipul
- Camila Smith
- Penelope Smith
- Caroline Sylling

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!