

THE CROSSWORD

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A PUBLICATION OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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GROWING IN FAITH

from Pastor Nathan Erb

Holy Cross operates under the command Jesus Christ gave to his disciples. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19

At our most recent annual meeting, I presented three simple categories to consider as we plan activities and opportunities: social, spiritual, and service. To elaborate, and in light of Holy Cross's constitutional mission, we want to be a congregation that is Growing in Faith, Serving in Love, and Being Together in Christ.

This month, we'll look at what it means to "Grow in Faith."

Teaching is one way we participate in the mission Christ has given us! We teach God's Word, which includes commands, promises, and the truth about who God is and what he has done for his creation.

This may seem obvious, but in order to teach, there must also be students. If a person has all the knowledge in the world but no one to teach it to, there isn't much teaching going on. So Jesus' command is not only to teach but also to learn. This is true for everyone, including myself.

On a recent Sunday morning, I asked the congregation if they thought the Bible was a good and worthwhile book to know. All hands went up! I then asked if everyone knew everything there was to know about God's Word.

All of the hands went down. I would put myself in that group. Although one of my primary responsibilities is teaching, I also consider myself a student. Every time I read the Bible, I learn something new. Even as I teach what I've discovered, I continue to

learn new things. I learn new things by actively seeking opportunities to learn from others.

Jesus was a master teacher and would skillfully use images and illustrations to describe what it meant to be in the kingdom of God. One of these repeated illustrations involves plants! In John 15:4, Jesus says, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”

Even if you don't have a "green thumb," you understand that any plant needs to be cared for in order to grow. To mature into a healthy, fruit-bearing plant, it needs the

**GROWING
IN FAITH.
SERVING
IN LOVE.
TOGETHER
IN CHRIST**

(Continued on page 5)

PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

There were five Sundays in April this year, but two stand out in my mind.

One was, of course, Easter Sunday. Perhaps you noticed it, too – the sanctuary was full! As in setting up extra chairs full! It has been years since the sanctuary held so many at a Sunday morning worship service. What a joy to behold! Add to that the delightful Easter breakfast that encouraged relaxed fellowship in preparation for worship, and we had a Sunday morning fully befitting the celebration of the resurrection.

The other Sunday was the first Sunday of our new schedule, and the beginning of our spring education session. First, kudos to everyone who paid attention to the announcements of the new start time. Second, kudos to the families who prioritized Sunday School for their children. The children are the future of our church, but only if they are present. And thank you to our teachers – young adults willing to take on the mantle of leadership.

Almost two years ago, Holy Cross began a new chapter, the results of which we are beginning to see manifested, for instance, in these two April Sundays. It hasn't always been easy; nor are we finished. Yes, there have been many successes, but there also have been some "potholes." None of these "potholes" was over doctrine. That has remained constant. Instead, our challenges often have been about letting go of the past as we look to the future.

This year, our Board of Directors has begun its meetings discussing how to keep Holy Cross the thriving congregation that we know and love. At our April meeting we talked about how living in the past can hinder our ability to respond to the present and prepare for the future. We had spent some time on the topic, trying not to regale the "glory days," when one Board member reminded us of something important: for many of our members, the "glory days" have no relevance because they weren't members then. For our newest members, even the time of our most recent vacancy is essentially just history. Please don't get me wrong. Knowledge of the past is important, if only to keep us from repeating its mistakes. However, the times of the past are not the times of the present; we respect the past as we adapt to the present. Again, we're not speaking of doctrine, which remains unchanged. What we're really speaking of is practice.

If you're still with me, you may be asking, "so what?" What do two April Sundays, a new chapter and the "glory days" have to do with Holy Cross being a thriving congregation? It's this – for Holy Cross to continue surviving and thriving, we need more member leaders, regardless of Holy Cross tenure, to be active, to help us focus on the present while preparing for the future. We still have three open spots on our Board of Directors. Will you serve? *Let me know at president@holycrosstrumbull.com.* +



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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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MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

“THE CHOSEN”

For the longest time—until now—“Jesus of Nazareth” was my favorite in-depth movie about Jesus Christ's life. I urge you to watch “The Chosen,” which can be found for free if you know where to look on many popular streaming services.

First of all, a disclaimer: viewing “The Chosen” does not replace reading the Bible. While I've found many scenes and added dialogue from the show to be useful and insightful, there are creative liberties taken in order to tell a compelling story. So far, there is nothing that I would call “false teaching,” but we must be mindful that reading the words of the original eyewitnesses is always preferable to a creative interpretation.

My entire family, however, has greatly appreciated the added color to many familiar scenes and stories from the Bible. For example, in Season 1, we see Jesus and his disciples at a wedding reception in Cana, where he transforms water into wine. The show does an excellent job of setting the story in a larger context, with relatable characters and emotional backdrops. Most viewers (including my family) like how Jesus and his disciples are depicted because it helps us understand that they were real people, not just characters in a story. You also know it's a good show when your kids beg you to watch it before bedtime instead of anything else!

For more information and to watch every episode online (currently three seasons with a fourth in the works), go to www.angel.com/watch/the-chosen.

You can also watch for free by installing the “Angel Studios” app on your Apple or Android device, as well as television streaming devices like Roku, Fire TV, or Apple TV.

The Chosen is a groundbreaking historical drama based on the life of Jesus, seen through the eyes of those who knew him. Set against the backdrop of Jewish oppression in first-century Israel, the seven-season show shares an authentic and intimate look at Jesus’ revolutionary life and teachings.

The global phenomenon has garnered over 500 million episode views worldwide, and over 110 million people have watched at least one episode. It’s available on major streaming services like Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Peacock while all seasons remain free in The Chosen mobile and TV apps. Viewer support through tax-deductible donations fund production and have helped make The Chosen the largest fan-supported entertainment project of all time.

NOTEWORTHY

News, Notes, & Acknowledgements from the Holy Cross Community

FROM THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE

We wish to thank everyone involved in the organization of church services and decorating for the Lenten and Easter Season:

- Laurie and Paul Vaitkus, for the numerous parament changes and for stripping the altar on Maundy Thursday. We also thank them for polishing the silver and brass used at the altar. And finally... many thanks to Laurie and Paul for staying one step ahead of the communion line on Easter Sunday.
- Lori Thompson, for laundering and pressing the altar, fair linen.
- Elisabeth Erb, for organizing our amazing Festival Choir and for all those who lent their voices. Thank you also to Elisabeth for all her hard work and creativity in planning and executing the church décor during Lent, Holy Week and Easter.
- Cheryl Mayeran and Kerry Geffert, for their beautiful duet on Maundy Thursday.

- Bill Weigle, for his guitar accompaniment on the Maundy Thursday duet.
- Kerry Geffert for closing out the Good Friday service with his very moving, acapella rendition of "Were You There."
- Dave Bogen, for his guitar accompaniment for one of the communion hymns on Easter Sunday.
- Edith Skoog, for creating the floral arrangement that adorned the Easter Cross.
- Pastor Erb, for assisting us in making many creative ideas come to fruition.

Pat Deloge and Donna Senft

CALLING ALL 2023 GRADUATES

If you are graduating this spring from high school, college or an advanced degree such as a Master's, we encourage you to share the details about this exciting milestone with your church family.

We plan to recognize all of our graduates in the July/August edition of *The CrossWord*. Graduate Information forms are on the narthex table or can be obtained electronically by contacting Mary in the church office:

office@holycrosstrumbull.com.

We ask that all information be given to the church office by Sunday, June 4.

Please let us know who you are – you are important to us!

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 Christian Preschool

Our preschoolers are busy learning about the many different animals that God created. This month we will explore farm, zoo, pond and ocean animals. We will learn about the habitats, life cycles and what these animals need to survive.

Spring is a time of growth and change, and we will continue to witness this firsthand in May. Every day we will watch the growth of the seeds we planted in April. The children are eagerly waiting for special caterpillars to arrive. We will observe and document how these caterpillars change – and we can't wait until they emerge as beautiful butterflies!

Our Bible stories will focus on the work of sharing the love of Jesus. We will learn about Phillip and the Ethiopian, Paul, Tabitha and Lydia and Timothy. Our

favorite day of the week is Thursday when we get the chance to have Chapel Time with Pastor Erb! He presents the Bible stories to the children in fun and creative ways!

Our Summer Camp sessions are close to being filled—Praise God! Camp is open to children ages 3 to 5 and will run from June 19-July 28, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

WE'RE ON FACEBOOK!

Check out our school's Facebook page to see pictures and descriptions of all our exciting activities!

www.facebook.com/

[HolyCrossPreschoolTrumbull/](https://www.facebook.com/HolyCrossPreschoolTrumbull/)

GROWING IN FAITH (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.” John 15:4

right amount of water, sunlight, and nutrients. The same can be said for our faith. Sunday worship is only one aspect of our Christian life. Another is consistent study and meditation in God's Word. If you give a plant enough water but leave it in a dark room, it will not grow. Likewise, for your faith to flourish and produce fruit, you must actively engage in opportunities to hear God's nutrient-rich Word!

The good news is that everyone now has the chance to grow in faith through Sunday school and Bible study thanks to our new Sunday schedule. Age-appropriate classes are open to children from preschool through eighth grade, and adults and high school students are welcome to join the Bible study so that we can all Grow in Faith together. See you Sunday! +

Pastor Nathan Erb



If Christ Has Not Been Raised

We are still in our sins

1 CORINTHIANS 15:17

First Corinthians chapter 15 is one of my favorite chapters in all of Scripture. It is rich with both theological content and personal meaning. The chapter itself begins with one of the most important things a Christian could ever ponder. These set of verses answer that burning and sometimes controversial question: what is the Gospel? The Gospel, it says, is the proclamation of the truth “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Paul goes on to provide a list of witnesses to the risen Christ for the purpose of illustrating that Christ didn’t just rise in his heart. Christ didn’t just rise spiritually. And finally, Christ didn’t rise metaphorically. Rather, Christ was killed on that cursed tree, and three days later he rose from the dead, in his body, as the first fruits of our real and bodily resurrection.

Now, there are two things to take note of here. The first is obvious—that as Christ has been raised, truly raised in his body, so shall we be raised, in our bodies, just as he

promised. The first is linked intrinsically to the second. That is, that if Christ did not rise from the dead, we are still in our sin. Or as the preacher would say, you are still in your sin.

So what does it mean to “still be in your sin”? Sin is the separation from God that we both inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and that we confirm daily, hourly, minute by minute, in our own state of sin as well as our active sins against our neighbors. As the liturgy helps us confess, we sin in thought, word, and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We do not love God with our whole heart (or left to our own devices, any part of it), and we do not love our neighbors as ourselves. Thus, we justly deserve God’s just and eternal punishment. That punishment is death – eternal death – and this death is the real enemy.

Death is what Christ came to mock. And death is what vexes us all. Christ’s death is his final act of taking on all our sin—truly taking it from us and making it his. In this final act of defiance, his final suffering and crucifixion

grabs from our wicked clenched fists the last remnants of sin that we stubbornly hang on to and lays that sin on his own back. The same back that is whipped by the guards. The same back that is pressed against the tree as his hands and feet are stretched and nailed securely down. The same back that slumps on the cross as muscle, tendon, and ligaments give way and fail to hold him up any longer. This back takes all our sin and dies in our stead. This is the sacrifice of Christ.

This is the vicarious atonement. This is what makes him the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who takes away your sin!

So what then of his resurrection? That is a good question. I previously noted that Christ's real enemy was death. Death was the curse that was wrought because of sin, our sin. Death is our ultimate fear. Death is the universal condition that links all mankind. Death is the enemy, and sin leads to death—both in this life now and forever. But what if sin was truly removed and what if the one who took it from us had the power to conquer it's curse and spit in the face of death? What would this mean for you and for me? Would it mean that we who are in Christ no longer had anything to fear? Indeed it would!

This is what it means for Christ to take our sin. If anyone else would have attempted such a feat, they would have failed. Why? Because only Christ is the eternal Lamb of God who was and is and is to come. Only he who spoke the words

“let there be” could also truly conquer sin, death, and the power of the devil. Only he who was in the beginning could confidently say that in three days he would rise again. Only he knew that he had to give his life freely and that no one could take it away from him. And only he had the power to fulfill the promise that his death would finally take our sin and his resurrection meant that death lost the finality of its sting over us.

So, Paul poses a mind game for us here in First Corinthians. He asks us to ponder the importance of the actual and real bodily resurrection of Christ by saying to us, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” Because if we are in our sins, death is

still an enemy with power over us. Without Christ's resurrection, death still has the power to curse, destroy, and wreak havoc and fear over our lives. And this is why the first seven verses of this chapter are so important. They show us, undoubtedly, that Christ did rise from the dead. That he appeared to “Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the

brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me (Paul) also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

As we celebrate Easter, we are called to remember and confess that he is Christ. He is risen. And if he is risen, our sins are no longer ours. When we fall asleep, he will come again and with a trumpet sound to wake us on that last day to be with Him! O, sin what of your curse? “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55). The true victory of Christ's bodily resurrection was all for you. Have no fear. Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Hallelujah!

“Sin is the separation from God that we both inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and that we confirm daily, hourly, minute by minute, in our own state of sin as well as our active sins against our neighbors”

Written by Scott Keith | 1517

Used by Permission. Original article can be found at <https://www.1517.org/articles/if-christ-has-not-been-raised-you-are-still-in-your-sins>.

A Study in Acts

from Cliff Schrock

ACTS 24:1-27

Since chapter 21, verse 18, the book of Acts has had a couple of themes that match up: The church's leader on trial, and Paul the prisoner. Paul's diligence to witness to Christ as the Son of God who came to earth for man's salvation is just as inspirational now as it was then. That latter theme ties in with the overall purpose of Acts, which is to show how Jesus Christ started the Christian church, to account for the church's amazing growth, and to help believers grow in Christian life and service. But with five chapters to conclude the book, the focus is on Paul, who is constantly in harm's way during his travels. After you have read Chapter 24, please pick up with the following summary.

As Chapter 23 had ended, Paul had been before the Sanhedrin, testifying to the truth about Christ but continually facing the immovable force of angry Jews. As Paul faced a conspiracy to have him killed, a tribune became his benefactor, likely because he knew the Jews were being deceptive. The tribune arranged for a contingent to take Paul to Caesarea at night to be with Felix the Governor. In a letter the tribune wrote for Felix, he provides background on Paul and says he's sending him to the governor for him to directly hear accusations from the Jews. Because of the tribune's initiative, Paul got to Felix safely. There Paul was held until he could put up a defense in front of his accusers.

Chapter 24 picks up five days after Paul's arrival in Caesarea. The high priest Ananias has led a contingent that has come to report its case against Paul to Felix. With Ananias was an attorney named Tertullus, and after Paul had been summoned to a hearing, Tertullus began

his accusations against Paul by flattering Governor Felix about how great a ruler he had been. Then Tertullus starts in on Paul; he called him a pestilent fellow, an agitator, a sect leader. He claims Paul had profaned the temple and tells Felix that if he examines Paul himself he'll find out all of these accusations for himself are true. The rest of Ananias' agitators who came with him, aka a kangaroo court, affirmed that everything being said was true.

It can be easy to think in our computer-driven, modern sophistication that people living two-thousand years ago were, well, dumb and backward. But Tertullus' presence and his tactics show that was hardly the case. Likely a Hellenistic Jew (a combination of Jewish religious tradition with parts of Greek culture) with a common Roman name, Tertullus' strategy was to argue that Paul was an enemy of two elements—public calm and peace plus the Jewish religion—both of which the governor was assigned to protect. We aren't made aware of any evidence Tertullus admitted, only the accusations, which in today's court world would not be enough to convict a defendant.

Once again, to Paul's credit, he showed lawyerly skills of his own when Felix gave him permission to speak, including saying that if anyone has a problem with him they should be there in person, not just rely on hearsay. We see Paul's reply in verses 10 to 21 and it's remarkable for its calm, logical, level-headed response to the mis-truths from Tertullus. Paul focused on two things: his opponents can't prove any of their claims, and second, he admits to one thing, that he worships the God of his accusers' ancestors. He responds that he has been a respectful, calming presence in the temple. And then he zeroes in on the crux of the matter, that the Jews have a problem with his "resurrection of the dead" teaching.

Demonstrating that he was a wise mediator as well as smart about the rules of law and familiar with the Way's followers, Felix said he would defer a ruling until he heard from the Roman tribune Lysias, who was not present to testify, and adjourned. Showing benevolence to Paul, Felix kept him in custody but allowed him enough access to friends to be comfortable and was treated well. Such courtesy showed that Felix didn't think the charges against Paul were so egregious and rose to the level of sedition that he needed to be under tighter security.

In the immediate aftermath of Felix' decision, he began a social relationship with Paul, asking about the Way and the coming judgment, which frightened Felix but didn't prevent him from conversing with Paul. +

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 25, which describes the continuation of Paul's trial following an incredible two-year gap from the adjournment of the trial of Paul before Felix at Caesarea.

Celebrating this Month

MAY

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 Ryan Blanchard
- 4 Charlotte Erb
- 5 Mary Atkinson & Nancy Dolan
- 6 Carol Burns
- 9 Jim Leslie & Ursula Nauman
- 10 Donna Jackson & Lia Veteri
- 13 Nicole Ciccica
- 20 Diane Dietman & Josh Wilson
- 23 Dieter Leibold
- 24 Cliff Schrock
- 26 Kerry Geffert & Cheryl Mayeran
- 28 Buella John
- 29 Maura Senft
- 31 Blake Deloge

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Date Name

- 4 Timothy and Laura Benson, Jr.
- 4 Dave and Donna Bogen
- 5 Andrew and Lauren Sylling
- 8 Joe and Cindy Ciccica
- 18 Richard and Michele Van Wart
- 23 Robert and Barbara Schneider
- 25 Scott and Sarah Ely
- 27 John Anantharaj and Buella John
- 30 Christopher and Erica Carola

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

- Nicole Benson-Ayisi
- Sarah Bogen
- Erica Carola
- Karli Chirgwin
- Marion Dale
- Nancy Dolan
- Gavin Dowling
- Donald Erickson
- Olivia Fanning
- Sydney Fitzmorris
- Jon Halls
- Stephanie Helminger
- Caroline Hron Weigle
- Charles Hron Weigle
- Emily Hron Weigle
- Alyssa Jenkins
- Mia McDonald
- Ursula Naumann
- Sigourney Norman
- Jennifer Rentz
- Alexis Rodriguez
- Manfred Schlaich
- Richard Van Wart
- Ryan Van Wart

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!