

THE QUEST

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

*Transforming the world & ourselves,
together in community,
fellowship and faith.*



He is *Risen*
Hallelujah!

April 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Staff News	5
Council News	10
Christian Education	12
Outreach	13
Worship and Music	17
Stewardship	20
Synod and Church-Wide News	21

JUST A LITTLE *Reminder*

The deadline for inclusion in the May 2021 edition of the Holy Cross newsletter, *Quest*, is Monday, April 12.

Articles can be emailed to the Church Administrator at:
admin@holycrosslutheranchurch.net.

The **deadline** for inclusion in the **Weekly Update** is noon on Tuesday.

Thank you,
Teresa Easterly
Church Administrator

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Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Herndon VA

THE PASTOR'S MESSAGE

*And the one who was seated on the throne said,
'See, I am making all things new.'*

Revelation 21:5

It has been over a year since the last time we worshipped together, in person and without the restrictions we've come to know all too well during this pandemic. It was the last time things were "normal." Since then, we've learned a lot, we've come through a lot, we've lost a lot, and through it all, Jesus walked with us.

We have changed as people and a community. We have grown in our perception ourselves and what it means to be the church. With the building primarily closed off, we have been forced to reevaluate what church looks like at Holy Cross: what it means to us, and what it means to our wider community in which we live, serve, and worship. We are in the earliest stages of a reformation – a literal reforming of our identity and vision as God's holy people in this place. Whenever we are able to return to fully in-person worship, Sunday School, and meetings, what seems clear is that

what once was accepted as normal is passed and what is becoming is a new type of normality that is not fully defined, but into which Jesus calls to follow him. We cannot simply return to the way things used to be. We have changed. The world has changed. The church has changed.

In the season of Lent, the primary focus is Jesus' journey to the cross and his subsequent crucifixion. It is a story about death, but more than the story of one person's death. It also marks the end of what has come before and the beginning of God's new plan. We are touched by Lent, but we are primarily people of Easter – God's New Creation spring forth from the death of the past.

From the loss and grief of COVID, a new beginning will emerge. Resurrection. Rebirth. Renewal. Reformation. Worship will be a hybrid – in place combined with online. Other aspects of congregational life will no doubt evolve as well. The way in which we have regarded and enacted outreach, evangelism, fellowship, and even membership will need to be reexamined in light of the events of this past year. There is no clear path, but we will work on it together. As with all reformations, we will have ups and we will have downs as we move forward. We will try some things that will fail. Some things will work well, maybe in ways we didn't even see happening.

Change is never easy, as this past year has taught us. Prayer, patience (with ourselves, and one another), and claiming God's amazing grace will be the spiritual discipline that will get us through the months ahead. Openly honest and loving conversations, working together for the good of the community, and celebrating God's gifts among us are some of the essential practices that will help us weather the uncertain times ahead.

Thank you for your ongoing faithfulness with me in the way of Jesus. As we move forward into what is to come, I am grateful for

the unique ministry gifts each one of you bring to the table and for the pray and support you offer to me.

In Jesus,

Pastor Martin

P.S. Thank you for your well wishes for my recent “mini sabbatical”. While brief, it was a wonderful couple of days to get away, walk the oceanside, and read some things not about work!

The Strife is O'er, The Battle Done



One of my favorite hymns to sing on Easter Sunday is *The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done*. The text of this hymn is a translation by Francis Pott of the Latin original *Finita iam sunt praelia*.

Imagery of Christ taking human form and battling death permeates this hymn. Looking at Christ's saving work as doing battle with the devil, rather than paying ransom for the sins of men or showing never-ending love, was common in the early Middle Ages and somewhat revived again by Martin Luther. In present times, hymn texts are more likely to lean in the direction of Christ's love rather than Christ's battle over death. Phrases such as, "but the pains which he endured, our salvation have procured," or, "The risen Christ, who walks on wounded feet from his garden tomb." are more likely to be seen from hymn writers today. However, Pott uses language like, "The strife is o're, the battle done," or, "The pow'rs of death have done their worst; Jesus their legions has dispersed." Equally powerful, language about the love of Christ and the power of Christ both have their place in our hymnody.

After not singing the word "Alleluia" for 40 days Francis Pott adds three bold "Alleluias" to start and end this hymn. An "Alleluia" can also be found at the end of each stanza. In combination with a fanfare like hymn tune (composed by one of the greatest

medieval composers, Giovanni Palestrina) these “Alleluias” are a powerful addition to any Easter service.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

*The strife is o’er, the battle done;
now is the victor’s triumph won!
Now be the song of praise begun.
Alleluia!*

*The pow’rs of death have done their worst;
Jesus their legions has dispersed.
Let shouts of holy joy outburst.
Alleluia!*

*The three sad days have quickly sped,
Christ rises glorious from the dead.
All glory to our risen head!
Alleluia!*

*Christ closed the yawning gates of hell;
the bars from heav’ns high portals fell.
Let hymns of praise his triumph tell.
Alleluia!*

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Jeremy Shoop, Director of Music and Liturgy

COUNCIL

A Message from the **PRESIDENT**

Holy Cross Family –

Those of us who live in northern Virginia know that the days of lovely weather we often experience in mid-March are usually a cruel tease and that we should not put away our coats because more days of nasty weather remain before spring truly arrives. Still, spring does arrive and with it comes the Easter time of joy and renewal as we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In a somewhat similar manner, we are experiencing the “lovely weather” of more widespread vaccination availability and loosening restrictions, but our actions need to be tempered by the prospect of more “nasty weather” if we let our guard down too soon. While increasing numbers of us have been vaccinated, the majority of our congregation has not, so we need to all do our part and continue with recommended safe practices for a bit longer. Soon, we will be rewarded by being able to emerge from this dreadful pandemic!

As we contemplate our potential emergence, we should consider our accomplishments and the lessons we’ve learned. On the one hand, I think we all look forward to a sense of normalcy; on the other, it would be shame if we returned to old practices without incorporating the experiences and guidance of the Holy Spirit that got us through some difficult times.

Last year, normal activities at the church came to a screeching halt, and we had to adapt quickly to our new reality. Income from outside users of our facilities dried up and giving by our own members facing hardship from the effects of the pandemic declined. Fortunately, we received a PPP Loan (later forgiven) as part of the CARES Act which ensured our ability to maintain the employment of our staff members, and our Worship Team pivoted to virtual worship in a manner that we didn't miss a Sunday!

Our investment the previous year in upgrading our network capabilities allowed us to incorporate new technology that enhanced our online worship experience well beyond the early days of viewing services through an iPhone in portrait mode! However, we reached a low point around the time of our Annual Meeting in November when we had to confront the reality of the very significant reduction in current and anticipated income in the new year. We approved a budget with draconian cuts but left open the possibility to forestall the worst effects if conditions improved. After that low period, things began to brighten.

A local family experienced a flood and turned to us for help; the outpouring of food, clothing and funds was amazing! Following this, pledge participation and commitments were the best in recent years. Giving thus far has been stronger, and Council was able to maintain staff compensation as authorized by the Congregation at the Annual Meeting. Every month I marvel at how our congregation continues to contribute wherever and whenever there is a need; financial support continues, and food donations increased again! Just as with the pandemic, it's too early to declare victory, but we sure are starting to be able to contemplate it!

May the Holy Spirit continue to use us and guide us to become more like Jesus.

- Sam Carter

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

It seems as if the months are flying by so quickly. Lent and perhaps Easter will be past when you receive this newsletter. We hope that Kingdom Kids are enjoying their first newsletter, “Kingdom Kids News”.

It is so important for us to try and keep these precious young people engaged in church and with their



friends. Before long, Kingdom Kids, will soon have enough canned goods collected that Pastor will be able to hide behind the pyramid constructed by these multitudes of cans. Thank you for each of your efforts to help provide for this outreach activity.

We also hope everyone enjoyed the multigenerational activities on Palm Sunday. Thank you to everyone that helped to get this activity organized. It will be so great to get everyone back into worship again. It will be like a family reunion. It has been great to see some of us via Zoom and Facebook, but our connections are not the same.

Soon, very soon, we may all be back together.

Respectfully,

Betty Skelton
Christian Education Chairperson

OUTREACH



Once again, this year Holy Cross will recognize April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Our church is partnering with SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center, a safe, child-friendly location that provides direct services to child victims of sexual and physical abuse in Fairfax County. Throughout the month of April our "pinwheel garden" will serve as a whimsical symbol of the great childhood that each child deserves and as a means for raising awareness about the problem of child abuse in our community. The pinwheels were provided by SafeSpot, their website is www.safespotfairfax.org.



Covid permitting we will have a "Noisy Collection" sometime during the month or on Mother's Day, a contribution to SafeSpot.



SafeSpot Children's Advocacy Center is a safe, child-friendly center. At the center, professionals from Child Protective Services, law enforcement, medical and mental health work together as a team during the investigation, advocacy, and prosecution of each case. This team puts the **needs of the child first** and provides a coordinated system of effective response and intervention to children who have been victimized. The team seeks to protect and prevent any further re-victimization of these vulnerable children and ensure proper services and treatment are provided. Their goal is to minimize trauma, promote healing, ensure child safety, strengthen families and hold perpetrators accountable.

English Language Learners (ELL) Spring Semester Classes via Zoom



We continue to teach English to our immigrant students every Wednesday evening via Zoom. We started January 13th and will continue until May. Our students join us online and participate very well in our classes. Our intermediate class has a new student who is originally from Japan.

We had a computer glitch one evening halfway through class. A teacher lost the Zoom class connection on her computer. This glitch lasted 15-20 minutes and the teacher was sure her students would not wait such a long time to continue with class. To her astonishment, every student patiently waited for the teacher to return on Zoom. One student even called to help with her computer. Meanwhile Zoom continued to record the students.

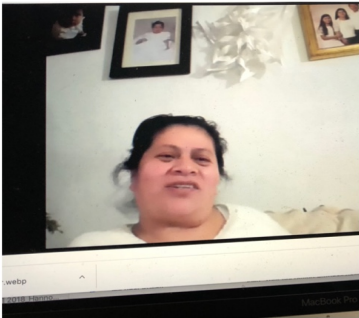
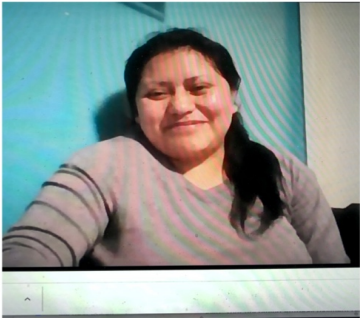
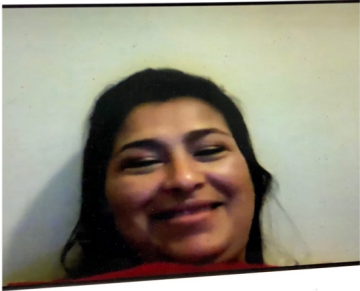
When the teacher's computer problems were resolved, she could only join the class as a participant, not as the host, since technically zooming continued without her. This meant that everyone could see each other and talk, but she had no way to continue their PowerPoint lesson. Conversation is always a learning process for our students and the class ended on a high note.

After class we happily watched the video of our students talking with each other while they patiently waited for the teacher's return. Students continued to discuss their lesson and talked about the word pneumonia, and how it affects the lungs. One student said that her mother had pneumonia while fighting COVID-19. Students also talked about what country they are from and what languages they could speak. They taught each other some Spanish words. They also questioned each other about where they live in the United States and what food they liked, telling one student that they would have enjoyed what she cooked for dinner that evening. Two students work for a furniture store and said they liked the work but need to learn more English to make more money. One student said: "Well, it's the American way, you work hard for little money."

We can hear and see improvements in our students' English, and their reading and writing skills. It is good to have students from different countries who speak different languages in our intermediate class because it forces them to speak English so everyone can understand each other.

Ellen Atwell and the ELL Team – Suzanne, Jeanne, Dayna and Chip.

Some of our students. . .



WORSHIP AND MUSIC

MAUNDY THURSDAY

APRIL 1 - 7:00 PM

FACEBOOK LIVE

This Thursday is called “Maundy,” which means “command,” from the verse in John’s gospel in which Jesus commands us to love another as he loved us. We hear about the Passover lamb, Jesus’ last meal with his disciples before his death, and Jesus washing his disciples’ feet. Finally we strip the chancel bare, to ready ourselves for Good Friday.



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GOOD FRIDAY

APRIL 2 - 7:00 PM

FACEBOOK LIVE

Why do we call this day Good? In John's telling of Jesus' passion, Jesus is "I am," the God who reigns from the cross, the king who discusses theology with Pilate. Listen for the differences between John's passion and Mark's passion that we heard on Sunday. At this service we pray for everyone we can think of, and we confess that it is our sin that crucified Christ.



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EASTER

APRIL 4 - 10:00 AM

FACEBOOK LIVE

What does it mean to be Christian? Christians are those who share their faith in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to transform themselves and the world. Each Sunday we gather to praise the resurrection, but Easter is our annual blow-out celebration. This year we hear the gospel from Mark, and we sing, and we sing, and we sing.



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EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE

Our Easter Worship service will be held outside in the church parking lot. Masks must be worn, and social distancing will be enforced. You can also worship online with us through Facebook, <http://fb.me/HCLCHerndon>.

STEWARDSHIP

WAYS TO GIVE

We must keep the Church alive. If we aspire to keep Holy Cross Lutheran Church a thriving, serving community of God's people, we will each need to make a determined effort to ensure that our offerings can sustain us through this time. Your generosity makes all things possible.



1. Drop a check in the mail or bring your offering with you to communion on the 1st and 3rd Sundays.
2. Go to our website, www.holycrosslutheranchurch.net, Click "Donate" and fill out the safe and secure donation form.
3. Download the **Give+** app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store, Search for Holy Cross Lutheran Church. (It will appear near the bottom of the list) and follow the prompts as desired.

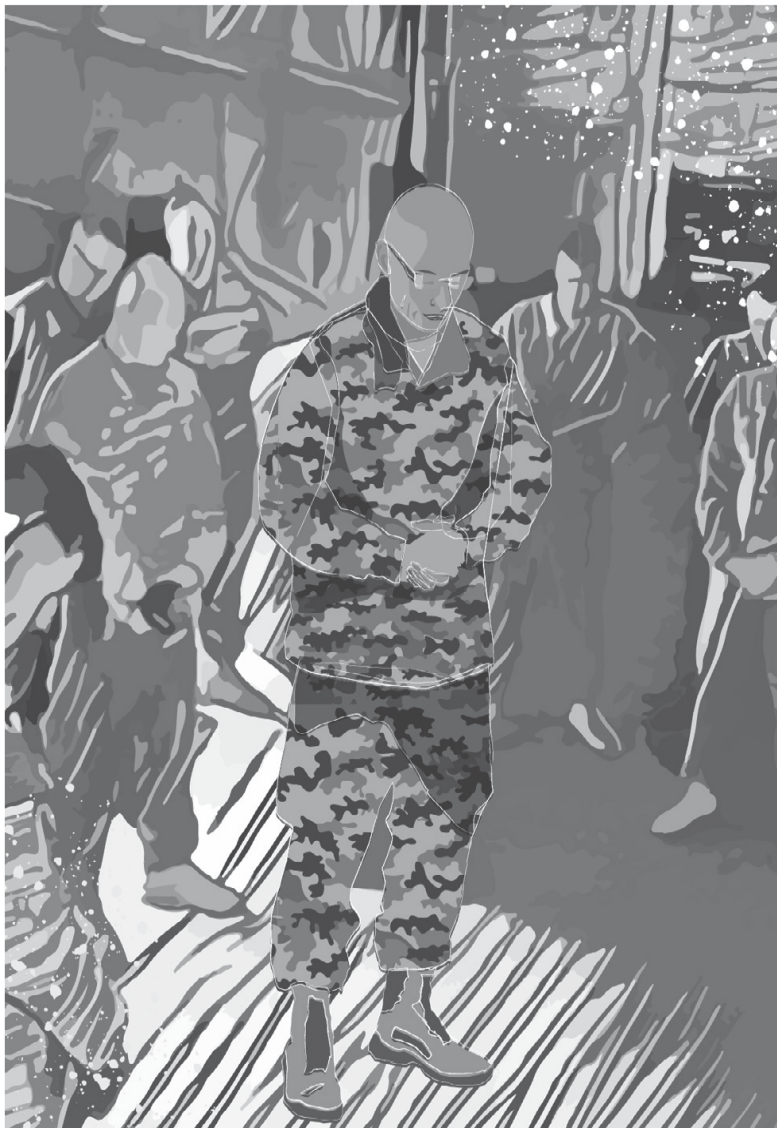
Together, we will ride out this storm. We are not afraid. We trust in God's grace and take peace and comfort in God's promise:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; who will never leave you or forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:6

SYNOD AND CHURCH-WIDE NEWS

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION 2020-21



Anthony Stephens, an ELCA pastor and Army chaplain, ministered to some 700 National Guard and Army troops during New York City's severe COVID-19 outbreak.



CHAPLAIN ON THE FRONT LINE

Ministering to some 700 National Guard and Army troops during New York City's severe COVID-19 outbreak might seem daunting. But not to Anthony Stephens, an ELCA pastor and an Army chaplain.

"IN MANY WAYS, THERE'S A FEELING OF DEFENSELESSNESS AGAINST THIS VIRUS," STEPHENS SAID. "WE WERE ALL EXPOSED BEFORE SOCIAL DISTANCING, AND WE CAN'T ESCAPE THAT."

Since 2016, Stephens has served as senior chaplain to Joint Task Force Empire Shield, part of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs. **The task force protects the city's bridges, airports, tunnels and train stations from security threats, and has also responded to the COVID-19 outbreak.**

Stephens helped troops deal with their anxiety over serving on the front lines and possibly contracting the virus. He also counseled those with family members or friends who were sick, jobless or challenged by other hardships.

"In many ways, there's a feeling of defenselessness against this virus," Stephens said. "We were all exposed before social distancing, and we can't escape that. There's a sense that you can wash your hands just so many times; that we're in God's hands now."

With a Master of Divinity from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Stephens maintains a private counseling practice and, as a pastor, chaplain and counselor, has ministered to people in parishes, prisons, hospitals, counseling centers and the military.

Of all his assignments, the closest to his heart is his current role as a New York Army National Guard chaplain, where he holds the rank of major. "Back in seminary, a Navy recruiter showed up and we talked and prayed," Stephens said. "I knew I'd be called someday to military chaplaincy." **Mission Support funds contribute to ELCA chaplain ministry.**

His diverse ministry experiences have equipped him to address the troops' spiritual needs. "Nothing that I've done in my life has been wasted. My experiences have been used in sermons, to be less judgmental and to give me perspective."

Thank you for your generous gifts of Mission Support, which made this story of faith in action possible. Mission Support is the portion of your offering your congregation shares with your synod, and your synod shares with the churchwide organization. To learn more, visit [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://elca.org/SOFIA).



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