



HOLY CROSS
LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Quest

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

January
2026

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Staff and Council are exempt from submitting the answers.

**“God has set my feet
on a Rock,
He has given me a firm
place to Stand.
He has given me
a Hymn of Praise.”
Psalm 40:1-3**

What's Happening at Holy Cross

New Features in January Quest

- Spotlight on Council Members
- Complete Crossword Puzzle –
- **First Submission** in -Wins a \$25 Panera Gift Card!

A Few Notes

- The deadline for inclusion in the February 2026 edition of the Holy Cross Newsletter, The Quest, is Monday, January 19, 2026.
- The deadline for inclusion in the Weekly Update is 4 pm on Tuesdays.

Find Us Online!

- www.HolyCrossHerndon.org
- facebook.com/HCLCHerndon
- Instagram.com/HolyCrossELCA

A Message from Director of Music and Liturgy, Jeremy Shoop

A New Season, A New Song

As We Turn the Calendar... to January, the church does something a little countercultural: instead of rushing ahead, we linger.

While the World Resets... with resolutions and fresh starts, the church continues to sing the Christmas story just a bit longer. We stay with the mystery of the Word made flesh, with angels and shepherds, with light shining in the darkness. Even as the decorations come down and daily routines resume, the message remains: God is still here, dwelling among us. On January 4th, we will observe Epiphany and continue lingering in the Christmas season with the magi's arrival.

January worship... carries us through the Sundays after Epiphany, a season of revelation. In word, song, and sacrament, we hear again and again how Christ is revealed not only to kings and crowds, but to ordinary people in ordinary places. The music of Epiphany often feels quieter and more searching than Christmas carols, inviting us to listen closely for God's presence in our own lives.

In the Weeks Ahead... you'll hear hymns that speak of light, calling, and journey, hymn texts that reminds us our faith is not static, but something we live and grow into. Whether sung boldly or prayerfully, these songs help shape us as people who follow Christ beyond the manger and into the world God so loves.

It is a Joy...to be part of this singing, praying, and worshipping community. Thank you for the ways you bring your voices and hearts into worship each week. In this season of Epiphany, may the music we share help us notice God's light in unexpected places and recognize Christ at work in our daily lives. As we move into a new year, may our worship guide us, sustain us, and send us out in hope.

All Shall be Amen and Alleluia!

Jeremy Shoop,
Director of Music and Liturgy

***Thank you to everyone who supported
our ninth annual Beer and Carols at
Jimmy's Old Town Tavern!***

We are grateful to those who donated raffle prizes, all who helped set up and staff the event, and the wonderful team at Jimmy's Old Town Tavern for welcoming us as we filled their space with food, drink, and carols. Most of all, thank you to everyone who bought raffle tickets and sang their hearts out!

This joyful community gathering is a wonderful way to share just how much fun we have at Holy Cross.

Thanks to everyone's generosity, we raised **over \$2,500** for She Believes in Me, a local charity supporting disadvantaged youth in our community.

***Don't miss our
10th annual
Beer and Carols
next year!***



A Message from Council President, Cara Papenheim

Has All that Holiday Hosting Left You Completely Exhausted as We Head into the New Year?

- Did you carefully curate each menu according to your guests' dietary preferences—complete with custom labels for every buffet item?
- Did you set an exquisite holiday table with the good dishes, vintage silverware, and special Christmas napkins?
- Or were you the perfect party guest—making sure you didn't over- or under-dress, sourcing the perfect bottle of wine or fancy holiday dish towel as a hostess gift, and offering to do the dishes and help clean up after each lovely event?



**For many of us, the role
of host or guest is
chosen for us:**

**“Mom always hosts
Thanksgiving,” or “your
house is bigger.”**

Hosting is a special burden—one that must be taken on with care, humility, and love. Guesting, while it may look easy from the outside, carries its own challenges. Nobody wants an Aunt Patti, the guest who simply cannot be pleased, or that friend Rachel—overly opinionated and determined to derail every conversation until her views are accepted as the only option.

In almost every social gathering, the only thing people at the table have in common is the host. Finding a uniting topic of conversation—or creating the right meal—can be a challenge for both host and guest alike.



Admittedly... I didn't attend many Advent services this year. But when it came time for communion on the Third Sunday of Advent—the Sunday of Joy—and the Eucharistic Prayer began, I was shaken... and I was joyful.

I've had the ***Eucharistic Prayer*** memorized since I was seven, but this Advent season delivered the message in a modern and powerful way:

**Jesus was always
the guest—yet
here, at this table,
He is the host.**

Our modern Eucharistic Prayer... names Jesus as both guest and host, uniting the congregation in a single mission:

“Do this to remember me.”

As the season of Epiphany begins and a brand-new year of hosting and guesting lies ahead, consider the impact we can make on Jesus’ behalf:

- Almost half of our Council is new to their roles, and our goal as church leadership is to help them feel welcome and included right away.
- Lunch for the Soul remains a pillar of community, hosting churches and neighbors who look forward to a warm meal and weekly fellowship.
- We continue seeking opportunities to host religious and community-focused groups in our building, offering affordable rental options and a safe place to gather.
- We prepare our home for a new Pastor by supporting the physical space of the church through property work days and faithful financial contributions.

As individuals, we can also extend the invitation—bringing friends and neighbors to Outreach and Evangelism events such as:

- **Shrove Dinner**
- **Pride and Homecoming Parades**
- **July 4th Fireworks**
- **Trunk or Treat**
- **Beer & Carols, among others.**

During the week...Jesus may be just another guest in our lives. But on Sunday mornings, we all attend the same party—with one thing in common: the Host, the Redeemer of Life.



**And we bring the greatest
hostess gift of all—our faith.**

**I'm looking forward to attending
2026
with all of you.**

**Faithfully,
Cara Papenheim**

A Message from Fellowship: Generosity and Joy

Since this article is being written in December, I want to say what a real pleasure it has been to serve as your Fellowship Chair. Whenever help is needed, you always show up—and it is greatly appreciated.

And now...

Welcome to Beverly Siecker, your new Fellowship Chair!

You can reach her at:

Fellowshipchair@holycrossherndon.org

***Several months are open for hosting a
Fellowship event!***

Will YOU sign up to lead one?

Here are some ideas for the year to get you thinking — and Beverly would love to hear your ideas as well:

- Board Game Night
- Hike & Visit a Brewery/Vineyard with Live Music
- Movie Night
- Bonfire & S'mores with Hot Chocolate
- Nature Walk
- Attend a Soccer, Baseball (Go Nats!), Rugby, or Cricket Game
- Progressive Garden or Dinner Party
- Chili Cook-Off

Calendar Dates for 2026



Tuesday, February 17, 2025
Shrove Tuesday / Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) Pancake Supper

Mardi Gras is very early this year!! Your help is needed to plan and run the Pancake Supper and Mardi Gras celebration again. Our Boy Scout Troop 12 really looks forward to this evening, and we want to ensure it continues.

If there is a Pancake Supper in 2026 (did we mention we need help?), The Royal Flush has again agreed to appear!

 ***Contact Anne Geiger at gei2@verizon.net if you can help with this fun evening.***

We will again be having soup and sandwich dinners (but no dessert) with worship during Lent.




Wednesdays, Feb. 25, and March 4, 11, 18, & 25 Lenten Dinners:




Sunday, April 5, 2026, Easter Brunch Potluck after service

 **Saturday, May 2, 2026- Holy Cross Night
at Cinderella, Herndon High School**

 **Sunday, June 14, 2026,
Music Sunday Potluck**

 **Friday, July 4, 2025 – July 4th
Patriotic Music and Fireworks -
outdoors:**

***This event has grown bigger every year and more help
is needed to plan it for 2025.***

 Contact Jeremy Shoop, Tammy Breene, or Beverly Siecker if you are able to help with this wonderful neighborhood outreach.

Joke of the Month

**What is the best breakfast cereal to eat in January?
Frosted flakes...Happy New Year!**

On that note...as always on Sunday, you are invited and encouraged to stop by the Fellowship Hall for some coffee, tea, juice, or water, and good food (there is always fruit and a LWR quilt to tie!). It's a terrific way to meet up with Holy Cross members and visitors.

Anne Geiger

Retired (as of mid-January) Fellowship Chair

A Message from Outreach

Oh, What Fun!

Holy Cross Family--



It's been an exciting year filled with many events, but most meaningful of all has been witnessing the generosity and dedication of the people of Holy Cross in making them possible.

November LINK Toy Drive

Thanks to the generosity of our congregation, 140 toys, books, and games, along with \$210 in gift cards, were delivered to the LINK Holiday Program toy distribution site at Community Lutheran Church.

The program coordinator expressed sincere appreciation for the delivery, sharing that the Holy Cross Lutheran Church donation arrived at just the right time and helped ensure that the needs of all registered families could be met. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this meaningful effort!

December Advent Appeal

During December, Ceclia Howard and Kristi Padley shared the inspiring work of Prison Fellowship International, which serves individuals who are incarcerated as well as their families. It was moving to learn about the many ways this organization supports healing, restoration, and new beginnings.

Thank you to all who donated to this important and worthy cause.

English Language Learners

The new ELL semester starts Jan 14 through May 13, 2026. This is an important ministry for our community; assisting people to acquire language skills that prepare them to thrive.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Day of Service - January 19, 2026

Inova Blood Drive

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

An electronic sign-up link will be provided by Inova and posted in January.

**Crafts and Kits Assembled for
Worthy organizations**

10 am to noon

Partnership

Holy Cross Lutheran Church is once again pleased to partner with the ***Herndon Woman's Club (HWC)*** to create projects that will be donated to organizations supporting vital community missions.



Donations Needed (In Advance)

- Clean, gently used socks (no holes)
 - Please consider donating socks whose partner has been lost.
 - These will be used to make heating pads for injured animals and donated to AERO (Animal Education and Rescue Organization).
- Used crayons
 - Donated to The Crayon Initiative, which remanufactures crayons into triangular shapes for hospitals, where they are less likely to roll off trays.

If you are able to donate socks and/or crayons, please bring them to church or contact:

- Helen Wolfe @hkswolfe@gmail.com
- Cheryl Smith – cismith1@verizon.net

HCLC Project: LWR Personal Care Kits

Last year, we collected most of the components needed for the kits. ***This year, we only need towels*** to complete them. Lutheran World Relief requests smaller, thinner, gray towels, as they are best suited for areas without access to washers and dryers. A link to the recommended towels will be shared to make purchasing easy.

Please plan to join us on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day for meaningful service opportunities for all ages.

Respectfully,

Tonya Elliott
Outreach Council Chair

A Message from ELL (English Language Learners)

Our 2025 fall semester started September 17th and continued through December 10th. We taught three classes at Holy Cross: Beginners, Basic, and Intermediate English. We taught 18 students from 7 countries:

- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Sudan
- Togo.



Our ELL students shared their Christmas party with our congregation, who were celebrating advent on December 10th. It was wonderful for our students to meet and enjoy food together with church members.



Students and their families also enjoyed a sing-a-long of Christmas carols, led by Suzanne Baggett, who did a wonderful job displaying the carols and lyrics on our big TV screen. We played the Right/Left Game, led by Kristin. That's always a big hit and causes lots of laughter. The game always ends with a gift for each student.

A big Thank YOU! to each teacher, Anne Geiger and Beverly Siecker. We also thank each member who prepared the delicious soups and wonderful food.



**Thank you for your
continued support
of our ELL
program and our
immigrant
community.**



We appreciate Pastor Luis very much, and want to thank him for always supporting our students and visiting with them after class, which always includes coffee and a snack. We also appreciate Sarah Schultmeier and Marie Nelson, who always help with any ELL request. Thank you, Ladies!



Delighted to Serve,
Ellen Atwell
Suzanne Baggett
Dyna Sword
Lauren Weatherhead
Kristin Anderson
Chip Edwards.

Spotlight on Council

Cara Papenheim, Council President



(Cara's Dad, Craig, & Cara)

I jokingly—and lovingly—say I was “voluntold” to be Vice President in 2024, not realizing at the time that the succession plan for President was already in place!

Childhood...having grown up watching my parents serve on Church Council, I now better understand the dedication it takes. I've always enjoyed being involved in the church and leading others, and this feels like the right time for me to serve. While I once considered seminary, this role offers a lighter commitment while still deeply nourishing my soul. As a kid, I loved putting on plays during family get togethers. It will come as no surprise that I was always the star & the director!

Currently...I'm married to an amazing husband I met during COVID and married at Holy Cross in 2023. He works for the government, and together we share our home with two retired bomb dogs (sweet German Shepherds) and two snuggly cats—whose antics I've written about in the Quest. Our house is always lively, especially at feeding time. As most know, I am a “Swiftie”, so when I think of writing my biography, it would be titled, “”Fake It till you Make It”(These are Taylor Swift Lyrics.)

Hobbies...wrapping presents. I love spending a day wrapping gifts with handmade bows, choosing a new theme each year as a creative break from holiday chaos (this year: Nutcrackers).

Favorites...at Holy Cross...The Music, obviously! 😊

Get Connected

“God has given each of us special spiritual gifts to use and serve one another. Do this with all the strength and energy God supplies. Then everything we do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 4:10-11

January Features

Connect with ***Outreach*** to help with ***MLK*** events on January 19, 2026 OR

LINK food distribution:

Outreach@HolycrossHerndon.org

Spring/Summer

Connect with ***Fellowship*** to help with:

- Shrove Tuesday
- Lenten Dinners
- Easter Sunday Potluck
- Music Sunday Potluck
- 4th of July Fireworks

Fellowshipchair@HolyCrossHerndon.org

Contact Jeremy Shoop to connect with Music and Liturgy: **Musicdir@HolyCrossHerndon.org**

Contact Cara Papenheim to connect with Council opportunities: **President@HolyCrossHerndon.org**

Contributions & Offerings

We aspire to keep Holy Cross Lutheran Church a thriving, serving community of God's people. We each need to make a determined effort to ensure that our offerings sustain us. Your generosity makes all things possible. You can bring your offering with you to worship service at 10 am, or use one of our many alternative giving options:



- Online/Mobile Set up a one-time or recurring donation through Vanco, our secure giving platform. Scan code to access.



- Send a donation directly to our PayPal account. Scan code to access.



- Through your bank:
Use BillPay with your bank or credit union to set up a single or recurring donations.
- By Mail
Mail a check to the church at:
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
1090 Sterling Rd.
Herndon, VA 20170

Crossword Puzzle

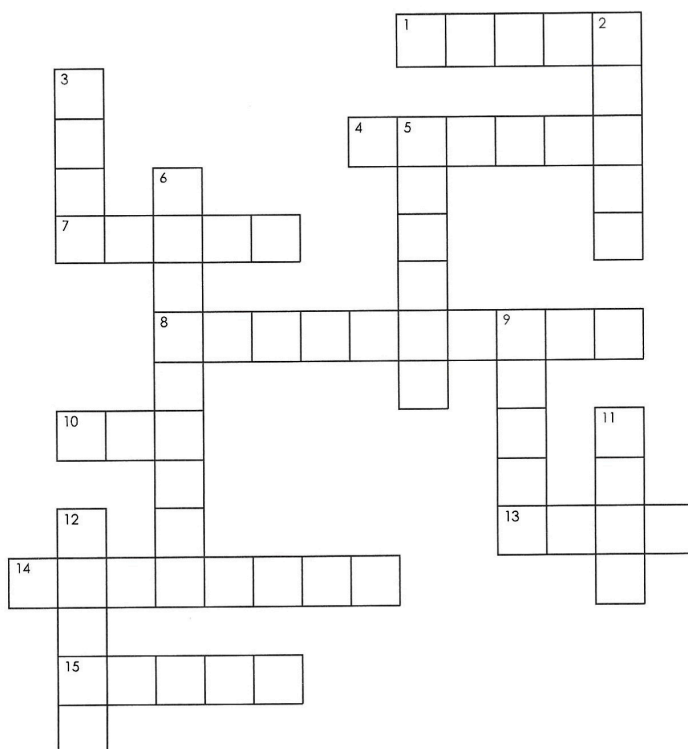
Win \$25 Panera Gift Card

***Staff & Council are exempt from answering January puzzle

Be the 1st to turn in a correct puzzle to
admin@holycrossherndon.org to win a \$25 Panera giftcard!

Name: _____

Quest 2026



Across

1. Month is Easter in 2026
4. Online company to purchase MLK item.
7. Best hostess gift we can bring Jesus.
8. Donation sought on MLK Day of Service to be refurbished.
10. Number of dogs Cara Papenheim owns.
13. Number of years Beer & Carols has met.
14. Deadline to add an article to the Weekly Update.
15. Organization taking blood on MLK Day.

Down

2. Lunch for the Soul does this on Wednesdays.
3. Number of new council this year.
5. Day MLK Day of Service is on.
Appreciated on July 4 at Holy Cross.
9. Number of countries represented at ELL's Christmas party.
11. Month Music Sunday is in.
12. We notice God's light through this.