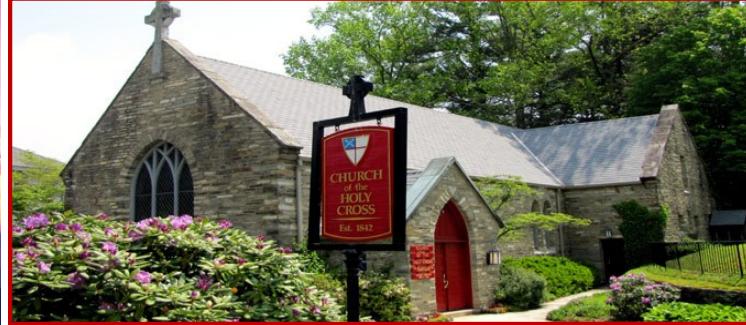




EarthSight



January & February 2026

It is a joy to return to the Valley of the Cross amidst the community I have loved since a youth, and once had the pleasure to serve as pastor, priest and friend. This time around, I will be navigating you along the pathways of transition as we prepare to welcome your priest and Rector.

To that end, your Vestry and I will organize, educate and recruit members of the parish to consider the many ministry opportunities at Holy Cross. We will be publicizing these ministries in the coming months.

In addition to these administrative duties, I will also be making pastoral visits to our homebound and hospitalized members, as well as newcomers. These folks will be passed along to the new priest. If you know of anyone you think needs a visit, or if you would wish one, please let me know.

I remain thankful for this opportunity to serve you.

Assuring you of my continued prayers, I remain, as ever,

Your fellow servant for Jesus' sake,

Faithfully Yours,

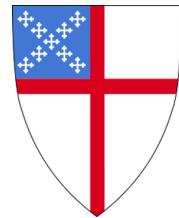
Father Scott +

Holy Cross Family and Friends,

Help us to welcome Father Scott Oxford home to Holy Cross! He will begin his duties as the new Interim Priest beginning Tuesday, January 6. His tentative office hours will be Tuesday and Thursday mornings, Wednesday afternoons, and other times by appointment.

The Rev. Dr. Scott A. Oxford is an eighth generation Appalachian, a lifelong Episcopalian, and a Camp Henry Alum. He is a one-time Rector of Holy Cross, Valle Crucis (1993-2000). A graduate of Appalachian State, Father Scott earned his Masters of Divinity at Sewanee in 1987, and his Doctor of Ministry from Drew University. He retired from active ministry after 30 years of service, which also included: Ascension, Hickory, St. Mary's and St. Paul's Missions in his native Burke County, and St. James, Black Mountain. He served as Canon to the Ordinary to Bishop Robert Johnson (2000-2003) where he oversaw numerous parish transitions. Following his retirement in 2017, Bishop McLoughlin assigned Father Scott to assist three parishes in the transition process. During COVID, Oxford served part-time at Trinity Parish, Asheville.

Father Scott is currently Scholar in Residence, Appalachian Collection at ASU where he is researching and writing about the early years of the Valle Crucis Mission, and reminiscences of ministry amongst the mountain folk of this region. He is father of Caroline and Will, and 'PopPop' to Will and wife Heidi's daughters, Selma and Naomi. Scott and Julia moved from Black Mountain to Boone in 2022.



The Interim's Notebook

- "The Things That Will Destroy Us: wealth without work; pleasure without conscience; knowledge without character; religion without sacrifice; politics without principle; science without humanity; business without ethics." Mahatma Gandhi

- "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

- "The Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction." - Charles Spurgeon



Dear Holy Cross,

As Casey, Simon, Faye, and I bask in the wonderful sendoff from Holy Cross we are reminded that these types of transition are like Maundy Thursday into Eastertide. We move through the 'inbetween' times of our lives knowing that God's providence sent us here, holds us through, and waits for us on the other side. But to experience it again is always hard, and sad, and anxious. The reason we focus on the dire moments in the life of our Lord: the passion, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension is to be reminded that not only are our experiences of change and loss not forgotten by God, but they are a part of God's salvation work in our lives. Paul in Romans Chapter 12 writes, '...do not be conformed to this age but be transformed.. so to perceive what God is doing.' Paul understood our desire to keep things static, safe, and unchanging, but had himself converted to know a God who is on the move. The world we inhabit was forever changed by Helene, by COVID, and a million other crises before. Holy Cross in the face of those crises has not conformed but with renewed minds brought the healing power of the Holy Spirit into each new challenge. Casey and I found a ready community among you because it is hard baked into your identity to love in the midst of challenge. The only advice I leave is to not lose sight of this gift. This gift has brought priests like Scott and his wife Julia to be a part of your community, it has kept the Country Fair going strong all these years, it has maintained the connection with the Mission School and your community neighbors, and it will bring to you a priest that God has called to serve with you. All of these changes and challenges have been difficult, tearing at the fabric of comfort and our sense of security; this change will be the same. Lean in, trusting that God has and will continue to do wonderful things through the work, ministry, and life of Holy Cross.

Rev Robert



Episcopal Church Women News

ECW is taking a break in January and will meet on **February 8th** in Skiles Hall after the 11:00 service

Please join us as we begin a new year of service and ministry!

Announcing a Valentine's Day Tea

You've heard of Men's Night Out but have you ever wanted a Women's Day Out? We will hold a pure social event for all the women of Holy Cross and our Methodist friends. You can also bring a friend noty associated with these two groups.

When? Where? What time? **Saturday, February 14th** at 10am Skiles Hall.

We will have tea, make Valentine's Day cards, and figure if this is something we would want to have on an ongoing basis.

NO COOKING REQUIRED unless you want to provide some goodies for the tea. Please RSVP to Andrea McDonough at amacd1962@gmail.com if interested.



January

Birthdays

Anniversaries

2 Sharlie Siegmund	18 Keith Martin	January 2
3 Julia Morton	22 Terry Jordan	Casey and Cathy Tester
4 Gerry Persad	25 John Persad	January 6
6 Patti Cribbins	28 Jeff Williams	Maria Lichtmann and Joe Harmon
8 Zeke Jordan	30 Susan Owens	January 18
9 Steve Loflin	31 Catherine Morton	Eileen and Bill Gaddy
10 Joe Dyer	31 Jaidyn Toomey	January 25
11 Paul Bernhardy	31 Chris Gray	Bev and Gene Sulzberger
12 Stella Barbato	31 Cornelia Smithwick	January 29
13 Rick LeVarge		Jennifer and Robert Henigin
17 Ernie Armstrong		January 31
		Barbara and Walter Pitts



Prayer List

Please keep the following in your prayers this week:

For Healing: Our injured and disabled military personnel, our veterans, all civilians harmed in conflict, and for Dayton C., Wendell S., Noyes L., Marilyn W., Gerry P., Rebecca M., Sam, Bill B., Julia M., Randy M., Shane B., Claire M., Sara P., Tav G., Andrea M., Charles III, Kate M., Floyd T., Ray L., Leslie S., Suzie L., Pam C., Ann G., Rosalie G., Stuart T., Michael H., Laura B., Mike L., Ann I., Mike M., Susan M., Jacquie M., Arthur L., Joel W., Coleman B., James C., Dylan C., David, Michael T., Nicole B.

For those in Harm's Way: All who serve with the armed forces at home & abroad, all who serve in the Peace Corps, and all health & relief workers throughout the world

February

Birthdays

1	Fred Martin	9	Betty Jo Coleman
1	Brady Myers	15	Clint Iles
2	Kip Kingree	15	Carol Jennings
4	Jan Capps	16	Pat Parks
5	Paula Gray	21	Madeline McGuire
8	Shella Barnhill	22	Eleonore McGuire
8	Mary Moran	23	Nichole McGuire
8	Robert Brigham	25	Kim Gauss
9	Walter Browning	28	Pam Conover

Anniversaries

February 5	Rebecca and Mike Alford
February 20	Sarah Hatch and Gary Swartz
February 20	Mary Jane Major and Fred Klingeman
February 26	Suzie and Noyes Long



January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1		
					2 Sharlie Siegmund's birthday	3 Julia Morton's birthday
4 8am & 11:00am  Holy Eucharist Rite II	5  8:00pm "Online Compline <i>Gerri Persad's birthday</i>	6  Patti Cribbin's birthday <i>Maria Lichtmann & Joe Harmon's anniversary</i>	7	8  8:00pm "Online Compline <i>Zeke Jordan's birthday</i>	9	10 Steve Loflin's birthday
11 8am & 11:00am  Holy Eucharist Rite II	12  8:00pm "Online Compline <i>Stella Barbatos' birthday</i>	13  Rick LeVarge's birthday	14	15  8:00pm "Online Compline	16	17 Ernie Armstrong's birthday
18 8am & 11:00am  Holy Eucharist Rite II	19  8:00pm "Online Compline	20	21	22  8:00pm "Online Compline <i>Terry Jordan's birthday</i>	23	24
25 8am & 11:00am  Holy Eucharist Rite II	26  8:00pm "Online Compline	27	28 Jeff William's birthday	29  8:00pm "Online Compline <i>Jennifer and Robert Henigin's anniversary</i>	30 Susan Owens' birthday	31 Catherine Morton, Jaidyn Toomey, Chris Gray and Cornelia Smithwick's birthday Barbara & Walter Pitts' anniversary

Februry 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II ECW after 11am service Sheila Barnhill and Mary Moran's birthday	2 8:00pm "Online" Compline Kip Kingree's birthday	3	4 Jan Capps' birthday	5 8:00pm "Online" Compline Paula Gray's birthday Rebecca & Mike Alford's anniversary	6	7
8 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II ECW after 11am service Sheila Barnhill and Mary Moran's birthday	9 8:00pm "Online" Compline Walter Browning and Betty Jo Coleman's birthday	10	11	12 8:00pm "Online" Compline	13	14
15 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II Carol Jennings' and Clint Iles birthday	16 8:00pm "Online" Compline Pat Park's birthday	17	18  ASH WEDNESDAY 12 & 7pm Services	19 8:00pm "Online" Compline	20 Sally Hatch & Gary Swartz's anniversary and Mary Jane Major & Fred Klingeman's anniversary	21 Madeline McGuire's birthday
22 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II Eleonore McGuire's birthday	23 8:00pm "Online" Compline Nichole McGuire's birthday	24	25 Kim Gauss' birthday	26 8:00pm "Online" Compline Noyes & Suzie Long's anniversary	27	28 Pam Conover's birthday

All Holy Cross Parishioners interested in serving as a Eucharistic Visitor or a Prayer Minister are invited to contact Father Scott or Kim Gauss. Once the weather breaks we will be establishing a schedule to meet for inquiry and study!



MEN'S NIGHT OUT

As is our custom, MNO is taking a two-month hiatus over the winter season, resuming for our tenth year of brethren fellowship on St. Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17. If you are interested in hosting one of our monthly gatherings in 2026, please send an email to KeithTMartin@gmail.com

Outreach

Welcome to a brand new year! Your Outreach is back at work answering calls from Watauga, Avery and Ashe county residents thanks to your support and proceeds from the Valle Country Fair. Here is a summary of Outreach actions during 2025:

Rent/Housing: \$13,102

Utilities: \$21,712

Auto/transportation: \$7,773

Medical: \$6,272

International Outreach: \$1,000

Emergency Grants: \$16,545

Other: \$1,228

Total: \$67,961

Carrying over into 2026: \$34,558

There were donations which were added to our leftover revenue from 2024 which accounts for the amount that started 2025. These came in response to Hurricane Helene and from Other churches in Florida and Wilson, NC. Outreach is very grateful to those who donated which allows us to continue our work since Fair revenue is not available until after all Fair bills are paid. This revenue is usually received by MOC in February. We did not award Community Grants in 2025 due to instituting Emergency Grants after the hurricane. As it stands, we will be able to award Community Grants in 2026 as well as our usual assistance to our three counties.

As Tiny Tim says, "God bless us, every one". Sincere thanks to our donors and parish members for your interest and support of this ministry.

Your Outreach team—Judy, Sis, Niki, Vickie, Kip, Marty, Mary, Roberta, Radie

Our own Randy McDonough was just voted into the North Carolina Cross Country/Track and Field Hall of Fame! Please click the link below for the full article from the Watauga Democrat.

https://www.wataugademocrat.com/sports/watauga-s-mcdonough-to-be-inducted-into-state-hall-of-fame/article_b7cf2941-6647-41c7-ba22-



Randy McDonough is being inducted into the North Carolina High School Track & Field and Cross Country Hall of Fame, recognizing a career filled with accomplishments and leadership in high school athletics. While honored to be among the inductees, McDonough admits that the honor is more about the program than himself. He emphasized that the honor reflects the collective success of his athletes and assistant coaches, attributing his recognition to their dedication and teamwork.

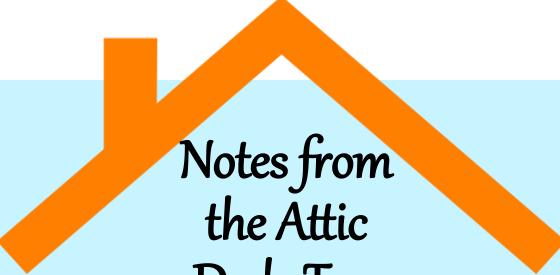
He has served as Watauga's head cross country coach since 1993 and has led both cross country and track and field programs for 34 years. His teams have won 101 conference championships, 28 regional titles, 8 state championships, and 8 state runner-up finishes. The Lady Pioneers recently won the inaugural 6A state championship in girls' cross country.

McDonough has coached 4 Foot Locker Cross Country National Finalists and 28 state champions, and has received numerous Coach of the Year awards, including Southeastern Regional honors.

He has held leadership roles in the North Carolina Track and Cross Country Coaches Association and served as meet director for various major events.

As a certified USATF/TAC official, McDonough has officiated at NCAA, NAIA, and USATF championships, and has worked at numerous state and conference meets.

The Hall of Fame, established to honor those who have significantly impacted high school track and field and cross country in North Carolina, selected McDonough and other distinguished coaches and athletes for its seventh class.



Notes from the Attic – Dedy Traver

As we said our goodbyes to Father Robert and Casey, Rev. Dr. Scott Oxford will be filling the “Interim-Interim” position as the search process for a new rector continues. Holy Cross Church has been through many changes over the years and ALWAYS comes through with flying colors! Some of us at Holy Cross have been through this process several times; others have never experienced the transition process. I thought it might be helpful to everyone to read about some of the transitions from “earlier days”. This month’s “Notes” are from a document that was written by Ms. Sarah Marsh Wagoner (Marilyn Welch’s step-grandmother) who came to Valle Crucis in 1909 as a teacher and stayed in Valle Crucis until the early 1960’s. She saw many many changes during her 50 plus years in Valle Crucis. Her notes are dated July 1, 1959.

“In May 1934 Holy Cross Church (present building) was consecrated by Bishop Gribbin and the following December the Rev. E. Dargan Butt came as priest-in-charge. He introduced the Lord’s Acre plan in Holy Cross mission (church gardens). His ministry extended to include the prison camp near Boone where he held regular services and one convict desiring to be baptized by immersion was brought over to Valle Crucis and baptized by Mr. Butt at the Dutch Creek Falls. Mr. Butt invited the Diocesan Convention for 1940 to meet at Valle Crucis. Mr. Butt left us at the end of 1940 and again Holy Cross carried on with lay reader services, summer supply and occasional visiting priests. The Mission Committee functioned with a sense of responsibility. Bishop Gribbin came to be with us on Roll Call Sunday. We had a full Sunday morning service, Holy Communion and sermon, congregational dinner and business meeting. At the close of the meeting some of us went back to the School building with the Bishop. A teacher called us all to come and listen to her radio – news from Pearl Harbor. It was December 7, 1941.

In February 1942 the Rev. Wilbur C. Leach came. In July 1942 it was decided to close the Valle Crucis School until further developments, owing to the effects of the national emergency on the school situation. The closing of the School made a great difference to Holy Cross congregation which for many years had had the advantage of an increased membership, larger attendance at services, leadership in church music and Sunday school teaching, and other resources of a larger group (The Mission School). This had now come to an end, but **when the situation was grasped the ranks closed-up and Church life went on.** There was now a need for something in the way of a parish house, and so, the Quonset Hut, was erected by our own members, grown men and boys. June 1946 saw the opening session of what was then called the Southern Rural Church Leadership School, with the Rev. Rufus Morgan as Director. (It later became the Southern Town & Country Church Institute). At the end of January 1950 Father Leach left us to go to St. Luke’s Chapel, New York City. **He had been here longer than any other priest-in-charge and two months more would have rounded out a full eight years. The laity of Holy Cross mission again rallied to carry on the Church’s life and work as they had done for longer and shorter intervals many times before.** This time we were fortunate that the Bishop appointed as lay reader-in-charge, one of our own Valle Crucis young men, **Welch Tester (Casey Tester’s father!)** who served here until he entered seminary. It was a proud and happy day for Holy Cross congregation when he was ordained deacon in this church.

Captain Thomas Wheat of the Church Army was in charge for three years and was most active in the mission of St. John’s as well as at Valle Crucis. During this and other periods of being without a resident priest we have been most grateful to those who have come shorter and longer distances to give us the Holy

Continued..

Notes from the Attic continued...

Communion. I remember one spring the Mission Committee was trying to arrange for a series of weekly Lenten services Friday nights and celebrations Saturday mornings. We asked the Rev. Frank Saylor if he could manage to come some way, Sunday school classes taking the place of sermon following the reading of Morning Prayer in the school building if we had not even a licensed lay reader. Mr. Winters has been with us now four years (1959) and we hope we may see him stay on and break Father Leach's record. Many things have changed through this half century, but one remains the same. If you go out and stand on the hillside as the "shades of night" are rising from the valley, creeping up the slopes to the mountain tops, those mountains pointing upward to the sky are still, as fifty years ago, giving their voiceless call, their perpetual *Sursum Corda, Lift up your hearts!*"

Thank you, Father Robert, for your wonderful ministry here at Holy Cross Church, your enthusiasm, wisdom, and your creative spirit – and some wonderful "new" word pronunciations!! Your love of God and your missionary spirit have brought people into the presence of God in this truly sacred valley. We will miss you, Casey, Simon, and Faye very much. Know that God will richly bless you in your continued ministries.





Holy Cross Episcopal Church
PO Box 645
Valle Crucis, NC 28691

www.holycrossvallecrucis.net
email: holy_cross@skybest.com

Diocese of Western North Carolina
The Rt. Rev. José McLoughlin, Bishop

Clergy & Staff

The Rev. Dr. Scott A. Oxford, Interim Priest-in-Charge
Shane Watson, Director of Music
Ahren Koenig, Parish Administrator

Vestry

Nina-Jo Moore (2028), Senior Warden
Randy McDonough (2028), Junior Warden

Doris Boulton (2026), Catherine Morton (2026 – completing term), Angela Williams (2026), Radie Armstrong (2027), Derek Eggers (2027), Sis Kinney (2027), John Goodrich (2028)

Officers

Church of the Holy Cross
PO Box 645
Valle Crucis, NC 28691