



December 2025



The Valle Country Fair

Before I moved to Valle Crucis I visited friends in Banner Elk. Hanging on their wall was a woodcut print by Tracey Council, depicted there were people in a festival setting in front of what I would come to know as the Apple Barn. I asked my friends about the setting, they told me about the Country Fair. How this annual autumn event galvanizes the Valle community and marches the best of simple rustic life tradition forward. Having now experienced it myself, I feel what my friends were trying to articulate. The Fair is closely tied to the missional heart of Holy Cross. The church community seeks to help and know people, the fair is a vehicle that provides opportunity for generosity and hospitality.



We are approaching fifty years of the Valle Country Fair. This year was the forty-seventh fair. In recent years, the Valle Fair has faced significant challenges in the COVID pandemic and hurricane Helene. It is also true that the volume of work in administration and execution presents problems, some key leaders have been engaged for over thirty years. Due to leaders and volunteers all of these challenges have been met. In the face of COVID the Gates led a successful online fair, after hurricane Helene Tav Gauss successfully garnered the financial support necessary to continue outreach efforts, and in this reboot year the Johnstons pulled together a coalition of leaders that pulled off one of the most attended and celebrated Fairs in its history.

This year I asked the vestry to think about the state of the Country Fair and the challenges we face. The vestry appointed Derek Eggers to lead a visioning team to address short term and long-term challenges to the sustainability of the Country Fair. The group is tasked by the vestry and rector to renew viability by reevaluating the mission, objectives, and practical functioning of the Fair. That team is made up of Bob and Julie Gates, Tracey and John Heiss, Margaret Love, Keith Martin, and facilitated by Derek Eggers. Whoever is serving as the senior priest will also meet with this group going forward. In November Derek led this group in their first meeting; they made some important decisions:

1. The team will meet biweekly to discuss a visioning plan.
2. This team will constitute the executive leadership team. To provide support and communication to the Fair leadership, and interface directly with the vestry and rector.
3. The team named Tracey Heiss and Julie Gates as 'Fair Chairs' for the 2026 VCF.

After seeking input and your wisdom, the visioning team will draft plans to ensure the health of the fair for the future. This is adaptive work, it means taking a good look at what is working well and what will need to shift. Adaptive work is always difficult; I implore you to support them. I believe that the Valle Fair provides the best opportunities to connect the mission and love of Holy Cross as well as the rich traditions that forged our identity with new communities and people.

Blessings to you,

Rev Robert (you can call me Robert)



Birthdays

2 Walter Pitts	17 Grace Alford
2 Tracey Conway	17 Jacob Alford
3 Jim Reed	17 Dawn Anderson
6 Steve Smith	21 John Harris
7 Joe Harmon	24 Denise Bentley
9 Katerina Whitley	25 Derek Eggers
11 Mary Armstrong	27 Jim Logan
11 Dennis Carlton-Jones	29 Debbie Stewart
11 Lee Rankin	29 Bill Morgan
12 Paul Cribbins	30 Pat LeVarge
13 Noyes Long	30 Wendell Seaver
15 Ron McInnes	30 Terry Fulton

Anniversaries

December 7
Judy and Bob Bondi

December 20
Leslie Trevathan and Mark Ritch

December 28
Dottie and Bill Hancock



Prayer List

Please keep the following in your prayers:

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 Y., Bill B., Julia M., Walter B., Randy M., Shane B., Claire M., Sara P., Tav G., Andrea M., Charles III, Kate M., John N., Floyd T., Ray L., Leslie S., Terry & Jean M., Suzie L., Pam C., Ann G., Rosalie G., Stuart T., Gini H., Michael H., Laura B., Jeff I., Russell, Gabriella F., Troy W., Jim L., Linda B., David F., Mamie M., Courtney K., Stacey D., Gideon E., Skylar P., Bettie B., Mike L., Ann I.

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.



It's **ANGEL TREE** Time!

There are several families at Valle Crucis school, and residents at The Life Care Center in Banner Elk for whom Holy Cross Church is their only Santa Claus. We also are helping out our Valle Crucis Teachers with gift cards this year as well. Thank you all in advance for your generosity! **Several slots still remain**, so *please* sign-up as soon as possible!

Follow the link below to access this year's "Virtual Angel Tree" registry and sign-up for gift donations. Here is how the Angel Tree gift donations will work this year:

Sign-up for gift(s) donations via [this SignUPGenius](#)

- Bring your wrapped and tagged gift(s) to Skiles Hall. The Christmas tree will be in place in Skiles Hall after November 28, 2025.
- o **Please begin bringing wrapped and tagged gifts starting this Sunday November 30, 2025.**
- o **All gifts and teacher gift cards need to be delivered to Skiles Hall no later than Sunday December 14, 2025.**
- o **For those buying gifts for Life Care Persons please add a few nice toiletries (lotions, creams, body washes, etc.)**
- o **THANK YOU** so much for your help!

Questions? Call Tracey Heiss: 703-919-9767, or Susan Howard: 828-260-4740



CHRISTMAS AT HOLY CROSS:

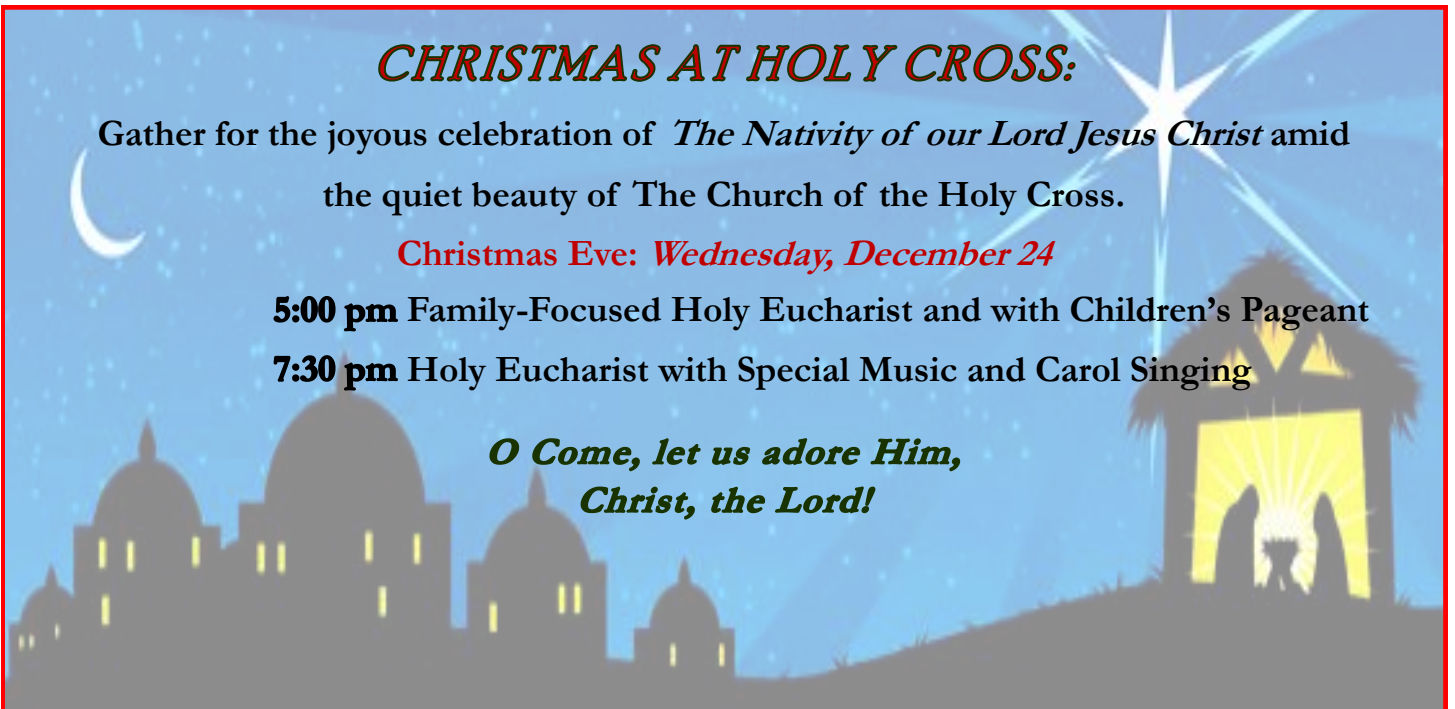
Gather for the joyous celebration of *The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ* amid the quiet beauty of The Church of the Holy Cross.

Christmas Eve: Wednesday, December 24

5:00 pm Family-Focused Holy Eucharist and with Children's Pageant

7:30 pm Holy Eucharist with Special Music and Carol Singing

***O Come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!***





Outreach



Holy Cross Holiday Reflection

Outreach members, you think of others
What they are going through, their challenges. You listen. You show up.
You hear MOC callers without judgment, but solutions. You humbly consider their asks and come
to consensus for their needs.

You Holy Cross parishioners, you give to others
You shop and give food donations
You provide meals for Hospitality House
You feed college students through Presbyterian Episcopal College Ministry
You give precious time in service of others through Listening Post at ASU

We see you love others
You call, send texts send cards to ones who need a contact from church, the ones who ask for nothing
despite their needs, the ones who must move away and those who are home alone. You remember
them.

DOK members recall their vows
Study
Service
Sharing the Word by actions. Difficult sometimes. But we try.

You serve the altar, arrange flowers, do the linen, speak the words of scripture
You advertise, pitch the tents, serve the food and count the profits for VCF Outreach. You set up
and take down tables and chairs for beaucoup events in Skiles Hall.

You treasure time together
A shared laugh at coffee hour.
A wordless nod of acknowledgement that is felt warmly
You relish church friends.

You sing, laugh, go to church services, send funny texts, shop for an Angel Tree, consider giving to
Alternative Christmas for those in need, and bring treats (sometimes) for Sunday coffee hour. You
Light up the Christmas Tree and hum along to a carol.

You live in God's rich peace.

Merry Christmas and Wonderful, Fulfilling Holidays For All of Our Generous Parish!

Your Holy Cross Outreach team— Judy, Sis, Niki, Vickie, Kip, Martie, Mary, Roberta, Radie

MERRY CHRISTMAS 2025



Episcopal Church Women News

ECW will have their regular monthly meeting on

Sunday, December 7th after the 11:00 service in Skiles Hall.

Join us as we wrap up another year of serving our church, community, and Christ.



The final ***Men's Night Out*** gathering for 2025 -- and the conclusion of our ninth year of fellowship - is a festive holiday gathering and "roast beast feast" beginning with B.Y.O. cocktails at **5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16** in the dining hall at the historic Valle Crucis Conference Center with dinner served promptly at 6:15 p.m. Remember that after this meeting, we'll be taking a two-month hiatus over the winter season, resuming in March 2026.

We're repeating the v-e-r-y popular menu from previous years consisting of "USDA prime chuck pot roast tenderly bathed and simmered until it's a melt in your mouth consistency in a rich stock containing carrots, onions, garlic, thyme, and sage (with an equally savoy salmon option for non-beef eaters) accompanied by Yukon gold mashed potatoes, creamed and herbed, Southern classic green beans with red peppers, butter, salt and pepper, accompanied by rustic oven warm wheat rolls, and a splendidly sumptuous salad bar serving all the favorites with a choice of dressing, and... spiced fruit cobbler served warm with vanilla ice cream for dessert, plus coffee, tea, water, and juices." ***Yum!***

The cost is a suggested **\$20** contribution per person but... in light of the holiday spirit, and in honor of VCCC providing such heroic hurricane relief assistance and a welcoming home to Valle Crucis School, MNO participants are asked to prayerfully consider a contribution above and beyond that amount in support of VCCC's unparalleled "Ministry of Hospitality."

MNO is an opportunity for men from within the parish and in our community to enjoy having an evening of fellowship together. We're very flexible and inclusive, so feel free to bring a friend... or three! In order to let our gracious hosts know how many will be in attendance from Holy Cross, please RSVP by noon on Sunday, December 14 (**note the early deadline**) via email to KeithTMartin@gmail.com.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you do not drive at night, need a ride to and/or from MNO, or are without reliable transportation for whatever reason, please let us know. We have participants from all over the High Country who would welcome your company and be happy to pick you up and deliver you safely home. ***Please join us!***

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
(From Dec. 7: Joe Harmon's birthday and Judy and Bob Bondi's anniversary) ↓	1 8:00pm Online Compline	2 Tracey Conway and Walter Pitts' birthday	3 Jim Reed's birthday	4 8:00pm Online Compline	5	6 Steve Smith's birthday
7 2nd Sunday of Advent 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II 12:30pm ECW ↓	8 8:00pm Online Compline	9 Katerina Whitley's birthday	10	11 8:00pm Online Compline Mary Armstrong, Dennis Carlton-Jones and Lee Rankin's birthday	12 Paul Cribbin's birthday	13 Noyes Long's birthday
14 3rd Sunday of Advent 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II	15 8:00pm Online Compline Ron McInnes' birthday	16  5:30pm Men's Night Out	17 Grace and Jacob Alford's birthday	18 8:00pm Online Compline Dawn Anderson's birthday	19	20 Leslie Trevathan and Mark Rich's anniversary
21 4th Sunday of Advent 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II 12:30pm Hanging of the Greens ↓	22 8:00pm Online Compline (From Dec. 21: John Harris' birthday)	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 5pm Holy Eucharist with Children's Pageant 7:30pm Holy Eucharist Special Music & Carol Singing	25 CHRISTMAS DAY ↓	26	27 Jim Logan's birthday
28 8am & 11:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II Dottie and William Hancock's anniversary	29 8:00pm Online Compline Debbie Stewart and Bill Morgan's birthday	30 Pat LeVarge, Wendell Seaver and Terry Fulton's birthday	31	(From Dec. 24: Denise Bentley's birthday)	(From Dec. 25: Derek Eggers' birthday)	

Holy Cross Christmas Pageant

Christmas Eve will be here soon. This year Holy Cross will host a pageant at the 5pm service. We are in recruitment mode! If your child or grandchild will be here over Christmas we would love to include them! Please contact Andrea McDonough (amacd1962@gmail.com) for details!

We will host two rehearsals: The first will be after the 11am service on Sunday December 21. The other will be at a time to be determined on December 23. We would love to include you!



Donations for Christmas Flowers and Greenery

The Altar Guild relies upon donations in order to decorate the Church for Christmas. Please give generously using the envelopes provided in the pews and/or in Skiles Hall.

REMEMBER: Completed forms must be submitted by 3:00 pm on Wednesday, December 17, 2025 in order to be included in all Christmas Service Leaflets.

Thank you!

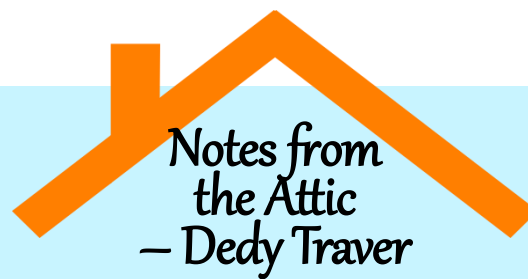


Special Announcement: **106th Annual** **Hanging of the Greens!** ***Sunday, December 21*** ***at 12:30PM***



Just as they have for the past 105 years, all parishioners and friends are invited to gather for the annual Hanging of the Greens in advance of Christmas. We need as many people as possible to help transform the décor of our beloved church from the somber tones of Advent to the glorious brightness of Christmas. We plan to green the church on Sunday, December 21 at 12:30pm following the 11am worship service. We will need to put up the pew candle holders, window candle holders, fill the candles with oil, hang the wreaths. There are jobs for everyone. So, bring your clippers and a lot of enthusiasm! The garlands and wreaths are purchased but we need folks to find greenery such as fir, white pine, Galax leaves, boxwood, etc. and bring it to the church **by Saturday, December 20th.** Please let Dedy Traver know if you can help. She may be reached at 898-5771 or email traverarms@yahoo.com. We will provide soup and sandwiches in Skiles Hall.

If you can bring a pot of soup or make a tray of sandwiches, please let Dedy know.



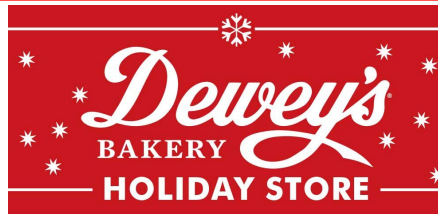
Notes from the Attic – Dedy Traver

As December 2025 begins as well as a “new” church year, we expect cold weather. We prepare by getting out the heavy coats, bring in a supply of wood for fireplaces, and stock up on canned goods – just in case there is a power outage! Have you thought what it might have been like in the early days of life in Valle Crucis? Here is a description of Christmas 1849 from the *History of the Order of the Holy Cross at Valle Crucis, NC*” as written by Rev. William Glenney French, First Superior of the Order. Let us all be thankful for our many many blessings –and take time to reach out and help our neighbors in need.

“Dec. 23, 1849 – I resolved that in spite of the indifference among our household, which I felt keenly, I would make our Chapel as beautiful as possible. The idea appealed to all the members of my flock, young men and boys, with the exception of Passmore (a priest assigned to Valle Crucis who had some disagreement with the way Rev. French was leading the Order) who made no offer to assist and did not come near us. When once we got to work, everyone displayed great zeal and energy, and my spirits rose accordingly, saddened only by the coolness of Passmore.

Dec. 25th Christmas – I kept a vigil alone. The night was fine, clear and cold, the great full moon shone brilliant and beautiful from the deep blue vault of heaven; now and then darkened for a few seconds by the white snow clouds, which swept swiftly across the sky. The roar of the winds through the miles of forests that covered the mountains, was like the sound of many waters and seemed far louder from the contrast with the quiet of the Valley, where only a chance gust was felt. It was a fitting night for remembering the Advent and Birth of the Son of God into a cold, cheerless, desolated World. About four o’clock (a.m.) I blew a rousing blast on my horn, for our Lauds at the Chapel and our household was not slow in gathering. We sang the Hallelujah, Psalms, Te Deum, and Benedicite, as in the “Canonical Hours”, a little English Manual. It was a joyful heart-inspiring service, and it was carried through with enthusiasm, in spite of the cold, for we had no fire in the Chapel. At eleven (a.m.) the usual Morning Prayer was said, in which all was sung that could well be, save the Lessons and Prayers which we had never tried to intone. After the celebration of the Holy Communion I invited all who would, to go down to the Rectory, my log hut, and take lunch with us. This was something of an “extravagance”, especially considering our limited means, but I could not look upon it as a “waste” for many of the congregation came from a distance and I felt that though they knew well no return was expected, save in a hearty good will, which might give access to the Gospel and Church of Christ among them. About forty persons remained, who went home with a joyful heart, and the never to be forgotten memory of such a Christmas Festival as they had never known before. The Christmas Celebration was carried forward into the next three days, St. Stephen’s, St. John’s, and the Holy Innocents, with as much joy as songs of praise could give. I took advantage of these days to see my people at their homes, going first down the Watauga valley for some five miles, through a path that was at once wild romantic but lonely, all up hill, crossing and re-crossing a little stream of crystal water, until we came to Bill Hick’s miserable ‘tumble-down”. Here I talked with the children awhile and then crossed the Watauga to Uncle Sam Feaster’s log house, where I dined with him and his dear old wife, on corn-bread and meat, which tasted as food always does, with an appetite sharpened by travel on foot. From there I went up the mountain to see Strickland, an old hunter, and returned to Uncle Sammy Feaster’s for the night. I was greatly amused at their talk with their little grandchild, who slept with them on the floor before the fire. They insisted on my sleeping in their only bed, but all my protestations were useless, and I was obliged to occupy it, using as a covering a warm feather bed, which did not come amiss, as it was a bitter cold night. The next morning, I pushed on to Mr. Mast’s house where I met Thomas and Heber and joining them we set off on foot over the mountain to our Valley. The ground was covered with snow and it was raining hard, but we reached home safely.

January 1, 1850 So cold last night that I could not lie upon my bunk. The wind was so piercing that my log house, being without lath and plaster, could not keep it out. My mattress being nothing but a bed quilt, folded once and laid across the bunk, was insufficient for warmth, but we had no bedding.”



Dewey's Bakery Holiday Shop Open!

Hello Parishioners who have supported SmileOnADG, the Adam Galleher Memorial Fund for many years! Our Dewey's Bakery Holiday Shop is open at Shoppes on the Parkway, Blowing Rock. We are located in Unit #2, open 7 days a week. Our contact phone is 828-572-9679.

Remember, when you purchase cookies & gifts from our shop, you are supporting Adam's Memorial Fund at 35% and we thank you for that.

This enables us to continue giving grants and scholarships to our local schools in Watauga, Ashe & Avery. -Debbie & Mike Galleher

Join the Holy Cross Chancel Choir!

If you enjoy singing in the car or the shower, consider joining the Holy Cross Chancel Choir. We rehearse on Wednesdays from 7pm-8:30pm in the Skiles Hall Choir Room. Can't read music? No problem. Afraid you can't carry a tune? That's probably false. Afraid of the time commitment? Just talk to Shane. We'd love to have you join this aspect of our music ministry.



Helping the Hungry in the High Country

You've seen the changes in funding for the SNAP food program. You've generously supported the Summer Food Program for Children through Holy Cross. Thank you for that. There is a great need again to help fill the shelves of local food banks. The need is urgent.

Please bring your canned and boxed goods to Skiles on Sundays (or any day) and place them on the tables in the Welcome Center designated for Hunger and Health Coalition, Hospitality House Kitchen Pantry or Foscoe Hometown Team. Check out store BOGOs, sales flyers, look over your own pantry and ask your clubs and social groups to join in the fight against hunger. Every can or box counts. You count. Someone nearby goes to bed with food in the belly because of you. A child, an older person, someone out of work needs what you do.

We are fortunate to have drivers to carry food to our local food banks. We just need the food. Bring any of these: canned fruits, vegetables, tuna or chicken. Boxes of cereal, milks and juices, baby formula, paper products, jars of peanut butter and jelly, condiments like ketchup, mustard, salt and pepper, hot sauce. New socks, sweatshirts and sweatpants, gloves, scarves, coats, winter work clothes and bottled water are all needed in Foscoe, where there are still homes without running water. Fill your green Simple Gesture bags. Kip Kingree or Judy Bondi will take them to Hunger and Health. Jeff and Angela Williams will tote goods and food to Foscoe Hometown Team. Ron Armstrong will carry food to Hospitality House Kitchen Pantry.

Thank you so much for your response to this food drive. It matters. Things work because of you. Blessings on you and yours for what you do for others.



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. Robert G. Hartmans, Interim Rector
Shane Watson, Director of Music
Ahren Koenig, Parish Administrator

Vestry

Nina-Jo Moore (2025 – completing term), Senior Warden
Darby Logan (2025), Junior Warden
Jennifer Browning (2025 – completing term),
Doris Boulton (2026), Catherine Morton (2026 – completing term),
Angela Williams (2026), Radie Armstrong (2027), Derek Eggers (2027), Sis Kinney (2027)

Officers

Jan Skopecek, Treasurer Dedy Traver, Clerk

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



December Newsletter