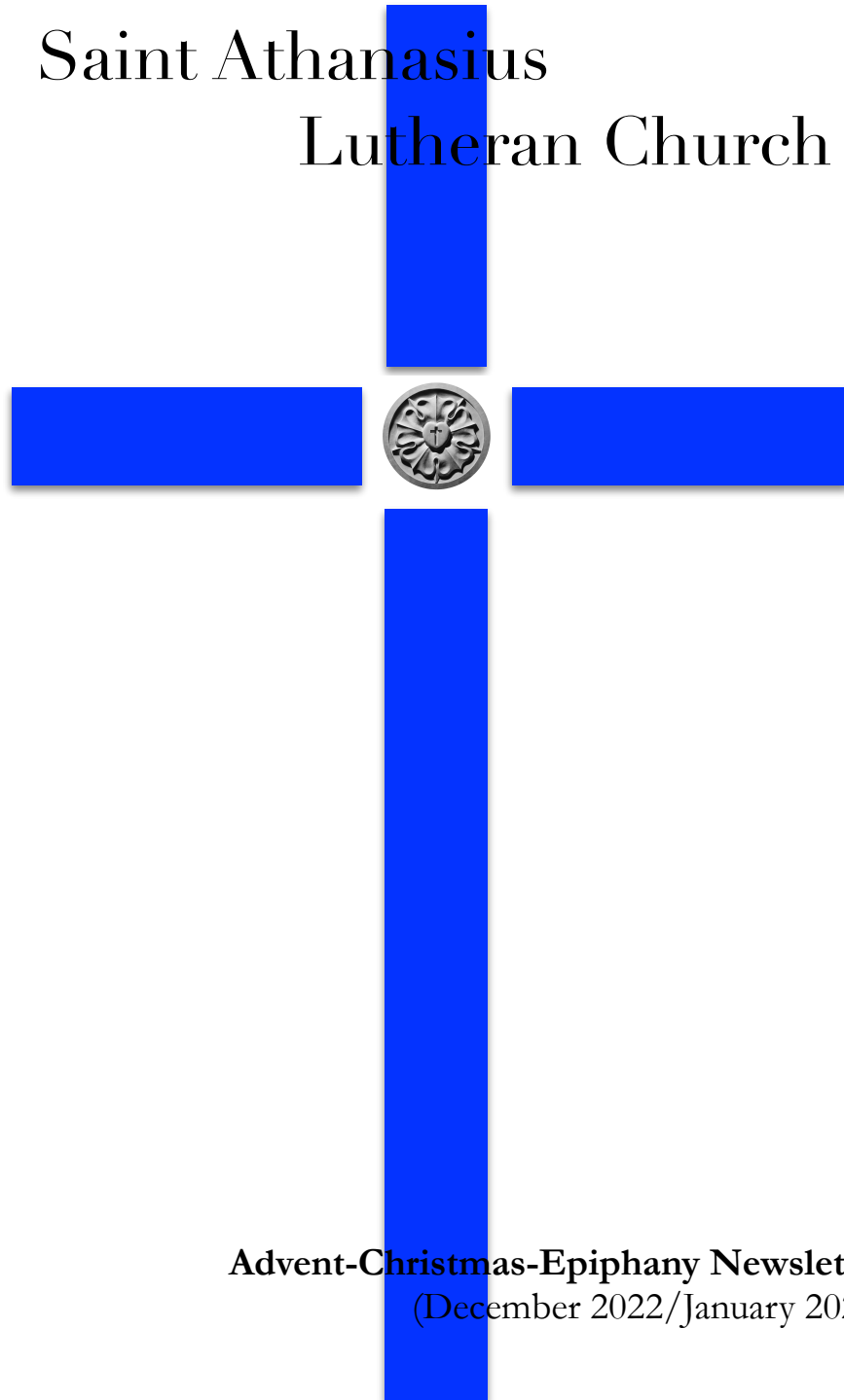


# Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church



**Advent-Christmas-Epiphany Newsletter**  
(December 2022/January 2023)



## **From the Pastor . . .**

### ***Names, Part 2***

Last newsletter I wrote about the renaming craze that seems to be everywhere in our country today, with schools, roads, sports teams, military bases, buildings, bridges, and even churches being stripped of the names they had and given new names. Perhaps some of this is appropriate and helpful, perhaps some is not. I'll let you decide. But names matter, and especially church names matter. Our name identifies us, who we are and what matters to us.

At the end of that article, I said I would address the name of our church, Saint Athanasius, in this newsletter. Saint Athanasius was a theologian of the church in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. He was present at the Council of Nicea, when the Nicene Creed began to be composed, and was later bishop of Alexandria, Egypt.

From just those facts, a church named Saint Athanasius confesses a number of things. First, and of least importance, is the location connection - Saint Athanasius was bishop of the church in Alexandria, Egypt, and our church was formed by a group of folks from Alexandria, Virginia. But the name tells us far more than that! To name a church after an early church theologian is to confess a connection to the early church - that what we preach and teach is nothing novel or new, but the faith that has been handed down to us over the centuries. The Lutheran Confessions make a similar statement by including the three Creeds of the church as the first documents, and documents of first importance, of our confession of faith. So while a great many things change in our world today, the truth never changes for Jesus never changes. Our name confesses the solid foundation on which we stand.

But why Saint Athanasius and not some other early church theologian? Here his connection with the Council of Nicea and the Nicene Creed speaks, for that Council was convened to ➡

address issues of Christology - how do we properly confess Jesus? How do we teach that He is both 100% true God and 100% true man against those who taught otherwise? By choosing this name, we are confessing that Jesus Christ is the center of our theology. This is in agreement also with St. Paul, who in 1 Corinthians wrote that *we preach Christ crucified* (1:23), and that he *decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified* (2:2). This name says: there is nothing more important than that.

Which ties in nicely with this time of the year as well, as we turn our eyes to the incarnation of Jesus, the Word of God made flesh for us and for our salvation. The season of Advent which waits for His coming, the season of Christmas which rejoices in His coming, and the season of Epiphany which reveals His coming.

Names say a lot, and our speaks of Christ and His importance to us. So that's a name that (seems to me) should not change.

His servant and yours,

*Pastor Douthwaite*



## Pastor's Open House

**When:** Saturday, **December 10th**

**Time:** 3:00-7:00 pm

As is our custom, Laurie and I and our family would like to open our home to you, your family, and your friends for a holiday Open House. ***Please bring nothing but yourself*** – we will provide food and beverages for all! (Healthy and unhealthy!) And stay as little or as long as you like! This is simply our way to share some Christmas cheer and to say thanks to all of you for all the love and care you have shown us this year. We hope you will be able to come!

# March for Life

**Friday, January 20th**



The Supreme Court decided this past year to overturn Roe v. Wade. Many pro-life folks celebrated and rejoiced. But that ruling did not end abortion, as most of you know. It simply sent the issue back to the states for each state to decide what the status of abortion would be for its citizens. There is also now a push by some for Federal legislation legalizing abortion far beyond what the Roe decision originally allowed. All of which means it is more important than ever to make your voice heard and stand up and speak up for life!

So why not plan to do so this year and attend the March for Life with your fellow Athanasians and thousands of others from around the country who support life. This is not an angry protest march, but a joyous celebration of the gift of life. For that is what we want everyone to know - that all life, no matter what it looks like, how able it is, or how young or old, is precious and valuable in God's sight - worth the life of His Son!

LCMS Life Ministries is requesting that if you plan to attend, that you register with them ahead of time, so they know how many to expect and can contact you via email or text any information or last minute changes you need to know. Go to **[lcms-life.org](http://lcms-life.org)** to register.

If you would like more information or have any questions, speak with Pastor. Hope to see you there!





## Annual Congregational Voters Meeting

**Sunday, December 11th**  
**11:30 am** *(after church)*

This is the annual business meeting of our congregation. Not exciting, but important! **Please plan to stay.** We need all of you! We'll . . .

- . . . hear how we did financially this past year and our budget plans for next year,
- . . . adopt the budget for 2023,
- . . . hear news about the upcoming 2023 Synod Convention,
- . . . hear about plans and ideas for next year and beyond,
- . . . and other business of the congregation.

Come give your thoughts and ideas! We'll have a **Pot Luck luncheon** this day as well, so after church we'll grab our lunch and *eat while we meet*. Hope to see all of you there!



**New Church Directories** are available for you. Please make sure you get one - or more than one if you need! We always have lots of changes in the congregation. And please use this directory to help support, encourage, pray for, and stay in touch with your fellow Athanasians!



## Holiday Service Schedule

### Advent Midweek Evening Prayer Services

*Benedictus Blessings*  
**Wednesdays, 7:30 pm**

Before Jesus was John the Baptist, the promised forerunner of the Messiah, sent to prepare His way. After John was born, his father Zechariah spoke the words of what has come to be known as the *Benedictus*, praising God for what He was now doing - fulfilling His promises and accomplishing the salvation of the world! This advent, we'll prepare for the coming of Jesus by considering the words of the *Benedictus* and what God has done for us in Jesus. I hope you will take some time this busy season to join us for prayer and meditation with these special services.

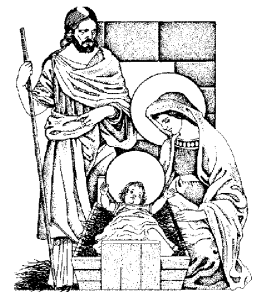
November 30: The blessing of being **visited**  
December 7: The blessing of being **mercied**  
December 14: The blessing of being **enlightened**  
December 21: The blessing of having **the way of peace**

## The Nativity of our Lord

**Christmas Eve Divine Service**  
Saturday, December 24th, 7:30 pm

**Christmas Day Divine Service**  
Sunday, December 25th, 10:15 am

**New Year's Eve**  
Saturday, December 31st, 7:00 pm  
*ONLINE LIVESTREAM ONLY*





## From Luther . . .

*(Luther compares the star which led the Magi to the Gospel which leads Christians to Christ.)*

Moreover, the star thus goes before them and does not leave them until it brings them to Christ; it goes no further, but remains over where the Child is. This is what the light of the holy Gospel does, which is like a bright lamp shining in the darkness, as St. Peter calls it (2 Peter 1:19). It goes before us and leads us, if we only cling to it with a firm faith. It does not leave us until it bring us to Christ and to the truth. But it goes no further, for apart from Christ it teaches us nothing. Thus the nature and work of the Gospel is signified by this leading of a star, and all believers [are signified] by the Magi; just as the star led them bodily to Christ, and they followed it bodily, so the Gospel spiritually leads the hearts of men in this world, and believing hearts see it and follow it with joy until they come to Christ.

[from: "Gospel for the Day of the Wise Men (Matthew 2:1-12)" in *Luther's Works*, Volume 76: *Church Postil II* [© CPH 2013], p. 127]



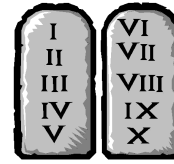
## From St. Athanasius . . .

*(St. Athanasius speaks of Christ taking a body like ours to save us from bodily death and corruption.)*

For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes to our realm, howbeit he was not far from us before. . . . He comes in condescension to shew loving-kindness upon us, and to visit us. And seeing the race of rational creatures in the way to perish, and death reigning over them by corruption . . . lest the creature should perish, and His Father's handiwork in men be spent for nought — He takes unto Himself a body, and that of no different sort from ours. For He did not simply will to become embodied, or will merely to appear. For if He willed merely to appear, He was able to effect His divine appearance by some other and higher means as well. But He takes a body of our kind, and not merely so, but from a spotless and stainless virgin . . . He prepares the body in the Virgin as a temple unto Himself, and makes it His very own as an instrument, in it manifested, and in it dwelling.

[from: "On the Incarnation of the Word," §8.1-8.3 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 4, p. 40]

## On the Catechism . . .



*During the Advent season we hear of John the Baptist and his proclamation of preparation and repentance. Therefore during this season, a catechism focus on the Ten Commandments is appropriate.*

**Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

The same was done in former times also with respect to wives. They knew such tricks, that if one were pleased with another woman, he personally or through others (as there were many ways and means to be invented) caused her husband to become displeased with her. Or he had her resist her husband and act in such a way that he was obliged to dismiss her and let her go to the other man. . . . But such an example, I trust, will not happen among us. . . . But it is not a rare thing with us that one estranges or alienates another's manservant or maidservant or lures them away with flattering words. . . . In whatever way such things happen, we must know that God does not want you to deprive your neighbor of anything that belongs to him, so that he suffer the loss and you gratify your greed with it. This is true even if you could keep it honorably before the world.

[from: The Large Catechism, The Ninth and Tenth Commandments §305-07 in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, First Edition (Concordia © 2005), p 420-21]

Questions for self-examination: *Am I discontent with the spouse, family, vocation, job, or employees the Lord has given me? Have I done anything to break up a friendship or marriage? Have I done all I can to mend or strengthen broken relationships?*

## Preparing for the Divine Service

*To give you the opportunity to look ahead and prepare for our Divine Service each Sunday, the Office Hymn, Holy Gospel, and Theme of each week for December and January are listed below.*

### **Advent 2** (December 4):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12 (John the Baptist begins his work.)

Office Hymn: LSB #344 "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

### **Advent 3** (December 11):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2-15 (John's in prison - Is Jesus the One?)

Office Hymn: LSB #345 "Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding"

### **Advent 4** (December 18):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25 (Joseph's learns about Jesus.)

Office Hymn: LSB #357 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

### **Christmas 1** (December 25):

Holy Gospel: John 1:1-14 (The Word is made flesh.)

Office Hymn: LSB #372 "O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is"

### **Christmas 2** (January 1):

Holy Gospel: Luke 2:21 (Jesus is circumcised.)

Office Hymn: LSB #360 "All My Heart Again Rejoices"

### **The Epiphany of our Lord** (January 8):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12 (The visit of the Magi.)

Office Hymn: LSB #370 "What Child Is This"

### **The Baptism of our Lord** (January 15)

Holy Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17 (Jesus is baptized by John.)

Office Hymn: LSB #407 "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord"

### **Epiphany 3 / Sanctity of Life Sunday** (January 22)

Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:12-25 (Jesus begins His work.)

Office Hymn: LSB #839 "O Christ, Our True and Only Light"

### **Epiphany 4** (January 29)

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12 (Jesus preaches the Beatitudes.)

Office Hymn: LSB #842 "Son of God, Eternal Savior"

**Note:** The Liturgy for all these Sundays is **Divine Service 3** (p. 184ff).



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[www.hopeandhelp-foryou.blogspot.com](http://www.hopeandhelp-foryou.blogspot.com)



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