

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church



Advent-Christmas-Epiphany Newsletter
(December 2023/January 2024)



From the Pastor . . .

Life Cycle

Did you miss me? Well, not *me*, but this newsletter! Or did you even notice that you did not get an October/November newsletter! I apologize for that. I kept waiting for life to slow down a little to give me the time, and . . . well . . . that didn't happen.

But it's not just me - all of you know how that is! Life never seems to slow down, does it? The news cycle gets faster and faster. Schedules get more and more full. The internet age is both a blessing and a curse. We can get more done, and so more and more is being demanded of us. That's not all bad, but it's not all good either.

And as I've said before, I think this is one of Satan's most effective tools these days: to make us too busy for Jesus. If he can't make us turn away from Jesus, he'll make us so busy that Jesus gets gradually pushed out of our attention and eventually out of our lives. The danger is real.

The season of Advent can help us with this. While the world leaps right into Christmas (and earlier and earlier every year!), the Church says, wait a second! Not so fast. Slow down. Let's take a pause to remember *why* Christmas. Let's prepare to remember Jesus' first coming in the flesh by looking toward His coming again in glory. Let's prepare by receiving Him now in His Word and Sacraments. And with a little preparation like this, our Christmas joy is even greater! For it is joy that is not just for one day, or a few hours, but a joy that grows and grows.

As a pastor, that's what I want for each of you - the joy of Jesus that comes with His forgiveness and life that grows each day and year of your life. That's why we have midweek Advent services, to tap the brakes on life - just for a moment! - so ➡

that we slow down and focus on Jesus during a very busy time of year.

So as a pastor, I also want you to know that as busy as I may get, I am never too busy for each of you! You are why I am here! Jesus put me here as His undershepherd for this very purpose, to feed and care for His flock. Maybe I do that well, maybe not - but that's why I'm here. So if you have a need or an issue, need a visit or a prayer, please let me know! Don't think I am too busy for you! The life cycle is as fast for me as it is for you, *but we're in this together*. That's the blessing of being the Church - you are never alone or on your own; you have lots of people here to support you.

So thank you for all of your concern for me and for taking good care of me and my family. You are all a great blessing. And I pray this is a blessed Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season for you as together we slow down, tap the brakes, marvel at all our Savior has done for us, and grow in the grace and joy of Christ.

His servant and yours,

Pastor Douthwaite



Open House

Pastor's Open House

When: Saturday, **December 16th**

Time: 3:00-7:00 pm

As is our custom, Laurie, Joanna, and I 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!

Marches for Life

Friday, January 19th

AND

Wednesday, February 21st



Wait! What? *TWO* Marches for Life? Yes!

The National March for Life on the National Mall in January, and the Virginia State March for Life in Richmond in February.

As usual, there will be the big national March for Life in Washington. But with the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision sending abortion decisions back to the states, each state's March for Life is now more important than ever - including Virginia. A group of us went to the state march last year for the first time, and we're hoping to build this and encourage more participation for this march as well. Being on a Wednesday, it might be a little awkward to go, but your presence is needed to encourage our legislators to BOTH care for women AND protect the lives of babies not yet born.

To this end, the March for Life theme this year is: *With Every Woman, For Every Child*. Why not plan to attend one or both with us this year? These are not the angry, protest marches you sometimes see on TV, but joyous celebrations of the gift of life.



LCMS Life Ministries is again 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** to register. And if you would like more information or have any questions, speak with Pastor. Hope to see you there!



**Annual Congregational
Voters Meeting
and Pot Luck Lunch**
Sunday, December 10th
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, our budget plans for next year, and adopt the budget for 2024,

. . . elect officers and board members,

. . . 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**

The Night Will Soon Be Ending
Wednesdays, 7:30 pm

Light and darkness are common themes in the Scriptures, and especially during the season of Advent. For our midweek meditations this year we will consider how the Light of God ends the darkness in our world and gives us hope now and hope eternal. Take some time out this busy time of year to stop, focus on our Saviour, pray, and listen to His Word.

December 6: The Light of Creation

December 13: The Light of the World in the Manger

December 20: The Light that Has No End

FREE Online Advent Calendar

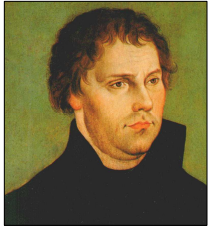
Simply scan the code
or go to: <https://rb.gy/clnp8b>
(Link also on our website)



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



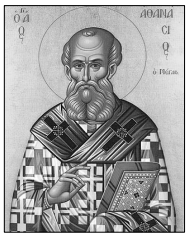
From Luther . . .

(Luther speak of the incomparable wonder of the incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh.)

He condescends to assume my flesh and blood, my body and soul. He does not become an angel or another magnificent creature; He becomes man.

This is a token of God's mercy to wretched human beings; the human heart cannot grasp or understand, let alone express it. However, we Christians can at least learn to prize and esteem these words . . . These words, "And the Word became flesh," were held in reverence. They were sung daily in every Mass in a slow tempo and were set to a special melody, different from that for the other words. And when the congregation came to the words "from the Virgin Mary, and was made man," everyone genuflected and removed his hat. It would still be proper and appropriate to kneel at the words "and was made man," to sing them with long notes as formerly, to listen with happy hearts to the message that the Divine Majesty abased Himself and became like us poor bags of worms, and to thank God for the ineffable mercy and compassion reflected in the incarnation of the Deity. But who can ever do justice to that theme?

[from: *Luther's Works, Volume 22: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4* [© CPH 1957], p. 102-03]



From St. Athanasius . . .

(St. Athanasius speaks of the connection between our creation and our re-creation in Christ Jesus.)

For in speaking of the appearance of the Savior amongst us, we must needs speak also of the origin of men, that you may know that the reason of His coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men. For of His becoming Incarnate we were the object, and for our salvation He dealt so lovingly as to appear and be born even in a human body.

[from: "On the Incarnation of the Word," §4,5.2-3 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 4*, p. 38]

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.

The Close of the Commandments:

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

There is included in these words . . . both an angry, threatening word and a friendly promise. These are to terrify and warn us. They are also to lead and encourage us to receive and highly value His Word as a matter of divine sincerity. For God Himself declares how much He is concerned about it and how rigidly He will enforce it: He will horribly and terribly punish all who despise and transgress His commandments. Also, He declares how richly He will reward, bless, and do all good to those who hold them in high value and gladly do and live according to them. So God demands that all our works proceed from a heart that fears and regards God alone. From such fear the heart avoids everything that is contrary to His will, lest it should move Him to wrath. And, on the other hand, the heart also trusts in Him alone and from love for Him does all He wants. For He speaks to us as friendly as a father and offers us all grace and every good.

[from: *The Large Catechism, Conclusion of the Ten Commandments* §322-23 in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, First Edition (Concordia © 2005), p 422-23]

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 1 (December 3):

Holy Gospel: Mark 11:1–10 (Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.)

Office Hymn: LSB #332 "Savior of the Nations, Come"

Advent 2 (December 10):

Holy Gospel: Mark 1:1–8 (John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus.)

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

Advent 3 (December 17):

Holy Gospel: John 1:6–8, 19–28 (John is not the Christ, but the Voice.)

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

Advent 4 (December 24):

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26–38 (Gabriel announces Jesus' birth to Mary.)

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

Christmas 1 (December 31):

Holy Gospel: Luke 2:22–40 (Jesus is presented in the Temple.)

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

The Epiphany of our Lord (January 7):

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

Office Hymn: LSB #395 "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright"

The Baptism of our Lord (January 14)

Holy Gospel: Mark 1:4–11 (Jesus, the greater, is baptized by John.)

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

Epiphany 3 / Sanctity of Life Sunday (January 21)

Holy Gospel: Mark 1:14–20 (Jesus calls His first disciples.)

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

Epiphany 4 (January 28)

Holy Gospel: Mark 1:21–28 (Jesus teaches and acts with authority.)

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

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



St. Athanasius Lutheran Church

703-455-4003

www.saint-athanasius.org

Meeting at:

114 Kingsley Road SW
Vienna, VA 22180

Mailing Address:

3057 Nutley Street Suite 822
Fairfax, VA 22031

www.saintathanasiuslutheran.blogspot.com

www.thesoberpeasant.blogspot.com

www.hopeandhelp-foryou.blogspot.com



Rev. James A. Douthwaite

(703) 861-4359

revjdoc@gmail.com