

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church



St. Athanasius Lutheran Church

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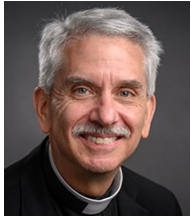


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Advent-Christmas-Epiphany Newsletter
(December 2025/January 2026)



From the Pastor . . .

The Forgotten Season?

I love the season of Advent. While the world rushes straight from Thanksgiving to Christmas, from turkey to tree, a feast of food to a feast of presents, the Church says . . . not so fast. Slow down. Prepare.

But prepare for what? The world is surely preparing! Decorating, buying gifts, going to holiday parties. And those are all good things - I do them, too! But our Saviour is coming, and so we must prepare. Oh, yes! The world says. We know. The baby in the manger and all that. But the Church says, **no**. That Saviour *came*. We are preparing for His coming again.

So we don't rush too fast to Christmas. That day comes fast enough! First, we focus on repentance, for only when our sins are forgiven are we prepared and ready for Jesus to come again. We also focus on how Jesus is coming to us now in His Word and Sacraments with the forgiveness we need. And then when Christmas comes, our joy is not just in the birth of a baby, but the Son of God who came to provide that very forgiveness.

Our beautiful Advent hymns focus us on these three *comings* (advents) of Jesus. Advent transitions us from one church year to the next, connecting the dots and showing us the big picture, preparing us to celebrate not just Christmas, but all the rest of the seasons in the Church Year, too.

So take some time to slow down and reflect, to repent and prepare your heart this season. *Don't let Christmas ruin your Advent*. As our Gradual for this season proclaims, *Behold, your king is coming to you*. Yes, He is coming *again* in glory! For you. To take you home. His birth at Christmas is the first step, but not the last. For the best is yet to come. Happy Advent!

His servant and yours,

Pastor Douthwaite



Pastor's Open House

When: Saturday, December 20th
Time: 3:00-7:00 pm

As is our custom, Laurie 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!

FREE Online Advent Calendar

Simply scan the code
or go to: <https://rb.gy/lzg24o>
(There is a link also on our website)
And send this link to family, friends,
neighbors - everyone! Spread the Word!



Christmas Caroling Sunday, December 14th 12:00 Noon - 2:00 pm

For the past few years, a group from our church has sung Christmas Carols at the Freeman House in Vienna. This enables us to meet our neighbors, sing the Word of God to them, spread some Christmas (and Advent!) cheer, and let them know about our church. We'd love for you to join us this year! The more, the merrier! We also have gifts to hand out to folks as they come by. It's a lot of fun. So put this on your calendar and plan to join us for a bit.

March for Life

Friday, January 23rd

Make plans now to join fellow LCMSers and folks from all around the country at the National March for Life on January 23rd. The day begins with a Divine Service at Immanuel in Alexandria, followed by brunch at the congregation. The rally on the Mall starts at 12 Noon, and the March around 1 pm. If you would like to attend, LCMS Life Ministries requests that you register with them ahead of time, so they know how many to expect and can contact you via email or text with vital 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. **Join us as we celebrate God's gift of life!**



Virginia Pro-Life Day

Thursday, January 15th

There will likely be an amendment to the Virginia state constitution on the ballot this Fall which will be harmful to babies, pregnancy centers, and pro-life efforts. This day, at the beginning of the legislative session, is a chance to meet with your state delegate and meet with them about this measure. There will folks from around the state there to help and facilitate these meetings. Interested? Speak to Pastor. And look for more information on this coming soon!



Annual Congregational Voters Meeting and Luncheon

Sunday, December 7
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 2025,
- . . . elect new 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 **catered 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

Sacramental Eschatology
Wednesdays, 7:30 pm

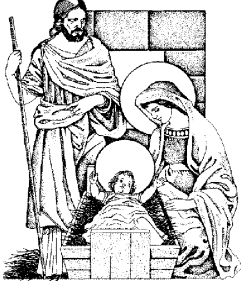
The word *advent* means coming. This season focuses on our Saviour who came for us, comes for us now, and in coming again for us. **The focus of our midweek meditations this year will be on how Jesus comes to us now in His Word and Sacraments and how that prepares us for His coming again in glory.**

Even though this is a very busy time of year with many extra things to do, do not consider this just another item on your list, or that you are too busy to come. Rather, use these services as an opportunity to *stop* the rush, slow down, and spend time focusing on our Saviour and all that He has done for you. It may just be exactly what you need! Join us!

December 3: Cleansed Brides (Baptism)

December 10: Judgment of the Forgiven (Confession & the Keys)

December 17: The Feast that Has No End (Sacrament of the Altar)



The Nativity of our Lord

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

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



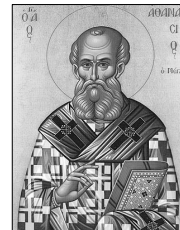
From Luther . . .

[Luther puts the Second Commandment into his catechetical hymn, These Are the Holy Ten Commands (LSB #581).]

These are the holy Ten Commands
God gave to us by Moses' hands
When high on Sinai's mount he stood,
Receiving them for our good.
Have mercy, Lord!

"Do not My holy name disgrace,
Do not My Word of truth debase.
Praise only that as good and true
Which I Myself say and do."
Have mercy, Lord!

[from: Lutheran Service Book #581 (vs. 1, 3) © CPH 2006]



From St. Athanasius . . .

(St. Athanasius speaks of the Word taking a true human nature and being born like us in order to redeem all people.)

For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes to our realm . . . 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, knowing not a man, a body clean and in very truth pure from intercourse of men. For being Himself mighty, and Artificer of everything, 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. And thus taking from our bodies one of like nature, because all were under penalty of the corruption of death He gave 'it over to death in the stead of all, and offered it to the Father.

*[from: "On the Incarnation of the Word," §8.1, 3-4
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.

The Second Commandment

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

The First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught the faith. This commandment now leads us forward and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first things that spring from the heart and show themselves are words [Matthew 12:34]. . . . Now you must simply learn to understand the meaning of this commandment and all the commandments, and to apply it to yourself. If someone now asks, “How do you understand the Second Commandment?” or “What is meant by taking God’s name in vain, or misusing God’s name?” answer briefly in this way: “It means misusing God’s name when we call upon the Lord God—no matter how—in order to deceive or do wrong of any kind.”

[from: The Large Catechism, Part I. The Second Commandment §50-51
in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, First Edition (Concordia © 2005), p 390]

How to confess from the Second Commandment: Is the Lord’s Word evident in my daily speech and conduct, or do I curse, speak carelessly, or misuse God’s name? Do I keep all the vows I have made in the Lord’s name, such as confirmation, marriage, or legal vows, etc.? Am I diligent and sincere in my prayers, or have I been lazy, bored, or distracted? Do I trust that the Lord God will answer them according to His good and gracious will?

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 (November 30):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 21:1–11 (Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.)

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

Advent 2 (December 7):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 3:1–12 (How do you prepare for Jesus?)

Office Hymn: LSB #344 “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

Advent 3 (December 14):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2–15 (How we know Jesus is the one.)

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

Advent 4 (December 21):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 1:18–25 (Joseph told of Jesus’ birth.)

Office Hymn: LSB #357 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Christmas 1 (December 28):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 2:13–23 (The plot to kill Jesus.)

Office Hymn: LSB #360 “All My Heart Again Rejoices”

The Epiphany of our Lord (January 4):

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 11)

Holy Gospel: Matthew 3:13–17 (Jesus fulfills all righteousness.)

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

Confession of St. Peter (January 18)

Holy Gospel: Mark 8:27–35 (Confessing a suffering Saviour.)

Office Hymn: LSB #402 “The Only Son from Heaven”

The Conversion of St. Paul / Sanctity of Life Sunday (Jan 25)

Holy Gospel: Matthew 19:27–30 (Following Jesus.)

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

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