

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church



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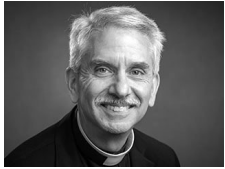


Epiphany-Lent Newsletter
(February/March 2025)

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From the Pastor . . .

Called to Be Light

Called to Be Light was the theme of the SELC District Convention this year (see separate page in this newsletter for some highlights). The Scriptures have a lot to say about light and darkness - the light of God and His love, and the darkness of sin and evil. God calls and uses us as His lights in this dark world, to love and forgive others as He has us. This begins with those closest to us, our families, and then extends out to friends, neighbors, and finally to all the world. Some of this light-shining we do as individuals, and some we do together as a congregation or church body.

It's hard though, isn't it? There are people who like the darkness, and times when it seems like the darkness is winning. But the darkness cannot win! John tells us with Jesus, *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it* (John 1:5).

To illustrate this, one of the speakers at the Convention told the following story: There was a teacher whose classroom had a closet. The teacher asked the class if the closet was light or dark inside. Dark, of course! OK. But what happens when you open that closet? Does the darkness come out into the room, or does the light from the room fill and enlighten the closet? The light fills the closet, of course! Darkness doesn't overcome light; light overcomes darkness.

There are other examples you can use to illustrate this, like a small candle lighting up a dark room, but the point is this: **the light wins!** The darkness cannot overcome it. So, too, is it with Jesus. The darkness cannot overcome Him, OR those who belong to Him. As one of our Easter hymns puts it: *Jesus Lives! The Vict'ry's Won* (LSB #490)! Indeed the victory is won. So *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven* (Matt 5:16).

His servant and yours,

Pastor Douthwaite



Ash Wednesday Divine Service and Lenten Midweek Prayer Services

On **March 5th** we will begin the Lenten season with a Divine Service for **Ash Wednesday** at 7:30 pm.

After that, our **Lenten Midweek Vespers Services** will be held at the Church **every Wednesday at 7:30 pm**, beginning on March 12th. We will be considering *The Angels of the Passion*. Angels play an important role in the story of Christ's Passion, and we'll take a look at this event through their eyes to help us gain a greater appreciation of what happened and all that Jesus has done for us.

March 12th: How It All Started

March 19th: A Mission of Mercy, part I

March 26th: Traitors!

April 2nd: A Mission of Mercy, part II

April 9th: Just One Little Word!

Take some extra time this Lenten season to meditate on the Word of God and for prayer. Life always seems so busy, so it is more important than ever to budget some time to stop and receive from our good and gracious God what we need to face the challenges and struggles of this life. Join us!

We're also **reviving our simple pre-service Lenten soup suppers**, to help you come and attend our Vespers services. We'll set up the church and get ready for supper from 6:30-6:45, and then supper will be between 6:45-7:15, followed by Vespers at 7:30. So come lend a hand for set-up, enjoy some soup, and then be fed with the Word! Hope to see many of you then!





The Imposition of Ashes

On Ash Wednesday, we will again offer the imposition of ashes for all who would benefit from this rite of repentance. If this is a new thing for you and you're not sure about it or have questions, we have an explanation and the answers to some frequently asked questions on our website. Simply go to saint-athanasius.org/Ashes.html. And if you still have any questions or concerns, please speak with Pastor.



Private Absolution

Since Lent is a penitential season, Private Absolution will be offered every Sunday during Lent. Pastor will be in the sanctuary from 8:00-8:30, before we begin setting everything up. Come take advantage of this opportunity to hear the forgiveness of God spoken directly to you by name.

February Is Seminarian Offering Month

We will again be receiving a special offering for our seminary students all through the month of February to help with their Spring quarter expenses. If you would like to contribute, please put your donation into the offering or make an electronic donation *specially marked* or designated for our seminary students.

And please remember - this is a *special* offering above and beyond your regular giving to the church. Don't reduce your regular giving! We need that for our regular expenses. Thanks for your generosity and love, both for our students and for the congregation they will one day be called to serve.



From Your Commission on Mercy . . .

Your Commission on Mercy is offering two opportunities for you this upcoming Lenten season. Although we will again be focusing on life for this season, we believe our Lenten Life Calendar effort has run its course and will not be offering that again this year. Instead, others efforts will be pursued.

(1.) 40 Days for Life - Our first effort is to provide posts that we hope all of you will share via your contacts on the internet. We will provide 40 simple pictures and thoughts on life issues that you can share on social media, or email, or however you choose. This is one for each day in Lent. We hope these will be thought provoking and open doors of opportunity for prayer and for conversation with others.

(2.) Walk-Run-Ride for Life - We have participated in this effort to support the Assist Pregnancy Center for a number of years now. This is not new! But we have two new aspects we hope to focus on this year:

(a.) We would like to get more people in our congregation to not only sponsor others, but to participate yourselves! We're setting a goal of **30 people** this year. We would especially like more of our youth to take part with us this year. And to make it easier to participate with us . . .

(b.) Picnic and Life Day - On April 26th, we will gather to do our walk or ride, and then have a picnic and fun day, with games and door prizes. And we're inviting you to bring friends and family to join in with us and join with our Church family in this fun way.

We'll also be applying for a matching grant from synod (\$4,000) to match what we're able to raise in the Walk-Run-Ride for Life. So please plan to join us in these efforts, to speak for and support life, and to have some fun doing it!



SELC District Convention Highlights

Pastor Douthwaite and Scott Killian represented our congregation at the SELC District Convention in January. Here are some of the highlights of what took place:

Elections: Both Pastor and Grace Killian were re-elected to their positions in the District - Pastor as Eastern Circuit Visitor, and Grace to the Board of Directors.

Resolutions: You may remember that our congregation submitted four overtures to the convention for consideration as resolutions of the District. (Four out of the five total which were submitted!) All of our overtures made it to the floor, three were passed as resolutions, and one did not. The three that passed (all without any dissenting votes) were to Encourage Every Congregation to Adopt a Missionary, to Address Persecution of Christians, and to Provide Definition and Guidance for the Supervision of SMP pastors. The one that did not was for our District Board of Directors to appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board. After much discussion, a voice vote seemed to indicate failure to pass.

Prayer: The convention opened with a Divine Service on Thursday night with synod president Matthew Harrison preaching. Friday and Saturday were both opened and closed with prayer offices, and a Memorial Service was held Saturday for those pastors and church workers who were called to glory the last triennium.

Looking ahead: The 2028 District Convention will be held in our Eastern Circuit. It is possible that Saint Athanasius will be asked to host! Stay tuned for that. And thank you for your prayers for a good and peaceful convention. It was!

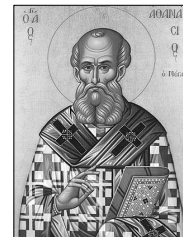


From Luther . . .

(Luther counsels and comforts Christians after the death of the first two Lutheran martyrs.)

My dear friends . . . it has been your privilege before all others in the world to not only hear the gospel and know Christ but also to be the first to suffer shame and injury, anxiety and distress, imprisonment and death, for Christ's sake. . . . What a little thing it is to be put to shame and to be slain by the world when those who are so treated know that their blood is precious and their death dear in God's sight! . . . Here we learn what is meant by the saying, "Be joyful in tribulation." "For a small moment," says Isaiah, "I have forsaken thee, but with great mercies I will gather thee" . . . Because, then, we see our present tribulation and have such strong and comforting promises, let us renew our hearts and be of good courage and joyfully allow the Lord to slay us. . . . May He strengthen and perfect you with his grace to the honor of His holy name . . .

[from: "Letter to the Christians in the Netherlands" (1523)
in *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, © 1960 Westminster Press, p. 193-94]



From St. Athanasius . . .

(St. Athanasius speak of Christ drawing all people to Himself on the cross.)

We must know this: that the demons have not been created like what we mean when we call them by that name for God made nothing evil, but even they have been made good. Having fallen, however, from the heavenly wisdom, since then they have been groveling on earth. . . . Out of envy of us Christians they move all things in their desire to hinder us from entry into the heavens; in order that we should not ascend up thither from whence they fell. . . . Their villainies and the changes in their plots are many. . . . And we, from the temptations we have suffered at their hands, ought to [support] one another under them.

[from: "Life of Antony, §22
in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4: Athanasius*, p. 202]



On the Catechism . . .

During the Lenten season we focus on all that God has done for us and for our salvation. Therefore during this season, a catechism focus on the Creed is appropriate. This year we consider the First Article:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. . . .

The mention of danger and evil . . . includes not only those that affect our physical well-being but also those that affect our spiritual well-being. . . . Satan will do whatever he can to destroy faith and the reception of God's gifts. While some dangers still befall us, how many others have not? Yet we recognize that at times our confession of faith may seem contrary to reality. . . . The picture is of God holding us up with one hand while holding our enemies at bay with the other. Psalm 23 provides a vivid picture of this when the psalmist states that the Lord prepares a table "in the presence of my enemies." Thus it is not always the case that these dangers disappear, but God preserves us despite them.

[from *Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*,
The Apostles Creed, the First Article, © CPH 2022, p 324-25, fn 34]

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 February and March are listed below.

The Presentation of Our Lord (February 2):

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

Office Hymn: LSB#519 "In His Temple Now Behold Him"

Epiphany 5 (February 9):

Holy Gospel: Luke 5:1-11 (A miraculous catch of fish.)

Office Hymn: LSB#398 "Hail to the Lord's Anointed"

Epiphany 6 (February 16):

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:17-26 (Jesus heals and teaches.)

Office Hymn: LSB #394 "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise"

Epiphany 7 (February 23):

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:27-38 (Jesus teaches about living the Gospel.)

Office Hymn: LSB #402 "The Only Son from Heaven"

The Transfiguration of Our Lord (March 2):

Holy Gospel: Luke 9:28-36 (Jesus' glory is revealed.)

Office Hymn: LSB #413 "O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair"

Lent 1 (March 9):

Holy Gospel: Luke 4:1-13 (Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.)

Office Hymn: LSB #656 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Lent 2 (February 16):

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:31-35 (Jesus mourns for Jerusalem.)

Office Hymn: LSB #708 "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart"

Lent 3 (March 23):

Holy Gospel: Luke 13:1-9 (The importance of repentance.)

Office Hymn: LSB #824 "May God Bestow on Us His Grace"

Lent 4 (March 30):

Holy Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (Parable of the Prodigal Son.)

Office Hymn: LSB #571 "God Loved the World So That He Gave"

Note: The Liturgy for all services of Epiphany and Lent continues to be **Divine Service 3** (p. 184ff).