

Alamance Lutheran Church

December News Notes

Our Mission: "Alamance Evangelical Lutheran Church empowered by the Holy Spirit, worships and praises our Lord, loves and serves others, as Jesus Christ taught, and shares the Good News of God's gift of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Adopted 11-23-1997



"Tis expectation makes a blessing dear; / Heaven were not heaven if we knew what it were." Sir John Suckling, "Against Fruition" Fragmenta Aurea (1646) 4.

Words from our Pastor

Dear Church,

It's beginning to look a lot like.....like I need a blanket, ear muffs and a thermos of anything HOT! The chilly temperatures have returned and even though we know what time of year it is, it does not get any easier the older we get.

Thirty years ago, we lived in Ashtabula Ohio which was on Lake Erie and in the snow belt. It was so cold that you could hear the small frozen branches crack off their limbs and fall to the street like snow. It was cold, but even in deep snow and ice, the hearty population made it to church. They really didn't know anything different and their community snow removal equipment helped the population get to where they had to go dressed in thick coats and boots which prepared them for the harsh season that came every year. We both grew up along the lake, but living in the snow belt was different. Esther told me that she prayed that God would send us south. The company that I worked for at the time offered me a transfer to help develop a new territory. When I told Es that we were going south she said "I prayed that God would send us south, not two hours south!" You can imagine how grateful we are that God has brought us where it is a lot warmer than Ohio! The ice on the tree limbs is a distant memory and now the occasional frost on the windshield is a minor annoyance.

Yet, with Thanksgiving behind us we turn our eyes to Advent and the frost on the windows, the decorations in our homes and Church Nativity displays, leads us to sing, "It /s Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas!"

I think about all that we have to do before the end of the year in preparation for our worship services, decorating the Church, confirming all of our participants for the Live Nativity, draining water lines to the concession stand, landscaping, trimming trees and our lists go on. Our minds whirl in a dizzying state as we think about all the stuff we place inside it this time of year as the reason for this season, becomes a blur.

When I think about the ministry you have supported with your gifts is pretty amazing. The construction of the Gathering Space is well underway with a few finishing touches to go, and already we have enjoyed fellowship and bible studies there. The Concession stand remodel has offered a perfect spot to assist hosting two outreach festivals for the community. The overgrowth of the ball field and surrounding areas has been cleared for enjoyment of the public and three different ball teams. We have a significant bridge that allows access to the rest of our woodlands for family enjoyment that previously was difficult. This Church began support of City Gate Dream center with monthly food donations in addition to our dedication to Allied Churches homeless shelter. We supported two families through Christmas Cheer to make their Christmas a memorable celebration. Our community came together despite age or physical limitation to provide a Live Nativity for the public to listen to the Christmas story and see it played out by live performers.

You did all that!

Through the years at ALC, others have perpetuated their financial gifts to the Church through their estates to create our endowments. We are fortunate to be able to do some unique ministry beyond what we receive in the offering plate from them. What would it look like, if this year, you made a special Christmas gift to the ministry of this Church that was equal to *all* the *deals* you got on your shopping list this year? Imagine it. In the 1st chapter of James, the English Standard Version we read. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

We all know that when the Son of Man comes, whatever had been on our shopping lists through the years will be of little concern. What we did with the first fruit resources He gave us, will be. Each of us have become who we are and all that we have accomplished from our God given gifts. Let's share some special gifts to the one who made it all possible for us.

No matter the weather, we know that God's love and presence is always here for us, the greatest gift of all.

On Christ's mission with you,
Pastor Ron Philabaum

Live Nativity: Hopefully you have been fitted for your costume. The Live Nativity is on December 9th from 5:00PM to 7:00PM. Come and join us or come and see! Current weather forecast for Alamance is a high of 58 and a low of 38 with chances of rain increasing to 35% later in the evening. We will keep you posted.

From the Council: The Council met on the 26th. We provided copies of the 2024 budget in the bulletins on Sunday morning. Additional copies are available at church. The major increases in the 2024 budget is much higher insurance costs. This is due in part because of the claim submitted for damage to the Parsonage. This is with our current provider. The Finance Team will be shopping around to find a similar policy with a lower premium. Church cleaning has also increased to provide better cleaning services. We have also increased our benevolence contribution to the Synod as we have significantly underfunded our Synod support in the past several years. We have scheduled a Congregation meeting for December 10th to ask for your approval of the budget and elect new Council members. We are pleased that two of our congregation members have agreed to serve on Council this coming year. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the meeting. There is room for more members on our Council. Please volunteer to lead the future of Alamance Lutheran Church. We will also share a proposal for a ramp to improve access from the Sanctuary to the restrooms. It is a concept that Terry Adams conceived and the Property Team is in the process of getting a formal proposal and quotations for. We will hold a Council retreat on February 24th at Twin Lakes from 9:00am to 5:00Pm. We want to ensure Council members, both new and old, will have clear schedules and be able to attend the event.

“Be the Light” Campaign: Please continue to support this important ministry of Lutheran Services Carolina. If you have any questions about “Be the Light,” please reach out to: [Kirk Tucker](#)

From the Finance Team: Through October, 2023, total General Fund Giving YTD was \$149,332. Operation Expenses YTD were \$179,220. Loss YTD is \$29,888. We had some higher than anticipated expenses in October. We anticipate our year end deficit to be in the neighborhood of \$40,000 which can be covered with tower fund revenue.

Thank all of you who continue to provide financial support to our ministries. While making formal financial pledges is not a practice at ALC, have you stayed current with your financial commitment to ALC’s ministries? If not, this would be a good time to catch up if you are financially able. As we look around at each other, there is no question we are an aging congregation. Generous donors in the past have provided for ALC to have endowment funds and the property that surrounds our church. Are you thinking about the legacy you can provide to ALC in the future just as those generous donors have done in the past?

It is important for us to welcome new members to support our ministries and share our financial needs. Expenses are increasing for maintenance and improvements to our facilities, insurance, salaries and benefits, and last but not least, growing our ministries.

From the Christian Education and Youth Team: The National Youth Gathering will be held again in 2024. We have three potential candidates that may be able to attend. Early registration is in November. The Bishop and Synod have an ambitious plan to raise funds to support sending youth to the gathering next year.

From Evangelism/Social Ministry:

CHRISTMAS IS COMING! As our service project for the month of December, we will be sponsoring one family and one elderly person through Christmas Cheer again this year.

Christmas Cheer has been serving Alamance County for over 100 years ago. They are devoted to seeing that no child or forgotten elderly person in Alamance County wakes up on Christmas morning without a present under their tree. In 2022, they served over 600 families (which included 1557 children) and 180 elderly people. For our part, we will be collecting money until **DECEMBER 3**. We will use that money to fulfill as many of the wishes of the children in the family as possible, provide support to the adults in the family, and give gift cards to a food store so they can have a Christmas dinner. We will do the same for the elderly person we sponsor. A description of the people we will be sponsoring is below. Please be generous in your donations – this may be the only gift they receive all year. Your donations can be put in the collection plate, just be sure to write Christmas Cheer on the envelope. If you have questions, please contact Marty Adams at martyherrin@verizon.net.

Schedule:

- Collect Money until December 3
- Shopping Lists Prepared by December 7
- Shoppers (we need at least five people) Complete Shopping by December 20
- Congregation Wide Wrapping Party December 21 (dinner provided!)

Mr. Hubert is 79 and lives alone in Burlington with very little family in the area. He is diabetic but gets around pretty well without any devices.

The De Lac family lives in Graham. The mom (Victoria) is raising three kids on her own while working AND going to school to get her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. They live with her mom (Henrietta) to share expenses. Preston (10) has learning disabilities, ADHD, and epilepsy. Athena (4) has a clotting disorder and epilepsy. Natyleigh (12) also has a learning disability. Victoria obviously has her hands full!



Thank you for continuing to support food donations for the Dream Center. We will be collecting *beans* for the Dream Center in November. *Rice* in December.

We are helping Allied Churches with food preparation each month. Kirk and Lynn for December, Marty and Terry for January. Lynn is preparing the schedule. See her if you want to volunteer.

The Lunch Bunch had a GREAT turnout at the Rise and Shine Diner. We will be meeting on December 14th and we are going to do something different in December. We will meet in the Social Hall for a fried chicken dinner. We are asking you to provide some sides to complement the chicken and make a small donation (\$5.00 pp) for the chicken. We think this provides an opportunity for us to sit around the table for fellowship as opposed to sitting along a long table. Come and join us! All are welcome, let Kirk and Lynn know you are coming so we can have enough chicken for everyone.

We have an automatic defibrillator which we will install after some members receive some training. Thanks to Barry Crouse, the fire department will provide the training. We need to finalize the date for the training.

Food insecurity is a big issue for many in Alamance County. We are moving ahead with the Blessing Box. Tony Lewis knows what we are thinking about and will give us an estimate of cost. Katie and Roy will apply for a Thrivent grant to cover some of the costs. Thanks for your support.

Pastor Ron will compose a letter we can send to new Twin Lakes residents inviting them to visit ALC.

Visit the ALC website to see the improvements. One area of emphasis this past month is ensuring that our [church calendar](#) is up to date. More and more people are making use of our space (that's a good thing), but it also means we must be careful about not overbooking. **If you are planning on using any space for an event or meeting, please let Marty know so that she can make sure it is added to the calendar.**

Our next meeting will be December 14th at 4:30 pm.

From Worship and Music: We have greatly enhanced our on-line streaming technology. Have you tried it out? We now can provide a high-quality experience when folks cannot be present for worship. (It is better if you come and be physically present, not just for you, for all of us and our faith community.) John is looking to train some additional operators for the system.

The new system will allow direct streaming to Facebook Live. The streaming feed will be provided on both Facebook and Zoom through November as we learn to use the new tools. Beginning in December, we will use Facebook exclusively for worship streaming

and end support on zoom. You do not need a Facebook account to access the live stream on Facebook. Just go to the Facebook website.

Advent is upon us. We will be holding midweek services on December 6th, 13th, and 20th. Will have a light meal at 6:00PM and service in the social hall at 6:30. Come and join us! Christmas is almost here too, and Christmas Eve is on a Sunday. We will hold our regular service at 10:00AM. Remember it's still Advent. Our Christmas service will be a 11:00PM and will include special music. Hopefully we will see some folks that we haven't seen for a while. By the way, if you know some of them, INVITE them to come and join us. We are friendly!

From the Cemetery Team: All residents are resting peacefully. If you are a voting member or an immediate family member of a voting member, you qualify for a free space in ALC's cemetery or memorial garden. Let Pastor Ron know if you are interested.

From the Hospitality Team: We will be providing meals for the Advent midweek services. There is another Red Cross Blood Drive on December 8th from 12:30 to 5:30. Sign up on line. In spite of some scheduling problems, our last drive was very successful.

We plan to hold our next "Because of You luncheon" in January with Connect for Faith on human trafficking. January is human trafficking month.

Goodies are being provided in the Gathering Space for some social time following our services. Thanks to Kathy and Cindy for the work they are doing.

From the Stewardship Team: We continue to explore alternate Church Databases in lieu of "Power Church" the database we are currently using on a limited basis. Marty will be working with Kaye to ensure our data is fully backed up and the system has been updated.

Pastor Ron is composing letters for all voting members to ask for their help in closing the deficit. It will include information about our BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) along with information on our Above and Beyond Campaign.

We are also exploring providing some estate planning seminars to be scheduled in the future.

The next meeting is December 9th at 10:00AM

From the Property Team: We have received custodial quotes for improved cleaning services, costs have been included in the 2024 budget. We need to finalize selection of service provider. Yes, costs are higher, and we think it will show in how the facility is being cleaned. We plan to use Gilmore endowment funds to fund improved service.

Terry Adams came up with a ramp idea that is better than what had been first proposed and will be the primary path pursued to enhance access to the restrooms from the sanctuary. The ramp is anticipated to cost \$50K which would use up most of the Gilmore Fund earnings because of the last two year's investment climate. Longer term goal is for an elevator

Removal of the Bartlett Pear trees in front of the church that block access to the sign has been rescheduled to sometime in January.

Fall Festival: THANK YOU all who helped make our third Raise Your Spirits Fall Festival a GREAT SUCCESS! Special thanks and recognition go to Kathy Ritchey for leading the planning effort and doing so much to make the festival a success and to Sharon Ward for all the work she did reaching out and organizing the vendors that attended the event, a first for our fall festival. We need someone to step up and lead the planning for our Festival in 2024.

Some Other Words: Planning for next year's Plaid Day has already begun. It will be held at Alamance Lutheran Church again because of the Church's historic significance to the community in May. We hope to build on the success of this year's event.

Continuing to build on our long-term relationship with the village.

What do you say when someone asks you what church you attend? Here is the RIGHT ANSWER (per Pastor Ron): "I believe in Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord and I attend the community of faith of Alamance Lutheran Church."

Look into Alamance Children's Theater offerings, the extensive offerings from Elon University, and Studio One provides great theater at reasonable prices. We are blessed to be here!



HOPE 104.5 - Have you discovered Alamance Counties newest Christian radio station? Give it a listen!

Pastor Ron had an opportunity to be a DJ on both Hope and Maverick radio stations. Did year hear him? A great

opportunity to spread the word about ALC's ministries.

Schedule for December:

- *December 2nd:h Men's Breakfast and Bible study 8:30 am.*
- *December 3rd: Last day to donate funds for Christmas Cheer.*
- *December 6th: Food Prep at Allied Churches at 9:00AM (Kirk and Lynn) , ALANON at 10:00am, First Advent meal and service 5:30PM.*
- *December 7th: Shopping Lists for Christmas Cheer complete*
- *December 8th: Red Cross Blood Drive 12:30PM to 5:3PM. Sign up on line , First Day of Hanukkah*
- *December 9th: Live Nativity 5:00PM to 7:00PM*
- *December 10th: Congregation Meeting 10:00AM*
- *December 13th: ALANON at 10:00AM, Second Advent meal and service at 5:30PM*
- *December 14th: Lunch Bunch in social hall at 11:30. (Donation for fried chicken, bring some sides, be social, let Kirk and Lynn know you are coming) Social Ministry/Evangelism at 4:30.*
- *December 17th: Church Council 6:00PM*
- *December 20th: Shopping for Christmas Cheer complete, ALANON 10:00AM, 3rd Advent meal and service 5:30PM*
- *December 21st: Wrapping party for Christmas Cheer 5:00PM, Light supper (Lynn's wonderful sloppy joes provided)*
- *December 24th: Church at 10:00AM, Christmas Eve Service with special music 11:00pm*
- *December 25th: Christmas Day, no church service.*

- *December 26th: Kwanzaa*
- *December 27th: ALANON 10:00AM*
- *December 31st: Noisy Offering Sunday, New Year's Eve, Happy New Year almost!*

Serving This Month

SERVING DURING DECEMBER

	Altar Set-up	Communion Set-up	Worship Assistant/ Reader	Greeters	Ushers
December 3	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	Kathy Ritchey	Jerry and Sally Combs	Roy Whitehead Pastor John Weinbach
December 10	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	Kirk and Lynn Tucker	Sharon Isley	Hugh Smith John Ritchey
December 17	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	Pastor Bob Hawkins	Sandy Kirkpatrick	Ted Milling Terry Adams
December 24	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	Ted Milling	Lynn and Kirk Tucker	Jerry Combs Pastor Bob Hawkins
December 24 (pm)	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	TBD	TBD	TBD
December 31	Diane Gural	Esther Philabaum	Marty and Terry Adams	Ted Milling	Pastor John Weinbach John Ritchey

Please let Kirk Tucker (kirktucker44@gmail.com, 262-853-0373) know of any Church related events or announcements to be included in future news notes. News notes for each month will be sent to members and friends of Alamance Lutheran Church the last week of the preceding month.

Alamance Lutheran Church

2023 – 2026 Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal

In June, your Church Council held a strategic planning/visioning meeting to explore our strengths and areas for improvement and to establish goals for the future. We started with three questions posed by Council President Ted Milling: What is Alamance Lutheran Church? Five years in the future, how would you describe Alamance Lutheran Church? And if you were to move, what would you miss the most about ALC?

The obvious news is that we have many strengths to build upon. Here are just a few that were identified:

- Reinforced faith community
- Pastor
- Diverse acceptance
- Financial resources (cell tower, endowments)
- Real estate – 33-acre campus
- Ability to be part of an empowered ministry team
- “Everyone knows your name” (personalized communion)
- We notice when you aren’t there
- Liturgical structure
- Grace theology/identity
- Building momentum – the sense of hope

As with any organization, there are always areas in which we could improve. None of these are insurmountable, but give us some areas we know we need to improve:

- Property stewardship
- Low volunteerism
- Complacency (been there, done that, served my time)
- Lack of follow through when people do volunteer
- Not being able to let go of our “pews”/”stake”
- Finance/stewardship disincentive

We next posed the question ***Where Do We Want To Be in Three Years??***

In simple terms, we want to continue the momentum we have been building and address our areas of improvement.

Our Three-Year Goal: Double the number of people regularly worshipping at Alamance Lutheran Church

Sounds easy, but in these post COVID times of decreased church attendance, it is going to take some effort to achieve this goal. So, what does this mean? **Our actions need to support this goal. Each worship committee will focus their efforts on meeting this goal. Resource decisions (time and money) will be made with this goal as the driver. This does not mean that we will not do anything else, it just means that our driving focus will be to meet the goal.**