

Alamance Lutheran Church

December 2024 News Notes



Our Vision: To be a beacon of Christian faith, love, and compassion where all are welcomed with open hearts.

Our Mission: We are called by God's spirit to:

- *Worship and Praise God*
- *Serve in Faith*
- *Share God's story*

"Tis expectation makes a blessing dear;/ Heaven were no heaven if we knew what it were." **Sir John Suckling**, "Against Fruition," *Fragmenta Aurea* (1646), 4

Words From Pastor Rooney: A WORD ABOUT ADVENT

While the month of December will bring us the celebration of Christmas with all its wonderful images, music and special joy, we want to take a moment to pause and reflect upon this season of Advent into which we have now entered. For it is this season which offers its own graces to us - if we would but watch and wait for it.

Let's start with the colors. The Winter colors are now upon us, that special hue that comes when the fields turn brown, and the bare trees take on a starker appearance. Even the skies at this time of the year have their own special colors as they begin to darken into ever-earlier nights. Without the colors, this would not be early winter in our land.

And in the days of Advent, the Church uses the blues of our candles to pray for the coming of God's gracious light in our time and place. But even as we light our candles, we live in a paradox, for we light our candles for the Messiah who has already come and dwells among us. And yet our lives and our world also cry out for the fulfillment of that promise, that God's justice and peace will come and flourish in our midst. Our blue is a color for yearning and longing, a deep longing that is too often muffled in our land and even in our churches, a hope for that which is yet to come.

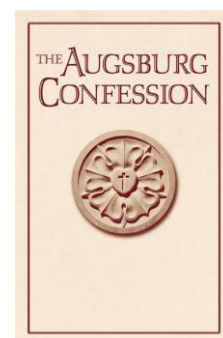
And central to these days of Advent will be our weekly celebration of the liturgy. Here we will listen to God's Word in Scripture, sing our songs and pray for those in need. And central to our Advent liturgy will be the biblical images of the One who leads us from the table of Word and Supper to labor for God's justice and peace in this troubled world. Because we know that Christ has been born, has died, is risen and will come again, the central activity of Advent cannot be our preparation for a birth that has already taken place. Instead, it must be our preparation for the continuing incarnation among us of the Prince of Peace, something which is especially longed for in these days of war and terrorism, division and conflict and for the coming of Christ once again at the end of all days.

In this brief season therefore, let us turn our attention away from nostalgia that simply looks back to a birth in a distant past. For central to our Advent liturgy, as darkness turns to light, is the sense of longing and hope and expectation for the future, a future marked by justice and peace in our land and a light for all those who dwell in the shadow and darkness of death. Let us be clothed then in deep blue, the color of our waiting and of our struggling for peace.

A blessed Advent to you all.

What Do We Profess to Believe?

Join us on Sundays at 9:00 in the parlor for our continuing discussion of the Augsburg Confession. The Augsburg Confession is the primary confession of faith of the Lutheran Church and one of the most important documents of the Protestant Reformation. Join us to get a better understand of what Lutheran's believe.



Congregation Meeting

Our rescheduled Congregation Meeting will be held following the Service on December 15th. The proposed agenda is:

- Opening Prayer
- Establish a quorum
- Approve minutes from last meeting
- Update on the Call Process
- 2025 Budget Approval
- Council Nominations and Proposal
- Adoption of our new "Mission and Vision"

- Closing Prayer
- Adjournment

Call Process

The Call Committee is holding discernment conversations with potential candidates. Strict confidentiality must be maintained until the committee submits the name of a primary candidate to the Council for approval. After Council approval, the primary candidate will meet with the Congregation for their approval and approval of a mutually agreed upon financial package. While a minimum of 2/3's majority is required for the call, it is common for a pastor to look for a vote over 9/10s majority from the Congregation to sense the Congregation supports the call. A simple majority is required to approve the financial package. **Please continue to pray about the call process and team so that the Holy Spirit continue to guide us.**

From the Council

The November Council meeting was delayed until December 1st. The Council approved the budget submitted by the Finance Team with a few minor modifications. Copies of the budget will be available for you to peruse next week. The Council is asking the Congregation to approve the 2025 Budget at our upcoming Congregation Meeting following the service on December 15th.

We spent time talking about Council Nominations and will share our proposal at the Congregation Meeting. Thanks to everyone who is considering serving on the Council.

It was a productive and positive meeting. The Council is not planning on meeting again in December. The next Council meeting will be January 12th.

Council Meetings are open to all voting members of the Congregation. There may be times when a particular topic may be closed, but for the most part, the meetings are open. If you are interested in the work of the Council, you are welcome to attend.

Finance Team

Our year-to-date expenses continue to be less than our revenue through October; we project a much smaller deficit at the end of the year than in past years. This is the result of reduced spending. Revenue growth is important for us to meet future budget expenditures with a full time Pastor.

Hospitality Team

The Hospitality Team will host the next Red Cross blood drive on December 6th, 1:30 to 6:00 pm. Please sign up online at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>.

Thanks to the team for supporting the two covered dish lunches for both the Beard and the Rhodes families. We continue to be blessed to have new members joining our faith community.

A Christmas Tea is planned for December 28th from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. A variety of teas will be provided; please bring a sweet or savory snack to share.

From the Worship and Music Team

December is a busy month as we experience the Advent season and close with Christmas. We will hold three Wednesday Advent simple meals at 6:00 pm followed by a Vespers Service on December 4th, 11th, and 18th. The theme will be Waiting, Watching, and Wondering. Our Christmas Eve service will be held at 11:00 pm on December 24th again this year and it will be a full service, including communion. Special music will enhance the service. We might even have a choir!

We want to enhance the service of our volunteer greeters and ushers. Be looking for defined expectations and instructions so all volunteers have a common understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

From Evangelism/Social Ministry



CHRISTMAS IS COMING! We will be sponsoring one family of three children and two elderly people 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 2023, they served over 700 families (which included 1610 children) and 225 elderly people last year.

Schedule:

- Donations complete as of December 1st. We have collected over \$2000. Thank you for your generous support of Christmas Cheer.
- December 1-15: Shopping. Shopping lists and budgets will be provided to shoppers.
- December 19: Congregation Wide Wrapping Party (dinner provided!)

Thanks to all of you who are donating food for both the **Blessing Box** and the **Dream Center**. The Blessing Box is continuing to be used regularly by the community, and the Dream Center is always appreciative of our donations. We are collecting **Pasta** in December; **Dry beans** in January.

We continue to help **Allied Churches** with food preparation on the first Wednesday of the month. Kirk and Lynn will be serving in December. Lynn Tucker continues to look for volunteers and maintains a schedule.

The **Lunch Bunch** will not be meeting in December. See you next year!

Men's Breakfast and Bible study is December 7th at 8:30. Join us! Remember Pearl Harbor!

We are sending letters from Alamance Lutheran Church to new residents of **Twin Lakes Community** inviting them to experience our faith community. With new residents coming to Twin Lakes with the opening of 48 units in the new Stockton Apartments in October and November we are hoping to see some new faces in Church. (In fact, we already have!)

Next meeting is December 12th at 4:30.

Stewardship Team

We had to cancel the **Prepare Wisely: Estate Strategy Essentials and Your Legacy** in November and hope to reschedule it in the future. The Parable of the Talents reminds us to spend our gifts rather than hoard them. Often, when we hear the word ‘stewardship,’ we think of our money. However, stewardship is much more! Each of us is the manager of our gifts. To be good managers of our gifts, we must use our special gifts we have received from God for the good of others. Examples of our gifts are our life experiences, talents and skills, interests, motivations and needs, energy, creativity, and imagination.

What are your passions? What do others tell you that you’re good at doing? Give thought to this...we’ll be exploring the gifts of each member! Because each of us has special gifts to offer, each congregation is unique and takes on a special character. There is nobody else in the world like each of us and there never will be! It’s amazing how God has made only one “You” - so think about your God-given gifts and share these gifts with others. We are continuing to ask you to fill out the Stewardship Forms. Sherry will give you one if you don’t have one. How will you share your gifts and talents?

We have collected information about how other churches handle Memorial Funds and will be making a recommendation to establish a **Memorial Fund** with specific guidelines.

We have also received support from Council to use undesignated “Above and Beyond” funds for the new dishwasher installation, specifically for countertops.

The “**Above and Beyond**” campaign is continuing. Thanks to those of you who have already donated toward the campaign. Have you seen the new signs outside? The new printer in the office? The new stockpot and ladles in the

kitchen? The new label maker and shredder? We almost have enough of the new songbooks to be able to use them during the service. All of these items, and more, are because of your donations to the Above and Beyond Campaign.



Property Team

Lots of improvements around the facilities thanks to many, and more are coming. The place is looking a lot better and shows we care about our facilities. Can't wait to show it off to a potential pastoral candidate. Work is also underway in the parsonage to make repairs and improvements. If a new Pastor chooses not to live in the parsonage, we will rent it and use the proceeds for a housing allowance for the Pastor.

Have you noticed the automatic door openers on the restrooms on the main floor? The first of several "accessibility" improvements with more to come.

Next Meeting: December 7th at 10:00 am.

Youth/Christian Education Team

The team has taken on the responsibility to hold our "Live Nativity" again this year. This is an opportunity for all ages. Rebecca is going all out on this. Rehearsal on December 13th at 7:00 pm. Main event on December 14th from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm. Actors need to come early to dress.

A Children's Baking Party will be held on December 10th at 5:00 pm. Children will bake and share cookies together. Wear your favorite holiday outfit.

Rebecca is holding Sunday School classes for children and youth each Sunday at 9:00 am. Pastor Rooney's class, currently on the Augsburg Confession, continues to be well attended.

Cemetery Team

The team has been in touch with the Synod to better understand the policies around ELCA cemeteries. More work needs to be done to understand the implications for us.

"Be the Light" Campaign

Please support this important ministry of Lutheran Services Carolina (LSC). The *Be The Light* campaign represents LSC's commitment to help overcome some of the challenges preventing some of our North Carolina neighbors from living full and abundant lives.

Be The Light underwrites many of the LSC's programs and is a critical fundraising source that enables them to expand services to meet the unique needs of the people they serve.

"Be The Light" Goals:

- Guide Children and Families
- Expand Services for Adults
- For the Children Endowment

If you have any questions about "Be the Light," please reach out to Kirk Tucker.

Some Words from the Council President:

We have a lot going on this holiday season. Just look at the schedule; I am sure I missed a number of things. We have much to be thankful for and I hope we all shared that with our friends and families over Thanksgiving. We have much to look forward to in this Advent season of anticipation. Not only for the birth of the King; also, for the coming of the King. And especially for us, with the anticipation a new Pastor to be our new spiritual guide and leader. Our cup runneth over. We are well blessed.

Schedule for December

- December 4th: Food prep at Allied Churches Kirk and Lynn - 9:00am; ALANON - 10:00 am; Advent meal and Vespers Service - 6:00 pm. (Choir practice following service)
- December 6th: Red Cross Blood Drive - 1:30 to 6:00 pm.
- December 7th: Men's Breakfast and Bible Study - 8:30am; Property Team 10:00am.
- December 10th: Children's Cookie Baking Party – 5:00 – 8:00 pm.
- December 11th: ALANON - 10:00 am; Advent meal and Vespers Service - 6:00 pm. (Choir practice following service)
- December 12th: Evangelism/Social Ministry Meeting - 4:30 pm.
- December 13th: Live Nativity rehearsal 7:00 pm.
- December 14th: Live Nativity - 6:00 to 7:30. Come early to dress in your costumes.
- December 15th: Congregation Meeting following Church Service.
- December 18th: ALANON 10:00 – am; Advent meal and Vespers Service - 6:00 pm. (Choir practice following service)
- December 19th: Christmas Cheer gift wrapping and sloppy joe supper - 5:00 pm.

- December 24th: Christmas Eve Service - 11:00 pm.
- December 25th: **Christmas Day**
- December 26th: Hanukah (1st day); Kwanzaa
- December 28th: Holiday Tea – 2:00 pm.
- December 29th: Noisy offering Sunday

Serving in December

	Altar Setup	Communion Setup	Worship Assistant/ Reader	Greeters	Ushers
Dec 1 Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Kathy Ritchey	Kirk and Lynn Tucker	Jerry Combs Terry Adams
Dec 8 Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Pastor Bob Hawkins	Jerry and Sally Combs	Hugh Smith Ted Milling
Dec 15 Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Kirk and Lynn Tucker	Wanda Patterson Kerry Sullivan	Sherry Ford Roy Whitehead
Dec 22 Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Pastor Bob Hawkins	Kerry Sullivan Sherry Ford	Hugh Smith Terry Adams
Dec 24 Christmas Eve Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Marty and Terry Adams	Donna Eash Ted Milling	Jerry Combs Terry Adams
Dec 29 Sanctuary	Rebecca Maness	Lynn Tucker	Roy and Katie Whitehead	Sharon Isley Sandy Kirkpatrick	Pastor Bob Hawkins Ted Milling

Please let Kirk Tucker 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.