

ADVENT

2025



In 325 AD, in the town of Nicea, a church council ensued that would change the world. Though the final form of the church creed commonly known as the Nicene Creed would not be finished until 381 AD in the city of Constantinople, the initial work began in Nicea and focused on the nature of the Son of God in relation to the Father.

Up until a few years before the council of Nicea, gatherings such as this one were almost unimaginable. For their entire history, Christians had largely been a persecuted minority in the Roman Empire. Gathering bishops from all over the empire was not only difficult, it was dangerous. Any wrestling the entire church did with how to best understand God and His loving work took place through writings, as opposed to gathering different strands of church leadership together for a discussion or debate. Further, this wrestling with theological questions was tempered by the fact that most energies were spent seeking to defend the faith against persecution and disciple people to hold firm to Christ amidst the threat of death.

However, when the Roman Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD—which made Christianity a tolerated religion in the empire—everything changed. Not only was it now possible to safely gather together, but energy was no longer being spent defending the faith against external threats. Moreover, the emperor himself was interested in unifying the church. And unity was not exactly what the church was experiencing at this time!

The reason for the division in the church was a debate that had ignited in the Egyptian city of Alexandria concerning the right relation between Jesus and God. To our ears, this debate can seem to concern esoteric aspects concerning the nature of God. But in reality, the debate concerned how to understand God himself and how to understand the very Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Arius, an early leader in the church, had been teaching that Jesus, while the first and greatest of God's creations, was nevertheless a created being—who mediated God's presence to the world. However, Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, and his young deacon Athanasius (pronounced: ah-thuh-NAY-shus), saw that this is not what the Scriptures were claiming about our Lord. In fact, they saw that this idea undermined the very idea that in Jesus we are truly being saved, and that in Him we have a true revelation of God himself.

If Jesus is not God, then he does not truly reveal God to us. And if he is not God, then his death does not release us from sin and death. But if through the man Jesus Christ God himself has indeed come into the world, then in him we have a true window into the nature of God, and we have a God who has united himself to all of our sin and death so that in him we would be healed. As Athanasius wrote in his work *On the Incarnation*: "He became what we are, that He might make us what he is."

On Christmas day, the light and life of the world was born. In him we truly see God, and in him we are truly given life. To deny that he is God is to cut off the world from the wonders of our God and the glory of his mercy and grace.

1700 years ago, the first ecumenical council of the church gathered together and affirmed this teaching—that the Son is "of one substance" with the Father, true God from true God, light from light. The council did not fully settle this matter, and Athanasius spent the rest of his life—often in exile and alone—defending its biblical basis. However, in the end the Lord used Athanasius and others to make the creed that began in Nicea become the very bedrock of the church's confession. This Advent and Christmas season, as we celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the council of Nicea, we want to meditate on the realities discussed at Nicea – we want to behold the wonder of the Incarnation.

To help us behold this wonder together, we're inviting you to participate in four ways this Advent:

First, join us for our Sunday gatherings. During this Advent season we will be focusing on John 1:1-18. We will spend four weeks reading, unpacking, and beholding Jesus through this passage where the apostle John first introduces us to The Word of God, who was with God and was God in the beginning, and who took on flesh so that in him we could behold God's glory and become children of God.

Second, join us for our special gatherings: our Advent prayer night, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day services.

Third, use this booklet for daily Scripture meditations on the glory of the Incarnation. Throughout this booklet you will find daily prompts to read short passages. However, we are not merely asking you to read these passages, or even to study these passages, but to meditate on them and allow God to speak to you through them. To help with this, we will introduce you to the ancient practice of reading referred to as *Lectio Divina*—a way of slowly allowing the Word of God to speak to you.

Fourth, read Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* along with our church. This short book, written by the then-23-year-old Athanasius, is one of the church's most beloved expositions of the glory of the Incarnation. For many of us, this will be our first foray into reading theological writings from the early church, and for others our first time diving deeply into a work by one of the church Fathers. Certainly, there are ways that Athanasius describes things that are foreign to us today, or different from how we would word things. But as a church, we stand on the shoulders of these remarkable men and women of the faith. God used Athanasius to see clearly in His Word the glory of the Incarnation, and we continue to benefit from that today. Allow this brother of ours to lead us to a renewed vision of the wonders of what God has done for us.

There are two ways to engage with this book:

- 1. Follow our daily Advent reading plan** (included in this booklet). This divides the book into short daily readings that exclude Sundays. Pick up a free version of the book from the welcome desk or you can read it online at ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.html.
- 2. Read at your own pace** using a modern English translation. We recommend the edition by modernsaints—titled *On the Incarnation: a modern translation*. If following this approach, read 2 chapters per week (3 chapters in the final week) to finish by Christmas.

Advent Schedule

Church-Wide Advent Prayer Night - Joy of Every Longing Heart

November 30 • 7:00pm

As the Advent season begins, we invite you to come and take a moment to pause, to worship and pray together, to rediscover our sense of hope, and to reflect on how our losses, our suffering, and our longings can actually help us to grasp the full meaning of Christmas.

Advent Sunday Services

Each Sunday in December we'll gather together and work through a portion of John 1:1-18. Our musical expressions will vary each week, featuring worship led by our Children's Choir, an acoustic set, Adult and Youth Choir, and ensemble with many worship leaders leading together.

November 30	John 1:1-3	Children's Choir
December 7	John 1:4-5	An Unplugged Christmas
December 14	John 1:6-13	Adult and Youth Choir
December 21	John 1:14-18	Worship Leaders Ensemble

Christmas Eve

December 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

3:00pm | 5:00pm | 7:30pm

Childcare is available for children ages 0-5 at 3:00pm & 5:00pm.

Christmas Day

December 25 - Christmas Day Carol Service

3:00pm

Spiritual Discipline: Lectio Divina

How we approach the Scriptures matters. Because of the depth and complexity of God's Word, we need to approach it in various ways. However, we can easily find ourselves stuck in one mode of reading. At North Park perhaps our greatest temptation is to only approach the Bible for the sake of deep study. Of course, studying God's Word is such an important thing to do! We should all long to wrestle with its intricacies and see its remarkable richness. But what can easily get lost in the midst of study is the deep relational reality of Scripture; that our Lord is its author and continues to speak to us through it. "For the Word of God is alive and active" (Heb. 4:12).

This Advent, to help us more deeply behold the glory of the Incarnation, we want to help you encounter God Himself by allowing Him to speak directly to you through His Word. For each day of Advent, we provide a different passage that speaks about the Incarnation of God into our world, and we are encouraging you to use the ancient practice of Lectio Divina to meditate on these verses.

Lectio Divina (Latin for "divine reading") offers a helpful way of reading Scripture that moves us beyond mere information to genuine encounter with the living Christ. Its practice involves a disposition to listen to the Spirit with our hearts and an orientation toward resting in God. *Lectio Divina* is not about how much you read, but about how deeply you listen. Usually you will only get through a few verses—and that's perfectly fine. The goal is encounter, not completion.

The Six Movements of Lectio Divina

PREPARE - Find a quiet place where you will be undisturbed. Begin with a short prayer to make yourself ready to meet Jesus and be attentive to Him.

READ (Lectio) - Slowly read the Scripture passage 2-4 times, out loud if possible. Listen for a word or phrase that catches your attention.

REFLECT (Meditatio) - Pause to notice any phrase, word, or image that captures your attention or rises to the surface. What is drawing you? Why might God be highlighting this?

RESPOND (Oratio) - Sit with this phrase and allow the Holy Spirit to expand your listening. What does it look like? Sound like? Feel like? Talk to God about what you're noticing. Stay attentive without trying to figure everything out.

REST (Contemplatio) - Simply be present with God based on what you've noticed. No need for many words—just rest in His presence.

RESOLVE (Operatio) - As you conclude, ask: How is God inviting me to live differently today? Sit in silence, knowing that God is near.

Brief Example:

Scripture: John 1:14 - "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"

REFLECT: The phrase "made his dwelling among us" captures my attention.

RESPOND: Lord, you didn't just visit—you moved in with us. You pitched your tent here. What does it mean that you made your dwelling with us?

REST: [Sitting in silence with this reality]

RESOLVE: God is inviting me to remember that he is not distant. He has come to dwell with us. So while he may feel distant, may I resolve to know that He dwells with me.

Your Daily Advent Practice

Each day during Advent (Monday-Saturday):

- Set aside 10-15 minutes in a quiet place
- Open to the day's Scripture passage (provided in this booklet)
- Follow the 6 steps above at your own pace
- Don't rush. If you only make it through step 3, that's okay
- We have provided space here to write down any words/phrases that stood out.

Remember: This is not a checklist to complete, but an invitation to let the Spirit speak and to meet with Jesus. Some days will feel rich and alive; other days may feel dry or distracted. Show up anyway. God is present in both. And if you miss a day, don't give up—just begin again the next day. God's grace is new every morning.

Sermon Series/Readings

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Sunday Service: John 1:1-3

Notes:

[illegible]

Monday, December 1

Athanasius Reading: Sections 1-3 (Creation and the Fall)

Lectio Divina Scripture: John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Tuesday, December 2

Athanasius Reading: Sections 4-5 (The Corruption of Death)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-16

For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness...I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Wednesday, December 3

Athanasius Reading: Sections 6-7 (God's Dilemma and Its Solution)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Psalm 46:7-11

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Thursday, December 4

Athanasius Reading: Sections 8-10 (The Word Takes on a Body)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Friday, December 5

Athanasius Reading: Sections 11-13 (The Lost Knowledge of God)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Colossians 1:15-20

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Saturday, December 6

Athanasius Reading: Sections 14-16 (How the Word Restored Knowledge)

Lectio Divina Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Sermon Series/Readings

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Sunday Service: John 1:4-5

Notes:

[illegible]

Monday, December 8

Athanasius Reading: Sections 17-19 (The Manifestation Through the Body)

Lectio Divina Scripture: John 1:4-5
In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Tuesday, December 9

Athanasius Reading: Sections 20-22 (Why the Cross?)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Isaiah 9:2, 6
The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Wednesday, December 10

Athanasius Reading: Sections 23-25 (Death Destroyed)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Isaiah 60:1-4

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you:

All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Thursday, December 11

Athanasius Reading: Sections 26-28 (The Evidence of Victory)

Lectio Divina Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:9-10

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Friday, December 12

Athanasius Reading: Sections 29-31 (The Resurrection’s Power)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Matthew 1:20-21

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Saturday, December 13

Athanasius Reading: Sections 32 (Summary of Proof)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Hebrews 2:14-15

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Sermon Series/Readings

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Sunday Service: John 1:6-13

Notes:

[illegible]

Monday, December 15

Athanasius Reading: Sections 33-35 (Prophecies of the Incarnation)

Lectio Divina Scripture: John 1:6-13

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Tuesday, December 16

Athanasius Reading: Sections 36-38 (The Uniqueness of Christ)

Lectio Divina Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:8-9, 12-13

Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth...When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Wednesday, December 17

Athanasius Reading: Sections 39-40 (End of the Old Covenant)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Daniel 7:13-14

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Thursday, December 18

Athanasius Reading: Sections 41-43 (Why Union with Humanity?)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Luke 1:29-33

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Friday, December 19

Athanasius Reading: Sections 44-45 (Why Not by Mere Command?)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Romans 8:3-4

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Saturday, December 20

Athanasius Reading: Sections 46-50 (The Victory Over Paganism)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Galatians 4:5-7

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Sermon Series/Readings

Sunday, December 21, 2025

Sunday Service: John 1:14-18

Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. A diagonal line runs from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a narrow margin on the left side. The paper appears to be part of a notebook or a template for writing.

Monday, December 22

Athanasius Reading: Sections 51-53 (The Moral Transformation)

Lectio Divina Scripture: John 1:14-18

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Tuesday, December 23

Athanasius Reading: Sections 54-55 (The Overwhelming Evidence)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Wednesday, December 24 (Christmas Eve)

Athanasius Reading: Sections 56-57 (Conclusion: The Call to Scripture and Holiness)

Lectio Divina Scripture: Luke 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Christmas Day Meditation

"Compassion moved him; He could not bear to see death victorious over us. Instead of allowing His creatures to perish and His Father's work to come to nothing, He took on a body—a human body, just like ours. He did not simply take on any generic form or merely appear...No, He took our body...Then, by taking a body like ours, subject to death, He surrendered His body to death on behalf of all humanity and offered it to the Father. He did this purely out of love for us, so that in His death, all might die, and the law of death would be abolished...Through this act, He restored humanity, turning them from corruption to incorruption, and brought life to all through His death and the grace of his resurrection." —Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest. Resolve.

Doxology: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without ending. Amen.

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