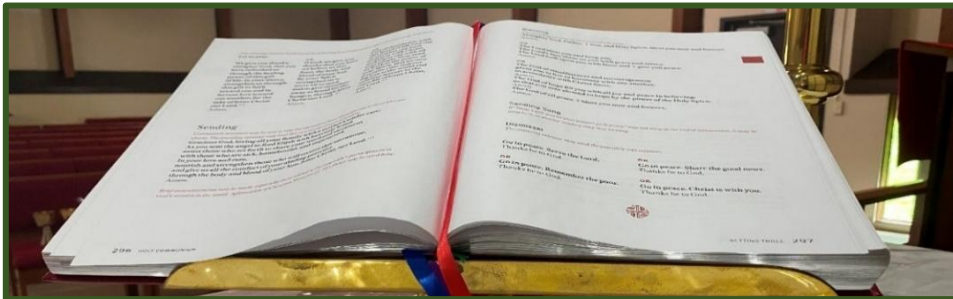


NEWS FROM ABIDING SAVIOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR

January 2026



RECENT SERMONS

Missed a recent sermon? Click on the date to get it.



[Sermon – Christmas Eve](#)

[Sermon – Second Sunday In Christmas](#)

[CLICK HERE TO GIVE YOUR OFFERING](#)

CHURCH - LET'S CONTINUE PRAYING TOGETHER



**Church of the Abiding Savior -- and Friends:
The Congregation Council is calling us to
A TIME OF PRAYER!**

The prayer of a follower of God is powerful and effective
(James 5:16b)

**2 O'CLOCK ON TUESDAYS
2 MINUTES OF LISTENING ***

***TO GOD'S DESIRES FOR US
PERSONALLY AND AS A CONGREGATION**

SET AN ALARM

2 O'CLOCK ON TUESDAYS / 2 MINUTES LISTENING TO GOD.

From The Pastor Carroll's Desk

The Wise People Still Seek Him

Rev. Dr. Julius Carroll

I have always liked the bumper sticker with the above phrase (edited for gender neutrality). The context behind the sticker-message is the coming of the three Wise people (astrologers) from modern-day Iran – to the baby Jesus.

We note that these people were not Hebrew – astrologers or, Hebrew – religious leaders, journeying from the Temple in Jerusalem to the stable – (or, more likely a house) in Bethlehem.

And, We note that The wise men find their way into the Christmas pageants in our congregations because we read the Christmas Story in the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus according to Luke. Take a ‘peek’ at Matthew’s Christmas story and you’ll see that the Wise Men are not in there but rather, Matthew focuses his attention on Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus and the shepherds and their reaction to the good news of the Savior – coming into the world; for all people of the world.

So, these wise people were – in the mindset of the Hebrews: FOREIGNERS; Gentiles who did not follow the God of Abraham and Sarah. The three were foreigners --- but they sought the light who had been born in a world of shadows.

There is a Charles Wesley hymn whose refrain goes: “Walk in the Light, beautiful Light, come where the dewdrops of mercy are bright. Shine all around us by day and by night, Jesus, the Light of the world.”

Church of the Abiding Savior, in anticipation of the Festival of the Epiphany (this coming Tuesday) and its subsequent season of the Church Year -- may God’s mercy shine upon you all and, on peoples of every nation. For, Jesus IS the light of the world!

And -- wise people still seek Him.

Pastor Carroll

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

On January 11, 2026 – after the 11am Service -- members of the congregation (and friends) will Gather in the Social Hall and via Zoom for Holy i.e., Spirit of God == CONVERSATION around 1), below. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WILL NOT BE A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – WITH SPEAKERS’ IDENTIFIED AND VOTES TAKEN PLACE.** On the contrary, notes will be placed on newsprint and comments received by the Zoom manager in the ‘chat-box’ by the Zoom participants. Pastor Carroll will receive the notes and will submit a Summary to congregants and interested friends prior to the 2nd Conversation on February 15th .

A LIGHT MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED AS WE ‘CHEW AND CHAT’ FOR NO MORE THAN 90 MINUTES.

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HOLY CONVERSATIONS during a CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITION

The Rev. Dr. Julius Carroll

The topics to be discussed (in three sessions) are:

- 1) + What does a given congregation do – WELL?
 - + A discussion about the congregation’s ministries that ARE NOT going too Well.
 - + Are there OPPORTUNITIES for ministry that the congregation might be missing?
 - + The congregation Brainstorms about the Core Values (that is to say) what are the things that the congregation does which are: NON-NEGOTIABLE) in regard to looking towards the future?
 - 2) + Based on the Core Values (identified above) what Goals – Strategies Realistic Timelines need to be put into place/into action as we move into the next chapter of the congregation’s life?
 - 3) + Reflection is done on the Ministry Site Profile results regarding:
 - Characteristics of the New Pastor
 - Priority 5 Gifts
 - Very Helpful Gifts
- + Given the Core Values (above) and the Goals and Strategies (above) – are there pastoral characteristics; top 5 priority gifts and/or very helpful gifts that need to be adjusted/added?

NEXT STEPS:

The Holy Conversations’ Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Congregation Council for review and subsequent affirmation. The Congregation Council will insert the Strategic Plan into the congregation’s Ministry Site Profile that will be submitted to the bishop for distribution to potential candidates for pastor of the congregation. The Ministry Site Profile will give the office of the bishop, the congregation’s Call Committee and candidates considering the Call -- an in-depth picture of this Community of Faith’s living into the ‘next chapter’ of the Church of the Abiding Savior’s life.

The Rev. Dr. Julius – Interim Pastor

Office Hours

Pastor Carroll has **Office Hours on Tuesdays between 10am - 1pm.**

Please contact him via phone/text at: 919 - 760 - 5482
or simply drop - by.



WELCA BI-MONTHLY MEETING



The bi-monthly breakfast meeting of Abiding Savior's Women of the ELCA (WELCA) will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 10:00 am. As plans are made, look to get more information on their second **"Dinner and A Movie"**.

ASH WEDNESDAY/LENT

In 2026, Ash Wednesday falls on Wednesday, February 18th which marks the beginning of the season of Lent. Please expect to get more information from the Worship/Music ministry with details for worship opportunities.



THANKS DR. McDONALD-FLETCHER



Dr. Varnell McDonald-Fletcher continues to prepare and share important and timely medical information with the congregation. The latest pamphlet **"Make The Most Of Your Medical Visit"** is available in the narthex.

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Abiding Savior will be hiring an administrative assistant/bookkeeper. This position will provide support to the finance ministry for processing financial transactions and work closely with the Pastor and Congregation Council to fulfill some of the administrative needs of the congregation. This will be a part-time position (approximately 10 hours/week). If you know of or would like to recommend someone for the position, please contact any member of the council. We are seeking an individual with excellent communication and technical skills.

CHOIR

If you enjoy singing, please consider joining the choir. Voices are needed. The upcoming rehearsal will be held on Saturday, January 10th at 12:30 PM.

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY -FEBRUARY 15, 2026

The Church Of The Abiding Savior, Lutheran was chartered February 7, 1965 with 19 confirmed members and 22 baptized members. The current church building was dedicated on March 14, 1965. We will celebrate 61 years on February 15, 2026.

DISTRIBUTION OF “*I HAVE RIGHTS*” RED CARDS

All people in the United States, regardless of immigration status, have certain rights and protections under the U.S. Constitution. The ILRC's red cards give examples of how people can exercise these rights. Cards do not provide individualized legal advice. Volunteers are needed to distribute Red Cards in the Hearthside community on February 26th from noon to 2:00 PM.

STORIES WE COULD TELL

This is a Black History Month Zoom event sponsored by the North Carolina Chapter of the African Descent Lutheran Association and led by Dr. Julius Carroll
February 19, 2026 7:00 – 8:30 PM Via Zoom



THRIVENT OPPORTUNITIES

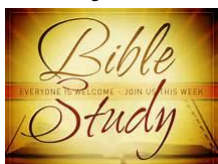
Thrivent Choice Dollars:

Members of Thrivent Financial can recommend where some of Thrivent Financial's charitable outreach funds go by directing Choice Dollars. If you are a member, please consider directing your Choice Dollars to Abiding Savior. These Dollars accumulate in your account and are not automatically allocated. Your Choice Dollars can be designated online. If you need help or have questions, please contact Veronica Johnson.

Applications can now be made for 2026 Thrivent Action Grants Think about an unmet need in the community and how you can help. Each Thrivent member is eligible to receive up to two \$250 Thrivent Action Team Grants per year. Grant applications can be made now through December 31, 2026. Thrivent members have used Action Team grants for Abiding Savior to provide assistance and address needs of neighbors throughout the Durham community.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Please join Pastor Carroll as we delve into the major themes in the Gospel according to Mark:



Wednesdays at noon and at 7:00 pm

The noon session is in person and on Zoom.

The 7:00 PM session is on Zoom

Learning to Live with the Light

This was the first year in fifteen years that I have not led worship on Christmas Eve...or planned for a Service of Lessons and Carols for the Sunday after Christmas (so as not to have to preach!)...or otherwise been involved in planning worship or making sure bulletins are formatted and printed at the appropriate times (or worrying that the printer would break at the most *inopportune* time).

I'd like to share with you how it was different. For the past 15 years, I've worked hard to make sure everything would go as planned—that the services would draw people into the mystery of the incarnation and that somehow I could sprinkle some of that Christmas “magic” into the hearts of my parishioners. Typically, it would feel like a sort of liturgical whiplash, the quick transition from Advent through Christmas to Epiphany: from waiting to birth to light. It's a quick transition if you think about it, just twelve days to reorient your heart and mind. To be honest, it's always been the hardest time of the year for me. I get immersed in the beautiful longing of Advent and am never quite ready to make the transition to Epiphany. Usually, it has to do with the state of the world and the suffering contained therein. It's always very clear to me that, no matter how long we've waited, four weeks is never enough to eliminate the need for a savior.

This year, however, something shifted. Because I did not immediately bounce from one service to the next, the twelve days of Christmas blossomed for me in a way they haven't in a very long time. Time slowed down for a beat or two, and in the comfort of my own home, I could sense that love had been born, and I could linger in it a bit.

We adopted our son when he was just two months old. I still remember that first night he slept in our home. Because we had had only two weeks to prepare for his arrival, we had nowhere for him to sleep except for a wicker basket called a “Moses basket” that another family had lent us. He slept in the basket, and I slept on the sofa beside him so that neither of us would feel alone. And then, during six weeks of parental leave, we learned, little by little, how to live with one another. We didn't go out much because when we did, it was an event, but plenty of people came to us. They came to see him and hold him, gifts started arriving on our doorstep, and we finally got a crib. There was a time of adjustment.

I wonder if Epiphany—and the season after Epiphany—would be an easier season if we thought of it more in terms of parental leave. It is, after all, a period of about six weeks. Of course, we can't take leave from our jobs or our responsibilities, but a subtle shift in our thinking might serve us well. It takes time to learn how to live with a new baby, especially when that baby is the light of the world. Perhaps this Epiphany season, we can gift ourselves with a bit of grace as we allow the light of the world to grow in us, maybe not like a firework so much, but like a candle whose light spreads to others until the whole room is as bright as the sun.

Let your light so shine.

Happy New Year

Emily K. Hartner