

## **Life Thoughts in the Church Year – October-December 2026 – Three-Year Lectionary**

**October 4 – 19th Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 22 A** – The master sent servants to harvest, and the tenants beat them and treated them harshly. Even worse, they killed the son. We too can treat the messengers of the Gospel harshly, especially when they speak the truth of God's Law to us. And yet, the Son of God went to the cross for us who are wicked and sinful (Matthew 21), and the vineyard of the Lord will yield good grapes on the last day (Isaiah 5). So, we press on toward that goal of everlasting life and share the Gospel with others, knowing that it is only by the grace of God that we are counted as perfect (Philippians 3).

**October 11 – 20th Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 23 A** – The wedding feast is prepared, yet people have lots of reasons for not attending. However, the excuses given for rejecting God are as implausible as the excuses people give to defend abortion and assisted dying (Matthew 22:5). Still, as God invites us into His great wedding banquet, He reminds us that this feast has been prepared for all and that every person is still precious to Him (Isaiah 25:6-7). Therefore, we have the task of extending His gracious invitation to “as many as you find” (Matthew 22:9).

**October 18 – Festival of St. Luke, Evangelist** – The Lord provides laborers in His harvest field. We pray for our pastor and for more pastors in the Church of Christ (Luke 10). We, the harvest, will receive the crown of righteousness on the Last Day. There will be suffering between now and then, but we endure knowing that God provides (2 Timothy 4). The Lord turns everything on its head and provides for His people healing, restoration, life today, and life everlasting (Isaiah 35).

**October 25 – Reformation Day** – Our freedom from slavery to sin comes through the Son of God being nailed to a tree (John 8). The righteousness of God has come to us by faith. This sets us free from sin and also sets us free to love God and love our neighbors. The life we have from God, we live for the benefit of others (Romans 3). In so doing, we give glory to God for all that He has done for us (Revelation 14).

**November 1 – All Saints Day** – Every believer (saint) lives a life of tribulation, being hated by the world and mourning the sin in their own heart and the sins of the world, like abortion, human trafficking and other such evils (Revelation 7:14; 1 John 3:1). Yet, God's children live hopefully, awaiting the day in which He will wipe every tear away from our eyes. When we find ourselves in that great, innumerable multitude, we will rejoice to be freed from all such evil and to greet all the saints washed in Christ's blood, including many of the victims of our culture of death (Revelation 7:9, 14, 17).

**November 8 – Pentecost 24** – Sadly, through things like abortion, abuse, poverty, and neglect, many people are deprived of a home filled with love, peace, and joy. God shows His love by preparing a “lovely dwelling place” (Psalm 84:1) for all people at His side through the death of Jesus, His Son. As we wait for Christ to gather us, His bride, to that eternal home with Him, we are wise to keep the light of faith burning brightly by continually hearing God's Word and by loving others by sharing His Word with them while there is still time (Matthew 25:1-4).

**November 15 – Pentecost 25** – The end of the Church year reminds us that there is an urgency to sharing the Gospel and God's Word about life. Naturally, when Christ returns, we want Him to find us as “good and faithful servants” (Matthew 25:21), using the talents and resources He's

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given us to glorify Him and love and serve every one of our neighbors. And, because the Lord “has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:9), we share God’s Word with eager anticipation that every life God has created may escape the day of wrath (Zephaniah 1:15) and live eternally with Him.

**November 22 – Last Sunday of the Church Year** – Today, Jesus gives a divine perspective on our neighbors. Jesus identifies “the least of these” as His “brothers” and tells us that when we love and serve those least ones, we are actually serving Him! (Matthew 25:40). St. Paul also reminds us that because of Christ’s own death and resurrection, all people will be raised on the Last Day, either to life or to death (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Together, this means that every single person, no matter their size, age, or physical condition, is a person whom Jesus has died for, identifies with, and who will be raised to live eternally.

**November 26 – Thanksgiving Day** – God “graciously provides for all our needs of body and soul” (LSB collect for Day of Thanksgiving). For Christ’s sake, God cares about our earthly lives, providing our physical necessities and healing our diseases according to His will (Philippians 4:19), and He cleanses us from the leprosy of sin, that we might live eternally with Him. God’s continual provision requires not only our continual praise and thanks but serves as proof that God loves each life that He has created and desires that we would do the same.

**November 29 – Advent 1** – Isaiah reminds us that every person is created by God. We are all the work of His hands: “we are the clay and He is our potter” (Isaiah 64:8). Not only does this teach us that each life is precious, it instructs us that our lives and our bodies are not ours to do with as we please. It is God alone who determines each life’s beginning and end and how we are to use our bodies to glorify Him. Thankfully, we can rest securely in His care, upholding His gift of life, because “God is faithful” and “sustains you to the end” (1 Corinthians 1:8).

**December 6 – 2nd Sunday in Advent** – “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (Isaiah 40). The Lord speaks comfort to His people, bringing forgiveness and hope through His promise of a Savior. John the Baptist prepared the way, calling sinners to repentance, pointing to Christ, not to himself (Mark 1). God is giving time for repentance; however, His promises also invite us to holy living and faithfulness (2 Peter 3). Therefore, we wait with confidence for the Good Shepherd to gather His flock and carry them in loving care. Jesus, help prepare hearts by Your Word, comfort those who hurt with Your Word, and keep us steadfast in the one true faith, Amen.

**December 13 – 3rd Sunday in Advent** – Brokenhearted, poor, captive, bound, and mourning (Isaiah 61), that is what sin does to each and every one of us. And as Christmas approaches, these become more of a reality for many people. Yet, we are reminded that the Lord will restore the fortunes of His people (Psalm 126). This is what John bore witness to in the wilderness, a place that’s lifeless and hopeless. John proclaimed hope and salvation (John 1), pointing to Jesus. This is the God of peace who Himself sanctifies you completely (1 Thessalonians 5), filling mouths with laughter and tongues with joy.

**December 20 – 4th Sunday in Advent** – “How will this be ...” (Luke 1) is a question asked not only by Mary the mother of our Lord. It is a question that’s often on the lips of many people who

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get unexpected news. The diagnosis, the unplanned pregnancy, the divorce, the death call. But God doesn't forget His promises or abandon His people "for [He has] been with you wherever you went" (2 Samuel 7), strengthening you with His Gospel (Romans 16). So let us sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever, making known His faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 89).

**December 21 – St. Thomas, Apostle** – St. Thomas, often remembered for his doubts, would rather have us remember his confession, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20). Imagine if you were remembered for only your weakest moments; what despair that would be. We would cry out, "Let not your anger burn against me" (Judges 6) when thinking about all our sins and failures. Yet, God in His love does great wonders, remembering not your sins because of the One whose hand and side bear the marks for you. This forgiveness invites us to speak the truth in love as we grow in faith (Ephesians 4), confessing alongside St. Thomas.

**December 24 – Christmas Eve** – "Let us love one another" (1 John 4). Christmas is often filled with family, gifts, and joyful gatherings. Yet, it can also be a season of loneliness, grief, or strained relationships. However, the good news of Christmas is that God's love does not depend on our circumstances. Immanuel, God with us, entered our broken world to make us His own (Matthew 1). Having first received His love, we are now free to share it with others. This Christmas, may God's love move us to notice, encourage, and care for those who need to know they are not alone.

**December 25 – Christmas Day** – Joy to the world! This day is rightly filled with much joy and singing, for your life is so precious and valuable that God left His throne in heaven to become one with you. The very Word of God has been made flesh, and now God dwells with us (John 1). Those precious baby feet sticking out from the swaddling cloth bring good news of peace and salvation (Isaiah 52). And soon those little hands will stretch out and be laid bare before all the nations on the cross of Calvary for all to see the salvation of our God.

**December 26 – St. Stephen, Martyr** – As we celebrate our Lord's birth, we are reminded of the cost of discipleship with the first martyr, St. Stephen. Faithfulness often comes at a cost to those who belong to Christ. Today around the world there are Christians who celebrate from prison, in isolation, and amidst threats of death, all while holding to the righteous Word of God (Psalm 119). But much like St. Stephen, we see the glory of God in His Word and Sacrament, which strengthen our faith in the face of persecution so that we can declare "'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23).

**December 27 – First Sunday in Christmas** – You are free in Christ, a child of God! (Galatians 4). Wherever you have failed, whatever you have done—or left undone—your circumstances do not define you. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, God has clothed you with the robe of Christ's righteousness (Isaiah 61). For Jesus' sake, He no longer looks upon your sin but sees you as His beloved child, "a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord" (Isaiah 62). Simeon and Anna rejoiced to behold this Savior in the temple, and with them we continue to sing His salvation and proclaim His praises today (Luke 2).

**December 27 – St. John, Apostle and Evangelist** – A message heard and a message proclaimed! St. John had heard a many great things from the Lord (John 21) and had a lot to say,

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writing a total of five books of the New Testament. His message is clear: that which was from the very beginning of creation is made known to us in God's own Jesus, forgiveness and life (1 John 1). This is the message the Church still proclaims today, calling sinners to repent and take refuge in the Lord (Psalm 11). Lord, having heard Your Word, lead us to follow in St. John's steps to proclaim it. Amen.

**December 28 – Holy Innocents, Martyr** – “There is hope for your future” (Jeremiah 31). The death of a child is among the deepest sorrows a parent can endure. In such grief, words often fail, and all we can do is cry, “O God, hear my prayer” (Psalm 54). At times it may seem as though God is silent – but that is the lie Satan wants us to believe. The Lord promises, “They shall come back from the land of the enemy” (Jeremiah 31). Sin, death, and Satan do not have the final word. Because of the Lamb who was slain and now lives, we have hope, a future, and the sure promise of the resurrection.

**December 31 – New Years Eve** – “Teach us to number our days” (Psalm 90). As one year ends and another begins, take time to reflect. See honestly where you have wandered from the Lord (Isaiah 30) but see even more clearly His unfailing love in Christ. No trial or temptation, no sin or failure, can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8). As we enter a new year, may the Lord grant us hearts of wisdom, steadfast faith, and joyful watchfulness, always ready for the day when our Savior returns in glory (Luke 12).

*Life Thoughts in the Church Year for October-December 2026 were written by Rev. Travis Kleinschmidt, Shawano, Wisconsin; Rev. Larry Yaw, Pulaski, Wisconsin; and Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans For Life.*