



November 10, 2020

Where Two or Three Are Gathered

Having spent Tuesday night watching the election coverage and going to bed at a not-unreasonable hour...for a teenager...I found it strangely refreshing to see the county mosaic up on the screen. The red and blue shades of votes being counted, the gray of results not counted yet. It was beautiful.

The next morning, when the counts were so close that nothing was called, the passage came to mind, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18) I saw, on those maps, two or three gathered in a space we call These United States and felt the presence of Christ.

We usually consider this passage to reflect our religious lives, but there is something more here. If you give 6 pastors the same text to preach from, you will have 6 different sermons. This is not because we are reading different Bibles, but we have been shaped in many different ways. Together we are more than simply the sum of

our parts; we are a multifaceted representation of how God can take things that wouldn't seem to work together and forge them into something awe-inspiring.

Think about Jesus' disciples. Fishermen, we know of, but Levi was a tax collector who took money from everyone, like fishermen for Rome. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus seemed well off enough and comfortable in their station in life, but Simon was a zealot, a religious and political revolutionary who wanted to openly fight against the Romans and shape the people into a righteous nation. Judas stole directly from the common purse, which he held himself, but even he had a place at the table for the Last Supper.

There is a beautiful message in the composition of Jesus' followers. There is not one way to be, but a myriad of ways that we can be called to serve Jesus in whatever our individual purpose, vocation, or political affiliation. As long as we gather, Jesus is there. There is no one way to approach God, but when we approach the same God, our values and priorities are shaped around that same Cross of Christ.

Jesus also says, "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire." (Matthew 5) While we understand that life and death are in the hands of God, and to claim that power for ourselves is to dare the transgression of this unequivocal command of God, it is disconcerting how Jesus equates murder to anger and insult.

It is too easy to look at a person and find something wrong, and not too much more difficult to let that perceived flaw become the reason to not listen to anything they say. It is just this easy to write somebody out of the body of Christ because we consider them to be fools and to not be able to constructively contribute to community. There is no provision made for doing it back to somebody, that pesky "turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and give your shirt, too" business. (Matthew 5)

When we let ourselves be divided, we shatter the beautiful mosaic of that map that I saw. We forget that we need two or three different people together to help one another see Christ's presence, to serve and be served. We deny the beauty of God's diverse creation, as Paul reminds us, "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing

be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. (1 Corinthians 12)”

Even as we wait and watch for what the next stage in our life together will look like as the body of Christ, I look forward to doing so with the diverse membership of the body of Christ.

Pastor Justin Smoot, he/him

SALC Military Families

Are you or a family member currently serving in the military? SALC would like to be in touch with you for Christmas. Please send in the name and contact information of your loved one to info@salc-wausau.org to receive something special this Christmas season.

2021, Here We Come! Planning and Pledging Time, Talent, and Treasures

Each year, the leadership of the church takes up the task of planning the ministry activities and needs for the coming year. How we are able to reach into the lives of people and be prepared to receive new members through worship, learning, witness and service is based on the bigger picture of how members and friends like you anticipate what you might share.

This will be even more challenging for 2021 as we adapt to the new realities and uncertainties of the pandemic. It is more important than ever that our ministry leaders know what resources they will have available, so we are asking you to assist in the planning for an annual spending plan by pledging your support.

Recently, a commitment card was mailed to invite you to prayerfully consider expressing your intentions for giving of time and talents and financial pledges. These cards indicating your intentions can be returned by mail, placed in the Drop Box outside the main entrance of the church, emailed, or filled out online at www.salc-wausau.org/forms.

Hear a message of gratitude and an invitation from the chairperson of the finance/stewardship ministry, Mark Gleisner to consider the unique ministry

opportunities this season of our life together provides: <https://youtu.be/ZOPNOq4GYM0>. Thank you for the gifts that you share so generously!

Worship Watch Parties

Do you know anyone who hasn't be able to watch our Facebook livestreams? Invite them to watch at church. Faith Formation Ministry has been looking for ways for members to connect and share in worship. We will be holding Worship Watch Parties to invite members to church on Sundays to watch a recorded live stream service. We will have space in the fellowship hall for 10 people at each viewing. Join us at 11:00 am and again at 1:00 pm this **Sunday, November 15**. If you are interested in attending, please sign up online: <https://bit.ly/3elmzFh>

Plan to Gather Updates and Feedback from Listening Sessions

Last month, six listening sessions were offered to share information and provide space for members to reflect on the direct impact Covid-19 has had on members and receive feedback. Many thanks to those who took the time to attend, send letters, e-mails and share in person. Helpful and productive ideas were provided as we were made aware of some of the challenges shared in ministry right now. [This video](#) was also shared to provide some history and understanding about the "Plan to Gather" criteria and plan. It features information about www.salc-wausau/covid, now a part of the Saint Andrew website. By accessing this portion of the website, members and friends of Saint Andrew can better understand our plan and response based on the criteria set by the task force and approved by council. If you have questions about weddings, funerals, baptisms, or anything else, check out that website to understand how church is available to you.

Pictures for Thanksgiving Service

What are you thankful for? Please send pictures of what you are thankful for this year to michelle@salc-wausau.org with a small description. Feel free to submit these on Facebook and Instagram (@salcwausau) as well.

Plan to Gather Weekly Update: 11/10/2020

For now, Saint Andrew remains in Phase One of the Plan to Gather. As soon as there is a consistent downward trend, we will move forward to Phase Two.

SALC COVID-19 UPDATE

As of 11/4/2020

Date	Burden #	Trajectory	Burden Status
10/14	1003.4	Increasing	Very High
10/21	1189.7	Increasing	Very High
10/28	1357.4	Increasing	Very High
11/4	1657.3	Increasing	Very High

Current SALC Status: Phase One

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