



November 17, 2020

Eight Months of Advent

Christmas is only a month and a half away, but we have been in Advent for 8 months already. We don't like this. Even before 2020, we would ignore Advent as we bull rush towards Christmas. We do not want to wait.

That is what Advent is about: waiting. Waiting for Christmas. Waiting for a Messiah. Waiting for deliverance. Waiting for a sign. Waiting for God to arrive. Waiting for Christ to come. Waiting for Christ to come again.

The Christian life was marked by feast days and fast days, the same as our world. A cycle of harvest, rest, planting, waiting. Every feast requiring a fast to prepare. The same practice as purchasing gifts and ingredients for meals, but not opening and enjoying them until the proper hour. You do not want to spoil the feast, the surprise, the joy.

While the season usually begins between November 27th and December 3rd, most Advent calendars have twenty-four days to help mark the days and count the time until Christ's birth. This makes it easier to know exactly when something is coming. If only we had a Covid Advent Calendar, to watch the approach of a vaccine and

treatment so that we can join together in rejoicing in community, sing in church, and take our masks off!

Too easily we forget that Christians have been living in anticipation of Jesus' coming for a couple thousand years. Jesus' ascension was coupled with a promise that, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1) This was a great source of joy and comfort initially, but as the days, months, and years lengthened, despair weighed on the community. The Psalmists cry of "How long, O Lord?" was taken upon the lips of Christian communities who buried their dead and wondered if Jesus left them alone and forgotten.

This was not easy for them. This is not easy for us.

Waiting grows us by focusing us on the reality we anticipate, but the longer we anticipate, the more the reality around us draws our focus from what will be to what is. We feel foolish for hoping. We atrophy. We harden our hearts against the cold reality of this world. At our best, we give up. At our worst, we look for patterns that aren't there. An explanation of why, a contrived countdown, an ersatz map, are just some ways we attempt to bring form to the nebulous time in-between what was and what will be. To bring control. To stop waiting.

Patience is an underdeveloped spiritual gift, especially for American Christians. We cannot quite grasp how undeserved God's gifts are; patience and waiting are things we do not want. A child cannot be born without the gestational period. The harvests cannot be reaped without the growing season, and the joy of a gift received cannot be felt without the time wrapped and hidden under the tree.

We often tell kids what we need to hear ourselves: "Good things come to those who wait." Best among those is that we end up shaping our lives around the coming reality, transforming the present coldness and isolation by embodying the coming refutation in God's presence and true community. We become the seed planted here and now to reap a harvest of what is coming. Is there a harvest of community and wholeness on the other side of Covid? Yes. God's upside-down kingdom where the values of power, wealth, and control are overturned and service, generosity, and trust are the way? Yes.

Not in a, "look busy, Jesus is coming," way.

Advent is not about doing.

Advent is being, embodying, abiding until Jesus comes.

Have patience.

Pastor Justin Smoot, he/him

Thanksgiving Week Office Hours

In the coming week, many will give thanks for the blessings we've received from God. The pastors remain thankful for the staff at Saint Andrew who have worked so diligently through this pandemic. Please join them in praying for their health and wellbeing in body, mind, and spirit as many will be using PTO in the coming week.

Monday, Nov. 24 – Tuesday, Nov. 25

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Wednesday, Nov. 26 – Friday, Nov. 28

Office Closed

As many return from Thanksgiving gatherings, out of care and love for our staff, please be mindful of your visits to Saint Andrew in person if you have been in large groups of people or are feeling under the weather. Thank you for your ongoing care, love, and support.

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.

Communion Distribution

As we remain in virtual gatherings, communion distribution will take place on the fourth and first Sundays of each month. This means communion will be available this coming **Sunday, November 23** and again on the second Sunday of advent, **December 6**. Please visit the office to pick up communion during the week from 8:30 am-4:30 pm or on **Saturday, November 22** from 10:00 am-2:00 pm.

Waypost Intern Position Available

Crossways is looking for a great candidate to join our staff as an intern at Waypost Camp. This temporary position will last through October of 2021, and is a great way

for someone to get into professional camp ministry. Interested? Know someone who would be great for the role? Check it out!

<https://www.crosswayscamps.org/employment>

Worship Watch Parties

Do you know anyone who hasn't been 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 22**. If you are interested in attending, please sign up [here](#).

Crossways Camping Ministries Update

Dear Crossways Camp People,

A global pandemic is a challenging time to have a mission statement begin with the words, "Bringing people together..." The hardest thing about this time, for so many of us, has been the grief and anxiety from staying distant from those we love. We miss you at camp too, and we long to gather together.

Even in the midst of continued uncertainty, we are making plans to open registration for Summer Camp 2021. It will look different than it has in the past. All of these plans are tentative and may change based on state/federal mandates, input from our health officials, and best practices emerging from the American Camp Association. We will communicate any updates as they happen.

Timeline

We are planning to open registration on Monday, January 4. This is quite a bit later than usual, which we hope gives us the time to get better information to you. We would rather delay registration than have to make mass changes or cancellations like last year.

Youth Camp

We are planning to open youth camp with a 50% capacity. If Covid conditions across the state warrant it, we may be able to raise that threshold. We are encouraged by the emerging reports from schools and summer camps that have been successful in mitigating the risk of the virus.

Family Camp

We will continue the practice of assigning housing by family. We may need to limit capacity based on the staffing we are able to provide.

Confirmation Camp

Confirmation Camp will open with a 50% capacity. We are meeting with individual Confirmation Leaders from across the Synod to help us think through the ways we can keep our campers safe.

Day Camp

In order to focus on health and safety during Covid, with new ways of doing programming at camp, we will NOT be scheduling Day Camp experiences for summer 2021.

It is our highest priority to care for the health and safety of our staff, our campers, and the families they return home to. As I write this letter, Covid-19 cases in Wisconsin are Very High and rising. We hope to see that trending downward by the time registration opens. We invite you to join us in prayer and in actions that help to make Wisconsin healthier.

Grace Abounds,
Rev. Sharon L. S. Cook,
Executive Director

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: 11/17/2020

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 11/11/2020

Date	Burden #	Trajectory	Burden Status
10/21	1189.7	Increasing	Very High
10/28	1357.4	Increasing	Very High
11/4	1657.3	Increasing	Very High
11/11	1925.9	Increasing	Critically High

Current SALC Status: Phase One

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