



Statement Regarding Christmas Worship at Saint Andrew

While many plan to gather in person or virtually over the Thanksgiving holiday, and Advent begins this coming Sunday, November 29, no doubt many are beginning to consider plans for Christmas. At Saint Andrew, the *Plan to Gather Task Force* considered options and recommendations pertaining to Christmas Eve in-person worship. The decision was never between *having Christmas* or *not having Christmas*; nor was it between gathering and not gathering. The decision was threefold: to continue with our [current criteria](#) under the Plan to Gather, make an exception and put the criteria on hold over Christmas, or re-evaluate and re-write our criteria for the Plan to Gather. In keeping with our current criteria, the task force recommended the following statement that was then approved and adopted by council on November 19:

In the spirit of Love, born to us in the Christ child, the pastors and staff, the Plan to Gather Task Force, and the Church Council at Saint Andrew Lutheran Church are committed to sharing the gospel safely and abundantly in these difficult times. As a large congregation with over 3000 members, we are partners in public health and have set the goal that Saint Andrew will not be a source of community spread. We recognize we cannot fulfill our mission to be “open to all” if the vulnerable and the visitor is not fully welcome in worship among us. We are equipped to support members in their life-long faith journeys through virtual and innovative means. Therefore this Christmas, we will worship together in our homes as a sign of love for the community we have been called to serve.

While not attending worship in person on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is certainly a loss, I would invite you to also consider leaning into the opportunities this provides us as a church: to share the gospel and cast the net as wide as possible by inviting others to join us in staying home for Christmas to help prevent further spread of Covid-19. The benefits are numerous.

- As a large congregation, we are **setting an example** for other area congregations that we can make bold, brave choices for the sake of public health.
- This decision is **not about us**. It’s about the community. It’s about God. It’s about God’s people.
- By not being a source of community spread, families can gather more safely, schools can resume in person with less quarantines, we can do our part in caring for health care workers and their families by not contributing to the surge.

Under the theme “I’ll be *home* for Christmas,” a Christmas Planning Task Force is already planning some incredible opportunities for you and your loved ones to engage with church, the building, be involved in sharing the love of Jesus, and connect to the deepest sense of what Christ came to bring: hope, peace, joy, and love! There will be opportunities to make a positive impact.

- Yard signs are being developed to invite others to join us on the live stream. “I’ll be home for Christmas - online worship” which will take place at www.facebook.com/salcwausau on **Christmas Eve at 6:30 pm and 10:30 pm** and on **Christmas Day at 9:00 am**.
- **Interactive opportunities to connect at church** will be available for you. From singing a Christmas hymn for the live stream in solos or family groups, to focusing on exterior decorations that will lift spirits and focus our hearts, to

time made available to take family pictures in the Sanctuary by the tree or to leave a family picture or a Christmas card to be present for the live stream, faith formation opportunities to engage children in a virtual Christmas pageant (see below) and adult faith formation through a four week Advent bible study at 8:00 pm on Tuesdays starting December 1, there will be many reasons to stop by church or engage online.

- *Christmas at Home* bags will be available and include full print bulletins for all services so that you can read through Christmas worship if being online is not as easy for you. Silent night vigil candles will be included, as will communion elements, and other devotional tools and surprises.
- *A Live Nativity* will take place outside on Sunday, December 20 to find a focal point in the cross and manger.
- A service project on a massive scale, inviting people to be generous through contributions to local organizations will keep us centered, **not in what we have lost, but what we can share.**

Stay tuned to the Weekly Wave for all of the announcements and details made available along the way. The promise of Christmas is *Emmanuel*, “God with us.” This good news is not confined to a sanctuary but with us wherever we go. Even as Joseph and Mary were met with “no room in the inn,” God still found a way to be born into this world. And from that manger, we have life in unexpected ways that only God can provide.

Christmas blessings to all,

Pr. Jenn

Christmas Lights Needed!

We hope to make our little corner of Rib Mountain as bright as possible – to bring hope not just to our neighbors, but also to the skiers and the people passing by. Christ our Light is coming! Can you help? We are looking for donations of new Christmas lights in counts of any number by Friday, December 4. Simply bring them or order online and mail them to church: [150202 County Road NN Wausau WI 54401](https://www.wisconsin.gov/locations/150202-county-road-nn-wausau-wi-54401).



For the very tall pine tree on the corner of NN and Partridge: LED mini multicolor lights [like this](#).

For the trees along NN and throughout the parking lot: mini “warm white” lights [like this](#).

For lighting up portions of the building: blue or white floodlights or spot lights will do. Extension cords, timers, and other supplies would also be welcome.

December 4 and 5 are currently the days set aside to do exterior decorating. If that is something you enjoy, call the office. We’ll be sure to let you know what times to come and help out!

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