



December 16, 2020

Pastor's Update ~ Revised Plans for Christmas Eve

Dear St. John's Family,

Although we had hoped to gather in person for worship on Christmas Eve, the continued surge in coronavirus cases has prompted us to conclude it would not be safe or wise to do so. After meeting with our Leadership Team via Zoom last evening and spending considerable time in dialogue with my colleagues, Pastor Addie and Andrew, the following plans have been set in motion.

We will provide a recorded worship service for Christmas Eve that will include **BOTH audio and video**. Thanks to the technical skills of our Minister of Music, Andrew Paulson, we will be creating a service you will be able to enjoy from the safety and comfort of your home on Christmas Eve Day, beginning at noon. There will be two "watch party" opportunities on St. John's Facebook page at 7:00pm and 11:00pm, and the service will also be available to view on our website and on YouTube. The service will follow a traditional "lessons and carols" format, and will include a special message for children, a Christmas message preceding the sharing of communion, and the opportunity to sing *Silent Night* with tealights you may switch on and raise in place of traditional candles.

Tealights may be picked up at St. John's on Wednesday, December 23rd and Thursday, December 24th, and will be in a large basket with a sign on it, on the porch outside my office door. If you purchased a poinsettia in honor or memory of loved ones, you may also come inside the sanctuary during office hours on Wednesday and Thursday before Christmas to claim your poinsettia and either take it home to enjoy or share it with someone whose holiday may be brightened by it. The Church Office will be closing at 3:00pm on December 24th.

One element of the video accompanying our Christmas Eve service will be a slide show of church members holding a candle. This is where we need your help! You are invited to send Andrew (andrew@st-johns-ucc.org) a photo of

yourself or family members holding candles (be creative and festive) so that we might include your photo in the slideshow that will appear during the singing of *Silent Night*. Photos must be submitted to Andrew by Monday evening, December 21st in order to be included.

Also, on Christmas Eve Day, between 1:00 and 3:00pm, persons are welcome to come and sit quietly in the Sanctuary for a brief time, as has been the case for the past few months on Thursday afternoons. If you would like to do so, please remember that you must call the Church Office and indicate the time you will be coming so we might assure that crowd size does not exceed safe limits.

A separate worship service will be recorded (audio only) for Sunday, December 27th, and will follow our usual order of worship, with a few additional Christmas carols for your enjoyment.

Our deep desire is that we, as a church family, might be able to celebrate Christ's birth in a safe, joyous and meaningful way, even though we will be physically apart. During the day on Christmas Eve, I would like to challenge each of you to call another member of St. John's ~ perhaps someone who usually sits near you in the pews or someone you have not seen recently because of the pandemic. Check in with one of our homebound members or those living in retirement living settings where restrictions set in place for the safety of all residents have prevented folks from coming and going as usual. While some are lamenting that Christmas 2020 has been ruined by the circumstances surrounding us, let me gently remind you that nothing can get in the way of, or ruin, Christ showing up yet again in our world in the form of a baby filled with promise and hope. As we wait for the light at the end of tunnel, let us celebrate in rare form *the* Light of the World ~ the One who is within reach and is the source of our strength and hope. Merry Christmas!

Pastor Sue