



November 17, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all.

Last week, these words were shared from Bishop Ruben Saenz of the Great Plains Conference:

Out of an abundance of caution I am strongly encouraging that in-person worship services for congregations located in counties identified as being in critical or dangerous statuses related to the COVID-19 pandemic be suspended until further notice. I fully recognize that this means worshipping physically apart from one another during the Thanksgiving and Advent seasons, including Christmas Eve, funerals, weddings, and other large group gatherings but I believe this is the most responsible action at this time to preserve the health and wellbeing of our laity and clergy.

In reviewing these words of encouragement with a number of our leaders, *the decision has been reached to move to online worship only, between now and the end of the year.* We are encouraging all committees and study groups to return to online as well. The Saline county covid total is rising. McPherson and other surrounding counties are seeing the rise as well.

Here is the plan moving forward starting this Sunday, November 22:

- Worship will be available on-demand meaning you can access the worship service anytime between 8:30 am Sunday morning and then throughout the week. The service will start from the beginning if you are running behind and do not get online until 11:15am. You cannot watch Sunday morning. No problem! Watch anytime during the week!
- Throughout Advent, we will be passing out personal candles for individuals and families to join online in the traditional candle lighting during the singing of Silent Night on Christmas Eve. The difference is you will be lighting from your homes. Imagine the light of Christ being lit throughout the city of Salina and surrounding towns. The walls of the church cannot contain God's light in the world.

My heart aches at this decision, but I feel we are putting the well being of the church and community first. What I want is to be together in person. What I know is we are better apart at this time.



Bishop Saenz concluded his note this way:

We are living in difficult and uncertain times. I am aware that many of our Thanksgiving tables will be fraught with uncertainties and absent of our loved ones for a variety of reasons. I am aware that this Christmas season will be difficult for individuals, families, and our communities. But we are a people of relentless hope in God in times of darkness, danger, and despair. Just because we can't gather for worship in our church buildings in this season of pandemic like we are accustomed, it does not in any way mean we cannot worship. In fact, our inability to gather as a community of faith to worship should compel us to find new ways to worship until we are able to gather again.

Singing new songs – together in joy!

Pastor Craig