

## CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH XENIA

NewsNote Vol. 2, No. 6  
Christmas 2



Streaming live to Facebook: use this link  
[CECX Facebook link](#)

Link for Sunday Worship on Zoom: click button  
below

ZOOM link

**A message from Rev. Jennifer**

**Happy New Year!** We are now in 2021--and we've been in Year B since Nov 30. We will be reading the Gospel according to Mark as our primary Gospel.

A thoughtprovoking, updated version of this gospel is **Marked**, a graphic novel of this gospel set NOW. You can get it through Seabury Books--I read it over and over. Here is the URL so that you can order it easily:

[www.MarkedGraphicNovel.com](http://www.MarkedGraphicNovel.com)

## About Christmas Eve...*mea culpa* (it's my fault)...

Rev. Jen used new technology purchased by the church for Christmas Eve: an iPad, tripod, and new mic system. We want to make in-person and remote worship available at the same time! Somehow I streamed to MY Facebook page rather than CECX's. I apologize! We did have viewers from as far away as California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota with us...and here is the URL from the 2.00 service--just click-->

### Christmas Eve 2 pm 2020

We'll get this sorted out!

### **A Message for Christmas from Rev. Jennifer**

*In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,*

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven,*

*and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

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What were those shepherds doing in that field? I know, I know, they were "abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night." But what were they doing? After all, everyone else was on the move. Carpenters and their very pregnant wives were on the move. Remember? Caesar commanded that everyone go to their ancestral villages to be counted for the census so that they could be properly taxed. Why had the shepherds ignored that order? And why didn't anybody care that they hadn't?

In Joseph and Mary's time, shepherds' lives were so bleak that they weren't even included in the tax count. Their testimony wasn't admissible in a court of law. Towns had ordinances that prohibited shepherds from staying inside the city walls overnight. Shepherds worked on the Sabbath, and so were classed as sinners-by-vocation along with tax collectors and sex workers. Shepherds were the people who hadn't found decent work and so turned to being shepherds.

The Good News is proclaimed first to the nobodies. The first moment of the first Christmas is news of Great Love proclaimed to the unnoticed, unloved, unworthy, unadmired.

When you are despised, and barred from polite and even semi-polite company, when you aren't permitted to sleep where others sleep, when you are seen as unclean, when you are such a nobody that you're not even worth being taxed, in what way could the Ruler of the Universe come to you so that you could—for an hour or maybe for a day—stop hearing the voices of hatred and self-hatred that you live and breathe?

A tiny, helpless, infant tended by parents in a stable filled with animals would surely be a place that shepherds could find themselves comfortable and on familiar ground. Shepherds spent their lives amidst the smell of blood and milk and manure, the sounds of bleats and the gentle lowing of ewes to soothe their fractious lambs. What is a day with a human newborn but blood and milk and manure and feeble cries and quiet murmuring? Hands and feet that would be disgustingly dirty if they went to a shop in town became useful in a stable. In a stable, worn and crusted hands of shepherds were the hands of experience and ease that could hold, grasp, tend, and do work that was needed by exhausted and grateful parents.

Perhaps it was this humble beginning and humble inclusion that made the shepherds confident and comfortable enough to go out into a world that had rejected and despised and ignored them to shout of the experience of Love come down among all of us. Our own Christmas celebrations are subdued this year, even bleak. Few of us are going anywhere; we will be right in the midst of our own usual messes. Perhaps this humble Christmas that has been forced on us will open hearts today as it did for the shepherds on that first Christmas so long ago.

May it be so.

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## Thanksgiving

**We give thanks that our church office is open this week after all! Becky tested negative after being exposed to COVID and is symptom free. We do not need to shut the church office now!**

Please pray with me:

### **A Prayer for Medical Scientists Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, California**

**God of wisdom,**  
bless medical scientists and researchers around the world  
with insight and skill, dedication and fortitude  
as they combat coronavirus,  
so that their work yields knowledge and understanding,  
speedily finding a vaccine, treatments and deterrents to its spread.

**Source of life,**  
grant public health and government officials  
the strength to act swiftly and decisively  
with compassion and understanding  
in service to humankind,  
fighting this outbreak  
and the other diseases that still plague the planet,  
diseases threatening the lives of our brothers and sisters,  
nations and communities,  
young and old.

**Rock of Ages,**  
bring an end to disease and suffering  
so that all may know  
your compassion and your grace.  
Praised are You, Adonai, healer of flesh, maker of wonders.  
**Amen.**

### *CHRISTMAS OUTREACH FOR OUR NEIGHBORS*

*Gifts of sustenance for Baby Jesus--and all babies*

**Christmas Outreach News: Diaper Drive and Collection for FISH Xenia**  
Mo. Lynn and Pete took close to **20 packages of diapers** to FISH, and we had  
7 more offered on Christmas Eve, along with **baby food, personal items, and**  
**cash offerings.**

A **check for \$267 was sent to FISH** to help them buy goods that will help our  
community.

**Bless you for your generosity to those who today need a hand.**

### **January 3, 2021 Christmas 2**

January 3, 2021 is First Sunday

### **Scripture Readings for January 3**

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 84

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19

Matthew 2:13-15

*you can find copies of the scripture on our weekly devotional  
at the bottom of this note*

## *Your Guide to Worship at Christ Episcopal and COVID-19*

Due to high levels of COVID-19 in our county,  
we are currently worshipping online

Here is a copy of the new **4 Dec Updated Worship Guidelines** (click on the bolded and underlined words) for worship during COVID. The bishops of Southern Ohio and Ohio have asked us to stay remote when we are purple or red. With the terrible spike in cases and COVID-related deaths, we will be remote until further notice--through December, and likely into January.

*Click on the button below to check on Greene County's status*

Ohio Dept of Health Map

### *Stewardship and Pledges*

***Please help us close the 2020 financial year with your remaining pledge, and please prayerfully consider what you can offer to in 2021.***

**Call the church office for details.**

**Click** on the **button below** if you'd like to give your pledge via the Diocese of Southern Ohio (this is set up especially for churches like ours). You can also mail or deliver your pledge to Becky at Nickell House.

Give pledge online

### **++Parish Prayer List++**

***Please contact church office to update or add names***

**Prayers for your daily devotions**

#### **Healing**

For David E, David O, Beth, Pam, Rick, Jonathan, Courtney, Lynn, John G., Brad, Cynda, Connie, Diana, Peter, Heather, Rev John T,

and for all who suffer because of COVID-19.

## **In God's Nearer Presence**

Peter L.

Alice B.

For all victims of COVID-19

All the victims of racial unrest

We pray for comfort and healing for those who grieve.

## **On-going prayer**

Matt, Trisha, Reid, Trish, Carolyn, Shayna, Kathy, Steve, Dorothy, Marcia, Shirley, Terry, Arlene, Kim, Jill, Lynne, Cynthia, Tiffany, Heidi, Madysun, Ken, Lamar, Laura and Avis, John, Grandma Ann, Greg, Jess and Tim, Tom, Tawn, Autumn, and Marsha S.

Diocese of Southern Ohio

***Please keep our diocese in your prayers, especially Bishop Ken, Bishop Nedi, and Bishop Wendell, and the Standing Committee who will be serving the diocese for the coming months as we discern the process for calling a new bishop.***

## **++Christian Formation++**

### **Weekly Devotional**

Our readings this week include exploration of hunger--spiritual and physical hunger. Suzanne Guthrie's weekly devotional is found at the button below. At the top left hand corner you will find the readings of the week.

Here is the link for the weeks readings as well as the devotional **Edge of the Enclosure**

## **++Previous Sermons++**

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