

The Good News

Christmas, 2020

Christ Episcopal Church

Keeping our Faith Alive



*Merry Christmas
To All!*

Christmas Eve Services
6:00pm to 8:00pm
See Web Page for Zoom Link

La Noche Buena
9:00pm to 11:00pm
See Web Page for Zoom Link

No services on Christmas day

Seeking ✝ Serving ✝ Sharing Christ



Sublime Mystery of God's Grace and Mercy

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Lord is near: Come, let us adore Him. This Christmas we want to discover God who becomes so close, who embraces us with affection. God, as God, has a predilection for the weakest, loves them, and calls us to care for them. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul tells us that Christ, "being of divine condition, did not boast of his status as God; on the contrary, he stripped himself of his rank by taking the condition of a slave, making himself similar to humankind" (2,6-7).

For centuries, Israel waited for the Messiah. The people envisioned the messiah as a political-military leader who would liberate Israel from the Romans. However, the savior was born in a stable, without doors, without shelter, in silence and in poverty. He came as a light that illuminates all people, "and his own did not receive it" (Jn 1: 9.11). However, "to all who received it, he gave the power to become children of God" (1,12). The promised light illuminated the hearts of those who had persevered in vigilant and active waiting, to gift them and us with divine sonship.

I am sure that all of us have been preparing throughout Advent - praying, and expecting the encounter with the Lord. Today more than ever, it is important for you to be ready, when there are just a few hours or couple days, to go before Christmas Eve. Watching and praying, we will be able to recognize and welcome the brilliance of Christ's Christmas, the Sun that rises from above, which dispels darkness and will renew everything with its brilliant splendor. Today the Christian's mission is to spread, with word and action, the truth of Christmas and the genuine act of salvation that Christ brings us.

Look around the world! People are living in poverty of all kinds: material poverty, material, loneliness and sickness. Jesus was born in the poverty of the manger; Jesus comes to offer everyone the only joy and the just peace that can satisfy the desire for the happiness of the human heart. Soon it will be Christmas. Jesus will come to transform the poverty to joy and peace for all. On Christmas Eve, we will once again stand before the manger to contemplate in wonder the act of God: the word made flesh, God among us. Feelings of joy, admiration, and gratitude will spring up in our hearts before the prodigy: that the Creator of the universe came out of love to make his home among humans.

These days, the liturgy urges us to live the final hours of Advent, as prelude to welcome the Lord into our hearts. At this end of the advent season, watchful and prayerful, waiting must be our fundamental attitude on these vespers. It is the attitude of the protagonists of the first Christmas: Zacharias and Isabel, the shepherds, the magi, the simple and humble people, but, above all, Mary and Joseph, who lived more than anyone the emotion of the event of which they were to be protagonists and witnesses. It is not difficult to imagine how the last days passed, singing in our heart the *Maranata*, "Come Lord Jesus," and waiting to hold the newborn in our arms.

In this period of uncertainty, may the Lord help you to follow the example of Joseph and Mary, to live the mystery of Christmas with authenticity and truth.

My fraternal greetings and my blessing to all.

Fr. Jean+

Words from our Music Director

As I reflect on the past year, we have been through quite a journey. This time last year, the interim rector was gone. We anticipated the arrival of the new rector. It seems very similar to our advent journey waiting for Christ to be born. We have been blessed with Father Jean and Monica, it seems our journey has just begun.

Over the past year, we switched from live services to Zoom services due to COVID restrictions. I have learned what works best for sound and video, playing and singing from my home. Finding videos on the internet and editing pictures sent from the congregation for the Christmas Collage on Christmas Eve have been a new, fun challenge. The responsibility of singing has been mine, and I realize how much I rely on and miss all the faithful choir members. Thank you to all choir members who are singing along with me unheard from their homes.

I also want to give a big thank you to all the lectors, who have learned how to read from Zoom. I am grateful to Monica and Father Jean, who have helped make our transition incorporating both live and Zoom services into a wonderful worship experience. They put their trust in my son, Louis, to help get the church sound system working! I especially want to thank everyone for their feedback and help making the services work smoothly.

As we slowly get back to in-person worship, know that I am planning and thinking about all the wonderful things we can do for the music program. Let us all be patient and see what the New Year brings.

Lisa Graves
Music Director



Community Meal

Community Meal Ministry of Christ Church continues to meet the increased demand for the services we provide, especially during this unprecedented time of the Covid-19 pandemic. A hot meal and food for two additional meals is provided every Sunday afternoon for up to 100 people. During the pandemic these are carry out meals. This service has been provided at Christ Episcopal Church for the last 32 years. The opportunity to serve has revealed that many of our neighbors are food insecure. One challenge that has presented itself is for us to be responsive to the increased and diverse demands of community members.

The Community Meal Ministry team is grateful for the donations from Christ Episcopal Church family. However, to remain compliant with the health safety and compliance requirements of Lake County, under

which Community Meal operates, we ask that future donations to our Community Meal Ministry be submitted to the treasurer's office. Please identify: Community Meal Ministry with the donation.

Christ Church's community meal team extends an invitation to all to serve. There are various opportunities to be of service and stay safe. As 2021 approaches, let us continue to welcome all.

Hendris Grenier

From Rev. Deacon Anne Smith

I rejoice that I can celebrate my first Christmas as a deacon with you! This Advent has been a perfect time for me to reflect on waiting. Two years ago I celebrated Christmas at Christ Church, hoping I would be back in a little more than a year as your deacon. And seven years ago I began the process of discerning whether the rumblings in my heart were truly the Holy Spirit leading me toward serving the church as a deacon.

The hardest waiting time was from this past May until my ordination in October. One thing I learned to practice, while I waited, was letting go and making room for God within me. I had expected to be ordained in May and then come back to Christ Church as your deacon. I realized I was filling myself with being annoyed and disappointed. I started to doubt I would ever be ordained. By the grace of God, I learned to let go a bit, and make space for God within me again. This Advent, I celebrated with you as a new deacon.

We all have had to practice letting go and making space for the Holy Spirit this Advent to lead us. We have had to let go of our desires to celebrate the Advent and Christmas traditions as we knew them. I feel blessed by the inspiration and imagination of the Christ Church community as we prepared for a joyful Christmas. God Bless you all this Christmas.

Deacon Anne

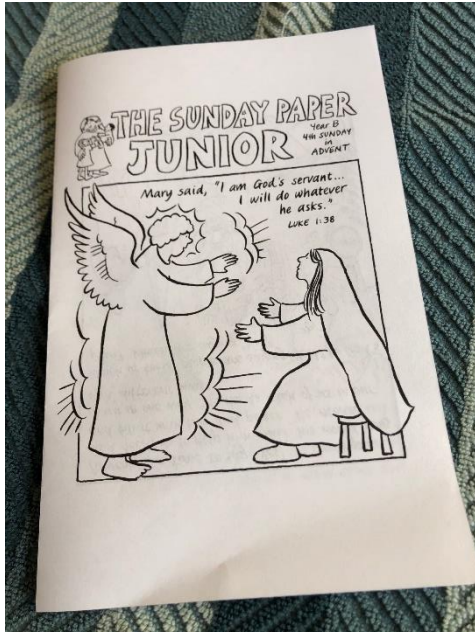


Congratulations and welcome to our new Bishop-Elect!



The Rev. Canon Paula E. Clark was elected to be the thirteenth bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. She will be the first Black person and the first woman to hold the position.

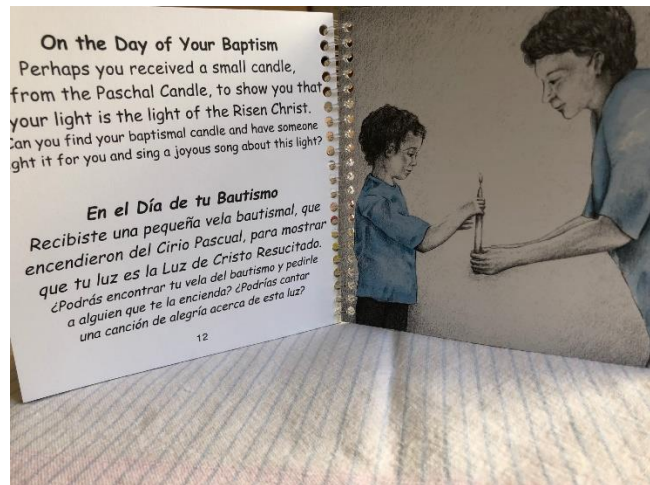
The Sunday Paper Junior and other Resources for Children



Have you seen this?!! Isn't it clever?!! The Sunday readings in a comic strip format Just what kids like!!! And they can color it! There's a brief introduction on the front and a note to parents on the back. Check it out for your kids, grandkids or even yourself. Children's books touch our hearts too! You will find it in the weekly email from Fr Jean along with the Sunday Bulletin and Chi Rho under SPJR.

The creator of The Sunday Paper, Gretchen Wolf Pritchard, also published a lovely book titled Offering the Gospel to Children if you're looking for more ideas.

Other resources for assisting children in their faith journey include:



The Seed of God collection by Genelda Woggon consists of five tiny books which fit perfectly in a child's hands. Best of all the content is written in both Spanish and English! Genelda wrote these books for her own grandchildren. They can be purchased at cctheo.org (Center for Children and Theology).



Scripture booklets from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd can be purchased at cgsusa.org and cctheo.org. Better yet, invite your child to copy Scripture texts to make their own booklets of the parables and historical events in Jesus' life. Below are some suggestions. It's a way of doing Lectio Divina so once again appropriate for adults as well. Older children could make them for younger siblings. Or perhaps some older kids and adults could make them for all our children and we could send them to the children on their birthday. Wish I had thought of the back in March!

Texts especially appropriate for the season of Epiphany:

The Prophecy of the Peaceable Kingdom – Is 11:6-9

The Prophecy of the Star and Scepter – Num 24:17b

The Adoration of the Magi – Mt 21:12

Parables for anytime:

The Good Shepherd – Jn 10:2-5, 10b-11, 14-16

The Lost/Found Sheep – Lk 15:4-6

The Mustard Seed – Mt 13:31-32

The Precious Pearl – Mt 13:33

The Leaven – Mt 13

The Hidden Treasure – Mt 13:45

The Seed – Mk 4:26-28

The True Vine – Jn 15:1-11

The Good Samaritan Lk 10:25-27

The Pharisee and the Tax collector – Lk 18:9-14

Pam Moore

Decisive Change in our Spiritual and Social Life

There is no doubt about it the corona virus has totally change our lives. Who could have believed a year ago that schools would be shut down, restaurants would be closed, and nearly everyone would be working remotely not to mention hundreds of thousands of people suffering and dying, physically, financially, and emotionally?!! For us as well as all faith communities it has been very difficult not seeing one another week by week. We are saddened by the inability to receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Jesus. The spiritual pain is real.

These are all challenges we have had to face and will likely continue to face in the months ahead. Yet in the midst of social distancing, isolation, and fear there is hope. There is opportunity. It is the opportunity to be creative, to imagine doing and being church in new ways. God is leading us through the chaos to a new order, one where we embrace the tools of technology to reach out to others. Just look at how quickly we established Sunday services and other prayer times, meetings, bible study, men and women's care groups via Zoom! We are reaching out to the Latino community. Every Sunday Latinos from various countries – Mexico, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and other states in the US have had the opportunity to gather as a community to thank God. As always, God is looking for new sheep and new sheep find God. My friends, we are doing well! We have kept the faith. We have learned so much! The pandemic has given us a new way to evangelize and be the Church in today's world. We can now envision a virtual church with members worldwide, perhaps with a welcome service hosted in the sanctuary. Using technology and social media to evangelize is a way of revealing God in difficult times. God gave us the power to invent new things and when we do that for the common good, God's presence is revealed. I invite you to continue adapting to the changes and signs of the times so that with God we can create a history that is life-giving and all-inclusive.

Today we must be open to change more than ever, willing to explore beyond the limitations we impose on ourselves. Changes arise as an opportunity to renew our selves, to achieve goals, to stay alert by observing everything that comes to us, in short, to live the present more consciously.

Fr. Jean







CHRIST CHURCH CLERGY AND STAFF

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey D. Lee, *Bishop*

The Rev. Jean C. Beniste, *Rector*

Anne Smith, *Deacon*

Lisa Graves, *Music Director*



CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Christ Episcopal Church

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