



November 24, 2023

Dear Friend of Christ Community Church,

Advent and Christmas have been a big deal in the historic Christian church. They are a big deal at Christ Community Church in our generation, too. Therefore, I would like to encourage all of us to **participate** in these special seasons of the church year. There's never been a better time to get plugged in and see what God is doing in our church family.

Enclosed is a **flyer** summarizing the events and services that are planned, along with an **information card** about our Christmas Eve Candlelight service, which can be shared with a neighbor, friend, or family member. On the back of this sheet is a **Christmas devotional** I wrote for your contemplation as we head into the holiday season. Upcoming events:

Saturday, December 2

Church Fellowship Breakfast

- Church fellowship breakfast served at 8:30 a.m. in Zinn Commons (ground floor fellowship hall)

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

- Worship service at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

- Worship service at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

- Worship service at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Church Family Luncheon

- Church family Christmas luncheon served at 12:15 p.m. in Zinn Commons (ground floor fellowship hall)

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

- No Sunday school classes today
- Worship service at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

- Candlelight worship service at 7:00 p.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Sunday, December 31

First Sunday after Christmas

- Worship service at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Sunday, January 7

First Sunday after the Epiphany

- Worship service with Holy Communion at 10:30 a.m. (in the sanctuary and via livestream)

Divine Hospitality: God at Home in a Fractured World

Timothy R. Valentino

“Oh, there’s no place like home for the holidays.” – Al Stillman

No doubt you’ve heard this line from the 1954 Christmas song by Al Stillman and Robert Allen: “Oh, there’s no place like home for the holidays.” It was covered most famously by Perry Como and later the Carpenters, and it has remained a holiday favorite for nearly seven decades. But did you realize there’s good theology in its message?

In the birth of Jesus, God made this fractured world his own home. Indeed, the incarnation of Christ was the ultimate display of divine hospitality. On that first Christmas, God set a table for broken people everywhere, inviting them to come feast at Bethlehem’s manger. And it’s an all you can eat buffet!

After all, this is the God of “immeasurably more” than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus, the Living Bread, came down from heaven to nourish everyone starving for the love of God. (Quite significantly, Bethlehem means “house of bread.”) When Christ was here in the flesh...

- His **life** showed us how to live.
- His **death** made us ready to die.
- His **resurrection** gave us new life—and the confidence that, in him, all will be well in the end.

At the end of God’s cosmic story is **a new heaven and new earth**. Eden, our original home, will be restored—only better than before. All God’s people will finally be made whole (and holy) forever. No more tears. No more sorrow. No more pain. No more shattered dreams and broken relationships. No more deadly diseases and debilitating disappointments. No more night.

God’s immeasurable love in Christ heals beyond our imagining and invites us to come home to stay. With him. Forever.

Through his Spirit living in us, **Jesus is still at home with us today**. That’s why believers are

called to extend his hospitality to others in our day. We’re his hands and feet on planet earth. The Christian faith is an *embodied* faith; we seek to live what we proclaim, even though we fall short many times. We seek to live as “earthen vessels” containing the divine “treasure” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

That’s exactly what Mary was. She was the original host of God’s Christmas hospitality. For nine months she literally was the first earthly home that Jesus had. But how could she possibly host that which cannot be contained? Solomon had a similar question. “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27).

And yet, **the God of “immeasurably more” became “measurably less” at Christmas**. He *did* dwell on earth—as a baby!

It’s hard to get our minds around such a mystery. **Deity in diapers?** Elohim with elbows and eyebrows? How can this be? T. S. Eliot described the newborn Christ as “the word within a word, unable to speak a word.” In Disney’s *Aladdin*, Genie (Robin Williams) described his own spatial paradox like this: “Cosmic, phenomenal power, itty bitty living space!”

That was even more true of Jesus. **He left the splendors of heaven to be with us in our distress**—at great cost to himself. Christmas, then, was the ultimate transition—divine to human, heaven to earth, riches to rags, power to powerlessness—all of it to invite us to our true home with God.

As we celebrate God’s hospitality at Christmas, we can rightly sing, “For the holidays, you can’t beat home, sweet home.” That very impulse comes from the God who made us, and then became one of us in Christ.

So, welcome to Jesus.

And welcome home.