



CHRIST EPISCOPAL church

17 November 2020

Dear Friends,

Although I insist we sing Hymn #56, “O come, o come, Emmanuel” every Sunday in Advent every year, my actual favorite Advent hymn is #67, “Comfort, comfort ye my people”. It is a paraphrase of the words of consolation that God gave to the Prophet Isaiah to speak to the people of Israel as their exile in Babylon neared its end. These words, spoken in a particular time and place, continue to resonate with people experiencing hardship, even to this day. My love for this hymn is rooted in the way my friend John interprets it on his acoustic guitar, but even so, the hymn’s message of hope is a word to which I find myself clinging often these days.

With cases of COVID-19 spiking throughout Warren County, the Commonwealth, and, indeed, the world, it has proven clairvoyant of Mother Becca and I to offer Bishop White to put together a Diocesan-wide **Church at Home** service for the First Sunday after Christmas. This Christmas Festival of Lessons and Music will feature musicians from around the Diocese of Kentucky, as well as my friend John, leading us in some of our favorite Christmas carols. John got his recording in early, so I’ve listened to “Comfort, comfort ye my people” over and over again in preparation for Advent, Christmas, and the writing of this letter.

By now, you know where this is headed, but to say it bluntly, it is with sadness that I announce that Church at Home will continue through the seasons of Advent and Christmas, and into 2021. Thankfully, back in August, the Restart Task Force decided to stop thinking month-to-month, your clergy and staff have had ample time to pray and plan for this eventuality. I wish things were different by now, but I am certain that our services in Advent and Christmas will bring glory to God, and I pray that they will help you worship God with joy and wonder during this holy season. Read on to learn more.

The Season of Advent is one of anticipation for the coming of Christ, both in the person of Jesus born on Christmas and in his second coming in power and glory. Traditionally, we mark the passing of the Advent Season by lighting candles on a wreath. As the world in the northern hemisphere creeps toward the longest nights and darkest days, Christians shine the growing light of Christ into the world. This Advent, on Sundays at 10am on Facebook and YouTube, Christ Church invites you to join us in **Approaching the Mystery**, as we walk toward the manger and the light of Christ coming into the world.

This Christmas Eve will be a **Silent Night on State**. Rather than a Nave jammed full of four or five generations of family, the usual eight of us will gather at 5pm to live stream a Festival Service of Holy Eucharist. We’ll sing the classics, and a virtual Christmas Pageant will air during the

service. Then, at 6:30pm and 11:00pm, you are invited to line both sides of State Street in front of Christ Church for a masked and physically distant singing of Silent Night. Candles will be provided as we sing praise to God together for the first time since March, and then we'll all queue up for the distribution of communion (in bread only) at the altar rail or floor station.

On Christmas Day at 10am a service of Ante-Communion with Carols will be streamed at the usual locations. As I've already mentioned, on Sunday, December 27th, the Diocesan Christmas Festival of Lessons and Music will be available at 10am. All services will be streamed at [Facebook.com/CECBG](https://www.facebook.com/CECBG) or [YouTube.com/CECBG](https://www.youtube.com/CECBG), and remember, you don't need an account to watch on either platform. It is our sincere hope that all of these services might be a comfort to all who sit in darkness mourning 'neath their sorrows load. May the light of Christ fill you with joy and peace in the days ahead.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.