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THE MARK

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



BEING DIVINE-HUMAN

ARISING TO REMEMBERING

BY PETER HAAS

Our journey this year has been centered around the theme, “Arising as Embodied Life.” We intentionally crown the year with the utmost expression of embodied life: the incarnation of Jesus the Christ, otherwise known as Christmas.

Merry Matter

Life is arising all around us. Evolutionary biologists and anthropologists are helping us understand that the flow of vast and deep time records are revealing an increasing complexity of life forms, from the simplest of chemical and cellular life to the complexity of *Homo sapiens*. So far, we humans seem to be the fullest expression of the living record of the journey of life on planet earth. Astoundingly, we have become aware of that fact. It’s as if, through us, life is looking at life – and knows it.

For better or worse, the human family is the current apex of arising embodied life. Apparently, it has taken a long time for our species to arise as this manner of embodied life. And even longer for this

seemingly new phenomenon of the Anthropocene to occur, the era where humanity influences the biological record.

No matter what comes of it all, the incarnation of Jesus the Christ stands as an enduring witness to the ultimate important purpose of life: we must cherish and care for one another – aiding one another in awakening to the spiritual purpose of our existence here, now in this arisen, embodied form, on this very precious, embodied planet of water, oxygen, flora and fauna, and genetic diversity. We are not *just* here to eat, drink, propagate, travel and be merrily entertained. Advent and Christmas are ideal seasons to ponder such things more deeply – to ask, to wonder, to grow silent, still and listen. What is a lifetime for? How are you choosing to use this long-in-the-arising gift? What is this gift of a lifetime asking of you?

I take the incarnation of Jesus the Christ as an intentional miracle to ground human development in a vision for our ongoing possible development. We needed a grounded new beginning and an

inspiring new template for what our purpose is. The Jesus story, in all its diversity and mystery, shows us the pattern of what Spirit does with matter: it infills it, overflows it, and draws it outward in loving service to all, and especially to just one, your “neighbor.”

Receiving and responding to this fusion of divine Spirit and matter in the form of human embodiment is one of the precious gifts of being alive. This gift wasn’t just for Jesus. The Jesus story demonstrates the Way and invites us to participate and contribute to its unfolding in real time. Let’s recall, Jesus said, *But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you].* John 16.7

Mary Matters

In addition to Jesus being the template. Mother Mary also shows us just how much a human being can become the nexus of Spirit and

matter. Mary is literally the location where the miracle of the incarnation occurs. Whereas Mary provides the initiating event that births the prototype new Being, which she named Jesus (the one who saves and heals humankind). Each of us can continue in the tradition of being the location of holy sanctity; of being and becoming embodied temples wherein the divine Spirit can continue its infusion into the human race; one by one, birthing not a savior or a man, as Mary did, but rather, birthing the fruit of the Spirit, the fragrance of the rose of Christ: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity and self-control, to name a few.

It's difficult to speak of such holy mysteries. It's even more challenging to write about them. Perhaps that's why poetry, dance and song are so useful in helping us articulate the intuition we feel, yet eludes us in the telling. And so, we turn to the poets, and sit in silence.

Consider the American poet William Everson, who lived much of his adult life in a redwood forest near the Pacific Ocean, only a

few hours from the Big Sur and the monks of New Camaldoli Hermitage. Everson's poems are filled with spiritual meaning and, read slowly, like *Lectio*, these poems can open vistas of wisdom for anyone who wishes to see more clearly – their own being, the being of others, and especially of nature, in all its life, beauty and power.

Take for example Everson's magisterial poem *The Canticle of the Rose*. The poem concludes with a kind of prayer that aptly suits the season of Advent and the glorious mystery of Mother Mary, and so too brings our 2022 journey to a close. He writes:

“Pride of the presence, bride of
the translucent Night, daughter
of dawn and the resurgent Day.
Bestow on me once more your
smile of essence, conferring in
your grace my own reality.
Endowing as your perfect
otherness [the] shape of Man,
that freed from my sickliness
of soul,
I might, in Christ, achieve all
that as Man I must.
And of such grace let me once

more clasp in my arms the
meaning [and warmth] of your
fiery spirit.

And burn upon my heart your
perfect signature.”


May the Divine Spirit seal
in our hearts the signature of
surrender and the joyful process of
saying, like Mary, *Yes. Let it be in
me according to thy way, to thy Spirit,
to thy Word.*

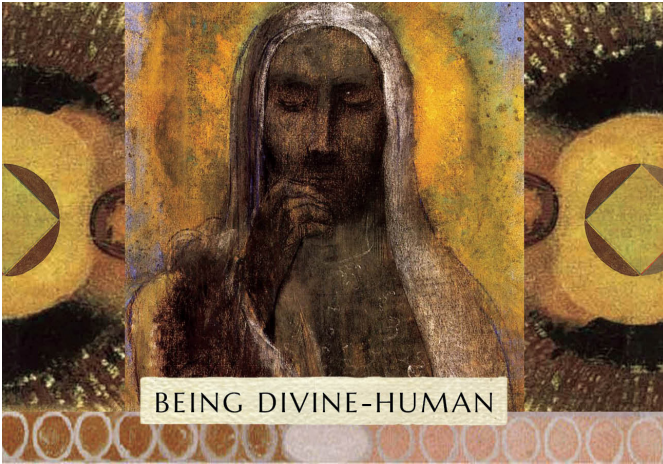
The journey continues. We
are arising, not arisen. Arising
as embodied life – to remember
something, someone, and even
yourself; to remember God and
love; to remember that you belong
here and have a part to play in
the drama of being human, and a
cosmic role in evolving toward the
realms of God within, ahead, and
all around.

Holy Day, Holy Night, Holy
Dusk.

Holy Remembering. Holy
Forgetting. Holy Inquiring.

Holy, Holy, Holy. The Three
in One.

Triad of Bethlehem, Nazareth
and Jerusalem. 



*Now and always may Christ be magnified in my body,
whether by life or death.* Philippians 1:20

ANNUAL AIM: ARISING AS EMBODIED LIFE

SAYING YES, AS A NEW WAY OF BEING;
ORDINARY AND DIVINE BY KIRAN AVASTHI WARD

The Trinity symbolizes integrated wholeness. ... every created being is held in being by the breath of divine love whose infinite depth exceeds the capacity of any finite being to contain it. ...

Evolution is the process by which Trinity becomes cosmos, and cosmos becomes Christified:
that is, love unto love becomes more personal and unitive.

Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being, God, Evolution, and the Power of Love*

Absolutely, the incarnation was not the revelation of some lone individual's oneness with God.

"Christ" is not a reference to either God or to a *particular* human being,
but to *everyman's* eternal oneness in and with God.

Bernadette Roberts, *The Real Christ*

I feel that 'harmony' is something which is actually being made possible for us now.

A new secret, on a tremendous scale.

The science and art of realizing on earth what Christianity revealed in Heaven.

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*

Reevaluating and staying open to all possibilities of living more genuinely, accepting ways that resonate within, rejecting ideas and teachings that do not bring me closer to wholeness.... These are some key ways I aim towards being Divine-Human. I may not practice the same way as many people, partially due to my different elective spiritual upbringing, and

yet, to quote Rodney Collin, "I feel that 'harmony' is something which is actually being made possible for us now."

One Christmas, my family joined the cast of *The Glorious Impossible*, which is The Church of Conscious Harmony's annual Christmas play based on a book by Madeleine L'Engle. Like Love, the birth of Jesus cannot be explained;

it's The Glorious Impossible and it can only be rejoiced in. It's a beautiful, intentional way to witness the unfolding of the extraordinary mystery.

When we deepen into the mystery of Advent and then the celebration of Christmas, we say yes to the humanness of Jesus and Mary. Moving deeper, I feel Divinity and Christ within and there is

transformation and resurrection. Jesus was The Christ. Universal and Divine as much as he was man and fully human. This is the beginning, where the world becomes aware of itself. We too can begin to see ourselves truly as ordinary humans and more completely with the Divine within. We can become aware and accept this truly amazing transformation.

Now I tinker on the edge of blasphemy, yet I can't help wondering ... what if God had come as a woman to earth? How would God have broken the mold all together on ordinary humanness as a woman? Wow! Jesus would have shaken the world's expectation and moved us even further into unknown possibility. Although the world was not yet ready for a woman as The Christ, Jesus was born to a woman who said yes. Mary said yes to all of the complexity of having a child before being married to a human man. Mary said yes to seeing this child go through an extraordinary life, including pulling her through emotional gut-wrenching experiences. As a mother, I would never want to experience watching my children suffer in an extraordinary way. In her strength, in her perseverance, her gentle spirit, her agony and in her extreme journey, Mary, mother of Jesus paves the way for me as a woman. She truly had Divinity within her.

Somehow, knowing how the Christ story ends also helps me celebrate the journey towards transformation, new enlightenment and a new way forward. I see all of this as kenosis, as "self-emptying." In meditation and in Centering Prayer, I self-empty many times a day as a way to be open to truth, and to non-identify with my humanness of negative emotion and agitation. Emptying is a way to be three-centered, to surrender my little wills and ways and to be open to a Divine Will and Way. Opening to my magnetic center draws me to essence within, reconnecting to that Divine center and more fully recognizing the Divine center in others.

I see Jesus self-emptying in the incarnation. God becomes flesh, assuming a human nature. And yet, we're called to move away from ordinary humanness. The Christian Orthodox Church breaks down this process into three stages: purification, illumination and union. These stages are related to the three levels of being: body, soul and spirit. For me, purification is connected with making something clean in either a physical way or a spiritual and ceremonial way. Diwali (a Hindu festival of lights) and Christmas remind me of this purification, illumination and union. One becomes reborn by remembering and moving inward toward a Divine light within each

of us.

With illumination, I typically think of bringing light to something. But in working with these three stages of moving away from my ordinary humanness, I see that illumination refers to an intuitive knowing. Even as I feel disconnected and lost at times, caught in the busyness of the holiday season rather than the spirit of the season, I find that by taking time to empty, surrender and find some peace, I do at some level begin to know intuitively of my Divine part within. When the theologians spoke of illumination, they were referring to a state of bringing increased consciousness to the world through the Holy Spirit. They were speaking of our minds and bodies being illuminated through a Truth that comes from having a more Divine state and a more Divine understanding.

While I think of union as a joining together, matrimony, or coming together, The Orthodox Christian Church reveals to me the idea of hypostatic union. Hypostasis translates as reality or person. So the hypostasis union is used to describe the truth of the incarnation in the Universal Christ, one person subsists in two natures – The Divine and the human. With this new understanding, I celebrate the emergence of a new consciousness – a non-duality as Jesus reconciles suffering and brings healing, mercy,

love and compassion. In moving from ordinary to Divine human, I am open to all good potential and celebrate a faith that leads to more understanding and potential for light within me, you and among all people.

I so yearn to be cleansed. Divinity completes what has begun. We are purified and transformed through this new way of seeing and understanding. This new way of seeing paves the way for me to accept the Trinity as another way of being aware of the Divinity within me.

At times, I fall asleep and forget. My consciousness gets stuck within my ordinary humanness. This has been the most difficult part for me. Ordinary human – I have that part down well – and Divine Human – how can this be? How can there be Divinity within me when I observe brokenness, shallowness, needing affection and love, needing to be a certain way, look a certain way, wanting esteem or to be liked by others. Even to write this contribution for our Church community, I could not help thinking, “You want me to write this? You must have the wrong woman. I am here, I participate as I can and when I can in all these different roles; to CCH, to my other meditative practices and groups, along with all my worldly duties to my husband, children, large families and social work in my counseling career

path. I am too stuck in my human roles. In my mind, I am not anyone who knows how to share about being Divine-Human. I am still trying to be a good ordinary human.”

And through a moment of Grace, non-identification and self-remembering, I am able to continue the process of shedding that old skin and again allowing this self to become new. Rebirth and moving toward an awareness of a transformation that only Divinity and the human born Christ could show us was possible.

Through The Journey School, we have worked with this consciousness in many ways. Jesus Christ symbolizes a new unity in creation; a new unity of heaven and earth. In receiving the sacraments, we become the sacraments holding that Divine Presence within ourselves wherever we go. My Wish is to be true to this Divine path, Divine Will and Divinity within me – I say yes. I pray that you too may be awakened to your own journey through purification, illumination and union. Especially during this season of preparing for the coming of Divine Light, may you say yes to acceptance and surrendering. May you say yes to a non-duality of your own ordinary humanity and Divine humanity. Peace and Love to each of you!


I leave with you the blessing of

these two short prayers that speak to me in all ways:

Father, Mother God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following Your Will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, You will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

We awaken to Your sacred presence, to Your Divine compassionate love, we see in all that happens, in the beautiful and the bad, the mystery of Your Holy plan. Many the blessings of Healing, Love, Mercy, Compassion, Wisdom be upon our journey. Bring us to You in safety and in peace. Amen.

Adapted from Edward Hays, *Pray All Ways* 

ELDER WISDOM: HONORING OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS BY DAVID MIKESKA

I have a wish to be with God, others and myself. As the years go by I am finding out that this process is not about perfection, growth in knowledge and power over myself. I am discovering this process is about a deepening relationship with God, others, myself and even all of creation. But, how does one go about it? I know that I am in a process of moving from my mind to my heart, from living primarily out of my head to living from a foundation of heartfulness. This wish has grown and developed in the past years, especially as I have aged and let go of physical and mental abilities that I formerly took for granted. I am sharing this elder wisdom with you now because I have been blessed with a tremendous opportunity to move along this path.

A little over a year ago, I was diagnosed with a rare cancer that few people survive. After three surgeries, I was told this very invasive cancer was not removed

from my body. I was being blessed with a new awareness that I may be dead within six months. What is this all about? Am I ready to die? This was staring me in the face for the first time in my long life – ready or not.

The Austin doctors sent me to the MD Anderson Center in Houston to see what they could do for me. Remarkably, after more tests, more biopsies and a whole team of doctors conferring, a new prognosis was made. They said that, yes, this is a rare and invasive cancer, but it may not be as fast growing as was previously thought. There was no treatment plan for now and no advice about any practices to slow the growth. We were just going to wait for three months and see what it did; but during this time, I really pondered about what to do, besides to prepare for death.

First, I started asking everyone I knew and many people I didn't to pray for my healing. This was a huge change for me as I

have always had a problem with petitionary prayer. "Please, God, heal my body of this cancer." Now, this prayer has meaning. Who cares that God already knows what I am going through and wants my essential Good. What I have received from this time of prayer is a great widening of awareness of the goodness, generosity and kindness sent my way by my large extended family, friends, The Church of Conscious Harmony's congregation, retreatants at Cedarbrake Renewal Center, and so many more. What generosity of Spirit – for me.

The next thing I did was follow the advice of a friend and linked up with a Sufi healer. She is a wise and holy person who told me that, in her tradition, trauma and crisis that we are not able to process or address can become lodged in our body and can manifest in physical disease. She led me to go back to my earlier years, uncover the traumatic events and ask for their forgiveness and release. This

“It is never too late to make a change that will affect the whole of creation.”

sounds like Fr. Carl Arico’s tried and true statement, “The issues are in the tissues.”

The essential aspect of her guidance has been to uncover festering guilt that I have carried for so many years; guilt that I didn’t even know that I had. One guilt that I have carried most of my life stemmed from my active participation in a hazing event in a football locker room over 65 years ago. With her help and kind guidance, I was able to look that event straight in the face and pray. My prayer became a litany of “I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I will do better.” I prayed that over and over throughout the day and night. There was a progression of who my prayers addressed. First, my prayer was to God, who I was asking for mercy for the first time in my life. Then, I turned my attention to the boy that we abused, seeking his forgiveness. Later, I turned my attention to Fr. Arthur, the priest who was also our football coach. I had lied to him that I didn’t participate in the hazing event. Then I became aware that I wanted to ask for forgiveness from my fellow team mates in that locker room. I had been a negative

influence on them and now wish I had stood up for the boy who was being hazed. I could have been a positive influence on them and was not. It doesn’t matter that many of the people in this event have already passed away. It is never too late to make a change that will affect the whole of creation.

I had been through the spectrum starting with God to my football team mates, and it took my Sufi healer to remind me to not only ask for forgiveness of your actions, you also need to forgive yourself – especially that young boy in you who has carried this weight of guilt for all these years.

I have gone on to identify and pray for forgiveness from a number of people that I have sinned against, ignored, abandoned or otherwise harmed actively or passively. The process is the same. It usually starts with God and moves to the individual who may be alive or dead. By the end of the process, I have to address my part in affecting the whole of creation. We are so connected, as in one Body. Then, finally, I often have to be reminded to open myself up to receive forgiveness. It is not self-

serving to want to become whole in forgiveness of self.

This process of prayer has opened me to the loving, personal, generous and kind God that I have wanted to meet all along. Who knows if I will be alive in six months or maybe ten years from now. Ultimately, it doesn’t matter anymore, except I would like to not put a whole lot more stress on my family, friends and community. I have been blessed beyond measure with a new, personal, connection with God, family and friends. I have experienced the healing Power of Forgiveness.

I need to also tell you that based on a recommendation from my daughter, I started taking a nightly dose of hemp oil, which has been noted for reducing or eliminating cancer in some people. The results from my last two visits to MD Anderson in Houston showed no trace of cancer. Was it the hemp oil or my wise healer or the prayers of the whole people of God who have been storming the heavens for my healing? My Sufi healer says that it all works together and is part of our loving God’s process of healing and forgiveness. 🕉

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE


CONSCIOUS LOVE BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: The Work hints at a Conscious Love. Something of a beautiful destination on the Way, a vertical point more than a horizontal death. Upon arrival, the illusion of separation begins to manifest. We consciously Work, the harmonic beat of the universe pulses a touch louder, the oneness of all stares back at us. The tiny piece of the broken mirror screams, “but I am not broke, for I am one and the same.” The wood of the axe handle, the trunk of the felled tree, the log that feeds the fire, the unhewed cross were each born alike. The soft skin of the baby begets the wrinkle of the wise, which in turns begets the baby. The old becomes new, the last becomes first. The inhale and the exhale are the yin and yang of one process, the man and the woman, but two parts of one system. That moon spins around this earth and this earth around that sun. The oneness has always been revealed. The Work, when tried on, danced in, laughed with and even cried can be a Way – a rabbit trail that runs off into the woods.

Work Source: “Now all conscious love depends on throwing out what is bad and selecting only what is good. ... The object of this Way is to get in touch with Higher Emotional Center directly through love ... We have to realize the illusions of love and how we ourselves cannot love and how indeed we both love and hate at the same time. For this reason, John says: ‘He who hateth his brother is in the darkness’ and also: ‘If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.’ Further, he says that whoever has not this love of which he is speaking is dead. He speaks indeed of this love as a new birth, calling it being begotten of God ... All love, he teaches, comes from the love of something higher than oneself or the world. He says God is love and the only way in which love can be made perfect is to know and acknowledge the existence of God. It is in this connection that he says: ‘Herein is love made perfect,’ and that in this kind of love there is no fear. And that is why he also adds: ‘If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.’ He speaks often of how

this love conquers the world and all its fears and cares and anxieties. He is speaking of something that can be awakened within us that is stronger than anything in life. He is speaking of something that changes the signs in us and reverses them so that what was active becomes passive and what was passive becomes active. In this connection you will remember the teaching in the Work ... about how Personality is active and Essence passive, and how a man must undergo a complete reversal within himself so that Personality becomes passive and Essence active, so that he is born anew.” Nicoll, *Commentaries* p. 611-612

Application: Dip your toes in the anxieties of tomorrow while remembering that today is all we have. Drink from the cup of the Work and perhaps understand a bit more about what it means to awaken, to die and be reborn, to consciously love.

Further Resource: *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.* John 4:18 



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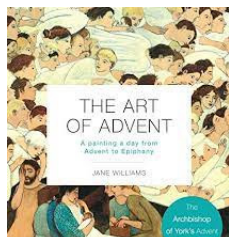
A YEAR IN REVIEW: ARISING AS EMBODIED LIFE

In 2022, we were invited to move ever deeper together as a community of intention, practice and devotion in this annual aim focused on illumination of the moving center (body).

To review and reflect on these monthly aims, previous issues of *The Mark* are available at consciousharmony.org/read-listen/the-mark.

January	Being Here	July	Being With
February	Harmony in Being	August	Being Ordinary
March	Being in Time	September	Being Possibilities
April	Unity of Being	October	Awakened Being
May	Inter-Being	November	Being Fulfilled
June	Spiritualization of Being	December	Being Divine-Human

BOOK LOOK



The Advent and Christmas season is an ideal time to begin a practice of reading a daily devotional. If you wish for a place to begin, consider *The Art of Advent* by Jane Williams. It is an accessible, visual resource with daily reflections paired with a compelling image.

ADVENT OFFERING

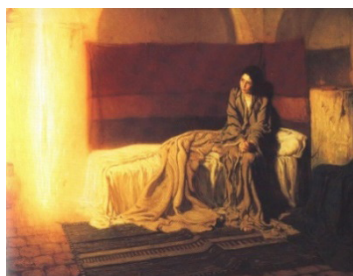
LUX DIVINA: ADVENT VESPERS

December 2, 9, 16, 23 7-8:05pm, in-person and online

Hosted by Oblates for the Community



We are invited to pause with intentionality each Friday during Advent. To abide in silence, prayer, Communion, chant, beauty – to nourish our being and prepare together for the Light Divine.



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday, December 4	Second Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 11	Third Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 18	Fourth Sunday of Advent
Saturday, December 24 Service 6:00-7:00pm	Christmas Eve Family Worship
Sunday December 25 10:00-11:00am	Christmas Day Family Service
Saturday, December 31 8:30pm-12:15am	New Year's Eve Program
Sunday, January 1 10:00-11:00am	New Year's Day Family Service

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

OPENING AN ADVENT CALENDAR

This Advent, we hearken back to a classic practice that many of us enjoyed in childhood. Aim to purchase an Advent calendar and consciously open or mark it each day in the morning hours. Some Advent calendars have images or chocolate behind each day's door. Or, simply use an ordinary calendar to consciously begin each day of the Advent journey. In addition, consider pairing a daily Advent reader with this conscious moment spent with the Advent Calendar. Say a prayer. Connect with gratitude. Give thanks. Send loving thoughts in prayer to others. Prepare to celebrate the Light of the World, in all its glorious expressions! ☸

DECEMBER CALENDAR

For more details, visit
<https://consciousharmony.org/>
 or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

†Lux Divina: Advent Vespers
 Dec 2, 9, 16, 23 7-8:05pm

*One-Day Virtual Advent Retreat
 Dec 10 9am-3pm Register online

Multi-Day Centering Prayer Retreats
 Dec 2-8 at Cedarbrake \$800
 Dec 16-18 at Cedarbrake \$300
 Contact the office for availability

†The Glorious Impossible Christmas Program
 Dec 15 7pm

†Christmas Eve Family Service
 Dec 24 6-7pm

†New Year's Eve Taizé Service
 Dec 31 8:30-9:45pm

⊕ New Year's Eve Fellowship, Burning Bowl
 & Centering Prayer
 Dec 31 9:45pm-12:15am (in-person only)

Church & Office Closed
 Dec 26-30

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
 1st Sundays
 Bring non-perishables to CCH or
 donate to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Sundays
 †Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
 *Intercessory Prayer 9am
 †Worship Service 10-11:30am
 ⊕ Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Wednesdays
 ⊕ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
 †Contemplative Worship Service 6-7pm

Thursdays
 *The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Saturdays
 *Scriptorium noon

*Please join these services, groups, and classes
 via online video options. Contact the website for
 accessible links and more information.

†In person and online
 ⊕ In-person only at CCH



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NGC 6302, known as the Butterfly Nebula, taken by Hubble space telescope, NASA

CHRISTMAS

*In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God, And the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

John 1:1-5

∞

The invitation [is] to enter into the cosmic Christ –
the divine person, the Word of God,
who has always been present in the world.
Christ is “the light that enlightens everyone” –
the God who is secretly at work in the most unexpected
and hidden ways ... into the heart of all creation.
... into the very depths of our being ...
and now we can act under the direct influence of the Spirit.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

