

# Square Two

Cima Newsletter  
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**Give thanks:** for our local church’s [online Christmas video](#); for a [refreshing holiday](#); for recent pronouncements that churches can meet again and schools can open. **Pray:** for continued safety from COVID-19; for the Cambodia Lutheran Church in its strategic planning; for Aimee’s mother in her battle with cancer.

“FEAR NOT, FOR BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.” (LUKE 2:10)



**Can it still be Christmas when we cannot worship at church?** Like many churches across the world, Christ Lutheran Church in Phnom Penh could not gather for Christmas due to an outbreak of COVID-19. Just before Christmas, however, authorities declared that the outbreak was contained after several days passed with no new cases. Even though churches had not yet received permission to have large gatherings, we wanted to do something. With three kids, our home is hardly clean enough to be considered sacred space, but nonetheless we decided it was safe for us to host small gatherings, making sure not to exceed the government-stipulated maximum of 20 people. **Can it still be Christmas when there is no special music?** At our gatherings there was no choir or band. We sang a few hymns in Khmer and English with nothing more than a guitar. At one of our gatherings, even the guitar broke and we were left to sing acapella! It was all informal, unpolished, a bit slapdash. But one participant, a young woman whose family is mostly not Christian and who had never been to a Family Christmas, said the singing was deeply meaningful to her, especially when we turned off the lights, lit candles, and sang Silent Night. **Can it still be Christmas when there is no sermon?** Any sermonizing would have been drowned out by kids running around and playing with toys. Instead, interspersed with the hymns, we simply read passages from Luke, John, and Romans that told both the story of Jesus’ birth and also its meaning. No lengthy explanation or interpretation. Just God’s Word in all its power. **Can it still be Christmas this year?** Yes, it can. Jesus was not born in a church but in a messy manger that became sacred space as it held the Savior of the world. Indeed, our messy living room becomes sacred space as we celebrate that same Savior some 2,000 years later. There was no band or choir present with the Mary and Joseph when Jesus was born, but nonetheless the choirs of angels rejoiced then just as our feeble voices join in the chorus from Phnom Penh now. No pastor delivered a sermon; there was just Mary and Joseph holding the Word become flesh. And as we read his Word in our living room, Jesus becomes present with us again. It is especially in these moments—the moments of uncertainty or disappointment, the unadorned moments stripped of all that we’ve come to rely on—that the birth of Jesus is truly what the angels declared: “good news.” Thank you, God, for the opportunity to discover it anew.



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