



'For to us, a child is born'

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Innkeepers can say "no." Presented with a very pregnant homeless couple who arrived with no reservations, presumably little money and a liability nightmare, many innkeepers might be well-advised to say "no," today.

Today's Christian celebration begins with an innkeeper who didn't. His compassion is apparent every day at Edgerton Women's Health Clinic, a place in the Quad-Cities that never says, "no," to those "great with child," as the Gospel writer Luke put it. Each year, Edgerton staff welcomes at least 450 babies into our community. None is from a family forced on the road because of an emperor's census decree. Yet, clinic worker Libbet Brooke notes that poverty often forces transitions that make Edgerton a respite on journeys to safety, employment and, in some cases, adulthood.

"Some of our folks think they're always en route," Brooke said.

Among those welcomed at Edgerton:

- The expectant couple who eagerly moved to the Quad-Cities on the promise of a job that never materialized.
- The pregnant mom who returned penniless to her hometown after her children's father failed to support them.
- The working mom who had neither time, money nor family to help with her pregnancy.
- The HIV-positive mom.
- The legal immigrant who knew neither our language nor our complicated health-care culture.
- The undocumented immigrant whose baby arrived faster than her federal documentation.
- The Illinois Medicaid recipient forced to seek Iowa care because her home state simply refuses to pay bills on time.
- The Scott County Jail inmate whose baby arrived before her court date.

Each of these actual cases and many, many more find room at Edgerton. No one is turned away.

Commitment, certainly not wages, drives the clinic's staff. These medical professionals could be paid more elsewhere. In many cases, faith drives that commitment. Registered nurse Bev Blake says she's at Edgerton specifically because of her faith, which happens to be the one that celebrates a birth today.

Like the innkeeper, Blake and the rest of the clinic staff say "yes," again and again to those who encounter Edgerton on their own difficult journeys. We join those celebrating today's Christian tradition, and all who find ways to say "yes," when it's not the easiest answer.