Christmas 2020

A Christmas Message from the President of First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council

As the world celebrates the joyful birth of the Christ Child, it is with honour and humility that I have the privilege of greeting you once again as your President. As always, my heart reaches out with gratitude and pride to all of you who give so much of your time, talents and resources for the work of the Lord throughout our First Dawn Eastern Edge Region.

In foretelling the birth of Jesus centuries ago, Isaiah wrote, "the Lord himself will give you a sign! Behold, the virgin shall conceive, give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel (which means 'God is with us' Isaiah 7:14). Probably never in our lifetime have we been more in need of that message, for this will be a Christmas like never before. Since last March when the Covid-19 Pandemic began impacting our lives, we have had to make adjustments in every aspect of our lives, functioning in very different and unfamiliar ways. The one constant factor through it all is Isaiah's message that "God is with us."

I have no words to adequately convey my gratitude to the leadership of our church at the National, Regional and Congregational levels. As I mentioned in an earlier message, the flow of vital pandemic information from our Regional Office became a lifeline for clergy and congregations and our compliance became noteworthy. Our Regional Staff and Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, our Executive Minister, deserve praise beyond measure for their commitment and tireless efforts. Our thankfulness to them also for organizing the very successful virtual Annual Meeting, the inspirational Milestones in Ministry and the meaningful Ordination/Recognition service under very trying conditions.

While the pandemic played havoc with every element of society and shut down our churches, our clergy are to be commended for finding innovative ways to provide both worship services and pastoral care for their parishioners.

HOPE IS BORN

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Advent and Christmas will again bring new challenges and we pray for God's guidance as we struggle to maintain the meaningful traditions associated with this blessed season. Yes, the sights and sounds of Christmas are all around us as the birth of Christ again takes centre stage. However, behind the sounds of celebration there are challenges of every description and there is pain in the hearts of many. Some are grieving the loss of loved ones while others live with the uncertainty of a loved one's illness. Still more are dealing with numerous demanding personal challenges including families being unable to gather with loved ones because of pandemic restrictions. I pray that those experiencing emotional pain, this Christmas, will feel God's loving arms enfolding them. And let us all shower love and blessings on those around us who are hurting-those whose lives touch ours.

Sometimes it takes an interruption in our daily lives, like Covid 19, to remind us how much we rely on countless numbers of Frontline Workers. They perform critical work, often in sacrificial ways, to maintain vital health and community services. Let us find ways of showing them gratitude and continue to pray for their safety.

May the glow from the Christmas lights all around us remind us that Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem, is the light of the world. Let us allow that light to penetrate our hearts and souls, rejuvenating our faith and renewing our commitment to His service.

I wish you all the joy and peace of this Holy Season and may God keep you and your loved ones safe.

Your Faithful Servant in Christ,

Rev. Peggy Johnson

President
First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council
The United Church of Canada