

Moderator's Christmas Message 2022

Transcript of Videotaped Message

My church family,

Christmas greetings to you in the name of the one who came to us as the Word made flesh—in the form of a baby born into lowly and humble beginnings.

We recite through the Gospel of John, “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....” It’s cryptic at best, but there is a reason we read the gospels alongside the Hebrew scriptures. Listen to the words of the Prophet Isaiah [52:7–10]:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they shout for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion.

Break forth, shout together for joy, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

We often associate the prophetic texts with dire warnings against our human fallibility and worst individual and corporate character defects.

But in this case, Isaiah is preaching a good news story. One of beauty, peace, good news, salvation, joy, comfort, redemption, vulnerability, and salvation.

What could be a better news story in the arrival of the Christ child than remembering all that good news promised to us through our faith? Not that we get to those things because of our faith, just that our faith reminds us—every year in the remembering of the coming of the Christ child—that all things are made new or possible again. That God wishes us to have life and to have it in abundance.

Sometimes it’s hard to remember with the constant assault of bad news stories meant to keep us in a state of perpetual stress and believing the worst in each other. In fact, all empirical evidence points to the opposite: Humans are generally decent and committed to the fabric of our societies and our social contracts with each other. That we are capable of great feats of innovation, kindness, overcoming obstacles, and achieving the impossible. We were born to achieve the impossible. And not only in the absence of crisis, but even more strongly in times of crisis.

So, this year, when so much seems uncertain and the news amplifies all the hard news stories, remember that when the Word is made flesh, there is One who came to show us that all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of God—and that through that One, we are capable of coming together to achieve the impossible.

From the Office of the Moderator and on behalf of The United Church of Canada, I wish you the very merriest and most inspirational of Christmases. May you be the good news and see the good news and share the good news this Christmas season.

Moderator Carmen Lansdowne