

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 12/24/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is our second Christmas under a pandemic. Few if any thought it would go on this long, but we still wear masks, physically distance ourselves, and struggle with decisions about gathering with family and friends. (Though the Spanish flu pandemic of the early 1900s lasted two years, the bubonic plague of the 1300s, also called the black death lasted seven.) With the omicron variant we face new challenges that seem to be moving us backward instead of forward.

This is not the only difficulty in our world today, either. We hear more about division in our country than unity. Many folks struggle with isolation, poverty, fear, despair, and so much more. All these things take a toll on us not just physically, but mentally as well.

Yet, it is into this world that Jesus was born. His family, too, faced threats and trials. A king wanted Him dead, and so dozens of children were killed in an attempt to end His life. His parents took Him as a refugee to a foreign country to try to protect Him. And when they were able to return, they went to a small town in the hills to try to maintain some anonymity.

Still, Mary and Joseph did not lose hope. In the midst of great difficulty and inconvenience, they continued to trust God. They found hope in the same place we can find hope today: in our God who risked coming into our world that was fraught with peril and anxiety. Our hope can be found in a helpless babe, born to poor parents in a world filled with questions. Because this babe grew into adulthood and then gave His life to free us from fear and shame, and to rise again with new life, we can find a hope that goes far beyond anything that this world can bring. Our hope in this time and in all time is in the One who came to promise that, in the midst of all that may come, God is with us. Our hope is in Jesus who shared God's unconditional love from which nothing can separate us. This is the joy we can find even in a pandemic Christmas. This is the hope we can find when all around us seems broken. This is where peace can be found when little else seem calm.

May God bless you and keep you as you celebrate the birth of our Lord this year. May your Christmas be one of hope that comes from the promises of the One who came into our world to bring the love of the Almighty. May you be sustained by the grace of God offered to all our world in the tiny babe of Bethlehem.

I wish for you a blessed Christmas and a hopeful New Year!

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey