

Christmas Greetings 2017

Dear friends,

I love the fact that Christmas actually begins on December 25 and the days of Christmas continue through January 5 coming to an official end on January 6 with the Feast of Epiphany. I relish this time of reflection. The craziness of consumer Christmas comes to a sudden halt on December 26 as the world outside my front door rapidly removes all signs of Christmas. Meanwhile, the meaning of Christmas continues to stir quietly in my heart and settle deep into my soul. A question bubbles to the surface over and over, "Just as God called Mary to bear God, Emanuel, God with us, Jesus, into our world – how is God calling us to be God-bearers in our world?"

I remember as a child watching my father, year after year, carefully place a single string of lights on our tree. Twenty-five bulbs the size of nightlights, crystal clear and colored, red, green, blue, orange, and purple -- each twinkling on its own whims with no rhyme or reason. I sat for hours every year watching in silence as they danced the hues of celebration across our tree.

Christmas made things possible like childhood fantasies of gifts, yummy once a year candies and special foods, and two whole weeks off from school. Christmas also unwrapped Jesus as we used the nativity figurines under the tree to act out our own creative versions, over and over, of the timeless story of Love made visible in the tiny babe.

The mystery of that holy night continues to speak truth to the hearts of those willing to listen. All around us seeds of **Hope** burst open into new life. **Joy** persists, in places least expected like trees growing through cracks in granite. **Love** shared never goes empty no matter how much we give away, and in a world so fraught with violence, hate, greed, and war, Emmanuel, God with us, still brings light to those in darkness and guides our feet in the way of **Peace**.

God continues to move in the midst of humanity searching for those who prepare the way, with open hearts, willing to be vessels through which Christ is born into our world not only at Christmas, but every day of the year.

I look forward to our continued ministry together as "God-bearers" in a world yearning to hear the Good News of God's healing presence. Thank you for all you do to support and share Christ's peace.

May all the blessings of Christmas be yours and may the spirit of peace rest upon you and your household is my prayer.

Love and joy,

