

JOY TO THE WORLD



Dear friends,

As we approach the celebration of Christmas – the celebration of God with us – warmest greetings to you and your family. May we all know the comfort, peace, and presence of God as we celebrate the child of Bethlehem and as we celebrate the good news that he represents for our lives and our world.

For many of us, and for many in our world, this season of Christmas brings a mixed experience, at best. Some of us experience very real loneliness at this time of the year. Others of us are exhausted from all the effort we put into trying to make Christmas special for our family. Still others of us are wrestling with real-world challenges that have taken up most our mental and emotional energy these past weeks.

At some level we may think there is a disjunction between our difficulties and frustrations in life, on the one hand, and our celebration of Christmas on the other hand. But there is no disjunction at all. Kathleen Norris, an American poet and essayist (also a Presbyterian), writes these words:

It is precisely because we are weary, and poor in spirit, that God can touch us with hope. This is not an easy truth. It means that we accept our common lot, and take up our share of the cross. It means that we do not gloss over the evils we confront every day, both within ourselves and without. Our sacrifices may be great. But as the martyred archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero once said, it is only the poor and the hungry, those who know they need someone to come on their behalf, who can celebrate Christmas.

The celebration of Jesus' birth is not merely happiness and lights. It is a real-world discovery of God's compassion and presence. While we were far off, God came close to embrace, forgive, and restore us.

In this season we are particularly grateful that we share in the new life and good news of Christ as a community – not only as individuals.

The joy Christ brings is a joy we share with one another.
The forgiveness Christ embodies is a forgiveness we may enact for each other.
The compassion Christ extends is a compassion we can pass on.

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As we prepare for Christmas and celebrate Christmas together at Kensington Presbyterian Church, let me remind you of the two special services to be held:

Christmas Eve Family Service

Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m.

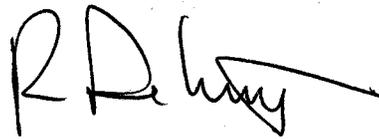
Breakfast, Carols and Christmas Prayers

Christmas morning at 9:30 a.m.

These are always joyful events in the life of our congregation and you are invited to join us, and to bring any family members or friends with you.

Enclosed with this letter you will also find an envelope for your Christmas offering toward the ministry, mission, and music of our congregation.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. DeLong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.