

*Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas from the Church of God in Eastern Canada Region as you reflect on and celebrate that first Christmas and the wonderful, loving gift of God - our Saviour!*

*I don't know about you, but for me, especially after all of the events of 2020 I am thankful to know - not just mentally, but really know at a level that is hard to even describe - that this child that we celebrate being born at Christmas - Jesus, was born for me!*

*A paraphrase of Isaiah 9: 6-7b (adapted from The Message, by Eugene Peterson)*

*"For a child has been born—for me (us)!*

*God has given the gift of His Son - for me (us)!*

*He'll eventually take over the running of the world - sooner if we allow Him to impact our lives.*

*His names will be: Amazing Counselor, Strong God, Eternal Father, Prince of Wholeness (peace).*

*His authority to rule and govern will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness or peace that he brings. Not just a cessation of wars amongst people and countries, but peace within individuals too, even in challenging times.*

*He'll rule from the historic David throne over that promised kingdom.*

*He'll put His kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always."*

*The idea that Jesus offers peace, hope, help, joy and love at a level we cannot understand, short of experiencing it - sign me up for that!*

*Not only this year but particularly difficult during these times of isolation, there has been an intensification of fear, anxiety, hopelessness, unrest, stress and uncertainty. World leaders do their best to deal with something that they have never experienced before - but they are ill-equipped to offer peace, joy, hope and rest that can calm and satisfy us at a level that touches us deeply. Brief hopes for seeing extended family and friends this Christmas were dashed by a surge in COVID-19 cases and the decision to further restrict gatherings in an effort to curb its spread. There are lots of ways to view these circumstances and we won't necessarily all agree. I am simply thankful for the Prince of Peace that provides such a sense of that in the midst of all of the craziness that is going on. Do I desire that it would be different? Of course! I will miss getting together with everyone and am getting tired of online socialization. I miss the spontaneity of laughter and hugs and the glimpses of wonder and what might occur while being with those I love.*

*Christmas this year will be different. It may be simpler. It may possibly be more restful and even more peaceful. With so many elements of what may have been our traditional Christmas celebrations removed, what do we have left? Very simply, I suggest we have Jesus - the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace - the baby who was given to us by God the Father over 2000 years ago. In these times of restricted gatherings, may I encourage you to receive the gift that God has given for you, and make room for Jesus as a guest this Christmas.*

*Blessings,*

*Chris Bonis  
Executive Director*

