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Dear Members and Friends of the Desert Southwest Conference,

In the familiar Christmas song, French composer Adolphe Adam wrote these words of encouragement: “A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!”

In these weeks of Advent, we light successive candles and hear messages in scripture, song, and word about hope, peace, joy and love. We look toward December 25

with faithful anticipation of the birth of the Christ child!

Likewise, with a spirit of expectation, news of the COVID-19 vaccines brings hope to a weary world. It is right and just that medical care workers are among the first to receive the vaccine. We pray that they will be protected even as they continue to care for many who are hospitalized or in need of medical assistance. Even with this new hope in the vaccine, we watch as the rates of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths continue to rise to alarming levels in Nevada and Arizona. Although hope is on the horizon, it is not yet fully realized.

As we finalize plans for celebrations for the upcoming holidays, many of us may be disappointed that we cannot gather in person with our families and loved ones. But let’s keep in mind the many persons who are facing the pain of an empty place at the table caused by a loved one’s illness or death due to COVID-19.

Many churches that began offering some form of in-person worship (outdoors, drive-thru, or socially-distanced indoors) have scaled back and are returning to primarily online, virtual worship. This is a safer and more responsible practice in our communities at this time.

Please keep our commitment to “Do no harm” and care for others by observing these safety precautions: wear a mask, practice social distancing, stay home as much as possible, wash your hands. Please continue to practice the procedures in your local church’s comprehensive plan and covenants. And keep praying fervently for an end to this pandemic.

There is hope! But we must continue to do our utmost in these next weeks and months. As we celebrate a very different Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, here is a prayer that brings hope to my heart:

Tender Shepherd,
Bring to my awareness your constant companionship
To my weariness your matchless strength,
To my brokenness your healing touch,
And to my joy your blessing. Amen.

- *Forty Days with Wesley, by Ruben P. Job*

Peace from our house to yours!

Bob and Greta Hoshibata