



December 15, 2020

Dear Fellow United Methodists:

It is the season of Advent, a time of anticipation and longing. We bask in the hope that something new is coming and in the promise that we can face the future unafraid. As people of faith, we stand in the confidence that God, who began a good thing in us, will see it to fruition.

As United Methodists we, along with siblings across faith communions, acknowledge that 2020 has been a time of trial for not only our churches but the world as we have faced the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been few instances in our lifetime when the whole world has faced a crisis at the same time. COVID-19 has stretched our health systems, our economies and even our faith. For those of us in the United States, we have also witnessed a season of discontent as the call for racial justice and an end to racism has resounded loud and clear.

Most of our local churches have been on the front lines and at the center of this liminal time. As we yearn to come together to praise God, to hear the Word, to pray, to mourn, and to bear witness to God's promises together in our own buildings, we have come to learn that we can approach the throne of grace anywhere we are. Indeed, the church is not a building.

We recognize that uncertainty will accompany us into 2021. As the Council of Bishops, we must remain on our knees in prayer, asking God to open our minds, thoughts, and hearts to discern what God would want us to do and who God would want us to be as we lead this global denomination.

So, let us look to God who began a good thing in us and let us continue to be people of love, joy, hope and peace.

Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey  
President  
Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church