



DURING THIS SEASON OF ADVENT, we wait expectantly for the coming of Christ. We long for God's justice, peace and mercy to be fully revealed on earth.

Today, it is easy to be consumed by fear. Fear is all pervasive. Fear of terrorism. Fear for the economy. Fear of people who are different from us. Fear can entangle and paralyze us.

But our faith encourages us to embrace an impassioned, joyful and trusting response to life. Isaiah 12:2 says: "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation."

And in the first two chapters of Luke, there are four references to fear and three references to joy, often only a verse or two apart. *Fear and joy are not incompatible ideas. From my work with MCC, I see daily that this is true.*

Despite the fear of terrorism, we've witnessed your deep desire to welcome refugees. The MCC offices have been inundated with calls from churches, families, neighbourhood associations and community groups who want to bring refugees to safety and welcome them to a new life in Canada. In her poem "Home," Warsan Shire writes:

*you have to understand,
no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land.

who would choose to spend days
and nights in the stomach of a truck
unless the miles travelled
meant something more than journey.*

We are thankful for all of you who have heard the call to walk with refugees on their journey and welcome them warmly into your congregations, homes and communities.

Despite fears of scarcity and a bad economy, we've seen you give generously to help those in need. Thanks to your support, we're able to provide relief to people affected by violence or disaster around the world. Our partners are distributing winter supplies to families in countries from Syria to Nepal. With your help, we're providing education in places like Lebanon, South Sudan and here in Canada. And because of your generosity, we support courageous peacebuilders in places like Afghanistan and Honduras. We are thankful to all of you who have chosen generosity in the face of scarcity.

When faced with fear of the other, we've seen you choose friendship. In the media, it's easy to see prejudice and fear of people who are different from ourselves. But time and time again, we've seen you choose friendship. Christian churches have partnered with Muslim groups to sponsor refugees. Churches have spoken out in support of reconciliation and the rights of Indigenous peoples. And volunteers have helped people reintegrate in their community after serving time in prison. When presented with the choice to fear the unknown, we've seen you build bridges and love your neighbour, no matter who that neighbour might be.

In this season of Advent, we bring our fears to God. We long to be released from the power of fear over our lives. As you've shown us repeatedly, fear cannot stop us from reaching out with compassion to help those in need. Thank you for the many ways you have helped us share relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

Sincerely,

