

## **A Christmas Greeting—Transcript**

### ***The Rev. Susan Johnson National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada***

My favourite memory of Christmas as a child is actually still the thing that I look forward to most every Christmas, and it's the time when we sit around the Christmas tree as a family, we have real live candles on the tree and we light them, turn off all the other lights in the house and then in the delicate light of the candles my father reads the Christmas story and we have prayers together and we sing and we celebrate as a family the birth of our savior.

What's your favourite memory, Fred?

### ***The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz Primate, Anglican Church of Canada***

Something similar actually. The great memory I have of growing up at Christmas was my father taking great pride in the Christmas tree – picking it out, decorating it, and then gathering as a family around just to simply sit and enjoy it. And all the while, while this was happening he would be at the top of his voice singing Christmas carols all through the house and that's one of my favourite memories of my dad and our family at Christmas.

Parish life my favourite memories I think are of Christmas in St. John's church in Lunenburg and it went something like this. At four o'clock in the afternoon on Christmas Eve we would have what was traditionally known as the blessing of the crèche, but we turned it into a Eucharist in time and we actually had a live crèche in the church and we'd have hay right up the centre aisle, live animals at the front of the church. It would be just turned into a wonderful site.

The place would be filled with children. It would be chaotic, perhaps not unlike that first Christmas so long ago. And then for the late midnight service all of that chaos and so on would be cleaned up and we would have a very sort of dignified midnight mass and the reflection would be much more on John's account of the incarnation.

### ***The Rev. Susan Johnson***

I think in some ways my favourite parish memories are very similar to my memories of family Christmases gathering together in the sanctuary with the candles and the carols and the telling of the story and that feeling of family, just a broader one. It's what continues to be the joy of Christmas Eve each year for me.

### ***The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz***

My great hope for this Christmas is that we really will do some serious reflection as people of faith on the titles that are given to the Messiah: Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. My hope is that this

Christmas the true love of peace will be rekindled in our world and that we will be able to look to Christ indeed as Prince of Peace. Peace in our hearts, peace in our homes, and peace in the world.

***The Rev. Susan Johnson***

In some ways it's like the circle just keeps getting bigger. We started off talking about Christmas in our families and then Christmas in our congregational settings. But the realization is that Christmas is a much bigger experience and a much broader message and the Prince of Peace is here to send a message of peace and comfort and goodwill to all of the world and that we are called to help share with that message with all those around us.

***The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz***

So it is our great delight as leaders of churches in full communion to wish you all—

***The Rev. Susan Johnson***

—each and every one of you—

***The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz and The Rev. Susan Johnson***

—a very blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

- Recorded December 2008