

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

November 30, 2022

Association Minister Message

Rev. Daniel L. Busch

PEACE. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and PEACE in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13). We live in a time of division, disrespect, and hostility. The USA has just finished (almost) another election cycle. Opposing candidates picture opponents as unqualified, dishonest, unethical, and unworthy to be elected. So much hatred and vile comments are made that one would wonder why anyone would want to be a candidate in the first place.

The Apostle Paul also lived during a time when people were divided by their differences. When he wrote to the Christians in Rome, Paul offered to them his own life's transforming experience of receiving God's revelation on how *"to live in harmony with one another..." (vs. 5).* Paul's words offered encouragement and comfort in the midst of persecution and lack of focus in the church. Theologian Ray Huggins describes Paul's teaching method, *"If you put it into a formula, it looks like this: Instruction + Steadfastness + Encouragement = Hope."* It is God who is steadfast and encourages people of faith to live in harmony with one another and *PEACE* is found and experienced by imitating Jesus Christ.

As we continue into the Advent Season, this Sunday's emphasis is *PEACE* and knowing Christ as the *"Prince of PEACE."* Jesus is *"Emmanuel" ("God with us.")*. Paul teaches that we are to *"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (vs. 7).* It was his *"welcome"* into Christ's company that Paul was affirmed and belonged. All the conflict in his life was changed and he found *PEACE* from God's mercy lived as part of the Body of Christ. We, too, find our welcome in Jesus Christ.

Paul's benedictory blessing is not just for the Roman Christians but also for us today. Paul's blessing describes God as the source of hope. God's hope gives us joy and *PEACE*. God brings *PEACE* in our acts of care, compassion, sympathy and empathy for one another. God's *PEACE* is love that forgives and embraces others as we would want to be embraced and forgiven. Following Jesus is *PEACE*. Thanks be to God. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*