

## The Church Council on Justice and Corrections

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## Le Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie

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Christmas Greetings to all our friends and colleagues from the Church Council on Justice and Corrections!

In our tradition, Christmas is a time of hope. It is a time when we discover light in the darkness. As Christmas approaches, we look back on a year of important changes and milestones for our country. We would like to highlight the presentation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the federal government. This year also saw the election of a new federal government, and the ongoing welcoming of several thousand Syrian refugees to their new home with us in Canada. A sense of hope and joyous expectation threads throughout these events, drawing us closer together as a nation.

For the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 2015 was an important year, as we continued to promote healing and reconciliation through our work in restorative justice. Restorative Justice Week was observed with exciting and creative infographics about criminal justice sent out each day of the week. A call for creative interpretation on how to “Imagine Justice” was also sent out across Canada. The many thoughtful and imaginative submissions are displayed in the gallery of art and creative writing on our website.

The Council has also been furthering the important work of fostering empathy in prisons. As CCJC’s empathy project gains new partners and trainees, participants feel so strongly about the value and need for victim impact (empathy) courses that they encourage other inmates to also participate. The participants themselves report a transformation in their understanding of their actions on others, including their families and other victims, and have highlighted the opportunity it presents to work through their own experiences of harm and trauma. The Church Council on Justice and Corrections is very excited by the interest that has been generated by this



### **The CCJC Vision:**

***“To serve as a shining light for restorative approaches to justice and corrections.”***

project! It is in harmony with our mission to serve “*as a shining light for restorative approaches to justice and corrections.*” Restoring right relationships and respecting the dignity of each person, especially in an environment as challenging as a prison, can lead to meaningful reconciliation.

As the day we celebrate the birth of Christ draws nearer, our gaze turns towards the tiny manger in a dimly lit stable in Bethlehem, where the Word of God became flesh. This tiny baby who was born in a lowly setting became a symbol of hope and peace to a darkened world. The shepherds in nearby fields were the first visitors drawn to the stable to see this child. Many of them were marginalized, outcasts from society. Although they may not have understood who this child was, they were blessed by his presence in their lives. Later the Christ child was visited by kings who brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These kings were also blessed by his presence in their lives. As we celebrate the birth of Christ let us be reminded how Jesus came to earth to be a presence in our lives and to reconcile the world to God through himself.

So let us continue to move forward in the work that has begun towards reconciliation and healing in our relationships with the first peoples of this land. Let us reach out in love and welcome to the refugees who will soon be arriving, remembering that many of us and our ancestors were also new arrivals in Canada at one time. Let us respect and uphold the dignity of all persons – the weak, the affluent, the marginalized, the lonely, the hungry, the ill, the well-educated, the imprisoned, and the new arrivals. May the Church Council on Justice and Corrections continue its work to play an important role in restoring broken relationships, leading to reconciliation.

It is our hope that your Christmas season will be full of the warmth of family and friends, with music and laughter filling your days and homes. And may the peace of Christ fill your hearts and minds, now and forever.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sharon Dunlop". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon Dunlop  
President  
The Church Council on Justice and Corrections