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Today's Letter of Hope is written by Ruth Ann Eagleson.

The Best Part of the Gift

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 20:35 New International Version (NIV).

Friends,

I have spent time this afternoon running off 'Letters of Hope' for individuals in our church who do not have the technology to access them. In doing so I reread messages written by others and a phrase from Rev. Dr. Hugh Farquhar, contributed by Roz MacDonald resounded in my mind ... "Long walk, part of gift."

We are all on a long walk right now, which is part of the gift we are giving to others. My gift to my loved ones was not to meet at a large family gathering this Christmas. Not only was I protecting all involved, but I hope I was teaching them to follow rules, consider the needs of others and give the difficult gift of not being with loved ones during COVID-19. We celebrated differently ... quietly ... smaller ... virtually ... less time together ..., however, I truly enjoyed the moments we had and focused on the positives. I did not have to wake in the wee hours of the morning to cook a turkey ... the time we spent with each other was more engaged ... I did not worry about being outside of the COVID-19 guidelines. The moments I shared with my loved ones were simpler and possibly more meaningful as a result of my concern for those I love. The journey to their home to drop off their presents was part of the gift. Giving up our large family gathering and meal was part of the gift. Modelling the 'walk' for those I love was part of my gift.

I have been amazed at the ingenuity of others as they gave the gift of caring to their loved ones this Christmas ... planning small family gatherings ... sharing gifts and meals on Zoom ... outdoor visits and outings ... not physically being with loved ones. Many felt the need to explain why or how they 'walked' within the Province's Covid guidelines. Most had a meaningful time with loved ones although it may have been only a shadow of their usual celebration. All gave a selfless gift of time and love even though it may have felt like a loss to some. Their 'walk' was part of their gift.

Let's continue to give the gift of caring. Give your time and talent when you can and when required, distance to keep all safe. Remember that not being with others may be the 'best part' of your gift.

We are told, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' In giving, by putting others first, we are blessed!

Stay safe ... contact others ... care for those you love ... distance as needed ...

Remember your 'walk' may be the best part of your gift.

God Bless and keep you,

Ruth Ann Eagleson

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*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

