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## The Diocesan Board of Education

The Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman  
Chair, Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education

December 2023

Dear Friends –

Have you made any Christmas presents or cards this year or written cards or gift tags? I enjoy seeing the new Christmas things people make each year like knitted angels and different biscuit shapes. I have heard grown-ups often say that they really love to receive gifts children have made themselves.

When I look at the crib scene in a nativity set or on a card with the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph and see the shepherds and wise men, I like to see what animals are in the stable. The animals were there first, I think.

On that first Christmas Day the animals gave the baby their own gifts. There was no room in the inn so you could say the ox and ass gave a homemade gift because they made room in their home, the stable, for Mary and Joseph after their long journey. The donkey carried Mary all the way. That was his gift. The cows gave their manger and some hay. Maybe they were giving up their breakfast so the baby could have somewhere soft to lie. Sometimes I see a dove in the stable too who is just there reminding everyone of peace.

This year I wonder if you might give some presents which aren't wrapped up but are like the ones the animals gave – making someone feel at home like the ox and ass, carrying or helping like the donkey, sharing what you have, like the cow.

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We don't always have a lot of money to buy things, but the presents that touch us and are remembered aren't usually the bought ones.

This year, as we pray for peace in our world, perhaps our gift can be like the gift given by the dove in the stable – the gift of being with everyone else, being peaceful with others and showing people that the baby born is the prince of peace for us all.

This Christmas, as you give and receive, I hope and pray that God will touch your hearts with love and our world with the peace that the Christ child came to bring.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justine Allain Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

The Ven Dr Justine Allain Chapman, Archdeacon of Boston  
Chair of Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education