

**Janet Noel-Annable, CEO**

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. ... “to give you a future and a hope.” – Jeremiah 29:11, NIRV*

What were your plans at the beginning of last year? Perhaps you were planning on a vacation or a big celebration. Likely, your plans for 2020 changed – dramatically. As for myself, I was hoping to spend time with family and friends as well as connect with many of you across the organization and our international partners. At Christian Horizons, we had big plans, too. We share these through *Onward*, our strategic planning process. Implementation of these plans shifted quickly, as we suddenly needed to focus on people’s physical health and well-being.

Looking back, we know that your resilience and the way we were able to respond to COVID-19 priorities is because of the passion you have for valuing people. People, communities, and families rallied together with us as we all dedicated ourselves to protecting each other’s health and safety. A year later, we celebrate this committed response while, at the same time, grieving lives that have been impacted or lost and adjustments of some of our plans due to COVID-19.

**Hope prevails.** It has been our hope for a better future that drives our pandemic response, and it is our hope for a world where *everybody* is valued, contributes, and experiences belonging that shapes our planning and our action for a better tomorrow.

- As we have learned through COVID-19, we need one another. Hope grows as we partner with people, organizations, and faith communities to meet one another’s needs and celebrate each person’s gifts. We have learned that *we can do it, together*. We can do better than the status quo, and hope guides the way.
- The way forward depends on meaningful communication and collaboration with people with developmental disabilities, their families, friends, communities, professionals, social services, and the government. Christian Horizons has a role to play, and that role is significant but must only be one piece of their larger network of natural and paid support.
- Our vision for the road ahead calls for the strength and creativity of each of us as we reimagine supports and services with people with disabilities and their families. Instead of one-size-fits-all solutions, we envision our services are part of a diverse

network of care that is directed by service users themselves and draws from their own gifts and strengths as well as those of their family and broader community.

- Together, we will explore big and small ways to take meaningful action toward this vision of belonging – where people accomplish their goals and dreams and grow in relationship with the people and communities that matter most to them.

As vaccines become available and numbers start to fall, I pray for a good future for you and your loved ones – a future not shaped by fear but by hope and imagination for what is possible. I pray the same for us here at Christian Horizons, that as we re-engage in hopeful planning for the future, our action will continue to bring us closer to a world that we imagine. This is a world of hope for *each person*, where people with developmental disabilities can make good and meaningful plans for their own lives, supported by networks of care in communities where everybody belongs.

### Making the Connection

- What things have given you hope over the past year?
- Where have you seen people, community, and families coming together to meet each other's needs and celebrate one another's gifts?
- Going forward, what is one big or small action we can take toward our vision of belonging? How can we invite people who use our services to help shape this action?