

## **At Christmas, Love Wins**

*In his Christmas Message, United Church of Christ General Minister and President the Rev. John C. Dorhauer invites all in the wider church to commit to making sure that 'Love Wins', no matter the season.*

I greet you all in the name of our Risen Savior.

Merry Christmas to each and all!

In this last year the United Church of Christ has been asking what it means to share a common purpose: "to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves."

It was Jesus who taught us what love of God incarnated looked like. We are his disciples. Our own devotion to God and to Jesus manifests itself in our love for others. Jesus once was asked, "When did we see you hungry and feed you; or naked and clothe you?" His answer was not only tenderly beautiful, it was fully instructive: "Whatsoever you did to the least of these, you did unto me."

Therefore, as a means of taking our purpose to love God seriously the United Church of Christ has entered into a season of what we are calling our 3 Great Loves: love of children ("bring them unto me, for to such as these belongs the Kingdom of God); love of neighbor ("...whom you shall love as you love yourself"); and love of creation ("when I consider Your heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you have made — who are we that you are mindful of us? Yet you have made us little lower than the gods, and entrusted to us care over the work of your hands.").

What better time than this season to commit to our own acts of love for God's children, our neighbor, and the handiwork of God's vast imagination - our mother Earth?

In this past year, I have borne witness to what your own commitments to love incarnated look like. I have seen your acts of kindness and compassion change lives.

In Maine, I sat in a church/restaurant where once a week members present a fine dining experience to about 85 homeless residents. In Colombia, I met with peace activists who serve as our co-mission partners and who worked with the government and rebel factions to negotiate a peace settlement that has helped end the longest armed conflict on the globe. In Italy, I met with Reform partners who daily receive refugees from Africa landing on their shores in search of food and freedom. And in Standing Rock we demonstrated with first nation peoples for water rights.

This baby Jesus we will soon celebrate the birth of inspires in all of us an impulse to love. Borne of God's love for us, we extend that love daily to those most in need of our acts of compassion and kindness. Our own lives are daily transformed by the kindness and compassion of others.

This Christmas, love wins.

May the joy of this season inspire you to know the love of God, incarnated once in Jesus and today in your acts of love — of children, to neighbor, and for creation.

Merry Christmas everyone!