

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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Courage in the New Year

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It has been an incredibly challenging and sometimes discouraging year in all parts of the world. Daily news reports tell stories and show pictures of violence, human exploitation, economic stress, rampant hunger, and the environmental crisis before us. Regardless of the form of government, democracy or dictatorship, dialog and negotiation seems to be at a standstill in the places where public policy decisions are made. The craving for power, greed, and supremacy seem to be taking the place of compassion and care.

Closer to home, we are aware that the decision making logjam in the halls of the U.S. Congress and the White House has resulted in disappointment and frustration for many who are committed to advocate for justice and fairness. This is evidenced in a recent Gallup Poll which indicates that the 7% approval rating of Congress is at its lowest point in history; coupled with the 38-43% rating for the President. The poor economy worldwide is certainly one of the factors at play; however other key issues such as jobs, the federal budget deficit, and the failure of the “super-committee” to reach agreement on deficit reduction contribute to the lack of confidence in our public officials among the American people.

All this cannot help but be hard on the human spirit. We do need hopeful inspiration and courage to turn the tide. At times like

this it is important to remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King shared decades ago, “The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.” The good news is that people of many faiths are joining together to raise a unified voice for that which is morally right. What is becoming clear is that we do not have to agree about everything, but we do have a mutual obligation to care for all that is God’s creation.

We are called to be a BOLD PUBLIC VOICE setting our sights toward the common good so that the marginalized are not forgotten. In spite of this discouraging landscape, we stand strong as people of faith committed to ensure that the dignity of each person is realized. We must not weaken our resolve especially as the year turns into an election time that promises to be filled with hotly contested debates. Each one of us can be a voice of inspiration and courage.

As Christians, our base of inspiration comes from the example set by Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at this holy time of year.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had. (Romans 15:4-5)

We are inspired by these ancient words and by the thousands of voices speaking out today. Thank you for never giving up. Thank you for continuing the journey. In the New Year, let’s keep working in faithful solidarity to light the flame of hope and kindle the fires of justice. Take **courage** in knowing that with God nothing is impossible.

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,277 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.