

# WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

700 Prospect Ave.  
Cleveland, OH 44115-1110  
Phone: 216.736.3700  
Fax: 216.736.3703



**Jessie Palatucci**  
**Online Communications Specialist**

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**Christmas Compassion**

**Jessie Palatucci**  
**Online Communications Specialist**

This is going to be a melancholy Christmas for my family. My grandfather, who is 92 and has lived a very full and wonderful life, is winding down his final days. It is an odd feeling – the sensation of grief mixed with the cheer of Christmas.

Though personally challenging this experience has helped me to better understand why, for some, the holidays are so difficult. This occasion that is supposed to be so joyous can be an emotional minefield. And I worry this year will be particularly hard for many.

Some, like my family, will be dealing with their first holiday following the loss of a loved one. For others it will be an older heartbreak. An absence that while not fresh, is painful and impossible to ignore.

Others will be celebrating Christmas with the people they love deployed overseas in war zones. Many, many people will face a holiday separated from their families by economic circumstances that have forced them to migrate to a different state or to a different country to find work and provide for the ones they love.

It is a struggle sometimes, especially in such a busy time of year, to take enough time to notice the suffering of those around us. There are so many distractions. Toys to buy, gifts to wrap, events to plan, traveling to do. I am as guilty as anyone of letting my excitement about the holiday blind me to the pain of my neighbors.

And perhaps it's worse now. The country seems to be in a moment of division. People are increasingly anxious to put up walls between each other. Barriers of race, religion, class, and nationality have been sharpened by the scarcity and fear that has dominated 2010.

If you will humor me, it is my Christmas wish that we all take a moment this week to genuinely reflect and feel for those suffering this December, in your immediate vicinity and beyond. Regardless of your politics take a moment to think about what it might be like for the undocumented immigrants in your community. Perhaps waking up alone, thousands of miles from family, friends, and familiar customs. Similarly, consider the great sacrifice of our troops overseas, far from safety and their loved ones.

Send them your thoughts. Send them your prayers. And I encourage you to set a little bit of time aside to actually do something. Bake an extra pan of lasagna and bring it to a family you know is struggling emotionally or financially. Send a letter to a deployed service member. Share the abundance in your life with some of your neighbors at your food shelf, shelter, or day laborer center.

The New Year is just around the corner, and we have so little time left to do something good in 2010. Won't you take a moment to make a better, more compassionate world possible?

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