



## Be afraid. Be very afraid.

**Michael Readinger**  
President and CEO, CHHSM

In the 1986 cheesy horror flick, *The Fly*, Geena Davis' character whispers this warning about a scientist turning into a large fly. The movie may have been comical, but there is certainly a lot to be afraid of in this world. And we are often afraid. Very afraid.

The political climate in the United States is often mean-spirited and divisive. Individual rights and environmental protections are being stripped away almost daily. International relationships are strained as warships are positioned defensively and economic battles are waged offensively. Our earth is at risk, our neighbors are being vilified, our children are becoming more marginalized every day ... and these trends show no sign of slowing down.

The 3 Great Loves initiative ([www.ucc.org/3greatloves](http://www.ucc.org/3greatloves)) of the United Church of Christ, which was introduced at the 2017 General Synod, calls us to pay close attention to three loves—love of neighbor, love of children, and love of creation—as particular expressions of our love for God. Two years after the UCC issued this call, it remains urgently relevant.

There has not been a time in recent memory when we have witnessed such a tide of public acceptance for violations of all that the 3 Great Loves stands for: from policies that demonize our migrating neighbors, to legislation that depletes health resources for vulnerable children, to loosened restrictions for corporate abuses of the environment. In the midst of it all, I am concerned and afraid that we are becoming desensitized to these oppressive attacks that undermine the values—and the people—we hold dear. What will be the long-term cost of these actions that take away basic support, remove protection for those who need it, prevent those seeking a better life from access, and destroy our planet's future?

We are all being called—not only by the United Church of Christ but by the world itself—to seek new ways to demonstrate the 3 Great Loves. Our engagement is needed to advocate for the reversal of trends that cut programs, slash

budgets, and ignore the basic needs of so many people. Write to senators and representative in Congress, write to local and state legislators, and tell them what is important to you and why. Continue to join creative efforts to serve this earth, these children, and all our neighbors.

There are so many justice issues facing our society that it can be overwhelming. We might be afraid. We might be very afraid. But our fear cannot lead to our inaction. We can draw courage from generations of advocates before us who loved in the face of hate and fear. We can find hope in the Spirit that whispers, “Do not be afraid.” We can connect and grow our communities around the love of neighbor, the love of children, and the love of earth.

The work continues. And the 3 Great Loves campaign provides both a starting place and a guide in our work for justice.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Readinger is President and CEO of the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

**LEARN** [ucc.org/justice](http://ucc.org/justice)

**DONATE** [ucc.org/donate](http://ucc.org/donate)

ARCHIVE



[bit.ly/witness4justice](http://bit.ly/witness4justice)

*The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 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.*