



Becoming Flesh
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We marked each Sunday in our Advent season with God's promises for hope, peace, joy, and love. We lit candles at church or in our homes as tangible signs of these promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

For many of us in Southeast Wisconsin, however, these promises have felt hollow or distant. Our communities are grieving from violence in Waukesha at the Christmas parade. We cannot make sense of the murder or injury of kids and Dancing Grannies. We've been shaken by racial tension and the trauma of violence in Kenosha. COVID has stolen family members and friends. In other parts of our country, tornadoes have taken lives, homes, and livelihoods. In what should be a season of eager expectation, hope has been extinguished; peace eludes us; joy has been postponed; and love remembers hands we used to hold. For many, fear and anger eclipse the promises of this season.

In the midst of this ugliness and despair, a baby comes again into the world. On Christmas, we are reminded once more that God became flesh and entered a world filled with grief, violence, illness, and injustice. The promises of hope, peace, joy, and love are fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, a gift to all of us who are worn out.

As the Church, we are now stewards of this gift. In a world that is weary and bruised, we are asked to proclaim boldly, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11 NRSV). We are not alone because Love has come into the world.

As stewards, our continued call is to comfort the people in their fear and to be a visible sign of God's promises. We bring the good news through the Rev. Ernest W. Glenn Christmas Toy Store, hosted annually by Christ Presbyterian Church (Milwaukee) and supported by many congregations, which offers hope and joy to more than 125 families in poverty. We proclaim our confidence in God's love in the year-end mission support gift of Second (Racine), which chose to share an unexpected estate gift and raised its original pledge ten-fold. We are the sign of great joy in the tangible hospitality shown by many congregations to Afghan refugees who are resettling among us, dismantling structural racism through our care. Gifts to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance are restoring the promises of Christmas to those devastated by tornadoes.

First Presbyterian (Waukesha) celebrates its 175th anniversary this year. God's love has been incarnated in their gift to the community foundation supporting victims and families from the Christmas Parade tragedy. Rev. Glen Reichelderfer recalled the prayer vigil organized by local churches the day after the parade, "It was good to hear honest words about the senselessness of that act and receive personal words of solidarity from many different religious traditions. That night, we clearly heard that we were not alone in our grief and shock.

"In light of this dreadful moment, [the] session decided to respond to this catastrophe. For 175 years, FPCW has been a part of Waukesha. We have a long history of supporting those who are suffering. Because of the generosity of our past members, we are able to be generous. Our prayerful conversations have led us to give a substantial gift to be used for the families of the injured and dead."

This Christmas, we need more than ever to hear the words of the angels, "Do not be afraid!" When the Church embodies the promises of hope, peace, joy, and love, it is the tangible reminder that we are not alone. God has come to be with us, flesh in our midst. Emmanuel! Merry Christmas!