

December 22 2023



Advent is a season of waiting, watching, preparing. It often arrives sparkling and bright, but for others it is less so. It is sometimes uplifting and joyous, and yet some hearts are weighed down and heavy.

Advent waiting is balancing the concerns of a world in need with the anticipated promise of a world that sees its needs fully met. Advent waiting is a spiritual practice of peering through the shadows, each year, to find that even through the gloom, **still ... the Light** of the World comes.

The promise is not that shadows will never fall.

The promise is that the Light of the World is present, even still, with us all.

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world. As we see storm events move through and communities step up ... when new neighbors arrive to find true hospitality and generous welcome ... as inspiration flows like water from a new well, and possibility grows like food raised on one's own land, and wholeness is recovered as body and spirit find healing mercies ... Week of Compassion steps closer to the vision of a world where God's people transform suffering into hope.

2023 held challenge and tragedy for far too many of God's beloveds:

... the war in Ukraine continues with thousands killed and millions displaced, while the war in the Middle East continues to decimate a land called holy in ways that we cannot fathom.

... a record number of billion-dollar disasters have impacted more people than ever across the United States, bringing hurricanes and flooding to communities still recovering from too-recent storms; wildfires racing down island mountainsides, destroying homes all along their path; and severe storms and tornadoes impacting towns with little warning and widespread damage.

... earthquakes in Turkey, Syria, and Morocco, and catastrophic flooding in Libya, have forever changed the landscape of nations, and will mean years of recovery for hundreds of thousands.

... the ongoing and intersecting impacts of increasingly significant climate change and persistent global political crisis continue to affect millions of people across every continent.

And **still ... the Light**.

Amid challenge and despair, **still ... the Light** shines. Following the One who came into the heart of the world's gloom, *Disciples bear that Light in his name:*

... an entire three-bedroom house was framed in two days, *inside* the Exhibit Hall at General Assembly! (And then was delivered to Graves County, Kentucky as a new home for a tornado-displaced family!)

... disaster preparedness and response training happened in congregations and gatherings across the country, both virtually and in person, and in multiple languages.

... general and designated giving, individual and congregational endowments, all increased this year, empowering ministry immediately as needs arise and allowing plans to be made well into the future.

... relying on years of collaborative effort and engaging new relationships, Disciples

churches, regions, ecumenical partners, and community leaders are in creative and strategic conversations, finding new inroads into disaster relief, refugee response, and sustainable development.

For all the many ways Disciples serve, give, and live out the gospel good news, we are grateful. From all of us at Week of Compassion, we pray exceeding great joy for each of you in this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

God of all we know and need,
Creator of all we have been, all we are, all we will be,
Redeemer, freeing us from ourselves,
Spirit that fires our imagination and wonder –

Light. Light. Light.
Even in gloom, even through shadow, even among distress and dismay –
Still ... the Light.

The Light shines.
In hope. Toward peace. With joy. For love.
Light of the World, break through us again.
Through our stubbornness, through our concern,
through our ego, through our anxiety.

Light of the World, break through.
Again. Again. Again.
Light. Light. Light.

God of all the world knows and needs,
Creator of all the world has been, all the world is, all the world will be,
Redeemer, freeing all of us always,
Spirit that fires global imagination and wonder –

Light. Light. Light.
Even in gloom, even through shadow, even among distress and dismay –
Still ... the Light.

Still ... the Light. Christmas Day 2023



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MISSION :
to work with partners
to alleviate suffering throughout the world

VISION :
a world where God's people
transform suffering into hope

volunteer
domestic disaster response

**immigrant and
refugee response**

give
to Week of Compassion

CORE VALUES :

connection - integrity - accompaniment

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