

Sunday, May 1st, is Global Love Day -- a symbolic day of unconditional love and call upon all people and all nations to come together in the wisdom of peace and love.

Love's wisdom, I believe, is most evident in God's transformational love – what I call “Gospel Love”. Gospel Love is not “Hallmark” sentimentality and Christ's peace is not a smoother over to avoid conflict at all costs. Gospel Love is a love that thirsts and advocates for justice and truth so that healing, wholeness and the beloved community has a chance to be established on Earth as it is in heaven. Gospel Love makes it possible to love our enemies; it is a perfect love that casts out fear.

What amazing possibilities would be present if every person and every nation observed this one day of peace and love on May 1st. How would it change our hearts? How would it change our world?

Putin's brutal assault on Ukraine and its people have been in the forefront of the news and airways. The impact of global warming is felt around the globe, especially by the most vulnerable, with no real end in sight. On the home front, cultural wars are ever-present serving to promote fear, disinformation, and division. We hear political narratives that weaponize fear and white fragility¹ to gain power and control, such as homophobic policies that threaten the lives of people in LGBTQ communities, anti-Black policies that create more and more economic and political barriers to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as full, belonging citizens of this country, and the denial of our collective truth – the history and presence of systemic abuse, oppression, enslavement, and the devaluing of Blackness against the false superiority of whiteness.

I found this quote on Middle Church's website. *“Our country is racing towards fascism. Our public systems are in tatters, our government is dysfunctional, and legislators are prioritizing banning books and victimizing trans children over meeting people's desperate needs. All of this is fruit of white supremacy that must be dismantled so something new can grow.”*

What comes to my mind are Jesus's words *“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* John 4: 23-24. Truth matters in our worship and in our Christian discipleship.

In such a time as this, it is of sacred importance, our sacred calling that the body of Christ embraces and models the gospel of Christ entrusted to us, a gospel

that teaches love of neighbor, love that speaks truth to power, a love that cares for the least among us, and is concerned for the common good.

Gospel Love is strong and tender, courageous, compassionate and fearless. As Christians who embody Christ's transformational love, we have the courage to love our country in a way that is not blind patriotism, but a patriotism that embraces an honest, truthful and whole history, not for the purpose of shaming, but to validate the lived experiences of our Black and Brown siblings, to make healing possible, and to learn and grow toward the beloved community.

Gospel Love is strong and courageous and casts out fear. As Christians we have the courage to love others who have been marginalized and demonized by the fear spreaders and hate mongers.

Gospel Love is the difficult love of inclusion that embraces the other, even our enemies. It is a bridge of love that nudges us to step toward common ground, toward holding each other in our common humanity and not demonizing "the other side".

Gospel Love is strong, compassionate, and wise, always seeking the common good. As Christians we are emboldened with Christ's compassion to embrace social programs, policies, and infrastructures that will help move our nation toward a just and healthier society for all, to live out our faith in a culture of compassion and humility, envisioning and creating a society built on a foundation of love and sustained by love – God's beloved community.

I pray that this Global Love Day be a day when the church renews its commitment to be a Christ presence in the world, a presence of transformational love, of justice and of truth. If not the church, then who?

I close with a posting I found on Facebook with a scripture, a song and a prayer.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 8:38-39

"The weight of the world is love.
Under the burden of solitude,
under the burden of dissatisfaction
the weight, the weight we carry
is love."

- Allen Ginsberg, "Song"

Prayer: On this Global Love Day, we *draw closer to you*, [Holy One], *as the heaviness of the world presses us closer to love's center*. Help us to stay engaged in the world as your faithful disciples, bringing Gospel love, truth and justice to a hurting world. Help us to actively work toward Your beloved community, where holy love is our daily bread and the foundation for all that we value and create together. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. (Adapted from Sojourners)

Yours in Christ,
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¹White fragility – is characterized by defensive moves that white people make when they are racially challenged. White fragility appears in a range of emotions like fear, anger, guilt, silence and arguing which inhibit the capacity for meaningful, cross-racial dialogue.