

Bishop's Office Message for December, 2004

Dear Partners in Ministry,

We are faced with the reality of a world in chaos. The war on terror dominates news and political agendas. Missile defense shields against "rogue" states and terrorist groups are being designed in both North America and Russia. The Middle East is in a high state of anxiety with the death of Yasser Arafat. The situations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and other places continue to remind us how fragile the relationships between human beings can be, and how capable people are of inflicting harm on other people. Global warming looms in the background as a force the likes of which we have never had to deal, and whose consequences are as yet unknown. All of this creates a dynamic of fear which affects the whole planet.

Advent and Christmas remind us of another reality in which we live. God, the creator of all, chose to come to this tiny speck of dust in the vastness of creation to become one with the human beings God created. This coming was not in power or pomp or threat. It was in the form of a vulnerable baby, born in a stable to parents displaced by an unfeeling government in the backwater town of Bethlehem. Jesus grew up and confronted all the powers of destruction in our world, took into himself all the hate human beings could generate, and put them to death with him on the cross. This Jesus lives now among us in the people he claims for his own in baptism. This community, gathered in Christ, nourished by his own body and blood, is sent out into the midst of this world of chaos, pain, and fear, with a new word - Love. This love overcomes all fear and knits together a broken people with a mandate to heal the world. So with the angels and shepherds outside of Bethlehem, we prepare once again to sing God's song that will not fade, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth." Christ is born! Alleluia!

+Stephen P. Kristenson, Bishop
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