



## BULLETIN INSERTS

### **December 25, 2022 – Christmas Day The Presiding Bishop's Christmas Message**

Hello. I'm inside St. James Church by-the-Sea, La Jolla, California. We thank the rector, the clergy, the staff, and the good people of this church for allowing us to bring this Christmas message to The Episcopal Church from this wonderful and beautiful congregation.

There is a Christmas carol not that well known here in the States, maybe better known in Great Britain, that says quite simply, "Love came down at Christmas. Love all lovely. Love divine. Love was born at Christmas. Star and angel gave the sign. Love came down at Christmas." The older I get, the more I am convinced that God came into this world in the person of Jesus for one reason, and one reason alone: to show us the way to be reconciled and in right relationship with the God who is the creator of us all, and with each other as children of that one God who is the creator of us all, and of all things.

Jesus came to show us how to live, reconciled with God, and with each other, and He taught us that the way to do it is God's way of love. For God's way of love is God's way of life. It's our hope for our families, our communities, our societies. Indeed, it is our hope for the whole world. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, and love came down at Christmas.

Now, look, I'm 69 years old. I've been around the block a little bit. I know that sounds nice, sounds like the kind of thing we say in church. It sounds nice, but naive, idealistic but unrealistic, and yet, consider the alternative. Need I just simply say the names? Uvalde, Vestavia Hills, Tree of Life Synagogue, Club Q in Colorado Springs, Ukraine. Now, God's way of love is not naive, it is not unrealistic, it's the way. It's the way to life for us all. Dr. King once said, "Darkness cannot cast out darkness; only light can do that. And hatred cannot cast out hatred; only love can do that." Love came down at Christmas. And as some of us are beginning to say in this Episcopal church of ours, "Love always."

Earlier this year, I went to Mother Emanuel AME in Charleston to be part of the seventh commemoration of the murders of the martyrs of Charleston. You may remember that a number of years ago, while members of that church had gathered for Bible study, a man came in and they welcomed him in, and invited him to join them, and he turned on them, and he killed many.

It was the seventh commemoration to both honor and remember those who had died, to give God thanks for those who helped—first responders, medical persons—but it was also something else. It was a time to commit ourselves, not simply to throw up our hands in despair, but to reach out our hands to each other, to roll up our sleeves, to take God's hand and take each other's hand and do the hard and holy work of love, which brings healing, which brings hope, which binds us together, and lifts us up to be all that God dreams and intends for us all to be.

Love came down at Christmas. Love always, because love is the way. It is the way that Jesus taught us based on the ancient teachings of Moses, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself," for on these two hang, depend, all the law, all the prophets, everything that God intends because God is love.

Love came down at Christmas and so let this Christmas be a moment of rededication to the work of love in the world. As Howard Thurman wrote long ago, "When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star and the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are at home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, then the work of Christmas begins. To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among others, to make music in the heart." For love came down at Christmas, and our work is to love always. God love you. God bless you, and may God hold us all in those almighty hands of love. Merry Christmas.

**The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry  
Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church**