

## A Christmas Message from Bishop Stephen T. Lane

December 15, 2016

Dear Ones,

The pain and the urgency of living in an in-between time are very apparent to us these days. Whether our focus is personal or political, whether we're waiting for a child to be born or an illness to pass or an injustice to be redressed, waiting is hard. We want to know what will happen. We want to know when the waiting will end. We want our dreams to be realized. And... we just don't know.



As some wag once put it, the question for Advent is (to quote the rock band Chicago) "Does anybody really know what time it is?" Advent is the season of the in-between time, the season when we wait for the annual celebration of Jesus' birth, Christ's first coming among us, and when we wait for Christ to come again to set things right. Our world is an in-between world, a world in which the outlines of a better way of life are visible, but far from realized. We long for the world we think we can see, and we hope that God will make it real.

I'm frankly not very good at not knowing. It challenges all my illusions of power and control. There really isn't anything I can do, but wait, and fret - which, as my wise wife, Gretchen, says - doesn't help.

It does help me to remember that while I wait for a more perfect realization of God's new world, I am not alone. Christ came down at Christmas and remains with us. Jesus' was born among us and still invites us to follow. Jesus was crucified and raised and calls us to live as his body. The time in-between is also the time of Jesus' presence through the Spirit.

Our cry, "*How long, O Lord, how long*" (Psalm 13:1) is met with this assurance:

*"...I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love." (Ps. 31:14-16)*

Let the radiance of the child in the manger calm your heart. God is here, right here, right now. May this Christmas be for us a time not only of celebration, but of peace. May we rest in God's love for us. May we trust in God's presence among us. May we know that we are held - in this in-between time as in all times - in God's loving hand.

Merry Christmas, my friends.

+STL

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