

Joyful Resistance

by Rev. Michael Neuroth
Policy Advocate for International Issues

“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.”
(Matthew: 2:10)

The start of a new calendar year is a threshold, a moment to acknowledge the passing of time. It is natural to look back and take stock of the past twelve months. For many, (far too many) 2017 was challenging. Personally many experienced job loss or change, health scares, the passing of loved ones, strained relationships and other life challenges.

As a nation, we grappled with our growing opioid epidemic. Natural disasters devastated Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico. We began to publicly face the reality of widespread sexual harassment and violence against women. We struggled with the existential threat of nuclear war and consequences of “America First” foreign policy. U.S. policy changed dramatically as our leaders withdrew from the Paris climate accord, shut the door to immigrants and refugees, and altered our tax system to disproportionately benefit corporations and the wealthy.

And then there were the tweets. The TWEETS! It is not hard to see why so many people were eager to say good-bye to 2017.

And yet, this past year was not all pain and darkness. It was also a year of empowerment and advocacy. We began the year with the Women’s March and ended it reflecting on the power of the #MeToo movement. Allies stood shoulder-to-shoulder to confront white supremacy in Charlottesville and in cities across the country. Confederate statues tumbled, a trans-woman was elected to the Virginia legislature, and young immigrants flooded Capitol Hill chanting “No hate, no fear!” Advocates organized across intersecting issues of injustice like never before, and engaged in advocacy and direct action in record numbers. “Resistance” became more than a partisan position, and instead was a call to action against unjust structures and traditions.

In spite of all the challenges, we found examples of hope. They were sometimes distant, and often unexpected, but we could feel it. In this season of Epiphany I am eager to find these bright spots of encouragement.

In the year to come, knowing the mix of challenges and opportunity that await us, let us strive to follow the example of the Magi in the book of Matthew, who followed a Star with joy and expectation, even in the face of fear, threats, and jealousy from King Herod. Like the Magi, let us take risks and choose to resist empire for the sake of hope. Let us stick together and uplift one another when we grow weary. Let us look for those moments to be “overwhelmed with joy” (Matthew 2:10), especially in the darkest of nights.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Neuroth is Policy Advocate for International Issues for the United Church of Christ.

LEARN

ucc.org/justice

DONATE

ucc.org/donate

ARCHIVE

The logo features the letters 'WfJ' in a stylized, bold, serif font. The 'W' and 'J' are large and connected at the top, with a smaller 'f' nestled between them.

bit.ly/witness4justice

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.