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# WITNESS for JUSTICE

A weekly commentary from  
the United Church of Christ

Issue #723 | Feb. 9, 2015

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## Better Together

by **Jessie Palatucci**  
**Online Communications Specialist**

Some days you just feel like a terrible person. It happens to all of us. You know that there are real problems in the world but you decide that instead of doing something about it, you are going to do some online shopping. And sometimes you know deep down that, even if no one can tell, you're not thinking very nice thoughts about people who probably don't deserve it. And some days you bail on the simple opportunities you could take to make the world better out of sheer laziness. And on those days, you feel like a jerk.

And it is on those days, if I can give myself a break long enough to see the world around me, that I am most grateful for community. What an incredible gift we are given in others. The ability to see ourselves reflected through another person's eyes – a person who not only doesn't think you're terrible, but perhaps thinks you're wonderful! And not just because you're tricking them by keeping your darkness hidden, but rather that you're really, truly not that bad!

What a relief. To know that you are beloved; that your ugly moments are not all that define you; that other people can forgive you even when you can't forgive yourself.

I think the world is like this, too. Just like us, sometimes the world feels terrible. Not just feels – IS – terrible. Violence. Patriarchy. Sexism. Racism. Homophobia. Greed. Oppression. On a systems level, we are probably messing up 100 times more often than we are as individuals. The only thing that makes it, and us, better is the commitment of many people working together in – you guessed it – community.

We want to fix – or at the very least improve – the world, but we know that none of us can do it alone. The very thought of trying to repair all

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*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
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that brokenness on my own makes me want to lay down and take a nap. Thankfully, we don't have to. There are many hands waiting to shoulder the burden when it gets too heavy, if we just ask.

A Jewish friend recently shared a quote, which helped to restore my perspective in a cynical moment: *"It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it"* (Pirkei Avot 2:20).

Ancient words, from long-gone Rabbis. Just the swift kick I needed to get moving again.

Our fatigue and our cynicism do not excuse us from doing the work of justice, but some days it helps to be reminded that we're not doing it alone. Ours are just one set of hands in a chain of many that reach back beyond our memory and surround us today. It is true that on some days we are not the good people we could be. On those days, we have to trust that others will pick up the work, keep it moving, and pull us back onto our feet.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jessie Palatucci is Online Communications Specialist for the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries.*

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