

# Dear DISCIPLES



A message from our  
General Minister and President

January 7, 2021

Rev. Terri Hord Owens *(Transcribed from video)*

Hello, Disciples.

I'm recording this message on Wednesday, January 6, 2021

We have just celebrated Epiphany today, the coming of the Light.

Today groups of people violently stormed the U.S. Capitol, broke through windows and doors, carried weapons and forcibly moved into the U.S. Capitol.

This was an insurrection, an attempt to overthrow lawful authority with the use of force, a violent assault on not only the processes but the places of our democracy.

It was also a visible and chilling reminder of the presence, the insidious presence, of white supremacy in the United States.

If Black people were storming the U.S. Capitol, with or without guns, we would be dead by now.

As many have pointed out this is an example of what privilege and the supremacy that exists that such extreme actions were even being undertaken and with such minimal resistance.

No matter your politics, we've lost our moral compass as a nation, and we have to get really clear about what is morally right, and how the Constitution of the United States works.

Sedition is inciting the overthrow of lawful authority by force. Whether we agree with them or not, the members of the U.S. Congress have been elected legitimately.

We cannot storm the Capitol when we disagree with actions being taken. The President of the United States, whether you like them or not, is elected legitimately under the laws of this country and we cannot simply storm the White House and take over.

When you don't like what is going on with elected officials, you organize, you vote, you use peaceful protest.

You do what they did in Georgia. You register people to vote, you educate. You get people to the polls. You educate. You mobilize. You do not spread lies and conspiracy theories. You do not incite violent overthrow of the government because you don't like the outcome of elections.

Dr. (Martin Luther) King once said, "Love is creative and redemptive. "Love builds up and unites. Hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the 'fight with fire' method which you suggest," he said, "is bitterness and chaos. The aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and creation of the Beloved Community."

Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create or organize anything permanent. Only love can do that.

Epiphany, a day when we remember the Magi, when they first saw the Christ Child. Earlier today I prayed on Facebook Live marking Epiphany by saying that once we have encountered Jesus, once we have seen the Christ, we must go back another way.

We must be aware, like the Magi, that the way of Herod is not always safe, the way of empire is not always wise.

And that because we have seen Jesus, we can't go back to what we were doing before. Once we've encountered Christ, we cannot ignore the difference his presence makes.

First and foremost as Christians, we remind ourselves today that the Child born in the flesh is real to us, and he, Jesus, calls us to something higher. We cannot be the same if we have encountered the Christ. We cannot ignore truth. We cannot ignore corruption. We cannot condone insurrection and violence in response to disagreement.

As Senator Mitt Romney said today, "The most respect we can pay to the people we disagree with is to tell them the truth."

So, if we have seen the light of Christ, we cannot take the road of racism, bigotry, voter suppression, distortion of the truth, sedition, and insurrection for those are not the roads that love can take. If we love one another, we must want for each other what we want for ourselves.

We must acknowledge that love will make space to hear one another, to respect one another, and use our democratic processes to ensure a society where all have enough.

Even in our political activity, we are not excused from being a witness to the light and love of Jesus Christ. Dr. King said, "I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour."

Those words are as true today as they were in 1967.

We must go another way, church. Light, the light of Christ must prevail. We are bound by our discipleship to pray, yes, but also to act, so that we might participate with God in bearing witness to God's limitless love as revealed through Jesus.

And as the next few days unfold, let's keep praying, but let's move forward. Let's recommit ourselves to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, welcoming all as God has welcomed us to the Lord's Table, working to be an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church.

Our world hungers for this light that we bear. Let's continue to stand up, speak up, and show up.

Let's be the church we say we are.

I greet you in the love of Christ.