



**WITNESS  
FOR JUSTICE**

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## **A Faithful Assignment**

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Has it happened to you yet? Maybe it happened this morning. That feeling of overwhelm with a smidge of helplessness about all that is going on in our world and lives. It's a lot. And it's more than just reading or watching the news. Hard and horrific things—you might have a list—are devastating the lives of our neighbors near and far, and even our own families, and our own selves. Not to mention our planet.

There is still so much that is good and beautiful and hope-filled. Faith is being made real in our relationships, our witness, and care for communities. At the same time, though, I am recognizing a weariness and sense of frustration that is difficult to shake. The questions before us are big. How do we live out our faith in these days? What do we do to continually nudge this world toward the one that God dreams for us—and for creation? What makes justice real?

Pastor and writer Barbara Brown Taylor had some words for me last week on a difficult day when I was struggling to figure out what to do. She wrote, "The main thing Jesus has asked me to do is to love God and my neighbor as religiously as I love myself. The minute I have that handled, I will ask God for a new assignment. For now, my hands are full." ("Holy Envy", 2019)

I had lost the main thing. I had allowed fear and that smidge of helplessness to overshadow my God-given priorities. In the next breaths, though, my shoulders came



down from my ears. With one hand rested on my chest I remembered that I am beloved. Try it. Deep breath. You are God's beloved. Right here, right now. Just as you are. And in the next breaths, listen. Where are you being called to love?

This love of God, neighbor, and self is our main assignment. This love is where justice-making begins. It's more than a sentiment or a feeling. This is love in action. The world is made up of neighbors—if in doubt, just re-read Luke 10:25–37.

Some days our love will show up big and boldly; in our risking, advocating, feeding, resisting. Other days, or even in other moments, this love will be shown as presence, as giving our full attention to the person in front of you or on the screen; as prayer, or tending to the garden or your own need to rest. Thank you for all the ways you meet the assignment. Your love and your loving matter.

Our hands are full. And we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Tara Barber serves as the Minister for Ministerial Support and Accountability in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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