

Claremont United Methodist Church - Nativity 2022

LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

This is such a clear and simple command. The Hebrew Bible teaches this in Deuteronomy 6:5, and Jesus affirms the same command in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke, chapter 10. In Luke's Gospel, a follow-up question from one in Jesus's audience was, "And so...who IS my neighbor?" We can almost hear the hedging in his voice as he seeks to justify himself: I hope you don't mean that EVERYONE is my neighbor.

Dear ones, Jesus says, that is exactly what I mean. We are here, together on this small, fragile orb, floating in the vastness of space and time. EVERYone we meet is our neighbor, and it is God's hope and dream that we will find a way to treat each one as though they are. This includes those who look like us, and those who are unfamiliar; those who worship and pray like we do, and those whose rituals seem strange and out of place; those who think like we do, and those who decidedly don't.

The children in this banner, with their loving and inclusive gestures, seem to reflect this sort of care and love for one another. We can't love like this on our own, but Jesus came into our broken world to help us do this very thing. With God's love in our hearts, we pray that we may learn to love God AND our neighbor. May it be so.