

Message of Christmas still rings true in 2014

The Christmas story is one of joy, of celebration, of hope. Its message of peace on Earth and salvation for humankind is as powerful, as relevant and as needed today as it was on that silent, starlit night some 2,000 years ago.

Today, people from Salem to Jerusalem celebrate Christmas in a world that is vastly different from that which greeted baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

But it remains a world divided by religions, ethnic differences, politics, economics and fear. It is a world that lives under the constant threat of violence and the continuing reality of war.

As old wars continue and new ones erupt, as senseless killings take innocent lives, as the needs of the homeless and the hungry grow ever larger, as uncertainty hangs over our cities and our nations, we might be forgiven if we scoffed at peace as an elusive ideal.

It is true that as long as conflicts, animosities and inequities flourish and divide us, we cannot truly realize the Christmas message of peace.

But Christmas brings us hope.

Hope that we can overcome the roots of conflict.

Hope that we can solve the problems of hunger, homelessness, injustice and poverty — not only around the world but also in our own neighborhoods.

Hope that we can recognize the value of religious views that are different from our own, and that we can respect one another's holy days and holidays.

Hope that we can create a just, moral and peaceful world.

Hope that we can create a bright future for all children — for all people.

For the message of Christmas, of peace on Earth, is not a passive message. It is an eternal call to action, a sustained effort to care for one another.

It is substituting tolerance and understanding for arrogance. It is rising above anxiety and helplessness.

It is working for justice. It is seeing all people as our brothers and sisters, as individuals whose lives, visions and needs are as worthy as our own.

Each of us, no matter what our circumstances, has the power to help bring about that peace, to make our

part of the world a little less hostile. We can do so through our choosing to act with caring and compassion and justice and understanding.

But if we refuse to have faith in our humanity, if we shrug and ignore the suffering and strife around us, we will make peace elusive.

This is a time of uncertainty for many. It is a time of mourning for many. But this holiday season, like every one before it, nourishes our spirit of giving and our sense of hope.

Our present to our neighbors should be to carry that spirit throughout the year.

To show respect and caring to every person. To be slower to anger and quicker to listen. To find compliments instead of complaints in our dealings with colleagues and family members.

To be selfless instead of selfish in our business and personal transactions. To give not just our dollars but also our time to ensure that our neighbors have food, clothing and companionship.

That way we make peace a path, not merely a goal.

For Christians and non-Christians alike, the Christmas season can be a new beginning on that path. Working collectively, we can overcome the violence, the anger and the despair around us. We can heal the wounds within our families, within our communities and within our hearts.

Together we can and will achieve peace. Throughout the world, that is the message of Christmas, the message of the Prince of Peace.

Today's editorial

It is a Christmas tradition for the Statesman Journal to publish this editorial each year, updating it as events dictate.



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