



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

Moderator's Letter: Response to the Recent Acts of Terror

[Français](#)

November 2015

Dear members and friends of the United Church,

I am writing to you with a heavy heart but also with a sense of hopefulness. The horrific acts of terror committed over the past month in Paris, Beirut, and Baghdad suggest that a new phase of terrorism has begun. Our hearts go out to all whose lives have been thrown into grief, fear, and chaos by these barbaric acts. Yet amidst the sorrow and grief, there have been glimpses of humanity at its very best. A friend saving the life of another as bullets rage, a father refusing to respond to the murder of his wife with hate, and community groups insisting that, despite what has happened, they will leave their doors open to welcome Syrian refugees. These are living testimonies to the resilience of compassion.

As a church we have been [praying](#) for all the victims that were harmed in these events. We also echo a recent [statement of the World Council of Churches](#) that said, "In the face of this brutality, all people of faith and of good will must stand together to recommit to respecting and caring for one another, to protecting one another, and to preventing such violence."

There is a growing political awareness that this kind of terrorism cannot be effectively countered through the traditional means of war. Addressing the brutality of organized terror will require many years of coordinated resistance. To that wisdom we add our conviction, as followers of Jesus, that love is the only power

strong enough to conquer the forces of hatred and death. Resistance rooted in love is our best hope for defeating terrorism.

This conviction will no doubt be tested in coming years. Recent events have clearly demonstrated that we are all vulnerable to terrorist attacks. People in all parts of the world and of every faith are being targeted. When terror strikes close to home, we may be tempted to project our fear onto our neighbours, to make enemies of those who dress, or act, or pray differently from us. At times like this we must hold firm to our faith in the power of love to overcome evil. Hostility and mistrust only feed the fear that leads to more violence. We must choose to stand in solidarity with our neighbours—near and far—of every faith and every background, united with all people of good will, to resist the hatred and division that terrorism attempts to spread.

Refusing to become mired in fear and hate requires both courage and discipline. Personally, I have found the practice of daily prayer to be a great source of strength and courage for me. I invite us all to pray for our government, our law enforcement agencies, our security services, and ourselves—praying that there will be wisdom to engage this threat with resilience and with care for the democratic principles that define us as a people.

Honouring what is good and life-affirming in our communities is another important form of resistance. The United Church has been involved in refugee sponsorship in Canada since 1979, which has richly blessed us as well as those we have sponsored. Congregations across the church are preparing for the arrival of Syrian refugees to Canada. We need to resist the fears that call for a withdrawal of support for Syrian refugees and remember that the vast majority of these people are victims of the very terrorism we also face.

As a church we also have a long history of building respectful relations with Muslim communities in Canada and, indeed, elsewhere in the world. One of the strategies of the terrorists is to divide Muslim and non-Muslim citizens in order to create a war of civilizations. In this context it becomes even more critical for the church to strengthen relations with Muslim neighbours, to invite visits between our congregations and communities, and to affirm that we are all Canadians together.

In these difficult and frightening times, let us draw on the inspiration of the one we name the true and only head of the church. Let us practise once again what it

means to follow Jesus: to live a life of compassion, to be courageous in faith, to resist fear and hatred, and to believe that, finally, love will win.

Thanks be to God for the work all of you are doing in this troubled time.

The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell

Moderator

The United Church of Canada

This message has been sent to all Conference offices and pastoral charges for which the General Council has an e-mail address. To ensure that all pastoral charges receive this message, we also ask presbytery secretaries to circulate to their e-mail distribution lists. Although this may result in some receiving the message more than once, we hope this will be less of a problem than if you were not to receive the message at all.

Copyright © 2015 The United Church of Canada.

You have received this message because this address is identified as the contact point for your Conference.

Our mailing address is:

The United Church of Canada
3250 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M8X 2Y4
Canada

[Add us to your address book](#)

[Update your subscription profile](#) | [Unsubscribe from list](#)