

*December 2018*

*Pastor Joy*

I recall so well the December, 38 years ago, when after decorating a little Christmas tree in my studio apartment, I sat in the dark, taking in the simple beauty of twinkling lights when the radio broadcaster abruptly stopped the music to tell of John Lennon's murder outside his apartment building in New York City. The memory comes to me each December as some of his music is played once again.

*"So this is Christmas, what have you done?"* sings John Lennon in his famous Happy Xmas song. (Released in 1972) Like the parables of Jesus that push at us to walk the extra mile on behalf of someone else or to love our enemies, Lennon's question challenges me to think about the ways I have embodied the light and love of the Spirit of Christ, making it not simply talk but action. It is almost too easy to allow cynicism and fear to shape our actions when bombarded by the hard news of the world near and far. Some days all I want to do is escape into my safe places where I can avoid it all. Mind you, I recognize the whole idea of even being able to escape – is a kind of twisted privilege in itself. My wiser self knows that escape is in not really a viable choice.

If all we do is look for what is wrong, cynicism and fear will rule the day. If instead we look around and participate in the myriad of ways hope and love are revealed, the very landscape on which we walk has a way of being more beautiful. Hope is not denial or an act of escape. Hope is an act of resistance. It is the determination to keep envisioning and moving towards the good. It points towards a time when the silence will not be startled by the sound of gunshots. Hope is best nurtured in the company of others, no matter the momentary circumstances. Who do you walk with towards a better day? Who helps you get up off the couch and live into hope?