

Excerpts from a letter by Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church (DOC)

January 12, 2012

Dear Disciples,

Today as I sit to write, it is the anniversary of the massive earthquake that shook Haiti two years ago. We have experienced the shock of other tragedies since then: the earthquake in Japan, storms across North American, and the on-going drought and starvation in the Horn of Africa (to name a few).

What does the good news of Jesus Christ look like at such a time? The story of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:13-17 gives us some clues.

There is John the Baptist, stunned that Jesus would come to him for baptism. Does "Your Majesty" bow down to a mere "Mr."? Jesus' request turned the world upside down! Instead of going to the high and mighty for validation, he did "the limbo" (how low can you go?) and turned to a wild man, asking for immersion in water.

Jesus goes through the watery chaos, comes out again to receive a blessing from God and heads into his ministry.

The good news still involves that same progression -- from chaos to blessing to mission.

When the walls of water are waiting to burst in, this is when the people of God are at our best. When we follow Jesus right into the chaos and come through on the other side to a blessing and a mission. When against all common sense we rediscover our hope.

Jesus told John, "I must be baptized by you." It seemed an idea designed to turn the world on its head, making chaos out of the normal human order of things. But Jesus wasn't afraid of a little chaos. He went for it! And instead of turning the world on its head, the world turned right side up! God spoke: "Beloved, I am pleased."

In this year of 2012, chaos may still loom. Decisions beyond our control may affect our economic future. In the U.S., an election year seems bound to unfold with personal attack instead of thoughtful debate about achieving the common good. It's tempting to give in to cynicism or despair. But Jesus leads a different way -- right into the middle of the chaos -- in a progression through chaos to blessing and a mission.

As we move more fully into 2012, I offer a prayer that we will, as a church, be willing to head into the chaos of our time with a sense of God's blessing and a call to God's mission. Perhaps we will lead a mission trip to Joplin or Tuscaloosa or Southwest Good Samaritan Center.

Disciples, we are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. Our calling is to follow Jesus -- and that usually means right into the chaos. But also right on through to blessing and to a mission and to a sense of things being right side up at last.