

## **You're Invited to Follow Jesus**

I wrote this to accompany our Wednesday prayer at 2 post on Facebook. Wednesdays at 2 pm, myself or Pastor J go live on Facebook for prayer and reflection. If you haven't seen it, no time like now! (Our Facebook page is [www.facebook.com/angolafcucc](http://www.facebook.com/angolafcucc).)

Here's the Facebook post:

"You're invited, not because we think you need Jesus, but because those of us who try to follow Jesus need you.

You're invited, not to church, but to a movement of care for our neighbors. We just happen to meet at church because you have to meet somewhere.

You're invited, not to heaven tomorrow, but to heaven now, on earth. A heaven that Jesus told us was coming alive here and now.

You're invited, not to be condemned by the Bible, but to read it among those who find it frees them.

You're invited to this congregation: First Congregational United Church of Christ. We are a community of Christ followers who embrace the marginalized, work with the poor, and seek empowerment to the powerless.

If you are wary of Christians, but still want to follow Christ, we need you.

Start tonight, with our Ash Wednesday service at 6 pm.

Worship is on Sundays at 10 am.

Our website is [www.angolaucc.org](http://www.angolaucc.org).

You're invited."

And now I invite you all to make an invitation to someone. You can borrow my language. You can text or call or send a card. You can strike up a conversation with someone who cares about the same things you care about. You can ask that friend who is sick and tired of the kind of Christianity they see being wielded like a weapon against the marginalized (that's the LGBTQ+ community, the immigrants, the poor, people with uteruses (women and those who do not identify as women), children who are hungry, people around the world being eliminated by bigger powers—national, military, economic.

Because the Jesus we follow is first and foremost the God on Earth of the Gospels. He is not the Levitical law. He is not the man evangelized by Paul. He is not an American.

Those readings, the Hebrew Bible and the letters of the Christian Testament are valuable, important, indispensable—but they are not the Gospels. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are where, to the very best of their ability, the human writers of those stories tried to capture the Jesus they believed in. It is where they tried to set down his words and deeds, his birth and death, his transfiguration and his resurrection. **The Gospels are the lens through which we interpret the rest of the Bible.**

Because we are *Christ* followers. That doesn't make us better or more worthy or wiser than our Jewish and Muslim siblings of the book. That doesn't mean we have it right and Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, and atheists have it wrong. It means that we have made a choice to commit to Jesus Christ. A choice no one forced us to make, but one we freely took on. And it means that we will, before considering any other command, follow the greatest commandment: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

If you know someone who is looking for that commitment, invite them here. If you know someone who is looking for a way to love their neighbor, invite them here. If you know someone who is looking to salvage a faith distinct from white Christian nationalism, invite them here.

Because they belong here and we who claim Christ need them for our project of love, justice, and peace on earth, in the name of Jesus.

Asking for your presence and offering loving community,

Pastor Nikki