

**BLESSINGS ALWAYS**  
**January 8, 2025**  
**Association Minister Message**  
**Rev. Daniel L. Busch**

*VOICE*. Celebration or mockery. Praise or destruction. Approval or condemnation. Affirmation or exclusion. Our *VOICES* by our thoughts, words, and deeds, can show respect or indifference to another person or group. We act/react with knowledgeable enlightened understandings, or prejudicial uninformed threatening reactions. Today's *VOICES* around us and in the world community are so disturbing, disrespectful, and threatening. *VOICES* are shouting for recognition, power, prosperity, and prestige. There is a sense of narcissism or self-serving intentions, greed, and purpose.

This coming Sunday celebrates the *Baptism of Jesus*. In many churches, part of the day's liturgy is *Renewal of Baptism* as a reminder that participants have been baptized into the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. When Jesus was baptized by His second cousin, John, the Baptist, "*And there was a VOICE from heaven: 'You are my Son whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness.'*" (Luke 3:22, CEB) The NRSVue states, "*And a VOICE came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'*" When we are baptized, God's *VOICE* tells us that we, too, are God's child, dearly loved and beloved, and God finds in us pleasure and happiness. The prophet Isaiah (43:1) affirms God declaring, "*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.*" What an affirmation that each one of us is known by God intimately. We are God's family, gifted to be co-creators with God.

God's *VOICE* is not just a sound but action: alive in us, around us, and through us. "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*" (Isaiah 43:2). We cannot hide from God or escape from God's love. It is unconditional love, for God "*dearly*" loves us, cries with us, laughs with us, shares with us gifts and graces of unlimited possibilities. God loves us in our exile as well as in our settlement. God is mysterious yet ever close to us. Through our baptisms, we are part of a community of faith that has a *VOICE* that speaks to correct injustices, wrongs, and all that divides us. Together we make a difference in the world to the glory of God. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS*.