



**United Methodist Church
in Germany**

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Message of Bishop Wenner on the website www.emk.de

We wish for one another a peaceful and merry Christmas. For many people in Berlin this wish doesn't come true. People in Berlin are mourning because relatives were killed at the terrible offense, probably a terrorist attack, in the evening of December 19. Or they are worried about the recovery of the injured. Those who were at that place, either to visit the Christmas Market near the Gedächtniskirche (Memorial Church) or to offer assistance after the attack, will not forget the terrible images. All of this happened at a place where people wanted to attune themselves to a Christmas mood. Abruptly the joyous feelings were turned upside down.

What we celebrate at Christmas does not depend on sentiments, thanks be to God. When God became human it happened in a historic situation that was shaped by violence, oppression and fear. It was not comfortable for the child in the manger; Jesus was born in desperate poverty and in insecure times. In the child in the manger God renewed the promise that peace will come on earth.

Right in the face of the manifestations of horror – whether because of terror in Berlin and elsewhere or because of war and war crimes in Syria and other neglected places –, we set our hope in Jesus Christ. In his name we try not to act on our human reflex movements, as understandable they might be. We do not cry out for revenge, nor are we generally suspicious towards certain groups of people, nor do we wish to get rid of the strangers. Those who trust the child in the manger will be comforted despite of fear and helplessness and will receive and give love.

I pray for God's comfort for the victims of the attack in Berlin and for their families. Methodists from all over the world have let us know that they are praying for those immediately affected and for our country. May the witness of the birth of Christ, Savior and Prince of Peace, be powerfully shared and heard in the churches in Berlin and everywhere where people celebrate Christmas. May we make room for Jesus so that we, filled by God's love, will overcome hatred with love and carry the light of peace that begins to shine in the barn in Bethlehem.

December 20, 2016

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner