**Love Wins v.2**

Hi, my name is Bruce Halen. My pronouns are he/him. I am a Caucasian male of average height and average weight with short silvery brown hair and a bit of an attitude.

Love is the doctrine of this church. Love will guide us. Make Love Visible. Did I miss any other references to Love with connections to FUCSJ? (Wait briefly for answers).

This place has been about love since the first day I walked up the steps and through the front door into this building. The word is love.

For me, there are two directions that you can go in this life. You can go in the directions of hate or you can go in the direction of love. As a child, I was required by my parents, neighbors and teachers to go in the direction of love. As an adult, I have chosen to continue in the direction of love.

For over 20 years, the vehicle that I have travelled on is 160 N. Third Street, San Jose, CA.

Love is hard, love is kind, love is cold, love is warm, love is compassionate, love is cruel, love is fair, love is unfair. Love is music, Love is war, Love is peace. The definition of love is never ending, constant, current and historical.

I can’t say that I understand all of what love is or all of what hate is. But, I do believe that love wins.

2024 was a pretty good year for me. Good health, plenty of travel and lots of things to write about. Then came the election and I lumped all of 2024 in with the election results. The election results sucked so, by association all of 2024 sucked. Was anyone else disappointed by the election results?

 I sulked until Thanksgiving before taking my own advice on how to deal with disappointment. Do something about it. Get involved. Be around people. Start writing again.

So, I got back to writing my Blog. I immersed myself in the music I was performing for the holidays. I got into the Christmas spirit of giving, sang carols and songs of the season. I listened intently to podcasts, read the paper copy of the San Jose Mercury News and got the worldview of the New York Times through my wife Meredy who gets the most credit for making me to at least appear to be literate.

I credit not one, but two epiphany-like experiences over the past five years for helping me negotiate COVID and the Trump era and to feel unabashedly hopeful about the future.

The first one came after reading Timothy Snyder’s booklet “On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons From the 20th Century.” The epiphany or learning, was that we were living the middle of the 20th Century all over again.

The light bulb went on. My lens on the state of things seemed able to cut through all the seemingly unrelated craziness going on, to see it for what it was and express my feelings about it. We were in the midst of a potential tyrant in the making. That was big, really big.

Epiphany #2 began when our interim minister Rev. XK (Xolani Kacela) inspired me to write down my most current goals and objectives for my life. It was a good exercise. The listing of goals and objectives was a good idea. For me, though, it stalled out when I got to the subject of **Good and Evil.** I wrote as if **Good and Evil** were as real as baseball and apple pie.

But, on further study of religious and philosophical texts and the promptings of a Buddhist friend, I came to a new realization. Good and Evil are titles that are assigned to people. People are not good or evil. Rather, like children, good and evil move through us but are not from us. The real dichotomy was **Hate and Love.**

The world got a whole lot easier for me to process when this lens got added to my world view glasses.

Throw in a little reading about the ancient teachings of Stoicism and what it can teach about worry and I am feeling pretty (within reason) good about things.

Love is everywhere in this church. In the songs we sing, the Affirmation that we read to each other every Sunday, in our mission statement “Make Love Visible.” Love is everywhere around here. And that is why I keep coming back here.

So, back to “Love Wins.” Several months ago, the marvelous musicians of our own **Guitars Aloud** needed substitute vocals for a song they were performing for a service here. The title of the song?

**Love Wins.**

**The song inspired me to have a banner made with that message on it. And it gave my life a theme and a theme song.**

It fuels my optimism for the coming year, and for the years to come. That optimism is born from those two personal epiphanies and, of course, this church community.

And, in case you missed the Guitars Aloud performance of this song, here it is as performed by Mel Washington and Wyatt Durrett.

**Love Wins**