

Love survives

By [Wm. Michael Jenkins](#)

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“What will survive of us is love,” writes Philip Larkin in his remarkably unsentimental poem “An Arundel Tomb.” He is reflecting on the recumbent stone effigy over the grave of a couple buried long ago in an ancient church.

Maybe we should take a step further, however, and say that love is that which not only “survives” but also rises, or is raised, from any and every grave. This is especially important to bear in mind in the face of all the threats to love, those powers and forces that try to bury it.

In my [lectionary column for the Century](#) (subscription required), I refer to Martin Luther King’s 1958 essay “An Experiment in Love.” King speaks of love that seeks “to preserve and create community.” Love, he says, demonstrates its power through its “insistence on community even when one seeks to break it.” Love “is a willingness to go to any length to restore community.”

There are forces of violence and hatred in our culture that seem to operate almost full-time. They seek to undermine community at every turn, to polarize and divide people along every potential social, cultural, economic, political, ethnic, racial and religious fissure. Dr. King reminds us that there is an antidote to these forces: a remembrance that we are made in the image of God, that we are all children of God, that we are bound together in a “network of mutuality” by the God who created us and holds us in love.

This divine love binds us together whether we acknowledge it or not. And it is the same powerful force that brought the whole universe into existence.

Love survives. Love rises from the dead. Love has this ability because it is more powerful than anything else in the world. We are not likely to hear this message in

any political ads this season, but it is God's honest truth. If we could believe it, it could just save us from our cynicism and from ourselves.