

MINISTER'S COLUMN, Scott Couper

For some time, a talking point for progressive and conservative media has been 'identity politics'. As people of faith, we often cede discourse to pundits who seek to persuade us to any one side of a political spectrum.

As people of faith, we need to remember that we have our own lens through which to interpret the world and by which to gauge our responses. I believe that lens is the life and ministry of Jesus the Christ. As people of faith, we do not primarily look to Republicans or Democrats. As people of faith, we do not primarily look to capitalists or socialists. As people of faith, we do not primarily look toward the President of the United States or the Chancellor of Germany. As people of faith, we look primarily to the pioneer and the one who perfects of our faith, Jesus the Christ, to provide direction for our thinking and actions.

Jesus practiced his own form of 'identity politics'. It is Jesus' 'identity politics' to which we should dedicate our allegiance and be thus be accountable. 'Identity politics' is generally known to be "a tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics". It can be argued that the right (conservatives) and the left (progressives) have practiced 'identity politics' for good and for bad. For example, 'Make America Great Again' is considered by many to be a return to white supremacy and patriarchy as governing forces in our country. 'Black Lives Matter' is considered by many to be a prioritization of the considerations and needs of people of color. Perhaps we as people of faith ought to recall that we ought not be obsessed and consumed with the secular world's political spectrum. Instead, perhaps we are asked to base our advocacy on Jesus' 'identity politics'.

In the gospel according to Luke (chapter 6, NIV), Jesus preached what is often referred to as the 'Sermon on the Mount'. Therein, I read about the 'identity politics' to which Jesus ascribes. So, who are the 'identities' that Jesus prioritizes?

²⁰Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

In Jesus' 'identity politics' who are prioritized? The poor, the hungry, the oppressed. In Jesus' 'identity politics' who are de-prioritized? The rich, the full, those who are happy with the status quo.

Love always in Christ, Scott

Council Chair, LYNN HERZOG

Money! It's not everyone's favorite topic, and some of us were taught that "Money is the root of all evil" (though it should be "The Love of Money"). But we all depend on it, and it has to be talked about.

In December, we continued our habit of spending more than we take in – by \$11,000 this month. Due to some generous donors, and the federal Paycheck Protection Program, our end-of-year deficit is not as large as was budgeted. But pledges are down, and our expenses are not, so prepare yourselves for an even bigger deficit in 2021.

We will all have a chance to discuss church finances at the Annual Financial Meeting on Sunday February 21, after the morning worship. It will be our first Congregational meeting held on Zoom! We need to have a quorum of voting members, so please be sure to attend. If you don't have computer access, you can use your telephone. If you are unsure how to do that, please contact the office, and someone will walk you through the process. Informational packets will be sent via e-mail, and mailed to those without e-mail. Hope to see you there!

CENTRE BELLS—February 2021

The newsletter of
Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ



From Music Director, MARY MILKEY-MAY

Well, here it is again, time for another *Centre Bells* article! January is breezing right by with no snow at this point in my neck of the woods. Oddly, Lake Morey (in Fairlee, VT) has yet to freeze over so I continue to wait impatiently for my annual lap skating, another anomaly of this year and perhaps another indication of climate change.

For Martin Luther King Sunday (1/17/21) we were lucky to enjoy Natalie Lewis' talented singing. Natalie sang two spirituals that I recorded with her in All Saint's Episcopal Church in South Hadley, MA. This is where my husband is Director of Music and Natalie is their hired weekly soloist. The acoustics in the church are amazing! Natalie is a senior voice major at UMASS who is looking to further her studies in grad school next fall. She is a delight to work with and she has an amazing gift of her voice.

I cannot believe that we will be entering the season of Lent this month! As I have mentioned previously, I love selecting and presenting Lenten choral music and look forward to it each year. Unfortunately, there will be no choral music. Yet, I am hoping to enlist some soloists (similar to Advent) to at least have some vocal music during services. Please let me know if you would be willing to volunteer!

LONG-RANGE PLANNING TEAM

The Long Range Planning Team (LRPT) has been meeting regularly via ZOOM since we were created by action of the congregation after our annual meeting in September 2020 and has had 3 ZOOM meetings with The Rev. Paul Nickerson, our church consultant. For the past two months our primary focus has been to get a better understanding of our church community by analyzing church demographics and to reflect on our recent church history. We are finalizing a survey that we hope to make available to all members, both past and present, to seek their input on highlights, struggles and key events during the tenure of our settled and interim ministers dating back to The Rev. Leonard Kramer who served the church from 1968 – 1980. We hope everyone will take the time to complete the survey and participate in small group ZOOM meetings to be facilitated by members of the LRPT. For those members who do not have access to a computer or are not familiar with ZOOM, alternate arrangements will be made so you will be able to participate in this important effort to reflect on our church history as we continue with our year-long vision and discernment process.

DEACONS

After our scaled back and subdued Christmas and New Year's observances, I am sure we all rejoiced to rip off that last page in our 2020 calendars. No doubt more than a few glasses were raised in relief and gratitude when the clock finally ticked past midnight!

Our present dormancy at Centre Church does have advantages, though, such as opportunity to tackle housekeeping tasks within our building. We deacons have been discussing plans and ideas to enhance the decor of the chapel, to facilitate and inspire greater use of it as a worship, meditation, and event space. At this writing, arrangements have been made to relocate one of the two spinets now occupying the chapel to Memorial Hall. Professional movers will dispose of the upright piano in the Hall, being in poor condition. Also, we expect to hire professional cleaners to remove accumulated wax drippings and paint spots from the sanctuary carpet.

This month will mark nearly one full year since all the world changed. It seems appropriate that now begins the season of Lent, a time of reflection, sacrifice, and prayer. An austere and barren time, for many. But we could, too, consider it the soil where the seeds of hope and resurrection are sown, and ourselves God's gardeners, nurturing and patient, and confident of the growth and harvest to come.

In faith, Heidi Mario

BRATTLEBORO CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

It's mid-winter and cold and the days are short. A wonderful time to explore the night sky, which is what our preschoolers are doing now. Toddlers and younger are enjoying books and trucks and pulling and pushing and developing fine and gross motor skills. The preschool class is learning to listen to the sounds letters make and find the answer to questions like "What is math?" We gave away two new baby quilts in January. Most of the children go out every day, and they are learning to dress themselves and how to ask for help when they need it. We started receiving food from the local school district so now all children are being provided meals. All parents have to send in an afternoon snacks. We are grateful for the program that allows us to partner with them for these meals. Feeding the children, keeping them safe, healthy, and happy puts them on the road to success in school later on; this is a job we feel good about.

MISSION & SERVICE

As we move through this dark time of year, and history, we are reminded of the inspiration we gain from our faith and from each other. To this Mission & Service would like to deeply thank all who contributed to the *Luz del Mundo Scholarship Fund* in January. We were able to send the entire amount of \$1,500 to the students of our sister parish community as their school year begins! Thank you to all whether your donation was large, which made such a difference, or small, which got us to our final donation total. We are so blessed to even be able to put additional funds aside that will be sent mid-semester. Thank you for bringing light to the students of Cabinitas.

On February 14, we will celebrate the light coming through the darkness in two ways. Our Second Sunday Offering, 'Mission Possible' will be collected for Centre Church, the building, which houses so many missions. Because of our support for our church, we are able to assist Loaves & Fishes, Brattleboro Centre for Children, Carry Me Home, and in usual times, host AA group meetings, Windham World Affairs Council events, and other groups. Without our church, Brattleboro would look and feel much different.

The second way that we will celebrate on the 14th, is to have a 'vigil' of hearts on our lawn. We will encourage church members and the community to participate in this event in which large hearts will be posted in the lawn honoring our first responders, hospital workers, essential workers, and of those hearts lost to this pandemic. More information will be forthcoming, but we hope that you will participate. Perhaps we can brighten up Main Street during this dark time and let Centre Church's light shine through.

MEMBER CARE

"The stars at night
Are big and Bright
Deep in the heart of Texas"

Many of you remember that song from decades ago. I hummed it while spending two months in the Lone Star State. The trip was planned so that I could visit our older son before he left for his next three months in Afghanistan.

He is employed by the U.S. State Department as a flight instructor for non-rated crew members - a crew chief for the helicopters on which he flies.

My son's two daughters, both granddaughters, and many of his wife's relatives live nearby, in Temple, Texas. Two days before I flew home to Vermont, there was a snowfall, a big one for that part of the country. An inch or so of the white stuff fell, enough for kids and grown-ups to go outdoors and build snowmen (maybe a once in a decade event for that part of Texas). School was called off for the next day, as the roads, especially the bridges, were not good for driving.

On my long visit there, I was able to join in with the Sunday service of Centre Church via ZOOM. I have done that every Sunday from my home in Putney. Now it was long distance, like Lisa Terzariol from Italy, Debbie Cope in North Carolina, Mike & Julie Ball in Wisconsin, and many others. It is all still so amazing to me that we have such means of communication. I am pleased that I can use Messenger for my other son in Japan.

Thanks to all those members, including the minister, who organize all of this for every Sunday morning. I think it will be easier when we can all enter the sanctuary on Sunday mornings again, don't you?

Marion Daley, *Member Care Chair*



PRAY



FAST



GIVE

COMMUNICATION from the WIDER UCC COMMUNITY

UCC national leaders condemn insurrection in racist takeover of the U.S. Capitol

By **UCC Leadership** published on January 7, 2021

We, the called and elected leaders of the United Church of Christ, heirs of a tradition rich with saints who have gone before us and whose courage in the struggle for justice and peace informs our own words and actions, rise in one voice, with clarity and unity to condemn the insurrection that took place at the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Upon hearing the news of his pending birth, Jesus' mother proclaimed: "God will scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts." We remember too these words from our blessed Savior Jesus, "I have come to bring good news to the poor, to bring release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free."

In the spirit of our ancestors, recognizing their intent and standing on their shoulders as people who acted in courage and faith, we join in one voice to name the evil we witnessed, and to condemn the words of our president and the actions of his insurrectionists and white supremacist terrorists. The president's words incited the attack on the United States Capitol. Therefore, we call upon members of his administration and the Congress to remove him from office, thereby holding him accountable for his treasonous actions and ensuring that he never hold the office of President of the United States again.

We bear witness to and name as racist the deplorable difference between security plans implemented during Black Lives Matter protests and the security plans ordered and implemented on January 6, ahead of a rally by armed domestic terrorists and call out that difference as an embodiment of white supremacy. That difference allowed the act of terrorism to happen.

We hold accountable our elected leaders, who have been complicit by their support of the actions of the president, as well as the lingering silence in the wake of his actions. We condemn their unwillingness to uphold the Constitution of the United States and their fueling of the flames that erupted at the U.S. Capitol and on the streets of Washington, D.C.

We name the pain and the collective trauma that all Americans felt when we were forced to witness the terror inflicted by armed insurrectionists. The mob broke through windows and forced our elected representatives to hide under their desks, place gas masks on their faces, lie under the rows of seats in the House and Senate Chambers. The mob surrounded U.S. Capitol security guards, who were outnumbered and overwhelmed, and made them fear for their lives. They marched through the Capitol buildings carrying Confederate flags. They placed pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails on the grounds of the Capitol. They ransacked the offices of our elected representatives and vandalized the grounds and the building. They removed the American flag that flies over the U.S. Capitol and replaced it with a Trump flag. They desecrated the Halls of Congress and our nation's democracy.

To the extent possible, every person involved in this armed attack on our Capitol must be identified, arrested and placed on trial for crimes committed.

Our love affair with white skin in America, a love affair that seeps into every pore of America's skin – including our houses of worship – culminated in another indefensible act of raw terror and violence. Some rioters and insurrectionists – many of whom would proclaim Jesus as their Lord and Savior – were carrying Bibles or holding "Jesus Saves" signs. We want to be clear: there is nothing Christ-like in any of this. Christians have for too long tolerated racism and racists as a part of our collective story.

Today as we condemn the perpetrators of this violence on the grounds of our Capitol, we further condemn the lie that whiteness is a virtue. The love of whiteness is an evil that must be rooted out from our shared and common narrative, and until it is, white supremacists like our current president and his devoted followers will continue to behave like they have a God-given right to acts of violence and insurrection.

We condemn the inaction and complicity of the church, which continues to miss the mark of its high calling by using the Bible and the gospel narratives to support injustice. The time has come, indeed, is long overdue, for the church to denounce theologies of whiteness, and to name white supremacy as idolatrous. Now is the time for the church, in all denominational contexts, to release support of white power and white privilege and to embrace fully the call to follow Jesus. Our faith calls us to acts of love, kindness and compassion. Our faith reminds us that the power of God aligns with the poor and the

UCC leaders, cont'd

abandoned, the weak and the hungry, the oppressed and the marginalized. We call on all people of faith and goodwill to use what we saw on January 6, 2021, as a call to justice and a reminder of what happens when evil goes unchallenged.

Our faithful response to this most recent act of white terrorism and insurrection will be to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, free the oppressed, welcome the stranger, love the neighbor, and fill the whole world with the love of our blessed redeemer, Jesus. And, as we continue to do so, we will walk in the courage to denounce and dismantle theologies and systems of oppression and hatred, replacing them with theologies of freedom, peace, justice, and love.

We invite all members of the United Church of Christ to a period of sober reflection and fervent prayer. We further urge brave conversation and a willingness to break down the barriers between us and within our communities. May we as Church offer a clear witness of the bold love, honest confession, and simple humility required of us all in this moment. In the words of the prophet Micah, let us go forth to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God."

Faithfully,

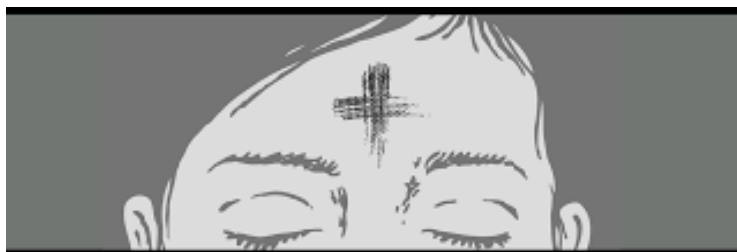
The Elected Officers of the United Church of Christ

The Rev. John Dorhauer, General Minister & President

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister

The Rev. Karen Georgja Thompson, Ass. General Minister

The Council of Conference Ministers



PEOPLE

NEW FRIENDS OF CENTRE CHURCH

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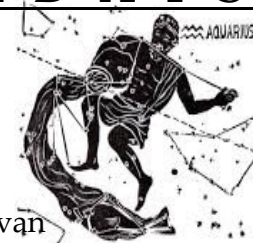
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BIRTHDAYS

- 17 Nan Mann
20 Emily Randrup
Dart Everett
Carolyn Moore
22 Stephen Brown
27 Mary Ann Donovan



A word of good cheer would be warmly received by members and friends of our church who are in nursing homes, assisted living centers, or are house-bound as of January 26.

Alta Barber

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Fran Burrows—Langdon Place

136A Arch St. #150, Keene, NH 03431

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c/o Allison Carrier Lucy

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1 Harvest Circle #301, Lincoln, MA 01773

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Please let the Administrator know if we've missed someone.

Obituary, Allen Myrick

Allen Myrick, the son of Kenneth and Hester Eppens Myrick, was born in Cambridge, MA on July 29, 1930, passed away on December 20, 2020. He grew up in Medford, MA, where he attended public schools. He graduated from Phillips Academy, Andover, MA in 1948; from Harvard College in 1952, and from Union Theological Seminary, New York City in 1955. He was married to Judith Cross in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1954.

After seminary, and inspired by a speech by given at Columbia University by Alan Paton, the Myricks spent a year in South Africa studying race relations and visiting mission work. This led to their appointment in 1957 as missionaries in South Africa under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational), where Allen taught in theological schools in Modderpoort and Alice from 1958 to 1968. During a furlough in 1962 he earned a Master of Theology degree in Old Testament from Harvard Divinity School.

In 1968 the Myricks returned to the US, where he served as minister of the Whitneyville Congregational Church, Hamden, CT from 1968 to 1975, and of the United Church of Christ of Kent, OH from 1975 to 1984. In 1984 the Myricks were again appointed to missionary service by the United Church of Christ, and worked in the newly independent country of Zimbabwe, where Allen did lay training work and local parish ministry from 1984 to 1994. In 1994 they retired, living first in Minnesota and then in Brattleboro, VT. In 2014 the Myricks moved to Covenant Village of Cromwell, CT.

In retirement, Allen has volunteered with various local organizations, including Brattleboro Area Affordable Housing, Brattleboro Pastoral Counseling Center and Brattleboro Justice Center. He was an active member of Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro and since 2016 a member of First Church of Christ, Middletown, CT.

Allen was a loving, compassionate man who was well-known for his global perspective, deep interest in world history, and a life-long commitment to justice making. Altogether, Allen and Judith spent 21 years in Africa working for the church and for racial justice, and Allen followed politics and race relations in southern Africa for the rest of his life. He was an avid reader, led many theological study and prayer groups, and was a leader amongst ministers.

Allen is survived by his loving wife of 66 years, Judith Myrick, and his three children, Becky Myrick, Helen Davis and her husband Dale, and Philip Myrick and his wife Thea, as well as six grandchildren, Jessie Myrick, Krista Maruca, Hannah Davis, Cameron Davis, Alyona Myrick & Denis Myrick.

He is survived by three sisters, Katherine Mulhern, Helen LaFleur, & Debbie Martin.

Gifts may be made in his memory to Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, 44115. To share memories or send condolences to the family, please visit www.doolittlefuneralservice.com.



FEBRUARY 2021

*ZOOM events
**Holy Communion

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 4 ⁰⁰ BCC Board	2 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	3 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 7 ⁰⁰ First Wednesday	4 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	5 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	6
7 10 ⁰⁰ Worship** ZOOM 12 ⁰⁰ Deacons' meeting	8	9 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	10 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Mission & Service	11 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	12 CB DEADLINE 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	13
14 Valentines Day 10 ⁰⁰ Worship ZOOM	15 Presidents' Day OFFICE CLOSED 1 ⁰⁰ Compassionate Brattleboro	16 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	17 Ash Wednesday 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting 6 ⁰⁰ Church Council	18 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	19 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	20
21 10 ⁰⁰ Worship ZOOM 11 ³⁰ Annual Financial Meeting ZOOM	22	23 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	24 MAIL CB 8 ⁴⁵ Staff Meeting	25 10 ⁰⁰ UCC Devotional* 4 ⁰⁰ Sermon discussion* 7 ⁰⁰ Worship Team	26 11 ³⁰ Loaves & Fishes	27
28 10 ⁰⁰ Worship ZOOM						

I came across this recipe in an old cookbook. Puzzling out the ingredients might beguile a few moments on a quiet winter's evening, as well as being an impetus to delve into our Bibles (of course, we all do that anyway, don't we?) I am writing it as I found it, please don't take "Solomon's advice for making good boys" to heart. It might make a fun project for our church school kids, when blessedly we have them with us again, to decode the passages and then make the cake. Enjoy!

Scripture Cake

4 cups 1 Kings 4:22 (first part)
1 cup Judges 5:25 (last clause)
2 cups Jeremiah 6:20
2 cups 1 Samuel 30:12
2 cups Nahum 3:12
1 tbsp. Numbers 17:8
1 tbsp 1 Samuel 14:25
Season to taste of 2 Chronicles 9:9
6 of Jeremiah 17:11

A pinch of Leviticus 2:13
1/2 cup Genesis 24:20
2 tsp Amos 4:5

Follow Solomon's advice for making good boys, Proverbs 23:14, and you will have a good cake.

P.S. Modern day instructions for making the cake, and a list of ingredients (for those who want to cheat!), are available at several sites online.

-Heidi Mario

SCOTT'S SERMONS can be accessed at the church website: www.centrechurchvermont.org -or- facebook page: <http://www.centrechurchvermont.org/audio--video.html> -or- https://www.facebook.com/pg/Centre-Congregational-Church-Brattleboro-VT-632678343519640/notes/?ref=page_internal -or- From the website *Welcome* page, click *Audio & Video* in the top list (or click *More* or *Other* on the top right).

FEBRUARY LECTIONARY TEXTS

Sunday, February 7, 5th Sunday after Epiphany
Isa 40:21-31; Ps 147: 1-11, 20c; 1 Cor 9:16-23;
Mk 1:29-39


Sunday, February 14, Transfiguration Sunday
2 Kings 2:1-12; Ps 50:1-6; 2 Cor 4:3-6; **Mk 9:2-9**

Sunday, February 21, 1st Sunday in Lent
Gen 9:8-17; **Ps 25:1-10**; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mk 1:9-15

Sunday, February 28, 2nd Sunday in Lent
Gen 17:1-7, 15-16; **Ps 22:23-31**; Rom 4:13-25;
Mk 8:31-38 or Mk 9:2-9



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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Current news/information in the larger UCC Community:

VT Conference: www.vtcucc.org / National: www.ucc.org

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