

**Centre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
The Reverend Dr Scott Everett Couper
Sunday, January 2, 2021
Second Sunday after Christmas**

“With Tutu, We Are Marching”

Christian Scripture: Jeremiah 31:7-14



The following video clip was shown before the message was preached.

<https://youtu.be/nsYabmg0aro>

Many of us have been or are now in exile. Formally speaking, exile is the state of being physically displaced from one's country or home. Yet, spiritually speaking exile is a state whereby one is displaced from where God intends us to be. In exile is the young man who identifies as woman and feels trapped in another's body. In exile is the widower who has lost his love of sixty years and thus feels lost, alone in his house, room, and bed. In exile is a man who is divorced

and separated from his children thus losing all sense of who he is as a husband and father. In exile are those who suffer from mental illness and depression and therefore are essentially removed from their true selves. In exile from God is the young rich man whose sense of his own or other's worth depends on material possessions. In exile is the woman working in a patriarchal industry, never really sensing any belonging, affirmation, or equal pay. Exile is a state of displacement whereby others cause you to sense that you do not belong where you are.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke a word of hope and restoration for an ancient people during their exile in Babylon. "Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow", preached the prophet (Jeremiah 31:13). Jeremiah reminded the people of God's ultimate intentions for them and how they will no longer be displaced.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke a word of hope and restoration to eighty percent of the South African population who because of the color of their skin had been exiled by white supremacists for hundreds of years in the land of their birth. Under Apartheid, they were made to be pariahs, foreigners, displaced, and exiled from their own country. Tutu preached a Gospel that was intensely political. Because there is no Gospel that is not political. Tutu preached justice and

reconciliation – and political as much by spiritual changes enabled their still imperfect realization.

Our video clip primarily emphasized how Archbishop Tutu transcended Christianity. He demonstrated the Gospel not just to Protestants, not just to Anglicans, not just to Christians. He demonstrated the Gospel to all faiths and to even those claim no faith tradition - and we all heard him! We also should demonstrate the Gospel *to all faiths* and to all people. Therefore, we should demonstrate the Gospel to those who were born beyond our borders. We need to demonstrate the Gospel to the Afghan Arrivals soon to be coming to Brattleboro at the end of January and February. For these exiles, we must live-out Centre Church's purpose to foster a community where they "belong, believe, and become all that God intends" for them. Will our church accept this purpose and the proposed mission to the Afghan Arrivals? I am confident we will. For with Jeremiah, and with Tutu, we are all marching out of exile.

This was the Word of God. And it was delivered to the People of God. And the People of God responded, "Amen!"