

First Presbyterian Church

19 Seminary Street
Barre, Vermont

January 22, 2023

Third Sunday After Epiphany

Affirming the Life and Values of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are delighted that you joined us today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!

GATHERING

Today's hymns are from the purple Glory to God hymnal, except where otherwise indicated.

Gathering on Abenaki Lands Acknowledgement

Announcements:

Prelude: My Lord, What a Morning Joe Utterback

Welcome

Centering Our Souls "Prophetic Politics: Selected Quotes of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

L1: Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

P: **History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.**

L1: He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

P: **In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.**

L2: Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

P: **Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.**

L2: The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace and brotherhood.

L1: Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for (humanity) to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. (We) must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

P: **Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.**

L2: Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction....The chain reaction of evil--hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars--must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

Men: **Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him.**

Women: **Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon which cuts without wounding and ennobles the (one) who wields it. It is a sword that heals.**

Men: **We must learn to live together as (family) or perish together as fools.**

Women: **An individual has not started living until (they) can rise above the narrow confines of (their) individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.**

L1: Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'

L2: The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But the Good Samaritan reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

P: **The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all (people) human and, therefore, brothers (and sisters).**

L1: Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

P: **Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.**

L2: Every (person) must decide whether (they) will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

L1: I submit to you that if a (person) hasn't discovered something (they) will die for, (they aren't) fit to live.

P: **The ultimate measure of (any of us) is not where (we) stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where (we) stand at times of challenge and controversy.**

L2: The church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.

L1: The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.

Women: **A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.**

Men: **It is not enough to say we must not wage war. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it.**

L2: We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war but the positive affirmation of peace.

L1: I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

Women: **We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear.**

Men: **We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.**

L2: I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.

P: **Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.**

L1: Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal.

L2: I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.

P: **Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.**

-- compiled, arranged, & adapted by Bret S. Myers, 1/15-16/2009

✠ Hymn for Liberation #339

Lift Every Voice and Sing

1. Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty. Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies; let it resound loud as the rolling sea. Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us; sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us. Facing the rising sun or our new day begun, let us march on, till victory is won.
2. Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod, felt in the days when hope unborn had died. Yet, with a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to the place for which our parents sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered; we have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
3. God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who hast brought us thus far on the way; thou who hast by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path, we pray. Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee; lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee; shadowed beneath thy hand may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

from Worship Ways

Holy One, we confess our need for grace and mercy. We seek forgiveness for the ways in which we have drawn away from you and our neighbors. We express remorse for our participation in the systems of the world that are actively opposed to your kingdom. Transform us to be carriers and promoters of your good news of new life, liberation, and hope in the world. May it be so.

Words of Forgiveness and Grace

Live lives that will acknowledge your forgiveness and new life in Christ. Be the good news in this world through your actions and practices, blessing others as you go.

Congregational Response

Tune: Gloria Patri

Honor to the Creator, who blesses us, and shows us how to bless.
May we ever love each other, and work for peace and justice;
Christ's light in us! May it be, may it be!

Passing the Peace:

Please help with Covid prevention by waving, making the peace sign, acknowledging with prayer hands, or by other methods of passing the peace that limit contact and maintain distancing.

LISTENING

Scripture Lesson:

Psalm 27

Message:

“Strength and Courage when Facing Threats”

RESPONDING

✠ Hymn for Peace with Justice

Lead Us from Death to Life

Refrain: Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace; let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world, let peace fill our universe.

1. Still all the angry cries, still all the angry guns, still now your people die, earth's sons and daughter. Let justice roll, let mercy pour down. Come and teach us your way of compassion.

Refrain:

2. So many lonely hearts, so many broken lives, longing for love to break into their anguish. Come, teach us love, come, teach us peace, come and teach us your way of compassion.

Refrain:

3. Let justice ever roll, let mercy fill the earth, let us begin to grow into your people. We can be love, we can bring peace, we can still be your way of compassion.

Refrain:

Giving of Our Offerings

We invite you to place your offering in the basket at the rear of the sanctuary as you leave, or you may give online or by mail. Thank you!

“Generosity arises from gratitude like heat arises from fire. Like fire, gratitude is lovely to see; but when it warms others with generosity, that is when it becomes a true blessing.”

Unison Prayer of Dedication

O God of Prophets and Peacemakers: We are thankful for your blessings of encouragement as we seek to correct injustices and come to the defense of those without voice. May these tithes and offerings be instrumental in nurturing equality, promoting peace, and establishing harmony between all your peoples and all your creation. Help us to be generous not only with our monetary-giving, but also with our truth-giving, life-giving and soul-giving – for the betterment of your world. May it be so, now and always.

Gift of Music/Choral Anthem

Deep River *Wilbur Held*

Prayers

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns, and Acts of Compassion or Kindness

Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Unison Prayer: “Poetic Prayer in the Spirit of Christ”

Loving Spirit, who is here and there,
we’re grateful for your tender care.

Your virtues rise, your values prized;
near and far, and everywhere.

Feed our bodies, and feed our souls.

And by forgiveness make us whole.

And may we all evils deplore,

as we search and sail for mercy’s shore.

May peace and love within us rule,
and justice be your Spirit’s tool;

Now and always, for us and others,
and for all creation.

May we make it so, all as one,
by your inspiration.

SENDING

✠ **Hymn for Solidarity #379 vss. 1-3** “We Shall Overcome”

1. We shall overcome; we shall overcome; we shall overcome some day.

Refrain: O, deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome some day!

2. We’ll walk hand in hand; we’ll walk had in hand; we’ll walk hand in hand someday.

Refrain:

3. We shall live I peace; we shall live in peace; we shall live I peace someday.

Refrain:

✠ **Encouragement for the Journey**

May God give you the grace never to sell yourself short;
grace to risk something big for something good;
grace to remember that the world is too dangerous for anything but truth
and too small for anything but love.

So, may God take your minds and think through them;
may God take your lips and speak through them;
may God take your hearts and set them on fire.

Rev. William Sloane Coffin

Postlude

✠ Please rise in body or spirit as you are able!

Rev. Bret Myers is preaching today.

Today Peggy Hood is our worship leader.

Dan Krymkowski will be making music today.

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE #734910-A.

The liturgies for this morning's worship were written by Rev. Bret S. Myers except where otherwise noted.

Biblical quotations are adaptations from the NRSV (unless otherwise noted); using variations of word translations from the original languages, as well as non-hierarchical and inclusive language.

P.S. Don't forget to continue your "Random/Intentional Acts of Kindness / Intentional Deeds of Compassion" this week and every week! I'm looking forward to hearing your stories!

Prayers – Each week we pray for a different person or family in our church. This week we invite you to keep Winifred (Winnie) McCormick in your prayers. Gracious Lord, we give thanks for her and her presence in this congregation. Hold her in the palm of your hand and let her feel your love. Give her the wisdom and strength to do your will and the faith and courage to face whatever challenges may arise.

As part of being the connectional Presbyterian church or other ministry within the Presbytery of Northern New England, each week we ask to keep one of Presbytery's participants in our thoughts and prayers. This week, we pray for our own church, the First Presbyterian Church, Barre, VT. – Rev. Bret Myers.

Our Church Session (Board) & Deacons

Chris Fuhrmeister, Clerk – Personnel and Worship

Roxanne Casadonte - Outreach

Dotty Ricks – Outreach

Lee Aura Bonamico - Outreach

Cathy Jamieson – Finance and Faith Development

Peg Lawson – Worship & Fellowship

Diane Nichols-Fleming – Finance

Jim Nichols-Fleming – Outreach and Personnel

Dan Krymkowski - Worship
Board of Deacons - Sylvia Mitton, Chairperson

OUR CHURCH

You the members and participants!

Treasurer – Kathy Adams

Pianist / Organist – Alison Cerutti / Dan Krymkowski

Administrative Assistant – Cindy Hooker

Choir Director – Peg Lawson

Custodian – Jennifer Milne

Elder of the Month – Dottie Ricks

Deacon of the Month – Sylvia Mitton & Paulette O'Bryan

Interim Pastor – Rev. Bret S. Myers

*Please make an appointment with Pastor Bret if you would like to meet with him.
You may email him at revbmyers@yahoo.com, or call/text his cell at 608-370-9472.*

Video chatting is also available via Zoom.

Office Hours will be established in the coming weeks.

To Contact the Church

Phone: 802-476-3966

Email: fpcbarre@gmail.com

Website: fpcbarre.org

For our Admin. Asst. Cindy Hooker

802-7893-0639 cell

802-479-2787 home

Email: fpcbarre@gmail.com