

# EBENEZER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday*

*January 16, 2022*

## VIDEO ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

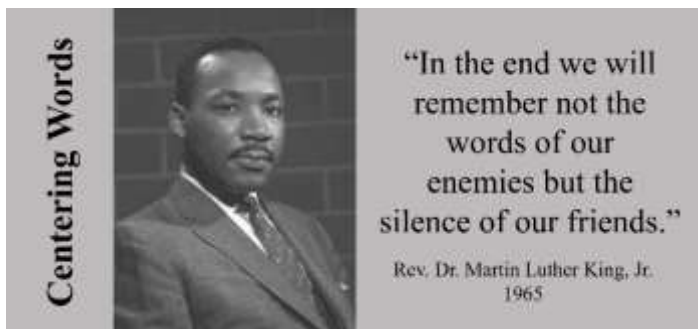
GATHERING MUSIC CD Player – Start this music at 9:20 a.m. & Play until 9:52 a.m. & Pause

'How Great Thou Art' – Sung by Tyrone (Ty) Wesley Track 9 CD Player Start at 9:53 a.m. & Let it advance to Track 10

## TURN ON CAMERA HERE

## RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE 'Help Us Accept Each Other' – NCH #388 Audio w/announcements, no lyrics on the screen.



WELCOME - (Darryl) Good morning! Welcome to Ebenezer United Church of Christ where no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, YOU are welcome here; where God's AMAZING GRACE is for EVERYONE; AND everyone's life has meaning and value. (Display the highlighted part on the big screen)

LIGHTING CHRIST CANDLE (Darryl)

Let us begin worship by rising, if you are able, for the Call to Worship (Darryl)

CALL TO WORSHIP (Janice & Congregation) "Resist" - Written by Rev. Gerald W. Bertsch – 12/5/21

One: A blanket of clouds tries to hide the blue sky.

**All: Fight the clouded vision; the blue sky is still there.**

One: The wind tries to dull our appreciation of the day,

**All: venture out and defy its claim. It tries to make us hide indoors.**

One: Resist the impulse to submit. Stand up for justice, truth and light.

**All: Evil hearts plot pain and chaos. Silence admits surrender.**

\*SINGING TOGETHER - 'AMAZING GRACE' – NCH #547 - Janice announces this hymn.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

My God has promised good to me, whose word my hope secures;  
God will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

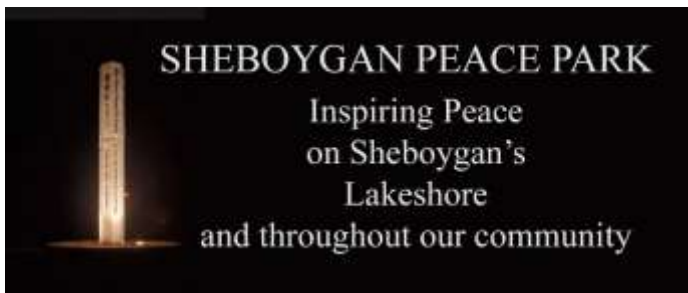
\*PRAYING TOGETHER (**Janice Hill** & Congregation)

### Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

A TIME ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN "Our *Sunday School's Peace Mission*" (**Darryl Gumm**)



SCRIPTURE READING - AMOS 5:24, and 6:1-3 (From The Prophet's Sermon to the Congregation of Israel) **Janice**

AMOS 5:24 --- But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

AMOS 6:1-3 – Verse 1: Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the

Mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!

Verse 2: Pass over to Cal'neh, and see; and thence go to Ha'math the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory?

Verse 3: O you who put far away the evil day, and bring near the seat of violence?

INTRODUCTION OF OUR GUEST SPEAKERS (by **Darryl**) Information on the screen with their Bio Info

This morning we welcome Cynthia Bertsch and her husband, The Reverend Gerald W. Bertsch, to help me lead us in worship. Cynthia and Gerry are Members of First Congregational United Church of Christ here in Sheboygan. The three of us met through our mutual involvement with the Friends of Peace Park Sheboygan. **(Not to be printed in the bulletin)**

PERSPECTIVE - Rev. Gerald W. Bertsch – Amos asks, “Who brought your enemies to their land?”

THE SETTING – Cynthia Bertsch, MA – (50 Years Later) The Civil Rights Institute Visit, Birmingham and Montgomery and Selma

## Civil Rights sites visited 50 years Later

Cynthia Bertsch, MA

In 2018, we planned a trip to various Civil Rights sites in Alabama because of our American history interests related to racial and human rights issues. As individuals living in northern States, we felt we were observers to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's and we wanted to learn more about several southern locations that gained national attention.



(Insert Image No. 1, [Birminghamcivilrightsinstitute.jpg](#))

In Birmingham, a city that was a stronghold of segregation and civil rights activism, we toured the **Birmingham Civil Rights Institute**. Opening in 1992, the Institute is an interpretive museum and research center that tells the story of the struggles of the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham. Its galleries feature a rendition of a segregated city of the 1950s, a replica of a Freedom Riders bus, and the actual jail door from behind which

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The Institute also teaches that “silence and indifference to the suffering of others can perpetuate social problems and divisions.”



(Insert Image No. 2, 16stbaptistchurchbirm.jpg) Across the street from the Institute is the **Sixteenth Street Baptist Church**. Founded in 1873 as the first black church in Birmingham, it has served as a worship and social center for the African American community. By the early 1960's, the Church provided space for civil rights rallies that led to marches and demonstrations.



(Insert Image No. 3, 16stbaptistbombinggirls.jpg) Tragically, the Church experienced a horrific bombing in 1963 that caused the deaths of four young girls who were attending Sunday School classes. This tragedy led to expressions of sympathy and financial contributions from around the world to restore the damaged building. A memorial plaque honors the girls.

Close to the Institute and the Church is the **Kelly Ingram Park** that served as a starting point for a march by teenagers to protest segregation injustices. A violent confrontation between the marchers and the Birmingham police in this location shocked the nation. Today, the park features sculptures depicting this struggle and offers a quiet and peaceful place to remember the civil rights conflicts in Birmingham.

In Montgomery, the **Civil Rights Memorial** honors those who died participating in the Civil Rights movement from 1954 to 1968. Sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center, it is also a location for education and reflection about the contest for equality.



(Insert Image No. 4, Dexter-Ave-King-church.jpg) Nearby the Memorial is the **Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church**. It is here that its pastor, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association that launched the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was also organized in this Church and Dr. King's ministry gained national attention.

Close to Dexter Avenue is the **Freedom Rides Museum**. Located in Montgomery's historic Greyhound Bus Station, in 1961 an integrated group of 21 young college students from Nashville arrived here to non-violently protest the practice of segregated travel in the South. These students became known as the Freedom Riders and their actions changed the city and our country.

Related to the Montgomery Bus Boycott is the **Rosa Parks Museum**. Its exhibits and artifacts tell of the arrest of Rosa Parks after she refused to give up her seat because of her race on a Montgomery city bus. It also features other people's activities that challenged the political and social climates of Montgomery in the 1950s.

54 miles west of Montgomery is **Selma, Alabama**. In 1965, this quiet, rural community received national attention for its March 1965 planned walk to Montgomery in pursuit of securing voting rights for African Americans. The first attempt by 600 individuals to march from Selma to the state capitol in Montgomery was met with violent attacks on them at the

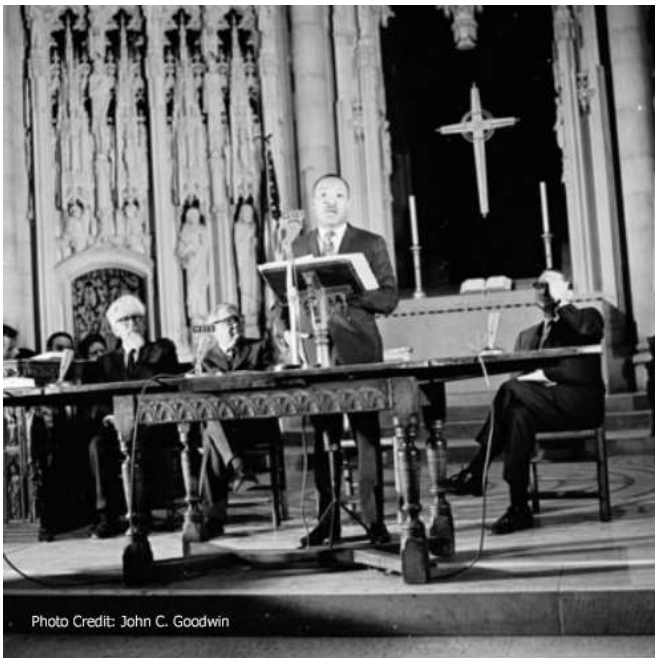




**(Insert Image No. 5, Edmundpettusbridgeview.jpg)** Edmund Pettus Bridge by Alabama state troopers. Again, a nation witnessed the horror of this assault and President Lyndon Johnson federalized 1,900 Alabama national guard troops and other military personnel to protect marchers for another walk to Montgomery. On March 21 over 4,000 participants left Selma for Montgomery. As they progressed to Montgomery, the number of individuals increased to 25,000 people (including Dr. King and a young John Lewis) who successfully reached the state capitol in Montgomery. In the aftermath of this march, The Voting Rights Act was signed by President

Johnson in August 1965. Today, Selma has a number of sites that commemorate these events. They include, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, a pivotal location of the march, the Selma Interpretive Center that provides a context for this development, and the Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a staging point for the march to Montgomery. In between Selma and Montgomery, the Lowndes Interpretive Center shares significant information about the march and the creation of “Tent City” which housed families dislodged by white landowners in Lowndes County.

RECOLLECTIONS –Rev. Gerald Bertsch – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Beyond Vietnam” speech 1967



Rev. Gerry, if you would like, we can have this image on the big screen during your Recollections message.

\*SINGING TOGETHER – ‘This Is My Song’ – NCH #591

**Janice announces this hymn.**

This is my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for lands a-far and mine.  
This is my home, the country where my heart is;  
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;

But other hearts in other lands are beating  
with hopes and dreams  
as true and high as mine.

My country’s skies are bluer than the ocean,

and sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;

But other lands have sunlight, too, and clover,  
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.  
O hear my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for their land and for mine.

A PRAYER - Rev. Gerald Bertsch "*Oh God, Make the Old Ones Fight*"

SCRIPTURE READINGS – MATTHEW 25:31-32, 37-40 & JOHN 8:31-32 (Good News for Modern Man) (Janice)

MATTHEW 25:31-32, 37-40

31 "When the Son of Man comes as King, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, 32 and all the earth's people will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats":  
37 The righteous will then answer him: When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you? 40 The King will answer back, I tell you, indeed, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!

JOHN 8:31-32

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "If you obey my teachings you are really my disciples; 32 you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

REFLECTION - Darryl Gumm "*Peace-work is our calling*"

During Reverend Lorri's December 5<sup>th</sup> Reflection, she showed us a video teaching us what True Peace looks like. It's when all that is broken is restored to wholeness when we partner with God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ to answer our calling to do peace-work. It's what gives us the hope, peace, joy and love we were focused on during Advent and Christmas.

Peace-work involves showing God's Love in all the ways we can, but to whom are we to show this love? People who look like us and talk like us? People who live with us, our neighbors, people we sit next to in church? If we are to do peace-work, we will do it the way Jesus teaches us in the scripture Janice just read. We will be present for everybody in God's Creation.

Much of the pain, suffering and conflict since the dawn of civilization has been the result of humanity thinking that God's Amazing Grace is reserved only for some, but not all of humanity.

If we are to answer our calling and do peace-work, we will be sure to feed, clothe, house, visit and restore to health every human in God's vast creation. We will also be truthful when we interact with each other. Doing this will have the potential of freeing us from the conflict and violence that has plagued humanity since the beginning of time. The cynics will say this is impossible. However, all of my spiritual mentors have taught me that nothing is impossible when we partner with God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and each other. My spiritual mentors also taught me that Jesus was and is non-violent. Even when he was being arrested and faced a painful death on the cross, he instructed his followers and supporters not to resort to violence. If we are to answer our

calling to do peace-work, we must do likewise. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. understood this and insisted that everyone doing peace-work with him, do it peacefully.

On New Year's Day, I read an article about why some people understand their calling to do peace-work by being present for everybody in God's creation. It has to do with stepping out of our comfort zone to come and see, and as Reverend Lorri encouraged us to do during her January 2<sup>nd</sup> & January 9<sup>th</sup> reflections. To help us answer our calling to do peace-work, sometimes God brings people into our lives who help us understand how everyone is part of his creation, just like you and me.

To illustrate this point, I've chosen to highlight three people God brought into my life. These three relationships taught me what it means to love and be present for people no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey.

**Note to ProP Operator: Please put the photos on the screen to correspond with the people I am talking about. With Ceil, put the photo with the Native Americans first. When I am finished talking about her being with the Native American Dancers, switch to the photo of her at the Lakefront. The 'All of God's Children' photo should go up when I start the paragraph "Regardless of what the rest of the world . . ." Keep that photo up to the end of my message.**



**Pepper Gort**, my dying friend, taught me how to live while dying and how to be compassionately present for people who are trying to live with dignity through the conclusion of their earthly life. Two months before she died, Pepper hosted a Garden Party for her family and friends and created a treasured memory and lesson I will never forget. She also taught me, even though it was a lesson I "thought" I had already embraced, how people with skin different from mine are, truly, as much a part of God's amazing creation as I am.



**Brian Gumm**, my oldest son, who has the courage to live authentically as a gay man, taught me and continues to teach me, how to make a significant difference through his life's work at the Center for Progressive Reform in Washington, D.C. He is an inspiration because he forges ahead to improve the lives of those who are often the recipients of our culture's oppression in spite of the hate, ignorance, and prejudice he has endured from some religious leaders, relatives, politicians, media personalities and everyday citizens who believe they're doing the "right thing." Brian embodies the concept that as Americans, we have a right to remain silent, but as Christians, we have an obligation to speak out when we witness oppression. He also teaches me how he is as much a part of God's creation as I am.



**Ceil De Prey** is my elderly peace-making friend who has a special place in her heart for Native Americans. She is pictured here with some Native American Dancers at Lakeland University on The Indigenous People's Day.



Ceil has taught me how wrong it is to fight wars to create wealth, jobs, get oil and control things that don't belong to us. She also teaches me how lonely it can be to be elderly in a culture that seems to exist only for the young, healthy and wealthy.



Ceil is so passionate about peace, she asked her friend, Susie, for permission to put a large peace sign on her property. That sign has been there for almost ten years, making a statement that peace is important in this community and it is a dream that is our obligation to bring to fruition.

Ceil and I wrote a book together, entitled, *Treasure Memories*. Our time together has taught me how she is as much a part of God's creation as I am.



Regardless what the rest of the world thinks or how history has treated them, I have learned how everyone is part of God's creation deserving of our love, our presence, our supportive voice and every single right and privilege I enjoy. This, my friends, is the peace-work our Creator is calling us to do. This is what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's ministry was about. This is how we take what is broken and restore it to wholeness, in our lives, in our relationships and in our world. This is Shalom. This is what True Peace looks like. May it be so. Amen.

INVITATION TO BE GRATEFUL AND GENEROUS (**Janice** & Congregation)

**The words we proclaim here together mean nothing unless we let them shape our lives. If we say we love God, we are called to embody that love in our families, in our communities, and in this sacred gathering. May God shape us into people who are generous, who seek what is right and good, and who work together for the flourishing of all life. In this spirit, may we bring our offerings to God and one another.**

\* SUNG RESPONSE 'Take My Gifts' NCH #562 - Verse 3 **Janice announces this sung response.**

Take whatever I can offer, gifts that I have yet to find,  
Skills that I am slow to sharpen, talents of heart and mind,  
Things made beautiful for others in the place where I must be:  
Take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me

\* PRAYER OF DEDICATION (**Janice** & Congregation)

**God, the work of our calloused hands and the healing of our calloused hearts belong to you. May this offering be the gift you seek, the presence you desire; and may it teach us to make real the loving touch of your grace as we strive to be instruments of peace throughout your world. Amen.**

**STOP TAPING HERE**

SPECIAL MUSIC -- 'Father, How Long?' – Sung by: **Tyrone (Ty) Wesley**

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY JANICE HILL**

**START TAPING AFTER JANICE'S SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**



FOCUS ON OUR LIFE TOGETHER (**Janice**)

\*SENDING SONG - '*Ruth's Benediction*' -- Christopher Grundy (Congregation) **Janice Announces This**

Wherever you go, may God go with you,  
Wherever you lay your head down,  
May the Spirit also rest.  
And when you find yourself in a foreign land,  
May Jesus our brother, lead you home again.

When you find yourself in a foreign land,  
May Jesus our brother, take you by the hand  
And make the ground where you stand  
Home again

ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE THE PARTING BLESSING (**Darryl**)

Due to the ongoing COVID Pandemic, out an abundance of caution, Cynthia, Gerry and I will not be greeting you as you leave the sanctuary. So please join me (now) in expressing your appreciation to us for being here this morning. (Clap)

PARTING BLESSING (**Darryl**)

Wherever you go, may God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ be with you and give you as you answer the call to do peace-work in this community and the world. Amen

**TURN OFF CAMERA HERE**

POSTLUDE - '*Stand by Me*' – Ben E. King – Performed by Playing for Change (mp4 of YouTube Video)

**Janice – Lectern Microphone**

Cynthia & Gerry – Pulpit Microphone

**Darryl – Headset Microphone**

**Tyrone (Ty) Wesley – Microphone #10 – TRACKS 9 & 10 – CD PLAYER**