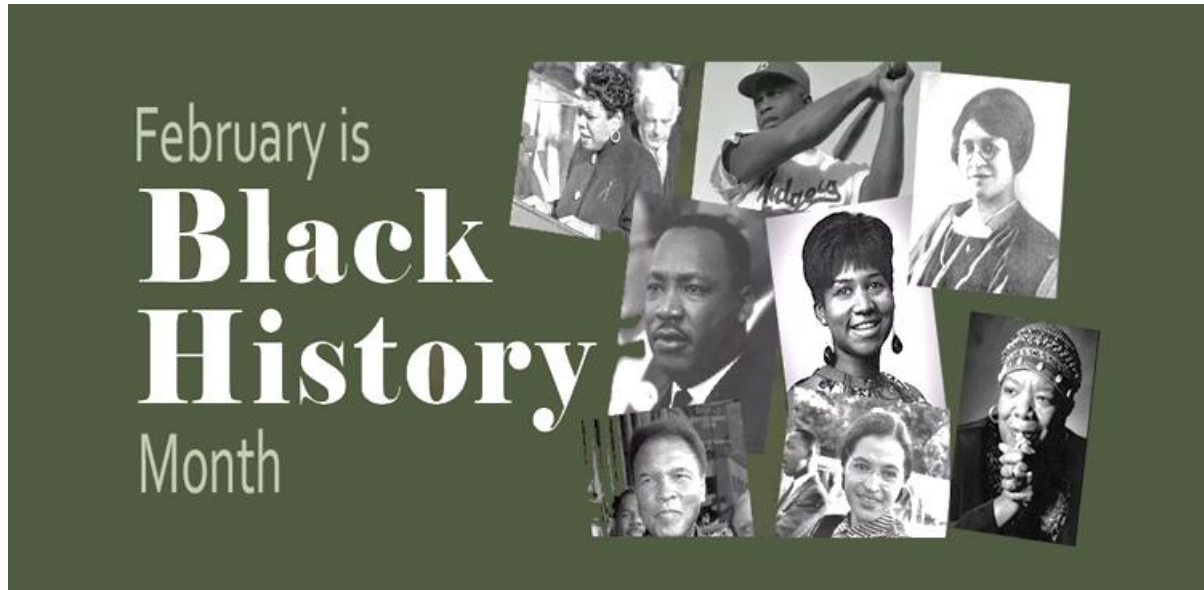


LAKE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2025, ISSUE 2, VOLUME 88

72 Ambrose Street, Rochester, NY 14608; Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
www.lakeavebaptist.org; Phone & Fax: 585-458-5765; Email: lakeavebaptistchurchoffice@gmail.com



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

So far, I have written two Pastor's articles for the February newsletter. Why? You may ask. Well, the original article was written on the day following the recent Presidential Inauguration. At that time, the country, and the world, was hearing about a flurry of Executive Orders being signed by the new President. These Executive Orders either undid the existing governmental priorities or laid out the priorities of the new administration. In the 12 hours

immediately following the inauguration, I received a number of emails from partners in our ministry who were trying to come to terms with the impact of those Orders on their various areas of work.

The article that I originally wrote for the February newsletter spoke to the impact of the halting of the arrival of new refugee claimants for what was to be 60 days. I emphasized that our church continues to stand behind the important role that refugees play in the fabric of our community and that we stand in opposition to this halting of people already in process to come to America.

Further, I addressed the (incorrect) proclamation that was made with regards to gender identity. The new President made it clear that under his administration there would be two "genders" – male and female. First, there is a difference between sex and gender. Furthermore, we know from experience that there are many different genders and gender expressions. I emphasized in that original article that we would continue to support people of all genders and gender expressions as part of the LABC community.

Now you may be asking yourself, "Why write another article?" Here's the reason. In the week since I wrote that original article, we have seen more Executive Orders handed down that further impact the fabric of our nation. One specific Order speaks to the temporary "freeze" on funds that are meant to fund various (previously approved by Congress) funding streams for national and state agencies and organizations. Specifically, our friends at Catholic Family Center (the main resettlement agency for people coming as refugees into the United States and the way that most of our New Americans have arrived) has been told they are to halt any spending on people in their care. There are, according to their numbers, 250 people who have arrived in Rochester since the start of November. These are people who are to receive support for three months (our New American ministry picks up where Catholic Family Center leaves off to help people who need additional support). This

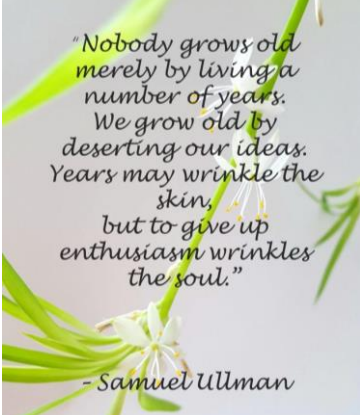
leaves 250 people potentially without the services that were promised to them when they moved through the settlement process. Please note, I say “potentially” because things are still in the process of being interpreted and understood. Regardless, there are organizations and people in our community who will continue to need support.

I wrote a second article because in the course of one week, things have changed significantly. This is what may become the custom of this new administration. There will be changes, there will be promises kept and promises broken. There will be confusion and there will be very detrimental decisions made that impact people in our community and beyond.

I make this commitment to you. At LABC, we will not compromise our values. We will continue to make this a place where all people are welcome. Whether they be people who come into the United States as refugees looking for a new life, or people who identify from across the gender spectrum. We will honor the value and worth of all people, and we will seek to serve however we are called to do. That may mean adjusting existing ministries or taking on new ministries where they are needed. That may mean advocacy and standing up for what is right and loving. And we will continue to be a place where all people are honored and loved for who they are as children of God.

I invite you to join with me in prayer for our nation. Wherever you stand on the political spectrum, I think it is reasonable and right to say that with each of these decisions, real people are impacted. People who have infinite value and worth. Please pray for our leaders, both nationally and locally, in elected positions and grassroots efforts. And in the midst of all this chaos and confusion, don't ever compromise who you are as children of God who speak truth and justice to a world so desperately in need of God's presence and peace.

Michael

 <p><i>"Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideas. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."</i> - Samuel Ullman</p>	<p>The LABC "Aging Joyfully and Gracefully" group will be meeting on Monday, February 3 at 1:00 pm.</p> <p>It is amazing that we are now into February! Although we still have a lot of winter to go through, it is wonderful that the days are getting longer and the darkness of winter is abating. Keep up the faith. Spring is only 7 weeks away!</p>
--	---

Susan's Musings

An Article from your Assisting Minister Susan Maybeck

I met a woman at Seminary. I had never heard to her before. Oh, yes, I knew Mary, mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. Also had met Mary and Martha several times. Let's see - what other women in the Bible did I know. Oh yes, in the Old Testament I had met Eve, of course, who was responsible for sin, Actually I learned in Seminary that we had misinterpreted Eve's role in their banishment from the Holy Garden.

Ah but I wander. The many women from the Bible that I already knew, my eyes were open to them in a different way, yes a feminist way. That perspective made me ponder why it was that Jesus revealed himself to the women at the tomb.

Jesus' word from the cross was to provide care for his Mother. Women led some of the early gatherings of Followers of Jesus.

But back to the unknown woman that I met while in Seminary. She did not have a name, just an ailment. She didn't seek attention from Jesus, but was in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Here is where I met the bent over woman.

Luke 13:10-13

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

I was amazed that I had never heard of the Bent Over Woman.

As we open the Bible, we see and understand so much more. I'd be happy to talk to anyone, especially about the stories of the women in the Bible.

Susan

LABC VALUES AND OUR ENDOWMENT

LABC has the great gift of an endowment. These funds, given by those who have gone before us, is monitored by an Endowment Investment team comprised of members of LABC. The Endowment Investment team was recently tasked with the responsibility of evaluating whether it was time for LABC to use the services of another financial management company to manage the investments on our behalf. The team brought to your church council a recommendation that we move our investments from one company (Manning and Napier) to another (Merrill Lynch – The Hines Group). This recommendation was discussed and approved. We are in the process of moving those funds.

Here's where we need your help. If you are familiar with investing, you may know that we need to decide what values we wish to ensure that our endowment investment portfolio expresses. For instance, if we value investments that avoid investments in the military, this is important to know. Or, perhaps, we value investments in companies that treat their employees well. These things are important to know so that we can provide appropriate guidance to our managers.

We have been asked by Church Council to hold an adult education class where we talk about the values that LABC wants to ensure are reflected in our investment decisions. Please join us for a second hour adult education discussion on these values **on Sunday February 2, 2025 at 11:30 a.m.** (Please note that we will not be discussing the breakdown of specific investments, but rather getting to the values that we want to be reflected on the whole portfolio.)

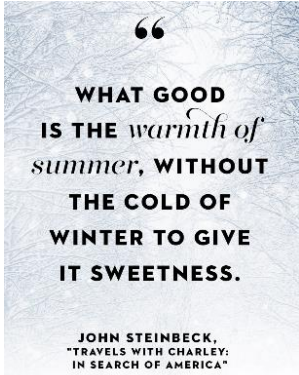
Further, if you're interested in learning a bit more about how endowments work, and how investment decisions are made, this might be a great chance to learn. All are welcome!



Join us for a **New Year Fellowship Luncheon** on Sunday, March 2nd, 2025 from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. This luncheon will be hosted by the Myanmar Fellowship at LABC. There will be a sign-up sheet available this Sunday at the Welcome Center for those who are planning to attend. Also, there is an additional sign-up section for those who can contribute salad or dessert. The main course, which will be cooked and provided by our Myanmar Fellowship,

will be herb marinated baked chicken, garlic mashed potatoes and mixed vegetables. A vegetarian meal will be available upon request. Please feel free to talk to Soe Win or Hkadin Lee if you have any questions regarding the lunch or if you would like to help out in any other way.

Some Thoughts and Prayers for these Frigid Winter Months.



IN THE MIDST OF WINTER by Cal Wick

Lord: In the midst of winter, when the days are cold and wind can pierce remind us of the warmth of your love.

In the midst of winter, when days are short, dawn comes late, and dusk arrives early remind us that in the darkness your light still shines.

In the midst of winter, when the flowers of spring still lie hidden in the earth, when leaves are off the trees, and the world can seem bleak remind us that Easter is but a short time away.

And when in our lives we feel as if we are experiencing a season of winter, reach out to us with the power of your resurrection so that we may feel the warmth of your love and see your light that alone can take away the darkness of our soul.

BEAUTY OF WINTER Author Unknown

God of creation, thank you for the beauty of winter- for snow, icy window panes, evergreen trees, warm coats, sledding, and hot cocoa. Let us enjoy Your creation in all its glory, this winter and always

“Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour.”

—ATTRIBUTED TO
JOHN BOSWELL

MITA: MADWOMEN IN THE ATTIC

Madwomen in the Attic is a grassroots organization that gives voices to marginalized individuals through literacy, writing, and arts work.

MITA Featured Writer
Soe Win

Come and See Me at the Intersection: Navigating My Gender Identity, Faith in Christianity, and Mental Health

God, I love you, and I know you love me. You have made me who I am today, and I believe you make no mistakes.

From a young age, I loved wearing skirts and playing with dolls. I never thought there was anything unusual about it. After all, what’s wrong with a girl wearing a skirt or playing with dolls? But growing up in a patriarchal and heteronormative society, I eventually realized that people saw me as “different.” My parents often scolded me for wearing my sister’s clothes, and I always envied her beautiful, pink outfits. Despite my longing, I didn’t question why my parents insisted I dress differently.

As I grew older—around the age of 10—I became aware that I might indeed be different. At school, I was called *achult*, an informal Burmese term for “transgender,” meaning “dry.” I was bullied, humiliated, and demonized for simply looking, acting, or behaving differently.

In Burmese culture, being born male is considered a blessing from God, as it comes with *hpone*. *Hpone* is an intriguing concept, loosely translated to mean “men’s luck,” masculine power, or authority. Because women are not born with *hpone*, they are seen as subordinate in society. Being male comes with certain advantages: men have authority over family members, can become monks, and are allowed access to areas in temples that are forbidden to women. People often asked me why I wasn’t happy with my assigned gender and why I wanted to change when I’d been “blessed.” Their questions implied that I had chosen my gender, as though it was a deliberate decision. But at that young age, I didn’t even know what gender truly meant, let alone understand the expectations tied to it—a misconception many people hold. Being so young, I couldn’t articulate an answer. That question, however, haunted my childhood.

At the same time, my faith deepened as a Christian, driven partly by our poverty as I sought both spiritual guidance and hope. I remember vividly spending entire days at church. I loved being at church. Growing up poor meant worrying daily about our next meal. Prayer was the only means of survival. My mother, a devoted Christian, passed her faith on to me, and I learned about Christianity through her. I prayed, attended church, and read the Bible, trusting God would help us escape poverty so we wouldn't have to endure hunger. The more I attended church and prayed, the closer I felt to God. I believed in Him wholeheartedly and never questioned His existence. I trusted him, and I knew He was with me all the time.

In the Christian community I grew up in, unlike in Buddhist beliefs, we did not believe in *hpone*—the spiritual essence that governs luck and fate. But the Church was strict in enforcing the gender binary, insisting that only male and female identities existed, with no space for anything beyond. To be trans or gay meant being marked as a sinner, regardless of who you were or how you acted. Verses from scripture, like Leviticus 18:22, were cited as judgments against the LGBTQ+ community, myself included.

As a child, I didn't dare question this authority. I turned that judgment inward, believing it was my fault for being different. I wanted so badly to be better, to be "normal." I yearned to fit in, to be accepted—not to be a sinner, but to be someone worthy of heaven. More than anything, I loved God. And in my heart, I wanted to believe He loved me back.

Overall, I was a good kid. I did well in school, helped with household chores, and worked with my family selling food on the streets. I took care of my younger brothers and sister. But somehow, I was never the perfect child.

Family members often reminded me of how I brought shame to the family, of how I dishonored them. One night, my father told me he loved everyone—except me. I cried silently, unable to make a sound. No matter how hard I tried, I would always be different, the child who brought shame to the family.

Despite the bullying, I have to admit that life in Burma wasn't as hard as it could have been. Although my family and community often mocked and humiliated me, I learned to ignore their jokes and insults. The boundaries between normal and abnormal, good and bad, justice and injustice, violence and tolerance, discrimination and acceptance—all felt blurred. Technically, homosexuality is illegal in Burma, but the law is rarely enforced. I wasn't seen as a threat as long as I stayed quiet, as long as I kept my head down. So long as I remained invisible, I would be safe. I was reduced to an object to be mocked, a punchline, or someone who could be treated as less than others.

But when I came to America alone, leaving my family behind, these lines sharpened. The dichotomies of good or bad, gay or straight, pure or evil, cis or trans were suddenly unavoidable, and I felt like an outsider. I didn't belong. I didn't have blond hair or even straight hair. I wasn't male or female in the ways people expected. I checked none of the boxes—straight, male, female, rich, white, beautiful. Instead, I was Asian, a refugee, an immigrant, and queer (trans).

In America, for better or worse, gender identity and sexuality are deeply political subjects. People openly debate whether LGBTQ+ rights are a matter of human rights or a sign of moral decay. Liberals argue that LGBTQ+ rights are fundamental, while far-right religious groups condemn these identities as sinful. Conservative and far-right religious fundamentalists often target LGBTQ+ individuals, citing the Bible to justify their actions. For example, they frequently reference the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (Genesis 19:1–29). This rhetoric, rooted in selective interpretations of scripture, continues to persist today. I never imagined that life in America would feel so different from what I'd hoped. Somehow, I felt safer in Burma than here, in the so-called land of freedom, democracy, and rights. Could that really be true? Was I dreaming? Where was the American Dream I had envisioned?

In Burma, I was mocked and humiliated, but my existence wasn't a political issue. Here, however, my identity was suddenly a topic for public debate. This left me feeling both seen and invisible in strange, unsettling ways. People weren't just questioning who I was—they were questioning whether I even had the right to be, especially within conservative Christian circles. The weight of this realization was overwhelming. Here, I wasn't just "different." I had become a symbol, a controversy, a topic to be dissected.

Despite these challenges and the cultural shock, I continued my studies in college. Again, I worked hard, studied diligently, and followed the law. I was a good citizen—I paid taxes, volunteered, and helped my community. Yet, somehow, it still wasn't enough.

In Rochester, there's a small Burmese community, many of whom are conservative Christians with strong, unyielding traditions. Some told me outright that I was bound for hell—that I was a sinner, not a true believer. They claimed my faith was wrong, that I wasn't a real Christian. Some would look me in the eye and say, "You will go to hell. It's in the Bible. You will never see heaven." I would just smile and stay silent, but the truth was, I didn't know how to respond.

These words terrified me. I began to lose trust in people. I withdrew, isolating myself without even realizing it. I wasn't sure if I was being left out or if I was choosing to stay away. I ate alone—at work, at school, and at home. I spoke less and less and could count my friends on one hand. The fear of being judged held me back, and so I pulled away from my community. I started to build fears. Would I be killed? Would I be murdered? Would I ever feel safe again, in my apartment, at my workplace, or even in public?

Over time, these harsh realities built up in my mind, creating symptoms of what I would later understand as mental health struggles. At first, I didn't know what it was. Mental health wasn't something we talked about in Burma. There, it wasn't addressed, discussed, or even acknowledged. Mental health carried a deep stigma—if you had mental health issues, you were seen as stupid, crazy, or mentally disabled.

I refused to get help. Or maybe I just didn't know where to seek it as a new refugee. Maybe it was both. I was terrified of being labeled "crazy." Deep down, I knew I wasn't, but shame kept me silent. I worried that reaching out would make me feel even more vulnerable, more out of control. What if people in my community found out? What if they judged me? Made fun of me? What if...

So, I became my own therapist.

One minute, I was happy; the next, I was overwhelmed with sadness. I wondered if I had bipolar disorder.

Countless nights, I lay awake, unable to sleep, and I questioned if I was struggling with depression or anxiety.

Unwanted memories resurfaced, nightmares haunted me, and I couldn't shake the thought—could this be post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?

I started avoiding people, afraid of rejection and criticism. I wondered if I had avoidant personality disorder (AVPD).

At times, my self-esteem plummeted. Intense anger, insecurity, and feelings of worthlessness overwhelmed me, and I questioned if I might have borderline personality disorder.

Some memories of my childhood were gone, lost to the past, and I wondered if trauma had erased them.

And the list went on...

One day, without even realizing it, I found myself standing in front of a mental health clinic. I didn't know how I'd ended up there, but there I was, rooted in place. Yet, I couldn't go inside. The thoughts came flooding back. What if I ended up in a mental hospital? What if people mistreated me? What if I lost my job and became homeless? Lost my apartment? What if people called me crazy? What if I never finished college? What if...

And so, I didn't go in. I still didn't seek help.

That day when I got into my apartment, I remember crying out loud for the first time, louder than I thought I ever had in my life. I don't think I had ever cried that much before. I didn't know where all those tears were

coming from: sadness? exclusion? anger? Was I going crazy? Had I lost my mind? I didn't know. All I knew was that I had cried so much I could barely breathe.

For the first time, I began to blame God. I cried out, "God, if I love You this much, how could You not love me back?" I held Him responsible for everything: my life, my gender identity, my struggles, my pain, my mental health. The list went on.

For the first time in my life, I wanted to die. One day, I sat on my bed, unable to move or muster the energy to do anything. I must have been sitting there, motionless, for almost 30 minutes. Then, my eyes accidentally landed on a bottle of ibuprofen across the room. Without thinking, I grabbed it, opened the bottle, and poured all the pills into my hand—about 20 of them. I almost put them in my mouth.

Suddenly, a vivid memory stopped me. I thought of my uncle—my mother's brother—who had died by suicide. I was so young at the time; I hadn't understood why he did it. But I remembered the mourning that followed, the grief etched on everyone's faces. I also remembered the words of my family: if someone takes their own life, they are destined to repeat the act at the same age in each of their next seven lives. That thought terrified me.

When I became fully aware of myself again, I saw that the pills had fallen from my hand and scattered across the floor. I quickly swept them up and threw them in the garbage. But even after that, I couldn't shake the doubt. Had I made the right choice by throwing them away? Or should I have taken them? To calm myself, I opened the Bible and began reading slowly. Gradually, I felt myself steady again.

However, from that day forward, I blamed God daily. There were countless days when I begged Him to take my life, feeling utterly worthless. I told Him I couldn't bear the pain any longer, pleading, "Take my life away; I would rather die than keep suffering." I questioned endlessly: *God, why won't You take my life and let me be at peace? Why do You allow me to suffer? How much longer must I endure this? Why did You create me this way? Did You make a mistake? Why don't You fix it? Why do others mock me and humiliate me, and you let them do it?* The questions piled up, unanswered.

But somehow, in unimaginable ways, my faith in Christianity grew stronger and stronger. The more I challenged God, the more He seemed to answer my prayers. The more I hated Him, the more He loved me. The more I asked, the more He gave.

Then, I found this church called Lake Avenue Baptist Church. I had never thought there would be a church that would accept me, but this one did. I was welcomed, embraced, and included. There, I found strength, self-esteem, and love. They taught me what it means to be a true Christian—showing love to those who have been excluded, refugees, immigrants, the poor, and LGBTQ+ persons.

Second, despite all the challenges, I completed my bachelor's degree with prayers. It wasn't easy, but I did it. Then, I found a well-paying job and decided to continue with a master's degree, and eventually, a Ph.D. Coming to America at 18 as a refugee, I barely spoke English. I remember using an interpreter just to navigate government paperwork. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine someone like me could earn an associate's degree, let alone a Ph.D.

Third, I found friends who accepted me without judgment. I learned that there are people who truly love and value you. These friends became important parts of my life, helping me realize how to distinguish between those who are genuine and those who are not. I learned to ignore and distance myself from negative influences, discovering that the world isn't as harsh as I once thought.

Finally, I came to understand that God sent me to Rochester, New York, for a purpose. I could have been sent to Mississippi or Alabama, where I might have faced danger. I could have ended up in Missouri or Kansas, where life could have been much harder or just different. I am deeply thankful that He brought me to Rochester—a city I am proud to call my hometown, where immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ people, and other minorities find a more welcoming community.

When I realized these blessings, my life began to change for the better. My coping mechanisms became reading the Bible, attending church, praying, making friends, and volunteering. Slowly, I began to love myself. I began to embrace my identity. I learned to love and value who I am. I practiced self-care through cooking, traveling, reading, studying, and watching TV. I made new friends and began opening up to them. I also started to rebuild my relationships with family members. I took warm showers, enjoyed a glass of wine, and dressed up when I needed a boost. Without realizing it, I started sleeping better, eating better, and simply feeling good. I learned to love who I am—the way I dress, the way I speak, and the way I behave. I learned to ignore negative comments and began thinking more positively.

I also realized that God had been with me all along. He protects me and loves me. There's no doubt: He didn't make a mistake. He created me just as I am, and He is proud of me. He has a plan for me; He chose me. With this realization, I found the courage to speak up. I became more involved in the community by volunteering, participating in church activities, and standing up against injustice. I joined rallies and protests, educating my community on immigration issues, mental health, and LGBTQ issues.

If God loves someone like me, then why does the faith I hold dear—Christianity—continue to oppress minorities? As I look forward, I understand through prayer, reading Bible, and life experience that it's not Christianity itself that oppresses us, but rather certain individuals within it—especially those rooted in religious fundamentalism. They frequently cite specific passages from the Bible, such as Genesis 19:1–29 and Leviticus 18:22, to justify their condemnation. However, they often ignore verses like Matthew 19:12, 1 Corinthians 6, and Galatians 3:28—texts that emphasize love, compassion, and inclusivity.

Unfortunately, much work will still need to be done, especially in the political climate we are heading into and with the rise of religious extremism. The next Trump administration is expected to target transgender people and the broader LGBTQ+ community through policies and bills aimed at rolling back their rights. For example, they may ban transgender individuals from serving openly in the military, attempt to define gender strictly based on biology at birth, and rescind protections for transgender students in schools, including access to bathrooms aligning with their gender identity. These actions will likely be part of a broader strategy to use trans issues as a political tool, exploiting fear and misinformation to rally their base and deepen societal divisions.

Yet, I will remain hopeful. I will continue to believe in God, in people, in justice, and in democracy. I will stay committed to helping build a world where everyone, no matter who they are, can experience the love and acceptance I believe God intended.”

A NOTE FROM THE FEATURED WRITER

Thank you all for taking the time to read this essay. It reflects my personal journey as I navigated my gender identity, faith in Christianity, and mental health. As a very private person, I rarely share my story, so consider this a special moment. This is the first time I've opened up in this way, and I believe now is the time to speak out. Amid the rise in hatred, bigotry, and Christian extremism, I feel compelled to share my journey and let the world know my truth. The truth is that none of us chose to be male, female, or non-binary. God created us as we are, with intention and purpose. He made us this way, and we are all part of His design.

In this essay, I aim to convey several important messages:

1. **Embrace yourself, no matter who you are.** You are beautiful, and you are worth it. There will always be people who judge or try to bring you down but remember: there are even more who will love and embrace you.
2. **If you're struggling with mental health, don't hesitate to seek help.** Many organizations are available to support you, such as the Crisis Line (988) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255). Don't ignore your mental health—reach out if needed. Don't struggle alone, as I once did. There is no shame in experiencing mental health challenges. Practice self-care, even if it simply means drinking a glass of wine or staying away from negativity. I work to raise awareness and advocate for mental health within my community. Remember, experiencing mental health symptoms doesn't make you “crazy” or “stupid.”
3. **There are many LGBTQ resources in the community.** For example, Trillium Health in Rochester and

The Trevor Project offers support via phone, chat, and text for LGBTQ+ youth (thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/).

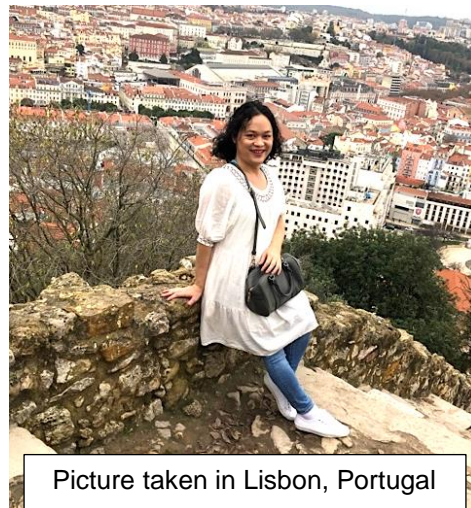
4. **If you are a therapist working with diverse clients, it is essential to adopt a trauma-informed and culturally competent approach.** This may involve speaking slowly, using an interpreter when necessary, expressing empathy both verbally and nonverbally, and asking questions in a nonjudgmental manner. In some cultures, mental health carries a significant stigma, which can lead clients to resist seeking help. Therefore, it is crucial for therapists to understand the unique needs and barriers their clients face to provide effective and compassionate care.
5. **To my fellow believers, remember that religion itself does not oppress us.** It is the actions of people that cause harm. Don't lose hope in your faith; instead, speak out against religious fundamentalism and support the separation of church and state. As a devoted Christian, I believe we are all equal in the eyes of God.
6. **Make sure to speak up.** Get involved in local grassroots movements and participate in rallies or demonstrations to drive change. Speak out against hatred, stand up against injustice, and let your voice be heard.
7. **Finally, to my critics (HATERS)—I forgive you.** I've accomplished much in my life, and through it all, I've learned that love prevails.

Remember: you are beautiful, loved, and valued. God does not make mistakes. Mental health is just as important as physical health, so take care of yourself. Don't ignore any mental health symptoms, as I once did. Please seek professional help if you need it. Love to you all.

ABOUT THE WRITER

I came to America alone as a refugee in 2007. Although I faced many challenges, I never

gave up. Today, I consider myself both a scholar and an activist. I recently earned my Ph.D. in Global Gender and Sexuality Studies from the University at Buffalo, where my research focuses on human rights, including women's rights, minority rights, and LGBTQ rights, global gender inequality, and gender in politics. My dissertation examined the women's movement in Burma. Currently, I teach part-time in the Department of Women and Gender Studies at SUNY Brockport. Two of my articles on women's rights and ethnic rights in Burma are in press and will be published next year. I am also working on my book, *Feminism in Burma*.



Picture taken in Lisbon, Portugal

Our Adult Education Class on January 12, 2025

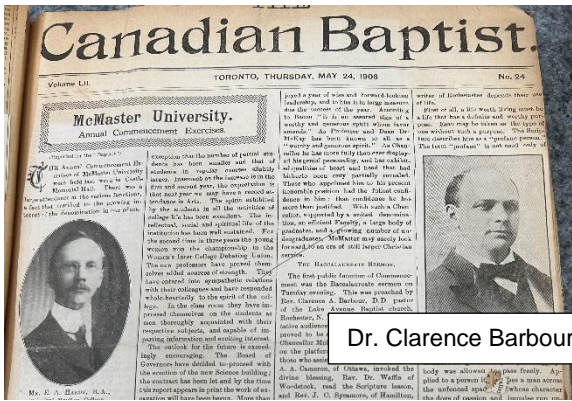
Dr. Soe Win presented a program entitled "Women and Christianity: Reinterpreting the Bible through a Feminist Lens" It was a very informative and well executed class and very thought provoking. The following are some pictures from the class.





Our Church Family

- We continue to keep in our healing prayers **Peter Jameson and the Jameson family** as Peter undergoes treatment for a serious illness
- Our prayers are with **Val Ketchum** and **Sue McMeekin-Davis** following recent surgeries.
- **Fiona**, the wife of **Austin Pettigrew** our former Director of Next Generation Ministries, has had a recent surgery for a detached retina in her good eye. Please keep her in your prayers.
- Please keep **Shaun Gonzales** in your thoughts and prayers as he continues treatment for eye problems.



Dr. Clarence Barbour

When worlds collide. Our Church Historian (Garth Brokaw) was doing some research on "America the Beautiful" which has LABC connections, and he stumbled across an article from the Canadian Baptist news that detailed how a former pastor from LABC (Clarence Barbour) preached a graduation at McMaster University (in Canada, where I did my MDiv). Not exactly groundbreaking, but a kinda cool connection.



A NOTE FROM THE LABC MISSION TEAM: Our mission team was thinking that February is the month of LOVE which left us wondering how each of us shares the love of Jesus individually. As a mission team, we find ways to show that love to other organizations that, in turn, help individuals and neighborhoods. But each of us, on our own, is capable of showing love to others in our own way. And we already do!!! We take food to people and food pantries, we shovel our elderly neighbors drive, we visit the sick and lonely, we tutor kids, we advocate for the stranger and for the least of these. This month, we ask that you be mindful of the ways that you show love. Each Sunday, we ask that you write on

the paper hearts by the bulletins the ways that you have shown Jesus' love to others. Please do not write your name. If you have children, please, invite them to share their ways of loving. You can then place the hearts in the Valentine's Mail Box (shown above). At the end of the month, we will use these ideas to make a visual display of what Love Looks Like at Lake Avenue Baptist Church.



**Colgate
Rochester
Crozer**

DIVINITY SCHOOL

GOD IS *with us*

PSALM 46:10 - 11, NRSVUE

SPRING 2025 LECTURE SERIES

MARCH
3
7:00PM
EASTERN
6PM - CENTRAL
5PM - MOUNTAIN
4PM - PACIFIC



GENE E. BARTLETT CHAPEL SERVICE

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Ann Kemper, CRCDS '07, Senior Pastor at Covenant United Methodist Church, Rochester, NY



MARCH
4
7:00PM
EASTERN
6PM - CENTRAL
5PM - MOUNTAIN
4PM - PACIFIC



CHRISTIAN FAITH & LGBTQ+ EXPERIENCE LECTURE

Lecturer: Rev. JJ Warren, Colgate Rochester Crozer Faculty Affiliate, Vienna, Austria



MARCH
5
7:00PM
EASTERN
6PM - CENTRAL
5PM - MOUNTAIN
4PM - PACIFIC



STANLEY I. STUBER LECTURE

Doctor of Ministry Student Panel

We are pleased to have our Doctor of Ministry (DMin) students share with us the ways they are integrating their CRCDS coursework into their distinct ministry contexts. The students will share their thesis proposals followed by responses from our panelists.



MARCH
6
7:00PM
EASTERN
6PM - CENTRAL
5PM - MOUNTAIN
4PM - PACIFIC



AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY LECTURE

Christopher Hunt, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO



VIEWING OPTIONS



IN-PERSON

Be part of the live experience on campus, engaging directly with our featured speaker on campus.



VIEWING PARTY

Join us on campus to watch speaker(s)/presentations online, creating a shared viewing experience with the CRCDS community.



WEBINAR

Stream the lecture live online from wherever you are.



HOST YOUR OWN WATCH PARTY

Create your own gathering! Invite friends to join you in experiencing the lecture series, showcasing the impact of CRCDS in your own circle.

REGISTER NOW

WWW.CRCDS.EDU/LECTURES



PRESENTED BY JOY IN SINGING
THE DALTON BALDWIN ART SONG INSTITUTE

Our **60th** International Art Song Competition
WINNER'S CONCERT

Alexandra Rose Hotz, *soprano*



PHOTO: HAIT WITMEIER

Ms. Hotz joins a long list of previous awardees as the 60th winner of Joy In Singing's prestigious International Art Song Competition. With a magnetic stage presence and captivating artistry described as "soul-stirring" (*Voice Magazine Santa Barbara*), she is equally at home on the opera, concert, and recital stages.

Cynthia Liu, *piano*

PROGRAM

Joseph Marx (1882 - 1964)
Und gestern hat er mir Rosen gebracht
Der Gefangene
Selige Nacht
Die Elfe
Nachtgebet

Jean Sibelius (1865 - 1957)
Five Songs, Opus 37
I. Den första kyssten
II. Lasse liten
III. Soluppgång
IV. Var det en dröm
V. Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte

Lili Boulanger (1893 - 1918)
Selections from *Clairières dans le ciel*
I. Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie
II. Elle est gravement gaie
III. Parfois, je suis triste
VII. Nous nous aimerons tant
VIII. Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme
IV. Les lilas qui avaient fleuri
XI. Parce que j'ai souffert

Tom Cipullo (b. 1956)
Of a Certain Age
I. Magnolia
II. There are mornings
III. Fugitive
IV. Two Men Loved Me Once
V. Mary
VI. The Garden

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00 PM
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

Tickets: \$35 (general admission) \$20 (seniors & students)
carnegiehall.org / CarnegieCharge 212-247-7800
Box Office at 57th and Seventh

The old joke about asking, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? That was answered by "Practice, practice, practice!", has come true for our former soprano Choral Scholar Ali Hotz. Congratulations, Ali! This is a great accomplishment.

Lee Foster

ABHMS calls for prayers and support as multiple wildfires ravage Southern California communities



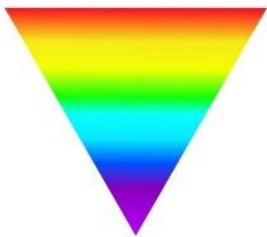
VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 01/13/2025)—American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) urges immediate support for the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) campaign to aid victims of the catastrophic wildfires devastating Southern California. Since January 7, multiple fires have consumed hundreds of thousands of acres across Greater Los Angeles, claiming at least 24 lives and destroying more than 12,300 homes and businesses according to local news sources.

In response to the unprecedented disaster, ABHMS is urging American Baptists across the country to give generously. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, ABHMS' executive director, reminds us of our

call to help our neighbors by "lifting up those in need with our prayers and financial support through OGHS [One Great Hour of Sharing]. Let us respond to the tragic losses experienced in Southern California with compassion and generosity, reflecting the love of Christ in this time of crisis."

Your donations to OGHS are directed to the designated disaster areas to address immediate needs and often long afterward as additional needs emerge. All your gifts will make a difference in the lives of people you may or may not know and show the love of God when and where it is needed most.

Checks designated to **OGHS–Southern California Wildfires** should be mailed to ABHMS' Office of Development care of Kim Wilkins, 1075 First Avenue, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania 19406. If intended, donor checks should also include the name of the donor's church and the name "Southern California Wildfires" in the memo section of the check to ensure that the church receives credit for the gift.



THE "BE YOU" MOVIE SERIES Join us at 6:00 pm on Saturday, February 1 for the movie "A Fantastic Woman". This academy award winning film tells of Marina, a hopeful singer and her love for Orlando, the well-off owner of a textile company. After Orlando falls gravely ill and dies in the hospital, Marina must face the harsh reality about the unconventional relationship between the two of them, the suspicions about her involvement in Orlando's death and her right to mourn her beloved deceased lover. The movie is in Spanish with English subtitles. The movie is for mature audiences.

COMMUNITY DINNER: Our next community dinner will take place **on Wednesday, February 19 at 6:00 pm**. The main course will be chili. A sign-up sheet will be available shortly at the Welcome Center.

Why Black History Month?

At the beginning of this newsletter we mentioned that February is designated Black History Month. During this month the U.S. honors and remembers the contributions and sacrifices of African Americans who have helped shape the nation. Black History Month celebrates the rich cultural heritage, triumphs and adversities that are an indelible part of our country's history. As Sara Clarke Kaplan, the executive director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University in Washington, D. C. stated: "There is no American history without African American history. The Black experience is embedded in everything we think of as American History." The celebration of Black history month is experienced nationally as many organizations, cities, and states host events to raise awareness of Black culture, and honor prominent Black individuals who have shaped the course of American history.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/02/01/1075623826/why-is-february-black-history-month>