

**First and Center
Pastor's Blog
October 1, 2019**

*"Our hearts hurt from the failed religion of extremism.
We deserve more than the failed religion of routine-ism."*

~ Rabbi Sharon Brous,
TED Talk



I tire of hearing many media sources equate the word "Christian" with evangelicalist, exclusivist, and often white-supremacist groups. I want to fairly shout at whatever screen or newspaper I am holding to say, "NOOOOOO! We are not all like that! *Christian* can mean something very different!" Many millennials and Generation Z folk have had either a negative experience with the Christianity of extreme exclusivism or, and this is true of the majority of them, have no experience of religion at all, knowing only what they hear on their screens. They continue to do what human beings have done from ancient times: seek meaning in their lives, seek something beyond themselves, seek belonging with supportive and loving communities. They just don't do it in churches because they are, for the most part, unaware that a church might be a place where those things can happen.

Which brings us to Rabbi Brous' second sentence. "We deserve more than the failed religion of routine-ism." There is comfort in routine, isn't there? As the world changes in turmoil around us, it is tempting to say that the role of the church is to be that place that never changes and so anchors us in....in what? In the past? In an unchanging God?

So much around us fairly screams at us that we cannot just be routine anymore. Generational change. Climate change. Deep divisions in our nation. Rise in racism and nationalism. This is the new "routine" in our society. The old "routine" of the church simply does not address this in any way.

How might we, here, now, break out of the "failed religion of routine-ism" and take some fairly big risks to open ourselves to something really new? Over this next year, we need to talk about doing this as Center Church! Hear me, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT DOING THIS AS CENTER CHURCH! Uncomfortable as it is at first, we are embarking on an adventure to discern what we might become if we take our new mission priorities seriously, and not just as window dressing to cover doing what we have always done.

I don't know who, if anyone, is reading this, but if you do, please let me know that you are aware of changes coming and exciting opportunities being opened up here at Center Church!

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister