

NORTHFIELD: TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC



RECORDER STAFF/PAUL FRANZ

The Rev. Julie G. Olmsted of the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield.

# A time such as this

**THE REV. JULIE G. OLMSTED**  
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March 5 is a holiday for the Jewish people; it's called Purim. Purim celebrates the story of Queen Esther in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a rich and cautionary tale about a beautiful Jewish woman chosen to be the wife (and queen) of the Persian King Ahasuerus, after his wife Vashti had "refused to come to him."

That is a story in itself, but the meat of this timeless narrative is what happens to Esther's people, Jewish exiles in Persia, or better said, what didn't happen, were it not for the courage of Esther.

After a deceitful and conniving "grand vizier" named Haman nearly persuades the king to exterminate this "alien race," Esther is faced with a dilemma: stay anonymous in her palace of comforts (the king didn't know she was Jewish) and let her people be pillaged and burned out of existence OR tell the truth and try to save them, risking her own life and position as queen. Her cousin Mordecai tells her she will not remain safe if she is silent, and perhaps she came

to this position "for a time such as this." Of course, she decides to tell the truth, saying beforehand my near favorite quote in the Bible: "If I perish, I perish." Esther risked big and her people and role as queen were spared.

Coincidentally, the lectionary New Testament Scripture for this past Sunday was Mark 8:31-38. This is a very difficult conversation in which

Jesus foretells his death and his bumbling but lovable disciple Peter will not hear of it. The Scripture says that Peter took him aside and "began to rebuke him."

Peter, like most of us, did not want to discuss difficult things. He prefers to "keep it light" and thereby

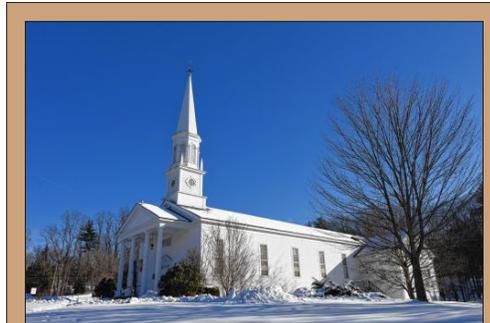
skate through hard times and possible danger. I'm like this. I just want to talk about love, love, love ... And that's not a bad thing, necessarily, unless "down below" there are people suffering and lives at risk (see Esther above).

Jesus responds with something colloquial and powerful: "Satan, get thee behind me. You are speaking only human concerns. I'm talking about the concerns of God." Jesus is telling Peter to back off because he is really only wanting to save his skin, and Jesus'



## FAITH MATTERS

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## About Trinitarian Church

Trinitarian Congregational Church, a United Church of Christ, is a small, welcoming and thoughtful congregation. We embrace diversity and the wisdom of different traditions, while honoring our own roots of congregationalism and social justice. Worship is at 10 a.m. every Sunday. Children's Blessing happens in the service then young ones have their own program of fun and learning.

Rev. Olmsted holds "Coffee Office Hour" at Cameron's Winery (105 Main St.) every Wednesday at 4 p.m. with church and non-church people to talk about anything at all. Like us on Facebook: Northfield Trinitarian Church. Website: tccnorthfield.org. 147 Main St., Northfield, MA 413-498-2431.

skin, and keep the truth at bay as long as possible.

Jesus goes on to say a most disturbing thing, something that I believe we all should ask in our lives from time to time: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

Our soul is who we are fundamentally. Our soul is the essence of our being. On an individual level and as a nation,

we should ask ourselves if plundering our resources, recklessly destroying families through deportation and allowing innocents to die while in school are worth our very soul, who we are at rock bottom? The Bible and other sources of wisdom are calling on all of us to speak up, to have hard conversations.

We are all Peter. We are all Esther.