



# Board of Christian Social Action NEWSLETTER

September 2020

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We honor three civil rights legends:

- Rep. John Lewis
- Rev. C.T. Vivian
- Rev. Joseph E. Lowery

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- Message from Minister
- The Importance of Voting
- Vacation Bible School

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## A Message Becomes a Movement

By Lynda Mack

Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17 year old, was shot and killed in 2012 by a neighborhood watch volunteer. The following year the shooter was acquitted.

This sparked the online message “#BlackLivesMatter”. Three women, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors, were the creators of the “online community to help combat anti-Black racism across the globe”.

Today the message has evolved to include #WhatMatters2020campaign. This will address 14 issues including racial injustice, police brutality, criminal justice reform and voting rights and suppression. There are 14 chapters of BlackLivesMatter in the US (including Washington DC), and 3 chapters in Canada striving for liberation.

*The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for  
All Black Lives.*

## The Conscience of the Congress: Rep. John Lewis

By Paula Young Shelton



John Lewis is a soldier of the civil rights movement with whom we are all familiar. He was born in Troy, Alabama on February 21, 1940. Lewis, as humble as he was powerful, made it a point to always connect with young people, perhaps because he himself was so young when he began fighting racism. He even told his story in a graphic novel, [March](#), to share his experiences with the younger generation.

John Lewis became one of the most respected elder statesman of the US Congress, but I remember

him as the baby of the group. He was the youngest member of the famed [Big Six](#), and too young for me to call, “Uncle John,” as I referred to MLK as my Uncle Martin. As a college student he organized sit-ins, and at the tender age of 21 participated in the Freedom Rides, which led to his assault and [arrest](#) by local police. At 23 Lewis became a nationally recognized leader as chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and made a courageous decision when he took a

*You must be  
bold, brave and  
courageous and  
find a way  
to get in the way.*

*John Lewis*

*Our world is in  
much turmoil  
but the work of  
justice  
is a work of  
love.*

*Rev. Brandon  
Harris*

stand against his fellow students and decided to participate in the Selma to Montgomery march, which, of course led to his brutal attack on the [Edmund Pettus Bridge](#) and subsequently the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Lewis was the youngest person to speak at the March on Washington. Evidence of his radical views can be seen in the circumstances surrounding this presentation. Lewis was forced to revise his [speech](#) when the elders got wind of it, or lose his position at the podium. Lewis scrambled behind the scenes, at the foot of the Lincoln statue, to find a compromise that would satisfy the others and not sacrifice his own convictions. He knew the value of working together to find common ground whether it was between different generations, races, or parties and he took his talents to Capitol Hill, representing Atlanta. Lewis followed the advice of his wife and political adviser, the former Lillian Miles, and ran for Congress, where he served for 34 years, earning the title, "The Conscience of the Congress." His fight for justice was not limited to African Americans and he actively worked to ensure equal protection under the law for all, including the LGBTQ community, immigrants, Native Americans, Asian Americans, farmers, and indeed, all humans. In 2011 he was awarded the presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama. Two years later many of us witnessed him march side by side with the president across the Edmund Pettus Bridge for the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March which, of course, led to the voting rights Act of 1965. Lewis had an impeccable reputation and heart of gold, and he also had some pretty smooth moves on the [dance](#) floor, which you can read about in [Walking with the Wind](#), as he describes dancing with Shirley McClain at a house party in the sixties in between civil rights battles (more evidence of his youthfulness during the movement). John Lewis lost his fight with pancreatic cancer on July 17th at the age of 80 years old.

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## **A Message from our Senior Minister Reverend Brandon Harris**

Micah 6:8 states (English Standard Version), "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Peoples Church as disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to the work of justice. Our world is in much turmoil but the work of justice is a work of love. It is a witness to the world around us that injustice doesn't have the last word. As members we have protested on 16<sup>th</sup> Street and at Black Lives Matter Plaza. Peoples Church members are leading the United Black Christians Prayer Calls for the UCC, Peoples Church members are participating in racial justice efforts for the UCC, serving on various committees for the Potomac Association, Central Atlantic Conference, and the national UCC. I hope that in the days ahead that we will be inspired to continue the work of love which is Justice. Encourage someone to vote, to protest, and to raise our voices so that justice might roll down like water.

*People  
do not choose  
rebellion,  
it is forced  
upon them.  
Revolution  
is always an  
act of self-  
defense.*

*C.T. Vivian*

**WASHINGTON,  
DC  
DEADLINES**

**REGISTRATION  
REC'D BY  
OCTOBER 13**

**REQUEST  
ABSENTEE  
BALLOT  
OCTOBER 27**

**RETURN  
ABSENTEE  
BALLOT  
NOVEMBER 3**

**EARLY VOTING  
OCTOBER 17 - 30**

**DC BOARD OF  
ELECTIONS  
WWW.  
DCBOE.ORG**

## The Greatest Preacher to Ever Live: Rev. C.T. Vivian

By Paula Young Shelton



Rev. C. T. Vivian was born Corey Tindell Vivian on July 30, 1924 in Missouri and grew up in Illinois where his career in activism began with his first job. As recreation director of Carver Community Center, Vivian participated in his first sit in, which resulted in successfully integrating Barton's Cafeteria in 1947. As a ministry student at the American Baptist College he met James Lawson, learned the nonviolent teachings of Gandhi and helped to execute the highly successful Nashville sit-ins of 1960 which sparked a national student

movement.

In addition to the sit-ins, Vivian participated in the Freedom Rides and organized civil rights marches. He was a member of the executive staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and a close personal friend of its president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In fact, Dr. King, known for his great orations, called Rev. Vivian, "The greatest preacher to ever live." Vivian used these skills to convey with eloquence and passion the goals of the civil rights movement. My favorite memory of Vivian is as he stood on the steps of the [courthouse in Selma, AL](#) trying to register people to vote. As he expressed their demands to the sheriff he was struck so hard in the face that the sheriff broke his own hand. And yet, Vivian rose from the ground, bloody but not broken, and continued his argument as articulately as he began. He fought for equality throughout his long life, co-founding the Center for Democratic Renewal (a.k.a. The Anti-Klan Network) and the [C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute](#).

In 2013 Barack Obama honored him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Even in his 9th decade on earth Vivian did not slow down. My husband remembers running into him in the airport not long ago, as Vivian raced through on his way to fight for justice, with the trademark sparkle in his eye and a pep in his step. He was married to Octavia Geans for 53 years and together the couple raised 6 children. C.T. Vivian was a man of strong conviction, incredible passion, and amazing courage and the world is better because he was in it. Rev. Vivian passed away at the age of 95 on July 17th of this year.

**THE BOCSA DONATED \$500  
TO THE RACIAL JUSTICE OFFERING  
TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY**

*You gotta love  
all God's  
children.*

*Joseph Lowery*

## MARYLAND DEADLINES

**REGISTRATION  
OCTOBER 13**

**REQUEST  
ABSENTEE  
BALLOT  
OCTOBER 30**

**RETURN  
ABSENTEE  
BALLOT  
NOVEMBER 3**

**EARLY VOTING  
OCT 26 - NOV 2**

**MD BOARD OF  
ELECTIONS**

**WWW.  
ELECTIONS.  
MARYLAND.GOV**

## Dean of the Civil Rights Movement: Rev. Joseph Lowery

By Paula Young Shelton



Rev. Joseph Echols Lowery was born October 6, 1921 in Huntsville, Alabama and dedicated his life to social justice and human rights around the world. In the 1950's, as head of the Alabama Civic Affairs Organization, he led the fight to desegregate the buses and public accommodations.

In 1957, he co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with his friend and colleague, Martin Luther King, Jr. and went on to serve as Vice President Chairman of the Board, as well as President and CEO. In the two decades of Lowery's

presidency, SCLC went international, fighting for civil rights in South Africa and peace in the Middle East. They took on the gun lobby, establishing the Stop the Killing/End the Violence Campaign, a gun buy-back program that removed over 12,000 guns off the streets, and focused on economic justice to address drug abuse and crime in the Black community. Though he retired from SCLC and the church by 1992, he never stopped working for justice. Lowery championed the rights of the LGBTQ community and fought for election reform while battling capital punishment and mass incarceration. He established the Coalition for the People's Agenda and continued to educate and register new voters for the rest of his life.

Above all, Joe Lowery was a pastor, delivering fiery and inspiring sermons to the congregations of Central and Cascade United Methodist Churches in Atlanta for over 20 years. He pastored his first church in Alabama, followed the movement to Nashville and finally to Atlanta to support the work of SCLC as he led his congregations with liberation theology and an emphasis on social justice. His religious doctrine guided his political ideology and when asked about his stand on gay rights he responded, "I am in the valley of prayer on gay marriage and I will err on the side of inclusiveness not exclusion. I'm going to follow Jesus, and say, 'Whosoever will come, let them come,' and I'm going to extend rights to all of God's children, and if I am wrong, God will have to judge me."

Rev. Lowery was married to his partner in the struggle, Evelyn Gibson Lowery for 66 years and the [Joseph & Evelyn Lowery Institute](#) honors their legacy with ongoing programs to educate and activate leaders in our communities. President Obama asked Lowery to deliver the [benediction](#) at his 2009 inauguration and later that year awarded him the Presidential Medal of Honor. At the tender age of 98, Joseph Lowery went on to glory on March 27, 2020 due to natural causes.

Want to learn more?

The [blue text](#) in the articles are [clickable links](#)  
to help you learn more about these great civil rights heroes.



*The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic process.*

*John Lewis*

## VIRGINIA DEADLINES

REGISTRATION  
OCTOBER 13

REQUEST  
ABSENTEE BALLOT  
BY MAIL: OCT 23  
IN PERSON:  
OCT 31

RETURN  
ABSENTEE BALLOT  
NOVEMBER 3

EARLY VOTING  
SEPT 19 - OCT 31

VA BOARD OF  
ELECTIONS  
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ELECTIONS.  
VIRGINIA.GOV

## Why We Need to Vote!

By Debra Long-Doyle

My hero and a friend of People's Church, is Congressman John Lewis. As we all know, he was a champion of voting rights. His last public words were published in a [Washington Post article](#) shortly after his death. He reminded us of what he fought for all of his life. He walked the walk, and talked the talk, reminding us in his last words that "[V]oting and participating in the democratic process is key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it." In his passing, he has passed the torch on to us all. And now, we must also do our part in voting and getting everyone in our orbit to do the same to honor the legacy of Brother Congressman Lewis.

On July 27th, I went to the Capitol grounds to greet the arrival of the body of my hero, a true American hero, to arrive to lie in state at the Capitol. While waiting for the arrival of his body, a reporter spoke to me and asked if I wouldn't mind telling him why I was there. I obliged him and was quoted in the New York Times article, a portion of which was the following:

"[W]hen you march, when you do things like getting people to vote, taking people to the polls, making sure their rights are being upheld, you honor John Lewis. The struggle continues, and I want to make sure that I live up to his legacy by doing everything I can to make sure that everyone's rights are protected." Now we all must go forth and do the same. My new mantra for the upcoming election, some version of which has been stated by many soldiers in the fight for upholding our right to vote is the following:

**WE MUST VOTE IN NUMBERS  
TOO BIG TO BE MANIPULATED!  
#GoodTrouble #NecessaryTrouble  
#VOTE #VOTE #VOTE!!!**

Rest In Peace and Power Brother Lewis! #JobWellDone!



**ELECTION DAY  
TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 3, 2020**

## Vacation Bible School

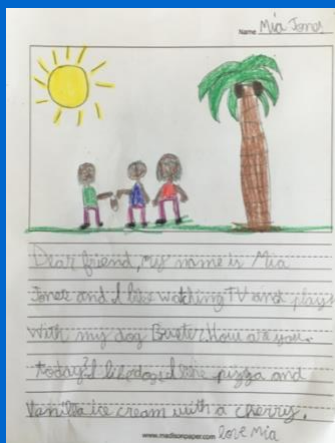
By Camia Stevenson

"World Love: Youth in Action," was a 6-week virtual program of instruction, music, interactions and fun. Each week the dedicated Vacation Bible School Volunteers led a Morning Meeting and held individual classes for students pre-k-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Week Three was dedicated to the theme of Being Fair and Just. The main points from the church Lenten text *A World Worth Saving* by George Donigian were:

1. Seeking justice means we work for what God intended for the world.
2. God's justice is realized through acts of love, mercy, and compassion.

During this week, the campers discussed the main points and scripture Micah 6:8 "And what does God require of us but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." The campers made BLM signs and many took trips to BLM plaza downtown DC. Youth Counselor Cierra Barnett discussed with the first-third graders the importance of equity and that it doesn't necessarily mean that everyone gets the same but that everyone should get what they need. The campers learned about seventeen-year-old [Shana Grant](#) who worked to block the school-to-prison path. The senior-high class met with local DC musician [Asha Santee](#) who held a discussion around using art and music to speak out against injustice. Finally, the VBS community service project partnered with [Fleur De Vie](#), a nonprofit organization supporting social and enrichment education at four schools in Haiti. The project goal was to raise \$1,250 to cover costs of making and distributing 1,000 children masks. Thanks to the hard work of the campers, and the generous support of church members the project nearly doubled their goal and covered the cost of making and distributing 2,000 masks! **Way to go Youth in Action!**

*The VBS  
Community  
Service project  
nearly doubled  
their goal and  
covered the cost  
of making and  
distributing  
2,000 masks!*



Mia Jones'  
letter to Haiti



Musician Asha Shante  
engages students on Zoom

Madeline Romine and  
her donation to Haiti