

*Congress* shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”  
— *First Amendment*

# the Monroe Times

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## SUBMIT A LETTER

The Times welcomes letters to the editor responding to news stories, letters, Our Views and events in the news. They must include the author's name and, for verification purposes only, address and telephone number. Letters may be edited and republished in any format by The Times. One letter per 28-day period, please. Letters must be 400 words or fewer and will be edited for clarity and style. The Times reserves the right to reject any letter.

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## TODAY'S QUOTE

**“Equality means more than passing laws. The struggle is really won in the hearts and minds of the community, where it really counts.”**

— Barbara Gittings

## FROM LEFT FIELD

# Months can be more than one thing. People too.

To say I am disappointed in some of my fellow county residents is an understatement. Leading up to Tuesday's Green County Board of Supervisors meeting, we received a rash of Letters to the Editor regarding a certain agenda item.



**Adam Krebs**

You know the one: a resolution to declare June LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

This shouldn't have been an argument or a debate. This should have passed unanimously with zero contention, so that the meeting could go on to the actual important matters of county citizens: Approving appropriations of ARPA funds, construction projects, ATV routes and other expenditures. These things affect literally everyone in the county.

Instead, there was incessant and continuous arguing around the community about something so not-actually-newsworthy it pained me to watch it go on.

This year is 2023. Why are we still arguing about a symbolic gesture like declaring a month to recognize a marginalized community? A community that has ZERO reason to be marginalized, but still has been for literal centuries? I know Fox News and Newsmax spew hate out of a narrative in order to make money, and 4-CHAN and Reddit users create stupid, not-at-all legitimate factual memes that spread like wildfire on Facebook and Twitter. The hate for anyone "different" is real, and it shouldn't be.

A month can be more than one thing. June can be Dairy Month, and LGBTQ+ Month. Heck, even days can be more than one thing.

Today, May 13, is, among many others, American Indian Day; Bereaved Mother's Day; Birthmother's Day; Children of Fallen Patriots Day; Cough Drop Day; International Hummus Day; National Apple Pie Day; and my two favorites, National Miniature Golf Day and Brunch for Lunch Day, both of which I plan on celebrating.

A person can be more than one thing, too. I can be a male, a son, a brother, and a dad. I can be a Brewers fan, and a Guardians fan. I can be an editor. A coach. A friend. An esports gamer. An atheist. An ally. A person could be both your neighbor and gay.

You don't have to share in the same activities as someone else if you don't want to. There is no rule forcing everyone to fly a rainbow flag on their porch, to go to a drag show, buy naughty adult products online, or do anything else that is pathetically and inaccurately stereotypical of the LGBTQ+ community.

To paraphrase Bo Burnham: "You don't have to insist on seeing every socio-political conflict through the myopic lens of your own self-actualization. This isn't about you. So either get with it, or get out of the way."

If you don't like soccer, don't go to a game, or watch it on TV, or read about it in the newspaper. No one is forcing you to. If you hate soccer, but your neighbor's daughter plays soccer, would you be a kind and respectful person and support her in her choice of sport to play — or would you chastise her? Would you picket her on the Square? I guess if you are a narcissistic psychopath, maybe.

But you don't have to. You can be a normal, simple, loving human being that respects others. You know, like the Bible actually says to do. "John 13:34. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

While it is your right to the first amendment, note that your thoughts and views might not put you in the strongest light as you intend. And trying to state your case while picking and choosing what sentences or tales to follow from the Bible also doesn't always help your case either.

Let's first remember that the Old Testament of the Bible was written more than 3,400 years ago. In Hebrew originally, then Aramaic, followed by Greek, Latin, Arabic, and finally, the rest of the languages used today. The New Testament is a collection of stories from about 2,000 years old, and also went through translation after translation. Chapters of the book were hand-picked, with some stories getting left out. Words that didn't directly match a translation were changed entirely. Eventually, an English king in the 1600s commissioned a new version that suited him, and from there many non-Catholic versions of the Holy Book have derived.

The name of Jesus himself had many different translations along the way. Iēsous, Yehoshua, Yeshua, Iēsous, Iesu, and then Jesus. It changed in translations, as well as even in the Great Vowel Shift of the 15th Century that led to the modern-day English language.

The point I am making is what people of today are basing practically their entire religion on, up to and including specific lines of text, are likely not the original meaning and text anyway. And to pick individual scripts and try to force feed the public and politicians to follow those word-for-word, and to create laws or disparage entire portions of our neighbors, is painfully, morally wrong. Lest we forget that the U.S. Constitution already separates "church and state" by not allowing the government to pick one religion over any other.

Some recent letters to the editor encouraged elected leaders to skip that part of the constitution. Another made claims that an LGBTQ+ person has a life span of 20 years less than their peers, without accounting for suicide and murder, or that the data went off of a study from 1994, when the social climate toward homosexuality was much, much different. "Why practice that lifestyle?" another asks. Because sexuality is not a mental disease or illness. It cannot be "treated." In fact, about 11% of U.S. adults share same-sex

attraction, according to the UCLA Williams Institute School of Law. That number implies that there are approximately 9 million Americans somewhere on the sexual spectrum that is not straight-cisgendered.

And that's just the number that currently identifies as such. More than 20% of Gen Z (1997-2002) identifies as LGBTQ+, according to 2022 Statista data. That doesn't mean young people are being indoctrinated, but rather they feel more comfortable with themselves and less need to hide or mask their sexuality than previous generations. The same data center showed that Millennials (1980-1999) have nearly doubled in LGBTQ+ identification in just one decade, from 5.8% to 10.5%. Gen X (1965-1979) is up from 3.2% to 4.2%, and even Baby Boomers (1946-1964) is up from 1.8% to 2.6%.

Another letter writer claimed that the library is "promoting pornographic and sexually explicit books to grade school children." But has the writer read the Old Testament of the Bible? It's full of incest, rape, and gory brutality.

The gentlemen picketing on the Square on Tuesday were attempting to use the Bible and their Christian background as a means of swaying public opinion. "God destroyed Sodom for the sin of homosexuality," "Homosexuality is a sin!" and "Repent and believe the gospel of Christ."

The contradictions in the Bible from Old Testament to New is astonishing, if not 100% understandable when considering the leaders of the world for 30-plus centuries rewrote and used it for their own benefit.

I mean, the Bible itself condones slavery and the selling of your daughter to an arranged marriage. If you're not going to live by the book in its entirety, you might as well simply take a back seat and pray to your lord in the confines of your own home, like the Bible also says to do: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:5-6.

Do these protesters express hate to the LGBTQ+ community because of things in the Bible? Do they tear down those in that community because it is a sin? Well, so is eating shrimp, lobster and crab.

Guess what else is sin? Wearing fabric of more than one cloth type. Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11 each prohibit the wearing of wool and linen fabric in one garment, the blending of different species, and planting together of different kinds of seeds.

Wait — planting together of different kinds of seeds? Our flower beds, gardens and vast agricultural fields that row crop rotations do just that. Does that mean that we are all

**Listen, I'm not telling you that you're not allowed to hate. You are. Seethe in the confines of your own home. But in public, be respectful. That's it. This resolution is to let a community that has been disparaged for millennia know that they are welcome here in Green County. They are welcome to visit. They are welcome to live here, join in enterprise and commerce, get an education, hold employment, have healthcare, and to simply be alive in our community.**

sinners?

If so, then so be it. When I was younger, I liked to joke with friends that "Jesus died for our sins — if we don't sin, then he died for nothing!" It was comical to me.

I was raised Catholic, but I fell out of religion at 18. And not just one, but all religions. I opened my eyes to the world and saw the horrors of theological autocrats; the establishment elites, the centuries of pitting neighbor versus neighbor in the guise of religion in order to keep the masses at bay. I saw the contradictions. War. Death. Rape and murder. I could feel the hate, and bloodlust for power.

Even the stories in the religious texts themselves didn't make sense to me from a scientific perspective. A lot of them lacked logic, and too many simply want you to "believe" for the sake of "believing," a la blind faith. When people ask me in conversation today why I am an atheist, without going through everything, simply put, there are more than 3,000 Gods worshiped around the world. I worship just one less than the people I am talking to. Being atheist doesn't mean I run reckless abandon. The opposite, actually. Since I gave up religion, I have treated life (mine and those around me), with more respect. I don't believe in an afterlife. I do believe in getting the most out of life to each individual's desires. Rather than hate, berate or marginalize, let's celebrate each other's individuality and uniqueness. Kindness is free.

While I see the Bible (actually, all religious texts) as nothing more than glorified ancient fiction and fables, I also have no problem in someone else believing any story they want. There are a lot of people struggling in this world, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially.

Some just feel entirely alone. Some are struggling with addictions, abandonment, trauma or something else. Being a part of a church or praying to any God might be what keeps them alive and pushing forward each day — and I am here for that. I love that. Keep doing it. If God gives you hope, comfort and a feeling of being whole, I'm happy for you.

The same can be said with the LGBTQ+ community. Many members have struggled — and are still struggling — with their own identity. Maybe they are lying to friends and family, scared to come out of the closet. They see the world today — hell, America today — and see

the hate seething. Just a decade ago they were finally allowed to get married in America and openly serve in the military. Things seemed to be trending toward correcting a long-time wrong.

But now? Entire states are criminalizing that community. Children can now be legally kidnapped in places like Florida, with parents arrested, if there are trans people living in a home. Books that a person might be able to identify with, from a character's perspective, are being taken off of library shelves.

It's a scary time. I lucked out being a Cis-white male in middle America, because this issue (like so many others) doesn't affect me directly. But I can be empathetic. I can see the plight others have gone through and can understand that it doesn't have to be this way. At all. "Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Romans 13:10

My final question is this: Are those against the Green County Board of Supervisor's resolution also against February Black History Month? April Autism Awareness Month? October Breast Cancer Awareness Month?

Are they against Brunch for Lunch Day?

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That's it. To be against welcoming anyone into our community says more about you than it does them. If you feel that way, then I hope you, too, find the peace and love that you so seek. You need it a lot more than you know.

Or maybe this is all just a simulation, and none of this is real. In that case, "01110000 01100101 01100001 01100011 01100101 00100000 01101111 01110101 01110100."

— Adam Krebs is the editor of the Times. He is an ally to the marginalized and a big mini-golf fan. He can be reached in the office at 608-324-3615 or by email at editor@themonroetimes.com.

## TIMES COLUMNIST

# When will the courthouse be fixed? Buy a raffle ticket now!

Would you believe me if I wrote that our first thought in planning a raffle did not have to do with raising funds, but rather to have fun? And that the inspiration comes from somewhere I had never even heard of until a volunteer found out about it from the Stephen Colbert Show?



**Jordan Nordby**

Since 1917, residents in a small village in Alaska, Nenana, have guessed when the ice breaks up on the river and have purchased raffle rickets. In fact, the Nenana Ice Classic's holds the number two raffle license in the state of Alaska.

The lottery is based on when the spring thaw will melt the ice enough to knock over a tripod posed in the middle of the Nenana River which is in Interior Alaska. Listening to the story about a community eagerly and anxiously awaiting and dreaming of spring is definitely relatable. And not just because we are usually dreaming of spring in Wisconsin, too. If you have been in downtown Monroe the last 20 months, you have likely been commenting on something specific no matter the season.

Almost every day, I am asked about or overhear people discussing the courthouse project. If it is someone from out of town, the general comment about a "big project" is usually followed with a question about wondering exactly what is being done. I have enjoyed reading

Noreen Rueckert's columns on the project and the history of the courthouse since the project started in September 2021. Originally, it was only supposed to take nine months to complete.

As you likely know, when contractors began opening the building up to complete masonry work, significant damage to interior portions of the walls was discovered. And, so, the scope of the work expanded and expanded. Comments late last summer focused on Cheese Days and how the project would surely be done in time for it. But here we are. Scaffolding can still be found on the south side of the courthouse and the clock tower is less than half its normal height as it is being rebuilt. The project has been funded by Green County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, including \$2.7 mil-

lion for the clock tower.

So, if you have been wondering or guessing with friends and family about when it is going to be done, now is your chance to win! Main Street Monroe is selling 50/50 raffle tickets through the month of May. Guess the date and time of when the scaffolding will be gone and the clock tower will chime for the first time and you get to split the pot. Ticket sales end at 5 p.m. on May 31st so it is likely to be sometime after that. So far, people have picked dates because of birthdays and anniversaries. My older brother has a December birthday, and my younger brother has a January birthday. If I could buy a ticket, I would likely not go with either one.

Winners in Nenana last year split a pot of about \$250,000. Full disclosure: I'm quite confident ours

will not be anywhere near that. But after all the work is done, the courthouse will be good to go for at least the next 80 years which makes this raffle a once in a lifetime opportunity. Plus, the chance to win money by guessing the official completion and the bragging rights that come with that over a project that has kept us all guessing is sure to bring a smile to your face.

Tickets are available at 213 Mercantile, The Local Joint, Toy Haus, and Luecke's Diamond Center and are \$3 each.

— Jordan Nordby is the executive director for Main Street Monroe. He can be reached at MonroeMainStreet@tds.net. Complete details on Main Street Monroe and its efforts can be found at mainstreetmonroe.org.