



GRACE NOTES

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JULY/AUGUST 2024

WHERE DO WE GO, NOW? THE SEARCH FOR HOPE

The pandemic, which could well be rising its head once again, the world-wide growth of terrorism, the growing number of guns, ammunition, life-taking drugs, poverty, inner-city demise and racism, anti-Semitism, those of different religions, or no religions, and a growing and magnifying hate, envelope our world in a crushing and expanding sense of unease. The struggles seem to be more intense; foreign players are influencing things world-wide, and terror is a commodity that is growing and likely to lead to wars that are nuclear, impacting all continents, and species.

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In the meantime, some of us have experienced serious health conditions, ferocious storms, and proud enemies joining forces, making things even more frightening and fearful. Are we able to see what is happening to each one of us... children, the poor, the elderly? All of us?

This issue of Grace Notes will cover a wide variety of articles, seeking to open a genuine dialogue about the hell that is brewing, and what hope remains. Some of us have faced and are facing still, life or death matters relative to our own health. Some have been saved by the miracles of medicine, the competence of those in medical research, learning from new technologies, nurses and home-care workers who come to the aid of those elderly ones and those seeking ways to make things better. And at the same time, we mourn those who have died or are near death.

Some would imprison those who guided us through multiple threats to health, like AIDS, like all the variants of COVID, and so many other illnesses that have taken their toll. The rewriting of history, the destruction of books, those who have found lies to be more comfortable than truth, and ignorance to replace generosity, merely add to that toll. We need to deliberate together in finding the way to newness and hope. While religion is called out as the center, how can there be religion without a loving God? Where is mercy? For months now, I have wondered and prayed about just where do we go, now?

A tiny excerpt, from one source: "I think Trump is perfect for American Christianity and conservatism because he is "christianity" with zero Christianity, and he is of conservatism without an ounce of conservatism. He ultimately exposes everyone – from (Marco) Rubio to (Kenneth) Copeland to Robert Jeffress – as a grifter. Because Trump is the perfect representation of the human heart's id, he pulls that out of anything and everyone that gets close to him.

Maybe Evangelicalism is going through that right now. Maybe there are thousands of churches in

this country that are more American than they are Christian. Even still, I know God is good.”

From “Evangelicalism’s Identity Crisis,” by David Podhaskie.

The recent “debate” gives us little room for hope. One leaning right, with a remarkable comfort in lying, with the virtual absence of truth. And the other, demonstrating a feebleness that defies the challenges we face in this country and the world. The President did a remarkable job of getting us through a pandemic, getting important bills passed dealing with infrastructure, and leadership in the world. He’s done a good job, but does he have what will be essential in the coming months and years? The other is a felon who has control of a broken Supreme Court, people who willingly do his bidding whether it be right or wrong, and now seems to direct the process of other legal matters that have been postponed, postponed, and postponed.

One side of our mess is consumed by power and control. One who would be king. Power and wealth are the values that are too often celebrated or sought after. A black person would buy a golden shoe, a Christian would buy a Trumpian Bible, which he literally knows nothing about, absolutely nothing. “Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty we are free at last.”

We are a multicultural church in a multi-cultural world. We don’t look down on the other, any more than we look up to power and might. We share what we have, we worship and welcome all people, from all lands and from every faith and country to join with us. Why not? How could we see ourselves as better than others. We’re not. How can we harm those suffering, forget our living off slaves, native Americans, people who built the railroads, the immigrants who planted crops and gave their lives picking cotton, living in support of this place, serving in wars deemed essential by past presidents. Some have believed America, the United States, to be a shining city on a hill.

The Hill was attacked by insurrectionists who roam throughout the “land” and now spread fear and hate particularly when it is time to vote. They are there. They tried to overturn the last election. They couldn’t do it. So now, they start from scratch with billionaire support, a crooked Supreme Court, and a Congress that is not capable of functioning in any way. Putin has his people in our country doing his dirty work. They have guns wherever they go, they meet in enclaves and are counted by those who find and study them. Multiple electors, theft of secret documents, the active work of threatening people who would not challenge the results of voting, voting machines, real people, and scaring those who gave their service to ensure fair elections.

Trump has made clear he will not accept the results of this election coming, and we have no reason to believe that he would. He is a felon, with a Court that routinely makes decisions based on laws and circumstances that date back before some states were states. This is, indeed, crazy. And therefore, we can only give up or fight.

Finally, one debate performance was delivered poorly. The other was delivered by a former president and included more than 30 lies, untruths, and exaggerations. His gross incompetence, and intention to do away with justice, altogether, with the support of the worst court in recent history, can’t even tell the truth about his own insurrection, and the threatening of the life of his own vice president.

WHERE LIFE NEVER ENDS

Neverending dream where life never ends – where people live in perfect harmony where color is not wrong – where we can walk and sing without laughter of putdowns – where someone greets you with words of joy – where loneliness and inequality become a – speck of dirt – in the winds of the past –

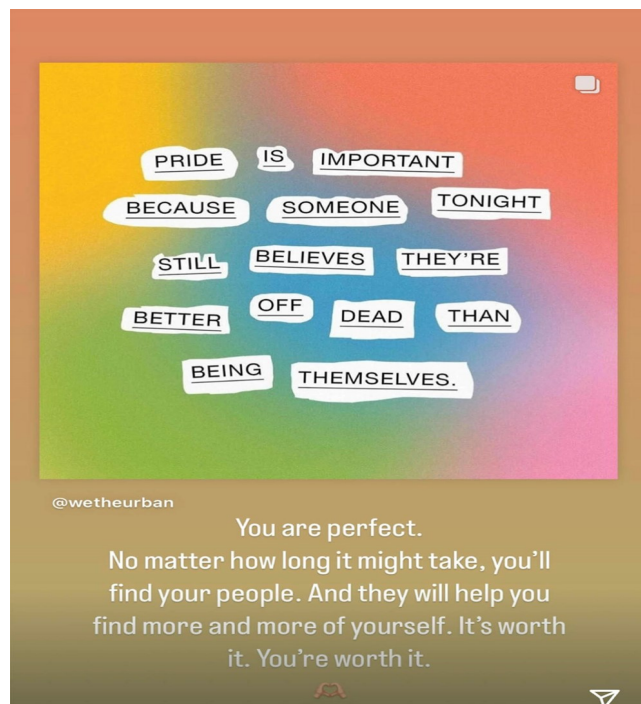
But reality must come first.

Red Cloud Graduate 2006 (Red Cloud is the largest privately funded Indian School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in a remote part of South Dakota since 1988.)

In Peter Marty's words, "What may have been obvious to Thomas Jefferson was probably not self-evident for those who worked for him under forced subjugation. And given the way we still treat different members of society in our day, it's still not obvious that we are convinced that all people are created and endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights. So, until such time as we're ready to live these truths by adjusting our rhetoric, enacting laws that benefit all people more equitably, and ending our punishment of the poor for being poor, we probably ought to practice a little more reticence when suggesting certain truths are obvious or self-evident."

Sadly, that really doesn't matter. The Constitution, the Statue of Liberty, the Declaration of Independence are all at risk. Dark money paves the way to decisions. The Supreme Court has blatantly and routinely been purchased by those who have matters before them. Trump promised the end to Roe vs Wade, and he delivered. The former president and McConnell having stolen a selection from Obama and given Trump the ability to stuff the court with justices who lied during their selection and have found it perfectly acceptable to rewrite laws on the books for 50 years and more.

There is no justice any longer, and we, the people, are the means to change this now. In the months to come, may we try to overcome the built in biases, and immorality of what once was the GOP. It sure isn't the Grand Old Party any longer.



PASTOR'S MESSAGE - GRACE NAMED A "WELCOMING CONGREGATION" BY AMMPARO!

The Synod Assembly was a remarkable opportunity for us to mingle with many friends, past and present, and to catch up with issues being addressed and opportunities for working with and supporting each other. Among those who we reached out to was Doreen Rinas who has long been engaged in helping and supporting immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Rinas's have encouraged Grace to do this, for a good deal of time.

Here is the word we received on June 29th:

Congratulations on officially becoming a "Welcoming Congregation" through AMMPARO! You all at Grace do so very much with asylum seekers and other people in vulnerable situations, You and Emmanuella and your congregation are indeed a witness of "welcoming the stranger" and "loving our neighbors!"

I am so glad that you reached out to Mary Campbell for possible grant money through AMMPARO! If you have any photos of your "Welcoming Congregation" ministry that I could include in my power point about Welcoming Congregations in New England, I'd love to incorporate them. It's a witness of your congregation but also gives ideas to other congregations of what Welcoming Congregations do!

Please let me know how it goes with getting access to funding with AMMPARO.

And if there are other ways that I or our Immigration Task Force might be able to help you, please let me know.

I will be contacting you and anyone else you might add, if there are legislative pieces to advocate for. You'll be on the listserve for AMMPARO and will get interesting emails from them. Mary Campbell also has a once every few months zoom event with more interesting ideas and people presenting.

This should enable us to get some help in our work with immigrants and perhaps connect again with Al Dornan who is still giving witness to the needs for helping people who are ending up in our country and need help.

We want to continue to advocate for voting rights, racial justice, reproductive freedom, advancing equality for all, accountability in policing, and evaluate the equity of the legal systems that people we serve encounter.

It's been a very busy month... with the 4th to come. Happy Fourth of July, and blessings to all during this very difficult and challenging time for our church and world.

AMMPARO is Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities



AMID SURGE OF CAMPUS PROTESTS, CHAPLAINS FIND REASON FOR HOPE IN THEIR STUDENTS

The chaplains at Ivy League and other top schools say the students have learned about the concerns of other faiths, while finding ways to express their own.

A student wrapped in an Israeli flag listens to pro-Palestinian protesters gathered on campus at the University of Texas at Austin, Tuesday, April 30, 2024, in Austin, Texas. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

May 10, 2024

by Elizabeth E. Evans

(RNS) — Ask a college chaplain, and you'll hear a story behind the pro-Palestinian protests on American college campuses that is more complicated, and in some ways less dire, than what you're seeing on television or in your news app.



Media accounts of the pro-Palestinian protests and counterprotests have focused on unwelcome encampments, fights between rival groups and arrests by police. But the conflict in Israel and Gaza, and the profound issues it raises, some campus spiritual leaders say, have done what colleges and universities are meant to do: prompted them to reflect on what it means to be moral agents and to assess their own diverse faiths.

Whether students participated in encampments, prayer vigils, Shabbat rituals or supporting other students, they were growing spiritually and learning how to claim their own place in history, the chaplains said.

Janet Cooper Nelson, a United Church of Christ minister who has long headed Brown University's chaplaincy team, said the students at the university where encampments ended after officials agreed to [vote on student demands](#) this fall represented a wide spectrum of beliefs.



Usama Malik. (Courtesy photo)

At the large public campus of the University of Texas at Austin, Muslim students have told Usama Malik, a chaplain with [Muslim Space](#), a community-building organization in Austin, that their trust in university administrators and public officials has been damaged by aggressive attempts to clear the encampments, even as solidarity among students of different religions has increased in past weeks, often with support from local pastors, faculty and even parents.

Having seen art-making workshops, a teach-in, a Shabbat service and an interfaith prayer vigil in recent days, said Malik, "you're really seeing a variety of things that often get missed in the way the news media has been covering the story." The events, often student-led, are "diverse, eclectic and very moving."

At Brown, said Cooper Nelson, students have become more involved in campus politics and their own faith issues. Those she has encountered "are prayerful, spiritually formed on the

AMID SURGE OF CAMPUS PROTESTS, CHAPLAINS FIND REASON FOR HOPE IN THEIR STUDENTS

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inside,” she said. “You see the students weighing the ideas and their decisions about engaging those ideas or moving them forward, very much based on how they understand what it is to live a life that’s grounded spiritually.”

Sr. Jenn Schaaf, a Dominican sister and assistant chaplain at Yale University’s St. Thomas More Chapel & Center, said the war for many students is by no means an abstraction. “Like the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, we have students who have relatives in Israel and Palestine. They are worried about people they know,” she wrote in an email.

“I’m grateful that our students are engaged in the religious and political sphere,” she added. “I’m also grateful that they are safe.”



Overall, the chaplains who spoke to RNS seem united in admiration for their students’ capacity to form their own opinions, make moral judgments and embrace the moment, as turbulent as it is. Indeed, Cooper Nelson’s colleague at Brown, Reconstructionist Rabbi Jason Klein, said that while Jewish students have welcomed the chance to connect the protests to Jewish values, spirituality and practice, they don’t want to be told by outsiders what to believe about the issues at the heart of the protests .

The Rev. Janet Cooper Nelson, left, and Rabbi Jason Klein are chaplains at Brown University. (Courtesy photos)

Cooper Nelson doesn’t consider it the chaplain’s role to teach as much as facilitate students’ takeaways. “It’s not my job to tell them what to do. It is my job to listen carefully and to try and hold up a mirror of what I hear them weighing and measuring what they are putting out there as the ideas that seem most important to them. I think we’re acting as friends, non-judgmental sounding boards.”

The Rev. Roger Landry, a chaplain at Columbia’s Thomas Merton Institute for Catholic Life, said he has attempted to focus students on helping one another. “There’s a temptation to think that a campus demonstration on a New York campus is going to have a major impact on a 76-year-old, seemingly intractable dispute in the Middle East. I’ve urged them to be far more practical by doing what we Catholics do, turning to prayer and to personal care,” he wrote in an email, adding that this “includes reaching out to Jewish and Palestinian friends to ask how they can support them.”

The majority of Catholics at Columbia are hard working students who prioritize sanctifying their studies, and despite their many concerns over what has happened in the Middle East before, on and after Oct. 7, aren’t happy that the toxins of that region have been brought onto their campus,” he added.

Brian Martin Burkholder. (Photo by Macson McGuigan)



AMID SURGE OF CAMPUS PROTESTS, CHAPLAINS FIND REASON FOR HOPE IN THEIR STUDENTS

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At smaller institutions, the war has also had an outsize effect, and the role of the chaplain has sometimes been more personal than at larger urban schools. At Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, students and faculty held a teach-in and a prayer vigil last fall and called for a cease-fire, prompted by students who had gone to Israel and the West Bank over the summer. After more student-led action this spring, the university administration joined them in urging the U.S. government to work for a cease-fire.

The Rev. Brian Martin Burkholder, the Mennonite chaplain, said he has tried to be present with the students who were on the trip who “felt compelled to speak out for those who were losing their voice and homes and land due to Israeli attacks and control,” he said. “I’ve checked in on occasion to see how they are doing and offer a space for reflection on their experiences. I wanted them to know they were seen, supported and valued.”

“Our Anabaptist Mennonite faith tradition informs supporting one another in community as well as giving and receiving counsel,” said Burkholder.

At Indiana’s Earlham College, historically Quaker but now very diverse ethnically, economically and across faith traditions, students have focused on how they can support each other, rather than being combative, said the coordinator of Quaker and religious life, Mimi Holland. As at Yale and many other institutions, there are students who have family members, both in Israel and in Gaza, she said.

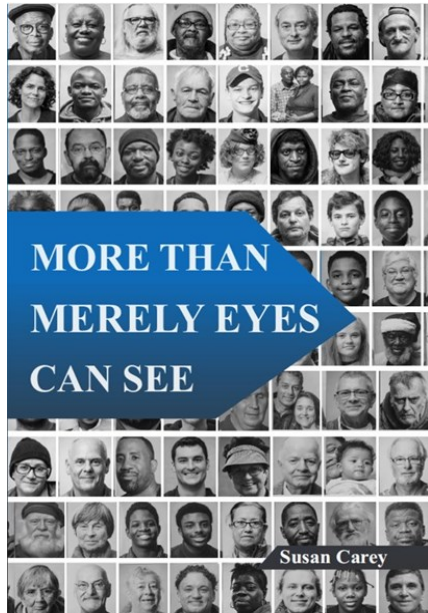
“I think there is something about the culture that is rooted in the Quaker way that promotes more thoughtful responses. The message of justice, bridge building, how we are all interconnected, not just as human beings but as the entire world and environment we live in ... that’s very much part of our culture.

“Our students are amazing. I see young people really putting the best part of their faith forward and acting on what their faith causes them to do in kind, loving, peaceful justice-seeking ways,” said Holland. “I’m just gobsmacked by how caring and thoughtful they are.”



Posters on campus at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. (Photo courtesy Mimi Holland)

MORE THAN MERELY EYES CAN SEE LAUNCHED ON 6/28



Sue Carey's new book was launched on 6/28 at the Hartford Boys & Girls Club. More than 70 people were in attendance, many of whom were represented in the book.

Sue had asked a number of people to speak: the President and CEO of the Boys & Girls Club, Samuel Gray, Jr.; Pastors Rick Kremer and Darrell Urban; Bernie Michel - photographer responsible for the wall portraits on the book cover; Lee Whittemore, one of the contributors; Leslie Kriesel, a professional editor; Dr. Melissa Sue John, the publisher and Dr. Nancy Naples, professor; and Elsa Koulla, assisting with book sales.

The book can be purchased on Amazon as well as at Barnes and Noble. All proceeds will go to the Boys & Girls Club of Hartford.

Here are some of the pictures from the happy event and quite a few familiar faces:



BLESSED MYSTERY

by Rev. Andrew Borden

Mystery. This term is accurate when speaking about God.

We can't view God within the spectral breadth of human optics.
There is no tactile dimension of God to the human senses.



God does not give off an aroma for our aural senses to capture, though people attending religious traditions where incense is used in worship can associate this with God.

Many religious traditions report our God as Creator. That brings with it implicit truths such as unfathomable knowledge of biomechanics, socio-psychology, physics, metallurgy, chemistry, fluid dynamics, thermodynamics and much, much more!

Within the tradition following Jesus' as God incarnate (entering human form and identifiable by the senses) brings with it reports of trans-dimensionality and control of the elements. All the while exuding an authentic, inclusive Love seeking the best of us.

This Presence we know as God can be felt. Simply speak with people of faith who have experienced this Divine touch over and again in all phases of their lives! God can bring a calm, a sense of joy, Wisdom in times of discernment, healing-capacity in dealing with times of stress and dis-ease.

A blessed mystery we can certainly trust despite the many-times chaotic assaults of the human senses that can inhibit awareness of the persistent Presence that is for us, not against us.

Let us embody the Love manifest in Jesus' incarnation as the True Humanity where retributive nature, demeaning attitudes and inequality have no place within the intent of our Creator.



OPEN THE DOOR WIDER FOR REFUGEES



Today (June 20, 2024) is World Refugee Day.

I'm here today only because of the kindness of strangers who fought to open the door for those fleeing unthinkable circumstances, and I believe others should have the same chance.

In the spirit of recognizing the strength and courage of the millions of people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced by war, conflict, famine, disease, natural disasters, climate change, or any other reason, I hope you'll take a moment to read my op-ed in *The Atlantic* below.

In solidarity,

Ilhan

Of the many titles I hold — congresswoman, mother, sister, organizer — one represents a part of my identity that I hold particularly close to my heart: *refugee*.

People frequently come up to me and share their own refugee stories. We immediately ask each other how long it has been since arriving in the United States. In my case, it's been 29 years since my family and I were given a golden ticket to start a new life in America as refugees.

We escaped war in Somalia and found refuge at the Utange camp in Kenya. During my four years living in a refugee camp with little food or water, I saw the best and worst of humanity. I witnessed the joy of a mother welcoming a baby safely into the world, despite the odds stacked against her. I witnessed the death of friends and family members in a camp where malaria, dysentery, and respiratory diseases were rampant. I am grateful that I made it out alive. But I would not be here without the generosity of the Kenyan people, the resolute efforts of UN workers, the help of resettlement organizations such as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and the welcoming spirit of the American people who gave me and my family a second chance at life.

Right now, the world is facing an unprecedented displacement crisis, as conflicts and catastrophes in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia displace tens of millions of people from their homes. I'm here today only because of the kindness of strangers who fought to open the door for those fleeing unthinkable circumstances. And that's why today, as we observe World Refugee Day, I am calling on President Biden to raise the refugee admissions cap, and allow more to enter the United States.

Not long after taking office, the president raised the admissions cap to 125,000, an important step in the right direction. But that number is still too small. Even worse, we have routinely failed to meet the cap. President Biden has called the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program "a statement about who we are, and who we want to be." I want us to be a country that lives up to our values of opening our arms during times of global catastrophe—both by raising the cap, and by ensuring that we actually admit the number of refugees it authorizes.

The horrific civil war in Sudan has displaced an estimated 10 million people, including almost 2 million who have fled to neighboring countries. Many of them have sought refuge in Ethiopia, which itself still has more than 1 million people forcibly displaced by the conflict and atrocities in Tigray. More than 1 million Rohingya are living in Bangladesh within a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar that has become a hotbed for forced recruitment of child soldiers and other human-rights violations. Massive numbers of people have fled wars in Syria and Ukraine, and economic and security collapses in Venezuela and Haiti. Global strife, economic uncertainty, and the climate crisis seem likely to fuel even higher levels of forced migration in the years ahead.

The systems in place, both in the U.S. and at the international level, are clearly inadequate to meet the scale of the displacement we are seeing around the world. Not only is it crucial to raise the refugee admissions cap; we also need an international treaty for migration worldwide, like the Paris Agreement on climate change, except binding on its signatories. We must create a system that is based on the human rights of migrants; that is mindful of the disparate experiences that migrant women, children, and LGBTQ people face; and that recognizes that every country on Earth has its role to play in establishing a more just, efficient, and humane way for people to exercise their freedom of movement.

As we work toward that larger goal, the United States must work to improve its own system for handling refugees. People who make the gut-wrenching decision to flee their home to escape brutal violence, as my family did, do not pause to consider whether Title 42 will impede their ability to enter the U.S. They do not check to see what amendments are going to be offered in the House of Representatives, watch a little bit of a Senate floor debate, or read through press statements from the White House. They flee because they have to. They come to our borders because they have no other option. There is no level of cruelty and no number of condescending warnings placed on billboards in Guatemala or anywhere else that will prevent parents from protecting their family.

The Biden administration has shown creativity and flexibility in creating parole programs for Ukrainians, Haitians, Cubans, and Venezuelans. These are not perfect solutions, but they have been successful at reducing border encounters for people from those countries, and they have demonstrated that we have the ability to welcome people in large numbers through orderly and safe processes.

We should do the same for Sudanese and Ethiopians, at a minimum. But even more than that, we should work toward establishing comprehensive legal pathways that enable people to arrive in the United States without risking their life or paying human traffickers their entire savings just to be detained at the border and deported.

Fixing our immigration system is not merely a matter of basic morality, although it is that. It is also the right way to address the very real problems that are created when millions of people mass at designated ports of entry and then are either detained or sent to overstretched cities around the country. As heated as the debate over the veracity of asylum claims has become, the very fact that so many people are seeking asylum shows us that many people are trying to arrive here legally. We should give them the opportunity to do so.

And we must reject the cynicism of those who indulge in xenophobia, or promise to close immigration pathways, because they believe that those positions will prove politically advantageous. Untold numbers of people around the world are counting on us to do the right thing. I dreamed of one day living in the United States when I was huddled in a refugee camp; today millions of children are dreaming the same dream, of living in a country that promises peace and opportunity. I hope that the door that saved my life can be opened even wider.



by Stephen Underwood | sunderwood@courant.com | Hartford Courant
June 26, 2024 at 6:00 a.m. | UPDATED: June 28, 2024 at 2:05 p.m.

Jendayi Scott-Miller stands outside the future site of the Angel of Edgewood Community Cafe and Resource Center in Hartford. Scott-Miller, who provides people in need with meals and groceries through her nonprofit Angel of Edgewood, is opening a food pantry and soup kitchen in Hartford's North End. (Jessica Hill / Special to The Courant)



A Connecticut nonprofit that was the victim of repeated burglaries is getting a major boost. U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal announced Tuesday the Angel of Edgewood in Hartford is set to receive \$709,000 in federal funds.

The Hartford nonprofit has been the victim of burglaries over the last few weeks, where founder Jendayi Scott-Miller said thousands of dollars in donated items were taken from the nonprofit's Franklin Avenue warehouse. Among the items stolen included air conditioners, TVs, clothes and jackets, toys and LEGO sets.

"These guys were professionals that literally vandalized and terrorized a great community organization," Blumenthal said at a press conference. "I was inspired to come to their aid and I am here to say we are not abandoning the Angel of Edgewood."

Despite the doors being locked, police believe the thieves climbed through a trash chute to enter the building. The chute has now been welded shut, Scott-Miller said. But despite closing the chute, thieves struck again after tampering with the front door on June 3, police said.

"She is known by a lot of different names, but the one that really fits her is the Angel of Edgewood. And there's a reason for it, because she helps so many people," Blumenthal said at a press conference. "I've seen it at work. The toys and back to school extravaganza at Dunkin' Park. I have been there for the Thanksgiving meals that are not just about eating, but dedication and hope. We all know even angels need a little lift once in a while. We can't count only on heaven to give our angels help. Sometimes they need a little help from elsewhere."

Blumenthal said that the funds will go towards boosting security and construction to ensure the warehouse is safer from theft. The funds are coming from an earmark on a congressional bill, according to his office.

"We know the need is there. This is one of the most food insecure and income challenged areas in our entire state," Blumenthal said. "We're going to make sure they can continue their great work and make sure we can provide the security they need. That involves better construction and more protection."

10 WAYS CHRISTIANS CAN PROTECT DEMOCRACY

SOJOURNERS

by Maria J. Stephen
JUN 13, 2024

Commitment to democratic norms is not a matter of political partisanship. The vast majority of Americans believe in, practice, and defend democracy — but there *are* partisan elites with powerful antidemocratic impulses gaining a foothold. As I wrote in “**Faith and the Authoritarian Playbook**,” people of faith have values rooted deeper than any political ideology and have led powerful pro-democracy movements around the world. In *Hope and History*, Vincent G. Harding reminds us that history, like our democracy, is not a spectacle but a task; it’s “a destiny that is still ours to create.” Here are ways Christians can be partisans for democracy.

1. Pray together.

Prayer fosters spiritual imagination, bravery, compassion, and an ability to hold fast to truth amid disinformation. World Vision offers **6 ways to pray for our country during the election**. The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention also offers a **prayer guide**. Sojourners has election **litany and prayers**, ready for sharing on social media. Texas Impact collected **interreligious prayers** to use during an election season.



2. Foster healthy debate.

Lead conversations that are honest, nonpartisan, and religiously grounded. To work effectively across partisan lines, Sojourners developed a curriculum for **Politically Divided Congregations** to strengthen Christian unity, evangelism, and the public witness of the church. The National Governors Association launched the **Disagree Better Initiative** to reduce animosity and foster healthy debate on policy initiatives. **Preventing and Responding to Election Disruption and Violence** from the Strong Cities Network helps local leaders defuse misleading information, prevent election-related violence, and promote social resilience and solidarity.

3. Learn together how authoritarian movements work.

Protect Democracy’s **The Authoritarian Playbook**, Just Security’s **American Autocracy Threat Tracker**, and United to Protect Democracy’s **The Authoritarian Playbook for 2025** may inform your conversations. The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict offers online **democracy courses** in several languages.

4. Encourage voting and civic engagement.

Encourage voting and civic engagement by teaching about pro-democratic norms and values through sermons, bulletins, and other communications channels. Name the values that guide Christian engagement in politics. **Faiths United to Save Democracy** has several resources for faith communities.

5. Develop “democracy pledges.”

Generation Vote’s pledge for politicians holds them accountable to use their power to protect voters’ rights and stop election subversion. Clergy can use a democracy protection pledge to guide congregations. Sojourners’ **Civic Discipleship** statement and resources may serve as inspiration. The (&) Campaign is hosting a **Civic Revival** featuring Christian civic disciplines for faith and politics.

10 WAYS CHRISTIANS CAN PROTECT DEMOCRACY

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6. Share your space.

Offer religious spaces as polling sites by contacting your local election office. Visit the nonpartisan site **Power the Polls** for guidance on how to apply to be a poll worker in your community. Be part of safe, fair, and efficient elections for all.

7. Offer training to provide accompaniment.

Provide training for protective accompaniment at the polls to deter threats and intimidation. Become congregational “poll chaplains” with the **Faiths United to Save Democracy** team. Train your communities in effective, strategic nonviolent action, consistent with our deepest held religious beliefs. **DC Peace Team** and **Pace e Bene** offer trainings. See Beautiful Trouble’s cool **BATMo! card deck** to support nonviolent action trainings. Over Zero’s **Election Violence Prevention Toolkit** for mayors and local leaders focuses on building strong communities, providing clear communication, and deescalating election threats. Interfaith America and Protect Democracy have developed the **Faith in Elections Playbook** to help religious communities support free, fair, and peaceful elections.

8. Prepare for the day after the election.

Watch and discuss the documentary **War Game** where a bipartisan group of U.S. defense, intelligence, and elected policymakers participate in an unscripted role-play exercise on political violence in a contested election. With communities across political and religious differences, develop a plan for advancing democratic norms *after* the election. The North Carolina Council of Churches developed a **Sacred Conversations toolkit** on becoming a trauma-informed faith community for shaping pastoral responses during crises. Talk about **post-election stress** from the pulpit. Make a pledge to stay off social media for a day. **Choose Democracy** prepares Americans to respond in the case of an undemocratic power grab (as we experienced in January 2021), particularly between November elections and a January presidential inauguration.

9. Publicly support all who stand against authoritarianism and white supremacy.

Provide public support to any faith leader or community — across the political, ideological, or theological spectrum — who takes a courageous stand against authoritarianism and white supremacy. Stand with them when they face backlash. Provide them with safe avenues of communication. **Defending Democracy Together** helps responsible conservatives vote for democracy. George Lakoff’s **Don’t Think of an Elephant!** urges progressives to present a clear moral vision for the U.S. so democracy can deliver on its promises.

10. Democratize life.

Reducing the threat of authoritarianism and building an inclusive democracy must be woven into every part of our civic life and have a long-term strategy. The Kairos Center and MoveOn Education Fund’s 2023 report **All of U.S.** provides recommendations for investing in pro-democracy resources particularly in rural regions among poor and working-class communities.

*Editors’ note: Sojourners is a partner of Faiths United to Save Democracy and may collaborate with other organizations listed above. **Decisions about editorial content** are the responsibility of Sojourners’ editorial team, free from the demands or influence of donors, advertisers, and organizational partners.*



Maria J. Stephan, co-author (with Erica Chenoweth) of *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, is chief organizer of the Horizons Project, where she works to build a just, inclusive, and peaceful democracy in the U.S.

SUPREME COURT WILL PROTECT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE FROM GUN VIOLENCE



This is huge:

The Supreme Court just issued a decision in the case *United States v. Rahimi* that prohibits people under domestic violence orders from possessing firearms – a step that *will* protect victims of domestic abuse and save lives.

Too often, firearms become a part of traumatizing – if not tragic – domestic violence against partners and children. In fact, firearms are used in about one half of domestic homicides, and domestic violence is also a growing contributor to homicides by firearms in youth.

These sobering statistics highlight just how pivotal this Supreme Court decision truly is. It's a critical safeguard that balances Americans' constitutional right to bear arms with the government's responsibility to protect the lives of partners and children of individuals deemed dangerous by the courts.

These protections are vital to protect people from gun violence. Young people regularly report intimate partner violence to our National Crisis Center, and school shooters often have a history of violence against women and girls. Educating yourself and others about the intersection of domestic abuse and violence can help prevent tragedies. That's why we've created a blog post to highlight those facts – as well as the warning signs of violence and what to do if you or a loved one needs help: [I hope you'll take a moment now to read our blog post to learn more about why protections for those who have experienced domestic violence are so important.](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/news/facts-about-domestic-and-intimate-partner-gun-violence-against-women-and-girls) <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/news/facts-about-domestic-and-intimate-partner-gun-violence-against-women-and-girls>

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about this important issue – and for all you do to help us prevent gun violence.

Mark Barden (Daniel's father)

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IS EMBEDDED IN THE BIBLE

SOJOURNERS

DEI is just one way we can repent of and repair the effects of the systemic sin of racism.
by [Adam Russell Taylor](#)

SINCE THE RECORD-BREAKING Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, we have witnessed a right-wing backlash against efforts to advance racial justice, exemplified by state and local laws to ban books and censor how we teach history. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, especially those in the corporate world and higher education, are also increasingly vilified.

Of course, these attacks on DEI are just a repackaging of old grievances. I've written extensively about how the political right in the United States has long sought to win and maintain political power by inflaming white racial prejudice through a never-ending culture war. To counteract this, we need to make a more persuasive and forceful case for why DEI programs align with and advance our core faith and civic values.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs address inequities experienced by people from historically marginalized identities, whether based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or any other element of humanity used to exclude and disadvantage. A DEI frame-

work expands an organization or institution's focus beyond simply recruiting a more diverse staff or student body to include diligent attention to equitable policies, compensation, and opportunities. When equity and inclusion are added to the picture, organizations can better build a shared sense of belonging, possibility, and ownership. That should be reflected not just in an organization's culture, but in its material realities, including wages and promotions.

A compelling moral and theological case for DEI isn't difficult to make. God created every human being in God's own divine image (Genesis 1:27), which precludes any categorical differences in people's inherent worth or value. What's more, as Christians we believe in a risen Lord who came to erase the entire concept that some groups of people are superior to others. "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). It's not that the many things that make each person unique disappear — far from it. But life in Christ should lead us to reject attaching a hierarchy of value to those distinctions.

U.S. institutions, including churches, were founded on profound structural inequities and still carry that taint. The nation itself is rooted in a Declaration of Independence that declares that all men (meaning, at the time, land-owning white males) are created equal and a Constitution that counted enslaved people as numerically worth three-fifths of a human being. Our country has never fully resolved that contradiction, and inequities persist. For Christians and other people of faith, DEI is one means through which to repent of and repair the effects of this systemic sin.

The Candler School of Theology at Emory University has a faith-rooted commitment to DEI that speaks to me: "Our faith calls us to understand diversity as a gift from God, equity as a moral imperative, and inclusion and belonging as the fruits of the Spirit." Our nation's growing diversity is indeed a gift to be embraced rather than feared or denied. May we, with the Holy Spirit's help, create more equitable organizations and foster cultures of true belonging and thriving.



Adam Russell Taylor

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of [*A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community*](#). Follow him on X [@revadamtaylor](#).

THIS MINE COULD POLLUTE GRAND CANYON'S SPRINGS AND HAVASU CREEK PERMANENTLY

Grand Canyon National Park brings people together. Visitors come from all over the world to share in the beauty of the deep, red canyon walls, the flowing Colorado River, and the diverse wildlife. The park unifies people through the experience and the several different histories that come together on the landscape, beginning with 11 associated Tribal communities.

At the border of Grand Canyon National Park is Baaj Nwaavjo Itah Kukveni—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. Within its boundaries is an active uranium mine, the Pinyon Plain mine, that began uranium mining operations in January 2024 despite widespread opposition from Tribal and local communities. While new mining is now banned within the monument, an exception was made for the Pinyon Plain mine under a mining law from 1872. The



THIS MINE COULD POLLUTE GRAND CANYON'S SPRINGS AND HAVASU CREEK PERMANENTLY

(continued from page 16)

uranium mine now poses a grave threat to Tribal communities and interconnected waters of the Grand Canyon.

Urge Governor Hobbs and President Biden to close the Pinyon Plain Mine. The surrounding landscapes are home to important natural resources and scarce water sources, as well as cultural and historical sites that hold deep significance for many Tribal Nations in the region.

The mine threatens to permanently pollute the aquifers that feed the Grand Canyon's springs and Havasu Creek, potentially bringing catastrophic consequences for the Havasupai Tribe, whose community relies on these waters, and for the broader and interconnected waters and wildlife habitat of the Grand Canyon.

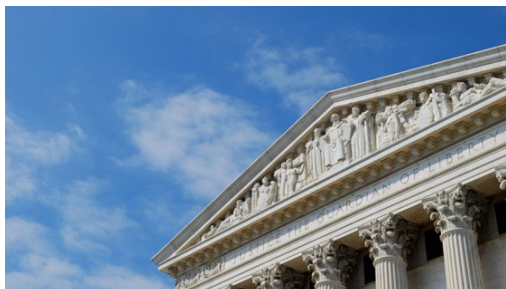
This landscape is home to several sensitive and endangered species, including the California condor and the Mexican spotted owl, as well as endemic plants and animals like the Kaibab monkey grasshopper.



Urge Governor Hobbs and President Biden to close the Pinyon Plain Mine. No uranium should be allowed to contaminate the waters and communities of the Grand Canyon.

Thank you for all you do,
Sanober Mirza
Arizona Program Manager

THE LATEST FROM THE SUPREME COURT



How the Supreme Court Went Off the Rails

**BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE**

We're nearing the end of another consequential Supreme Court term, one that will likely be remembered for the justices' calculated refusal to swiftly reject Donald Trump's claim that he's immune from prosecution. It's further proof of the Court's hard-right turn. The recently released and updated paperback

edition of **The Supermajority** by Brennan Center President Michael Waldman charts the rise of the conservative voting bloc and unpacks its regressive rulings on reproductive rights, gun control, and government regulation. As the Court continues to remake American life and law at breakneck speed — and its public standing deteriorates just as rapidly — we need reforms to ensure that it stands up for **constitutional values and the rule of law**.

Juneteenth's Unrealized Promise

Juneteenth marks the date in 1865 when the last enslaved people in the farthest corners of the United States were informed of their emancipation. We celebrate it today as a victory for the rights of Black Americans, but recent years have seen the very laws drafted to combat racial discrimination used to curb Black Americans' participation in society. This new era of retrenchment is a salient reminder that **the fight for true freedom is far from over**.

The Latest Threat to Fair Representation

In Galveston County, Texas — the birthplace of Juneteenth — Black and Latino voters are challenging a racial gerrymander for violating the Voting Rights Act. They argue that the recently adopted map effectively bars communities of color from electing the candidate of their choice to the county's governing body. Rather than weigh the merits of the map, however, a federal appeals court is considering narrowing the Voting Rights Act to stop coalitions of minority groups from jointly suing over racial discrimination. A new Brennan Center analysis lays out the stakes of the case and explores how the fight over fair representation in Galveston is part of a broader [national story of resistance to minority political power](#).

Safeguards for the 2024 Election

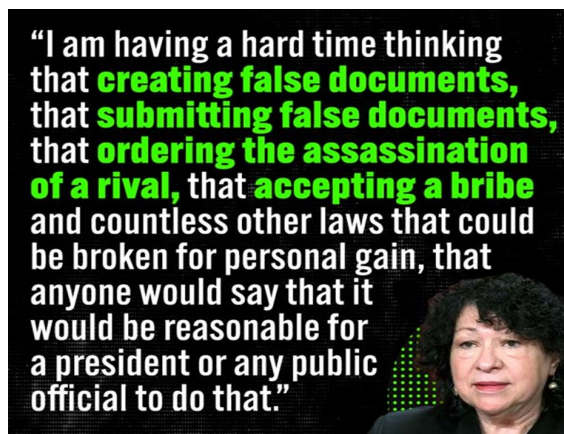
Threats of violence and political interference are expected to persist in the 2024 election. Thankfully, there are many federal and state laws in place to ensure the integrity of our elections and protect both voters and election workers at every stage of the process. Two new sets of Brennan Center resources detail the legal guardrails against some of the likeliest threats, including the possibility of [unfounded mass voter challenges](#) and the [intimidation of voters and election workers](#).

The Blinders on Meta's Watchdog

Meta's oversight board was created in 2020 to bring transparency and accountability to the company's decisions about the posts it removes, amplifies, or demotes on Facebook and Instagram. The board has weighed in on high-profile cases, including decisions to deplatform former President Trump after the January 6 insurrection and the removal of Covid-19 misinformation. But its effectiveness is hindered by its limited capacity and a lack of access to the algorithms that control the vast majority of the decisions about what speech is allowed on the platforms in the first place. For the board to do its job properly, it needs access to the algorithms at the [heart of Meta's content moderation system](#).

Podcast: What Originalism Means for Women

Our latest episode is about how the Supreme Court's shift toward the so-called original meaning of the Constitution has come at the expense of decades of progress for women's rights. This playback of a live panel features Madiba K. Dennie, author of *The Originalism Trap*; Khiara M. Bridges of UC Berkeley School of Law; Emily Martin of the National Women's Law Center; and Alicia Bannon of the Brennan Center and *State Court Report*. Listen on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), or your [favorite podcast platform](#).



New England Synod Hunger Team



IN THE LENTEN AND EASTER SEASONS OF 2023, THE NEW ENGLAND SYNOD HUNGER TEAM CREATED THE "BIG HUNGER CHALLENGE, BOLD GENEROUS RESPONSE" CAMPAIGN, CHALLENGING CONGREGATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO RAISE \$100,000 FOR ELCA WORLD HUNGER TO BE MATCHED BY A GENEROUS DONATION OF \$100,000.

**THE LENTEN & EASTER CAMPAIGN RAISED OVER \$230,000 AND
IN 2023 OUR SYNOD CONGREGATIONS SHARED \$539,000 TO WORLD HUNGER!**

YOUR GIFTS SUPPORTED HEALTH CLINICS AND MICROLOANS, WATER WELLS AND FAMILY FARMS, FOOD PANTRIES, MEAL PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZING EFFORTS, ADVOCACY, AND MUCH MORE! **THANK YOU** FOR THE WAYS YOU SUPPORTED ELCA WORLD HUNGER AND THE NEW ENGLAND SYNOD HUNGER TEAM IN 2023! **AND THANKS BE TO GOD!**

This year, **ELCA World Hunger is marking 50 years of ministry!** For half a century, Lutherans have joined together to address the root causes of hunger and poverty around the world while also addressing the current realities of food insecurity happening locally and globally. We have made great strides, but once again we face a startling increase in global hunger.

This year, the New England Synod Hunger Team is focusing on the work that ELCA World Hunger does in the Holy Land.

ELCA World Hunger supports work in education, health, food, economic development, and human rights in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan. This work is in support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and Augusta Victoria Hospital. In particular, the largest support is for schools, vocational training programs, and specialized health care.

Supporting this Christian presence in Palestine and Israel is an essential part of the commitment by the ELCA and leads us in our mission and helps shape our work for peace and justice within the region. Your prayers and financial gifts to ELCA World Hunger make an impact to neighbors near and far. Thank you.



POPE'S MESSAGE



"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36).

These words are a constant admonition to see in the migrant not simply a brother or sister in difficulty, but Christ himself, who knocks at our door."

Pope Francis

A STORY ABOUT A LITTLE BOY

A Jewish family named Karnofsky, who immigrated from Lithuania to the United States, took pity on the 7-year-old boy and brought him to their home.

There he stayed and spent the night in this Jewish family home, where for the first time in his life he was treated with kindness and tenderness.

When he went to bed, Mrs. Karnofski sang him Russian lullabies, which he sang with her.

Later he learned to sing and play several Russian and Jewish songs.

Over time, this boy became the adopted son of this family.

Mr. Karnofsky gave him money to buy his first musical instrument, as was the custom in Jewish families.

Later, when he became a professional musician and composer, he used these Jewish melodies in compositions such as St. James's Hospital and Go Down Moses.

The little boy grew up and wrote a book about this Jewish family, who adopted him in 1907.

In memory of this family and until the end of his life, he wore the Star of David and said that in this family he learned "how to live a real life and self-determination."

This little boy's name was Louis Armstrong. This little boy was called Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong. Louis Armstrong proudly spoke fluent Yiddish and "Satchmo" is Yiddish for "big cheeks, a nickname some say was given to him by Mrs. Karnofsky!

Now you know the rest of the story!



UPCOMING DATES AND READERS FOR JULY

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER!

July 4 - Independence Day! 4th of July - OFFICE CLOSED
July 14 - Congregational Meeting to discuss Insurance Issues and Coffee Hour after Service
July 20 - First Calvary Community Day! - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
July 28 - Coffee Hour after Service (July Birthday & Anniversary Recognition)
August 11 - Coffee Hour after Service
August 24 - Free Health Fair 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
August 25 - Coffee Hour after Service (August Birthday & Anniversary Recognition)

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for July 2024

Note: If you are unable to read on your assigned Sunday, please switch with someone else.

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
7/7	1	Ezekiel 2: 1-5	Rodney Carr
	2	2 Corinthians 12: 2-10	Nina Kretschmer
	Psalm	Psalm 123	Rodney Carr
7/14	1	Amos 7: 7-15	David Grafton
	2	Ephesians 1: 3-14	Karla Grafton
	Psalm	Psalm 85: 8-13	Alternate - women, then men
7/21	1	Jeremiah 23: 1-6	Sherri Girard
	2	Ephesians 2: 11-22	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Psalm 23 – King James Version	Unison
7/28	1	2 Kings 4: 42-44	Barbara Calogero
	2	Ephesians 3: 14-21	David Eberly
	Psalm	Psalm 145: 10-18	Alternate - men, then women

Readers for August have not been assigned yet. As soon as they are, they will be posted to the bulletin board in the Narthex.

SOLAR PANEL REPORT - MAY 2024



Produced

2.5 MWh

19% higher*

7 May :122.7 kWh

Maximum production day

Consumed

1.5 MWh

5% lower*

10 May :86.8 kWh

Maximum consumption day

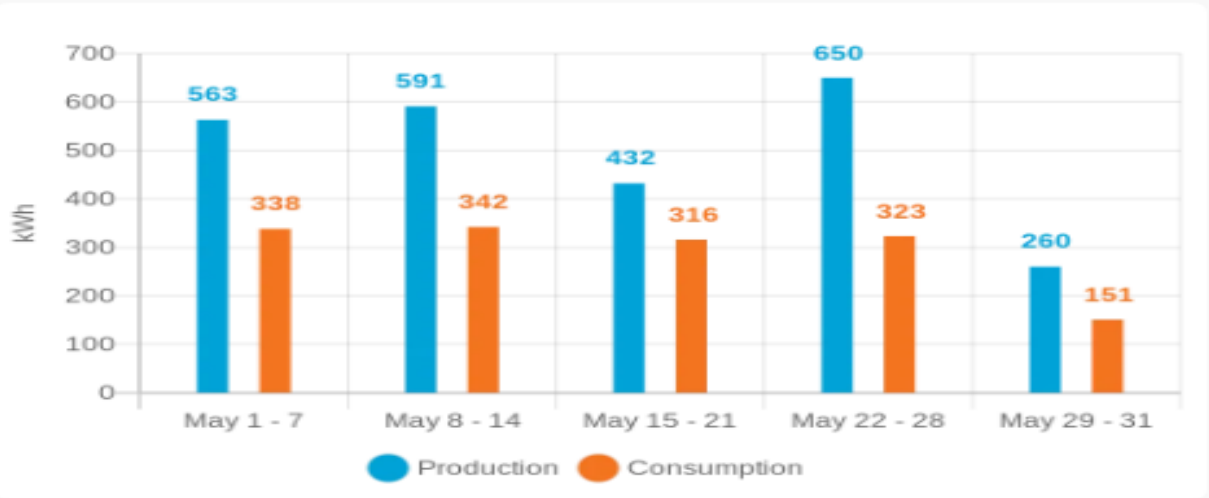
Grid energy

602.4 kWh

Imported

1.6 MWh

Exported



CO2 reduction

1.81 ton

Offset equivalent to 31 Trees

Grid Dependence

41%

For this month, 41% of your energy consumption is supplied by the utility grid.

Get grid independence with Enphase

[Add Storage](#)

Year-to-date production

9 MWh

* As compared to last month's records

JULY & AUGUST 2024 BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES!



Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact the office at 860-527-7792 or email office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com to update our records.

***May you all be blessed as you
celebrate your
special days!***



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Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Judy Butterworth-Kremer, Secretary

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

Toby Scott, Sexton

www.graceistheplace.org

