



GRACE NOTES

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WHAT WE SEE NOW. IT'S 2024

When fear rushed in, I learned how to hear
my heart racing, but refused to allow my
feelings to sway me. That resilience came
from my family. It flowed through our
bloodline.

—Coretta Scott King, *My Life, My Love, My Legacy*

The death count in Gaza has grown to more than 30,000 with no more hostage releases and a clear and certain focus of Netanyahu to do away with the two-state solution and to destroy Hamas, the Palestinians, and anyone else in his path. That would include children carrying a white flag and seeking safety.

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The control of the House of Representatives in the United States is now in Trump's hands as he doesn't want major progress to be made on anything; rather, he wants to use the lack of progress as talking points for his coronation. Republicans meet privately and do not share the substance of their meetings. Will anything be done in the short term, and how will our government function at a time of war and challenge all over the world?

And 2024 has just started!

Donald Trump won the Iowa Caucus and the New Hampshire primary. He is marching forward, even as his 91 felony counts march forward, too. Relative turnout in Iowa was slim with a preponderance of support coming from so-called Christian Nationalists. More on this subject is shared later in this issue. It is striking how little campaigning Trump is doing. He chooses court

appearances as a means of showing his base how badly he is treated and how unfair these proceedings are. This, he hopes, will fuel the ardor, violent temperament, and white supremacist nature, along with his promises to be a dictator with revenge as his focus.

He appears in Court at will, proving to his supporters how poorly he is being treated by these proceedings, and enabling him to skip the typical rigors of running a presidential campaign. He has discovered a new way to move his juggernaut of lies, deceit and narcissism forward, while giving direction to the slim House Majority of election deniers and ultra-right-wing robots taking their cues and direction from him.

Working with Democrats on ways to address some of the most egregious issues facing the country, some potentially historic progress was in the offing dealing with border security. Other issues, too, were within reach. Trump instructed the Speaker of the House not to take any steps so that Republicans can blame the existing administration for not acting.

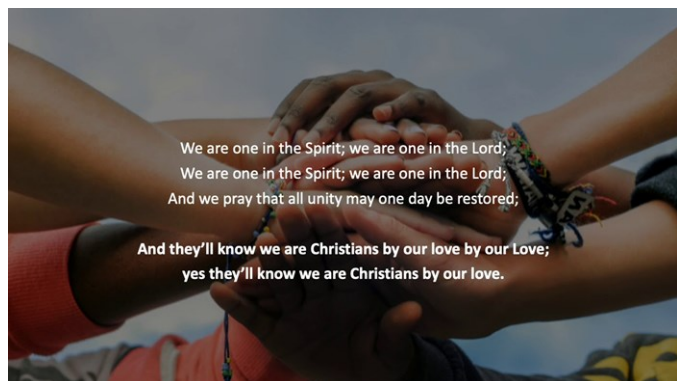
The inaction of The House has also managed to cut off necessary aid to Ukraine and add greater panic to the expanding war in the Middle East. Can you think of a body of Congress being as totally impotent as these folks have been? I can't think of any time that more incompetence was displayed.

We continue to spend our wealth on weapons, by distributing them in our country, enabling 'open carry' in increasing numbers of republican states and distributing same, in a growing way using ghost guns that people can buy by mail order and put them together themselves. Let's shut down the NRA, and at least have them taxed as they surely are an institution for a private purpose, the promulgation of guns, guns, and more guns.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could discover a way to end the hatred at home, and be a beacon of peace for the world? Then we may look for ways to better serve others. Yes, we are Christian, but not to the exclusion of any faith including the growing number of Americans who have no faith. We can still work with them, try to provide support for the least of these, break down barriers and open doors that are closed, give as much of ourselves as we can.

While the world is exploding around us, we look for ways to give more, love more, welcome more, and seek better ways of working together. Let's reach out more, build relationships with each other, and members of the communities we serve. Let's make the world a better place. Snow doesn't keep us from gathering, our further disturbing political circumstances will not stop us from reaching out to those who are desperate and need food, shelter, or other forms of assistance that beg for our help, our attention, and our love.

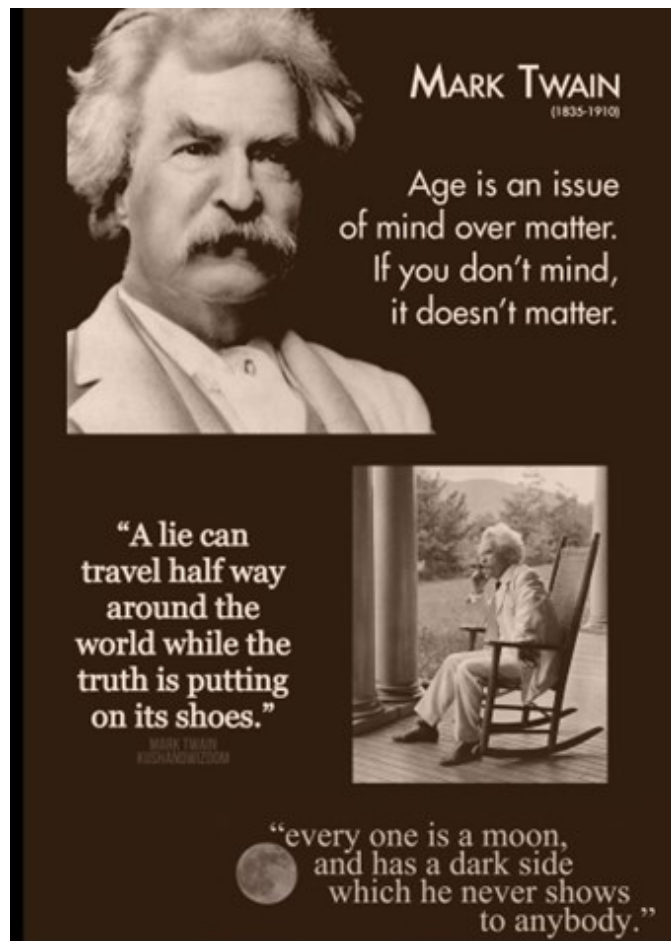
As resources shrink, and darkness overcomes us, we look for ways to bring the light to us and others with a deep and abiding love and a truth that sets us free. Our war machine needs to shrink. If we could find ways to advocate for and make peace, even in the world that we know in ways that we can make a further difference, let's do it. We can show the new ways by the way we come together. "Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love."



PASTOR'S MESSAGE - WE ARE LOOKING FOR A TRANSFORMATION

My wife is getting stronger, and I have gotten weaker. First step has been taken, and with guidance from Mildred, who did the same last summer, I will get through this step shortly. No more passing out, God willing, and a return to my energy and strength. In fact, it is my intention to enjoy a special anniversary in February, and then to schedule another surgery to address other health issues that I have. All of this will hopefully lead to a return to full health and strength. This is one of the transformations we are praying for. **Update: Pastor Rick has completed the first step and his surgery is scheduled for February 16. Good news!**

I am also hoping for a transformation of our church, as well as building bridges between other churches and faith-based organizations. If we have ever needed each other, we need each other now. There must be a reason for us to continue here to learn how to do it with more love and joy than ever. Let's remember as Mark Twain would say, "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: HOW AMERICANS DESCRIBE 'CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM'

Public attention to the concept of “Christian nationalism” has grown rapidly in the past few years. Google Trends data shows a significant rise in searches for the term following the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, and searches for the term peaked in July 2022 after Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., declared in an interview that “We need to be the party of nationalism and I’m a Christian, and I say it proudly, we should be Christian nationalists.” Several other religious and political leaders also recently have embraced the “Christian nationalist” label.



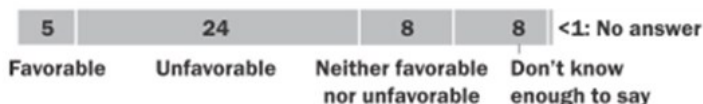
Despite this growing attention, less is known about how the U.S. public views Christian nationalism. A new Pew Research Center survey finds that more than half of all U.S. adults (54%) have not heard or read anything about Christian nationalism. An additional 14% of Americans have heard at least “a little” about Christian nationalism but say they have neither a favorable nor unfavorable view of it, or that they don’t know enough to take a position. And about one-quarter of all Americans (24%) express an unfavorable view of Christian nationalism, while 5% view it favorably.

More than half of U.S. adults have heard nothing at all about ‘Christian nationalism’

How much have you heard or read about “Christian nationalism?”



All in all, do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of “Christian nationalism?”



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Sept. 13-18, 2022, among U.S. adults.

“Most Americans Say Founders Intended for U.S. to be a ‘Christian Nation’”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The survey asked 2,540 respondents who have heard at least “a little” about Christian nationalism: “In your own words, what does the phrase ‘Christian nationalism’ mean to you?” Many describe “Christian nationalism” in terms of Christian dominance in society, while others associate the concept with racism, authoritarianism, bigotry and exclusion. A smaller portion of Americans describe it as the positive influence of faith and morals in society. The following selection of responses captures the range of different views expressed.

“It is prioritizing a very specific interpretation of the Bible over tolerance towards other people’s

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: HOW AMERICANS DESCRIBE 'CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM'

(continued from page 4)

beliefs and faiths.

It's saying "if you don't follow these beliefs, you can't live here," and taking a very violent approach to ensuring that reality." - [Religious none, age 18-29](#)

"Agreeing that this country was established with Christian beliefs at its core and has drifted toward allowing immoral conduct being protected and supported. A movement to help correct that." - [Protestant, not born-again/evangelical, age 65+](#)

"Going and telling people the great news." - [Religious none, age 18-29](#)

"Religious people who love their country." - [Protestant, not born-again/evangelical, age 50-64](#)

"The country was started with Judeo-Christian values. Today's U.S. government is trying to destroy all morals that Christians hold dear. If our corrupt government wins, we will have an immoral society in the U.S. which is against Christian beliefs." - [Catholic, age 50-64](#)

"Violently forcing Christian values into the social and political sphere. Incorrectly believing that America is God's chosen nation." - [Born-again/evangelical Protestant, age 18-29](#)

"Allowing prayer in school, but only Christian prayer and no other religions. Allowing religious statues on government property. Allowing Christian churches a voice in politics, but still not requiring them to pay taxes." - [Religious none, age 50-64](#)

"Supporting the U.S. because this nation was founded on God's word and can be a beacon of freedom to the world." - [Born-again/evangelical Protestant, age 65+](#)

"Trying to take the U.S. back to the 1950s where White men were king and women should stay home and raise kids." - [Religious none, age 65+](#)

"That Christian beliefs should prevail in all aspects of the government. Decisions made by the Supreme Court should reflect Christian views." - [Protestant, not born-again/evangelical, age 50-64](#)

"Evangelicals driving policy far right." - [Catholic, age 50-64](#)

"Using religion to further political agendas." - [Protestant, not born-again/evangelical, age 50-64](#)

"Being a Christian first and foremost. But being keenly aware that what happens at the government level affects us all, and we should not sit by allowing others to make changes in the country that are opposed to Christian beliefs, we should be involved." - [Born-again/evangelical Protestant, age 50-64](#)

"Fanatics distorting Christian values for self-serving opportunities to further their perceived righteousness." - [Born-again/evangelical Protestant, age 50-64](#)

"It's a view held primarily by straight, White, Christian males that the U.S. should be RULED – as opposed to being GOVERNED – according to their interpretation of the Bible and therefore that women, members of the LGBTQ community, practitioners of other faiths, and people of other races and ethnicities, etc., are inferior beings and should be subjugated and controlled as such." - [Religious none, age 65+](#)

Reach out to the Pew study for more examples of comments made.

ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ON CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

"America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological convictions."

Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion. We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation—including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship—against religious communities at home and abroad. "

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK IS TICKING

The Doomsday Clock is only 90 seconds away from midnight — closer than ever to global catastrophe.[1]

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists reset the clock this week and kept it at 90 seconds to midnight in the face of rising tensions across the Middle East. The brutal reality is that right now, *multiple* nuclear-armed nations are at, or terrifyingly close to, war.

Last year, Congress did its part to push us closer toward midnight by expanding the already massive U.S. arsenal with unnecessary nuclear-armed submarines, more missiles, and new warheads. **As the world barrels toward a doomsday scenario, every weapons lobbyist in town is heading back to the Hill to spread the LIE that more weapons will make us safe.**

This backward thinking only accelerates a nuclear arms race to the bottom that could end the world as we know it — *and it's time to turn back the clock.*

A crucial chance is coming up as Congress gears up for another fight over government spending. **That gives our small team just a narrow window to raise the alarm in the media, rally our champions in DC, and mobilize tens of thousands of grassroots activists to drown out the war lobby. And as we work to push back on a new nuclear arms spree, we need you with us.**



[The Win Without War team is sprinting to stop Congress from cutting the Pentagon a check to fund a huge expansion of the nuclear arsenal.](#)

This week, leading scientists declared our entire planet has inched even closer to nuclear Armageddon than at any other time in the past 65 years.

Closer than during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Closer than the height of the Cold War in the 1980s.

Closer than at the start of the nuclear arms race in 1953.

The reality is that building more nuclear weapons has only deepened a global arms race that could have devastating impacts on us all. **Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) recently reminded his colleagues as much on the House floor: “The world is calling on us to end the threat of nuclear war, not enable it.”**

“90 seconds to midnight” is a stark reminder that governments pouring TRILLIONS of dollars into nuclear weapons over the years have done little to make the world safer. Unfortunately — and despite every signal imaginable reminding us that this is one more moment where reducing nuclear stockpiles would’ve created pathways to peace, and with massive public support for disarmament — Congress could further entrench a failed status quo and push us closer toward doomsday later this year.

With the war lobby once again jumping to monetize crises and conflicts, working against peace to expand the U.S. war machine, Win Without War’s work is more crucial than ever. **That’s why we’re pulling out all the stops to keep the pressure on Congress and push them away from reckless nuclear weapons spending increases in 2024. But it won’t be easy,** ” Second by second we’ll turn back the clock together.

Thank you for working for peace,
Sam, Stephen, Raimy, and the Win Without War team

1. Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, “[A moment of historic danger: It is still 90 seconds to midnight](#)”

POPE’S MESSAGE



"Let us not forget those who suffer the cruelty of war in so many parts of the world, especially in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel. At the beginning of the year, we exchanged wishes of peace, but weapons continue to kill and destroy. Let us pray that those who have power over these conflicts reflect on the fact that war is not the way to resolve them, because it sows death among civilians and destroys cities and infrastructure. In other words, today war is in itself a crime against humanity. Let us not forget this: war is in itself a crime against humanity. Peoples need peace! The world needs peace! I heard, a few minutes ago, on the programme “A Sua Immagine”, Father Faltas, vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem: he spoke about educating for peace. We must educate for peace. We can see that we – humanity as a whole – are not yet educated enough to stop all war. Let us always pray for this grace: to educate for peace."

Pope Francis

Congress has heard the pleas of our communities! This week Congress reached a bipartisan deal to enhance the Child Tax Credit (CTC), a vital piece in our work to lift children out of poverty.

Proverbs 3:27 teaches us, “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.” In a time where many are just making it through their day-to-day, we have the power to tell our elected representatives, ***“Do not withhold the Child Tax Credit from families and children in need.”***

Email your lawmakers

Now, more than ever, we need you to urge Congress to follow the leadership of Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (Oregon) and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jason Smith (Missouri-08) by enhancing the CTC immediately.

Poverty is not just a lack of financial resources—it hurts child development during the most critical years of rapid brain growth, leading to developmental gaps that can last a lifetime.

Though this proposal falls short of the full need, we recognize this important window of opportunity to make meaningful progress towards ending child poverty. Child poverty more than doubled in 2022 and continues to grow, and families are struggling to afford the things needed to ensure their children survive.

In one year, improving the Child Tax Credit would:

- Lift as many as **400,000 children** above the poverty line.
- Allow roughly **16 million children** in families with low incomes would benefit from increased resources and supports.
- Address socioeconomic inequities that Black, Brown, Latine, and American Indian and Alaska Native children face, whose parents are over-represented in low-paid jobs due to historical and ongoing discrimination and other structural barriers to opportunity.

ACT NOW

We need your faith in action to help move mountains for children living in poverty. Join us in reminding your lawmakers that they have a sacred responsibility and duty to protect the best interests and futures of our children.

Thank you,
Lauren W. Reliford, MSW
Political Director



THE GREED OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY IS OUT OF CONTROL



Today, all across the world, millions of people are suffering and dying simply because they cannot afford the medicine they need. The greed of the pharmaceutical industry is out of control. Too often pharmaceutical companies don't produce medicines for people in poor countries simply because it's not profitable.

No one should die or suffer because of their level of income or where they live. I hope you'll take a moment to read my recent op-ed in the Guardian about this important issue.

- Bernie

Poor people in the developing world have a right to medicine.

People should not die because of their income or where they were born. We must have the courage to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry

Bernie Sanders

Mon 20 November 2023

Here is a simple moral proposition. No one in America, or anywhere in the world, should die or suffer unnecessarily because they cannot afford a prescription drug which, in many cases, costs a few cents or a few dollars to manufacture.

As Chairman of the US Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) I'm going to do everything I can to develop a new approach to the development and manufacturing of prescription drugs that responds to medical need, rather than short-term shareholder profit. Given the power and greed of the pharmaceutical industry this is not an easy task, but it's one that must be pursued.

The tragic reality is that, today, millions of people around the world are suffering, and dying, from preventable diseases because they can't afford the outrageous prices charged by pharmaceutical companies. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one third of humanity lacks access to essential medicines. For a staggering number of people around the world, this leads to what the WHO calls "a cascade of preventable misery and suffering."

There are a number of reasons why this tragic reality continues to happen.

First, too often drug companies abuse patent monopolies to charge outrageous prices or

THE GREED OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY IS OUT OF CONTROL

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otherwise keep lifesaving drugs out of reach for people around the world. For example, the Boston-based drug company Vertex is neither selling a transformative new treatment for cystic fibrosis in the developing world, nor



allowing other local companies to produce it. Put simply, the company is not only refusing to bring a life-raft to people drowning with cystic fibrosis in poor countries, it is also blocking others from deploying their own life-rafts to people who need them to stay alive.

Second, far too often, the medicines that are desperately needed by millions of people in poor countries are not being produced by the pharmaceutical industry because the drug companies cannot make sufficient profits by doing so. In the US and other developed countries people often pay exorbitant prices for life-saving medicines. Poor people in developing countries can't. They don't have the money. The result: they die. Because the business model of the pharmaceutical industry values dollars gained over lives saved, there are not enough companies looking for transformative treatments, especially for diseases that afflict poor people.

Consider the case of tuberculosis (TB) – a disease that killed more than 1.3 million people in 2022, and is on the rise as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The TB vaccine still used today is more than a hundred years old, and only protects young children, even though adolescents and adults account for the majority of TB transmission. The testing of a promising new publicly-funded TB vaccine that could potentially save millions of lives was delayed after its corporate owner, GSK, decided to focus on more profitable vaccines.

The scientist who brought GSK the idea of the TB vaccine decades ago now acknowledges that Big Pharma cannot deliver for developing countries. "You get a big company to take it forward? Bullshit," he told ProPublica. "That model is gone. It's failed. It's dead. We have to create a new one."



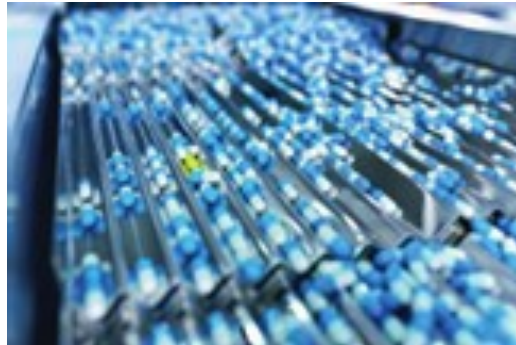
Clearly, we must do better. The life of a millionaire in New York City is not worth more than the life of a person living in extreme poverty in South Sudan.

Fundamentally, we need to transform how we pay for the development of new prescription drugs. This starts with funding open-source research, so lifesaving information is shared, and scientists around the world can work together to research and manufacture their own breakthroughs. Patents should not stand in the way of public health.

THE GREED OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY IS OUT OF CONTROL

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If we can provide \$886bn to the Pentagon for military spending, we can provide scientists with the money they need to develop cutting-edge cures that are accessible to everyone.



People should not die because of their income or where they were born. We know what it will take to save lives. Now we must have the courage to stand up to the pharmaceutical industry. Let's do it.

THE BRIEFING - THE BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE
The Briefing

LAWMAKERS' ASSAULTS ON STATE COURTS

2023 was a watershed year for state courts, as they were asked to decide critical issues such as abortion access and partisan gerrymandering. In response to their mounting importance, politicians across the country repeatedly attempted to undermine the power and independence of state courts. A new Brennan Center resource identifies trends in state lawmakers' attempts to exert control over the state judiciary and warns of similar assaults we can expect in 2024.

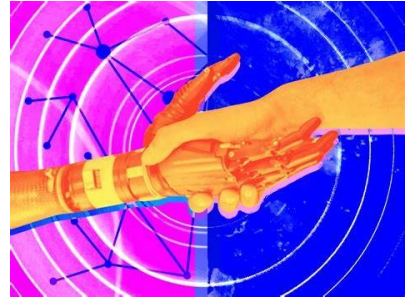
THREATS TO DIRECT DEMOCRACY

State courts weren't politicians' only targets. For years, some state lawmakers and officials have tried to thwart citizens' power to change policy through ballot initiatives by imposing harsher requirements for placing initiatives on the ballot and getting them approved. These efforts "are part of a larger antidemocracy blueprint — yet another example of state officials trying to manipulate the rules of elections and obstruct the will of voters," Sara Carter, Alice Clapman, and Alexi Comella write.



DANGERS OF AI-POWERED SURVEILLANCE

While monitoring social media activity can help law enforcement investigate crimes, these efforts often veer into surveilling social and political movements, particularly those involving minority communities. Artificial intelligence tools, which many law enforcement agencies are rushing to adopt, stand to supercharge social media monitoring and its associated harms. Alarming, the Biden administration's new, sensible rules for AI use don't extend to national security and intelligence operations or to police departments — "but they should," write Faiza Patel and Julian Melendi in *Just Security*



MY GOAL IS NOT TO HAVE A DIALOGUE; MY GOAL IS TO SOLVE THIS MADNESS'

SOJOURNERS

An interview with Palestinian peace activist Ali Abu Awwad on nonviolent resistance.
By Jim Rice



A CORE PRINCIPLE of nonviolence is recognizing the humanity of your opponent. In time of war, that principle does not become irrelevant or obsolete — it becomes more difficult, and essential. In the wake of Hamas' brutal Oct. 7 attack, as Israel's retributory assault was gearing up, Ali Abu Awwad, a nonviolence activist who lives in the West Bank, wrote: "Now more than ever, we all must refuse to use violence to justify more violence. We should not allow our pain to blind us to what is most needed: mutually guaranteed sovereignty, security, and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians."

At a time when even calling for a cease-fire is seen by some as an unforgivable choosing of sides, Awwad and other peacemakers insist that the "side" we're called to support isn't exclusively pro-Israel or pro-Palestine, it's "pro-solution." Awwad is clear that there is no military answer to that question: "The best way to support Israel," he writes, "is to protect *both* Palestinian lives and Jewish lives."

He's not alone in recognizing the humanity of all involved. For instance, some Israelis who suffered terrible loss in the Hamas attacks have been among the strongest proponents of peace. Noy Katzman's brother, Haim, was killed on Oct. 7. In her eulogy, Noy called for the end of the killing of innocents. "I call on the government and all of us not to use our death and pain to cause death and pain of other people or other families," Noy said. "I demand to stop the cycle of pain, and understand that the only way is freedom and equal rights." Israeli peace

activist Maoz Inon, whose parents were killed by Hamas, implored Israel to stop its war on Gaza. "Revenge is not going to bring my parents back to life," Inon wrote on Aljazeera.com. "It is not going to bring back other Israelis and Palestinians killed either. It is going to do the opposite. It is going to cause more casualties. It is going to bring more death. We must break the cycle."

Awwad has also been the victim of violence. As a teenager, he was imprisoned for four years for participating in the protests of the first intifada. Years later, he was shot by an Israeli settler while changing a tire in the West Bank; soon thereafter he learned that his brother, Yusef, had been shot and killed by an Israeli soldier at a checkpoint. But Awwad did not succumb to the temptation to seek violent revenge. Instead, he began working with Israeli families who lost loved ones to violence, starting him down a path that led, in 2016, to the co-founding of a Palestinian nonviolence movement called Taghyeer, the Arabic word for "change."

Awwad spoke with *Sojourners* senior editor Jim Rice while visiting Washington, D.C., last summer. After the Israel-Hamas war started, Stephen R. Stern, director of the U.S.-based Friends of Taghyeer Movement, decried the "unspeakable crimes and terror" committed against Israelis and told *Sojourners*, "The Israeli military response takes the Holy Land deeper" into an "uncharted abyss built on years of conflict ... on a precipice that might reach the truly unimaginable." — **The Editors**

Sojourners: How is the Israel-Hamas war being experienced by Palestinians in the West Bank?

Stephen R. Stern: Ali and others in the West Bank have told us that there is significant despair because the war is devastating Gaza and has intensified an already insupportable level of settler and army harassment, violence, and evictions. Daily lives in the West Bank are also in a state of disruption. A colleague there reported, "Everyone suffers from trauma. There is so much sadness and anger for what is happening on the ground ... violence only leads to violence, and it will not reach a peaceful solution."

The mid-October report from the West Bank continued: "An attack took place for four continuous hours [nearby]. Large forces from the occupation army, military vehicles, and infantry soldiers raided and the soldiers shot at some homes extensively ... They also focused on shooting at water tanks and closing roads with military jeeps. ... In the same night, the occupation soldiers continued arresting more young people, beating them and terrorizing children and mothers in addition to making them suffer through preventing them from moving between areas and regions. There is a continuing attack by settlers on Palestinians who live in border areas close to the settlements and ... an interruption in the supply of basic materials, petroleum, and medicines in these regions. ... Now the danger touches every Palestinian citizen, whether in the West Bank or Gaza."

In late October, the Israeli military raided Ali's house while he was out working to save lives. They ransacked the family's possessions, and Ali, his wife, and their young son were forced to abandon their rental home. Ali and his family are safe, but they had to move to another location in the Bethlehem area.

Ali, you've been the victim of extreme violence by Israelis. It would be a natural human response to be angry and filled with hatred. What helped you to take a different path?

Ali Abu Awwad: The anger is there. It didn't disappear. The challenge is not to be led by it. I'm angry, and I can be humiliated at any time, at any checkpoint. The question is, what do you do with it? What do you want from your reaction? Even if I kill someone, would that provide

justice to me, my brother's kids, to my parents who passed away? And what is justice at all? I do believe in justice, but I don't think there are just solutions. I believe in fair solutions. I didn't act just from my heart. I also acted from my mind. I realized that adding another body to the thousands of victims will not get me to freedom, will not heal my wounds, and it also will not help with my political cause. In the end, I'm a leader. I'm not just someone who has been victimized and then his soul, his desire for life, was buried in the grave of my brother.

Actually, this is what the oppressor wanted: To bury my desire for life, my normal activism, my mind, in the same grave. That was my best revenge — when I refused to take revenge by physical acts. I gained the best revenge by not victimizing a human being, but rather by rejecting injustices. I'm facing the system, not the people, because I know the system is based on a lot of trauma — and stereotypes that people fall easily into, in that system, with their fear.

Jewish fear has become our biggest enemy. A step toward freedom is to heal or to overcome that fear — or at least not to create more threats.

It doesn't mean to step into a fantasy of reconciliation — I don't speak about "reconciliation," honestly. Reconciliation needs values, it needs a political system, to heal a painful past. I speak about "nonviolence," which hopefully will lead to reconciliation after a political peace agreement.

How did you begin to understand the power of nonviolence to achieve justice in Palestine and elsewhere?

During the first intifada, I saw nonviolent activism. But I was not convinced that this huge, militant, Zionist ideology can be faced with our humanity alone. The achievement of [the] Oslo [peace process] — whatever Oslo was, right or wrong — was to show that the massive, mostly nonviolent action of the First Intifada was enough to bring both sides to the table.

My personal experience with nonviolence started in prison. My mother and I were in two different prisons. We decided to have a hunger strike to visit each other, a hunger strike for 17 days. For the first time, after 17 days of starving, I finally achieved something from Israel — I was allowed to visit my mother. I started learning about nonviolence, but I still doubted it. After I lost my brother, I had a second transformation in meeting the victims of the other side. Many Palestinians would never see Israelis as victims, but I think they are. As the Jewish people were the victims of the war, we also have something to do with it when it comes to Israeli families who have lost someone in the conflict.

When I met them, it was not just about meeting their humanity. It's also meeting their commitment for my freedom. That was even more important. They didn't see us just as victims who have lost someone and [therefore] deserve to be treated well. No, they stand for our legitimate political rights, which is very courageous to do, if you are the victim of the other side. So, that was my second transformation.

After I dug deep — with my doubts about nonviolence, with the failures of peace processes, with the weaknesses of anger, which I live with every day — I realized that nonviolence is not just about having a dialogue with Israelis. Dialogue is just a tool. My goal is not to have a dialogue; my goal is to solve this madness. Dialogue can help in promoting peaceful conversation. But that will not change Israeli lives, because they have their own state, they have their own system. Dialogue will not change the conditions of Palestinian daily life when it comes to legal rights.

MY GOAL IS NOT TO HAVE A DIALOGUE; MY GOAL IS TO SOLVE THIS MADNESS'

(continued from page 14)

Nonviolence is much more about a national political role that we need to take to achieve our rights. This is a tremendous national responsibility for my people. That's why I launched this movement. It offers something that is new and will apply to our needs. It also will solve the confusion between the two identities that we have as Palestinians — the revolution and the citizenship — because when we are jumping between both, we have no idea how to deal with the extreme violence, with the right-wing minority that seems to be taking over everywhere. This can only be faced with nonviolent activism, which requires great sacrifice. This is a sacrifice you make and you achieve things—not a sacrifice that you make and you make things worse.

Is nonviolence a tactic or strategy for your political work? Or is it something deeper for you?

This is not a tactic. It's like love: You cannot tactically love someone. Right? It doesn't work that way — you can't divorce strategically or love tactically. It's also not a strategy. It's a model of being identified with life with all its resources. Because land has something to do with it ... nationality, religion — all the values of being, when they are based on nonviolence. Even political responsibility has a lot to do with it, because this is about political leadership as well. The nonviolence leaders who managed to achieve their rights, their human rights, were not insane people who came from the moon. These are people who faced the most victimization.

On the other hand, nonviolence is the taste of my life. Without doing this, I cannot find a reason to live again, after all I have lived through. It's the celebration of my existence. Your oppressor wants you to cry, and you smile.

But it also has something to do with the other side. Believe me, I know hundreds of people — there is enough humanity within the Jewish community, within the Israeli society, for nonviolence activism to succeed. Because you do not just disarm yourself, you disarm your enemy. Because you are not creating a threat, you are raising questions about their own identity and how they practice it. You have to bring this out of them. For that, you cannot just shift from nonviolence to violence. You have to have a strategic role with a strategic statement and a strategic vision and a strategic commitment. For me, nonviolence is my life.

The “Democracy or Rebellion” protests in Israel last summer focused primarily on the judicial coup and not so much on Israeli settlement expansion, military raids, or settler pogroms. What message do these protests carry for people committed to Palestinian freedom?

For me, democracy in Israel also has something to do with our lives as Palestinians. Almost 2 million Palestinians live in Israel, with Israeli ID and citizenship. It's great to have Israeli voices taking responsibility about their own issues because this is what we do as Palestinians in the Taghyeer movement: We take responsibility for our people. If Israeli society can manage to stand up for their democracy, I think they can manage to stand up for both side's rights, because this occupation is harming Israel as well. It's not just harming the Palestinians.

That's why one of the most important things for us as a movement is to influence Israeli society. When we stand up nonviolently, this is going to be the key for the Israeli society to stand up, proving that, when this current government says there is no partner [with which to work toward peace], we need to show that. We need to show that, not to prove to them, but to be the best servants of our goal of freedom. I think Israel cannot be normal until all life, on both sides, is normal.

What does nonviolence bring to bear in the context of what is arguably the most

MY GOAL IS NOT TO HAVE A DIALOGUE; MY GOAL IS TO SOLVE THIS MADNESS'

(continued from page 15)

hard-right, anti-Palestinian government in Israel's history?

Actually, it can *only* be faced by nonviolent massive national action through a strategic plan. This is not about rejecting the status quo, or saying, "We are here against certain people." We are here for ourselves, first. Nonviolence unites Palestinians and unites Palestinian society — because there is a lot of division. Nonviolence can apply to the peaceful solutions we are aiming at; this is our vision.

Nonviolence will make this right-wing, militant system unworkable. Because it's based on hate, on fear, on authority, while nonviolence is based on humanity and responsibility. Our nonviolence approach is not about resisting the occupation; it's to *end* the occupation. Our goal is not just to resist; our goal is to end the injustices — injustices toward everyone, not just toward the Palestinians. This conflict has been going on for decades; it has taken so many lives. This conflict cannot be solved by force.

This conflict is about identity — more even than land, borders, water, Jerusalem — all the issues. This right-wing government is bringing this to the table. This will require from us a new act of nonviolence, a new political role. Let's discuss identities. Let's go to the core of the problem, not go around the problem. Nonviolence, for the Palestinians, is the only way to connect between two identities that are managing our lives daily: the identity of revolution against the occupier, and the identity of citizenship under the PA [Palestinian Authority] without a state.

We are confused between these two identities. In [the nonviolence organization] Taghyeer, we bring these two identities together in a national effort to reject injustices, and to apply new alternative systems that would replace the corruption, would replace the right-wing activities and projects, but also would promote citizenship and responsibility among the Palestinians themselves.

Are you hopeful that progress can be made toward a just peace in Palestine/Israel? If so, what are the foundations of that hope?

I always have hope, but it doesn't motivate me. I cannot say that it's my optimism that pushes me every day. I believe more than I hope, because I strategize that dream of having a solution to this madness. I have hope as a human being because people need hope. Hope is like oxygen. But I don't think that hope is enough in this conflict. We need more responsibility. We need action plans. We need strategy. We need to strategize that hope to be effective.

What gives me hope, as well, are all those human beings on both sides who still fight every day for a solution, not each other. When I see Israeli and Palestinian mothers struggling to protect their kids without pushing them to become killers — this gives me a lot of hope. Finally, this world is promoting so much despair. Our politicians and corrupted leadership are promoting so much despair. For me as a leader, I cannot just close my mouth. I cannot stop. I live one life, and I want this life to promote life for others after we go.

Jim Rice

Jim Rice is a senior editor of *Sojourners* magazine. He has also served as editor and managing editor of the magazine, director of Sojourners Outreach Ministry, and coordinator of Sojourners Peace Ministry.



ENCOURAGING WORDS IN TIMES OF FEAR



Trusting uncertainty in this luminous poem from Felicia Murrell in December's We Conspire series from the Center for Action and Contemplation
December 20th, 2023

How do we find courage and trust during times of transition and turbulence? Living school sendee Felicia Murrell invites us to hold transitional moments in our minds and hearts in this moving poem, "Liminality and Certitude," originally published in ["ONEING: Transitions."](#)

Liminality and certitude are always
at odds with one another.

Anxiety thrums through the body, unmooring—
Pause.
Relax your shoulders, unfurl your hands.
Try a deep cleansing breath.

Give yourself to the earth.
Let Mother gift herself to you.
Let your feet hit the soil,
remember the patterns of growth,
the cycles of life.

Things bury deep. Things grow in the dark.
Things rise again.
All things transition.

In the radiance of dark, there is process:
the unfolding of mystery,
things words cannot articulate,
a threshold to freedom the mind cannot comprehend.
But the body feels,
the heart knows:
This is liminality.

The threshold of transition,
from death to life, from evening to morn,
from gestation to giving birth.
The unknown is a part of it all.

—Felicia Murrell

A Great Sermon for Religion and Science Weekend

The Rev. Steve Keplinger, Rector at Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tucson, AZ and a member of The Clergy Letter Project, has written a wonderful sermon (<https://www.theclergyletterproject.org/pdf/Keplinger2024.pdf>) that I think you'll enjoy and find useful as you prepare for Religion and Science Weekend. I'll quote just a small piece towards the end of his sermon to give you a flavor of what he has to say:

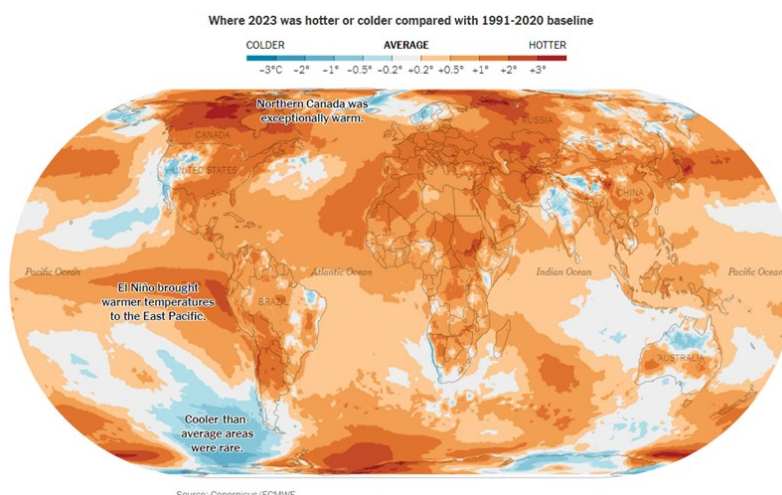
By honoring both science and religion, we have the chance to reunite the two elements of society that have caused the greatest segregation of our lifetime. By bringing them back together, we can work as one to find the ultimate truths of the universe and God. By showing us that the God born in Bethlehem is a God of all nations and all people, it holds the potential to end the bitter conflict that continues unabated in the Middle East today and across the globe.

Do take a look at the entire sermon; you won't be disappointed. And let me take this opportunity to remind you to sign up for Religion and Science Weekend, if you've not yet done so, and to share any relevant sermon you might deliver with me.

2023 Was the Hottest Year on Record – By a Huge Amount

You may well have seen the news that 2023 was, by far, the hottest year on record. Whether you've seen that news or not, you'll want to take a look at this *New York Times* article discussing the issue (https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/09/climate/2023-warmest-year-record.html?unlocked_article_code=1.M00.Efzm.7QWDgBxmKak_&smid=url-share). I hope you take particular note of the graph in the piece visually presenting just how extreme this past year was. (The link is to a gift article in *The Times* so even if you don't have a subscription, you can read the article for free.)

The *BBC* also ran an article (<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-67861954>) on the topic and I want to bring the comments of Dr. Petteri Taalas, the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization from 2016 and 2023, to your attention. His comments, "Extreme weather is destroying lives and livelihoods on a daily basis," echo those included in



our Climate Crisis Letter. If you've not yet added your signature to that Letter, I hope this provides the incentive for you to do so. Just let me know and I'll get you added.

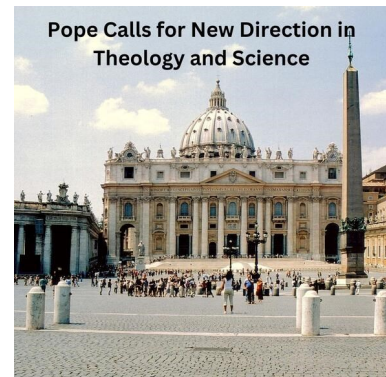
The Grand Canyon, Evolution and Pope Francis

A rafting trip got Rabbi Daniel Swartz — a longtime environmental activist — thinking about the way the human experience relates to the processes of the natural world. How do people live absent the belief that things are getting better, and could quite possibly be getting much worse? How do we muster the resilience to try to make a difference — especially on Climate Change — while simultaneously preparing for real losses, both to the natural world and human civilization? The director of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life talks about the philosophical and theological questions he's wrestled with as he's marshaled his energies toward activism. He demonstrates his philosophy in action, recalling a 2021 gathering of global religious leaders at the Vatican in which participants shaped an important statement on Climate Change. And he shares his impressions of meeting Pope Francis.

Pope Calls for New Direction in Theology and Science

Father Bob Carr, pastor at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Allston, MA and a member of The Clergy Letter Project, has written [an article](https://www.newsbreak.com/@rjcarr-1599907/3218773547105-pope-calls-for-new-direction-in-theology-and-science?s=mp_1599907) (https://www.newsbreak.com/@rjcarr-1599907/3218773547105-pope-calls-for-new-direction-in-theology-and-science?s=mp_1599907) for *Newsbreak* entitled “Pope Calls for New Direction in Theology and Science.” Here’s one short paragraph to give you a flavor of the piece:

The pontiff appears to call for an end to the split between faith and science. Historically understood to be rooted in the Protestant Reformation and elements of the Enlightenment, he called for both disciplines to come to a new understanding united in the pursuit of a charitable truth pursuing wisdom.



Tucker Carlson and a Flat Earth



If you imagine that I’m not a Tucker Carlson fan, you’d be correct! Nonetheless, on behalf of The Clergy Letter Project and modern science, I occasionally pay attention to what he has to say. Even though his audience has shrunk enormously since his departure from *Fox*, there are still far too many people who listen to him and take what he has to say seriously. Here’s an example of why I pay attention – and why you should as well. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/opinion/tucker-carlson-says-he-s-open-to-the-flat-earth-theory/ar-AA1IBsfH?ocid=msedgdhp&pc=LCTS&cvid=17f62e36089d4f8eb04c66d7d359ca0a&ei=23>

This piece explains how Tucker has said that he’s open to the idea that the Earth is flat. Yup, you read that correctly. Frightening, especially if many of his viewers adopt his position. You can help push back against this ridiculous position by encouraging friends and colleagues to join The Clergy Letter Project and by participating in Religion and Science Weekend.

Michael Zimmerman
 Founder and Executive Director
 The Clergy Letter Project
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mz@theclergyletterproject.org

What President Biden decides to do over the next 48 hours could determine whether or not we go to war with Iran.

Over the weekend, three U.S. soldiers were killed and dozens injured in a drone attack launched by militias operating along the Iraq-Syrian border. This senseless loss of lives is just the most recent example of escalating strikes between the U.S. military and a variety of forces in the Middle East. If one thing is clear since the horrific Hamas attacks of October 7th, it is that violence begets more violence. **We've seen this playbook before — trying to bomb our way to peace didn't work in Iraq or Afghanistan — and it won't work now.**

Thankfully, there is a different path to choose. These attacks on U.S. troops are directly linked to the ongoing war in Gaza. The last time there was a temporary ceasefire, the attacks on U.S. troops in the region ceased. And right now, negotiations are happening for another potential ceasefire in Gaza. Such a deal would save Palestinian lives, protect U.S. soldiers by broadly de-escalating tensions in the region, and likely involve the release of hostages held in Gaza. Taken together, these steps would help create the conditions necessary for a path to lasting peace.

But hawkish politicians are pounding the pavement as I write this, advocating for war. They're using the absurd argument that not responding with violence makes the U.S. look weak. We know that's not true, we know that strength is not about using violence, but rather finding solutions that actually work, like diplomacy. That's why it's so crucial for you to add your name to this petition right now **calling on President Biden to choose a ceasefire in Gaza over a regional war in the Middle East.**



Add your name to this petition. President Biden: Change course now. Call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and prevent a regional war.

ACT NOW

[https://act.winwithoutwar.org/act/iran-jordanstrikes?
akid=9547.342312.5loyzH&c0=iran-
jordanstrikes.hDmUP_&rd=1&source=em20240129&t=9](https://act.winwithoutwar.org/act/iran-jordanstrikes?akid=9547.342312.5loyzH&c0=iran-jordanstrikes.hDmUP_&rd=1&source=em20240129&t=9)

When everyday people from all over the U.S. sign this petition, it'll send a clear signal to the White House that people want President Biden to do all he can to solve the conflict, not make it worse. And it starts with a ceasefire in Gaza.

WAR WITH IRAN?

(continued from page 20)

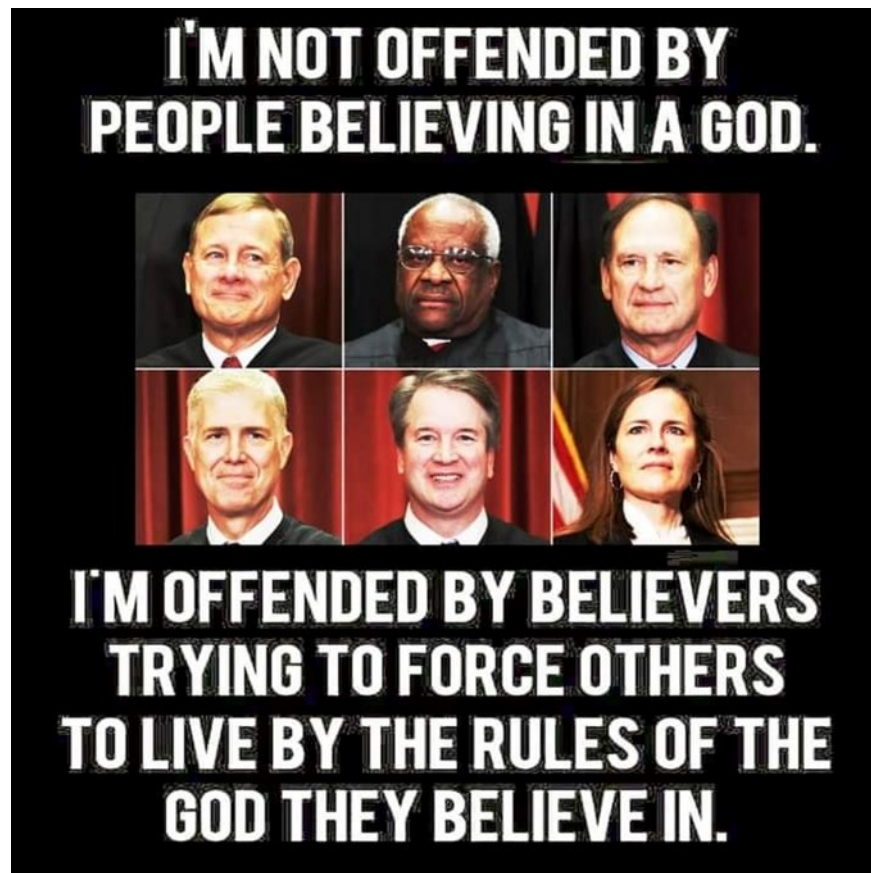
We know that the war chorus is making itself heard in the White House, and that's why we can't afford to be silent. I am going to personally deliver your signatures to the White House, so sign right now to have your name included and show President Biden just how many of us want him to choose peace over war.

President Biden: Activists around the country demand that you call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Moments like this can be infuriating and hard, listening to Washington's armchair generals demand we launch yet another war in the Middle East. For most of them, the closest they'll come to the actual war is watching it on the news, but the reality is that we are talking about literal life and death for countless people on the ground. Our movement is built in the belief that there is another way, that we can reject the false choice between doing nothing and bombing. And we know there are far more of us than those cheering for war. So let's make them listen to us, stop the slaughter in Gaza, and prevent a horrific regional war.

Yours, with hope —

Sara Haghdoosti



SOLAR PANEL REPORT— December 2023



Energy Report | December 2023



Produced
849.0 kWh

41% lower*
21 Dec : 61.6 kWh

Maximum production day

Consumed
2.0 MWh

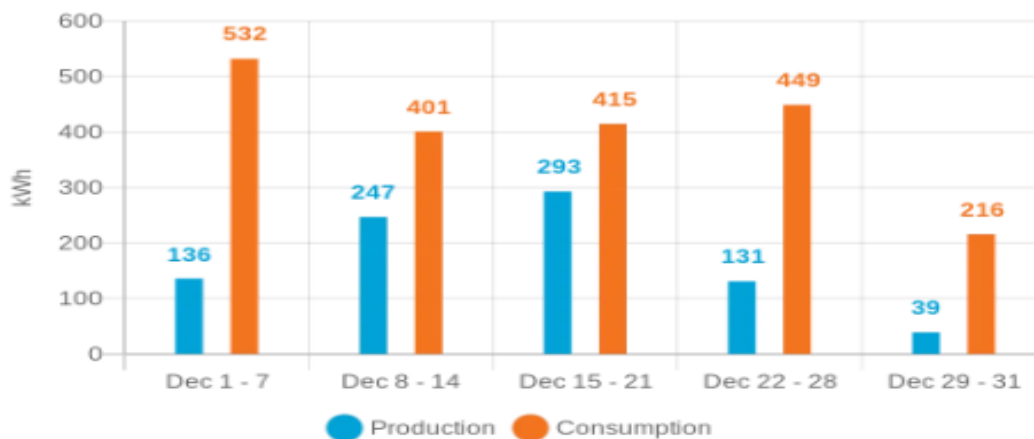
4% lower*
22 Dec : 124.8 kWh

Maximum consumption day

Grid energy
1.5 MWh

Imported

350.8 kWh
Exported



CO2 reduction
1,358 lb

Offset equivalent to 10
Trees

**Grid
Dependence**
75%

For this month, 75% of your
energy consumption is supplied
by the utility grid.

Get grid
independence
with Enphase

[Add Storage](#)

Year-to-date
production
23 MWh

* As compared to last month's records

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FEBRUARY 2024 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!



**Happy Birthday to All born
in February!**

**Happy Anniversary!
Blessings on Your Anniversary.**

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

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

SPECIAL DATES!!

February 11th - Black History Breakfast after Service

February 14th - ASH WEDNESDAY - Service at 7 p.m.

February 18th - Annual Program and Budget Meeting after Service

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for February, 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
2/4	1	Isaiah 40: 21-31	Rodney Carr
	2	1 Corinthians 9: 16-23	Quincy Coleman
	Psalm	Psalm 147: 1-11, 20c	Alternating men/women, 20c in unison
2/11	1	2 Kings 2: 1-12	Marty Holmeen
	2	2 Corinthians 4: 3-6	Betsy DeRoma
	Psalm	Psalm 50: 1-6	Kasumi Campbell
2/14 Ash Wednesday	Gathering Psalm	Psalm 51: 1-17	Readers will be determined at the service.
	1	Isaiah 58: 1-12	
	2	2 Corinthians 5: 20b; 6: 10	
2/18	1	Genesis 9: 8-17	Judy Butterworth-Kremer
	2	1 Peter 3: 18-22	Nina Kretschmer
	Psalm	Psalm 25: 1-10	Unison
2/25	1	Genesis 17: 1-7; 15-16	Rebecca Lewis
	2	Romans 4: 13-25	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Psalm 22: 23-31	Alternating Pastor/ Congregation



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Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

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

www.graceistheplace.org

