



**March 2023**

## **JOY IS SUCH A GREAT GOOD: LOOKING AT A DISTANCE**

Last month spoke to the idea of truth. A bit late, this message suggests that looking at a distance can be a way to better grasp what the truth may be, but also give focus on the things we hold the closest in our hearts. The things that bring us the greatest joy. As we continue to watch the horrors of our broken world and particularly our country's inability to find or seek a better way to be with each other, it is only God that urges us to see from a distance to find the joys there present. It is through a kind of "radical attentiveness" that we can grasp all that is happening around us. What is important, what is not. What does Lent do. It helps us to step back and look at ourselves, not simply to see the darkness, but to the lights that are there. God is good. God is with us. God is good all of the time, even though the darkness can block our vision.

Let's look at some recent challenges and circumstances and see the other side. And, let's recognize that joy in of itself is a good enabled by God, is pointed out by God and is enabled through God's mercy and love. How about some ready-to-see examples:

- We planned to celebrate Black History Month after worship on a Sunday. We needed to have the annual congregational, financial meeting on that Sunday. We changed the calendar moving our special appreciation of contributors to our church and world to wait a week.
- Addressing our family travails, I have been functioning from a distance for all of this year. Some might argue I have been doing that for almost ten years. Just kidding, I hope.
- I had agreed to participate in the wedding of another couple from the Myanmar Community at Grace. I'd accepted that request quite some time ago. It would be on a Saturday.
- Once again, due to the preparations needed for the Black History Month breakfast, the plans had to be adjusted, as the wedding itself was consuming the prep time in the Community Room.
- Our personal travails have had me at a distance from the Collaborative Center for Justice, GHIAA, Greater Hartford Conference, and our own church ministries.
- Members of our church community have been suffering, sick, dying and needing help. I needed to separate myself from visitations, particularly some of the people that I truly love.

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All these things seemed sad and dark in one way or another, but now let's see what God had in store:

- First Calvary church with generosity and concern, offered to start their service an hour late so that we could have our finance meeting.
- The wedding took place with 185 children and adults present; the joy filled the church and the hearts of all present, including Dale Eberhardt and this pastor. See pictures here. Their decorations were gorgeous.
- Judy completed 50 days from her transplant, is getting stronger and is now driving, cooking and slowly regaining her strength. We go to Boston later this month for an assessment of her progress and next steps.
- Fresh Start has won awards and new sources of financial support including the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and another award pictured in their wonderful newsletter sent out recently.
- LEVO was recognized for its work in an article presented in this issue. We have been one of the sources of rich soil for those two growing non-profits that are providing jobs and products that bring joy to others.
- Louisa got her Green Card after years and years of trying. This enables her to work and to cross borders (I think) when she visits family or friends in Canada.
- Danielle Wellington, daughter of Sonja, received a prodigious regional award shown inside this issue.
- Sound problems with our Zoom have been solved by a young man who is a part of Nilda's faith community. He was glad to help!
- Nancy has been the engine behind the continuation of both Property and Friday Gathering committees and has proposed and the Council joyously agreed to a clean-up day – see the note in this issue. It will be an in and out clean-up. All volunteers invited.
- Sue Carey's book is in the process of being self-published with some other possibilities appearing as possible options, too. Sue may want to become a publisher herself as she has learned so much about this very complex and challenging field. Bernie Michel photos will be prominent I suspect.
- The police and children's program that was designed by Charter Oak Culture Center, both groups learn how to play guitar and rap at the same time. Lt. Atuna I believe is participating as he reached out to me.
- Conversations have begun between Grace and Emanuel Lutheran to see how we might work together. Sue has been helping out with their Sunday Pantry ministry.
- We received significant financial gifts for our ministries from a friend of ours and from Faith Church of East Hartford, who made a legacy gift having decided to sell their property and close. Darrell Urban is working on ways to have Norman Banta become a member of Grace. Norman has been a member at Faith, and he David Eberly and others have had joyous moments with the Urbans.
- The Black History Month breakfast happened on this past Sunday and there were a number of tables filled, with great grits, and good "eatings" for all who came, and with information about and music being played reminding us of contributions to our country and world made by black people. We had very special guests that day including Allison Lewis, helping out with the cooking and preparations, Chet and Glenna Brodnicki, and John Calogero.

Thanks to the team that came at 5 PM on Saturday to clean the floors in the Community Room (Elsa Koula), and to set up tables and make other preparations (Lou Oliver, Allison and Rebecca Lewis. The people from CT Myanmar did a wonderful job in cleaning up and taking down all of their decorations.

All the good things that are going on were examples of a church where people work at doing good, and care about those suffering and needing help. Joy, laughter, and delight are very powerful! All of you have offered us your prayers, your cards, your notes, your love in countless ways. Mechthild von Magdeburg said, “There I leap into love, from love into understanding, from understanding into enjoyment and from enjoyment beyond all human senses. There I shall remain and yet circle still higher.” From the poet Jacopone di Todì:

It never entered my mind, Jesus,  
that in the dance I am the dancer,  
but the force of your love, Jesus,  
has most certainly led me to dance...  
I had already forgotten  
that I had begun to dance,  
joy fills every heart, Jesus,  
so that words are lacking.



## **IT IS THE TIME OF LENT – Pastor’s Message**

This time of the Church Year has us on a journey which includes a rich calendar of saints in the Lutheran tradition—Christians from every age who have pointed to Christ in their living and dying.

March 5<sup>th</sup>: The Second Sunday in Lent – Week 2

Perpetua and Felicity were early Christian martyrs who chose to die rather than forsake their faith in Jesus and their commitment to each other. Harriet Tubman was Moses to her people, leading many enslaved people to freedom during the horror of American slavery. She was deeply religious and believed her work was a direct call from God despite her own personal challenges. As an enslaved woman in New York, Sojourner Truth sued for her freedom, then spent the rest of her life working for abolition and women’s suffrage. Throughout history Christians have been called to lives of service and sacrifice.

March 12<sup>th</sup>: The Third Sunday in Lent – Week 3

Gregory the Great was a sixth-century pope who is often remembered as one of the “fathers of Christian worship” because of his work revising the liturgy and making developments in church music. Patrick was a missionary in Ireland. Called by God to carry the good news of Jesus to the Irish, he became one of the founders of the great Celtic tradition of Christianity. Patrick is famous for his defense of the Trinity. We remember that our Christian life is formed and sustained by worship and prayer. We need time to reflect and time for prayer.

March 19<sup>th</sup>: The Fourth Sunday in Lent – Week 4

Oscar Romero was martyred while celebrating mass in 1980. Archbishop Romero was an outspoken critic of the government corruption, military abuse, and oppression of the people of his native El Salvador. He was convinced that heart of the gospel is centered on God’s compassion for the poor and the liberation of all people. In Joseph we see how the holy family became refugees at the hands of a tyrant ruler. In our baptism we pledge to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

March 26<sup>th</sup>: The Fifth Sunday in Lent – Week 5

This final week commemorates Hans Nielsen Hauge, a nineteenth-century Norwegian lay preacher and John Donne, the seventeenth-century English poet and dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. At first class first glance there is little that connects these two—but at their heart both individuals were fervent in proclaiming the amazing Grace of God with as much clarity as possible. This is the core of our Christian faith, that Jesus died to save us from our sins and rose to grant us everlasting life.

April 2, 2023 is Sunday of the Passion – Palm Sunday,  
April 6, 2023 is Maundy Thursday  
April 7, 2023 is Good Friday, and  
April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023 is the Resurrection of Our Lord – Easter Day

Please join us in our worship, ask for a Lenten Study Guide if you would like one, and remember to show specific kindness to someone for each of the forty days of Lent. If you forget a day, or do not have a chance to do this, please place a gift to ELCA World Hunger in our collection basket on a Sunday or drop it off to the church office. Your gift will be matched by the ELCA.

Bless each and every one of you at this time of repentance, love and generosity.



## HONORING THOSE WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE TO VOTE FOR OUR VALUES by Susan Stephenson

This week of Black History Month, IPL would like to honor those that fought for equal and fair voting rights for everyone. It is because of the courageous activism of black leaders throughout U.S. history that we have equal rights to vote our morals to protect Creation.

The *Voting Rights Act of 1965* was a landmark legislation that outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War, where voter suppression methods- such as grandfather clauses, literacy tests, poll taxes, and other obstacles- had virtually eliminated the Black vote and held Black registrants and voter turnout at a staggeringly low number.

We'd like to honor the many black activists leaders that made this act possible, such as [Amelia Boynton Robinson](#), called the matriarch of the voting rights movement, who was a Civil Rights activist, educator, political leader, and catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and [Frederick Douglass](#), who became a voting rights activist and supported the rights for everyone, no matter their race or gender, to vote.

We also acknowledge modern-day activists such as [Rep. Donald McEachin](#) (VA), who went to seminary school, but spent his life as a dedicated public servant who led efforts to promote equality and protect our environment. He co-authored the Environmental Justice Act before his passing last year, an important bill that did not pass, but parts of which were included in other legislation that IPL is still working to pass in his legacy.

Something important that all of these leaders had in common was devotion to their faiths. As people of faith and conscience, we know that we have a moral responsibility to protect Creation, and one of the best ways we can do that is to vote for pro-climate solutions in our local, state, and federal elections.

In 2022, IPL's Faith Climate Justice Voter Campaign reached more than half a million "low propensity" but climate-alarmed voters in key states to encourage them to exercise their voting rights. It was touching to hear so many expressions of gratitude from participants who received voting information and encouragement.

This amazing work was made possible by all of the Black leaders that made voting possible for everyone. To honor these leaders, we must ensure that these rights are protected so we can all vote our values on election day.

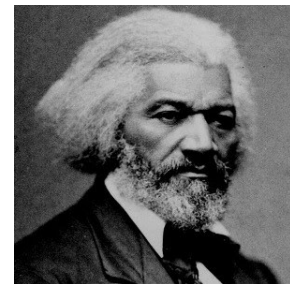
[Donate today to support just voting rights and voting pro-climate.](#)

Thank you for all that you do to protect Creation.

With gratitude, Susan Stephenson  
Executive Director



Amelia Boynton Robinson (1911-2015) was a civil rights pioneer who championed voting rights for African Americans.



Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was a formerly enslaved man who became a prominent activist for equality and voting rights.



Donald McEachin (1961-2022) was a public servant who led efforts to promote equality and protect our environment.

## SPRING AHEAD WITH LEVO!

Many of you attended our Fall Fun-raiser in 2022. It was such a success that we are hosting another event. This time we'll be at Waypoint Spirits on Thursday, March 30th! We would love to see you there! Sign up [here!](https://donorbox.org/events/416238)  
<https://donorbox.org/events/416238>



### Levo in Puerto Rico!

In January, the Levo team traveled to Puerto Rico and assembled a hanging hydroponic system on the wall of an afterschool program called Niños de Nueva Esperanza. NNE is a program dedicated to serving the youth of Sabana Seca, providing academic support, psychological therapies, evaluations, and sociocultural workshops for participants and their families. Levo hydroponics will contribute to these efforts and provide a

demonstration of what is possible for the wider community. We are excited to continue introducing simplified hydroponics to the communities where we can have an impact.



### Big Plans:

Levo plans to grow over 10 tons of produce in 2023. That's a lot of produce. We need to do several things to grow these vegetables this year:

- we are recruiting and training new Hartford residents in hydroponic farming
  - we are updating our training space
  - we will be expanding seedling operation
- And most importantly, we are building over a hundred new hydroponic systems and creating new neighborhood farms around the city.



## SPRING AHEAD WITH LEVO!



(continued from page 6)



### Volunteering with Levo:

Levo began regular volunteer events on the weekends at the beginning of February. Come work with power tools, paint hydroponic systems, clean out and prep systems, plant and pot seedlings, and just have a great time with other like-minded people. Check out the calendar [here](https://levointernational.org/volunteer). <https://levointernational.org/volunteer>



### A Trip to the Tropics?:

Levo is International. Our work began in Haiti, where poverty is hard to imagine for most Americans. While Levo continues to operate in Haiti, the declining political situation in Haiti has prevented us from conducting immersion trips in that country. However, our new programs in Jamaica and Puerto Rico, provide an opportunity to help and exchange culture. If you are interested in participating in a trip to Puerto Rico or Jamaica in the winter of 2023/2024, please sign up [here](https://levointernational.org/internationaltrips). <https://levointernational.org/internationaltrips>

*This week, I'm turning the Briefing over to my colleague John Kowal, who asks whether amending the Constitution is the path forward for democratic reform*

—Michael Waldman

More than half a century has passed since Congress last proposed a successful amendment to the Constitution. Adopted in 1971, the 26th Amendment lowered the national voting age to 18. It was the fourth addition to the Constitution in the span of 10 years. Remarkably, the measure won the approval of the requisite 38 states in just 100 days, the fastest ratification on record.

But then, in a pattern that has repeated itself throughout American history, the momentum for constitutional reform slowed. After the Equal Rights Amendment was thwarted in the 1970s by a demagogic campaign that presaged a sharp turn to the right in our nation's politics, progressive reformers pulled back. Today, only a few hardy reformers see much value in cranking up the unwieldy mechanism of Article V to repair a Constitution that too often fails to meet today's needs. The dispiriting common wisdom, subscribed to by many progressive scholars and reformers today, is that our Constitution is simply unamendable.

But can this be true? In today's contentious and fractured politics, it may seem difficult to imagine forging the broad consensus needed to pass a constitutional amendment under the two-step process of Article V, which requires supermajority approval in Congress *and* the states. But as Brooklyn Law School's Wilfred Codrington and I argue in our book, *The People's Constitution: 200 Years, 27 Amendments, and the Promise of a More Perfect Union*, this disempowering sense of futility is nothing new. Amendments have come mainly in short bursts, spurred by social movements and visionary leaders, only to be followed by decades-long dry spells, when reformers look to other avenues of reform.

In this way, our national charter has been reformed — and its principles renewed — in four waves of change linked to some of the most turbulent times in American history, from the fight to ratify the Constitution to Reconstruction's promise of a "second founding" to the reform boom of the Progressive Era to the 1960s' movements for civil rights.

As this history reveals, previous generations of Americans have made our Constitution more democratic, more inclusive, and more suited to the needs of a changing country through the mechanism of Article V. It's an inspiring story of progressive change. Yet today, the arena of constitutional reform is dominated by conservative activists who have launched campaigns to radically curtail the power of the federal government. Those ambitious efforts have only bolstered a sense among progressives that it's unwise and even dangerous to tinker with the framers' handiwork, keeping these reformers stuck on the sidelines.

On February 16, the Brennan Center hosted **Constitutional Amendments: Time to Rethink?** — an academic symposium exploring the prospects for amending the Constitution in our time. The day's discussion, led by a lineup of prominent thought leaders drawn from the



## THE BRIEFING: PERFECTING THE CONSTITUTION

fields of politics, journalism, academia, and reform advocacy, will consider whether improving the Constitution through the Article V amending process remains a vital and viable means of advancing legal change in the 21st century.

At the symposium, leading experts will examine the lessons that history offers for those interested in waging Article V amendment campaigns today, as other avenues of reform seem blocked. The discussion will also consider the benefits of investing in this largely neglected mode of legal change, including its potential to shape public sentiment around a robust, progressive vision of the Constitution in the courts, in our politics, and in the public discourse. Looking forward to this generation's opportunity to make its mark on our national charter, participants will imagine a path forward for amendments that can effectively address problems that beset our democracy today, including proposals on equal rights for women, abolishing the Electoral College, overturning *Citizens United*, and limiting Supreme Court justices' terms.

The day kicks off with keynote remarks by Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), the leading constitutional scholar serving in Congress today. Reflecting on the progressive activism that "built the modern Constitution," Raskin urges reform-minded Americans to shed their fear of advancing reform through Article V. "It's a betrayal of our history if we don't talk about amending the Constitution in order to create a more perfect union," he says. "We need to be planting flags in the unfolding history of democracy. That's what the constitutional amendment process is all about."

### Closing the FBI's Back Door into Americans' Data

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act — a 2008 provision that aims to facilitate surveillance of suspected foreign terrorists — has long been flagged by advocates as a risk to Americans' constitutional rights. Rather than strictly monitoring foreign threats outside the United States, the FBI, CIA, and other federal agencies are using this overbroad provision as a domestic spying tool. With Section 702 up for reauthorization this year, it's high time for a major overhaul. "Congress must rewrite the rules to ensure that the government cannot rely on its foreign intelligence surveillance authorities to conduct warrantless surveillance of Americans," Elizabeth Goitein writes for *Just Security*.

### A Fairer Census

The Biden administration has proposed creating a combined race and ethnicity question for the 2030 census. This would be significant progress toward making the decennial count more accurate and equitable. The modified questionnaire is expected to help the government collect better data, make it easier to enforce civil rights protections for Latinos and other people of color, and enable electoral districts to accurately reflect the diversity of their residents. "We at the Brennan Center support this change . . . as taking the first steps toward matching the census form to today's demographic realities," Mireya Navarro writes.

### The Right Way to Use Comparative Law

The Supreme Court used an erroneous comparison to other countries' abortion laws in overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Now that the fight for reproductive rights is largely moving to state courts, it's vital for judges to use comparative law with appropriate rigor when deciding on abortion access. "It's important for judges to carefully consider which comparisons are truly relevant to their jurisdictions, as ill-fitting parallels can lead to flawed rulings," Northeastern University law professor Martha F. Davis writes for the Brennan Center's *State Court Report*.

### Interpreting State Constitutions

In recent years, the Supreme Court has turned toward staunch originalism, using the justices' understandings of American history and tradition to hand down rulings on hot-button issues such as reproductive and gun rights. This has fanned the flames of the debate over the merits and shortcomings of originalism as compared to other methods of constitutional interpretation — a question that similarly concerns state courts. Rather than choose one, however, "[state] judges should use all interpretive tools that are available and then use their judgment to select the best possible interpretation," Maryland Judge Dan Friedman writes for *State Court Report*.

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH, 2023

**"It is normal for us to love those who love us, and to be friends of those who are friends to us; yet Jesus provokes us by saying: if you act in this way, "what more are you doing than others?" Here is the point to which I would like to draw your attention today, to what you do that is extraordinary.**

**"More", "extraordinary", is what goes beyond the limits of the usual, what exceeds the habitual practices and normal calculations dictated by prudence. Instead, in general we try to have everything more or less in order and under control, so as to correspond to our expectations, to our measure: fearing not to be reciprocated or to expose ourselves too much and then be disappointed, we prefer to love only those who love us in order to avoid disappointments, to do good only to those who are good to us, to be generous only to those who can return a favor; and to those who treat us badly, we respond in kind, so that we are even.**

**If we remain in the ordinary, in the balance between giving and receiving, things do not change. If God were to follow this logic, we would have no hope of salvation! But, fortunately for us, God's love is always "extraordinary", it goes beyond the usual criteria by which we humans live out our relationships."**

**Let us continue to stay close, with prayer and concrete support, to the earthquake victims in Syria and Turkey.**

*Pope Francis*

*~ Angelus February 19, 2023*

## **NEGOTIATING PEACE IN UKRAINE ISN'T SURRENDER. IT'S CHRISTIAN**

Adam Russell Taylor

SOJOURNERS

SojoMail



As the war in Ukraine enters its second year, Ukrainian citizens are hurting and exhausted. Meanwhile, Russia is mounting a new counter-offensive and Ukraine is restocking weapons from its allies, including the U.S. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians have been killed and wounded, both Ukrainian and Russian, yet the war grinds on without an end in sight.

The ability to imagine and advocate for alternatives to war is a core Christian responsibility. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God,” says Jesus in Matthew 5:9. It’s one of my favorite beatitudes, but it’s part of Jesus’ teaching that’s often ignored. Amid an increasingly devastating and intractable war in Ukraine, it’s time to reclaim it.

I admire the Ukrainian people’s courageous resistance and support their right to defend their sovereignty from Russian President Vladimir Putin’s imperialistic aggression. Yet, I’m alarmed that the prospect of peace seems increasingly elusive. As economist Jeffrey Sachs puts it: “Neither Russia nor Ukraine is likely to achieve a decisive military victory in their ongoing war: both sides have considerable room for deadly escalation. Ukraine and its Western allies have little chance of ousting Russia from Crimea and the Donbas region, while Russia has little chance of forcing Ukraine to surrender. As Joe Biden noted in October, the spiral of escalation marks the first direct threat of ‘nuclear Armageddon’ since the Cuban missile crisis 60 years ago.”

The deafening silence in the media around the imperative to wage peace and the lack of political will from the U.S., Ukraine, and NATO to at least attempt to pursue peace through mediation, diplomacy, or negotiation is alarming. The U.S. and NATO allies seem more bent on helping Ukraine win a war than working toward finding a peaceful resolution. Ukraine shouldn’t be used as a proxy to achieve the goal of weakening or defeating Russia in a bigger geopolitical struggle.

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## SHOCKING NEW EVIDENCE OF BIG OIL'S LIES

Union of Concerned Scientists  
Alex Vanderweele Ortman



An alarming new study, published last month, looked at ExxonMobil documents from 1977 to 2003. What researchers found is shocking...

**Not only did ExxonMobil executives know their practices were harmful, as early as the 1970s, their scientists accurately projected the global temperature rise that would result from the heat-trapping emissions produced from burning fossil fuels the company extracted, refined, marketed, and sold.<sup>1</sup>**

Over the last 50 years, the oil and gas industry has generated \$2.8 billion *a day* in revenue.<sup>2</sup> They've used their profits to buy power and influence to delay action on the climate crisis—fighting tooth and nail to protect their outrageous profits when they knew what they were costing communities and the environment.

UCS members play a critical role in supporting the science-based research and advocacy needed to ensure Big Oil answers for its lies, and push back against the influence they've bought. Now, with many allies of Big Oil heading powerful committees in Congress, we have to show up for this fight stronger than ever.

As everyday people struggle to pay sky-high energy bills, Big Oil executives and investors continue to take home obscene profits—\$190 billion in 2022 alone.

**Meanwhile, the consequences of Big Oil's lies and coverups are massive:** the United States just closed out one of the deadliest and costliest years for extreme weather and climate disasters. In 2022 there were 18 separate disasters with damages of \$1 billion or more, with a total economic cost of \$165 billion and 474 lives lost, and many of these kinds of disasters are worsened by climate change.<sup>3</sup>

It is well past time that these corporations are held accountable, and with new evidence behind us, we are more fired up than ever for this fight. **But we can't do it without the full force of the UCS membership—without you, Richard.**

UCS experts are regularly providing testimony to lawmakers and through initiatives like our **Science Hub for Climate Litigation**. UCS is working to grow a powerful network of experts whose research can inform litigation that seeks to hold Big Oil accountable for climate Cost and fraud.

Thank you,

Alex Vanderweele Ortman  
Director of Membership  
Union of Concerned Scientists

## WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH RECOVERY EFFORTS FROM THE TRAIN DERAILMENT IN OHIO



**SIERRA CLUB**  
OHIO

Two weeks ago a train carrying 20 cars of hazardous material derailed in East Palestine, Ohio. The accident sent toxic chemicals into the air and over the ground of this small town—chemicals used in making paint, adhesives, and PVC pipes. **Chemicals that can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea and irritation to the nose, throat and lungs—or which can be linked to liver damage and cancer.**<sup>1</sup>

Sierra Club Ohio is dedicated to protecting those rights. We have a plan to help East Palestine recover, and to secure protections against future disasters for all vulnerable communities. But we desperately need your support to accomplish this vital work:

**[Make an emergency gift to support the Sierra Club's efforts in Ohio. Your gift will provide resources to help our disaster response, ensure long-term recovery and protection, and secure environmental justice.](#)**

People have been told they can go back to their homes and they should only drink bottled water. Officials have said there is little danger—but residents are worried, trustworthy information is hard to come by, and we have no idea what the long-term impacts of this disaster will be.

We're committed to protecting East Palestine—and communities across the country—from future disasters. Organizers are canvassing shelters and meeting with residents to assess their needs. We are working to secure funding for rigorous analysis—we need independent groups to measure the toxicity in the air, water, and soil. And we will push the state legislature to enact strong regulations about how toxics are transported by train.

And we're not just responding to this disaster. From protecting our last remaining wild places and wildlife, to protecting our communities against the effects of climate change, to fighting for environmental justice, **we are working to build a better future for all.**

**[Your emergency gift will support the Sierra Club's efforts in Ohio to help the community recover—as well as all of its efforts to protect wild places, secure environmental justice, and build a safer and sustainable future.](#)**

East Palestine is at the center of several overlapping environmental justice crises happening at the same time, most of them caused by the petrochemical industry. It's just one of the communities you will support when you make an emergency gift. I hope you'll consider helping us today.

With gratitude,

Ericka Copeland  
Ohio Chapter Director  
Sierra Club

P.S. – We're working hard to help people affected by this toxic spill and build a safer future for all. **[Make your emergency gift to help respond today.](#)**

## WE TEACH OURSELVES

By Isisara Bey



When my mother emigrated to the US from British Guiana in 1949, she was already a certified primary school teacher. But the prejudice of the times prevented her from securing a teaching position in American public schools.

So she, with a couple of other Caribbean teachers and two Anglican priests, started their own school in Queens, NY. And since they enrolled their own children, my mother was my first grade teacher.

Originally the school was housed in a church basement. Then for the next several years, classes were held in a Jewish Community Center. We were free to use the classrooms during the day since they did not have classes until after 3 pm, when the Jewish children arrived for a few more hours of education about their religious heritage.

I thought it unfortunate that they had to have a second school shift. Later, I understood that many other nationalities and religious groups supplement their children's American education with lessons in their own history, values, language and traditions.

The observance of national Negro History Week was initiated in 1926 by historian and scholar, Carter G. Woodson. He selected the month of February because it included the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Sixty years later, in 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244 designating February as National Black (Afro-American) History Month.

Now our country is embroiled in a fevered national conversation around the actions of the College Board, which stripped its African American Studies Advanced Placement curricula of the scholarship of many African American writers. These intellectuals used topics including critical race theory, intersectionality, feminism, Black Lives Matter, the prison industrial complex, reparations, and the queer experience to center the African American perspective in the history of this country. The names and works of progressives including Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw, Michelle Alexander, bell hooks, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Audre Lord and Alice Walker were removed.

This conservative backlash uses the denunciation of the aforementioned AP topics to reinforce a whitewashed version of Western Civilization.

But we know it takes more than a week or a month to encompass the many achievements and contributions of African Americans to the American story. In fact, we have incorporated an understanding of our own history as part of our lives for centuries, even when it was illegal for enslaved Africans to read and write.

I once heard the late noted historian, John Henrik Clarke, praise the education his teachers delivered in his segregated school, which lifted up the works of African American writers, inventors and scholars, and set him on his path to become a brilliant teacher/activist.

The scores of independent schools, after school programs, and public and private historically Black colleges and universities, are also testament to our understanding that we are responsible for learning about who we are, what we have done, and what we can and must do now as a people.



## WE TEACH OURSELVES

As my good friend Paul Coates, founder of Black Classic Press (re)publishing company says, *Du4Self*.

With this in mind, I am offering just some of the books and authors who have strengthened my sense of self-determination, appreciation for the richness of my culture, and my understanding of my authentic place in the world.

*World's Great Men of Color*, by Joel Augustus Rogers; *The Moors in Spain*, by Stanley Lane-Poole; *Two Thousand Seasons*, by Ayi Kwei Armah; *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, by James Weldon Johnson; *The African Origin of Civilization*, by Cheikh Anta Diop; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire; *Soledad Brother*, by George Jackson; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston; *The Heart of a Woman*, by Maya Angelou; *The Big Sea*, by Langston Hughes; *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker; *They Came Before Columbus*, by Ivan Van Sertima; *Mama Day*, by Gloria Naylor; *So Long a Letter*, by Mariame Ba; *Playing In The Dark*, by Toni Morrison; *Segu*, by Maryse Condé.

Enjoy!

Isisara Bey  
Artistic Director, March On Washington Film Festival

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## HELP END DECADES OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE FOOD AND FARM SYSTEM

Farming offers a powerful path to build community wealth and resilient food systems, but Black farmers have faced a long-documented history of racial discrimination at the hands of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). By denying Black farmers loans and access to technical assistance, the USDA has effectively cost many their land and livelihoods.



In fact, because of these harmful practices, over the last hundred years, **the number of Black farmers has shrunk from 14 percent to less than two percent of US farmers, owning just half a percent of all farmlands.**

This is just one facet of the generations of racism and discrimination that Black farmers and ranchers have faced. Thankfully, [\*\*Congress can help right these wrongs by passing the Justice for Black Farmers Act.\*\*](#)

This legislation proposes concrete steps to correct these injustices. If passed as part of the next food and farm bill, which Congress is negotiating this year, the bill would take significant steps toward ensuring Black farmers' access to government benefits and services that White farmers have historically taken for granted.

[\*\*The Justice for Black Farmers Act is an opportunity to begin to rectify and repair decades of discrimination while also investing in the next generation of farmers—urge your members of Congress to cosponsor this important legislation.\*\*](#)

Sincerely,

Archie Creech, Jr.  
Outreach Coordinator  
Food & Environment Program  
Union of Concerned Scientists

## DID YOU MARCH AGAINST THE IRAQ WAR? By Win Without War team

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



Twenty years ago this week, millions of people rose up in opposition to the Iraq War. **That movement is still alive because activists like you continue to fight for people over profit and peace over war.**

Next month, we'll light up the front lawns of the U.S. Capitol with thousands of candles to honor the lives lost in that pointless war and remind the world that it's way past time to rip up the law that allowed it to happen — but we can't do it alone.

[Will you chip in \\$15 now to help us call on Washington to remember the lives lost in the Iraq War next month? Together, we'll show the world that we haven't stopped fighting for what's right.](#)

Read Sara's note below to get caught up on our plans, and thank you for helping us shine a light for peace.

— Amy

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Twenty years ago TODAY, on February 15, 2003, millions of people rallied to the streets worldwide to stop the Iraq War. **Since you're reading this, chances are you may have been there.**

Sadly, we know what came next: Beginning on March 19, 2003, bombs started to fall, cities were turned into rubble, millions lost their homes. Even conservative estimates tell us that as many as 306,000 Iraqi civilians died because of the U.S. war.

Right now, however, the law that opened the door to this horrific war, the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), is STILL on the books, and STILL giving presidents the power to launch devastating strikes that ruin lives and make us all less safe. But that could change: This week our champions in Congress went to bat to repeal the '02 AUMF again — and in no small part because of the incredible momentum activists like you have built up over the year.

**The protests that began 20 years ago aren't over — this year we'll have another chance to push for peace.** And one of the best ways to undo the legacy of the '02 AUMF, and George W. Bush's disastrous weapons of mass destruction lies? Remind everyone of the human cost.

That's why we're planning on lighting up the front lawns of the U.S. Capitol with thousands of candles next month. **Together, we'll reaffirm our commitment to peace, honor the lives lost in a pointless war, and remind the world that it's way past time to rip up the law that allowed it to happen.**

Nearly two decades later, the U.S. invasion of Iraq remains a somber reminder of the devastating impact our violence-first foreign policy can have on communities a world away.

When Congress passed the '02 AUMF, it gave the U.S. government the green light to invade Iraq. **The world would later discover that this invasion was built upon a foundation of falsehoods, resulting in unspeakable tragedy.**

You may know that Win Without War was founded in opposition to the heedless, destructive rush to invade Iraq two decades ago. That's why we've made repealing the 2001 and 2002

## DID YOU MARCH AGAINST THE IRAQ WAR?

(continued from page 16)

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



authorizations for use of military force — the key laws that have made decades of endless war in the Middle East possible — a key priority. **But it's because of our tireless advocacy and your relentless activism, that we're so close to repealing the '02 AUMF today.**

Next month, as we gather members of Congress and movement leaders on the Capitol lawn, we will reflect on the past 20 years and look forward to a future where the United States uses its power and resources to build true security, rather than destroy lives.

*The New York Times* called the February 15, 2003 mobilization "the second super-power," and two decades later, it remains a significant moment in history, as well as a crucial reminder that people have always been calling for peace — and we're not done yet. **Shining a light to recognize the human toll of the Iraq war isn't just the right thing to do, it'll also help us begin to dismantle a destructive legacy.**

Peace is an uphill fight here in Washington — a town full of hawkish politicians and weapons lobbyists. But activists like you, who donate a few dollars, sign petitions, and make critical phone calls have changed the debate about our nation's post-9/11 wars over the past two decades.

Together, you've been part of a visionary campaign for a foreign policy focused on justice, human security, and equity - to END ENDLESS WAR. Please support us to continue this work, by honoring the memory of every lost life and sending a message of hope for a more peaceful future. Let's make history again.

Thank you for working for peace,

Sara, Amy, Stephen, and the Win Without War team



If you are as angry as I am about the greed of the pharmaceutical industry, then I am asking you to contribute \$27 to show that together we are going to take them on and lower the price of prescription drugs. This is important.



When we talk about corporate greed in this country, there is perhaps no better example than the greed of the pharmaceutical industry exhibited by the outrageously high prices that Americans pay for prescription drugs.

In America today, millions of people are making the unacceptable choice between feeding their families or buying the medicine they need. Seniors are forced to split their pills in half and many have died because they did not have enough money to fill their prescriptions.

All across this country, the American people are asking themselves how does it happen that we in the United States pay, by far, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs?

Why is it that nearly one out of every four Americans cannot afford their prescription medication?

How does it happen that nearly half of all new drugs in the United States cost more than \$150,000 a year?

A few years ago, I took a busload of people with diabetes from Detroit, Michigan, to a drugstore in Windsor, Ontario. And there, in Canada, they were able to purchase the same insulin products they bought in the United States for one-tenth the price.

In 1999, 24 years ago, I took another busload of people – this time women with breast cancer – from St. Albans, Vermont to a doctor's office and a pharmacy in Montreal, Canada. And, there again, with tears in their eyes, they were able to purchase tamoxifen for one-tenth of the price charged in the United States.

How is it that in Canada and other major countries the same medications manufactured by the same companies, sold in the same bottles are available for a fraction of the price that we pay in the United States?

Well, the answers to all of these questions are not complicated. In fact, they can be summed up in just three words: Unacceptable corporate greed.

Over the past 25 years, the pharmaceutical industry has spent \$8.5 billion on lobbying and over \$745 million on campaign contributions to get Congress to do its bidding.

Incredibly, last year, drug companies hired over 1,700 lobbyists including the former congressional leaders of both major political parties – over 3 pharmaceutical industry lobbyists for every Member of Congress.

Meanwhile, as Americans die because they cannot afford the medications they need, the pharmaceutical industry makes much higher profit margins than other major industries.

Yes. The pharmaceutical industry makes higher profit margins than the banking industry, they make higher profit margins than the corporate media, and they make higher profit margins than the oil and gas industry.

As the Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee I intend to do everything that I can to take on the greed of the pharmaceutical industry and substantially lower the price of prescription drugs.

For starters, I asked my staff to put out a series of reports to take a serious examination of the unprecedented corporate greed of the pharmaceutical industry. Last week, they just released the first report focusing on the exorbitant compensation packages that the pharmaceutical industry has given to its CEOs and other executives within the industry.

According to this report, "The Pharma Pandemic Profiteers," in 2021, while hundreds of thousands of Americans died from COVID, 50 pharmaceutical executives in just 10 companies made \$1.9 billion in total compensation.

These same 50 executives are in line to receive up to \$2.8 billion in golden parachutes once they leave their companies.

The reality is that pharmaceutical companies are experts at hiding the true scope of their greed.

They publish executives' salaries, stock options, and perks as "reported compensation," but fail to explain the true value of the money their executives take in.

For example, AbbVie CEO Richard Gonzalez's reported compensation in 2021 was \$23.9 million. But after accounting for the value of his stocks and stock options, that number jumps to nearly \$62 million.

Eli Lilly CEO David Ricks' reported compensation was \$21.5 million, but with his stocks and stock options, that number increases to more than \$67 million.

Incredibly, while Regeneron Pharmaceuticals CEO Leonard Schleifer's reported compensation was \$6.5 million in 2021, the value of his stock options brought his total to an astronomical \$452.8 million.

Meanwhile, over the past decade, 14 major pharmaceutical companies spent \$747 billion not to make life-saving drugs more affordable, but to make their wealthy shareholders even wealthier by buying back their own stock and handing out huge dividends – \$87 billion more than what they spent on research and development.

Now, we have been told, over and over again, by the pharmaceutical industry and their allies that if their executives are not allowed to make these exorbitant compensation packages, if they are not allowed to charge outrageously high prices for prescription drugs and if they are not allowed to maintain monopolies on the medicine that was developed with billions of dollars in taxpayer funding, it will have a chilling and stifling effect on innovation.

In other words, if Congress does anything meaningful to take on the greed of the pharmaceutical industry, new life-saving drugs will not be invented and people will suffer. Or as Gordon Gecko from the 1980s film *Wall Street* would put it: Greed is good.

Well, let me respectfully disagree.

The reality is that a life-saving drug does not do any good if a patient cannot afford to buy that drug.

It may shock you, but there was a time when the inventors of life-saving drugs were not obsessed with making huge sums of money, but were instead obsessed with making people well.

In the 1950s, for example, there was Dr. Jonas Salk, who invented the vaccine for polio. Salk's work saved millions of lives, and prevented millions of people from being paralyzed.

It has been estimated that if Dr. Salk had chosen to patent the polio vaccine he would have made billions of dollars. But he did not.

And when Edward R. Murrow, one of the great investigative journalists in our nation's history, asked Dr. Salk who owns the patent to this vaccine this is what Dr. Salk said: "Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Could you patent the sun?"

What Dr. Salk understood was that the purpose of this vaccine was to save lives, not to make himself obscenely rich.

Now let's fast forward to the COVID pandemic.

After receiving billions of dollars from the federal government to research, develop and distribute the COVID-vaccine, the CEO of Moderna, Stéphane Bancel, became a billionaire overnight and is now worth \$5.7 billion.

Incredibly, Mr. Bancel is in line to receive a \$926 million golden parachute when he leaves the company.

And he is not alone.

The 2 co-founders of Moderna (Noubar Afeyan and Robert Langer) are both worth \$2 billion each. And one of the founding investors in Moderna (Tim Springer) is now worth \$2.5 billion.

None of them were billionaires before the taxpayers of our country funded the COVID-19 vaccine.

Meanwhile, while nearly 1.1 million Americans have died from COVID and over 100 million became ill, Moderna made over \$19 billion in profits during the pandemic.

It does not have to be this way. The reality is that if Congress had the courage to take on the greed of the pharmaceutical industry, we could cut the price of prescription drugs in America by at least 50%.

How? By preventing the pharmaceutical industry from charging more for prescription drugs in the U.S. than they do in Canada, Britain, Germany, France and Japan – a concept that is not only supported by progressives, but former President Donald Trump.

I will soon be re-introducing legislation in the Senate to do just that.

How many more Americans must die before we finally have the guts to stop the pharmaceutical industry from getting away with murder?

That is a question I will be asking over and over again to the pharmaceutical industry during my chairmanship of the HELP Committee.

Thank you for reading, and thank you for your continued involvement in our movement to take on corporate greed and fight for the needs of the working class.

In solidarity,

Bernie Sanders



## CREATION CORNER: A LENTEN DISCIPLINE

By Nancy Urban

I am back again to talk about TRASH. Not only have we humans messed up God's gift of creation by depleting the forests, polluting the oceans, depriving the plants and animals of their natural habitat and turning the soil into deserts; we are now filling the earth with our trash. We, in America have so much stuff we don't want or need and so much food that we do not eat; so much packaging, throw away plastic containers and—the list goes on and on—that we are running out of space to put it.

According to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and the CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection,

- A CT family of 4 produces over 2 tons of garbage every year.
- With the shut down of the MIRA trash to energy plant, CT now expects to export 33% of our trash to landfills in midwestern states.
- 75% of our trash could be recycled, especially food waste and yard waste, but we only recycle or compost 35%. We also know that much of what we recycle ends up in the trash because of contamination or lack of a buyer who wants it.

There are many ways that we try to deal with our trash. Trash to energy, landfills, recycling our plastic, paper, glass and metal, composting programs for our food and yard waste—all of these in one way or another add to our energy use, pollution of air, land and water, cost money to operate, take tax dollars from other programs or increase our taxes.

The one solution that we hear very little about is to just stop producing so much trash! What a novel idea!! But it seems to be working in towns that have instituted the "Pay as you Go" plan. Trash is deposited in bags that people purchase. The more trash you produce the more bags you have to purchase. The more bags you use, the higher your cost for trash disposal. There are several towns using this system; Stonington, CT and Worchester, MA, being two of them. They report a great reduction in trash per household. It is generally true that change can happen when it affects a person's pocket book. These towns have also diverted money that would have been used for trash pick up to programs that help people reduce their trash in the first place.

So, back to Lenten Discipline. Would each of us as caretakers of God's Creation consider at least one of these this Lenten Season?

- Find ways to cut our own trash by 50%, 30%, 25%—you decide. There are many ways—you can figure it out.
- Write, email, call your state representatives and town council people. Find out what is stopping them from supporting a "Pay as you Go" system. Is there a way to help move this along?
- Pray! We, as people of faith believe in the power of prayer. Pray that we stop our selfish ways of living that destroy God's Creation. Pray that we be open to the ways God wants to use us in helping to restore Creation.

Danielle Wellington is a licensed CPA holding both her Bachelors and Masters degree from the University of Connecticut. During her time at UConn, she took part in numerous study abroad programs, traveling to Germany, China, and Singapore with their School of Business. Since then, Danielle went on to obtain her CPA license and now works full time at Voya Financial as a Sr. Auditor. She also works part time as a real estate agent serving the Greater Hartford County, working to promote and advance the knowledge around home ownership and building generational wealth. In her free time, Danielle likes to travel, read, spend time with her friends and family, and play tennis.

Danielle also served as Treasurer of the African American and Black Employee Council at Voya Financial. In that capacity, Danielle has presented and coordinated opportunities to engage the company with both local and nationwide organizations that support people of color. From supporting local scholarships, to sponsoring an educational workshop for young women interested in STEM, Danielle is always looking for ways to help. In 2022, she also received the Do The Right Thing Award from Voya's CEO Rod Martin, an award selected for employees who recognize, model, and act on the company's values on a daily basis.

She also serves as a mentor to students at her alma mater, UConn's School of Business.



## MARCH 2023 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!

### Happy Birthday! March

Justin Santana	01-Mar
Jonathan Ruhe	04-Mar
Amy Nolen	04-Mar
Tyler Colbert	08-Mar
Masso Koulla	09-Mar
Austin Colbert	18-Mar
James Burden	21-Mar
Quincy Coleman	23-Mar
Francisco Colon	28-Mar
Gayle Brown	29-Mar



*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](mailto:office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com)  
to update our records.

### IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Sunday, March 12th—Daylight Savings Time Begins

Sunday, April 2nd—Palm Sunday

#### HOLY WEEK

Thursday, April 6th—Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 7th—Good Friday

Sunday, April 9th—Easter Sunday




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### SPRING CLEAN UP; SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, April 22: 9:00-2:00

The Property Committee invites one and all to join together for a spring cleaning at Grace, both indoors and out. April 22 is Earth Day and this is a great time to spruce things up. Lunch will be served and we will find a job for anyone who wants to pitch in. Save the date and more details coming in the April Grace Notes.



Grace Lutheran Church  
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### **Our Staff and Council Leadership**

Reverend Richard H. Kremer, Pastor

rickkremer@aol.com

Emmanuella Hart— Ministry Coordinator

ministry.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com

Nilda Bolorin, Parish Administrator

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Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker,  
Artist in Residence

Walter Scott, Sexton

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Gladys Jackson, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

[www.graceistheplace.org](http://www.graceistheplace.org)

