



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

JUNE 2024



“ALL THAT YOU TOUCH YOU CHANGE. ALL THAT YOU CHANGE CHANGES YOU.” - Lauren Olamina

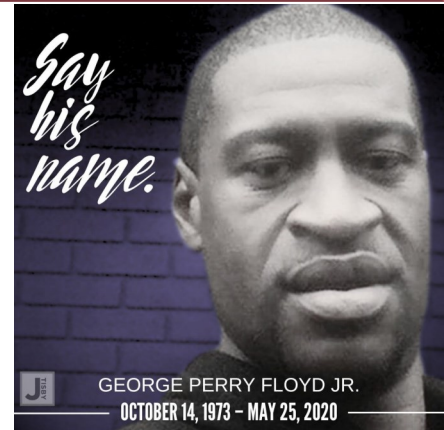
I met a woman on Saturday, the 25th of May. She was a Baptist, Pentecostal, exploring becoming Lutheran or a mix of the three. She could sing, read poetry with meaning, be present with others, laugh, sit, be respectful of an old man who had some difficulty getting up, walking the labyrinth, all of us there, remembering George Floyd... His death awakened our country to the meanness and horror of it all. It shocked those who cared about such things. People who truly believed that Black Lives Matter.

This event had me thinking deeply about those moments in my life that caused me to stop, wonder what was wrong, deeply wrong, and I internalized, each and every one of them. Like many of you, I remember those moments. In a very deep place.

As a young white man experiencing segregation in the South for the first time. The violence that followed riots spreading through the country, often with underlying racial implications. Lynching, church bombings, killing of young people trying to bring about peace in the South. The fight for the right to vote, The murder of President John F. Kennedy, the death of Bobby Kennedy, the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Viet Nam War, the draft, student protests, police brutality, the murder of Malcolm X, racism writ large, the Black Panthers in New Haven and Hartford, lots of tear gas, anti-Semitism, 9/11, responders running into the fires and our response killing hundreds of thousands, immigration, refugees and a growing sense of hate and separation.

How could we forget the death of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020? Four years ago. Like the memories already discussed, this death was life changing for many, and a blip in time for others. Yet many of us have truly been affected by the events of that day, and the ensuing unrest to follow. A trip taken by Sue Carey as a part of the Lutheran Church's antiracism initiative was to spend a day at the George Floyd Global Memorial and she would learn a great deal from the discussions with families, communities at a Lutheran Church that was a short distance from where the horror that took place.

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An aerial view shows a memorial area in honor of George Floyd on Thursday in Minneapolis. Kerem Yücel | MPR News

Sue and the other participants were asked to do one tangible thing because of their experience in Minneapolis. Sue decided to get to know Kamora Herrington, the founder of the Kamora Culture Center, not far from Grace on Sterling Street in Hartford. Sue committed to remembering George Floyd so that no one may ever again experience a death like his. After all, we are a church committed

to an end of racism, poverty, separation, and hate. In fact, we reach out to people who are suffering in many ways, who are separated by race, they may be gay, old, young, vulnerable, or lonely. Jesus calls us to the street where people are hungry, needing clothing, trying to address addictions, find jobs, and seek help with other challenges or differences.

We do not decide who we should help. We see our call from God to help all in need at whatever cost. And we try to do just that. Jim Curry, of the Episcopal Church chose to worship at Grace when he retired. I remember well marching with him and others from Grace both immediately after the incident in Minneapolis, and then, marching with some demands to call out to the police, politicians, and anyone who would listen, that this was not “OK” in our country, our city, or anywhere else.

We demanded change, accountability and still do. And we still must. Whether it be GHIAA, our engagements with the CCFJ, the Wheeler Clinic, Urban Alliance, CT Food Share, Angel of Edgewood, other churches, synagogues, non-profits now including the Kamora Culture Center, we have the commitment and the courage to do our work.

Today, we are a nation divided by book bans, the rewriting of American history, the dreaded wars being fought, the innocents paying the price, and our country living with the possibility of a party that intends to win an election whether they do or don’t win. The Supreme Court majority is corrupt, and its reputation is at an all-time low. Though the plan is to put in place a white supremacist legion, they can only do so by creating a dysfunctional system of justice, and the means to destroy our Constitution and our democracy. We have had the blessing of being in the Holy Land two times, I am suffering for the Palestinians, who were not part of the attack made on Israel. Jewish Voices for Peace, FOSNA and others written about in this issue will tell you of the dangers that Netanyahu is delivering with our country’s financial support while our children who are protesting at colleges throughout the country are being treated horrifically.

The world we live in is changing fast. We must hold on and work for justice, equality, truth and no more lies. It’s up to each one of us to make that outcome work. It is up to us.



PASTOR'S MESSAGE - THE CLOCK IS TICKING

Now that I have learned that I must take care of myself, I pass the same message on to each of you. We are blessed with a very special church, the growing love and joy we have being together, we can't help but make a difference in our world and congregation. We have a very fine group of Council Members, a wondrous group of people leading the Parish Life Committee (how about T-shirts?) and an ever changing and advancing way to contribute to the communities that we serve.

With strange weather during this difficult time to be alive, I will be slowing down myself, and yet, I'm hopeful that I can provide the leadership and love that you want. I am also committed to making this world a better place, and I know each one of you is, too.

Dorothea has done wonderfully in guiding our worship planning, Emmanuella is keeping us connected to the communities we serve and ways to work with others. The best Worship Committee on earth, the Property Committee trying to keep up and the Friday Gathering Committee are all quite busy.

We have property matters to deal with particularly that we will soon take a step into summer. We'll be adding a new awning at the 46 door, while addressing other external issues once we have our landscapers ready to do our spring clean-up.

We have a number of people joining Synod Assembly this year. We will have four voting members, myself, as Pastor, Emmanuella, Betsy, Lou and Emma. I believe that to be correct but will clarify it this week. The Synod Assembly will involve the selection of a new Bishop, as well as a full number of other tasks. I encourage you all to review the materials in advance. It is already available on the Synod Website.

"Guilty on all counts." The former president of the United States has been found guilty of 34 counts of lying to voters and interfering in an election to grab power. The unanimous decision by 12 New Yorkers was a validation of fears many have about the MAGA movement in this country.

I ask all of you and anyone else reading this issue to please vote during the November election. Because our world is in such disarray it is essential that we all vote. It is time for our country to decide what it will be.

So, "the Clock is ticking" and we must do our part.



NEW KIND OF GROCERY STORE TO LAUNCH IN FROG HOLLOW

The Hartford Courant

Its goal is providing healthful food at cost based on income

by Kenneth R. Gosselin HARTFORD COURANT

In the works for two years, a food shopping alternative in one of Connecticut's most impoverished neighborhoods will open May 30, offering a new approach in a city struggling to build a viable ecosystem that delivers fresh, healthful groceries.

The Grocery on Broad, near the Fire by Forge restaurant in Hartford's Frog Hollow, is offering shoppers the opportunity to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and ingredients to make meals. Prices will be discounted based on individual and family income, and can be combined with other low-income subsidies such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.



The market's goal is to open up more options to buy fresh groceries and ease what it costs to make purchases, said Ben Dubow, executive director of the Hartford-based nonprofit Forge City Works, which will operate Grocery on Broad.

"What we're really trying to do is address both," Dubow said. "To me, it's just part of the puzzle. It's not the whole thing. We don't see ourselves replacing traditional

food pantries or other programs like that. But we think we can be a good supplement for people and provide ongoing, continuing access to more healthy, wholesome, real foods on a regular basis."

Dubow said he hopes the model will work in other neighborhoods where buying nutritious food and meal ingredients such as rice, beans and other grains is a challenge.

Frog Hollow, within four blocks of the State Capitol, is one of the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods in the state, according to the nonprofit Partnership Strong Communities that advocates for an end to homelessness and expansion of affordable housing.

The median household income in Connecticut is \$65,521 compared with \$27,051 in Hartford overall and \$17,333 in Frog Hollow. At 16%, Frog Hollow has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. About 90% of residents are renters, nearly 80% of whom have moved in the last year. And half are spending more than the recommended 35% of their income of housing, which puts a strain on budgets for groceries.

Customers meeting income guidelines can qualify for either 50% or 25% discounts on purchases at the market by signing up for a free membership. If a potential customer doesn't meet income guidelines, a membership still carries a 3% discount. Walk-ins off the street also will be welcome but would pay full price.

The one-page application provides for "self-certification" of income. For example, a family of four with annual income of \$90,000 or less could qualify for a 25% discount. The same-size

NEW KIND OF GROCERY STORE TO LAUNCH IN FROG HOLLOW

(continued from page 4)

family earning less than \$67,500 in annual income could qualify for a 50% discount.

Once a customer has a membership, a card will be issued for swiping at the end of a shopping trip. The discount will be applied privately, Dubow said, to “destigmatize” the process so no one will know who is getting discounts and who’s not.

So far, the grocery has 80 members, according to Mayra Rivera, the market’s general manager. The market offered sign-ups during weekly pop-up markets last year, and applications will again be accepted when the market opens.

The market dovetails well with Forge City Work’s main mission of increasing access to healthy food and its training program for city’s youth for careers in the hospitality and restaurant industries. Some of the trainees will prepare “grab-and-go” items that will be sold at the new grocery.

The thought behind the market also is to not necessarily clear a profit but to break-even. To do so, Dubow has said he expects Forge City Works will have to raise \$100,000-\$150,000 a year to subsidize the venture.

The grocery, operated in partnership with Connecticut Foodshare, is opening with the innovative use of a \$142,000 Hart Lift storefront grant, a program funded with federal pandemic relief funds. Hart Lift seeks to revitalize vacant storefronts throughout the city and also was instrumental in the opening of Fire by Forge, the former Firebox, a year ago. The Hart Lift grant combined with a \$250,000 federal grant secured with the help of the office of U.S. Rep. John B. Larson, Dubow said.

Forge City Works had hoped to have the new grocery open by early January, but the date got pushed back. There were delays in construction and equipment delivery and a wait for funding to arrive, Dubow said.

“So kind of a combination of things, but here we are, ready to go,” Dubow said. “This is really exciting to see come to fruition, to be able to try something new in this area that will make a significant difference for our neighborhood and community.”

Kenneth R. Gosselin can be reached at kgosselin@courant.com.

THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM IS FAILING AMERICA’S YOUTH

May is National Foster Care Month, and this topic is personal to me.



When I was young, my mom became a foster parent. We took in three boys for three years: Robbie, and two brothers Alex and Johnny.

Alex was only two years old when we opened our home to him and his 3-month-old brother. When they were removed from their mother’s care, the state wasn’t sure if Johnny would make it. He was suffering from malnutrition, and Alex is the only reason he survived his first few months of life. The toddler would feed him stray Cheerios off the floor in their house. Some days, that’s all he

had to eat.

Their circumstances were horrific, but that is the case for so many children.

Right now, there are approximately 391,000 kids in the foster care system on any given day, and just over 50,000 are adopted each year.

Those who aren't adopted are far less likely to have a stable and secure future, maintain employment, afford housing, or even have a device to access the internet, call someone for help, or job hunt.

That's because there is not enough government support for foster care services or for these children. Too often, the system fails these kids in other ways, too.



After three years with us, Alex and Johnny's mother got them back. But they were removed from her home again.

You'd think the state would have asked my mom if they could return to our house, with a loving family they saw as their own. But since their mother lived in a different county than us now, they were placed with total strangers, again.

I think about Alex and Johnny often. I hope they've had the same opportunities I've had, the opportunities they would have had if we'd raised them. Realistically, I know that's not likely.

Less than ten percent of America's foster youth go on to obtain a degree – but there ARE solutions.

Right now, Ohio lawmakers are considering legislation that would provide college scholarships to every kid placed in foster care on or after their 13th birthday. It's a big step in the right direction, but we could do more.

I'd like to see a version of Ohio's bill in the U.S. House that provides an easier path to a college education for foster children nationwide – *plus* additional benefits for foster parents, the majority of whom aren't given the necessary resources to provide for these kids on their own.

The path we're on today with abortion bans across the country is setting up America's underprivileged youth for even harder times ahead.

Despite the unique challenges foster kids face in an overloaded, underfunded system, Republicans are working to ensure even more children end up there by forcing women who aren't prepared or fit to be mothers go through with their pregnancies.

When I'm in Congress, I will work to improve the foster care system, fix the conditions that overload it, and better support foster parents and the kids who depend on them.

And I'll start by helping Democrats codify *Roe*.

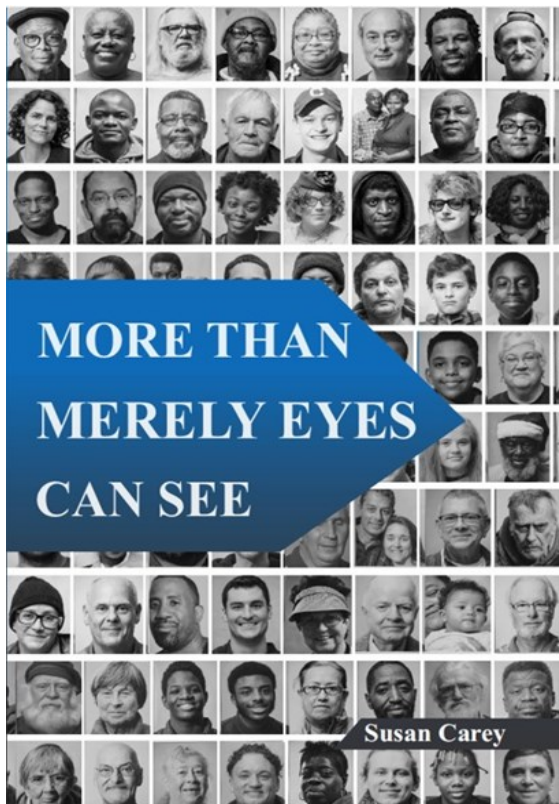
Your next congressman,
Jerrad Christian
Democrat for OH-12

YOU'RE INVITED! BOOK LAUNCH ON FRIDAY, JUNE 28 AT 10:30 A.M.

by Sue Carey

More Than Merely Eyes Can See, Sue Carey's book about the Friday Gathering and the stories of more than forty diners will be released in June.

Grace and the Friday Gathering are invited to the book launch, which will be held at the Boys & Girls Clubs at 170 Sigourney Street on Friday, June 28 at 10:30. Attendance is limited, so **please RSVP to Sue if you plan to attend.**



Marc Fitch, a novelist and investigative reporter for CT Inside Investigator, writes:

More Than Merely Eyes Can See portrays the stark, real, and often heartbreaking humanity present in the unseen lives around us, lives that are small yet somehow bigger than we can ever imagine. The individual portraits presented show the world as it is and lives that are undeniably beautiful, frustrating, tragic, and, at times, funny. They open the mind and the heart to the simple idea that a meal, a conversation, and a radical acceptance of a human being, with all their individual strengths and flaws, can build community in ways more powerful than politics or slogans. *More Than Merely Eyes Can See*, and the individual stories therein, is a reminder that fiction is often a poor facsimile for real life.

Mere words cannot express my immense appreciation to all the people—past and present—who shape the Friday Gathering and make it possible for us to share life with our neighborhood. Please join me for the launch. I look forward to celebrating our story with you!

With gratitude, Sue

DON'T FORGET JUNETEENTH! 6/19/2024

"Juneteenth, officially Juneteenth National Independence Day, is a federal holiday in the United States. It is celebrated annually on June 19 to commemorate the ending of slavery. The holiday's name is a portmanteau (a word made by combining the spellings and meanings of two or more other words or word parts) of the words "June" and "nineteenth", as it was on June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger ordered the final enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas at the end of the American Civil War." Wikipedia



POPE'S MESSAGE



"Every one of us has encountered the Lord and we struggle to speak about it. Each one of us could say so much about this: seeing how the Lord has touched us, and sharing this, not by being a lecturer to others, but by sharing the unique moments in which we perceived the Lord alive and close, who kindled joy in our hearts or dried our tears, who transmitted confidence and consolation, strength and enthusiasm, or forgiveness, tenderness."

Pope Francis

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE BOARD



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

by Rev. Dr. Aimée Frye Appell

On behalf of the board of White Lutherans for Racial Justice

Dear White Lutherans,

I want to talk to you about a recent incident that caused harm, both directly to a beloved and respected member of our community, and indirectly to many of our siblings in Christ. My intention in writing this letter is to 1) educate; 2) equip; and 3) prevent similar harm in the future. As has often been said, when we know better, we do better. I believe we *can* and *must* do better, but I am aware that many of us either do not know the impact of our actions or do not know how to respond appropriately.

We learned about this incident from the witness of Black LSTC (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) alumni who were in attendance. Dr. Linda Thomas, a Black woman, a Womanist scholar and professor of anthropology and theology at LSTC, was invited to offer a formal and scheduled response to one of the talks at the Seminex Homecoming event on April 17, 2024. The lecture Dr. Thomas was responding to was entitled "Faith Active in Love: The Quest for Justice in the Church and the World," and was given by David Beckmann. Dr. Thomas's response was a part of the scheduled events of the day, and therefore was neither "off-the-cuff" nor unexpected. However, when she began her remarks by saying, "GOD looks like me," she was met with laughter from the audience, many of whom were White and male. While it is important to interpret our neighbors' actions in the best possible light, it is also important to recognize that intention and impact are not the same thing. While those in the room may not have intended to hurt Dr. Thomas or others attending with their laughter, the impact of that laughter was far-reaching and harmful.

One of the first things that our board did on learning about this incident was to reach out to Dr. Thomas and ask her how we could support her. She had several suggestions, including writing this letter, learning and teaching about the *imago dei*, and doing anti-racism training such as that offered by Crossroads.

Dr. Thomas has written extensively and taught about the *imago dei*, including in [this article](#) (343-Article%20Text-1619-1-10-20211215%20(1).pdf) in *Currents in Theology and Mission*. (This article also serves as a primer on Womanist Theology, including the concept of Intersectionality, if this is a new field of thought for you.) The *imago dei*, or “image of God,” is found in each and every human being, according to the Creation story of Genesis in which God makes humankind “in our image, according to our likeness” (1:26). Even as we preach and teach that God is not confined by any single gender, race, or ethnicity, the normative white male God continues to dominate our artwork, undermining our efforts. It is essential that we introduce our congregations to a wider variety of images in which God and Jesus are presented through the imaginations of the global majority. The gorgeous and readily-accessible works of artists such as He Qi and Sadao Watanabe and the Jesus Mafa series offer a good place to start.

There are so many wonderful authors that can guide our work as we dismantle White supremacy in our institutions and in our theology. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* by Kelly Brown Douglas and *God is a Black Woman* by Christina Cleveland are two books specifically related to the *imago dei* and the ways that our focus on Whiteness as normative has stripped our theologies of important and astounding depths, limiting our experience of and perception of God.



As the Association of White Lutherans for Racial Justice, we are committed to dismantling white supremacy in the ELCA through education, advocacy, and accompaniment. We are intentional about inviting people into relationship and community grounded in this work. (Authentic and intentional relationship and community is as necessary to dismantling White supremacy as it is to proclaiming the gospel, and for the same reasons.) We listen for teachable moments when we can help our White siblings recognize and, where possible, repair harm done when our Whiteness shows up ahead of our consciousness. The LSTC event described above is one such moment.

One final word of encouragement, if I may: This letter is not intended to shame anyone who was in the room on April 17 when Dr. Thomas got up to speak. However, the work of dismantling White supremacy is a long and difficult process, and we need one another to keep ourselves honest and accountable to this goal. Unfortunately, when we White folks get into a room, we often lose track of this goal, and what might have been intended to be an inclusive community quickly becomes “White space.” It is easy for us to fall back into habits that may be comfortable to us but are not welcoming to those who do not fit the norms. It is therefore incumbent upon us to be extra attentive in those moments.

I want to invite you to use this story, whether you were present or not, as a learning opportunity. Think carefully about how you wish you (or anyone) had responded in that moment. How might you have shown solidarity with Dr. Thomas? How could you have interrupted the laughter and directed the focus back to Dr. Thomas and her presentation? What words or actions might have been helpful? If we think through these questions now, we are more likely to act accordingly the next time a similar situation arises. Joining the work of White Lutherans for Racial Justice is one way to get started. Subscribe to our email list, attend our monthly Zoom drop-ins, participate in our book studies, and watch for other upcoming

opportunities.

While White supremacy culture teaches us to keep quiet and look at our shoes in embarrassment, the gospel teaches us to stand against injustice, pouring ourselves out as the Body of Christ for the sake of our neighbor. And the gospel, the love stronger than death itself, is also stronger than White supremacy culture. This is most certainly true.

Your sibling in Christ,
Rev. Dr. Aimée Frye Appell
On behalf of the board of White Lutherans for Racial Justice

AN AFTERNOON OF CHALLENGE AND HOPE with The Rev. Dr. William Barber II

A number of people from Grace attended this presentation at Immanuel Congregational Church on May 5th. The Mayor spoke, many choirs filled the space with song and, after Rev. Dr. Barber's words, we ended with a rousing Hymn - Lift Every Voice and Sing.

In addition to his powerful message shared with us, he was promoting this March on June 29, 2024 - see the below poster.

Poor People's Campaign
A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, June 29, 2024
3rd & Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. | 10 am

Mass Poor People's & Low-Wage Workers' Assembly & Moral March on Washington, D.C. & to the Polls

Bishop William J. Barber, II
National Co-Chair,
Poor People's Campaign:
A National Call for Moral Revival;
President and Senior Lecturer,
Repairers of the Breach

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis
National Co-Chair,
Poor People's Campaign:
A National Call for Moral Revival;
Executive Director,
Kairos Center

REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH | **POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN** | **KAIROS CENTER**

Twitter: @UniteThePoor | Facebook: @anewppc | Website: poorpeoplescampaign.org

“TRUMPTASTROPHE” - FREEDOM FOR ME AND NOT FOR THEE



Welcome to our weekly “Trumptastrophe” email series that serves to remind us of the destructive policies, decisions, and actions we encountered during the Trump presidency and the threats that he and others in the MAGA movement still pose – and to keep those moments clear in our memory as we fight to defeat Republican extremists during the upcoming elections.

This week’s Trumptastrophe focuses on former President Trump’s rocky relationship with social media. Indeed, although social media was one of the very tools responsible for his rise to prominence within the Republican Party, Trump and right-wing conservatives often attack social media companies when their content is removed or flagged for violating each platform’s policies regarding what they consider to be acceptable content. This stormy relationship has led to conservatives calling for the weaponization of the Federal Communications Commission if Trump were to be reelected so they can penalize companies unwilling to allow their lies and misinformation to be broadcast to their users:

On May 27, 2020, Trump threatened to “strongly regulate” social media companies or “close them down.” Trump was angry about Twitter putting fact-checking notes on two “potentially misleading” tweets in which he made unsubstantiated claims about mail-in ballots and voter fraud. Just one day after his threat, Trump signed an executive order that Human Rights Watch called “a profound attack on online freedom of expression globally” by targeting “companies that displease government.” The order included typically Trumpian whining about his tweets having been flagged as inaccurate. At a press event announcing the order, he complained even more, calling fact-checks a form of “political activism.”

The day after Trump issued his executive order, he used his Twitter account to warn that he would deploy the military against people protesting George Floyd’s killing by a police officer, and threatening, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.” Twitter labeled it with a notice saying it violated the platform’s rules against glorifying violence.

Four years later, Trump and his advisers are vowing that if he gets back into power, he will “come after” big tech companies and media outlets whose moderation policies and political coverage he doesn’t like.

Trump complained in 2020 that social media companies were silencing conservative voices, a frequent complaint from right-wing figures. There was never much substance to the claim, and it is particularly ridiculous now that X/Twitter under the leadership of Trump fan Elon Musk has proudly re-platformed the disinformation-spewing former president, along with far-right figures who promote white nationalism, antisemitism, and other forms of extremism.

Trump’s 2024 campaign team is in fact deploying a “troll army” to attack his enemies on social media. Right Wing Watch noted earlier this year that Trump’s trolls are led by an overtly racist, unapologetically misogynistic, and gleefully amoral” online activist called Brenden Dilley.

Trump’s 2020 executive order charged the Commerce Secretary with asking the Federal Communications Commission to define standards for evaluating whether social media companies were applying “good faith” in moderating content, and threatened companies with legal action. It sought to ban federal agencies from advertising on platforms deemed to be biased against conservatives. In response, one FCC commissioner said Trump wanted to turn the commission into “the president’s speech police.”

The White House told reporters that some of the ideas in Trump’s order grew out of a “social media summit” Trump held the previous summer with a clown car of far-right online personalities. At that event, Trump gave what The New York Times called “his own unique interpretation of the First

“TRUMPTASTROPHE” - FREEDOM FOR ME AND NOT FOR THEE

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Amendment,” saying it’s “not free speech” if “you see something good and then you purposely write bad.” Afterward, he told supporters that tech companies were, like “the FAKE NEWS media,” an “enemy of the people.”

You don’t have to be part of the MAGA movement to have concerns about the power wielded by huge tech firms and the influence of their platforms and algorithms. Protecting free speech and preventing harm and harassment are a complicated balancing act. Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that tech companies could not be sued by family members of a victim of an ISIS terror attack for having failed to keep ISIS content off their platforms. There have been bipartisan calls in Congress to revisit regulation of tech platforms.

In response to current congressional efforts to do away with provisions contained in Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which protect tech companies from liability for what others publish on their platforms and protect them against legal action for moderating content, the Center for Democracy and Technology wrote this month that “Section 230 is about free expression” and warned that repealing the section without a clear alternative in place would “threaten user’s free expression rights and exacerbate the very problems some in Congress seek to solve.” New America has suggested alternatives for addressing online harms.

Trump and his advisers don’t seem that interested in policy nuance. Trump adviser and far-right ideological warrior Steve Bannon has called the people who run tech companies “evil” and “sociopaths.” Attacking “big tech” and the media are reliable ways to get applause at MAGA gatherings.

Trump’s allies at Project 2025 vow that under a like-minded president, they will seize control of any sources of independence in the executive branch that might slow the imposition of the president’s will. Project 2025’s policy agenda says its top priority for the FCC will be “reining in Big Tech,” which they accuse of trying to “drive diverse political viewpoints from the town square.” And, in a show of Trumpian contempt for checks and balances, Project 2025 calls on the FCC to issue an order interpreting Section 230 differently than courts have.



As Bruce Maiman noted in a HuffPost column, “Control of all federal branches would mean control of the Federal Communications Commission, which makes and enforces rules for television, radio and internet companies. You can imagine an effort to neutralize the power of a media that routinely has exposed Trump’s well-documented lies and improprieties.” Indeed, it doesn’t take much imagination when you have Trump advisers threatening to “come after” the media, and Trump himself vowing to “come down hard” on MSNBC and “make them pay for their illegal political activity.”

These are just some of the reasons we need YOU in this fight. So, find your favorite way to unwind after reading through this week’s recap, and then make a plan for how you will fight back this week, this month, this election cycle.

Thanks for all that you do to defeat Republican extremism.
– People For the American Way

TAKE ACTION: NO TO DRONES. NO TO SHOTSPOTTER SURVEILLANCE



As salaamu alaykum —

The hum of drones fills the skies in Gaza “24/7” as drones play a major role in carrying out strikes during the active genocide we are witnessing.

One Israeli drone company, Airobotics, has an exclusive partnership with ShotSpotter audio surveillance, integrating microphones with drone response.

From the U.S. to Palestine, stopping the free flow of surveillance tech, like ShotSpotter, is critical for us all. Tech in the wrong hands — from Israeli soldiers to U.S. police — is yet another weapon.

Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren are calling for a federal investigation into ShotSpotter after a WIRED exposé⁴ found over two-thirds of ShotSpotter microphones are placed in Black, Brown, and low-income neighborhoods — potentially in violation of civil rights law.

Take action today: [Call for a federal investigation into ShotSpotter surveillance tech.](#)



As every horrific day of Israel’s genocide continues in Gaza, we are collectively doing what we can to stop arms transfers to Israel and prevent the free exchange of mass surveillance tech that harms us all.

Police use of facial recognition and social media surveillance of U.S. students protesting genocide is not disconnected from the Israeli military’s use of those same tools.

[One tangible step toward ending mass surveillance would be a federal investigation into the widely-used ShotSpotter.](#)

ShotSpotter is in over 100 U.S. cities, with over 20,000 microphones, 70% of which are used to monitor Black, Brown, and low-income communities.

We need to stop U.S. surveillance tech from being used in support of Israel’s genocide in Gaza. And we need to push back on the surveillance tech coming from Israel that aims to fill our skies with drones to police us.

[Take action with us today.](#)

In solidarity,
Granate and the team at MPower Change



Constant noise from the unmanned planes causes headaches, irritability, and insomnia, and can literally drive one mad.

Shahd Safi
Gaza Strip
November 13, 2023

A Skylark drone, one of the several types used by Israel over Gaza.

Always, always, there is the buzzing. The incessant whine of drones hovers over Gaza skies 24 hours a day, every day.

Drones are not new to Gazans. They have been routinely used by the IDF, or as I call them, the IOF — Israeli Occupation Forces — to monitor everyday life here for many years. I had become almost accustomed to their irritating sound, like a mosquito in my ear. But that was before.



Since Israel imposed the lockdown after October 7, drones have proliferated in deadly swarms over our heads. Now they sound more like buzz-saws or motorcycles. The constant noise causes headaches, irritability, and insomnia, and can literally drive one mad.

During the day, the drones look like two black or brown triangles wandering the sky together. Sometimes they appear very small, but even these tiny distant triangles can end your life in seconds. Unlike war planes that loudly announce themselves, when a drone strikes, you don't know it's coming. Suddenly something — it could be you — explodes. Sometimes they look like slow-flying birds. You wish they were birds. Even the most dangerous birds are more merciful.

We recently confirmed that highly sophisticated U.S. drones, operated by U.S. military personnel, now circle over Gaza. The U.S. claims they are unarmed, meant to locate hostages and prevent further escalation between Israel and Hamas. But for Palestinians here, it feels like these drones are protecting Israel as it continues the genocide of our people.

A family conversation

"Whenever I hear a drone getting close, I just feel so scared," says my beloved mother. "My heart starts beating rapidly and my body feels cold. I wonder who it will shoot. I'm always terrified it's one of my children or relatives."

"I remember I couldn't study many times due to the buzzing of drones," adds my cousin, Hala. "It provokes me a lot, especially during the night, I hope one day they leave our sky,"

"Somehow, I manage to handle the noise," cousin Nada injects. "When I traveled to Egypt as a child, the first thing I noticed was that I wasn't hearing the noisy drones. Now that I'm older, I'm okay with the noise and their presence, I got used to it. What I am not okay with is the killing, the bombing."

"The drones and warplanes are beautiful at night, sparkling and shining like stars and sometimes lit up orange, but what they do is very ugly," says cousin Mohammed "I hope they don't kill me."

Whenever the drones come close and the sound intensifies, Mohammed tells me he's scared. I lie to him: "When the noise gets super loud, we should feel reassured we won't be bombed. It's loud because when they are right above us, drones and planes shoot at what's in front of them, not what's directly below."

It's something I've been telling myself since I was a child, although now it makes me feel guilty as I say it to Mohammed, because I know it's not true. If ever a drone strikes, he'll never know it's coming.

Our perilous sky

How contradictory is our planet's sky! It hosts such beautiful birds and passenger planes to take us around the world, but it's also the stage for the world's deadliest weapons. I wonder, is Venus' sky more merciful? Where, under this perilous sky, can Palestinians go?

PS Fellow WANNer Hossam Wail Abo-Shammallah has recorded [a video of the drone sound](https://www.instagram.com/p/CzfeDUKLQ5I/).
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzfeDUKLQ5I/>

Listen to it through your headphones, and imagine you can never take them off.



Mentor: [Ellen Tichenor](#)



Tell Congress: Opposing genocide isn't antisemitic.

GOOGLE'S LYING

While the world has been **reeling in horror at the genocide in Gaza and deadly pogroms against Palestinians in the West Bank** – Google is pressing ahead with a massive government and military cloud computer contract in Israel.

EKŌ

Google workers say that this technology is directly enabling Israel's crimes against Palestinians. And they are fighting back.

Last month tens of Google employees staged simultaneous sit-ins in New York and California, putting their bodies in the way to defend human rights and disrupt the \$1.2 billion Israeli government contract.

Google bosses retaliated by firing 50 of them (even workers who weren't protesting!), but **pressure is mounting on the tech giant to drop the Israeli government contract.** Let's

Tell Google: drop the Israeli government contract and respect human rights

It's all over the media. One Google software engineer who participated in the New York City sit-in protest in April said that by providing cloud and AI infrastructure to the Israeli military, Google is *"directly implicated in the genocide of the Palestinian people."*

Now journalists at The Intercept have an official Israeli government document which proves that Google's statement that the contract is "not directed at highly sensitive, classified, or military workloads relevant to weapons or intelligence services" is untrue. In fact, **the contract commits Google to directly support Israel's weapons corporations.**

Google is having a PR meltdown. A crackdown announcement to all employees, leaked to the media, warns *"If you're one of the few who are tempted to think we're going to overlook conduct that violates our policies, think again."* **Sounds a little desperate, doesn't it?**

The truth is, the contract – called Project Nimbus – has drawn condemnation from shareholders as well as employees, over **concerns that the project will lead to further abuses of Palestinians' human rights.** But we need to grow this campaign all around the world, to change the calculus for the bosses at Google.

There's no other way. The contract with the Israeli government apparently forbids Google from denying service to any particular government entities. So the **only way for Google to end complicity in war crimes committed by the Israeli military** is to drop the contract completely.

Tell Google: drop Project Nimbus and respect human rights for all

We've been fighting in solidarity with tech workers and impacted communities for years. After public pressure, Microsoft sold its stake in AnyVision, a facial recognition startup implicated in Israeli human rights abuses. In 2020, **we helped get Apple to adopt a landmark human rights policy** to protect its customers. And the Ekō community is still campaigning to stop Google and Microsoft from building data centres in Saudi Arabia, where we know the government will stop at nothing to silence journalists and dissidents.



First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, **then you win.**

Thanks for all that you do,
Eoin, Leili and the team at Ekō

Ekō is a community of people from around the world committed to curbing the growing power of corporations. We want to buy from, work for and invest in companies that respect the environment, treat their workers well and respect democracy. And we're not afraid to stand up to them when they don't.

SOME OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS FROM PALESTINE



Since returning to Palestine last week, I have been speaking with trusted individuals and extensively monitoring Hebrew broadcasts on TV and radio. I developed a number of observations about Palestinians and Israelis that are often missing in the Western Press:

1. Palestinians in the West Bank and Israel have a deep sense of fear and foreboding. They were shocked at the intensity and brutality of the Israeli response to Hamas' attack and the inability of the world community to respond adequately to what they clearly perceive as an ongoing genocide.
2. Many are also surprised at how long the crisis is taking. They strongly fear that the end is nowhere in sight, and that if hostilities in Gaza were to cease or become significantly reduced then the West Bank would be next. The heightened level of Israeli settler and army violence as well as impunity is only the first step towards a more massive attack, with the possible aim of another large-scale population transfer—this time in the West Bank and towards Jordan.
3. Israelis also are reacting as if in the midst of an existential battle, sensing the need (and perhaps the opportunity) to reach a final resolution of their dispute with the Palestinians, by means of a crushing and lasting victory and the implementation of an unclear plan to resolve matters in their favor once and for all. The sense one gets is that Israelis are living in a bubble, with no appreciation for the suffering of the Palestinians (which is rarely depicted in their media) or the opinions of the rest of the world (which they dismiss as antisemitism). There is only a determination to use massive power, out of a sense of superiority combined paradoxically with a feeling of vulnerability. There exists also a sense of entitlement and impunity clearly demanding that Israel be exempt from normal standards of behavior and that the world see things their way, and complaining of victimhood if the world (or anyone) fails to support their version of reality.
4. There is very little interest in Israel any more to maintain the façade of democracy, liberality, freedom of speech, right of dissent, or judicial restraint. There exists a vengeful spirit and a feeling that the outrages of October 7 gives them the right to do anything they want. The anger at Netanyahu personally hides the fact that Gallant and Lapid do not really disagree with him at all on the overall handling of the Gaza issue or the Palestinians.
5. In the West Bank there is real economic suffering, since tourism has virtually stopped as well as work permits for Israel. Last month, there was also a 50% reduction in salaries from the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, there is increased settler violence and an overall sense of foreboding as people are waiting for worse things to develop. Ultimately, there is a tremendous disappointment with the reactions of the Arab countries and of the Palestinian Authority, which is losing all credibility.
6. Generally, there is a feeling that major things may happen soon, none of them at all good, yet there is a fierce determination for *sumud* and resilience.

These are merely some of my observations. While I am here, I will continue to listen and absorb what I see and hear.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Kuttab
Executive Director



THE REFORMER: SAINT JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN, PASTOR, REFORMER, AND PERSON OF UNENDING PATIENCE

On 4/20/24, the church remembers a 16th Century reformer who pastored **THE REFORMER: SAINT JOHANNES BUGENHAGEN, PASTOR, REFORMER, AND PERSON OF UNENDING PATIENCE**.

We should just get this out of the way at the beginning: St. Bugenhagen was Martin Luther's pastor and the pastor of St. Mary's Lutheran Church in Wittenberg. And, look, if you can imagine a more irritable or irritating parishioner than Martin Luther...well...I cannot. So blessings to this guy already!

Born in Pomerania in 1485, Bugenhagen was smart, well educated, and a beneficiary of necessity: there weren't any theologians to be ordained, and he happened to be smart enough to pass as one, and so he was ordained a priest in 1509. He began teaching Bible courses at Belbuck Abbey, and in 1520 he picked up a little pamphlet entitled *“Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church”* by an exiled fellow priest, Martin Luther, and thought it was largely rubbish.

He eventually, though, became warm to the idea (perhaps his heart was strangely warmed?) and in 1521 moved to Wittenberg to support the growing Reformation in person.

Bugenhagen quickly grew into his Reformation role and was drafted into Luther's writing team, tackling the daunting task of translating the entire Bible into German. He used his scholarly know how to take on Ulrich Zwingli in the inter-Reformation arguments, and he became a sought after lecturer and teacher in his own right. Along with all this, he had to listen to Martin Luther's confessions which, legend has it, were long and detailed. Bless.

Bugenhagen's leadership is still felt today as it was he who ordained that first new cadre of Lutheran pastors into this fledgling movement of a church. He became one of the first three protestant doctors of theology, sponsored and paid for by Frederick III, Luther's patron and protector.

While Luther took to writing and speaking, Bugenhagen tended the ship at home in Northern Germany and Scandinavia, piloting the new church into a new frontier. He organized and wrote the rules for new church plants throughout the region, effectively becoming a Bishop for the parishes that sprang up in the Reformer's wake. Under his influence the church in Denmark-Norway lost their Apostolic Succession as it was Bugenhagen, and not the local Roman bishop, who crowned Christian III and ordained local pastors. He was derisively called "The Second Apostle of the North," but the name, though a bit of a slur, was true: he not only set up new rules for the churches in the area, he actually got leadership and the locals to follow the rules and fall in love with them,

He moved hearts, not just heads.

And all the while he had to listen to Blessed Martin Luther's confessions. Bless him.

When Saint Martin died in 1546 it was Saint Bugenhagen who took care of Kadi and Luther's



children, faithful to his friend and parishioner to the end.

Saint Johannes Bugenhagen died on this date in 1558. He was more than just a pastor, but an influencer, and a brilliant community organizer. He knew how to get people together for a common goal and meet that goal...he deserves to be studied if only for that amazing gift.

And I would bet a large sum of money that most Lutherans, though we've lived eating the fruits of his labor for our entire lives, didn't even know about him (or much about him) until reading this. I didn't know much about him until I went to seminary, and my love for him primarily came from my Church History professor who, bless his German heart, loved him.

Saint Johannes Bugenhagen is a reminder for me, and should be for the whole church, that in the shadows of great people we often find great people who quietly move mountains.

Let those with ears to hear, hear.

-information gleaned from public sources and from the memory banks of Church History II (thanks, Dr. Hendel)

Posted on Facebook April 20, 2024 by Tim Brown-- a pastor, writer, and ELCA director for congregational stewardship. Brought to us by Barbara Ruhe.

WE FOUND YOU SOME HOPE

This weekend marks the unofficial start of summer, but for many watching or who are impacted by the continued violence in Gaza and beyond, it means the start of another season of suffering and fear.

For more than seven months now, the world has witnessed unconscionable horror. In the past few days alone, the Israeli military has displaced nearly one million people in Rafah — it likely wasn't the first time they've been forced to flee because of the threat of bombs and bullets.

Our small team at Win Without War remains undeterred in our pursuit of a ceasefire that can end the violence and create the space for a sustainable peace across Israel and Palestine. **While there is much to grieve and be enraged about, today I wanted to share something different. Because amidst *incredible* despair are amazing stories of heroism and hope.**



Days ago, Palestinian journalists covering Gaza were awarded the 2024 IPI-IMS Press Freedom Hero Award. The list of named individuals includes **Wael Dahdouh**, Al Jazeera Arabic's Gaza bureau chief, who has continued reporting despite unimaginable personal suffering and loss. [Learn more about why he has risked his life to "be the world's eyes and ears".](https://www.aljazeera.com/program/talk-to-al-jazeera/2024/3/31/wael-dahdouh-gazas-voice-amid-loss-and-courage) <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/talk-to-al-jazeera/2024/3/31/wael-dahdouh-gazas-voice-amid-loss-and-courage>

This will be the first time a collective group has won the award, and the decision is a testament to the incredible resilience and perseverance these journalists show each day.



There's also **Adam Hamawy**, a former U.S. Army combat surgeon who refused an evacuation from southern Gaza earlier this month. Instead, he chose to stay with colleagues who were unable to leave because they weren't U.S. citizens. His courage became a call to action that got the attention and support of multiple members of Congress, including Senator Tammy Duckworth, whose life he saved in Iraq 20 years ago.

On Tuesday, CNN reported that Hamawy — and 15 others — have been safely evacuated. He remarked, "We are glad that we are out and that we all left together. Our hearts are with the people who still have to endure and cannot leave."

This list includes people like **Magen Inon**, whose parents were killed on October 7 and who spoke in person at a London event that was part of the 19th Israeli-Palestinian Joint Memorial Day Ceremony hosted by Combatants for Peace and the Parents Circle–Families Forum, two peace-building organizations earlier this month. Mr. Inon refuses to let the violence that has happened to his family be 'hijacked' for more war and now works as a peace activist.

And that brings me to you. If you're reading this, you're likely one of the tens of thousands of people who have taken action or donated in support of peace these past few months (and possibly even long before!). And the simple truth is that you give me hope.

This moment may be dark, but this weekend, if you're able, I encourage you to find a moment to see these, and other, bright spots. Thank you for being part of that light — and if you're itching or inspired to dig deeper, here are three things you can do right now:

- **Speak Out.** [Urge President Biden to go further in conditioning U.S. support of the Israeli government as it wages a brutal war in Gaza](https://act.winwithoutwar.org/act/ceasefire-rafah?akid=9876.342312.rJqXHQ&c0=ceasefire-rafah.YcMSrK&rd=1&source=em20240526&t=11). <https://act.winwithoutwar.org/act/ceasefire-rafah?akid=9876.342312.rJqXHQ&c0=ceasefire-rafah.YcMSrK&rd=1&source=em20240526&t=11>. If you've already signed, please consider sharing with 5 friends to help us build more power.
- **Stay Ready.** U.S. voters have an incredible amount of influence when it comes to influencing U.S. foreign policy — and how it impacts people's lives worldwide. It all starts at the ballot box. [Check to make sure your voter registration is up to date so that you're ready for November](#).
- **Support.** To end the violence in Gaza and across the region, we need to ramp up our advocacy, movement support, ad campaigns, grassroots mobilization, everything. All that work takes incredible resources — but that's where you come in. If you're looking to support those who are directly in harm's way, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), is a trusted organization that does vital, lifesaving work on the ground in Gaza and elsewhere..

It's not easy to be someone who refuses to look away and continues to speak out. There's no shortage of worthy causes that are less painful to engage with. But you and I know that when people turn away, the cycle of violence can continue.

That's why together, our community is inspiring something beautiful: By refusing to give up in ways big and small, we are the ones who will build the more peaceful world we all want and deserve.

Sara, on behalf of the Win Without War team

THE RAFAH MASSACRE

Over the holiday weekend, while many Americans were distracted and after the International Court of Justice instructed Israel to cease all military operations in Rafah, **Israel launched more than 60 strikes on the refugee city, including dropping multiple 2,000-pound bombs on a “safe zone” of displaced civilians living in tents.**

This was an utterly horrific massacre, with people burned alive as well as infants and children decapitated. At least 45 Palestinians were killed, with more injured. It should have never happened, *and we cannot let it happen again.*

Sign our petition right now demanding the Biden Administration immediately halt ALL weapons transfers to Israel → https://go.justicedemocrats.com/sign/petition_20240529_rafah/?source=em20240529-35032&akid=35032%2E1529610%2ECj0iLa

Israel’s government can’t get its story straight: while the IDF claimed Hamas leaders had a base near the humanitarian site, Netanyahu made a statement saying this bombardment was a “mistake.” Regardless, Israel intentionally bombed refugees living in tents – it was an unjustifiable, heinous war crime, and Israel MUST be held accountable.

President Biden repeatedly said that attacking Rafah was a red line. Israel has since attacked this humanitarian zone numerous times, with tanks now in the city center — *but as of yesterday, the White House says Netanyahu still hasn’t crossed the red line.*

The line has been crossed, time and time again. We cannot let our government continue spending our tax dollars to send billions of dollars, bombs, and weapons to Israel to enable their genocide against Palestinians.

We cannot and will not sit idly by while our government enables this carnage. Netanyahu and his far-right government must be stopped — it’s time for President Biden to stand on the right side of history by doing everything in his power to prevent more innocent loss of life.

In solidarity,
Justice Democrats



JUNE 2024 BIRTHDAYS!



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.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER!

June 6-8th - NE Synod Assembly - Worcester, MA

June 12 -- Father's Day

June 19 - Juneteenth!

June 28 - Sue Carey's Book Launch 10:30 a.m. Boys and Girls Club, Hartford

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for June 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
6/2	1	Deuteronomy 5:12-15	Nina Kretschmer
	2	2 Corinthians 4: 5-12	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Psalm 81: 1-10	Alternating men, then women
6/9	1	Genesis 3: 8-15	Marty Holmeen
	2	2 Corinthians 4:13 – 5:1	Judy Butterworth-Kremer
	Psalm	Psalm 130	Unison
6/16	1	Ezekiel 17:22-24	Kasumi Campbell
	2	2 Corinthians 5: 6-10, 14-17	Betsy DeRoma
	Psalm	Psalm 92: 1-4, 12-15	Unison
6/23	1	Job 38: 1-11	Dale Eberhardt
	2	2 Corinthians 6:1-13	Rebecca Lewis
	Psalm	Psalm 107: 1-3, 23-32	Alternating women, then men
6/30	1	Wisdom 1:13-15 and 2:23-24	Pastor Rick
	2	2 Corinthians 8: 7-15	Mildred Unfried
	Psalm	Psalm 30	Unison



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Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Judy Butterworth-Kremer, Secretary

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

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Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

www.graceistheplace.org

