



GRACE NOTES

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The Sun

Mary Oliver

Have you ever seen
anything
in your life
more wonderful
than the way the sun,
every evening,
relaxed and easy,
floats toward the horizon
and into the clouds or the hills,
or the rumpled sea,
and is gone—
and how it slides again
out of the blackness,
every morning,
on the other side of the world,
like a red flower
streaming upward on its heavenly oils,
say, on a morning in early summer,
at its perfect imperial distance—
and have you ever felt for anything
such wild love—
do you think there is anywhere, in any language,
a word billowing enough
for the pleasure
that fills you,
as the sun
reaches out,
as it warms you

as you stand there,
empty-handed—
or have you too
turned from this world—

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Lutherans are imperfect, but we know we are loved and forgiven. We come from different backgrounds and identify in different ways, with a commonality in our conviction that our unconditionally loving Creator and Redeemer offers us mercy, forgiveness, an eternal life as a free gift - we call it God's grace.

We love Jesus, and we remember he told us to love ourselves, our neighbors, and our God.

We trust that the Holy Spirit is always at work within and around us, guiding us into joyfully expressing that love through service, justice, and worship.

We try to be welcoming,
and we like to think our catch phrase is kinda cool:
God's work. Our hands.

ONE OF US IS RUNNING FOR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES



OUR LIVES ARE A SERIES OF CHOICES

One might assume that knowing what to do in any given moment of our lives involves a complex series of daily choices. These decisions are both simple, sometimes vexing, but in this modern world always present, and too often scary and difficult. So often we look away, hide out afraid to decide, wondering who is there to judge us, and realize to hide out is a much simpler way to lose ourselves in the sauce of a common yet difficult and challenging life.

Luther would say, "Not to choose is to choose."

It would be good if we could just cover ourselves in the blankets of disguise, pay attention to the silly and meaningless things, lock our doors as the disciples would do, deny the things that are important, and hope that no one comes to hurt us or find us in our loneliness. Hope is so fleeting; we do not know who or what to trust and when and where to take the risk of our choices.

So often those risks have consequences. Loss of friends, fear of loneliness, darkness rather than light. Some of us are far more vulnerable than all of us or most of us.

These folks, who are all around us, wanting, needing, and frightened by the threats and violence. They are vulnerable. They could be immigrants or refugees, elderly, those fearful of seeking help, hungry, homeless, unable to find healthcare, worldly and near or at a far distance, while others can't watch or do anything about it.

It is at this time of grave uncertainty that things have begun to change! Here you will read about perspectives on these things and suggest that these issues offer an existential need to engage in what is happening. From another earlier time, a song was constantly on the radio calling to us, "Somethings happening here, what it is ain't exactly clear." It was Viet Nam, today it is Israel, hostages, Palestinians, Lebanon, Russia, Ukraine, Myanmar, Haiti, Iran, wealth versus poverty, violence and guns. We are told that Project 2025 will remove the need to vote and we won't have to worry about voting anymore. Hate groups abound and our government is not functioning. Our hearts are full of fear. I have long characterized myself as an "independent." I can no longer do that. In this world, it feels to me to be a coward's choice.

'This Sacred Scene' offered by ... Amanda Gorman

We gather at this hollowed place / because we believe in the American dream.

We face a race that tests if this country we cherish / shall perish from the Earth / and if our Earth shall perish from this country.

It falls to us to ensure that we do not fall, / for a people that cannot stand together / cannot stand at all.

We are one family / regardless of religion, class or color.

For what defines a patriot is not just our love of liberty / but our love of one another.

This is loud in our country's call because while we all love freedom, / it is love that frees us all.

Empathy emancipates, / making us greater than hate or vanity, / that is the American promise.

Powerful and pure, / divided we cannot endure / but united, we can endeavor to humanize our democracy / and endear democracy to humanity.

And make no mistake, / co-hearing is the hardest task history ever wrote.

But tomorrow is not written by our odds of hardship / but by the audacity of our hope, / by the vitality of our vote.

Only now approaching this rare air / are we aware / that perhaps the American dream is no dream at all / but instead a dare / to dream together.

Like a million roots tethered, / branching up humbly, / making one tree, this is our country / from many, one, / from battles, won, / our freedoms sung, / our kingdom come has just begun.

We redeem this sacred scene / ready for our journey from it together.

We must birth this early republic / and achieve an unearthly summit / let us not just believe in an American dream, / let us be worthy of it.

It is time for a new generation to take charge, to show us a new way, to bring us forward, not backwards. Even though our religious leaders are trying to show the way, and so many churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues look for ways to help, like GHIAA, like our own efforts to welcome all people, show love out in the communities we serve, establishing relationships with others who care, finding ways to walk hand in hand with the have nots, walking away from the things that frighten us, continuing to call out to others who are lonely, building relationships, looking for new ways to help, to see the unseen and to bring the future forward...

We are a nation of immigrants. Save native Americans, we all have come from somewhere else, looking for a safer place for our families, escaping from joblessness and Climate change, clean water, addressing the shortage of housing, the poverty all around us, people making money off of the poor, buying up housing and raising rents. This a political quagmire, a relationship mess, and the most daunting time for most of us.

So, when someone says to you, don't worry, you won't have to vote again. When you learn that the plan is to further cut taxes for the wealthy, while increasing costs for the middle class, when we know our children are dying from gun violence, our military will round up all immigrants and prepare them for mass deportation, this is not right, it is sick. I love our country, we need to encourage voting, make it easy to do so, and to enable women to have control of their lives and bodies.

Listen carefully as November 5th comes closer. Be sure you understand the stakes that we face as a nation and a world. Let's come together, right now!

PASTOR'S MESSAGE - IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

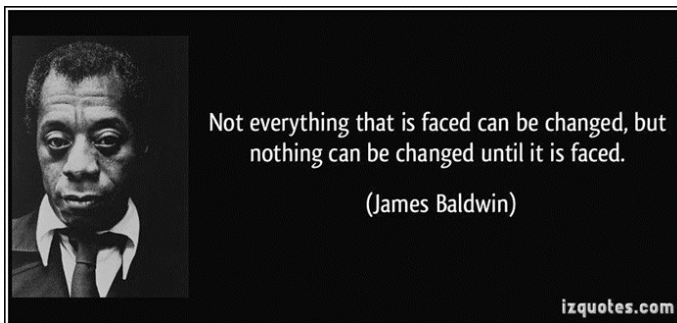
We have now listened to both parties in our country, and even as I am ailing, we watched and listened to all of it. Both parties and the process of this election year with candidates vying to lead our country forward. There are 67 days until November 5th. We have heard the plans of the Republicans and Democrats, and even the words of other candidates like RFK, Jr. who has now decided to join Trump, who willingly welcomes him.

Billionaires have funded and are funding much of what is happening, hoping to shape our future with their interests and power. Their collective desire is to anticipate another massive tax cut resulting in greater wealth and even less taxes, while tariffs and taxes consume the rest.

Elon Musk, as an example, anticipates having a major impact on the outcome by using his wealth to shape the future. In the meantime, Mr. Trump anticipates his Supreme Court to be having his back, with support for his immunity and outrageous decisions that have already taken our country back fifty years and more.

I am your pastor, and not your political advisor and chief. I can tell you, that I love all people. My family made its way to this country around the time of the first world war. I had family members on both sides of World War 2, and even so I felt shame about my family and its likely impact on the holocaust.

In so many ways our future could well be determined by a disturbed person who has split our nation, with lies and violence. I plead with each and every one of you to vote. Voter suppression will yield what I fear the most. We must be able to find a way through this.



It is also remarkable that we have a remarkable man as the Vice-Presidential selection who brings with him, love, decency, and fearlessness. Yes, he is an ELCA Lutheran, and we can be proud of him. Our New England Synod Bishop, an openly gay man, has already faced challenges brought about by those who would desecrate churches where such people might worship as we welcome all to our churches.

Kamala Harris has a vision for our country and its place in the world. In some sense this election and our choices may make all the difference. Let us all vote. And remember - that not to vote is to vote. Not to choose is to choose.





July 29, 2024

It took just 5 days.

Nothing like it had ever happened before in American history.

And yet, by this past Thursday, a mere five days after President Biden's 1:46 pm Sunday afternoon announcement of him ending his re-election campaign and handing the candidacy over to his Vice President, Kamala Harris, the Wall Street Journal (no friend to women, People of Color, young voters, the poor or the working class), WSJ — this grand oracle of Capitalism, conservative ideology and the force that is Rupert Murdoch — ran this stunning historic headline, truly one for the ages:

Harris Erases Trump's Lead, WSJ Poll Finds

Kamala Harris, the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, two genius parents, one a Stanford economist, the other a brilliant Berkeley scientist, both active in the 1960s civil rights movement of their beloved adopted country, America, and proud to have their children be among the first to integrate a public school in California — *that* Kamala Harris was now, in 2024, accepting the all-but-certain nomination to be the Democratic Party candidate for President of the United States.

And, it should be noted, the chance to become the first woman ever to hold this esteemed office.

Yes, that was just one week ago. A euphoric nation exploded in a joyful belief that finally the promise of the American Dream was no longer just a "promise" nor a "dream" but a roaring reality that immediately took off like a rocket.

And each day this week has seen a new record set for a Presidential campaign:

- A Record-Smashing Surge of Volunteers Signing Up Across Key Swing States (a total of 170,000 throughout the nation as of this morning);
- The Biggest One-Day Haul of Campaign Contributions Ever, 60% of them from first-time donors (the total overall take is more than \$350 million as of today);
- The Largest Zoom Call Ever for a Campaign Meeting (160,000 participants, with more than double that expected on Monday night's "Women for Harris" Zoom — feel free to join in
- The Most People Ever to Register to Vote Over a 48-Hour Period: Almost 40,000 New Voters!

85% of all Convention delegates (3,404 of them) endorsed Harris after she had only been a candidate for three days — and all this 4 weeks before the Convention even starts!

Historians and political scientists agree that this level of enthusiasm *this quickly* is unheard of in modern American politics. Trump is furious. He is planning to sue to "keep Harris off the ballot."

Good luck with that. It won't work. Apparently, somewhere along the way, Trump Van Winkle must have fallen into a deep sleep and missed the memo that many white men like him also seemed to miss:

“America is no longer your America, the exclusive club for the gender missing its second X chromosome, which then makes you prone to war, violent outbursts, something called ‘mansplaining,’ harassing the other gender, dying on average 6 years before that other gender — and yet still holding the majority of the wealth, the property, the tee times and most of the seats in Congress (72% of those seats at last count are yours).”

That America is being shown the door.

Here’s what the New America looks like:

Seventy-nine percent of the United States is either **Female** (51% of the country), **Persons of Color** (42% of the country is now Black, Brown, Asian or Indigenous), or **Young Adults** between 18 and 39 (the Gen Z-ers and Millennials now make up 42% of the country!) — or some combination thereof of these three demographics.

This Country Is Female, Young and Not-So-White Anymore.

Not the best place to run for President if your three main personality traits are misogyny, bigotry, and sounding like everyone’s Uncle Don.

Oh — and then there’s this...

Here’s the truth about who our fellow Americans really are (and here’s the list nobody has bothered to show you because, well, we need to keep perpetuating our own belief that we are stuck living in a white, Christian Nationalist, conservative, red-neck, deep-fried-Oreo-loving country — when, in fact, the vast bulk of the United States is **not** like that anymore):

- 69%** of Americans support legal **abortion**.
- 72%** of Americans **don’t** own a gun.
- 90%** of the country wants **more** gun control laws.
- 72%** of us believe the Climate Crisis is **real**.
- 71%** of all Americans **approve** of labor unions.
- 79%** of us insist the rich must pay **more** in taxes.
- 76%** of us want a much **higher** minimum wage.
- 70%** of all voters believe marijuana should be **legal**.
- 73%** of the country want student loan debt **relief**.
- 74%** of Americans want **more** affordable homes.
- 65%** support **term limits** on all Supreme Court justices.
- 84%** of Americans want **free** Pre-k and 3-k.
- 69%** of Americans **support** same-sex marriage.
- 65%** of Americans want to **end** the electoral college.
- 89%** of Americans **oppose** gerrymandering.
- 70%** of us are demanding a **permanent** ceasefire in Gaza **NOW!**
- 72%** of all Americans want money **removed** from politics!
- 70%** of Millennials say they would **likely** vote for a Socialist candidate.

THAT is who we are.

Mr. Trump — how do you expect to win when what you believe in is the **opposite** of what more than two-thirds of the country believes regarding many of the major issues of the day?! You are running as a right wing whackadoodle in a country that has seriously become more open and progressive. The majority of Americans HATE what you stand for. Just look at those poll numbers I listed above. Those percentages don’t come from me, they come from Gallup, the Associated Press, PEW Research, CNN and others. They come from the American people.

And finally, one last powerful fact:

The Republicans have **LOST** the popular vote in **7 of the last 8** Presidential elections! Since 1988, the American people have made it abundantly clear: They don't want a Republican running the country. The **ONLY** reason we were stuck with Bush and Trump is because the Founders created the Electoral College in order to appease the slave states and try to avoid a Civil War (and that seemed to work out ok).

But here's the kicker: The majority of these 3 groups — women, young people, People of Color — vote **Democratic** in every election! The statistics don't lie: **51%** of women are Democrats, as are **61%** of young people, and **83%** of African Americans. Those facts alone should guarantee that the Democrats hold a majority of political power in the United States.

But as long as there is gerrymandering, the Electoral College and voter suppression, the concept of "one-person, one-vote majority rule" — the singular underpinning of a true Democracy — is sadly missing as the "Democracy" is still yet to be realized.

So what's the takeaway here? It's quite simple:

THERE ARE MORE OF US THAN THERE ARE OF THEM!

We are now the majority.

We are a Liberal Nation.

We are going to elect the first woman — a Black woman, no less! — to be the President of the United States.

So what could possibly go wrong?

THE ONLY WAY TRUMP CAN WIN IS IF LIBERALS AND DEMOCRATS STAY HOME.

But why would that happen? The unthinkable — a certain skill set many Democrats have repeated ad infinitum — would have to take place:

1. For instance, if the candidate, Kamala Harris, suddenly starts taking "centrist" positions in order to not offend anyone — yet in doing so she ends up offending everyone, i.e., the **MAJORITY** of Americans who are liberal, Left and progressive women, People of Color, young people, and the working class. That is not going to happen.
2. Or, if Harris continues Biden's embrace of Netanyahu and America's funding of, and the arming of, the slaughter in Gaza, this will hand Michigan over to Trump and put him in the White House. Michigan has 200,000 registered Muslim voters, and 300,000 Michiganders are of Middle Eastern or North African descent. Plus, 13% of young voters in Michigan have already declared they will leave the Presidential line on the ballot blank. In fact, I think one way to fix things in Michigan would be for Vice President Harris and her running mate to make a major announcement in Detroit, on a stage with numerous area Arab Americans, Muslims, and leaders of a wide-ranging coalition of Jewish peace groups, to offer her action plan as to what she and Biden can do *now* to keep their initial promise to Netanyahu — that if he uses American tax dollars or weapons to violate international law and human rights, such "assistance" will be withheld. Said Biden to Bibi in October: "When America experienced the hell of 9/11, we felt enraged as well... [and] we made mistakes. So, I caution the government of Israel not to be blinded by rage." In other words, Biden's warning to Bibi was this: Do not do what we did to Iraq — and to

ourselves.

Netanyahu refused to listen — and then did the opposite of what Biden warned him not to do. And after each round of carpet bombings, obliterating hospitals, schools, childcare centers and refugee camps, with hundreds and then thousands of Palestinian bodies piled higher and higher, Biden would admonish Netanyahu and tell him that we were going to have to cease gifting him with an unlimited supply of American tax dollars and weapons. And each time, President Biden, already in obvious decline, seemed not to know what to do or how to handle the horror he had personally unleashed on the good people of Palestine. And so it continues to this day. There is no place anywhere on the planet outside of the Arab and Muslim world with as many Arab and Muslim souls than in the state of Michigan. That is why I will keep talking about this until I am heard. The Party doesn't get it. In 2016, Hillary lost Michigan when she didn't need to. I will not sit by and let the same fate befall Kamala Harris — which perhaps, after she refused to sit on the dais with Netanyahu at his speech to Congress last Wednesday, hopefully this seems unlikely. And, after her one-on-one meeting with him the next day, there was no hug. She walked out and addressed the gaggle of cameras and microphones with this steely direct statement regarding the suffering of the Palestinian people: "I will not be silent."

3. Likewise, if Vice President Harris appoints Josh Shapiro as her Vice Presidential candidate, this too may result in losing Michigan. Shapiro said it's "antisemitic" for anyone to join the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel in order to convince them to stop their apartheid behavior. He also cruelly compared peaceful college students to the Ku Klux Klan because they were calling for an end to the slaughter in Gaza. Actions like these will diminish the Arab American vote for Harris and depress a large swath of the youth vote throughout the country. As Michelle Goldberg of the New York Times has said, "Biden is in danger of losing Michigan and, with it, the whole election."

Also, more than 2 dozen public education advocacy groups have asked Vice President Harris not to choose Shapiro as her running mate because, as they stated in their letter to her on Wednesday, "we respectfully ask you not to select Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, who has supported education policies mirroring Project 2025." As we Michiganders gave the world Trump Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, we are especially concerned about even the slightest whittling away of our public schools, and we, too, ask Vice President Harris to pick a running mate who is a million miles away from any of these efforts.

4. Finally, should Harris decide to do the bidding of the wealthy who are lining up with big checks so they can try to control her, this would clearly put her on the side against the workers and consumers. Case in point: This week Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, gave her \$7 million. What will he want for his money? He's already revealed the quid pro quo: He wants the removal of one of Biden's best appointments, the head of the FTC, Lina Khan. She is on a mission to break up monopolies and to police Corporate America in the hopes of stopping them from doing more harm. Hoffman and other Big Money donors want to stop *her*. Hoffman has no shame in stating what he expects in return for his \$7 million "donation" to the Harris campaign: "I would hope that Vice President Harris would replace her." Will Harris do what she is told? *My hope?* Absolutely not.

But as many have said, the Dems are pros at snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. So, as I see it, that's the only way we can lose. If too many people sense it's the same old political hoo-ha, the Democratic vote will be seriously **depressed**, millions will stay stuck in their **despair**, and all of this may lead to a Trump victory.

This must not happen. The overwhelming jolt of joy from this last week must continue, but with **ACTION** — and that is where you and I come in!

In my next letter to you, I will reveal the blueprint/playbook/ battle plan for what we millions — the Majority — must do over these next 100 days. I think you're going to like it. It includes simple things we can all do. It will be fun. You'll meet new friends. There are Door Prizes! You might become a local hero. And we're all gonna party like it's 2029!

CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALITY - STATEMENT



As Christians, our faith teaches us everyone is created in God's image and commands us to love one another. As Americans, we value our system of government and the good that can be accomplished in our constitutional democracy. Today, we are concerned about a persistent threat to both our religious communities and our democracy — Christian nationalism.

Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, distorting both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation. We reject this damaging political ideology and invite our Christian brothers and sisters to join us in opposing this threat to our faith and to our nation.

As Christians, we are bound to Christ, not by citizenship, but by faith. We believe that:

- People of all faiths and none have the right and responsibility to engage constructively in the public square.
- Patriotism does not require us to minimize our religious convictions.
- One's religious affiliation, or lack thereof, should be irrelevant to one's standing in the civic community.
- Government should not prefer one religion over another or religion over nonreligion.
- Religious instruction is best left to our houses of worship, other religious institutions and families.
- America's historic commitment to religious pluralism enables faith communities to live in civic harmony with one another without sacrificing our theological convictions.
- Conflating religious authority with political authority is idolatrous and often leads to oppression of minority and other marginalized groups as well as the spiritual impoverishment of religion.

We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires acts of violence and intimidation—including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and attacks on houses of worship—against religious communities at home and abroad.

Whether we worship at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, America has no second-class faiths. All are equal under the U.S. Constitution. As Christians, we must speak in one voice condemning Christian nationalism as a distortion of the gospel of Jesus and a threat to American democracy.



Gospel music is my oasis in troubled times. My colleagues can also attest that it's the background music by which I conduct most of my work.

I fell in love with gospel music as a student in college in the mid-'90s. In one of my first weekends in Atlanta as an undergraduate at Emory University, I made a pilgrimage to Ebenezer Baptist Church, the spiritual home of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and was moved to tears by the gospel choir of the church. A year later I joined Voices of Inner Strength, Emory's gospel choir, though I should note this says less about my own

(limited) musical talent and more reflects that there were no tryouts. Making matters worse, my solution when I was singing off-key was to simply sing louder, prompting the longtime choir director — Maury Allums, who still leads the choir today — to use a wink and nod-like gesture when he wanted me to lip sync the words rather than sing. Despite these setbacks, my love for gospel music only grew stronger, and many of the songs that we sang in our concerts became an indelible soundtrack in my spirit, including “Stand!” by Victory in Praise Music, “Total Praise” by Richard Smallwood, and “Love” by Kirk Franklin.

The roots of Black gospel music can be traced to the hymnals of the early 19th century, including *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns Selected from Various Authors* (1801), as well as to Black spirituals and sacred songs, which were heavily influenced by ancestral African music. As explored in *Gospel*, the recent PBS miniseries on the history of the genre, contemporary gospel music emerged with the musical innovations of brothers Edwin and Walter Hawkins, especially when Edwin modernized an old hymn in his 1968 song “Oh Happy Day” to create what Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes in the series as “a bona fide hit.” While contemporary gospel has evolved to include a range of styles, from worship songs to mass choirs to Christian hip-hop, the music is often characterized by dominant vocals and a strong use of harmony.

The year that I graduated from college, the first WOW Gospel album, an annual compilation of the year's most popular gospel hits, came out. I eagerly awaited each album's release (I'm still mourning that these compilations were discontinued in 2019). Often, there was a single song on each album that stood out, resonating deeply in my spirit — much to the chagrin of my wife and, later, my family, as I played that song on repeat incessantly in the car or house until its grip on me started to fade. In many ways, these songs brought me through some of my darkest times, biggest struggles, and most memorable periods of life, reminding me of God's reckless love, constant presence, gravitational grace, and perfect will. Simply put, gospel music has strengthened my faith and sustained me.

Today, we find ourselves in a time of incredible uncertainty, anxiety, and even trauma with each news alert, from the recent decision by the Supreme Court's conservative supermajority granting sweeping presidential immunity to record-breaking heat and climate disasters fueled by climate change to deep polarization in our culture to growing anti-democratic forces that are propelled by a resurgence of white Christian nationalism. And while there are many strategies for getting through tough times — from worshiping in church to engaging in many forms of self-care to experiencing solidarity with others by advocating for free and fair elections — gospel music continually inspires resilient hope and steadfast faith. Gospel music conveys that God is indeed “a rock in a weary land” and a “bridge over troubled waters,” reminders that will be particularly critical in the weeks and months ahead.

10 GOSPEL SONGS THAT SUSTAIN ME IN TROUBLING TIMES

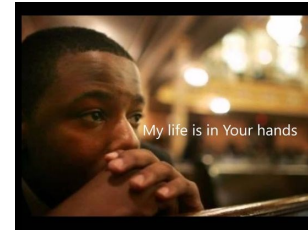
(continued from page 11)

Below are 10 of my all-time favorite gospel songs. Though there are so many more songs I was tempted to include, I hope this playlist will pique your interest in a genre that has been a source of hope and inspiration for me.

“My Life Is In Your Hands” by Kirk Franklin

Kirk Franklin revolutionized gospel music by blending the music with hip-hop and R&B. This particular song has been a source of reassurance and strength, reminding us that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39) and that God always has our lives in the very palm of God’s hands.

*Oh, I know that I can make it (I know that I can stand)
I know that I can stand (no matter what comes my way)
No matter what may come my way (Jesus, my life)
My life is in your hands (let's sing it together, listen)*



“Your Steps Are Ordered” by Fred Hammond

This song came out during a time in a season of my life after college in which I felt lost and was wrestling with a call to ministry. The song provided a powerful reminder that even when we feel alienated from God, God is still ordering our steps.

*Every step of a righteous man
Is ordered by God
Ordered
Though you may not know his mind
He will reveal it all in time
Just know till then
Your steps are ordered by God*



“I Almost Let Go” by Kurt Carr & The Kurt Carr Singers

This song provides a needed reminder that God always keeps us in the balm of God’s grace and love.

*So I'm here today because God kept me
I'm alive today only because of His grace
Oh, He kept me, God kept me, He kept me
So I wouldn't let go*



“This Battle Is the Lord’s” by Yolanda Adams

As a faith-inspired activist, it is often easy for me to experience burnout and despair, particularly in the face of modern-day Goliaths. In addition to speaking about overcoming personal battles, this song provides a constant reminder that ultimately the battles we face belong to God and that we must rely on God’s infinite strength and wisdom rather than our own as we serve as God’s instruments of justice and peace.

*No matter what
You're going through
Remember that God is only using you ...
For this battle is not yours, it's the Lord's*



10 GOSPEL SONGS THAT SUSTAIN ME IN TROUBLING TIMES

(continued from page 12)

“Bow Down” by Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship Mass Choir

When I listen to this song, I feel as though I can enter into a posture of humble worship and total reverence. It’s a song that enables total surrender.

*Bow down and worship Him;
Worship Him
Oh, worship Him
Bow down and worship Him;
Enter in*



“It’s Not Over (When God Is In It)” by Israel & New Breed

This song is like a musical sermon that reminds us that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26) and that in Christ, the new creation has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

*It’s not ending, It’s only the beginning
When God is in it all things are new
All things are new*



“Hold On, Don’t Let Go” by Richard Smallwood

Smallwood is easily one of the most gifted gospel composers of all time. This song came out after I lost my beloved uncle, Danny Lawson. Amid my grief and pain, the song provided solace and healing, enabling me to “hold on” as God took my hand.

*Your trials come to make you strong,
Seasons will change, it won’t be long
Hold on, don’t let go,
Even though your heart hurts you so,
He’ll never let go of your hand*



“Jireh” by Elevation Worship and Maverick City Music

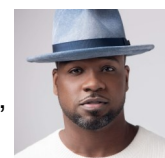
I didn’t discover this song until well after it had come out and won great acclaim. The song played a key role in lifting me out of a period of seasonal depression, reminding me that I am “enough” and that God is always “more than enough.”

*You are Jireh, You are enough
Jireh, You are enough
And I will be content in every circumstance
You are Jireh, You are enough
Forever enough
Always enough
More than enough*



“Medley” by Vashawn Mitchell

Mitchell has become one of my favorite gospel artists, particularly given that we share a love of South Africa. This medley provides a remix of some of my favorite, most edifying worship songs, including “One Thing Remains” by Bethel Music.



10 GOSPEL SONGS THAT SUSTAIN ME IN TROUBLING TIMES

(continued from page 13)

*Your love never fails
It never gives up
It never runs out on me*

“Breathe” by Maverick City Music

Maverick City Music is producing some of the most moving and prolific gospel music right now. In a time of intense stress and anxiety, we could all benefit from this reminder to breathe, letting God carry our burdens and knowing that no matter what happens, God is still on the throne and has given us victory through Jesus’ resurrection.

*Just breathe
It’s a miracle, we can breathe
There’s power in the way that we breathe
Release your heavy burdens
And let everything that has breath, praise the Lord
This is why we have breath, praise the Lord*



Adam Russell Taylor

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



CT MARKET’S NEWEST VENDOR BRINGS MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE. ‘GOAL IS TO DRAW A SMILE ON YOUR FACE AFTER EVERY BITE.’

The Hartford Courant

Taste Mediterranean Restaurant co-owner and chef Samer Madanat prepares a gyro in the kitchen of the restaurant inside Parkville Market in Hartford on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. (Photo/Credit Stephen Underwood)



by Stephen Underwood | sunderwood@courant.com | Hartford Courant
UPDATED: July 17, 2024 at 3:01 p.m.

Parkville Market’s newest vendor is also its first Mediterranean restaurant, opened recently by a couple from Jordan.

Taste Mediterranean Kitchen, which had its grand opening at the Hartford food hall Tuesday, serves classic Mediterranean fare like chicken and lamb shawarma, grape leaves, falafel gyros, pitas, baba ganoush, hummus, fries and greek salads.

CT MARKET'S NEWEST VENDOR BRINGS MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

(continued from page 14)

"It's a big hole that we were looking to fill," said Matthew Sousa, vice president of operations for Parkville Market. "We never had Mediterranean cuisine before and we are very excited to bring authentic Mediterranean cuisine to Parkville Market."

The indoor food hall has 22 vendors and is now operating at capacity, according to Sousa. The opening of Taste Mediterranean Kitchen comes after the market last summer welcomed four new vendors serving dishes from Asia, Brazil and Portugal. The market has vendors representing cuisines from around the world making it a unique experience for customers.

Taste Mediterranean Restaurant co-owners and husband-wife duo Samer Madanat and Suhad Madanat along with co-worker Moath Alawneh inside the restaurant at Parkville Market in Hartford on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. (Photo/Credit Stephen Underwood)



The Mediterranean restaurant is co-owned by Jordanian immigrants and husband-wife duo Samer Madanat and Suhad Madanat who emigrated to the United States roughly a year ago. Samer, who was a chef for over 20 years in Jordan, cooks at Taste and has brought his favorite dishes.

"It means so much to me to be here today. This is a great spot for us," Samer said. "I used to come and visit the United States but now I'm living here and able to bring my food here. It's a nice feeling."

The Madanats and co-worker Moath Alawneh run Taste's day-to-day operations while business partner Abdul Qademi manages the finances. Taste's entire menu is halal, a designation meaning food is permissible under Islamic law due to the way the food is prepared.

"Hartford has got just about everything and we really believe in the city," Qademi said. "We realized there is not a lot of halal options in Hartford and so we wanted to bring that here. It gives people more choice who are looking for that."

Suhad, who emigrated to the United States with her husband, said she is proud that she is able to bring the flavors of her home country of Jordan to Hartford. Suhad and her husband Samer, both members of Grace Lutheran Church in Hartford, credited Pastor Rick Kremer for helping them work through the immigration process and be able to open up their business.



Taste Mediterranean Restaurant holds its grand opening inside Parkville Market on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. (Photo/Credit Stephen Underwood)

"Everything we serve here, we served exactly the same way in Jordan," Suhad said. "We came to America because we want people to enjoy our food. We love the diversity here at Parkville Market. We have many people here from many different countries, so it's wonderful to be able to bring our cuisine from Jordan here. America has been very good to us and we wanted to open here because we know people will love our food."

Taste's menu offers a diverse array of options including fresh Mediterranean salad staples like tabbouleh with parsley, tomato, cucumber, olive oil and lemon juice. Meats include chicken and

CT MARKET'S NEWEST VENDOR BRINGS MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

(continued from page 15)

lamb shawarma roasted on a slow-turning vertical spit with traditional Middle Eastern spices.

Taste Mediterranean Restaurant offers samples on the day of its grand opening inside Parkville Market in Hartford on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. (Photo/Credit Stephen Underwood)



"We take pride in catering to the dietary preferences and requirements of our guests. Halal, vegetarian, vegan, keto, gluten-free, and other special dietary options are thoughtfully incorporated into our menu, ensuring that every guest can indulge in a satisfying and enjoyable dining experience. Our serious goal is to draw a smile on your face after every bite," the restaurant said in a statement to the Courant.

Mayor Arunan Arulampalam, who held his mayoral campaign kickoff in Parkville Market in early 2023, said he was happy to hear that the market is now at full capacity.

"From day one, my administration has been committed to investing in our neighborhoods and making Hartford the easiest place to do business," said Arulampalam said. "This is an exciting time for Hartford, and we'll continue to support small businesses and build on the success Parkville Market has seen as a neighborhood destination."

Parkville Market is located at 1400 Park St. and is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sundays and Mondays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. For more information on Taste Mediterranean Kitchen or Parkville's other vendors visit parkvillemarket.com

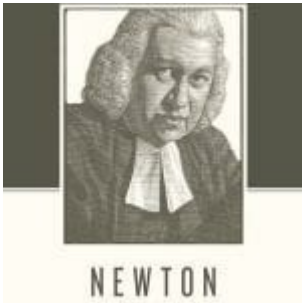
Stephen Underwood can be reached at sunderwood@courant.com

WELCOME MATEO PEREZ ! BAPTIZED ON JULY 14, 2024



MORE THAN 250 YEARS AGO: JOHN NEWTON'S 'AMAZING GRACE' FIRST SUNG

Some Things You Probably Didn't Know About the Evangelical Hymn
by **Bruce Hindmarsh**



It was 250 years ago on January 1, 2023, that a congregation in the market town of Olney in England first sang the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

It didn't become popular right away. But gradually it spread among churches of all denominations in America. It became a revival song on the western frontier and an African American spiritual in black churches and a standard in 20th-century hymnbooks. Then it crossed over into the commercial marketplace in the age of radio with recording artists like Mahalia Jackson in 1947 and Judy Collins in 1970.

1. The original title wasn't 'Amazing Grace.'

The first title was “Faith's Review and Expectation,” since it was written for New Year's Day as an exercise in looking back (review) and looking forward (expectation). The hymn looks back in faith at the many dangers, toils, and snares through which God's grace has sustained us. It also looks forward with confidence, knowing God's grace will be there as long as life endures.

2. We don't know the original tune of 'Amazing Grace.'

The tune to which the song is now universally sung is a shape-note tune called “New Britain” from the American South, first published in 1829. However, when the words were originally published 250 years ago, there were separate tune books and you could mix and match any tune that fit a “common meter” hymn like “Amazing Grace.” Some of the early tunes that were used for “Amazing Grace” have been discovered, and they have a very different feel from the tune we know today. “New Britain” is based on the popular pentatonic scale (the black notes on the piano) and this has contributed to its wide appeal.

3. 'Amazing Grace' became an African American spiritual though it was written by a former slave trader.

It's to this song that people turn when tragedy strikes. When all hope is lost, we sing 'Amazing Grace.'

“Amazing Grace” has long been cherished by African American churches as a black gospel song, and there have been powerful, popular performances by Mahalia Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Jessye Norman, Wintley Phipps, and many others. Yet the words were written by a former slave-ship captain named John Newton, two decades after he left the slave trade, when he was an Anglican minister in the English Midlands. He would later move to London and make a key contribution to the abolition of the slave trade. As Wintley Phipps said, “I believe God wanted that song written just the way it was written just so that we would be reminded that as Christians whether black or white . . . we are connected by God's amazing grace.”

FIVE FAITH FACTS ABOUT HARRIS PICK TIM WALZ, A “MINNESOTA LUTHERAN” DAD

If elected, Walz would become only the second Lutheran vice president, depending on how you count it.

(RNS) — Frenzied speculation over Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris’ pick for her vice presidential running mate came to an end Tuesday (Aug. 6), with the current vice president reportedly choosing Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz to be her successor should they win in November.

Walz’s profile has risen in the weeks since President Joe Biden announced he was bowing out of the presidential race. The Midwesterner has appeared regularly on national television programs to make the case for Democrats, coining the now widely adopted “MAGA is weird” line of attack, and winning fans as he advocates for liberal policies with the same folksy charm that’s made him popular in his home state.

Some are calling his persona “Midwestern Dad” energy, citing his background as a high school teacher and football coach. But Minnesotans know Walz as something even more specific: a “Minnesota Lutheran” Dad.

Here are five faith facts about Walz:

Walz, like many Minnesotans, is Lutheran.

He made a similar joke while speaking at a conference hosted by the Center for American Progress last year, suggesting that, like Minnesota Lutherans, Democrats don’t talk enough about their accomplishments. When moderator and Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne asked aloud if that made Democrats political, Walz responded, “I don’t know — maybe.”

In 2019, Walz appointed Jodi Harpstead, the former head of Lutheran Service of Minnesota and a self-described “Lutheran girl” herself, to run the state’s Department of Human Services.

If elected, he would be the second (and maybe first) Lutheran vice president.

If elected, Walz would become only the second Lutheran vice president, depending on how you count it.

There are multiple Lutheran denominations in the U.S., all of which trace their lineage back to Martin Luther, the famed German priest who is credited with ushering in the Protestant Reformation that begat all of Protestantism. Some Lutheran groups are affiliated with American evangelicalism, but the largest — and the one associated with Walz’s own church — is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a mainline denomination on the more liberal end of the spectrum.



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz speaks during a news conference for the Biden-Harris campaign discussing the Project 2025 plan during the third day of the 2024 Republican National Convention near the Fiserv Forum, Wednesday, July 17, 2024, in Milwaukee. (AP Photo/Joe Lambert)

The only previous vice president connected to the tradition was another Minnesotan, Hubert Humphrey, who was raised Lutheran but ended up attending a Methodist church after his family moved to a city where there wasn’t a Lutheran one available.

Were Walz to follow Harris' lead and run for president one day, he would become — if elected — the first Lutheran president.

He faced blowback from religious communities — including conservative Lutherans — during the pandemic.

Walz was one of many governors who imposed restrictions on worship in his state during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. He was also one of many governors who faced pushback from religious communities, especially conservative ones: On May 22, 2020, leaders of Minnesota Catholic communities and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a conservative Lutheran denomination, both announced they would return to in-person worship that weekend in direct defiance of Walz's restrictions, arguing it was hypocritical to bar people from worship while opening the Mall of America.

Two days later, Walz announced he would ease restrictions on houses of worship, allowing churches and other religious communities to open at 25% capacity so long as they adhered to social distancing. He cited new guidance from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention but also voiced his own discomfort with the restrictions.

"I certainly want to acknowledge to those Minnesotans who find the contradictions maddening: So do I," he said.

He rallied with faith leaders after the death of George Floyd

As protests erupted in Minnesota after the murder of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer, Walz huddled with faith leaders from the state, hoping to stem violent clashes between demonstrators and police. Within days of Floyd's killing, Walz hosted a news conference featuring community leaders; elected officials such as Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Attorney General Keith Ellison; and faith leaders, including the Rev. Alfred Babington-Johnson, Imam Asad Zaman and Rabbi Aaron Weininger.

Many of the speakers condemned violence, but also urged Minnesotans to join nonviolent protests, call for police reform and voice outrage at Floyd's murder.

"For those watching, this is our Minnesota," Walz said at the end of the conference, his arms outstretched. "This is who we are. This is the decency, this is the compassion, and this is the community of who we are. You hear the passion — no one up here is going to leave justice unserved."

He has advocated for the Minnesota Muslim population

Minnesota is home to a significant and influential Muslim population that Walz has interacted with on numerous occasions. Somalis, more of whom live in Minnesota than any other state, are primarily Muslim — including Rep. Ilhan Omar, one of only three Muslim members of the current U.S. Congress. The first-ever Muslim to serve in Congress is also a Minnesotan: Ellison was a U.S. representative before becoming Minnesota's attorney general.

Walz, for his part, has regularly attended iftar dinners and Eid al-Fitr celebrations, welcomed a Muslim delegation with a speech during a Muslim Day at the Capitol in 2019, visited Muslim communities that have been victimized by vandalism and spoken at events hosted by local chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations and others geared toward pushing back against Islamophobia.

TIM WALZ' SON

Nothing illustrates the stark differences we face as a nation more acutely than the reactions to the outpouring of emotion by Tim Walz's (learning disabled) teenage son who wept while proudly cheering his dad.

One group was moved to tears while another was moved to tweet insults and mockery.

And there it is.

That's the choice.

THE CHURCH IS A FAMILY AND....

**CHURCH IS NOT AN
ORGANISATION YOU JOIN; IT
IS A FAMILY
WHERE YOU BELONG,
A HOME WHERE YOU ARE
LOVED AND A HOSPITAL WHERE
YOU FIND HEALING.**

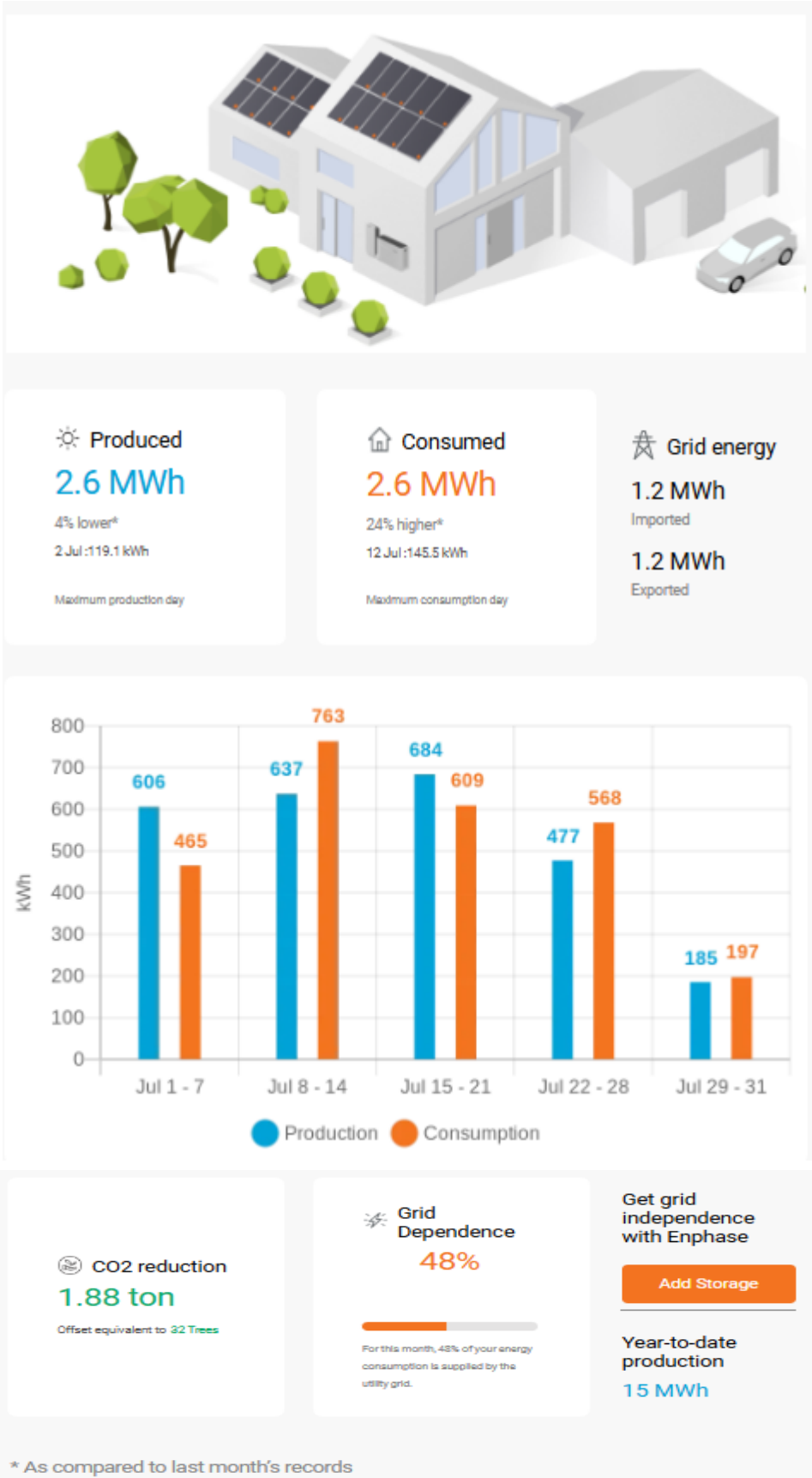
4. 'Amazing Grace' is a spiritual practice.

When John Newton wrote the hymn, it was part of his regular practice of self-examination—he paused at key moments to consider his sins and God's mercies in the past, to make his confession and receive forgiveness in the present, and to dedicate himself to God's will for the future. He wrote in his diary on the first of January 1773, "I am now in the 49th year of my age, & may expect in the course of a few years at most to go whence I shall no more return. . . . May thy grace keep me always waiting till my appointed change shall come," and he continued in prayer. This was "Amazing Grace" as a spiritual practice, considering in prayer how God's grace has brought us safe thus far and how his grace will lead us home.

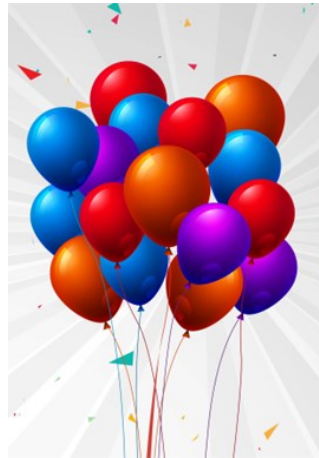
**If Congress and the courts will not take
action to help make our communities safer
from gun violence, then we – the people –
must do it ourselves.**

**That's why I'm proposing the Right to
Safety Amendment, a new amendment to
the United States Constitution, which will
mandate background checks, ban civilian
purchases of assault weapons, and raise the
federal minimum age to buy a firearm from
18 to 21.**

SOLAR PANEL REPORT - JULY 2024



SEPTEMBER 2024 BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES!



***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.

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for September 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
9/1	1	Deuteronomy 4: 1-2 and 6-9	Dale Eberhardt
	2	James 1: 17-27	Betsy DeRoma
	Psalm	Psalm 15	Unison
9/8	1	Isaiah 35: 4-7a	Dorothea Glatte
	2	James 2: 1-17	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Psalm 146	Pastor odd; Cong. even
9/15	1	Isaiah 50: 4-9a	Barbara Calogero
	2	James 3: 1-12	David Eberly
	Psalm	Psalm 116: 1-9	Unison
9/22	1	Jeremiah 11: 18-20 or Wisdom 1: 16 thru 2: 1 and 12-22	Mildred Unfried
	2	James 3: 13 thru 4: 3 and 7-8a	Kasumi Campbell
	Psalm	Psalm 54	Unison
9/29	1	Daniel 10: 10-14 and 12: 1-3	Barbara Ruhe
	2	Revelations 12: 7-12	Rodney Carr
	Psalm	Psalm 103: 1-5 and 20-22	Pastor odd; Cong. even



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Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Judy Butterworth-Kremer, Secretary

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

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