



GRACE NOTES

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SEPTEMBER 2023

SHALOM—OUR WORD OF DESPERATION AND JUSTICE

One of our dearest and most gifted Grace members holds the word “shalom” in her heart, as a part of her very being.



When Jesus comes upon his disciples in any form of trouble or angst, he reaches out and says, “Peace be with you.” Peace, I give to you.”

“Do not fear.” “I am with you.”

The agonies of the world we are living in are building daily, and we fearfully anticipate the worst. We may think, “this is the worst of times.” Violence and death, natural disasters, the frightening pace of climate change, and its impact throughout the world. War, pestilence, our faith evaporating even as it is more deeply needed than ever in our lives. And, we quibble, we fight, we arm ourselves like no country ever in history. More importantly, we sell weapons for profit all over the world and our hate-filled rhetoric kills in and of itself.

We read the Daily Meditations from Richard Rohr and the team at the Center for Action and Contemplation. The words chosen daily are remarkably relevant to each of us, every day. I cling to them. Perhaps some of you do, too. So, as I look forward to the end of Summer, the beginning of the school season for our children, and the growing sense of violence and hate yet to come, may we remember and grasp the meaning of Shalom. Dear Dorothea articulates it so well, in Hebrew as well as our own languages of love and justice. Here what Shane Claiborne has to say about justice this morning in the CAC Meditation:



For starters, the word for “justice” in the Bible is the same word as “righteousness.” This overlap shows that the central concern of biblical justice was not “getting what you deserve”; rather, it was making right what was done wrong, restoring what had been destroyed, healing the wounds of an offensive act. It was about bringing balance and wholeness back to the community, which is why you often see scales as an icon for justice.

Shane Claiborne

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Those who mistaken Christianity for Christian Nationalism do not realize that this has little to do with our faith or our beliefs. This is the manufacture of religion for wealth and power, control over women's lives, and the ultimate of "culture wars" led by those who care little for anyone but their whites only perspective on our world and its control.

**CHRISTIANS
AGAINST
CHRISTIAN★
NATIONALISM**

This is the task of those who would follow Jesus: to live in just relationships with one another, to work at restoring to wholeness those people and relationships that they and others have broken, and to repair as best they can what cannot be restored. This practice of restoring and repairing relationships between people and God and among people themselves is not unlike that in which the contemporary practice of restorative justice engages. Like Jesus’ own work ... to bring about the fullness of *shalom*, through the practice of right relationships and the healing of those people who are “broken,” restorative justice focuses on the present and future needs of the victim, the perpetrator, and society in order to repair what has been broken or stolen from the victim, to bring the perpetrator to acceptance of responsibility, and to mend the threads that hold society together.

Sister Katherine Birge

Brothers and sisters, this is where we are. The Hartford International University for Religion and Peace calls out to the world, wanting to be a beacon of justice, righteousness and shalom. The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance takes action together to bring about more justice, more understanding and more acceptance of each other.

Hartford International
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE



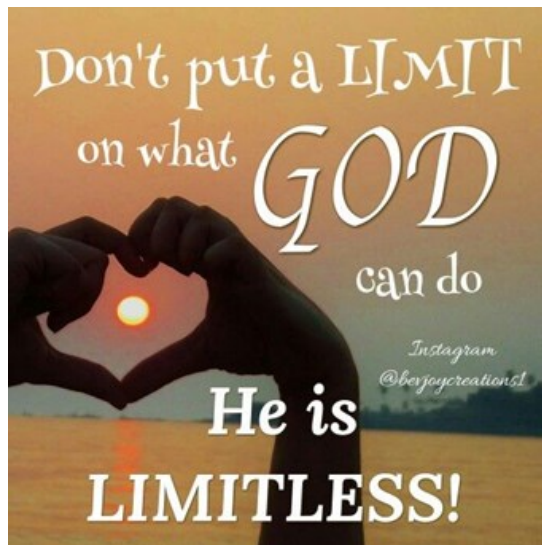
Grace, too, wants to be that place for people to come to know that we care, that see us as a place where they are welcomed, not taken advantage of, not because we can distribute stuff, but that we show people, all people, how they are welcomed, loved, appreciated, respected, properly and respectfully treated, and shown how dearly we care for those who come looking for justice, particularly of the restorative variety.

We're not giving up, and we hold-up ourselves as a work in progress, not perfect by any means, but aspiring to be better. Teach us Lord, bring us Lord, show us Lord... that Shalom is within reach of each and every person we meet and welcome.



PASTOR'S MESSAGE –LET'S KEEP ON, KEEPING ON!

I'm not going to pretend that all is well with our world, our church, those who serve it, and those who worship. But, I can tell you with my heart wide open that we will continue to try to do what ever we can for whomever comes in our doors looking for peace, needing that peace and wanting something of meaning in relationships among themselves and relationships with their God. We are not about converting, we are about caring, we are not about pushing and shoving, we are about giving and teaching, advocating, praying, sorting through the wheat from the chaff, and understanding that God's mercy and love is limitless.



Yes, we know, it isn't "hip" to go to church, yet we are discovering that it is life-giving to find a place to open our hearts to God and each other. That's what we hope to do. That's who we are trying to be. And, we want to do more, not to figure out how to do less.

Please join our effort to seek justice and shalom, both at the same time, with the people who are with us, and those who join us and leave us. We are not in control, God is. And, we are and always will be, far from perfect.

Yet, we will keep trying. Thank you for giving me some time off, particularly our Worship Committee led by Dorothea Glatte, and our Church Council with Betsy DeRoma's leadership, which has worked tirelessly throughout this very difficult year, trying to sort who it is we are and why we are, and what does that mean as we go forward.

I further give a special thanks to our Ministry Coordinator, Sister Emmanuella Hart, who has shown us what love can be and how that might be lived in the midst of so many human crises surrounding our church and its communities.

Thank you one and all.

May God show you shalom in your life and may we together expand on our understanding about living and loving through the means of restorative justice.



Monday, August 28th, marks the 60th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s celebrated "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered on Aug. 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. NPR's *Talk of the Nation* aired the speech in 2010. Below is a transcript.



Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders gather before a rally at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963, in Washington.

National Archives/Hulton Archive via Getty Images

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.: Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But 100 years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check.

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men — yes, Black men as well as white men — would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds. But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt.

We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.



Civil rights protesters march from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial for the March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963.
Kurt Severin/Three Lions/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.

There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.

And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel,

cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: for whites only.

We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.



People clap and sing along to a freedom song between speeches at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

Express Newspapers via Getty Images

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day down in Alabama with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right down in Alabama little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

“I HAVE A DREAM” SPEECH AUGUST 28, 1963

(continued from page 7)

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that, let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last.

POPE'S MESSAGE

His words.
Your journey.
Together.



THURSDAY AUGUST 10TH, 2023

“Today is a good moment to ask ourselves: what weighs on my heart? What weighs on my spirit? What makes me go to sit in the lazy chair? It is sad to see Christians “in the armchair”!

What are the mediocrities that paralyze me, the vices that crush me to the ground and prevent me from raising my head? And regarding the burdens that weigh on the shoulders of our brothers and sisters, am I aware of them or indifferent to them? These are good questions to ask ourselves, because they help *guard our hearts against apathy*. The Book of Proverbs says: “With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life” (*Prov 4:23*). Guard your heart: that means to be vigilant! Stay awake and guard your heart.”

Pope Francis

THE U.S. AND CHINA MUST UNITE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS, NOT EACH OTHER



The latest report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is very clear and it is very foreboding. **If the entire planet, led by the largest economies in the world — the United States of America and China — does not get its act together, the world that we will be leaving our children and future generations will be increasingly unhealthy and uninhabitable.**

Please read my latest op-ed enclosed below about the urgent need for the United States and China to come together to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



The US and China must unite to fight the climate crisis, not each other
Cooperation is not only in the best interests of all countries, but is
absolutely necessary for the survival of the planet

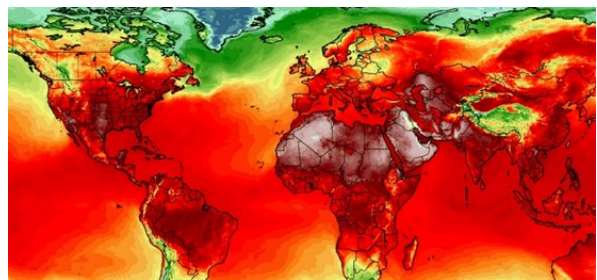
- Bernie Sanders

Mon 21 August 2023

Climate change is a global crisis and cannot be solved by any one country alone. If the United States, China and other industrialized countries do not come together to dramatically decrease greenhouse gas emissions, the world we leave our children and future generations will become increasingly unhealthy and uninhabitable. Tragically, the cooperation required to address this existential threat is being undermined by hawks in both the United States and China who are moving us toward a disastrous cold war.

Now is the time for a radical rethinking of geopolitics to reflect the reality that international cooperation is not only in the best interests of all countries, but is absolutely necessary for the survival of the planet.

Here's the reality. The last eight years have been the eight hottest on record. This year is on track to be the hottest year in recorded history, and this past July was the hottest month on record. Across the United States, July broke more than 3,200 daily temperature records and dozens of American cities broke or tied their previous daily temperature records three or more times. Phoenix experienced 31 days in a row at or above 110F (43.3C), 13 days longer than the previous record. El Paso, Miami, Austin and many other places also suffered under record-breaking stretches of extreme heat.



Smoke from unprecedented wildfires in Canada enveloped US cities and drifted halfway around the world, causing dangerously unhealthy air quality. Vermont, my home state, experienced floods that damaged 4,000 homes and 800 businesses, the state's worst natural disaster since 1927.

THE U.S. AND CHINA MUST UNITE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS, NOT EACH OTHER

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In Maui, Hawaii, rapidly moving fires destroyed 2,700 structures in historic Lahaina and took more than 100 lives, making it the deadliest wildfire in the US in more than a century.



But it's not just the US that is dealing with record-breaking heatwaves and enormous climate-caused devastation. China experienced record-high temperatures last month, including the country's all-time temperature record of 126F (52.2C), and recent flooding has killed about 100 people, destroyed nearly 200,000 homes, displaced some 1.5 million people and caused more than \$13bn in damage.

From Tokyo to Rome to Tunis to Tirana, cities across Asia, Europe and north Africa experienced their hottest days on record. In Iran, the heat index hit 158F (70C), testing the limits of human survival. In our own hemisphere, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador all saw temperature records fall. It's winter right now in South America, but that hasn't stopped temperatures from exceeding 100F (37.7C) in some places, a heating event a climate historian labeled "one of the extreme events the world has ever seen".

And it's not just that temperatures have been soaring on land. Our oceans have never been warmer. Right now, 44% of the world's oceans are experiencing a marine heatwave. The Mediterranean Sea is experiencing its hottest temperatures on record, more than 9F hotter than average in some places. Off the coast of Newfoundland, waters are as much as 18F above normal. South of Miami, waters reached 101F (38.3C). You're supposed to find temperatures like that in a hot tub, not the ocean. This warming could further devastate coral reefs, fisheries and marine ecosystems around the world.

In the midst of this global crisis, there is both good news and bad news. The good news is that recent years have seen long-overdue steps to transition the global economy away from fossil fuels into more efficient and renewable energy sources. In the United States, the Inflation Reduction Act included an unprecedented \$300bn in investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, which could help increase US solar energy by 500% and more than double wind energy by 2035, reducing carbon emissions by roughly 40%.

Other countries have also made major investments. China spent \$546bn on clean energy last year and continues to manufacture and deploy more renewable energy than the rest of the world combined. By 2030, China may deploy enough renewable energy to essentially power the entire US electrical grid three times over. The European Union has laid out a plan to invest more than \$1tn over the next decade in renewables and energy efficiency, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% compared with 1990.

Importantly, large sections of the corporate world have turned away from investments in fossil fuels and are now spending hundreds of billions on sustainable energy. Altogether, the International Energy Agency (IEA) expects the global community to invest \$1.6tn in wind, solar power, electric vehicles, batteries, and electric grids this year, compared with just \$1tn in fossil fuels.

With the U.S. war in Afghanistan over, you may have thought an era of endless war has ended — far from it. **Today, the United States remains on perpetual war footing, and often with devastating results.**

Like just weeks ago, when *U.S.-trained* soldiers led a coup in Niger. U.S.-trainees originally given instruction in the name of “countering terrorism”, have ultimately helped launch nearly a dozen coups across West Africa since 2008.

Disastrous operations in Niger, Mali, Guinea, and more aren’t a failure of the U.S. military machine: *they’re the system working exactly as designed.* And that system won’t stop until we fundamentally change the core of U.S. foreign policy.

Right now, Congress is considering repealing the 2002 AUMF — the outdated law that justified the U.S. invasion of Iraq. *And here’s something big: we’re on the verge of winning.* But this progress, as crucial as it is, is merely a stepping stone to the bigger fight to repeal the linchpin of global perpetual war: the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF).

On top of continuing operations in Somalia, Iraq, and Syria, you may not know that the United States ALSO has significant military deployments in Cameroon, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, the Philippines, and Turkey.

It’s a staggering scale of war that spans the globe, and while there are many classified battlefields we don’t know about, some we do, like the sprawling U.S. drone base in Agadez, Niger. Lt. Gen. Jonathan Braga, head of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, met Brig. Gen. Moussa Salaou Barmou, a U.S. trained Nigerien soldier, there in June. Barmou would help oust Niger’s democratically elected president a few weeks later.[1]

The suffering and chaos Nigeriens now face is just another example of a failed U.S. strategy to “counter terrorism” — but this is no accident. Instead of rooting out corruption, helping to alleviate poverty, or combat human rights abuses in countries like Niger, the United States prioritizes weapons sales and war training.

Our system is geared towards war and violence because of the power of weapons contractors, because voices of impacted people are locked out, and because a status-quo, military-first mindset reigns supreme.

Here’s the simple truth: *When you invest in war, you get more war.*

War profiteers have made TRILLIONS in profits since 9/11 and stand to lose BIG if we’re successful in pulling the plug on the 2001 AUMF — and they know it. That’s why they’re throwing EVERYTHING they’ve got toward keeping the war machine running.

Peace is an uphill fight in Washington. But activists like you — people who dig deep, sign petitions, and make critical calls — have changed the debate about our nation’s post-9/11 wars.

But we’re not done yet. You can be sure our team is not resting until we tear up and block reckless black checks to wage war — and we need you with us.

Thank you for working for peace,

Amy, Shahed, Yint, and the Win Without War team

1.) *The Intercept*, [“Niger Coup Leader Joins Long Line Of U.S.-Trained Mutineers”](#)

INDICTED! RACKETEERING! GOP RIP, THANK YOU,

Monday, August 14, 2023

Just moments ago, as the clock was ready to strike midnight, Fani Willis, the District Attorney of Fulton, Co., Georgia, announced that a citizens Grand Jury has voted to indict former president Donald J. Trump and his 18 Co-Conspirators (including Rudy Giuliani, Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, lawyer John Eastman and others) on 41 counts of racketeering and other criminal acts for conspiring to form an “organized crime enterprise” which attempted to “illegally overturn the 2020 presidential election” through theft, fraud, forgery, impersonating law enforcement, impersonating electors to the Electoral College, and for conspiring with other top elected Republican officials in six other states, plus Republican leaders in the District of Columbia, to overthrow the election and re-seat Trump in the Oval Office for a 2nd term — even though Trump lost the election by 7 million votes. The prosecutor is charging Trump and his crime group under the RICO statutes that are used to convict and imprison those involved in mob-like crimes.



The 90-page indictment lists the commission of “161 overt criminal acts” — a breathtaking, comprehensive list of crimes in an enterprise led by Trump. The DA spent nearly two years on her extensive investigation. It reads like no stone was left unturned, with a massive amount of evidence obtained by the prosecutors in her office. It also states that there are 30 other “unnamed, unindicted co-conspirators” who may be indicted at a later time. So at least 48 people joined Trump in forming his organized crime family to overthrow our Democracy. Unbelievable. How close did we come to losing this country?

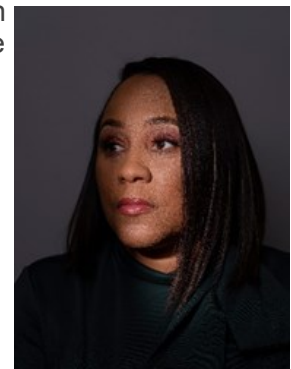
We, the People, need to stay thoroughly informed and be as active as we ever have been as citizens of this country. This is not the time to have “Trump Fatigue.” This is the moment to put this traitor on trial and make sure that this criminal who has gotten away with EVERYTHING for over 50 YEARS, finally faces Justice.

Read the full indictment from Fulton County, Georgia here:
<https://d3i6fh83elv35t.cloudfront.net/static/2023/08/CRIMINAL-INDICTMENT-Trump-Fulton-County-GA.pdf>

It’s a grab bag of insanity on this week’s episode of my podcast as I declare the Republican Party DOA (although if you hold a mirror up to its nose, you can see that it’s still slightly breathing). For nearly a year, I’ve been publicly calling for the removal of 121 Republican members of the House and Senate who voted to overturn the election on the night of January 6th. The 14th Amendment clearly states that anyone who provides aid or comfort to those who participated in an insurrection shall be permanently barred from ever holding office again. The same rule applies to our ex-president. Trump should not be on any ballot **ever again**. This position is now getting some traction and it’s a good thing to see.

Fulton County, Georgia, District Attorney Fani Willis, hero of the month.

Also, a BIG thank you to Fani Willis, the District Attorney in Atlanta, for filing the indictment of indictments, a masterpiece of Justice.



TOMMY TUBERVILLE IS BLOCKING MORE THAN 200 MILITARY CONFIRMATIONS

by Lucas Kunce

As a Marine officer doing arms control negotiations, I saw how dangerous a single empty leadership position could be. But right now, Tommy Tuberville is blocking more than 200 military confirmations — and just took five weeks off for Senate recess.

That's why I put this op-ed in Fox News — because I want Tommy Tuberville, Josh Hawley, and every other Senate Republican to see it.

This email is longer than usual, but I wanted to take a moment this morning to tell you what's exactly going on and how it impacts service members, military families, and our national security. **Will you please let me explain?**

For the first time in over a century, the United States Marine Corps is without a Commandant — the highest-ranking officer in the Corps. We're in this situation because Senator Tommy Tuberville has blocked hundreds of military promotions, including the Commandant's.

He claims he's doing this because government funds have been made available to cover travel for some service members getting abortions. But because I spent 13 years as an active duty Marine and I'm still Lieutenant Colonel in the Reserves, I've been in a lot of conversations about what this means and thought I'd take some time today to lay it out for you.

As a note, these are my personal observations and may or may not be the same as the Department of Defense.

So first, for a lot of us Marines, this just sucks. Going to the Commandant's house and meeting the Commandant during our initial six-month officer training called The Basic School is one of the highlights of that school.

The same can be said for Marines across the world and at every stage of their training or careers. The Commandant is a big deal for us — someone we look up to, aspire to, and who gives us guidance. So not having a Commandant because some politician in D.C. wants to play games is a morale killer.

But the problem is much bigger than us not having a Commandant. Hundreds of other promotions are backed up with it. **And that doesn't just suck — that has a real impact on our troops and on national security.**

Military life is hard. You move all the time, there's no certainty, there are lots of deployments, you work very long hours, but you do it because you believe in the mission and you believe in the country and taking care of the people who live here.

And now, because promotions aren't going through, people who've given decades of their lives to this country are being asked or forced to change their plans or not retire. The one thing they thought they had control over.

People are being frozen in place. They're not getting the promotion they worked so hard for. Their kids don't know what school they're going to go to next year when the summer ends. Their spouses can't figure out their employment. The list goes on and on, and the impact of that is felt throughout the Corps.



LUCAS KUNCE

FOR U.S. SENATE



TOMMY TUBERVILLE IS BLOCKING MORE THAN 200 MILITARY CONFIRMATIONS

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This is wrong. Service members are being used for political leverage, the same way that these politicians recently used us veterans for political leverage by holding up the PACT Act — which takes care of us for burn pit exposure we received in Iraq and Afghanistan. **It's absolutely demoralizing to see them use us like this over and over and over again.**

Senator Tuberville is quite literally punishing military families for things that other people have done that he doesn't like. It's shameful, it's selfish, and I'll be frank, it's stupid because it also damages our national security.

He goes out there and has the nerve to say that promotions and positions don't matter, an acting commander can do just as good a job, and be just as capable with or without the actual nomination going through.

Trust me though, rank and position do matter or they wouldn't exist.

I learned that myself when I was representing the US in arms control negotiations with NATO allies and Russia from 2016 to 2019. When you've got American officers with lower ranks going up against generals and admirals in critical meetings and negotiations, that matters.

Our allies, our partners, other countries, and our adversaries notice. Russia and China, they notice.

And now dozens, if not hundreds, of military officers are going to have to explain why the US is sending significantly lower ranks than their counterparts to critical meetings and negotiations around the globe.

When China sends a high-ranking general to meet with a third country and we send a one-star acting commander, that undermines our country, our position, and our national security. It's going to look like we don't care, it's going to look like we aren't serious, and people are going to question our country's resolve.

Weakening the position of our representatives overseas weakens our national security. Period. And that's exactly what Senator Tuberville is doing.



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We need more folks right now in the media, in Congress, and especially in the Republican Party, to step up and say something — and Senator Tuberville needs to stop putting his personal politics ahead of our troops and ahead of our national security.

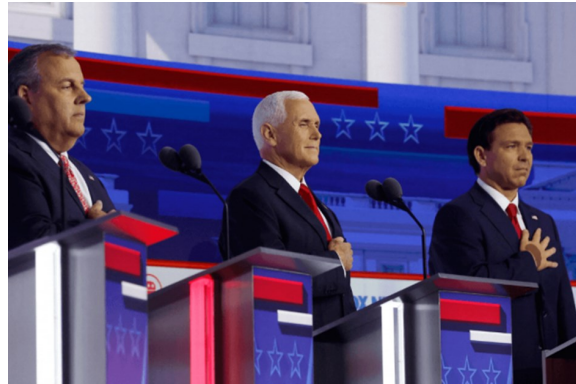
These service members, veterans, and their families deserve to have someone looking out for them in the U.S. Senate — and that's just part of why I'm running to defeat Josh Hawley and flip this seat.

6 WARNING SIGNS OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN US POLITICS

SOJOURNERS

by Adam Russell Taylor
August 24, 2023

If the first debate for the 2024 Republican primary is any indication, we're headed toward a combative and chaotic presidential race. The first debate, held last night in Milwaukee, was most notable for who didn't attend, namely former President Donald Trump, who, despite facing four separate criminal indictments, is the leading Republican candidate by a margin of nearly 40 points. His refusal to debate his opponents does a disservice to Republican voters and the country, all of whom deserve to hear Trump defend his previous actions and 2024 campaign platform, which includes several dangerously authoritarian proposals such as making it easier to fire career civil servants or deploying the National Guard to fight street crime.



But my main interest in watching the first Republican primary debate was to get a sense of whether Republican candidates would challenge the growing anti-democratic forces within their party. For example, will Republican candidates continue to defend Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election results? And will they continue to embrace the "us-versus-them," fear and grievance-based politics that propelled Trump to power? I was also on the lookout for indicators of candidates' support for white Christian nationalism, a set of ideas enjoying an alarming resurgence (and super-charging the anti-democratic forces) that pose a grave threat to both our democracy and the witness of the church.

The term "Christian nationalism" gets used in different ways, but some experts define it as "a constellation of beliefs — that the founding of the United States was 'divinely inspired' or that God is invested in the success of the U.S. — that manifest in political goals." In politics (and some churches), these ideas are part of a coordinated strategy to ensure white Christians maintain their ongoing dominance in all sectors of U.S. society. When I think about examples of Christian nationalism, I think of the subtle ways some people imply that one must be Christian to be a "true" American, or argue that the growing presence of non-white people and non-Christians pose a threat to "traditional" values, or stoke fear by saying that Christianity is under attack.

But Christian nationalism exists on a spectrum — and we need to resist it in all its forms. Extreme and overt manifestations of Christian nationalism include those who displayed Christian symbols and prayed during the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Subtler and perhaps more insidious forms of Christian nationalism include people who say things like, "America has always been and should remain a Christian nation." We also must be careful not to use "Christian nationalism" as a catchall term for anyone we disagree with, including social or political conservatives; while we may strongly disagree with those who want to make abortion illegal or support cuts to social welfare programs, we should not assume that someone who holds those beliefs automatically believes Christianity deserves a more prominent place in U.S. politics.

While there are some extreme politicians like Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) who proudly claim the label, it's unlikely the top Republican presidential candidates will explicitly embrace Christian nationalism by that name. Instead, voters in the 2024 election will need to be on the lookout for how candidates' behavior and rhetoric aligns with Christian nationalist

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ideals and anti-democratic beliefs. Or as Jesus put it: “You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16).

Here are some questions I’ll be asking throughout the upcoming election to evaluate whether any candidates seeking public office are advancing Christian nationalism and anti-democratic views:

1. Does the candidate perpetuate the Big Lie that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump?

In other words, do they seek to undermine trust in our electoral process and thwart free and fair elections? The correlation between Christian nationalist beliefs and the belief that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump has been documented in both surveys and reporting. Recent surveys have also shown 40 percent of people who adhere to Christian nationalist beliefs agree with the statement that “patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country,” compared to just 16 percent of all Americans. And though the 2020 elections are long over, the threat of election interference is not: Among the 2024 field of candidates, *The Washington Post* has documented that only seven of the 12 candidates they contacted would commit to accepting the results of the 2024 election. Fortunately, in the first Republican debate, every candidate except for Vivek Ramaswamy agreed that former Vice President Mike Pence did the right thing when he exercised his constitutional duty to certify the 2020 election results. On the other hand, it was deeply disconcerting that all of the candidates (except former Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson) raised their hands to signal they would still support Trump if he won the nomination and was convicted of a crime in a court of law.

2. Does the candidate stoke fear through “us-versus-them” rhetoric or by demonizing anyone deemed “other”?

Two recent studies show that Christian nationalism is highly correlated with racism, white supremacy, homophobia, patriarchy, and Islamophobia. While we certainly cannot say that a person who makes racist comments or expresses support for an Islamophobic policy is automatically a Christian nationalist, we can think of this connection as one of several things of which we should be wary. For example, hard line stances on immigration taken by most of the declared GOP candidates indicate that, at the very least, these candidates are trying to exploit the degree to which many conservative voters fear the United States’ growing racial and religious diversity. During the first debate, Ramaswamy described migrants entering the country as “the invasion across our southern border”—language that dehumanizes migrants, evokes threat and warfare, and echoes similar language many candidates have used throughout their campaigns. We also need to be vigilant for candidates using any coded language, often called dog whistles, that signal to audiences that white Americans are the “true” or “real Americans” and others are therefore suspect and less patriotic or less truly American.

3. Does the candidate proclaim a revisionist history account of the U.S. being “a Christian nation”?

Our nation was founded around the First Amendment’s commitment to no established religion and the free exercise of religion, but last fall, some candidates for Congress and governor got a lot of attention for more overt and aggressive statements about America’s founding as a Christian nation. In the coming elections, we should watch for these blatant examples as well as softer statements that carry this connotation.

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4. Does the candidate talk about America's "chosenness" and greatness without acknowledging the way our nation has continually fallen short of its founding principles?

For example, in the first debate, South Carolina's Sen. Tim Scott, who is Black, kept talking about his life story of overcoming adversity to underline American greatness and the American dream, saying that if he could succeed in the U.S., anyone can. Yet Scott failed to mention any of the systemic injustices deeply rooted in history that continue to disadvantage and harm Black and brown Americans.

5. Does the candidate only talk about faith or "biblical values" when it comes to hostility to LGBTQ+ rights and opposing abortion?

This misguided and overly narrow agenda says very little about so many other issues of grave moral consequence — from climate change to poverty to racialized policing and immigration, and more. For example, during the first debate, Pence **repeatedly invoked his faith** as he called for a national 15-week ban on abortion, ignoring that many people of his same faith **do not share** his moral position on abortion. Nor did Pence invoke his faith to call for a more urgent response to domestic or global poverty.

6. Does the candidate demonize racial justice commitments or dismiss them as being "woke"?

Christian nationalism is often tied to an ethno-nationalist identity, which in the U.S., means being white. Many candidates who claim to be "anti-woke" are simply refusing to imagine an America in which the promise of "liberty and justice for all" is truly extended to people of every racial group. Many of these people also deny that there is any need to seek repair or systemic change to correct past and current wrongs. At last night's debate, Florida's Gov. Ron DeSantis **bragged** about his record of banning Critical Race Theory (never mind that the theory isn't something taught in primary or secondary schools to begin with) and what he called "gender ideology," in schools. These are clear signals that he objects to a true accounting of American history that recognizes the role racism and sexism have always played. This myth that the the U.S. is an "innocent nation" is **prevalent** among Christian nationalists.

In Matthew 5, Jesus is clear that the way to discern whether Christian language is true or false is to look to the outcomes: the fruit. The questions above can help us recognize — and resist — the manifestations, or fruit, of Christian nationalism at the federal, state, and local level. The point of recognizing this unsavory fruit isn't to then demonize the people who bear it; the point of recognizing this toxic ideology is to neutralize it and keep it from spreading. In the voting booth, this means rejecting candidates who embrace these ideas; in our churches, it means being resourceful and more courageous in finding ways to disciple Christians away from this heresy.



Adam Russell Taylor

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 Twitter [@revadamtaylor](#).

Her father was a criminal defense lawyer and a member of the Black Panther Party — she is the fighter we've needed. She's gonna shut the whole Trump mob operation down.

Mike

THE U.S. AND CHINA MUST UNITE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS, NOT EACH OTHER

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This progress has led the IEA to forecast that renewables will surpass coal to become the largest source of global electricity generation by early 2025, much faster than previously predicted.

The bad news is that we are still falling well short of the kinds of investments needed to deal with this crisis. We are still not moving fast enough to save our planet. The latest report from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that without more urgent action, the world will pass the key 1.5C (2.7F) threshold by the early 2030s, risking a far deadlier future for our children and future generations. The science is clear: if the US, China, and the rest of the planet do not act with greater urgency to dramatically cut carbon emissions, our planet will face enormous and irreversible damage.

Let's be clear: since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the US has put more carbon into the atmosphere, by far, than any other country. While the new technologies sustained by fossil fuels improved our standard of living, we laid the groundwork for the climate calamity the planet is now experiencing.

In recent years, the rapidly growing Chinese economy has eclipsed the US as the world's major carbon emitter. Right now, China is building six times as many coal-fired power plants as the rest of the world combined — the equivalent of two new coal plants every week. Last year, they quadrupled the number of new coal plants approved compared with 2021.

Current plans will see China add as much new coal to its grid as used in all of India, the second largest coal user, and five times more coal capacity as the US.



It is no great secret the Chinese government is undertaking many policies that we and the international community should oppose. They are cruelly repressing and interning the Uyghurs, threatening Taiwan and stifling freedom of expression in Tibet and Hong Kong. China has bullied its neighbors, abused the global trading system, stolen technology and is building out a dystopian surveillance state.

The US is rightly organizing its allies to press Beijing on these and other issues. But organizing most of our national effort around a zero-sum global confrontation with China is unlikely to change Chinese behavior and will alienate allies and partners.

THE U.S. AND CHINA MUST UNITE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS, NOT EACH OTHER

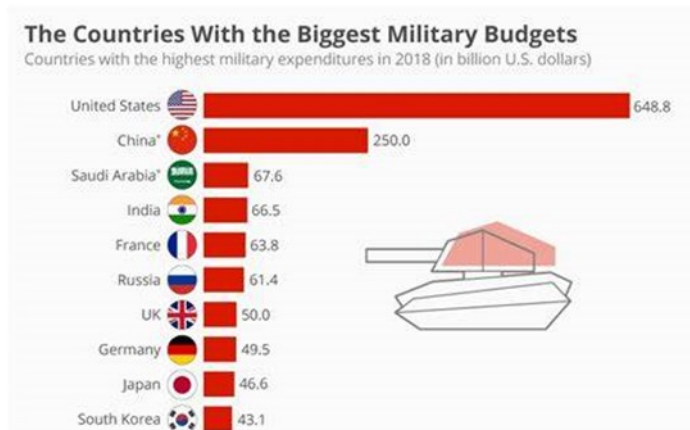
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Most importantly, it could doom our planet by making climate cooperation impossible between the world's two largest greenhouse emitters. We need to move in a bold new direction. Recent history provides some instructive examples.

In 1962, when the US and the Soviet Union stood on the verge of nuclear war, President John F Kennedy and the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, came together to prevent mutual destruction. Just a few months later, with the nuclear crisis as the background, President Kennedy proposed to the Soviet Union an arms reductions plan which would change the confrontational dynamic that had brought the world to the brink. Even arch anti-communists like Nixon and Reagan made bold gambits to reduce tensions, fearful of global annihilation. We face a similar dynamic today, facing collective catastrophe if we do not change course.

Here is the insane dynamic that must be changed. In recent years, both the US and China have greatly increased their military budgets. The US now spends some \$900bn on the Pentagon, more than the next 10 nations combined. China, with the world's second largest military budget, spends almost \$300bn. Despite spending these huge amounts on "defense", both countries are losing the war against the climate crisis. The US has experienced massive floods, fires, drought and extreme weather disturbances, which have cost us hundreds of billions. The recent flooding in China alone will cost that government tens of billions. Into the future, scientists tell us that great cities like Shanghai and New York will be underwater if we do not act effectively against the climate crisis.

So here's a "radical" idea. Instead of spending enormous amounts of money planning for a war against each other, the US and China should come to an agreement to mutually cut their military budgets and use the savings to move aggressively to improve energy efficiency, move toward sustainable energy and end our reliance on fossil fuels. They should also provide increased support for developing countries who are suffering from the climate crisis through no fault of their own.



Now, I know that establishment politicians in both countries will tell me how naive and unsophisticated I am to offer such a suggestion and they will provide a million reasons as to why it can't be done. My response is this:

Go talk to the people in Vermont who have lost their homes because of unprecedented flooding and the families in Hawaii who lost loved ones in the recent fires.

Go talk to the more than 1 million people in China who have been displaced by catastrophic floods.

by Zachary Lee

Editor's note: we were unable to fit all of this article in previous issues. Will continue to include the information about a couple of these extraordinary women in this and future issues.

Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

The Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis is author, activist, public theologian, and senior minister at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City, where she is producing the **Freedom Rising Conference** this April 28-30. She is the author of ***Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness That Can Heal the World.***



Why is the work you do so important right now? It seems to me our nation is in a time of existential foment. Who do we want to be and what will we do to make it so, is an important question of identity and vision. In my work at Middle Church in New York, our incredibly diverse congregation is on a journey together in which we rehearse the world about which we dream. My preaching, teaching, writing, coaching, and visioning help set a path for us, in these swirling times, to model for each other what Beloved Community looks like. My work is urgent, and I love it.

A prayer for 2023: Though oftentimes painful, may these times of expanding and contracting help give birth to stronger communities filled with more patience and fierce love, and to the world we want. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Yvonne Delk

Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk is currently a member of the board of trustees of Franklinton Center at Bricks in North Carolina. She was part of the 1962 Freedom Rides on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the first Black woman to be ordained in the United Church of Christ.

She is former executive of the Community Renewal Society of Chicago and has served the UCC in leadership positions, including as the director of its Office for Church in Society. She has worked internationally as moderator of the World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism and is the founding director of the Center for African American Theological Studies (CAATS). For 60 years Rev. Delk has served as an educator, preacher, organizer, and a prophetic voice leading the fight for human and civil rights for people of color, children, and the poor throughout five continents.



Why is the work you're doing important right now? I am Elder Mother Yvonne Virginia Delk. In my 84th year as a pastor, activist, storyteller, mentor, and spirit guide, I am retelling the United Church of Christ's "origin story" through the publication of my first book, ***Afro-Christian Convention: The Fifth Stream of the United Church of***

Christ. Based on the lived history and research of my team of contributors, our denomination has voted to affirm its Afro-Christian origins, shifting us from a European-originated denomination to an African-originated denomination. Amid America's current period of regressive Afro-phobia, white supremacy, and attacks on how we interrogate the original sin of racism, I am telling the story of faith, courage, resistance, strategic foresight, and resilience that flow from the well of our African ancestors and African spirituality. Not only does this work meet our historical moment, but I am using it to provide ongoing witness for younger generations who are embracing theological imagination and moral agency toward the beloved community of justice, love, liberation.

A prayer for 2023: Lead on, O God of freedom and justice. O God of liberation and truth, we invoke your Spirit. We follow you with fear and sometimes tears, but we come forth rejoicing. Encircle us with your liberating mercy and grace. You are the God who calls worlds into being and refuses to bow before the gods of Empire. You are the Author, Perfector, and Defender of life. You are the God who does not leave us lost, even when we wander. You are the God who invites us to choose life against the snares of death surrounding us. You are the God who says that truth crushed to earth shall rise again. O God of our ancestors, we are Your people. Empower us with conviction and courage. Journeying with You, O God, is indeed the way home for us. Welcome us with singing and dancing, so that we may run and not grow weary, walk and not faint in our struggle for liberation. Amen.

THE U.S. AND CHINA MUST UNITE TO FIGHT THE CLIMATE CRISIS, NOT EACH OTHER

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Go talk to the people in southern Africa who are starving because of the terrible drought and floods they are experiencing or farmers around the world who can no longer grow their crops because of water shortages.

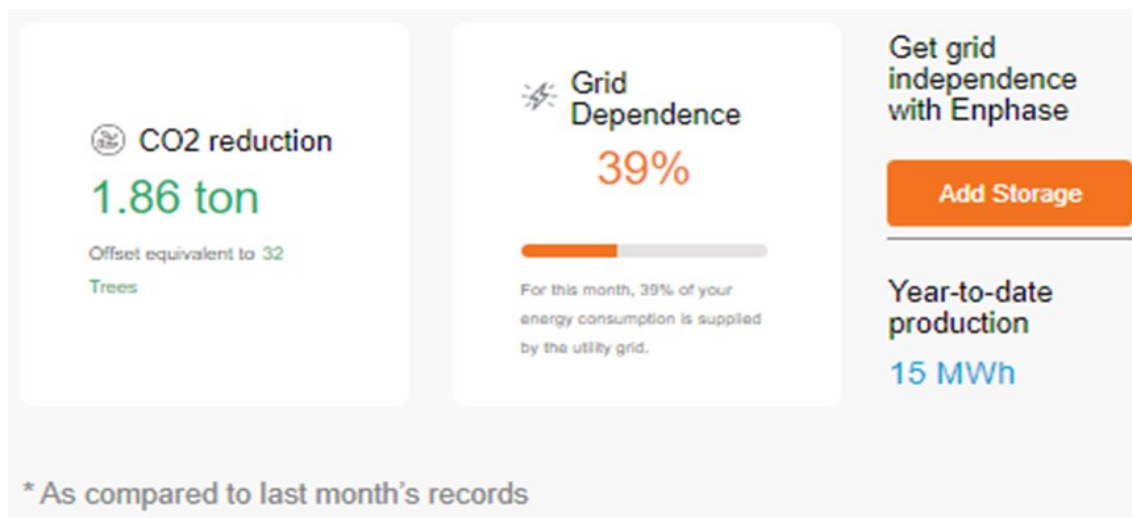
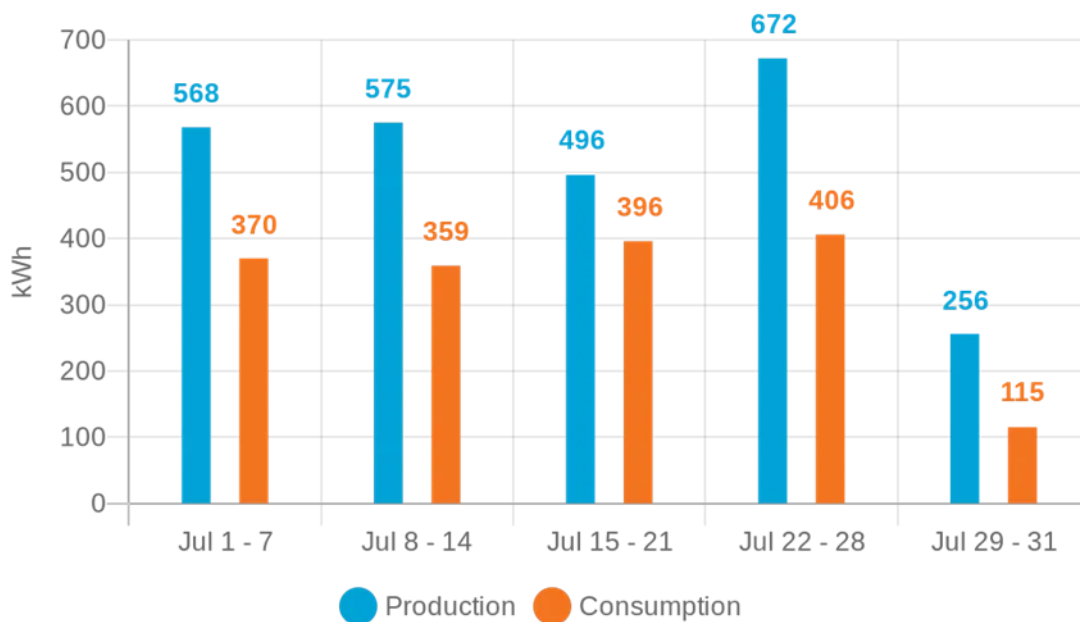
Perhaps most importantly, go talk to the hundreds of millions of young people in every country on earth who are losing hope, wondering whether they should even have children of their own, given the enormous challenges the climate crisis poses for a normal life.

Nelson Mandela famously remarked; "It always seems impossible until it's done."

If we are to save the planet, now is the time for bold action. Let's do it.



SOLAR PANEL REPORT—July 2023



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SEPTEMBER 2023 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!



Happy Birthday September!

Happy Anniversary!



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

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

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for September 2023

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader	Notes
9/3	1	Jeremiah 15:15-21	Quincy Coleman	
	2	Romans 12:9-21	Marty Holmeen	
	Psalm	Psalm 26:1-8	Sonia Wellington	
9/10	1	Ezekial 33: 7-11	Mark or Cindy Jones	
	2	Romans 13: 8-14	Mark or Cindy Jones	
	Psalm	Psalm 119: 33-40	Unison	
9/17	1	Genesis 50: 15-21	Kasumi Campbell	
	2	Romans 14: 1-12	Judy Butterworth-Kremer	
	Psalm	Psalm 103: 1-13	Alternating Verses	Pastor/Congregation
9/24	1	Jonah 3: 10-11	Nina Kretschmer	
	2	Philippians 1: 21-30	Lou Oliver	
	Psalm	Psalm 145: 1-8	Rodney Carr	



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Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

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