



GRACE NOTES

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OCTOBER 2023

LOOKING FOR MEANING AT A TIME OF UNIVERSAL UPHEAVAL

The world we inhabit seems to be coming apart in ways that many of us have never imagined or thought that it might. We are confused, looking for signs, hoping for a rescue, looking for goodness. The world we witness further disturbs and confuses, never mind complicates, bringing forth more and more angst and disappointment.

By the way, we don't really need to look far away to be concerned. We have elderly people in our church suffering in Alzheimer's units in assisted living, people uncertain about what will happen when the money runs out, desperate people looking for food, clothing, safety, and anything that can have them feel something, like relationships, like others who care, to embrace life in its fullness not when it is on empty. The people who cry constantly because of so many sorrows they live with and can find no way to see an end to it. People living in housing that has mold, in places that are being purchased and its boarders evicted.



Then there are those who are doing drugs, fentanyl, mixed with other horrors, bringing death, abused children, the owning of blocks by gangs, those driving so recklessly that death or frightful accidents are the results. Children go to schools without the resources they need, and always we fear for their safety as they go to school, when they are in the school, and when school is finished.

Did I mention those on welfare, social security, and limited incomes, or those refugees and immigrants who are trying to find a way to live safely, protecting their families, finding jobs and places to live? And then we have had floods, power lines down, streets needing repair, and pathways no longer safe or available for those trying to go from here to there.

Then there is the matter of healthcare, the pandemic, the new threats to those over 60 and for those dependent on medication to live. Gun violence, ghost guns, weapons of all sorts, police at risk, young people, innocents, babies falling out of windows, injustice, hate crimes, people of faith targeted, Our Jewish brothers and sisters, people of color, indigenous peoples, and the growing beat of white "Maga" folk at work in CT, too.



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If you live in this world the way we do, you might be thinking and feeling in a similar way. I offer the following assertions that show us that we may not know what truly is going on, and we may make assumptions that make matters worse, although its hard for us “adults” to see or understand. Let’s reflect on the following encounter of a little child and his mother:

הָיָה יָדוֹן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לִכְרֹךְ זְכוּת.

A lovely little boy was holding two apples with both hands.
His mother came in and softly asked her little boy with a smile:

My sweetie, could you give your mom one of your two apples?

The boy looked up at his mom for some seconds, then he
suddenly took a quick bite on one apple, and then quickly on
the other.

The mom tried hard not to reveal her disappointment.
Then the little boy handed one of his bitten apples to his mom
and said:

mommy, here you are. **This is the sweeter one.**

No matter who you are, how experienced you are, and how
knowledgeable you think you are, always delay judgement.

Give others the privilege to explain themselves.

What you see may not be the reality.

Never conclude for others.

L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!



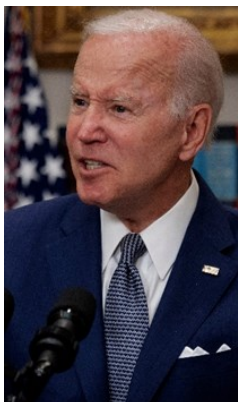
What a lovely thought. If we were to spend less time thinking that we know all that there is to know. No matter how much life experience we've had, and how many degrees we have and numbers of places we have been... perhaps, we might try slowing down our judgements. In the context of our taking in all that we have seen and heard, witnessed and fear. Maybe we can dig deeper. The answers may not be obvious, but that doesn't mean they will not be found.

In the context of relationships, across all of our differences, and there certainly are many, let's promise to give others the privilege of explaining themselves.

What we assume or conclude about others may not be reality at all. Let's give each other the opportunity to interact as brothers and sisters and allow those with all those different, foreign experiences and natures... may they speak their truth such that we are willing to hear it. And may we discover that doing the same with others, we may be better understood. And, together we may find ways for us to come closer, to care more, to be less afraid, and to be aware of what really is going on around us.



BIDEN IN DETROIT, The First President to Join Striking Workers and Walk the Picket Line — aka "The Day the Filthy Rich Were Sure Would Never Come"



Relaxing and soaking in their ocean of billions and billions of dollars, they never saw this day coming. Why would they? They privately refer to themselves as "The Owners." They own the country. They own the politicians. They think they own you and me. In just this decade alone the Big 3 car companies made off with profits — *profits!* — of a quarter trillion dollars! Other fat cats have bought up all the media so that their version of the truth is virtually all we see. They've almost succeeded in turning our democracy into an autocracy, and their thievery has resulted in the top 1% of them owning more wealth than the bottom 90% while 61% of all Americans must live from paycheck to paycheck. According to the Federal Reserve, nearly 40% of our fellow citizens do not at any given time have \$400 of available cash in their pockets for an emergency expense.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE – EMBRACING CHANGE, AND DOING WELCOME

The world around us is changing. That's absolutely true! But one might not have expected that we would do likewise, thinking that perhaps we would stay as we've been. Well, we are trying to do what we do better, engaging more people, establishing norms of behavior within the church, particularly as we discover more welcoming ways to honor and respect those who are guests, and all those who volunteer.

We are also working to make our space more welcoming, uncluttered, clean and sanitary. Our food services cry out for that, and we have let things go for years, enabling the church to be unsanitary, cluttered and uninviting all at the same time. A major clean-up is in motion and we've added a new and high potential sound and video system. And ultimately the removal of the six refrigerator/freezers in the Fireplace room making room to utilize the room for a variety of purposes, along with the storage of materials essential for feeding people on Fridays, and with enough food for us to give people coming to our doors daily, some food that they badly need.



And we are looking more closely at what it is that we are giving people to eat. Our intention is to provide healthier food, fresher food and serving it from a kitchen that itself is being better managed, with proper cleaning, and organization, barring people from using it that do not have the authority and experience to be in it.

In addition, we want to welcome people in need with love and genuine caring. That means, if we have someone come to the door, we listen to them with urgency, and we respond with kindness and the necessary information. This is in process including a program in working with volunteers to ensure all understand how we can be at our best, while listening to our volunteers to discover new and better ways to respond and work together. This latter process has been the initiative of Sue Carey and has already shown improvement in terms of our ability to serve the people who come.

We are running Janet's Closet differently, we have less clutter in the hallway coming into the Community Room, and we have music playing as people come in for Prayers at 3 PM. We acknowledge and thank all those who are there to serve, we are welcoming people from St. Matthew who will be bringing Confirmation Students and church members to participate in our Friday programming and food sharing.

The mikes are now working, and announcements will be made with the help of needed amplification.

We will be working on upgrading the outside of the church, improving the benches that were not painted, addressing the leaks in the awning, and we have a new/refreshed team – The Parish Life Committee - with the task of creating new and different activities for church members and guests. For instance, we've talked about the idea of doing a "Gospel" Service on a Sunday, with food, music, singing and worship in the Community Room. Other ideas are in the minds of our team, too.

As new people come to worship with us, and they are, we want to make them feel at home, offering them help in worship, and with a warm welcome. There is no need for us to be overly

rigorous or intrusive in our welcomes. Please allow others to say, “hi” and introduce them to me as the pastor. Sometimes at the end of the service I find new people surrounded making it difficult to welcome them myself.

And, finally, I point you at the marvelous article prepared by, once again, Sue Carey. It is a remarkable, historically wondrous reminder of how it is our country faces the kinds of challenges it faces today. Restorative Justice is essential to our better understanding of why some people are treated differently than others, and it opens a whole new way for us to come to express our desire to make things new.

You will note that we have placed a sign in the front of the church indicating “Black Lives Matter.” This is a reflection of our growing awareness of our sad history as a nation, and our stake in the ground insisting that we want to be a part of the movement to change our beloved country and the world for the better.



BIDEN IN DETROIT

(continued from page 3)

But when the current President defeated the Democratic Socialist in the Democratic primaries in 2020, and then went on to win the White House that November, Wall Street and Corporate America breathed a sigh of relief. Their old friend from Delaware, Inc., a self-proclaimed lover of Capitalism, a former leader of the mass incarceration of our Black citizens through his “Crime Bill,” and the man who, through his treatment of Anita Hill, paved the path for Clarence Thomas to take his ill-begotten seat of terror on the Supreme Court. Yeah, that guy, Joe, the kind of tool that wealthy white America has always found quite useful in keeping the majority of Democrats moderate, centrist wimps. The Party that’s always proclaimed to be on the side of the workers, the women, the Earth, the dispossessed, the grapes of wrath — while all along barely lifting a finger to see that the men and women who do all the work receive a just compensation. Who have not seen a raise in the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour in over 14 years. And an entire gender who had its bodily autonomy ripped from them after begging the Dems for 49 long years to please pass a law in Congress to make Roe v. Wade the permanent Law of the Land. But they never got around to it. And then it was too late. Too late for affirmative action. Too late to save the EPA. Too late. Too late.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

by Sue Carey

Have you attended a meeting that opened with a land acknowledgement statement like this?

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) acknowledges that Asylum Hill is located on the traditional lands of the Poqonook, Sicoag, Tunxis and Wangunk tribes.

Land acknowledgement, a custom used by Native Peoples, has been adopted by many public institutions to acknowledge and honor the history between Indigenous People and the land these institutions occupy. For example, when I attend the ELCA “EDLARJ” (European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice) meetings on Zoom, participants—who come from all across the country—are asked to identify the names of the Indigenous Peoples who originally stewarded the land where participants now live. At the monthly AHNA meetings, library programs, and lectures at the Old State House in Hartford, statements like this are read at the start of each event. This is just the tip of the iceberg: many organizations have posted land acknowledgement statements on their website.

My interest in these statements was recently piqued when author Robert P. Jones’s latest book, *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy and the Path to a Shared American Future*, was released. In the book, Jones introduces the reader to a document called the Doctrine of Discovery. Below is an excerpt (edited for clarity; 11:00-15:00) from a panel discussion given on September 6 at Georgetown University where Jones describes the Doctrine of Discovery and how it shaped the identity of the United States. The full discussion is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXkFurcm Wk>. Jones explained:



Well I should say that I have a PhD in religion and I really got taught very little about the Doctrine of Discovery throughout my higher education, through graduate school, [and] seminary. I think I heard the term but it certainly was never taught as something central to America’s current identity crisis, which is the way I think about it. [It’s] a kind of Rosetta Stone for understanding the deep structure of the conflicts that we’re experiencing today.

Essentially, [the Doctrine of Discovery] is a set of Christian doctrines that were put forward in the late fifteenth century over a period of about fifty years that were all about this dilemma. What happens in the late fifteenth century? Well, it’s the first European contact with the Americas. There are these “discovered” lands with “discovered” people in them, and there is this dilemma: What do we do? What is our responsibility? Can we exploit any of these lands and these people?

So, 1493 is the year that I think is significant for the Americas and for our country, because it’s not the year that Columbus sailed the ocean blue, 1492. It’s the next year when he goes back [to Spain]. What he goes back to do is to get more soldiers, more missionaries, and more supplies to come back and conquer and colonize. That’s really the mission, and he needs permission to do this. Who does he appeal to? He appeals to the political structures, Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain. He also appeals to the closest thing to international law that actually existed in Europe at the time, and that is the pope in Rome.

And I should say this is not just a Catholic issue. These edicts—they were papal bulls—which means they were kind of official edicts from the Vatican. This is before the Protestant-Catholic split. This is before the split between the Church of England and Catholicism. All of western Europe is under the jurisdiction of the papal powers in Rome. These documents spell it out straightforwardly.

What they say is this: The key part of the logic is, who deserves human rights—and who does not—is predicated on one thing only, and that is: Are they Christian? The logic of this is, if these lands are occupied by people who are not Christian, and the only other corollary or caveat is, and they are not already dominated by a Christian power—so you can't interfere with another Christian power—but if they are free of Christian domination already and not Christian, you have the blessing of the church and the state to go in to conquer, to kill, to steal their goods, occupy their towns, claim the land, and then this line; it's in the document: It's from the head—the person that Christians thought of as the Vicar of Christ on earth—says this: That you have the right, not only to kill, conquer, and all that, but to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery. That's in the document, in addition to all the other rights.

That sense of these lands, these previously undiscovered lands by Europeans, is being set up and understood to be claimed as a kind of Promised Land for European Christians, regardless of the people who are already here. This is the key insight and the power of the Doctrine of Discovery that sets off Native American genocide [and] the transatlantic slave trade. All of it, you can trace back to the root of this idea.



If the Doctrine of Discovery is new to you, then this is a lot to digest. The idea of America as the Promised Land for European Christians—a veiled reference to white people that excludes Jewish people and others—has persisted over the centuries. It was reflected in the artwork of the Hudson River School landscape painters, which in the mid-1800s was acclaimed as the first American style of painting. Some historians assert that this way of thinking is reflected in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the formation of the KKK, and systems that reinforce white supremacy.

As I learned more about the Doctrine of Discovery, I also learned that the ELCA has been seeking meaningful ways to bring about restorative justice. Past issues of *The Lutheran* and *Living Lutheran* magazines have highlighted these topics. But until now, this information did not sink in with me. In case it is the same for you, below are a few examples of what is going on churchwide:

- ♦ At the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery.

- ♦ In 2021, the ELCA's "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force" began encouraging the ritual practice of land acknowledgement at the beginning of every church meeting or gathering, in all expressions of the church.
- ♦ In 2022, the Churchwide Assembly approved an action to support restorative justice in partnership with Indigenous people, including returning land or sharing proceeds when property is sold and to financially support ELCA Indigenous congregations and ministries.
- ♦ The *Living Lutheran* and ELCA emails have highlighted the Truth and Healing Movement, which Bishop Elizabeth Eaton launched in April this year. See the September/October 2023 issue of *Living Lutheran* ("From Words to Action: Congregations Join the Truth and Healing Movement" by Isabell Retamoz).

The Doctrine of Discovery legitimized the colonization practices of Europeans in the Americas, as well as across the globe, and cloaked it in Christian spirituality. That it originated within Christianity makes it necessary for "the church" to lead in practicing restorative justice. While I have focused on recent actions concerning Indigenous Peoples, the ELCA is also pursuing racial justice. For example, "The Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent" begins:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) apologizes to people of African descent for its historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the United States and globally. We lament the white church's failure to work for the abolition of slavery and the perpetuation of racism in this church. We confess, repent and repudiate the times when this church has been silent in the face of racial injustice.

Our church is not a corporate body located in Chicago. We are the church. We are called to repudiate the errors of our forebears and serve justice—now. Making a land acknowledgement statement is easy; AHNA has already written it for Grace and those of us who reside in Asylum Hill. Some will argue that the statement is just for show, but to make the statement is the first step in considering how restorative justice can follow. The same with boldly claiming "Black Lives Matter" on our front lawn. They are just words. But if we cannot claim the words, then I don't know how we will live into them.





CAC faculty member Barbara Holmes teaches about contemplation that arises in collective experiences of crisis. Against all odds, crisis becomes transformative “sacred space.” In her podcast The Cosmic We, Holmes reflects that in such a space:

We let go of our narratives, our plans, and the stories that we tell ourselves about who we are and where we come from. We toss our resumes or CVs to the winds, and we finally realize with regard to our corporate or social climbing that there is no there, there. When a crisis impacts a community, we collectively plunge into a space of stillness and unknowing, a shared interiority of potential and spiritual re-birthing.

After each crisis, questions loom. Will we rise to the occasion and allow the planet to recover from our toxic greed? Or will we continue to destroy our planet, our only home? A crisis forces those caught in its clutches to come to terms with the fact that life as we knew it may never be the same. When the crisis strikes, the response from the village must be a pause. There’s little that we can do, but we can be. We can listen. We can love our neighbors and we can host the Spirit that utters over every dawning day. [1]

Barbara Holmes describes the transformative benefits that can emerge from crisis—if we allow them:

I see crisis contemplation becoming a refuge. When everything around you is beyond your control and you shatter, you find within you a space of solitude, peace, and refuge that allows you to begin to gather yourself again. Howard Thurman talks about an inner island that no one can breach without your permission.

A second benefit is that crisis contemplation becomes a wellspring of discernment in a disordered life space. In other words, there is this moment of shattering where we can do nothing, and we have an opportunity to be still. We are told in Psalm 46:10 to “Be still and know that I am God,” but how many of us allow time or even have the capability to be still? Our nervous systems are such a jangle that sitting still can also be nearly impossible for some of us. When we have no choice but to be still, though, there’s an opportunity to discern what comes next. Many of us operate on instinct and impulse, but there is a way to live where we’re operating out of discernment and where there is a knowing that is beyond our own. [2]

In her book Crisis Contemplation, Barbara Holmes—or “Dr B”—ends with a prayer of gratitude:

For the crises, the disruption of order,
and the plunge into contemplation,
we are grateful.
For the welcoming darkness
and the wounds that bring us
to a place of unknowing,
we thank God!
For the nurture of our many villages
Of belonging, we are grateful.

For healing that comes in unexpected ways,
and the imaginative pathways
of futurism and cosmic rebirth,
thanks be. [4]

[1] Adapted from Barbara Holmes and Donny Bryant, "Crisis," *The Cosmic We*, season 4, episode 1 (Albuquerque, NM: Center for Action and Contemplation, 2023), podcast, MP3 audio.

[2] Holmes and Bryant, "Crisis," *Cosmic We*.

[3] Barbara A. Holmes, *Crisis Contemplation: Healing the Wounded Village* (Albuquerque, NM: CAC Publishing, 2021), 138.

[3]

Image credit: A path from one week to the next—Taylor Wilson, *Madonna and Messiah* (detail), ink, used with permission. Alma Thomas, *The Eclipse* (detail), 1970, acrylic on canvas, [Smithsonian](#). Alma Thomas, *Snow Reflections on Pond* (detail), 1973, acrylic on canvas.

Creation is sacred space; the multi-colored spot of paint on canvas echoes the light through a stained-glass window.

BIDEN IN DETROIT

(continued from page 5)

Yes, to the rich, it all looked so great, so smooth, everything moving according to plan, our country — no, *their country*.

Until today.

Today, the wealthy are going to be forced to watch something that has never happened before in the United States of America: The President of the United States will fly to Detroit, take a sign into his hands, and walk with thousands of striking Autoworkers in a picket line meant to shut down the factory and prevent any commerce or manufacturing from taking place inside. No president has ever done this. Ever. This president had this to say last week:

"The automakers have made record profits. The workers deserve a record contract." BOOM! Mic drop. He later announced he would go to Detroit to picket with the union, the workers.

Oh how I wish I could've been in the plush office of any one of our 756 billionaires when that appeared on the screen! To see them choke on whatever they were eating or drinking. To see their mouths agape, their eyeballs about to pop out of their heads. Their frantic effort to find a baby aspirin in their vest pocket, or lunging toward the oxygen canister in the room so they could breathe. Nothing in their lives will have prepared them for this singular historic moment when the man they thought they bought and paid for had betrayed them, had used his power as the most powerful man in the world to stand on the side of the people, the working people, women and men who had taken pay cuts, gave up their benefits, bowed down and bent over to their corporate masters and now, here was the President, right up in the faces of the Big 3 CEOs and, speaking Scrantonese: ***You mess with these good people, you're messing with me.***



POPE'S MESSAGE

His words.
Your journey.
Together.



"You can have flaws, be **anxious** and even be angry, but just remember that your life is the world's biggest contest." Only you can stop it from failing. You are appreciated, admired, and loved by so many. Remember that happiness is not having a sky without storms, a road without accidents, a job without effort, a relationship without disappointments.

"Being happy means finding strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, security in fear, love in discord." It's not only to enjoy the smile, but also to reflect on the sadness. It's not just about celebrating success it's about learning from failure. It's not just about feeling happy with applause, it's about being happy anonymously. Being happy is not a fatality of destiny, but an achievement for those who can travel on their own.

"Being happy is to stop feeling victimized and become the author of your own destiny." "It is to walk through deserts, but to be able to find an oasis deep in one's soul. It's thanking God every morning for the miracle of life. To be happy is not to be afraid of your feelings and to be able to talk about yourself. Have the courage to hear a "no" and trust the criticism, even when it's unwarranted. It's about hugging your kids, hugging your parents, spending poetic moments with your friends, even when they hurt us.

"To be happy is to let the creature that lives in us live, free, joyful and simple." You are mature enough to say, "I made mistakes". Having the courage to say I'm sorry. It's the sense of saying "I need you". It's having the ability to say, "I love you". May your life become a garden of blissful opportunities that in spring is a lover of joy and in winter a lover of wisdom.

"And when you make a mistake, start over." Because only then will you be in love with life. You will find out that being happy isn't about having a perfect life. But use tears to irrigate the tolerance. Use your defeats to train your patience.

"Use your mistakes with serenity of the sculptor." Use the pain to connect to pleasure. Use obstacles to open the windows of intelligence. Never give up... Above all, never abandon the people who love you. Never stop being happy because life is an amazing show. "

~ POPE FRANCIS

BIDEN IN DETROIT

(continued from page 10)

Wow. Yes. Each of us lived to see this day. It finally happened. Now it's up to all of us to pick up the gauntlet, join with the unions, fight for their livelihood, defend our Democracy, and repel all forces hell-bent on creating a fascist society. This is our moment.

Thank you Joe Biden for standing with us and truly acting as our public servant. **You** serving us, not the other way around as we're used to. Thank you for coming to Detroit. This will not soon be forgotten.

Michael

LABOR DAY



In the history of this country, real, significant change has never happened from the top-down. It always happens from the bottom-up. So today, let us stand with organized labor and the working people of this country. Let us stand for economic justice. Let us take on greed and oligarchy and create a government and society that works for all, not just the few.

Please read my latest op-ed enclosed below.
- Bernie



Why this Labor Day is so consequential

It's not utopian thinking to imagine that, for the first time in world history, everyone could have a decent standard of living
[Bernie Sanders](#)
Mon 4 September 2023

As we celebrate Labor Day, 2023 let's take a quick look at the economy over the last few years.

Never before in American history have so few owned so much and has there been so much income and wealth inequality.

Never before in American history has there been such concentration of ownership in our economy with a handful of giant corporations controlling sector after sector, enjoying record-breaking profits.

Never before in American history have we seen a ruling class, utilizing a corrupt political system, exercise so much political power through their Super Pacs and ownership of media.

And never before in American history have we seen the level of greed, arrogance and irresponsibility that we see today on the part of the 1%. Corporate greed is rampant.

Meanwhile, as the billionaire class becomes richer and more powerful, over 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, and many work for starvation wages and under terrible working conditions. Incredibly, despite huge increases in worker productivity and an explosion in technology, the average American worker is making over \$45 a week less today than he or she did 50 years ago after adjusting for inflation.

Today, in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, tens of millions struggle to put food on the table, find affordable housing, affordable healthcare, affordable prescription drugs, affordable childcare and affordable educational opportunities. In our country today we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of almost any major nation, and half of older workers have no savings as they face retirement.

And, in the midst of this massive inequality, the United States and the world face enormous

economic transformation as a result of artificial intelligence, robotics and other new technologies. There is no question but that many of the jobs being done today will not be here in 10 or 20 years.

Let's be clear. These technologies, which will greatly increase worker productivity, have the potential to be extraordinarily beneficial for humanity, or could cause devastating pain and dislocation for tens of millions of workers. The question is: who makes the decisions as to what happens in this radically changing economy, and who benefits from those decisions? Do we allow the "market" to throw working people out in the streets because they are "redundant", or do we take advantage of the increased productivity this technology creates to improve the lives of all?



Throughout the history of humanity, the vast majority of people have had to struggle to feed themselves, find adequate shelter and eke out a living. The good news is that the revolutionary new technology, if used to benefit all of humanity and not just the rich and the powerful, could usher in a new era in human development. It is not utopian thinking to imagine that, for the first time in world history, we could enter a time in which every man, woman and child has a decent standard of living and improved quality of life.

In the United States, for example, the 40-hour work week, under the Fair Labor Standards Act, has been the legal definition of full-time work since 1940. Well, the world and technology have undergone enormous changes since 1940 and American workers are now 480% more productive than they were back then. It's time for those standards to reflect contemporary reality. It's time for a 32-hour work week with no loss in pay. It's time that working families were able to take advantage of the increased productivity that new technologies provide so that they can enjoy more leisure time, family time, educational and cultural opportunities – and less stress.

Moving to a 32-hour work week with no loss of pay is not a radical idea. In fact, movement in that direction is already taking place in other developed countries. France, the seventh-largest economy in the world, has a 35-hour work week and is considering reducing it to 32 hours. The work week in Norway and Denmark is about 37 hours a week.



Recently, the United Kingdom conducted a four-day work week pilot program of 3,000 workers at over 60 companies. Not surprisingly, it showed that happy workers were more productive. The pilot was so successful that 92% of the companies that participated decided to maintain a four-day work week because of the benefits to both employers and employees.

Another pilot of nearly 1,000 workers at 33 companies in seven countries, found that revenue increased by more than 37% in the companies that participated and 97% percent of workers were happy with the four-day work week.

Needless to say, changes that benefit the working class of our country are not going to be easily handed over by the corporate elite. They have to be fought for – and won. And in that

regard there has been some very good news over the last several years. We are now seeing workers stand up and fight for justice in a way we have not seen in decades. In America, more workers want to join unions; more workers are joining unions – 273,000 last year alone; and more workers are going out on strike for decent wages and benefits and winning. We're seeing that increased militancy all across our economy – with truck drivers, auto workers, writers, actors, warehouse workers, healthcare professionals, graduate student teachers and baristas.

Let's continue that struggle. Let's think big, not small. Let's create an economy and government that work for all, not just the few.

Happy Labor Day.

WHO WOULD JESUS CUT FROM MEDICAID? by Lauren W. Reliford

SOJOURNERS



When I teach people how to advocate on Capitol Hill, I say that the best way to appeal to legislators is to build a common vision for humanity rooted in shared values. Early in my political advocacy career, I assumed that as a Christian, I'd have an easier time of this since more than **87 percent** of Congress claims to share my Christian faith.

For me, this faith has always been rooted in Jesus' lived example of how we are to be unapologetic in our support for each other. And when Jesus says, "love thy neighbor as

thyself," I imagined this meant, well, help thy neighbor, assist thy neighbor, care for thy neighbor, nurture thy neighbor — all without condition or justification, just as Jesus did.

But since then, I've learned a serious lesson about the limitations of the Christian imagination in politics. Despite the faith we share, many lawmakers in this country don't seem to envision a country where we actually put these values into practice. My latest disappointment? Millions of people **losing** Medicaid coverage — our nation's primary public health system that provides health care and support for folks with low income and/or disabilities — because states refuse to do the right thing.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress put into place protections for people enrolled in Medicaid to ensure that they were able to stay covered while the country was under a public health emergency. This policy, known as "**the continuous coverage requirement**," allowed states to receive additional federal money for their Medicaid programs in exchange for not kicking people out of the program for as long as the country remained under a federal public health emergency.

From a Christian perspective, I saw this policy as an astounding move of faith and care by the federal and state governments to ensure the safety, protection, and health of our society's most under-served people at a moment when they needed it the most. Serving more than **90 million people**, Medicaid is an enormous investment in the people in the U.S. — the kind of

good work that Jesus would be proud of. As Christians, we should be applauding the fact that our country has such a system in place: It is a testament to the value we place on humanity because we are made in the image of God and therefore treat each other in a manner befitting of the Spirit.

As it happens, providing health care coverage to as many people as possible amid a highly contagious, airborne, and deadly pandemic is also just common sense, even through a purely capitalist lens: Healthy people translate to a thriving labor force and a thriving economy, an idea supported by decades of research from organizations like the Blue Cross Blue Shield, the American Medical Association, and Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Put differently, preventing people from getting seriously ill, permanently disabled, and/or unable to work at their full capacity is vital to our economic wellbeing and national security survival.

Unfortunately, it seems that some states have neither Christian goodness nor capitalist common sense.

Last year, Congress severed the link that made additional Medicare funding dependent on keeping people enrolled and set March 31, 2023 as the end of the continuous coverage requirement, regardless of whether the COVID-19 health emergency was in effect. States were tasked with “unwinding” the continuous coverage requirement by reviewing the eligibility of every person enrolled in Medicaid in their state and either renewing or removing them from the program. Given that Medicaid enrollment grew enormously during the pandemic, increasing over 30 percent from 64 million in January 2020 to 85 million by late 2022, one would think state Medicaid agencies would begin preparing for the bureaucratic nightmare of making coverage determinations for millions of people. One would also think that state Medicaid agencies would have begun creating a process to ensure millions of people did not erroneously lose coverage, acting with integrity and morality because they are dealing with human lives.



One would be wrong.

Eight states could not wait to kick people off their Medicaid rolls and began the process in February, before continuous coverage officially ended. According to data from KFF, a health policy information organization, a total of more than 5.6 million people have already lost health care coverage through Medicaid, an astounding figure that far surpasses the number of people who normally lose coverage annually. In many states, well over a quarter of Medicaid enrollees have been terminated or determined ineligible; in Texas, that number is more than 60 percent. In Florida, which has disenrolled more than 30 percent of Medicaid enrollees, families are suing the state, saying that they were removed without due process.

The Department of Health and Human Services has predicted that as many as 15 million people will ultimately lose coverage. The department estimates that more than 60 percent of those who lose coverage will be Black, Latine, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or a multiracial identity, further exacerbating our already poor health care outcomes and treatment.

According to KFF estimates, as many as 73 percent of those disenrolled are being removed through a process called “procedural terminations,” which is when states mail out Medicaid renewal forms, never hear back, and thus remove someone. This is a problematic process because once someone is removed, they must go through extra bureaucratic hurdles to try to get back on Medicaid — an application process that’s already plenty difficult. For example,

some states may mail the renewal packet to the wrong address or to a person who is unhoused and, therefore, does not have a stable mailing address, or to a family in a rural area with limited mail access. Even assuming the recipient receives the forms, they are overwhelming, require massive amounts of information, and can be written in such technical jargon that nothing makes sense. As someone who has applied for Medicaid for myself and helped patients through the process as a social worker, I can tell you: The hoops this country makes the most deserving jump through to get the things they need is appalling and shameful, with state Medicaid agencies largely to blame.

Medicaid is administered and **run by each state**, with the federal government providing oversight and additional funding. This means that each state has enormous power and flexibility to determine who to cover, what services and treatments to provide, how to deliver care, and how much to reimburse providers. What is crucial here is the states' ability to decide who to cover, something that gives state health officials extraordinary power to determine who is "deserving" or "poor" enough to be eligible to receive Medicaid. Although the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is responsible for Medicaid program administration at the federal level, individual state Medicaid agencies establish many policies and manage their own programs on a day-to-day basis. This is due to federal law, which requires each state to designate a single state agency to administer and/or supervise the administration of its Medicaid program. This structure gives state politicians the power to decide who is "entitled" to receive it based on ineligibility requirements, creating space for states to decide that people aren't "poor enough" or "sick enough" or "deserving enough" based on their own understanding of human needs.

When I look at the value judgements behind these decisions, I see states trying to decide: Whose suffering matters? Who is worthy of help and support? I can't pretend to understand these values. My own faith teaches me that everyone is worthy of love, care, and concern, with extra special attention to help those who are most vulnerable. My faith allows me to imagine a nation where, if anyone lacks clothes or food, we give them the things they need just like it says in James 2:15-16. And my faith empowers me to make this vision a reality, on earth as it is in heaven, knowing that when one person suffers, we all suffer, and when one rejoices, we all share in the joy (1 Corinthians 12:26); I wish Christian lawmakers felt the same way.



Lauren W. Reliford

Lauren W. Reliford, MSW, is political director at Sojourners.



DOES YOUR STATE ALLOW GUNS AT POLLING PLACES?

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE
The Briefing

by Michael Waldman

No one should have to worry about encountering a gun while voting, but only 12 states and Washington, DC, prohibit open and concealed carry of firearms at poll sites.

Banning guns wherever votes are cast shouldn't be controversial. Think about it — the Supreme Court's *Bruen* decision was the most sweeping expansion of gun rights in the history of the country. It wiped out vital public safety laws in six states and invited dozens of lawsuits challenging others across the nation. And yet Justice Clarence Thomas acknowledged that Americans have always agreed there are certain places where guns simply do not belong. He specifically named three of them: legislative assemblies, courthouses, and polling places.

It is, in short, constitutionally sound to ban guns where Americans vote. But states have not kept up with the profusion of guns and their new constitutional protection.

In a [report](#) published this week, my colleagues Sean Morales-Doyle and Robyn Sanders, along with Allison Anderman and Jessica Ojeda of Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, issue a call to prohibit guns wherever election administration occurs: at or near polling places, ballot drop boxes, election offices, and ballot-counting facilities.

The report comes at a critical moment. For more than 20 years, lobbyists have pushed to loosen restrictions on firearms in legislatures and in the courts. Twenty-seven states now allow people to carry a gun in public without a permit or background check, up from just two in 2010. States that have tried to hold the line against the proliferation of guns have run into a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions striking down restrictions on who can carry a weapon, and where. As a result, there are now more guns than people in the United States.

The spread of guns has coincided — perhaps not entirely coincidentally — with the rise of extreme political polarization and political violence. You know the facts. Election officials have been forced into hiding. Domestic terrorists have threatened actors at nearly every level of government. Police foiled a plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan. And an armed mob attempted on January 6, 2021, to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power after a lawful election.

Tamping down the rising tensions about political disagreements so that violence is never on the table will be the work of generations. It will require a cultural shift and a degree of political bravery and will that many of our leaders can't seem to muster. But getting guns away from voting sites is something we can and should do right now. It's common sense, it's constitutional, and it's absolutely necessary.



A LESSON IN LOVING-KINDNESS



Join us reading this reflection from generous supporter and member of our growing contemplative community, Elaine Walsh Carney, who has worked in philanthropy, facilitation, mediation, and negotiation for 32 years. In the midst of a health crisis, Elaine relied on the stillness of contemplative practice to carry her through. She writes:

When I first met with Fr. Richard to prepare for my wedding in 2006, I was struck by his deep, contemplative, and thoughtful nature. He guided my fiancé John and me through the Enneagram, quickly learning that we were remarkably similar in temperament. He shared that this could mostly serve us well but might cause problems if we were not diligent. He encouraged us to look inward with rigor and sincerity and work through our challenges with grace and dignity.

My husband's family was drawn to Fr. Richard Rohr's light several decades ago as early supporters of the development of the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque. As a family, we are deeply honored to aid in the work of the CAC and to support Fr. Richard in his pursuit of clear, compassionate loving-kindness for all.

Years later, I had an opportunity to put this wisdom to good use. I still remember the hushed sounds of the life-support machines to which I was attached in the Pulmonary Intensive Care Unit at Intermountain Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah. At that time, I had been intubated and awake for several hours. To calm down and stay sane, I tapped into loving-kindness meditation:

*May I be filled with loving-kindness;
May I be healthy and well;
May I be peaceful and at ease;
May I be happy.*
—Traditional Buddhist Meditation

I repeated the mantra above for the four days that I was intubated, unaware of how close to death I was. I only knew that I just needed to stay calm.

At the end of my fourth day in the ICU, the nurses pulled the intubation tube from my throat, and I was able to speak again. They were quite surprised and curious about how I had managed. "You were the calmest intubated and awake patient that we have ever seen in this unit. What did you do to stay so peaceful?" "I practiced loving-kindness meditation," was my simple response. Meditation may have saved my life and most certainly helped me retain my sanity.

We are indeed blessed to have been touched by Fr. Richard's wisdom. I am thankful for the insights and resources that he has shared with us over the seventeen years of our wonderful friendship.

Elaine Walsh Carney, Founding Principal of Pathfinder Philanthropy Advisors, has specialized in philanthropy, facilitation, mediation, and negotiation for thirty-two years. Elaine's passion is developing and supporting a "culture of philanthropy" in the organizations that she serves. Her current volunteer leadership is focused on climate-change mitigation, democracy, and resilience. She lives in Jackson Hole, Wyoming with her husband of seventeen years, John Carney.

IT'S GETTING EASIER FOR US CAR OWNERS TO GO ELECTRIC

by Elliot Negin, Senior Writer

The following are excerpts from an article from the Union of Concerned Scientists about EVs.



Last year, US drivers bought more than 800,000 new electric vehicles (EVs), **65 percent** more than in 2021, even as overall car sales declined. Those **807,956** EVs accounted for **5.8 percent** of all new cars sold, an increase from **3.1 percent** in 2021.

Thanks largely to federal tax incentives, lower sticker prices, and more available models, EV sales have continued to surge in 2023. The 554,140 EVs sold during the **first** and **second** quarter of this year represent nearly a 50 percent jump from the **first half** of 2021, and sales are on pace to surpass a record-breaking 1 million by the end of this year.

That's a far cry from just six years ago, when EVs were considered a niche technology (and the fossil fuel baron **Charles Koch** and his minions **wanted** to keep it that way). Today, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) projects that **50 percent** of US passenger car sales could very well be electric by 2030. If that happens, EVs could make up **60 to 70 percent** of the cars on US roads by 2050.

Given the climate crisis, which seems to worsen every day, the sooner the better. After all, the transportation sector is the largest contributor of US anthropogenic global warming emissions, accounting for **29 percent** as of 2021, and the majority of those emissions—**81 percent**—come from cars and trucks. (The rest comes from planes, trains, ships and boats.) In other words, cars and trucks are responsible for 23.5 percent of total US heat-trapping emissions, nearly as much as the electric power sector, which contributes **25 percent**.

To avoid the worst potential consequences of climate change, we will have to transform the transportation and electric power sectors **in tandem**. And while the recent exponential growth of EVs is encouraging—and new federal initiatives will likely turbocharge it—there is still a way to go to overcome lingering consumer hesitancy about EVs.

I recently sat down virtually with one of UCS's top EV experts, **David Reichmuth**, a senior engineer in the organization's Clean Transportation Program, to get a better idea of EVs' near- and long-term prospects. Before joining the UCS staff in 2013, Reichmuth—who has a PhD in chemical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley—worked at Sandia National Laboratories in Livermore, California, where he conducted a cost-benefit analysis of the relative benefits of vehicles powered by batteries, hydrogen fuel cells, and petroleum.

EN: Another concern prospective EV buyers have is upfront cost. On average, EVs have a higher sticker price than comparable gasoline-powered cars, and most EV offerings have been luxury models. What is in store on that front?

DR: Many EVs are now sold at a higher price point than buyers are used to paying. That is partly due to the fact that all new cars and trucks—gasoline, diesel and electric—are more expensive post-pandemic. In May, the average new vehicle buyer paid more than **\$48,000**. That said, we should see some more affordable options soon, such as the new Volvo EX30 and the next generation Chevy Bolt. Federal tax credits also make EVs more affordable, with as much as \$7,500 available for some new EV purchases and leases. And next year, there will be a tax credit available for purchasing a used EV.

by Zachary Lee

Editor's note: we were unable to fit all of this article in one issue. So, after presenting 2 women in each of 4 issues, this completes the information about these eight extraordinary women.



Rev. Jennifer Butler

Rev. Jennifer Butler is the founder in residence of **Faith in Public Life**, a network of faith leaders united in the pursuit of justice. In 2005, she founded Faith in Public Life to amplify progressive faith voices and forge multi-faith, multiracial, and ideologically diverse faith coalitions to work for justice and the common good. She chaired President Barack Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. She was named one of the **"22 Faith Leaders to Watch in 2022"** by Center for American Progress. She is the author of ***Who Stole my Bible? Reclaiming Scripture as a Handbook for Resisting Tyranny*** (2020), which makes a biblical case for multi-faith, multiracial democracy in the face of rising white Christian nationalism and authoritarianism in the U.S. and around the world. Her book ***Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*** (2006) was among the first to document the formation of a global religious nationalist effort. Stay updated on her work at **RevJenButler.com** or follow her on Twitter or Instagram @RevJenButler or on Facebook at @RevJenniferButler.



Why is the work you do so important right now? Religious nationalism is resurging around the globe, hijacking faith to legitimize autocratic rule and undermine human rights. In the U.S., white Christian nationalism and QAnon — legitimized by a number of elected leaders — have captured the hearts and minds of many Americans. I'm working to equip faith leaders to reclaim our sacred texts that have been hijacked by ethnonationalists, so that we can make a visionary case for democracy — the system of government that embraces the scriptural vision of dignity for all. Together, our voices can help lead people away from ideologies that exploit fear and insecurity to exclude people based on race, class, gender, orientation, or creed.

A prayer for 2023: Stand in a pose that gives you strength as you pray: "God who made all in your likeness and who liberates those whose dignity is denied, we invite your cloud of witnesses to walk with us now; we invite the strength of your unlikely champions whose compassion and courage defeated tyranny. We say their names. We imagine their trepidation in facing their Goliath. We picture the loving vision that compelled them forward. And by your grace may we find joy and confidence as we walk in your unfailing love."

Céire Kealty

Céire Kealty is a Ph.D. candidate in Theology at Villanova University, studying theological

ethics and Christian spirituality in relation to the global garment industry. Her academic and public work explores the humanitarian, environmental, and existential problems and insights imbued in our clothing. For more on Céire's work, follow her educational [Instagram](#), *Patron Saint of Threads*.



Why is the work you do so important right now? Clothing, and the garment industry at large, are implicated in problems deserving faithful attention (but are often hidden from view), from garment worker exploitation to environmental harms like [waste colonialism](#). As momentum builds in advocacy and policy spaces to address these ills, it's crucial that churches, as communities of *wearers*, join in this work. So, I write to demonstrate the need for faithful engagement with clothes, while bridging the gap between ancient *and* contemporary revelations — whether that's reconciling faithful calls to “clothe the naked” with humanitarian problems of clothing donations or considering the spiritual insights of a Chilean desert filled with textile waste. I want to encourage believers to connect with their neighbors and God's creation through their clothes and seek “the good” of every human hand and earthen soil involved in our clothes' creation through joyful, solidaristic action.

A prayer for 2023: May we be awakened to our true needs and those of our neighbors, near and far, that are muffled by corporate calls to consume without ceasing. May we turn from fleeting fineries that fail to sustain us. May we find respite in the arms of the beloved community instead. May the nourishment of kinship propel us forward, as we face challenges of baffling proportions. May we not waver amidst these mammoths, as we know You are with us and for us, O God.

IT'S GETTING EASIER FOR US CAR OWNERS TO GO ELECTRIC

(continued from page 19)

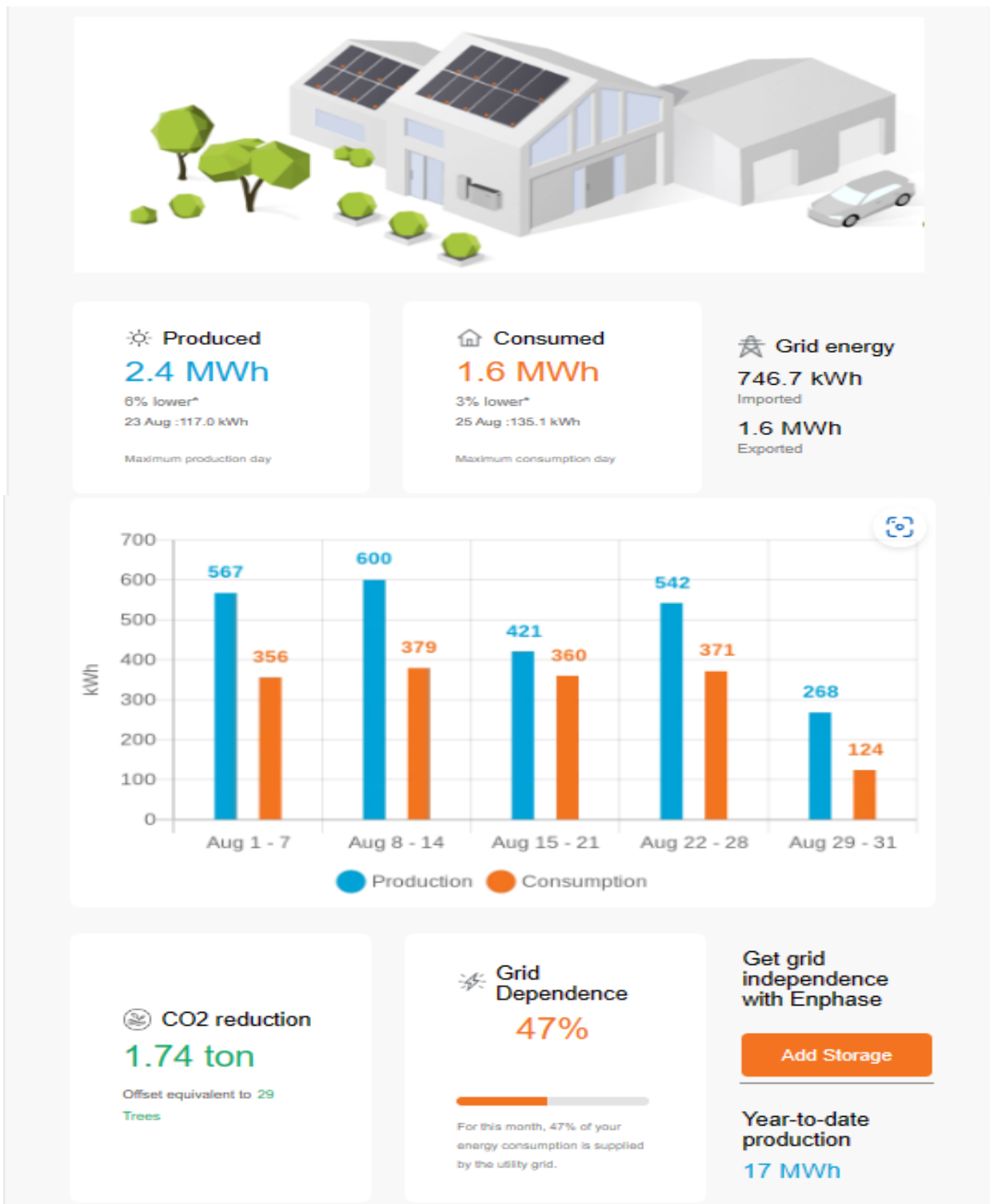
In any case, EVs are generally [cheaper](#) to run and maintain over their lifetime than a comparable gasoline car. We conducted an [analysis](#) in 2017 that found that it was cheaper to charge an EV than fill up a gasoline car in the 50 largest US cities. A more recent [analysis](#), published by Energy Innovation just last month, found that it's now cheaper to charge an EV in all 50 states.

EN: Finally, how much cleaner is an EV? You and your colleagues developed a [tool](#) that compares lifecycle heat-trapping pollution from EVs and gasoline-powered cars. What did you find?

DR: When we [compared](#) the lifecycle global warming emissions from generating electricity to those from producing and burning gasoline, we found that driving an EV produces significantly lower emissions than a gasoline car. More than 90 percent of Americans live where driving an average EV is responsible for less global warming pollution than the most efficient gasoline vehicle, which gets 57 miles per gallon. Based on where EVs have been sold so far in the United States, driving on electricity produces emissions equivalent to those of a gasoline car getting 88 miles per gallon.

Of course, avoiding driving altogether by using public transportation, biking, or walking would be even better for the environment. But if you have to drive, an EV would produce significantly lower emissions today and, over time, would produce even less as the electricity grid gets cleaner.

SOLAR PANEL REPORT—August 2023



* As compared to last month's records

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OCTOBER 2023 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!

Happy Birthday October!

Gladys Jackson	10/2
Mavis Smith	10/3
Joycelyn Agyemang	10/5
Sherri Brown	10/5
Ty-rese Merrill	10/8
Cynthia Jones	10/13
Miles Edward Abrom	10/15
Pr. Rick Kremer	10/21
Gretchen Unfried	10/22
Ryan Wellington	10/25
Akeva Koulla	10/26
Anna-Marie Potter	10/30



Happy Anniversary!

Catherine & Jerrod Abrom	10/10
Herbert & Anne Reiher	10/12



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 October 2023

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader	Notes
10/1	1	Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32	Barbara Ruhe	
	2	Philippians 2: 1-13	Dogara Simon Danbara	
	Psalm	Psalm 25: 1-9	Unison	
10/8	1	Isaiah 5: 1-7	Barbara Calogero	
	2	Philippians 3:4b-14	David Eberly	
	Psalm	Psalm 80: 7-15	Alternating Pastor/Congregation	
10/15	1	Isaiah 25: 1-9	Gladys Jackson	
	2	Philippians 4: 1-9	David Kremer	
	Psalm	Psalm 23	Unison	King James Version
10/22	1	Isaiah 45: 1-7	Marty Holmeen	
	2	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10	Rebecca Lewis	
	Psalm	Psalm 96: 1-13	Alternating Pastor/Congregation	
10/29	1	Jeremiah 31: 31-34	Mark or Cindy Jones	May be Joint Service
	2	Romans 3: 19-28	Mark or Cindy Jones	
	Psalm	Psalm 46	Rodney Carr	
11/5	1	Revelation 7: 9-17	Dale Eberhardt	
	2	1 John 3: 1-3	Judy Butterworth-Kremer	
	Psalm	Psalm 34: 1-10	Alternating Pastor/Congregation	



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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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