



GRACE NOTES

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

July 2020

A PAUSE

For at least four months, we have lived under pandemic conditions. What are they? Well, fear, working from home (if at all), wearing masks, keeping distance, some of us even separating ourselves from members of our own family as a means to be extra-safe, to protect them and us. It has also been a time of watching mixed messages delivered on radio, TV, social media and by word of mouth often contradicting themselves, often politically motivated and too often simply false. We can't even find the science anymore, save the brave doctors, nurses and attendants who staff hospitals throughout the country (and, of course, the world).

But this is the United States of America. The richest country in the world, the one that has led the world in dealing with past pandemics and has a large number of the finest medical and scientific minds in the world living here. Dare I say, many of them from different countries, of different races, and of very different backgrounds. They came to this country to learn and many stayed. It is noticeable that so many of the people who risk their lives for us daily during the pandemic are from other parts of the world, just as we have walled them off, or their relatives and friends. We seem to want to maintain our "purity" or save ourselves from them.

In the midst of all that, something else has happened and is worthy of note. Our jobs may be on pause, our schools are on pause, athletics are on pause, churches are on pause, vacations on pause, even visiting friends, family and neighbors are on pause. There are times in our lives when we encounter such pauses. The one where one or other of our family members get sick; an accident, a death watch, a loss of a profound nature. A divorce, a split, someone addicted and now ill, someone we thought to be fine, suddenly begins to behave erratically and we don't know why. Everything stops... there is a pause.

In life, these pauses can often be tied to something profound. I mentioned some of the bad interruptions. There can be good ones, too. I got the promotion, our child is getting married, a child is born, someone graduates and gets a great job, these often lead to pauses, too.

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Pastor's Message - Our God Reigns

It is almost July as I write this, and I wonder how to feel at this time of national joy and anticipation, time off and remembering our victories and our greatness. This July, I am thinking quite differently. Even as we are planning a parade in Washington showing off our weapons and our troops, I will not watch it. Even as some of us thrill to the sound of canon and fireworks, I will not. If I had the courage, I would fly the flag upside down on my house, signaling our deep and deadly divides and separation and the fact that our country is not great again. It is back to where it was.

I do not mean to be a traitor, because there will be those who suggest my words being treasonous. My country meant something at one time, it stood for something. We had values and we tried to live them. Fault-full, oh, yes. Trying – often, but not often enough.

We are human and sinful. No change there. Perhaps our stepping on the backs of the poor, removing healthcare and giving the wealthy and corporations tax breaks are samples of why I am where I am on this July 4th. But, even more than that, I am afraid that we have lost our way. Our sinfulness consumes, it is not simply visible.

The hope that I do have has little to do with these things. I do know of people who are giving their lives for others, who haven't forgotten the poor, or the children in cages, the marijuana users in prisons, and the largest population in prisons than anywhere in the world.



Photo used with permission of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA

Fireworks are explosions. They remind me of wars, of sadness and our inability to live with one another. I will skip this Fourth.

But, I will remember, that it is our calling to “preach His good news to the poor... to bring His healing to the brokenhearted, to proclaim His liberty to the captives, and to open the prisons of those who are bound, and to proclaim the year of the Lord.”

I heard the voice of the Lord saying... Whom shall I send and who will go....

Let's reflect on our lives this Fourth and answer that question in a very simple way. Here am I. Send Me. Know that our God reigns even in the pauses and interruptions. Even in times of trouble. Amen.



A PAUSE

(continued from page 1)

Shorter, perhaps, than the pause we are facing now, and perhaps less all-encompassing, who knows.

It could be perceived, as it was by me at the time of my first heart troubles, that God was interrupting me and giving me a message that I needed to hear. Haven't you had such interruptions yourselves? Haven't you even said out loud that God is trying to get my attention, I best listen at times like these when we are on a kind of a stop. A pause, if you will. Our attention has been taken and placed elsewhere. We ponder. We look at things differently and we come to see that which we hadn't seen until the interruption.



Then, in the midst of the pandemic pause, we watched black people being shot by white policemen and white supremacists. With nothing else but our confused, overwhelming and complete pause during this time of pandemic, suddenly we were able to witness these incidents in a deeper, clearer and more compassionate way. Why? Because we are all on pause fearing for our own lives, now we witness a very specific part of our population being treated like “slaves” or something less than human. They are murdered by

the very people who are paid to care for them. Black Lives Matter... the movement that had started years ago, now comes to the fore... what is going on here? This isn't right. We must change.

As so many of us find more time and more attention focused on our faith during this time of uncertainty and devastation, we begin to spend our time and our energies in different ways. We're not going out shopping every day, in fact, it could be dangerous to do so, many shops have been closed, and are no longer available... at least for now. TV and all the other media have been a drumbeat about the virus, our incompetence in addressing it and our fears and worries about our friends, our families, our jobs and our neighbors. We read, we meditate, we seek solace in prayer, in the hope that our loving God will somehow step in. Some of us have even wondered if the time of Jesus' return is about to come in the midst of all this daily horror.

John Stewart, the comedian and very profound kind of thinker (my perspective, yours might be different) wondered if this pause might have a purpose... and if that were the case, we should be looking carefully at how we live, how we care for those less fortunate and what we do when we find our institutions including government and policing, functioning in a way that is not consistent with what we value and believe. What if (my interpretation) this pause was a macro interruption by a troubled God. What if it is happening to get all of us to look at how we live, what is important and what isn't. What if, our God wants us to come together, not split apart.

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A PAUSE

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What if our God wants us to live in righteousness and justice, not racism, wealth-disparity, and self-interest. Maybe this pause is for divine purpose.

Maybe God is looking for accountability, along with love. Maybe God is calling us to open our eyes and to see. Listen to what is happening. Use our God-given gifts to discern what is wrong and to fix it.

If this pause is, in fact, a divine intervention, how can we make the very best that we can out of it? What should each one of us do, in our lives, to make a difference.

Let's let go of the fear and grab on to the compassion, let's stop counting our money and begin to share it with those who have so little. And, let's take back our government and change our institutions and systems to ensure all get a fair shake, and then we also consider whether those suffering are worthy of reparations growing out of hundreds of years of oppression and suffering.

Maybe we could take away some of the excessive responsibilities of our policing and incarceration systems, and replace them with mental health workers and scientists looking for ways for people to return to normal lives. Instead of separating whites from blacks by suburban and urban life settings, perhaps there are ways that economic and racial divides might be joined with hope and love.

During this pause we have been worshiping on Zoom like many faith groups throughout the world. During this time, I have really found daily and weekly joy in the music of Black people in this country. Every Sunday we listen to and sing along with spirituals, or other church music sung with passion and love and compassion by people who are different from those white in our congregation. I would say that we all love it; it's not just about me.

And, we manage our church thinking and plans current and future to serving others, to advocating for systemic change and for discovering ways that each one of us can be different. Jesus calls us to a radical change that few of us have ever gotten. Let's grasp this space, this time, and this pause and let us come to live together in a new way.

One last argument for the principle of interruption. I hope you have noticed that with fewer cars, trucks and planes our skies are clearer, the noise level is reduced, and we can see more bees and wildlife wherever we go. God's creation is showing us the way. Let's follow it. Let's take joy in it. And, let's stop worrying about it. It may be a new day. The day that Dr. King looked for, that so many others throughout history like Nelson Mandela, Ghandi, and so many others. But in our case, we follow our Triune God, father, son and holy spirit. God is with us, God is in control, and we have nothing to fear.



New Civil Rights movement

Listening to Fely's speech I was enervated by this new Civil Rights movement and by her accusation, "Why didn't our History classes and books tell us the truth? In the 60's the Vietnam War and Civil Rights movement led to new history being written that gave voice to African Americans and other people of color, to women and to workers too long suppressed and hidden. Yes, there has been a version of American History-the version that denied racism and class conflict-and it is time that we get rid of it!!!! It is time that someone objects to showing *Gone with the Wind* on TV , because it presents a neo-segregationist view of slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the Ku Klux Klan and promotes racism and a belief that people can perpetuate the losing cause that was traitorous and wrong! Juneteenth should be a national holiday!!! We should be proud that the Confederacy was defeated!!! We should be proud that slavery was abolished!!! We should be proud of the abolitionists and of the new abolitionists as they shape the new Civil Rights Movement. Fely, as we said in the 60's, "Right On!!!!"

Mark Jones

June 26, 2020

Fely Yigle

Dear Fely:

I am very pleased to inform you that you have been named to the Dean's List of Towson University for the spring 2020 semester.

Please accept my congratulations for your outstanding academic performance! The Dean's List award is a significant personal and professional achievement, and thus, something about which you should be very proud. I recognize the commitment and resolve required to achieve this honor, especially given the particular challenges of this semester, and commend you for all the work you did to obtain this high level of academic success.

Best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely yours,

Melanie Perreault, Ph.D.
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs



Grace Gardens - Sue Carey

Years ago, before the time of the Friday Night Gathering, Asylum Hill residents living near Grace mostly interacted with the church by way of the parking lot. The driveway was a meaningful shortcut for people passing through from Niles Street—and the apartment buildings further up and West Middle School—to Farmington Avenue, with its bus stops and the Loaves & Fishes ministry. It was a meaningful shortcut because many folk get around on foot and rely on public transportation, which can be exhausting even when the weather is good. People noticed that the parking lot was mostly empty most of the time. We know this because they told us, when they started coming to the Friday Night Gathering. I imagine that those neighbors appreciated the parking lot because the short cut shaved a few steps off their travel and the church was friendly enough to welcome the trespassers.

There are no public gardens or parks in our small section of the city. There is no sanctioned place where neighbors can linger, visit with friends, or children can explore and release their jubilant energy. The neighborhood has been described as a jungle of apartment buildings. There are no backyards with swing sets or driveways with basketball hoops, things suburban neighbors might take for granted. Linger too long and you can get a ticket for loitering. “Move along” an officer commands from the patrol car. We know this, because they told us, when they started coming to the Friday Night Gathering.



“People need a place to sit” was observed and then honored, and the idea for benches was hatched. Furniture built to care for the needs of neighbors had more of an impact than we expected. A homeless man came every day to work on the project, and the blessing of finding meaningful work opened the door to reconciling with his family. Fresh Start has birthed new beginnings over and over again.

“Can I sit here?” “Is it okay if I sit?” the passersby ask. In response, I want to sing, “This is my Father’s world!” and we are just the caretakers. The respect and courtesy is humbling. The hesitation about whether they are welcome is unsettling. It’s “their” neighborhood. Is there work left to do to make it Grace’s neighborhood, too?

With time, sunflower seeds were sown along the fence, then vegetables and more flowers were planted, and a canopy was installed with a table and benches. When the garden was being tended to, people stopped to say hello. Strangers were invited to rest in the shade of the canopy, and some stopped being strangers and came inside for dinner and then upstairs for worship. Occasionally, even Friday dinner was served in the garden, when enough able-body volunteers set up tables and chairs to serve a hundred or more and then brought it all back indoors.

Years ago, Mike McGarry added Grace’s Garden to the annual Hartford Blooms spring bus tour. Neighborhood churches come together for the Good Friday procession and now they come together for pollinator species.

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Grace connects the gardens from Asylum Hill Congregational, Youth Challenge on May Street, St. Joseph's Cathedral, Trinity Episcopal and Immanuel Congregational church. This is what it means to be neighborly.

In the Garden is where God placed Adam and Eve, and so it's fitting that Grace's garden is a kind of holy sanctuary where the neighborhood and the faithful come together. In a city where a strong sense of community nurtures neighborhood safety, the garden is a place where relationships are cultivated. It offers shelter and invites gathering, and is a buffer from loitering. For a congregation that values diversity and Creation Care, the pollinator garden nurtures biodiversity. It is a tiny effort to restore a wild land, reclaimed from urban expansion. A play garden, with boulders and tree trunks that encourage curious young minds to explore, gives mothers and grandmothers with children in tow a moment to catch their breath. Grace has longed to see children growing in its embrace and the neighborhood needs this kind of calming space.

It's in the genetic code of Grace Lutheran to welcome the stranger and the refugee. For a while, our neighbor was the stranger and the "hood" was seeking refuge from systems that favor the affluent and the beautiful. Gardens can be messy places, where worms aerate the soil, moths and butterflies spread pollen, crickets chirp, grasshoppers jump, fireflies blink, and ants return the nutrients from dead plants to the soil. Gardens can also be God's place, dissolving the artificial boundaries that divide "us" and "them" and affirm that we are all God's children.



Statues, Memorials and Symbols

In today's news are several stories regarding the relocation or elimination of persons calling for the removal of racist symbols. In some cases, there are groups opposed to the elimination of statues claiming that, for better or worse, these celebrate a heritage of which many are proud.

These statues and memorials were erected for their own political purposes. For instance, Connecticut State Librarian George C. Godard in the early twentieth century called them "grappling hooks" to the past so that current and future generations will not forget that his WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestants) forebears founded the country. Godard was a WASP and intended that memorials and statues inform recent immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe that contemporary white Protestant ancestors were the ones who should be leaders because they had a greater hold on historical truth than the newcomers.

Sometimes the issue surrounding memorials is more complicated. For instance, a statue of former Union Army General and former President Ulysses S. Grant has been removed because in his early life, he married into a slave-owning family and in spite of the opposition of his abolitionist family, owned a slave. By the mid-1850's, in spite of the abolitionist arguments of his family and the public debate over slavery, he was neutral on the subject. Slaves built a house for his family, he worked with slaves in the field and did not oversee them effectively, and he legally freed the slave in his possession. However, later in his life, he commanded troops that won the Civil War for the North and that led to the abolition of the slavery and when he was President, he fought the Ku Klux Klan when a growing number in his political party were not supporting the goals of Reconstruction. Those who oppose racism, however, argue that his neutrality and complicity with slavery is enough evidence for the removal of his statue.

The Cross and church are the symbols of our faith. Churches may sit silently within communities that have changed from what they were when the edifices were built, but they beckon to people in the neighborhood. Churches come alive for all when the Gospel is preached from within and practiced outwardly by current congregations. Such is the case at Grace. For many years, several ministries such as Friday Night and Fresh Start, have embodied our Savior's commission that the Gospel be preached to the whole world, in this case, at the corner of Niles and Woodland in Hartford. Our faith has set us free to do these works thus showing a diverse neighborhood the Christian based intention of our congregation. Hence, our steeple, a symbol of our faith, merges with our members' good works to do what Jesus commanded that we do: Love our neighbors as he has loved us, show mercy to those in need, and preach the Gospel to the whole world.

Mark Jones





Kind hearts are the garden,
Kind thoughts are the roots
Kind words are the blossoms,
Kind deeds are the Fruits.
- John Ruskin



CORONAVIRUS - Hints For Protection

Broccoli

There is research that shows that this always-healthy food contains an even more powerful compound than your everyday lineup of vitamin-packed veggies, one that could possibly help fight off the virus that we are all trying to avoid: COVID-19. It also protects against cancer and other ailments, according to emerging research.


There is a building body of research to show that the controversial green veggie is found to deliver a super compound called Sulforaphane Glucosinolate, which is known as a disease-fighting agent that boosts immunity even as it helps take the stress off your other organs.

This magical compound sulforaphane been shown to have anti-microbial effects and is being taken in supplement form to fight against Herpes, Hepatitis C, and flu viruses, D'Adamo explains, and he said that some people are using it to strengthen their immunity in light of the coronavirus. "Sulforaphane increases the body's natural killer cells that are part of the normal immune response that fights pathogens like this," he explains.



(Please consult with your doctor before taking any medications and/or advice for fighting COVID-19)

The New York Carib News
Provided by Lloyd Smith



July 2020 Birthdays & Anniversaries

Elsa Koulla	07/01	Happy Anniversary	Lloyd & Mavis Smith 07/26 - 62 yrs. Dale & Donna Eberhardt 07/05 - 40 yrs.
Leslie Manchester	07/01		
Waneta Jacobs MacDonald	07/02		
Carl Lindstrom	07/03		
Michael Lewis	07/09		
Brian Phelan	07/14		
Emmanuella Hart	07/17		
Belinda Yigle-Kaljob	07/18	<div>Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact the office, 860-527-7792 or email officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net to update our records.</div>	
Petre McAdams	07/19		
Adrian Mathura	07/23		
Edith Mamet	07/26		
Bernadette Friedrichs	07/27		
John David	07/30		

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



Fresh Start Community Connections and Covid-19

By Richard Carman - Global Giving Manager



The Covid-19 virus has impacted Fresh Start Pallet Products in Hartford, CT in ways similar to most non-profits. Like so many challenges we've faced over the years we have adapted to the changing workplace environment. When the various "stay at home" governmental directives started rolling out, we initially thought we would need to close the program.

However, like other businesses we have found ways to ensure we could legally remain open. In short we found that we qualified as an "essential" business in one area of our training and production operations. We were fortunate in that our contracts with the new Parkville Market in Hartford, CT fit the requirements. Parkville, when fully operational, will be the first Food Hall in the state. While their needs changed from indoor dining to curbside food pick-up, to this week of allowing the Market to expand to outside dining and limited indoor dining. As the opening of CT has progressed we have worked very hard to produce new products for them and, at the same time, increased our training opportunities for our trainee/workers.

Not only has this challenge hit during the Covid-19 crisis we needed to be flexible with two of our Syrian Muslim refugees during Ramadan. Providing flexible working hours to ensure they can practice their faith has proven invaluable for their dietary needs and sleep patterns.

Fresh Start's income comes primarily from fundraising supported by GlobalGiving and the sales of furniture that is the end product of our training, thus making our Parkville Market relationship even more critical.

In short, the community partnership with Parkville Market and its owner Mr. Mouta and his team has been a lifeline to our survival during these challenging times. Though difficult at times, Fresh Start is stronger today than we could have ever imagined.

The shout out for this report is a 'THANK YOU TO OUR HEROES AT THE PARKVILLE MARKET AND GLOBAL GIVING WHEN WE NEEDED IT MOST' !!!

LOCATION: Hartford, CT - USA

WEBSITE: [http://](http://www.freshstartpalletproducts.org)

www.freshstartpalletproducts.org





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