



# GRACE NOTES

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

**December 2020**

## HOPE FOR THE NOT YET

There is a word “liminal” that has come in and out of my life over time. I first heard it in seminary, and it seemed to follow me, or I followed it. Webster’s says it means “of or at the limen or threshold.” It further elaborates, “at a point where one perception or condition blends or crosses over another.” (Limen by way of Webster’s means a threshold, border, or frontier.) I am aware how often we live in a liminal fashion.

If we approach a threshold, a border and/or a frontier, as we cross them, we are neither here nor there. In a deep sense we live just in front, beyond or in- between, all the time.



As Christians, Advent is one of those times. We await the coming of the Messiah. Jesus is with us right now, but we are awaiting the time of his birth, when we joyfully celebrate his coming from a Holy place, not here, to here. We know he was here, and he is here. Yet, for now, we are watching and waiting for we do not know just when he will come and come again. Jesus’ birth is of such wonder and so full of hope, that we may sometimes see him with us in the form of generosity, love, our passion to help others and our wish for and look forward to our time when we are reunited with Him.

We truly do hope for the not yet. I bet we all do that a lot. If we haven’t been overcome by the challenges of living in this place and time, we have wondrous thoughts about what that might be like. It is especially true for those of us who cannot look away, or for those who take steps towards those suffering, who advocate, who talk with others who are struggling and need help.

While Advent is moving us gently and lovingly to our Savior’s birth, we are hearing the story of Mary’s conversation with Gabriel, her remarkably perfect response and obedience. We remember the shepherds and their sheep, the place where the baby was placed in a manger... but that’s way further down the road.

The thing about the Not Yet, you see, is that it IS COMING. Otherwise, it would always be the NOT YET. It is coming. This a time we thank those who we love, reach out to the lonely, give respite to those restless, a smile to those sad, food for those hungry, clothes for those cold and without, help to those helpless and acceptance to those on the fringe.

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## **PASTOR'S MESSAGE – Our Savior is Coming!**

May you find yourself a bit more hopeful as we approach Christmas with the national election behind us. Yes, the pandemic remains with us, but vaccines are in sight and credible scientists and medical personnel will be leading the distribution of such. So many have suffered this year, and so many have died. Our prayers reach out to all those throughout the world who have been victims of this terrible disease.

We had our own crisis with our dear son having a stroke at 53 years old. We are thankful that we were present, that the doctors in the hospital were so talented and attentive and that his rehab experience has helped him begin the process of walking/moving once again. Thanks for your prayers for David.

This issue is not letting up on our concerns about justice about the needs of our community and city. We have our own national church speaking eloquently in this issue, those involved with GHIAA are very active and impacting, and it is time now to rethink our immigration policies and particularly those that lead people to prison. So many fill our jails with convictions that in today's world would not even produce a ticket. The residual of that is jails and prisons filled with borderline innocent people of color, who have been exposed to the worst that is the pandemic by being incarcerated at the time it hit. In GHIAA's words we want our Governor to declare that racism is a public health crisis in Connecticut. It is! As it is throughout this country. And, we need to discover new ways and means to enforce justice, not one that favors one racial group or another for punishment.

Having said that, we also have to consider thoughtfully what is the role of the police, men and women, and what can we possibly expect from them when they do not have proper training or skills to address mental illness. Many of the people who find trouble in the streets or in their homes should properly be served by medically trained personnel in an appropriate institutional setting. If not, new methods need to be developed to properly treat people who are not well.

Enough for the preaching in 2020 (except for Sunday). It's been a tough year, but we are, most of us, making it through. Hopefully, our faith community has helped. WE love and appreciate every one of you and we give thanks to God for our ability to do what we do.

Happy Advent.... And, then, YOU KNOW WHAT! Merry Christmas....





**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## **ELCA presiding bishop joins ecumenical partners in Advent message**

CHICAGO (Nov. 30, 2020) — The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and leaders of The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada have joined together to offer the following Advent message:

### **Churches Beyond Borders - Advent Call to Address Racism and White Supremacy**

*John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4).*

In the wilderness and in the river, on the margins of society, John the Baptizer offered faithful witness to the ongoing work of God. People went beyond the borders of their familiar lives to hear the words of a prophet, to seek renewed faith, to begin new journeys and to be transformed through baptism.

What does it mean to offer faithful witness today? As we ponder this question together as national church leaders, we experience shared challenges, new insights, mutual encouragement, deeper faith and common callings. Our common witness is bound not by ecclesiastical or national borders but by our common baptism. As leaders of four churches on a shared continent, and with shared complicity in the legacies of the Doctrine of Discovery, the enslavement of Black people and the mistreatment of all people of color, we hear the prophets and the Spirit speaking clearly when we listen together.

This Advent, we feel called to name the truth that the sin of racism and white supremacy is ongoing. People continue to be subjected to and oppressed by these systemic evils, even within our own churches and the ecumenical movement.

For the sake of our common mission and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we share a commitment to dismantling racism and combating white supremacy, and we actively seek opportunities to engage more deeply. We bind ourselves together in this work, even as we are bound together by a common history of complicity with evil. We look forward to meeting with members from the Black, Indigenous and other communities of color within and beyond our churches to help us develop specific goals and actions. We know this will not be easy, but it is essential. It happens only by moving beyond the borders of the familiar, encountering the truth, trusting God's grace and being transformed. We have much to learn from and with each other.

The birth of Christ to dwell among us holds the hope for our own rebirth. Our faith is in God's ongoing work that establishes God's kin-dom of equity, equality, justice and liberty for all. Our calling is to prepare the way of the Lord by embracing truth, promoting healing and acting in love.

As you make your Advent preparation this year, what do you need most? Forgiveness, repentance, healing, renewal of baptismal vocation, time in the wilderness or a word from a prophet? We are confident that God will grant us all that we need to be transformed for faithful witness.

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## ELCA presiding bishop joins ecumenical partners in Advent message

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Let us pray

God of all, form us into churches beyond borders.  
When we feel stuck, amplify the prophet's word.  
When we are distracted by privilege, put us in the wilderness.  
When we need a new way, dunk us in the river.  
When we are wrong, move us down the path of truth-telling and repentance.  
When we need healing, sustain us with your love and hope.  
When we cannot see beyond ourselves, move us beyond arbitrary borders.  
Bless us with the Holy Spirit, that the good news may be for us a beginning.  
Amen.

Archbishop and Primate Linda Nicholls  
Anglican Church of Canada

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry  
The Episcopal Church

National Bishop Susan C. Johnson  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America





## HOPE FOR THE NOT YET

(continued from page 1)

And, we've got to cut ourselves a bit of slack, too. Everything does not have to be perfect. The biggest toy is not the best. Just being together and remembering just how funny some Santa's look or for that matter how a particular farm hand – you know, the one that plays the organ, massages the books, weeds some, pays some bills occasionally, too. Take a look at that fellow and relive his infinite jokes, and then remember all the blessings God brings this day and every day, whatever our moods, fears or wonderings.

We live with constant change, some we like, some not so much. Let's remember as we cross over the frontiers of our lives, the borders of our friendships and the thresholds of our relationships that what happens and how it happens is often more about how we do it, than what we do.

I received a wonderful gift from our gift-bearer-in-chief, Lloyd Smith. A book called LOVE IS THE WAY. It is wonderful, thank you, Lloyd. You know the words to one of the songs that he uses. It helps us to more deeply understand and embrace love. I like this one:

Sometimes I feel discouraged,  
And think my work's in vain,  
But then the Holy Spirit  
Revives my soul again.

If you cannot sing like angels,  
If you can't preach like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus,  
And say he died for all.



Friend of mine from Seminary....

Let's enjoy with a bit of humor...

## We Three Kings

Pandemic Parody

Words: R. G. Huff

A Serious Hymn-writer Gone Rogue

John Henry Hopkins, Jr.

KINGS OF ORIENT



1. We three kings are six feet a - part. We'll Pur - ell be fore we de - part.  
2. Mel - chi - or is now quar - an - tined! Stuck in Per - sia, so — it seems.  
3. Bal - tha - sar has lost — his taste. Eat - ing food is such — a waste.  
4. Cas - par left the car - a - van. He post-poned his star-gaz - ing plans.



We've been test - ed as sug - gest - ed. Care - ful are we, and smart!  
No more trav - el on a cam - el 'til there's a good vac - cine.  
How dis - quiet - ing, now he's diet - ing. Life now is slow - er paced.  
No more roam - ing; Cas - par's hom - ing, scrub - bing his red - dened hands.

### REFRAIN

*Sing Only after Stanzas 1 & 4*



O — Do our masks go with our gowns? Do these face shields hide our crowns?  
Still our masks clash with our gowns! Face shields hide our top - pled crowns!



We've had plen - ty twen - ty, twen - ty! Still we head t'ward Da - vid's town.  
We've had plen - ty twen - ty, twen - ty! Soon we'll head t'ward Da - vid's town.

### Optional Stanza 4:

Caspar blames it all on Amahl--  
One night's visit on the long haul.  
Coughs and sneezes,  
Short-breaths, wheezes.  
Li-co-rice cures it all.

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## Prisons and law enforcement are not the solution to our social problems

Nov 24, 2020

by [Dwayne David Paul](#) [Opinion Justice](#)



A person in a mask with lights spelling out at least the word "police" stands outside the site of the 2020 vice presidential debate between Vice President Mike Pence and Democratic vice presidential nominee Sen. Kamala Harris on the campus of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City Oct. 7. (CNS/Reuters/Jim Urquhart)

I love a good magic trick. Most of us do. I'm convinced it's the incongruities that charge our bodies with a sense of wonder: The jolt of confused pleasure we experience when our otherwise

reliable senses have been fooled. That slack-jawed astonishment we feel as we try to make sense of witnessing a too-simple solution to a complex problem. There's a catch, though: Tricks take place on terms we find acceptable; otherwise, they're just lies.

"Defund the police" is a response to the lies conservative politicians in both parties have expertly tricked Americans into believing. These include, as [Angela Davis](#) warned decades ago, that policing and prisons could magically disappear our social problems and that the government cannot afford to pay for large social welfare programs.

This phrase is part of a long abolitionist tradition in the United States, but it resonates with a wider audience today because two truths have exposed the barbarism endemic to American capitalism: First, that not even a once-in-a-century pandemic can slow [police violence](#). Second, that our government is so unaccustomed to providing for us that it tries, [and keeps failing](#), to create a last-minute social safety net through emergency legislation.

America's catastrophic responses to the coronavirus pandemic and to racial justice protests have made plain for many the effects of a 40-year project that began in the early 1980s. At the time, Ronald Reagan campaigned on both cutting social programs and doubling military spending. [Contemporaries understood](#) Reagan's cuts as the formal end of half a century of large-scale government poverty interventions spanning the New Deal and the Great Society. Cuts were so steep that workers earning as little as \$6,500 a year — less than [\\$19,000 today](#) — were kicked off welfare rolls.

As leaders siphoned funds from agencies that promote human flourishing, they redirected them to policing, prisons and militarism. While problems such as homelessness, poverty and substance abuse have all intensified this year, police and prisons are the sectors of government most primed to "solve" them today.

Abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls this sleight of hand "[organized abandonment](#) of vulnerable communities." It is characterized by the privatization of public goods and services, divestment from social welfare,

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## Prisons and law enforcement are not the solution to our social problems

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and investment in institutions of state violence. In this view, the pandemic and police violence are twin problems rather than unrelated events whose coincidence we can attribute to 2020. [Juxtaposed images](#) of nurses wearing garbage bags for scrubs while police suppress protests in cutting edge gear illustrate this.

### [Embedded rich media on Twitter](#)

Tweet from Jules Ehrhardt,  
@ezyjules, May 21, 2020

The moral stupidity that produces these outcomes cannot be blamed solely on the current occupant of the White House. Donald Trump's ascension to the highest office is at once a symptom and a cause of our decay. He did not erect history's largest prison system. Military expenditures were already our largest federal discretionary expense when he took office. These failings are his — and our — inheritance.



Reagan's culture war on the urban poor — whom he framed as drug-addled, pathologically violent welfare cheats — exacerbated dehumanizing perceptions of how every level of government should relate to that population. This culminated in his Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. The [\\$1.7 billion](#) legislation allocated \$500 million to further militarize the country's anti-trafficking efforts through the Coast Guard, Customs and the DEA. It provided over \$322 million for surveillance technology. In a sign of things to come, the bill also sponsored a Pentagon-led study of the feasibility of converting surplus federal buildings into prisons.

In 1996, Bill Clinton declared in his state of the union address that "the era of big government is over." He, like Reagan, didn't mean "big government" per se, but social services. The proclamation was a victory cry after Democrats, in close collaboration with House Republicans, further [gutted the welfare system](#) with the passage of the controversial Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.



Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell and a woman religious walk with others toward the National Museum of African American History and Culture during a peaceful protest June 8, following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police May 25. (CNS/Bob Roller)

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## Prisons and law enforcement are not the solution to our social problems

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Conversely, policing and prisons had already expanded thanks to Clinton's 1994 crime bill. Rather than funding programs to alleviate the recession-level [10.6%](#) Black unemployment rate, the [\\$30.2 billion](#) bill allocated \$9.7 billion for new prison construction, and \$10.8 billion for things such as putting an [additional 100,000](#) police officers on the streets. The bill's programs were funded by cutting [270,000 jobs](#) from elsewhere in the federal government per the recommendation of Vice President Al Gore's [National Performance Review](#). The administration haphazardly downsized many frontline positions, according to the Government Accountability Office, causing [lengthy backlogs](#) in service-oriented agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Magician [Penn Jillette](#) identifies something illuminating, if not unsatisfying, as the problem with giving away magicians' secrets. "You can't give away real magic tricks. And the reason is they're too boring. It's hard work," he says. "You'd be dozing off halfway through." Once we agree to be tricked, our delight rests in not knowing how it happens, only that it does. We are complicit in our own deception. Desire and consent spawn the ignorance needed for audiences to co-create magic with magicians.

The pandemic and the protests have made such ignorance impossible.

Our 40-year project has made us the global leader in incarceration. The socio-economic problems police and prisons "solve" have heightened during the pandemic. [Eight million](#) renters face eviction and homelessness. Overdose deaths, a national plague that claimed [70,980 lives](#) in 2019, appear to be [up more than 17%](#). [Eight million Americans](#) have been driven into poverty since May.

The pandemic, like policing and prison, has not exacted an equal toll. Both continue to disproportionately ravage the communities of Black and brown people, as well as poor whites.

As people of faith, we must use our highest values to navigate this crisis. Here the Catholic Church's [option for the poor](#) can be our lodestar. The only way to make it out with these newly vulnerable people intact is to demand that our elected officials once again radically redistribute public funds. This time, they must move resources away from violent institutions and toward meeting human needs. After all that we have lost in this pandemic — and all that we will lose — we cannot afford to disappear another generation of so-called "problems" behind prison walls.

Those problems are people.

[Dwayne David Paul is the director of the Collaborative Center for Justice, a Catholic social justice organization sponsored by six communities of women religious.]

## To Give or Not to Give???

There has been news lately about the increase in street corner “panhandlers” (interesting term, wonder where it came from), not just in Hartford, but also in the surrounding suburbs. Some people are upset that this is in “their” neighborhood and want the town to do something about it. Others just ignore and walk or drive on by and some hand out food or money. “Panhandling” is not illegal as long as the person is not harassing or threatening anyone. Some towns have encouraged people to not give any money as it may be spent on drugs or alcohol and simply makes the situation worse. They have the police interact with people, see if they need help, give them information as to where they can go to receive help, but still the folks are on the corners with their signs. I suppose there are a variety of reasons that have brought a person to stand on a corner, in all kinds of weather, holding a sign asking for monetary help. I choose to just give having no control over how it is used, letting that be in God’s Hands, hopefully passing on just a spark of light in the darkness.

Remember a while back, before covid-19, I suggested that one could use the Grace business cards, put information on the back about Free Friday dinners and hand them out along with a dollar or two? Now, thanks to the efforts of Nina Kretschmer, there is a better way to let people know that Grace is giving out meals along with other items every Friday and also sending along messages of peace, hope, and the love of God for all people. Nina has been making cards. On one side along with a beautiful picture is a Bible verse, poem, or quote conveying a message of hope and on the other side is a notice about free dinner take out every Friday at Grace. I have been using these cards, put each in an envelope along with a dollar and handing them out as I encounter people asking for help. **BUT—Nina has been very productive and I have more than I can use! I would like to deliver to anyone who would want to use them. Just give me a call or text at 860-416-3336. I will be happy to drop off a bundle of 10 or more at your home.** Maybe during this season of Advent this could be one way that we at Grace could help the light of Christ shine.

Nancy Urban

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***"The Lord, for his part, asks us to be generous, to conquer fear with the courage of love, to overcome the passivity that becomes complicity. Today, in these times of uncertainty, in these times of instability, let us not waste our lives thinking only of ourselves, indifferent to others, or deluding ourselves into thinking: "peace and security!" (1 Thess 5:3). Saint Paul invites us to look reality in the face and to avoid the infection of indifference."***

*Pope Francis*

## **Book Launch: "The Painted Sky" by Rabbi Donna Berman with Illustrations by Louisa Barton-Duguay**

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

7 pm - 8pm

Charter Oak

Hartford CT

**Note:** Virtual Event.

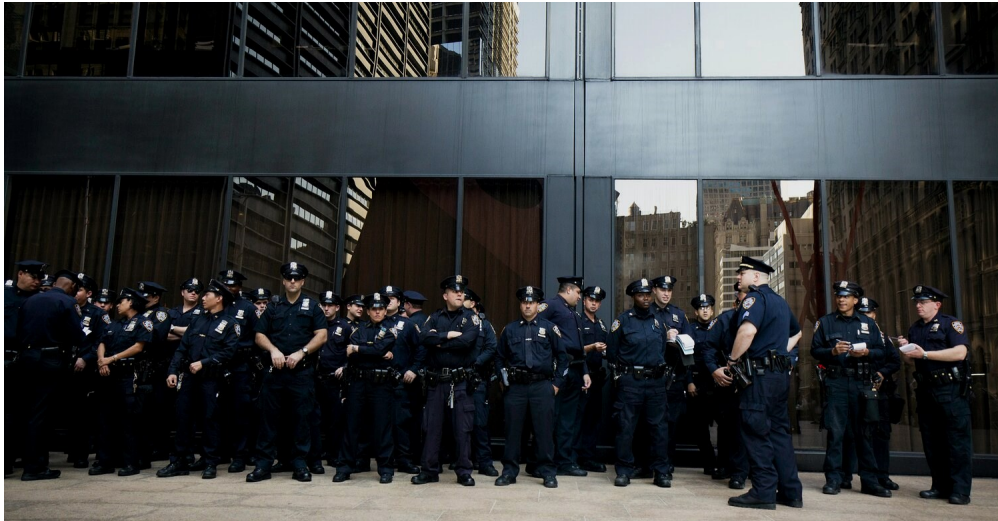
Join Charter Oak Cultural Center Executive Director Rabbi Donna Berman for the launch of her first-ever children's book, *The Painted Sky*! Making this publication all the more delightful is that it includes breathtaking illustrations by Louisa Barton-Duguay, a graduate of Charter Oak's BOTS Center for Creative Learning. In *The Painted Sky*, a privileged few build a dome around an unsuspecting community. The residents of the town eventually become content with their lack of freedom, happy to stare at the painted sky above and not question the limitations placed on them. A smart girl manages to escape the dome and discover joy in the forbidden world outside. Can she convince her fellow "dome-inated" citizens that liberation is theirs only if they choose to seek it? This conversation with Rabbi Berman and Ms. Barton-Duguay is FREE and a wonderful opportunity to hear the story read by the author and preview the illustrations with commentary by the artist. A great event for adults and children ages 6 and up. Books will be available for sale.- a perfect gift for family and friends for the holiday season. 100% of the proceeds from the sales of *The Painted Sky* benefit Charter Oak! FREE EVENT! Join us via Zoom on Tuesday, December 8 at 7pm.



## Recognizing a Pattern of Police Violence

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

Luke 4:18 (NIV)



This briefing is a guest post from [Aaron Griffith](#). Griffith is Assistant Professor of History at Sattler College, where he teaches American history and the history of Christianity. He is the author of [God's Law and Order: The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America](#) (Harvard, 2020) and has written for *Christianity Today* and *Religion News Service*.

The past several months have seen a flood of protests of unjust police violence against Black Americans and broader calls for a reckoning with the inequality present in America's criminal justice system. Black Americans are killed by police at more than [twice the rate](#) of White Americans, and people of color [make up](#) 67% of the nation's prison population—despite being only 37% of the general population. The US holds the [largest](#) prison population in the world. According to [The Sentencing Project](#), Black men are six times more likely to be incarcerated than White men.

There are several historical factors that explain the formation of these inequalities within American criminal justice. Scholars have pointed to the long history of influential public assumptions about the [“criminal” nature of Black Americans](#), from Emancipation to [today](#). These in turn drove expanded policing of Black communities. “[Colorblind](#)” rhetoric in American law-and-order politics has cloaked racial inequality in criminal justice from the Civil Rights era on, and uprisings against police brutality in Black communities often result in [further expansion](#) of law enforcement power.

There are pronounced racial divides in how Americans understand our current state of policing. As PRRI polling has [shown](#), 82% of Black Americans see recent police killings of Black persons as part of a broader pattern, but only 44% of White Americans report the same.

While this divide is striking, the same polling actually shows that, as a whole, the public's recognition of our nation's pattern of racist, violent policing has grown some of the past few years.

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## Recognizing a Pattern of Police Violence

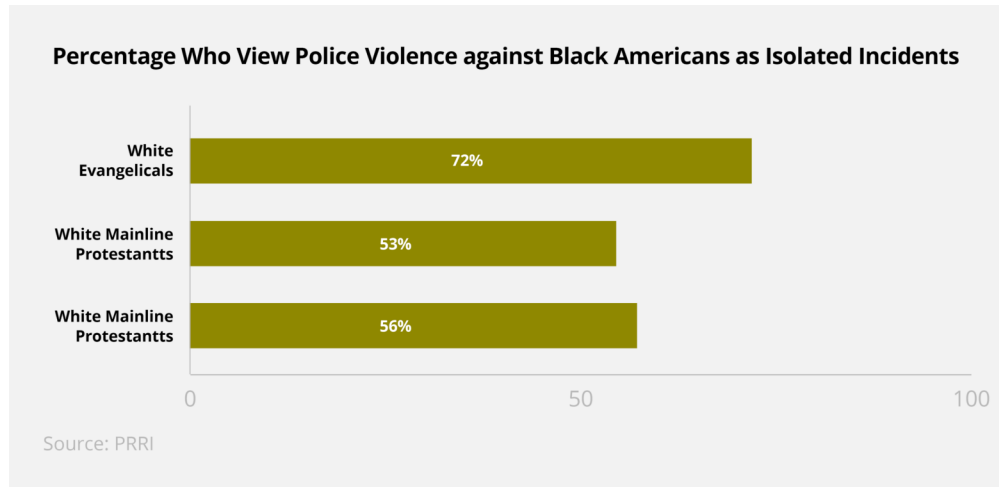
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Cell phone cameras and social media have made it possible for more people to record and share instances of police violence; such livestreaming videos, for example, let the public witness the murder of George Floyd by a police officer for themselves. These videos have been amplified by news coverage which, coupled with coverage of increased protests and activism, have likely driven increasing recognition of current unjust police practices against the Black community.

Churches should be sites for spurring on further transformation of hearts and minds on criminal justice matters. However, PRRI polling [also shows](#) that some Christian communities are **particularly resistant to seeing police violence against Black people as a systemic problem**.

White evangelical Protestant attitudes on this question have not moved over the last five years. In both 2015 and 2020, 72% of White Evangelicals reported that they view unjust killings of Black men by police as **isolated incidents**.

While a growing number of White mainline Protestants and White Catholics do recognize our nation's pattern of police violence against Black Americans, majorities in both groups continue to believe that instances of police brutality against Black people are isolated incidents (53% and 56% respectively).



**Why do so many White Christians discount police violence against Black people as merely isolated incidents?** As I argue in [God's Law and Order: The Politics of Punishment in Evangelical America](#), White Christians, especially evangelicals, have largely come to see America's anti-crime politics and policing efforts as a natural part of their religious and political world. Romans 13 becomes a convenient proof text to **justify punitive law enforcement efforts**, with its exhortation for Christians to "be subject to the governing authorities" and its warning that "rulers hold no terror for those who do right." In this view, crime is too simply equated with sin, and viewed as a problem that is best solved by a ramped-up disciplinary state presence (as opposed to other [programs](#) or [services](#) that might address underlying social problems). White Christians are also easily captivated by a rhetoric of colorblindness that often accompanies law-and-order politics, but which actually obscures racial disparities in police violence.

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## Recognizing a Pattern of Police Violence

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More than [90% of all Americans](#) report that belief in American laws and institutions is fundamental to being “truly American.” This makes sense: laws govern our lives together. **But our faith is misplaced in institutions and laws which persistently treat some unfairly, with devastating consequences.** Black people have been subject to racist, unequal, unjust policing and incarceration practices for generations. Our commitments to equality and justice must be matched by an unflinching commitment to just policing practices.

In order to overcome their captivity to punitive politics and willingness to overlook systemic injustices, White Christians must first listen. We must listen to history, taking into account the deep roots of our nation’s criminal justice system in the White supremacist soil of our nation. We must also listen to the critical voices of the present, especially the stories and perspectives of brothers and sisters of color who call the church to see, understand, and resist the pervasive violence and racism that persists in our justice system and nation. **Christians must become able to question assumptions about what appears “criminal,” what kinds of bodies, neighborhoods, and behavior seemingly deserve surveillance or confinement.** As Dominique DuBois Gilliard [has written](#), “We must interrogate our hearts and minds to unearth the stereotypes, prejudices, and fears that lie dormant or that we clandestinely hold...the ways [we have] conformed to the patterns of this world.” And ultimately, **Christians must see Jesus anew, as someone put to death by the authorities on an instrument of state violence and who, yet, proclaimed freedom to the captives and oppressed.**

**Pray:** that your community’s eyes would be opened to the problems and racial disparities within American criminal justice.

**Preach:** about experiences of captivity and incarceration of God’s people throughout scripture and in this moment. Consider Jesus’ own identification with victims of state violence through his execution on a Roman cross, and the victory over instruments of law and order in his resurrection.

**Act:** urge leaders to enact policy that lessens your community’s reliance on policing; holds officers accountable for misconduct; and invests in alternatives to incarceration. Convene a group of people from your faith community to read and reflect on the history of race and policing, as well as theological texts focused on these issues. Dominique DuBois Gilliard’s [Rethinking Incarceration](#) (2018) builds on work by [Michelle Alexander](#) & [Bryan Stevenson](#) to advocate for a christocentric engagement of the criminal justice system.

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THURSDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2020

***“A day lived without prayer risks being transformed into a bothersome or tedious experience. Everything that happens to us could turn into a badly endured and blind fate for us...Prayer is primarily listening and encountering God. The problems of everyday life, then, do not become obstacles, but appeals from God himself to listen to and encounter those who are in front of us. The trials of life thus change into opportunities to grow in faith and charity. The daily journey, including hardships, acquires the perspective of a “vocation.” Prayer has the power to transform into good what in life would otherwise be a sentence; prayer has the power to open the mind to a great horizon and to broaden the heart.”***

*Pope Francis*

## Community Organizing

Community Organizing continues despite the pandemic - it just looks a little different these days.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." - Luke 4:18-19*

Interfaith Community Organizing continues throughout New England, despite the pandemic. Like all of us, there have been big shifts in how things happen (like online instead of in-person), but the commitment to the core of the work remains.

The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) had a [large Zoom action](#) on November 12th, with over 700 participants calling on Connecticut legislators and the governor to declare racism a public health crisis, pass a clean slate bill to restore rights after criminal sentences have been served, and eliminate the practice of welfare liens. They followed up with an online press conference November 24th to call on the governor to respond.

Read more about GHIAA's platform or view the recording of the action at their website through the Center for Leadership and Justice: <http://cljct.org>.

Several ELCA congregations participate in the ongoing work of GHIAA.

Down the highway in Waterbury, the Naugatuck Valley Project ([www.nvpct.org](http://www.nvpct.org)) is pivoting to provide emergency relief and community building, especially in Latinx communities hard hit by COVID. They have three major foci: hunger, environmental justice (addressing local brown fields), and healthcare. They are continuing their efforts with large for-profit healthcare companies like the one that bought out Waterbury Hospital, attempting to hold them accountable for maintaining quality care that is accessible to the community, supporting their staff, and investing in local communities rather than building excessive profit for the company and its shareholders. Their efforts continued in the pandemic with, among other work, a November car parade protest at Waterbury Hospital.

The Naugatuck Valley Project as well as the Merrimack Valley Project (Northeast Massachusetts, <https://www.merrimackvalleyproject.org>) and the Kennebec Valley Organization (Maine, <https://kennebecvalleyorganization.com>) all received three-year ELCA World Hunger grants starting in 2021 to support their work addressing root causes of hunger in their communities.

Community organizing is rooted in relationship building and [one-to-one conversations](#) that draw out both the deeper issues that people care about deeply in their communities and the gifts and connections they have to address those issues. This work is transformative not only for the broader community, but also for congregations who undertake that relationship-building work.

Systemic racism is embedded in all the issues these organizations seek to address, incorporating intentional anti-racism work in their organizing and prioritizing voices from people of color in our communities.

Lutherans across New England, joining their ecumenical, interfaith, and community partners, are seeking to live out their faith and answer their baptismal call to work for justice and peace for all the earth. If you want to learn more about community organizing, how it can transform your congregation or community, or how to get connected to organizing happening in your area, contact Pr. Steven Wilco, Associate to the Bishop at [swilco@nesynod.org](mailto:swilco@nesynod.org).

A very excited Treasurer (see cover page) did some comparing between our Eversource Electric bills. The April bill, about average for that month showed we'd spent \$500.88 for the month for our electricity. What had our treasurer/farmer and all around wonder man excited was the fact that our November Eversource Bill, post-solar panels was \$75.83, which includes A \$65.76 hook-up fee. This is the beginning of our money-saving which should make our investment pay-off in fine fashion. Next year we will begin to get our Zyrec payments that will reduce further our out of pocket cost as the bonus awarded was quite generous. Thanks be to God!

**EVERSOURCE**  
 Account Number: 5177 781 2066  
 Statement Date: 03/17/20  
 Service Provided To:  
 GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CH

*April*

<b>Total Amount Due by 04/14/20</b>	<b>\$500.88</b>
Amount Due On 03/17/20	\$596.95
Last Payment Received On 03/11/20	-\$596.95
Balance Forward	\$0.00
Total Current Charges	\$500.88

#### Electric Usage History - Kilowatt Hours (kWh)



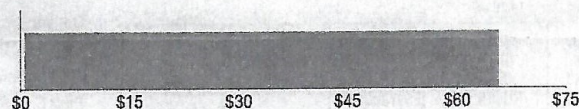
**EVERSOURCE**  
 Account Number: 5177 781 2066  
 Statement Date: 11/17/20  
 Service Provided To:  
 GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CH

*November*

Current Charges for Electricity	
<b>Supply</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<b>\$267.81</b>	<b>\$212.12</b>
Cost of electricity from CONNECTICUT GAS & ELECTRIC INC	Cost to deliver electricity from Eversource

<b>Total Amount Due by 12/15/20</b>	<b>\$75.83</b>
Amount Due On 11/18/20	\$167.74
Last Payment Received On 11/05/20	-\$167.74
Balance Forward	\$0.00
Total Current Charges	\$75.83

Current Charges for Electricity	
<b>Supply</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$65.76</b>
Cost of electricity from CONNECTICUT GAS & ELECTRIC INC	Cost to deliver electricity from Eversource



**Your electric supplier is**  
 CONNECTICUT GAS & ELECTRIC INC  
 222 MAIN ST  
 FARMINGTON CT 06032-3623  
 866-568-0289

At Eversource, we appreciate your contribution to renewable energy and welcome you to your new cogeneration billing! Each month the electricity you purchase and the amount of any excess electricity you generate will be displayed on your statement.

Please remember the amount of energy you generate will differ from your sales amount, which refers to the amount of generated energy that is unused and sold back to the electric grid.



Merry Christmas!



## Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



Week Forty-eight

Spirituality and Social Movements

### **Spirituality in the Civil Rights Movement**

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

The deeply spiritual foundation of the Civil Rights movement is often underemphasized. The movement that sought political and legal equality for Black Americans was grounded in faith. The devout Christian commitment of virtually all its leaders, from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Fannie Lou Hamer to John Lewis, inspired them to work for the dignity and equality of all. Rosemarie Freeney Harding (1930–2004), the wife of civil rights leader Vincent Harding (1931–2014), recalls the power of the Holy Spirit working in the movement during that time.

One of the most exciting things for me about being in the freedom movement was discovering other people who were compelled by the Spirit at the heart of our organizing work, and who were also interested in the mysticism that can be nurtured in social justice activism. We experienced something extraordinary in the freedom movement, something that hinted at a tremendous potential for love and community and transformation that exists here in this scarred, spectacular country. For many of us, that “something” touched us in the deepest part of our selves and challenged us in ways both personal and political.

There was an energy moving in those times. Something other than just sit-ins and voter registration and Freedom Schools. Something represented by these signal efforts but broader. As I traveled around the country in the sixties, it seemed to me that the nation—from the largest community to the smallest—was permeated with hope; the idea that people can bring about transformation; that what we do matters. . . .

(continues on page 19)



Martin and Coretta [King] and Anne Braden and Ella Baker and others like them had a beautiful effect on people who spent time with them. Living and working in their presence hastened changes in your own thoughts, your reactions, your priorities; even if you weren't always cognizant of the shift. . . . Being constantly in the presence of people who lived so fervently in the power of nonviolence, who believed and acted from the understanding that love and forgiveness were essential tools for social justice; being surrounded by people like that fed those commitments in me, in many of us. And it infused the nation. . . .

For a lot of people in the Movement, our participation gave us a craving for spiritual depth. . . . Sometimes not knowing what was right or wrong in a situation, they had to be quiet about it. Had to go somewhere and just meditate about it. Pray on it. . . .

Rosemarie Harding's description of the Spirit working within the young people of the Civil Rights movement reminds me of my time with the New Jerusalem Community where we also sang, prayed, and trusted that God would speak to us—and God did!

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### December 2020 Anniversary & Birthdays!

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

**Happy Anniversary**  
Rodney Carr & Emma 12/26  
Coleman - Carr

Did we miss your  
birthday or anniversary?  
Contact the office,  
860-527-7792 or email

[Office.gracelutheranhartford@  
gmail.com](mailto:Office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com)  
to update our records.

<b>Rodney Carr</b>	<b>12/02</b>
<b>Kasumi Campbell</b>	<b>12/04</b>
<b>Gail Lindstrom</b>	<b>12/05</b>
<b>Dawn Scagel</b>	<b>12/16</b>
<b>Geraldine Pickens</b>	<b>12/18</b>
<b>Tairah Merrill</b>	<b>12/20</b>
<b>Mildred Unfried</b>	<b>12/21</b>
<b>Donna Phelan</b>	<b>12/22</b>
<b>Annie Major</b>	<b>12/23</b>
<b>Mary Urgitis</b>	<b>12/31</b>





Grace Lutheran Church  
46 Woodland Street  
Hartford, CT 06105



### Our Staff and Council Leadership

The Rev. Rick Kremer, Pastor

rickkremer@aol.com

Nilda Bolorin, Parish Administrator

**\*Note new email**

office.gracelutheranchurch@gmail.com

Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker

Artist in Residence for Outreach

Barbara Ruhe, President

Barbara Calogero, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Walter Scott, Sexton

[www.graceistheplace.org](http://www.graceistheplace.org)

