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those beautiful words (and hope)



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Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday before
Advent, we listened in on the words of Luke as
Jesus was crucified. Not what one would

particularly expect on the Sunday before we begin to reflect on Jesus' coming. In many ways,
our lives of late as a congregation, as people of God, and as Americans have grown
increasingly challenging and more difficult. Our country has grown increasingly split, our
church has been shrinking, and our finances have continued to stress our Council and cause
consternation about our abilities to continue to minister to our communities and address the
needs of the homeless, jobless, hungry, suffering and vulnerable people.

All of that is the tough stuff. All of that is what we see every day, and what we want and need
to address, yet it seems ever more challenging as more people come for food, for clothing, for
jobs, and for our help in countless other ways.

Yet, what we can depend on, is who is in control. It isn't us. It isn't the forces of evil that seem
to be in control of housing, incarceration, the treatment of immigrants, and health care for all
of our people. It isn't whatever forces are seemingly in charge of our environment, causing
fires, hurricanes, and so many other natural disasters. It isn't either in the control of our
congress, our senators and house members, and it certainly is not in the control of a
president that offers leadership that is coarse, self-focused, dishonest, and fear building and
mongering.

Yet on Sunday we heard the crowds wanting to crucify him, the soldiers taunting him, and
even one crucified with him telling him to save himself and those with him if he indeed was
the Messiah.

Who really is in control? The answer comes in a remarkable dialogue with the other criminal
being crucified, who simply says that Jesus is innocent, and then asks Jesus to remember
him, when he goes to his kingdom. Jesus promises him that "today you will be with Me in
Paradise." Later Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

In the midst of pain, and suffering, knowing full well what was to happen, Jesus asks for
mercy for his torturers and invites a criminal to join with him.

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Pastor’s Message – Control, Power & Wealth

The Impeachment Process is holding sway and Pastors are not to opine on such things. Frankly for three years now. I have found myself inundated if not overwhelmed by constant reporting usually beginning with something “tweeted” by the president, and then studied, analyzed and criticized by our “free” press. On any particular day, one risks being submerged with the tweeting and reporting. What can be assured is that our democracy is not working as it once did, and our founding fathers and mothers would be aghast by what has happened to us and is happening to us virtually every minute of every day.

I’m not a politician, nor am I a Democrat or a Republican. I’m independent and always have been. If “Make America Great Again” means turn people against each other, debilitate the government, overturn all that the prior president did (good or bad) and blame everything on the prior president with a zeal that feels more racist than political, then what is going on in our country is just what the doctor ordered. Separation of the races, dehumanizing people of color, calling people who don’t agree with us by horrid names, disavowing hundreds of professionals and their work, the promulgation of lies and made up theories of the ilk that the prior president was not born in the United States and therefor had no right to be elected.

But what is happening is not the doing of one man, it couldn’t be. So, what is truly happening? What are we as Christians called to do about it? Money, wealth and power feel to me to be at the root of what is happening. While wealth disparity has been a part of our country’s landscape for generations, it seems to have reached a new and frightening level. The Supreme Court’s decision on “Citizen’s United” has managed to more fully bury what is happening politically and what it is doing to our institutions and our people, particularly those who have been caught between the elements of progress (automation, AI, etc.), and the ever more wealthy 1% of those in our country and countries throughout the world.

Historians have spoken of concepts like “The Power Elite” based on a perceptive sociologist’s book of the same name that offered arguments that the United States was ruled by an “elite”, proving their existence by a quantitative study of those in power. Importantly, those with this enormous and growing power, did not view themselves as “elite” even as the author identified the job titles of those so characterized.

More recent studies have suggested the existence of a kind of American “oligarchy” that has taken over our politics. We have three billionaires running for president in 2020. More recently some have acknowledged the existence of people with extraordinary power in government, business, the professions and the military. What people have not seen is the possibility that these powerful groups of individuals may work together to strip people of civil liberties, and employ gerrymandering, and other means to impact elections. Many of those people intentionally have used their wealth and power to control regulations, create dangerous circumstances environmentally, and dangerous circumstances for the lower and middle classes when dealing with clean water, healthcare services and costs, among so many other threats and realities.



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SAVE THESE DATES!

Sunday, December 8th, 11:00 am to Noon - Congregational “Program” Meeting: Should bad weather cause a cancellation, our rain/snow date will be on Sunday, December 15th from 11:00 am to Noon. Please do all that you can to attend as we will need a quorum. We have a lot of exciting things to tell you about and look forward to this very important meeting.

Sunday, January 5th, 3:00 – 6:00 pm – Light – 3, an Epiphany Celebration: Hosted by the Urban’s. All are invited to open house at the home of Darrell and Nancy Urban. They will have good food, ping-pong games, Trivia regarding the light with prizes. Bring a favorite song about light (stars, moon, sun, Jesus as light for the world) or a poem, reading or story that you would like to share that has helped you to “walk in the light.”

379 Ridgewood Road, West Hartford; rides will be arranged for those who need them.

Sunday, January 12th following worship – Hospitality and Caring for Creation, a Discussion: An opportunity to consider ways of improving our hospitality while also caring for creation.

Winter Musical Entertainment—featuring David Eberly

Grace’s own David Eberly is the featured musician at the following locations:

- ♦ **Place:** Plainville Public Library, 56 East Main St., Plainville, CT,
- ♦ **Date:** Dec. 4, 2019, **Time:** 7—8 p.m.
- ♦ **Place:** Farmington Library, 6 Monteith Drive, Farmington, Ct.
- ♦ **Date:** January 5, 2020, **Time:** 2-3 p.m.

December Birthdays & Anniversaries 2019

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

Happy Anniversary!

Rodney Carr & Emma Coleman - Carr 12/26

Rodney Carr	02-Dec
Gail Lindstrom	05-Dec
Dawn Scagel	16-Dec
Geraldine Pickens	18-Dec
Tairah Merrill	20-Dec
Mildred Unfried	21-Dec
Donna Phelan	22-Dec
Annie Major	23-Dec
Mary Urgitis	31-Dec

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact the office, 860-527-7792 or email officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net to update our records.

Pastor's Message – Control, Power & Wealth

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One talent the elite has shown has been the ability to divide the middle class and working class based on race/ethnicity and religious affiliation. This strategy has worked time after time breeding quarrels and bickering and making it impossible for people who share the impact of the oppressors, fighting among themselves. Look at the so-called Trump/Reagan Democrats who are not sympathetic with African-Americans or immigrants, the majority of whom are Hispanics.

What makes the “far right” elite so frightening is that it has stayed united for so long and controls so much of the Constitutional framework. Where is the viable, united opposition? Trump or his brain trust, not an oxymoron, understand this and use shocking statements and humiliation to frustrate the coalescence required for a united front in 2020. This group of politicians, business types, billionaires with Dark Money and others, according to this theory, currently rule America and are made more powerful by the increasing inequality of wealth.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. once wrote that American politics oscillated between a philosophy that favored business and one that favored people. Is this only an illusion? I hope not.

Our faith, our trust and our commitment to our mission at Grace all argue for growing the role of religion in the lives of people. We are trying to do that. We are called to do that. And, by reading our cover article, you will know who is truly in charge. It's not us. It's not them.

The countervailing power challenging the oligarchy is our God, our God with us and our God in us.

Kasumee and the Un-Named (as yet), Band

It was another of those Friday Night Gatherings... yet there was something different somehow. Oh, I remember. The Steinway Grand had been moved more towards the center of the Community Room, and there was a bass on one side, and a set of drums on the other. And I'm trying to remember, yes, there was a microphone tilted toward the piano chair that was empty. I kept wondering what is happening here...

After folks started coming in, the band, a pianist and singer, Darrell, a bass player, Randy, and on drums, Mike. They began singing and playing and everybody listened and enjoyed the music. But, then, this small, little girl, the one who had her debut at the church on a Sunday came over to join the group. A mic was all set up for her. And, she began to sing with poise, softly with a smile.

Kasumee, had sung at Christmas once in this room, but not accompanied by accomplished musicians... as host, I asked, “what is the name of this group? The answer was, “it is yet unnamed!” So, take a look at the pictures below and imagine the beautiful music that came forth that night.

God is good!



OLD LUTHERAN NEWS

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

It doesn't get much better than sending and receiving lovely, clever Grace Notes. We encourage you to send these out to your family and friends to remind them that they are forever and always Saved by Grace.

Grace Notes Comes with 10 cards (one of each expressions) and 10 envelopes \$5.95 <https://oldlutheran.com/products/grace-notes?receiptful>



Christmas Friday Gathering

December 20th, 4:30-7:00 p.m.

Once again the Friday Gathering Dinner will have a special Christmas celebration with music, gift bags, singing and candle light closing. The Friday Gathering Committee invites all to participate.

- Be part of the celebration and join in the dinner.
- Contribute to the gift bags with personal items such as bar soap, tooth paste, small hand lotions/shampoos, tooth brushes, hats, warm socks, mittens, etc. **NEED TO BE IN THE GRACE MEETING ROOM BY DEC 12.**
- Sunday, Dec. 15, help pack the gift bags following worship.
- Assist with the music or closing program.
- Help prepare/serve the meal or with clean up.
- Serve at the welcoming table, register guests, do name tags and give out tickets for gift bags.

Nancy Urban 860 416 3336 nlurban@gmail.com

Fair Trade Coffee, Tea and More

At its November meeting the Congregation Council reconfirmed Grace's commitment to using Fair Trade/ Equal Exchange coffee and tea for all of our events. This is a program of the ELCA and Lutheran World Relief. Using Fair Trade products supports the people who grow and harvest the items. Working in co-ops the people are assured a fair price for their labors as well as the profits being used to better the community through the building of schools, clean water, and community centers. Many of the cheaper brands found in the grocery stores often pay low wages, do not care for the sustainability of the land and some have been known to use child labor. **EVERY TIME WE SERVE FAIR TRADE COFFEE OR TEA AT GRACE WE ARE HAVING A GOOD CUP AND ALSO DOING GOOD.** Fair Trade products are found in the hospitality cupboard and the Council requests that no other brands be donated.

Wanting to gift some Fair Trade Products? Nancy Urban purchases these items wholesale and has on hand several kinds of tea at \$3 a box, baking cocoa or dark hot choc. mix for \$5, and small dark choc. bars (great stocking stuffers) 5/\$1. They will be at Grace on Dec 1st and 8th following worship.



those beautiful words (and hope)

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From: Frederick Buechner, Listening to Your Life

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart.

For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost. When I'm feeling most ghost like, it is your remembering me that helps remind me that I actually exist. When I'm feeling sad, it's my consolation. When I'm feeling happy, it's part of why I feel that way. If you forget me, one of the ways I remember who I am will be gone. If you forget, part of who I am will be gone.

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. "the good thief said from his cross (Luke 23:42). There are perhaps no more human words in all of Scripture, no prayer we can pray so well.

You see, God is in control. We can trust in that and we can know that. As we moved towards the end of the year, we received a bequest from Bernie Biederman, we have been feeding close to 100 people on a Friday Night and Emanuel Lutheran sent us \$1,000.00 to help. We were founding members of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, we have welcomed a new member Michael Gagnon to our church, and we have improved our facility by the work of a volunteer, and gift of God, Lee Whittemore. We will be bringing several additional people into membership before the year ends, and we know and believe that we are here for a purpose. Not our purpose but His. Not our doings, but His.

May the God that loves and protects us, that leads and guides us, that gives us the example for us to live, may that God hold you close during these times of woe and uncertainty, and may we trust that we know how God responds to OUR plea, "Jesus, remember us; each and every one of us." Amen.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

November 19, 2019

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is very disturbed by the November 18 announcement by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo that the Administration unwisely is changing current U.S. policy by stating that the "establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law."

Our church has consistently called for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, the cessation of all settlement activities and withdrawal from settlements on Palestinian territory to the 1967 boundaries, a negotiated, final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and the establishment of and international support for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state. We will continue to work with ecumenical and inter-religious partners who share these commitments. In the long term, we wish to see Israelis and Palestinians co-existing in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states.

The Administration's announcement makes the realization of these outcomes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more difficult and distant, rather than advancing the cause of peace. The announcement, like earlier ones on the conflict, gives no evidence of having been developed in consultation with those who will be most adversely affected by this policy, namely the Palestinians in the occupied territory. Instead, it will give a "green light" to further settlement activity and a worsening of the conditions of occupation, including intensified military and police measures and the further diversion of natural and other resources that benefit only settlers.

By reverting to the policy of the Reagan Administration, the new policy ignores facts that have been created on the ground since 1989 (from a settler population then of close to 200,000 to an estimated more than 700,000 at present in the West Bank and East Jerusalem). It also discredits international law such as various provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention -- to which Israel is a party -- about the obligations of an occupying power as well as the prevailing international consensus about settlements, most recently articulated in Security Council resolution 2334 of 2016 (to which all UN member states are bound according to the UN Charter).

Our distress with this announcement is primarily its impact on the daily life of Palestinians, especially our sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, but also their Christian and Muslim neighbors. We are also concerned with policy changes that further distance the United States from the prevailing international consensus on the path toward a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including respecting human rights standards and international law.

God's peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

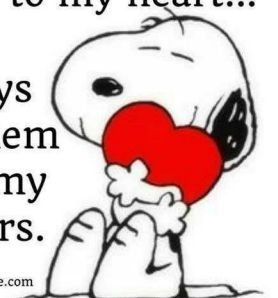
Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

<https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8014>

When my arms can't
reach people who are
close to my heart...

I
always
hug them
with my
prayers.



www.iampoopsie.com