



GRACE NOTES

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

BISHOP EATON ISSUES PASTORAL MESSAGE ON SCOTUS RULING REGARDING ROE V. WADE

June 24, 2022

Dear church,

Whatever personal perspective one might take on the June 24 abortion ruling from the Supreme Court, it is the legal framework in which we now minister, and I wish to speak a pastoral word at this time.

The Supreme Court has voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, removing federal constitutional protection for safe and legal abortion and leaving decisions about abortion law largely to the states. As a result, safe and legal abortion will likely not be accessible in every state. This church's 1991 social statement *Abortion* argues that "the number of induced abortions is a source of deep concern" but teaches that the practice should be legal (pp. 3, 9-10). In other words, "Laws should be enacted and enforced justly for the preservation and enhancement of life, and should avoid unduly encumbering or endangering the lives of women" (p. 9). Overturning *Roe v. Wade* and placing decisions about abortion regulation at the state level encumbers and endangers the lives of all persons who need to make decisions about unexpected pregnancies.

First, as a pastor of this church, I want to acknowledge that this decision affects many people, especially those whose pregnancies unfold in complex situations and the people who love them. Many now find their moral agency restricted because federal law no longer guarantees access to legal and safe abortion. They already face difficult moral questions, and the Supreme Court decision only adds to their anguish. As our social statement reminds us, we have both the freedom and the obligation to serve neighbors in complex situations. As a church, we are called at this moment to recognize and spiritually support people who are struggling with decisions around pregnancy.

Second, as presiding bishop, I want to remind this church that, despite this new legal landscape, we continue to depend on our social teaching for guidance. Our social statement provides the moral framework for our church's communal discernment and ministry, holding in tension both the strong Christian presumption to preserve and protect all life as well as the complex moral situations in which pregnancy sometimes occurs. Our social teaching is complex and does not hew to clear categories or labels such as "pro-abortion" or "anti-abortion."

That complexity is reflected in several points. The statement recognizes that pregnant persons have moral agency; they are the ones to make decisions about a pregnancy (see pp. 5-6). This church and its ministers trust them to decide but expect them to make such decisions in

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BISHOP EATON ISSUES PASTORAL MESSAGE ON SCOTUS RULING REGARDING ROE V. WADE

(continued from page 1)

relationship—with God, self, partner, family, ministers and others. I also want to underscore for the whole body of Christ the statement's exhortation "that those who counsel persons faced with unintended pregnancies respect how deeply the woman's pregnancy involves her whole person—body, mind and spirit—in relation to all the commitments that comprise her stewardship of life" (p. 5).

Further, our church teaching holds that there are no exclusive rights in pregnancy. A pregnant person does not have an exclusive right to abort a fetus at all points during the pregnancy. A developing life does not have an exclusive right to be born (p. 2). This church does not support abortion as a normative form of birth control but rather understands it as necessary in some morally responsible circumstances. This church does not condone late-term abortions except in extreme circumstances, which must be determined by the individual with their medical caregivers (p. 7).

This church acknowledges that individuals and religious traditions hold divergent viewpoints over when life begins. These divergent views are not only scientific but also biblical and cultural. The ELCA social statement acknowledges these ethical ambiguities and states that "the closer the life in the womb comes to full term the more serious such [moral] issues become." (p. 7).

As we live into this new legal framework, we can respond to and minister in the current situation, for instance, by ministering to individuals who seek abortions; advocating for laws that provide free or affordable health care, child care and education; providing and promoting sex education; continuing to be a community of discernment where thoughtful and diverse perspectives can be shared and heard; and advocating for state laws that provide legal, safe and affordable abortions, and against legislation that would outlaw abortion in all circumstances (p. 9).

Finally, I wish to remind everyone that this church supports peaceful means of expression within a diverse society. Peaceful protest is a crucial element of civic engagement; violent protest is not, and this church reproves it. Likewise, this church is on record against hate speech. Let us be instruments for peace where there is none. Let us listen to one another. Let us serve the needs of neighbors in all the complexities life presents. God calls us to be *for* others, just as God in Christ is for us.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A QUOTE FROM SISTER THEA—From Barbara Ruhe

A friend posted this on Facebook--Sister Thea was an African American Roman Catholic nun.....quote by Sister Thea

God is bread when you're hungry, water when you're thirsty, a harbor from the storm. God's a father to the fatherless, a mother to the motherless. God's my sister, my brother, my leader, my guide, my teacher, my comforter, my friend. God's the way-maker and burden-bearer, a heart-fixer and a mind-regulator. God's my doctor who never lost a patient, my lawyer who never lost a case, my chaplain who never lost a battle. God's my all in all, my everything.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE—WE SIMPLY CAN'T

It's not because of our personal life situation, although that is of great concern and will require time, energy, prayers, planning and executing... which will lead us to let go of things for a while, and to find the time to focus on these other matters. This is a two-month Grace Notes, opening some time and space. But were we not to pause and commit to keep on going, I would not be honest. We simply can't.

It's not because we don't want to face the ugliness that continues to grow, surround and in some ways choke us. The Roe v Wade decision made by perhaps the most politically biased Supreme Court in our history (dangerous comment, I'm not a historian, nor have I researched this) but it does have a number of members who said one thing when seeking appointments, and now have shown that their words were not true, and their actions are. Our government with one party having the presidency, the senate, and the house, is ineffectual. And those least of these are the ones who suffer the most. We took a small first step on violence, but it will not by any means end the impact of guns in our country. Ask the families who have just this year been impacted by mayhem and death in schools, supermarkets and places of worship.

If we were to list all of what is going wrong in our world we couldn't. Should we want to give our lives to address that list, we couldn't. Were we to try, it is unlikely that we would succeed! In fact, those who have the sensitivity to see, along with the energy, longing and hope that our actions might help temper the earthquakes, shine light on that which does harm, and try on new ways to live and act, to share and love. Sometimes, it's simply too much. Maybe, we simply can't.

There is an element of this in the following excerpt from the Notebooks of Bishop James Hazelwood of our New England Synod. His guidance points us to ways that we can, but we need the time to look at other things and seek the strength, guidance and support of the Holy in our lives:



THE NOTEBOOKS OF JAMES HAZELWOOD



The Sabbath we all need

We live in a culture of restlessness, and the antidote is restfulness.



Ancient people in the Near East seem to be the first to realize and articulate the need to "give it a rest." They were agrarian people after years and years as nomadic people. While the Hebrew scriptures suggest that from the very outset of time, even Yahweh insisted on a day of rest, it wasn't until the once enslaved people were moving toward a more settled existence that they finally got the message and encoded it in their first book of laws. Remembering the sabbath day became a commandment that was also tied to other ideas, such as the year of Jubilee, a time of debt relief every fifty years. Both aspirational concepts that never became solidified in day-to-day life.

In our time, there is much gnashing and wailing around laws or structures that we no longer follow, but the one commandment our society seems quite bold to defy is rarely mentioned. How often is the answer to "how are you?" no longer "I'm fine," but "I'm so busy." A sigh of exhaustion often accompanies it. In today's world, people are praised for their productivity, effectiveness, and accomplishments. And, like you, I have that voice pounding in my head to do more, generate more, and work more. The Pharaoh's voice from ancient Egypt echoes through the centuries as if my value comes from building more pyramids.

There was a period when external collective agreements reinforced the practice of the Sabbath. On the farm in Montana, the wheat farmers with Nordic piety never worked the land on Sundays. A classmate of mine from seminary discovered this while on his internship in a rural parish on those open plains. That was thirty-five years ago and a reminder of an era with culturally reinforced norms. In our go-go 21st century internet-connected society, external reinforcement disappeared long ago. The only way to reclaim the sabbath falls to the individual and perhaps a tiny cluster of friends and family members.

By Sabbath, I'm not speaking of the day off to get errands done. Instead, I wonder about time on the porch, a walk in the park, contemplating Mary Oliver, or extended reflection on life's big questions. The more extroverted among us might invite a friend to the porch or the park or the conversation on those important looming questions. Some Orthodox communities, be they Jewish or Amish, restrict engagement with all things mechanical and technological. Thus it's a walk to the synagogue or the neighbor's barn for supper. These practices seem utterly distant, and the reader may think I'm casting about for a time that is simply out of reach—a fair point.

But our restless times call for a response, and I do not see more activity moving us further toward the realm of peace. On the contrary, I think we are all desiring a sabbath. Self-imposed pauses, be they breathing techniques, mindfulness practices, or plain old prayers of silence, are increasingly needed.

As Walter Brueggeman points out in the quote below, finding Sabbath requires intentionality and communal reinforcement. It's not enough for each of us to individually seek Sabbath, though that is part of the solution. What is needed is a commitment by the community to Sabbath. This might happen in gatherings where people say, "let's pause from all this activity, even if for a moment, an hour or a week." It can also be reinforced when we speak and listen to others about their busy lives. Can we offer words that counter the not-so-subtle implication that the more active we are, the more value we hold?

"In our contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from the insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusions into every part of our life from the family to the national budget....But Sabbath is not only resistance. It is alternative...The alternative on offer is the awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God."

Walter Brueggeman, Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now

All the wise people I know, be they in the annals of recorded history or the partners in contemporary living, practiced Sabbath and still do. So let's bring this to a close with the

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PASTOR'S MESSAGE—WE SIMPLY CAN'T

(continued from page 4)

wisdom of Mary Oliver. Though the poem is titled Praying, it could also be titled Sabbath.

Praying

It doesn't have to be
The blue iris, it could be
Weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
Small stones; just
Pay attention, then patch
A few words together and don't try
To make them elaborate, this isn't
A contest but the doorway
Into thanks, and a silence in which
Another voice may speak.

- Mary Oliver, Devotions

In the spirit of the summer sabbath, I'll be stepping away from Notebooks until the weather turns cooler and the length of days decreases. See you in September. Have a sabbath-like summer.



James Hazelwood currently serves as Bishop in the New England Synod ELCA Lutheran. He is the author of *Everyday Spirituality: Discover a Life of Hope, Meaning and Peace* as well as the forthcoming *Weird Wisdom for the Second Half of Life*. His website is www.jameshazelwood.net

REMEMBERING 1967

By Jonathan Kuttub



June 5, 1967 was the first day of the Six-Day War, when Israel attacked its Arab neighbors, destroyed their airforces and armies, and proceeded to capture the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Golan Heights (from Syria), and the Sinai Peninsula (from Egypt). Israel claimed this was a “defensive, preemptive” war and that the Arab armies were poised to attack and annihilate it. Modern Israeli historians, in-line with contemporary scholarship, freely admit that Israel was never in any danger and that, for all their bluster, the Arab armies were neither planning nor were in any position to wage war against Israel. But, the myth persists and most Americans still think that Israel was attacked in 1967 by surrounding Arab armies. This event has been labeled by the Arab countries as a *Naksa* (setback), to be distinguished from the *Nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948, and it has been argued that international law and outside pressure would soon force an Israeli withdrawal that would ultimately eliminate the effects of the *Naksa*.

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Israel claimed that it had no territorial ambitions and would gladly return the Occupied Territories in return for peace with the Arabs. Many in the West still believe this lie, clinging to the mirage that a grand compromise can be reached whereby Israel withdraws its occupation forces and permits the existence of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza side by side and in peace with Israel.

Every Israeli government since 1967 has maintained this lie—with some governments (particularly Labor or leftist governments) being more forthcoming as to how far they are willing to go in making compromises, while more right-wing governments (like Likud under Netanyahu) have been clearly less willing to promise serious concessions or withdrawal. Yet, all Israeli governments worked to establish more and more settlements in the Occupied Territories and confiscate more and more land. In fact, they were thrilled to “limit the conflict” to



those territories occupied in 1967 and forget about the rights of Palestinians in the remainder of Palestine. The issue, to many of them, was how much land would they have to return and how much authority over the West Bank would be shared between the Palestinians and Israel and its settlers.

When negotiations between Israel and the PLO took place under the auspices of the United States, it was agreed that “permanent status issues” would be left to the end: Jerusalem, the settlements, the borders, the refugees, and security arrangements. A Palestinian Authority was created, which was supposed to be the nucleus of the coming State of Palestine, and “permanent status negotiations” were supposed to begin within three years and concluded no more than five years after the signing of the Cairo Agreement in 1994, which was falsely labelled an Interim Agreement. This never in fact happened.

Now, 55 years after the Six-Day War, it is worth taking a new look at current realities and challenging the lies and half truths that stand in the way of genuine peace. The list below runs contrary to the official, prevailing views typically allowed in this country, but it is becoming more and more difficult to deny the following truths:

- Israel has ambitions and plans to keep all of the Occupied Territories. It is neither willing to withdraw to the 1967 borders nor allow for an authentic, sovereign Palestinian state to arise there or anywhere else in Palestine. The Saudi (Arab Peace) Initiative, which offered Israel full peace with all Arab and Muslim states in return for giving up those territories it occupied in 1967, was never even considered by Israel.
- Israel is not willing to abide by the provisions of international law or be governed by universal standards of human rights when it comes to Palestinians. It relies on the United States to insulate it from any accountability before international tribunals.
- Israel is not in any military danger, nor does it face any legitimate security concerns. To the contrary: it is a major military power vastly superior to the Palestinians as well as to all surrounding Arab countries, who have no interest in fighting it anyway. Israel has nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons, a highly sophisticated weapons industry, and the ability to project its power throughout the region. In fact, it regularly bombs its

REMEMBERING 1967

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neighbors, particularly Syria, as well as Palestinians in Gaza. Even without the unqualified support of the United States, Israel has no military challengers.

- Israel has no interest in offering Palestinian Arabs equality within its borders. Whether in Israel itself, within the besieged Gaza Strip, or in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank, it acts as sovereign and openly declares its desire to assert Jewish domination and supremacy in all these areas. Israel has no interest in negotiating peace with the Palestinians or coming to terms with their national desires. Its concept of peace is for Palestinians to surrender to its domination.
- The concept of a ‘Jewish state’ at the heart of Zionism can only be implemented at the expense of the land’s non-Jewish inhabitants, who need to be expelled, disenfranchised, besieged, subjugated and ruled by military might, or otherwise marginalized, to allow for the existence of a Jewish-dominant state. Barring the complete ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, apartheid becomes an existential necessity for Israel.

In our concern for justice and peace, we must start by recognizing and proclaiming the truth even if it runs counter to what is commonly accepted as “conventional wisdom.” Every proposed solution or political action must be judged on the basis of morality, in terms of justice, fairness, human rights, and respect for human dignity—not just on the basis of *realpolitik*. It must seek to reduce suffering, avoiding violence as well as oppressive measures. Peace cannot be based on military might or on the permanent subjugation and suffering of a weaker party.

As Christians, we cannot remain neutral or silent in this situation. As God’s children on both sides are suffering, we need to be agents of change for peace and justice. However, we also cannot continue to speak of a “conflict” or posit a false symmetry between oppressor and the oppressed, abuser and abused, even as we declare both to be children of God. The system of oppression, racism, and apartheid must be dismantled, because it dehumanizes both the oppressor and the oppressed alike.

JUNETEENTH IN 2022

By Pramilla Jayapal

Juneteenth is an important day in America — it’s a stark reminder of our history. There’s been hard-fought progress towards justice and there’s so much work yet unfinished.



On this day 157 years ago, slavery was finally ended in America. It was on June 19th, 1865 that Union soldiers landed at Galveston, Texas with news that enslaved people were now free.

I’m proud that our Democratic majorities and President Biden made Juneteenth a federal holiday last year. **But we can’t just move on.** Congress still has an enormous amount of work ahead — work to make equality real and address nearly a century of oppressive Jim Crow laws in America.

I’ve spoken about these issues and I discussed them with my supporters on this day last year. But these pressing issues aren’t going away and we need to continue thinking about them and fighting for transformative changes in our society. Here are some of the things I’m continuing to think about today:

America's for-profit health care system leaves Black Americans much more likely to be uninsured than white Americans. Even when seen by a doctor, our Black brothers, sisters, and siblings are less likely to get the care they need. Black women are more likely to die during childbirth, have nearly three times the odds of being hospitalized as white Americans, and are nearly four times more likely to die from COVID-19. Every moment that we refuse to guarantee health care, too many Black Americans are suffering.

America's economy is deeply, deeply unequal. White families have 10 times more wealth than Black families — a racial wealth gap that has gotten worse, not better. This is because we live in a society and an economy that simply does not address longstanding inequities, deprivation of opportunity, or a lack of investment.

America's housing system is based on devastating generational impacts that used exclusionary redlining and financial practices to shut out people of color and fuel racial injustice. This — combined with the lack of economic justice — has caused the housing crisis for Black Americans, who now make up more than 40% of those experiencing homelessness. **The neighborhoods that many Black Americans live in are perpetually flooded with toxic dump sites and lack of access to clean air, safe drinking water, and public lands.** They are far more likely to be situated next to highways and polluted areas that only worsen the health conditions that exist because of lack of health care.

America's education system institutionalizes discrimination to the extent that the schoolhouse to jailhouse pipeline begins as early as kindergarten. Black students are treated differently because of the color of their skin: disciplined, suspended, and expelled for behavior that elicits no response for white students.

Our justice system is patently unjust. At a time when we incarcerate more of our citizens than any other country, Black Americans are being imprisoned at more than five times the rate of white Americans. This is in part due to a war on drugs that was actually a war on Black Americans, locking them up and locking them out of opportunity.

You see, *every single system is stacked on top of another* — all discriminatory and intertwined, threads of injustice that come together to hold people back. That's why I am working on and fighting for immediate and urgent legislative solutions to address each of these institutionalized disparities — like Medicare for All, a minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour, the PRO Act, the Housing is a Human Right Act, the College for All Act, a Green New Deal, and so much more.



I didn't come to Congress to fight for incremental change. I came here to set things straight and to fight for what matters and what we deserve. This Juneteenth and every single day, I pledge to you that I will stand up to push for real change, in solidarity with the Black community and with all of us who believe in a better world — a world that only we can shape with our own hands and our own will.

Thank you for doing this work with me: with urgency, with generosity, with the belief that we can change things if we work hard enough and urgently enough.

In solidarity,
Pramila

“GRANDMOTHER OF JUNETEENTH” OPAL LEE REFLECTS ON HER JOURNEY TO SECURE A NATIONAL HOLIDAY

At 95 years old, Opal Lee is showing no sign of stopping. Her life's story — including her famous trek from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., to call on lawmakers to make Juneteenth a national holiday — has since become legendary, earning her the name "Grandmother of Juneteenth."

"I decided that maybe if a little old lady, 89 years old, in tennis shoes walking from Fort Worth to Washington, somebody would pay attention," she told CBS News of her decision to undertake the walk.

Lee would trek two and a half miles at a time, a callback to the two and a half years it took General Gordon Granger to arrive in Texas and inform enslaved Black people of their freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865.

She eventually delivered 1.5 million signatures to Congress, and clinched victory when legislation passed last year. It was then signed by President Biden in the White House, establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday.



Ninety-four-year-old activist and retired educator Opal Lee, known as the Grandmother of Juneteenth, speaks with U.S. President Joe Biden after he signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law in the East Room of the White House on June 17, 2021 in Washington, D.C. PHOTO BY DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

But Juneteenth was a cherished holiday to the former schoolteacher and mother of four long before she launched her national campaign. "When I was a little one and we lived in Marshall, Texas, we'd go to the fairground," Lee said. "There'd be games and food and food and food. I'm here to tell ya it was like Christmas!"

But June 19 wasn't always a celebratory occasion. In 1939, when Lee was just 12 years old, her family moved to a home in Fort Worth that was torched by a White mob. "The paper says there was some 500 folk who gathered. They drug the furniture out and burned it, burned the house too. My parents never ever talked to us about it, not ever," Lee said. "They accepted what happened."

Despite what happened, she said, her mother worked "untiringly" until she was able to get another home. Lee credits her mother's tenacity for her decision to erect a new national museum on her own land, dedicated of telling the story of Juneteenth.

"People think it's a Black thing when it's not. It's not a Texas thing. It's not that," Lee said. "Juneteenth means freedom and I mean for everybody!"

When asked what she wants to be remembered for, she responded, "I want them to know that the little old lady dreamed and they can dream too and that dreams can come to fruition."

***This story was produced by the CBS News Race and Culture Unit.
CBS Village***

COLLABORATE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE: Report from the New England Synod Assembly

By Nancy Urban

This was the theme of the New England Synod Assembly held June 9-11 in Worcester, Mass. Five members of Grace were in attendance—Nancy Urban, Sue Carey and Gladys Jackson as voting members; Louisa Barton Duguay as a visitor; and Pr. Darrell Urban as a voting clergy.

The report from Bishop Hazelwood had us facing the reality that since 1967, the ELCA membership has been in decline. In the New England Synod we have gone from 183 congregations to 166. Many of our congregations are served by part time ministers or are in transition discerning their future sustainability. Just as the rest of the country has experienced the “Great Resignation” so has the church, with very few pastors available for the needs to our congregations.

Hence the theme of COLLABORATION. “A new church is being born”. It does not look like the church of a few years ago. Where the Church is thriving or being about ministry it is often through working in collaboration with other congregations, denominations, public institutions or other non-profits. Pooling together resources, skills and energy to meet the needs within the community—getting outside the walls of the building or expanding those walls beyond the congregation. Bishop Hazelwood interviewed several panels in which people shared ways in which collaboration was happening. UCC and Lutheran—Lutheran and Episcopalian—working together in areas of worship and community projects; Zion Lutheran in Pittsfield, MA, that no longer needs their large education wing turning it into low cost apartments; Cross of Christ in Waterbury, CT, recognizing the need for children to feel loved and cared about adopting a first grade class and sharing acts of love; house churches that are developing; and many more examples of congregations working with other organizations.

There were many workshops available for participants to attend as well as several resolutions regarding issues of climate change and racial justice; calling on congregations and individuals to take these issues seriously with meaningful actions and not just words or good intentions. And of course we were all beaming with pride as Sue Carey was interviewed —on stage—by the Bishop regarding the book that she has written.

And now a word from the following:

Gladys Jackson: I was most impressed with the open discussion regarding racial issues and the church’s broadening perceptions of what race is all about; how congregations can participate in the whole process of recognition of issues and opportunities to be actively involved in more than just talk. It was good to see the turnout of folks from all over New England and to hear the open discussions on how the church is moving forward in new ways.

Nancy Urban: When one is surrounded by over 400 people talking together, worshiping together, listening to one another, all sharing the hope that is embodied in our faith; it is good to be reminded that we at Grace are a part of a larger body all seeking to live out the Gospel wherever we are planted. It was very affirming that much of what was shared regarding new directions for the church were the very things that we have been working on in our GHIAA (Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance) core groups—listening to one another through one on one conversations.

Louisa Barton Duguay: Going to Synod is always a great experience. Just being with over 400 people whose energy is more closely aligned to your own energy is a boost, and then there is the occurrence of connections you were not expecting. The discussion of racism was lively and led to the resolution being tabled but the discussion to be continued with urgency.

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Sue Carey: After all my years as a Lutheran, this was my first experience at a Synod Assembly. I thank all of you that I had the opportunity to represent Grace. My impression of the three days is that it proceeded on two levels. First was the series of panels that Bishop Hazelwood called on to expand our imagination about the meaning of collaboration and envisioning the future of church. It was inspiring to hear firsthand about how these relationships evolved and how they enriched each congregation. At the same time, discussion and resolutions to address racial justice permeated each day. Thursday began with Bishop Hazelwood presenting his synopsis of the turmoil in the Sierra Pacific Synod. Next, he revealed that a keynote speaker and workshop leader had withdrawn from our Assembly because the Bishop, in a taped orientation meeting, had omitted the man's title and treated him differently than the other speakers. When time came to vote on the Synod's budget, there was a proposal to allocate funds as a Gesture of solidarity with the members of the Sierra Pacific Synod who had suffered (it was defeated). There were more discussions and more resolutions that continued on Friday to address antiracism efforts. Antiracism workshops were held Friday and Saturday. The back and forth dialogue was vigorous. There are no quick fixes. This is important and demanding work, and we need to be vigilant that we create a fully inclusive community where all voices impact decisions that are made.

To keep abreast of antiracism efforts in the NE Synod, sign up for their emails at <https://newenglandantiracism.org>

To see the resources that the ELCA provides, use this website:

<https://edlarj.org/our-work/>

Finally, as one speaker reviewed all the ways that we, as a people have become fearful; war, climate change, political divisions, pandemics, mass shootings, etc.—what the Church has to offer is Hospitality/Love. The kind of Love that we find in the words and teachings of Jesus. This Love helps us to move beyond fear, this Love is what is so desperately needed by all.



A Closing Prayer: from morning Service of the Word.

O God, you have called your servants
in ventures of which we cannot see the endings,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go.
but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

BISHOP EATON PARTICIPATES IN EMANUEL NINE COMMEMORATION EVENT



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

Chicago (June 14, 2022) — The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), will join faith and government leaders on June 17 to mark the seventh anniversary of the racially motivated shootings at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. The leaders will participate in a commemorative Bible study event that will kick off a yearlong Bible study across the country.

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BISHOP EATON PARTICIPATES IN EMANUEL NINE COMMEMORATION EVENT

The theme for the livestream event, “What Kind of Soil Are We?,” is taken from Mark 4:1-20, the Bible passage the Emanuel Nine were studying on the night they were murdered by Dylann Roof (who was raised in an ELCA congregation). The text is commonly known as the parable of the sower, and alternatively as the parable of the soils. Christian leaders across the nation will use the commemorative event to study the parable and lead discussions critical to this time as race, history and politics intersect.

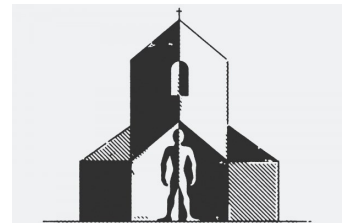
To honor this day, the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to establish June 17 as the “Emanuel 9 Commemoration and Day of Repentance,” honoring the martyrdom of Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton and Myra Thompson. Pinckney and Simmons were graduates of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., one of the ELCA’s seven seminaries.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WHITE IDENTITY COMES BEFORE CHRISTIAN FAITH

In the U.S. today, two-thirds of white Christians practice a “religion of whiteness,” a new study finds.

By Michael O. Emerson

SOJOURNERS



MY COLLEAGUES AND I have done extensive research on race and religion for 30 years. We’re now wrapping up an intensive, three-year national research project where we heard from thousands of Christians and examined trends in church attendance and commitment. We have a clear conclusion: God is shaking down the U.S. church. It is currently in a reckoning, the likes of which has not been seen for centuries.

As our team interviewed Christians of color across the U.S., we heard a similar and painful story repeated: White Christians, by their actions, seem to favor being white over being Christian. Christians of color cited many instances of that type of behavior, national and local, communal and personal. We wondered if this was the case empirically and, if so, why. As we tested the hypothesis, we found a plethora of evidence substantiating what we heard.

My co-author Glenn Bracey and I are proposing a theory in our forthcoming book, *The Grand Betrayal*: Most church-attending white Christians are not bad Christians. This is because they are *not* Christian at all. Instead, we propose they are faithful followers of a different religion: the “religion of whiteness.”

In the U.S. today, an entire religion has developed around the worship of the dominance, centrality, privilege, and assumed universality of being white. “White is right,” so this religion postulates, and it has developed a particular set of beliefs, practices (such as a highly selective use of biblical scriptures), and organizations to support, defend, and teach its “faith.”

We can make predictions based on the theory and test them empirically. Let me offer one example. We selected three Bible verses that speak about empowering minority ethnic

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WHITE IDENTITY COMES BEFORE CHRISTIAN FAITH

groups (Acts 6:1-7), welcoming foreigners (Deuteronomy 24:14), and confessing the sins of your own group (Nehemiah 1:6). We asked those who told us they believe the Bible should always be used to determine right and wrong if they agreed with the verses and analyzed their responses by racial group. For African American and Hispanic Christians, the majority strongly agreed with the verses. But for white church-attenders, only one-third strongly agreed. These white churchgoers differed from other Christians in that the majority took issue with the Bible.

We went further by including a fourth verse as a control, one that referred only to individual piety: the injunction not to use unwholesome words (Ephesians 4:29). Here all groups—no matter their racial category—strongly agreed with the Bible verse imploring Christians not to use unwholesome words. White practicing Christians agreed with the Bible exactly as other Christians when the verse did not ask about showing favor to groups other than their own.

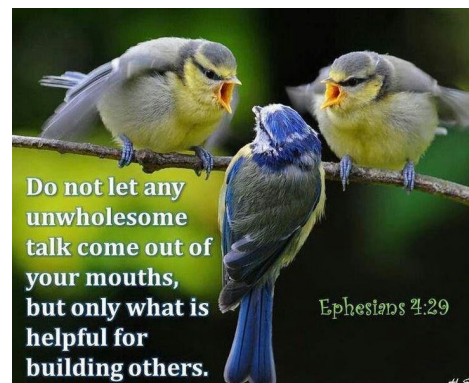
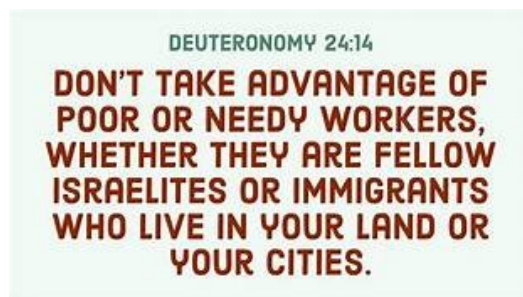
We found this pattern over and over again: White practicing Christians differed from Christians of other racial groups and from non-Christian whites whenever the topic was race. For example, white practicing Christians are twice as likely as other whites to say “being white” is important to them and twice as likely as other whites to say they feel the need to defend their race. Through extensive statistical analyses, we found that two-thirds of practicing white Christians are following, in effect, a religion of whiteness. They repeatedly placed being white ahead of being Christian; the findings were not explained away by political affiliation, location, age, education, income, gender, or other factors.

So, where do we go from here? In this time of reckoning, our churches are being sifted. The middle ground is ending. Social justice movements are a key part of this reckoning. Quite simply, Christian justice movements centered on bringing the love of Christ to all people are invigorating U.S. Christianity and have the immense possibility to do more so in the future, for at least three reasons. First, these movements are largely multiracial, and often BIPOC-led. This is essential—a demonstration and enactment of what must come to be. Second, these movements draw people out of a focus on one’s self and one’s own group and instead direct Christians to the biblical essence of focusing on God’s reign and creation. And third, these movements bring to light where various churches stand. We need the practitioners of Christianity to pray and work for mass conversions from the “religion of whiteness” to an authentic Christianity rooted in the radical teachings of Jesus.

It is both a difficult and an incredibly invigorating time. The church will not look the same when we get to the other side.



Michael O. Emerson is a professor of sociology at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and co-author of the forthcoming *The Grand Betrayal: The Agonizing Story of Race, Religion, and Rejection in American Life*. Emerson's research is funded in part by the Lilly Endowment Inc., which also provides funding for Sojourners.



NO FORCED LABOR; NO EXCEPTION



There's a glaring reality that our country needs to face: Despite many of us being taught that the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude more than 150 years ago – forced labor still persists in our country.

What I'm talking about is the exploitative practice of forced prison labor – and it is largely a result of something called "the exception clause" in the 13th Amendment itself.

The ACLU released a shocking new report this week that shows exactly how this "exception" continues to fuel human rights abuses against incarcerated workers across the country. **I'll break that down for you in one second, but first I want you to know that there's something you can do to help end the injustice:**

A critical piece of legislation is in Congress right now – called the Abolition Amendment – which seeks to nullify this egregious loophole once and for all. We just need to push our lawmakers to take action.

So please, send a message with us to your members of Congress today and tell them to pass the Abolition Amendment immediately.

To be clear: The "exception clause" states that slavery is barred *except* for people who have been convicted of crimes. And our latest findings show that it has allowed for millions of workers in prisons over the years to be exploited, underpaid, and excluded from workplace safety protection laws.

In fact, more than 76% of incarcerated workers reported facing punishment – such as solitary confinement, denial of sentence reductions, or loss of family visitation – if they decline or were unable to work. And that doesn't begin to cover the inhumane conditions they're also made to work within.

It's no coincidence either that this loophole disproportionately encouraged the criminalization and re-enslavement of Black people during the Jim Crow era – and that we still feel the impacts of this systemic racism today in the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown people in our country's prisons.

For a nation that claims to be the "land of the free," forced labor of any kind is unacceptable, and it is unconscionable that we've kept this exception within the United States Constitution.

Let's bring it to an end: **Send a message to Congress today and tell them to pass the Abolition Amendment immediately.**

Thanks for taking action,
Jennifer Turner
Pronouns: She, her, hers
Principal Human Rights Researcher, ACLU Human Rights Program

WHAT DACA MEANS

By Pramila Jayapal



As a proud immigrant who arrived in America alone when I was 16, I know the importance of programs like the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA has allowed 800,000 Dreamers to study and work in the U.S. without fear of deportation. I will always believe: Dreamers are American. Dreamers are home. Dreamers are

WHAT DACA MEANS

(continued from page 14)

us. That's why it was such an incredible moment for justice, equality, and our Dreamers when President Obama implemented DACA in 2012.

But it hasn't been smooth sailing for DACA. Trump attacked it. A court ruled in favor of a Republican-led lawsuit last year blocking new DACA applicants from getting approved. While the case is appealed, DACA's future remains uncertain. It's cruel, it's unjust, and we must fight back.

Under Trump, we witnessed unimaginable cruelty and heartbreak: children separated from their families, immigrants locked up in for-profit prison detention centers without adequate nutrition and public health, a Muslim ban, turning away asylum seekers and refugees, a complete demonization of immigrants from every part of the GOP.

Republicans will not stop trying to rollback immigrant rights and opportunities in this country. It's our job to fight back, advocate, organize, and protect hard-won gains like DACA. For all of us who believe in the humane and moral treatment of immigrants, we must continue our work forward.

In solidarity,
Pramila

WE'RE STILL FIGHTING FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN CONGRESS



It's been more than six months since the House passed the Build Back Better Act, which includes critical investments in climate, jobs, and justice. Now the Senate is deliberating a similar reconciliation bill that, if passed, would amount to the most significant congressional action on climate change to date. The urgency for immediate action has never been more clear -- in the months since the House's passage, we've experienced devastating droughts, floods, wildfires, and heat waves.

While progress has been stalled in the Senate, we're now facing a key opening to get this across the finish line before the August Congressional Recess. We must fight for action on climate with the same relentlessness that the fossil fuel industry exhibits in protecting its profits and its free pass to pollute our planet. While it's been a long and hard road, we're still in the fight and can make significant progress with a reconciliation bill that advances key climate provisions as the Senate continues its efforts.



This is a crucial moment to fight the climate crisis with everything we've got, while addressing racial and economic injustices at the same time. Tell your members of Congress to take action now!

Here's what we're working towards:

The Electric Sector: Expanding the 10-year clean energy tax credits will help put us on the

(continues on page 16)

WE'RE STILL FIGHTING FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN CONGRESS

path to 100 percent renewable energy, while making solar more accessible to everyone and creating hundreds of thousands of family-sustaining jobs in a growing clean energy economy.

Clean Energy Manufacturing: With a thriving clean energy sector, the U.S. can lead the world in manufacturing clean energy components like solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. Manufacturing such products here in America will lead to better environmental and labor outcomes and will help insulate us from supply chain disruptions.

The Transportation Sector: Transportation is the biggest climate emitter in the U.S. and a significant source of toxic air pollution. We must invest in fully electrifying cars, trucks, and public transportation, making it easier and more affordable for Americans to get around.

Industrial Sector: Investing in cutting carbon emissions from the industrial sector, including steel, cement, and aluminum plants, will reduce emissions and air pollution in fenceline communities and better position the U.S. to be a leader in clean manufacturing.

Building Decarbonization: We can rapidly enable home electrification by expanding home energy and efficiency tax credits and providing rebates for items like home heat pumps, water heaters, and induction cooktops. This will cut indoor air pollution, reduce energy bills, and make American homes healthier and safer.

Environmental Justice: Long-overdue investments in frontline environmental justice communities will clean up pollution and create healthy, toxic-free communities, healthy ports, and climate-resilient and energy-efficient affordable housing.

[Like what you see? Send a message to your members of Congress today to demand a reconciliation bill that makes progress on these key climate priorities.](#)

But there's even more we're fighting for:

Public Lands: Congress can make progress on implementing President Biden's commitment to protect 30 percent of the nation's land and water by 2030, by taking actions like protecting the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from drilling and development.

Black Lung Disability Trust Fund: Congress has missed an opportunity to extend the Black Lung Excise Tax at its historic rate, leaving coal miners who rely on the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund in the dark. As we strive for a clean energy economy, we must not leave behind mining communities that have paid a high price for our reliance on fossil fuels.

Methane Emissions Reduction Program: Swift action to reduce potent methane emissions is necessary to avoid the worst consequences of the climate crisis. A strong Methane Emissions Reduction Program could improve methane monitoring, fund environmental restoration, and help communities reduce the health effects of methane pollution.

NEPA Implementation Funding: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) ensures local and environmental justice leaders have the information they need to understand a project's impacts on their community and have a process for getting their concerns addressed. Instead of rolling back NEPA standards, Congress must dedicate adequate funding and resources for effective review and community engagement.

Raise Revenue by Eliminating Fossil Fuel Subsidies: At a time when oil companies are making record profits, we must eliminate the billions of subsidies that they receive from the

WE'RE STILL FIGHTING FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN CONGRESS

(continued from page 16)

federal government.

It's rare that we have an opportunity to make progress on all these fronts at once. While we are unlikely to get everything we are fighting for, the more senators hear from their constituents about these priorities, the more likely we are to secure a truly transformative climate bill.

Take action now! Tell your members of Congress it's time to deliver on a reconciliation bill that will protect our communities from the climate crisis, support family-sustaining jobs, and aid our transition to a 100 percent clean economy.

Let's get the job done.

Sincerely,
Hebah Kassem
Acting Director
A Living Economy
Sierra Club

CREATION CARE CORNER By Nancy Urban

When I attended a poetry reading by Lynn Johnson, I was moved by her poem, "Earth Grief". With her permission I now share it with you. Just as we are unable to experience the true joy of Easter without walking through Holy Week, the same can be said for Creation Care. We must acknowledge our grief at the destruction our hands have made before we can move forward with hope for the future.

Earth Grief

*Everyday we crucify Earth.
We gouge her belly till it spurts oil,
hunks of coal and putrid gasses.
We burn her offerings to warm our bodies and carry us
wherever we will.
We shave off her trees to speed our way, to make more
room for us, less for her animals.
Those, we rob of food, and murder in their sleep.
And still we burn,
filling the sky with carbon.
We heat her up, we melt her frozen places.
Her waters rise,
eating away at beaches,
drowning her rich soil, home to the seeds of life.
Everyday her waters rise,
washing up whales pregnant with plastic,
and twisted waste of bags and bottles.*

*And everyday, we drive the nails deeper,
as we start up our cars, and turn up our heat,
while the sun shines and the wind blows,
whispering resurrection.*



Lynn Johnson

SOLAR PANEL REPORT—MAY, 2022



Produced



2.7 MWh

3% higher *

9 May : 128.1 kWh
Maximum production day



Consumed

1.2 MWh

11% lower *

27 May : 89.2 kWh
Maximum consumption day



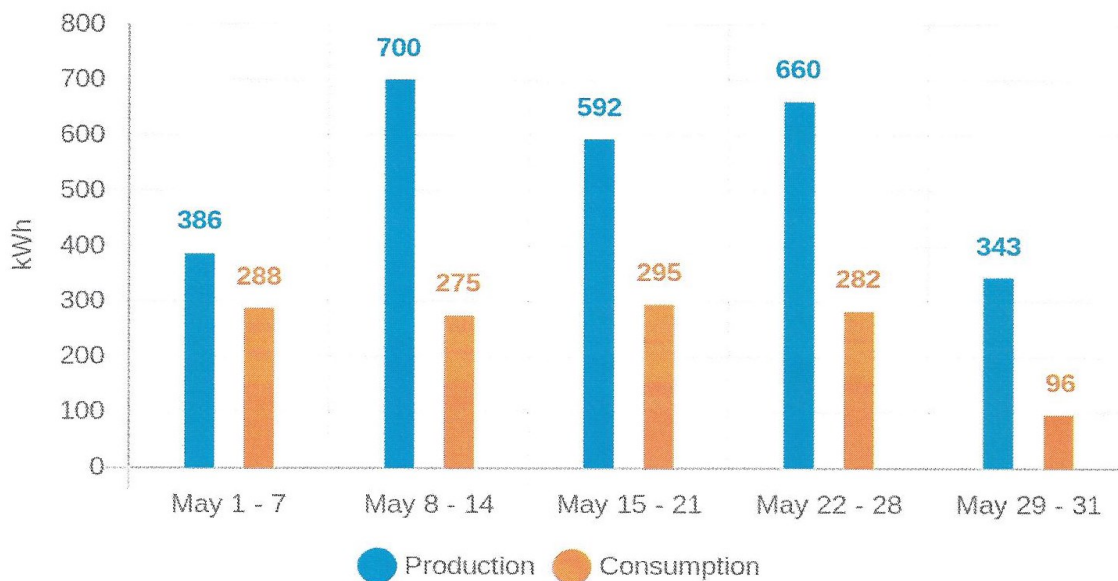
Grid energy

500.1 kWh

Imported

1.9 MWh

Exported



Carbon offset

1.85 ton

Offset equivalent to 48
Trees



Energy
Independence

59%

For this month, 41% of your energy
consumption is supplied by the utility
grid.

Get grid independence with
Enphase

Add Storage

Year-to-date production

10 MWh

* As compared to last month's records

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July and August 2022 Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Anniversary!

**To all those married
in the month of July and August!**

Happy Birthday!

**To all those beautiful people
born in July and August!**



***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.



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