



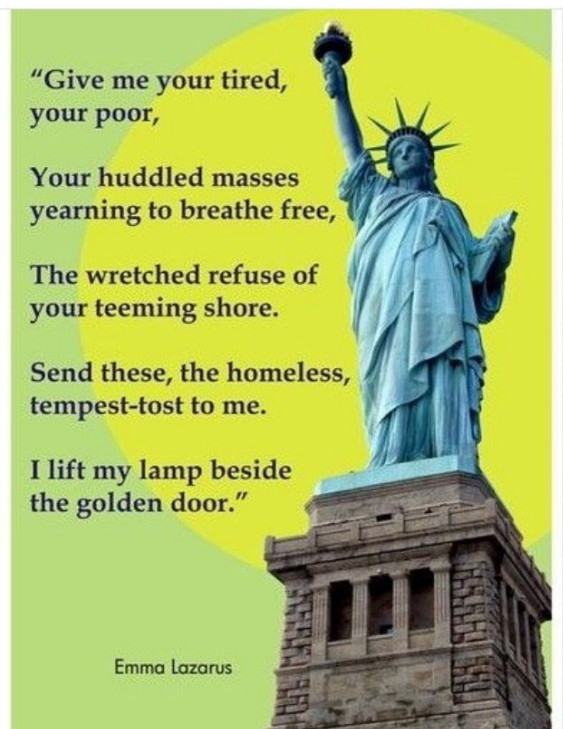
GRACE NOTES

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

JANUARY 2025

WHAT DO WE DO NOW? JANUARY 1, 2025

It is beyond ironic that we have long spoken of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of hope for those suffering, tired and poor, yearning to breathe free. Earlier in my life, we thought of ourselves as the melting pot for the world. We had pride in our open arms, we thought of ourselves as a beacon, with our arms wide open.



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Looking forward now, we look to purging our country of people who have long been a part of that melting pot. Those who came from Europe, to be sure, but, too, people who have come from places throughout the world. They escaped from wars, lack of jobs, and safety, hoping for a chance for a better life. Their families and children were at risk where they were. They were part of the slave trade that brought African slaves to our shores to do the work that no one wanted to do, and that the rich could buy the people to do it.

Peter Marty from Christian Century, reminds us "Sometimes the harm caused by breaking a promise is less than the harm caused by keeping it." On a trip to South Africa some years ago, we followed Nelson Mandela, his path from prison to the presidency; the company I worked for withdrew its business with South Africa in response to apartheid.

As did businesses throughout the world.

Remarkably here we are in 2025, with the "acting" new president - the richest man in the world, Elon Musk, who managed to grow his wealth even as he gave huge sums of money to the misogynist, racist, traitor, and murderer, to be his running mate. This "president" whose first presidency was a disaster would fail at dealing with a pandemic, continued his illicit relationships with women, and now has teamed up with a variety of people who have little skill or experience to take on the reins of the most powerful country in the world, at a time of national crisis, world wars, and near constant violence.

"Promises, as Peter Marty continues, are lovely when they're made with honesty and kept with reliability they form the substructure of healthy relationships. Cross my heart and hope to die, we used to say as kids, having conveyed the zeal of our trustworthiness.

Billionaires have flocked to this new world, feeling no accountability or concern as they are fine,

they have no cares but how to continue to grow their wealth and live as they want with zero concern about those who are poor, even as immigrants and refugees continue to do the hardest work for the lowest wages.

In Marty's words, "A father breaks the news to his children that despite an earlier promise of an ice cream run, he has a migraine and must head to bed. A mother who's fed up with Donald Trump's crude behavior and demeaning rhetoric can't imagine casting a vote for this GOP standard bearer, but not to do so feels to her like a betrayal of her internal promise to be a lifelong Republican."

Between Trump and his minions girls and women have been raped, abused, swearing not to tell anyone. She'll incur unspeakable shame and anguish if he finds out that she talked.

The billionaire class is separated from the rest. They pay less taxes (as a percentage) and store wealth overseas, and only God knows where else. It reminds us how Trump reduced taxes to the rich as a way to get the support of the wealthy.

Back to Peter, once again: "If the harm caused by breaking a promise is less than the harm caused by breaking it, then good moral sense should have us re-examining our obligation to that promise."

When we as people of faith hold on to our promises, like caring for our parents or spouses as they grow old, we do that as a lifetime commitment. How many family members do we know who are holding on to their life to fulfill their promises. They cannot conceive of letting go of those expansive and life-affirming, moral truths.

Quoting from Peter Marty's comments, under the headline, **Made to be Broken**, "Many people who make such fervent, non-negotiable promises like this are worried about disappointing themselves as much as their infirm spouse or parent. Their pledge of loyalty to meet their own standard for providing unceasing care is one they cannot imagine cancelling. To them, that would feel like betrayal. So using promise language they try to create for themselves what theologian Lewis Smedes once called "an island of certainty in a heaving ocean of uncertainty... a small sanctuary of trust within a jungle of unpredictability."

"To be a person of constancy and fidelity doesn't require that we be all things or do all things. It only demands that our love resemble the ineffable presence that speaks from a burning bush in Exodus 3: *I am the one who will be there with you.*"



IT'S GETTING WORSE, NOT BETTER – PASTOR'S MESSAGE

War is breaking out all over the world. Lebanon, Gaza, Palestine, Syria, Haiti, South Korea, Unrest in Germany, France, Britain, Parts of Africa, Myanmar, Central America, Russia, etc. And Trump now savors the notion of acquiring, Greenland, Canada and Panama.

The poor are getting poorer, food is at a premium, clothing is needed, and all the things we do at Grace are needed more than ever. With the new “regime” coming to power, we will be challenged to do and give more.

So many of us have been tempted by despair and lack of hope.

We will seek ways to help those who are strangers and at risk; reach out to people from all over the world who come to us from HIU, a newly challenged and named Fresh Start WORKS, and GHIAA stepping up once again with challenges far greater than the past.

But, in all this, we need to gather in peace and solidarity. We must come together to help each other. Not give up but get up. We stand for what matters; we must discover new and better ways to help each other. We must let go of our differences and embrace ways to grow and give of our selves.

Thanks for your support, of me, of us, of our ministries. Let's thank our partners, invite more people and discover new ways to bring us together and find love at a time of hate, truth at a time of lies, and hope at a time of fear.

We need to find the absence of hate, the end of stupidity, and an end to extremism. Inside this issue you'll find some more tough stuff, some humor and creativity. As we move into a new year, let's embrace the future... God remains with us... we are not alone, and we must live 2025 with courage and gratitude for what we have, and what we bring and the God, who will lead us to a new Epiphany. A new day. Our savior is born, thanks be to God. Amen.



CHURCH NEWS



FRIDAY GATHERING

- **Entertainment** - if you would be interested in/willing to entertain at a Friday Gathering Dinner, please let Judy Butterworth-Kremer know at judyvbk@aol.com.



JANET'S CLOSET -

- Volunteers (escorts) are still needed for Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- We need gently used seasonal clothing, blankets and shoes.
- Clothing racks are needed, too.

Special Dates of Note

January 1st - New Year's Day

January 6th - Epiphany

January 9th - Jimmy Carter's National Funeral at 10 a.m.

January 20th - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observed

February 9th - Congregational Annual Meeting after Service

SPECIAL EVENTS

Israel Alvarez - New Member
12/1/2024



HIU Student Presentations - 12/8/2024
Justine Auma and Derejé Mergia



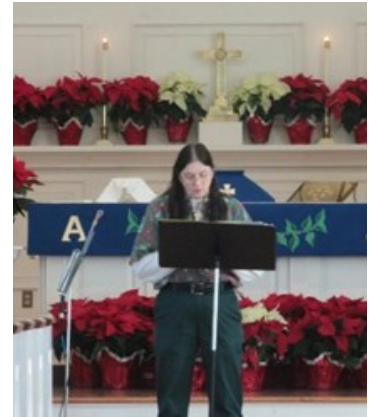
Baptisms - Dom, Adrian and Erik - 12/22/2024



SPECIAL EVENTS CONTINUED

(continued from page 4)

BAPTISMS CONTINUED



FRIDAY GATHERING - 12/13/2024 - DINNER WITH HARTFORD HOSPITAL AND MAGIC SOUL

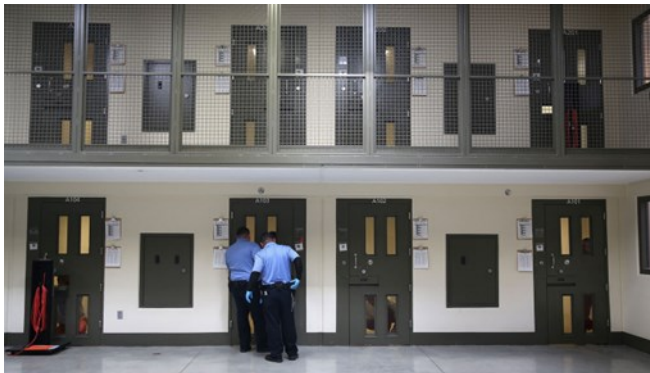


CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - 12/24/2024



WHAT TRUMP'S VICTORY MEANS FOR THE PRIVATE PRISON INDUSTRY

The two largest companies that manage detention centers and correctional facilities are poised to profit from aggressive immigration policies.



The stock prices of the country's two largest publicly traded companies that own and manage prisons and immigrant detention centers soared immediately following Donald Trump's election as president. Shares in GEO Group and CoreCivic rose again the day after the president-elect announced Tom Homan, who managed immigration enforcement during Trump's first administration, as his "border czar." Speaking at the Republican National Convention this summer, Homan said, "I got

a message to the millions of illegal aliens that Joe Biden's released in our country. You better start packing now."

This is not the first time prison company stocks skyrocketed at the news that Trump would take the Oval Office. When he was elected in 2016, the private prison industry — which analysts had referred to as beleaguered — immediately rebounded. Two weeks later, CNBC reported that an analyst had written in a research note, "The Trump victory was a game changer for these stocks."

That this is a repeat phenomenon should come as no surprise. Echoing the rhetoric from his first campaign, Trump spent much of his time on the campaign trail over the past few years promising to undertake "the largest deportation operation in the history of our country." Clearly, the incoming administration's focus on immigration enforcement provided the confidence investors needed to bet on these stocks, which profit from government contracts for prisons and detention centers.

Two key players in the industry are especially well positioned to thrive under a second Trump term. GEO Group noted in its recent annual report that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement contracts accounts for 43 percent of its revenues. CoreCivic reports that 30 percent of its revenue came from ICE contracts in its most recent annual report. These companies seem well aware that greater gains lie ahead. As GEO Group Executive Chairman George Zoley said on an earnings call on November 7, "The GEO Group was built for this unique moment in our . . . country's history and the opportunities that it will bring."

One less obvious but still important benefit is that GEO Group's and CoreCivic's transportation subsidiaries are also likely to secure more contracts with the federal government if large-scale deportation efforts move forward. Generally speaking, deportation isn't an immediate process — many people navigating the vast U.S. immigration infrastructure will need to be transported between facilities and to court hearings. GEO Group's CEO acknowledged the potential of their transport services on the earnings call, noting, "We believe we have the capabilities to expand the provision of these services to assist ICE in moving several hundreds of thousands of additional individuals if needed."

Other aspects of the Trump administration's proposed law enforcement agenda could similarly drive profits for private prison companies. When it comes to "law and order," Trump's campaign platform declares that his administration will "increase penalties for assaults on law enforcement, put violent offenders and career criminals behind bars, and surge federal prosecutors and the National Guard into high-crime communities." Currently, the Department

WHAT TRUMP'S VICTORY MEANS FOR THE PRIVATE PRISON INDUSTRY

of Justice can't legally contract directly with for-profit firms to house people awaiting trial or convicted of crimes. But that is most probably about to change.

Recent presidents have followed a pattern of undoing their predecessors' policies on the DOJ's for-profit prison contracts. In August 2016, under President Barack Obama, then—Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates sent a memo to the Bureau of Prisons directing it to decline to renew contracts with for-profit firms. Six months later, then-President Trump's attorney general rescinded the Obama administration's memo and instructed the Bureau of Prisons to resume contracting with for-profit firms. Then in January 2021, within President Biden's first days in the White House, he issued an executive order directing the attorney general not to renew DOJ contracts with privately operated criminal detention facilities. Biden's order took the Obama-era policy a step further by applying it to contracts with not just the Bureau of Prisons but also the U.S. Marshals Service, both of which are within the Justice Department.

We should expect whiplash again, as it is almost certain that President-elect Trump will tear up the existing executive order that resulted in the successful termination of all for-profit contracts at the Bureau of Prisons and many at the Marshals Service.

Beyond merely housing and transporting people who are undocumented, private prison corporations are also poised to profit from supervising undocumented people living in the community. For example, GEO Group's subsidiary BI Incorporated currently has a contract with ICE for the case management and supervision services that are part of the federal government's Intensive Supervision and Appearance Program. This often involves phone reporting, GPS monitoring, and surveillance through SmartLINK (which uses facial recognition and other technologies).

On Geo Group's earnings call, the chief operating officer said, "We expect the incoming Trump administration to take a much more expansive approach to monitoring the several millions of individuals who are currently on the non-detained immigrant docket." On the same call, the company's executive chairman explained that when it comes to the Intensive Supervision and Appearance Program, they can "scale up from the present 182,500 participants to several hundreds of thousands or even millions of participants."

It appears that CoreCivic doesn't have a contract for this service at the moment, but that could change in the next four years as GEO's current contract is set to expire in May 2025. The latest private prison industry stock boom makes clear the sobering reality I discussed in my book, *Inside Private Prisons*: The mass detention of undocumented individuals is inextricably intertwined with the growth of companies that profit from prisons and detention. To be clear, these corporations are not directly responsible for the country's immigration policies. From a business perspective, the private prison industry's services meet a desperate governmental need to find bed space for the increasing number of people the government seeks to detain. The federal government has increasingly outsourced this function to corporations, with **more than 90 percent** of individuals in immigrant detention housed in facilities owned or managed by for-profit entities as of 2023.

But as many advocates and policymakers have noted over the past few decades, the business model for these for-profit prison firms allows for wild upswings in detention by offering the government vast capacity. So, as we stand on the precipice of an explosion of mass detention, it is critical to acknowledge that if these corporations didn't exist, it would be difficult for the federal government to execute its plans.

Lauren-Brooke Eisen



This article first appeared at [Just Security](#).

President-elect Donald Trump has promised to carry out the largest deportation operation in American history. While he has provided few specifics about how his administration would accomplish this, Trump has indicated that he will declare a national emergency and that he will invoke both the **Insurrection Act** and the **Alien Enemies Act**. A common theme in almost all of his statements is his intent to deploy the military.

The prospect of heavy military involvement in immigration enforcement has generated alarm in many quarters. But the authorities that Trump might summon—and the hurdles he might face in using them—are not widely understood. This article seeks to identify and elucidate them. Starting with the baseline constraint on military participation in law enforcement, the Posse Comitatus Act, the discussion below sets forth the relevant statutory authorities in escalating order of potency and identifies potential constraints on their use.

This article is intended as both a primer and a reference (i.e., readers can skip to the particular authorities about which they may have questions). The authorities covered may be summarized as follows:

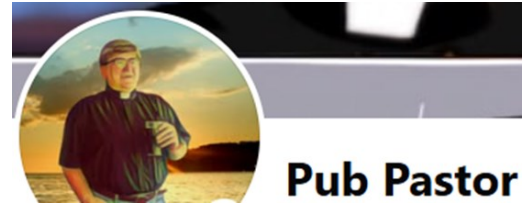
- Chapter 15 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code has several provisions allowing federal armed forces (including active-duty forces and federalized National Guard forces) to *assist* with law enforcement, including through the provision of military facilities and equipment, without directly participating in core law enforcement activities.
- A declaration of national emergency under the National Emergencies Act could provide additional resources for military assistance to law enforcement but would not permit federal armed forces to participate in core law enforcement activities.
- 32 U.S.C. 502(f)(2)(A) allows the president to request (but not require) that governors deploy their states' National Guard forces to perform certain federal missions, free from the constraints of the Posse Comitatus Act—i.e., Guard forces could participate in core law enforcement activities.
- The Insurrection Act, generally regarded as the primary statutory exception to the Posse Comitatus Act, allows the president to federalize National Guard forces and to deploy them and active-duty armed forces anywhere in the country.
- The Alien Enemies Act does not itself authorize military deployment, but when combined with the Insurrection Act or other authorities, it could permit the militarized deportation of immigrants lawfully in this country under specified conditions.

More on all of these authorities can be found on the Brennan Center's "[Domestic Deployment of the Military](#)" and "[Outdated and Dangerous](#)" webpages.



Elizabeth Goitein

GOD, I DON'T KNOW. AMEN



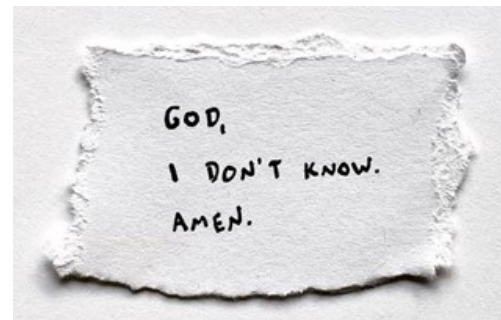
Intro

Just a UMC Pastor who brings a unique blend of wisdom, wit, and warmth to the intersection of faith and everyday life. And believes "church" can't be contained by walls or stained glass!

Striving for inclusion & justice, in the world (AKA my parish)

"I confess, Dear God,
that I cannot for the life of me
figure out how to pray for him.
He mocks your beloveds,
and seems to think that he is you.
I cannot for the life of me
figure out how to pray for him
whose god is power,
whose currency is cruelty.
I know, I know,
he is also your child,
made in your image.
I know, I know,
I have promised
to be faithful in prayer.
I know, I do know
what you want me to do.
I just don't know how.
And I really, really don't want to . . .
because his name tastes so sour on my lips.
Dear God, the best I can do right now
is to name this aversion.
The best I can do is to want to pray better.
Please hear this stumbling confession of mine.
Please make something of my willingness to try.
Please help me speak his name to you
until I can do it without flinching.
Because although I can't for the life of me
figure out how to pray for him,
praying for him IS for the life of me
- and for the life of the world -
as much as it is for him.
Amen."

+ Rt Rev Susan Goff
retired Bishop Suffragan
of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia



8 WINS IN 8 COUNTRIES!

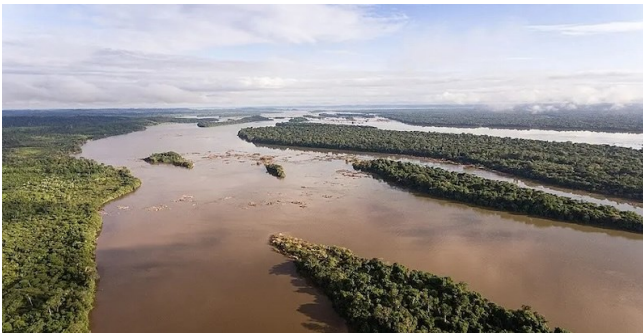


8 wins in 8 countries in just a few months! That's 2024 by the numbers, as far as we're concerned. Yes it was a bloody hard year, with a lot of setbacks, but it's also been kind of incredible!

From cutting almost a billion dollars (!) from investment in the despicably dirty Southeast Asian coal market to protecting workers at over 30 factories in Pakistan to winning the largest nature shareholder resolution vote in the world – it's been a banner few months.

Which just proves that **when history slows its arc towards progress, communities like ours fight harder, smarter** and faster to win essential protections for the most vulnerable. Read on to find out more!

Brazil: Major victory for the communities of the Amazon's Volta Grande do Xingu



The communities of the Volta Grande do Xingu have been fighting for over a decade to prevent Canadian mining giant Belo Sun from putting an open-pit gold mine in the heart of their territory, jeopardizing the lives and futures of local farmers. **And just days ago, they got a huge win: a federal judge overturned the mining company's government approval** – which has been granted by Bolsonaro's far-right administration.

The Volta Grande do Xingu Alliance has been fighting Belo Sun's project for years, and we know it's not over. The company will do everything in its power to overturn the decision, including lobbying relevant government officials in Brazil.

We'll be there to help. Ekō members have already chipped in to help fund the community's legal fights against Belo Sun, **and launched a member-powered campaign** demanding the Royal Bank of Canada divest from Belo Sun's Amazon projects. When the bank saw all the problems with the project, they dropped it!

With YOUR support, we'll help keep up the fight and protect the Xingu River, the Amazonian fauna and flora, and the region's people from Belo Sun's greedy, destructive mine.

Indonesia: cutting off money for coal

Indonesian coal giant Adaro trumpets its green credentials, but in reality they've been working hard to destroy Kalimantan's rainforests for coal. We've worked for over a year to cut off their financing **and finally, we have a breakthrough:** in October, Adaro was forced to ditch the idea of reissuing a massive \$750 million bond, and now plans to sell-off its interest in projects like this one!



There's always more to do, but this win is worth celebrating, and wouldn't have happened without our fantastic community. We brought the story of Adaro's biodiversity, climate, and human rights scandals to the financial capitals of the world with an expert report, engaged journalists to tell the story, and petitioned banks to stay clear of the company's bonds.

India: Coal giant's fake green bonds exposed for what they are

Bond financing is a complicated, murky world that quietly does a lot of damage to our planet. But wins like Adaro show we're up to the challenge of exposing this toxic funding for fossil fuels! We also played a critical role in alerting investors to the risk of fake green bonds from India's mega-conglomerate Adani. Ekō members and our amazing coalition partners relentlessly exposed Adani's greenwashing – **and in the end the company had to cancel plans for a \$1.2 billion bond sale in the 11th hour!**

Pakistan: Levi's finally signs the workers safety Accord



Over ten years ago, more than 1000 garment workers in Bangladesh were killed in the Rana Plaza disaster. Over 190 companies, from H&M to Zara, scrambled to sign a safety accord to stop it from ever happening again.

One company that refused to sign? Levi's.

Well, after nearly 70,000 Ekō members joined unions in Pakistan and Bangladesh by signing a petition calling on Levi's and other laggards to

join the safety accord, **it finally happened. In October, Levi's signed on in Pakistan.** While the company is still yet to sign on in Bangladesh, this progress wouldn't have happened without our collective efforts!

China: Volkswagen pulls out of forced labour region

Over a million Uyghurs are being tortured, brainwashed and forced to work by the Government of China, and Germany's giant carmaker has been profiting from it, buying car parts from Chinese suppliers that very likely use Uyghur forced labour.

More than 60,000 of us petitioned Volkswagen to pull out of the region. We spread the word on social media, and even sent emails directly to VW's top brass! **Last week it was reported that Volkswagen had sold its stake in the factory.** This is a big deal and shows we can have an impact on almost any issue!

Australia: We rallied shareholders to save the skate

When T-Rex was roaming the Earth, the Maugean Skate was swimming in our seas. But this living dinosaur, unique to Australia, is in critical danger, as its last remaining habitat is being destroyed by the salmon industry!

After more than 60,000 Ekō members joined a petition demanding that major supermarkets stop stocking salmon from these farms, we turned up the heat by supporting the world's first shareholder resolutions aimed at preventing an extinction event.

Ekō members flooded their super and pension funds with emails calling on them to vote for these resolutions. Nearly 40% of Coles shareholders defied the Board's recommendations and voted in favour – **making it the largest nature resolution in the world this year!** The supermarkets have reached out to us to discuss next steps, and we'll be keeping up the pressure to save this iconic prehistoric creature.

Under water and around the world: TUI bans transporting shark fins

Did you know there are over 500 different shark species, varying in size and character, from the tiny dwarf lantern shark to the massive, gentle whale shark? The extinction of these species would be catastrophic for the balance of oceanic biodiversity – yet shark fins are still hunted, sold and shipped around the world. 100 million sharks are killed every year for the trade!

Experts have been lobbying airlines for years to boycott the shark fin trade, but sometimes only public pressure makes the companies move. A great example of that: **just days after we launched our campaign calling on airlines to protect sharks, TUI Group, a massive German tourism company, issued a new policy** on the Prohibition on Transport of Shark Fins, Fur, and Hunting Trophies.



...And those are only a few examples of our impact together in the last few weeks and months! This community and our vision of a better world gives us the energy to keep campaigning, even when we're feeling low.

With deep appreciation,
Deborah, Eoin, Vanessa, Ildem, Vicky, Apekshita and all the Ekō team

P.S. Wait, there's more good news – the global Boycott Puma campaign confirms that **Puma will end its sponsorship contract with the Israel Football Association (IFA)** on December 31, 2024. More than 140,000 of us petitioned the German sportswear brand to join Ben & Jerry's and become a champion of Palestinian rights. We tweeted and posted online, and Ekō campaigners even spoke with Puma's CEO to deliver our message. Corporations will hardly ever admit it – but **public pressure works!**

JIM'S MORNING MEDITATIONS

"What the world needs now is love, sweet love; It's the only thing that there's just too little of; What the world needs now is love, sweet love; No, not just for some but for everyone." Refrain lyrics of ***What the World Needs Now Is Love*** (1965) by Hal David; music composed by Burt Bacharach. First recorded and made popular by Jackie DeShannon



Merry Christmas; Chag Chanukkah Sameach (Happy Festival of Lights); and may we all have a blessed 2025! On these joyous religious holidays, we celebrate our beliefs in a higher power (however you may hold that power in your heart) and our family community. That higher power and family bond is often distilled down to LOVE. Love of yourself, love of your friends and family and yes, love of your enemies, of all mankind. In these turbulent and challenging times, as we take this time for reflection and celebration, may we hold as the universal truth that what the world needs right now is love, sweet love; it's the only thing that we all need and no, not just for some, but for everyone. Universal love is what unites us, it is what each and every human needs to be fulfilled, especially in these dark days of winter. May the light of Christ's birth, or the lights of the menorah candles bring you a blessed Holiday. I will be back with you after New Years Day. Thank you for being part of our community.

Thanks for reading Jim's Morning Meditations! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work. <https://jimcartersmeditations.substack.com/>

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



Friends,

The easiest thing we can do is to give up. I know for many of you, what we face now seems insurmountable. So I want to share with you something GOOD that happened this week, before I get to the Bad and the Ugly.

THE GOOD

In 1968, Shirley Chisholm became the first Black Woman elected to the United States Congress, representing Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn, New York. I'm sure she felt like giving up many times, too. But in 1972, she did just the opposite — she ran for President of the United States of America, the first Black Woman Presidential candidate for a major political party in this nation's deeply racist and sexist history.

I turned 18 in 1972. This was the first year 18-year-olds were allowed to vote. About a month after my 18th birthday, I voted in the Michigan Democratic Presidential Primary, and I cast my first-ever vote for Shirley Chisholm. She collected 3% of the vote in that primary — and I was one of them. Meanwhile, the winner was the Governor of Alabama, George Wallace. He was a hard-core racist and segregationist. He personally stood and blocked the entrance of the University of Alabama, prohibiting its first Black students from entering. The President, John F. Kennedy, had to call in the Alabama National Guard to Tuscaloosa. This is the same George Wallace who received 51% of the vote in the 1972 Michigan Democratic Presidential Primary. George McGovern got 27% of the vote and Hubert Humphrey got 16%. I voted for Shirley Chisholm not as a protest vote against these white men, but because in my opinion, she was the best candidate for the job.

George Wallace won, in part, because the day before the voting, a man with a gun shot him in an assassination attempt. Wallace was left paralyzed. Shirley Chisholm, his opponent, went to visit him in the hospital. When one of her young campaign aides objected — “*Why would you go visit a Racist and a Segregationist?*” — Chisholm's answer was simple: You never know what effect you might have...

Chisholm's bedside visit to George Wallace helped to change Wallace's point of view. He would eventually spend the rest of his days disavowing his past views — admitting that he was wrong and that it was time for change. As I remember this, it was Shirley Chisholm who created this transformation in his soul.

This past Saturday, November 30th, would have been Shirley Chisholm's 100th Birthday. New York City has made this “Shirley Chisholm Day.” And of course the next day, December 1st, is Rosa Parks Day — the day Rosa Parks decided to *not* do the “easiest thing” and instead, refused to move out of a seat at the front of the bus.

On Wednesday, December 4th, the United States Congress voted unanimously to honor Shirley Chisholm with the Congressional Gold Medal — the oldest and highest award in America, right there with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. And one of the Congresspeople who spoke on the floor of the House Wednesday, honoring Shirley Chisholm's decades of service, was that very same Chisholm campaign aide who questioned her visit to Wallace in 1972 — Representative Barbara Lee.



Rep. Barbara Lee

Like Ms. Chisholm, Congresswoman Barbara Lee is also one of my personal heroes, and I am lucky to call her a friend. Just *three days* after 9/11, Barbara Lee was THE ONLY PERSON IN CONGRESS to vote against the blank check authorization of war that the Bush administration used to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. Standing alone, she warned the country that we should be “careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target.” Now, some 23 years later, the Global War on Terror has become one of our “endless wars,” the beast that keeps feeding the machine of the military-industrial complex. To date, this “war” has cost you and I, the American taxpayers, **\$8 TRILLION**. She was right. Of course.

Representative Lee is retiring from Congress on January 3rd, 2025 after 26 years. She has been our defender, our champion, a *true* American Patriot. She never did the “easy thing” — she never, ever gave up. She will be missed in Congress, but I have a feeling we have not heard the last from her.

THE BAD

Unfortunately, all is not well in our Constitutional republic.

In just the last 72 hours, our nation’s “Well Regulated Militia” has violently murdered 63 Americans. Another 114 people were injured by gunfire.

The victims of this senseless — yet Constitutionally-protected! — violence include two kindergarteners at a Seventh Day Adventist school in California and the killing of the CEO of United Healthcare, the nation’s largest health insurance corporation. He was gunned down on the streets of midtown Manhattan.

Each year nearly 50,000 Americans are killed by gun violence. And each year over 100,000 Americans die from infections they pick up when they visit or check into our nation’s health care facilities. How is this possible in the 21st century in the wealthiest nation on Earth? A nation where the wealthy owners of the for-profit hospitals and nursing homes despise regulations and inspections — making going to get medical help in America one of the most dangerous things you could do.

And finally there’s this: According to the medical journal *Lancet*, 13% of Americans have a family member or friend who have died in the last 5 years because they simply couldn’t afford medical treatment.

None of this should be happening in a place called the United States of America. And while the gun deaths will make headlines if it’s a mass shooting at a school or a church, or if it’s the assassination of a multi-millionaire CEO in New York, the 186 who will die today due to a broken healthcare system, one that is run primarily by insurance men, we will not hear one word about that tonight, their names shall never be mentioned.

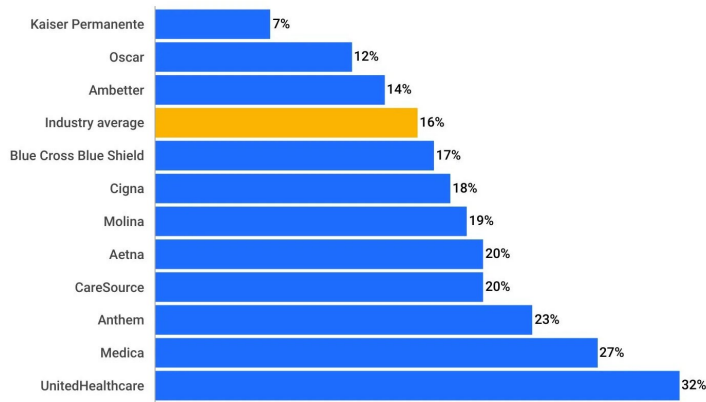
The motives for the school shooting Wednesday and the killing of the CEO, are currently under investigation and are not yet known. All we know now is that on the bullet casings used in the killing of the CEO included the inscriptions, “*Deny*” or “*Defend*” or “*Depose*” — which could mean everything, or nothing. They could have just as easily said, “*From my cold dead hands*” or “*Make America Great Again*” or “*Half-Off Tuesdays at Applebees!*”

After all, this is America. And weirdly enough, the death of the healthcare CEO has got people talking about America’s health insurance industry and how it makes money off of denying people

health care and letting them die. It's one of our most awful and ugly truths — truths that we don't really want the rest of the world to see. Because no other industrialized country on Earth so willingly and heartlessly lets a few large corporations literally decide who shall live and who shall die — a

decision that is based solely on profit motive.

Claim denial rates by insurance company



Based on available in-network claim data for plans sold on the marketplace.

Here's the current denial rates of the top healthcare companies — from the best, Kaiser, to the worst, United Healthcare:

Kaiser was the worst health insurance company in the 1970s, the evil geniuses that gave us the sick system we suffer under today. And yet they, Kaiser Permanente, are now the best — they say “Yes!” to submitted claims and provide coverage more often than their competitors. And who denies care to the most Americans? United Healthcare! They turn down over 5

times as many patients in need of care than do the folks at Kaiser. And THAT speaks volumes about just how horrible our healthcare situation is here in this country when I find myself giving props to Kaiser.

THE UGLY

Wait, wasn't that The Ugly? Nope, it sure wasn't.

While Barbara Lee, Maxine Waters and others were honoring Shirley Chisholm in Congress on Wednesday, Republican Congressmen were busy introducing a bill in support of teaching Civics in our high schools. Well, not *actual* Civics. Just a government mandated curriculum that would require all schools to teach the evils of Communism: H.R.5349 — the “Crucial Communism Teaching Act.”

But when Democratic Rep. Jim McGovern rose to ask why the bill makes no mention of teaching the dangers of Fascism, the Republicans across the aisle all-but-accused Rep. McGovern of being a communist and refused to answer the simple question: Why are we teaching kids Communism is bad but aren't teaching them about the historic failures and mass, mass death caused by Fascism? Why is one bad but the other... not really an issue?

And as Rep. McGovern pointed out on the House floor, when he offered an amendment to the Bill to add the word “Fascism” — in other words, to include Fascism in the forms of government we were going to teach American schoolchildren are “bad” — *every single one of the Republicans voted AGAINST INCLUDING FASCISM AS “BAD.”*

If you tuned into C-SPAN to witness this on Wednesday, you may have thought you had turned on Comedy Central, only to realize that not only wasn't this funny, it was a terrifying display of the soon-to-be inaugurated administration that is poised to walk us back out through our front door



THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

(continued from page 15)

and into a sea of stupidity. Right now, it's nowhere near January 20th. Biden is still president. Leonard Peltier would like you to know that.

Giving up is easy folks. Resistance will be hard.

Let's be like Rosa and Shirley and Barbara.

Photograph: Don Hogan Charles/Getty Images



SIHAM'S STORY WILL INSPIRE YOU ♥

Survival is a daily struggle for so many families across the globe.



Through war, displacement, natural disasters, and poverty, we at Oxfam witness families doing whatever it takes to stick together, survive, and build a brighter future.

This message tells the story of one family in Lebanon, where the conflict between Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah has affected hundreds of thousands of civilians. Please take a moment to see their story and remind yourself why we are working so hard to support millions of families across the globe.



Siham, a 33-year-old mother of two, was forced to flee with her family after an Israeli airstrike destroyed her home in South Lebanon in September. Credit: Tarek Chahine, SHiFT - Social Innovation Hub

Siham, her husband, and their two daughters are from South Lebanon, which has become a flashpoint in the ongoing conflict across the Middle East.

In September, an Israeli airstrike hit Siham's home, forcing her family to flee. As a result of the attack, Siham sustained injuries to her hand, neck, and eye.

"I put my hands over my children's eyes in an effort to protect them," Siham said of the attack that destroyed her home. "I carried my eldest daughter, who is seven years old, and my younger daughter was in my arms while I was barefoot inside the house. I felt like I was walking on something hot; I don't know if it was glass or missile fragments."

Her family ended up in a collective shelter for displaced people, where Siham began to receive medical treatment. She worried about permanently losing her sight as she and her family coped with the trauma they experienced.

After the airstrike, her youngest daughter did not speak for five hours due to the shock. Siham is doing her best to protect her daughters by providing them with love and attention. However, her youngest daughter is now filled with anger, has trouble sleeping, and is frightened by loud noises that remind her of the bombings.



“It’s nothing less than a miracle that I can still hold my children,” Siham said. “Anyone who sees how my house was destroyed, leveled to the ground, would say we could never have made it out alive.”

Siham and her youngest daughter share a peaceful moment after her eye surgery at a shelter in Tripoli. Credit: Tarek Chahine, SHiFT - Social Innovation Hub

In October, Siham underwent eye surgery at a shelter in Tripoli to heal her injury, and she is now focused on supporting her youngest daughter. “I bought her some small toys, like puzzles, and began giving her the care and love she needs,” Siham said. “She is better now, but she still gets scared when she hears any sudden sounds.”

Despite the challenges, Siham feels a little safer now—and she holds onto the hope of better, safer days ahead.

“I hope that when my daughters grow up and become young women we will look back on these moments and laugh,” Siham said. “I hope we will reminisce and laugh it out—I don’t want us to remember this with sorrow and pain. **Sometimes, a memory is painful, but once we move past it, we laugh because we were able to overcome it.**”

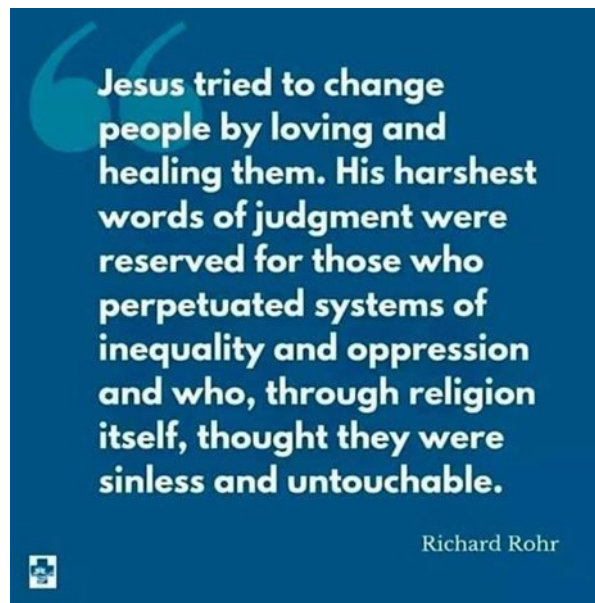
Siham and her youngest daughter share a peaceful moment after her eye surgery at a shelter in Tripoli. Credit: Tarek Chahine, SHiFT - Social Innovation Hub



The extraordinary resilience of families like Siham’s is truly inspiring—and it motivates all of us at Oxfam to continue our lifesaving response despite extreme hardships and ongoing dangers.

We hope you find hope and inspiration in Siham’s story as well, as a reminder of the life-changing impact we are making together for families facing the most urgent challenges of our time—from Lebanon to Nigeria to South Sudan.

Together, we will do even more good for families like Siham’s in the year ahead.
Sincerely, Oxfam America



POPE' S MESSAGE



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2024

"Dear brothers and sisters, one never knows everything about God, never! Perhaps we have in mind a powerful God who does what He wants, instead of the God of humble meekness, the God of mercy and love, who always intervenes respecting our freedom and our choices. Perhaps we even find ourselves saying to Him: "Are you really you, so humble, the God who is coming to save us?". And something similar can happen to us with our brothers and sisters too: we have our ideas, our prejudices and we attach rigid labels to others, especially those we feel are different to us. Advent, then is a time for overturning our perspectives, for letting ourselves be surprised by God's mercy."

Pope Francis

I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO SAVING MY ISLANDS AND THE FUTURE OF MY PEOPLE



My name is Taufu'i 'Ae Valu Naufahu and I'm part of **350 Tonga**. For over a decade, I have dedicated my life to fighting the climate crisis to save my islands and the future of my people. I was born and raised on an island where I experienced and enjoyed the beautiful creations of nature: the ocean and its resources, the land of my grandparents, the changing of weather from one season to another. **However, as time went by, things started to change. The fruits during summer time, the species in the ocean that we caught for meals... it all just disappeared.**



Throughout the years, with the help of 350, I have been organizing activist networks, actions and political advocacy at local and global stages. This year we started the **"Our Pawa" campaign to seek energy independence for our islands, and climate justice for all.**



Our Pawa gathering in Australia, May 2024. Photo credit:

Eremasi Rova

The word "pawa" comes from the Tok Pisin language in Papua New Guinea, and means power. **"Our Pawa" refers to the collective strength of Pacific peoples in the face of the climate crisis.** It's a reminder of how powerful we are in our capabilities to fight for what we see as right and just for our countries and our islands. With

the campaign, we're putting pressure on leaders – in the Pacific and beyond – to:

- Power up safe and equitable renewable energy, engaging our communities at all levels of decision making.
- Ensure job security for workers, investing in capacity-building and greater cross-regional collaboration – as well as training opportunities in renewable energy technologies that can support migration for Pacific islanders.
- Finance a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific, with no more money or subsidies to fossil fuels and other carbon-emitting extractive industries, and real investments in renewable energy.
- Commit to bold climate goals in 2025, especially raising ambition on Australia's NDCs.

During the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in August, we made great progress. The meeting was held in my home country, Tonga, and I helped organize events to engage civil society and the youth movement. We provided training, led actions and made our voices heard inside the closed-doors meetings.



Our movements' actions at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Tonga, August 2024. Photo credit: Eremasi Rova

Our Pawa is more than a campaign for me – it's a life choice, and our only path forward. I have a daughter who's turning 8 years old this year. I want to secure a safe and protected future for her, my nieces and nephews. I look for

solutions to stop the climate crisis, because this may be the only way that they would be able to uphold and experience the things I did when I was young. This is what Our Pawa is about.

We know that for the Pacific to survive the intensifying climate crisis, we need to end the age of fossil fuels. And we know that for the Pacific to thrive in the face of this crisis, we need access to safe, affordable and renewable energy.

Our campaign is growing very quickly, a clear indication that what we are calling for resonates within the Pacific Islands and Diaspora communities. Be part of it, help us keep building our power!

In solidarity,

Taufu'i 'Ae Valu Naufahu
350 Tonga

JIMMY CARTER, AMERICA'S BEST EX-PRESIDENT

**The
Christian
Century** Thoughtful,
Independent,
Progressive

After his 1980 defeat, Carter devoted himself to the causes of a progressive evangelicalism that has all but disappeared from public view.

by Randall Balmer
December 30, 2024

*Former president Jimmy Carter, 1924–2024 (US Navy
photo / Timothy A. Hazel)*



Jimmy Carter, the 39th president of the United States and the oldest surviving president in American history, died December 29. By any reckoning, he led a remarkable life.

Anyone who visits Plains, in southwest Georgia, and especially the Carter farmstead three miles down the road in Archery, cannot fail to be impressed by the simplicity of Carter's background. Carter himself never complained about the circumstances of his childhood, and in fact he often made the point that his family was more prosperous than their neighbors. But the Carter farmhouse lacked indoor plumbing during Jimmy Carter's childhood, and it wasn't until he was 14 years old that Franklin Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Agency brought the wonders of electricity to Archery.

Carter walked three miles to school and back, often barefoot. He was acutely conscious of his status as a "country boy," but he studied hard and read diligently. His favorite teacher, Julia Coleman, often remarked that one of her students might become president of the United States someday. Carter was listening.

After graduating from Plains High School, Carter attended the U. S. Naval Academy and, upon graduation, was commissioned as an ensign. Together with his new wife, the former Rosalynn Smith, he embarked on a career in the navy.

In 1953, however, Carter was summoned back to Plains. His father, known in the community as "Mr. Earl," was dying. As Carter stood at his father's bedside, he listened as countless members of the community came to pay their respects and to thank Mr. Earl for small acts of kindness: extending credit from the Carter store, carrying their mortgage in times of financial stringency, providing new clothes for a poor family so they could attend their daughter's

graduation with pride.

When Carter returned to Schenectady, New York, where his young family was stationed at the time, he informed Rosalynn that he was resigning his commission to return to Plains to try to have the kind of influence on the community that his father had. Rosalynn, who enjoyed her status as a navy wife, was not amused. Apparently, the automobile trip from Schenectady to Plains transpired in almost total silence between these two strong-willed individuals.

The rest is history: the Georgia state senate, governor of Georgia, then the improbable run for president of the United States. Carter was assisted every step of the way by Rosalynn, his wife for 77 years until her death in 2023.

I believe it is impossible to imagine Jimmy Carter becoming president had it not been for Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. Johnson had lied to us about Vietnam; Nixon had lied about, well, pretty much everything. We needed to know that our president had a moral compass, and Carter, a Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher, arrived on the scene and promised that he would never knowingly lie to the American people.

We elected him president in 1976. The country was in a mess when Carter took office in 1977: the lingering scars of the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Arab Oil Embargo, runaway inflation and soaring interest rates.

Carter's presidency is not generally considered a successful one, and I would be hard pressed to argue otherwise. But historians have a way of revisiting the past, and now, more than four decades since Carter left the White House, they are beginning to appreciate many of his accomplishments: the Camp David Accords, the renegotiation of the Panama Canal treaty, his emphasis on human rights, his calls for energy independence. Carter appointed more women and minorities to office than any president before him, and many conservationists consider him the best environmental president ever.

Carter's devastating loss in his 1980 bid for a second term might have persuaded a lesser person to retire quietly to Plains. But Carter had other ideas. The Carter Center, founded in 1982, has compiled a remarkable record of averting military conflicts and eradicating disease. As Carter conceded in one of our conversations, he very likely would not have done any of these things had he been elected to a second term.

I first met Jimmy Carter at a small gathering prior to an academic conference at Emory University. What he wanted to talk about was what he characterized as the "unsurpassed joy" of telling others about Jesus. He was referring, of course, to his own religious transformation, which occurred in 1967, shortly after he lost his first campaign for governor. Carter was disconsolate. He had campaigned so vigorously that he lost 22 pounds, and he had invested a great deal of money into the effort. Worse, he had lost to Lester G. Maddox, of all people—a notorious segregationist who rose to prominence when he confronted three Black men with an ax handle as they tried to integrate his restaurant the day after Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

When Carter returned to Plains after his bitter defeat in the 1966 election, he began searching his soul. With the help of his sister Ruth Carter Stapleton, a Pentecostal evangelist, Carter rededicated his life to Christ. Shortly thereafter, he headed to Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, with other Southern Baptist laymen to knock on doors and share their faith. Later that same year, Carter was paired with a Puerto Rican minister for a similar venture in Springfield, Massachusetts. Carter, with his rudimentary command of Spanish, would read from the Bible in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, and the pastor, Eloy Cruz, would preach. At the end of their week together, Carter pressed Cruz about why he was so successful. Cruz demurred, thinking

that Carter was superior to him. But Carter insisted.

"Señor Jimmy," Cruz finally responded, "the secret to faith is to have two loves: one for God and the other for whoever happens to be standing in front of you at any given time."

Carter sought to live and to govern according to that principle. Not perfectly, of course; none of us is perfect. His policies were remarkably consistent with those articulated by the 1973 Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, which in turn mirrored the priorities of 19th-century evangelicalism: concern for minorities, helping the poor, and equal rights for women.

Arguably the greatest political paradox of the past century is that evangelicals, the very voters who helped propel Carter to the presidency in 1976, turned dramatically against one of their own to embrace Ronald Reagan four years later. Religious right leaders concocted a high-minded reason for their defection: opposition to abortion. But this is utter fiction. (Carter, in fact, had a much longer and more consistent record of opposing abortion than did Reagan, who as governor of California had signed into law the most liberal abortion bill in the nation.) These evangelical leaders, led by Jerry Falwell and organized by Paul Weyrich, mobilized instead to defend tax exemptions at segregation academies and at such places as Bob Jones University. Reagan adroitly seized on the issue. "I know this group can't endorse me," he famously said to an evangelical audience in August 1980, pausing for effect, "but I want you to know that I endorse you and what you're doing."

That speech made no mention of abortion. The 1980 election nevertheless marked the beginning of an alliance between the religious right and the Republican Party, one that has calcified in the years since. Tragically, Jimmy Carter's progressive evangelicalism—a term he embraced during my final interview with him—has all but disappeared from public view.

My favorite quote about Carter came from James Laney, the former president of Emory University. "Jimmy Carter is the only person in history," Laney said, "for whom the presidency was a steppingstone."

Carter hated that quote, but he is generally regarded as the best ex-president in American history. And now that the partisan gloss his political adversaries had painted has begun to fade, historians are coming around to view his presidency more favorably.

History, I suspect, will treat him the way he typically treated others: gently, and with kindness.

'AN EXCEPTIONAL MAN': JIMMY CARTER STATE FUNERAL SET FOR JAN. 9.

John Bacon, Alex Gladden, Rebecca Morin, N'dea Yancey-Bragg USA TODAY

PLAINS, Ga. – The official state funeral for former President Jimmy Carter will be held Jan. 9 at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the White House confirmed Monday.

The Carter Center released a statement saying the family has accepted an invitation from Congress for Carter, who died Sunday at 100, to lie in state at the Capitol rotunda. Funeral services will begin on Jan. 4 and end on Jan. 9, moving from Carter's home state of Georgia to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Biden declared that all American flags be flown at half-staff for 30 days at all federal buildings, military posts and naval stations, as well as on all naval vessels. Most of the federal government will be closed on Jan. 9 in observance of the day of mourning, the president said in a proclamation on Monday.

JANUARY 2025 BIRTHDAYS!



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

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact the office at 860-527-7792 or email office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com to update our records.

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for January 2025

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
1/5	1	Jeremiah 31: 7-14	Betsy DeRoma
	2	Ephesians 1: 3-14	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Wisdom 10: 15-21	Betsy DeRoma
1/12	1	Isaiah 43: 1-7	Ivy Thomas
	2	Acts 8: 14-17	Kasumi Campbell
	Psalm	Psalm 29	Alternating Pastor and Congregation
1/19	1	Isaiah 62: 1-5	Barbara Ruhe
	2	1 Corinthians 12: 1-11	Nina Kretschmer
	Psalm	Psalm 36	Unison
1/26	1	Nehemiah 8: 1-3; 5-6; 8-10	Sonia Wellington
	2	1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a	Judy Butterworth-Kremer
	Psalm	Psalm 19	Bolded verses left side; other verses – right side; all read verse 14
2/2	1	Malachi 3: 1-4	Betsy DeRoma
	2	Hebrews 2: 14-18	Mildred Unfried
	Psalm	Psalm 84	Rodney Carr



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Toby Scott, Sexton

Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Judy Butterworth-Kremer, Secretary

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

www.graceistheplace.org

