



Grace Lutheran Church
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Hartford, CT 06105



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www.graceistheplace.org



GRACE NOTES

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

March 2020

Coretta Scott King wrote the forward to *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* her husband's last book, which we will be reading during Lent... her words speak for themselves:

"It was characteristic of my husband that in 1967 when confusion in the civil rights Struggle abounded he would undertake a book titled *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* He not only took the responsibility for leadership, he toiled vigorously to offer discerning leadership.

In this book he piercingly revealed the cause of our national discord, placing it squarely on the ingrained white racism of American society. He made discrimination and poverty the central focus of his attacks. A year later, spending nearly a million dollars with a huge staff, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was to come to the same essential conclusions.

In this work Martin Luther King, Jr., stresses the common cause of all the disinherited, white and black, laying the basis for the contemporary struggles now unfolding around economic issues. He spoke out sharply for all the poor in all their hues, for he knew if color made them different, misery and oppression made them the same.

The book is remarkably contemporary also in its treatment of international relations. The author here discusses poverty as a source of world instability and the arrogance of wealthy nations toward the deprived world. It is our common tragedy that we have lost his prophetic voice but it could compound the tragedy if the lessons he did articulate are now ignored.

The glowing spirit and the sharp insights of Martin Luther King, Jr. are embodied in this book. The solution he offered can still save our society from self-destruction. I hope that it will be seen as a testament, and that the grief that followed his death will be transmuted to a universal determination to realize the economic and social justice for which he so willingly gave his life." Coretta Scott King, *May 1968*



LENTEN LIFE AND LENTEN JUSTICE

What does this have to do with Lent? We all take the days from Ash Wednesday through Easter very seriously. We come to church looking for discipline and we decide the ways we intend to live those disciplines for the Lenten period. We are challenged by the deeply personal journey that our Lord and Savior takes to the cross. His suffering, his pouring himself out for us, the cross ending with the joys of resurrection and ascension. We are looking for something during this time.

(continued on page 4)

Pastor’s Message—MARCH THIS YEAR, IS HARD...

Our country and our world and our own hearts are full of conflict, confusion, dissonance and the kind of pain that keeps us up at night, has us walking like zombies down the street, seemingly undirected, without purpose, things that we cannot control seem to be in power, we may feel more and more helpless, subject to the whims of power, nature’s response to our neglect and our own City on the Hill, looking a whole lot more tawdry that we ever thought it to be.

Jesus says, stop. Look around. Things are turning. We must reassess our priorities, think with more hope, live those expansive lives described earlier and set our sites on things that are not simply about us, our families, our people and our needs. That truly is not enough. See what is happening around you and know that there is something wrong and you can do something about it. You really can.

This Lent seek out people you don’t know, reach out to those suffering and in need, give to others with your hearts, hands and wallets... pay attention to what is happening even as you walk down the street, look around in church and see the people right here who are crying out.

And, get involved. The Greater Hartford Interfaith Alliance (GHIAA) is in action to bring about change in Hartford. Formidable change, change that will impact those who are vulnerable, those who have no voice, those who are the victims and need us.

While we know our community building and our feeding and clothing ministries are to be held up, stop and see, go and listen, sit and pray for all those who enter our doors. They are God’s blessing to us, and we want to be God’s blessing to them.

A Muslim woman came into the church this past week wanting to learn more about what we were and what we were doing. She was poor, somewhat timid, but courageous to walk into a church building in our country at this time without knowing anyone and not fully grasping the difference between her faith and the faith of those who worshiped with us. I took her hand and she gave it to me. Muslim women are not to be touched in any way and I thought, I’d erred. Yet she smiled and we sat down to talk.

I told her about Grace, Fresh Start, Friday Gatherings, our worship and took her into the sanctuary. She said, “Oh, this is so beautiful and so clean.” Our TED Talk Program was just finishing up in the Forum Room with more than twenty in attendance. I brought her in and introduced her to the group.

They warmly cheered for her with lots of smiles and obvious welcome. Nilda, too, had welcomed her lovingly.

The harshness of Christ’s journey, the brokenness in our country, our government and many if not all of us feeling hopeless, vulnerable and without power, all make for a very hard March.

Let’s each one of us commit to find ways to reach out to those we don’t know, treat them with love and acceptance, offer them an ear, or a prayer, or an invitation, or a warm and sincere voice of thanks. We are all in this together. Our power exists when we are together and caring for each other not when we are separate and into the business of crucifying.

Jesus has taught us by his words, but mostly by his acts.

Let us pray,
Lord, God, make the Lenten Spirit our life’s Spirit. We need each other more now than we have ever needed each other. Show us how. AMEN.



Campaign
HAND UP
OR
DRAG
DOWN?

The Truth About
Welfare
Assistance:
It’s a loan— not
a helping hand.

To get involved with this
campaign, email:
GHIAA@cljct.org

GHIAA is an initiative of
the Center for Leadership
& Justice.
47 Vine St., Hartford, CT
860-527-9860
Cljct.org

REPEALING WELFARE LIENS
FACT SHEET

DID YOU KNOW?

- Connecticut requires welfare recipients to pay the state back for the financial assistance they have received—treating welfare as a loan.
- Connecticut is one of only two states in the country that still do this.
- The state places a lien on the recipient’s assets, and demands repayment when the person sells or refinances a home, receives a legal settlement (for example, for personal injury), receives any inheritance, or dies and attempts to leave any inheritance to heirs.
- The effect of the lien is to push recipients (or their heirs) back into poverty whenever they begin to pull themselves out of it.
- A 1973 national study noted that over 30 states had this kind of provision in their law at that time. The study concluded—almost 50 years ago--that the policy was outmoded, and advocated: “As the Nixon administration has recommended, Congress should prohibit all recovery in the federally funded cash assistance programs; the states also should repeal the requirement in General Assistance.”
- Since that time, at least 30 states have followed that recommendation. The time has come—in fact is long overdue—for Connecticut to do likewise.
- Working with GHIAA, House Majority Leader Matt Ritter has drafted a bill to repeal the current statute.

As compelling as the need for change is, repeal **WILL NOT** be easy. Potential skeptics may cite the loss of revenue, which amounts to about \$30 million per year. However, GHIAA believes that the cost to Connecticut of **NOT** repealing the statute could be much greater, in terms of the perpetuation of poverty, and the social cost that pervasive poverty brings!

Our state can do better—as 48 others already have—to enable those who receive assistance to make their way out of poverty and find their way off of assistance altogether.

YOU CAN HELP. Our GHIAA Core Team can show you how easy it is to contact your state legislators by letter or phone to encourage them to strongly support the repeal bill. Please be in touch with your Core Team Leaders to find out how you can make a difference in enacting the repeal bill into law.

Together, we can make this happen! Many thanks.



Campaign

CLEAN SLATE

CLEAN SLATE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What would Clean Slate do? The policy would empower Connecticut to expunge qualifying criminal records for people who remain crime-free for three years for most misdemeanors and five years of low-level felonies. Clean Slate helps people get the second chance they've earned by streamlining petition-based record-clearing—a costly and time-intensive process that prevents the vast majority of eligible people from ever obtaining needed relief.

Why do we need an automatic expungement process? Currently, eligible returning citizens have to go through a lengthy, confusing, and opaque application process through the Board of Pardons and Parole. Most people require legal assistance, which can be expensive during the lengthy application process. These factors dramatically suppress participation. Clean Slate would eliminate these barriers to integration for many. Nearly 9 in 10 employers, 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 5 colleges now using background checks, denying formerly incarcerated people the opportunity to support themselves and their families.

What about convicted rapists and murderers? Clean Slate would expunge most misdemeanors and low-level felonies, which excludes rapists and murderers. No sex offenses will be expunged. Additionally, of the 96,000 Connecticut arrests in 2018, only 3.5% were for violent crimes. People convicted of higher-level felonies would still be eligible to apply for expungement through the already existing process with the Board of Pardons and Parole.

Has this ever been done before? Yes! At the State level, Pennsylvania, Utah, and California have all passed Clean Slate legislation with wide bi-partisan support.

Does this work? A 2019 Michigan study found that citizens who had their records expunged saw a 25% increase in salary after just two years! Those salaries, earned on the legal marketplace, mean that they can secure basic goods, support their families, and contribute tax dollars to society. A study of the U.S. military found that individuals with felony records were promoted more rapidly and to higher ranks than others and were no more likely to be discharged for negative reasons than individuals without records.

How do I benefit? A society in which people's basic needs are met is a safer society. Clean Slate would help formerly incarcerated people support themselves and their families, and have access to legal ways of earning money. We all benefit from a healthy economy. If not for mass incarceration and the collateral consequences of a criminal record, the U.S. poverty rate could have dropped a full 20% between 1980 and 2004. In 2014, the employment penalty for felony conviction cost the U.S. economy 1.9 million workers.

To get involved with this campaign, email:
GHIAA@cljct.org

GHIAA is an initiative of the Center for Leadership & Justice.
47 Vine St., Hartford, CT
860-527-9860
Cljct.org



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

ELCA presiding bishop issues statement on new travel ban 2/5/2020 1:50:00 PM

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Dear Church,

Last week, on the third anniversary of the original executive order, the administration extended the travel ban to the United States from seven majority Muslim countries to thirteen. The ban suspends the issuing of immigrant visas that can lead to permanent residency for those from Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Nigeria, as well as visas available through a diversity lottery for applicants from Sudan and Tanzania. This announcement comes on the heels of several other rule changes restricting travel to the U.S.

As Lutherans, these actions should concern us. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has set us free from ourselves to serve our neighbor. This expanded policy separates families from loved ones already here. Further, it prevents people – especially those escaping perilous or life-threatening situations in several of these nations – from coming to safety in the U.S. It does not enhance our safety or reflect our vocation as Christians.

Our church has a strong history of hospitality for refugees and immigrants. After World War II, when one out of every six Lutherans in the world was a refugee or displaced person, Lutherans resettled some 57,000 refugees in the United States (ELCA social message on "[Immigration](#)"). Today, with more than 60 million displaced people in the world, we continue God's work of welcoming refugees through advocacy and our vital partnership with [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#).

The ELCA also has companion Lutheran churches in many of these countries that are, with us, member churches of [The Lutheran World Federation](#) (LWF). (In several instances our church has developed strong partnerships with these churches over many decades.) The current president of the LWF, with whom I serve as a vice-president, is archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is one of the world's fastest-growing Lutheran churches. Accompaniment of these ELCA partners requires our solidarity and advocacy with them.

The expanded policy also reflects racial and religious discrimination. Over the past three years, the targeting of Muslims has had a direct and negative impact on our interfaith partners, who are harmed not only by the policy, but by the rhetoric surrounding it. Together with other Christians and Jews, we are standing with Muslims through the [Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign](#). We are inviting [advocacy](#) as a means for helping those affected now, while preventing discrimination in the future. This is one way of embodying our commitment to opposing "all forms of religious bigotry, violence, discrimination, and persecution and stand in solidarity with those who experience them, whether they are Christian or of another religion or worldview" ("[A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)").

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LENTEN LIFE AND LENTEN JUSTICE

(continued from page 1)

We read, we pray, we talk together, as we will on the evening of March 31st at 6:00 pm sharing a simple meal, but more importantly examining our lives and our world, for Lent is indeed a time of self-examination. We want to do good during Lent, alms giving, focus on others and those suffering, acting, petitioning, crying out for justice and truth.

The true challenge that is Lent is not simply, what happens over six weeks, it is how Lent creates new life in us. We want to do more in our lives, not simply during Lent. We want to have Lent become our lives.

This, simply, is what Jesus asks his disciples to do at the climax of his Sermon on the Mount.

I love how we sing the “Lord’s Prayer” on Sundays. The prayer itself we may offer with strong voice in church, and then there are the days when we can only pray that there is another strong voice able to pray it for us, when we are unsure of what we believe. This prayer, as Lent, turns our lives inside out. The Christian life is about “we” and “us”, not “me” and “I”.

We learn when we pray and act during Lent that as much as we ask God to give to us, we must be willing to give to God and one another in return. The Lord’s Prayer and Lent are starting places, not the end.

We are called to prepare for the best, to live expansive lives, to give generously, to engage the stranger, care for the needy. Lent is not about feeling holy, but about the lifelong commitments that help us hold on to the things that will sustain us.

The danger of Lent is that we go through the motions of discipline without learning how to live Lent. By living “right” during Lent, we may discover how we can and should live our lives.

Life without justice is something else. Jesus is more than a model for a handful of weeks. Jesus is a model for our entire lives.



Contact Dale Urban the leader of Grace’s team for more details and plans for these actions:



GHIAA is an initiative of the Center for Leadership and Justice

GHIAA ACTION
Thursday, March 12th, 7 PM Sharp
Union Baptist Church,
1921 Main Street, Hartford
PLEASE ARRIVE BY 6:30 PM

This will be a public GHIAA meeting where we update legislators on these campaigns and seek public commitments to support GHIAA’s positions.

Background on GHIAA’s Campaigns

1. GHIAA is seeking to pass clean slate legislation which would automatically expunge the criminal records of returning citizens who do not return to crime 3 years after misdemeanors and 5 years after non-violent felonies.
2. GHIAA is seeking to pass legislation that would repeal “welfare liens.” A welfare lien is a lien the state places on a low income person receiving various forms of state assistance, demanding repayment when the person sells or refinances a home (many years later), receives a legal settlement (i.e. personal injury), receives any inheritance, or dies and attempts to leave any inheritance to their heirs. Connecticut is one of two states in the country that does this to its residents.

To register for this event visit: <https://ghiaamarch.eventbrite.com>

Role of Core Teams: Each GHIAA congregation is asked to turn out a minimum of 10 people to this action. Please identify the number of people your congregation will turn out and email that number to ghiaa@cljct.org or call/text Cori Mackey at 860-810-9736.

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ELCA presiding bishop issues statement on new travel ban (continued from page 3)

The travel ban and its extension do not promote our values of mutual respect of all God's children, each created in God's image. Furthermore, these bans contradict our church's and our nation's commitments to be a place of welcome and safety for others. Federal courts have recognized this already by blocking significant portions of the ban, finding them discriminatory, anti-Muslim or unconstitutional.

The ELCA social statement "[For Peace in God's World](#)" reminds us that "the church is a disturbing presence when it refuses to be silent and instead speaks the truth." On this policy, we as Lutherans cannot be silent. The history of our church, the life-giving relationships we share with other Lutherans worldwide, and our commitments to and with inter-religious partners are the basis not only for our concern – but for our continued accompaniment, advocacy and action.

In peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

THE “BURYING” OF ALLELUIA

As we prepared for the beginning of Lent this past Sunday, our worship time ended with a ritual that dates back to the fifth century of the Common Era. For the first time at Grace we “buried” the word Alleluia as we now move to the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday at 7 pm at Grace on the 26th of February, 2020.

This is a solemn way to say goodbye to a very joyous word until it is said again at Easter. The word “Alleluia” is rooted in a Hebrew expression that means “praise the Lord.” It is frequently found in the Psalms and has been always associated with joy and exultation. This is why it is forbidden during Lent, a somber liturgical season focused on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. To put it simply, Lent is like one long Good Friday.

Even as we reflect on sin, death and our dependence on God in Lent – even as we ritually bury the “Alleluia” in our sanctuaries, we know that God’s work in the world continues. We share in God’s work with hope, joy and faith. Some pictures of the burial taken by our multi-talented organist and treasurer, Dale Eberhardt.



Volume 2020, Issue 3

TED TALKS – AN UNAUTHORIZED REVIEW

What would happen if we were to get a large screen TV, build a program to invite people to become acquainted with TED Talks, offer thanks for attendance and invite those attending to select a talk that spoke to them and have them facilitate a two-hour session themselves?

Would anyone come? What is a TED Talk, anyway? From Wikipedia lets answer the last question, “ What is a TED talk:

TED Conferences LLC (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is an American media organization that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan "ideas worth spreading". TED was conceived by Richard Saul Wurman in February 1984[5] as a conference; it has been held annually since 1990.

TED's early emphasis was on technology and design, consistent with its Silicon Valley origins. It has since broadened its perspective to include talks on many scientific, cultural, political, and academic topics. It is owned and curated by Chris Anderson, a British-American businessman, through the Sapling Foundation.

The main TED conference is held annually in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada at the Vancouver Convention Centre. Prior to 2014, the conference was held in Long Beach, California, United States.

TED events are also held throughout North America and in Europe, Asia and Africa, offering live streaming of the talks. They address a wide range of topics within the research and practice of science and culture, often through storytelling.

The speakers are given a maximum of 18 minutes to present their ideas in the most innovative and engaging ways they can. Past speakers include Bill Clinton, Sean M. Carroll, Elon Musk, Ray Dalio, Cédric Villani, Stephen Hawking, Jane Goodall, Al Gore, Temple Grandin, Shahrukh Khan, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Billy Graham, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Bill Gates, Dolph Lundgren, Bob Weir, Shashi Tharoor, Bono, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Leana Wen, Pope Francis, and many Nobel Prize winners.

TED's current curator is Chris Anderson, a British-American businessman, computer journalist and magazine publisher.



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I have attended parts of three of the sessions at Grace so far. The last one drew 26 people and was near filling the Forum Room. A number of participants have already facilitated discussions of TED Talks that they have selected. While the talks themselves are often fascinating and thought-provoking, what is so much more is how attendance continues to grow and how people look forward to having their chance to present. Attending three times earns you the right to present a talk yourself. The talks are screened by the program leaders, Louisa Barton-Duguay and Sue Carey.

During each of the programs I attended it was clear that all who attended were deeply interested in the material, had distinct and personal reactions to it, and were finding their voice to share their thoughts and feelings.

At times the material might trigger a strong reaction, differing views on what they meant and the facilitators carefully offered a balance and welcome for all opinions, thoughts and reactions. It was marvelous to take part, and I found myself being drawn in to the topics and full of my own reactions. This is powerful stuff.

TED Talks are about real life, real stories, current events and circumstances, cultural developments and the wonders of science. There is very limit to what has been said and what it means. It causes all to engage in real life dialogue about things that impact them every day and hold meaning for them in their lives.

The first TED Talk offered by a participant was greeted with warm and enthusiastic applause and three standing ovations. I'd call that a success, wouldn't you?

TED Talks at Grace are offered every Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Come and see.... you may find yourself leading a session yourself, and as a leader you get \$50 and after having attended five you receive a 10- trip bus pass.

Congratulations to both Louisa and Sue for such a creative and powerful intervention in the lives of our church and those who have come so far.

The program was funded by the Urban Alliance that provided the flat screen TV and \$1000.00 to cover program costs. The program will last until the funds run out.

This is what church is about.

Nancy Urban and Dale Eberhardt found errors in our last issue– Thanks!
Are there anymore Sherlock Holmes' among you?
We're trying to improve Grace Notes!

LENTEN CALENDAR 2020

| SERVICES | DATE | TIME |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| ASH WEDNESDAY | FEBRUARY 26 | 7:00 PM |
| 1 ST SUNDAY IN LENT | MARCH 1 | 9:30 AM |
| 2 ND SUNDAY IN LENT | MARCH 8 | 9:30 AM |
| 3 RD SUNDAY IN LENT | MARCH 15 | 9:30 AM |
| 4 TH SUNDAY IN LENT | MARCH 22 | 9:30 AM |
| 5 TH SUNDAY IN LENT | MARCH 29 | 9:30 AM |
| SOUP SUPPER AND DISCUSSIONS | MARCH 31 | 6:00 PM |
| PASSION/PALM SUNDAY | APRIL 5 | 9:30 AM |
| MAUNDY THURSDAY | APRIL 9 | 7:00 PM |
| GOOD FRIDAY* | APRIL 10 | NOON |
| EASTER SUNDAY BREAKFAST | APRIL 12 | 8:30 AM |
| EASTER SUNDAY | APRIL 12 | 9:30 AM |

*The Asylum Hill tradition of “Carrying the Cross” to six or seven churches will begin at noon, likely at Trinity Episcopal on Sigourney Street. The group will arrive at Grace at about 2 p.m.

Grace will have its own Good Friday Service at 7:00 p.m.

Birthdays & Anniversaries 2020

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| Justin Santana | 01-Mar |
| Jonathan Ruhe | 04-Mar |
| Amy Nolen | 04-Mar |
| Tyler Colbert | 08-Mar |
| | 09-Mar |
| Austin Colbert | 18-Mar |
| James Burden | 21-Mar |
| Quincy Coleman | 23-Mar |
| Francisco Colon | 28-Mar |
| Gayle Brown | 29-Mar |

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

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