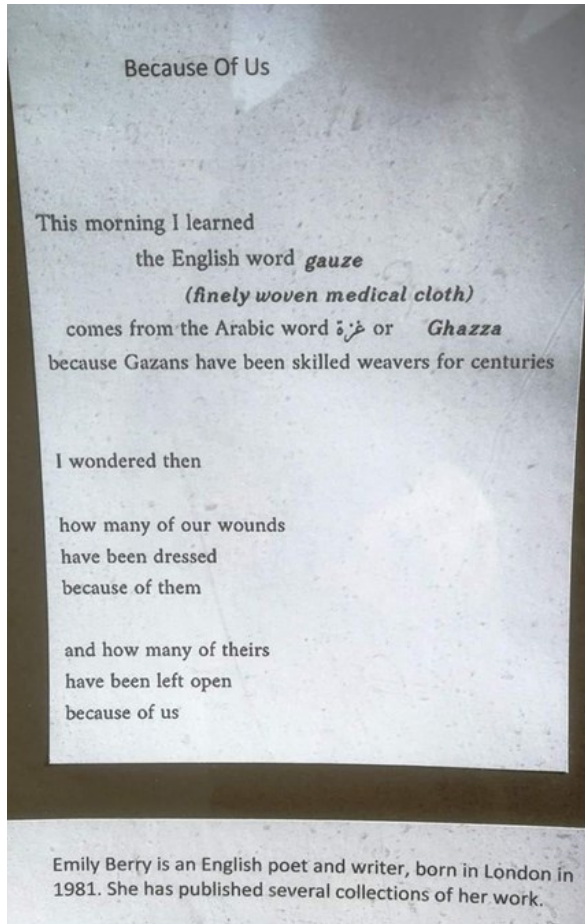




MAY 2024

WE CAN NO LONGER BE BYSTANDERS – THE CRISIS GROWS



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We can no longer remain silent. Things in our world are seriously broken, with complexities and growing potential for untold and unpredictable consequences. This is happening with growing consistency. There is hardly a day when a growing number of horrific circumstances are presented in the news, in our communities, our city, the state, our country and throughout the world. How much can we take as more and more seems to be dumped on our collective plates as we simply try to grasp it all, never-mind dealing with it.

It is unacceptable for life on this planet to allow these things to fester and grow without a vivid sense of what we can do as innocent bystanders to stop it in its tracks. Where is our own sense of urgency and determination? It is no longer OK to watch things happen without acting. We can't watch all that we believe in and hope for be so fleeting. In the past, courageous people stood up to injustice and malice. We have grown so used to it, many of us simply stay in our homes, perhaps with ear plugs, praying that somehow God will make this all go away. Really? What's happening to our children, to their lives and hopes?

This is not the time for silence. It is not time for us to roll ourselves up in blankets and turn off the lights. After having brought up my disdain for the political consequences of another Trump presidency, a group of absolutely outrageous decisions by the Trump created Supreme Court, and other Trump appointed judges, were made visible. Forgetting about our democracy and risking our "experiment" as a country, where we respect all people who believe in whatever they might but respected the rights of others, that we have fought for over hundreds of years.

In addition to what is happening politically, we must wonder how very few people have become outrageously rich, paying no taxes, as all the rest of us are paying taxes.

At the very same time, those others, particularly those living in poverty, with little hope, and



those who can't see how their children can reach the place that they are in economically. Schools are dangerous and have become the places of death for so many. Open carry, the availability of guns through an outrageous lobby that also pays no taxes, the NRA, has had the impact of making guns available to everyone... and not just one, recent arrests suggest that some individuals own hundreds of guns, guns meant for war, and we have plenty of evidence that they are fully willing to use them.

People of color, racism, wars, violence, drugs, college students erupting about the horrific state of Gaza, the reaction to them, Russian influence, China's actions, our military spending is through the roof, and there are Russians working in our country to support the ending of our democracy.

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship are under attack with the need to increase security.

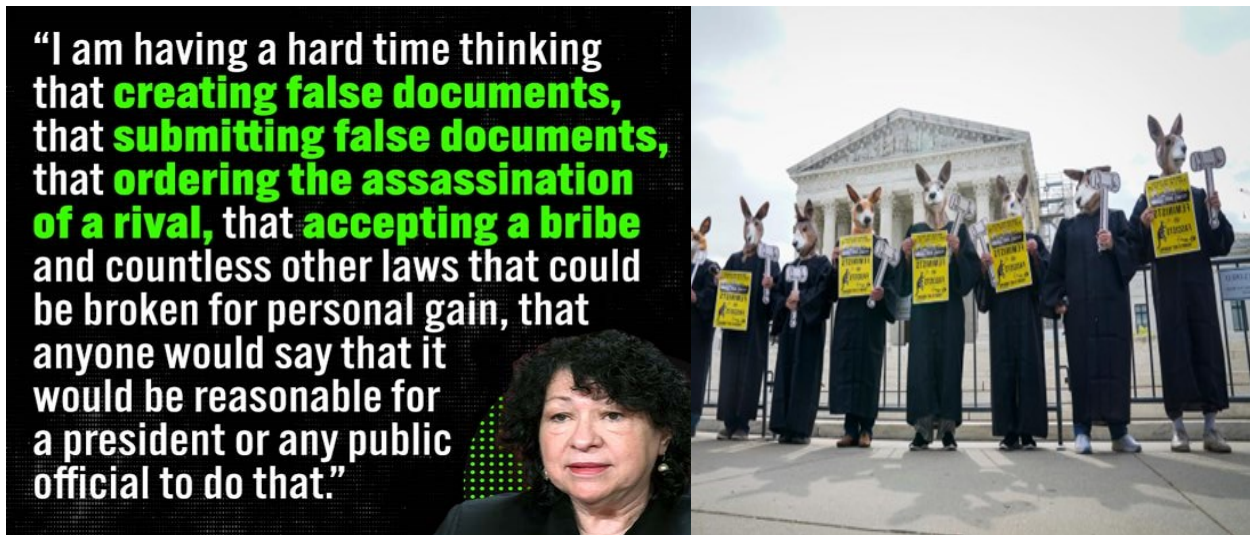
Christian Nationalism and Evangelicals are increasingly being seen as the only Christians, redefining the concept of the place of true religious freedoms, and a clarity about the separation of church and state or religion and state. Churches are closing, people are increasingly looking for other ways to deal with their angst and their lost hope.

What can we do? What will make things different, and let's respond. Just like Nelson Mandela, or others we admire and see in our hearts and lives. Even while he was imprisoned, he discovered things to do. Even as he was mistreated, and beaten, he did the things that he felt he could, and he should. He never gave up nor should we.

Taken from the book *A Concise History of South Africa*, Robert Ross ends with an Epilogue, **"the acid rain of freedom."** These words are a way of conceptualizing what we are going through today. Freedom has a price. A lot started with the destruction of the twin towers in NYC, with our knee-jerk response using our military to kill hundreds of thousands in Iraq, even though those who did these things were Saudi's, but they had control of the oil.



A very thoughtful and deeply loving member of our church perhaps gives us some thoughts about how not to be a bystander, and why. I share her words here, without naming names, but rather calling us to awareness. *"Simply because we speak the truth as anyone in her/his right mind who witnessed the January 6th insurrection*



would agree. In my observation, most of those who support Trump are bullies just like him. Many have very little education. My fear is he is helping to raise a country of bullies and people who threaten others when they can't get their way by examples he is setting with his own behavior. It is especially harmful to our youth. So not only do I fear for Grace, but I am also afraid for America.

I pray often for God's intervention that He hears and answers prayers (sometimes with a yes, or no, or wait a while). Often when we receive an answer to a prayer, we mean it was answered with a "yes," but "no" is an answer as well. He once answered his own son, Jesus, with a "no" as we recall in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed three times, "My Father, if possible, may this cup be taken from me?" If the answer had been "yes", we would not have been saved from our sins. My point is whatever God's answer is to my daily prayer, we are in good hands. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." I pray we will be guided by the Holy Spirit, as to what steps to take to make all who visit Grace at any time, to do so in safety and peace, and to experience acceptance and love." These are serious matters and need to be addressed.

What can we do? We can reach out to those who are lonely and hurting. We can treat each other with love, seeking to feed those hungry, clothe those in need, welcome the stranger, accept people as they are, vote in whatever way you feel safe, by mail, early if possible. **Just do not skip voting.** We can change what we want, but not without effort. Offer to help at places where votes are taken, be unafraid to say hello, to stop and help someone who is in trouble, to reach out to others as Christ reaches out to us. Some of our articles this month speak to things we might say or do. Let Grace continue to be "the place." And, for us, to make it so. We are not perfect, nor will we ever be. But it is the message of our time. **Not to act is to act.** Listen to our children, try to teach them to live without avoiding others, without grasping on to phones instead of relationships. Let's teach each other how to love. And truly believe that this "**acid rain of freedom**" is not only necessary, but also the means to live what we believe.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE - -- IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

The world, Grace version, is hectic, full of complexity, and deeply grounded in hope. Our partnership with the Angel of Edgewood is coming into focus. More and more people are volunteering to help, and a number of those are coming to worship. We have many people ailing, Quincy, Gladys (who is receiving visitors galore), Mavis, Ethel (we will continue the search for her), Nilda (to have surgery), Jackie (completing her rehab), Cindy, Mark and Tim (faithfully joining us for worship), etc. Baptisms in the future, celebration of the life of Annelies on May 4th at 11:00 AM, Reverend Dr. William J. Barber on May 5th at 3:00 PM at Immanuel Congregational Church at the end of our block on Woodland Street.

William Harshaw rejoins the chefs on Friday Gathering, and I heard that Gary Vollinger may return, too. We will welcome them with joy. I am back as Pastor, and am trying to catch up with visits, planning for the future, and with great thanks to our very special Church Council, who have carried my weight (which never has been light) and the weight of others, bringing our church through a time of difficulty and challenge.

We have also been blessed by two remarkable people, one from Lebanon, and the other from Cameroon. They have joined us for a year as students of the Hartford International University for Religion and Peace. Look for an article about Amar, and additional words about Philip who was recently selected for a prize for his efforts during his time here. He was a blessing for us, too.

May we be a continued presence of hope for our communities and each other for many years to come.



GREATER HARTFORD CONFERENCE CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

by Nancy Urban

Grace is a part of the nine congregations that make up the Greater Hartford Conference. At the April 21 Event, possibilities that Grace is already doing such as solar panels, Blue Earth composting, food pantry, Friday dinners and using compostable dishes and utensils when actual dishwashing is not readily available, were highlighted. Other congregations shared information regarding pollinator gardens, food gardens, compostable communion cups, and ways they were working for God's Creation within their communities. It was noted that, while each of us is working in some way for sustainability, social justice and fulfillment, we know that given the present state of the planet, it is not enough. Each participant was encouraged to reflect on their own lives as well as within their congregation to seek out ways to be better stewards of this gift of creation. The following is a writeup of the April 21 Earth Day Gathering:



70 participants from the congregations of the Greater Hartford Conference came together on April 21 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford for an Earth Day Gathering. The program, led by Nancy and Rev. Darrell Urban took us through the painful journey of being confronted with the reality of what we have done to God's creation; the devastation of the earth and all creatures, the social injustice amongst the people and for many a lack of meaning in their lives.

We were led through a process of understanding what kinds of false beliefs have brought us to this crisis and then moved forward as we encountered the many ways that God is acting through God's people to bring about new life and healing for our broken world. What wonderful opportunities await each of us as individuals and as congregations as we support one another, being committed in action to help bring about an environmentally sustainable, socially just, spiritually fulfilling human presence on this planet.

Rev. Nancy Wright from the New England Synod Green Team and Sarah Thornton, solar consultant were available for conversation as the evening concluded with a "cool" (foods that have the least impact on the earth) potluck.

AMAR AL MOUSSAWY - WEDNESDAY VOLUNTEER POST!

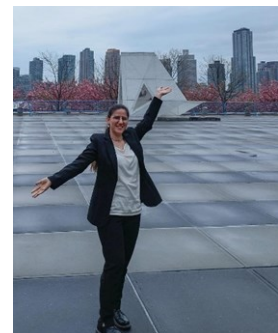


I want to introduce you all to Amar. She started volunteering at Fresh Start earlier this year and we love her enthusiasm. Amar has a diverse background in engineering and is currently fostering human communication, interfaith dialogue, and facilitating trauma healing in the Hartford, CT area. She visits the shop and helps translate for our international employees, assists on our shop floor and volunteers at our events. Here is why Amar wanted to join Fresh Start: "I volunteer with Fresh Start because I believe in their mission of bringing mechanical engineering and the social good together as a nonprofit which helps financially disadvantaged people get a job transition for their lives."



Thank you, Amar! We are so excited to have you as a part of our volunteer group!

Jenna E. Columbus
President / CEO
Freshstart Pallet Products



by James Hazelwood



THE NOTEBOOKS OF
JAMES HAZELWOOD

I've pondered this question for some time and concluded that the answer is yes. Yes, there is one answer to all of life's burning questions. It's been sitting right in front of us for our whole lives. It's both profound and simple. It's also actionable.

The answer to life is “Be Generous.”


Be generous with your time, money, love, and affirmations.

“Perhaps the simplest, most powerful moral question is this: Am I a net giver or a net taker?” writes Chris Anderson, CEO of the famous TED talks, in his new book [Infectious Generosity: The Ultimate Idea Worth Spreading](#). Engaging in some self-reflection around his question, am I a net giver or a net taker, as measured by the people we’ve hurt versus the people we’ve helped, the resources we’ve consumed versus those we’ve protected, the ugliness versus the beauty.



There is nothing that catches people's attention more than generosity, as expressed in human actions. Don't we all love a good listener? You know the person who will be generous with their attention, time, and energy, and give it all to us. Is not this the most majestic experience? I'd go further and suggest it might even border on the mystical. Why? Because the encounter transforms people.

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity." Luke 6:35-36 the Message.



Beyond Jesus' teachings, almost all other religions espouse the beauty, nobility, and benefits of generosity. Islam emphasizes the concept of *Zakat*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Muslims are required to give a portion of their wealth (usually 2.5%) to help the less fortunate and support various social welfare initiatives. In addition to *Zakat*, Muslims are encouraged to engage in voluntary acts of charity, known as *Sadaqah*, to express generosity and kindness. Dana, or the act of giving, is a fundamental virtue in Hinduism. It is believed that selfless giving contributes to spiritual growth. Hindus are encouraged to give to those in need, including food, shelter, and education. Like Hinduism, Buddhism places importance on the practice of Dana, or generosity. Buddhists believe that generosity helps break the cycle of craving and attachment and leads to a compassionate and selfless life.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING? - THE KEY TO ALL OF LIFE

(continued from page 6)

Generosity plays a vital role in the social fabric of communities, economics, and nations. One might even suggest it serves as the glue for the whole world. Researcher Cathryn Townsend The [Human Generosity Project](#) explores how societies improve their collective well-being. “In certain communities, giving to those in need, with no expectation of return, is normalized and expected. The project researchers have found such behavior around the world, including among herders and hunter-gatherers in East Africa. And findings thus far suggest that such generous societies are more likely to survive during difficult times.” According to an article in [Scientific American](#).

Not only do collective societies benefit from generosity, but individuals do as well.

Generosity—the quality of being kind and understanding, the willingness to give others things that have value—is often defined as an act of selflessness; however studies are now showing that generosity is actually (selfishly) in one's best interest. Practicing generosity is a mental health principle that could be the key to a meaningful and healthy life.



That statement seems to fly in the face of decades of research and conventional wisdom—equating “human nature” with selfishness and aggression. Yet, a more complex and nuanced understanding of human nature has emerged in recent years. While studies no doubt suggest that humans have a propensity for self-interest—and these studies have drawn understandable attention—research has revealed that currents of generosity also run deep through us, according to a [white paper at the Templeton Foundation](#). “Generosity comes in many forms, from charitable donations to formal volunteering to helping a stranger to care for a spouse or a child. What these and other examples have in common is that they involve “giving good things to others freely and abundantly.”

The Dalai Lama famously said, “if you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”



Extending compassionate generosity improves the world and enriches our experience of life. Feeling down? Give something away—time, attention, energy, or resources.

“That I feed the hungry, forgive an insult, and love my enemy – these are great virtues. But what if I should discover that the poorest of beggars and most impudent of offenders are all within me, and that I stand in need of all the alms of my own kindness; that I myself am the enemy who must be loved – what then?”

— Carl G. Jung

TELL GOOGLE: DON'T LET YOUR TECH BE COMPLICIT IN WAR CRIMES!

WIN WITHOUT WAR

Shocking investigations have exposed how the Israeli military is using Google Photos to surveil Palestinians in Gaza, capturing their faces without consent at checkpoints and with drones and feeding this data into colossal databases used to track their identities and every movement.[1]

The problematic tech has wrongly flagged civilians as wanted Hamas militants. In a harrowing essay for *The New Yorker*, Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha details how he was beaten and interrogated by the Israeli military after his arrest. He was ultimately released without being charged and told his facial recognition-enabled arrest had been a “mistake.”

While Google has long claimed to be a progressive, responsible company, so far, it has failed to take any steps to stop its software from fueling the Israeli government’s surveillance regime in Gaza. That’s where you come in.

We don’t need any more “mistakes” to happen before Google takes action to ban the Israeli military from using its tech to violate people’s human rights. If there’s anything corporations care about, it’s their brand — and when Google’s CEO hears from tens of thousands of activists calling on him to change course, you can bet he’ll start paying closer attention.

[Google is thoroughly failing in its motto to “do the right thing”, but activists like you can help hold the company accountable. Tell Google CEO Sundar Pichai: Don’t let your tech be complicit in war crimes.](#)



Google Photos

By allowing the Israeli military to use its tech to track and surveil people in Gaza, **Google is making a deliberate choice to prioritize profit and partnership with global superpowers over human rights and dignity.**

The Israeli military’s facial recognition program was initially justified as a tool to search for hostages, but as the Israeli government’s siege of Gaza deepens, it is morphing into something with repercussions that can reach far beyond Israel and Palestine.

For decades U.S. police and the IDF have exchanged tactics. If U.S. law enforcement agencies were to start using Google Photos for the same kind of surveillance here, the consequences would be dire. Black people and other communities of color who are already disproportionately targeted because of flawed facial recognition technology could face even greater abuses of their civil and human rights. That’s part of why Amazon banned police use of its facial recognition software back in 2020.

But Google’s involvement in Israeli surveillance operations isn’t just a stark betrayal of human rights — it’s also a clear violation of its own terms of use, which notes that Google Photos cannot be used “to promote activities, goods, services, or information that cause serious and immediate harm to people.”

Tracking, surveilling, detaining, and beating people sound like “serious and immediate harm” if you ask us.

There’s one clear way Google can fully avoid complicity in human rights abuse and war crimes — and the way to do it is to ban the Israeli military from using its tech.

1. *The New York Times*, “[Israel Deploys Expansive Facial Recognition Program in Gaza](#)” (gift link)

ANISIRAVTI TESTIFIER, ITAMAR SHAPIRA, STATES:

“I'M A PAWN IN A GAME THAT NOT ONLY DOES NOT END, WITH EACH REVENGE, IT JUST INTENSIFIES.”



Itamar Shapira here. I am from Haifa, an anti-occupation/war/apartheid activist, a student and a political tour guide. I am also a testifier with the collective AniSiravti (“I refused” in Hebrew), a new initiative of past reserve refusers. We publish testimonies of past and present soldiers who declare their refusal of the occupation, apartheid and war on Gaza today in order to grow the refusers’ community. I refused to serve my reserve duty in 2004 and served about three weeks in military prison. **I would like to share with you why I chose to refuse and [extend a call for solidarity in finding others like me](#) - any past and present Israeli soldier is welcome.**

I served from 1999 to 2002 in the engineering infantry squad. Our missions often led us into Palestinian villages in the West Bank, where we aimed to apprehend individuals involved in planning or executing suicide attacks on buses. Upon entering villages and homes, it was not uncommon for us to come under fire. On occasion those engaging us directly, and bystanders caught in the crossfire, were killed.

When you enter a Palestinian village, just like they entered Gaza today, the shooting is indiscriminate. You're not really looking only for the terrorist. Innocent bystanders often bear the brunt of the violence. It's not accidental, it's part of the rules of engagement to shoot anyone who may hurt you, including anyone running away from their homes terrified, if you suspect they may be carrying explosives. **From raid to raid, we observed a disturbing pattern- individuals whose relatives we killed, would later perpetuate terror attacks.**

While revenge was never openly acknowledged, it unofficially lingered beneath the surface. Officially, we spoke about the strategic or tactical benefit of each operation, as armies of democratic states are supposed to behave. **When I realized that we are actually in a cycle fueled by revenge and bloodshed, I understood that my participation did not enhance the state's security.**

I began to imagine myself in the shoes of a Palestinian, how I would react to invasions of a foreign military blocking and killing innocent people, blocking ambulances from the injured, demolishing houses etc. I realized that as an Israeli, I was perpetuating a cycle of vengeance for the deaths of innocent people. If I was a Palestinian, I would likely seek revenge for the death of innocent people on my side. It dawned on me that I'm a pawn in a game. A cruel game that not only does not end, with each revenge, it just intensifies. If twenty years ago up to twenty people were killed in each raid or terror attack, then today we see hundreds and thousands, even tens of thousand people killed. That's why I would refuse again today.

Towards the beginning of the war I was afraid to speak out publicly. The police, government and even fellow civilians were resorting to extreme measures to suppress any opposition to the war on Gaza. But today, more than ever, it is important to show Israelis and the international community that there are refusers and resisters of the war on Gaza. When I discovered the collective, AniSiravti, I was thankful there were others speaking out. They gave me the courage to share my story.

AniSiravti is looking for former Israeli soldiers who refused to serve and for those who found alternative ways to refuse their service (not as a political conscientious objector), and would like to publicly declare their refusal. We are looking for those who are interested in publishing a written or video testimony (with the option of remaining anonymous) of their refusal and are open to publish it on various social media platforms.

If you know of someone interested or you, yourself, would like to give a testimony, please

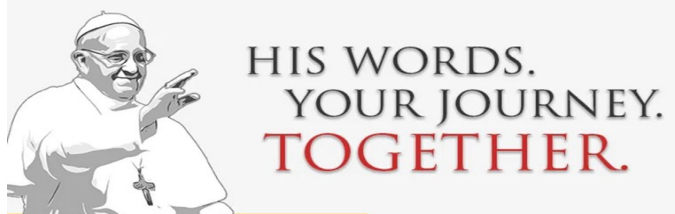
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(continued from page 9)

share and sign this [google form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FAIpQLSdzoqiB8Xr8laO4Z8_L5RWmAtSZlwZniAG64ENDVX2gUzRU9Q/viewform) https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FAIpQLSdzoqiB8Xr8laO4Z8_L5RWmAtSZlwZniAG64ENDVX2gUzRU9Q/viewform

Help us widen our community so we can amplify the voices of refusers in one call to end the war and the occupation.

In solidarity,
Itamar Shapira



"Our wounds can become springs of hope when, instead of feeling sorry for ourselves or hiding them, we dry the tears shed by others; when, instead of nourishing resentment for what was robbed from us, we take care of what others are lacking; when, instead of dwelling on ourselves, we bend towards those who suffer; when, instead of being thirsty for love for ourselves, we quench the thirst of those in need of us. For it is only if we stop thinking of ourselves that we will find ourselves again. But if we continue to think of ourselves, we will not find ourselves anymore."

Pope Francis

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FINDS GRANDMOTHERLY
BOND IN HARTFORD**



Hartford International
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE



The first Sunday after Philip Fonjoh arrived at HIU, in August 2023, to begin his MA in International Peacebuilding, he walked through Hartford looking for a church to worship God. With no luck, on his way back, he walked past a bus station where Marion, an 89-year-old lady, was standing. Phillip said, "Hi," and they started a conversation. She told him she was going to church and insisted he come with her. They have been friends ever since. "Meeting her, I felt, was God's providence leading me to her."

When Philip speaks about Marion, his smile doesn't only reflect his personality but also fond memories of Cameroon, his home country. Marion reminds him of the close relationship he had with his grandmothers. "I was looking at her, and I had this kind of a connection, missing my grandmothers from both my paternal and maternal side."

"I thought I was going to have cultural barriers, but I speak, and she is able to understand my English. She flows with me, and I don't even see the color that she is white," Phillip said. "She doesn't look at me as black, so the relationship has become cordial in such a way that minimizes anything that could have been a cultural shock."

The staff at Immanuel House is always welcoming of Philip. They are glad that he visits her. Marion says of Philip, "He always brightens my day. He is helpful and keeps my spirits up, and I'm always glad he comes."

When he returns to Cameroon, he will keep her in his prayers.

THE HOUSING CRISIS

the
Sanders Institute

Dear Friend,



As communities across the nation grapple with an escalating housing crisis, The Sanders Institute convened a Gathering of elected officials, union and non-profit leaders, housing advocates, educators, authors, activists and community organizers in Los Angeles, California to find solutions.

The harsh reality of unaffordability, unavailability, homelessness and housing insecurity transcends geography, affecting urban centers and rural landscapes alike, and it

demands urgent attention.

At the Gathering, we delved into the intricacies of recently-passed and proposed legislation, considered the out-sized impact of real estate investors and explored various initiatives including social housing models, community land trusts, and non-traditional housing partnerships.

We examined the intersections of housing policy and climate, why climate resilience needs to be a core theme in housing development and why climate justice must be included in planning and zoning regulations. We confronted the stark realities faced by our most vulnerable populations, from seniors to veterans to children aging out of the foster system. Cognizant of the connection between inadequate education and housing insecurity, we considered the impacts of race, ethnicity, culture and social class on the educational system and how that system might be re-imagined. Beyond theoretical policy discussions, The Sanders Institute Gathering was well-grounded in data and research studies and informed by the real-world experiences of those on the front lines of service.

We are now at a critical juncture. The widespread reality of the housing crisis has begun to break through, with people of all ages and most backgrounds feeling it's effects. Now is the time to act.

With your support, we will amplify the diverse voices that came together with a sense of urgency and determination to examine the root causes of the housing crisis, share innovative initiatives and propose actionable strategies. In the coming months, we will be able to publicize the content and reports of the Gathering panels – each focused on a different aspect of the housing crisis. With your support, we will educate the public and the media, champion a shared policy agenda – one rooted in compassion and equity – and mobilize around that agenda to effect real and lasting change.

Your contribution, big or small, one-time or recurring, will truly make a difference.

With gratitude,

Jane O'Meara Sanders & David Driscoll
Co-Founders, The Sanders Institute



This week, Palestinians uncovered a second mass grave in Gaza, at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis. More than 300 bodies were buried there, many with their hands and feet tied, killed and discarded by the Israeli military.

The Israeli government has enjoyed impunity to commit genocide for the past six months, aided and abetted by the U.S. Congress. On Tuesday night the Senate approved over \$14 billion in military funding for Israel — which

President Biden is expected to sign off on.

As this genocide continues, our movement isn't backing down. Across the country, Jews are holding Seders in the Streets for Passover, and campuses across the country are being filled by student encampments in solidarity with Gaza. A new anti-war movement is being forged, demanding an end to U.S. support for Israel...

“How is this year different from all other years?”

This week is Passover, the Jewish holiday of liberation. To paraphrase the first question asked each year, “How is this year different from all other years?” To this, Jews of conscience reply: “This year is not like other years. There can be no feasting while Gaza is being starved.” Across the country, tens of thousands of U.S. Jews are coming together and refusing to let our traditions, our histories, and our identities be used to starve, displace, and massacre Palestinians.

On Tuesday Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the highest ranking Jewish elected official in the U.S., led the vote to send over \$14 billion more to the Israeli military. Meanwhile, thousands of us gathered on his doorstep in prayer and song for a “Seder in the streets.” After shutting down the street for hours, more than 250 of us were arrested by the NYPD.

In Seattle, JVP and allies held a Seder to shut down the street outside Senator Patty Murray's office, demanding she take action to stop arming Israel. From Denver to Portland to more than a dozen other cities, JVP and allies are holding 17 different emergency Passover actions this week.

This year, hearing the story of Passover means that we recognize that we are all in *mitzrayim*, the narrow place, while the Israeli genocide of Palestinians continues. The only way out is through — we must continue to mobilize to bring liberation for all into the present.

Campus protests are spreading...

Student encampments in solidarity with Gaza are spreading like wildfire across the U.S., springing up on campuses from Columbia to NYU, the New School, University of Michigan, University of Maryland, Berkeley, Swarthmore, Yale and more.

These anti-war students have established encampments in solidarity with Gaza. Their demands include university divestment from Israeli apartheid — refusing business as usual

while U.S. institutions support genocide.

And so is the crackdown on student protesters.

Student encampments are making headlines across the country, as demands for immediate ceasefire and divestment from apartheid become more mainstream every day. In response, our elected officials and the U.S. media are exploiting fears of rising antisemitism to smear peaceful anti-war protests as dangerous, anti-semitic mobs.

Actual violence *has* occurred — but at the request of university administrators. Less than 24 hours after Columbia students established their Gaza Solidarity Encampment, Columbia President Minouche Shafik called in the NYPD to forcefully disperse the peaceful protesters. Officers wearing riot gear and carrying zip ties swarmed the encampment, arresting over 100 students.

At Yale, photos circulated on social media of Yale-branded buses being used to cart off dozens of students arrested for demanding divestment from Israeli genocide. At NYU, cops clad in riot gear were also called in to crack down on student protesters; they arrested dozens of students and used pepper spray on demonstrators, including a journalist at NYU's student newspaper.

Undeterred by the NYPD raid, Columbia students almost immediately re-established the Gaza solidarity encampment on their campus — and now, Shafik is threatening to call in the National Guard to forcefully clear the encampment. We've seen how this ends: Students being brutalized by cops conjures up images of an infamous crackdown on Columbia's campus in 1968, when police violently arrested hundreds of antiwar student protesters.

When the mainstream media covers these displacements, they tell a story of unsafe, antisemitic protests. It bears repeating: these are peaceful student anti war protesters, many of whom are Jewish.

Unsurprisingly, Biden has already gone so far as to release a statement stoking this fear-mongering around antisemitism on college campuses. Yet he's remained silent on the mass graves being uncovered in Gaza. That's not a coincidence.

This crackdown is a distraction. Our opposition has every intention of continuing to conflate anti-Zionist, anti-war organizing with antisemitism — but we won't lose focus. The bravery of these students in the face of state violence and unrelenting attacks sets an example for all of us. We must all remain just as steadfast in our demands for ceasefire, an end to genocide, and a future of Palestinian liberation.



USE THIS HASHTAG ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHEN POSTING ABOUT THE WALK!

#CTFOODSHAREWALK

Join Connecticut Foodshare at our annual Walk Against Hunger on Saturday, May 4th, 2024, at Dunkin' Park, home of the Hartford Yard Goats! Register here if you would like to participate to raise funds and awareness about food insecurity in Connecticut. Participating benefitting programs will receive 100% of the funds that you raise. Benefitting programs do not need to attend the Walk Against Hunger in person to participate in the online fundraising opportunity.

Event Safety

Connecticut Foodshare is committed to keeping our participants as safe as possible. We follow the guidelines of Dunkin' Park, our host sponsor for this event. All in-person walkers over the 16 are required to register. During the registration process, walkers will be asked to acknowledge and sign our safety waiver.

Walk Day Schedule

Saturday, May 4, 2024 - Dunkin' Park, Hartford, CT

8:00 AM - Check-in opens, entertainment and family activities begin

9:30 AM - Walk program begins with local media personalities, Renee DiNino from iHeart Media/the River 105.9 and Scot Haney from WFSB/Channel 3

10:00 AM - Walk steps off, the route is 1.5 miles, starting and ending at Dunkin' Park

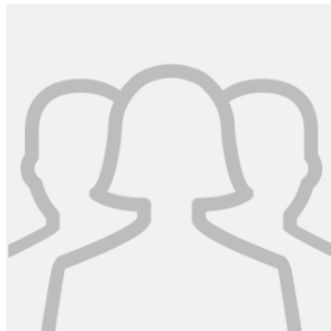
Use this path: <https://donate.ctfoodshare.org/event/walk-against-hunger/e553428>

Or

<https://ctfoodshare.org/> - then at the top of the page select "Register today"

Grace Lutheran Hartford-Friday Gathering

Lets walk until the homeless, hungry, immigrants, and refugees are housed and feed.



JOIN TEAM

DONATE

by Adam Russell Taylor

APR 25, 2024

Sometimes the church can feel hopelessly divided: Disagreements around sexuality are splitting apart Protestant denominations in the U.S. and around the world. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further divided the Orthodox Church. The Catholic Church continues to face fallout over its handling of sexual abuse and schisms over Pope Francis' hopeful efforts to create a more inclusive church. But while the church's divisions tend to grab headlines, I've noticed that examples of unity within the body of Christ often go unnoticed.



When I say “Christian unity,” what I mean isn’t “Christians should all just agree” or even “Christians should ignore our real differences in doctrine and tradition.” Instead, what I mean by “Christian unity” is that when we center our shared identity in Christ — notwithstanding our differences — we can generate trust and build relationships that bear real fruit, increasing cooperation within the church to address challenges in the world. And I say this knowing that there are often many good reasons why Christians are not unified, including differing views on issues that cut to the heart of our faith, such as our interpretation of scripture, what we believe about the role of baptism, and vastly different governance structures, as well as differing views around contentious issues such as abortion and sexuality. But Christian unity is still worth pursuing because it ultimately strengthens our collective witness, advancing the love of God and work of justice.

Last week, I had the privilege of seeing glimpses of that kind of Christian unity in action. As president of Sojourners, I traveled to Accra, Ghana for the **Global Christian Forum**, a gathering that “seeks to offer new opportunities for broadening and deepening encounters” between members of different churches and inter-church organizations. Started in 1998, the GCF fills a gap in the ecumenical movement by trying to make an extra effort to include churches — such as charismatic traditions, African-instituted churches, migrant churches, and megachurches — that haven’t always felt included or accepted in other ecumenical spaces. This year, I was especially inspired to hear from nearly 30 younger Christian leaders who participated in a pre-forum gathering supported by Sojourners and were embraced as full participants in the forum itself.

It feels appropriate that this forum took place in sub-Saharan Africa, which is predicted to be home to **40 percent** of the global Christian population by 2060. Walking into the Ridge Church conference facility reminded me of what it feels like to walk into the headquarters of the United Nations in New York, with people of nearly every nationality, race, and ethnic background mingling and engaged in conversation. Our time together was also filled with rich liturgy and beautiful music, capturing the breadth of cultures and traditions within the global church — from a Ghanaian praise song that we returned to throughout the gathering, to Black freedom spirituals and classic Protestant hymns.

The GCF has two key goals: foster mutual respect and explore our common concerns together. To encourage the former, the forum revolved around small group conversations in which each member shares their own faith story. My own small group included Christian

leaders from China, Zimbabwe, Sweden, Ghana, Canada, and Russia. We offered each other vulnerable details of our own faith journeys, including times of uncertainty and struggle; many of us had wrestled with (and ultimately embraced) a call into ministry and our deep encounters with God's redemptive love and grace. Sharing your faith story — or as we call it in my Black Baptist tradition, your testimony — has a disarming and humanizing effect. We found ourselves developing a sense of kinship, enabling us to reflect together on challenging issues facing both the church and the world.

The **statement** released at the end of the gathering put it well: "To share our personal stories is to witness to the resurrection of Christ together."

Bearing witness to our shared experiences of rebirth and renewal is an essential part of Christian unity. Story-sharing helps us see that while our doctrines and theology differ, we still share an ongoing relationship with Christ — a vertical relationship that then inspires and calls us into deeper horizontal relationships with others. This emphasis on what binds us together shouldn't minimize the significant differences in tradition and doctrine that separate the major branches of the church. Instead, we can recognize these differences as an opportunity to learn, be stretched, encourage, and lovingly challenge each other as we work together to advance God's reign of justice and peace.

Christianity is so often known for what it's against rather than what it is for, but my experience at GCF reminded me that ecumenism is not optional; it's essential for the credibility of our witness and the church's ability to affect positive change.

But Christian unity is never an end unto itself. Throughout GCF, we drew on Jesus' words in John 17, in which Jesus prays earnestly that that his disciples would be one with each other "to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (17:23). In this passage, we see that Christians aren't to strive for unity because it's "nice," but because that kind of oneness tells the world something powerful about who God is; it's inextricably linked to mission, our outward witness, and action.

In his remarks to the forum, Rev. Jerry Pillay, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, echoed the connection between ecumenism and mission: "Our world needs a spiritual and moral renewal; it needs us to speak prophetically and with one voice to the challenges of our times, and we can succeed by constantly allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us and with us and through us to transform the world." While the GCF is not a formal body that makes public statements or advocates around particular issues, speakers in the forum addressed a range of pressing issues including the horrific war in Gaza, the global migration crisis, and Christian persecution. We heard from leaders who imagined what the church could do if we united — despite our differences — on issues of peacemaking and combatting poverty and oppression.

During the forum, we spent a full day journeying together on a pilgrimage of lament and reconciliation to visit one of the "slave castles" on the Cape Coast where millions of enslaved Africans were held before being forced onto ships and sold across the Atlantic. It was jarring to see a **church built on top** of the dungeon where Africans were brutalized — and many died — before the survivors were shipped to the Americas as slaves. Standing in a place where Christians worshipped God while unconscionable suffering took place beneath them, I was reminded how often the church has been complicit with or perpetrated evil, including the more subtle ways that the church continues to ignore grave suffering and injustice in its midst today. And yet, I was also reminded that the church played a key role in initiating a moral campaign against slavery that ultimately led to the end of the transatlantic slave trade. We

ended our pilgrimage with a worship service at a nearby Methodist church, where we shared prayers of lament and pledged our commitment to dismantle racism and end modern-day forms of slavery.

Investing in Christian unity is critical both globally and within our national contexts, a challenge that I'm hopeful the Forum can further advance. My experience at the Forum reminded me of the annual conference of **Christian Churches Together**, which brings together a similarly diverse cross-section of the church and also emphasizes the power of sharing faith stories.

Through CCT, I have witnessed firsthand how relationships built across Catholic, Orthodox, Mainline Protestant, and evangelical leaders have strengthened the witness of the church. Many relationships that were built in the early years of CCT helped to lay the groundwork of trust and mutual respect that contributed to the formation of the **Circle of Protection**, an ecumenical coalition that Sojourners co-created in 2010 to prevent steep cuts that were being proposed to federal programs that benefit and protect low-income Americans. The group remains one of the strongest ecumenical coalitions advocating for federal funding for programs that fight poverty both in the U.S. and around the world.

I'm hopeful that the relationships, trust, and mutual respect that have been built and strengthened at the GCF can help to mitigate future conflicts and even prevent future wars in which religion has been — and still is — misused to justify inaction or violence. Imagine the impact a more united global body of Christ could have in addressing some of the most pressing global challenges, from the climate crisis to the growing migration and refugee crisis to the threat of authoritarianism and religious persecution and extremism. This will require that we lean into some of the harder conversations about what divides us, even as we center what binds us together. And by working together to address common concerns, despite our differences, we can spread God's love and advance God's reign of justice and righteousness.

Adam Russell Taylor

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and author of [*A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community*](#). Follow him on X [@revadamtaylor](#).



HOW TO OVERCOME THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

by
Kendra Cherry, MSEd

Psychologists have long been interested in exactly why and when we help other people. There has also been a tremendous amount of interest in the reasons why we sometimes *don't* help others. The **bystander effect** is a social phenomenon that occurs when people fail to help those in need due to the presence of other people. In many cases, people feel that since there are other people around, surely someone else will leap into action.¹



Factors That Can Help Overcome the Bystander Effect

While the bystander effect can have a negative impact on **prosocial behavior, altruism and heroism**, researchers have identified a number of different factors that can help people overcome this tendency and increase the likelihood that they will engage in helping behaviors.² Some of these include:

Witnessing Helping Behavior

Sometimes just seeing other people doing something kind or helpful makes us more willing to help others.

Imagine that you are walking into a large department store. At the entrance is a bell ringer asking for donations to a charitable organization. You notice that many of the people who walk by are stopping to drop their change into the donation bucket. As a result, you might feel more inspired to stop and donate your own change.

Researchers have found that when we observe other people engaging in prosocial behaviors, such as donating blood, we are more likely to do the same, according to a study published in 2019.³

Being Observant

One of the key reasons people often fail to take action when help is needed is that they do not notice what is happening until it is too late. Ambiguous situations can also make it difficult to determine if help is truly needed.

In one famous experiment published in 1968, participants were less likely to respond when smoke began to fill a room when the other people in the room also failed to respond. Since no one else was taking action, people assumed that there must not be an emergency.⁴

Staying alert and attuned to your situation, rather than relying purely on the responses of those around you, can help you best decide how to react.

Being Skilled and Knowledgeable

When faced with an emergency situation, knowing what to do greatly increases the likelihood that a person will take action. How can you apply this to your own life?

While you certainly cannot be prepared for every possible event that might transpire, taking first aid classes and receiving CPR training could help you feel more competent and prepared to deal with potential emergencies.

Guilt

Researchers have found that feelings of guilt can often spur on helping behaviors. So-called "survivor guilt" is just one example.⁵ Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, some people who had survived the event felt driven to help others in the aftermath.

Having a Personal Relationship

Researchers have long known that we are more likely to help people that we know personally.⁶ In an emergency situation, people in trouble can help cultivate a more personalized response even in strangers by taking a few important steps.

Simple behaviors such as making direct eye contact and engaging in small talk can increase the likelihood that a person will come to your aid.⁷

If you are in trouble, single out an individual from the crowd, make eye contact, and directly ask for assistance instead of making a general plea to the group.

Seeing Others as Deserving of Help

People are also more likely to help others if they think that the person truly deserves it. In one classic study, participants were more likely to give money to a stranger if they believed that the individual's wallet had been stolen rather than that the person had simply spent all their money.

This might explain why some people are more willing to give money to the homeless while others are not. Those who believe that homeless people are in their situation due to laziness or unwillingness to work are less likely to give money while those who believe that these individuals are genuinely deserving of help are more likely to provide assistance.

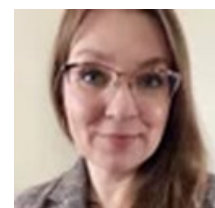
Feeling Good

Feeling good about ourselves can contribute to prosocial behaviors. People who feel happy or successful are more likely to lend assistance, and even relatively small events can trigger such feelings.

Hearing your favorite song on the radio, enjoying a warm summer day, or successfully completing an important task at work can leave you feeling joyful and competent and more likely to help out another person in need. This is often referred to as the "feel good, do good" effect.²

By Kendra Cherry, MSED

Kendra Cherry, MS, is a psychosocial rehabilitation specialist, psychology educator, and author of the "Everything Psychology Book."





Connecticut Society of CPAs (CTCPA) member **Danielle Wellington, CPA of Voya Financial in Windsor** recently graduated from the 2024 Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy, a program designed to strengthen leadership skills, develop and build relationships, and create a collaborative professional services community.

A resident of **Windsor Locks**, Danielle participated in this landmark program with more than two dozen other professionals from various industries and backgrounds, including accounting and finance, law, insurance and architecture.

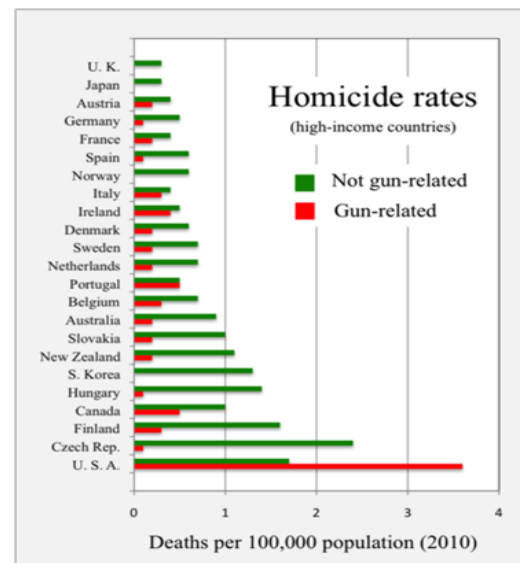
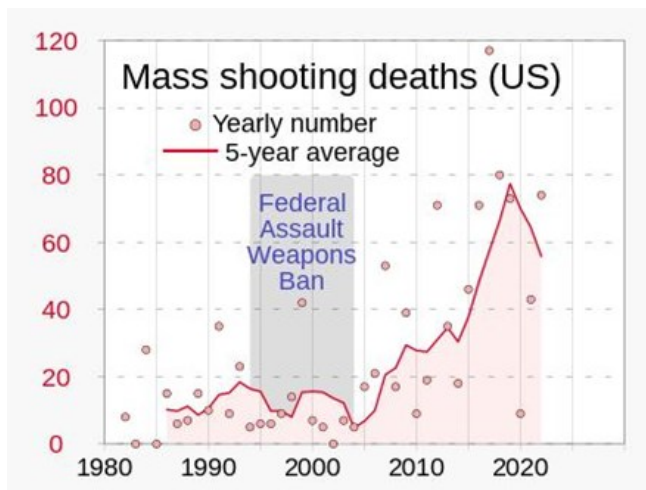
The program, focused on the next generation of business leaders, was presented in partnership with six professional organizations:

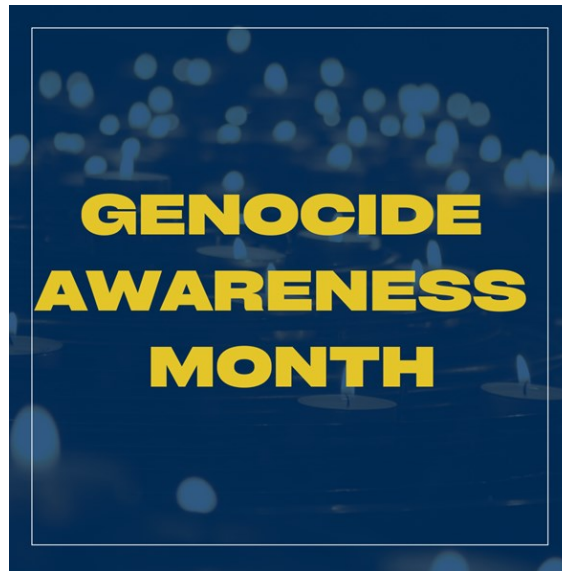
American Institute of Architects, Connecticut,
CFA Society Hartford,
Connecticut Bar Association,
Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants,
Connecticut Young Insurance Professionals, and
Hartford County Bar Association.

"This outstanding group of emerging leaders have transformed together throughout this collaborative six-month program. The forward-thinking leadership skills they have honed will empower them to lead their organizations and their communities through these times of unprecedented change today and into the future," said Bonnie Stewart, CTCPA Executive Director and CEO.

With a membership of more than 6,000 in public practice, business and industry, government, and education, the Connecticut Society of CPA's mission is to advocate on behalf of the accounting profession, foster a professional community, and provide high-quality professional development opportunities.

SIMPLER WAY TO SHOW THE IMPACT OF THE NRA AS A GUN MANUFACTURING LOBBY AND ONE OF THE POLITICAL ARMS OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY





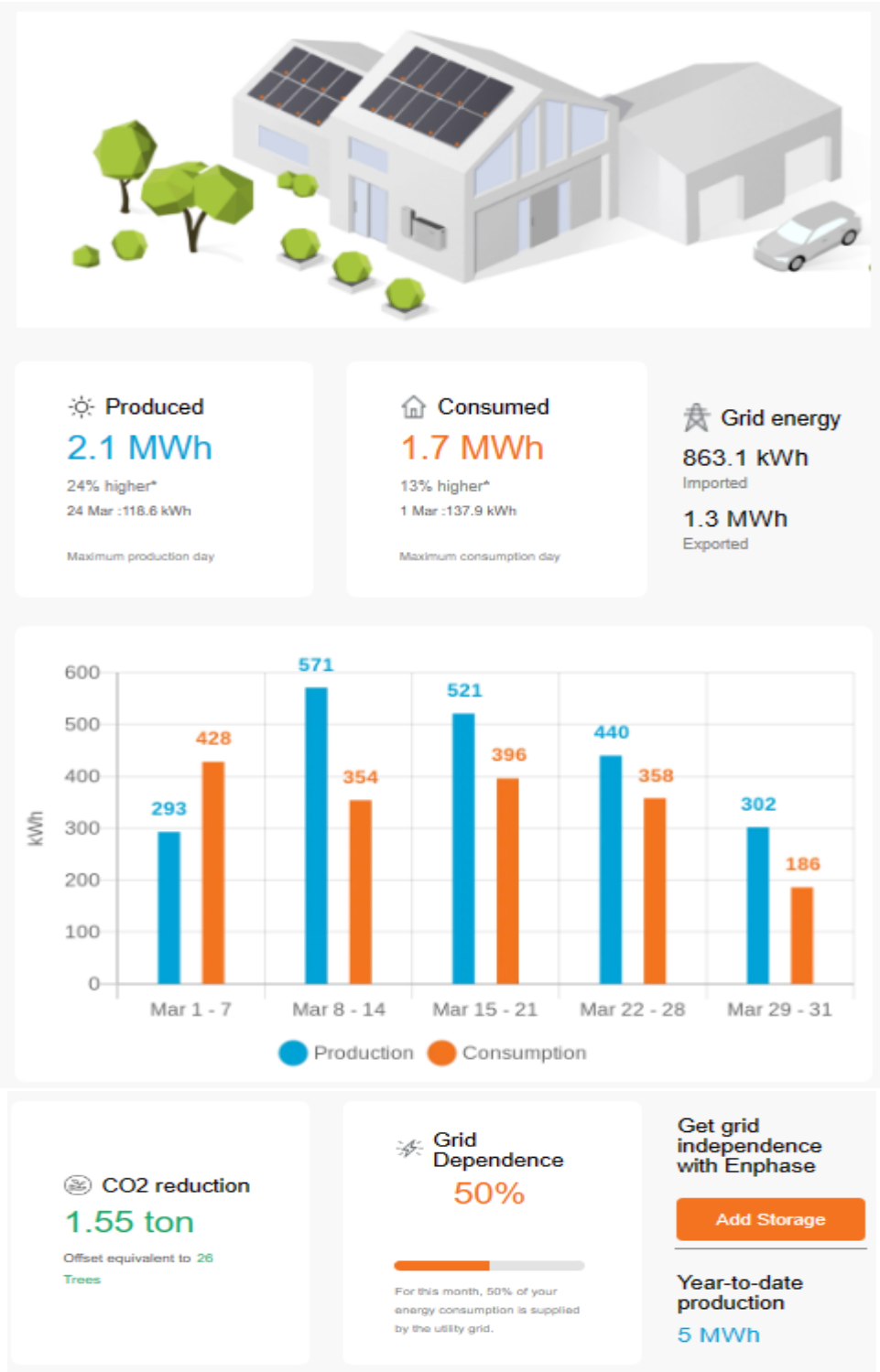
April is recognized as Genocide Awareness Month due to the four genocide commemorations that take place during April: April 7th recognizes the [Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda](#), April 17th memorializes the [Cambodian Genocide](#) and April 24th is [Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day](#). Yom Hashoah, [Holocaust Remembrance Day](#), often takes place during April depending on the Jewish calendar.

Today (April 24, 2024) we recognize Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

We pray for all people of Armenian descent as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day is observed. This day marks the 1915 start of the Armenian genocide that culminated in 1.5 million Armenians being killed at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. Sadly, this genocide became a template for other 20th century genocides. Hitler, beginning the invasion of Poland held this genocide as an example, saying “Who after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians.” In the fall of 2023, the forced deportation by the Azerbaijan government of 120,000 native Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, known as Artsakh to Armenians, occurred. Genocide is a real and present threat again. May God comfort and heal the descendants of all those who were lost, enliven efforts to reclaim Armenian cultural heritage and help people of different religions, races and ethnicities live together in peace.

God of life,
your Spirit hovers over all existence,
bringing life out of nothingness,
beauty out of ashes,
and resurrection life from the depths of the earth.
We pray for the survivors of all genocides and those whose lives were lost.
We remember the victims of violence, discrimination, and persecution
in all forms in our world today.
We pray as ‘never again’ rings out as plea instead of promise.
God of deliverance,
renew our hope in your promise.
Heal the still open wounds through the power of your love and mercy,
That peace and consolation prevail.
In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.

SOLAR PANEL REPORT— March 2024



* As compared to last month's records

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MAY 2024 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.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER!

May 4th - Foodshare Walk - 8:30 a.m. Registration; 10 a.m. Walk Starts

May 4th - Annelies Koenig Celebration of Life 11 a.m.

May 5th - Rev. Dr. William Barber in Hartford - 3 p.m. Immanuel Congregational Church

May 12th - Mother's Day

May 27th - Memorial Day

June 6-8th - NE Synod Assembly - Worcester, MA

Grace Lutheran Church – Readers for May 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
5/5	1	Acts 10: 44-48	Betsy DeRoma
	2	1 John 5: 1-6	Dorothea Glatte
	Psalm	Psalm 98	Unison
5/12	1	Acts 1: 1-11	Judy Butterworth-Kremer
	2	Ephesians 1: 15-23	Rebecca Lewis
	Psalm	Psalm 47	Unison
5/19	1	Ezekial 37: 1-14	Rodney Carr
	2	Acts 2: 1-22	Betsy DeRoma
	Psalm	Psalm 104 24-34, 35b	Alternating men then women
5/26	1	Isaiah 6: 1-8	Barbara Calogero
	2	Romans 8: 12-17	David Eberly
	Psalm	Psalm 29	Unison



Grace Lutheran Church
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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

