



OCTOBER 2024

LIFE SQUEEZED BETWEEN ART, POETRY AND A SPRAY OF HOPE

There are a lovely few paragraphs in the last page of the September issue of Christian Century. I was drawn to the two remarkable works of art, yet my heart was drawn to the hopelessness of the words. As we pray for the world God created, the darkness feels like it will, if it hasn't already, overcome it.

John Kohan, a writer and art collector shares a perspective on two pieces of art created by Kateryna Shadryna, that emerged from the early days of Putin's Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Russians were to have been victorious in a matter of days. After all without any warning, being out-gunned and in a form of disbelief mixed with fear, they were as vulnerable as one might imagine.

Since then, wars, pandemics, political fights, horrific storms, hurricanes, wildfires are consuming the earth.

Shortly after the Russian invasion, and at a time when the fate of their homeland hung in the balance, a number of Ukrainian Greek Catholic icon writers came together in the city of Lviv to take part in a demonstration of how important it was for communities during times of trouble, to offer wood contrasting portraits of the faithful and the hopeful.

WE ARE TOGETHER: The first of these wood panel paintings, suggests real-life scenes of Ukrainians taking shelter in the Kviv metro, during the failed Russian advance on the capital. She depicts the anguished followers of Jesus in a Holy Saturday huddle, supporting each other in prayer, as they try to make sense of the crucifixion. One head protrudes above the confining black rectangle of present woe into the white field of eternity.

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Faith in God's goodness expands into hope for future salvation in the second icon, *THE TREE OF LIFE*. In this second image, where figures bunched together, become joyous dancers, encircling this evergreen biblical symbol that offers its leaves to all "for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2). Shadrina creates icons, immediately recognized by their iridescent rainbow hues. These colors remind us that pure light is composed of all the colors of the spectrum.



Ukraine continues to fight for its life as does Russia, as they, too, are struggling with a counter punch made by Ukraine that is ceasing their land, and causing them to threaten to use nuclear weapons.

One of the candidates to be President of the United States threatens millions of people in our country with either being rounded up and deported, or to be punished or given retribution for anything they ever did in not supporting him or doing what he told them to do. This routine liar, and crooked man is a felon, owes hundreds of millions having been found to operate his firm illegally, and he has acquired and manipulated the Supreme Court making the rule of law almost non-existent. Should he succeed, he will permanently impact the existence of our democracy, and the hopes and dreams of those who see the world and our country differently.

So, let's not forget the message of hope that we can see and feel through artists, poets, and may we trust that somehow we will come to know and feel God's presence which will spray the joy of hope on us all at this time of fear and destruction.

We can VOTE in CT on October 21st. Make sure you are registered.



And here is the poetry:

There is a Field by Sarah Rossiter

Love is the physical structure of the universe.

- Teilhard de Chardin

So he said, but what is love;
a word, that's all, like 'tree'
for instance, one word to hold
the all of it, twig, branch, seed,
white oak, white pine, acorn
resin, leaf or needle, fragile
birch or wild apple, roots,
of course, the inner life,
heartwood, sapwood, cambium,
evolving seasons, sleep and growth,
space surrounding, rain, sun, dirt,
eyes that see and hands that touch,
the bark, the spark that animates,
and, yes, connects where language
fails: *Love is a field, meet me there.*



PASTOR'S MESSAGE - "WE SHALL OVERCOME..."

This issue of Grace Notes is published at a time of great concern and anxiety. These subjects and difficulties will be explored, not out of fear, but hope. We will seek to discuss substantive concerns about everything from war, our faith, the spread of disease, the political and religious challenges facing all people. Housing, jobs, challenges to women's rights, and the miraculous that still is present. Our faith's and our church's responses and the ways other have chosen to come together in new and different ways.

To provide a rich example of such things, please look at the pictures below. They illustrate how gifted people can give witness to so much by way of their craft, that it touches our collective lives. A piece of art created years ago leaves an image for others to imagine, learn from and find solace.

Ron Bell, who lost his son months ago came upon the White Oak Throne a work of art that has been in the park for years. It had been updated by the artist, who also has presented murals and other gifts of beauty to the city and community. In fact, it caught the eye of Ron, who used his natural skills to not only notice the Throne, but to offer to help it to once again be an attraction, as he himself was mourning his son's loss.

Ron began to clean it and examine all aspects of the piece.... others came to watch him and see it. Before long many people were there. The artist died just as he came to share other information about it with him. That led to the community calling for a new plaque, as they talked about this man who truly was dearly beloved by many. Ron was involved as a supervisor early on at Fresh Start, and had gifts to work with wood.

At the urging of the artist, he placed his son's name into the wood. See them below.

Ron has gifts, and we all do. May this issue inform, bring you hope and have you come together in harmony and love with those all around you.

Yes, we shall overcome!



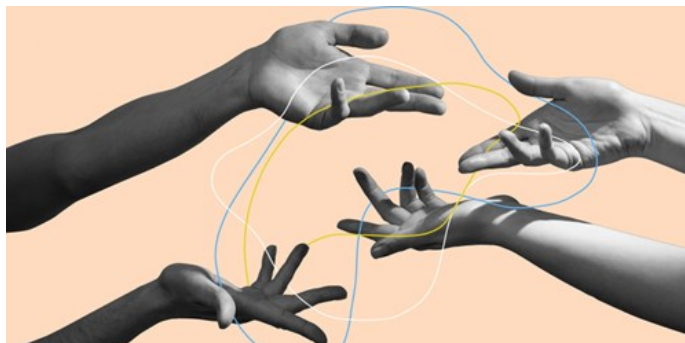
The picture of the plaque is hard to read. Go see it!



A POSTURE OF HOPE

No, everything is not fine. But we can help each other envision a better way.

by Peter W. Marty in the September 2024 issue
Published on September 13, 2024



(Illustration: master1305 / iStock / Getty)

Most of us have participated in conversations in which someone mentions a discouraging political trend or societal crisis of the day. That's usually when other participants weigh in with their own take on present gloom. From there the shape of the conversation deteriorates rapidly. Good cheer gets replaced by a cloud of pessimism. Only a shift to idle chatter about the weather tends to rescue the moment. Despair is easy to come by in anxious and divided times.

But there is another way. We can choose to live with a posture of hope instead of a disposition of dread. In fact, when you open any issue of this magazine, I want you to see our commitment to hope. That's both our legacy at the *Century* and how we wish to be known. To be for good and important things in life is more noble than merely being against disturbing events and trends.

One of the greatest gifts God hands to each of us is our ability to choose. Through our choices we become certain kinds of people or, in the case of journalistic decision making, a certain sort of magazine. Attitudinal choices and adjustments in outlook—when we are able to make them—reveal what kind of people we get to become. David Sipress captures this truth in his *New Yorker* cartoon featuring a couple walking the beach at sunset. They've obviously been arguing. "All right, Stephanie," the man says exasperatedly. "You win. It's great to be alive!"

Yes, it is great to be alive. Negative energy has never taken anyone anywhere significant, so far as I can tell. Complaining about life rarely brings satisfying results. And cynicism about the world around us is just a way of keeping distance and exempting oneself from responsibility or involvement. As poet Christian Wiman once put it, "Cynicism is nothing but a retreat into your own little refuge where you can point and make judgments, all the while feeling a sense of superiority."

In a long section of Luke's Gospel, Jesus speaks of the fear and anxiety that will infiltrate people's lives as they witness distress, persecution, calamity, and more. The cataclysmic events enveloping the earth will be matched only by the chaos rumbling around in people's souls. But then, in a most improbable image, Jesus starts talking about spring. He paints a parable of green leaves appearing on bare trees. Suggesting that summer and the kingdom of

God are near, he calls his followers to stand tall amidst the turmoil as he summons them to live expectantly in hope (Luke 21:5–36).

“In [Jesus Christ] every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes,’” writes the apostle Paul in response to critics who questioned his integrity after he altered his travel plans (2 Cor. 1:20). Bothered that others would consider him unreliable, he makes clear that he’s enthused to live his life with a hope-filled outlook, precisely because he trusts in the yes of Jesus Christ. As the late Peter Gomes said of the gospel, “There are only two reactions [to it]. . . . It is either ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ . . . Either you accept that belief in Jesus means a change in you and in your worldview or you do not.”

Yes might be the most powerful word in the world. It can create, build, and heal. Its capacity to change hearts makes it essential to a posture of hope. And hope is not some silly conviction that everything in society and politics is just fine. It isn’t fine. Hope merely visualizes a better way—a way to walk into the future and, even more importantly, create a future. We at the *Century* are here to do that with you. Thanks for your support, which only furthers our hope-filled take on life.

Peter W. Marty is editor/publisher of the Century (since 2016), and recently retired from 28 years as senior pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport, Iowa. Email Peter at peter_marty@christiancentury.org



CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM AND WHO IS A 'REAL' AMERICAN"



WATCH THIS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8CsPTzJCPE>

In her video addressing Christian nationalism, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us that “what binds us together is not ethnicity, but shared participation in our civic life springing out of our cultural heritages and working for the common good.”

GREATER HARTFORD INTERFAITH ACTION ALLIANCE (GHIAA) ON A ROLL: RAMPS UP FOR NOVEMBER 21 POWER SUMMIT



by Darrell Urban

Grace has been part of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance from its very beginning. Grace gathers weekly and prays for peace, for those hurting with lack of housing, lack of food, health care and a variety of needs. Following our Lord's command, our congregation has sought diligently to minister to people with those needs in our community. Most are quite familiar with the enormous and successful efforts we have undertaken for a congregation of this size.

We know from our work that what we do to reach out and help people often does not get at the root of the problems. Many of the problems we see are the result of the way our society structures and organizes itself socially and politically. We know we have to act to change things in order to create a more equitable and just community in line with the teachings of our biblical faith. We have been doing that through the Greater Hartford Action Alliance (GHIAA) and have been very successful in getting slumlords out of Hartford, passing legislation to get rid of welfare liens, passed legislation that has changed policies on getting rid of the stigma of incarceration for people who have served their time and shown they have changed, created policies that deal with police accountability, and a variety of other issues. This has been done through the power to change social policies. Power comes from two things: Organized money (of which we don't have much of), or organized people. That second source of power is what we have been able to create by joining together with other religious organizations that share the same justice goal.

GHIAA is not some agency we send a check to that takes care of the issues for us. (Although Grace makes an annual donation to pay for the administrative costs of this ministry.) GHIAA is US! The people that make up the 52 Christian, Jewish, Muslim congregations and other institutions.

GHIAA will have a very important Power Summit on November 21st 6:30-8:30 at Weaver High School in Hartford. Huge numbers of people are needed at this event to demonstrate to politicians and power brokers that we are organized and we have power. We need as many people from Grace as possible to attend. Your presence on November 21st sitting in that seat will be very important to send a message. Do you have friends, family, neighbors you can invite to come along? It will be very exciting!

Have a heart! Members of the Grace core group have created a visual board that was unveiled at the Worship service on Sunday, September 29th. Each person committing to attend will have their name on a paper heart that will be attached to the board. We want to watch from Sunday to Sunday to see who has a heart on the board. You may have people from the Grace core group reaching out to you in person or on the phone to invite you to have a heart on the board.

How did we get here and what are the issue campaigns that will be launched at the Power summit on November 21st?

Grace joined Trinity Episcopal Church down the street in February to host house meetings in which (many of us were people from the community engaged in Grace

GREATER HARTFORD INTERFAITH ACTION ALLIANCE (GHIAA) ON A ROLL: RAMPS UP FOR NOVEMBER 21 POWER SUMMIT

(continued from page 7)

ministries as well as members of the Sunday Morning worshiping community) to tell about concerns we care about or that have directly impacted our lives and lives of our family. Especially stories that reflect those concerns. In all, among the various congregations in GHIAA, over 500 people participated.

Over the next few months, the carefully drawn up notes from these house meetings were fed to special groups who reviewed every last word, sorted through, and collated their findings. Some members of Grace were involved in that.

The feedback from this process was presented at a delegate Assembly on June 20th in which delegates from Grace attended. From that gathering research groups were assembled to work on formulating how to deal with these issues. They interview the public leaders that are involved, they do a power analysis and come up with a way we can act that will change something. GHIAA doesn't campaign on something it doesn't think it can win. The following (after the flyer) is an information sheet put out by the GHIAA staff that shows the issues that will be finalized in the campaigns launched at the Power Summit November 21st.



FALL 2024 ISSUE UPDATES



ORGANIZING COMMITMENTS

GHIAA is intentional to ensure our issue campaigns are in alignment with our core values. We demonstrate our ongoing commitment to embodying these values in every facet of our work through these guiding principles:

- Accountability
- Center BIPOC & Under Represented Voices
- Balance Power Dynamics
- GHIAA Leader Led Campaigns
- Partnership
- Racial & Economic Justice
- Strategic Analysis

GHIAA Research Teams have diligently broadened their understanding of the issues to ensure that our next action campaigns reflect our guiding principles. We maintain our commitment to only move forward with action campaigns that are in alignment with our organizational values.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

There is a need for thousands of units of affordable housing in CT. Currently, most affordable housing exists in Urban Areas with many suburban towns employing any number of tactics to prevent the inclusion of affordable housing in their communities. GHIAA intends to organize leaders in our member congregations to build power in their local towns to overcome these barriers and become part of an organized movement to increase affordable housing.

Good Cause Eviction Protection: Most tenants in CT can be evicted for no reason at all and these are called No-Fault Evictions. No-fault evictions have been on a steady increase, leading to homelessness and precarious housing situations for many low-income renters. GHIAA seeks to support legislation to expand Good Cause Eviction Protection in CT.

STATE FISCAL POLICY

No more Fiscal Roadblocks.

We need Strategic Investment.

CT is a wealthy state with billions of dollars stockpiled as surplus. Yet we are starving essential services of necessary resources in order to overstuff our reserves. Analysts have reviewed the Fiscal Roadblocks creating the imbalance and they've identified the Volatility Cap and the Spending Cap as primary offenders because they are misaligned.

The Rainy Day Fund is projected to reach \$4.7 Billion or 21.1% of the net General Fund in 2024. That equals billions blocked from being reinvested into vital and lifesaving services like special education, mental health services, and care for senior citizens. It's time to change these outdated policies. We must reinvest in CT's vital safety net services.

COMBATING RELIGIOUS & RACIAL HATE

GHIAA has an ongoing commitment to anti-oppression values. However, we recognize that values without action are hollow. In response to a groundswell of concern, we have established the new religious and racial hate work group. Drawn from clergy and institutional leaders, this group is addressing the harm caused by antisemitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, and racism. Together we will learn, grow, and deepen our communal relationships through shared understanding. Opportunities will begin in the new year.

MIRA POLLUTED LAND REMEDIATION

CT suburbs made a mess and it's time to clean it up.

The plans for remediation of the land surrounding the trash-to-energy plant are moving forward. However, our work is not done yet. During a recent planning meeting, the MIRA Dissolution Authority (MDA) repropose using the property for an updated trash processing plant. Despite previous guarantees that MIRA land would not be used for trash processing, they have included this as a potential option to “keep their options open.”

Hartford residents have borne the negative health impacts for over 30 years. Residents in the surrounding neighborhoods have some of the highest asthma rates in the state. It is time to hold decision makers accountable.

NEXT STEPS

It's time to kick into high gear!

1. Focus on creating and executing your institution's Turnout Strategy.
2. GHIAA staff and leaders will contact public officials and decision makers to join us at GHIAA's Power Summit. Everyone will be fully informed of all issues and asks in advance. No one will be taken by surprise.
3. Attend the GHIAA Power Summit on Nov 21st and bring everyone you know who wants to create positive change in our communities.
4. Look forward to action for justice in Winter 2025 and beyond.

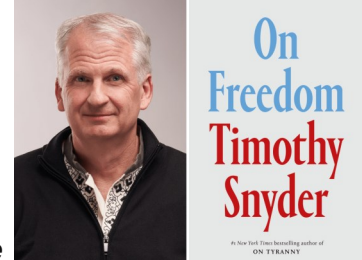
Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (860)527-9860 www.cljct.org/GHIAA

“Freedom is the value of values, because freedom is the condition in which we’re actually able to bring other values together,” Snyder said. “And so it’s inherently a happy thing. And I think once you think about it on the bright lines, then you move spiritually in that direction.”

by [David Goodman](#) September 25, 2024, 5:17 pm

Professor Timothy Snyder and his book, “On Freedom.” Photo courtesy of Timothy Snyder

The Vermont Conversation with David Goodman is a VT Digger podcast that features in-depth interviews on local and national issues with politicians, activists, artists, changemakers and citizens who are making a difference. Subscribe on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#) or [Spotify](#) to hear more.



Timothy Snyder is the Richard C. Levin Professor of History and Global Affairs at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. The Guardian wrote, “In the years since the 2016 U.S. presidential election there has been no more significant critic of the advance of Trump’s form of nihilism than Timothy Snyder.” This year, he has testified before Congress about foreign influence in the U.S. and has campaigned tirelessly in support of Ukraine in its war against Russia.

In 2017, Timothy Snyder wrote a short book, “On Tyranny: 20 Lessons from the Twentieth Century.” It was a cautionary tale drawn from Snyder’s studies of totalitarian regimes. He mused about how lessons from foreign regimes like Hungary, Russia and Eastern Europe applied to the U.S. The lessons were warning signs that signaled when a country was veering toward totalitarianism. “On Tyranny” was the New York Times bestselling nonfiction book of 2017 and stayed on bestseller lists for years.

Snyder has a new book, “On Freedom,” in which he reflects on what it means to be truly free. He talks about the difference between “freedom from” — or negative freedom — and “freedom to,” which he says is what a free society must embrace.

Snyder said that “freedom from” leads to “a clash of all against all. Because if freedom is just me against other stuff and I never have to ask who I am or what I want, then eventually I start to see you as a barrier.”

Sen. J.D. Vance is an example of someone who espouses negative freedom. “His view is that government can’t do anything and therefore it won’t do anything and therefore my oligarch friends get to run everything. And the only task that I have as a politician is a kind of performer who makes up stories that get people angry at one another and fight one another. Negative freedom leads ... to a moral vacuum. It leads to political helplessness, and eventually it leads to social self-destruction.”

By contrast, “freedom to” is “not just a matter of ... women not being oppressed, it’s also a matter of their having health care so they can be free.”

“There’s a positive feedback loop between doing things together and being more free as individuals.”

Is the U.S. on a glide path to fascism?

“Not a glide path, because I think history is made up of the structures and the trends but it’s also made up of the funny little bumps that nobody expected,” Snyder replied. “I think it’s fair to say that we are at a moment where things can go either way, and I think it’s quite clearly defined now, precisely because the way Kamala Harris is talking about freedom. She’s very much in a future orientation.”

By contrast, Donald Trump “is a guy who, facing prison and thinking about nothing except himself, needs to die in bed and that bed has to be in the White House and the rest of us be damned,” said Snyder. “He’s also a person who’s filled with grievance about a story that he made up himself. The internet is full now of people who use AI to generate fake images and then get mad at the fake images.”

“This is not a time to be unaware of choices or to be cynical about voting or to imagine that history or something is going to take care of us. Only we are going to take care of this for us.” Snyder writes that “being joyous is the first step to freedom.”

“Freedom should make us happy because freedom is about caring about the little things that people care about and about being able to put those things together in our own unique ways and maybe to bring them to life, whether that’s a family or whether that’s a hobby or whether it’s a profession or whether it’s a sport or whether it’s a getaway,” said Snyder.

“Freedom is the condition in which we’re actually able to bring other values together. So it’s inherently a happy thing.”

THE CLERGY LETTER PROJECT AND THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

The 2024 presidential election may well be the most important election of our lifetimes and clergy members have critical advice for voters.

Since its inception, 17,359 religious leaders from all 50 states, representing a host of religions and denominations, have joined The Clergy Letter Project. While the initial focus of The Clergy Letter Project was to counter attempts by school boards to ban the teaching of evolution or supplement it with the inclusion of creationism, members quickly realized that religion and science have much more in common than this single issue. The Clergy Letter Project’s mission thus grew to promote a broader understanding of the relationship between religion and science to encourage policymakers to make use of the teachings of both disciplines.

Values central to the mission of The Clergy Letter Project, respect for truth, for science, for diverse faith traditions, and for the dignity of all persons, reflect many of the dominant differences between the two major party candidates for president.

Each year there is growing scientific evidence that human induced climate change is already seriously impacting many parts of our country and the world. Unless climate change is treated as the existential threat that it is, it will have a devastating impact on both our country and the world in the coming years. Care for the poor and disenfranchised lies at the heart of our diverse faith traditions, with many vulnerable communities already suffering from the consequences of climate change.

THE CLERGY LETTER PROJECT AND THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

(continued from page 12)

The Clergy Letter Project has regularly spoken out forcefully, from both religious and scientific perspectives, about how all human beings are worthy of respect and fair treatment, how we are all part of one species, and how attempts to divide us are counterproductive and immoral.

Both religion and science recognize and promote truth as a foundational value for all their endeavors. While politics has seldom been the best place to find truth, lack of respect for truth and the constant use of deception to advance a political agenda must be recognized and rejected.

Finally, The Clergy Letter Project has worked diligently to promote civil discourse about complex issues, recognizing that it is only when we engage with fellow members of the community by listening respectfully and speaking thoughtfully that we are able to make progress towards resolving those difficult issues.

The differences between the two major party candidates on these and on many other issues are clear and profound.

Because the results of this presidential election will have such immense consequences for our country and for the world, The Clergy Letter Project strongly urges all eligible voters to carefully examine the positions and attitudes of the contenders with respect to both religion and science. The Clergy Letter Project urges voters to cast their votes for the team they believe best reflects the values outlined above and which will likely yield the most positive results for our social, moral and environmental well-being.

More information about The Clergy Letter Project can be found at www.theclergyletterproject.org

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YES! JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR JUST EVISCERATED TRUMP AND HIS LEGAL TEAM'S ENTIRE IMMUNITY ARGUMENT:

Justice Sotomayor is SPOT ON!
Trump didn't cause January 6th because it was an official act of office – he did it for personal gain.

The precedent that Trump's immunity argument could set – would turn us into an oligarchy!



"IF THE PRESIDENT DECIDES THAT HIS RIVAL IS A CORRUPT PERSON AND HE ORDERS THE MILITARY TO ASSASSINATE HIM, IS THAT WITHIN HIS OFFICIAL ACTS FOR WHICH HE CAN GIVE IMMUNITY? **"HE'S NOT DOING THESE ACTS IN FURTHERANCE OF AN OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY, HE'S DOING IT FOR PERSONAL GAIN."**



OFER SHORR CAN GO BACK TO HIS JOB!



Over the last week, the refuser and educator Ofer Shorr was targeted and attacked by a right-wing city mayor and the Israeli Ministry of Education, who tried to fire him, because he published a video stating that he will refuse again as he did in the past. After a campaign that was supported by Refuser Solidarity Network, we won! Ofer Shorr can go back to his job, educate students and continue to express his political views and talk about refusing. This is an achievement not just for Ofer but for the entire anti-war movement, a push back against the deterioration of freedom of speech and expression.



Ofer refused in 2003 during the second intifada. Over the last year, he took part in AniSiravti ("I refused" in Hebrew), a new initiative of older reserve refusers who are running social media campaigns with video statements of past and present soldiers declaring their refusal of the occupation, apartheid and war on Gaza.

In his video he said: "Every time I did reserve duty and experienced the occupation, I became more depressed. I saw that this had no connection to security. It was a matter of power and control." When the Second Intifada broke out, "it was a breaking point for me. I decided I would no longer do reserve duty in the occupied territories."

His resonant message was met with harassment from students and teachers at his teaching job, followed by calls to be fired by the city's mayor. Days later, he was summoned by the Education Ministry and was barred from entering the classroom without any legal basis. This is obviously not the first time we've seen and reported on the political persecution of educators here in Israel. many others who are part of a much longer history of the state threatening people's very livelihoods to squash their dissent. At least 35 cities, towns and universities have taken disciplinary actions against teachers and professors since October 7.

Now, Ofer is refusing to give in to the political witch hunts barring him from his livelihood. "I'm coming to do my job, and they're supposed to let me do it. I won't sit at home being afraid," he says. Israel tried to silence him but it backfired. "Ani Siravti" backed by RSN, started a campaign to support Ofer with legal aid, press and media campaigns. After two weeks of intense campaigning, the Ministry of Education backed down from its demand. Ofer is back in the classroom.

Despite the campaign's success, being a refuser and a dissident is hard and straining and it will not end there. Even after the actual act of refusal itself, many Israeli refusers experience persecution and social isolation.

Refuser Solidarity Network stands behind Ofer and his fight. Through legal aid, press and media campaigns, we are determined to support any refuser in their fight for freedom, equality and justice for all from the river to the sea.

In solidarity,
Mattan Helman
Executive Director
Refuser Solidarity Network



CHURCH NEWS



FRIDAY GATHERING

General Notes:

- Chief Chef - Emma Coleman-Carr is the Chief Chef for Friday Gatherings. In that role, she is responsible for all kitchen related activities, including the Chef schedules, making sure they have the support they need, managing the kitchen and ordering necessary supplies. If anyone has any comments about any chef, or activity in the kitchen, please be sure to share them with Emma.

Donations needed - we have discovered a shortage in forks, mugs and cups. If you have extras, please bring them to the church when you can. The office is open from 10 to 3 Monday through Friday.

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.

Recent Special Activities -

- 9/6 - David Eberly entertained us all with his delightful piano playing. Such a gift! Thank you, David, we will be sure to ask you to return soon.
- 9/20 - a team from St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Avon (a partner of Grace), prepared and served Friday Dinner at Grace. It was a great night! Thank you, St. Matthew! See pictures on the next page.



GRACE CLEAN-UP DAY - SAVE THE DAY!

October 26th from 9 a.m. to noon.

Please volunteer to help keep our church beautiful!
We'll focus on inside so it will not be weather dependent.
Please let Judy Butterworth-Kremer know at judyvbk@aol.com if you'd like to help.
More information to come as we plan.

Special Dates of Note

11/28 - Thanksgiving Day - there will be no service on this day.

WALKING THOUGHTS - Taking a Walk in the Woods – Without Your Screen

A Blog by H. Paul Santmire (a former Grace Pastor)



I first heard about the MIT social scientist, Sherry Turkle, in a radio news report, while my wife and I were stalled in commuter traffic. This was the story. She had required her students to turn off their electronic devices during her lectures. In the process, she had elicited much resistance. So I was not surprised to learn from a recent op-ed essay (Mattia Ferraresi, Boston Globe, September 29, 2024, K 5) that Turkle has more recently spoken out against the alienating effects of what she called constant connectivity, arguing “that people are condemned to be ‘forever elsewhere’ due to the dopamine lure of their screens.”

WALKING THOUGHTS - Taking a Walk in the Woods – Without Your Screen

(continued from page 15)

I have a response. Put down your screen and take a walk in the woods. I'm well aware that going out into the woods isn't a fresh idea. I'm in very good company here. Henry David Thoreau once wrote a compelling essay on walking. And he did a lot of it in Concord and also elsewhere, from strolling along the beaches of Cape Cod to climbing the arduous heights of Mt. Katahdin in Maine. John Muir likewise walked profusely and wrote about that experience profusely, as in his essay, "A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf." I welcome all that kind of attention to walking. I think that one cannot say too much in favor of the practice, especially for folks of my advanced age.

Which prompts me, often these days, to venture out on many – very modest – walks of my own, especially the kind that often preoccupy me on the forest paths around my family's old farmhouse in rural, southwestern Maine. I have written about those walks often.

But I'm not sure whether I have, by that writing, really reached many – any? – in today's younger generations. Why? Those busy folks may be too preoccupied with their phones.

Be that as it may, I'm not going to give up celebrating walking whenever I can, because, in addition to everything else, I believe – with Thoreau and Muir – that walking can be a charged spiritual discipline, particularly for those who are seeking to follow the Christian way.

Christianity is a profoundly earthly religion. God Godself has taken on flesh, according to the witness of the Gospel of John (1:14). Christian creeds, in the same spirit, insist on "the resurrection of the body." And everything ends, according to the witness of the Bible, with the dawning of a new heavens and a new earth. For Christianity, matter matters.

And Christianity has always been a religion on-the-way, a pilgrimage religion. My own daughter-in-law is currently walking the French Way of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, with countless other pilgrims.

When I was a child, and my mind would on occasion drift off during Sunday sermons, I sometimes wondered what heaven would, one day, be like. I now firmly believe that one thing that the saints will be doing in the time of the heavenly new creation of all things on the Last Day will be this: some, if not all, will be found walking in the heavenly woods, with, I imagine, no screens in hand.

THANK YOU, ST MATTHEW!



Scholars, pastors, and activists on hopeful action to undo this heretical belief system.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024

BY WILLIAM J. BARBER II, JENNIFER GARCIA BASHAW, JAMES SPENCER, AMAR D. PETERMAN, MATTHEW HILDRETH, DIANA OESTREICH, CARLOS A. RODRÍGUEZ, LISA JACOB

WEAPONIZED CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM seeks a “Christian” government that would erode civil rights and undercut election integrity and democratic principles. It endorses the use of violence to obtain or maintain power; embraces white supremacy; and distorts Christian language, symbols, and identity into tools for political manipulation and gain.

At the same time, beliefs about “God and country” exist on a wide spectrum. White Christian nationalism is sometimes supported by people who are not white. And stifling all participation by people of faith in public life is not a suitable alternative to nationalism.

In other words: It’s complicated. You’re not alone if you are confused, concerned, or dismayed by these topics. But hopeful action is possible. The following short essays by scholars, pastors, and activists offer insights on Christian nationalism and how to dismantle it.—*The Editors*

PROPHETIC FAITH
by William J. Barber II

IF FAITH WERE not powerful, people in power would not invest so much to manipulate it for their own interests. When we oppose Christian nationalism, we must begin with a recognition of the power of faith.

As the divide between the super-rich and the poor has grown wider in the U.S. over the past half century, poor communities have been offered divisive culture wars and the false hope of an individualistic prosperity gospel.

Faith has the power to bring us together and build up a democracy where everyone can thrive. Every movement toward a more perfect union in our nation’s past has been powered and sustained by deep faith traditions. We need to learn from the faith of Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and William Lloyd Garrison; Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, and Ella Baker. This rich theological heritage helps us guard against the forces that distort Christianity to justify extremism. But it also prepares us to practice prophetic faith in our own lives and ministries.

“Woe unto you who legislate evil and rob the poor of their right,” the prophet Isaiah declares. In his first sermon, recorded in Luke 4, Jesus takes up Isaiah’s scroll to proclaim “good news to the poor.” Any alternative to the religious nationalism that calls itself “Christian” must embody this prophetic proclamation for the 135 million Americans who are poor or low-income today. As the divide between the super-rich and the poor has grown wider in the U.S. over the past half century, poor communities have been offered divisive culture wars and the false hope of an individualistic prosperity gospel.

In a time of extreme inequality, Ezekiel says God looked for someone to stand in the gap but found none. Several chapters later, though, God sends Ezekiel to prophesy to a valley of dry bones. There Ezekiel witnesses the power the rejected have when they come together and rise up as a nonviolent army.

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN COUNTER CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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Poor people in the United States today are the largest swing vote in national elections. If they unite around an agenda, they have the power to reconstruct American democracy. God has seen fit to ordain those who have been rejected in this world to lead the revival of love, justice, and mercy that we so desperately need. We embody an alternative to religious nationalism when we join God in this work.



William J. Barber

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, president of Repairers of the Breach and founding director of the Yale Center for Public Theology and Public Policy, is the author of *White Poverty: How Exposing Myths about Race and Class Can Reconstruct American Democracy*.

THE OPPOSITE OF THE GOSPEL

by Jennifer Garcia Bashaw

ADHERENTS TO CHRISTIAN nationalism believe they follow Christian principles. In reality, Christian nationalism is anti-Christian, upending biblical principles.

The principles that Christian nationalism prioritizes over the worship of God — white supremacy, authoritarianism, the pursuit of power and dominance, and the violence of militarism — directly oppose the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

Christian nationalism enacts an insidious form of idolatry. The first commandment of the covenant that Yahweh makes with Israel is “you shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). There are countless stories about the disastrous consequences of worshiping anything other than Israel’s God. The biblical witness implores the people of God to not prioritize anything over the worship of their God. Christian nationalism, in practice, does just the opposite. More than that, the principles that Christian nationalism prioritizes over the worship of God — white supremacy, authoritarianism, the pursuit of power and dominance, and the violence of militarism — directly oppose the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

In his life, Jesus protected the marginalized and vulnerable (women, the poor, the infirmed, the outcast) while pushing against political and religious powers that perpetuated systems of dominance and abuse. In his death, Jesus submitted to those forces of empire to stand in solidarity with those who suffered under their rule. His resurrection solidified the truth of his teaching, that God’s power and kin-dom is a life-giving, peace-bringing reign that turns empire on its head. Together, Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection model for Christians how we should live, that we must *oppose* the death-dealing powers that cause suffering in the world.

“Christian” nationalism, in contrast, *aligns with* those powers and results not in the defense of the most vulnerable people, but in their dehumanization. Nothing could be further from the teachings of the Bible and Jesus’ ministry.



Jennifer Garcia Bashaw is associate professor of New Testament and Christian ministry at Campbell University. She is the author of *Scapegoats: The Gospel through the Eyes of Victims and John for Normal People*.

Jennifer Garcia Bashaw

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN COUNTER CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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Illustrations by Ben Jones



NATIONALIST DELUSIONS by James Spencer

IN NOTES ON NATIONALISM, George Orwell wrote: “Nationalism is power hunger tempered by self-deception.” Nationalism is a form of ideological capture similar to other “isms” that sacrifice reality for simplicity and a false sense of control. Christian nationalism is one species of nationalism. As such, it pursues power tempered by delusions.

Christians do not pursue political power but patience as we wait for God to make all things new.

Christian nationalists seek the power to govern the United States on their own terms. Believing that America has drifted from its Christian origins and values, Christian nationalists believe they must guide the nation back to the right course. Guided by a selection of biblical maxims and Christian values, Christian nationalists believe they can ensure a strong nation for future generations. Seeking the power to govern becomes altruistic.

Christian nationalism’s delusions inform its interest in power, implying that a certain standard of morality will guarantee America’s future. There is little biblical reason to think that a minimal standard of morality will sustain our nation. The biblical text suggests that God limits the duration of nations (Acts 17:26) and will only allow a certain amount of “iniquity” (Genesis 15:16). Second, it implies that ongoing legislation and enforcement will keep human sin in check. As I wrote in *Serpents and Doves*, “If Israel could not overcome human sin despite its unique, God-given advantages, why is it that we think a Christianized version of the United States can?” Law and order are not trivial, but they are limited. Christian nationalism overestimates the state’s potential.

There are other Christian nationalist delusions, but it seems important to end with a positive theological account of Christian politics. Our call is to follow Christ even if the world never changes. Christians may engage politically so long as doing so does not diminish our capacity to point to and glorify the Triune God. To do so, we remember that Christians are not responsible for fixing the world, but for living faithfully in a world so broken only God can fix it. Christians do not pursue political power but patience as we wait for God to make all things new (Revelation 21:5).



James Spencer, author of *Serpents and Doves: Christians, Politics, and the Art of Bearing Witness* and *Christian Resistance: Learning to Defy the World and Follow Christ*, is president of the D.L. Moody Center and Useful to God ministries.

James Spencer

ANTITHETICAL TO LOVE by Amar D. Peterman

INSTEAD OF CHRISTIAN nationalism, I want people to love their neighbors.

If Jesus' life and ministry teach us anything, it is that this control is not only antithetical to love, but it also actively works *against* love.

Christian nationalism is, at its core, a pursuit of control — of people, of land, of resources, of ideas, of speech — amid a perceived moment of chaos. Rather than seeing control as something we wield only in service to a greater good, Christian nationalists enjoy control for its own sake. It is, as St. Augustine describes, like an exiled community journeying home who, along the way, become so enthralled with the ships and carts transporting them that they forget why they embarked on this homebound journey in the first place. Christians who are infatuated with control will always lose sight of what God calls us to enjoy: God and neighbor.

If Jesus' life and ministry teach us anything, it is that this control is not only antithetical to love, but it also actively works *against* love. The determinative control that Christian nationalists seek to wield is the very control that God gives up. God does not force our hand but instead beckons us to love and enjoy God because of God's good and loving action toward us. God forfeits control by entering the chaotic waves and ripples of our contingency and creaturehood and making Godself known to us in Jesus Christ.

By returning control to its rightful place as something we *use* rather than *enjoy*, we are released to the radical, loving possibilities of moving in and through our world recognizing that Jesus is Lord, and we are not. Truly, the possibilities of goodness, flourishing, community, reconciliation, and transformation are not brought about by domination. They are made possible by the divine love of God flowing in and through us as we love a God who has commanded that we love our neighbors.



Amar D. Peterman

Amar D. Peterman is an Indian American scholar working at the intersection of faith and public life. He is writing a book on seeking the common good, to be published by Eerdmans.

Illustrations by Ben Jones



YOU ARE NOT ALONE by **Matthew Hildreth**

ACROSS THE COUNTRY thousands of rural Americans are working to slow the spread of Christian nationalism in our communities, and we are facing overwhelming odds.

Millions of pro-democratic voters live in small towns and rural communities. We're just in hiding.

Nationally, about 3 in 10 Americans sympathize with Christian nationalism. In rural states such as North Dakota, Mississippi, Alabama, and West Virginia, that number climbs to nearly 5 in 10.

Among my faith community (white evangelical Protestants), the numbers are especially alarming. Thirty-one percent of us support the statement: "Because things have gotten so far off track, true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country."

The vocal and visible presence of Christian nationalism in our communities can be overwhelming. Those of us in small towns and rural communities who disagree with Christian nationalist ideas often feel isolated, alone, and afraid. It can be scary to be the only person in your church or community who supports democratic values. But the fact is, you're not alone. Millions of pro-democratic voters live in small towns and rural communities. We're just in hiding.

That's why leaders in our rural network at RuralOrganizing.org are distributing thousands of yard signs that say, "We support choice, freedom, and democracy." Our research shows that these signs lead to multiple conversations with friends, families, and neighbors about the importance of supporting our democratic institutions.

Putting up a yard sign is a small step, but it's critical. We can't address Christian nationalism on our own. It takes an entire community; we can't build it in the dark. We must show our allies in the shadows that they are not alone. And if we're going to address the Christian nationalist ascendancy in rural America, it's easier if we all jump in together.



Matthew Hildreth is executive director of Rural Organizing.

Matthew Hildreth

A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN FIRST by **Diana Oestreich**

IN THE MIDDLE of the night in Iraq, I woke up to my sergeant calling for a medic. I rolled out of bed, grabbing my gun and medic bag. While I was sitting in the tent clinic waiting for my patient to be seen, a soldier leaned over and in a conspiratorial whisper said, "I'm not a conscientious objector, but I love Jesus and there's no way I would take away another person's chance at knowing God for eternity. I'm a truck driver, and it's dangerous out here. I have a wife and kids

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN COUNTER CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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back home too. But I refuse to load bullets in my weapon.”

Jesus requires us to lay down the sword while Christian nationalism calls us to pick it up. Christ commands us to love our enemies while Christian nationalism requires us to conquer them.

His words stung. What am I willing to give my life for? What am I willing to take a life for? My unflinching answer to both of those questions had always been “America.”

Waging war in Iraq forced me to confront that I was trying to serve two masters: Christian nationalism and Christ. Because Jesus requires us to lay down the sword while Christian nationalism calls us to pick it up. Christ commands us to love our enemies while Christian nationalism requires us to conquer them. Christian nationalism divides us from Jesus.

That night I went back to my tent and unloaded the bullets from my gun. With each emptied bullet, I found freedom to give my allegiance to Jesus first and my country second. Obeying Jesus’ command to love my enemies instead of killing them is how I became a citizen of heaven first.

We can’t build a Christian nation marked by God’s mercy, forgiveness, and self-sacrificial love using the tools of death, destruction, and deception.

Waging war cost me everything, but finding my freedom from Christian nationalism is what saved my life on the battlefield of Iraq and will change your life too.



Diana Oestreich

Diana Oestreich is a former combat medic, activist and author. She is the founder of The Waging Peace Project: Activating Justice and Instigating Joy by committing acts of courage right where we live, and the author of Waging Peace: One Soldier's Story of Putting Love First

Illustrations by Ben Jones



HOW CHRISTIANS CAN COUNTER CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE by Carlos A. Rodríguez

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IS an oxymoron. I know, because I have been a Christian and a nationalist. And I could not do both at the same time.

Jesus was clear: Welcome the stranger. Nationalism is clear: Reject the stranger, war with the stranger, destroy the stranger.

To be a Christian (aka a Christ follower) means following a leader who never led an army, who never used a weapon, who opened the table to outsiders, and who told us to welcome the stranger (as a way of welcoming Jesus).

To be a nationalist means that you put the nation above all. It is a type of worship of the history and race of one people over others. It's a faith statement that says, "We are superior AND WE MUST BE PROTECTED."

To be a proper Christian nationalist you must be bad at Christianity and bad at caring for your country.

It's time to choose.

When I pastored a church in North Carolina, I tried to start a Spanish-speaking service and declared our space a sanctuary. You know, so that undocumented migrants, who speak Spanish, could come worship Jesus without fear of being chased by ICE. But apparently "protecting" the nation against undocumented mothers, fathers, and children was more important than following Jesus.

Jesus was clear: Welcome the stranger.

Nationalism is clear: Reject the stranger, war with the stranger, destroy the stranger. Christian nationalism is not a religion or a form of Christianity. It's a cultural framework that promotes the fusion of Christianity with American civic life — which is impossible when you're trying to follow Jesus into the margins.

Christian nationalism: Our country is blessed. It's manifest destiny. Our ways are superior. Our Constitution is divine. God chooses the U.S.

Christ: Love thy neighbor. Serve others. Welcome the stranger. Care for the poor and the sick. Be a peacemaker. For God so loved the world.



Carlos Rodríguez

Carlos A. Rodríguez is an author and founder of The Happy Givers, a nonprofit addressing food insecurity and other needs in Puerto Rico.

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN COUNTER CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

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CHANGE IS POSSIBLE by Lisa Jacob

I WAS IN pastoral ministry for the past 13 years. I saw the toxicity of this Christian nationalist ideology and the way that it was captivating minds and hearts. To me it is a deep distortion of the gospel. As a pastor I felt a great responsibility to develop people and help them understand the ways of Jesus and how that is counter to this ideology.

How do we help churches interrogate their biases around policies and practices that uplift Christian nationalism?

When we think about addressing Christian nationalism, there are a few approaches. One is trying to develop awareness. Only a small percentage of the population are true champions of Christian nationalism, but many people are adherents or accommodators of some Christian nationalist beliefs. You address awareness through conversations and classes, trying to help change minds and hearts, most likely of those in the accommodator group.

One resource, for people who have no idea about Christian nationalism, is *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy*, by Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry. Another resource for conversations is Pamela Cooper-White's book *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide*. She writes about three different thresholds: green light conversations, yellow light conversations, and red light conversations. We need to nuance conversations with people depending on where they are in their adoption of this ideology. She gives tools to think through that.

A second way to counter Christian nationalism is addressing the policies it impacts. Our coalition in North Texas has taken this route. We've focused on Tarrant County, where Fort Worth is, and Dallas County.

Through lots of conversations, we've discerned three focus areas. One is education — fighting for public schools and public-school teachers, specifically countering book bans and vouchers. The second area is immigration, as Christian nationalism influences the anti-immigrant narrative. The third area is church engagement. How do we help churches interrogate their biases around policies and practices that uplift Christian nationalism? We then find a new way forward, helping churches discern a theological framework for political and civic engagement in contrast to Christian nationalism.

There's so much that we can do to address Christian nationalism. But I often feel we are captivated by hopelessness. Change is possible. If we're not grounded in our hope of what could be — and what we want to see our world be — then we will be overwhelmed by the waves of issues and policy. I don't know if we'll see the end to this in our lifetime, but our future is worth the fight.

For a list of additional resources and effective actions for Christians to support democracy, go to sojo.net/steps-to-democracy.

Lisa Jacob

Lisa Jacob is the North Texas organizer for [Christians Against Christian Nationalism](#), a project of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

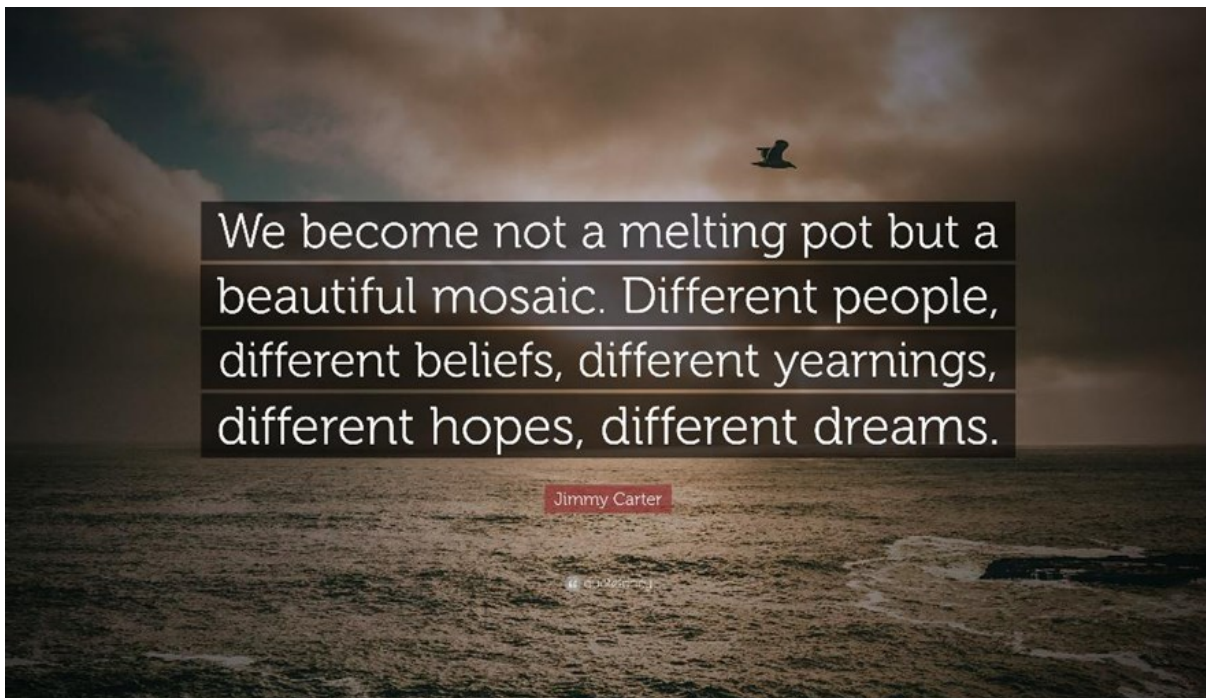


HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, PRESIDENT CARTER!



October 1st was President Jimmy Carter's 100th birthday. Please join us in wishing him a happy one, and thanking him for all he has done for America and the world throughout his incredible life .

Happy birthday, President Carter! And thank you.



SOLAR PANEL REPORT - August 2024



OCTOBER 2024 BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES!



***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 October 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
10/6	1	Genesis 2: 18-24	Dorothea Glatte
	2	Hebrews 1: 1-4; 2: 5-12	Betsy DeRoma
	Psalm	Psalm 8	Read in Unison
10/13	1	Amos 5: 6-7, 10-15	Judy Butterworth-Kremer
	2	Hebrews 4: 12-16	Quincy Coleman
	Psalm	Psalm 90: 12-17	Pastor even verses; congregation odd
10/20	1	Isaiah 53: 4-12	Rebecca Lewis
	2	Hebrews 5: 1-10	Nina Kretschmer
	Psalm	Psalm 91: 9-16	Rodney Carr
10/27	1	Jeremiah 31: 31-34	Dale Eberhardt
	2	Romans 3: 19-28	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Psalm 46	Rodney Carr



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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

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