



# GRACE NOTES

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

**JULY/AUGUST 2023**

Irish poet Pádraig Ó Tuama wrote this  
prayer for those dwelling in the  
shadowlands:  
**God of darkness**  
**You must be the god of darkness**  
**because if you are not, whom else can**  
**we turn to?**  
**Turn to us now.**  
**Turn to us.**  
**Turn your face to us.**  
**Because it is dark here.**  
**And we are in need. We are people in**  
**need.**  
**We can barely remember our own**  
**truth, and if you too have**  
**forgotten,**  
**then we are without a hope of a map.**  
**Turn to us now.**  
**Turn to us.**  
**Turn your face to us.**  
**Because you turned toward us in the**  
**body of incarnation.**  
**You turned toward us.**  
**Amen.**

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## **I AM NOT A REPUBLICAN, NOT A DEMOCRAT, AND NOT A CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST...**

YES, I vote. YES, I work for Peace. YES, I tell the truth, YES, I am against assault weapons.  
YES, I fear for our children. YES, I care about the 110 million people in the world who no longer  
live in their homes or countries due to climate change, war and terrorism. YES, I act to protect  
all people, without regard to any differences whatsoever. YES, I am against forcing young  
children or vulnerable prisoners who labor in factories so that they may do filthy and disgusting  
jobs and be paid a fraction of what the work should pay. YES, people of color, children, people  
with different religious beliefs, people who are different because of who they love, and  
celebrate their differences, and live their lives without hurting or defaming anyone else – I  
support them. YES, I have not supported the Viet Nam War, the Iraq War, nor the Afghanistan  
War. Yes, I see the consolidated Military, Industrial Complex, arming our police at home,  
arming people all over the world, semi-supporting our troops while maximizing their profits, and  
consistently on the receiving end of more and more of our country's gross domestic product  
while we ignore poverty, illness, arm the police with military equipment, and can't seem to find  
the money for people to receive decent wages.

I do NOT support those who would cheat, take advantage of their positions for personal gain,  
and strip others of their rights and healthcare needs. I do NOT support our ethic-less Supreme  
Court. I do NOT believe in burning books, politicians determining what we can read and

**I AM NOT A REPUBLICAN, NOT A DEMOCRAT, AND NOT A CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST...**

(continued from page 1)

distorting history by selecting what is worthy of teaching and what isn't. I am NOT one who has women play defined roles, subordinate to men. I am NOT supportive of more nuclear weapons, or tactical nuclear weapons. I am NOT supportive of countries that are engaged in threatening or killing a part of their populations or their neighbors. I am sickened by and NOT supportive of Nazis anywhere in the world, including our country. White Supremacy does NOT belong in this country or anywhere else in the world. The free access to firearms of any type, and ability to wear them concealed or evident is NOT my idea of living in a democracy.

YES, I believe in voters' rights. All voters' rights. YES, I believe we need to discover better ways to maintain and protect our environment. YES, I support the protection of all species on this planet, and the caring for God's creation. YES, we need to rely less on fossil fuels, discovering new and better ways for trucks, cars, and other forms of transportation to have less of an impact on our air, plants, trees, and all forms of nature. YES, I believe in science and in prayer. YES, I believe that vaccines saved millions from death. YES, I recommend to all that know and see to take the vaccines recommended and to trust in them as they have and will save lives.

These things said, I do NOT support any Maga Politicians whatsoever, especially those who are a part of our government having participated in the big "lie" and the insurrection. I do NOT support people who run for office anywhere in this country to support the Maga crowd either directly or indirectly. The Republican Party-political operatives throughout the country are on the extreme end of the right wing. I have little to no hope that this party will do anything but damage to our country and the world.

YES, we are at a time of reckoning. YES, I support politicians that stand for the "Yes-es" that I have shared here. Some of those people are in Connecticut and many are throughout the United States. May we all say "Yes" to those who will bring us together as a people. May we say "No" to those who could care less about the people and more about themselves, their power and wealth.

We will see where we are in September, come September. In the meantime, count your "Yes-es" and pray for them. Do what you can, and we all can, to remind us that the America we love, is a place of "Yes." The Church that we attend, and support is a "Yes" Church. We join with our GHIAA friends of all faiths, to demand and seek that our country come to know that "Yes" is who we are, and "Yes" will always be the same. We are not "Not." Amen.



**YES!**

## CELEBRATING GRADUATES, TAKING SOME TIME FOR REFLECTION, AND TAKING A REST – PASTOR’S MESSAGE

The summer begins with celebrating the children and young people who have graduated, and/or have a break for the summer. We have already been to one graduation party and loved it. In our very diverse community, there are many young people going to school and now taking a break. And a well-earned one, too.

With all that is going on around us, in our towns and cities, states and country, it is also a time for reflection. What is going on that we can impact? What can we do, and how? May we find better ways to be together, and to emphasize love and joy, not division, anger, and frustration.

For us, we will take some time off, exactly when is yet to be finally determined. David is thrilled that he will go to Camp Calumet this coming Sunday for a week. We will be going to Saratoga for the races and a reunion with dear friends and colleagues in early August. In my absence, Dorothea will cover for me on Sundays, and I will be alerted if there are emergencies that require my presence.

For sure, all of us need some time to collect ourselves and consider what’s happening to us personally, professionally and with our friends and families.

Summer is the time for this purpose, and this July-August Issue means, you’ll hear from us again in September. This past Sunday 40 of us worshiped together, and it was marvelous. We may be able to do a joint service on July 30<sup>th</sup>, and I am waiting to hear from our co-worshippers at 46 Woodland Street to see if that idea is possible given the dynamics of this coming month.

Just to say, keep yourselves well and know that you are beloved and very special, each one of you, to each one of us. May your time during these summer months allow for children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, for celebration with lots of love, and with a trusting in our God who is with us, all the time.

This God is good, all of the time, and He is there for each one of us whenever we are in need, and looking for hope.

God bless+,

Pastor Rick, Judy, and David

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## BREAKING NEWS! - SUPREME COURT STRIKES DOWN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS, SAYS RACE CANNOT BE A FACTOR

June 29, 2023

The Supreme Court has ruled that colleges and universities must stop considering race in admissions, forcing institutions of higher education to look for new ways to achieve diverse student bodies....

**The Hartford Courant**



# CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH THE BLACK LIBERATION MOVEMENT: OUR FOREMOTHERS AND FOREFATHERS IN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



by Pastor Chad Collins

For the last two years, our nation has recognized June 19th as the federal holiday Juneteenth. Juneteenth commemorates June 19th, 1865, the day in Galveston, Texas, when the final stand of the confederate army (The Army of the Trans-Mississippi) fell and General Gordon Granger proclaimed the end of slavery and that all formerly enslaved people would be in a state of absolute equality. This, of course, was about 1½ years after president Lincoln made the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 and nearly 250 years after Africans were first stolen from their homes and brutally enslaved in the original colonies.



It must be said however, that Juneteenth is so much more than remembering dates

and defeats of armies. We must remember that the Emancipation Proclamation was largely a military tactic, declaring freedom only for those enslaved persons in rebel-held territory and not within slave states loyal to the Union or even within Confederate territory occupied by the Union army. It was the [initiative](#) and the actions of the formerly enslaved themselves that forced the hand of white leadership in both the North and the South. Hundreds of thousands would flee the plantations, with many returning to encourage others to flee. Others began demanding compensation for their work or simply rose up against the plantation system. And, many formerly enslaved demanded to join the Union army, by the end of the war constituting 10% of soldiers and in some regiments up to 50%.

Juneteenth is a celebration of African Americans' strength to endure and their power to overcome! Juneteenth is a celebration of the struggles and the successes of the movement for Black Liberation. Juneteenth has never been about what Lincoln or Granger proclaimed but has always been about our African American sisters and brothers' awe-inspiring will to live and fight for freedom!

This is why, if you were fortunate enough to attend a Juneteenth celebration, you joined in a great celebration of life and liberation. You probably ate some delicious home made food, witnessed some beautiful art, listened and danced to some form (Hip-Hop, Gospel, Rock and Roll, Soul, R&B, etc.) of the great Black American music, Jazz! And within the celebration, you were most likely invited to remember and recognize that all this beautiful life was formed and shaped by a people who resisted and persevered against one of the most evil systems of brutality and oppression known to human history.

As our Palestinian sisters and brothers resist and struggle for their own freedom, and as many of us fight alongside them, we recognize that we are standing on the shoulders of giants, and we take great inspiration from Black Americans' legacy of resilience and power to overcome. And until the day comes, when Palestine is free, may we all continue to embrace the will to resist! Sumud!

Happy Juneteenth! Free Free Palestine!



## NATIONAL SAFER COMMUNITIES SUMMIT



Last week, we were honored to stand alongside advocates and survivors at the first ever National Safer Communities Summit led by Senators Chris Murphy and Richard Blumenthal in Hartford, CT.

It was an inspiring day where we celebrated the achievement of getting the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act signed into law last year. This historic law was the first major federal gun safety legislation passed in nearly 30 years.



However, there's still much more work to be done. We need to pass more solutions at the federal level—such as universal background checks, elimination of assault weapons, and extreme risk protection orders—to keep guns out of the wrong hands and ensure the safety of our communities.



As President Biden said at the summit: “We are not finished. We are not finished. We are not finished.”

## EXPANDING THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE— WADSWORTH ATHENEUM

New England Synod eNews  
June 28, 2023

I Am Seen...Therefore, I am: Isaac Julien and  
Frederick Douglass

at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in  
Hartford, CT



Frederick Douglass is known for his escape from slavery and his national and international leadership in the abolitionist movement. Less known is his embrace of the then-emerging field of photography in the late 1830s. He used the medium and images of himself to speak directly to the public. Historians believe that Douglass was the most photographed American of the nineteenth century.

Douglass appreciated photography for its democratic principles. As the technology progressed, it became affordable to the masses. Douglass wrote, "The humbled servant girl whose income is but a few shillings per week may now possess a more perfect likeness of herself than noble ladies and court royalty." The ability to choose clothing, adornments, posture, and props allowed the sitter to exert control over their image and provided alternatives to racist portrayals of African Americans. Douglass recognized that there is a "fixed" quality to a photograph. In his 1861 "Lecture on Pictures," he said, "Pictures do not change, but we look at them through favorable or unfavorable prevailing public opinion."

The exhibition, *I Am Seen...Therefore I Am* is presented in two parts. First is Isaac Julien's *Lessons of the Hour*, a multi-screen film that runs approximately 25 minutes. The film contrasts episodes from the life of Frederick Douglass with issues of social justice that resonated then and now. In adjacent galleries, the exhibition presents a collection of rare daguerreotype and other nineteenth-century photographs. Co-curated by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Sara Elizabeth Lewis, and presented in collaboration with The Amistad Center for Art & Culture, the photographic images celebrate the collaborative output of African American photographers and sitters. Juxtaposing historic images with Julien's contemporary work, the exhibition represents a dialogue of Douglass's unfinished movement for social justice.

The opening of the exhibition in May commemorated the 180th anniversary of Douglass's first speech made in Hartford in 1843. Although Connecticut is known for producing abolitionists like the Beecher family and John Brown, slavery was not abolished in the state until 1848. When Douglass came to speak in Hartford in 1843, no church opened its doors to him. Douglass spoke in the courtyard outside the adjacent Center Church, across the street from the Wadsworth Atheneum. A historic marker and plaque designate the area as Frederick Douglass Court.

For more information, see Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

Private tours for individuals or congregations (at no additional charge) can be arranged. Contact Sue Carey at [scarey@snet.net](mailto:scarey@snet.net), one of the newly elected members of the Synod's AntiRacism Team, who adds 'For me, part of doing the work of racial justice is to use resources like this to arrive at a more complete narrative of the African American experience. It would be a privilege to share the exhibition with you.' She can also offer suggestions for free or reduced museum admission.

## IT WON'T MATTER WHO BOMBS WHO WHEN NUKES ARE IN THE MIX

Nine countries spent \$157,664 per minute on nuclear weapons last year — with the United States leading the lot by a mile — this spending is cause for alarm.

**WIN WITHOUT WAR**

Today, the world sits on a knife's edge. Nine nuclear-armed countries hold the destructive power of 135,000 Hiroshima bombs. Putin just confirmed Russia has moved nuclear weapons to Belarus, and given the turmoil in Russia through the weekend, that brings up some scary scenarios.

And as the world barrels toward a doomsday scenario, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) just poured fuel on the fire with a return to Trump-era nuclear policies. Just this week, they've renewed efforts to expand the already massive U.S. arsenal with nuclear-armed submarines, more missiles, and new warheads.

You and I know you can't have it both ways on nukes. Congress accelerating a nuclear arms race to the bottom could end the world as we know it, and it's time to change course. Luckily, a crucial chance is coming up fast as negotiations over a must-pass defense bill ramp up this summer. We're seizing this moment to raise the alarm in the media, rally our champions in Congress, and mobilize hundreds of thousands of grassroots activists who want a future free from nuclear weapons. We can't do it alone — in order to drown out the war lobby and push back on ANY attempts to pad the nuclear war budget, we need you with us.

ALL nine nuclear-armed countries have recently increased their weapons spending, and experts expect the global nuclear arsenal will only grow.

It's an absolute windfall for weapons contractors. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons reports that companies including Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman are making money hand over fist, reaping an average of \$256 in nuclear weapon contract money for every \$1 they spend lobbying on "defense."

Here's the kicker, Despite governments across the globe spending \$82.9 BILLION last year alone, there was NO measurable improvement in security.

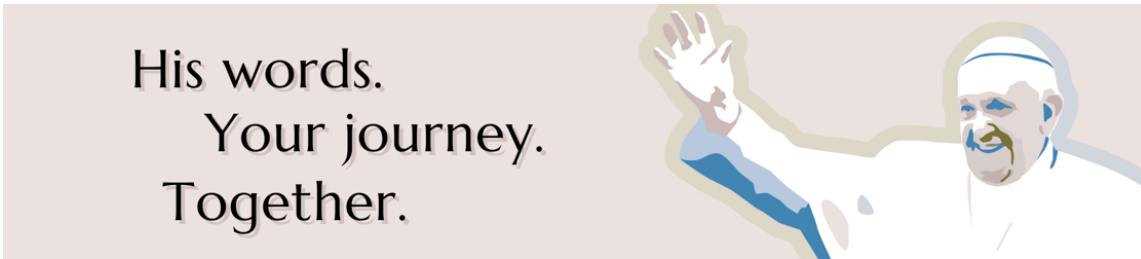
We have to change course before it's too late. That's why we're launching a crucial campaign to push Congress toward disarmament, and away from global devastation. First, we push back during the House and Senate National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) negotiations, where the funds get authorized. Then, we go even further to stop Congress from spending even one dime on unnecessary, dangerous nukes like the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) or the B83 gravity bomb during the appropriations process, which is also getting underway.

That first phase has just begun, and it'll take a massive effort from partners across the movement, key members of Congress, and every current and former defense official and expert who agrees that we've got to do everything we can to avoid a nightmare nuclear scenario. What happens next will be pivotal, and we can't do it alone.

Thank you for working for peace,  
Shahed, Faith, Amy, and the Win Without War team



## POPE'S MESSAGE



THURSDAY JUNE 15TH, 2023

**“Let us imagine that the Lord came on earth today. Unfortunately, he would see many wars, much poverty and many inequalities, and at the same time, tremendous technical achievements, modern means, and people who are always rushing, who never stop. But would he find someone who dedicates time and affection to him, someone who would put him in first place? Above all, let us ask ourselves, “What would he find in me, if the Lord were to come today, what would he find in me, in my life, in my heart? What priorities would he see in my life?”**

*Pope Francis*

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## WHY SETTLER POGROMS ARE NOW SWEEPING THE WEST BANK

**Frustrated at the military's pushback to their pogroms, settlers will continue upholding Jewish supremacy by any means necessary.**

# THE WIRE

By Menachem Klein June 26, 2023 in partnership with

**LOCAL CALL**  
שיחה מקומית

Sometimes there is an event so extreme that it tears the veil of willful ignorance from the eyes of Jewish-Israeli society. The pogrom in Huwara last February, in which hundreds of settlers torched the Palestinian town in the occupied West Bank, was such an event. Last week's pogroms in Turmus Ayya, Urif, and Umm Safa raised the curtain even higher, forcing many Israelis to stare straight at a reality that has long been present and can undoubtedly get worse.

But the main problem is not in the byproduct of occupation — Jewish settler terrorism — but in Israel's routine activity in the territories. Indeed, the decision by the heads of the Israeli security establishment to label the pogroms as “terrorism” indicates that the veil has only been partially lifted; they simply don't want Jewish terrorism to interfere with or embarrass the authority of the army, Shin Bet, and police.

Settlement is itself a violent act, whether it is done in concert with Israeli law or with the law following retroactively. It is violent because the settlers impose their presence on the natives and rob them of land, water, free movement, and basic human rights. It is an organized system of violence on behalf of the state.



## WHY SETTLER POGROMS ARE NOW SWEEPING THE WEST BANK

(continued from page 8)

The symbiosis between the army and the settlers is not limited to violence; it also exists in the understanding of their mission. The settlers explicitly define their mission as the Judaization of the area, and they do this effectively and consistently. The army's mission is not to provide security for all residents in the territories — as international law requires of the occupying power — but rather to protect the settlers from the reactions of the native Palestinians, who are not allowed to defend themselves, neither with the help of the Palestinian security forces, nor by establishing their own national guard. The factor that determines whether a West Bank resident's life and property will be protected is whether or not they are Jewish.

*Israeli security forces argue with Jewish settlers at the entrance to the West Bank town of Turmus Ayya, June 21, 2023. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*



Expanding settlements as a response to the murder of Israelis — as senior government ministers pledged to do last week — is also not a harmless civil action. It is violence without immediate bloodshed, yet which will inevitably engender Palestinian resistance, followed by bloody army repression.

The Palestinians are tolerated only if they assimilate into the landscape, becoming inanimate objects that forgo their collective identity. But as long as they maintain that identity, they are by definition an enemy. The army and the Shin Bet will continue to control them with biometric and electromagnetic data that tracks their location, actions, and thoughts as expressed in phone calls and on social media. The Palestinians' complete dependence on Israel for permits makes it easy for Israeli authorities to gather information about their family and medical conditions, sexual tendencies, personal weaknesses, and social structures, and to weaponize that information to force them into collaboration.

Jewish supremacy is clear as day, and the Palestinian people are bleeding physically and politically. However, as settlements expand and the army operates, the friction increases, and so too does the Palestinian motivation to react. Today, Palestinian violence has little expectation of liberating the West Bank; the power disparity between the parties is all too evident. Rather, it is intended to exact a price, any price, from the colonizers.

### Dangerous frustration

This pushback frustrates the settlers. How is it possible that all their power and supremacy has still not erased Palestinian identity and resistance? That frustration is what drives pogroms like those we saw last week, which then pushes the army and government to use even more force to expand the settlement project. Just a few days ago, Col. (Res.) Moshe Hagar, head of the pre-military academy in the settlement of Beit Yatir, called for the destruction of a Palestinian city or village in order to teach the Palestinians a lesson.



Meanwhile, Bezalel Smotrich, who serves both as finance minister and minister in charge of the civilian affairs in the West Bank, called any comparison between what he termed "Arab terror" and the "civilian counter-operations" both "wrong and dangerous."

*Damage caused to Palestinian homes and cars by Jewish settlers in the West Bank town of Turmus Ayya, June 21, 2023. (Nasser Ishtayeh/Flash90)*

Their frustration today is greater than it was in the past. In the 1980s and '90s, the settlers in the occupied territories transformed from a civil movement supported by the establishment into the establishment itself. They found their way into the executive levels of the government's civil and security branches that control the Palestinian population and their land. Today, under the current far-right government, they have reached the height of their powers. They do not think for a moment about acknowledging the limitations of their power, because the vector of their political ambitions is linear and unequivocal. They must not retreat.

The idea of containing the conflict in order not to lose control — as the army, Shin Bet, and police are hoping to do — is unacceptable to those whose frustration is on par with their political and theological extremism. The settlers are pushing the security establishment to act in accordance with Hagar's vision. Unlike in "Operation Defensive Shield" — when the Israeli army physically and politically destroyed the Palestinian Authority in 2002 through devastating urban invasions — today there is no leadership left to decimate. The PA under President Mahmoud Abbas has already done this in the service of Israel. The Israeli right's call to launch "Defensive Shield II" is instead a call to action that places Palestinian civilians as the central target, rather than as mere acceptable collateral.

The end of the conflict and the two-state solution are no longer relevant to the Israeli public and the international community. Lacking a solution — or more accurately, the will to pursue one — foreign governments, including Arab states, have allowed Israel to create a single regime in the entire area between the river and the sea without having to officially declare annexation. The fact that two different groups live under two sets of laws under a single sovereign means that Israel is implementing practices of apartheid, racial supremacy, and military rule not as a matter of foreign policy, but rather as its *domestic* policy.



### **'Anti-antisemitism' was meant to unite American Jews. Why is it backfiring?**

This is why, for example, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir is seeking to establish his own private militia, to have the power to put Israeli citizens in administrative detention, and to deepen the Shin Bet's penetration into the lives of Palestinian citizens of Israel. And, in the wake of the events of May 2021, the Israeli army has now drawn up plans to act against Palestinian citizens in the event of a conflict.

Israel's leaders are realizing that they need to further bend the law to their will, otherwise the identity of the entire area between the river and the sea will never be exclusively Jewish. And unfortunately, the Jewish Zionist left has neither the vision nor the courage to prevent this trend.

*Menachem Klein is professor of Political Science at Bar Ilan University. He was an advisor to the Israeli delegation in negotiations with the PLO in 2000 and was one of the leaders of the Geneva Initiative. His new book, *Arafat and Abbas: Portraits of Leadership in a State Postponed*, was just published by Hurst London and Oxford University Press New York.*

## NEW FAITH BASED COMMUNITY SERVICE OFFICER

June 18, 2023

I would like you to welcome our new Faith Based Community Service Officer, Orlando Gutierrez. He is copied here and his handsome photo is attached. Orlando is a Hartford native from Puerto Rico, who grew up in the City of Hartford, where he resided for over 28 years.

He attended all Hartford public schools and has been a Patrol Officer for the past 8 years and was assigned to the midnight shift. He is a Field Training Officer and enjoys training recruits. He is also part of the HPD Honor Guard unit. He is a 13 year Army veteran with two combat deployments to Afghanistan and is currently the maintenance platoon sergeant, where he is in charge of 15 soldiers and 6 Chinook helicopters. Orlando is fluent in Spanish and English.



Most importantly he's been serving God since the age of 7 and attends the Alpha y Omega Church, located at 203 Franklin Avenue, Hartford CT, for the last 30 years. He is very active in the church, where he plays the piano and his son plays drums. Orlando has also preached the word of God and volunteers serving the homeless and other activities. Lastly, he is a family man with his wife and three beautiful boys.

Orlando will be starting this coming Tuesday. Please keep an eye out for him, as both of us will be making our rounds. We just kindly ask that you have patience, as he is one man in a great city of over 200 places of worship.

Thank you,  
**Lieutenant Douglas Antuna**  
**Chief of Staff & Community Outreach Team Commander**  
**Hartford Police Department**  
**253 High Street Hartford, CT 06103**  
**Telephone: 860-757-4151**  
**[Antud001@hartford.gov](mailto:Antud001@hartford.gov)**

## ON JUNETEENTH WE'RE WORKING TO FINALLY END SLAVERY FOR EVERYONE



Juneteenth marks the end of slavery in the United States, but to the surprise of many, slavery is still legal in the U.S. When Congress passed the 13th Amendment in 1865, it included an exception that allows slavery "as a punishment for crime." That means that incarcerated people work for private corporations, state-owned businesses, and correctional agencies for pennies an hour, if they're even paid at all. They build furniture, pick cotton, clean highways, work in call centers, and clean the very facilities that house them. Refusing to work can result in anything from denial of visitation or calls, beatings, or worse. It's time to end this.



Serena Martin Liguori, for one, risked solitary confinement if she didn't show up for her job in

## ON JUNETEENTH WE'RE WORKING TO FINALLY END SLAVERY FOR EVERYONE

(continued from page 11)

the cafeteria of the prison where she was housed. She worked for \$0.09 an hour. She never received any safety training, and she burned her wrist as a result. Dyjuan Tatro swept the same hallway in the prison where he was incarcerated day after day with about 20 other people. It was, in his words, dehumanizing. Serena and Dyjuan are two of the millions of incarcerated people who are forced to work in prison.

What it comes down to is: slavery is wrong. For everyone, everywhere. All the time.

Last week, legislators reintroduced the Abolition Amendment — House Joint Resolution 72 and Senate Joint Resolution 33 — to End the Exception in the 13th Amendment and make slavery illegal for everyone. We are part of a coalition of over 90 organizations working to ensure that slavery is erased from our Constitution without exception. [Tell your Congressmembers to take action and cosponsor this bill to ensure it gets a full hearing in the 118th Congress.](#)

With Gratitude,  
The Worth Rises Team

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## CONGRESS FANS THE FLAME OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS



Canada's wildfires have left millions of people gasping for air. Hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and heatwaves are only becoming more catastrophic, and Congress has missed the memo. Because while smoke cloaked the Eastern Seaboard 2 weeks ago, the GOP-led House Armed Services Committee was busy putting the final touches on an \$886 BILLION weapons and war budget.

It requires an INCREDIBLE amount of energy to wage war across the globe — and almost all of it is derived from fossil fuels. You can't wish away a wildfire. But by throwing HUNDREDS of BILLIONS more dollars at the Pentagon and its global "footprint" of fuel-guzzling planes, ships, tanks, and bases, Congress is fanning the flames of the climate crisis instead of funding programs that clean our air and water and create safe and thriving communities.

It's a damning statement that instead of addressing this threat head-on, we're helping to accelerate it. But Win Without War isn't about to let the House pass the buck. The best thing we can do is fight back — so that's EXACTLY what we're set on doing.

The good news? When the House votes on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in the coming weeks, we'll get a crucial shot at stopping them from rubber-stamping a near-trillion-dollar check for pollution and war.

The Pentagon, National Security Council, and Director of National Intelligence ALL agree that the climate crisis is a matter of national security.

People across the Eastern Seaboard forced to breathe in toxic smoke from wildfires abroad last week is just another stark reminder that climate change IS the existential crisis of our time. But in the coming weeks, Congress could actually double down on a strategy that will only exacerbate the threat.

The reality is: The Pentagon is the single largest institutional consumer of petroleum and a HUGE source of greenhouse gases, emitting more than 100 countries combined. Emissions are a key driver of global warming, and when the temperatures increase, it means more



flooding, longer droughts, scorching heat waves, and extreme hurricanes.

Our addiction to war is fueling the climate crisis, but here's why we won't give up: Every single fraction of a degree of planetary warming we avoid matters. Cutting even a percentage of the

Cutting even a percentage of the Pentagon's proposed \$886 BILLION budget will save lives and protect ecosystems.

We've shut down attempts to pad the Pentagon budget before, and we can do it again. With momentum and outrage over the Pentagon budget growing across the grassroots and in Washington, we have a crucial chance to make a change as the House prepares to vote on the NDAA later this summer.

It's time we truly reconcile with what all this war spending costs us, get our priorities back in order, and put the PEOPLE and the PLANET first. Win Without War is at the forefront of this fight, but we need you with us.

If you're tired of a violence-first approach that hurts people and the planet, you know that this work can't be put on the back burner. That's why we need you with us today. Let's build the beautiful, safe, and healthy world we want and deserve.

Thank you for working for peace,  
Abbey, Shayna, Sam, and the Win Without War team

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## SUPPORT UNIVERSAL SCHOOL LUNCHEONS

No child should go hungry for any reason, period. However, since Republicans blocked an extension of the crucial and effective free school meal program put in place during the pandemic, families are once again struggling with food insecurity.

According to the USDA, 34 million people, including 9 million children, in America are food insecure, meaning they lack consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.

By providing healthy school meals for all students, we can provide a nutritional foundation for learning, advance racial equity and social justice, as well as eliminate school meal debt and the lunch shaming that can come with it.

**Democrats in the House and Senate have introduced the Universal School Meals Program Act, which would provide all students with free breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack from preschool through high school.**

**Tell Congress that the United States MUST feed our nation's future leaders. Tell them to pass the Universal School Meals Program Act.**

Kids can't learn on an empty stomach. Providing free school meals for all students would enhance learning and academic achievement, reduce childhood hunger, eliminate lunch debt, remove the significant administrative burden to collect lunch debt, and foster social solidarity, because all of us have a stake in our kids' futures.



In addition, the proposed bill would boost small local farms by sourcing healthy ingredients locally.

**Let's build on what we know works - offer free meals to ALL students just like we offer them textbooks and bus service.**

**Join the Progressive Caucus Action Fund and tell Congress to feed our country's kids - pass the Universal School Meals Program Act!**

It's time to move forward, not back.  
-Progressive Caucus Action Fund

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### AMERICA IS FACING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

From the Guardian



America is facing a mental health crisis  
Young people are grappling with challenges that no generation in  
modern history has been forced to deal with. They need our help now

Tue 13 June 2023

This country faces a long-standing mental health crisis, which has been exacerbated by the isolation, fears and uncertainties of the pandemic. This crisis impacts all generations, but has been especially devastating for young people.

In America today, 40 percent of parents report being either extremely or very worried that their child is struggling with anxiety or depression.

And they are right to be worried.

According to a recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 1 out of every 3 teenagers in America reported that the state of their mental health was poor. 2 out of every 5 teenagers felt persistently sad or hopeless. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people age 15 to 24 in the United States. Nearly 20% of high school students report serious thoughts of suicide and 9% have made an attempt to take their lives.

In recent months I have had the opportunity to visit a number of schools throughout Vermont and have spoken with students, teachers, administrators, and parents. As Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions I have spoken with national experts and recently held a hearing on this subject which featured Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General who has written extensively on this subject.

What I have learned is that our young people today face challenges that no generation in modern history has ever been forced to deal with. The pandemic, the worst public health crisis in over 100 years, created fears in children about whether they or their loved ones would get sick or die. That's an anxiety not easily dealt with by young, developing minds. And let us not forget. Over 200,000 children did lose one or both of their parents to COVID and millions more saw relatives and acquaintances become sick or hospitalized. That grief and fear remains long after any national emergency is declared over.

The pandemic also brought about a massive disruption in the normal, day-to-day lives of our

## BLACK, BUTCH, QUEER — AND BAPTIZED INTO GOD'S SCANDALOUS LOVE

Commentary, The Joy of Being Queer and Christian  
by Tonetta Landis-Aina

JUN 14, 2023



*This article is part of the series, **The Joy of Being Queer and Christian**; new articles will be added throughout the month of June.*

Last weekend, for the very first time in my life, I dyed my hair. I walked into a woman-owned barbershop and gave them permission to change my short hair from its usual very dark brown to an extravagant, and for me, shocking, blonde. Someone else's hands ran over my tender scalp, creating something new.

I know many people change their hair color as they would change their seasonal wardrobe or move to the latest style of eyeglasses. But for me, it's different: I was born in the American South and nurtured in the deep soil of respectability. I was weaned on, "Nice young ladies don't..." and, "Now *you know* that you have to be 10 times better than white people." Even coming out as a lesbian, embracing my own gender nonconformity, and transitioning to all-male clothing did not do very much to dampen the sense in me that acting in socially acceptable ways is important — that doing what is proper is to be commended. Even if my identity as a Black, butch, queer woman prevented me from living fully inside the lines of the acceptable, surely I could still squeeze my life as close to the outside of those lines as possible. I could avoid controversy and be "the good gay." I got married. I became a pastor. I became the mother of two beautiful children, a boy and a girl.

But over the years, it has only become clearer to me that respectability is a cheap carnival trick — an optical illusion. If you're Black like me, respectability will not prevent you from being killed on the street by the very police whose salaries your tax dollars make possible. If you're queer like me, respectability will not stop you from being kicked out of that supposedly welcoming church nor prevent your siblings from uninviting you into the lives of your nieces and nephews. If you're a woman like me, respectability won't even get you pay that's equal to that of the man who sits in the office across from you.

Yet, even knowing all that, the truth is that I still must actively wrestle against the easy attractiveness of respectability with its false promises of security, inclusion, and success.

### **READ: 'Are We Advocating for Something By Existing?'**

Slowly, I'm embodying the reality that the scriptures demonstrate another way for people who identify as LGBTQ+ and for their allies. The story of Philip and Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 especially captivates me: God tells Philip to become joined to the chariot of a eunuch traveling back to his homeland after worshiping in Jerusalem. Philip is told to enter a new adventure of the Spirit by joining the eunuch's story. The eunuch would have been **a sexual "other"** in the context of the story, a person who transgressed the boundaries of gender and sexual identity simply by existing. They would not have been able to have children and that perceived shame also would have put them beyond the borders of the acceptable. Yet, the story ends with Philip baptizing the eunuch, affirming this perceived "other" as a member of the community of

## BLACK, BUTCH, QUEER — AND BAPTIZED INTO GOD'S SCANDALOUS LOVE

(continued from page 15)

the faithful. But Philip also goes down in the waters of baptism and then preaches the good news all through the region. In other words, by joining the experience of one who cannot possibly be respectable, he is deeply converted as well.

I marvel at the joy that must have infused that baptism. It reminds me of the joy that my queer siblings and I are gifted to pass on to the church here in the U.S.: the joy of showing hospitality to those whose stories are unlike our own; the joy of transgressing boundaries of the acceptable as we follow a God who transgressed boundaries of human and divine, spiritual and material; the joy of a promiscuous and prodigal invitation into the love of God and the love of self.

So, yes, for the very first time in my life, I dyed my hair. During this Pride season, it will remind me of the need to play further from the lines for the sake of joy and liberation. Indeed, it will remind me that authenticity is the only way to true joy. As I dance in the streets at my city's Pride parade, I will embrace the scandal of it all and try to become more scandalous in my own expression of grace and faith. And in so doing, I will find myself inside the abundant, raucous pleasure of God, who is ever joining all our stories in promiscuous love.

### **Tonetta Landis-Aina**

*Rev. Tonetta Landis-Aina is a pastor at The Table Church in Washington D.C., where she has made her home for the last 19 years. When she is not enjoying her wife, son, and daughter, she loves helping to create liberating community in the way of Jesus and helping marginalized folx find their stories in scripture.*

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## HAPPY PRIDE MONTH!

**SHeldon WHITEHOUSE**

Rhode Island's vibrant LGBTQ+ community has made so many contributions to our state. I love to march with Rhode Islanders at our Providence Pride parade, which I've joined just about every year I've been in the Senate, and before.



I've always believed that diversity makes us stronger. I am a strong supporter of the *Equality Act*, legislation that would update civil rights laws to prohibit discrimination – in employment, housing, and education – on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Not everyone in Congress shares that belief. While we've come a long way in the fight for justice and equality, there are still far too many Republicans in the Senate who don't believe LGBTQ+ Americans deserve freedom from fear and discrimination.

We have plenty more work ahead of us. A Democratic Senate can get it done.

Thank you, Sheldon



## WHO IS A “REAL” AMERICAN?

by Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

An excerpt from the July/August  
Living Lutheran magazine



It's ironic that Puritans fled religious persecution and that the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free expression thereof," yet an element in our country wants to legislate that the United States is a Christian nation where Christianity should be privileged and only Christians should hold office. This is Christian Nationalism, which is neither Christian nor patriotic. There is no doubt that the Founders were Christian and that a majority of Americans identify as Christian. That is different from declaring Christianity as the established religion of the United States. And, dear church, let's be clear, a Christian Nationalist does not define Lutherans as "Christian."

God knows I love my country. This beautiful, fragile, yet surprisingly resilient experiment in democracy and nationhood that's not predicated on shared ethnicity is unique among nations. My grandfather, father and uncles all served during World War I and World War II. I had the honor of placing a wreath on behalf of the ELCA at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. I won't have my patriotism questioned. Christian Nationalism is a perversion of the gospel and a threat to our democracy. It's precisely because I love my country that I warn against it.

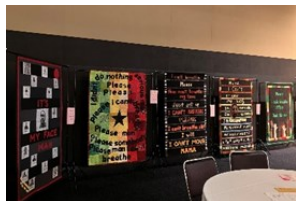
Who is a "real American"? I say that my Muslim neighbor walking freely down the street in a hijab to offer a meal to her Christian neighbor during Ramadan is a real American. Motivated by her Muslim faith she acted as neighbor to me. She is not less American because she is Muslim. Because she is an American, she can be her authentic self and participate in building our community and country. 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.

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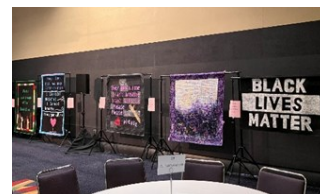
**2023 NE Synod Assembly is in the rearview mirror** - and what a time it was! Though it only lasted just over 24 hours, there was plenty packed into those hours indeed. Here are just a few of the highlights of our time together.



Our opening prayer and land acknowledgement were offered by Pr. Nancy Wright, the Synod's Pastor for Creation Care.



Quilts were on display from the Sacred Allies Quilt Ministry ([www.saqm.org](http://www.saqm.org)), based on the last words of George Floyd. Friday night's worship offering was gifted to SAQM to further their antiracism work.



Communion was offered to all in attendance.



## THE GREED OF BIG PHARMA CANNOT CONTINUE



There is a lot of discussion in the media today about how "divided" our nation is. And in many cases, that is absolutely true. There is significant disagreement on issues like immigration, gay rights, abortion, and guns.

But the truth is that on a number of economic issues, the vast majority of Americans – Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike – are quite united. And we should do our best to bring people together around those issues.

The American people are united in the belief that the very rich and large corporations should pay their fair share in taxes. They are united that we should raise the minimum wage. They are united that it's absurd we pay more per-capita for health care than any developed nation, but get worse outcomes.

And the American people are overwhelmingly united in their understanding that we are getting ripped off by the pharmaceutical industry in this country whose greed and outrageous pricing is literally killing people.

That is one of the reasons I recently wrote an op-ed for Fox News on that last topic. Yes, I wrote it for Fox News. Because this is an issue where people with otherwise significant political differences almost universally agree.

Let's bring people together when we can. Let's stand together against oligarchy and corporate greed.

I hope you'll read the op-ed below and share it with friends.  
Bernie

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/the-greed-of-big-pharma-cannot-continue/ar-AA1cV7xx>

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## AMERICA IS FACING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

(continued from page 14)

youth. For the first time in modern history our young people, by the millions, stopped attending school. Not only was their education severely impacted, but so were their social lives. No more getting together with friends after school or on weekends. No more dating. No more team sports. No more theater or chorus. No more doing the normal things that their parents and older brothers and sisters did.

But it was not just the pandemic's impact on health that impacted our young people. The pandemic also brought forth an unprecedented level of economic anxiety. It was only a few years ago that, as a result of COVID, millions of workers lost their jobs, lost their health insurance and were worried about being evicted from their homes and apartments. We can all remember the long lines of Americans lining up for emergency food boxes to feed their families. When parents lose their jobs, when they struggle to pay the rent, when they worry about putting food on the table and how to get the health care they need, their children are often struggling quietly beside them. And young people know something else. This economy is not working for them.



Everything being equal, unless we bring about long-needed reforms, their generation will have a lower standard of living than their parents. How are they going to afford to go to college or pay off their student debts? Will they ever be able to buy their own home or afford health care? Young people are worrying about these things on a daily basis.

And then there is the radical impact that screen time and social media have had on the younger generation, something that previous generations have never experienced. According to a recent survey most kids are spending more than five hours a day on social media or playing video games. Thirty-two percent of teens surveyed said they were online for 5 to 6 hours, 17 percent reported being online for 7 to 8 hours and 13 percent said they were online 9 or more hours a day.

What is the impact of all that screen time?

Well, according to a recent study, 32% of teen girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse.

More than 40% of Instagram users who reported feeling “unattractive” said the feeling began on Instagram.



About 25% of teenagers who reported feeling “not good enough” said it started on Instagram. But it’s not just Instagram. The same can be said for Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok and other social media platforms.

And let’s be clear. In terms of social media we are up against some of the creative minds in the world who keep coming up with new ways to get teenagers addicted to their sites in order to sell them more products and make more money. Clearly, the mental health damage they do to millions of young people is much less important than the huge profits they are reaping.

Two other issues have also kept recurring in my discussions with young people.

They are deeply concerned about climate change — and whether the planet that they and their children will be living in will be healthy or habitable. And they also question their government and the kind of political leadership in this country that has allowed this existential threat to occur.



And then there is the issue of gun violence. Incredibly, there have been well over 200 mass shootings in the United States this year which have taken place in virtually every state in the country. Almost all public schools in America now have active shooter drills in order to best protect the children if an attack were to take place. For many kids, obviously, the thought of such an attack is extremely frightening and can have a profound impact on their mental health.

That is just some of the tragic reality impacting the mental health of tens of millions of young people in our country today.

And what are we doing to address this crisis? The answer is: not much.

Despite spending twice as much per capita on health care as almost any other major country on earth, our broken and dysfunctional health care system allows 85 million Americans to be either uninsured or underinsured. The result: tens of millions of our people cannot afford the mental health treatments they may desperately need. This is just one more reason why we must move away from the horrific system we currently have that is designed to bring massive profits to the insurance industry and drug companies and pass the Medicare for All legislation I recently introduced. Unfortunately, as a result of a corrupt and rigged political system, that is not going to happen tomorrow.

Further, even with decent insurance, it is hard for many to find the psychiatrists, psychologists, addiction counselors or social workers where they live. As a nation, our health care workforce, especially in mental health, is woefully inadequate.

Right now, as Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee I and my staff are working hard to address the mental health crisis within the current political realities we face. We are drafting legislation to greatly increase the number of mental health providers in the country and get them into the schools and communities where they are needed most. We are also fighting for a major increase in federally funded health care clinics so that anyone in this country, regardless of income, can get the health care they need - including mental health services.

But, as important as increasing availability to mental health treatment is, we have got to do much more if we're going to address the root causes of this crisis.

In my view, if we are truly going to resolve the mental health crisis that we face, we will need a political revolution that creates a society based on justice, compassion, human solidarity and a growing sense of community. We can no longer abide the grotesque level of corporate greed that pervades every aspect of our economy. We must move to a society in which people are treated as human beings, not commodities.

Our goals are clear. We need to create an economy that works for all, not just the 1%. We need to give hope to those who have lost hope. We need to revitalize democracy, bring new people into the political process and end the corrupt campaign finance system we now have. We need to end all forms of bigotry.

Is any of this easy? No. Those who own and control our economic and systems have endless resources at their disposal to maintain the destructive status quo. But the simple truth is that we have no moral choice. If we truly care about our kids and grandchildren, if we care about the very future of our planet, we must stand up and fight back.

Let's do it.

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## COMPASSION AS A KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

It's hard for me to imagine a gritty Christian mysticism without compassion.



## THE NOTEBOOKS OF JAMES HAZELWOOD

Compassion, an intrinsic human quality, is the foundation for much of human life. It goes beyond mere sympathy, as it enables individuals to recognize and share in the suffering and joy of others. In a world marked by division and discord, compassion emerges as a powerful force capable of healing wounds, fostering unity, and promoting positive change.



## COMPASSION AS A KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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Compassion differs from empathy, despite the two often being used interchangeably in the modern US American language. Empathy suggests in-pathos, a feeling into the experience of the other, which is impossible. The original meaning of empathy is “a term from a theory of art appreciation that maintains appreciation depends on the viewer's ability to project his personality into the viewed object.” In other words, its origin is in aesthetics in the art critic world of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has morphed into something else today, suggesting projecting or injecting one's assumptions about another's thoughts and feelings.

### I'm against empathy.

But I'm big on compassion. Compassion is co-pathos. It's coming alongside the other and getting close to their experience. You are along with them. In my experience, attempting to get inside someone else's experiences, feelings, or thoughts is not helpful. I have a difficult enough time trying to figure out what I'm experiencing, feeling, or thinking at any given moment, much less trying to get inside someone else's. Compassion has deep roots. The English language it's connected with hundreds of years of language usage. It's often associated with a "sorrow or deep tenderness for one suffering or experiencing misfortune." Additionally, the word connects to the passion of Christ's suffering on the cross.

### I'm pro-compassion.

This past Sunday, I worshipped at one of the congregations here in New England, where compassion is central to their ministry. It pours out of almost everything they do, from addressing local needs to an overseas mission trip. The guest preacher, a seminary student, focused her sermon on Jesus' compassion for the crowds of people following him. She noted that when the word compassion is invoked in the life of Jesus, it always leads to a call to action.



Later that same day, as I prepared for this essay, I pulled from a deck of cards I sometimes use to prompt me toward my devotional life; these two cards. Can you say synchronicity?

*What is one of the kindest things someone has ever done for you?*

*What random act of kindness could you perform right now?*

Would you consider a random act of kindness a call to action around compassion?

I've explored many spiritual practices available for a more mature life of soulful living, such as meditation, prayer, music, body movement, and time in nature. Still, when I served in a congregation in Brooklyn, New York, I realized many people find the spiritual practice of compassionate caring central to their lives. This might cause some of you to question my level of wisdom. Strange as this may be, I came slowly to this realization.

Compassionate caring for another human, animal, or vegetable is one of the many ways people express their spirituality. I'm thinking of people, as well as furry and feathered creatures, as well as whole forests. Yes, there is spiritual and economic value in tree hugging.

Compassion encompasses a profound understanding of the human experience, transcending differences, and fostering empathy. It involves recognizing the suffering and challenges others face and responding with kindness and support. By embracing compassion, individuals move

beyond their perspectives and biases, opening themselves up to connect with and care for others.

Compassion yields numerous benefits for those who receive it and those who practice it. On an individual level, compassion promotes psychological well-being by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. It enhances emotional resilience and cultivates a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Moreover, compassionate acts create a ripple effect, fostering positive social connections and inspiring reciprocal acts of kindness, strengthening communities, and promoting a sense of belonging.



The early Christian church likely expanded rapidly in the ancient world because of compassion. Sociologist Rodney Stark has written of the unique phenomenon in that time where early followers of Jesus tended to the orphan and widows, fed the poor, and buried the dead. Over time, people observed this pattern of behavior, and he credits it as the primary reason Christianity expanded so rapidly in the Mediterranean landscape. My non-scientific observations of the current church would parallel Stark's findings. Those congregations engaging in compassionate care and action tend to be healthier and more vibrant and offer a clear alternative to a materialist and self-centered philosophy of life.

A gritty mysticism is grounded in compassion. This might seem disconnected because we often associate spirituality and mysticism with abstractness, but adding the adjective “gritty” helps ground this work. There is something about caring for another that connects us with our common humanity, and that connection is sacred.

The ancient Hebrew people had a word for compassion. It is *hesed* or *chesed*, often translated as loving-kindness between God and people or between people themselves. Used over 150 times in the Hebrew Bible and translated in many and various ways as mercy, compassion, charity, love, and sometimes grace. The word is central to Jewish ethics, with one historic rabbi writing:

**“The world rests upon three things: Torah (scriptures), service to God and bestowing kindness (*chesed*).” ([Pirkei Avot 1:2](#))**

This also comes forward in the Kabbalah. In this Jewish mystical tradition, the right hand of God is described as benevolence and kindness (*Chesed*).

Compassion is not merely an abstract concept but a call to action. It prompts individuals to engage in acts of kindness and support, such as volunteering, philanthropy, and advocacy for social justice. Offering a listening ear, aiding those in need, or driving a neighbor to a health appointment, can profoundly impact individuals and create positive change.

But how do we cultivate compassion? While compassion may come naturally to some, it is a quality that can be nurtured and cultivated. Education is vital in promoting compassion early on, instilling values of respect and understanding. Practicing mindfulness and self-reflection helps individuals develop a greater awareness of their emotions and biases, enabling them to respond to others compassionately. Additionally, fostering a culture of compassion within families, schools, workplaces, congregations, and communities creates an environment that nurtures and reinforces human behavior.

Compassion has the potential to drive significant social change. It can pave the way for a more just and equitable society by addressing systemic inequalities, promoting inclusivity, and

## COMPASSION AS A KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

(continued from page 22)

challenging prejudices. It encourages individuals to advocate for the marginalized, promote human rights, and foster a greater sense of global responsibility. When compassion becomes a collective force, it can transform societies, bridge divides, and foster unity.

Compassion serves as a guiding principle for a more connected world, and it's crucial in grounding spirituality in the here and now. Hence, I favor gritty mysticism, which I borrowed from Father Vincent Pizzuto, and his outstanding book [Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life](#).

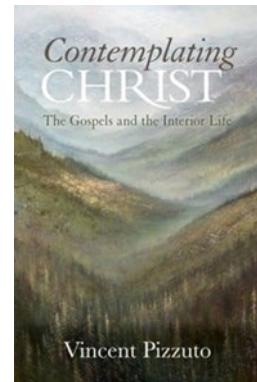
A gritty, compassionate mysticism enables individuals to transcend personal biases, extend kindness, and engage in acts of support and understanding. By cultivating compassion through education, mindfulness, and fostering a culture of empathy, we can create a society that values the well-being and dignity of all its members. Ultimately, compassion can heal wounds, bridge divides, and drive positive social change, contributing to a brighter and more harmonious future.

Those searching for a concrete down-to-earth spiritual practice may find compassionate care as your schtick.

***Now, what act of kindness can you perform right now?  
Could you do it?***

Let me know, and next issue, I'll report some of your stories to the community.  
[jim@jameshazelwood.net](mailto:jim@jameshazelwood.net)

*Jim*



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## 8 CHRISTIAN WOMEN SHAPING THE CHURCH IN 2023

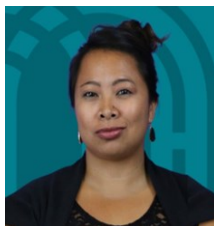
by Zachary Lee

*Editor's note: we were unable to fit all of this article in previous issues. Will continue to include the information about a couple of these extraordinary women in this and future issues.*

**A blessing for 2023:** I hope that in 2023, as fascism rises, we can see more people fighting for the rights of our most marginalized, especially trans women and men.

### Elaina Ramsey

Elaina Ramsey is the executive director of **Faith Choice Ohio**, which elevates the moral power of faith communities to advance reproductive health, rights, and justice. Elaina is currently pursuing ordination with the United Church of Christ and writing a book on evangelical/exvangelical support for abortion. In another season of life, she previously worked as a *Sojourners* assistant editor and as the first director of the Sojourners Women & Girls Campaign.



***Why is the work you do so important right now?*** Across the South and

## SOJOURNERS



Midwest, abortion care is completely banned or severely restricted due to an unholy alliance between the church and state. This remains not only a serious public health crisis but also a spiritual crisis that requires deep pastoral care. My faith calls me to provide compassionate and practical support to abortion seekers and to equip clergy and congregations to boldly advocate for abortion access. To provide healing and to witness against reproductive oppression, coercion, and forced birth in the name of God. It's hard and grueling work, but more sacred than ever.

**A prayer for 2023:** God of compassion and conviction, open our hearts and disturb our spirits. Help us repent of the ways we weaponize faith to silence, shame, and stigmatize others. Teach us to honor all bodies as divine sites of joy and liberation — and not of condemnation. Give us strength and wisdom, O God, for such a time as this that we may do right by you, your people, and your creation. Amen.

### Rev. Dr. Grace Ji-Sun Kim

Rev. Dr. Grace Ji-Sun Kim is a professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion and received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. She is the author or editor of 21 books, most recently, *Spirit Life, Invisible* and *Intersectional Theology*. Kim is a series editor for the Palgrave Macmillan Series, *Asian Christianity in the Diaspora*, and has served on the American Academy of Religion's board of directors. Kim writes for *Baptist News Global*, *Sojourners*, and *Faith and Leadership* and has published in *TIME*, *The Huffington Post*, *Christian Century*, *US Catholic Magazine* and *The Nation*. She is the host of **Madang podcast** which is sponsored by *The Christian Century* and is an ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) minister. To read more of her work you can also follow her on Substack: **Loving Life**.



**Why is the work you do so important right now?** As a public theologian, I teach, write, speak, preach, and host Madang podcast. All of these different aspects of my vocation are important to me as it is an avenue to share and uplift marginalized, silenced, and invisible voices. I grew up in a family and culture that taught that being silent is a virtue. But silence isn't helpful when systems of oppression work against you to subjugate and marginalize people and groups. I hope that all my various actions provide a platform and space to amplify silenced people/s voices and concerns, and work toward building a kin-dom of God that welcomes and embraces all people.

### A prayer for 2023

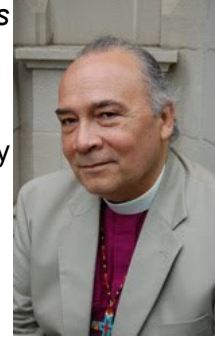
Creator God, thank you so much for creating each one of us uniquely and special. Help us to celebrate our diversities and embrace those who are so different from us.  
 Grant us your wisdom to choose and live wisely.  
 Grant us your peace so we can be peacemakers.  
 Grant us your love so we may love our enemies.  
 Gracious God, aid us to live with gratitude for all the many blessings that you have bestowed upon us. Support us to use our gifts faithfully to further your kin-dom here on earth.  
 Thank you for your grace, mercy, and love for us. Amen.



## HOPE MAKES ROOM FOR LOVE

*Retired Episcopal bishop and Choctaw citizen Steven Charleston draws on his Native American experience to navigate collective crisis.*

We inhabit a period in history that seems to be filled with conflict. The world has become an uncertain place, a dark place, where we cannot see what may happen next. All we know, based on our recent experience, is that things could—and probably will—get worse....



For millennia, my ancestors followed a spiritual path that was respectful of the earth, inclusive of all humanity, and visionary in its transformative power. That tradition has survived. It is one of the oldest continuous spiritual paths on earth. My ancestors' faith continues to this day despite every hardship and persecution it has been forced to endure.... I was asked to write a brief commentary about the Christian theology of the apocalypse: the final, terrible vision of the end of the world. I said my Native American culture was in a unique position to speak of this kind of vision, because we were among the few cultures that have already experienced it. In historic memory, we have seen our reality come crashing down as invaders destroyed our homeland. We have lived through genocide, concentration camps, religious persecution, and every human rights abuse imaginable. Yet we are still here. No darkness—not even the end of the world as we knew it—had the power to overcome us. So our message is powerful not because it is only for us, but because it speaks to and for every human heart that longs for light over darkness.

*Charleston takes inspiration from the hope embodied by his ancestors during crisis and displacement.*

My ancestors did not survive the Trail of Tears because they were set apart from the rest of humanity. Their exodus was not a sign of their exclusivity, but rather their inclusivity. In their suffering, they embodied the finite and vulnerable condition of all humanity. They experienced what the whole tribe of the human beings has experienced at one time or another throughout history: the struggle of life, the pain of oppression, and the fear of the unknown. Their long walk was the walk of every person who has known what it means to be alone and afraid. But they walked with courage and dignity because they had the hope of the Spirit within them....

Hope makes room for love in the world. We can all share it, we can all believe in it, even if we are radically different in every other way. We no longer need to fear our differences because we have common ground. We can hope together—therefore, hope liberates us. It frees us from our fear of the other. It opens our eyes to see love all around us. It unites us and breaks our isolation. When we decide to embrace hope—when we choose to make that our goal and our message—we release a flow of energy that cannot be overcome.

Hope is a light  
that darkness can never contain.


## SOLAR PANEL REPORT—May, 2023



 **Produced**  
**3.2 MWh**


37% higher\*  
31 May :123.7 kWh

Maximum production day

 **Consumed**  
**1.3 MWh**

6% lower\*  
5 May :107.4 kWh

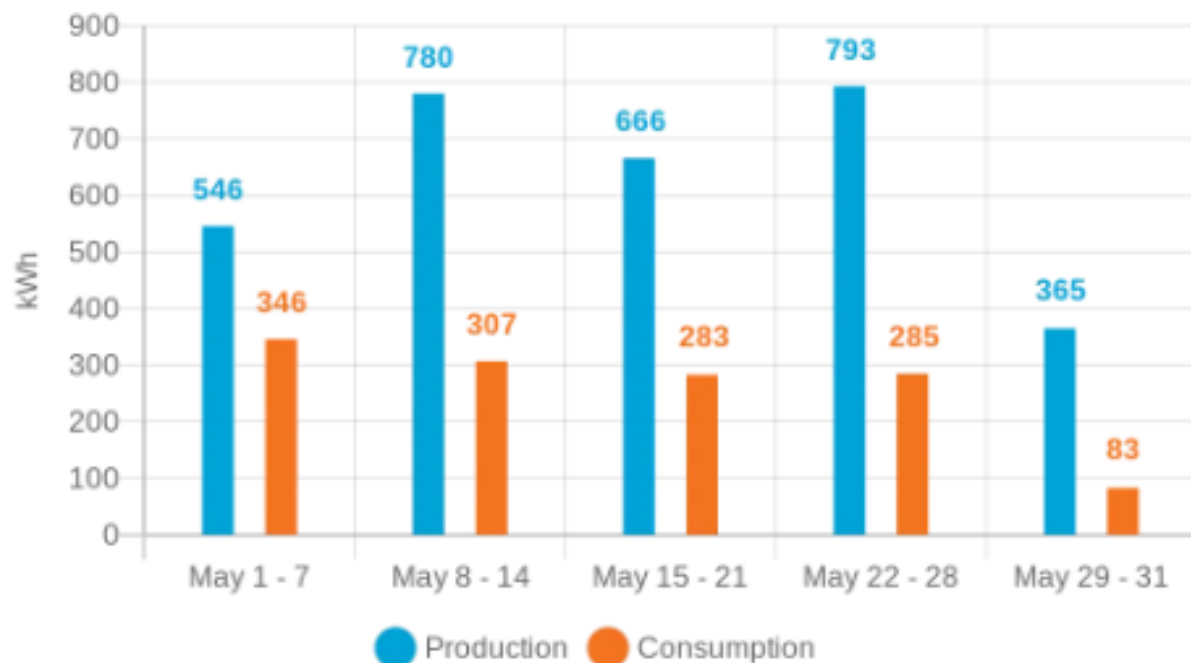
Maximum consumption day


 **Grid energy**  
**479.4 kWh**

Imported

**2.3 MWh**

Exported



 **CO2 reduction**  
**2.29 tons**

Offset equivalent to 39 Trees

 **Grid  
Dependence**  
**37%**

For this month, 37% of your  
energy consumption is supplied  
by the utility grid.

**Get grid  
independence with  
Enphase**

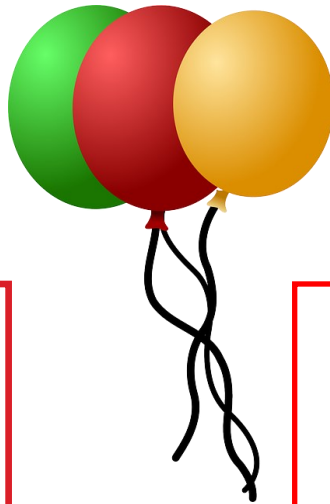
[Add Storage](#)

**Year-to-date  
production**  
**10 MWh**

\* As compared to last month's records

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## **JULY & AUGUST 2023 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!**



**Happy Birthday to all who  
birthday is in  
July and August!**

**Happy Anniversary on this  
special day!**



***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](mailto:office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com)  
to update our records.



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Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

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