



DECEMBER 2024

ACCEPTING VULNERABILITY AND NAKEDNESS – DECEMBER 1, 2024

We often draw on Christian Century for our Grace Notes articles, and as we come to the close of a year filled with hate, extremism, death, violence and threats, we may listen to the voice of Peter W. Marty once again as we try to untangle the tangles and come to grips to a world at war, and a country divided. The solemn occasion cannot be overstated or dismissed. Where is God in all this, or is there a God?

Accepting Vulnerability & Nakedness - page 1-2
Pastor's Message - Violence Begets Violence - page 3
Church News - page 4
The America I Want to Save is the America We Never Had - page 5-7
A Story - The Pope and The Rabbi - page 7 -8
Treasure Every Child - page 8-11
If You Want to Start To Feel Better, Think About This-- page 12-13
A Spiritual Response to the Election - page 14-16
JD Vance's Dangerous Ties to Opus Dei - page 16-18
Arrest Warrant Issued for Netanyahu - page 18-20
Life Shouldn't Be this Way - page 20-21
Science for Good - Annual Report - page 21
Solar Report - page 22
Birthdays, Anniversaries & Readers - page 23

From Peter Marty's December issue, "If you've never undergone a procedure in an outpatient surgical center, you can expect an experience like this: a nurse hands you some non-slip socks and one of those open-in-the back hospital gowns. They then instruct you to head to a changing room. (From near constant experiences in 2024 – I was to have this experience so many times, I can't remember how many!).

Back to Peter... "Once you manage to tie the neck cords of your gown into a bow, a task that always challenges me, you step into a large room. The instant you look around that room, some version of four uncomfortable words will rattle your psyche: ***I feel extremely vulnerable***. Six or eight other patients, facing you from their own bays (with their privacy curtains half-drawn or not drawn at all), sit on recliners, just like the one assigned to you. Aware that your own backless gown resembles your health insurance plan in a conspicuous way – every time you turn around you discover that something is not covered – you are eager to have a seat. As you wait for someone to confirm your birth date for the ninth time, you try to look comfortably at ease, which is what every other scantily clad person in the room aims for as well. If you're lucky, an aide will place a warm blanket on your lap -a luxury that Adam and Eve would've loved to have instead of their fig leaf. There you sit, surrounded by other precious people in skimpy gowns, frail creatures all of you, feeling particularly vulnerable as you await the call for surgery."

I was blessed to have my dear wife Judy with me most of the time during these ordeals, and, in truth, all those attending to me were always caring, genuine and real. Back again to Peter. "If we're honest with ourselves, to be alive is to be vulnerable. It is an inextricable part of being human. We're born naked and without any self-protecting parts. No fangs. No venom. No horns. No camouflage. Just tender flesh waiting for some clothes to arrive and a few modest protective devices that we learn to develop over time."

Through all too many circumstances in life, though, we resist vulnerability, fighting any and all association with it. Many of us are taught to view vulnerability as an embarrassing sign of weakness. "my nakedness embarrasses me, Lord," Elizabeth Rooney opens her poem, "Unfrocked." I am accustomed to some shreds of self- deception / patches of pretense, coverings of conceit. / I am not much as I am." But such a sense of powerlessness can serve as an opening.

When Soviet dissident Alexandr Solzhenitsyn tried to retain some degree of control over his vulnerability in the Gulag, desperate to acquire basic clothing and food, he found himself at the mercy of his jailors. But as he accepted and embraced the fulness of his vulnerability and deprivation, his captors had less power over him. As their power shrank, his only grew.

In Christian worship during most of the year, we celebrate God as an invisible power. But when Christmas rolls around, our normal calculations of power and influence suddenly get upended. A strange recalibration occurs within us as we find God showing up in marble or mosaic but as an unashamedly naked infant, what Frederick Buechner calls a divine descent into the “ludicrous depths of self-humiliation.” The nakedness of the incarnation will always seem scandalous to some, but to others of us it becomes an urgent call to acknowledge the vulnerability that will connect us with others in love.

After a year of political campaigning, in which powerful people strut around as invulnerable saviors, encountering God in a birthday suit deserves to be more than a sideshow. This one who arrives undressed in Bethlehem is precisely whom we must come to know if we’re to discover the power and love that can spring from life’s most vulnerable moments.

May we expose our vulnerability, as hold on to life together. Amen.



VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE – PASTOR’S MESSAGE

If we count the deaths and starvation occurring around the world, in our own country, in our cities and towns, it is completely unimaginable. What we have seen, witnessed, and absorbed brings us to Advent, a time of waiting, and then a time of birth that also occurred at a time of danger, fear and uncertainty.

As we think of our times together this year, we faced the loss of dear, loved and respected friends, family members. Illness, difficult choices and discord. Yet at this time, we have pulled together, figured out ways to encounter our challenges and give thanks for our friendships, all pitching in and trying to be a counterpoint to all the pain all around us.

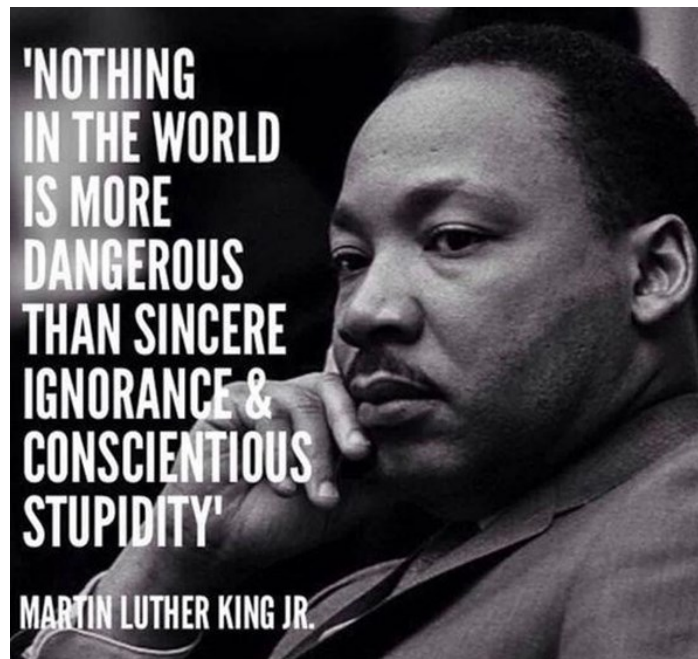
We have huge challenges in front of us as a faithful group of loving souls who have discovered we can help each other. We can reach out to those suffering, we can feed the hungry, we can join our brothers and sisters of faith and gather once more to work to make things better.

We will seek ways to help those who are strangers and at risk; reach out to people from people from all over the world who come to us from HIU (Hartford International University of Religion and Peace), a newly challenged and named Fresh Start (you’ll hear about that soon), GHIAA stepping up once again with challenges far greater.

But, in all this, we need to gather together in peace and solidarity that what is good is what we stand and seek, what matters is what we must search for and embrace, and that together we may discover more and better ways of giving help.

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

We need to find the absence of hate, the end of stupidity, and an end to extremism. Inside this issue you’ll find some tough stuff, some humor and creativity. As we move from Thanksgiving, let’s remember to give of ourselves as we find the way to embrace a future of hopefulness, together.



CHURCH NEWS



FRIDAY GATHERING

- **Entertainment** - if you would be interested in/willing to entertain at a Friday Gathering Dinner, please let Judy Butterworth-Kremer know at judyvbk@aol.com.
- **Congratulations to Emma Coleman Carr and Israel Alvarez for attaining the ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification. Great work!**
- **Christmas Gifts** -on 12/27 we plan to give Christmas gifts to our Friday Gathering guests. Donations of hats and gloves for men, women and children are requested. We will need any donations by 12/15, as after service on 12/15, we will bag, with your help, these gifts.



JANET'S CLOSET -

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



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS -

- The deadline for getting your order in for Christmas Poinsettias is December 15th. Order Forms will be available on 12/8.

Special Dates of Note

December 8th - HIU Student Presentations after Service.

December 15th - Deadline for ordering poinsettias.

Preparing Christmas Gifts for Friday Gathering after Service

December 22nd - Celebrate December Birthdays after Service

December 24th - 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



MARILYN RAMSEY BAPTISM - WELCOME MARILYN!



THE AMERICA I WANT TO SAVE IS THE AMERICA WE'VE NEVER HAD



A Thanksgiving Eve Message from Michael Moore



Constructing the Statue of Liberty, assembling it piece by piece, 1886

Friends,

This morning it was announced that it appears the final count may now be in — and **Trump has FAILED to win a majority of the popular vote. His final total, as of now, will be under 50% — or 49.83%.**

This was no landslide. It was the smallest percentage of a popular vote victory in a Presidential election since Richard Nixon in 1968.

Here's how **little** we lost by:

Just 12 votes per precinct across the entire United States!

That's it. With Harris behind by just 2.4 million votes out of the 152 million who voted, that's an average of just 12 votes per precinct across the nearly 200,000 precincts in the U.S.

Is there anybody reading this who believes we can't get just 12 more people out in our part of town to vote next time? Exactly! C'mon, yes, we just got a kick in the gut, it super sucks, we've got a real fight ahead of us — **but we're only a dozen people short per precinct!** Is it really worth giving up? You're just 12 raffle tickets short for the new band uniforms! You only need 12 more people to sell out the school play! You are just 12 pages short of finishing your first novel! Get a grip! Snap out of it!

The administration Trump is currently forming — it's like one of us wrote this script *and he is unbelievably following it to the exact word!* *The Wrestling Lady will run our schools! The guy who beheads a whale, straps it to the top of his car and drops a dead bear he wanted to eat off in Central Park will be in charge of all our Health and Human Services! The weekend guy on Fox and Friends will be in charge of our 2 million soldiers and launching our nuclear missiles! And we actually got one of our own, an ex-Bernie campaigning Congresswoman who we all know really well, a crazed but lovely Hawaiian who looked higher than you at that Phish concert, to be in charge of all of our spy agencies! Yes!*

Don't ask me how we've pulled all this off. I keep pinching myself! One person who works at the White House told me this week, "Dude! How'd you guys mastermind this? With this set up, Trump's presidency is going to crumble within 18 months!"

I didn't like that. A lot of hurt will be enacted over 18 months. We'll try to come up with more stuff that'll shut him down by July.

In the meantime, about a month ago on Halloween, I posted **free of charge** my "How We Ended Up with Trump the First Time and How We Can Rid Ourselves of Him" movie — ***Fahrenheit 11/9* — on YouTube. Free** to all.

It was the Thursday before the Election, the last weekend before the Election, our final six days to try and get out the same vote we mobilized 4 years ago — to convince the majority that is **already** on our side NOT to take it for granted that Trump was going to lose and that they didn't need to show up to the polls. Everyone had to show up! We failed to make that happen. 2.4 million of those who stood with us against Trump in 2020 decided to stay home. They felt abandoned and uninspired by a remarkable 107-day campaign led by perhaps the smartest person in our lifetime to

run for President who, for those 107 days, embraced Wall Street ("I'm a Capitalist!"), hugged billionaires, toured swing states holding hands with "repentant" war-mongering Republicans, bragged about owning a Glock and spoke less and less about banning AR-15s. And in the final weeks, there were fewer labor leaders invited on stage, the campaign no longer addressed the true anger of the working class, it failed to promise a crackdown on inflation — *greed-flation* — with prosecutorial zeal and strict price controls by jailing corporate executives who jack up prices in order to post record profits.

The campaign grew quiet about how heavily it was going to tax the rich, there was little talk about how the planet may have reached the point of no return in the climate catastrophe, or why was it that my factory worker father could afford to buy a house upon returning home from WWII, or I, with my high school education, could buy one at 24 — *and yet I don't know a single goddamn person under 40 today who owns their own home!* The Democrats stopped promising old people a *real* increase in social security, refused to promise young people a debt-free college education, and for 30 years did nothing to give the working poor a *real* raise in the minimum wage — even though they had a Democrat in the Oval Office for over half of those years.

STOP PRETENDING TO BE SURPRISED THAT 2.4 MILLION WORKING CLASS DEMOCRATIC VOTERS STAYED HOME!!

Seriously, how do you lose an election to a fascist nutter when, according to every poll, the vast majority of Americans **support** legalizing abortion, banning assault weapons, guaranteeing paid family leave, free pre-K education, taxing the rich, term limits on the Supreme Court, ending gerrymandering and the Electoral College, removing money from politics, supporting labor unions, and demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. That's us. The MAJORITY of Americans.

But we fell short — by a *minuscule* 1.6% of the total vote. We failed to convince our disappointed and depressed friends and neighbors to help us in this last-chance effort to stop a madman from returning to office.

It is now Thanksgiving. Tomorrow, millions of us will gather around the table with family and in-laws and friends. In many cases, there will be a Trump voter or several Trump voters sitting around the table with you. I know there are many, many, many of you who just can't bear it, who can't deal with the racism, the misogyny, the... well, the even *more misogyny* any longer — those of you who are boycotting the family Thanksgiving, or who've made other plans to enjoy the long weekend in peace and reflection, spending (charging) ridiculous sums on Black Friday, or who plan on just pulling the covers over your heads until it turns December.

All of us are still taking time to think about what exactly we can do next. What each of us can do to resist the coming storm. What each of us can do to get motivated and find hope for the fight ahead. We cannot give up, so we must find a way to resist, to stop them, to protect the vulnerable amongst us, to win in 2026 and in 2028. After our devastating loss to W. in 2004, we came back in 2006 and flipped both the House AND the Senate. And 2 years after that we elected the first African American president, the only candidate who opposed the Iraq War. We will come up with a strong and successful plan of action. I will help write that plan.

In the meantime, I will also leave *Fahrenheit 11/9* up on YouTube in full for **free** and available indefinitely. The film will show you what we needed to do the last time Trump took office. There are good lessons we need to re-learn. You can watch it on [YouTube](#) or right here:



Please watch this if only to be reminded that we must not wait for the Democratic Party to get its act together or to finally shrug off their corporate overlords and fight the right fight. We hold immense power in our hands — and we rarely act as if we know that.

This is a movie about resistance and a reminder of what is truly at stake in these “United States.”

As I say toward the end of the film, “the America I want to save is the America we’ve never had.” It’s time we take our majority and build that America.

— Mike

P.S. Again — for the third time in 8 years, by a vote of the American people, Trump **lost a majority of the popular vote!**

A STORY - THE POPE AND THE RABBI - from Barbara Ruhe

Several centuries ago the Pope decreed that all the Jews had to convert to Catholicism or leave Italy. There was a huge outcry from the Jewish community so the Pope offered a deal.

He would hold a religious debate with the leader of the Jewish community. If the Jews won, they could stay in Italy. If the Pope won, they'd have to convert or leave.

The Jewish people met and picked an aged and wise rabbi to represent them in the debate.

However, as the rabbi spoke no Italian and the Pope spoke no Yiddish, both sides agreed that it would be a "silent" debate.

On the chosen day the Pope and rabbi sat opposite each other.

The Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers.

The rabbi looked back and raised one finger and shook it at the Pope.

Next the Pope waved his finger around his head.

The rabbi pointed to the ground where he sat.

The Pope brought out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine.

The rabbi pulled out an apple.

With that, the Pope stood up and declared himself beaten and said that the rabbi was too clever.

The Jews could stay in Italy.

Later the cardinals met with the Pope and asked him what had happened.

The Pope said, "First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up a single finger, shaking it to remind me there is still only one God common to both our beliefs."

"Then, I waved my finger around my head to show him that God is all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground to show that God is also right here with us."

"I pulled out the wine and wafer to show that God absolves us of all our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of the original sin."

He beat me at every move and I could not continue."

Meanwhile, the Jewish community gathered to ask the rabbi how he'd won.

"I haven't a clue," the rabbi said. "First, he told me that we had three days to get out of Italy so I shook my finger saying no."

"Then he tells me that the whole country would be cleared of Jews and I told him that we were staying right here."

"And then what?" asked a woman.

"Who knows?" said the rabbi. "He took out his lunch so I took out mine."

TREASURE EVERY CHILD**SOJOURNERS**

by Raj Nadella



DECEMBER 2024

THERE IS MUCH anticipation in the air. During Advent, we eagerly await the Christ child among us and all the blessings and transformations this infant brings. Our readings during this season remind us of the Christ child's vision for our world — and of God's power to upend existing political orders. This is the child whose mother proclaims that he will "cast down the mighty," "lift up the lowly," and change the course of history for God's people. We welcome the arrival of new life in Christ, imbued with hope and reminders that life is never fully defeated by empire's death-dealing designs.

But this Christ child comes in many guises. This child appears as an unhoused person, a racial other, an incarcerated person, a foreigner. Will we receive every child of God as we receive the Christ child and honor their hopes and full potential? Will we give to all of God's children the gifts of our time, energy, joy, and relationship so that our communities become hospitable places for the Christ child and every child?

Indian artist Jyoti Sahi has a beautiful painting called "Incarnation within the Anthill." In the image, Sahi sets a tightly curled Mary and infant Jesus inside a tall insect mound. In some parts of India, these mounds are called the "ears of the earth." As numerous, tiny, and insignificant as ants may seem, they are sacred and have inherent value, just as the mother and her newborn child have. It requires deep listening to nurture this Christ-consciousness. May the Advent season remind us that every child is sacred and that honoring God's image in the tiniest ones can bring down empires.

December reflections on scripture from the Revised Common Lectionary, Cycle C.

December 1

A Turnaround Moment

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

THERE HAS BEEN so much destruction at the hands of the Babylonian Empire, but the prophet Jeremiah highlights God's promise to restore the fortunes of the land. God assures the people that the land marked by desolation will brim with new life (33:15-16). All the destruction the people have witnessed will make way for peace. What a relief!

Jeremiah 33 repeatedly uses the words "justice" and "righteousness." The Hebrew word *sedek* ("righteousness") appears in various forms three times in verses 15 and 16. It means acting rightly according to the promises made. When the Lord acts with righteousness, the people are made safe, and salvation is extended to the land. Righteousness also refers to a horizontal relationship among people — not just between individuals and God. People are righteous when they relate to one another justly and acknowledge each one's humanity. Such righteousness and right relations become the foundation for God's salvation. In the prophet's understanding, salvation is no esoteric concept but is rooted in how people conduct themselves in relation to a neighbor. The nation's salvation is made possible when people foster just relations among each other. This Advent let's look closely for the tiny green "righteous branch" sprouting up near us.

December 8

No Half Measures

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

THE BEGINNING OF Luke 3 can seem a little mundane. Why do we want to hear all the details of rulers and their territories before we get to the big announcement of John the Baptist and his ministry? But these are necessary details. John's call for repentance challenged oppressive structures. As scripture scholar Richard A. Horsley notes, these rulers were responsible for perpetuating the structures that John is challenging. Luke named names! He fixed their place in history alongside their complicity in oppression. Rather than using the details of these rulers to *praise* them, Luke instead indicted them.

The word of God came to John, who turned his back on empire. And it came to him in the wilderness, away from the halls of power. John's detachment from power allowed him to hear the message in ways those associated with power could not. Power by domination blinds people's ability to see new possibilities or accept uncomfortable truths. John's religious slogan, drawn from Isaiah 40, of "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (Luke 3:5) sounds too ambitious. His vision that "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth" (verse 5) appears too grandiose. But John's sermon matched his times. It was a period of extreme political and economic oppression, and John's message channeled the moral imperative of a major course correction. How often do we settle for only "trimming" the mountains that block justice or ignore "rough ways" because of the demanding work needed to make them smooth?

December 15

Justice Isn't Abstract

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

IN 2020, WEALTHY white parents of students in Howard County, Md. public schools opposed or failed to support a measure to integrate their schools across racial and economic divides. Many of these parents considered themselves progressive on social issues. But when faced with an option to desegregate the schools their children attended, they failed to translate progressive social ideals into a concrete commitment to justice.

Luke 3 mentions many people going to the countryside to participate in John's movement of baptism. These were wealthy people who professed a commitment to justice and wanted to be part of what John was stirring up. In my imagination, they snapped selfies with John and posted them on Instagram. They wanted to be seen as hanging with the right crowd, wearing the right shirt, and committed to justice.

Rather than give them a "P" for "participation," John promptly puts them on the spot, asking them to "produce good fruit" of their repentance (verse 9). He makes it clear that repentance and justice are never abstract ideas but should always manifest themselves in concrete actions in one's own time and place. John invites people to leverage the power they have — big or little — within their own spheres of influence to challenge oppressive structures and transform lived realities for those who are least protected and most vulnerable.

December 22

Hope > Trauma

Micah 5:2-5; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-55

"THE VISITATION" IS a wooden and gold sculpture made in Germany in the 1300s, attributed to Master Heinrich of Constance. It depicts Mary and Elizabeth meeting after the Annunciation. The sculpture adds a small but important detail from Master Heinrich's sacred imagination. Mary places her left hand on Elizabeth's shoulder. They grasp one another's right hands. Elizabeth's left hand is on her heart. The gentle touching radiates care, mutual support, and celebration at this pivotal moment in their lives.

Luke records Elizabeth asking why she was so favored that "the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (Luke 1:43). But, really, to whom else could Mary have gone? Both cousins have just experienced life-altering announcements from angels. Both have overcome initial skepticism to

embrace the good news about the arrival of their prophetic children. Given their shared experiences and emotional spaces, only Elizabeth could offer Mary the support she needed.

An irony in this story is that these two women, who were at the margins of power and social hierarchy, were the first to believe in the promise of Advent. Their unique vantage points as the oppressed allowed them to see what those close to power could not. Luke's original text doesn't say whether it was Mary or Elizabeth who sang the Magnificat. The generational trauma they experienced at the hands of many foreign empires should have made it impossible for them to sing of hope. However, they did not have the luxury of despair. The ambiguity allows us to imagine the two women announcing with one voice the great things God has done for them and celebrating the salvation. Hope was their only tool for transforming generational trauma into generational healing and power.

December 29

Child Prodigies

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

THE 2006 MOVIE *Akeelah and the Bee* celebrates the determination of an 11-year-old girl from a low-income neighborhood to win the National Spelling Bee. While most other contestants are from privileged backgrounds, Akeela thrives with the support of her community in South Central Los Angeles and despite her parents' inability to recognize her gifts.

Luke is the only gospel writer to record the story of Mary and Joseph losing Jesus and later finding him in the temple. Luke tracks the boy Jesus' adventures and prodigious attributes. Such child prodigy stories are commonplace in Hellenistic literature and show up again in extracanonical gospels. Luke's story highlights everyone's amazement and wonder listening to Jesus, including teachers who were impressed by his brilliance and intelligence. Luke suggests that even if Jesus' parents were lost in their anxiety, their nurture of him and the support of their community contributed to his spiritual and intellectual growth. Within the literary context, Luke suggests that Jesus becomes strong and was filled with wisdom because of all the care he received.

Children flourish when they are nurtured well. When properly supported, children can display wisdom and amazing works. We cannot fully celebrate the Christ child's demonstration of faith and knowledge here if we are watching from the sidelines as countless children in our own time and place fail to thrive or reach their full potential because of social obstacles placed in their path. This season, let's act on our promise to ensure that every child receives the care and nurture they deserve.



Raj Nadella

Dr. Raj Nadella is the Samuel A. Cartledge associate professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga.

IF YOU WANT TO START TO FEEL BETTER, THINK ABOUT THIS:

by Jamie Raskin <info@e.jamieraskin.com>

If the game runs sometimes against us at home we must have patience till luck turns, & then we shall have an opportunity of winning back the principles we have lost, for this is a game where principles are the stake. Better luck, therefore, to us all. . .

--Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Taylor (1798)

My Dear Friends:

They say that defeat in politics is a far more profound experience than victory, and we have all traveled through a swirl of profound emotions and ruminations over the last few days, with more thoughts and feelings surely to follow.

But Kamala Harris and Tim Walz ran an all-out campaign to defend democracy, freedom and progress—and we were part of it. I'm proud of their service and I'm proud of the hard work thousands of my friends and supporters did in Maryland and across America.

The loss hit us like a ton of bricks. The last few days have been a blur of grief, disbelief and denial, regret, despair, resignation, estrangement and loss, heartbreak, and maybe, just maybe, the first stirrings of acceptance and renewed resolve to fight for the people and the true principles at stake in this fight.

If you want to start to feel better, think about this:

Just as we feel demoralized by the Harris-Walz loss to Donald Trump by *four million* votes in 2024, Trump's supporters felt demoralized by Trump's loss to Joe Biden by more than *seven million* votes in 2020.

But, operating as constitutional patriots—and not partisan zealots, we have responded honorably to the loss of the presidency.

We've expressed our disappointment civilly and our hopes for the future honestly.

We're not telling sinister judicially-debunked lies about who won the election to divide America.

We're not concocting disinformation and propaganda about imaginary election fraud in the states.

We're not committing fraud by trying to get state election officials to fabricate thousands of nonexistent votes to change the results. Nor are we preparing counterfeit electoral college slates.

We're not summoning mobs and violent extremist groups to attack police officers and destroy the peaceful transfer of power.

We're not out inciting mob violence against Capitol police officers, Montgomery County and D.C. police officers, federal law enforcement officers, Members of Congress, the Vice-President or anyone else in order to overthrow the election and block the peaceful transfer of power.

We are modeling true democratic citizenship without jettisoning our principles and values.

As Democrats we undoubtedly made strategic and tactical mistakes in this campaign. We need a rigorous analysis of what worked and what did not work against the dreadfully effective tactics of our



IF YOU WANT TO START TO FEEL BETTER, THINK ABOUT THIS: (continued from page 12)

homegrown authoritarians and oligarchs.

This is a process all of us should be engaged in—not just the Harris-Walz campaign or the Democratic National Committee—but all of us who have skin in the game.

But our values have *never* been a mistake. We have defended constitutional democracy against right-wing coups and violent insurrection. We have defended the freedom and health care of women against theocrats. We have fought for children and opportunity against the defenders of inequality and the promoters of chaos who vow to destroy Head Start and the Department of Education.

We have championed the right to health care and cheaper prescription drug prices, Social Security and Medicare, the work of climate scientists. We have defended libraries against book-banners, the right to vote against vote suppressors and fair elections against the lords of gerrymandering. We have insisted upon a foreign policy based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

We are among 68 million Americans who voted for these principles and values, and we're not going anywhere.

But I know it's no fun to lose an election contest between the bright hopes of democratic progress and the dark promises of MAGA authoritarianism.

This has been an especially tough loss for Democracy Summer Fellows and the wonderful young people everywhere who threw themselves into this campaign. We honor them for their passionate hard work and I hope you will all reach out to the young people in your lives to talk them through the cycles and rhythms of politics and the necessary resilience of hope and the fight for change. During my travels across Maryland and America this campaign season, I've met wonderful people hungry to address the real problems of our day—the mounting calamities of climate change, the omnipresent peril of gun violence and the deepening of inequalities between tens of millions of working people who live below the poverty level and the billionaire class increasingly usurping government power.

For as long as I am alive, I am going to honor and participate in this urgent fight for strong democracy, freedom and progress for all. Regardless of all the attacks on the January 6th Committee and threats against Democrats in Congress, I'm not going anywhere and I will never back down to the bullies and the oligarchs, the autocrats and the theocrats, the extremists and Russian bots.

This is our country and I'm going to fight alongside you to defend it every day.

It is an honor to be your friend and your brother in this struggle. Thank you for your resolve and your enduring love of country.

With total solidarity and immense gratitude,

Jamie

P.S. Hang on to your hat. Hang on to your hope. And wind the clock, for tomorrow is another day.

— E.B. White

A SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO THE ELECTION: WHAT MATTERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR FAITH AND THE FUTURE

America
THE JESUIT REVIEW

by Cecilia González-Andrieu November 13, 2024

Supporters of Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris react to early election results during an Election Night rally at Howard University in Washington on Nov. 5, 2024. (OSV News photo/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters)



I don't know where to start—not because I have nothing to say, but because there's too much, and anything I say will be inadequate.

Do I start with the young woman sobbing after class, wanting to know what she can do? How can she connect to others whose hearts are also breaking? Or do I start with the night before, when, as votes are counted I cling to my rosary, praying myself into a troubled sleep? Or maybe I should start a couple of years ago when an undocumented teenager going through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults asks me to be their godparent? I so love that kid. Or maybe 18 years before that, when another undocumented and idealistic young man stepped into my brand-new faculty office to tell me his story, igniting my work to develop resources for undocumented students and their families. Or maybe I should start in a room at the Vatican a month ago, and my conversation with Pope Francis? No, not there; I will ponder that moment in my heart, especially the deep sadness in his eyes.

I have no interest in replaying this election. I believe any analysis of what has happened will take years to untangle. We might never understand how we got here, especially because history is written (and sanitized) by the winners. Yet as a person in the ministry of theological education and advocacy for the vulnerable, I have three immediate concerns: What are our young people learning? What will we do as people of faith to actively mitigate suffering? And, finally, what about the future?

Who are we?

For now, our young have learned that we live in a reality where there is no “we.” This is a destabilizing space in which to exist as a young person, and we need to soberly acknowledge this truth. The young of most species first learn from adults, and as they reach adolescence prioritize learning from their peers. Humans, like many of our fellow creatures, are inherently social. Yet we have just witnessed a catastrophic unraveling of our social fabric. Our young are learning (and perhaps will teach each other) that insults, ambition, bigotry and misogyny ultimately win. They are being taught through words and actions that the most fundamental of all Christian beliefs—that God is love and we must care for all of God's creation—can be trampled without consequences in the pursuit of self-interest. They have witnessed that those seeking reconciliation and prioritizing the dignity of others will be mocked and defeated. They have seen with their own eyes that behavior that would not be tolerated in most homes can be in full display in front of cameras, cheered on and encouraged. It often seems the only value left standing today is the false glitter of wealth and power, and the permission to use any means to get there.

We've been here before

The history of Christianity is replete with times when instead of the Beatitudes, we chose thrones. The pursuit of profit and power is not a victimless crime. The limitless pursuit of profit requires a ruthless disregard for the needs of others, and power is what makes it possible. The United States has told itself many tales about its innocence and glory; none of them are

A SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO THE ELECTION: WHAT MATTERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR FAITH AND THE FUTURE

(continued from page 14)

entirely true. So, is it any wonder that we no longer know how to recognize lies? One of the most difficult things the early church had to do, which we see clearly in the writings of Paul and in Acts, was to wrestle publicly with wrongs and falsehoods. The early Christians had to deal with power struggles, manipulation, deceit and division and they did so by calling it out and pointing back to the promises Jesus had come to fulfill. There was another way to be human, another way to care for creation, another way to honor God's dreams. The prophets had been crying this out for generations, asking for repentance and conversion. Sometimes their voices were heard; many more times they were silenced. What is happening in the United States right now will affect our entire planet, not just this country, for generations.

Will we be silent?

None of us can predict how many of the threats that have been made during this campaign will be carried out by the new administration, but we should take their possibility seriously. We've been told of plans to massively and violently deport immigrants, to end programs that support the poor, to dismantle public education, to ban teaching about our difficult history and to continue to burn our planet to a crisp to fuel all our materialistic vices. Prediction is a fool's errand; preparation, on the other hand, is the work of the prudent.

Whatever way we voted or did not vote is irrelevant now. What matters is what happens from here forward. Our parishes, schools and neighborhoods have to prepare for difficult times. In particular, we must advocate for our immigrant brothers and sisters. We anticipate the forced separation of parents from children. We need to do the heartbreaking work of readying documents transferring the care of children to compassionate neighbors and friends. Our small businesses and farms have to be ready for repeated raids; for mothers and fathers, brothers and friends to disappear, and for widespread economic hardship to spread as harvests rot and essential work goes unfilled. *We will need to feed each other.* We have to prepare for the loss of health care and other safety nets for our elderly and sick. *We will need to come together to bind each other's wounds.* Our schools, universities and libraries may become targets; our books may be banned and our journalists jailed. *We will need to teach each other to remember what is true.*

None of this is theoretical for me. I have already lived through a country's society unraveling as a small child in Cuba. This desolate feeling is too painfully familiar. In my extended family we have had to flee from multiple places, multiple times. When she died, my mother-in-law had already experienced being displaced and seeking refuge twice in her life; tragically, so has my 91-year-old father.

What about the future?

Despite the results of this election, I still believe what I told my children: The world is full of good people ready to do the right thing. The future needs to nurture that innate goodness, bring us together and help us reorient ourselves in ways that give life. For this, we will need to face what is broken and imagine new ways to heal.

Let us focus on abundance. Abundance is very different from affluence. Abundance means that there is enough for all of us if we just learn to share. It is the multiplication of loaves and fishes, where none go hungry. This requires generosity and to turn the attention away from ourselves and toward the needs of others.

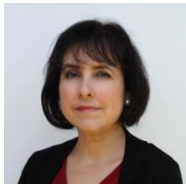
Let us overcome fear. The unfounded fear of strangers and their ways masks our real fear, which is that we will lose power and influence. Fear of our vulnerability is what fuels racism, sexism, nationalism and all of the attitudes that build walls, drop bombs and humiliate the

A SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO THE ELECTION: WHAT MATTERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR FAITH AND THE FUTURE

(continued from page 15)

weak. The “strongmen” of this world are the absolute antithesis of Christ on the cross; they sit in ornate palaces watching their cities burn while they divide up the world.

There’s much work to do. The reign of God is groaning under the weight of human egoism. Only its complete opposite—neighbor-carrying generosity grounded in love—can free it.



Cecilia González-Andrieu

Cecilia González-Andrieu, is professor of theology at Loyola Marymount University, a contributing writer for **America**, and president-elect of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States. Among her many publications is *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty*. She is also an advisor to Discerning Deacons, the Ignatian Solidarity Network and Catholic Women Preach.

J.D. VANCE’S DANGEROUS TIES TO OPUS DEI



You need to read this analysis of J.D. Vance:

Vance could serve as the leader of a new movement to institute an illiberal and explicitly reactionary political order [and] expel America’s current ruling elite in order to replace it with a new, more conservative one, drawn from the ranks of the New Right...

It is, in effect, a plan to accomplish through elite rule what even the MAGA movement has failed to accomplish through democratic control: the creation of a social order built around conservative values, even if those values remain broadly unpopular with the American people.

What POLITICO writer Ian Ward describes here is wildly in line with the goals of Opus Dei, the Catholic sect / the “cult inside the government” with ties to Project 2025.

To recap, Opus Dei’s mission is to weaponize religion and overtake democratic governments around the world. They succeeded in Spain nearly 100 years ago and expanded to other European countries and the U.S. soon after.

Unbeknownst to the American public, our next vice president has been plugged into a network of secretive-but-influential individuals and organizations, including Opus Dei.

Vance’s allegiance to Christian nationalist groups and ties to Opus Dei exist in no small part thanks to people like the Heritage Foundation’s Kevin Roberts and American entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and GOP mega-donor Peter Thiel.



Roberts, a close personal friend of Vance, receives regular spiritual formation from Opus Dei’s Catholic Information Center in Washington, D.C. One has to wonder how long it will be before he invites his friend to join him at the CIC. Perhaps he already has....

Thiel, another close friend and Vance's top financier, befriended Father Arne Panula while he was an undergrad at Stanford University. The two remained friends until Panula's death in 2017.

During his life, Panula served as the vicar of Opus Dei in the U.S. as well as the head of the CIC. Thiel has praised the Opus Dei priest for his influence in his own life and in our government.

The billionaire also publicly supported the late Father C. John McCloskey, another Opus priest and former director of the CIC until a sexual assault scandal brought too much attention to the church. Even after the CIC cut ties with McCloskey, Thiel continued to support him.

But J.D. Vance may have his own Opus Dei affiliates, too.

In 2019, Vance converted to Catholicism and was baptized at a Cincinnati church with ties to Opus Dei. He told a friend and reporter that he was drawn to Catholicism because his idea of "the optimal state" is the kind of government "the Catholic Church would like to see."

Let's be clear: the Catholic Church has no interest in interfering in American democracy. That would be Opus Dei.

St. Gertrude, where Vance was baptized, is operated by Dominican Friars from the Province of St. Joseph. The Dominican Friars are *openly* supportive of Opus Dei, even hosting events for the group in other parts of the country.

As for the Cincinnati church, they recently brought on a new priest who described the founder of Opus Dei as "a special founding grace" from God.

Even if Vance is somehow unaware of this extremist offshoot of Catholicism, it should concern us all that the most anti-democracy Christian nationalists support him — and I'm not just talking about Roberts and Thiel.

Earlier this year, former Heritage Foundation employee William Wolfe began pushing Vance as the best person to become Trump's running mate.

Wolfe is an editor of "The Statement on Christian Nationalism," a far-right religious manifesto that inspired parts of Project 2025's Mandate for Leadership.

The manifesto outlines a reshaping of the U.S. government in which women are not allowed to vote, and Christ-ordained "civil magistrates" write and enforce laws to support scripture — including charging women with murder for having an abortion.

That is who Vance is friends with, and those are policies Vance seemingly supports.

"The Statement on Christian Nationalism" was written in alignment with the Center for Renewing America, the think tank led by former Trump officials Russell Vought (tell the Senate to reject his nomination) and Kashyap Patel.

William Wolfe is not a random extremist, either. He is a former Trump official who worked in both the DOJ and the Pentagon. He is also a former Heritage Foundation employee with a long list of associates at other Project 2025 partners.

Based on my research, I do believe that J.D. Vance is very clued into the network of far-right influential Catholics here in the United States, Opus Dei included.

Even more concerning is how much his views align with theirs.

As horrifying as a second Trump presidency might be, remember Ian Ward's words and consider them a warning about a first Vance presidency: Vance "could serve as the leader of a new movement to institute an illiberal and explicitly reactionary political order."

Thanks for reading, sharing, and supporting our work!

Rebecca, The Deep Dive Project
A Proud Member of Deprogram America



THIS IS HUGE: ARREST WARRANT ISSUED FOR NETANYAHU

Last week, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant, on allegations that they committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This is huge. In this Wire, we'll break down each allegation in the ICC's historic decision, why this is a landmark moment, and why it matters for our movements.



THE WIRE

Why did the ICC issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant?

Netanyahu and Gallant stand accused of the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare, and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts. The ICC also "found reasonable grounds to believe" the two Israeli officials "bear criminal responsibility as civilian superiors for the war crime of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population."

Unsurprisingly, Netanyahu has responded to the warrant by accusing the ICC of antisemitism. And, like clockwork, Biden sprang to his defense, calling the warrants "outrageous."

1. On the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare

The ICC found that Netanyahu and Gallant had "intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity," by "impeding humanitarian aid in violation of international humanitarian law" and through "their failure to facilitate relief."

2. On the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts

The ICC argued that "the lack of food, water, electricity and fuel, and specific medical supplies

THIS IS HUGE: ARREST WARRANT ISSUED FOR NETANYAHU.

created conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of part of the civilian population in Gaza.” This deprivation “resulted in the death of civilians, including children due to malnutrition and dehydration” — and thus the ICC found “reasonable ground to believe” that Netanyahu and Gallant had committed the crime against humanity of murder.

It also accused them of the crime against humanity of persecution, arguing that civilians in Gaza are being targeted on “political” or “national” grounds. Finally, it accused Netanyahu and Gallant of the crime against humanity of other inhumane acts, citing their role in the prevention of medical supplies and medicine from reaching Gaza, which has forced doctors to “carry out amputations, including on children, without anesthetics.”

3. On the war crime of intentionally targeting civilians

The ICC also “assessed that there are reasonable grounds to believe” that Netanyahu and Gallant “bear criminal responsibility as civilian superiors for the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population of Gaza,” citing two incidents that it said “qualified as attacks that were intentionally directed against civilians.”

Why is this so significant?

This is the first time the ICC has issued arrest warrants for so-called “pro-Western” leaders in its entire, over 20-year history, and the first time any international court has done so since WWII.

Israel’s Prime Minister is now a wanted man who could stand trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity were he to be brought before the ICC. One-hundred and twenty-four countries are members of the court and are legally bound to enforce its decisions. Already, the governments of Canada, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, South Africa, Norway, and the Netherlands, among others, have said they would arrest Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant should they step foot inside their border.

On the other hand, authoritarian leader Viktor Orban immediately pledged *not* to enforce the ICC’s arrest warrants and welcomed Netanyahu to Hungary.

Israel — and the United States, by association — are becoming increasingly isolated on the world stage. By continuing to fund and arm Israel’s genocide, the U.S. government shows where it stands: on the side of the anti-Democratic far-Right.

Why does this matter for our movements?

Over a year into Israel’s genocide, the ICC’s arrest warrants represent a tangible step toward some form of accountability. But for the tens of thousands of Palestinians that the Israeli military has slaughtered in the Gaza genocide, and for the millions it is currently starving to death, true justice is a long way off.

Still, as the *Wire* argued in January, Israel’s prosecution under international law matters for our movements because it shifts the organizing terrain and opens up new opportunities for escalation.

The ICC’s decision strengthens the case for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), demands grounded in international law, and it exposes top officials of states that continue to arm Israel, such as the U.S., to potential charges of “aiding and abetting” war crimes.

THIS IS HUGE: ARREST WARRANT ISSUED FOR NETANYAHU.

It represents a new pressure point, one our movements can exploit to hold our elected officials' feet to the fire at a time when it feels like the paths for change are narrowing.

With less than two months before Trump's inauguration, many of us feel terrified about what's coming — but that doesn't mean we're slowing down, just that we need to think creatively about the way we organize going forward. The ICC's landmark decision has revealed cracks in the facade of Israeli impunity, and it presents new avenues for our movements to seek accountability and demand an end to the genocide.

Tell the Senate: Stop repressing the Palestine movement.

There are two incredibly dangerous and repressive bills in front of the Senate. Both are part of the broader assault on the movement for Palestinian freedom and progressive causes — and must be defeated. Email your Senators now .

LIFE SHOULDN'T BE THIS WAY

People gather at Apalachee High School in Winder, Ga., after a 14-year-old student killed four people and injured at least nine more. / Amanda Greene

DECEMBER 2024 by Megan Gomez

I WAS ANGRY that this happened again. I was hurting for Apalachee, and for students and school [employees] around our county. I was heartbroken as stories from people in my church close to this tragedy began to come in. I was rattled and processing. I still am.

SOJOURNERS



This is the 416th school shooting in our country since Columbine. When will things change?

I was in middle school when Columbine happened. It changed the way I looked at school forever. Then on Wednesday [Sept. 4] my youngest, at 3 years old, experienced her first lockdown. I am thankful to our preschool and church staff for keeping our preschoolers safe, but life shouldn't be this way. This is the 416th school shooting in our country since Columbine. When will things change?

I thought of Jesus, weeping at the death of his friend Lazarus. I thought of Jesus telling his disciples to love their enemies, to pray for them, even those who hurt them, even the political leaders who beheaded his cousin and would soon put him on a cross. I thought of Jesus' command to love God with all our hearts and love others as ourselves. I thought of the book of James and the exhortation to be doers of the word and not just hearers of the word. How well do I, *do we*, follow what God says: to love others, to help others, to reach out?

It turns out this 14-year-old kid [with the gun] lived about a mile or so from my church. I don't have faith that laws or politicians will change things. I have faith in God and believe [God calls] us to do more, to not pass the buck, saying "someone should do something." Each of us *is* that someone. We can make a difference in our communities, neighborhood, or just on our street. We have a lot of hurting people and hurting families. Our school counselors, teachers, and community counselors can't do it all. They are overwhelmed and stretched thin. They need us.

Our kids need us.

Megan Gomez is an associate pastor at Bethlehem First United Methodist Church in Bethlehem, Ga.

SCIENCE FOR GOOD – Annual Report

This year has brought relentless challenges to our work—such as the Supreme Court enabling Big Oil to sideline science by overturning the "Chevron doctrine," president-elect Trump and Project 2025 threatening to reverse our science-backed policy advancements, and the troubling reality of billionaires and climate-denying politicians spreading disinformation to protect corporate interests over public health.



Yet, thanks to members and supporters like you, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) remains steadfast in our mission: putting rigorous, independent science into action, developing solutions and advocating for a healthy, safe, and just future. Our diverse team of scientists and experts has devoted 2024 to advancing science for good.

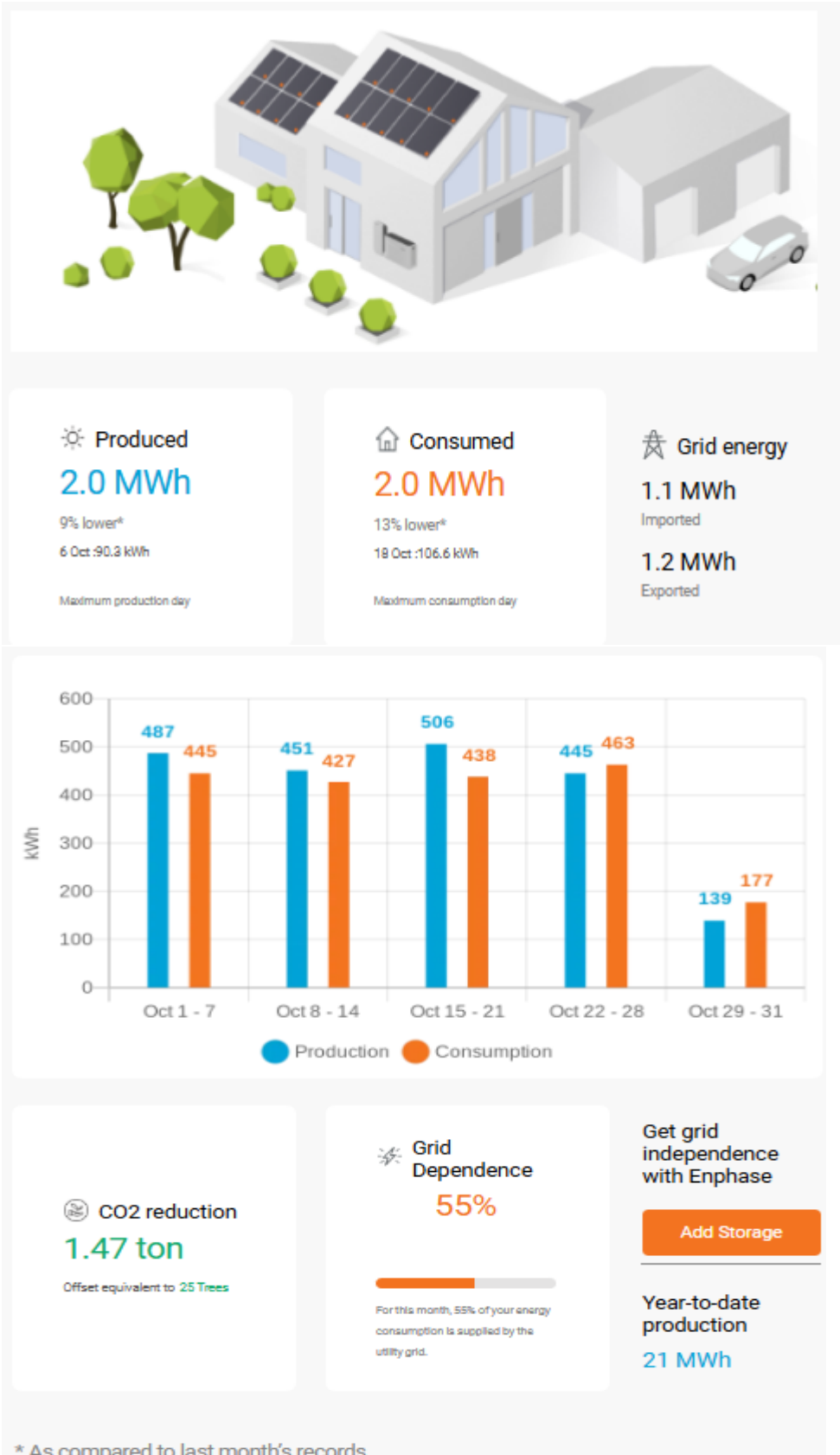
And the results speak for themselves.

In this year's annual report, [*Science for Good*](#)—we highlight the progress you've made possible:

- Thanks to UCS's expertise and the advocacy of dedicated supporters like you, the government issued its strongest-ever standards for limiting emissions from cars and pickups. This landmark regulation is expected to prevent 7.2 billion tons of carbon emissions from passenger vehicles by 2055.
- Your support helped UCS expose Tyson Foods' water pollution. UCS released a report and interactive map detailing how and where Tyson Foods slaughterhouses and processing plants released more than 371 million pounds of pollutants into US waterways—in many cases near critical wildlife habitats or low-income communities.
- After years of work fueled by your support, we celebrated an announcement of federal limits on carbon dioxide emissions from new gas-fired power plants and existing coal-fired plants. These new standards are projected to deliver \$370 billion in climate and health benefits by reducing power plant pollution.
- A UCS analysis found that millions of Americans reside near facilities emitting ethylene oxide (EtO), a known carcinogen. By leveraging this report in our advocacy efforts, we successfully urged the Biden administration to take action. This past March, a new rule was announced requiring certain facilities to reduce EtO emissions by up to 80%. This significant measure will protect over 13 million people from toxic exposure.
- Following years of advocacy by UCS—including a 2021 report that found one-third of facilities handling toxic chemicals are located in areas vulnerable to climate hazards—we have seen strengthened regulations. These new rules require more than 12,000 chemical facilities to develop clear plans to prevent and prepare for natural and human-caused disasters.

At UCS, we are inspired by you to fight harder than ever before. As we look ahead to the monumental work to come, regardless of the fights we have ahead, we remain committed to using science for good.

SOLAR PANEL REPORT - October 2024



DECEMBER 2024 BIRTHDAYS AND 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 December 2024

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

Date	Reading #	Reading	Reader
12/1	1	Jeremiah 33: 14-16	Nina Kretschmer
	2	1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13	Sonia Wellington
	Psalm	Psalm 25: 1-10	Unison
12/8	1	Baruch 5: 1-9	Karla Grafton
	2	Philippians 1: 3-11	David Grafton
	Psalm	Luke 1: 68-79	Rodney Carr
12/15	1	Zephania 3: 14-20	Barbara Calogero
	2	Philippians 4: 4-7	David Eberly
	Psalm	Isaiah 12: 2-6	Unison
12/22	1	Micah 5: 2-5a	Marty Holmeen
	2	Hebrews 10: 5-10	Lou Oliver
	Psalm	Luke 1: 46b-55	Unison – sing ELW 251
12/24 7 p.m.	1	TBD	TBD
	2	TBD	TBD
	Psalm	TBD	TBD
12/29 Lessons and Carols	1	TBD	TBD
	2	TBD	TBD
	Psalm	TBD	TBD



Grace Lutheran Church
46 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105



Our Staff and Council Leadership

Reverend Richard H. Kremer, Pastor

rickkremer@aol.com

Emmanuella Hart— Ministry Coordinator

ministry.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com

Nilda Bolorin, Parish Administrator

office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com

Toby Scott, Sexton

Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Judy Butterworth-Kremer, Secretary

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Emma Coleman-Carr, Altar Guild

www.graceistheplace.org

