



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105

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July 2018

Fresh Start News

Good morning,

Last night (June 21, 2018), Judy and I decided to visit Vito's Trattoria on Trumbull and Church in Hartford at nearly sunset. Why, you say? Well, it was the first night - and the longest day of the year - for public viewing of a new outside dining area in the front of this storied restaurant group. I wanted to take some pictures and see it for myself. You see, Fresh Start has been working on this project for months. 11 large, custom planters, with some pipe to hold the strings of light. It had to be done just right; and it was.

Mike McGarry a longtime friend and partner with us made the introductions. Ron was in it from the beginning, then Mark to help with the design and manufacture working with Ron and the creative mind behind the whole enterprise, Rob, the owner. A bunch of Board members helped in one way or another - thank you for your expertise and support. But the work, the real work was done by the hard-working team that is Fresh Start! Waseem, Mohammed, Mike, and Ron built, assembled, stained and lugged this large number of very heavy pieces to the truck (rented and driven by none other than Steve Erie with his sidekick Ed Johnson) to deliver this masterpiece to the site. Where a team emptied it and began to position the whole system. Earlier in the day yesterday, Mike added the finishing touches of boxes and boxes of plants and flowers to be displayed in each of the 11 planters. It was a huge job, and coincidentally, Dr. Ed showed up and ended up helping Mike with the finishing touches. It is gorgeous. See for yourselves below. And, please, congratulate the Fresh Start Team for a job very well done.

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Mike (McGarry) tells me it will be on the front page of the upcoming Hartford News!

OUR GOD REIGNS

I do trust that “Our God Reigns”. It enables me to sleep at night and to witness the things that are happening that hurt, disappoint and cause fear. From the beginning and to the end, our God reigns.

Like a recurring bad dream, the arrest of asylum seekers at our borders brought me back to a trip we took in 2011 to try and understand what was happening at the Arizona border, both the Mexican and the U.S. sides. I was disturbed then, as I am now. People who seek asylum are coming to us saying we cannot live anymore in our country. Extortion, violence, rape and murder have led to our escape. The lack of jobs, food and clothing that come with these things made us leave, to try to find a safe place for our families, but mostly for our children.

What is a misdemeanor, we had learned, was being treated like a felony. But, to make everything far worse was the cruelty of separating children from parents, and then not keeping track of who was where. The bragging about these steps that have just happened reminded me of Sheriff Arpaio in Phoenix who made immigrants parade in the middle of the City to maximize their feelings of hopelessness and shame, while allowing others of them to do roofing jobs in the desert heat – 110 degrees Fahrenheit and higher – without papers. Now we strip children from their families with a degree of callousness that has not been seen since the Japanese in America were arrested and imprisoned for no reason other than their race and ethnicity.

The things that are being celebrated as the means of making America great again are taking me back, when America was not so great again. My time in a segregated South Carolina, the separation of people by race, the killing of the innocent, the lynching of the poor and the suffering.

Our God does not encourage such horrors then or now. We are encouraged to love each other and particularly the stranger, the poor, the frightened, the innocent and the victims. Even as we continue to push the envelope about how bad can we get, I know and trust the God who reigns. Not the fallible human beings who take joy in their ability to cause pain and anguish for millions, not the ones who work every day to figure out how to transfer wealth from the poor to the most wealthy, and not the ones who were gifted by the generations that preceded them, and were born with golden spoons in their mouths.

It comforts me to know that our God reigns. And that this, too, will past. I only wish that we could avoid the horrors that seem to be growing virtually every day... right in front of us all. We must pray, act and love like never before.

LOVE
TMY
NEIGHBOR



STATEMENT FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON ON EXECUTIVE ORDER

About two weeks ago, I joined more than 20 other faith leaders in raising concerns about the administration's announced plans that it would begin separating families and criminally prosecuting all people who enter the U.S. without previous authorization. In line with that statement, I acknowledge that President Donald Trump's new executive order, "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation," does keep families together, but for how long and in what conditions? I am troubled by what the executive order does and does not guarantee. There is no provision for reuniting children already separated from their families, nor for children whose parents have already been deported. The executive order also allows for the possibility of future family separations.

The forced separation of children from their parents is unnecessarily cruel, further traumatizing families who have already suffered in their countries of origin and on the dangerous journey to the U.S. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its predecessor church bodies have a long history of caring for children, families and refugees. It's who we are.

This executive order will expand the detention of families. The ELCA opposed the detention of families policy during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, and we oppose the policy now. Detention centers are not designed to support families. Community-based alternatives to detention, like ones that Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has piloted, are cost-effective ways to ensure that children and parents can await their court case in a dignified setting.

In his explanation of the Lord's Prayer in the Small Catechism, Martin Luther reminds us that good government is part of our daily bread. As Lutherans and as citizens, we can work with elected officials toward humane, just, and compassionate solutions. Through AMMPARO and LIRS, the ELCA is committed to walking alongside children and families who are seeking asylum. You can be part of a network that uses their hands and voice to ensure they feel welcomed wherever they go. We can also advocate through ELCA Advocacy (elca.org/advocacy).

By grace we are set free to love and serve the neighbor. Let us, through prayer and action, serve these vulnerable children and families.

<http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7939>



Please get involved in adding your voice in addressing the needs of migrant families being separated as they are seeking asylum. Ascentria is a member of Lutheran Services in America and is affiliated with the ELCA



We have been experiencing a nightmare. Thousands of innocent migrant children have been taken from their parents...in the United States of America!

You probably heard the audio recording of children crying out for their parents. It's all been so heartbreaking.

This tragedy is not just the suffering of the children and their parents – all people of conscience have suffered. We saw what was going on, and we were sickened by it. Children were being used as pawns by the Trump administration for leverage to force Congress to pay for a border wall that most Americans oppose.

Children should never be used for political extortion. That is immoral.

The President has now reversed himself. He has taken executive action to end his cruel policy. But it's important to realize that thousands of migrant families are still incarcerated or denied their legal right to apply for asylum.

This nightmare is not over. And regardless of the President trying to end news coverage of this crisis, the suffering goes on. So, please, do not look the other way.

If you share our anguish about this tragedy, I ask you to consider taking personal action.

- **Contribute to our [Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program](#).** We care deeply for the children in our care and those granted asylum after fleeing violence and persecution.
- **Share your voice!** Contact senators and representatives to protest this crime against humanity. [Click here for their contact information](#).
- **Consider volunteering or becoming a foster family for a refugee minor.** Children need a loving family. If you are interested, or know someone who might be, [learn more](#).

At this time, our Ascentria Care Alliance Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program and our Division for Children's Services program have not received any children who are being separated from their parents at the U.S. border. These Ascentria programs provide foster care for youth with varying immigration statuses from a variety of countries, who do not have a parent or guardian to care for them.

Protecting children is at the heart of Ascentria's mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela'.

Angela Bovill

President and CEO



Subject: ELCA presiding bishop responds to Supreme Court decision on travel ban

June 26, 2018

Thus says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow ... (Jeremiah 22:3).

I am dismayed by the Supreme Court's recent decision concerning the president's authority to restrict travel into the United States. It applies to travelers from certain countries based on those countries' inability to provide information necessary for immigration vetting. Strong vetting procedures have already been authorized by Congress and reviews of applications for possible links to terrorism are also in place. Therefore, restricting all travelers from certain countries simply because they are citizens of those countries is deeply troubling. In the past, we have seen the sometimes horrific effects of excluding and marginalizing (or worse) whole classes of people based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender identity or other characteristics.

Our social statement, "For Peace in God's World," provides theological guidance for the church to respond by offering wise words of caution:

Citizens need to give careful attention to how we in the United States perceive our national interest and interpret our national identity, since what states do depends in large measure on their views of their own interests and identity. Sin's power often makes itself felt in arrogant and self-righteous views of national identity, and in narrow, short-term, and absolute views of national interest.

We expect expressions of our nation's identity to build on the best of our traditions, to respect others' identity, and to open up paths for mutual understanding. For the sake of a greater good or for reasons of conscience, citizens may need to oppose a prevailing understanding or practice of national identity and interest.

With this court decision, we are again reaching a point where the assertion of "national security" by the executive branch of government results in the rejection of all other considerations in national policy discussions. Our social statement also reminds us: "In bondage to sin, we fall captive to fear." Jesus taught us to love one another. The social statement calls us to "a dynamic vision of difference in unity."

In a time ... when an idolatrous allegiance to one's own community endangers our oneness, we must voice with clarity the powerful vision of difference in unity. This vision calls us to engage differences, not to ignore or fear them. The hope for earthly peace challenges people to strengthen their own particular communities in ways that promote respect and appreciation for people in other communities, for all share a common humanity.

Let us recall that all people are created in God's image and, therefore, rather than have suspicion be our assumption, let us attribute to them honor and respect as God does.

God's peace,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Grace is a Member of the Christian Activities Council that Successfully Wins Action Against Slumlord...

by Darrell Urban

On May 29th The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) canceled a notorious New York City landlord's contract as the result of the organizing efforts of the tenants in Emmanuel Ku's apartment buildings in the Clay Arsenal section of the north end with the support and expertise of the Christian Activities Council (CAC).

CAC member, Pastor Darrell Urban, representing Grace, is establishing a small group of Grace members in the organizing efforts of the council. Darrell attended the final meeting at Hartford City Hall with tenants, Christian Activity Council organizers, Mayor Luke Bronin, and other city officials to confront HUD on its continued contract with Emmanuel Ku as the owner of 150 units in 26 buildings that have been infested with vermin, mold, broken windows, countless building, and health and safety violations. The apartments have been in this condition for years and tenants were not able to get Mr. Ku to make the needed changes until the Christian Activities Council got involved about 11 months ago. As a result, those who have been living in these conditions will be given certificates of relocation and can now find more suitable, clean and safe places to live.

Others from Grace that have attended the council's organizing meetings have been Louisa Barton-Duguay, Quincy Coleman, Paul Yigle-Kaljob, Dave Holmes, Mike Phillips and Pastor Rick Kremer.

Organizers for the council are now also working with several Grace members who live at 10 Marshall Street, a building plagued with serious drainage problems.

The plan is to have house meetings with Grace members to get to know each other better, and to share concerns with one another about conditions and issues in our communities that greatly concern us. This is part of the ongoing process of organizing our interfaith communities to become a powerful force for addressing issues in our city. This was evidenced in this successful effort with this action against (Emmanuel) Ku.

The Christian Activities Council has been established in Hartford since the end of the 19th century and is going through a metamorphosis from a strictly Christian organization that provides charity and services, to a powerful interfaith organization that can use its power to structurally intervene in situations in our city. This is to pursue issues of justice and to get at the root causes of problems that in the past have been addressed through services only.



Joshua Serrano and Milagros Ortiz, tenants and tenant leaders of the Clay Arsenal Renaissance Apartments, hug during a press conference Thursday announcing that landlord Emmanuel Ku will lose his million-dollar-per-year federal housing contract.

Mark Mirko| MMirko@Courant.com

Quincy Coleman Repairs Handicap-Accessible Restroom...

by Darrell Urban

Amongst the many activities going on this spring, one of them quietly going in between, was the repair and re-tiling of part of the handicap-accessible restroom downstairs. Water seepage had rotted part of the floor and threatened to produce a hole right on through.

Quincy tore the old floor out, fitted a new plywood underfloor with special water-proofing techniques and then cut and cemented in new vinyl floor that matched the original.

You never know what might be going on in the spaces between the advertised and calendared activities.



Quincy Coleman repairs the floor in the handicap-accessible restroom at Grace.



Black-eyed Susans in Dale's Yard

Dear members and friends of Grace,

Urgently needed: Friday Gathering supplies

We are not often able to purchase or access all of the supplies we use for the Friday Gatherings from FoodShare. We are running low on basic supplies such as coffee, sugar, spices, trash bags, napkins, and dish soap.

If you have an account with Thrivent you can request a \$250 Thrivent Action Team Grant money card for a special project. If you do not have an account, as a member of Grace, you can become an associate member for \$20 and then apply for an action grant. If you need

assistance with this, please contact Louisa or Nancy.

Over the past several years, using these Thrivent Action Team grants, we have been able to purchase needed supplies without using Grace Funds. We have also been able to get T shirts and name tags.

If you would prefer to make a monetary donation or gift cards, please contribute in whatever way you are able.

If you can help with this, please call or email Nancy Urban. 860 416-3336 or nlurban@gmail.com

Thanks, everybody!

Lay Minister Lloyd Smith and Grandmother Mavis Smith shared with us news about their grand-daughter, Olivia McAdams, receiving a prestigious award from the Watkinson School. Join us and Olivia's proud parents, Craig and Petre McAdams in congratulating Olivia!



Congratulations, Olivia!

From: Arielle Martins <ariellemartins@watkinson.org>

Date: May 31, 2018 at 11:59:08 AM EDT

Subject: Words from today, if you want to keep them:)

Given in memory of Watkinson parent, Sonya Dockett Nwachukwu, this award is given to a young woman who demonstrates the qualities and characteristics most closely associated with Sonya during her life: fierce determination, an exemplary work ethic, grace under pressure, and a clear-sighted vision of the possibilities that await women of substance when they aspire to succeed.

I've seen her "fierce determination" out on the lacrosse field, her "exemplary work ethic" in class, and her "clear-sighted vision for women" in her leadership role in Young Women's Empowerment Group. I've witnessed unforgettable "grace under pressure" when she was honored as The Aurora Foundation's Young Philanthropist of the Year. Her speech, beautifully written and hauntingly executed, moved her audience to tears. But in the smaller moments, I see her go about her day with the boldness, compassion, and authenticity that epitomize a "woman of substance." I am humbled and honored to present this 2018 Sonya Dockett Nwachukwu award to Olivia McAdams.

Arielle Martins
Upper School Math Teacher Watkinson School
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Olivia has been accepted at American University, Washington, D.C. and will be starting classes this September.

Pastor John Stendahl

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In a different context I might argue that sometimes our prayers *are* in fact raised from out of our powerlessness, prayers that groan and yearn from places of exhaustion and failure. The strong words that I read on that lovely Shabbat morning should not be heard to deny or obscure such prayers of longing from the depths of human weakness. But Riemer's words are needed, a correction and challenge to another obscuring: the use of prayer as an emotional substitute for action, a pious passivity that fails to recognize and use the power that we do have.



More photos of Fresh Start's booth at the recent 2018 Celebrate West Hartford Arts/Crafts Show.

Rich Carman and Dennis Dell'Accio interact with show attendees





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