

Thu, Jul 18, 2024

CALIFORNIA



Good morning! In this issue...

- Standing up for Palestine in D.C.
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- Bishop Barber on last weekend's violence

Announcement



Interfaith Action for Palestine

July 28–30 | [Register](#)

Washington, D.C. area and online

Over three days, two gatherings with dramatically different agendas will take place in the D.C. area. One group, Interfaith Action for Palestine, coordinated by a coalition including Christians for a Free Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace and Mennonite Action, will be mobilizing to expose, counter and disrupt the Annual Summit of the other group: Christians United For Israel (CUFI).

Founded by a far-right televangelist pastor, CUFI is the largest Zionist, “pro-Israel” organization in the U.S., with over 11 million members. It espouses Christian (overwhelmingly white) supremacy and promotes Christian Nationalist policies. Interfaith Action for Palestine will be bringing a message of nonviolent love and justice, calling for an immediate and permanent end to Israel’s genocide in Gaza and freedom and human rights for Palestinians.

Here is why Rev. Joanna Shenk, PPC supporter and Associate Pastor at First Mennonite Church of San Francisco, is attending:

As a Christian faith leader I am going to D.C. to bear witness to the way of liberation and peace, speaking out against the way Christianity has been used to perpetuate violence and war. I think often of Dr. King’s words in the Beyond Vietnam speech, where he connected the U.S. military’s killing of Vietnamese people with the killing of poor Americans (both on the front lines and in impoverished communities).

It is unconscionable that my tax dollars are being used to kill tens of thousands of people in Gaza and destroy the land. This war on Gaza has taken billions of dollars away from a desperately needed social safety net in this country and utterly devastated Gaza, while creating huge profits for weapons manufacturers. It is a moral outrage undergirded by Christian Zionism, which is the foreign policy of Christian Nationalism.

In D.C., I will be joining with Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and other people of faith to say no to this madness, and to call for a permanent ceasefire and for a world that heeds the voices of the prophets throughout history and in these times.

Fundamental to the PPC Moral Fusion 17-Point Agenda are these two demands:

- Addressing militarism and the war economy
- Standing for peace not war; an immediate ceasefire in Gaza that allows humanitarian relief, the release of all hostages, and peace with justice to be pursued; and an end to genocide, around the world.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Interfaith Action for Palestine and to RSVP.

Meetings & events

Freedom Church of the Poor's July series

"Reclaiming Our Abundance: Projects of Survival"

Sundays in July, 3pm PT

Freedom Church of the Poor is a project of Kairos Center, one of the anchor organizations of the Poor People's Campaign. This month's services will focus on projects of survival and their critical role in building a movement to end poverty, led by the poor. The series will feature religious and community leaders who are implementing these projects of survival in myriad ways: as mutual or direct aid, social justice ministries, community care and more.

Watch last week's services and the rest of the series on the [Kairos Center Facebook page](#).

Faith All-Call statewide meeting

Wednesday July 24, 6:30pm | [RSVP](#)

Our Faith All-Call meetings are a space especially for those who are moved to take action through the lens of faith. This one will feature a recap of our June 29 Mass Assembly and a look at how we're mobilizing to the polls. We'll also examine the faith roots of Project 2025 and discuss [White Poverty](#), the newly-released book by Bishop Barber and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and what we can learn from it for our mobilizing efforts. All are welcome!

Take the pledge!

At the Mass Assembly on June 29, Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis invited the crowd to pledge to help mobilize 15 million poor and low-wage voters to the polls this November and to fight for a moral public policy agenda that lifts from the bottom. [Watch](#) her rousing call to action and...

ADD YOUR NAME

PPC in the media



“Poverty is not a Black issue, it’s an American issue”

In an opinion piece in [The Hill](#), themes of race and political division from Bishop Barber and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove’s new book, *White Poverty*, are explored, with Bishop Barber discussing how the book came into being and the many leaders and activists he has learned from.

“We are pitted against one another by politicians and billionaires who depend on the poorest among us not being seen...by cable news and social media memes and politicians who depend on tired narratives to rally their base against imagined enemies of their ‘values,’” he says.

“An all-consuming spiral”

Bishop Barber on last weekend’s violence

The following is a reprint of a lengthy [thread](#) Bishop Barber posted in the wake of the shooting at the Trump rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

We all have to stand against political violence. Debates over ideas are one thing, but violence, assassination attempts, and killing innocent bystanders is something else. And it is wrong, no matter what the justification.

We have to give authorities time to do a full investigation of the man who tried to assassinate former President Trump at his rally in Pennsylvania. It’s irresponsible to assume motive by saying he made a donation to a Democratic PAC or was a registered Republican. And it’s certainly wrong to say he hated Trump because he was for Biden, or he was an agent of Satan sent to kill Trump, who is an instrument of God...

It’s also wrong to toy with conspiracies about the “deep state” orchestrating this kind of violence to cause civil unrest. Right now the investigators must investigate. And we as a society must refrain from violent words, innuendos, and articulations. The main talking we need to be doing is on our knees before God.

“Deliver us from evil,” and “make me an instrument of your peace” have been my prayers. We must pray for those injured, for the family of the deceased victim, for former President Trump, and for a covering over all the other candidates.

In fact, we have to keep the person who died front and center and not minimize the death and lift up a candidate. Because the death of a rally attendee reveals how, whenever we loose violence, hatred, and bullets, we never have control over who they might destroy.

We must pray and work for the day when we lay down our sword and spear, guns and violent language, and live as brothers and sisters.

Some are saying, "Something is wrong and we need to get back to a time when we knew what being Americans meant." But we have a history of assassinations. Maybe we don't need to get back but to go forward, debate issues, and not demean or dehumanize one another.

Regardless of party or position, we all must denounce violence, repent if we have not, and lean into nonviolence. I know what it means to receive death threats and be told you will be killed. But even with the threats, I must denounce violence—period. It is an all-consuming spiral that will destroy us if we don't.

Maybe we don't need to get back but to go forward, debate issues, and not demean or dehumanize one another.

This is a time for all of us to hear again the need to turn swords into plowshares. We need to hear that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We need to hear that there is a way to speak the truth in love and not make a political opponent a sworn enemy. When Dr. King said George Wallace, the governor of Alabama, had "lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification," he told the truth. But he also offered hope and never spoke as though Wallace couldn't change. He challenged dangerous lies and still loved Wallace. We must hear the teaching of Scripture: "love your enemies." "Be not conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind."

All I could hear the other day was what Peter said to a violent, untoward generation, filled with the politics of violence when Caesar sought to hurt, harm, and kill opponents: "Repent and you shall be saved." Turning toward truth and love, both individually and as a society, must be our starting point.

We need to repent of how we have allowed our politics to be about destruction, not dreams that strengthen the foundations of democracy. Public discourse has too often fueled the politics of fear, division, and polarization.

We have allowed the very framework of our public debate to be more about the harshest insults than straightforward conversation about the issues that most impact everyday people, especially the poor, low-wage workers, marginalized neighbors, sick folks, and immigrants— the people who Jesus said every nation will be judged by how we treat them.

We must refocus beyond the notion of left versus right, where you choose sides and set out to tear down the other side. We must repent and move to state our position that this or that issue is wrong or detrimental in our opinion—or based on data and research or past experience—but without declaring that the person who challenges us is less than human, is a conspirator, or is going to destroy the nation.

The truth is that if the nation is weakened or democracy is eroded, it will not be because of one person, but as a result of the complicit participation of citizens who went along with

the destructive attitudes and actions from which we refused to repent and thus pushed the collective to an ultimate breaking point.

And we must connect all of these attacks, for instance, from Congresswoman Giffords to Congressman Scalise to Speaker Pelosi's husband to Vice President Pence to all the threats Obama, AOC and others have received to this most recent assassination attempt against Trump.

We as moral and religious servant leaders must try with the Spirit's help to embrace and embody what ought to be.

We must look deep in our history and in ourselves to tell a better and truer story about what ails us and why it comes to the forefront in certain moments. We cannot be about just one moment. We must repent of what we've continued to be.

Every media group that for corporate profit has fed this demonization of neighbors must repent.

Every preacher who has declared that a person or a political candidate is our savior must repent.

Every person who claims our goal is to "go back" to some place in our history, as though violence is a recent occurrence, must reconsider and turn instead toward the hope of God's peace.

We must be true to what we have said on paper and ensure in our practice that fulfilling the preamble of the Constitution is our framework for public dialogue:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...

This is why we engage in public life. Truth in love is the only way to debate issues.

The presidential candidates should certainly lead in this serious repentance and lament. It is time to become statesmen and agree together on a truth-in-love model going forward. Stand together and commit to real debate on issues. This is not a weak position; truth in love can strengthen our democracy.

But I don't know if people who have depended on division to build power can shake its stronghold to listen. So we as moral and religious servant leaders must try with the Spirit's help to embrace and embody what ought to be.

I seem to hear now what the ancient prophet heard as he sought to challenge the violence within the DNA of his society's political experience. "He said, "Son of man, I'm sending you to the family of Israel, a rebellious nation if there ever was one. They and their ancestors have fomented rebellion right up to the present. They're a hard case, these people to whom I'm sending you—hardened in their sin. Tell them, 'This is the Message of God, the Master.' They are a defiant bunch. Whether or not they listen, at

least they'll know that a prophet's been here. But don't be afraid of them, son of man, and don't be afraid of anything they say. Don't be afraid when living among them is like stepping on thorns or finding scorpions in your bed. Don't be afraid of their mean words or their hard looks. They're a bunch of rebels. Your job is to speak to them. Whether they listen is not your concern."

I pray for the sake of ourselves and our children that America can find the strength to listen and learn together what it means to be "one nation, under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

Thanks for reading. If you have any questions, you are welcome to reply to this newsletter or email california@poorpeoplescampaign.org.