



A Year in the Life

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This week will mark the first anniversary of the second term of the President of the United States. This week is also the celebration of the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As these two events are juxtaposed, amidst the increase of authoritarianism, the attacks on democracy, the threats of violence, the militarization of US cities, and the actions taken against other countries and their leaders, what has the year taught us, and how will we, as Christians and people of faith, attend to the year that lies ahead? And, what will be the legacy of the church in this moment? History is being written on the memory of these events that are demanding our attention daily.

There are many challenges to be identified. The deployment of Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel across the United States has escalated into violence against immigrants and US citizens and has resulted in the killing of Renee Nicole Good. Immigration policy has long been a hot button issue, with deportations being a part of every administration.

This past year has proven that the streets are not safe—not that they ever were—for the stranger, for black and brown people, for those deemed foreign in a country where White Supremacy continues to feed on the glorification of Whiteness and the diminishment of those deemed as other. Lives and livelihood are under attack as the stroke of the pen continues to create Executive Orders meting out injustice in the quest to “make America great again.”

Greatness is questionable when



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inequities ensure that the most vulnerable among us continue to be oppressed. Immigrant communities have long been a part of the fabric of the United States, their time and presence often exploited for cheap labor, risky tasks, and work others choose not to do. Farming communities and factories are just a few of the places targeted for employing immigrant labor, yet the truth is that immigrants are present across the workplaces and industries needed for sustaining the economy and caring for people. As immigrants shelter in place against this pandemic of evil, there are changes being experienced in communities, even as neighbors rise to the occasion, protecting and caring for each other.

The president signed 26 Executive Orders on January 20, 2025, the highest number of Executive Orders signed by a president on their first day in office. To date, [225 Executive Orders have been signed](#). Most do not make the nightly news cycle, the implications of their content often missed in the silence until they are enforced. The commitment to justice necessitates knowledge of actions being taken. The struggle for freedom rests on understanding and correcting what is yet to come. The administration continues to use misinformation and disinformation as strategies for supporting its actions. The truth is needed and necessary for the change yet to come.

The past year has witnessed a blatant disregard for civil rights and freedom of the people. The exception to national and international law bodes ill for many. Rights are being revoked. Human rights are being revoked. The hands of the clock are moving forward, even as these times in which we are living hearken back to the rise of totalitarianism, an extreme form of authoritarianism, which emerged in the world following the economic downturn of the 1930s.

Then, the church was implicated in the deaths of those deemed as “other.” Less than 100 years later, democracy is being challenged, and the church gets to choose how it will be written into the history books. The “year that was” has lessons that point to a future

that must resist and eliminate the manifestation of injustices and tyranny.

The life and legacy of Dr. King are more poignant in the long shadow being cast by tyranny, calling for justice in these days ahead. His words remind us: “The time is always right to do right.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson serves as the General Minister and President/Chief Executive Officer in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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