

Groton Daily Independent

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The Groton Transit Bus will be going to Madison on Sunday, April 27 for baseball games.

For more information contact the Transit at 605-397-8661.

Monday, April 21

Senior Menu: Chicken and rice casserole, broccoli, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

NO SCHOOL - Easter Break

Groton Senior Citizens Meet, 1 p.m., Groton Community Center

Baseball at Miller, Varsity at 6 p.m.; JV at 8 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 22

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, baby carrots, waldorf salad, whole wheat bread.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

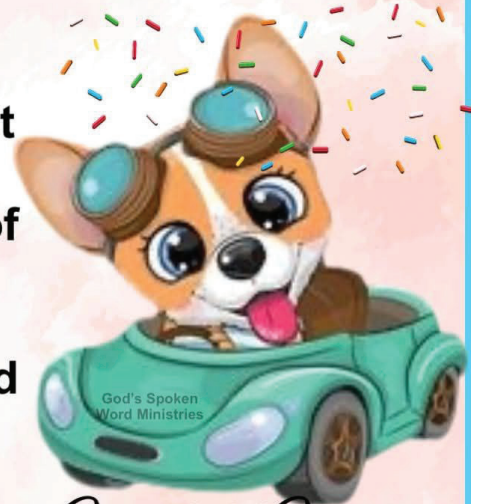
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

Good Morning

It's Monday

I pray that God showers you with His many blessings,

and grant You the desires of your heart, today and always.



Have a Wonderful Week!

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce.

Smarter Balance Testing. Grades 3-5 (ELA and Math)

Girls Golf at Milbank, 10 a.m.

Track at Britton-Hecla, 2 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, April 23

Senior Menu: Lasagna bake, tossed salad, fresh fruit, garlic toast.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Cheese pizza, green beans.

Smarter Balance Testing. Grades 3-5 (ELA and Math)

FCCLA Banquet, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.

Groton United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

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1440

Why 1440? The printing press was invented around the year 1440, spreading knowledge to the masses and changing the course of history. More facts: In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. We're here to make each one count.

SCOTUS Immigration Ruling

The Supreme Court temporarily banned the Trump administration from deporting a group of Venezuelan men over the weekend, directing officials to keep the group in the US while legal challenges proceed. The order—passed 7-2, with Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas dissenting—was issued near 1 am ET Saturday morning.

The directive is the latest in an emerging confrontation between the court and administration over immigration policy. The court previously ruled deportations could continue for the time being under the 1798 Alien Enemies Act but that deportees had the right to challenge their removal prior to leaving the US.

In related news, Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) returned from a meeting with Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who was mistakenly deported to El Salvador. Abrego Garcia said he had been transferred from the country's CECOT mega-prison to a separate detention center.

Federal officials separately released a two-page document detailing two incidents—a 2019 police informant identifying Abrego Garcia as affiliated with MS-13 and a 2022 traffic stop in which an officer suggested he may be involved with human trafficking. No charges were filed in either case.

Finally, statistics released last week revealed a nearly 95% year-over-year drop in border encounters.

NBA Playoffs Begin

The 2025 NBA playoffs got underway this weekend in what is expected to be one of the more unpredictable tournaments in recent memory.

In the East, the No. 2 Boston Celtics, led by stars Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown, look to defend last year's title and extend the franchise's league-record 19th championship. In their way are the No. 1 Cleveland Cavaliers, who finished atop the conference for the first time since the 2015-16 season. Separately, the No. 6 Detroit Pistons look to continue one of the biggest single-season turnarounds in league history.

In the West, the No. 1 Oklahoma City Thunder enter as the odds-on favorite to win the championship. The LeBron James-led No. 3 Los Angeles Lakers look to capitalize on the acquisition of superstar Luka Doncic (added in one of the most stunning trades in league history). Meanwhile, the No. 4 Denver Nuggets are led by Nikola Jokic, who is chasing his fourth career league MVP award.

The NBA Finals are slated for the week of June 5.

El Paso Shooting Plea

The gunman responsible for killing 23 people and wounding 22 others in a mass shooting at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart in 2019 is expected to plead guilty to capital murder charges today. The plea deal brings the long-running case to a close and avoids the death penalty.

Investigated by officials as an act of domestic terrorism, then-21-year-old Patrick Crusius drove more than 700 miles from his Dallas-area home, entering the store armed with a semiautomatic rifle and wearing headphones and earmuffs. A four-page anti-immigrant and white nationalist manifesto, uploaded to the website 8chan minutes before the shooting, suggested the specific store was targeted due to the demographics of the city (El Paso is 80% Hispanic and Latino). Sentencing will come on top of 90 consecutive life sentences handed down in 2023 on federal hate crime charges.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Team USA tops Canada 4-3 in overtime to win women's hockey world championship.

Oklahoma wins its seventh NCAA women's gymnastics title.

Judge allows Harvey Weinstein to remain in hospital during his retrial on rape and sexual assault charges with jury selection to continue today.

"Sinners" tops Easter weekend at US domestic box office with \$45.6M while "A Minecraft Movie" passes \$700M globally.

Science & Technology

Scientists "create" a new color by using a laser to stimulate the retina; five people have reported seeing the new color dubbed "olo," a highly saturated blue-green.

Researchers discover genetic variations responsible for the development of cleft lip and cleft palate; condition is one of the most common birth defects in the US, affecting about 0.1% of children.

Archaeological evidence from Germany of ancient horse hunts suggests the ability of humans to collaborate and plan complex tasks dates back to at least 300,000 years ago, roughly 250,000 years earlier than believed.

Business & Markets

Stock markets reopen after Good Friday holiday, as companies gear up for first-quarter earnings reports this week; see schedule and estimates for companies including Tesla, Boeing, IBM, and many others.

Logistics firm DHL suspends packages into the US valued above \$800, citing increased administrative burden at US customs under new tariff orders.

Trump administration expected to further eliminate the \$800 threshold for packages from China and Hong Kong May 2, citing concerns over fentanyl shipments.

US class-action lawsuit accuses Tesla of using predictive algorithms that inflate odometer mileage, pushing owners past warranty limits quicker; company denies allegations.

Politics & World Affairs

Russian President Vladimir Putin declares one-day ceasefire yesterday in observance of Easter; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy criticizes unilateral move, says Russia still carrying out attacks.

Israel disciplines leader of military unit involved in attack that killed 15 emergency medical workers in Gaza.

White House officials say April 11 letter to Harvard with set of reforms was unauthorized, came as talks between the administration and the university were advancing.

Iran nuclear talks to enter second phase this week; US officials say discussions will bring in technical experts from both sides.

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Newsweek

The Bulletin

YOUR DAILY BRIEFING OF
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

WORLD IN BRIEF

- Pope Francis' funeral: As tradition dictates, the camerlengo—alongside three appointed assistants—will determine the timing for when the late pontiff's body will be brought into St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing.
- The next Pope: With the passing of Pope Francis, the Catholic Church is preparing for a transition that will determine its direction for the foreseeable future. Will the next pope continue Francis's progressive reforms, or will the cardinals pivot back toward theological conservatism?
- Japan sends ships to new China-funded naval base: Japan, which is a key United States ally in the Indo-Pacific region, became the first foreign country to visit a China-funded naval base in Cambodia, located near the South China Sea, since its reopening.
- Trump vows to make America 'more religious': President Trump promised on Sunday in a Truth Social post that he would help make the United States "more religious."
- Trump admin 'screw up' with Abrego Garcia: Sen. John Kennedy, a Louisiana Republican, called the Trump administration's deportation of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia a "screw up" during a Sunday appearance on NBC News' Meet the Press.

How Pope Francis Radically Reshaped the Catholic Church

The rundown: Pope Francis has died, but the transformative impact of his papacy—marked by structural reforms that some view as a return to the Church's roots, and others as a further departure from them—will endure as his lasting legacy.

Why it matters: His papacy focused on modernizing the Church through structural reforms, gender inclusivity and expanding representation from the global south. He softened stances on homosexuality and contraception, allowed women to vote in key assemblies, and emphasized a more collaborative, humble exercise of authority. However, Francis faced criticism for not delivering major reforms on clergy sexual abuse. His outspoken political views—supporting migrants and criticizing nationalism—often sparked controversy. While his efforts angered traditionalists, many credit him with reshaping Catholicism into a more global and socially engaged institution.

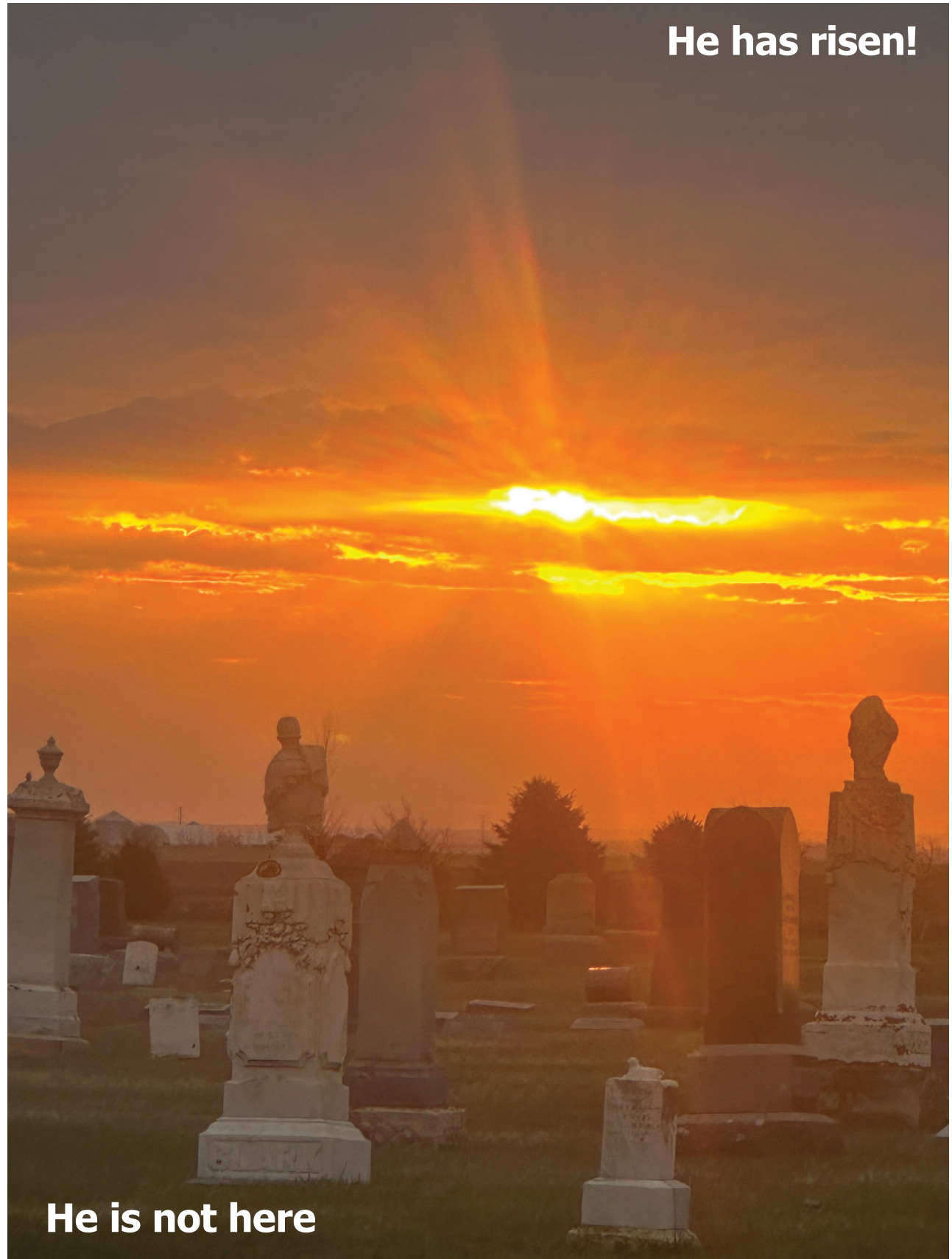
TL/DR: "His election in 2013 will be seen as a kind of tectonic shift in the life of the Church," Michael Sean Winters, a longtime writer for the National Catholic Reporter told Newsweek.

What happens now? After Francis is laid to rest, the College of Cardinals enters a conclave to elect his successor. The process, held within the Sistine Chapel, requires a two-thirds majority vote. The newly elected pope will emerge onto St. Peter's Basilica's balcony, delivering his first blessing to a world awaiting the next chapter in the Catholic Church's history.

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He has risen!



He is not here

Groton Area Tigers Varsity Hitters Will Face Tough Obstacle From Miller Varsity Outlaws

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity's hitters will be put to the test on Monday when they play Miller Varsity Outlaws. Groton Area Tigers Varsity scores five runs per game, while Miller Varsity Outlaws allows 5.67. The varsity team plays at 6 p.m. followed by the junior varsity team at 8 p.m.

Last Time Out:

Groton Area Tigers Varsity gave up a comeback to W.I.N. Varsity in an 8-5 loss. Miller Varsity Outlaws lost to Clark Area (C/WL/H/C) 3-1 at Miller in a tight pitcher's duel.

Player Highlight:

Gavin Englund hits and pitches for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Englund primarily plays third base on the field. Englund has induced six groundballs on eight balls in play this season.

About Groton Area Tigers Varsity:

Groton Area Tigers Varsity has a 0-1 record this season. Nicholas Morris's 1.750 OPS leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The third baseman has a 0.750 OBP and a 1.000 slugging percentage this season. Morris leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity with four innings pitched. The right-handed pitcher has a 0.00 ERA this season. Karsten Fliehs and Brevin Fliehs lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity with five total fielding chances each this season.

About Miller Varsity Outlaws:

Miller Varsity Outlaws has a 0-3 record this season. Seth Roseland's 2.000 OPS leads Miller Varsity Outlaws. The right-handed hitter has a 0.500 OBP and a 1.500 slugging percentage this season. Jett Kleinsasser leads Miller Varsity Outlaws with 12 innings pitched. The starting pitcher has a 4.08 ERA this season. Nolan Adams leads Miller Varsity Outlaws with 23 total fielding chances this season. Adams's primary position is catcher.

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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

It's draft week! If you're familiar with my work, you know how much I love the NFL draft. To me, it's like Christmas, but instead of sitting around a tree and waiting to find out what gifts we'll get this year, we'll be sitting around a TV. Most years, it's pretty clear what direction the Vikings are going to go. Last year, for instance, we knew the team was going to take a QB, we just didn't know which one. This year, however, things feel different. There isn't one clear direction the team will go. So today, we take a look at what the "experts" are predicting the Vikings to do.

I looked at 10 different mock drafts from all the big companies. I went in expecting to find a variety of players for the Vikings, but that was not the case at all. In fact, out of the 10 mock drafts I reviewed, six of them had the same player, while a seventh had a different player but at the same position. Two of the mock drafts predicted the Vikings to trade out of the first round altogether. There was only a single mock draft that went against the grain.

Nick Emmanwori, a safety from Georgia, was far and away the most popular pick for the Minnesota Vikings, with 60% of the mock drafts connecting the player and team. And it makes sense, considering the Vikings lost a starting safety in free agency (Camryn Bynum to the Indianapolis Colts). The Vikings' other safety is Harrison Smith, and while I believe the Hitman should end up in the Hall of Fame when it's all said and done, he's getting up there in age. However, it's important to remember that the Vikings also have Josh Metellus who is technically a safety even if he plays every position on defense. The Vikings' safety group also includes Jay Ward, Theo Jackson, and recently signed Bubba Bolden, but none of those players have proven they have what it takes to be a starter in this league.

Nick Emmanwori was a linebacker in high school before moving to safety at South Carolina. He's fast, as evidenced by his 40-yard dash time at the NFL Combine (4.38 seconds). He's also built like a linebacker at 6'3", 220lbs. Put those two together, and you get an imposing safety with huge potential. Also, like Metellus, Emmanwori can be a run-stopping safety who plays in the box – and he's fast enough to be the deep coverage safety.

One mock draft had the Vikings taking a safety, this time however it was Malaki Starks from Georgia. A few years ago the Vikings took a safety from Georgia in the first round, and that player became one of the biggest busts in Vikings' history. And while they are two different players who just happen to play for the same team, it's hard not to compare Starks to former Vikings Lewis Cine. Both players are 6'1" and 200lbs, but Cine had a much better 40-yard dash time than Starks (4.37 vs 4.5). Ultimately I trust the coaching staff to bring in who they think will make an impact, drafting a slower Lewis Cine doesn't make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

Out of the eight mock drafts that didn't have the Vikings drop out of the first round, only one had a non-safety connected to the Vikings. Instead, they predicted the Vikings would draft Donovan Jackson, an offensive guard from Ohio State. The Vikings made a concerted effort to bolster their offensive line through free agency, bringing in two new faces (Ryan Kelly and Will Fries) to replace Garrett Bradbury and Ed Ingram. However, it's possible the Vikings want to remake the entire interior offensive line by adding someone like Donovan Jackson to replace Blake Brandel.

Out of the 10 mock drafts I reviewed, two of them had the Vikings moving out of the first round entirely and adding more draft capital. I wouldn't be surprised if the Vikings move down, but I'm not sure Vikings' General Manager Kwesi Adofo-Mensah would move out of the first round altogether since first-round picks come with a fifth-year option, increasing the value of picking in the top 32.

No matter what happens, though, I'm looking forward to watching the draft this week (the first round is Thursday evening, rounds two and three will be on Friday, and the last four rounds will be on Saturday). Skol!

"Spring is finally here"

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD

Spring is finally here, and for many of us that brings the joy of returning to outdoor activities, planning summer vacations, and... well, allergies. Depending on the allergen, people can suffer from allergies any time of year, but spring is a particularly common time in our part of the world to hear my patients complain of seasonal allergies.

Allergic rhinitis most commonly manifests as runny nose, congestion, and sneezing. Other symptoms can include cough from postnasal drip or worsening asthma, hives, and itchy or watery eyes. Sometimes these symptoms can be hard to differentiate from a viral cold, but typically the symptoms are fairly classic and don't require any testing.

I often have patients inquire about allergy testing. We might refer to an allergy specialist for testing in patients with severe symptoms that aren't adequately improved with usual care. Testing might include blood or skin patch testing depending on the situation or allergen in question. However, the vast majority of patients can be treated without specialized testing.

Initial recommended treatments for allergic rhinitis are available over-the-counter. Antihistamine medications can reduce many of the symptoms. I recommend using second generation medications such as loratadine, cetirizine, or fexofenadine, which act more specifically for the targeted symptoms. First generation antihistamines such as diphenhydramine or doxylamine are less specific and thus have more problems with adverse effects. Common side effects include dry mouth and drowsiness, but we can see those first generation antihistamines cause more severe adverse effects such as confusion.

Another very effective option is an over-the-counter nasal steroid spray, such as fluticasone or various others. Taken daily these will reduce congestion, mucous, and post nasal drip. They are quite safe for long term use and should not have systemic side effects. Additionally, these can be used along with an antihistamine.

Take care in the nasal spray aisle, however. Some other nasal sprays are vasoconstrictors, such as oxymetazoline, and while they will alleviate congestion, they should not be used more than three days consecutively. If so they can cause worsening congestion when the medication wears off, or a rebound effect.

In summary, allergies can be a real annoyance and truly make people feel rotten. Basic over-the-counter measures can be very helpful and are worth trying. If those aren't working, though, time to talk to your primary care provider about other options or the need for further testing.

Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices Internal Medicine at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, and on social media. Watch On Call with the Prairie Doc, most Thursday's at 7PM on SDPB and streaming on Facebook and listen to Prairie Doc Radio Sunday's at 6am and 1pm.



Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD

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**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

April 22, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Public Hearing on Transfer of the following Alcohol Licenses:
 - a. Retail (On-Sale) Liquor: Travis Swenson DBA: Elm Lake Resort transfer to Monica Hansen DBA: Drop Tine Resort
 - b. Package (Off-Sale) Liquor: Travis Swenson DBA: Elm Lake Resort transfer to Monica Hansen DBA: Drop Tine Resort
5. Bob Schatz to discuss Aberdeen Homeless Coalition Outreach
6. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Cooperative Agreement with Aberdeen School District for Juvenile Detention Center
7. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Quote from Huff Construction for Public Defenders Office
8. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. R-O-W for Pat Keats
 - b. Discuss Load Limits
 - c. Set Bid Date for Sand Lake Bridge Project
9. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 15, 2025:
 - i. General Meeting
 - ii. Brown County Board of Equalization
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Lease Agreements
 - e. Travel Request
 - f. Claim Assignments
 - g. Lottery Permit for Aberdeen Area Chamber of Commerce
 - h. Abatement
 - i. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising
 - j. Final Plat:
 - i. Johnson Airport Subdivision
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

EQUALIZATION BOARDS

1:00 PM - BROWN COUNTY CONSOLIDATED BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

- Reconvene
- Contested Appeals
- Adjourn for 2025

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Perkins County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: South Cabin Road, five miles west of SD Highway 73, 15 south of Lemmon, SD

When: 7:55 p.m., Saturday, April 19, 2025

Driver 1: 49-year-old male from Box Elder, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2008 Chevrolet Silverado

Seat belt Used: No

Perkins County, S.D.- A Box Elder man died in a single vehicle crash Saturday evening, 15 miles south of Lemmon, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2008 Chevrolet Silverado was traveling westbound on S. Cabin Road and went off the road at a curve and rolled. The driver was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

###

Note: Records of state-reportable crashes are now available at <http://www.safesd.gov/>. Records should be available about 10 days after the investigation is complete.

Groton Citywide 2025 Spring Cleanup

April 28-May 2

**ALL ITEMS NEED TO BE DROPPED OFF
BEFORE 10AM ON 5/2/25!!**



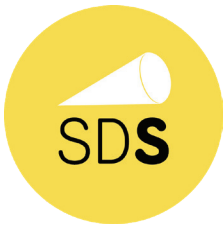
Bring anything you wish to dispose of to the City Shop-10 E Railroad Ave starting April 28th.

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

**Pickup can be arranged for
Monday, April 28th to Friday, May 2nd ENDING AT 10AM
by calling City Hall 605-397-8422.**



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Q&A: Retiring lobbyist says South Dakota Capitol environment is increasingly hostile

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 20, 2025 5:00 PM



David Owen, head of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

The environment in Pierre today is “more strident” than it was when David Owen began lobbying South Dakota lawmakers in 1998. Much has changed since then, Owen said, but that’s been the biggest shift.

Owen said Pierre’s deeply divided political environment, particularly among Republicans, is one where policy debates turn personal. He describes it as “a cancer in the system.”

“We used to have battles, take the vote, then go on and see each other at dinner. Those days are gone,” Owen said.

Owen, 70, is retiring.

He’s been president of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry for nearly three decades, representing the state’s business interests in and out of the Capitol building. Before that, he worked for various Midwest chambers, including in Kansas and Montana.

Owen’s favorite part of the job has always been explaining the policymaking process, whether to state lawmakers or a boardroom of business leaders. He’s known for his sharp wit and policy knowledge, and has earned a reputation for occasionally breaking from the pack, especially when compromise or principle demanded it.

Ahead of his August exit from professional life, Owen sat down with South Dakota Searchlight to reflect on the art of lobbying, shifts in the Legislature, and what he sees as both the promise and peril of South Dakota politics.

The following conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

What made you interested in lobbying lawmakers?

I’ve always been interested in policy and politics. So I chose chambers that were involved in those kinds of issues.

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I was going to be a teacher. And what I like about what I've done is that I teach every day.

I teach legislators the perspective of the chamber, which gets difficult at times. And I have to teach my board about the issues and pressures around us. Because my board's full of really smart people, successful business people, who get frustrated with the ups and downs of politics.

What is the biggest misconception about lobbying?

There's this idea that the lobbyists always win.

We do have a tremendous advantage over citizens who come to the Legislature. It's something I'm uneasy about. A bill has its hearing, and then they vote on the bill. That means a lot of citizens show up to say "Me too" and bring their concerns. They've got their piece of paper. They've never done this before. They're really nervous.

Meanwhile, the paid lobbyists, including the one you're talking to, already have a pretty good idea what the vote's going to be, because we're there all day. We catch legislators in the hall. We don't bribe anybody, but we're familiar with them.

South Dakota is increasingly becoming pay-to-play. They do fundraisers and we have a political action committee, but legislators are independent enough that we don't have the kind of control over them that the public seems to think. Otherwise, nobody would lose.

This year, I was talking to some of the freshmen legislators who had never served before.

I heard from like five of them, the same answer that was pretty different than in the past. I asked the question, "What prompted you to run?"

I heard more about concerns about "society" and how they thought they could help straighten out "the culture" by being in the Legislature. That's a big task. That brings you to introducing things like school vouchers. That brings you to thinking the Ten Commandments in every classroom will help structure a moral code that will solve some of these social problems.

And there are two influential lobbying groups up there, we've got more, but two groups in particular, that have added to the schism: the abortion people and the gun people. They don't reach across any aisle.

Other lobbying groups, like the chamber, are involved in all kinds of business. We're involved in a whole bunch of issues. We've got lobbyists that are banging on each other on one issue, working together on another. The abortion people don't do that. The NRA doesn't do that. Instead, they send nasty postcards out.

You used to be a Republican and later registered as an independent. Why?

What finally got me to pull the trigger on leaving the party was Merrick Garland's proposed nomination to the Supreme Court, him not getting a hearing. Because Republicans were all saying you can't do this when there's a presidential election.

And then, with unbelievable speed, closer to the election than that, Republicans got Amy Coney Barrett confirmed. And that was perfectly OK.

I just thought, "I don't think we have any principles here."

I had run ballot campaigns 12, 13 times in two states by then. I get roughness. I get things getting ugly. But I'd like to think that we have some principles that we will stand by, and that just flushed it out of me.

How has the business of lobbying itself changed?

My wife, Debra, who had been a lobbyist for the local chamber, was recently terminated. So, she spent some time as a contract lobbyist.

And I now understand this whole game of contract lobbying better. So, I don't know if I'm noticing changes or if I'm better educated.

In the world of contract lobbying, you have two camps. You have a camp where people are coming to certain lobbyists because they have a reputation of being very effective. And they charge a certain range, starting around \$20,000 and it goes up. And then some people are just starting, kind of looking for clients.

It's interesting to me the number of out-of-state groups, national groups, that have some agenda and are hiring these contract lobbyists.

There's more people with money forming groups, that in turn hire lobbyists to do, quite honestly, some

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fairly obscure crap.

For example, another lobbyist reached out to me, and he had a group of trailer manufacturers who wanted to change one of our laws that requires trailer manufacturers to be affiliated with dealerships.

So, this group in some orbit around some star finds him and says, "Can you help us change this?"

What are the right reasons to want to become a lobbyist?

I've done what I've done for 45-plus years, 27 sessions, because I'm called to stand in this scene between business and government.

I have profound respect for people who work for the public. I have great respect for my members and my board members. They're two totally different systems. The balance sheet for legislators is how they vote and how they feel. That's not a balance sheet for a business.

My advice is to deal with facts. Listen. You can learn a lot. Be yourself, unless you're an a——. And know why you're there, but respect and try to learn why other people are there.

Every time we find something in the law that looks really stupid, I go back to when it passed. Every mistake we've made, we made on purpose. There was a reason that they convinced everybody in 1920 to vote for, I don't know, tying up horses.

I think the right reason is to solve problems. If you're there sincerely, I think that's the right thing. I don't like the process when it sinks to the level of win-at-all-costs. I don't like when it gets abusive – when they're sending out postcards cards because they found out a lawmaker against their cause was picked up for a DUI when they were 18 years old.

The wrong reason is just wanting to publicly humiliate those opposing your cause. That makes good people fearful of getting involved. And we're going through some of that right now.

The Republican Party is clearly divided into two sides. Right to Life, the NRA, the carbon pipeline people, those groups like to send out nasty cards. I think that's a cancer in this system. If you've got to do that to win, I wish you'd find another occupation. Go be a bartender; leave the state.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Statehouses in Louisiana, Nebraska and North Dakota focused on abortion policy

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - APRIL 20, 2025 3:00 PM

Abortion-related bills continue to be introduced and debated in statehouses across the country, especially in states where the procedure is already banned.

Many bills aimed at further restricting abortion access have so far not been as successful as in prior years, including new attempts to restrict travel to states where abortion is legal for a procedure and efforts to restrict abortion medication.

Meanwhile, states where abortion is broadly legal continue to try to expand and further protect access.

It can be hard to monitor it all, so States Newsroom's Reproductive Rights Today team tracks certain bills or maneuvers that could alter the reproductive legal landscape in a legislative roundup. Depending on the partisan makeup of a legislature and other state government officials, some bills have a higher chance of passing and becoming law than others.

Louisiana

Louisiana has a near-total abortion ban with exceptions only to save the pregnant person's life or prevent serious injuries.

House Bill 425: Republican Rep. Josh Carlson introduced a bill in early April to greatly expand the state's definition of "coerced abortion," after a recent case of a Louisiana mother who prosecutors said coerced her daughter into getting an abortion by threatening to kick her out of the house if she didn't, Louisiana Illu-

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minator reported. The current definition of coercion covers the "use or threatened use of force, control or intimidation" to obtain an abortion, and the new bill outlines 18 examples of what counts as force, control or intimidation. Some of those include vague wording such as "restraint of speech" and "exploitation of needs for food, shelter, safety, affection, or intimate or marital relationships." Those found guilty of violating the law would owe a \$5,000 fine or imprisonment for up to five years.

The bill is awaiting a hearing in the House's criminal justice committee.

Nebraska

Abortion is legal in Nebraska during the first trimester, up until 12 weeks gestation. After that point, there are exceptions only to save the pregnant person's life or in cases of rape or incest.

Legislative Bill 632: Republican Sen. Ben Hansen introduced this bill in January with the stated intent to create more "dignity" for an aborted fetus, Nebraska Examiner reported. It is similar to a 2003 Nebraska law requiring written policies for the proper disposal of remains when a baby is born dead. The bill's statement of intent says health care facilities would be required to dispose of aborted fetuses by "cremation, interment by burial, or as directed by the Board of Health." The facility would not need to notify the pregnant person about the method by which the remains were disposed, according to the bill text.

A fellow senator, Ashlei Spivey, called the bill a backdoor attempt to ban abortions, which Hansen denied. She also said it could have unintended negative effects on access to in vitro fertilization procedures, and care for miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies.

Republican Sen. Merv Riepe said he might file an amendment allowing the pregnant person to have the choice of how to dispose of the remains, but that amendment had not been filed as of Friday. That amendment may determine if the bill moves past the second debate of three total debates before it can become law.

North Dakota

Abortion is legal in North Dakota up to 24 weeks of pregnancy after a court declared its ban unconstitutional in September. But there are no clinics providing those services statewide.

House Bill 1015: Lawmakers want to add \$1 million to a budget bill to establish a "life education committee" that would spread awareness of abortion alternatives, according to North Dakota Monitor. Republican Sen. Janne Myrdal said North Dakotans don't have enough information about "pro-life centers" and adoption services for those in crisis. A state law called the Abortion Control Act already requires health care providers to distribute information to patients about alternatives before an abortion. Lawmakers already approved a \$50,000 appropriation for the production of a video that would educate abortion providers about the state laws.



State Rep. Josh Carlson, right, filed legislation that would greatly expand the definition of coerced abortion in Louisiana law, to include instances of "restraint of speech," and denial of resources such as food or shelter. (Photo by Allison Allsop/Louisiana Illuminator)

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The campaign would be supervised by the committee, according to the Monitor, but the education services would be carried out by a third-party contractor hired by the Office of Management and Budget. The Senate committee gave the bill with the \$1 million addition a "do pass" recommendation, and it will be heard next by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

West Virginia

West Virginia has a near-total abortion ban, with narrow exceptions for rape and incest and to save a pregnant person's life.

House Bill 2129: A "Parents' Bill of Rights" is now law in West Virginia, expressing a fundamental right of parents to direct the upbringing, education, care and medical care of their minor children — but that right does not extend to abortion.

West Virginia Watch reported the law says a parent has the right to educate their child as they see fit, and to make health care decisions for their child, with the exception of abortion and gender-affirming care. Democratic Del. Evan Hansen said that was discriminatory on the basis of religious beliefs.

"If we're going to pass a bill that preserves parental rights, for parents to decide about medical care for their minor children, we shouldn't pick and choose," Hansen said.

Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Are seaweed farms good for the planet or is that just industry hype?

– Josiah Barnes

The production of seaweed has boomed to over 35 million tons in the past few years, while the industry has become a \$16.7 billion market. Its popularity is due to its notable ecological benefits, like its absorption of carbon, production of food and marine habitat production. Seaweed proponents praise them for being easy to grow and creating bioplastics while critics argue that there are significant shortcomings.



Caption: Seaweed farms like this one in South Korea promise to provide food with a minimal environmental footprint. Credit: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, FlickrCC.

Seaweed farms are not only fast and easy to grow, but also notably versatile. Unlike terrestrial crops like trees, fruits, vegetables and herbs, seaweed requires no fertilizer, pesticides, freshwater or land to grow. Thus, it can easily adapt to diverse environments and survive without constant human intervention.

Furthermore, the growth of seaweed farms benefits marine life. Beyond improving water quality, the presence of seaweed farms buffers the effects of ocean acidification in surrounding areas, greatly aiding both prosperous and polluted environments. Seaweed farms also create forage and refuge habitats for commercially important fish, like cod and tuna, while acting as a food source for countless other species.

Seaweed can also decrease the impacts of carbon and other greenhouse gases. By absorbing both nutrients and carbon dioxide to grow, seaweed decreases the number of toxic emissions entering oceans and the atmosphere. Seaweed pulls more greenhouse gases from water than eelgrass, mangroves and salt marshes combined. It can also be cultivated to reduce heavy metals and other pollutants, acting as a sponge to rid the ocean of toxins. It also plays a critical role in the creation of bioplastics, which mitigate plastic pollution by replacing carbon-intensive products and greenhouse gases.

Despite the benefits, seaweed farms can be expensive and difficult to implement globally. The higher price decreases the demand for the algae, making it difficult for farmers to support the target growth of their farms. Furthermore, 98 percent of farmed seaweed is grown in Asia, illustrating the lack of geographic diversity worldwide.

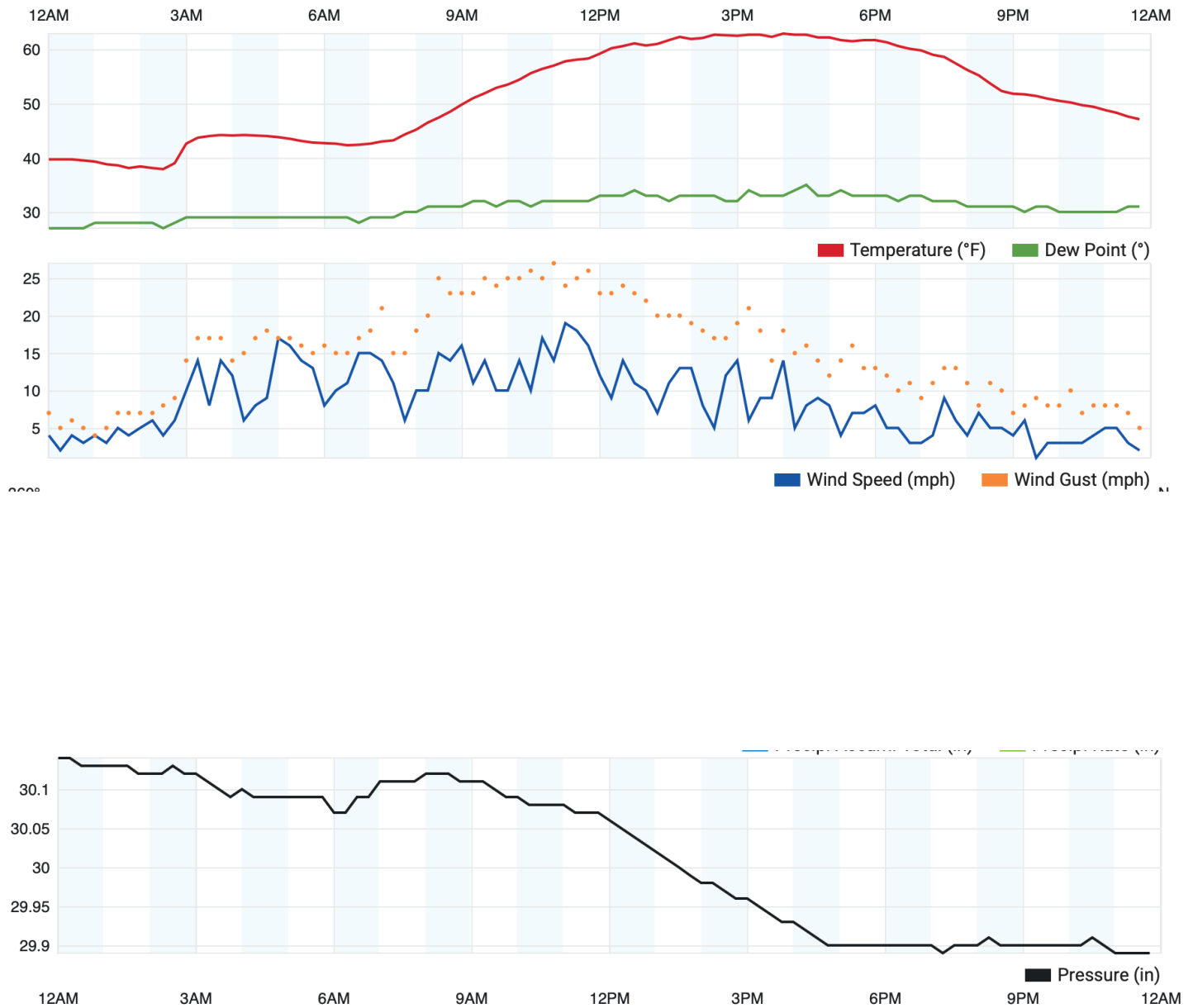
So, scientists are looking for ways to expand the reach and impact of seaweed farms to maximize their benefits. Specifically, many are experimenting with growing seaweed aimed at reducing water pollutants like metals. Ultimately, Alexandra Cousteau, head of the non-profit Oceans2050, noted that "Seaweed farming offers a scalable, nature-based solution for carbon removal while delivering co-benefits such as biodiversity enhancement, economic opportunities, and food security."

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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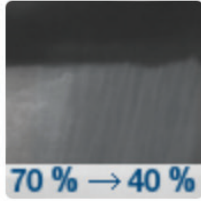
Today



High: 70 °F

Becoming
Sunny

Tonight



Low: 40 °F

Showers
Likely then
Chance
Showers

Tuesday



High: 67 °F

Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

Tuesday Night



Low: 37 °F

Mostly Clear

Wednesday



High: 64 °F

Partly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers



Showers and Thunderstorms Late Today

April 21, 2025

4:41 AM

Gusty winds and small hail possible with any stronger storms

- Showers and thunderstorms move into central SD late afternoon/early evening. A few storms could produce **wind gusts near 50 mph and small hail**.
- Activity reaches the James River valley later in the evening, with gusty wind and small hail threat starting to diminish.
- Precipitation exits the area around midnight.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A quick moving system will move east across the Dakotas later today, with showers and thunderstorms moving into central South Dakota by early evening, then progressing eastward into the nighttime hours. A few storms could produce wind gusts near 50 mph and small hail. Overall, rainfall amounts should generally be less than a half inch, but portions of north central South Dakota may see slightly higher amounts.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 63 °F at 3:18 PM

Low Temp: 38 °F at 2:29 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 11:02 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 54 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1980

Record Low: 16 in 1936

Average High: 60

Average Low: 33

Average Precip in April.: 1.12

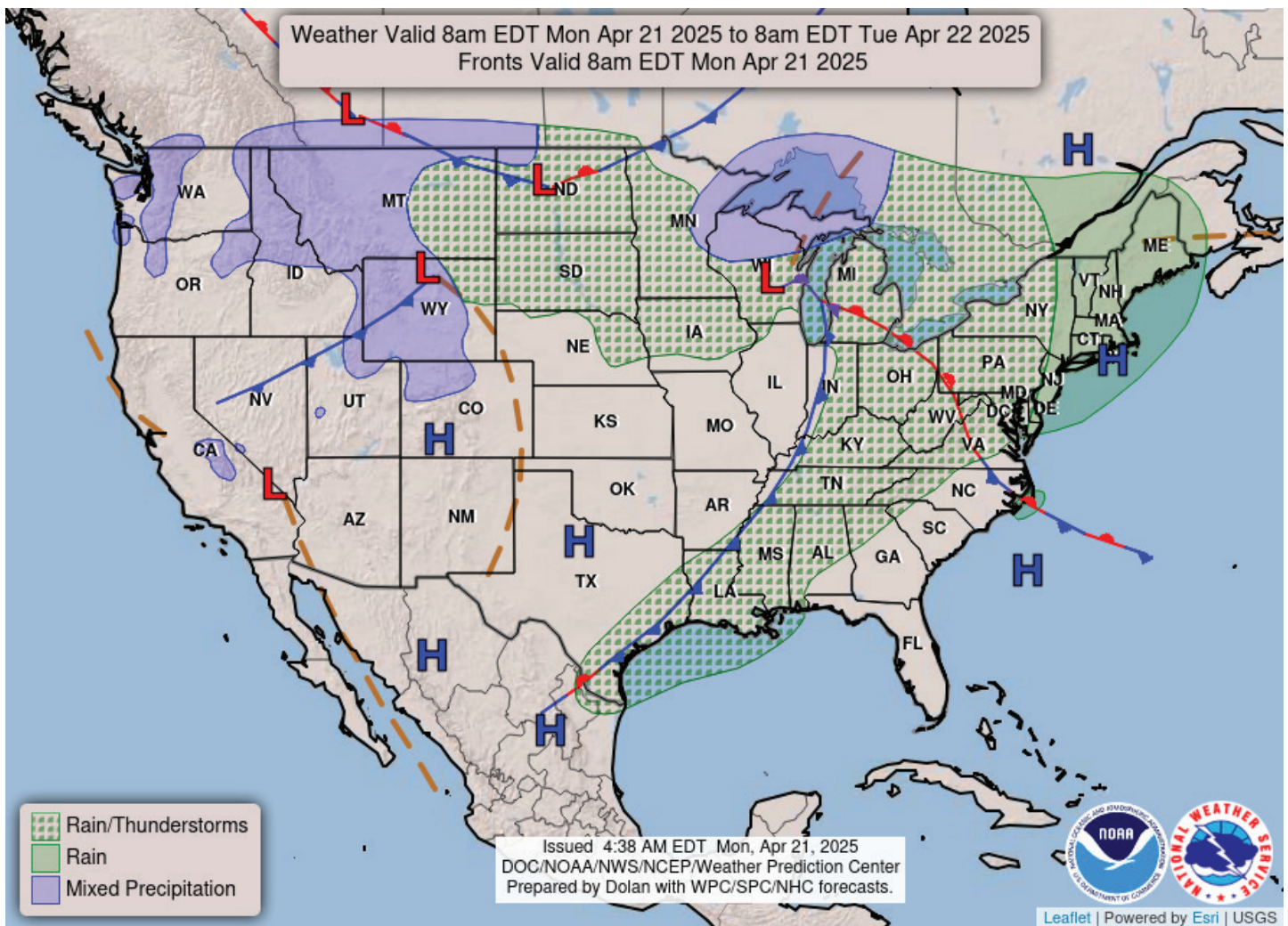
Precip to date in April.: 1.09

Average Precip to date: 3.18

Precip Year to Date: 1.72

Sunset Tonight: 8:28:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:32:16 am



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Today in Weather History

April 21st, 2007: Heavy rains of 2 to 2.50 inches caused flash flooding in and around Watertown. Many streets and several roads outside of town were flooded. During the evening, a warm front extending across the region was the focus for heavy rain and severe weather across far northeast South Dakota. Hail up to the size of quarters, along with heavy rains of over 2 inches, caused some flooding, mainly in Codington and Hamlin counties.

1958 - Portions of Montana were in the midst of a spring snowburst. Snowfall amounts ranged up to 55 inches at Red Lodge, 61 inches at Nye Mine, and 72 inches at Mystic Lake. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Severe thunderstorms spawned 48 tornadoes in the Upper Midwest. Hardest hit was northern Illinois where sixteen tornadoes touched down during the afternoon and evening hours causing fifty million dollars damage. On that Friday afternoon tornadoes struck Belvidere IL, and the Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn, killing 57 persons. (David Ludlum)

1980 - The temperature at International Falls MN hit 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed from the Gulf of Mexico to New England and the Great Lakes Region, with twenty-nine cities reporting record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 82 degrees at Caribou ME, 94 degrees at Mobile AL, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 93 degrees at New Orleans LA, were records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - After having had just twelve rainouts in the previous twenty-six years at Dodger Stadium, a third day of heavy rain in southern California rained out a double-header at Dodger Stadium which had been scheduled due to rainouts the previous two days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The temperature at Las Animas, CO, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record for April. Twenty-two cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Eight cities equalled or exceeded previous April records. (The Weather Channel) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail in Oklahoma, and also caused some flash flooding in the state. Thunderstorms over the Southern High Plains produced golf ball size hail at Roswell NM and El Paso TX. Easterly winds and temperatures near zero produced wind chill readings as cold as 50 degrees below zero for the spring festival (Piuraagiaqta) outdoor events at Barrow AK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2007 - The South Plains and Panhandle of West Texas were hit by an outbreak of severe thunderstorms. Between the hours of 5 and 6 pm, several thunderstorms developed across the western South Plains. Around 7 pm, a supercell produced a tornado which touched down around Fieldton (southwest of Olton) and then moved just south and east of Olton, doing damage to several structures and equipment. The thunderstorm continued to move northeast across northeast Lamb, northwest Hale, southeast Castro and southwest Swisher Counties, producing a long-lived tornado (along with hail up to the size of tennis balls). By 7:45 pm, the storm approached the town of Tulia in Swisher County. A tornado touchdown was reported in the town, causing major damage. The tornadic thunderstorm continued to move northeast across Swisher County over open country through about 8:30 pm. (NWS Lubbock, TX)



Nothing Can Separate Us

Nothing, not even our own mistakes, can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:32-39 English Standard Version

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Romans 8, Paul delivers a persuasive argument for believing in eternal security, and it's framed with these questions:

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? The answer is simple: No one can bring an accusation against believers and make it stick. Satan tries, but God has justified us through Jesus—He's declared that we are not guilty. If you fall into a stage of unbelief or sinful living, you may lose your reward, but you can't lose your eternity in heaven with God (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Undoubtedly, there are many experiences that test our faith, but we are ultimately saved by God's grace. Jesus understands our trials and doubts, and He is not interested in casting us away at our first misstep. God always knew we would make thousands of mistakes after receiving Christ, but He saved us anyway.

Some followers of Jesus worry that embracing the idea of eternal security will motivate people to go out and live a life of sin because they have nothing to lose. If we think about the wonder and majesty of our Father, doesn't it make more sense that people would be motivated to praise Him for saving them from their disobedience? The more we know of Jesus and His love for us, the more we will love Him and want to please Him.

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.18.25

5 13 15 17 28 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 14 Hrs 40 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 11 23 29 36 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$31,450,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 55 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.20.25

3 6 17 30 42 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 10 Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

4 14 21 28 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$118,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 10 Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

2 3 21 55 63 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 39 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 04.19.25

7 25 37 39 63 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$139,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 39 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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Upcoming Groton Events

03/22/2025 Spring Vendor Fair at the GHS Gym 10am-2pm
03/29/2025 Men's Singles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle 10am, 1pm & 4pm
04/05/2025 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39, 6-11:30pm
04/06/2025 Pancake Sunday, Historical Society Fundraiser, 10am-1pm, Community Center
04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
04/12/2025 Groton Firemens Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
05/12/2025 High School Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove
05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
06/07/2025 Day of Play
06/13/2025 SDSU 4 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
06/21/2025 Groton Triathlon
06/23/2025 Ladies 2 Person Scramble at Olive Grove
07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/09/2025 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
07/11-13/25 2025 VFW 12U Class B State Baseball Tournament
07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
07/16/2025 Men's Pro Am Golf at Olive Grove
07/25/2025 Ferney Open Scramble Golf at Olive Grove
08/01/2025 Wine on Nine Fundraiser at Olive Grove
08/09/2025 2nd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off 1-9:30pm
08/14/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm (2nd Thursday)
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

News from the **AP** Associated Press

The Latest: Pope Francis dies at age 88

By The Associated Press undefined

Pope Francis died Monday, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

Here's the latest:

Trump offers condolences

President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social: "Rest in Peace Pope Francis! May God Bless him and all who loved him!"

Dalai Lama says Francis lived a simple but meaningful life

The Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has offered prayers and condolences for Francis to his spiritual brothers, sisters and followers around the world.

He said in a letter that Francis had dedicated himself to the service of others, "consistently revealing by his own actions how to live a simple, but meaningful life. The best tribute we can pay to him is to be a warm-hearted person, serving others wherever and in whatever way we can."

Orthodox Christian leader says Francis wished for a greater unity of churches

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the leader of the Orthodox Christians, said Francis' wish was for a greater unity with the Orthodox. "He was a faithful friend and fellow traveler and supporter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and a genuine friend of Orthodox Christianity."

He mentioned a meeting the two had in Jerusalem in 2014, in which Bartholomew told Francis of the upcoming 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council held at the city of Nicaea, now Iznik in Turkey, by Roman Emperor Constantine in 325.

"I had told him, your Holiness ... it will be a great, symbolic action to go together and celebrate, and talk about the further steps of our Sister Churches. He appeared enthusiastic," he said.

"It was not to be," the 85-year-old Bartholomew said, adding that he would welcome Francis' successor, if he so desired.

Turkish leader says Francis was dedicated to interfaith dialogue

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Francis was dedicated to building interfaith dialogue and addressing "human tragedies" such as the Palestinian issue and the war in Gaza.

"A respected statesman, Pope Francis was also a spiritual leader who valued dialogue between different faith groups and took the initiative in the face of human tragedies, especially the Palestinian issue and the genocide in Gaza," Erdogan wrote on X.

Israel has adamantly denied allegations of genocide in Gaza, calling them baseless and antisemitic. Pope Francis had said such allegations should be investigated while also calling for a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

Iran's president commends Francis' position on the war in Gaza

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian offered condolences for Francis and praised his humanitarian stance including support for "innocent Palestinian women and children" in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Irish leader says Francis recognized every human's essential dignity

Irish President Michael Higgins says Francis' recognition of the "essential dignity" of every human being helped him confront issues such as climate change and the plight of migrants, as well as the child sexual abuse scandal that has rocked the church.

Higgins, who has been Ireland's president since 2011, said he discussed these issues with Francis during five meetings over the course of his papacy.

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During his last visit to Ireland in 2018, Francis spoke about the child sexual abuse scandal that has undermined support for the church in the once overwhelmingly Catholic country.

"On such matters, and on others such as attitudes towards women and those of the LGBTQ+ community within the Church, Pope Francis sought to play a positive role," Higgins said. "I recall at the end of our meetings he would say as to his work on such issues, 'it is very difficult', as he asked for and offered prayers."

Head of World Jewish Congress says Francis was a true moral leader

The president of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald S. Lauder, described Francis as "a true moral leader, a man of deep faith and humanity, and a steadfast friend to the Jewish people."

"From his early years in Argentina to his papacy, Pope Francis was deeply committed to fostering interfaith dialogue and ensuring that the memory of the Holocaust remained a guiding lesson for future generations," he said.

"In November 2022, our Executive Committee had the honor of convening in Vatican City. There, we held a private audience with Pope Francis where we launched the historic 'Kishreinu' (Our Bond) initiative, marking a new chapter in Catholic-Jewish relations and reinforcing the common future of our two peoples."

Albania's leader calls Francis the country's great friend

Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama called Francis the country's "great and unforgettable friend."

For his first European journey in 2014, Francis chose Albania, a land of 3 million population that has become a symbol of interfaith dialogue.

Albania is a predominantly Muslim nation, with smaller Catholic and Orthodox communities who generally live in harmony. All of them suffered gravely under Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha, who declared Albania the world's first atheist state in 1967. Religious authorities of all faiths were killed, tortured, imprisoned or sent to labor camps.

Churches in the Philippines ring bells to mourn Francis

Churches in the Philippines, the largest Roman Catholic nation in Asia, rang their bells Monday to mourn Francis. He visited in 2015 to console survivors of Typhoon Haiyan and celebrate Mass before millions in Manila.

"Pope Francis showed us what it means to suffer with others and find hope in the midst of pain," Manila Archbishop Jose Advincula said, citing the pope's visit to a central region where Haiyan left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in November 2013.

"The Holy Father has reminded us that the church must be close to the poor, merciful to all and a welcoming home for the forgotten," said Advincula.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said Francis "taught us that to be a good Christian is to extend kindness and care to one another. His humility brought many back to the fold of the church."

Flags across UK ordered to fly at half-staff

British authorities ordered that government buildings fly flags at half-staff until Tuesday evening in light of the pope's death.

Mother of a slain Israeli-American hostage praises Francis

The mother of a slain American-Israeli hostage praised Pope Francis' advocacy for Hamas-held captives in the Gaza Strip.

Rachel Goldberg-Polin, who was among families of the hostages who met with the pope in November 2023, said he "felt our sorrow and suffering, and we so appreciated his advocacy on this topic, and on trying to find peace and reconciliation."

Francis had repeatedly called for the release of the hostages abducted in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack and for an end to the war it sparked.

Hersh Goldberg-Polin and five other hostages were killed by their captors last year as Israeli troops closed in on the tunnel where they were being held.

First formal Vatican service for Francis set for Monday evening

The first formal liturgical ritual for Francis will occur at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT) on Monday with the confirmation of the pope's death and the placement of the body in the coffin.

The Vatican released the announcement from Archbishop Diego Ravelli, the master of liturgical ceremonies.

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The presiding prelate is Cardinal Joseph Farrell, the camerlengo who has taken over the administration of the Holy See and will remain in charge until a new pope is elected.

Those invited to attend the ceremony, which will take place in the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where Francis lived, are the dean of the College of Cardinals, any relatives of the pope, the director and vice director of the Vatican's health department.

According to the new rites and rituals Francis approved last year, the body will remain in the chapel for a few days before being brought for public viewing in St. Peter's Basilica. After that there will be the funeral and conclave to elect a new pope.

Canonization of the first millennial saint postponed after Francis' death

The canonization of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis, has been postponed due to the death Monday of Pope Francis, the Vatican announced.

Acutis, an Italian teen, used his computer savvy to create an online exhibit about more than 100 eucharistic miracles recognized by the church over many centuries, focused on the real presence of Christ that Catholics believe is in the consecrated bread and wine.

He died of acute leukemia at age 15 in 2006. The canonization was planned for Sunday.

Egypt's Muslim cleric mourns 'his brother' Francis

Egypt's top Muslim cleric mourned the death of "his brother" Pope Francis and offered condolences to Catholics around the world.

"Pope Francis was a humanitarian icon of the highest caliber, sparing no effort in serving the message of humanity," Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, Al-Azhar's Grand Imam, said in a statement.

He recalled that the relationship between the Islamic world and the Vatican was developed under the pontiff's watch.

Flags lowered in Italy

Flags flew at half-staff in overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Italy to mourn the death of Francis on Easter Monday, a public holiday.

The faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, where bells tolled in mourning.

Sister Monica Gonzales, who was visiting from Mexico, called Francis' death "a great loss for the church and for the whole world. A pope who worked so hard for peace, and for the good of all. Let's all pray for him."

Eva Bonnano, from Philadelphia, called it "a very sad day. It is honestly impressive, I think, that he made it to Easter, I think that is almost like a miracle for Italy."

Johann Xavier said he had traveled from Australia, hoping to see the pope during his visit. "But then we heard about it when we came in here. It pretty much devastated all of us. It is really sad," he said.

Putin says Francis defended humanism and justice

In a letter of condolences, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted the pope's international clout as a "consistent defender of the high values of humanism and justice."

Putin said that the pope "actively encouraged the development of a dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, as well as constructive interaction between Russia and the Holy See."

Zelenskyy says Francis was praying for peace in Ukraine

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says his country grieves together with Catholics and all Christians who looked to Francis for spiritual support.

"He knew how to give hope, ease suffering through prayer, and foster unity. He prayed for peace in Ukraine and for Ukrainians. Eternal memory!" Zelenskyy wrote on X.

Head of US bishops says Francis will be remembered for outreach to those on the margins

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement that Francis will long be remembered for his outreach to those on the margins of the church and society.

"He renewed for us the mission to bring the Gospel out to the ends of the earth and offer divine mercy to all," he said.

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"Recently, he expressed anew prayerful hope in his letter of support to the bishops of this country in our attempts to respond to the face of Christ in the migrant, poor, and unborn. In fact, he has always used the strongest and clearest expressions in the defense of the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death."

British prime minister describes Francis as a courageous leader

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer described Francis as a courageous leader who reached out to people all beliefs around the world.

Starmer says Francis' leadership in a "complex and challenging time" stemmed from the pontiff's deep humility.

"Pope Francis was a pope for the poor, the downtrodden and the forgotten," Starmer says in a statement. "He was close to the realities of human fragility, meeting Christians around the world facing war, famine, persecution and poverty. Yet he never lost hope of a better world."

Bells of St. Peter's Basilica toll for pope's death

Shortly after noon Rome time, the great bells of St. Peter's Basilica began tolling to mark Francis' death. Tourists in the square stopped in their tracks to record the moment on their phones.

LGBTQ+ group thanks Francis for his advocacy

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry — a U.S.-based group advocating for greater LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Catholic Church — thanked Pope Francis for his outreach.

"With simple words and gentle gestures, Pope Francis powerfully moved the Catholic Church to become a more welcoming home for LGBTQ+ people," he said.

"Francis was not only the first pope to use the word 'gay' when speaking about LGBTQ+ people, he was the first pope to speak lovingly and tenderly to them. His kind words of welcome to this community, traditionally marginalized in the church, rang loudly around the globe."

King Charles praises Francis for working to protect the environment

King Charles III praised the late pope for his work on safeguarding the planet, saying he had profoundly touched the lives of many.

In a statement signed "Charles R," the monarch says the pope will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith.

"Through his work and care for both people and planet, he profoundly touched the lives of so many," Charles said. "The queen and I remember with particular affection our meetings with His Holiness over the years and we were greatly moved to have been able to visit him earlier in the month."

he pope met privately with Charles and Queen Camilla on April 10 at the Vatican during the royal couple's four-day state visit to Italy. It was the pope's first known meeting with a foreign dignitary after he was hospitalized for five weeks with double-pneumonia.

Charles had been scheduled to make a full-scale state visit to the Vatican in conjunction with his tour of Italy, but the visit was postponed due to Francis' illness. The brief private audience earlier this month was scheduled at the last minute and lasted about 20 minutes.

Vatican prepares first rituals for pope's death

The Vatican is preparing the first rituals following Francis' death: The body of the pope is expected to be transferred within the course of the day to the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where he lived, so that Vatican officials can pay their final respects.

There, the head of the Vatican health service examines the body, ascertains the cause of death and writes a report which is expected late Monday.

The body rests in the pope's personal chapel for the ritual pronouncement of death, presided over by the camerlengo, the Vatican official who runs the Holy See administration between the death or resignation of one pope and the election of another.

For the public, the cardinal archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, is expected to lead a recitation of the Rosary prayer in St. Peter's Square later Monday.

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A bishop in Southern Arabia remembers pope's visit to Abu Dhabi

Bishop Paolo Martinelli, the apostolic vicar of Southern Arabia, issued a statement saying that "all the people in the UAE are greatly saddened by the death of Pope Francis, whom we remember with gratitude for his visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019."

He asked all parishes to plan a Mass for Francis. The vicariate oversees the Catholic Church in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, called Francis "a great leader whose compassion and commitment to peace touched countless lives."

"His legacy of humility and interfaith unity will continue to inspire many communities around the world," Sheikh Mohammed said in an online message.

Maine bishop says Francis' legacy is one of mercy and compassion

Bishop James Ruggieri of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, Maine, said that Francis' legacy will be "one of mercy and compassion, but also of hope. In this Jubilee Year, may we honor Pope Francis by carrying on his mission and living as pilgrims of hope."

Dutch cardinal recalls meetings with 'a pope of encouragement'

Dutch Cardinal Wim Eijk called Francis "a pope of encouragement" and recalled two meetings between Dutch bishops and the pontiff in 2013 and 2022.

He said that Francis "put aside the prepared speech ... and really entered into dialogue with us. On both occasions, he appealed powerfully to persevere and not to lose courage. Not to look back in nostalgia, but to look to the future."

Argentina's president eulogizes Buenos Aires-born Francis

From Buenos Aires, Francis' hometown, the office of Argentine President Javier Milei expressed condolences and support to all the faithful in the predominately Catholic South American country.

Milei highlighted the "tireless struggle of Francis' papacy to protect life from conception, promote inter-religious dialogue and bring a spiritual and virtuous life closer to young people," his office said, describing Argentina as "the land of Pope Francis."

Pakistan calls Francis' death a loss for the global community

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the passing of Francis is an irreparable loss to the global community.

Sharif praised Francis as a "pioneer of interfaith harmony, peace, and the promotion of humanity."

He said under the pope's leadership, the Catholic Church consistently spread the message of love, tolerance and mutual respect across the world. "Pope Francis's life and conduct have been a beacon of light — not only for Christians but for people of all faiths."

The chief rabbi of Rome says Francis opened dialogue between Judaism and Catholicism

The chief rabbi of Rome, Riccardo di Segni, "offered heartfelt condolences to the Catholic world" on the pope's death on behalf of Rome's Jewish community.

He said that Francis' pontificate was an important new chapter in the history of relations between Judaism and Catholicism, "with openings to a dialogue that was sometimes difficult but always respectful."

"I remember the numerous occasions in which I met him, always marked by sympathy, attention and trust. With my community I express my condolences for his passing and heartfelt condolences to the Catholic world."

Spanish, Greek prime ministers mourn Francis

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez expressed his condolences for the death of Francis, saying, "His commitment to peace, social justice, and the most vulnerable leaves a profound legacy."

In Athens, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis paid tribute to Francis as a religious leader who dedicated his life's work to peace and solidarity.

"The faithful of the Roman Catholic Church mourn the loss of their religious leader, and Christians around the world join them in their grief," Mitsotakis wrote in an online post. "Along with them, every citizen of the earth who believes in peace, friendship, and solidarity also mourns. These are values to which Pope

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Francis dedicated his life and work."

JD Vance says 'my heart goes out to millions of Christians'

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who is in India and had met Pope Francis on Easter Sunday, said his "heart goes out to the millions of Christians all over the world who loved him"

"I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill. But I'll always remember him for the below homily he gave in the very early days of COVID. It was really quite beautiful," Vance wrote on X. "May God rest his soul."

The head of Church of England says Francis improved relations between religions

The acting head of the Church of England remembered Pope Francis' wit, compassion and commitment to improving relations between the world's religions.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said Francis' life was centered on service to the poor, compassion for migrants and asylum-seekers and efforts to protect the environment.

"I remember, in the brief times I spent with him, how this holy man of God was also very human," Cottrell said in a statement. "He was witty, lively, good to be with, and the warmth of his personality and interest in others shone out from him."

A note of criticism from the Women's Ordination Conference

The Women's Ordination Conference had been frustrated by Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women.

"While we will continue to experience the gifts of Pope Francis' openness to reform, we lament that this did not extend to an openness to the possibility of women in ordained ministry," the conference said.

"His repeated 'closed door' policy on women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed. This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women," it said.

It said it had long prayed that Francis would be transformed by the testimonies of women sharing their sincere calls from God to ordained ministry and guide the church toward embracing the fullness of women's equality. "Yet when it came to the topic of women in ministry, he seemed stuck in bad theology and outdated tropes."

India mourns Francis as a beacon of compassion

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose country has nearly 30 million Christians who make up 2.3% of the population, says Pope Francis will always be remembered "as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world.

"From a young age, he devoted himself towards realizing the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope," Modi said.

The Indian leader posted a photo of himself with the pope and said he was "greatly inspired by his commitment to inclusive and all-round development."

Ireland's foreign minister says Francis was a voice for the voiceless

Ireland's foreign minister, Simon Harris, expressed hope that Pope Francis' teachings will continue to inspire the world, saying the late pontiff's commitment to justice, peace and human dignity touched millions of people around the globe.

Francis' advocacy for the poor, calls for improved interfaith relations and focus on protecting the environment made him "a beacon of hope and a voice for the voiceless," Harris said in a statement.

"Pope Francis bore his illness with great dignity and courage," Harris said. "As so many people in Ireland and as Christians across the world mourn his loss, we find strength in his message of hope, mercy, and compassion, which will continue to inspire us to build a better world for all."

Meloni says 'we say goodbye to a great shepherd'

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said the news of Francis' death "deeply saddens us, as we are saying goodbye to a great man and a great shepherd. I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his counsel and his teachings, which never failed me, not even in times of trial and suffering."

She added that "his teaching and legacy will not be lost. We bid farewell to the Holy Father with hearts full of sorrow, but we know that he is now in the peace of the Lord."

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Macron says Francis gave hope to the poor

French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is largely Catholic, shared his condolences in a post on X.

"From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the Church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. For it to unite humans among themselves, and with nature. May this hope forever outlast him."

Dutch prime minister says the pope was a man of the people

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof paid tribute to Francis, saying the pope "was in every way a man of the people."

"The global Catholic community bids farewell to a leader who recognized the burning issues of our day and called attention to them. With his sober way of life, acts of service and compassion, Pope Francis was a role model for many – Catholics and non-Catholics alike. We remember him with great respect," Schoof wrote on X.

Israel's president offers condolences to Christians

Israel's mostly ceremonial president offered condolences to Christians after the death of Pope Francis, calling him a man of "deep faith and boundless compassion."

In a post on X, Isaac Herzog said the pope had fostered strong ties with Jews and advanced interfaith dialogue.

"I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered," he wrote, referring to the pope's repeated calls for an end to the war and the release of captives held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Francis had repeatedly criticized Israel's wartime conduct and said allegations of genocide, which Israel has adamantly denied, should be investigated.

Top EU leader says Francis was an inspiration for the entire world

Ursula von der Leyen, a top European Union leader, remembered Francis as an inspiration for the entire world, not just Christians.

"Today, the world mourns the passing of Pope Francis," von der Leyen, the head of the European Commission, wrote on X.

"He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate. My thoughts are with all who feel this profound loss. May they find solace in the idea that Pope Francis' legacy will continue to guide us all toward a more just, peaceful and compassionate world."

Francis made last public appearance on Easter Sunday

Francis made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday, a day before his death when he emerged to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square and treat them to a surprise popemobile romp through the piazza, drawing wild cheers and applause. Beforehand, he met briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

He performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced to the world on March 13, 2013 as the 266th pope.

Pope died at 7:35 a.m. Monday

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, announced that Francis died at 7:35 a.m. Monday (05:35 GMT).

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Farrell said in the announcement.

"He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with faithfulness, courage, and universal love, especially for the poorest and most marginalized.

"With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, we commend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite, merciful love of God, One and Tribune."

Global tributes pour in to honor Pope Francis after his death

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

LYON, France (AP) — Church bells tolled in mourning. Well-wishers flocked into pews. Tributes to Pope

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Francis poured in from around the world on Monday after the Vatican announced the pontiff's death at age 88.

The 266th pope was praised for his groundbreaking steps to honor the poor and the vulnerable; seek to end conflicts like those in the Middle East, Ukraine and Africa; protect the environment; and guide the Catholic Church toward greater tolerance of gays and lesbians, among other things. Some critics say he didn't always go far enough. Others said he went too far.

Many recalled his legacy as the first pope from Latin America, and the first Jesuit to reach the pinnacle of church hierarchy, one who stressed humility over hubris for a Church beset with scandal and indifference.

Here's a look at some of the global reactions a day after his last public appearance on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square.

— U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who met with the pope on Easter Sunday before traveling to India, wrote on social media that his "heart goes out" to the millions of Christians who loved him, and said: "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

— King Charles III praised the pope for his work on safeguarding the planet, and alluded to their multiple personal meetings — including a private visit on April 10 at the Vatican. "We were greatly moved to have been able to visit him earlier in the month," the King wrote in a statement signed "Charles R." It was the pope's first known meeting with a foreign dignitary after he was hospitalized for five weeks with double-pneumonia.

— Church bells tolled in honor of Francis, from the recently reopened Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris to a lone bell at the St. Bartholomew Parish in Bulacan, in the Philippines, that was rung 88 times to signify "the 88 fruitful years of our dear Pope Francis," the parish wrote on social media.

— Martin Pendergast, secretary of the LGBT Catholics Westminster in London, recalled how Francis looked past sexual orientation and said he wouldn't judge people who tried to carry out the will of God. "He was the first pope to actually use the word 'gay,' so even the way he speaks has been a radical transformation -- and some would say a bit of a revolution as well -- compared with some of his predecessors," Pendergast said.

— The Women's Ordination Conference lamented Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women. "His repeated 'closed door' policy on women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed," the conference said. "This made him a complicated, frustrating and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women."

— President Emmanuel Macron of France, a largely Roman Catholic country, focused on the pope's impact on the church, writing on social media that "from Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the Church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. For it to unite humans among themselves, and with nature. May this hope forever outlast him."

— Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, one of the few official visitors to see Francis during his recent hospitalization, alluded to the pope's personal comfort and advice, saying it "never failed me, not even in times of trial and suffering." She added: "We are saying goodbye to a great man and a great shepherd."

— Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te expressed condolences on social media and said people there would "continue to draw inspiration from his lifelong commitment to peace, global solidarity, and caring for those in need." The Holy See is among Taiwan's only 12 remaining diplomatic allies while China, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory, has been poaching others.

— South African President Cyril Ramaphosa noted the pope's "extraordinary life story" and said "Pope Francis advanced a world view of inclusion, equality and care for marginalized individuals and groups, as well as responsible and sustainable custody of the natural environment." Africa has seen some of the Catholic Church's biggest growth in recent years.

— European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recalled the pontiff as an inspiration for the entire world, not just Christians. "He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate," she said on social media. "My thoughts are with all who feel this profound loss."

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— Israeli President Issac Herzog, whose role is mostly ceremonial, called Francis a man of “deep faith and boundless compassion.” Francis repeatedly criticized Israel’s wartime conduct in Gaza and said allegations of genocide, which Israel has adamantly denied, should be investigated. “I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered,” Herzog said on social media.

— The Palestine Red Crescent offered condolences to Christians, calling the pope “one of the most prominent supporters of justice and human dignity, including his noble stances regarding the suffering of the Palestinian people and their right to freedom and justice.”

— President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt, an overwhelmingly Muslim country, said Francis leaves behind “a great human legacy that will remain etched in the conscience of humanity.”

— President Alexander Van der Bellen of Austria recalled how the pope traveled to the Italian island of Lampedusa, a key landing point for migrants seeking to reach Europe, to meet with refugees and commemorate those who died while trying to cross the Mediterranean. The Austrian leader said on social media that the pope’s impact resonated in ways large and small: “He ensured that homeless people near St. Peter’s Square could shower. He criticized dehumanizing words and gestures. That was Pope Francis.”

— President Vladimir Putin of Russia hailed the pope as a “consistent defender of the high values of humanism and justice” and alluded to the pontiff’s efforts to foster interfaith dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. Last year, the pope suggested Ukraine should have the courage to negotiate an end to the war with Russia and not be ashamed to sit at the same table to carry out talks. Critics said that suggested he was siding with Russia. Francis tried to maintain the Vatican’s traditional diplomatic neutrality during the war, but that often was accompanied by apparent sympathy with Russia’s rationale for invading Ukraine — like when he said NATO was “barking at Russia’s door” with its eastward expansion.

Hegseth had a second Signal chat where he shared details of Yemen strike, New York Times reports

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth created another Signal messaging chat that included his wife and brother where he shared similar details of a March military airstrike against Yemen’s Houthi militants that were sent in another chain with top Trump administration leaders, The New York Times reported.

A person familiar with the contents and those who received the messages, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, confirmed the second chat to The Associated Press.

The second chat on Signal — which is a commercially available app not authorized to be used to communicate sensitive or classified national defense information — included 13 people, the person said. The person also confirmed the chat was dubbed “Defense ` Team Huddle.”

The New York Times reported that the group included Hegseth’s wife, Jennifer, who is a former Fox News producer, and his brother Phil Hegseth, who was hired at the Pentagon as a Department of Homeland Security liaison and senior adviser. Both have traveled with the defense secretary and attended high-level meetings.

The White House and Pentagon said late Sunday that disgruntled former employees were spreading false claims.

“No matter how many times the legacy media tries to resurrect the same non-story, they can’t change the fact that no classified information was shared,” said Anna Kelly, White House deputy press secretary. “Recently-fired ‘leakers’ are continuing to misrepresent the truth to soothe their shattered egos and undermine the President’s agenda, but the administration will continue to hold them accountable.”

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell added in a post on X late Sunday that the report “relied only on the words of people who were fired this week and appear to have a motive to sabotage the Secretary and

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the President's agenda. There was no classified information in any Signal chat, no matter how many ways they try to write the story."

The revelation of the additional chat group brought new calls for Hegseth to be ousted as President Donald Trump's administration has faced criticism for failing to take action so far against the top national security officials who discussed plans for the military strike in Signal.

"The details keep coming out. We keep learning how Pete Hegseth put lives at risk. But Trump is still too weak to fire him," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer posted on X. "Pete Hegseth must be fired."

The first chat, set up by national security adviser Mike Waltz, included a number of Cabinet members and came to light because Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, was added to the group.

The contents of that chat, which The Atlantic published, shows that Hegseth listed weapons systems and a timeline for the attack on Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen last month.

Hegseth has previously contended that no classified information or war plans were shared in the chat with the journalist.

The Times reported Sunday that the second chat had the same warplane launch times that the first chat included. Multiple former and current officials have said sharing those operational details before a strike would have certainly been classified and their release could have put pilots in danger.

Hegseth's use of Signal and the sharing of such plans are under investigation by the Defense Department's acting inspector general. It came at the request of the leadership of the Senate Armed Services Committee — Republican Chairman Roger Wicker of Mississippi and ranking Democratic member Jack Reed of Rhode Island.

Reed urged the Pentagon watchdog late Sunday to probe the reported second Signal chat as well, saying that Hegseth "must immediately explain why he reportedly texted classified information that could endanger American servicemembers' lives."

"I have grave concerns about Secretary Hegseth's ability to maintain the trust and confidence of U.S. servicemembers and the Commander-in-Chief," he added.

The new revelations come during further turmoil at the Pentagon. Four officials in Hegseth's inner circle departed last week as the Pentagon conducts a widespread investigation for information leaks.

Dan Caldwell, a Hegseth aide; Colin Carroll, chief of staff to Deputy Defense Secretary Stephen Feinberg; and Darin Selnick, Hegseth's deputy chief of staff, were escorted out of the Pentagon.

While the three initially had been placed on leave pending the investigation, a joint statement shared by Caldwell on X on Saturday said the three "still have not been told what exactly we were investigated for, if there is still an active investigation, or if there was even a real investigation of 'leaks' to begin with."

Caldwell was the staff member designated as Hegseth's point person in the Signal chat with Trump Cabinet members.

Former Pentagon spokesman John Ulyot also announced he was resigning last week, unrelated to the leaks. The Pentagon said, however, that Ulyot was asked to resign.

Pope Francis, first Latin American pontiff who ministered with a charming, humble style, dies at 88

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change, died Monday. He was 88.

Bells tolled in church towers across Rome after the announcement, which was read out by Cardinal Kevin Farrell from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," said Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, who takes charge after a pontiff's death.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was

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admitted to Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy.

He made his last public appearance on Easter Sunday — a day before his death — to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square, drawing wild cheers and applause. Beforehand, he met briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

Francis performed the blessing from the same loggia where he was introduced to the world on March 13, 2013 as the 266th pope.

From his first greeting that night — a remarkably normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his embrace of refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signaled a very different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference.

After that rainy night, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution that had seen its influence wane during the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, whose surprise resignation led to Francis' election.

But Francis soon invited troubles of his own, and conservatives grew increasingly upset with his progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics and crackdown on traditionalists. His greatest test came in 2018 when he botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in Chile, and the scandal that festered under his predecessors erupted anew on his watch.

And then Francis, the crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope of the peripheries, navigated the unprecedented reality of leading a universal religion through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City.

He implored the world to use COVID-19 as an opportunity to rethink the economic and political framework that he said had turned rich against poor.

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented," Francis told an empty St. Peter's Square in March 2020. But he also stressed the pandemic showed the need for "all of us to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

Flags flew at half-staff Monday in overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Italy, and tourists and the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, where bells tolled in mourning.

Johann Xavier, who traveled from Australia, hoped to see the pope during his visit. "But then we heard about it when we came in here. It pretty much devastated all of us," he said.

Francis' death sets off a weeklong process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter's for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

Reforming the Vatican

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and finances but went further in shaking up the church without changing its core doctrine. "Who am I to judge?" he replied when asked about a purportedly gay priest.

The comment sent a message of welcome to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by a church that had stressed sexual propriety over unconditional love. "Being homosexual is not a crime," he told The Associated Press in 2023, urging an end to civil laws that criminalize it.

Stressing mercy, Francis changed the church's position on the death penalty, calling it inadmissible in all circumstances. He also declared the possession of nuclear weapons, not just their use, was "immoral."

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, met the Russian patriarch and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

He reaffirmed the all-male, celibate priesthood and upheld the church's opposition to abortion, equating it to "hiring a hit man to solve a problem."

Roles for women

But he added women to important decision-making roles and allowed them to serve as lectors and acolytes in parishes. He let women vote alongside bishops in periodic Vatican meetings, following long-standing complaints that women do much of the church's work but are barred from power.

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Sister Nathalie Becquart, whom Francis named to one of the highest Vatican jobs, said his legacy was a vision of a church where men and women existed in a relationship of reciprocity and respect.

"It was about shifting a pattern of domination — from human being to the creation, from men to women — to a pattern of cooperation," said Becquart, the first woman to hold a voting position in a Vatican synod.

Still, a note of criticism came from the Women's Ordination Conference, which had been frustrated by Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women.

"His repeated 'closed door' policy on women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed. This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women," the statement said.

The church as refuge

While Francis did not allow women to be ordained, the voting reform was part of a revolutionary change in emphasizing what the church should be: a refuge for everyone — "todos, todos, todos" ("everyone, everyone, everyone"). Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or powerful CEOs.

"For Pope Francis, (the goal) was always to extend the arms of the church to embrace all people, not to exclude anyone," said Farrell, the camerlengo.

Francis demanded his bishops apply mercy and charity to their flocks, pressed the world to protect God's creation from climate disaster, and challenged countries to welcome those fleeing war, poverty and oppression.

After visiting Mexico in 2016, Francis said of then-U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out "is not Christian."

While progressives were thrilled with Francis' radical focus on Jesus' message of mercy and inclusion, it troubled conservatives who feared he watered down Catholic teaching and threatened the very Christian identity of the West. Some even called him a heretic.

A few cardinals openly challenged him. Francis usually responded with his typical answer to conflict: silence.

He made it easier for married Catholics to get an annulment, allowed priests to absolve women who had had abortions and decreed that priests could bless same-sex couples. He opened debate on issues like homosexuality and divorce, giving pastors wiggle room to discern how to accompany their flocks, rather than handing them strict rules to apply.

St. Francis of Assisi as a model

Francis lived in the Vatican hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes and not the red loafers of the papacy, and rode in compact cars. It wasn't a gimmick.

"I see clearly that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful," he told a Jesuit journal in 2013. "I see the church as a field hospital after battle."

If becoming the first Latin American and first Jesuit pope wasn't enough, Francis was also the first to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century friar known for personal simplicity and care for nature and society's outcasts.

Francis went to society's fringes to minister with mercy: caressing the deformed head of a man in St. Peter's Square, kissing the tattoo of a Holocaust survivor, or inviting Argentina's garbage scavengers to join him onstage in Rio de Janeiro. He formally apologized to Indigenous peoples for the crimes of the church from colonial times onward.

"We have always been marginalized, but Pope Francis always helped us," said Coqui Vargas, a transgender woman whose Roman community forged a unique relationship with Francis during the pandemic.

His first trip as pope was to the island of Lampedusa, then the epicenter of Europe's migration crisis. He consistently chose to visit poor countries where Christians were often persecuted minorities, rather than the centers of global Catholicism.

Friend and fellow Argentine, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, said his concern for the poor and disenfranchised was based on the Beatitudes — the eight blessings Jesus delivered in the Sermon on the Mount for the meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit and others.

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"Why are the Beatitudes the program of this pontificate? Because they were the basis of Jesus Christ's own program," Sánchez said.

Missteps on sexual abuse scandal

But more than a year passed before Francis met with survivors of priestly sexual abuse, and victims' groups initially questioned whether he really understood the scope of the problem.

Francis did create a sex abuse commission to advise the church on best practices, but it lost influence after a few years and its recommendation of a tribunal to judge bishops who covered up for predator priests went nowhere.

And then came the greatest crisis of his papacy, when he discredited Chilean abuse victims in 2018 and stood by a controversial bishop linked to their abuser. Realizing his error, Francis invited the victims to the Vatican for a personal mea culpa and summoned the leadership of the Chilean church to resign en masse.

As that crisis concluded, a new one erupted over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington and a counselor to three popes.

Francis had actually moved swiftly to sideline McCarrick amid an accusation he had molested a teenage altar boy in the 1970s. But Francis nevertheless was accused by the Vatican's one-time U.S. ambassador of having rehabilitated McCarrick early in his papacy.

Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick after a Vatican investigation determined he sexually abused adults as well as minors. He changed church law to remove the pontifical secret surrounding abuse cases and enacted procedures to investigate bishops who abused or covered for their pedophile priests, seeking to end impunity for the hierarchy.

"He sincerely wanted to do something and he transmitted that," said Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean abuse survivor Francis discredited who later developed a close friendship with the pontiff.

A change from Benedict

The road to Francis' 2013 election was paved by Pope Benedict XVI's decision to resign and retire — the first in 600 years.

Francis didn't shy from Benedict's potentially uncomfortable shadow. Francis embraced him as an elder statesman and adviser, coaxing him out of his cloistered retirement to participate in the public life of the church until Benedict's death on Dec. 31, 2022.

"It's like having your grandfather in the house, a wise grandfather," Francis said.

Francis' looser liturgical style and pastoral priorities made clear he and the German-born theologian came from very different religious traditions, and Francis directly overturned several decisions of his predecessor.

He made sure Salvadoran Archbishop Óscar Romero, a hero to the liberation theology movement in Latin America, was canonized after his case languished under Benedict over concerns about the credo's Marxist bent.

Francis reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass that Benedict had relaxed, arguing the spread of the Tridentine Rite was divisive. The move riled Francis' traditionalist critics and opened sustained conflict between right-wing Catholics, particularly in the U.S., and the Argentine pope.

Conservatives oppose Francis

By then, conservatives had already turned away from Francis, betrayed after he opened debate on allowing remarried Catholics to receive the sacraments if they didn't get an annulment — a church ruling that their first marriage was invalid.

"We don't like this pope," headlined Italy's conservative daily *Il Foglio* a few months into the papacy, reflecting the unease of the small but vocal traditionalist Catholic movement.

Those same critics amplified their complaints after Francis' approved church blessings for same-sex couples, and a controversial accord with China over nominating bishops.

Its details were never released, but conservative critics bashed it as a sellout to communist China, while the Vatican defended it as the best deal it could get with Beijing.

U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, a figurehead in the anti-Francis opposition, said the church had become "like a ship without a rudder."

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Burke waged his opposition campaign for years, starting when Francis fired him as the Vatican's supreme court justice and culminating with his vocal opposition to Francis' 2023 synod on the church's future.

Twice, he joined other conservative cardinals in formally asking Francis to explain himself on doctrine issues reflecting a more progressive bent, including on the possibility of same-sex blessings and his outreach to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

Francis eventually sanctioned Burke financially, accusing him of sowing "disunity."

Francis insisted his bishops and cardinals imbue themselves with the "odor of their flock" and minister to the faithful, voicing displeasure when they didn't.

His 2014 Christmas address to the Vatican Curia was one of the greatest public papal reprimands ever: Standing in the marbled Apostolic Palace, Francis ticked off 15 ailments that he said can afflict his closest collaborators, including "spiritual Alzheimer's," lust for power and the "terrorism of gossip."

Trying to eliminate corruption, Francis oversaw the reform of the scandal-marred Vatican bank and sought to wrestle Vatican bureaucrats into financial line, limiting their compensation and ability to receive gifts or award public contracts.

He authorized Vatican police to raid his own secretariat of state and the Vatican's financial watchdog agency amid suspicions about a 350 million euro investment in a London real estate venture. After a 2 1/2-year trial, the Vatican tribunal convicted a once-powerful cardinal, Angelo Becciu, of embezzlement and returned mixed verdicts to nine others, acquitting one.

The trial, though, proved to be a reputational boomerang for the Holy See, showing deficiencies in the Vatican's legal system, unseemly turf battles among monsignors, and how the pope had intervened on behalf of prosecutors.

While earning praise for trying to turn the Vatican's finances around, Francis angered U.S. conservatives for his frequent excoriation of the global financial market.

Economic justice was an important theme of his papacy, and he didn't hide it in his first meeting with journalists when he said he wanted a "poor church that is for the poor."

In his first major teaching document, "The Joy of the Gospel," Francis denounced trickle-down economic theories as unproven and naive, based on a mentality "where the powerful feed upon the powerless" with no regard for ethics, the environment or even God.

"Money must serve, not rule!" he said in urging political reforms.

Some U.S. conservatives branded Francis a Marxist. He jabbed back by saying he had many friends who were Marxists.

Soccer, opera and prayer

Born Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the eldest of five children of Italian immigrants.

He credited his devout grandmother Rosa with teaching him how to pray. Weekends were spent listening to opera on the radio, going to Mass and attending matches of the family's beloved San Lorenzo soccer club. As pope, his love of soccer brought him a huge collection of jerseys from visitors.

He said he received his religious calling at 17 while going to confession, recounting in a 2010 biography that, "I don't know what it was, but it changed my life. ... I realized that they were waiting for me."

He entered the diocesan seminary but switched to the Jesuit order in 1958, attracted to its missionary tradition and militancy.

Around this time, he suffered from pneumonia, which led to the removal of the upper part of his right lung. His frail health prevented him from becoming a missionary, and his less-than-robust lung capacity was perhaps responsible for his whisper of a voice and reluctance to sing at Mass.

On Dec. 13, 1969, he was ordained a priest, and immediately began teaching. In 1973, he was named head of the Jesuits in Argentina, an appointment he later acknowledged was "crazy" given he was only 36. "My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative," he admitted in his *Civiltà Cattolica* interview.

Life under Argentina's dictatorship

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His six-year tenure as the head of the order in Argentina coincided with the country's murderous 1976-83 dictatorship, when the military launched a campaign against left-wing guerrillas and other regime opponents.

Bergoglio didn't publicly confront the junta and was accused of effectively allowing two slum priests to be kidnapped and tortured by not publicly endorsing their work.

He refused for decades to counter that version of events. Only in a 2010 authorized biography did he finally recount the behind-the-scenes lengths he used to save them, persuading the family priest of feared dictator Jorge Videla to call in sick so he could celebrate Mass instead. Once in the junta leader's home, Bergoglio privately appealed for mercy. Both priests were eventually released, among the few to have survived prison.

As pope, accounts began to emerge of the many people — priests, seminarians and political dissidents —whom Bergoglio actually saved during the "dirty war," letting them stay incognito at the seminary or helping them escape the country.

Bergoglio went to Germany in 1986 to research a never-finished thesis. Returning to Argentina, he was stationed in Cordoba during a period he described as a time of "great interior crisis." Out of favor with more progressive Jesuit leaders, he was eventually rescued from obscurity in 1992 by St. John Paul II, who named him an auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. He became archbishop six years later, and was made a cardinal in 2001.

He came close to becoming pope in 2005 when Benedict was elected, gaining the second-most votes in several rounds of balloting before bowing out.

Pope Francis reached out to migrants and the LGBTQ+ community, but also drew unusual opposition

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Some takeaways about the life of Pope Francis, who died Monday:

Background

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born Dec. 17, 1936, to Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the eldest of five children. He was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1969 and led the religious order in Argentina during the country's murderous dictatorship from 1976-83. He became archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998 and elevated to cardinal in 2001 by St. John Paul II. He was elected the 266th pope on March 13, 2013, on the fifth ballot.

Francis' Firsts

- The first pope from the Americas.
- The first from the Jesuit order to be elected pope.
- The first to take the name of Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi.
- The first to visit Iraq, meeting its top Shiite Muslim cleric in 2021.

Humility and simplicity

As Buenos Aires archbishop, Francis denied himself the luxuries his predecessors enjoyed, riding the bus, cooking his own meals and regularly visiting slums. This simplicity continued as pope, marked by Francis taking the name of the 13th century saint known for personal simplicity. He lived in the Vatican hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes and not the red loafers of the papacy, and set an example to the clerical classes by using compact cars.

Migrants

Advocating for migrants was one of Francis' priorities as pope. His' first trip outside Rome in 2013 was to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa to meet with newly arrived migrants. He denounced the "globalization of indifference" shown to would-be refugees. He prayed for dead migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2016 and brought 12 Syrian Muslims to Rome on his plane after visiting a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece. His plea for welcome put him at odds with U.S. and European policies. He said in 2016 of then-candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out "is not a Christian."

LGBTQ+ stance

Early in his papacy, Francis signaled a more welcoming stance toward LGBTQ+ people, declaring "Who

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am I to judge?" when asked about a gay priest. In a 2023 Associated Press interview, he declared that, "Being homosexual is not a crime," and later approved blessings for same-sex couples, provided they don't resemble marriage vows.

Environmental stance

Francis became the first pope to use scientific data in a major teaching document and made care for God's creation a hallmark of his papacy. In 2015, his environmental manifesto "Praised Be," urged a cultural revolution to correct what he called the "structurally perverse" global economic system that exploits the poor and turned Earth into "an immense pile of filth." Many popes before him, though, also called for better care for the environment.

Clergy sexual abuse stance

The greatest scandal of his papacy came in 2018, when he discredited Chilean victims of clergy sexual abuse by siding with a bishop whom they accused of complicity in their abuse. Realizing his error, he invited them to the Vatican and apologized in person. He also brought the entire Chilean bishops conference to Rome, where he pressed them to resign. He convened a summit of the Catholic hierarchy in 2019 on abuse and sent a strong signal by defrocking former U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick after a Vatican investigation determined he abused minors as well as adults. Francis passed church laws abolishing the use of pontifical secrecy and establishing procedures to investigate bishops who abuse or cover up for predator priests. But he was dogged by high-profile cases where he seemed to side with accused clergy.

His critics

In his first years as pope, critics had a living alternative in Pope Benedict XVI, who had resigned and was living on the Vatican grounds. That amplified the right-wing opposition to Francis' reform agenda. Some called him a heretic after he opened the way in 2016 to letting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics receive Communion. In 2018, the Vatican's retired U.S. ambassador Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano published an accusation that U.S. and Vatican officials for two decades covered up McCarrick's sexual misconduct and demanded that Francis resign. After Vigano amplified his criticisms and drew a following of his own, the Vatican in 2024 excommunicated him for schism.

Pope Francis, Latin America's first pontiff who ministered with charm and humility, dies at 88

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humility and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives over climate change and critiques of capitalism, died Monday. He was 88.

Bells tolled in church towers across Rome after the announcement, which was read out by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta, where Francis lived.

"At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the home of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of his Church," Farrell said.

Francis entered Gemelli hospital on Feb. 14, 2025, for a respiratory crisis that developed into double pneumonia and, at 38 days, became the longest hospitalization of his papacy. Part of his right lung was removed in the late 1950s after a bout of pneumonia, and he suffered from chronic lung disease.

He emerged on Easter Sunday — his last public appearance, a day before his death — to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square, drawing wild cheers and applause.

The death now sets off a weekslong process of allowing the faithful to pay their final respects, first for Vatican officials in the Santa Marta chapel and then in St. Peter's for the general public, followed by a funeral and a conclave to elect a new pope.

From his election on March 13, 2013, the Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio signaled a different papacy, embracing refugees and the downtrodden, especially following the troubled tenure of Pope Benedict XVI, who surprisingly resigned.

But conservatives grew increasingly upset with Francis' progressive bent, outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics

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and crackdown on traditionalists. He badly botched a notorious case of clergy sexual abuse in 2018.

The crowd-loving, globe-trotting pope also navigated the church through the coronavirus pandemic from a locked-down Vatican City, declaring it "has shown us that we cannot live without one another, or worse still, pitted against one another."

Elected on a mandate for reform

Francis was elected on a mandate to reform the Vatican bureaucracy and its finances, but he went further, shaking up the church itself without changing its core doctrine.

Asked about a purportedly gay priest, he famously responded, "Who am I to judge?" — a welcoming message to the LGBTQ+ community and those who felt shunned by the church.

Francis changed church positions on the death penalty, declaring it inadmissible in all circumstances, and modified its stand on nuclear weapons by saying their possession was "immoral."

In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China on bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican for decades, and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

But his real revolutionary change came in emphasizing the church should be a refuge for those on society's fringes: migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts.

Evoking St. Francis of Assisi

Francis lived in the Vatican hotel rather than the Apostolic Palace, wore his old orthotic shoes rather than the traditional red loafers, and used compact cars.

If being the first Latin American and Jesuit pope wasn't enough, he was the first to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century friar known for personal simplicity, his message of peace, and care for society's outcasts and nature.

His first trip as pope was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, epicenter of Europe's migration crisis, and he consistently visited countries where Christians were persecuted.

Missteps on priestly sexual abuse

But over a year passed before Francis met survivors of priestly sexual abuse. Victims' groups questioned whether he understood the scope of the problem.

His papacy's greatest crisis came in 2018, when he discredited Chilean victims of abuse and stood by a bishop linked to their abuser, a notorious pedophile. Francis later invited the victims to the Vatican for a personal mea culpa and summoned the leadership of the Chilean church to have them resign.

Another crisis erupted over ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the retired archbishop of Washington and a counselor to three popes.

Francis had sidelined McCarrick after an accusation he had molested a teenage altar boy in the 1970s. The Vatican's onetime U.S. ambassador, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, still accused Francis of rehabilitating McCarrick early in his papacy. Francis eventually defrocked McCarrick after an investigation determined he sexually abused adults as well as minors.

Two popes in the Vatican

Francis' election after Pope Benedict XVI's stunning decision to resign and retire -- the first in 600 years — created the unprecedented reality of two popes on Vatican grounds. Despite the potentially uncomfortable shadow, Francis embraced Benedict as an elder statesman and adviser until his Dec. 31, 2022, death.

Francis didn't pursue the anti-abortion agenda of Benedict or St. John Paul II, although he starkly likened it to "hiring a hit man to resolve a problem."

But he reversed Benedict's signature liturgical legacy by reimposing restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass. He said he was healing divisions, but conservatives and traditionalists blasted the move as an attack on them and the old liturgy.

Francis slowly shifted the balance of power from doctrinaire church leaders to more pastoral ones, appointments reflected in choosing cardinals who will elect his successor.

His boldest anti-corruption steps were wrestling the Vatican's bureaucrats into financial line, limiting compensation and ability to receive gifts, and eliminating obstacles to prosecuting cardinals criminally. He authorized a police raid of Vatican offices that led to a criminal trial into a botched London real estate

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venture.

Economic justice was important to Francis, who said he wanted a "poor church that is for the poor."

Francis criticized trickle-down economics in his first major teaching document, saying "the powerful feed upon the powerless" without regard for ethics, the environment or even God. He elaborated on that in an ecological encyclical, which denounced the "structurally perverse" system that exploited the poor and risked turning Earth into "an immense pile of filth."

A religious calling at age 17

Born in Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the eldest of five children of Italian immigrants. He credited his grandmother Rosa with teaching him how to pray.

He said he decided on the priesthood at 17, entering the diocesan seminary four years later. In 1958, he switched to the Jesuit order, attracted by its missionary tradition and militancy. He was named head of the Jesuits in Argentina in 1973 at age 36. Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

His tenure coincided with the start of Argentina's 1976-83 dictatorship and "dirty war," when the military waged a brutal campaign against left-wing guerrillas and other regime opponents.

Like many, Bergoglio didn't publicly confront the junta. He was accused of effectively allowing two slum priests to be kidnapped and tortured by not publicly endorsing their work.

Only in a 2010 authorized biography did he recount how he persuading the family priest of dictator Jorge Videla to call in sick so that he could say Mass in the junta leader's home and successfully appeal for mercy.

From Buenos Aires to Rome: Key dates in the life of Pope Francis

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Key events in the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who became Pope Francis and died on Monday:

Dec. 17, 1936: Jorge Mario Bergoglio is born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the eldest of five children to Mario Jose Bergoglio, an accountant from Italy, and Regina María Sívori, the daughter of Italian immigrants.

Dec. 13, 1969: Ordained a priest with the Jesuit religious order, which he would lead as Argentina provincial superior during the country's murderous dictatorship that began in the 1970s.

May 20, 1992: Named auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires and in 1998 succeeds Cardinal Antonio Quarracino as archbishop of the Argentine capital.

Feb. 21, 2001: Elevated to cardinal by St. John Paul II.

May 2007: Helps draft the final document of the fifth meeting of the Latin American bishops conference in Aparecida, Brazil, synthesizing what would eventually become his concerns as pope for the poor, Indigenous peoples and the environment and the need for a missionary church.

March 13, 2013: Elected 266th pope, the first from the Americas, the first Jesuit and the first to take the name of Francis, after St. Francis of Assisi.

April 13, 2013: Creates a kitchen cabinet of eight cardinals from around the globe to help him govern the church and reorganize its bureaucracy.

May 12, 2013: Canonizes the "Martyrs of Otranto," 813 Italians slain in 1480 for defying demands by Turkish invaders to convert to Islam. With one ceremony, Francis nearly doubled the 480 saints made by St. John Paul II over his quarter-century pontificate, which at the time was more than all his predecessors combined for 500 years.

July 8, 2013: Makes first trip outside Rome to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa to meet with newly arrived migrants and denounces the "globalization of indifference" shown to would-be refugees.

July 30, 2013: Declares "Who am I to judge?" when asked about a gay priest during a news conference, signaling a more welcoming stance toward LGBTQ+ community.

Nov. 26, 2013: Issues mission statement for his papacy in *Evangelii Gaudium*, ("The Joy of the Gospel"), denouncing the world financial system that excludes the poor and declaring the Eucharist is "not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."

May 25, 2014: Makes an unscheduled stop to pray at wall separating Israel from West Bank town of

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Bethlehem, in a show of support for the Palestinian cause.

June 8, 2014: Hosts Israeli and Palestinian presidents for peace prayers in the Vatican gardens.

March 20, 2015: Accepts the resignation of the "rights and privileges" of Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien after adult men accuse him of sexual misconduct.

June 18, 2015: Issues his environmental manifesto "Laudato Si" ("Praised Be"), calling for a cultural revolution to correct the "structurally perverse" global economic system that exploits the poor and has turned Earth into "an immense pile of filth."

July 10, 2015: Apologizes in Bolivia for the sins and crimes of the Catholic Church against Indigenous peoples during the colonial-era conquest of the Americas.

Sept. 8, 2015: Overhauls the annulment process to make it faster, cheaper and simpler so divorced Catholics can remarry in the church.

Sept. 24, 2015: Challenges Congress to rediscover America's ideals by acting on climate change, immigration and poverty reduction in the first speech by a pope at the U.S. Capitol.

Nov. 29, 2015: Inaugurates the Jubilee of Mercy by opening the Holy Door of the cathedral in Bangui, Central African Republic, rather than at the Vatican.

Feb. 12, 2016: Meets Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill during a stopover in Havana and declares "We are brothers," in first such meeting between a pope and patriarch in over 1,000 years.

Feb. 18, 2016: Prays for dead migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, later says then-presidential candidate Donald Trump is "not a Christian" for wanting to build a border wall.

April 8, 2016: Opens the way to letting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics receive Communion in a footnote to the document "Amoris Laetitia" ("The Joy of Love").

April 16, 2016: Visits a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, and brings 12 Syrian Muslims to Rome aboard his papal plane in an appeal for solidarity toward migrants.

Sept. 19, 2016: Is questioned in a letter by four conservative cardinals seeking clarification of his opening to divorced and remarried Catholics.

Dec. 1, 2017: Declares at a meeting in Bangladesh with Myanmar Rohingya refugees that, "The presence of God today is also called Rohingya."

Jan. 19, 2018: Accuses sex abuse victims of slander during a visit to Chile, further undermining Catholic Church's credibility. Subsequently orders a Vatican investigation into Chile's abuse crisis.

April 12, 2018: Admits to "grave errors" in judgment in Chile's sex abuse scandal. Later summons Chilean bishops to Rome to secure their resignations and invites abuse victims to Vatican to apologize.

Aug. 3, 2018: Declares capital punishment "inadmissible" under all circumstances in a change to official church teaching.

July 28, 2018: Accepts the resignation of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick from the College of Cardinals, orders him to penance and prayer pending an investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct with minors and adults.

Aug. 26, 2018: Retired Vatican ambassador Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano publishes bombshell accusation claiming U.S. and Vatican officials for two decades covered up McCarrick's sexual misconduct, demands Francis resign.

Sept. 22, 2018: Vatican and China sign landmark agreement over bishop nominations.

Oct. 14, 2018: Canonizes slain Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero after his saint-making process was held up for decades by conservative cardinals.

Feb. 4, 2019: Signs the "Human Fraternity" document with the imam of Al Azhar, establishing collaborative relations between Catholics and Muslims.

Feb. 16, 2019: Defrocks McCarrick after Vatican investigation finds he sexually abused minors and adults.

Feb. 21, 2019: Opens first Vatican summit on child protection, warns bishops the faithful demand action, not just condemnation of clergy sexual abuse.

May 9, 2019: Issues new church law requiring clergy sex abuse to be reported in-house, although not to police; establishes procedures for investigating accused bishops, cardinals and religious superiors.

Oct. 25, 2019: Apologizes to Amazonian bishops, tribal leaders after conservative activists steal Indigenous

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statues from Vatican-area church and throw them into Tiber River in show of opposition to the pope.

Nov. 24, 2019: Declares the use and possession of nuclear weapons "immoral" during a visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

Dec. 17, 2019: Abolishes use of "pontifical secret" in clergy sex abuse cases, allowing bishops to share internal documentation about abusers with law enforcement.

Feb. 12, 2020: Declines to approve ordination of married men as priests after appeals from Amazonian bishops, sidestepping issue in document "Querida Amazonia" ("Beloved Amazon").

March 27, 2020: Delivers solitary evening prayer to the world facing the coronavirus pandemic from the promenade of St. Peter's Square.

Oct. 4, 2020: Issues encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" ("Brothers All,"), arguing the pandemic proves theories of market capitalism failed and a new type of politics is needed to promote human fraternity.

Nov. 10, 2020: Vatican report into McCarrick finds Vatican, U.S. bishops, cardinals and popes played down or dismissed reports of sexual misconduct but spares Francis.

March 5-8, 2021: Becomes first pope to visit Iraq, meeting with its top Shiite Muslim cleric.

July 4, 2021: Undergoes intestinal surgery at Rome's Gemelli hospital, has 33 centimeters (13 inches) of colon removed.

Jan. 5, 2023: Presides at funeral Mass for Pope Benedict XVI.

Jan. 24, 2023: Declares in an Associated Press interview that "Being homosexual is not a crime."

March 29, 2023: Is admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital for respiratory infection; is released April 1.

June 7, 2023: Undergoes surgery to remove intestinal scar tissue and repair a hernia in the abdominal wall.

Oct. 4, 2023: Opens a synod on making the church more responsive to ordinary faithful during which women are allowed to vote alongside bishops for the first time.

Nov. 28, 2023: Cancels visit to Dubai to address U.N. climate conference and outline a new ecological manifesto "Laudate Deum" ("Praise God") because of a new case of acute bronchitis.

Dec. 16, 2023: Vatican tribunal convicts Cardinal Angelo Becciu of embezzlement and sentences him to 5½ years in prison in one of several verdicts in a complicated financial trial that aired the city state's dirty laundry and tested its justice system.

Dec. 19, 2023: Approves blessings for same-sex couples provided they don't resemble marriage, sparking fierce opposition from conservative bishops in Africa, Asia and elsewhere.

July 5, 2024: Vatican excommunicates leading Francis critic Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano for schism.

Sept. 10, 2024: Some 600,000 people, half of East Timor's population, attend Francis' Mass in Dili in what is believed to be the biggest turnout for a papal event in terms of the proportion of the population.

Dec. 26, 2024: Opens the holy door of Rome's Rebibbia prison, two days after formally inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee.

Jan. 16, 2025: Appears wearing a sling after a fall that bruised his right arm, just weeks after another apparent fall bruised his chin.

Feb. 14, 2025: Is hospitalized after a bout of bronchitis worsens and then develops into a complex lung infection and double pneumonia.

Feb. 28, 2025: His doctors briefly consider suspending treatment after a breathing crisis but decide instead on an aggressive course that risks organ damage.

March 13, 2025: Marks the 12th anniversary of his election as pope while hospitalized.

March 23, 2025: Is released from the hospital after 38 days of treatment but looks weak and frail.

April 17, 2025: Keeps his Holy Thursday tradition of spending time with the least fortunate, visiting inmates at Rome's Regina Caeli prison. Although he says he can't perform the ritual of washing the feet of 12 people in a gesture of humility, he says he wanted to be with them and "do what Jesus did on Holy Thursday."

April 20, 2025: Says "Brothers and Sisters, Happy Easter!" and imparts the Easter Urbi et Orbi blessing from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, then surprises the 35,000 people in the piazza below with a long ride in the popemobile, around the square and up and down Via della Conciliazione, in what would become

his final goodbye to the faithful.

April 21, 2025: Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the camerlengo, announces from the chapel of the Domus Santa Marta hotel where Francis lived that the pope died at 7:35 a.m.

The rites and rituals following the death of a pope, his funeral and burial, explained

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The death of a pope sets in motion a series of carefully orchestrated rites and rituals well before the conclave to elect his successor begins. They involve the certification of death and public display of his body for the faithful to pay their respects, followed by the funeral and burial.

Pope Francis, who died on Monday, revised various rites last year, simplifying the funeral rituals to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican in keeping with his wishes. But the core elements remain, including the three key moments that must be observed between the death of a pope and his burial.

The reforms are incorporated into the slim red volume "Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis," Latin for "Rite of Burial for Roman Pontiffs."

Why were changes to the funeral rites necessary?

While popes often tinker with the rules regulating the conclave that elects their successor, a revision of the papal funeral rites hadn't been undertaken since 2000.

The changes became necessary after Francis expressed his own wishes, and after Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI died on Dec. 31, 2022. For Benedict, the Vatican had to work out the novelty of a funeral for the first retired pope in 600 years.

A few months later, Francis revealed he was working with the Vatican's master of liturgical ceremonies, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, to overhaul the entire book of rites to simplify them.

In explaining the reforms, Ravelli said the changes aimed "to emphasize even more that the Roman Pontiff's funeral is that of a pastor and disciple of Christ and not of a powerful man of this world."

The declaration of death

The three main stations, or moments, occur first in his home, then in St. Peter's Basilica, and then in the place of burial.

The reform allows for the formal confirmation of death to occur in Francis' personal chapel rather than his bedroom. It is unclear why, the change may be more practical than anything since Francis chose to live in a small suite in the Vatican's Santa Marta hotel rather than the Apostolic Palace. He has a personal chapel at Santa Marta.

Upon the pope's death, the head of the Vatican health service examines the body, ascertains the cause of death and writes a report. The body is dressed in white.

The body rests in the pope's personal chapel for the ritual pronouncement of death, presided over by the camerlengo, the Vatican official who runs the Holy See administration between the death or resignation of one pope and the election of another. The camerlengo is American Cardinal Kevin Farrell, one of Francis' most trusted aides.

In a change from the past, the rite no longer requires the body to be placed in the traditional three coffins made of cypress, lead and oak. Now, the pope's body is placed in a wooden coffin, with a zinc coffin inside. The pope is dressed in red liturgical vestments, his miter — the traditional headdress of bishops — and the pallium woolen stole, a kind of scarf. The Paschal candle, a large, decorated candle used at Easter, is placed nearby.

The camerlengo drafts the formal declaration of death, attaching the certificate that had been prepared by the health service chief.

The master of liturgical celebrations, Ravelli, then decides when other faithful can pay their respects before the coffin is moved to St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing.

Once in the basilica

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When the body is brought into the basilica, the Litany of Saints chant is sung. The camerlengo leads the procession.

In another change, the pope's body is no longer placed on an elevated bier. Rather, the simplified wooden coffin is placed facing the pews, with the Pasqual candle nearby.

The sealing of the coffin

The night before the funeral, the camerlengo presides over the closing and sealing of the coffin, in the presence of other senior cardinals. A white cloth is placed over the pope's face.

A bag containing coins minted during his papacy is placed in the coffin along with a one-page written account of his papacy — known in Italian as a "rogito," a word indicating an official deed. It is read aloud by the master of liturgical ceremonies and then rolled up and slipped inside a cylindrical tube that is placed inside the coffin. Another copy is kept in the Vatican archives. The covers of both the zinc coffin and the wooden one bear a cross and the papal coat of arms.

Francis' coat of arms, which he kept from when he was bishop, features a shield and the monogram of his Jesuit order, with the words "Miserando atque eligendo," Latin for "Having had mercy, he called him." It comes from an episode in the Gospel where Christ picks a seemingly unworthy person to follow him.

The funeral and burial

The funeral is presided over by the dean of the College of Cardinals or, if that is not possible, by the vice dean or another senior cardinal. The current dean is Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, 91. The vice dean is Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 81. Francis earlier this year extended both of their five-year terms rather than appoint new ones.

Francis' reform allows for burial outside the Vatican, with the camerlengo presiding. Various seals are impressed on the coffin, and it is placed inside the tomb.

Francis has said he wants to be buried not in St. Peter's Basilica or its grottoes, where most popes are buried, but in the St. Mary Major Basilica across town. His choice reflects his veneration of an icon of the Virgin Mary that is located there, the Salus Populi Romani (Salvation of the people of Rome).

After every foreign trip, Francis would go to the basilica to pray before the Byzantine-style painting that features an image of Mary, draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus who in turn holds a jeweled golden book.

"It's my great devotion," Francis told Mexico's N+ in revealing his future burial plans. "The place is already prepared."

With the burial, the Catholic Church begins nine days of official mourning, known as the "novemdiales" and the conclave begins.

'Who am I to judge?' Pope Francis had an informal, lighthearted speaking style

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis, who died on Monday, had an informal, lighthearted speaking style, and sometimes he even created words in a combination of his native Spanish with the Italian that he spoke as pope.

Some of his memorable quotes:

A simple, initial greeting

"Brothers and sisters, good evening!" -- Francis' first words delivered from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica after his election as pontiff on March 13, 2013.

A plea to remember the poor

"When the votes reached two-thirds, there was the usual applause, because the pope had been elected. And he gave me a hug and a kiss and said: 'Don't forget the poor!' And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars, as the votes were still being counted, till the end. Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. ... How I would like a Church which is poor and for the

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poor!" — Francis, speaking to journalists on March 16, 2013, recounting how Cardinal Claudio Hummes gave him the idea of choosing the name Francis.

A plea for mercy

"In these days, I've been able to read a book by a cardinal — Cardinal Kasper, a good theologian — about mercy. And this book has done me a lot of good, though don't think I'm just doing publicity for my cardinals' books! It's not like that. But it's done me so much good. Cardinal Kasper said that feeling 'mercy,' this word changes everything. It's the best thing we can feel: It changes the world. A bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just." — Francis' First Angelus prayer from his studio window, March 17, 2013. ____

A greeting for Benedict

"We are brothers." — Francis, upon meeting Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI for the first time after the election, at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, March 23, 2013. ____

A welcoming phrase

"Who am I to judge?" — Francis, responding to a question about a purportedly gay priest, in a comment that set the tone for a papacy more welcoming to LGBTQ+ Catholics, July 28, 2013. ____

A greeting for the patriarch

"We are brothers." — Francis, to Patriarch Kirill during the first-ever papal meeting with the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, in the Havana airport, Feb. 13, 2016. ____

A message on the sacraments

"In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, 'I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy.' I would also point out that the Eucharist 'is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.'" — Footnote 351 in encyclical "Amoris Laetitia" ("The Joy of Love"), referencing Francis' writings about access to the Eucharist, April 8, 2016. ____

An outreach to Islam

"The meeting is the message." — Francis, upon meeting Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the prestigious Sunni Muslim center of learning, after a long freeze in relations, May 23, 2016.

On criticism

"It's an honor if the Americans attack me." — Francis' quip to French journalist-author Nicholas Seneze, referring to U.S. conservative criticism, aboard the papal plane about Seneze's book "How America Wants to Change the Pope," Sept. 4, 2019.

On the pandemic

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time, important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other." — Francis, praying for an end to the coronavirus pandemic in St. Peter's Square, March 27, 2020.

On Indigenous people

"I am sorry. I ask forgiveness, in particular, for the ways in which many members of the church and of religious communities cooperated, not least through their indifference, in projects of cultural destruction and forced assimilation promoted by the governments of that time, which culminated in the system of residential schools." — Francis, apologizing for abuses of Indigenous peoples in Canada's residential schools, at the site of a former school in Maskwacis, Alberta, July 25, 2022.

On Argentina

"I don't know if you're familiar with this theological-cultural history, that the guardian angels of some countries got mad with God and told him: 'Father, you were unfair to us ... you gave each of our countries a wealth: cattle, agriculture, mining. And to the Argentines you gave them everything. Everything!'"

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They have all the wealth.' And it is said that God thought a little. 'But to balance it out, I gave Argentina Argentines.'" — Francis, in an interview with The Associated Press, Jan. 24, 2023.

On homosexuality

"Being homosexual is not a crime."— Francis, in an interview with The Associated Press, referring to countries that criminalize homosexuality, Jan. 24, 2023.

Francis changed church policy on the death penalty and nuclear weapons but upheld it on abortion

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis changed the Catholic Church's teaching in areas such as the death penalty and nuclear weapons, upheld it in others such as abortion, and made inroads with Muslims and believers who long felt marginalized.

Where Francis, who died on Monday, stood on key issues:

Abortion

Francis upheld church teaching opposing abortion and echoed his predecessors in saying that human life is sacred and must be defended. He described abortion, as well as euthanasia, as evidence of today's "throwaway culture" and likened abortion to "hiring a hit man to resolve a problem."

But he didn't emphasize the church's position to the extent his predecessors did, and said women who had abortions must be accompanied spiritually by the church. Francis also allowed ordinary priests — not just bishops — to absolve Catholic women who had intentionally terminated a pregnancy.

He didn't approve of attempts by U.S. bishops to deny Holy Communion to President Joe Biden because of his abortion-rights stance, saying bishops should be pastors, not politicians.

Abuse

Francis' greatest scandal of his papacy was when he discredited Chilean sexual abuse victims by siding with a bishop whom they accused of complicity in the abuse. After realizing his error, he invited the victims to the Vatican and apologized in person. He then brought the entire Chilean bishops conference to Rome where he pressed them to resign.

In his most significant move, Francis defrocked former U.S. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick after a Vatican investigation determined he abused minors as well as adults. Francis later passed church laws abolishing the use of pontifical secrecy and establishing procedures to investigate bishops who abuse or cover up for predator priests.

But he was dogged by some high-profile cases where he seemed to side with accused priests.

Benedict

In 2013, Pope Benedict XVI resigned in the first such papal retirement in 600 years, and Francis was elected to replace him.

With Benedict living on the Vatican grounds until his 2022 death, Francis said it was like having a "wise grandfather" at home, part of his belief the elderly have a wealth of experience to offer.

There was friction at times, however, including when Benedict co-authored a book strongly backing priestly celibacy at the precise moment Francis was considering an exception to resolve a clergy shortage in the Amazon.

He praised Benedict for humility and courage by setting a precedent for retired popes, although after the German-born pontiff died, Francis said the papacy should be a job for life.

Capitalism

Some conservative U.S. commentators accused Francis of having Marxist sympathies, given his frequent denunciations of economic systems that "idolize" money over people and clear distaste for U.S.-style capitalism.

He called for a universal basic income, dignified wages and working conditions, and said that while globalization had saved many from poverty, "it has condemned many others to die of hunger because it's a

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selective economic system.”

“This economy kills,” he said of globalization, defending his positions as those of the Gospel, not communism.

Celibacy

Francis upheld celibacy for Latin Rite priests even after bishops from the Amazon asked him to make an exception to allow married priests to address a shortage of clerics.

Francis had long said the celibacy requirement could change, since it was not a matter of doctrine. But he said the debate was too politicized and that he didn’t want to be the pope to take the step.

China

In 2018, Francis authorized a deal over bishop nominations in China to end a decades-long dispute and regularized the status of a half-dozen Chinese bishops who had been consecrated without papal consent.

Details of the accord were never released, but his conservative critics bashed it as a sellout to communist China, while the Vatican defended it as the best deal it could get before Beijing closed the door entirely.

Contraception

Francis defended the church’s opposition to artificial contraception, but he also said Catholics need not breed “like rabbits” and should instead practice “responsible parenthood” through approved methods.

The church endorsed the Natural Family Planning method, which involves monitoring a woman’s cycle to avoid intercourse when she is ovulating.

At the same time, Francis suggested in 2016 that women threatened with the Zika virus — which was causing malformations in thousands of children at the time — could use artificial contraception because “avoiding pregnancy is not an absolute evil” in light of epidemics.

COVID-19

Like the rest of humanity, Francis was grounded during COVID-19, prevented from traveling, celebrating Mass in public or presiding over audiences. He repeatedly urged the world to use the pandemic as a wake-up call showing the need to reset priorities and policies in favor of the most vulnerable.

Francis strongly supported vaccination campaigns and demanded the poor have priority. The Vatican’s doctrine office said it was morally acceptable to be vaccinated, even with shots that used cell lines from aborted fetuses in research and production processes, putting Francis at odds with conservatives who refused the shots on moral grounds.

Death penalty

Francis went beyond his predecessors and changed Catholic teaching to state that the death penalty is “inadmissible” in all cases, regardless of the severity of the crime.

Francis also called life in prison without parole a “hidden death penalty” and solitary confinement a “form of torture,” saying both should be abolished.

Divorce

Francis divided the church by issuing an opening to divorced and civilly married Catholics to receive Communion.

Church teaching holds that, without a church-issued annulment declaring the initial marriage invalid, these Catholics are committing adultery and thus cannot receive the sacrament.

Francis first made it easier to get an annulment. Then, he didn’t create a blanket admission to the sacraments to these Catholics without one, but in a footnote to his 2016 encyclical “The Joy of Love,” he suggested bishops and priests could accompany such couples on a case-by-case basis.

Environment

Francis became the first pope to use scientific data in a major teaching document by calling global warming a largely human-caused problem.

In his 2015 encyclical “Praised Be,” Francis denounced a “structurally perverse” world economic system that exploits the poor and risks turning the Earth into an “immense pile of filth.” A 2023 update singled out the U.S. for its emissions and warned the world was “nearing a breaking point.”

He pressed the issue at a 2019 meeting of bishops from the Amazon and in his preaching on the coro-

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navirus pandemic. While Francis pressed the ecological issue harder than his predecessors, many popes before him called for better care for God's creation.

Indigenous peoples

Francis made sweeping apologies for the "crimes" against Indigenous peoples during the colonial and post-colonial conquest of the Americas.

He apologized in Bolivia in 2015 and again during a "penitential pilgrimage" to Canada in 2022 for the church's role in the forced assimilation of Indigenous children in church-run residential schools.

The Vatican also formally repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery," theories backed by 15th century "papal bulls," or charters, that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of lands and form the basis of some property laws today, even though it didn't rescind the bulls themselves.

Francis also held up as a model economic system the Jesuit-run missions in Paraguay that brought Christianity and European-style education and economic organization to the natives in the 17th and 18th centuries.

He canonized the 18th century missionary Junipero Serra during his 2015 trip to the U.S. over objections from some Native American groups who accused Serra of forced conversions, enslaving converts and helping wipe out Indigenous populations through disease.

Islam

Francis made significant progress in the Vatican's troubled relations with Islam by forging ties with Sunni and Shiite religious leaders and emphasizing a shared commitment to peace, solidarity and dialogue

He signed a landmark document on the need for greater human fraternity with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the seat of Sunni learning in Cairo.

He was the first pope to visit both the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq, the birthplace of Abraham, a prophet important to Christians, Muslims and Jews. While in Iraq, he met with the country's top Shiite cleric and a revered figure in the Shiite world, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

Latin Mass

In one of his most controversial moves, Francis reversed Benedict and reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass. Francis said he had to act because the spread of the so-called Tridentine Rite after Benedict relaxed restrictions in 2007 was becoming a source of division in the church.

This outraged his traditionalist and conservative critics, who called the move an attack on them and the ancient rite. It fueled right-wing opposition to Francis that already was angered at his outreach to gays and divorced Catholics.

LGBTQ+

Francis famously said, "Who am I to judge?" when asked in 2013 about a Vatican monsignor who was purportedly gay.

Francis followed up by assuring gay people that God loves them as they are, that "being homosexual is not a crime," and that "everyone, everyone, everyone" is welcome in the church.

During his pontificate, the Vatican reversed itself and said transgender people could be baptized, serve as godparents and witnesses at weddings; and approved same-sex blessings. But while he met several times with members of the LGBTQ+ community, Francis didn't change church teaching stating that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered."

As archbishop of Buenos Aires, he opposed efforts to legalize same-sex marriage and proposed, unsuccessfully, that the country approve civil unions instead.

He articulated support for those Argentine civil union protections in a 2019 interview with Mexican broadcaster Televisa, making him the first pope to come out in favor of them.

Migration

Francis denounced the "globalization of indifference" shown to migrants and urged Europe and other countries to open their doors to those seeking better lives.

His first trip outside Rome as pontiff in July 2013 was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, a key site in Europe's migration crisis.

In 2016, he brought a dozen Syrian refugees to Rome with him from a camp in Greece and repeated

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the gesture in 2021 while visiting Cyprus and Greece. "We cannot allow the Mediterranean to become a vast cemetery!" he told European lawmakers.

He also decried "inhuman" conditions facing migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2016, Francis said of then-candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out "is not a Christian."

Nuclear weapons

Francis went further than his predecessors -- and church teaching -- by saying that not only the use, but the mere possession of nuclear weapons was "immoral."

The church previously held that nuclear deterrence could be morally acceptable in the interim as long as it went toward mutual, verifiable disarmament.

Vatican reform

Francis was elected on a mandate for bureaucratic reform after centuries of waste, mismanagement and market crises put the Vatican's financial health at risk.

He imposed regulations to bring order, transparency and modern accounting to the books, requiring competitive bidding procedures, caps on gifts, salary cuts for cardinals and the centralization of assets and investments in one office with a unified, ethical and green investment policy.

He created a Secretariat for the Economy to supervise the Holy See's finances, staffed mostly with lay experts, and he authorized a sweeping criminal trial into the Vatican's botched investment in a London real estate deal that resulted in losses of tens of millions of euros.

Women

Francis consistently called for a greater role for women in governing the church and made significant appointments and changes to church law to prove his point.

He named an Italian nun as prefect of the Vatican office for religious orders and another Italian nun as head of the Vatican City State administration, two jobs previously held only by cardinals. He also named a French nun as an undersecretary in the Vatican Synod of Bishops' office, giving her a vote in the previously all-male process and opened up the synod itself to voting women members.

He named three women to the Vatican office that vets bishop appointments, a first. He appointed women to half the seats on the Vatican's economic council, appointed two study commissions into whether women could be ordained deacons, put Mary Magdalene on par with the male apostles by declaring a feast day for her, and formally allowed women to serve as lectors and acolytes, services previously open to them on an ad hoc basis.

But he reaffirmed the all-male priesthood and ruled out, for now, ordaining women as deacons.

US airstrikes killed 12 people in Yemen's capital, the Houthi rebels say

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's capital killed 12 people and wounded 30 others, the Houthi rebels said early Monday.

The deaths mark the latest in America's intensified campaign of strikes targeting the rebels. The U.S. military's Central Command declined to answer questions about the strike or discuss civilian casualties from its campaign.

The Houthis described the strike as hitting the Farwa neighborhood market in Sanaa's Shuub district. That area has been targeted before by the Americans.

Footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed damage to vehicles and buildings in the area, with screaming onlookers holding what appeared to be a dead child. Others wailed on stretchers heading into a hospital.

Strikes overnight into Monday also hit other areas of the country, including Yemen's Amran, Hodeida, Marib and Saada governorates.

The strikes come after U.S. airstrikes hit the Ras Isa fuel port in Yemen last week, killing at least 74 people and wounding 171 others.

The strikes follow the resumption of negotiations in Rome between the U.S. and Iran over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, which Washington has linked to its attacks in Yemen.

The U.S. is targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are the last militant group in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that is capable of regularly attacking Israel.

The new U.S. operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than attacks on the group were under President Joe Biden, an AP review found. The new campaign started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid from entering the Gaza Strip.

From November 2023 until this January, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees \$1 trillion of goods move through it. The Houthis also launched attacks targeting American warships without success.

Assessing the toll of the month-old U.S. airstrike campaign has been difficult because the military hasn't released information about the attacks, including what was targeted and how many people were killed. The Houthis, meanwhile, strictly control access to attacked areas and don't publish complete information on the strikes, many of which likely have targeted military and security sites.

A horse therapy program in Namibia brings joy to children with learning disabilities

WINDHOEK, Namibia (AP) — Susan de Meyer's horses have different effects on different children. Hyperactive kids learn to be a little quieter around them while nonverbal children are moved to communicate and to bond with them.

De Meyer runs a program in the southern African country of Namibia that harnesses the power but also the gentleness of horses to help children with learning disabilities and conditions like ADHD and autism.

Each weekday morning, de Meyer's dusty paddock just outside the capital, Windhoek, is enlivened by a group of eight to 10 children from one of the special schools she helps. The children ride the horses, groom them, stroke them and often, de Meyer says, talk to them.

De Meyer grew up on a farm surrounded by horses and they've always been part of her life. She said they have a quality that is invaluable: They don't judge the children, no matter how different they are.

"The horse is the hero in this whole situation because these kids don't want to be around a lot of people," de Meyer said.

De Meyer's program, "Enabling Through the Horse," is supported by the Namibian Equestrian Federation and won an award last year from the International Equestrian Federation because it "underlines the wonderful characteristics of the horse in exuding sensitivity and intuition."

Horse therapy has been promoted by autism groups and those that work with children with learning disabilities as having a positive impact. And animal therapy in general has been found to be useful in many instances, like dogs that help military veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and therapy cats that are taken to hospitals and nursing homes.

Some survivors of the devastating 2023 Hawaii wildfires found relief in horse therapy while grieving loved ones they had lost.

De Meyer jokes she has "two-and-a-half horses." These include two Arabians — a white mare named Faranah and a brown gelding, Lansha — while the "half" is a miniature horse called Bonzi, who is about head-high for a 5-year-old.

The Arabians are often the most useful for the children's therapy because of their size, de Meyer said.

"It gives them self-esteem. When they stroke the horse, the therapy starts because this is a very big animal compared to their height, and they are not scared to stroke the horse ... and then to ride it and tell the horse what they want," she said.

De Meyer works with children with a range of conditions or disabilities, including autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, Down syndrome, those who are nonverbal or touch sensitive, and some who were

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born with fetal alcohol syndrome and have developmental problems.

She has received interest from other countries in Africa and Asia to start similar programs there.

"The changes that I've seen with the learners are significant," said Chriszell Louw, a teacher at Dagbreek School, which says it is one of just two government schools in Namibia for children with intellectual disabilities. "We have a learner that likes to talk a lot. When we come here, she knows she has to keep quiet. She sits in her place."

"Some of them you see they are more open, they are happy. Some of them were very scared when they started with the horse riding but now they are very excited. When they hear we're going to the horses they are very excited and just want to go by themselves," Louw said.

De Meyer said her program helps with fine-motor skills, gross-motor skills, muscle strengthening, coordination, balance and posture, all important for kids who struggle to sit at a desk at school and learn.

One simple exercise de Meyer has children do when they ride is to let go of the reins and stretch their arms out straight and to the sides, using only their torso and lower body to balance as a groom leads the horse around the paddock.

Some of the kids break out in smiles when they let go and look like they're soaring.

"We make the world different for these kids," de Meyer said.

Vance arrives in India for a 4-day visit that includes talks with Modi and personal engagements

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance arrived in India on Monday for a four-day visit as New Delhi looks to avoid U.S. tariffs, negotiate a bilateral trade deal with Washington and strengthen ties with the Trump administration.

Vance will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the first day of his largely personal visit. The two leaders are expected to hold discussions on bilateral ties outlined in February when Modi met President Donald Trump in Washington.

The U.S. is India's largest trading partner and the two countries are now holding negotiations aiming to seal a bilateral trade agreement this year.

They have set an ambitious target of more than doubling their bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. If achieved, the trade deal could significantly enhance economic ties between the two countries and potentially strengthen diplomatic ties as well.

Vance's first visit to New Delhi comes amid the backdrop of Trump's now-paused tariff program against most countries, including India. It also coincides with a rapidly intensifying trade war between Washington and Beijing, which is New Delhi's main rival in the region.

Modi and Vance are expected to "review the progress in bilateral relations" and "exchange views on regional and global developments of mutual interest," India's Foreign Ministry said last week. On Monday, spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Vance's visit will "further deepen the India-U.S. comprehensive global strategic partnership."

Vance is combining business with pleasure on this trip

Vance was greeted with an Indian classical dance performance after he arrived at New Delhi's Palam airport on Monday, following his visit to Rome, where he met Pope Francis on Easter Sunday. He is accompanied by his wife, Usha Vance, a practicing Hindu whose parents are from India, along with their three children and officials from the U.S. administration.

The family visited the Akshardham Hindu temple in New Delhi after their arrival and are expected to tour the iconic Taj Mahal monument and the 12th-century Amer Fort — a UNESCO world heritage site — during their trip.

India is important to the U.S. in counterbalancing Chinese influence

India is a close partner of the U.S. and an important strategic ally in combating the rising influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also part of the Quad, which is comprised of the U.S., India, Japan

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and Australia and is seen as a counterbalance to China's expansion in the region. Trump is expected to attend a summit of Quad leaders in India later this year.

Washington has long sought to develop a deeper partnership with New Delhi, which is seen as a bulwark against China. Modi particularly established a good working relationship with Trump during his first term in office and the two leaders are likely to further boost cooperation between their countries.

Modi was among the first leaders to visit the U.S. and hold talks with Trump after he returned to the White House. During his visit, he hailed a "mega partnership" with the U.S., and kickstarted a negotiation process to minimize the possible fallout of Trump's tariffs.

The two leaders also said they planned to grow their defense partnership, with India signaling compliance with the Trump administration's demands, saying it will purchase more oil, energy and defense equipment from the U.S. Modi has also been reciprocal to Trump's demands to deport undocumented migrants as India has accepted many of its citizens from the U.S. in past few months.

Regardless, Trump targeted India with a 26% levy, part of which has since been paused. However, he has continued to call India a "tariff abuser" and "tariff king."

Trade talks are urgent for Delhi as it tries to avoid Trump's tariffs

The trade negotiations are especially urgent for New Delhi as it could be hit hard by Trump's tariffs, particularly in the agriculture, processed food, auto components, high-end machinery, medical equipment and jewelry sectors.

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India's former foreign secretary and ambassador to the U.S., said Vance's visit holds significance as it comes at a time of global upheavals in world trade. He said ties between New Delhi and Washington could see an upsurge under Trump's presidency, mainly in technology-sharing and defense.

"U.S. trade policy under Trump offers an opportunity for India to embed itself in a bigger way in the U.S. markets and global supply chains," Shringla said.

Modi's government is also hoping to attract investment from Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

Last month, Musk's Starlink entered into agreements with two of India's top telecom operators to provide satellite-based internet services. Musk also indicated he would visit India later this year after speaking last week with Modi, signaling there could be progress in the electric-car maker's push to enter Indian market.

India is also a major defense partner of the U.S. It has in recent years embedded advanced American jets, helicopters, missiles and military gear into its armed forces. The two countries have announced plans to sign a 10-year framework later this year for strengthening their defense partnership.

China warns countries against making trade deals with the US unfavorable to Beijing

BEIJING (AP) — China on Monday warned other countries against making trade deals with the United States to China's detriment.

Governments including those of Taiwan, Japan and South Korea have begun negotiations with Washington after President Donald Trump announced sweeping tariffs against almost all of America's trading partners on April 2. The import taxes were quickly paused against most countries after markets panicked, but he increased his already steep tariffs against China.

"China firmly opposes any party reaching a deal at the expense of China's interests," China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement. "If this happens, China will never accept it and will resolutely take countermeasures in a reciprocal manner. China is determined and capable of safeguarding its own rights and interests."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said earlier this month the countries currently negotiating trade deals with the U.S. should "approach China as a group" together with Washington.

The U.S. tariffs against other countries are economic bullying, the ministry said in the statement attributed to an unnamed spokesperson.

"Appeasement cannot bring peace, and compromise cannot win respect," it added. "For one's own temporary selfish interests, sacrificing the interests of others in exchange for so-called exemptions is like seeking the skin from a tiger. It will ultimately only fail on both ends and harm others without benefiting

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themselves.”

China said it’s open to talks with Washington but no meetings have been announced.

Trump made China the target of his steepest tariffs, imposing several rounds of tariffs totaling 145% duties on Chinese imports. Beijing has retaliated with tariffs of 125% on U.S. imports.

The tariffs have spooked exporters and stalled shipments, while threatening to drag on the global economy.

60,000 Americans to lose their rental assistance and risk eviction unless Congress acts

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

Moments after Daniris Espinal walked into her new apartment in Brooklyn, she prayed. In ensuing nights, she would awaken and touch the walls for reassurance — finding in them a relief that turned to tears over her morning coffee.

Those walls were possible through a federal program that pays rent for some 60,000 families and individuals fleeing homelessness or domestic violence. Espinal was fleeing both.

But the program, Emergency Housing Vouchers, is running out of money — and quickly.

Funding is expected to be used up by the end of next year, according to a letter from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and obtained by The Associated Press. That would leave tens of thousands across the country scrambling to pay their rent.

It would be among the largest one-time losses of rental assistance in the U.S., analysts say, and the ensuing evictions could churn these people — after several years of rebuilding their lives — back onto the street or back into abusive relationships.

“To have it stop would completely upend all the progress that they’ve made,” said Sonya Acosta, policy analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which researches housing assistance.

“And then you multiply that by 59,000 households,” she said.

The program, launched in 2021 by then-President Joe Biden as part of the pandemic-era American Rescue Plan Act, was allocated \$5 billion to help pull people out of homelessness, domestic violence and human trafficking.

People from San Francisco to Dallas to Tallahassee, Florida, were enrolled — among them children, seniors and veterans — with the expectation that funding would last until the end of the decade.

But with the ballooning cost of rent, that \$5 billion will end far faster.

Last month, HUD sent letters to groups dispersing the money, advising them to “manage your EHV program with the expectation that no additional funding from HUD will be forthcoming.”

The program’s future rests with Congress, which could decide to add money as it crafts the federal budget. But it’s a relatively expensive prospect at a time when Republicans, who control Congress, are dead set on cutting federal spending to afford tax cuts.

Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters, who championed the program four years ago, is pushing for another \$8 billion infusion.

But the organizations lobbying Republican and Democratic lawmakers to reup the funding told the AP they aren’t optimistic. Four GOP lawmakers who oversee the budget negotiations did not respond to AP requests for comment.

“We’ve been told it’s very much going to be an uphill fight,” said Kim Johnson, the public policy manager at the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Espinal and her two daughters, aged 4 and 19, are living on one of those vouchers in a three-bedroom apartment with an over \$3,000 monthly rent — an amount extremely difficult to cover without the voucher.

Four years ago, Espinal fought her way out of a marriage where her husband controlled her decisions, from seeing her family and friends to leaving the apartment to go shopping.

When she spoke up, her husband said she was wrong, or in the wrong or crazy.

Isolated and in the haze of postpartum depression, she didn’t know what to believe. “Every day, little

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by little, I started to feel not like myself," she said. "It felt like my mind wasn't mine."

When notices arrived in March 2021 seeking about \$12,000 in back rent, it was a shock. Espinal had quit her job at her husband's urging and he had promised to cover family expenses.

Police reports documenting her husband's bursts of anger were enough for a judge to give her custody of their daughter in 2022, Espinal said.

But her future was precarious: She was alone, owed thousands of dollars in back rent and had no income to pay it or support her newborn and teenage daughters.

Financial aid to prevent evictions during the pandemic kept Espinal afloat, paying her back rent and keeping the family out of shelters. But it had an expiration date.

Around that time, the Emergency Housing Vouchers program was rolled out, targeting people in Espinal's situation.

A "leading cause of family homelessness is domestic violence" in New York City, said Gina Cappuccitti, director of housing access and stability services at New Destiny Housing, a nonprofit that has connected 700 domestic violence survivors to the voucher program.

Espinal was one of those 700, and moved into her Brooklyn apartment in 2023.

The relief went beyond finding a secure place to live, she said. "I gained my worth, my sense of peace, and I was able to rebuild my identity."

Now, she said, she's putting aside money in case of the worst. Because, "that's my fear, losing control of everything that I've worked so hard for."

Drones pose increasing risk to airliners near major US airports

By AARON KESSLER and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A commercial airliner was on final approach to San Francisco's international airport in November when the crew spotted a drone outside the cockpit window. By then it was too late "to take evasive action," the pilots reported, and the quadcopter passed by their windshield, not 300 feet away.

A month earlier, a jetliner was flying at an altitude of 4,000 feet near Miami's international airport when its pilots reported a "close encounter" with a drone. In August, a drone came within 50 feet of clipping the left wing of a passenger jet as it departed Newark International Airport.

The incidents were all classified as "near midair collisions" — any one of which could have had catastrophic consequences, according to aviation safety experts. They were also not isolated encounters.

An Associated Press analysis of an aviation safety database reveals that drones last year accounted for nearly two-thirds of reported near midair collisions involving commercial passenger planes taking off and landing at the country's top 30 busiest airports. That was the highest percentage of such near misses since 2020, when air traffic dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first reports of near misses involving drones were logged in 2014, the AP found. The number of such encounters spiked the following year. Over the last decade, drones accounted for 51% — 122 of 240 — of reported near misses, according to AP's analysis.

Passenger jets have long been subject to risks around airports — whether from bird strikes or congested airspace — as was made clear by the January collision between a military helicopter and commercial jet near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people.

The threat has become more dire

The threat from drones has become more acute in the last decade as the use of quadcopters and remote-controlled planes has exploded in popularity. The FAA estimates that Americans are operating more than a million drones for recreational and commercial purposes.

"If you have the money, you can go on the internet and buy a pretty sophisticated drone that can reach altitudes they really have no business being at," said William Waldo, a professor of safety science at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

The risk is most acute near airports because that is where the flight paths of drones and airplanes most overlap, experts said.

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The incidents represent only a portion of such close calls because the database — NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System — relies on voluntary submissions from pilots and other aviation workers. A separate FAA program, which includes reports from the public, tallied at least 160 sightings last month of drones flying near airports.

"The FAA recognizes that urgency, and we all know additional changes need to be made to allow the airports to go out and detect and mitigate where necessary," said Hannah Thach, executive director of the partnership, known as Alliance for System Safety of UAS through Research Excellence.

FAA says it is taking steps to improve safety

The FAA said it has taken steps to mitigate the risks of drones. It has prohibited nearly all drones from flying near airports without prior authorization, though such rules are difficult to enforce, and recreational users may not be aware of restrictions.

The agency requires registrations for drones weighing more than 250 grams (0.55 pounds), and such drones are required to carry a radio transponder that identifies the drone's owner and broadcasts its position to help avert collisions. Additional rules govern commercial drone use.

The agency has also been testing systems to detect and counter drones near airports. Among the methods being examined: Using radio signals to jam drones or force them to land. Authorities are also weighing whether to deploy high-powered microwaves or laser beams to disable the machines.

Experts said the FAA and other authorities could do more. They suggested creating a system similar to speed cameras on roadways that could capture a drone's transponder code and send its pilots a ticket in the mail.

They also said the FAA should consider regulations that require all manufacturers to program a drone's GPS unit to prevent it from flying near airports and other sensitive areas, a method called "geofencing."

Drone manufacturer ends mandatory 'geofencing'

DJI, a leading drone maker, used such geofencing restrictions for years. However, it eliminated the feature in January, replacing it with an alert to drone pilots when they approach restricted areas.

Adam Welsh, head of global policy at DJI, said managing requests from authorized users to temporarily disable the geofencing became an increasingly time-consuming task. More than one million such requests were processed last year.

"We had around-the-clock service, but the number of applications coming in were becoming really hard to handle," Welsh said. "They all had to be reviewed individually."

With no other manufacturers enabling geofencing, and without government rules requiring it, DJI decided to end the practice, he said.

The FAA declined to say if it is considering whether to mandate geofencing.

Drone users can face consequences

Experts said authorities should take more aggressive action to hold drone users accountable for violating restricted airspace — to highlight the problem and deter others from breaking the rules, pointing to recent arrests that they hoped might send such a message.

In December, for example, Boston police arrested two men who operated a drone that flew dangerously close to Logan International Airport. Police reported that they were able to find the drone flyers, in part, by tracking the aircraft thanks to its FAA-mandated transponder signal.

A month later, a small drone collided with a "Super Scooper" plane that was fighting wildfires raging through Southern California. The drone punched a hole in the plane's left wing, causing enough damage that officials grounded the aircraft for several days to make repairs.

Authorities tracked down the 56-year-old drone operator, who pleaded guilty to a federal charge of recklessly flying his aircraft. The man, who has yet to be sentenced, admitted he launched his DJI quadcopter to observe fire damage over the Pacific Palisades neighborhood, despite the FAA having restricted drone flying in the area, according to court records. The operator lost sight of the drone after it flew about 1.5 miles from where he had launched it. And that's when it struck the "Super Scooper."

Zelenskyy says Russia is trying to create an 'impression of a ceasefire' as attacks continue

By VOLODYMYR YURCHUK and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honoring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce.

"As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

Despite Putin's declaration of an Easter ceasefire, Zelenskyy said Sunday morning that Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

In later updates, Zelenskyy said that despite Ukraine declaring a symmetrical approach to Russian actions, "the trend of increasing the use of heavy weaponry by Russian forces continues." He said, however, that it was "a good thing, at least, that there were no air raid sirens."

He noted that some Ukrainian troops were killed in a Russian "ambush" on Sunday in the Donetsk region, and said the Russian soldiers responsible would be "eliminated."

Russia's Defense Ministry accused Ukrainian forces of overnight attacks in the Donetsk region despite the ceasefire. It said Ukraine had sent 48 drones into Russian territory. According to the ministry, there were "dead and wounded among the civilian population," without giving details. It claimed Russian troops had strictly observed the truce.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson also said Ukrainian forces had launched attacks.

Zelenskyy said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine's offer to extend the truce for 30 days when it ends midnight Sunday. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Moscow had not responded to Kyiv's proposal.

"In practice, either Putin does not have full control over his army, or the situation proves that in Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favorable PR coverage," Zelenskyy wrote.

Just hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a vocal supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

His announcement came after U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday that negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side is "playing" him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

The State Department said Sunday that the U.S. is committed to "a full and comprehensive ceasefire." It noted encouraging discussions this past week in Paris about peace prospects in Ukraine, which Secretary of State Marco Rubio conveyed in a call to his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov.

3 Haitian soldiers warring with gangs are slain outside of Port-au-Prince

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — At least three Haitian soldiers were killed in an apparent gang ambush Sunday in a town on the outskirts of Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince, Haitian authorities confirmed.

The area of Kenscoff has been under heavy fire in recent days as Haitian law enforcement have warred with the gang coalition known as Viv Ansanm. It's just the latest explosion of violence as Haitian authorities and foreign forces scramble to rein in gang warfare in the Caribbean nation.

Haiti's government in a post on the social media platform X wrote that the soldiers died "on the front line ... weapons in hand."

"These soldiers are not just members of our armed forces. They are worthy sons of the Nation, defenders of our sovereignty, whose ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten. Their commitment is a powerful reminder that freedom and security come at a price, and that this price is sometimes paid in the blood of our bravest," wrote the Haitian government in a statement.

Local media reported earlier in the day that a military reinforcement mission, traveling in an unarmored car, was transporting soldiers to a conflictive area in Kenscoff, when the soldiers were violently targeted by heavily armed men.

Video circulating on social media showed soldiers in camouflage pulling bodies out of the truck.

Salvadoran President Bukele proposes prisoner swap with Maduro for Venezuelan deportees

By MARCOS ALEMAN and MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele proposed carrying out a prisoner swap with Venezuela on Sunday, suggesting he would exchange Venezuelan deportees from the United States his government has kept imprisoned for what he called "political prisoners" in Venezuela.

In a post on the social media platform X, directed at President Nicolás Maduro, Bukele listed off a number of family members of high-level opposition figures in Venezuela, journalists and activists detained during the South American government's electoral crackdown last year.

"The only reason they are imprisoned is for having opposed you and your electoral fraud," he wrote to Maduro. "However, I want to propose a humanitarian agreement that includes the repatriation of 100% of the 252 Venezuelans who were deported, in exchange for the release and surrender of an identical number (252) of the thousands of political prisoners you hold."

Among those he listed were the son-in-law of former Venezuelan presidential candidate Edmundo González, a number of political leaders seeking asylum in the Argentine embassy in Venezuela, and what he said were 50 detained citizens from a number of different countries across the world. Bukele also listed the mother of opposition leader María Corina Machado, whose house the political leader has said was surrounded by Venezuelan police in January.

Bukele said he would ask El Salvador's foreign ministry to be in contact with the Maduro government.

Venezuela's prosecutor's office responded Sunday night, calling Bukele's statements "cynical" and referred to the Salvadoran leader as a "neofascist."

It demanded Bukele's government provide the Venezuelan government with a list of the people detained as well as their legal status and medical reports.

"The treatment received by Venezuelans in the United States and El Salvador, constitutes a serious violation of international human rights law and constitutes a crime against humanity," it said in the statement.

The proposal comes as El Salvador has come under sharp international scrutiny for accepting Venezuelans and Salvadorans deported by the Trump administration, which accused them of being alleged gang members with little evidence. Deportees are locked up in a "mega-prison" known as the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), built by the Bukele government during his crackdown on the country's gangs.

Controversy has only continued after it was revealed that a Maryland father married to a U.S. citizen, Kilmar Abrego Garcia, was deported by mistake. The U.S. Supreme Court ordered the U.S. government to facilitate his return, but there's no sign of that happening.

El Salvador's archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas on Sunday called on Bukele not "to allow our country to become a big international prison."

Despite the controversy, Bukele maintained that all of the people he has kept in the prison were "part of part of an operation against gangs like the Tren de Aragua in the United States."

Israeli probe into the killings of 15 Palestinian medics in Gaza finds 'professional failures'

By MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli investigation into the killings of 15 Palestinian medics last month in Gaza by Israeli forces said Sunday it found a chain of “professional failures” and a deputy commander has been fired.

The shootings outraged many in the international community, with some calling the killings a war crime. Medical workers have special protection under international humanitarian law. The International Red Cross/Red Crescent called it the deadliest attack on its personnel in eight years.

Israel at first claimed that the medics’ vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire but later backtracked. Cellphone video recovered from one medic contradicted Israel’s initial account. Footage shows the ambulances had lights flashing and logos visible as they pulled up to help another ambulance that earlier came under fire.

The military investigation found that the deputy battalion commander acted under the incorrect assumption that all the ambulances belonged to Hamas militants. It said the deputy commander, operating under “poor night visibility,” felt his troops were under threat when the ambulances sped toward their position and medics rushed out to check the victims. The military said the flashing lights were less visible on night-vision drones and goggles.

The ambulances immediately came under a barrage of gunfire that went on for more than five minutes with brief pauses. Minutes later, soldiers opened fire at a U.N. car that stopped at the scene.

Bodies were buried in a mass grave

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a U.N. staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by troops conducting operations in Tel al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later.

The Israeli military said soldiers buried the bodies to prevent them from being mangled by stray dogs and coyotes until they could be collected, and that the ambulances were moved to allow the route to be used for civilian evacuations later that day.

The investigation found that the decision to crush the ambulances was wrong but said there was no attempt to conceal the shootings.

Mar. Gen. Yoav Har-Even, who oversees the military’s investigations, said the military notified international organizations later that day and helped rescue workers locate the bodies.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society has said the men were “targeted at close range.” Night-vision drone footage provided by the military shows soldiers were 20 to 30 meters away from the ambulances.

The deputy commander was the first to open fire, leading the rest of the soldiers to start shooting, Har-Even said. The investigation found the paramedics were killed due to an “operational misunderstanding” by Israeli forces, and that shooting at the U.N. car was a breach of orders.

The findings asserted that six of those killed were Hamas militants — it did not give their names — and said three other paramedics were originally misidentified as Hamas. The Civil Defense is part of the Hamas-run government.

No paramedic was armed and no weapons were found in any vehicle, Har-Even said.

One survivor was detained for investigation and remains in custody for further questioning. According to the military, soldiers who questioned the survivor thought he identified himself as a Hamas member, which was later refuted.

UN calls for accountability

Har-Even said the deputy commander was fired for giving a not “completely accurate” report to investigators about the firing on a U.N. vehicle.

The statement on the findings concluded by saying that Israel’s military “regrets the harm caused to

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uninvolved civilians.”

“Without accountability, we risk continuing to watch atrocities unfolding, and the norms designed to protect us all, eroding. Too many civilians, including aid workers, have been killed in Gaza. Their stories have not all made the headlines,” Jonathan Whittall, interim head in Gaza of the U.N. humanitarian office OCHA, said in a statement responding to the findings.

There was no immediate public reaction from the Red Crescent or Civil Defense.

The findings have been turned over the Military Advocate General, which can decide whether to file civil charges. It is meant to be an independent body, with oversight by Israel’s attorney general and Supreme Court.

There are no outside investigations of the killings underway.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 150 emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, most of them while on duty, as well as over 1,000 health workers during the war, according to the U.N. The Israeli military rarely investigates such incidents.

Israel has accused Hamas of moving and hiding its fighters inside ambulances and emergency vehicles, as well as in hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, arguing that justifies strikes on them. Medical personnel largely deny the accusations.

Israel disputes ICC accusations of war crimes

Palestinians and international human rights groups have repeatedly accused Israel’s military of failing to properly investigate or whitewashing misconduct by its troops.

Har-Even said the Israeli military is currently investigating 421 incidents in Gaza during the war, with 51 concluded and sent to the Military Advocate General. There was no immediate information on the number of investigations involving potential wrongful deaths or how many times the MAG has pursued criminal charges.

The International Criminal Court, established by the international community as a court of last resort, has accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant of war crimes. Israel, which is not a member of the court, has long asserted that its legal system is capable of investigating the army, and Netanyahu has accused the ICC of antisemitism.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Hamas currently holds 59 hostages, 24 of them believed to be alive.

Israel’s offensive has since killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Frustration has been growing on both sides, with rare public protests against Hamas in Gaza and continued weekly rallies in Israel pressing the government to reach a deal to bring all hostages home.

Tornado-producing storm deals deadly weather to Oklahoma and Texas

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

A slow-moving, active storm system brought heavy rain, large hail and tornadoes to parts of Texas and Oklahoma and left three people dead as severe weather warnings Sunday continue to threaten parts of the south-central and Midwest U.S.

On Easter Sunday, communities in Texas and Oklahoma were beginning to assess the damage wreaked by tornadoes. There were 17 reported events Saturday, according to Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service’s Weather Prediction Center. Five were confirmed in south-central Oklahoma, including one that inflicted substantial damage on a small town that was still recovering from a March tornado.

The storm also brought heavy rain to a broad swath of north-central Texas across central-eastern Oklahoma, much of which saw 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 centimeters) accumulate Saturday into Sunday.

Police in Moore, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of Oklahoma City, received dozens of reports of

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"high-water incidents" over the weekend, including two cars stranded in flood waters Saturday evening. One car was swept away under a bridge, and police said they were able to rescue some people, but a woman and 12-year-old boy were found dead.

"This was a historical weather event that impacted roads and resulted in dozens of high-water incidents across the city," Moore police said in a statement Sunday. Moore has about 63,000 residents.

The storm also killed one person about 80 miles (129 kilometers) farther southeast after a tornado touched down in Spaulding, according to the Hughes County Emergency Management. The department wrote on Facebook that several homes and structures were destroyed and there were "numerous wash-outs" of county roads.

The National Weather Service said the preliminary survey of damage showed that tornado was at least EF1, with wind speeds between 86 and 110 mph (138 to 177 kph), as was another south of Oklahoma City in Love County.

Oravec said the system wasn't moving much over Texas and Oklahoma Saturday, leaving the area stuck under a very active thunderstorm pattern that produced large hail, flash flooding and tornadoes.

Bill Macon, emergency management director in Oklahoma's Marshall County, said their early assessments show a tornado "skipped and jumped around" over a path of 6 to 7 miles (about 10 to 11 kilometers) in the rural area that left at least 20 homes damaged, with some destroyed completely.

Macon said people were mostly home when the late night tornado came through, downing "huge" trees and dozens of electric poles and power lines, but there had not been reports of injuries or fatalities.

"We take those things pretty serious down here in Oklahoma," Macon said of the National Weather Service's warnings.

One Oklahoma town that was still rebuilding from an early March tornado was hit again late Saturday. The north side of Ada, a town home to about 16,000 people, sustained damage that the weather service said indicated at least an EF1 tornado based on a preliminary survey. Social media posts showed roofs ripped off businesses in town, storefront windows blown in and billboards knocked sideways.

In a video posted to Facebook, Jason Keck, Ada director of emergency management, said the tornado seemed to track across the north side of town to a shopping center, "leaving a lot of damage to buildings, power lines and trees."

One clothing store was "severely damaged," according to The Ada News, but "bracketed on both sides by intact structures."

At least two tornadoes crossed west Parker County, Texas, on Saturday, the county's emergency services said on Facebook. Emergency crews were dispatched to several houses with roofs torn off and homes exposed, photos showed. One detached roof ended up smashed across a driveway.

Later Sunday, the storm system moved more quickly northeast but remained active with the risk of hail, high winds and heavy rains in Arkansas, Missouri, southern Illinois and southeastern Iowa. Thousands in Missouri were without power.

While heavy rain was subsiding in Texas and Oklahoma by late Sunday afternoon, additional heavy rain is expected across parts of the Plains this week, Oravec said. With streams already swollen and the ground saturated, that leaves the area at risk of additional flooding.

Jay Sigel, considered America's best amateur since Bobby Jones, dies of cancer at 81

BERWYN, Pa. (AP) — Jay Sigel, who was widely viewed as America's best amateur since Bobby Jones, has died of pancreatic cancer, the U.S. Golf Association said Sunday.

The USGA said Sigel died Saturday at age 81. Along with his two U.S. Amateur titles and three U.S. Mid-Amateur victories, Sigel played in nine Walker Cup matches, twice as a playing captain.

Sigel was low amateur in the Masters three times, and once each at the U.S. Open and British Open during his sterling career.

His intention was to turn pro when he starred at Wake Forest on an Arnold Palmer scholarship. But his

left hand went through a pane window on a swinging door that required 70 stitches. Sigel decided to remain amateur and started a successful insurance business.

"I always thought things happen for a reason," Sigel once said. "The hand injury was the best thing to happen to me."

He won his first U.S. Amateur in 1982, and the following year became the first player to win the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Mid-Amateur — for players at least 25 years old — in the same season. He also captured some of the nation's most prestigious titles, such as the Sunnehanna Amateur, the Northeast Amateur and the Porter Cup.

Sigel joined the PGA Tour Champions when he turned 50 and won eight times, though his legacy was amateur golf.

He was on eight winning Walker Cup teams, and played as the captain in 1983 and 1985.

In Nigeria's floating slum, 'The Herds' tour spotlights climate change where it's felt the most

By PELUMI SALAKO Associated Press

MAKOKO, Nigeria (AP) — Several canoes paddle toward Makoko, a vast floating slum built on stilts in the lagoon at one end of Nigeria's economic hub of Lagos. Riding on the vessels are giant cardboard puppet animals along with their puppeteers dressed in black.

Once on the water, the animals — a gorilla, a leopard, an elephant, a wildebeest, a giraffe and a donkey — all come alive. The gorilla hoots, the donkey brays and wags its tail as the leopard bends its neck toward the surface as if to drink but halts just before its face meets the water and then turns to look around.

It is Saturday, the second day of "The Herds" theatrical tour stop in Nigeria on a journey 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) from Africa's Congo Basin to the Arctic Circle with puppet animals. It's a journey organizers say is meant to bring attention to the climate crisis and "renew our bond with the natural world."

The tour started last week in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo, and will continue across the world with Dakar, the Senegalese capital, as the next stop.

The story goes that the animals will be forced out of their natural habitats due to global warming and displaced north, stopping in cities along the way and being joined by more animals.

The sprawling slum of Makoko — an old fishing village — was perfect to illustrate that because it has for many years shown resilience in the face of climate change, often finding ways to adapt to extreme weather, said Amir Nizar Zuabi, "The Herds" artistic director.

Dubbed the Venice of Africa, the Makoko slum is a low-lying community vulnerable to rising sea levels and flooding. Lagos itself is no stranger to the impacts of climate change, with roads and houses across the coastal city often engulfed during annual flooding.

"We are on the edge of one of the greatest global crises, and ... I think the global south offers a lot of knowledge and a lot of resilience," Zuabi said, referring to developing countries in the Southern Hemisphere with lower incomes and higher poverty rates compared to the "global north."

Spread out beneath the Third Mainland Bridge that connects much of Lagos, Makoko came alive as "The Herds" moved in. People poked their heads out of windows in awe of the exhibition. Children and women stood on the plank porches outside their rickety wood houses, watching as the animals paddled in through the narrow waterways. Some mimicked the animals while others applauded and waved at them.

"It looked so real," Samuel Shemedede, a 22-year-old resident of Makoko, said in awe of the puppets. "I had never seen something like that before in my life. It is not real, but they made it look so real."

As the tour left Makoko and moved to the Yaba suburb, the city's notorious traffic stood still for the puppets as they towered over people and vehicles. The big animals had been joined by smaller primates like monkeys who hoot noisily, prance around, and even dance.

The tour was punctuated by dance and choreography performances from a local theater group whose performers, clothed in beige sack material and straw hats, intermittently charged toward the puppets as though they were about to attack them.

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As they journeyed through the streets, spectators were treated to chants from the Hausa language song "Amfara," which loosely translates to "We have started."

At a time when African nations are losing up to 5% of their gross domestic product every year as they bear a heavier burden than the rest of the world from climate change, "The Herds" organizers said it is important to break down climate change and its impacts in a way that many people can relate to.

"A lot of climate debate is about science ... and scientific words don't mean anything for most people," Zuabi, the artistic director, said. "I wanted to create a piece of art that talks about nature, beauty and how animals are wild and majestic."

The animals invading cities is a metaphor for abnormal things now becoming normal as the world deals with climate change, he said. "And hopefully this becomes a way to talk about what we are going to lose if we continue burning fossil fuels."

Alito's dissent in deportation case says court rushed to block Trump with middle-of-the night order

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court acted "literally in the middle of the night" and without sufficient explanation in blocking the Trump administration from deporting any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th-century wartime law, Justice Samuel Alito wrote in a sharp dissent that castigated the seven-member majority.

Joined by fellow conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, Alito said there was "dubious factual support" for granting the request in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union. The group contended that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart such removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

The majority did not provide a detailed explanation in the order early Saturday, as is typical, but the court previously said deportations could proceed only after those about to be removed had a chance to argue their case in court and were given "a reasonable time" to contest their pending removals.

"Both the Executive and the Judiciary have an obligation to follow the law," Alito said in the dissent released hours after the court's intervention against Republican President Donald Trump's administration.

The justices' brief order directed the administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Center "until further order of this court."

Alito said that "unprecedented" relief was "hastily and prematurely granted."

He wrote that it was not clear whether the Supreme Court had jurisdiction at this stage of the case, saying that not all legal avenues had been played out in lower courts and the justices had not had the chance to hear the government's side.

"The only papers before this Court were those submitted by the applicants. The Court had not ordered or received a response by the Government regarding either the applicants' factual allegations or any of the legal issues presented by the application. And the Court did not have the benefit of a Government response filed in any of the lower courts either," Alito said.

Alito said the legal filings, "while alleging that the applicants were in imminent danger of removal, provided little concrete support for that allegation." He noted that while the court did not hear directly from the government regarding any planned deportations under the Alien Enemies Act in this case, a government lawyer in a different matter had told a U.S. District Court in a hearing Friday evening that no such deportations were then planned to occur either Friday or Saturday.

"In sum, literally in the middle of the night, the Court issued unprecedented and legally questionable relief without giving the lower courts a chance to rule, without hearing from the opposing party, within eight hours of receiving the application, with dubious factual support for its order, and without providing any explanation for its order," Alito wrote. "I refused to join the Court's order because we had no good reason to think that, under the circumstances, issuing an order at midnight was necessary or appropriate. Both the Executive and the Judiciary have an obligation to follow the law."

The administration has filed paperwork urging the high court to reconsider its hold.

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On Friday, two federal judges refused to step in as lawyers for the men launched a desperate legal campaign to prevent their deportation. Early Saturday, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also refused to issue an order protecting the detainees from being deported.

The ACLU had already sued to block deportations of two Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet facility and sought an order barring removals of any immigrants in the region under the Alien Enemies Act.

In the emergency filing early Friday, the ACLU warned that immigration authorities were accusing other Venezuelan men held there of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which would make them subject to Trump's use of the law.

It has only been invoked three previous times in U.S. history, most recently during World War II to hold Japanese-American civilians in internment camps. The administration contends it gives them the power to swiftly remove immigrants they identified as members of the gang, regardless of their immigration status.

Following the unanimous high court order on April 9, federal judges in Colorado, New York and southern Texas promptly issued orders barring removal of detainees under the law until the administration provides a process for them to make claims in court.

But there had been no such order issued in the area of Texas that covers Bluebonnet, which is 24 miles north of Abilene in the far northern end of the state.

Some Venezuelans subject to Trump's use of the law have been sent to El Salvador and housed in its notorious main prison.

Anti-Trump resistance sees another leader in Van Hollen as Democrats' leadership carousel turns

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Now, it's Chris Van Hollen's turn.

The mild-mannered Maryland senator has suddenly emerged as a leading figure in the resistance to Donald Trump's norm-busting presidency, becoming the latest in a small but growing collection of Democratic officials testing the strength of their political power in a weakened party with no clear leader.

Van Hollen's rise follows his decision to travel 2,000 miles to El Salvador last week to meet with Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who was wrongly deported and federal courts have said should be returned.

Van Hollen did not secure the release of the Salvadoran citizen who had been living in Maryland. But simply by meeting with him, in defiance of Trump and his ally El Salvador President Nayib Bukele, Van Hollen created a new sense of hope and momentum for Abrego Garcia's family and the anti-Trump resistance.

"Sen. Van Hollen's leadership in this moment is exactly how Democrats should be pushing back against a wannabe dictator like Donald Trump — calling for law and order over chaos and adhering to the Constitution instead of a tyrant," Democratic National Committee Chair Ken Martin told The Associated Press. "No matter how much Trump tries to act out his dictatorial fantasies, Democrats will always defend democracy when it's on the line."

Van Hollen's emergence in a critical national debate offers a fresh window into the Democratic Party's monthslong leadership carousel as it struggles to counter a series of Trump administration policies with far-reaching consequences, from slashing the federal workforce to stripping funding from universities, pushing back against court orders and launching a trade war that's rattling the global economy.

Looking for the face of the Democratic Party

The Democrats' most visible elected leaders, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries and Sen. Chuck Schumer, both of New York, have lost the confidence of many progressive activists for not fighting Trump with the urgency or creativity that the moment demands.

Ezra Levin, co-founder of the resistance group Indivisible, said the growing protest movement is directed both at Trump and "the Schumers of the world, those who want us to roll over and play dead."

"Courage is impressive and contagious," Levin said, noting that he's hearing "a ton of positive feedback for (Van Hollen) among our folks on the ground." He said the reaction is akin to the outpouring of support for Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., earlier in the month.

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Booker had stepped into the leadership void by delivering a record-breaking 25-hour speech on the Senate floor that briefly served as a rallying point for the frustrated anti-Trump movement. Concerned voters also have packed into rallies hosted by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., who have launched a national "Stop Oligarchy" tour.

At the same time, potential 2028 presidential contenders such as Govs. Gavin Newsom of California and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan have gone the other way by downplaying their Trump criticism at times. Others, including Govs. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania and Wes Moore of Maryland, have largely avoided stepping into the national debate.

"I don't think it's ever wrong to fight for the constitutional rights of one person, because if we give up on one person's rights we threaten everybody's rights," Van Hollen said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "I think a lot of voters — both Republican and Democrat — are tired of elected officials and politicians who just put their finger to the wind. And I would say that anyone who's not prepared to stand up and fight for the Constitution doesn't deserve to lead."

Critics in both parties go on the attack

Van Hollen's trip was praised by many on the left, but there was no shortage of detractors — even within his own party.

Newsom described the Democratic Party's focus on the Abrego Garcia case as "the distraction of the day" that allows Republicans to avoid tough questions about Trump's tariffs, which have upended global trade and threaten to worsen inflation.

Indeed, Republicans have embraced the Abrego Garcia debate.

White House border czar Tom Homan called Van Hollen's move "disgusting." Trump senior adviser Stephen Miller, speaking at the White House, said Van Hollen's "heart is reserved for an illegal alien who's a member of a foreign terrorist organization."

"It seems to me that these Democrats are representing the illegal aliens against the very constituents, the U.S. citizens, that they're supposed to be protecting," said Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., also on CNN.

When pressed repeatedly, Emmer did not say whether he backed Trump's suggestion that U.S. citizens convicted of serious crimes could be jailed in other countries such as El Salvador.

Abrego Garcia came to the United States illegally in 2013 at 16, but an immigration judge in 2019 granted him legal protection that allowed him to stay and work in the U.S. He has a valid work permit. His wife and their three children are U.S. citizens.

The administration insists that Abrego Garcia is a MS-13 gang member, although he has not been charged with any crimes.

Van Hollen's long path

Van Hollen is no stranger to national politics, although he has perhaps spent as much time shaping the political landscape during his two decades in Congress as fighting on its front lines.

Since he joined Congress in 2003, the 66-year-old attorney has done his turn as head of both the House and Senate campaign arms, a rare feat that put him at the center of his party's national political strategy.

That said, he has a lower national profile than other Democrats who have stepped into the spotlight in recent months.

Van Hollen has never run for president nor hinted he may. Sanders nearly won the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, while Booker ran unsuccessfully for president that year and told the AP recently that he would not rule out another bid.

Still, Van Hollen has been especially aggressive against Trump this year.

He was a co-host of the first major rally against Trump and Elon Musk's cuts at the U.S. Agency for International Development, a protest that brought out a dozen members of Congress.

Given that so many government agencies and workers live in Maryland, the senator has been a leading advocate against Trump's cuts, including those at NASA, the National Institutes of Health and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among others.

On Sunday, he was interviewed on five major new shows.

He repeatedly pushed back against questions on allegations about Abrego Garcia's gang affiliations. Like

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Democrats across the country, he tried to cast the debate as not about immigration but about Trump's refusal to follow the law.

A federal appeals court issued a blistering order Thursday raising serious constitutional concerns about the Trump administration's behavior.

The three-judge panel said the Republican president's government is "asserting a right to stash away residents of this country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process that is the foundation of our constitutional order."

Van Hollen highlighted those concerns.

"My whole point here is if you deprive one man of his constitutional rights, you threaten the constitutional rights of everybody," he said on "Fox News Sunday." "I'm not vouching for the individual. I'm vouching for his rights under the Constitution."

This Midwestern city has long been a federal hub. The pain from DOGE's cuts is everywhere

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — In her 28 years working for the federal government, Shea Giagnorio provided day care for the children of U.S. soldiers, training for employees and oversight for safety net programs.

Public service took her from Germany to Alaska to Kansas City, Missouri, where she moved last year for a long-sought promotion.

But when she reported to a downtown federal building for work one day last month, her access card did not work. After a co-worker let her into the building, she checked her email: Her entire office had been let go in the latest mass firing ordered by President Donald Trump's administration.

The 46-year-old single mom has canceled her apartment lease, is selling her new furniture and may have to pull her daughter out of college. She wonders what will happen to the at-risk populations her team helped serve at the Administration for Children and Families, a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"Not only me, but all these peoples' lives are turned upside down," Giagnorio said.

The impact of the cuts by Trump appointees and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency can be found everywhere in the Kansas City metropolitan area, which has long been a major hub for federal agencies about 1,000 miles away from Washington, D.C. Money once promised to the region for public health, environmental, diversity, food aid and an array of other programs has been axed, and thousands of local jobs are in jeopardy.

With nearly 30,000 workers, the federal government is the largest employer in the region. One longtime Kansas City economic researcher said he believes the region could lose 6,000 good-paying federal jobs, which in turn would wipe out thousands of others in service industries.

An IRS worker said thousands of her co-workers fear they will lose their jobs, even as they put in overtime processing tax refunds in a building so crowded that they struggle to find desks. Under pressure, hundreds more agreed this past week to retire early or take a buyout.

"It's a kick in the stomach to people that are doing everything they can to meet what's required of them," said Shannon Ellis, a longtime IRS customer service representative and president of the union representing local workers.

By Thursday, at least 238 Kansas City workers had taken the buyout offers and were expected to leave the agency in coming weeks. Ellis noted many of those same workers had been told they were essential and required to work overtime during tax season, some seven days per week.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture grant revocation disrupted a historically Black neighborhood's plan to expand its program growing fresh produce in a food desert. A nearby pantry reduced its monthly grocery allotment for those in need after federal cuts left food banks shorthanded.

Urban farmer Rosie Warren grew 2,500 pounds of fruits and vegetables last year in community gardens to help feed the Ivanhoe neighborhood, where many Black families were concentrated under housing

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segregation policies of much of the 20th century.

Warren harvested greens, potatoes and watermelons as part of an effort to address food insecurity and health concerns in a neighborhood challenged by blight, crime and poverty. She was ecstatic last fall when the USDA awarded the neighborhood council a three-year, \$130,000 grant to expand the gardens and farmers' market serving the area.

In February, the council received a notice terminating the grant. The USDA had determined the award "no longer effectuates agency priorities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities."

"What do you do if you don't support providing access to food to people who don't have it? Wouldn't this make your job easier?" she said. "I think it's absurd. It doesn't make any sense."

The withdrawal of federal funding for new lab equipment and vaccines means the city may be less prepared for the next pandemic.

The Kansas City Health Department's laboratory is badly in need of an upgrade, with equipment dating to when the building opened in the 1990s.

One basement space is water damaged and rarely used. Another has equipment that is so inadequate that the city has to ship samples to a state laboratory 150 miles away, causing inefficiencies, agonizing waits for results and delayed response times.

But the funding for lab upgrades was abruptly eliminated last month as part of the Trump administration's \$11.4 billion cancellation of federal grants to states for public health.

An HHS spokesperson said the agency's downsizing, including cutting jobs and consolidating divisions, would save money and make the organization more efficient. As for the \$11.4 billion in grant funding cuts, the spokesperson said, "HHS will no longer waste billions of taxpayer dollars responding to a nonexistent pandemic that Americans moved on from years ago."

The IRS has offered a similar rationale for its downsizing, saying it is making process improvements that will ultimately more efficiently serve the public.

Musk said last year that Trump's budget cuts would cause a "temporary hardship" that would soon put the economy on stronger footing.

One local economic researcher said it remained unclear just how deep that hardship will be in Kansas City, including whether it will just slow growth or cause population losses.

"It's a big burden that's being placed on a narrow group of people," said Frank Lenk, director of the Office of Economic Development at the Mid-America Regional Council, a nonprofit of city and county governments in the Kansas City region. "It will definitely take some of the steam out of the local economy."

Trump has credited DOGE with helping end "the flagrant waste of taxpayer dollars," saving billions to help improve the nation's finances.

The White House didn't respond to questions about Kansas City. But Trump said recently he would invite the Kansas City Chiefs to the White House to make up for a 2020 Super Bowl victory celebration that was canceled during the pandemic.

Vance meets Pope Francis on Easter Sunday after tangle over migration, gets chocolate eggs for kids

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance met briefly with Pope Francis on Sunday to exchange Easter greetings, after they got into a long-distance tangle over the Trump administration's migrant deportation plans.

Francis, who is recovering from a near-fatal bout of pneumonia, received Vance in one of the reception rooms of the Vatican hotel where he lives. The 88-year-old pope offered the Catholic vice president three big chocolate Easter eggs for Vance's three young children, who did not attend, as well as a Vatican tie and rosaries.

"I know you have not been feeling great but it's good to see you in better health," Vance told the pope. "Thank you for seeing me."

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Vance's motorcade entered Vatican City through a side gate while Easter Mass was being celebrated in St. Peter's Square. Francis had delegated the celebration of the Mass to another cardinal.

The Vatican said they met for a few minutes at the Domus Santa Marta "to exchange Easter greetings."

Vance's office said the vice president "expressed his gratitude to Pope Francis for inviting him to meet on Easter Sunday and for the hospitality the Vatican has extended to his family."

"I pray for you every day," Vance said as he bid Francis farewell. "God bless you."

In all, Vance's motorcade was on Vatican territory for 17 minutes. The vice president later joined his family for Easter Mass at St. Paul Outside the Walls, one of the four pontifical basilicas in Rome. The Vances visited the tomb of the apostle St. Paul that is said to be located there.

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, and the pope have tangled sharply over migration and the Trump administration's plans to deport migrants en masse. Francis has made caring for migrants a hallmark of his papacy.

Just days before he was hospitalized in February, Francis blasted the deportation plans, warning that they would deprive migrants of their inherent dignity. In a letter to U.S. bishops, Francis also appeared to respond to Vance directly for having claimed that Catholic doctrine justified such policies.

Vance has acknowledged Francis' criticism but has said he will continue to defend his views. During a Feb. 28 appearance at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, Vance didn't address the issue specifically but called himself a "baby Catholic" and acknowledged there are "things about the faith that I don't know."

Vance met Saturday with the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

Vance's office said he and Parolin "discussed their shared religious faith, Catholicism in the United States, the plight of persecuted Christian communities around the world, and President Trump's commitment to restoring world peace."

The Vatican, for its part, said there was an "exchange of opinions" including over migrants and refugees and current conflicts.

The Holy See has responded cautiously to the Trump administration while seeking to continue productive relations in keeping with its tradition of diplomatic neutrality. It has expressed alarm over the administration's crackdown on migrants and cuts in international aid while insisting on peaceful resolutions to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Queen Elizabeth II's favorite dogs race for glory in Britain's Corgi Derby

LONDON (AP) — Some of the fastest canines on four very short legs have raced for glory in Scotland's annual Corgi Derby.

The Musselburgh Racecourse Corgi Derby was first held in 2022 to mark Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne. The late monarch was a devoted corgi fan who owned almost 30 of the breed over the decades, along with a few dorgis — a corgi-dachshund cross.

Four-year-old Juno beat a 16-strong field of dashing dogs dressed in bright sweaters over the 230-foot (70-meter) race on Saturday at the racecourse outside Edinburgh. She came from behind in the final stretch to beat last year's winner, Rodney.

The winner and her owners, Alisdair Tew and Fran Brandon, were presented with a trophy and dog treats by tennis coach Judy Murray, mother of Scottish star Andy Murray.

Tew told the BBC that "we trained her for this last year but this year we just resorted to just letting her chasing things, particularly seagulls" on Edinburgh's Portobello Beach.

"Juno is always ready for treats — that is probably why she won," he said.

Elizabeth's love of corgis began in 1933 when her father, King George VI, brought home a Pembroke Welsh corgi they named Dookie

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Corgis were often by Elizabeth's side in the decades before her death in September 2022 — accompanying her on official tours, reportedly sleeping in their own room at Buckingham Palace and occasionally nipping the ankles of visitors or royal family members.

Three corgis even appeared alongside the queen as she climbed into James Bond's waiting helicopter in the spoof video that opened the 2012 London Olympics.

Strollers and other baby products will get more expensive -- and harder to find -- with tariffs

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Sam Rutledge and his wife have a baby due in mid-July, so they thought they had a few more months to research and buy the gear they'll need.

But President Donald Trump's tariff announcement in early April turned the couple's slow walk into a sprint. In the past few weeks, they've bought two strollers, a car seat, a nursery glider, a crib and a high chair. All of them are made overseas.

"These are all pretty expensive under normal conditions, but when it became clear tariffs were coming we decided to buy them in case they became prohibitively expensive," said Rutledge, who is a high school physics teacher.

Raising a child in America has never been cheap. In the first year alone, it costs an average of \$20,384, according to Baby Center, a parenting website. But tariffs — ranging from 10% for imports from most countries to 145% for imports from China -- will make it many times more expensive for new parents.

An estimated 90% of the core baby care products and the parts that go into making baby paraphernalia — from bottles and diaper pails to strollers and car seats — are made in Asia, according to the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association, a U.S. trade group. The vast majority come from China.

"Overseas manufacturing has been the norm in our industry for decades," said Lisa Trofe, the association's executive director.

It wasn't always this way. When Munchkin Inc. CEO Steven Dunn founded his company in 1991, it made baby bottles in California with tooling from New Jersey. But over the years, the manufacturers he used shut down and the cost of doing business in the U.S. skyrocketed. Now, about 60% of Munchkin's 500 products, from a \$5 sippy cup to a \$254 Night Owl Stroller with headlights, are made in China.

In response to the tariffs, Dunn halted orders from China and instituted a hiring freeze at Munchkin's California headquarters, where 320 people are employed. Dunn expects Munchkin will run out of some products within three months.

"There is no possibility of being able to pass on those tariffs" to customers in the form of price increases, he said.

Dunn said he tried to reduce his dependence on China in recent years, shifting some manufacturing to Vietnam and Mexico. He also spent a year communicating with American manufacturers to see if one could make Munchkin's new Flow Nipple Shield, which allows a breastfeeding mother to see if her milk is flowing. But most said they couldn't make the complex silicone product, Dunn said. It's now made in Vietnam.

"There's not enough tool makers and manufacturing expertise and automation and skilled labor in the U.S. to make the thousands of products the juvenile industry needs," Dunn said.

Multiple baby brands and companies contacted by The Associated Press didn't respond or said they weren't commenting on the tariffs, including Graco, Chicco, Britax, Nuna, Dorel Juvenile, UppaBaby, Evenflo and Bugaboo.

The Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association said it asked the Trump administration for a tariff exemption, arguing that baby products are essential for children's well-being. Trump exempted some baby products, including car seats and high chairs, from import taxes during his first administration. But he hasn't said whether he would consider doing so again.

The Associated Press left a message seeking comment with the White House.

Nurture&, a company that makes a popular nursery glider and other baby furniture, said it's trying to be transparent about the impact of tariffs.

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In a recent email, the company told customers it started lowering prices on some items when the tariffs hit. The company, which was founded in 2020, said it would keep those lower prices in place until April 30, but after that it may not be able to absorb the full cost of the import duties.

"These are large purchases, these are investments, and this is a very sensitive life stage," Nurture& Chief Merchant Jill Gruys said. "We want people to make the best decision for their budget and their family."

Elizabeth Mahon, the owner of Three Littles, a baby store in Washington, said she's worried the tariffs will make essential products too expensive for some families.

Mahon volunteers twice per month at the Department of Motor Vehicles, where she teaches people how to buckle their kids safely into car seats. Some families still must be persuaded to use car seats, she said. Mahon fears higher prices would be another deterrent.

"No one is dying if they can't buy a toy, but if they don't have access to car seats, kids will get seriously injured," she said.

At her own store, Mahon is getting notices that some manufacturers plan to introduce steep price increases in May. She feels lucky she could rent a storage facility and build up inventory ahead of the tariffs. For many small businesses, she said, the extra costs are "a death sentence."

At The Little Seedling baby shop in Ann Arbor, Michigan, owner Molly Ging said she would normally be putting in Christmas orders at this time of year. Instead, she's sorting through price increase notices from many of the vendors she works with.

"It's a lot to manage, and I just have no idea how it's going to play out," she said.

Business is brisk right now, with customers hoping to beat tariff-related price increases. But Ging worries about her 13 employees – all moms who bring their kids to work – and about whether she can maintain enough inventory to meet future demand.

"Babies don't stop being born because there's tariffs," she said.

Today in History: April 21, Prince dead at age 57

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, April 21, the 111th day of 2025. There are 254 days left in the year.

On April 21, 2016, Prince, one of the most inventive and influential musicians of modern times, was found dead at his home in suburban Minneapolis from an accidental fentanyl overdose; he was 57.

In 1836, an army of Texans, led by Sam Houston, defeated the Mexican Army, led by Antonio López de Santa Anna, in the Battle of San Jacinto, the final battle of the Texas Revolution.

In 1910, author Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, died in Redding, Connecticut, at age 74.

In 1918, German Air Force pilot Manfred von Richthofen, nicknamed "The Red Baron," was killed at age 25 after being shot during a World War I air battle over Vaux-sur-Somme, France.

In 1930, fire broke out inside the overcrowded Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, killing 322 inmates in the deadliest prison disaster in U.S. history.

In 1975, with Communist forces closing in, South Vietnamese President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu resigned after nearly 10 years in office, fleeing the country five days later.

In 1980, Rosie Ruiz was the first woman to cross the finish line at the Boston Marathon, but was later exposed as having cheated by entering the racecourse less than 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) before the finish line. (Canadian Jacqueline Gareau was named the actual winner of the women's race.)

In 2015, an Egyptian criminal court sentenced ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi to 20 years in prison over the killing of protesters in 2012. (Morsi collapsed and died during trial on espionage charges in June 2019.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian-filmmaker Elaine May is 93. Author-activist Sister Helen Prejean is 86. Singer Iggy Pop is 78. Actor Patti LuPone is 76. Actor Tony Danza is 74. Actor Andie MacDowell is 67. Musician Robert Smith (The Cure) is 66. Actor Rob Riggle is 55. Actor James McAvoy is 46. Former NFL quarterback Tony Romo is 45. Actor Gugu Mbatha-Raw is 42.