

THE WITTENBERG WAY

PASTOR'S PAGE

September 2020
Volume 13, Issue 6



Dear Grace Family,

"Moving on!" That's a common phrase people say following some difficulty. Whether it's a natural disaster, a break-up, job loss, or even a pandemic. At some point, you simply must get back to living and continue to do the vocations our gracious God has given us to do in loving Him and our neighbor. I'm proud of how our church has weathered the storm of this virus and the resulting lockdown(s). While not everyone has returned to in-person worship services, we have managed to stay financially

solvent and have received many new attendees as a result of being one of the few churches in San Diego to remain open, singing, and serving Holy Communion.

God created us to be in community with other people (Gen 2:18 ff). He also created us to be in fellowship with Him. In His perfect creation, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect community with one another and perfect fellowship with the Lord. But sin destroyed both. One of the results of the Fall is separation in place of community. The close fellowship that Adam and Eve had with God was replaced with banishment. Sin infects every aspect of our lives outside of the Garden. Our sinful world is filled with hardships, suffering, violence, disease, and death. Separation from God and from other people is part of our world.

The Gospel that Jesus anticipated being "proclaimed in the whole world" is the Gospel that has brought us into fellowship with God and into community with one another. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the mandated isolation that we experienced, we have a new appreciation for the hardships of those who live in isolation apart from the pandemic. We have good news to share with them. It is the good news that Jesus has paid for their sins, removed their uncleanness, and reconciled them to the Father. He desires that all people would take a place in the community of His church. Jesus still receives sinners and eats with them. As His witnesses, we share in His desire to gather isolated and separated people into the family of Christ. Reminded by our recent experience with isolation, we take the words of Ephesians 2:12-13 to heart, to "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

So with all that said, moving on. I look forward to our life together in Christ this Fall as we restart our various Bible Studies and Sunday School classes for all ages. I pray you will join us and celebrate our fellowship together as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

Prayerfully Yours,

Pastor Thomas

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A Conversation on Religion & Politics

Join Pastor Thomas and guest lecturers this Fall for our adult Sunday School as we discuss a Lutheran view of church and state. We will examine historic Christian teaching regarding the purpose of government and propose constructive ways in which we can participate as Christian citizens for the betterment of our world.

Please join the Wednesday
Morning Bible Study as we
resume our study of C S Lewis
Wednesday Sept. 16
10:00 am.



CARING FOR THOSE WITH DEPRESSION

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By Todd Peperkorn, STM

OPENING PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, Your precious blood washes away our sins and revives our spirits. Look with compassion on all those who suffer during this pandemic, and restore hope and well-being to them. Banish the spirit of depression, strengthen their faith, disperse the cloud of despair that covers them, and grant them the comfort of Your Holy Spirit and the joy of Your salvation. Give us as Your people wisdom to learn how to care best for them, and courage to reach out to all those in need; for You live and reign with the Father and the same Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*¹

INTRODUCTION

“Why is it that every little thing takes five times more energy than it should, pastor?” The congregation member lamented further, “I’ve had problems with depression before, but this is worse than I’ve ever experienced it. It’s all I can do to even get out of bed in the morning.” Is this scene familiar to you? All of us have been feeling it to some degree or another, but during this time of pandemic, every bit of work, every emotion, sometimes even every interaction with other human beings takes so much more work. Why is it that simple things have become so hard? Why is it that we see our loved ones struggling so much with what really should be easy things? In this study we are going to try to answer some questions which I hope will be helpful. Here are some of them: How do we as a congregation try to first of all understand what is going on and why it is so hard? Why does this pandemic make these things so much harder? What can we do as a congregation, and what can we not do? And finally, what do we do when it seems like nothing is working?

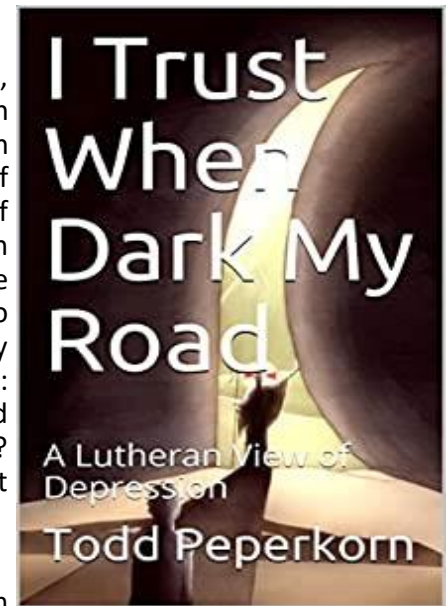
WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF DEPRESSION?

Clinical depression is an all-encompassing low or severe mood that is often accompanied by a loss of self-esteem, interest in the outside world, and interest in pleasure or any regular activities. We often lump numerous things under the larger category of “depression,” but this definition helps us to gain some key insights. Depression has to do with our emotions or moods. These moods can express themselves as extreme emotionalism, as anger or resentment, or even as a complete numbness to the outside world. In many ways, the overarching theme of clinical depression is shutting off the outside world, because the synapses in our brains aren’t connecting as they normally do. Outside stimulus becomes difficult to handle, and so we become curved inward, lost or trapped in our own thoughts and feelings.

Clinical depression can have many causes — physiological, situational, psychological, spiritual. Usually it is some combination of all four. It is that combination which makes depression so difficult and even weird for us as Christians. My own body might be working against me, alongside my sinful nature. Read Romans 7:14–20. Even if I know what is right, my own sinful flesh fights against me. Read Romans 7:21–25. Martin Luther would sometimes say that our sin makes us turned inward upon ourselves, or “incurvatus in se” in Latin. That is why, of all diseases, depression has this spiritual element that can be hard to unpack.

WHY HAS THE PANDEMIC EXACERBATED DEPRESSION AND OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES?

If we understand depression as cutting off the outside world, a numbness to outside stimulus and a curving in upon oneself, then this pandemic is even worse than we thought! Because we have been forced to cut off our direct interaction with the Body of Christ in so many ways, we are even more vulnerable to attack from the Evil One. The lack of physical contact with others, and lack of spiritual contact or connection with the Word of God and the Sacraments in church — well, that is dangerous business for us sinners who need the Gospel all the time. Read the Seventh Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and Luther’s Explanation in the Small Catechism. Deliverance from evil always means that we are delivered from the clutches of sin, death and hell, and we are delivered to Christ and His Word of comfort for troubled sinners. Read Isaiah 40:28–31. Our strength never lies in ourselves, but in the Creator who loves us, who gives Himself to us, and who will never grow weary of giving us His mercy and care.



¹ Adapted from Collect #800, Pastoral Care Companion, p. 325.

CARING FOR THOSE WITH DEPRESSION

WHAT CAN WE DO AS THE CHURCH TO CARE FOR MEMBERS IN THIS TIME?

PRAY. Read **1 Peter 2:9**. By praying for all those in need, we fulfill our vocation as the church of being a royal priesthood. A priest intercedes before God on behalf of others. This connects us to the people we pray for, and connects us to God, who exhorts us to pray with “boldness and confidence, as dear children ask their dear father” (Small Catechism, Explanation of the Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer). Because someone with depression may not be able to pray for themselves, we pray for them.

COMMUNICATE. Read **1 Peter 3:13–17**. Be ready to give a defense for the hope that is within you. We will talk about hope more in a minute, but the key part for us here is to communicate God’s love and mercy at all times to those who are in need. Sometimes people with depression have a difficult time hearing good news. They are not wired for it at the time. But be patient and gentle, and give hope where it is possible. God’s mercy does not disappear because things are hard.

SUPPORT. Read **1 Peter 4:7–11**. Notice here that Peter does not call us to do high and lofty things for one another. He calls us to show hospitality without complaint, and to use the gifts God has given us for the sake of one another. What does that support look like? It will depend on the person and the situation. Maybe it means a note of encouragement, maybe it means a meal, maybe it means caring for another’s children for a little while. Be creative! Support doesn’t mean solving everything. It means giving relief where you can.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF WHAT WE CAN DO AS THE CHURCH? As with all things, we must remember our vocations. The church’s vocation is to proclaim the Gospel, to comfort those in sorrow and need, to lift up the weary, and to hold up the gifts of God to a dying world. It is not the church’s vocation to diagnose diseases. We would never expect a pastor visiting someone in the hospital to do open heart surgery, unless the pastor also happened to be a heart surgeon. One of the greatest gifts that we can bring to our people is the acknowledgement that we don’t do everything. God uses many different people with lots of different skills to care for and love the world. The more we are able to recognize that, the more clear our own place in a person’s healing and care will become.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT WE CAN DO? Read **Psalm 130**. Perhaps more than anything else, people who suffer from depression need hope. Hope means looking to the future, because God has taken care of your sins at the cross, and takes care of you now in the forgiveness of sins. We have a future because God is always present for us, no matter what may come. We have a future because with the Lord is steadfast love. As the psalmist says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:26). God’s mercy does not depend on my attitude, or how well I am doing “during these difficult times.” God’s mercy is His very nature, and He never abandons His people. Period. This is not always easy to communicate, but never give up on those whom God loves!

IN GOD, MY FAITHFUL GOD (LSB 745)

*In God, my faithful God,
I trust when dark my road;
Great woes may overtake me,
Yet He will not forsake me.
My troubles He can alter;
His hand lets nothing falter.*

*My sins fill me with care,
Yet I will not despair.
I build on Christ, who loves me;
From this rock nothing moves me.
To Him I will surrender,
To Him, my soul’s defender.
If death my portion be,
It brings great gain to me;
It speeds my life’s endeavor*

*To live with Christ forever.
He gives me joy in sorrow,
Come death now or tomorrow.*

*O Jesus Christ, my Lord,
So meek in deed and word,
You suffered death to save us
Because Your love would have us
Be heirs of heav’nly gladness
When ends this life of sadness.*

*“So be it,” then, I say
With all my heart each day.
Dear Lord, we all adore You,
We sing for joy before You.
Guide us while here we wander
Until we praise You yonder.*

About the Author - The Rev. Todd A. Peperkorn is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Rocklin, California. He is the author of the book, *I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression*.

Used with permission.

Dear Grace:

One of the great joys of being the CAPS Executive Director has been watching how God's people come together to move the ministry forward. Opening new satellites is critical to our mission as we work to reach more women and couples facing unplanned pregnancies in San Diego.

Our Mesa Area Clinic is now secured and, with the help of God's amazing people, we are on our way through the process of permitting, building and equipping our new clinic.

So many friends are already working tirelessly to move the steps along, including the agents representing us in the leasing agreements, our attorney, architect, engineers and contractors. Prayer warriors have been covering the whole process while our amazing supporters are giving generously to fund these ongoing efforts. There are many regulations we must meet in line with our clinic license and accreditation. Medical clinic building requirements must be met, permitted and passed by the City.

Because we are on our third satellite, we know what is necessary to give our patients the experience most conducive to making decisions for life. The décor must have the right balance of professionalism and comfort. The consultation room must feel private and calming. The medical exam rooms must be clean and sanitized while not feeling sterile.

If you have not had a chance to visit our clinics, you can take a virtual tour which also shows the location of our Mesa Area Clinic and also how you can help to equip our new clinic by going to our website.

Thank you for being a part of what God is doing in San Diego to love people facing unintended pregnancies and to help save their babies!

Standing with you for Life,
Julie Dowler, Executive Director



Baby Gift Tubs Needed



Visit our shopping list on smile.amazon.com! Now you can purchase items for our baby gift tubs for new CAPS moms from Amazon and send them directly to CAPS.

1. Sign-in with your Amazon log-in or create a log-in on smile.amazon.com.
2. Pick "College Area Pregnancy Services, Inc" (CAPS) as the non-profit to support through your purchases.
3. Find our charity list: hover over "Accounts & Lists" at the top right of the screen to see the drop down list of links. Click on "Amazon Smile charity lists" link. CAPS charity list will pop-up. Purchases from our list will be sent directly to CAPS. Similar items are welcomed, too.



CAPS Walk For Life – A Big Success

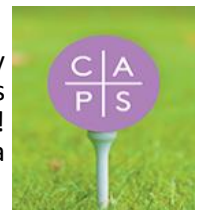
You did it and then some! We raised over \$27,000 toward ultrasound services at the Mesa Area clinic opening this year. Nurses will be trained to use the new ultrasound machine.

Pastor Brian and Rachel did an actual Walk for Life through Balboa Park!

Thanks to all who contributed, walked & prayed for CAPS! Walk & pray anytime. Specific prayer requests and more information can be found at: capswalk.org.

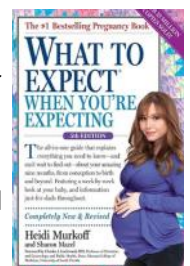
Day of Golf

Join us at Maderas in Poway on Monday, Oct 12th. This is our first live event of 2020! Register to play or be a sponsor at capsgolf.com.



Books Needed

Help us keep stocked up on a favorite printed resource, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, 5th edition. New copies can be purchased at smile.amazon.com. Gently used copies of the 5th edition are also welcomed.



A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP IN DIFFICULT TIMES

The Coronavirus outbreak, related government closure orders, and attendant business uncertainties necessitated that our preschool close in March. That was difficult enough given our interest in Christian care and education, but the closure predictably also interrupted the flow of income to the Church from the preschool and this brings us to a financial challenge that we as a congregation need to reflect on and address proactively.

In round numbers, our preschool has been generating approximately \$60,000 annually in income after expenses for the church for the past several years.

Once the decision to close the preschool was made, the congregation – all of us – instantly faced a developing budget shortfall that we project will amount to approximately \$22,000 by the end of 2020. Obviously, we need to decide how to address that deficit.

There is some “good” news in all this. Our Council President directed the Council and Staff to implement immediate reductions in expenditures that the closing of the preschool permitted. Our Trustee reprioritized work on the Church property and made expense reduction recommendations. And our Treasurer removed budget expenses related to the school, shifted reserve and other fortuitously donated, non-designated funds to the operating account, and then re-worked the remaining 6 months of the 2020 budget. It’s important to note that much of the predicted shortfall for 2020 has to do with one-time expenses (such as paying out accrued vacation and other benefits) to separating preschool employees. As such, our best judgment is that a modest uptick in our collective giving through the remainder of the year will retire the deficit. The particularly encouraging news is that, if the Grace community can maintain that enhancement in giving in 2021, it looks like we will have a balanced budget in 2021, *even without the preschool*.

As you consider this, we would like to suggest that, while the preschool was closed because of COVID-19 related restrictions, health concerns, and business and legal uncertainties that continue to prohibit and inhibit the operation of schools, the intervening months of reflection have revealed there are sound reasons to consider permanently ending the Church’s dependence on preschool tuition income, at least in terms of paying the ordinary congregational bills. The obvious question, of course, is by how much must our collective giving increase to raise the \$22,000 to cover the anticipated 2020 shortfall and end dependence on preschool revenue?

At the moment, there are 110 Giving Units in the congregation (a Giving Unit is a contributing family or individual), and *if each Giving Unit were to commit to increasing their annual contribution to the church by only \$10 per week, we project the entire \$22,000 would be raised by year’s end!* If that incremental increase in giving can then be sustained into 2021, we project that the Church will return to a balanced budget, or very nearly so. Sustaining that giving level in 2021 would have the added bonus of permitting the Council to reinstate the important priority of contributing \$5,000 monthly to emergency reserves and the organ fund, budget items that had to be discontinued in response to COVID and the preschool closure.

We understand, of course, that some of us may not be able to increase weekly giving by \$10, and that while giving has blessedly remained constant through the outbreak thus far, some may be having or develop trouble giving at all due to job changes. Some of us may be able to do more than others, but I hope everyone will do what they can. For those blessed with stable work and finances, it will be a chance for the fortunate to lay up treasures where it matters most and help meet the challenge. In full recognition of present difficulties, the uncertainties of the day, and the sacrifice that our request may represent, we’re asking everyone who possibly can to take this prayerful step up in giving right away.

Blessings to you all in Christ Jesus,
Randolph Houts
Council President

Lynn Willis
Stewardship Chairman Pro Tem

JESUS AS THE DOOR TO HEAVEN

What does a true disciple of Jesus look like? Perhaps we imagine soldiers assembled before their commanding officer; or students in the school of their Rabbi; or ministers in gospel service; or worshippers at the feet of their Lord. In Matthew chapter 19, Jesus gives us a hands-on portrait of the kingdom:

"Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:13-15)

The disciples imagined that Jesus would be too "important" for children. They made the decision for Him and sent away the young families, giving them an earful as they went. We can only imagine what their rebuke was, "The Messiah's a busy man! Don't bring your grubby toddlers here! He's the King, don't you know child-care is beneath Him." In these rebukes, they revealed how desperately they had misunderstood Jesus.

This King was all about stooping. He had come from heaven to earth and it was His glory and gladness to do so! To bend down and pick up the helpless, to bless the needy who have nothing to offer, "to gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom" (Isaiah 40:11) – this is His heart-beat.

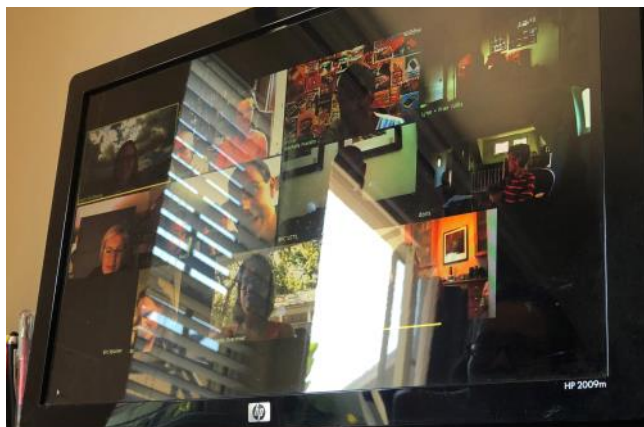
The disciples had to eat their words as Jesus invites all – big and small:

"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3-4)

This reality is depicted in this stained glass window with Jesus surrounded by little children. In the medallion below is the symbol of a door. Jesus alone is the Savior of the world, and thus, the only door to the kingdom of heaven. The Son invites me into His kingdom where little children belong – in fact, only little children belong. It's a kingdom whose royal insignia could depict this scene – the Lord of Life stooping to gather up the children as they squeal with delight. This kingdom is, fundamentally, a family where, in C.S. Lewis's phrase, "Everything is for the asking, and absolutely nothing can be bought."



GOD SPEED



A virtual farewell for the Brown Family during the pandemic. Paris, Natalie and the boys moved to Georgia last month.



Pr. Brian offers a farewell prayer for Matt Sharber. Matt is in the Navy and

**Sunday School
ENDURING FAITH**

**STUDENTS
WALK THROUGH
THE BIBLE IN
THREE YEARS.**



YEAR 1 - BIBLE SURVEY

YEAR 2 - OLD TESTAMENT EXPLORATION

YEAR 3 - NEW TESTAMENT EXPLORATION

**PRESCHOOL
AGES 3-5**

**LOCATION
ST. LUKE'S ROOM**

**TEACHER
MS. BETHANY
CARTER**

**ELEMENTARY
AGES 6-10**

**LOCATION
ST. PETER'S ROOM**

**TEACHER
DR. CINDY HANSEN
&
MS. AMY RUSSERT**

**JUNIOR HIGH
AGES 11-14**

**LOCATION
THE DEN**

**TEACHER
MS. VALDA HOUTS**

Fall Semester: September 13 - November 22

Winter Semester: January 10 - March 28

Spring Semester: April 18 - May 30



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San Diego, CA 92103
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gracesandiego.com

The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas

Music Director
Michael Burke

Office Manager
Gretchen Jordan

Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Nursery available

IT'S EASY TO DONATE TO GLC

Scan the QR code below with your phone or text a dollar amount to 84321 to donate. Give through your online banking, use your giving envelopes or just drop your donation in the offering plate.

Thank you!



Hearing Assistance is now available in our sanctuary.



Please see one of our ushers who will be happy to provide you with a listening device.

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH

Dave, Chris, Rev. Ken & Marilyn Licht, Buffey, Alma, Josh, Bill, Diane, Guadalupe Valle, First Responders and Firefighters fighting the CA wildfires, and those suffering from the COVID pandemic.

PRAYERS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD OF GOD

Jeremy & Alma, Gavin & Carmen

PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

Rev. James May (Kenya), Daniel Conrad (Central America), Rev. Dr. Ron & Mary Anne Rall (Papua New Guinea), Rev. Dr. John & Melinda Bombaro (Latvia)

PRAYERS FOR THE MILITARY

William Baker, Nathaniel Beaver, Andrew Burke, Alex Cavins, Gaby Cavins, Tajy George, Jack George, Jr., Dylan Jensen, Jack Ogden, Matthew Morgan, Eric Mitchell, Rhett Nowotney, Gavin Robillard, Heath Russert, Matt Sharber, Linka Schleusener, and Andrew Warren

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO COME TO SERVICES

Lorna Winterstein, Mary Jane Robinson

BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

13- Rachel Thomas
15- Laura Blosser
16- Shawn Merfalen
20- Patricia Della Giustina
22- Soren Hansen
23- Caroline Serrano
30- Ruben Castaneda

OCTOBER

1- Karen Dorris
2- Lynn Willis
3- Dennis Bonilla
5- Evie Richards
7- Patty Morgan,
7- Jonah Burke
11- Leigh Ann Bozung
13- Rebecca Kiperts

14- Cindy Behling-Hansen
15- Dillon Weissman
17- Wesley Newton
17- Mike Thompson
20- Zaro Razak
28- Christina Burke
28- Jeremy Fullam
30- Betty Burke

If we missed your birthday email the church office at: gjordan@gracesandiego.com

