

THE WITTENBERG WAY

PASTOR'S PAGE



Dear Grace Family,

Return to the Lord Your God. This phrase sets the theme of the Lenten season for the next forty days as we reflect on the mercy of God to save sinners like us. Why can we repent and trust God to forgive us? Because we are promised that He is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding

in steadfast love" (Joel 2:13). Moreover, we are not just promised this, but our Lord went willingly to the cross to ensure it is so.

I hope you will join us during our midweek soup suppers and worship services this season. Our sermon series during these special times together will focus on the question, "Where in the World is God?" by looking at the last week of Jesus' ministry on earth.

I want to thank our new eleven members for deepening their commitment to GLC by joining us in our shared mission this past month. The time, talents, and service of our members are what makes Grace such a wonderful family of God, and I look forward to serving together with you all.

I also want to thank everyone for your generosity in supporting the Grace Lutheran Organ Restoration in Action (GLORIA). At the last voter's assembly, we approved the expenditure of Phase 1. It is my hope that we will contract with the builder by the end of the month to purchase our new organ console.

Lastly, in this issue, I have included an article on the coronavirus and the common cup of Holy Communion. Every time there is a health scare, people are rightly worried. I hope the facts shared alleviate any concern you would have in receiving the body and blood of our Lord Jesus.

Lenten Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pr. Thomas'.

Pr. Thomas

March 2020
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Lenten Prayer 2

Thomas Hopko

You manifested humility, O Christ,
as the way of genuine nobility
by emptying Yourself and taking the form
of a slave.

You did not hear the self-praising prayers of
the Pharisee,
but you received the broken sighs
of the publican as a blameless sacrifice.

Therefore I cry out to you:

"Have mercy on me, O God,

have mercy on me,

and save me, O Savior."



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by Rev. Brian Thomas

The news of the last week has been filled with turmoil created by the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, roiling financial markets, causing increasing concern throughout the world about transmission, and otherwise raising concerns about the spread of infectious disease. Invariably, the first question asked of the church in moments like this is: *What about the common cup at the Lord's Supper?*

The simple answer is this - peer-reviewed studies and Centers for Disease Control guidance since the 1980s have consistently shown that "no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of a common communion cup" and "the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low, and appropriate safeguards--that is, wiping the interior and exterior rim between communicants, use of care to rotate the cloth during use, and use of a clean cloth for each service - would further diminish this risk" (American Journal of Infection Control (Vol. 26, No. 5, 1998).



I have communicated thousands of people and shaken thousands of hands in receiving lines after service. Beyond that - I've consumed what's left in the chalice after Holy Communion, quite literally drinking behind thousands of people over my ordained vocation. And I promise - I get sick at the same rate the rest of us do! In a time of fear and panic, let us continue to dwell with one another, continue to be with one another, and continue to be at the Eucharistic feast with each other. I firmly believe Jesus would do the same.

I'll conclude with a key quotation from an important peer-reviewed study: "No episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported. Currently available data do not provide any support for suggesting that the practice of sharing a common communion cup should be abandoned because it might spread infection"(*Journal of Infection*, 1988, Vol 16, pgs. 3-23). This study was in 1988. Every follow-up study since has found this to be true.

**This article is a GLC adaptation of an email received from Pr. David Sibley, who worked as a scientist before being called into the pastorate.*

We do all these things at Grace Lutheran and my assisting elders are trained to wipe the rim of the chalice, as well as rotate the cup for each communicant.

A common follow up question: *Is it more sanitary to intict (dip) the host into the cup than drink from it?*

In short - absolutely not! As any experienced pastor will tell you, it is a common occurrence when people intict the host for their fingers to touch either the consecrated wine or the side of the chalice. This is, in fact, less sanitary than drinking in the first place - we can make sure our clergy and elders wash their hands, but we can't do the same for the whole of the congregation! Beyond this, as microbiologists have studied this issue, they found that the alcohol in the wine we use kills germs and, unlike ceramic cups, the silver and gold used in chalices like ours don't harbor microbes.



The parsonage welcomes a new addition, Princess Grace the Pug. As you can see, she shares an affinity for bubbles just like her mom and dad.

CULTURAL CONNECTION: THE RISE OF THE NONES

by Rev. Glenn Fluegge

The “Rise of the Nones” is a rather recent phenomenon in the United States that has received quite a bit of attention. They account for about a quarter of the general U.S. population and about one third of the younger population. In fact, they are the fastest growing religious demographic in recent years.

Although they can be quite spiritual in their practices and beliefs, the “Nones” are those who claim “none” when it comes to religious affiliation. They often describe themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” For a variety of reasons, some well-intentioned and justified, they dislike institutionalized religion and view religion as a private, individualized, and internal affair.

But, as Gene Veith points out, “research is showing that the ‘institutional’ and corporate dimension of religion is exactly what makes it so beneficial, both to individuals and society.”

This is especially true of Christianity, as Veith helpfully reminds us:

“It involves other people. It has to do with ‘love,’ which, by definition, entails a relationship with someone else, both with God and with one’s neighbors. The Gospel calls us into a ‘church,’ an assembly of other believers who, together, constitute ‘the body of Christ.’ Though Christianity entails personal beliefs, it is never purely ‘private.’ Worship, the sacraments, good works, vocation, and the Christian life in general connect us with other people.”

The corporate dimension of Christianity, in particular, has something to offer an American society that feels increasingly lonely.

And loneliness is not a trivial thing. Most of us probably see “mortality” as the underlying problem of humanity and solutions abound that attempt to fix the human body and mind and alleviate the limitations that mortality has imposed on us. Thank the Lord for these efforts, but I am beginning to agree more and more with Samuel Wells who contends that the “central problem of human existence” is isolation even more so than death. Indeed, we were not created to die, but as relational beings, we were certainly not created to live in isolation. In the beginning, the only thing God declared to be “not good” was Adam living alone (Gen 2:18).

The inherent corporate nature of Christianity can help with this current “epidemic of loneliness” in a way that individualized “spirituality” cannot even begin to replicate. Veith sums it up well:

“‘Being spiritual’ in an internal, mystical, privatized, highly-individualized way is not going to give you these benefits. Rather, it uses spirituality as yet another means of escaping from the external world ever deeper into one’s own self. That kind of religiosity is isolating, with the potential of intensifying our loneliness and lack of connection with the external world. We need institutions, with their rituals we can participate in with others and the obligations and relationships they impose. Not only for religion to give us better lives, but, I would add, for our religion to be true.”

The communal dimension of Christianity embodied in the local church may just be what the world needs.

Glenn Fluegge serves as Director of the Cross-Cultural Ministry Center at Concordia University, Irvine



THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS ~ Thrivent members can recommend Thrivent to distribute a portion of its charitable funding by directing Choice Dollars® to Grace Lutheran Church. Members become eligible for Thrivent Choice dollars based on insurance premiums, contract values and Thrivent volunteer leadership. Our Thrivent rep, Clare Truong will be here to answer questions on Sunday March 22 during fellowship with donuts and fruit!

CAN YOU FIND THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD WINDOW?



In this window, the bottom medallion depicts Noah's ark, where eight souls were saved through the floodwaters. In the upper portion, we see our Lord being baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist. The window connects the Old and New Testament truth that our God saves through means, and one of them is aqueous. The connection between the salvation given to the human race in the flood and the eternal salvation distributed in Holy Baptism cannot be overlooked. St. Peter writes, "God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you" (1 Peter 3:20-21).

In 1523, Martin Luther wrote his Little Book of Baptism. In it, he added something he called "the flood prayer" to the baptism liturgy that was being used by the Church. Today a variation of his flood prayer is included in the baptism liturgy we use to this very day. The prayer goes like this:

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

In this prayer, we give thanks for all the ways God has used water and for God's promise to bring about new life. The prayer also connects the newly baptized person to the larger biblical narrative, emphasizing that just as God brought about new life back then, so God continues to bring about new life here and now. The narrative described in this prayer provides a wonderful

model for reflection during Lent, centered around the idea that water, with the word, creates new life.

This window is quite special as it was purchased by Lois Paylor's mother, Marcia Payne, and to this day, the Paylor family sits in the pew nearest to their family window.

NEW FACES OF GRACE



This past month Grace welcomed eleven new members. They are: John & Bethany Carter, James & Nicole Clark, Carlos & Merry Cristiani, Jane Hadley, John & Tina Puente, Kelley Schmidt, and Matthew Sharber.

ORGAN UPDATE—PHASE ONE

A Voter's Assembly was held in February and the congregation was informed about the bidding process, initiated by Council, to complete Phase I of the Organ Restoration. The Council chose Blackinton and Associates of El Cajon to complete the work. The bid was presented to the congregation for ratification and it passed unanimously! As of this writing, it is my understanding that all of the money for the project has been allocated and the contract with Blackinton should be signed shortly. Praise God for His marvelous provision!

It probably would be helpful at this point to go over where we are with the project, why we are fixing the console first, and what's next. First, the GLORIA Project is broken down into 3 phases: the console replacement; Great, Choir and Pedal Division wind chest repair/replacement and revoicing (those are the major items in this phase, however, everything that needs to be repaired or replaced in those divisions will be done during this phase), and; Swell Division windchest replacements and revoicing. With the console replacement being approved, the pieced together console we have now, will be replaced with one that will be cohesive and work together seamlessly with the other parts of the organ. For example, the console now consists of the case made by Wickes Organ Co, the keyboards made by Austin Organ Company and the Pedal board made by Blackinton. The Syndyne controller or "brains" of the organ, if you will, will be totally replaced. This controller has been a problem for the organ ever since it's installation. The brand new digital controlling system will, among other things, allow the organist to press a button and actually receive a response. It will also mean that we won't lose entire divisions because of occasional electrical malfunctions and we will gain back all of our 100+ levels of memory. We will also gain an additional manual so all the divisions of the organ will have their own "home". For example, the Positiv Division (all of the pipes on each side of the Mezzanine), does not have a specific keyboard, so the organist has to direct that Division to play on a particular manual or pedal. That situation will resolve with the new console.

So when will we see this new console? As soon as Blackinton has a signed contract, they will begin work on the new custom console that will be made

specifically for our organ. The process will probably take 10 months from contract to installation. Hopefully, we will see it in place in the Mezzanine by Christmas.

Will this fix the majority of the problems? No, not by a long shot. The work done in Phase I only fixes the problems specifically related to the console. The rest of the organ, particularly the Great, Choir and Pedal Divisions are still on life support. The organist will still need to turn the organ off during the Preaching of the Word, so as to not distract the Pastor with the sound of rushing wind, and we will continue to get occasional ciphers (pipes sounding on their own without the help of the organist) due to the deteriorating windchests and linkage action.

While we have made great headway in a very short amount of time, please understand that the cost of Phase II is substantially more than that of Phase I. In that regard, I would ask that, while Phase I is being completed, that we focus our attention now on Phase II. It's only through your gifts and, most importantly, your prayers, that we will see this project through to completion.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Michael Burke

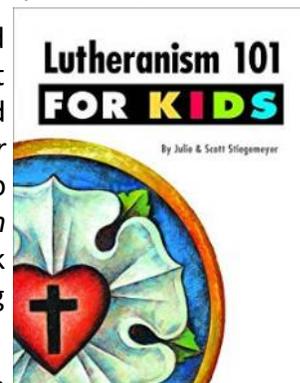


ENDURING FAITH FOUNDATIONS FAMILY RETREAT MARCH 21

Do you have a son, daughter, or godchild under the age of five? An encore presentation of GLC's "Enduring Faith Foundations" class for equipping parents to teach the Christian faith at home is scheduled for Saturday, March 21 from 10 to 2. Parents and godparents are warmly encouraged to attend!

If you missed out on the Sunday morning class, teachers David and Laura Yow will be covering the same material at this family retreat. Lunch and all materials will be provided. Childcare will be provided, too.

Guest speakers will be Rev. Scott and Julie Stiegemeier. Scott teaches theology and bioethics at Concordia University, Irvine, and Julie works in writing support at Pepperdine University. Scott and Julie have written numerous resources for adults and children, including two books they wrote together: *Lutheranism 101 for Kids* and *Your Marriage by God's Design*, both published by Concordia Publishing House. Julie has also produced numerous children's books to help parents share the faith, including *Arch Books*, devotional resources, and numerous children's titles. Scott and Julie look forward to talking about living within a Christian family, teaching the faith, and sharing resources with participants.



There is no charge to attend, and previous experience not required -- just a hunger to learn how to teach the faith to your littles at home. Please RSVP to the church office by March 14. See you March 21!

GRACE FELLOWSHIP

Who was it that said "two heads are better than one?" Well this year we have three, Betty Burke, Gretchen Jorden and Harold Nichols. We have been busy coming up with special themes for our Sunday Social Hour and looking at several ideas for church outings when the weather improves.

We started out the year with Egg-cettera Sunday, Muffin Sunday and Souper Bowl Sunday. Our Second Sunday Group and the Choir have come back to host again with delicious meals. March is for St. Patrick and the Second Sunday Group will serve Corned Beef and Cabbage this week, followed by the Preschool hosting St. Patty's Day Green on the 15th. The month will end with Thrivent bringing donuts and fruit on the 22nd, and the first Mac & Cheese Cook-off on the 29th. April will be just as exciting with a good old Pot-Luck on the 5th (Palm Sunday) and our annual Pancake Breakfast on Easter Sunday. May kicks off with Derby Day on the 3rd, Harold will be making Kentucky Burgoo that is served at the Derby and we will have mint juleps to enjoy, too. Mothers Day we are hoping to have a Baby Shower to help CAPS Pregnancy Clinics during the Social Hour. Memorial Day Weekend we'll move outdoors to the courtyard with a Hot Dog and Hamburger Cook out after Sunday services. The last Sunday of May is Pentecost we'll host an International Day and will be asking you to bring recipes from your heritage, ethnicity, or nationality.



We are also interested in what the church would like to do in the way of outings. San Diego has several professional teams, baseball, rugby, soccer, ice hockey and others to enjoy. Day trips to the Nixon and Reagan Libraries, a game show, wine tasting, the theater, or a dinner out to a nice restaurant as we did to Italgo Restaurant in Chula Vista. Summer is around the corner and it's also time for a church picnic. If you are interested in an event, please contact a member of the Fellowship Committee.

Fellowship is just not parties and eating events. It's greeting and getting to know someone. Saying hello to a visitor to our church, and inviting them for the Social Hour. Remember the FELLOWSHIP we show one another will help our church grow.

- Harold Nichols

PROJECTS AT GRACE

The Grace Lutheran Church building and property have been around for 100 + years and everyone knows that with age constant care and upkeep are required. Paul Himmelberger brings his expertise as our new trustee although he has held this Council position in previous years. He began his work by creating a spreadsheet of projects that are needed for completion in 2020.

At the top of the list is the organ restoration with the first phase ready to kick-off. The number two project on the list is the installation of the security cameras. Jeremy Fullam is heading this project and the cameras have been purchased he is working on the install schedule. Since we are almost out of the rainy season, Paul has been working with Benton Roofing to install new gutters and downspouts on our preschool building. The gutters and downspouts will alleviate the courtyard and classroom flooding during any future downpours.

One of the other current projects is the purchase and installation of hearing assist devices for the sanctuary. Council approved this expenditure last year but further investigation was needed to see if the devices would work with our current speakers and microphones. The system uses RF technology and with an older building often the signal cannot go through the walls. Paul completed the research and the system has been purchased. Hopefully, some of our hard of hearing members will be able to enjoy the Easter services.

We recently had some minor maintenance done on the sanctuary heating system to get the heater functioning on Sunday morning.

There is always constant upkeep on the grounds, parking lot and outside of our buildings. Todd, our part-time maintenance person handles minor repairs and does all of the grounds keeping during the week and on Saturdays. The iron fence around the parking lot and playground will be scheduled for painting and repairs within the next month. We'll be doing this work in coordination with Grace Tower who shares the playground portion of the fence.

Other projects in the pipeline are the repairs of cracked glass in some of the small windows, repairs on the apartment stairways, clean-up, and repair of small leaks from the old water feature, courtyard seating, and new cushions. The elevator repairs and /or replacement is also an ongoing concern.

When I run through the list with Paul weekly, I think about the SNL character, Roseanne Roseannadanna that said, "it's always somethin'".

- Gretchen Jordan

UPCOMING SERVICE SCHEDULE

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Wednesday Lenten | 6:00 pm |
| Palm Sunday | April 5 @ 8:00 and 10:30 am |
| Holy Thursday | April 9 @ 6:00 pm |
| Good Friday | April 10 @ Noon and 6:00 pm |
| Easter Vigil | April 11 @ 11:00 pm |
| Easter Sunday | April 12 @ 8:00 and 10:30 am |

Wednesday Evening Lenten Soup Suppers are at 5:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.
Please join us on Easter morning at 9 am for Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall
hosted by the Second Sunday Fellowship Group.
If you would like to help, please contact Linnette Hollman or the Church office.



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The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas

The Reverend
Gleason Snashall

Deaconess
Doris Snashall

Music Director
Michael Burke

Office Manager
Gretchen Jordan

Preschool Director
Rexanna Blas

Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Augsburg Academy
9:30 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!



PRAYERS

Today and every day include some time for prayer . . . for yourself, for your church family, and for those in need.

Prayers for strength: Bill, Rev. Dr. Mueller, Barbara, Eli and Eamonn, John, Brianna, Dale Northup, Joe, and for our military and first responders.

Prayers for our missionaries: Rev. James May (Kenya), Daniel Conrad (Central America), Rev. Dr. Ron and Mary Anne Rall (Papua New Guinea), Rev. Dr. John and Melinda Bombaro (Latvia)

Prayers for the military: Thomas Abbott, Nathaniel Beaver, Andrew Bund, Andrew Burke, Alex Cavins, Gaby Cavins, Christian Cole, Jon Feazel, Jonathan Fisch, Brenda Fonseca, Tajy George, Jack Lynn George, Jr., Joseph Jindrich, Jack Ogden, Dave Miceli, Matthew Morgan, Eric Mitchell, Jacob Neuberger, Heath Russert, and Andrew Warren

Prayers awaiting the arrival of a child of God: Bo & Lyndi and Adam & Kim

Prayers for those unable to come to services: Lorna Winterstein, Mary Jane Robinson and Dottie Allen



Our fellowship needs families to help each Sunday to provide set-up, food and clean-up. Donuts, muffins, bagels, brunch items or lunches are some ideas. Or choose a theme like Mexican, Italian, sandwiches, salads, chili, hot dogs (we have a grill), cookies & ice cream, pita pockets or whatever you'd like!

BIRTHDAYS

MARCH

- 5 - Joelle Merfalen
- 6 - Paris Brown
- 9 - Keira Rall
- 14 - Lucas Robillard
- 19 - Kirschten Huntley
- 20 - Kaia Hill
- 30 - Bong Hwan Lee

APRIL

- 1 - Bobbi Roberts
- 2 - Jason Huntley
- 6 - Kariff Gomez
- 9 - Tony Fillius
- 10 - Steve Hollman

If we missed your birthday call or email the church office.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wed. March 11 @ 5pm

Lenten Soup Supper (March 11, 18, 25, April 1)

Wed. March 11 @ 6pm

Midweek Lenten service (March 11, 18, 25, April 1)

Sunday March 22

Fellowship with Thrivent—donuts, fruit, & coffee

Sunday March 29

Fellowship with a Mac & Cheese Cook-Off

Sunday April 5 @ 8 & 10:30

Palm Sunday services

Thursday April 9 @ 6 pm

Holy Thursday service

Fri. April 10 @ Noon & 6pm

Good Friday services

Saturday April 11 @ 11pm

Easter Vigil

Sunday April 12 @ 8 & 10:30

Easter Sunday services

Sunday April 12 @ 9 am

Easter Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall

If you have an idea for fellowship, please let us know. We can always use your help by hosting, setting-up and cleaning-up for fellowship. You can always donate, too. It's easy and always fun, plus you might get leftovers!