

# THE WITTENBERG WAY

## PASTOR'S PAGE

March 2019  
Volume 11, Issue 3



Dear Grace Family,

In the last issue of the Wittenberg Way, I invited the parish to consider Grace Gatherings, a new hospitality initiative to help us as a commuter church get to know, love, and serve one another through shared meals. I am thrilled with the response! We had over 80 people sign up and will begin this month with 10 groups gathering across the county. My prayer is that God would richly bless these gatherings and build up lasting friendships of trust and support within this household of faith.

The season of Lent is now upon us as we join Jesus on His way to Jerusalem to bear our sin. During this season we will meditate on our sinfulness, but always with an eye toward Easter, where the empty tomb tells us that our salvation has been accomplished. Please join us this year during our Lenten mid-week soup suppers and vesper services where I will be preaching through Peter's First Epistle on the theme of "Standing Firm in Shaky Times."

Please pick up one of our Lenten devotionals to use throughout the season. Whether or not it has been your custom to fast from something during Lent, I invite you to add something positive in addition to devotional reading. Please pray for your brothers and sisters who are facing trials and sickness during this season. While you may not know all the particulars, your Heavenly Father does. As James promises, "The prayer of the righteous can accomplish much" (Jas 5:16). A blessed Lententide to you all.

Prayerfully Yours,

Pastor Thomas

### CATECHISM CONVOCATION

Saturday, May 4th, 2019, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm  
Grace Lutheran Church San Diego  
"Teaching and Practice of The Lord's Prayer"  
Guest Presenter: Rev. Peter C. Bender

### CHILDREN'S OFFERINGS

Envelopes are now available on the desk in the hallway. Please take one for all your children or one for each child.



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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WED	Mar 13 @ 10 am	Morning Bible Study
THU	Mar 21 @ 6 pm	Coronado Evening Bible Study
SUN	Apr 14 @ 10 am	Palm Sunday—one service
THU	Apr 18 @ 6 pm	Holy Thursday service
FRI	Apr 19 @ Noon & 6 pm	Good Friday services
SAT	Apr 20 @ 11 pm	Easter Vigil
SUN	Apr 21 @ 8 & 10:30	Easter Sunday services
SAT	May 4 @ 8:30 am	2019 Catechism Convocation

## What is Lent? by Pr. Brian W. Thomas

Dr. Seuss once humorously remarked, “They say I’m old fashioned, and live in the past, but sometimes I think progress progresses too fast!” One of the blessings of the church calendar is that it interrupts our “progress” with slow, annual rhythms that serve followers of Jesus by focusing our attention upon what matters most—Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection. Such is the case with the season of Lent.

The term “Lent” derives from the Anglo-Saxon word “lencten,” a synonym for the season of spring—a time when the days lengthen. As nature begins to awaken from the death of winter, so Christians celebrate the renewal of life in Christ who has defeated the enemies of sin and death.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter). The forty fast days of Lent, known as the Quadragesima, do not include Sundays, so the six Sundays within the season are not of Lent but in Lent. Lent is observed by many Christian traditions—Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and others—although many evangelical churches do not.

Lent is considered a preparatory season for Easter and serves liturgically as a journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. The Gospel reading traditionally used on the last Sunday before Lent sets the tone for the season:

And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” (Luke 18:32–33).

In the early church, Lent was a period of preparing new converts called “catechumens” for the Sacrament of Baptism on Easter Vigil. This period included fasting, instruction, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines. By the medieval period, however, Lenten observances began to take on more austere penitential practices and works—righteousness prevalent for that era,

and much of the joyful expectation of Easter was lost. The post-Reformation observance of Lent, as Luther Reed notes, is both commemorative and penitential: “It regards the season as a time of special spiritual opportunity to contemplate the Passion of Christ as an incentive for self-examination, repentance, and growth in faith and grace.” (Lutheran Liturgy, 491).

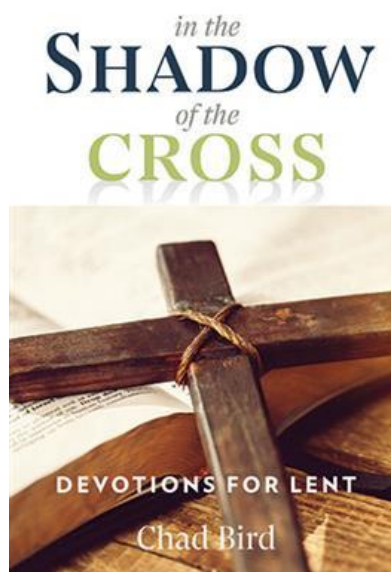
I have found that contemporary observances of Lent tend to more carefully balance the penitential themes with the baptismal, always keeping an eye toward Easter Sunday, so that we do not fall prey to an inward, self-focused spirituality that robs us of the joy of what God in Christ Jesus has accomplished for us in His saving work. While it is a restrained liturgical season, omitting the Gloria in Excelsis and Alleluias, it provides believers with an opportunity to increase their devotion to God personally and corporately.

Typical spiritual disciplines that I have found beneficial to the observance of Lent include the following:

On Ash Wednesday, many Christians follow the tradition of having their foreheads marked with ashes in the sign of the cross to remind them of the wages of sin, which is death. The ashes symbolize repentance as the prophet Joel calls us to “return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13).

Many churches, like ours, conduct mid-week Lenten services where pastors will preach on a particular theme or topic relevant to the season. Attending these services provide times of increased devotion and opportunities for spiritual growth. This year I will be preaching through 1 Peter with the theme of “Standing Firm in Shaky Times.”

Many Christians choose some form of fasting. This could take the traditional form of not eating during daylight hours or giving up some habit or behavior during Lent as an exercise in prayerful self-



## What is Lent? (cont.)

denial. While self-denial and fasting can be useful, be mindful that such exercises should not be done in order to merit the approval of God, but draw your attention upon what Christ Jesus gave up for you on the cross.

Some Christians not only deny themselves something during the season but add some beneficial discipline to fill the gap, such as Scripture reading, prayer, volunteer service, or reading through a Lenten devotional with their families. This year I would encourage everyone to pick up 1517 Teaching Fellow, Chad Bird's Lenten devotional, *In the Shadow of the Cross*. My family will be using it this year around our dinner table during the season.

Whatever you may choose to do this Lententide, let the gradual for Lent—that short verse read or chanted between the Old Testament and Epistle readings on Sunday—mark the emphasis and piety of the season: “O Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

## PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP - PART 5

### GOD'S STEWARDS ARE *IN* THE WORLD, BUT NOT *OF* THE WORLD.

#### What does this mean?

**God's stewards recognize that the Lord sets them apart from the world and by the transforming power of the Gospel sends them into the world to live out the Gospel.**

#### What does God's Word say about this?

Rom. 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

John 17:15-18 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into this world, I have sent them into the world. (cf. John 20:21-23)

Gen. 12:1-3 The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

#### How is this done?

##### **As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- Emphasize how the Gospel transforms stewards' attitudes in, about and toward the world;
- Emphasize the Christian witness of stewards in the decisions that are made; and,
- Encourage the support of appropriate projects and activities both within and outside the church.

##### **As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- Limit the scope of Christian stewardship only to "church-related" projects and activities;
- Use spiritually defective approaches and motivations from the world that are based mainly and primarily on the criterion that they "work;" or,
- Forget the daily tensions and struggles of being God's stewards in but not of the world.

## HOW OUR OFFERINGS STACKED UP IN FEBRUARY AND THE YEAR

February Offerings Budget	\$23,165	YTD Offerings Budget	\$41,549
February Offerings Actual	\$21,232	YTD Offerings Actual	\$38,218
Shortfall	<b>\$ 1,932</b>	Shortfall	<b>\$ 3,331</b>

# Stations of the Cross at Grace Lutheran

## by Deaconess Doris Snashall

The tradition of walking the Stations of the Cross appears to have originated as far back as the first century. After Constantine legalized Christian worship in the Roman Empire in 313, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher was erected on the location believed to have been Christ's tomb, becoming popular with pilgrims. The late-fourth-century Galician pilgrim Egeria described the fervency of these pilgrimages: at "the hour of cockcrow," she, a bishop, and two hundred others walked to Gethsemane singing hymns and there listened to the Gospel passage on the Lord's arrest, after which she heard "such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people" that it echoed "practically as far as the city."



The practice has generally been a Catholic devotional expression of meditation, sorrow, and repentance. However, for centuries Episcopal churches have also observed the Catholic stations of the cross. Now, Presbyterians and other Protestant churches, even Lutheran, have taken up the practice. Likewise, modern-day Evangelicals have devised variations of the stations, which often include the Resurrection of Christ.

The idea is to walk a path from one station to another, pausing at each station replicating the path of Jesus to the Cross and to meditate on His passion and to pray. The practice is often done during the Lenten season, a time of reflection on our sinful lives and our desperate need for the Savior. Walking the stations can be done either individually or in groups.

This ancient devotional exercise commemorating the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ is also called the "way of the cross" (Via Crucis) and the "way of sorrow" (Via Dolorosa). Over the years it has had from five to thirty-plus stations, until 1731, when Pope Clement XII set the number at fourteen. Its tableaux of Christ's passion—painted, engraved, carved, or sculptured, using stone, wood, or metal—create a literal prayerful path that helps spiritual seekers put on Christ's sandals as they move slowly from station to station, reflecting on his life.

The fourteen Stations of the Cross at Grace have recently been moved from the interior of the sanctuary pillars to the aisles in order to facilitate walking from one station to the next for parishioners who choose to do so. The number has also been reduced from fourteen to ten. The fourteen stations often used by Catholic Churches include four that have no Scriptural basis but remain in use as traditional. They include the sixth station, Veronica wipes the face of Jesus, and three stations referring to Jesus falling.

These are the Stations of the Cross in use at Grace, with their Scriptural references:

First – Jesus is condemned to death.

(Mark 15: 1-15, Matthew 27:23-31)

Second – Jesus takes up the cross.

(John 19:13-17, John 19:5)

Third – Jesus meets His mother.

(John 19:25-27)

Fourth – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross. (Mark 15:21)

Fifth – Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem. (Luke 23:27-31)

Sixth – Jesus is stripped of his garments. (John 19:23-24)

Seventh – Jesus is nailed to the cross. (Luke 23:33-43)

Eighth – Jesus dies on the cross. (John 19:28-37, Matthew 27:50)

Ninth – Jesus is taken down from the cross. (John 19:38-40)

Tenth – Jesus is laid in the tomb. (Mark 15:46-47)

Our Grace stations do not include the Resurrection, as some Evangelical churches do. As an expression of this penitential season of Lent, Christ on the cross is hidden from our view. Likewise, we fast from our shouts of Alleluia. This gives us a sense of our desperate situation without Him.

Easter morning, we will again cry out our Alleluias in praise of Christ's victory over sin, death, and the power of the Devil, by His sacrificial life, death, and Resurrection.

<sup>i</sup>George E. Gingras, translator, Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1970), 108-109. Egeria describes four pilgrimages at the end of the fourth century.

<sup>ii</sup>Carmen Acevedo Butcher, Professor of English and Scholar-in-Residence at Shorter University in Rome, Georgia.



# Grace Safety Committee Update

## by Andrew Burke

For those of you that have been worshipping here at Grace, whether on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings, I'm sure you can recall at some point a strange or unsettling occurrence that happened during one of our services. Whether it was the purse snatcher that was chased down, or the woman who took a shower in the women's restroom, to the man who shouted "Allah" from the back pew, to more recently, the belligerent man who became assaultive a few Sundays ago. These types of situations have not gone unnoticed by our counsel.

Several months ago, counsel thought it prudent to form a committee tasked with the responsibility of looking at the challenges our church faces in trying to keep our parishioners safe while still opening our doors to the community we live in. A safety committee was created with that purpose in mind. The committee encompasses people with knowledge and experience in law enforcement, military, the medical field, and other relevant vocations. As the chair of the committee, I wanted to provide you with information on what we have been looking at, and some of the changes around the church that you may or may not have noticed.

Over the past few months, the Safety Committee has been meeting and discussing ways that we can handle potential situations that arise on Sunday mornings, with the hope of preventing them all together. One of the main issues Grace is going to face being a church located in uptown San Diego is that of the homeless population. Yes, scripture tells us to love our neighbors, but we also have to be cautious and aware of the potential dangers we face with a large homeless populace in our backyard. Many of the homeless come with psychological issues that make them extremely unpredictable and volatile, just as we saw a few Sundays ago with the man in the fellowship hall. Grace is also located in the vicinity of UCSD and Mercy Hospitals where a large influx of homeless are evaluated for psychological problems. When these individuals are released, they are within walking distance of our parish. As such, Pastor Brian and the Safety Committee request that you not invite transient individuals to the fellowship hall for lunch following the service. If you are approached by one of these people and are not comfortable in saying no to them, please direct them to an usher, elder, the deaconess, or either pastor. These individuals are more than welcome to worship with us, provided they are not disruptive to the mass.

Given the location of our church, general access to the grounds was something we felt was an area that needed to be addressed, especially since there are so many entrances to our facility. Knowing who is coming onto the property is of utmost importance. You may have noticed new signage fixed to the gates leading to the alleyway and courtyard. The signs state that the gates will be locked during service times and that access to the sanctuary can be made by way of the front of the church. With no one watching certain areas, the Safety Committee feels it is important to limit access to various parts of the property while the vast majority of people are gathered in a central location. The elders, ushers, and members of the Safety Committee who monitor the narthex during worship are then able to identify who is entering the church and address potential problems before they get out of control.

One of the other tasks that the committee took on was ensuring that our medical supplies were centralized and fully stocked in the event of an emergency. Going through our existing supplies, we quickly realized that much of our inventory was expired or no longer in common use. Our larger first aid kit, located in the metal box hanging on the wall next to the mail boxes, is now completely resupplied with everything we would need to treat injuries. We do, however, ask that if you are in need of simple medical supplies, such as a Band-Aid, that you continue to use the smaller first aid kit located in the church office.



The members of the Safety Committee are confident that we have laid out a great foundation for ways that we can keep you safe as you come to worship with us. Now is the time to continue to build on that foundation, but we can only do that with your help. The safety of Grace and its people cannot rest on the shoulders of the pastors or a single committee alone. We need everyone's participation in protecting this body of people. If there are issues that need to be addressed, please feel comfortable enough to bring them to our attention.



Malachi Bryan Burke was baptized on March 3. Malachi is joined by his big brother, Jonah, his aunt Christine and parents Andrew and Brandi. Malachi is the grandson of Michael and Betty Burke. Congratulations!



Corban Daniel Merfalen was baptized on February 24th. Pastor Brian and Fairlight Lower served as godparents for Corban. Rachel and Shawn and Corban's big sister Joelle enjoyed their happy day.



Paul and Gloria Himmelberger celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in February. A classic Italian dinner with delicious homemade lasagna was served including a full table of appetizers and goodies. A strawberry shortcake anniversary cake also marked this wonderful celebration.





The first Grace Lutheran staff get together was held at Pastor and Deaconess Snashall's home last week. Many of our preschool teachers, our school parent/school mom and council member, Leigh Ann Bozung also attended the event.

## Update from Pastor Ron and Mary Anne Rall

Dear Members of Grace,

We just wanted to say "Thank you!" for keeping us in your weekly prayers! In case you don't know us, we are the parents of Matt, Emily and Chris Rall and we are called missionaries to Papua New Guinea. Ron teaches at Timothy Lutheran Seminary for 2 quarters each year, which means that we are in PNG from February thru mid-April and again from mid-July through September. Ron teaches on Monday through Thursday and visits congregations in outlying areas on the weekends. Since he is the only missionary pastor on the field here in the Highlands, he is busy preaching at different congregations each week, as well as doing funerals, school openings and the like. We lived here from 1973-1981 but left after Emily developed severe asthma which was not treatable in PNG. We stayed in ministry in the US for 24 years and then started returning to PNG for 4-6 weeks each year to do workshops for pastors and evangelists under the auspices of the Papua New Guinea Mission Society (PNGMS). We would like to share some of our experiences with you occasionally so that you have some idea of how to pray for the ministry and the people here in PNG! There are currently 34 students at the seminary, 8 of whom are on vicarage. The language of instruction is Melanesian Pidgin but the students are from many language groups: Hewa, Enga, Duna and Melpa. Many of the students have finished Grade 10, but the average is probably Grade 8. The Seminary instruction period is 4 years, with the 3rd year being vicarage or practice year out in a congregation.



We live in an old missionary house, refurbished by the PNGMS. We are blessed to have electricity (off and on), a propane stove and a refrigerator! When we do go out to the bush congregations, we stay in a thatched bush house with a pit toilet somewhere in the vicinity! I always carry toilet paper--you never know when you'll pick the wrong leaf! PNG is a lush green country with wonderful, helpful people who love God above all. There has been an increase



in sanguma or witchcraft lately where certain people are accused of being witches and causing the deaths of others. For this, they are tortured. Another of the missionaries has made it his mission to counteract this and it seems to be helping in the last few months. For this, we are very thankful and we ask your continued prayers.

Our internet connection is poor, but I will try to share some pictures with you. Again, thank you so much for your prayers. We so enjoyed worshiping with you last December and hope to spend time with you again!

Blessings on your Lenten season.

Sincerely, Pastor Ron and Mary Anne Rall



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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



## PRAYERS

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

**Prayers for strength in time of need:** Bill, Rachel, Eli, David, Joyce, Kris, Hayden, Scott, Sheridan, Elvie, Mildred, Linnette and John

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

**Prayers for the military:** Thomas Abbott, Nathaniel Beaver, Rev. John Bombaro 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 Neuberg Heath Russert , Andrew Warren

**Prayers awaiting the arrival of a child of God:** David & Laura, Rory & Yui, and Jeremy & Jessika as they await the arrival of a child of God.

**Prayers for those unable to come to services:** Lorna Winterstein, Mary Jane Robinson, Don & Maryann Preisinger.

## EVENTS



## BIRTHDAYS

### MARCH

20- Kaia Hill  
22- Leslie Overstreet  
30- Mrs. Bong Lee

### APRIL

1- Bobbi Roberts  
6- Angel Gomez  
9- Tony Fillius  
10- Steve Hollman

13- Elanor Janiak  
14- Linnette Hollman  
14- Mark Hass