

THE WITTENBERG WAY

PASTOR'S PAGE



Dear Grace Family,

In this issue, I want to highlight a couple of opportunities to further your discipleship.

First, on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am we will be studying the life and writings of C.S. Lewis. I am a huge fan of Lewis, particularly his creative apologetics. For this reason, I have written an article that uses the teleological method or "argument of design" to defend our belief in God to whet your appetite to learn more.

Second, during the Sunday school hour, I will be leading a new adult study on the importance of Christian virtue using a series of videos and discussions from one of my former professors. Lutherans have struggled the past century to understand the role of sanctification in the life of the justified believer, often straying in one of two extreme positions: legalism or libertinism. This study will steer us clear of both.

On Sunday, February 23, there will be a quick voter's meeting between the services to ratify our updated constitution and by-laws, which several dedicated members have spent countless hours working on. If you are a voting member, please make every attempt to attend. These are foundational documents that govern how we conduct business, so it is vital that we discuss and approve the changes before sending them to our district office to be finalized. Children's classes will continue during the meeting, so they have a place to go and our teachers will have the opportunity to vote afterward.

As we make the slow descent from Epiphany to the Lenten season this month, we have been reminded by our Sunday lectionary readings just how desperate our world is for the message of the cross, and yet, just how repulsed the world is by that same message. Because of this, many churches have turned their attention away from the cross and onto more palatable topics with the hope of packing the pews. While I commend the desire to build the church, our Lord has given us the message to proclaim. As St. Paul put it, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). As Jesus promised, He will build His church, so we must remain focused on His life, death, and resurrection for sinners whether the world around us likes it or not. It is what all of us need to be reminded of over and over again. So please join us this Lent as we journey to the cross.

In Christ's Service,

Brian Thomas

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All Thinking by C.S. Lewis

I would rather be what God
chose to make me
than the most glorious
creature that I could think of;

For to have been born
in God's thoughts
and then made by God

is the dearest, grandest, and
most precious thing
in all thinking.

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WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Have you ever wanted to study the life and writings of C.S. Lewis? Join us on Wednesdays from 10:00-11:00 am as Pr. Thomas leads an in-depth study through video, reading, and discussion on the tremendous impact of one of the most important Christian apologists of all time. Topics will include Mere Christianity, The Four Loves, The Problem of Pain, The Great Divorce, and some of his shorter essays on the faith.



THE ARCHITECT: AN ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

PAGE 2

by Rev. Brian Thomas

As many parishioners of Grace know, I am an avid golfer. My long-term goal as a player is to reach par, which is to say, even. Golf is the only place in life where getting even is good.

One of the most difficult aspects of the game is learning to hit out of bunkers, those nasty sand traps that are intentionally placed to make an already difficult game a lot harder. The professionals on TV make it look so easy, but trust me, it's not.



It's a skill that takes years to master. The legendary golf architect, Donald Ross, once commented: "There is no such thing as a misplaced bunker. Regardless of where a bunker may be, it is the business of the player to avoid it."

While attempting to avoid a bunker recently, it dawned on me that no one looks at a golf course and thinks, "That's extraordinary how the grass, bunkers, ponds, and holes just randomly appeared out of nothing." Why? Because it is readily apparent that each course is purposefully designed by an architect and maintained by the greens-keeping staff. And yet, many atheists look at the well designed, ordered, beautiful and purposeful world that we all live in and believe it all a random, unexplained, unplanned accident. In other words, there isn't an architect behind it all.

Some atheists have argued that if an architect truly existed, he would have designed his creatures better. This is Stephen Jay Gould's main line of argument in his book, *The Panda's Thumb*, where he cites the apparent sub-optimal design of a bony extrusion that pandas have for thumbs. The problem for Darwinists, like Gould, is that this turns out to be an argument for an architect rather than against one.

First, the very fact that someone can identify something as "sub-optimal" implies that they know what optimal design is. You can't know something is imperfect unless you know what perfect is. So Gould's observation of sub-optimal design implies an admission that design is detectable in the panda's thumb.

Second, sub-optimal design doesn't mean there's no design. Even if we grant that something is not designed optimally, that doesn't mean it's not designed at all. Just because I don't find bunkers on a golf course to be optimal for my game, they are still designed; no one would claim they were put there by natural laws.

Third, to say that something is poorly designed you must know what the objectives or purpose of the designer are. If Gould doesn't know what the designer intended, then he can't say with authority that the design falls short of those intentions. How does Gould know the panda's thumb isn't exactly what God had in mind? Gould assumes the panda should have opposable thumbs like you and me. But perhaps the panda's thumbs were designed to be just as they are. Last year, the San Diego Zoo sadly sent two giant pandas back to China. While I don't know that much about pandas, I do know that Bai-Yun and Xiao Liwu's thumbs worked just fine when stripping bamboo down to eat its edible interior. And they looked incredibly cute doing so. Maybe pandas don't need opposable thumbs because they don't need to write articles like this one; they simply need to strip bamboo to survive. Gould can't fault the designer of that thumb if it wasn't intended to do more than strip bamboo.



Finally, in a world constrained by physical properties, all design requires trade-offs. Golf architects are typically restricted by property size, natural grass and tree varieties, and must consider sustainability in their design. For example, golf architects in much of the Northwest are not nearly as concerned with water usage as they are here in the arid Southwest. Because trade-offs cannot be avoided in this world, engineers must look for a compromise position that best achieves intended objectives.

THE ARCHITECT: AN ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

For this reason, you cannot fault the design of a Toyota Prius because it doesn't carry fifteen passengers when the objective of the maker was to carry four. The car maker traded size for fuel economy and achieved the intended objective. Likewise, it could be that the design of the panda's thumb is a trade-off that still achieves intended objectives. The thumb is just right for stripping bamboo. Perhaps, if the thumb had been designed any other way, it would have hindered the panda in some other area. We simply don't know without knowing the objectives of the designer. What we do know is that Gould's criticisms cannot succeed without knowing those objectives. In other words, Gould is happy to place himself above the architect to offer critique rather than humbling himself before the One who made the heavens and the earth. Or to use St. Paul's words from Romans 1:21—22:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

While God has revealed Himself in nature, I am more grateful that He has revealed Himself historically in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem sinners like me, who like Gould, once rejected Him. While belief in Jesus may not help me reach par, it will certainly ensure I reach heaven, and I'm pretty sure the courses there are designed without bunkers. Amen.

*My line of argument concerning Stephen Jay Gould is taken from Frank Turek's approach in his book, *I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist*.



EYE IN THE SKY by Jeremy Fullam, Council Member

In the coming weeks, you will notice some new fixtures installed on the walls and ceilings around the property. After having been on the pending project docket for some time, the council recently authorized funds (included in the FY 2020 budget) to purchase and install a closed-circuit digital security camera system. As much as we would hope that our facility and property would be respected, we have to live with the reality that we are a target for various criminal acts, including vandalism and petty theft.

We intend to purchase a high-quality system so that - if needed - we can use footage to identify and potentially prosecute those responsible for damaging our property. It is the council's hope, however, that the mere presence of these cameras will serve as a deterrent to any malicious behavior.

The placement of these cameras was developed in consultation with members who have experience in security and law enforcement. We obtained bids from four licensed security contractors and ultimately chose a local company - San Diego CCTV Pros - to install a church-purchased commercially available camera system. At this time, these cameras will mainly cover entry/exits around the campus, as well as areas of increased risk and sensitivity, such as the main office and sacristy. After this phase has been installed, the council will, on an ongoing basis, evaluate the need for further cameras.

If you have questions about this project, please feel free to reach out to Jeremy Fullam.

CAPS PREGNANCY CLINICS



Grace Lutheran has partnered with CAPS to support our local community's right to life. Grace member, Shannon Carreiro, will serve as GLC's liaison and regularly provide our church with a variety of opportunities to serve women and couples with unplanned pregnancies in San Diego. If you would like to join CAPS as a partner volunteer, they will provide in-depth training on Tuesday, March 17th; however, you must have your application in by February 25th. For more information on this and other volunteer opportunities, please go to friendsofcaps.org/volunteer



One of the most beloved stories of the Old Testament is centered on the life of Joseph (Genesis 37-50). The favorite son of Jacob, he is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, ends up in Egypt, and within a few years, he ends up running the most powerful nation on earth as Pharaoh's Chief Executive Officer, which in the end, turns out to be the very thing that saves his brothers from famine. In the lower medallion of the window, Joseph is holding a daisy, symbolizing purity. In the upper portion, we see a young Jesus in the Temple, where He astounded the teachers of the Law with his knowledge and wisdom.

When we collect the details of Joseph's life we see a glorious reflection that closely mirrors the life of Christ. This is not because Joseph was Jesus's favorite Bible hero. It is because God is sovereign, and he has been laying the tracks for the glory of Christ throughout redemptive history. Jesus is the greater Joseph.

Here is a list of similarities that should cause you to marvel at God's sovereignty:

1. He is the object of his father's special love.
2. He had promises of divine exaltation.
3. He was mocked by his family.
4. He was sold for pieces of silver.
5. He was stripped of his robe.
6. He was delivered up to the Gentiles.
7. He was falsely accused.
8. He was faithful amid temptation.
9. He was thrown into prison.
10. He stood before rulers.
11. His power was acknowledged by those in authority.
12. He saves his rebellious brothers from death when they realize who he is.
13. He embraces God's purpose even though it brings him intense physical harm.
14. He is the instrument God uses at the hands of the Gentiles to bless his people.
15. He welcomes Gentiles to be part of his family.
16. People must bow their knee before him.

PLAYING WITH POLITICS: THE VOCATION OF THE VOTER

CROSSWISE INSTITUTE SUMMER CAMP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS JUNE 21-25, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, IRVINE

There are two topics you're not supposed to talk about in polite conversation: politics and religion. Avoiding these crucial features of human interaction, however, has hurt our ability to understand those with whom we disagree. This year's topic is a bold step toward understanding the nature of American politics, from the ads that shape us to the candidates we hope will improve our lives. Do we put too much hope in our government? Or too little?

2020 Crosswise summer experience will provide a multi-leveled approach to our voting responsibilities, examining the science behind elections as well as the consequences of a disengaged citizen. For the Christian, the stakes are high and yet there is a tremendous opportunity for the Gospel in the midst of our civic discussions.

If your high school student is interested, please let Pr. Thomas know as we have scholarship funds to support. For more information, see:

<https://www.cui.edu/academicprograms/christcollege/crosswise/crosswise-experience-2020>



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Fellow Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are two matters of importance coming up for decision by the congregation in February. Many of you know that while the Council and Elders are authorized to take certain actions by the church's foundational documents, other matters call for action by the Voter Assembly, the body of the church's voting membership. If you have any doubts about whether you're a voting member, talk to Pastor Brian or Gretchen. The normal quorum for a meeting of the Voter Assembly is not terribly hard to achieve, but a 2/3 vote will be needed to update the Church's Constitution and Bylaws and that has proved to be difficult in the past.

Work on the Constitution and Bylaws has spanned two administrations of the church, dating back to the presidency of Paul Himmelberger. Last year, the Council concluded that, because a number of hands had already contributed to the amendment effort, the process of finalizing amendments and gaining approval by the congregation and the District would be placed in the hands of a small committee, made up of Paul Himmelberger, Chris Latham, and myself. The committee has reached a final version of the proposed amended documents that we believe will greatly enhance and clarify the management of the church's business affairs. The proposed documents and the Church's existing Constitution and Bylaws are available for review in the office or by contacting Gretchen Jordan. If the Voter Assembly approves the amended version of the documents on February 23, we will then send them out for District Approval. After the District approves, we have to bring the documents back before the Voter Assembly again. I hope you'll make an effort to see this process through.

Also up for ratification at the February 23 Voter Assembly will be Phase-1 of the organ restoration project. The Council's initial effort was to attempt to establish the market for the rather unique services involved in renovating an instrument like our organ. Michael and Dale from Blackinton, the company that services our organ, developed the general outline of the project. We then sought out estimates of the cost of restoring the organ from various sources based on a general description of the project. Ultimately, the details of the project were reduced to a Request for Proposal (RFP), designed to provide specifications for bids and in an effort to receive the most comparable bids possible. Three fine organ builders, Blackinton, Quimby, and Berghaus were presented with the RFP, which broke the process into stages; a recognition that, realistically speaking, the project will have to be pursued in phases through multiple fundraising efforts and by a series of church administrations. All three builders were amply qualified to restore the organ by all accounts. Quimby declined to bid and after consideration and discussion, the Council is recommending Blackinton's bid. Blackinton is familiar with our organ, local to the church, and was competitive in price.

The Council has only approved presentation of Blackinton's bid for Phase-1 of the organ to the Voter Assembly for ratification and the work will only be undertaken when the funds are raised and available to the church. Phase-1 is basically the control features of the organ, the console and some related circuitry which will help set the "map" for future work. The rest of the phases of the organ restoration will be the subject of future Council deliberations and votes, Blackinton has not yet been awarded the remaining phases, and the other bidder, Berghaus, has not been eliminated from consideration for the future phases. The Council considers this a prudent way to proceed on a complicated project like this and will permit evaluation of work and adjustment of the project as and if needed over the years that will be involved. With that said, we are already over half way to the estimated cost of the first phase.

Given financial issues that troubled the Church in the years before Pastor Bombaro came along, the Council is committed to our continuing efforts to place funds in reserves for contingencies, among them the elevator, which will represent a significant expense when it decides to quit one of these days. And we don't want to borrow, either, even for something so dear to us as the organ. This Council simply won't take that sort of chance with GLC's future and assets and while raising funds for the organ. Our investigation into the expansion of the Pre-School continues and we've found that the Den will be much less expensive to convert for that purpose. More on that next time.

In the meantime, and while we can all look for ways to assist with the organ funding according to our abilities and means, it is critical that we continue to make our normal contributions to the Church. Our place of worship and campus are a sanctuary of rare beauty, but they are high maintenance. And as always, I would like to encourage you to pray for your church, your Pastor, and the church leadership.

Blessings in Christ Jesus,
Randy Houts, Council President



Dove Love 2 is the Dove toddler class painting the hearts for their door and Dove Love 2020 is the finished product. Check it out in the courtyard.



Pr. Brian joined the Ninjas for their celebratory lunch after their workouts.

4 YEAR OLD NINJAS



The Grace Lutheran Preschool Explorers on Ninja Warrior Day. They traversed across an obstacle course set up in the parking lot by some of our teachers. The children were rewarded with Ninja Day for filling their bucket of good deeds. They are currently working on filling the bucket again for a camping event.

CHARACTER MATTERS: A STUDY ON LUTHERAN VIRTUE ETHICS

NEW ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS (FEB 9 - MARCH 29) 9:30 AM TO 10:15 AM

Join Pr. Brian in the Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour to begin a conversation about the role of character and ethics in the life of the Christian. The goal is for students to wrestle with what it means to live their lives faithfully in a broken world.

Topics will include:

1. Character Defined
2. Justification and Christian Character
3. More than Law & Gospel?
4. The Formation of Character
5. The Reason for Character
6. Test Case #1: Transgenderism & Christian Character
7. Test Case #2: Bio-Ethics & Christian Character
8. Test Case #3: Business Ethics & Christian Character

AN UPDATE FROM THE RALLS IN PNG

Dear Friends at Grace,

We are once again in Papua New Guinea! Two of your members have joined us! Emily (Rall) spent 4 weeks with us, holding medical clinics in some areas where medical care has been suspended because of tribal warfare. She ended up stitching up the heel of a young boy who had been cut with a bush knife by his younger brother--the cut just missing his Achilles tendon! Emily sat in the front yard and the boy laid down with his foot in her lap. A shot of lidocaine and the boy didn't even feel the 8 stitches! In another situation, Emily saw a young boy who uncovered his shin to show us a gaping wound of about 4 inches going down his tibia. He had suffered from this for 3 years. Every time he went to the hospital, the wound was dressed and he was given penicillin and some pain meds! He carried around a little baggie with a chunk of his tibia in it. Osteomyelitis in the extreme! Emily left us on



January 30th to continue her travel to South America, just after our son, Chris and his new wife, Kapau came to spend 10 days with us. Since their arrival, they have cooked delicious Thai meals for us, helped with general household chores and shoveled a pile of gravel to make room for delivery of books donated for the Lutheran Agency schools here.

We arrived in PNG several weeks before the Seminary is due to start so that Ron might be able to preach at the congregations a little farther from the Seminary. On one of our trips, Ron's backpack was stolen from the back of our truck, but happily, it was recovered a few days later by a seminarian living in the area. Emily's boots (stolen at the same time) were not returned because the thief said he "needed" them. The seminarian told the thief that he had made a big mistake--stealing from God--and that if he kept Ron's belongings (alb, pectoral cross, Bible and the like) he would have to repent, change his life, read the Bible and worship regularly. The thief apparently thought the cost was too great and gave all of Ron's belongings back!

It is always a joy to celebrate with the many PNG congregations and we have had a little more time to get around since we came so early. Just yesterday, we discovered that school will begin even later than we had been told. The Dean of Studies decided that so many students arrive a day or two late that they would just solve that problem by starting a week late! Unfortunately, that probably means that students will arrive even later!

There are several Bible schools in different circuits that will be starting next week. The schools offer one year programs that teach students the Bible so that they can serve effectively as evangelists. Ron has been busy setting the programs for the schools, getting students settled in the schools and helping the teachers prepare for their classes.

The Papua New Guinea Mission Society organized a book drive last year to supply books for a school that suffered several arson fires. We received so many books that we expanded to include all the 32 Lutheran agency schools (many of them in bush places) here in the Highlands. Half of the 36,000 pounds of books arrived by container last week and the schools have been coming to get boxes of books all week! The other container will be delivered at the end of this week. It's an exciting time and the teachers are thrilled to get so many new books!

Thank you as always for your faithful support--particularly in prayer! We look forward to our next family visit to San Diego!

In Christ,

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

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, Dee, , Eli and Eamonn, John, Brianna, Dale Northup, 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 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 Neuberg, Heath Russert, and Andrew Warren

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

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

BIRTHDAYS

FEBRUARY

12- Nathan Russert
15- Gloria Berge
16- Meriah Razak
17- Lola and Ellie Mezzadri
17- Gretchen Jordan
17- Gavin Robillard
20- Rylinn Farish
23- Gabriel Castaneda
24- Brady Milligan
27- Laura Latham,
27- Randy Houts
27- Georgia Thompson
28- Lily Thomas
28- Angelo Brown

MARCH

1- Travis Milligan
4 - Ted Nilsen
5- Joelle Merfalen
6 – Paris Brown
If we missed your birthday
call or email the church office.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|--|
| Sun. Feb. 16 | 11:30 am | HEROES SUNDAY - join your church family and make your own mini-sub sandwich to honor our heroes. |
| Sun. Feb. 23 | 9:15 AM | VOTERS' ASSEMBLY - Please plan on attending this very important meeting to vote on the revised Constitution and By-Laws of Grace. Breakfast Burrito Bar will be hosted by the choir. |
| Tues. Feb. 25 | 6:00 pm | SHROVE TUESDAY - Extraordinary pancakes along with the classics and homemade sausages. |
| Wed. Feb. 26 | 12 & 6 pm | ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES |
| Sun. Mar 1 | 8 & 10:30 am | FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT |
| Wed. Mar 4 | 5:15 pm | LENTEN SOUP SUPPER - A light soup supper in the fellowship hall followed by the Lenten service. Please help by bringing in a soup to share. Sign up on the board in the hallway. |
| | 6:00 pm | MID-WEEK LENT SERVICE |

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