

# THE WITTENBERG WAY

## PASTOR'S PAGE

November 2019  
Volume 12, Issue 10



Dear Grace Family,

Some visitors recently worshipped with us and they marveled at how a staunchly liturgical and sacramental church in the middle of Hillcrest could have such a diverse membership with so many young families and children. When I told them that the majority of our members do not actually live in the neighborhood but drive in from as

far away as San Marcos, Alpine, and Bonita, they were flabbergasted.

After hearing their story, I learned that district leadership had sold his congregation on the idea that only old people care about liturgy and keeping traditions alive. Grace is proof positive that this not true!

There is a reason that DNA testing and genealogical tracking companies like "Ancestry" and "23 and Me" have sharply risen in popularity. Young and old want to know from whence they came. They want to know their family origins, identity, and story. I told our visitors that the key to Grace's growth and sustainment over the years has been quite simple. We have embraced our unique identity and history as American Lutherans. We have deep roots and we have consistently watered and nurtured our families through the ups and downs of life through Word and Sacrament, hymnody, prayer, catechesis, and the celebration of our life together in Christ.

I want to thank all who have volunteered and helped support our GLORIA organ concert and upcoming gala to raise funds to restore our pipe organ with your time and talents. It has been a team effort across the board and I'm proud of how our church has rallied together.

In Christ's Service

Pr. Brian Thomas

### Choruses from "The Rock" - Part I by T.S. Eliot

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.  
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!  
The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our  
ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to God .  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in  
knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in  
information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the  
Dust.



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## Waiting for Heaven in an Age of Instant Gratification

By Pastor Brian

Listening to Elyse Fitzpatrick's excellent talk on the "life everlasting" at the recent Here We Still Stand conference, I was reminded of a hospital conversation with a parishioner. "Pastor, I just want to be with the Lord in heaven and for all of this to be finally over," Ella exclaimed with an earnestness that let everyone within the oncology unit know she meant it. This was her third round of chemotherapy and the will to fight the good fight had diminished with each drop of poison introduced into her bloodstream. Ella joins the chorus of countless saints across the ages in expressing their desire for heaven where Jesus has promised He will "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more—or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist" (Rev 21:4).

As much as we may long for heaven. Even death itself does not usher us into the final state of the new creation. So, in life and death, we must wait. And as the philosopher, Tom Petty, sings, "Waiting is the hardest part."

### Waiting as Blessed Hope

Whether it's waiting in line at the DMV, waiting in traffic, or waiting for the results of a biopsy, one thing is certain—no one enjoys it. This is especially acute in a consumeristic culture continually bombarded with advertisements promising immediacy and instant gratification. Our impatience with God's timing, however, is not unique to our time and place.

The Old Testament is replete with the refrain: "How Long, O Lord?" The tension in such a question is palpable but alleviated in part by the knowledge that God is not bound by the linear constraints of time. God is infinite, and therefore, lives in radical simultaneity in which past, present, and future co-inhere without being constrained as we finite creatures are in the succession of moments from past to present to future. Thus, Peter can say that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day (2 Pet 3:8).

It is easy to view waiting with a negative attitude, particularly during difficult seasons of life; however, the Bible provides a more positive approach by stressing it is as "hopeful expectation." The Hebrew words for "wait" most often employed in the Old Testament are closely tied to the concepts of trust and hope (qavah, yachal, chakah). We are to wait upon the Lord with hopeful expectancy like children going to sleep on Christmas Eve in eager anticipation of the gifts that will be given and received come morning because we are confident that our Heavenly Father will deliver on all His promises (cf Ps 130:5–6). Thus, the prophet Isaiah can say that those "who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isa 40:31).

The Old Testament tells a story with a future-oriented focus pointing towards the promised Prophet (Deut 18:15), Priest (Ps 110:4), and King (Isa 9:6–7), who would usher in a kingdom where God's reign would be fully realized by Israel and the nations. When we open the New Testament, the writers quickly demonstrate how the great promises of the Old Testament have been inaugurated and fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15).

Through the means of grace, Christ grants us a share in all the blessings of this ancient hope. The promised kingdom can be experienced and enjoyed now by grace through faith in the King's death and resurrection. The gift of the Holy Spirit poured out in Holy Baptism is a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of Christ's glory (Eph 1:14). And yet, we followers of Jesus must await the full manifestation of these promises to come full bloom.

The tension of waiting for heaven is tied to the fact that we live between what theologians often refer to as the "already and the not yet." Believers have received the promised end-time blessings through the Gospel and already participate in the messianic age. But these blessings are ours by faith, not sight (Rom 8:24). Therefore, this present age is lived under the cross.

### A Kingdom Under Attack

Life under the cross can be likened to a battlefield as we wage war with sin, death, and the devil. Many theologians have compared life between the already/not yet to that of D-Day of the Normandy invasion to V-Day at the end of the Second World War. The death and resurrection of Jesus are like D-Day; Christ's return will be like V-day. C.S. Lewis similarly spoke of this present world as enemy-occupied territory:

# THY KINGDOM COME

Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends; that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going.<sup>i</sup>

Life under the cross presses us not only into a war within but also a war without. As Steven Hein warns, “Spiritual warfare also entails a battle against the forces of evil outside the Christian which can bring experiences of temptation, trial, and tribulation.”<sup>ii</sup> While we are assured of final victory, we live in the present fighting the good fight of faith. As such, we are called to arms with the weapons of faith (Eph 6:10–20). There will be times when we will grow weary and want to give up in the face of what seems like insurmountable odds, repeated failure, and trials of varying degree and kind. Like Ella in our introduction, we just want it to be over.

Our Lord’s timing often feels like it is moving at a snail’s pace. But Peter reminds us that the Lord’s delay serves a patient purpose: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, he gathered his disciples together to give them their marching orders: “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). Thus, before the King returns, he has left his Church with the vocation of expanding his kingdom through the ministry of His Word and Sacraments (Matt 28:19–20). The church is the visible manifestation of Christ’s kingdom on earth, like a city set on a hill, shining the light of Christ so that all would know where to find safe passage and refuge (cf. Matt 5:14–16).

My grandfather used to regale me with sea stories in my childhood. He served as an engineer on a U.S. Navy ship that was sunk by a Japanese torpedo in the South Pacific. As he and his fellow survivors floated in the shark-infested waters amidst the wreckage awaiting rescue, my grandfather said he hoped for three things: (1) That he would be saved, (2) That his fellow sailors would be saved, and (3) that the rescue ship would reach safe harbor, so that they could finally go home. This hope of survival amid danger motivated them to band together to stay alive. Similarly, when we pray the second petition of the Lord’s prayer, Thy Kingdom come, we are not asking for the kingdom of power to come, for that is already present; we are asking that the kingdom of God’s grace would come into our hearts, and into our neighbor’s hearts, so that all would enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of glory to come. In light of this petition, Luther encouraged his barber and friend, Peter Beskendorf, to pray the following:

Dear Lord God, Father, convert and protect! Convert those who have not yet become like little children and members of Your kingdom, so that together we may serve You in Your kingdom with a right faith and genuine love, and then, come out of this assaulted kingdom into the eternal Kingdom. Hinder those who refuse to turn away from using their power and strength to destroy Your kingdom. Hurl them down from their thrones and humiliate them so they are forced to cease and desist. Amen.<sup>iii</sup>

To pray, Thy kingdom come, is searching and demanding. First, it means we are not the king and must lay down our kingdom-building projects, taking every thought captive unto the King’s command. Second, it is an acknowledgment that our citizenship is not gained through merit but by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of the King alone, for we serve a benevolent King whose rule is not tyrannical, but compassionate, merciful, and loving.

As we lift this prayer unto God we begin with ourselves. “Use me, O Lord, to faithfully serve in Your kingdom through my earthly vocations, in my relationships, and through the resources, you have graciously provided.” However, this prayer is not given just for us, but corporately, for it begins with the plural possessive pronoun, “Our Father who art in heaven.” Here we must recognize that this is a battle we do not, and should not, fight alone for there is strength in numbers. Our King has promised, moreover, that all authority in heaven and earth are His, and as we carry out His Gospel mission, we have the comfort of knowing that He is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). Until then, we pray: “Come, Lord Jesus!”

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<sup>i</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 51.

<sup>ii</sup> Steven A. Hein, *The Christian Life: Cross or Glory?* (Irvine, CA: New Reformation Publications, 2015), 107.

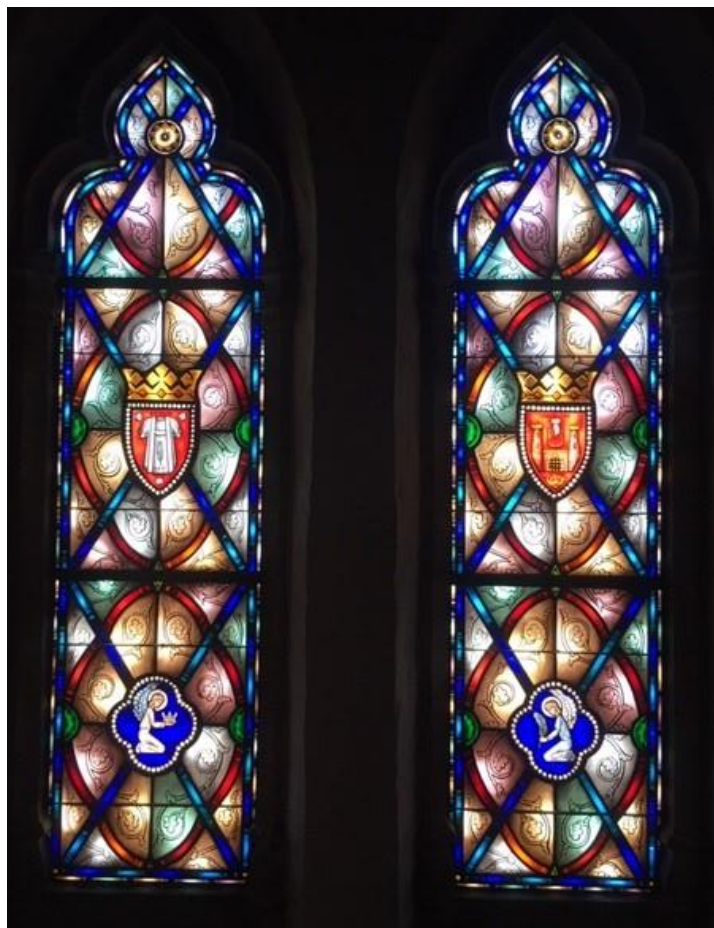
<sup>iii</sup> Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray: For Peter, the Master Barber*, Trans. by Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: CPH, 2012), 9.

## Can You Find the "Martyr" Windows?

Martyrs are those who have paid the ultimate cost of following Jesus with their very lives. The term "martyr" was taken from the Roman courtroom denoting a witness. Located in a conspicuous place, Grace Lutheran has two stained glass windows featuring martyrs of the faith.

The first window is of Stephen, one of the first deacons, chosen for his faithfulness to distribute food to the needy in the early church. Falsely accused of blasphemy against God for following Jesus, he was stoned to death. His dying words were an echo of Jesus' own last words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60).

The second window is of John Huss (1369-1416AD), an early reformer from Bohemia (the northeastern portion of today's Czech Republic). Nearly a century before Luther, Huss began to champion the authority of scripture against indulgences, immorality and works righteousness. "In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached, I will die today with gladness," was his last utterance before being burned at the stake, chanting hymns as the fire consumed him. The term Huss means "goose" in the Czech language. The early reformer seemed to know that his reforming work laid the groundwork for another who would follow. He said to the bishop who had ordered his execution, "You may cook this goose, but there will come a swan who will not be silenced." Huss was making a play on words with this prediction. That swan was Martin Luther.



"I was overwhelmed with astonishment," Luther later wrote. "I could not understand for what cause they had burnt so great a man, who explained the Scriptures with so much gravity and skill."

### HOW OUR OFFERINGS STACK UP AS OF 10/30/19

October Actual	\$22,269	YTD Offerings Actual	\$206,226	2019 Budget	\$246,000
October Budget	\$20,558	YTD Offerings Budget	\$199,997	Amount needed	
Overage	\$ 2,011	Overage	\$ 6,229	By 12/31/19	\$39,774

### PODCAST OF THE MONTH

THE WORD ENDURES

<https://thewordendures.org/>

A study of the Bible with the Church, past and present, with host Pastor Will Weedon.



*The* WORD *of the* LORD  
ENDURES FOREVER





Pr. Brian with newborn baby, Leo Schroeder.  
Leo's Baptism will be Dec. 1, 2019.



Oktoberfest 2019 was our annual celebration here at Grace on Oct. 26th. Plenty of delicious food, fun games and good music. Many thanks to everyone that made this year's event a success!



At their recent Grace Gathering at the parsonage, guests were treated to a "Low-Country Boil".



Kariff Gomez (second from right) is with his teammates from La Jolla Country Day School after winning the Ice Hockey District Championship. Congratulations!



Michael Burke and Dale Sorenson are getting ready for the behind the scenes organ tour. If you missed the tour and are interested in seeing how the organ works and why it needs repairing, contact the church office for the next available date.



Members and Friends of Grace Lutheran:

I have a few things to highlight for you as we approach the close of my two-year term as your President. First, I have received a number of requests to continue in my position to provide some consistency in direction for a few pending projects, notably among them consideration and planning for expansion and enhancement of our preschool, proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, and the organ restoration bidding and approval process. I have prayerfully considered these requests and determined that I would be willing to continue for another year if the congregation re-elects me. Several council positions will be turning over, including President, Vice President/School Board, Stewardship, and Fellowship. You're welcome to propose candidates for these positions, including mine, my willingness to serve a bit longer notwithstanding!

Although we hope to amend related provisions of the church's documents in 2020, approval of the budget and the election of new church officers requires a Voter Assembly. This is a meeting of the church's voting members (typically individuals over the age of 18 that have been formally admitted as members) for which advance notice is provided. If you have any doubts about your voting status, see Pastor Brian. To conduct business at a Voter Assembly, a numerical majority of the voting membership must be physically present at the meeting. So this is different than certain meetings in which action can be taken by a majority of *those present*, regardless of number of members the voting body has. Obviously then, attendance by every voting member who can make it is critical to our ability to conduct business at the Voter Assembly. *The Voter Assembly will be December 8, 2019 following the second service (the current plan is to have 2 services that day, so early birds could maybe consider hitting the street fair or, dare I suggest... Pastor's Class!).* Please try to be there if at all possible and I'll try to keep the meeting as efficient as possible and get everyone on their way.

I will briefly mention some of my continuing efforts and priorities as your President. We have progressed in our investigation and planning for expansion of the school, although significant work remains. For now, the plan is to upgrade our facilities in the classrooms upstairs and expand by one classroom. Pastor Brian is infusing the curriculum with a higher level of Christian content and bringing a form of Catechesis to staff as well. We are still receiving input from architects and other professionals on requirements and feasibility. One anticipated benefit of school expansion is the ability to generate revenue to direct to missions and to assist with the organ restoration.

Speaking of the organ, the Council has solicited bids from 3 fine builders, within and without of California. We don't know exactly who will bid yet, but Michael was instrumental (guess that's a pun) in putting together a Request for Proposal which detailed the work needed on the organ. The Council hopes this RFP make it easier to compare bids. The Council will select and propose what appears to be the best bid to the congregation at a prospective Voter Assembly in 2020 for ratification. You are encouraged to donate to the organ restoration at any time, however. Although the bids are not in yet, we do anticipate the expense of the restoration to be very significant and it will take several years and some benefaction to reach our goals. We are looking at doing the project in phases as well as in one shot in the future at this juncture.

From a congregational safety standpoint, we are actively soliciting bids for surveillance cameras for the church premises. Detective Eric Cooper of the San Diego Police Department has been extremely generous in providing his expertise to help Jeremy Fullam and I design another Request for Proposal which will be submitted to bid for this project. The cameras will capture activity around the church, potentially identify wrongdoers, and provide a visual deterrent. This project is anticipated to move in up to 3 phases, depending on cost and experience with the system. The church's locks have been updated and re-keyed. We also changed key protocol and have an updated list of who has what keys. While the council recently voted not to utilize professional security guards, the council has approved the formation of a Safety Team made up of volunteers from the congregation. The Team's membership and purposes are in the formative stage. We are also automating certain locks at the church to enhance the control of ingress during services and at other important times. We have also formed a core of Ushers and other church members to verify certain access points to the church are locked and/or monitored during services. Finally, the Governor recently signed a bill that may offer funds to houses of worship making security upgrades. While this is perhaps a sad commentary on our times, we are investigating the applicability and utility of this new law for GLC.

Lastly, I would like to mention the courtyard fountain, which you may have noticed, has been removed. This fountain was problematic from a maintenance standpoint because of its location under one of the Mesquite trees. It also was



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)

not up to the occasional person jumping, sitting, or other messing around on the top of the fountain. The Council's sense was that the movement, appearance, and sound of water was nevertheless a pleasing feature of the courtyard, so we are in the planning phases of a replacement fountain, in a more Spanish style, in a new location in the courtyard. The plan would include some relatively minor aesthetic changes to the firepit to make the two features more consonant and in keeping with the church's general architecture.

As we approach year-end, it's very important to check your giving record and do your best to meet your pledges and commitments by December 31. These are better financial times for the church than anyone thought possible a decade or two ago, but much of what we have accomplished was done with funds from individual benefactors of means. And the church is now undertaking a project to restore the organ which will run to many hundreds of thousands of dollars. It will take continuing financial commitment to the church to maintain our capital integrity, save for repairs and contingencies, and see to the organ. It will continue to be an adventure to be sure, so let's prayerfully partner in it, each according to their ability, means, and talents.

Blessings in Christ Jesus,  
Randolph Houts, Council President

## MEET OUR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS



### MISS PAMELA THOMAS

Ms. Pamela has been with Grace for six years. She comes from a small country in West Africa that was founded by the American Colonization Society (ACS) who took free slaves back to Africa in the 1800's. She fosters 2 girls there: Esther (24) and Theresa (17). She is proud to have received her US Citizenship and Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development. Pamela feels God has called her to mold the minds of young children and teaching is her passion, so she does it with all her heart. She enjoys sharing Bible stories with the children in the simplest ways so they can better understand them. You will always find Pamela singing, dancing, and having fun with messy art activities with the kids.



### MISS BROOK WILBUR

Brook was born and raised in Hanford, California with her 2 siblings. After starting as an aide in the 2 year old room, she has decided to go to school to get certified to be an infant teacher. Brook enjoys photography and drawing. She loves seeing the children's excitement as they learn new things. Her favorite Bible story is the Ten Commandments. She loves to relax by the mountains and at the beach.



### ADOPT A TEACHER

Parishioners can "adopt" a teacher! Simply by asking for one of the bio cards and praying for them, acknowledging their birthdays or work anniversaries, leaving them notes of encouragement or whatever you see fit. Bio cards are available from Rexanna, our Preschool Director or from the church office.

The Preschool will celebrate their Annual Thanksgiving Feast on Friday Nov. 22nd in the Fellowship Hall. Each year the preschool staff puts together a delicious celebration of thanks. Preschool families are asked to bring in appetizers and desserts.





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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 in time of need:** Bill, Dee, Samuel & Henry, and Rev. Dr. Mueller. 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 Neuberger, Heath Russert, and Andrew Warren

**Prayers awaiting the arrival of a child of God:** Michael & Karen.

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

## BIRTHDAYS

### NOVEMBER

11- Spencer Huntley  
11- Luke Rall  
14- Quinn Razak  
18- Gleason Snashall  
18- Gloria Himmelberger  
21- Christy Van Dyke

23- Dave Janiak  
25- Rachel Merfalen  
28- Wyatt Lamontagne  
29- Christian Brown  
30- Claire Latham  
30- Harold Nichols  
30- Nick Russert

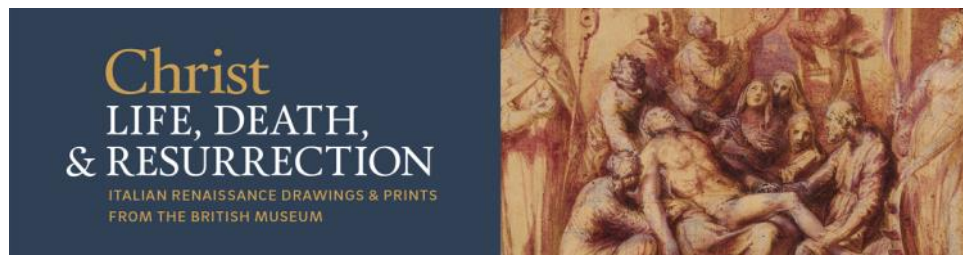
### DECEMBER

1- Alisa Moore  
2- Liam Schroeder  
5- Evangeline Yow

If we missed your birthday,  
contact the church office:  
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday	Nov. 16	6 pm	Organ Restoration Gala
Sunday	Dec. 1	8 & 10:30 am	First Sunday in Advent
Wednesday	Dec. 4	5:45 pm 6:30 pm	Soup Supper Sunday Mid-week Service
Sunday	Dec. 8	11:45 am	Voter Assembly Meeting



### FREE EXHIBITION

**Locations:** Founders Hall, Hoehn Family Galleries, University of San Diego  
Timken Museum of Art, Balboa Park  
From September 13 - December 13, 2019

*Christ: Life, Death, and Resurrection* includes over 40 original drawings and prints by Italian Renaissance artists from the renowned collection of the British Museum. This exhibition represents the first time that many of these objects will be displayed in the U.S., and thus is a unique opportunity to study these rare and beautiful works.

Hours: Mon-Fri 12 to 5 pm, Sat & Sun 12-4 pm, Closed Thanksgiving