

# THE WITTENBERG WAY

## PASTOR'S PAGE



Dear Grace Family,

I developed a deep appreciation for wine over twenty years ago when I had the opportunity to live in Italy. Wine is, after all, Italy's favorite past time. Rachel and I have recently visited several vineyards, including a few down in Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico. I find the entire wine making process fascinating. It is equal parts science and artistry. But it all starts with good soil and a healthy vine.

Jesus likened our relationship with Him to a vine and branches. "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). In a vineyard, branches are defined by their connection to the vine. Jesus is the vine, and so your identity is defined by your connection to Him. And it is in that relationship—and ONLY in that relationship—that you will bear fruit in your life, because that is what naturally happens when branches abide in a vine. If we become detached from Christ, then we cut ourselves off from the only source of life there is. But as we abide in Christ the vine then we will continue to be nourished with an abundant source of life and fruitfulness.

The gospel you hear and receive at church through Word and Sacrament is the sap of life flowing from the vine into the branches. The gospel refreshes our soul. It strengthens our faith. It enables our love and energizes our service. In other words, it produces the fruit of faith.

This past year has sadly kept some from being able to attend services. But whatever the circumstances may be, there is always a great danger in detaching yourself from Christ's church. In fact, it happened in the first century, so much so that the writer to the Hebrews warned his parishioners: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Heb 10:24).

Some people seem to think you can have Jesus without His church. But you can't! It doesn't work that way. Christ has brought us into His vineyard and He wants us to abide here, because this is where His life is. This is where branches draw nourishment from the vine to bear much fruit. Apart from the vine, you will become fruitless, faithless, and lifeless. But as the saying goes, *in vino veritas*; and in the true Vine, you receive the truth, because He is *the way, the truth, and the life*.

I am grateful for you, my fellow branches. May we continue to stir one another on in love and good works so that our parish would produce an excellent varietal of God's love for San Diego as we abide in Christ.

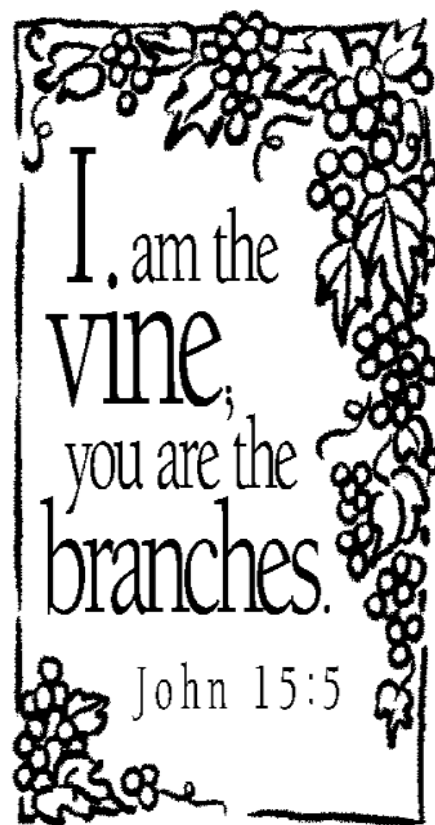
In Christ's love,

Pastor Thomas

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GRACE  
Lutheran Church

# THE LAW OF CAUSALITY

## by Pr. Brian Thomas

When you visit a doctor for some ailment, they will run a variety of tests to rule out possible causes. As they narrow it down, they are able to properly diagnose and treat the root problem. For the past few months, the Wednesday Bible study group has looked at a variety of heresies, false teachings, cults, and world religions. By ruling out false teaching, we are better able to understand the truth (what we believe and why we believe it). The second benefit of this study has been to equip ourselves to be better witnesses for the truth. As St. Peter puts it, we are "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).

Since only a small percentage of the congregation attends this study, I thought I would share some of our discussions in the newsletter concerning atheism. As I told the group this past week, I do not have enough faith to be an atheist. The evidence for theism, and particularly, the God of Holy Scripture is just too all encompassing to ignore. The atheist claims that no one created something out of nothing. To hold such an opinion is to doubt the law of causality. Causality is just one of several cosmological arguments. It claims that if the universe had a beginning then it must have had a cause:

Major Premise:      Everything that has a beginning has a cause.  
 Minor Premise:      The universe had a beginning.  
 Conclusion:          Therefore, the universe had a cause.

This argument is quite old; it was used by philosophers and theologians in the medieval period. It was particularly important to Thomas Aquinas. Today, this is not so controversial. With the discovery of the Big Bang, most scientists now admit that the universe—space, time, and matter—had a definite beginning. Even the brilliant atheist Stephen Hawking agrees with this. Philosophers refer to this as the principle of sufficient reason. Nothing just is without a reason for why it is.

The universe is a vast, interlocking chain of things that have come into existence. Each of these things must therefore have a cause. My parents caused me, my grandparents caused them, et cetera. But does the universe as a whole have a cause? Is there a FIRST cause, an uncaused cause, a transcendent cause of the whole chain of successive causes? The point of controversy isn't the beginning, but WHO or WHAT caused that beginning. The atheist protests against the very idea that a personal intelligence (God) caused this beginning.

The law of causality does not "prove" God's existence but simply show that it is not only plausible, but it is the best answer we have based on the evidence. For me personally, it falls into the legal arena of "beyond a reasonable doubt" when coupled with all the other arguments we will consider to defend our belief in God.

If space, time, and matter had a beginning, then the cause must transcend space, time, and matter. In other words, the cause must be space less, timeless, and immaterial. This cause must also be enormously powerful to create the universe out of nothing. And it must be a personal agent in order to choose to create since an impersonal force has no capacity to choose or create anything. Personal agents create. Impersonal forces—which both atheists and theists call natural laws—merely govern what is already created, provided agents don't interfere. For example, take gravity. As an impersonal force, it cannot decide anything. It blindly does the same thing over and over again. A personal agent, on the other hand, doesn't necessarily do the same thing over and over again. He or she could do something unique, like decide to create something.

So we are left with a space less, timeless, immaterial, powerful, and personal FIRST cause. As a Christian, this sounds very much like God. For us, it is an entirely probable claim based upon the evidence we have even apart from Holy Scripture. For atheists like Richard Dawkins, however, they respond with something like: "We have to give science more time. If we give science more time, eventually we will find a natural cause for the universe." Such a statement is not scientific at all. It is a "faith" based claim. Faith and the object of that faith are in science (or quite frankly, in humanity). Given advances in science and technology, Dawkin's faith may seem reasonable. After all, hasn't science continually advanced and proved a lot of things, so why shouldn't it be given a chance to prove the FIRST cause of the universe? Since nature had a beginning, nature cannot be its own cause. The cause must be beyond nature, which is what Christians mean by the word "supernatural." Immediately, an atheist will accuse me of the "god of the gaps" fallacy, which says that if we find a gap that science cannot answer, we plug "God into the gap," and say God must have done it.

## THE LAW OF CAUSALITY

We are not arguing from what we don't know (a gap), but from what we do know. In fact, we can flip this accusations around on our atheist friends and say they are using a "natural law of the gaps fallacy" by having faith that an undiscoverable natural law will one day explain the beginning of the universe. We will never find a natural cause for all of nature. I can say that with confidence because if nature had a beginning, then the cause cannot be something natural because nature didn't exist. Nature was the effect, so it cannot be the cause. The cause must be something supernatural or beyond nature.

Now, most honest atheists admit this fact, so they will say, "Well, then the universe just popped into existence without a cause." But if the universe just popped into being with all the extraordinary diversity that brilliantly works together to sustain life on earth uncaused and out of nothing for absolutely no purpose, then why doesn't everything do so? Why don't books, BMWs, and burritos just pop into existence out of nothing? In fact, if you're hungry right now for a burrito, does it make more sense to order one from a taco shop or just wait and hope? Talk about faith!

Nothing cannot create something, because, as Aristotle put it long ago, "nothing is what rocks dream about." Unless some powerful and personal agent intervenes, the ancient maxim still stands: out of nothing, nothing comes.

The cosmology of the 21st century is much more sympathetic to theistic beliefs than it was previously because there is growing realization within the scientific community that our universe came into being fine-tuned for life, which is to say, the fundamental constants of nature have specific values that seem to have been selected in order to allow life to develop. Is this a cosmic accident as atheists claim, or is this what one would expect if a personal God had to chosen to create in this way?

The Bible repeatedly describes the causal force of the universe as a personal agent possessing the characteristics anticipated by science and cosmology: God is described as an uncaused, non-spatial, a-temporal, immaterial, and personal cause with incredible power. The God of the Bible meets the criteria outlined by science.

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## PARAMENTS AND THANKS

Paraments are the colorful adornments that cover the altar, pulpit, and lectern. Their colors reflect the changing seasons of the church year. Most of Grace's paraments are quite old and have mildewed over the years. Like most church furnishings, paraments are custom-made and expensive. Two years ago one of our families purchased the red chalice veil and burse which cover the chalice. The elders had budgeted the purchase of one new set each year for the next few years, but thankfully, due to another generous gift, we were able to buy new red, white, green, and purple sets to complement our sanctuary.

Our new sets were custom made to our specifications including color, size, accent and trim and purchased through Concordia Publishing.

The new paraments are given to Grace in memory of Mildred Nichols and Otto Germann.





By Shannon Carreiro

## UNSUNG HEROES OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE MOVEMENT

After three months of grim and grimmer topics, now seems a good time for some uplifting stories. And, yes, there are some. More than I have space here to tell.

### Mildred Fay Jefferson (1926-2010)

Mildred Jefferson grew up in a rural east Texas town in the depression-era, segregated south. She graduated summa cum laude from Texas College at age 18, received a master's degree from Tufts University, and by age 25 had earned a Ph.D. from Harvard Medical School. She was the first African American woman to do so! She was also the first woman granted membership in the Boston Surgical Society and the first female



surgeon general at Boston University Medical Center. But Mildred was just getting started. In 1970 a decision by the AMA to allow its physician members to *ethically* perform abortions launched Mildred's second career. She became a powerful voice for the unborn and an influential, sought-after speaker. President Ronald Reagan credited Mildred with bringing him into the prolife movement. In 1973 she co-founded the National Right to Life, the nation's oldest prolife organization. She also founded the Culture of Life Studies Program, which she promoted in public schools nationwide. Until her death at 84, Mildred Fay Jefferson fought the good fight.

### Bernard Nathanson, M.D. (1926-2011)

Bernard Nathanson is an unlikely hero. After all, this is the man who co-founded the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL). He served as director of New York City's Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health, at the time the largest abortion facility in the world. He presided over 60,000 abortions. But in the late 1970s, this life-long atheist surprised everyone. He became a Christian and a forceful prolife advocate who dedicated the rest of his life to protecting the unborn. In 1996, he published "The Hand of God: A Journey from Death to Life by the Abortion Doctor Who Changed His Mind." Considered a seminal work in the prolife movement, it is still in print.



### Rebecca Kiessling

We've all heard people say they're against abortion except in cases of rape. Maybe we've even said it ourselves. Rebecca Kiessling has something to say about that. At age 18, Rebecca learned she had been conceived at knife-point by a serial rapist and given up for adoption only because abortion was illegal in Michigan at the time. "Whenever you make that exception for rape," she says, "what that really translates into is you being able to stand before me, look me in the eye, and say to me, 'I think your mother should have been able to abort you.'" Today Rebecca is an attorney and a politically influential international prolife speaker. Her powerful counter to anyone who would dismiss a life just because of how it is conceived is well worth reading at <https://rebeccakiessling.com/rebeccas-story>.



### Kristen Hawkins & SFLA

There's a common perception that only the old, conservative and uber-religious oppose abortion. Everyone knows that young adults are the "pro-choice generation" and highly supportive of abortion on demand. Kristen Hawkins begs to differ. Since 2008 Kristen has been president of the nation's largest youth prolife organization, Students for Life of America (SFLA). She heads a team of more than 45 full-time employees serving over 1,250 chapters in all 50 states. Their mission is to recruit, train and mobilize students and young adults to end abortion. In the 2020 election, they worked tirelessly to get out the vote for prolife candidates. SFLA believes that America's young adults want abortion abolished and their polling supports that belief: 70% of Millennials favor specific limits on abortion such as bans on late-term abortion and parent notification. That's cause for hope!





# UNSUNG HEROES OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE MOVEMENT

## 29 Members of the 117<sup>th</sup> United States Congress

This encouraging story was largely overlooked in the wake of the dysfunctional presidential election. Did you know that when the new Congress convened this past January it included a record number of prolife women in the House of Representatives? Ten of the 18 new Congresswomen got there by flipping seats in districts previously held by pro abortionists. They joined 11 prolife female incumbents who were reelected and 27 prolife male freshmen Representatives. Over in the Senate six prolife candidates were elected, including three incumbents. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony List, called the wins evidence that being prolife “has gone from being viewed as a political problem to a winning issue.”



## Mothers

A new human being is born every 8.08 seconds in the United States and every one of them has a mother. According to the latest CDC data, in 2019 there were 3,747,540 babies born in our nation. Forty percent of their mothers were unmarried. While that is a deeply regrettable statistic on many levels, it also contains a spark of hope. Those unwed mothers could easily have terminated their pregnancies with the enthusiastic approval of our culture. This Mother's Day, while we're honoring our own mothers, let's also pray for all the mothers who chose life and all the mothers who didn't.



### ***Did You Know?***

*The LCMS has a Life Ministry actively working to uphold the sanctity of life at all stages. Visit the website to learn more and to access resources including blogs, videos and news about events. [LCMS.org/life](https://LCMS.org/life)*

## FACES OF GRACE

Our organ restoration is progressing behind the scenes. Below is the new console which is constructed from beautiful white oak and will house the components. The important top of the console has also been completed by a local craftsman. Other components are in the process of completion. We'll keep you posted about Phase 2!



Guy Martin received his First Holy Communion on April 11th. Pastor Brian is pictured with Guy and his parents, Theresa and Josh.





Text: William Whiting, 1860  
Tune: "Melita," John Dykes, 1861  
Themes: Trinity, Trust, Travel  
LSB: 717

May 30: selected for Trinity Sunday (also Memorial Day weekend) at Grace

## By Beth Schleusener

"Eternal Father, Strong to Save" lives tenderly in a lot of hearts. We know its connection to the Armed Forces, especially the Royal Navy and US Navy, and we've heard it played at funerals, commemorations, and concerts. I often sang this hymn in chapel when Dave and I were in Japan, and I remember a young mom loving the text and tune so much, even though it made her cry (she mostly attended services alone with her young children while her husband, a helicopter pilot, was deployed in the Pacific).

Foremost, this is a Trinitarian hymn. Each stanza names a person of the Trinity and describes specific provision for us when we are in peril. The original text focuses strictly on the dangers of sea travel, and the biblical references are clear:

Stanza 1 – God the Father - Psalm 104 – we depend on the ongoing attention of our Creator, and we perish should he avert his attention.

Stanza 2 – God the Son – the Gospels - Miracles of calming the storm and walking on water at the Sea of Galilee.

Stanza 3 – God the Holy Spirit - Genesis 1 – the Spirit's role in calming the chaos during the creation of the earth.

Stanza 4 – the Triune God – Psalm 107 - Give thanks to the Lord – They cried in their trouble and he saved them from their distress. – Some went out on the sea in ships...they saw the works of the Lord.

In 1940 the Episcopal Church rewrote stanzas 2 and 3 to include travel on land and air. This is the version we sing in LSB (but the original text is printed there, too). This text works perfectly as a prayer when we travel, when we are frightened, or when we just need God's mercy – which I guess is any time, really.

The tune to this hymn has enjoyed an exclusive relationship with the text; John Dykes composed it specifically for the text one year after it was written. The name "Melita" was chosen thoughtfully. Melita is the ancient name for the island of Malta, where the apostle Paul was shipwrecked in Acts 27.

In addition to the careful selection of the name, the music itself is surprisingly symbolic. The melodic contours of the music reflect a series of shifts (secondary dominants, or tonicization) upward in the scale. In plain English, this means the melody line in each of the three phrases swells, literally, in the shape of a wave! Rise up, peak, break. Repeat twice more, but each subsequent wave is lower than before, as the sea becomes calmer, then stilled. In the first phrase your voice will rise 9 steps, 1 more than an octave. But in the second phrase you'll span only 6 steps, and by phrase 3 you'll rise just 4 steps. And the stanza ends by stepping down to the confident, secure tonic (a chord that always feels like a good, proper finish). So, musically speaking, we are singing phrases that could evoke St. Paul's experience in a tempestuous sea, with a battered ship, but finally with deliverance and protection for all the voyagers. Our confidence in God's providence might be that confident tonic chord we sing at the end, after the uncertainty of the three waves.

Here are a two links of beautiful performances of "Eternal Father, Strong to Save:"

United States Naval Academy Men's Glee Club  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BD3rPWmi1VA>

Ohio State Marching Band  
(wait for it...they sing!)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOxEMuXoX9c>



# WORSHIP SCHEDULE

## EASTER 6

May 9, 2021

Psalm 98

First Reading: Acts 10:34-48

Second Reading: 1 John 5:1-8

Gospel: John 15:9-17

## THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Thursday May 16, 2021

Psalm 47

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

Gospel: Luke 24:44-53

## EASTER 7

May 16, 2021

Psalm 91

First Reading: Acts 1:12-26

Second Reading: 1 John 5:9-15

Gospel: John 17:11-19

## PENTECOST

May 23, 2021

Psalm 139:1-12

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Second Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Gospel: John 15:26-27;16:4-15

## TRINITY SUNDAY

May 30, 2021

Psalm 29

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

Second Reading: Acts 2:14, 22-36

Gospel: John 3:1-17

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 6, 2021

Psalm 130

First Reading: Genesis 3:8-15

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

# GRACE GATHERINGS 2.0



Several years ago, we began something called "Grace Gatherings." Because the members of our parish live all over the county, we are not your typical neighborhood church. In fact, very few of you actually live in our churches' zip code. Thus, Grace Gatherings exist to bring our church family together in your very own homes sharing good food, drink, prayer, and conversation. It is a way to broaden the fellowship and deepen the friendship of our church family. When we started these gatherings we had ten groups. Some never really got off the ground and a few slowly fizzled out. COVID certainly hampered a few. My Grace Gathering group has marched on, enjoying great food, wine, and friendship. As summer quickly approaches, it is time to rebuild this important ministry for those who would like to sign-up and participate.

## How does this work?

It's really simple. A couple of families who live in convenient proximity to one another get together once a month for a meal. The host family, which rotates monthly, sets up a date, picks a theme, provides the main course, and hands out assignments on what others can make or bring. For example, my group has stuck with themes, because it is much easier to plan. We have done everything from a low country seafood boil to a night where everyone had to make an ethnic dish from their families' heritage, which we entitled the "The United Colors of Grace." Once, we even had the children plan and cook the meal. I am currently working on a Texas Roadhouse-themed dinner.

In the past, a few were worried that their apartment or house would not be large enough to host. But not to worry. You can host a sunset picnic at La Jolla Shores or pick a happy hour spot somewhere in town. There are ways to be creative. You don't even have to be a good cook. The point is to foster community and build friendship outside of Sunday morning.

## How Can You Participate?

We will have a sign-up sheet at the welcome table. I will do my best to pair families and individuals together based upon geography and/or willingness to travel to other parts of the county. But please know that if you sign-up, you are making a commitment to your Grace Gathering group. This only works when we are willing and able to make time for one another. And I can tell you from two years of experience with my own group, it is worth it!





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The Reverend  
Brian W. Thomas  
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Office Manager  
Gretchen Jordan  
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

Divine Service  
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Nursery available

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

Thank you!



Hearing Assistance is now available in our sanctuary.



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

## PRAYERS

### PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH

Marie, Victoria, Christy, Walter, Joyce, Dave, Bill, Dennis, Steve, Molly and Grant Mellor

### PRAYERS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD OF GOD

Jeremy & Jessika Belgau

### PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

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

### PRAYERS FOR THE MILITARY

William Baker, Andrew Burke, Tajy George, Jack George, Jr.,  
Philip Hawthorne, Dylan Jensen, Jack Ogden, Josh Martin,  
Matthew Morgan, Gavin Robillard, Heath Russert, Linka Schleusener,  
and Holly Schmidt

### PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Lorna Winterstein, Joyce Rochester

## BIRTHDAYS

### MAY

4- Valda Houts  
10- Geary Thompson  
14- Chris Rall  
16- Levi Schroeder  
19- Paul Himmelberger

21- Nathaniel Parker  
22- Lorna Winterstein  
24- Kim Newton  
27- Leslie Yoder  
28- Michelle Thompson  
29- Jeremy Belgau

### JUNE

1- Grace Newton  
2- Lucas Schroeder

*Ascension Thursday*  
*Dinner & Service*  
*May 13th*

*Dinner from 5-6 pm*

*Service at 6:00 pm*

*Please join us for fellowship  
and service. Sign-up to help  
at the welcome desk!*

## Men's Chorus



**TRINITY SUNDAY**  
**MAY 30 @ 10:30 SERVICE**

We are gathering a men's ensemble to sing "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" as a choral benediction. (This is the Navy hymn). The arrangement is a straight-forward TTBB hymn setting, and we'll rehearse at 10:10 on the 30th in the choir loft with brass. If you would like to join us, contact Beth at bethschleusener@gmail.com.