

# THE WITTENBERG WAY



Dear Grace Family,

New Year's is a celebration of the past and the future. We take stock of the past with thanksgiving and sometimes even relief (that it's over), and we look to the future in hope and anticipation, and perhaps with some worry, for what it may hold.

The point is that New Year's celebrations often remind us of who we are as opposed to who we would like to be, and what we have done in comparison to what we hoped to have done. What we've lost. Who we've lost. It reminds us of our accomplishments, but mostly it reminds us of our failures. I say this because we often begin each year "resolved" that this is the year we are going to [insert lofty goal here].

Whatever the personal goals you have set for 2023, let me share a few I have for our church family in light of what the church is and what the church does.

First, the church is a people of "the Book." This book, of course, is the Holy Bible. The first pillar of our church is that we are a "Biblical" church. Thus, my prayer is we would remain true to our confession by living obediently under the authority of Christ's Word. This is our calling as the people of God, and it is my holy vocation to lead you in this by teaching and modeling the same in my life and ministry. If you have not made it a habit to participate in Sunday School or Bible Study, make this the year you do so. We grow in the Lord as a church best when we do so together. If you do not regularly read Christian books, let this be the year you do so. I am happy to give you some recommendations.

Second, the church is a place of grace (hence, our name). It inhales the grace of the Father by the death, resurrection, and ascension of His Son through the preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It exhales this same grace in love toward our neighbors. You are a member of the church, an heir of God's family. Thus, you are not only a recipient of God's grace but a bearer of that grace for the life of the world. My prayer is that you would spread that mercy through the generous giving of your time and income to volunteer and support the work of our church for the sake of San Diego.

Third, don't let your past define your future. We are the baptized, therefore live in light of your promised future. Pastor Harold Senkbeil notes:

Looking at my own life I am only too aware of my sin and failure. But as far as God is concerned, my sinful nature is dead and gone. He sees only the new man in Christ—perfect, whole and complete. This is reality but it is a hidden reality... this calls for faith. Our real identity as new men and women in Christ will not be obvious until He comes again. When He appears, then our holiness and worth and value will be apparent to everyone—including us! But not yet. Until then we live by faith, recognizing that the Christian life is a hidden life. (*Sanctification*, 139)

Although we already possess eternal life now, we do not yet experience it in full. For now, it is hidden under and shaped by the cross as we eagerly await this incredible promise: "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:4). Who knows? Maybe this will be the year. Even so, we pray: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

A blessed new year to you all,  
Pastor Thomas

January 2023 Volume 10, Issue 1

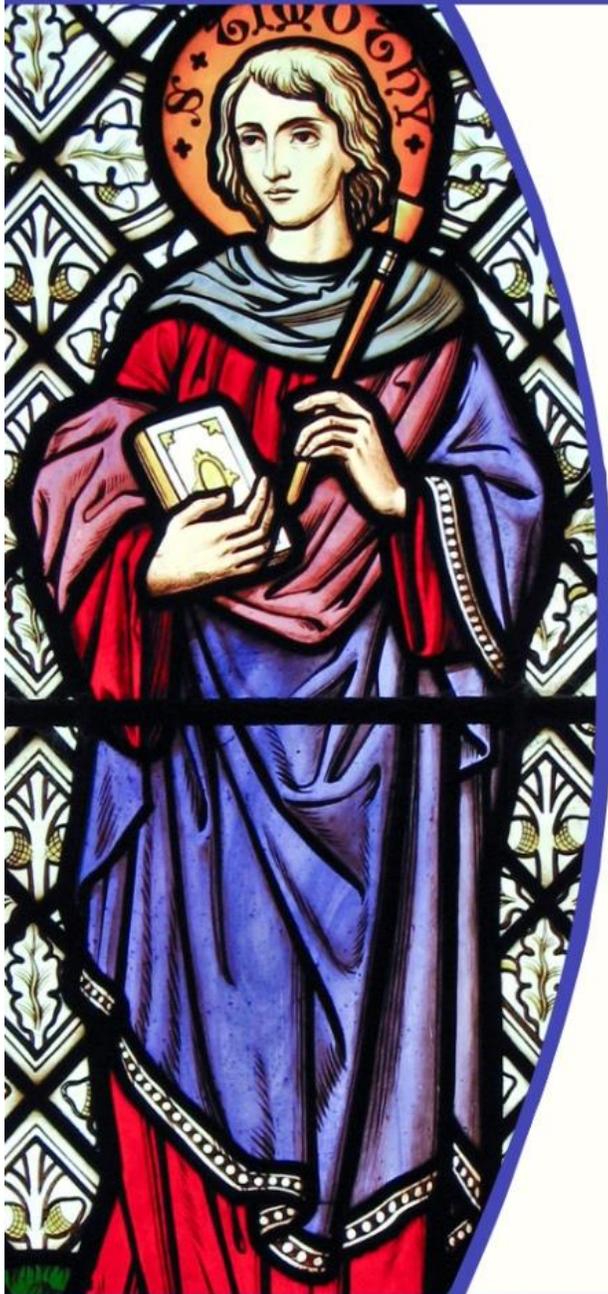
## WHAT'S INSIDE

ST. TIMOTHY	PG. 2
NEWS FROM ITALY	PG. 3
SANCTITY OF LIFE	PG. 4
PRO-LIFE ADVOCATE	PG. 5
FACES OF GRACE	PG. 6 - 7
PRAYERS, BIRTHDAYS AND EVENTS	PG. 8

## GRACE WILL CELEBRATE SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY ON JANUARY 22, 2023

A representative from  
CAPS will be on hand to  
share what the Lord has  
been doing through  
their ministry.





## St. Timothy January 24

**Time Period** 1st century AD

### Who was he?

A pastor, missionary, and close companion of the Apostle Paul.

### Did you know?

- He was raised in a faithful household, where his mother and grandmother carefully instructed him in the Holy Scriptures.
- Paul encountered Timothy on his second missionary journey and took him on as his pupil.
- The two letters in the New Testament that bear Timothy's name provide insight into the early life of the Church and encourages Christians to labour for the Gospel.

Lutherans have always understood that there is great benefit in remembering the saints whom God has given to the Church. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Article XXI) lists three reasons for such honor.

- First, we thank God for giving faithful servants to His Church.
- Second, through such remembrance our faith is strengthened as we see the mercy that God extended to His saints of old.
- Third, these saints are examples both of faith and of holy living to imitate according to our calling in life.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF MICHAEL A BURKE

Family was the most important thing to Michael. Born July 16, 1955, to an unwed mother, he was given up for adoption at birth and spent the first six weeks of his life in an orphanage. Michael was adopted by Larry and Betty Burke of Rochester, NY. Three years later their family expanded with the birth of Larry and Betty's daughter, Kelly.

In 1976, Michael met his future wife Betty at the West Henrietta Baptist Church. He was the organist, and she joined the choir. Married on June 7, 1980, they welcomed their first child, Christina, in 1982 and their second child, Andrew, in 1984.

Michael loved being a father. He was very attentive, played the piano and sang songs to the kids every night before bed, and loved teasing and joking around. Michael was extraordinarily proud of his ability to build a home full of love, laughter, and music for his family. Through the years, his children came to rely on his wisdom and understanding to navigate life's many challenges.

In 2014, Andrew and his wife Brandi, playing on Michael's love of Asian cuisine, decided to announce their first pregnancy via fortune cookie. In October 2015 when Jonah was born, Michael immediately fell in love. His love grew deeper when his second grandson, Malachi, was born in February 2019. Through the birth of his grandsons, Michael gained the name that was his greatest pride and joy: Papa.

The deep love of family Michael felt led him to seek out his biological parents in 2017. Not being able to access any records through the State of New York, Michael turned to a search angel who specializes in reuniting children with their biological parents. The search angel successfully located Michael's biological mother Gayle, who had unfortunately passed away two years prior. She was survived by her two daughters, Kathy and Karen. The three siblings formed a bond that was incredibly special.

One year after finding his maternal family, Michael's first cousin, Tim, reached out after a successful match on ancestry.com. This paved the way to Michael meeting and forming special bonds with his Aunt Pat and several first cousins on his paternal side.

In 1990, tired of the constant transitions, Michael and his best friend and former boss, Steve, started their own collection agency, Consolidated Recovery Group (CRG). The founding of CRG was based on an attempt to better ensure financial stability for his family during a very unstable time. Through the years, Consolidated Recovery Group became more successful than Michael could have ever imagined.

In 2009, Michael accepted his final full time principal organist position at Grace Lutheran Church, San Diego – a position he routinely referenced as the height of his organist career. As Music Director for Grace Lutheran, Michael thoroughly enjoyed playing the organ, directing the choir, and the relationships he built in his more than ten years of service to the church.

A rare opportunity arose in 2018 when the Grace Lutheran Choir was invited to participate in a joint choir performance under the direction of Pepper Choplin, singing on stage at Carnegie Hall in New York City. He often felt that this was the greatest musical achievement of his life.

Michael loved the liturgy and the reverence of the Lutheran Mass to which his music was sincerely dedicated. His passion was enhancing the church service for the glory of God through his music, which was so evident to all those fortunate enough to have heard him play.

In 2020, Michael resigned his position at Grace Lutheran Church and moved to Aiken, SC with Betty to start the next chapter of their lives. Michael continued to operate CRG from his home and substituted for organists at various Lutheran churches in the area.

Despite moving away from California, Michael remained extraordinarily close with his children and grandchildren. Because of his frequent visits, he often quipped that he still lived in San Diego and only vacationed in South Carolina.

On December 2, 2022, tragedy struck the Burke Family when Michael suddenly and unexpectedly died at home in Aiken, SC. Despite the deep grief and sadness his family and friends feel in his passing, we rejoice in the knowledge of Michael's steadfast faith in Christ and his eternal salvation.



# OUR MISSIONARIES IN ITALY

Last month (October), the Confessional Lutheran Church of Italy celebrated the confirmation in Rome of our dear brother Roberto Scafa (from Florence). Praise the Lord as Italian speakers are comforted by the pure Gospel that we proclaim, centered around Christ crucified and his forgiving love for us!

Our presence continues to grow across the Peninsula. We are in contact with a list of people too long to mention from Naples, Bari, Rome, Abruzzo, Milan, Florence, Alessandria, Piacenza, Turino and Padova. A combination of Zoom Services of the Word, online and in person catechism and traveling to bring them the Lord's Supper is the only way the work here in Italy can continue forward. As our Lord says, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few!

On the morning of October 5th, I received a message from a brother Lutheran pastor in Finland. Two Iranian women, confirmed Lutherans in his congregation, were being deported from Finland to Italy. They were on their way to Rome as we spoke.

Although I was able to get them an Airbnb, and I will be investigating what government assistance is available to them, their situation here is bleak. Italy is often the last stop before being deported back to Iran. Muslims who convert to Christianity face death if they return to their country. Please join me in praying for this family, so that together we can be working to make Italy their home as they continue to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, who promises his presence in the midst of all difficulties and guarantees a place in the house of the Father that he has prepared for us.

As I care for other people's immigration, I continue trudging through the bureaucracy and paperwork of my own immigration situation. Even though my family had to return to the US once again due to the slowness of their visa process, we look forward to being back in Italy together on November 15th.

Thank you for your prayers and your offerings that carry this work forward to the glory of Jesus Christ our God and Savior. Amen!

Rev Tyler, Yanela, Lia and Alessia McMiller

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Pastor McMiller with mother and daughter Iranian Christian refugees



Pastor McMiller with two LCMS Americans (Greg and Brandie) who live in Italy that have connected to our Church.



Roberto's confirmation in Pastor McMiller's apartment

To support our work financially, you may send a tax deductible gift to:  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis MO 63166-6861  
Or  
Mission Central – LCMS World Mission  
40718 Highway E 16, Mapleton, Iowa 51034  
Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod  
OR to Mission Central  
Mark checks "Support of Tyler McMiller."  
Gifts can also be given securely online at [www.lcms.org/mcmiller](http://www.lcms.org/mcmiller) or  
<https://missioncentral.us/mcmiller>  
Thank you for your prayers and support!



Roberto with the men studying to be pastors

## WINNERS, LOSERS & THE LONG GAME

On November 8, the people of California voted Proposition 1 into law, enshrining the right to unrestricted abortion in the state constitution. For the record, the final tally looked like this:

Yes – 66.8%/6,217,873  
No – 33.2%/3,096,747



Disappointing? You bet. Especially when you consider these other data:

### CA.gov

- Population of California – 39 million
- CA Voter Registration – 26.9 million eligible; 21.9 million registered

### Pew Research Religious Landscape Study of Adults in California

- Identify as Christian – 63% (30% Protestant; 28% Catholic; 5% Other)
- Absolutely Believe in God – 54%

Where were all those absolute believers? How many of them were among the 5 million eligible voters who didn't bother to register? Weren't there among the registered just 4 million more who could have made the small effort to vote No on Prop 1? Why didn't they?

### Cynicism & Apathy

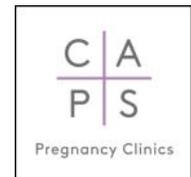
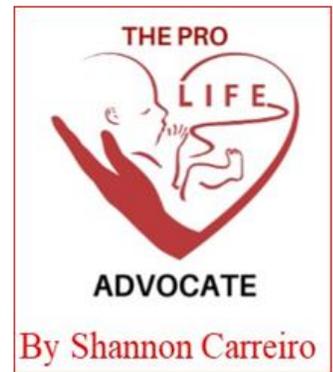
During the lead-up to the election, I heard too many professing believers on social media cynically say voting was pointless, that the "fix" was in so why bother? Because cynicism isn't a Christian position. Because precious rights like voting die from apathy. Unfortunately, unborn babies will die too.

### Determination & Persistence

But here's another way to see it. How many babies were saved and how many minds were changed because of efforts to defeat Prop 1? Every one of those goes in the Win column and reminds us that we cannot be discouraged by the outcome of one evil proposition in one election. After all, it took America over 200 years and a war that cost 690,000 lives to abolish the right of one person to control the life of another. I believe there is a legitimate analogy between slavery and abortion, which also claims the right of one person to control the life of another. The abolition of slavery grew through America's churches and I believe that the abolition of abortion can as well.

In the new year there is work to do. A worthy long-term goal for prolife advocates is to focus on securing, at the federal level, personhood for the unborn child and its constitutional right to life. In the short-term, support prolife efforts such as CAPS. And pray. Persistently.

*Then be of good cheer. Christ is born. The battle is already won. Celebrate the victory!*

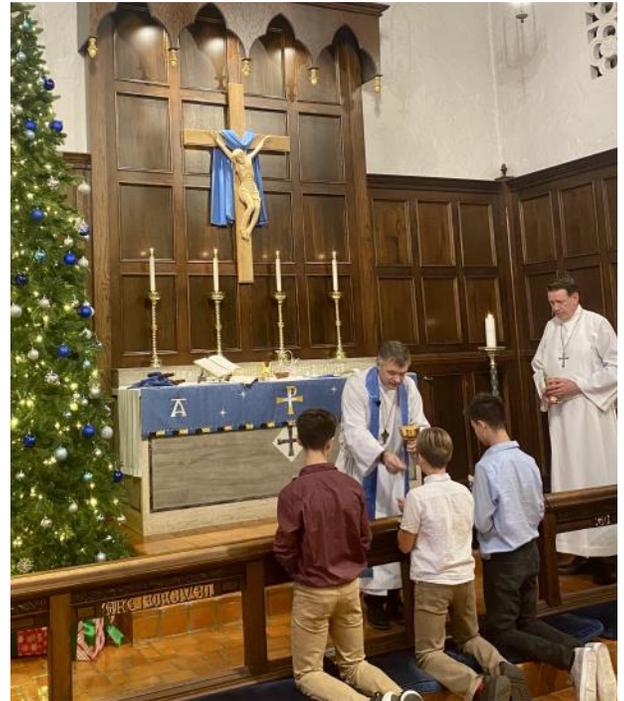


# FACES OF GRACE



Above: We celebrated the Holy Baptism of JJ Smith on Christmas Eve. JJ was surrounded by his parents, RJ and Christine and many family members were in attendance.

Right: Maverick, Connor and Colton Anderson received their First Holy Communion on Dec. 4th.



At the Thanksgiving Blessings monthly potluck we also commemorated the 247th birthday of the US Marine Corp. Captain Elliott Perko is shown "sabering" the cake. Paul Himmelberger chats with Autumn Laning and Elliott, our oldest and youngest Marines in attendance.



There was plenty of fun, good food and fellowship at the Annual Elders, Council and Staff Christmas get together. This year's theme was an Hawaiian Christmas. The Hollmans, Segarras and Travis Wheeler are enjoying the festivities. In the photo at right there was some more fun answering Christmas trivia and exchanging white elephant gifts. Gracie was also the center of attention.

# FACES OF GRACE



Grace's new 15 foot Christmas tree was decorated for Advent. Pr. Brian, Mark & Gretchen Jordan get the branches just right, while Evie Richards and Georgia Thompson get as many ornaments on the tree as they can. Harold Nichols and Duncan Mellor worked on the tree in the Fellowship Hall. Plenty of fun and sweet treats were had by all.



For the first time in several years, the 6 pm service attendees were delighted to hear the joyful sounds of the children singing a Christmas carol led by Robin Segarra. Our singers were Andersen Lee, Guy Martin, Duncan Mellor, Kristen Lee, and Robin's granddaughters, Isabelle and Aubrey.



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Gretchen Jordan  
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Sunday Divine Service  
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Sunday School  
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

JOHN HANSEN  
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA  
Treasurer

SHANNON CARREIRO  
Secretary

HEATH RUSSERT  
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT  
Fellowship/Activities

JOHN BARBER  
PHILIP HAWTHORNE  
Members-at-Large

CARL LEHMAN  
Education

TED NILSEN  
Head Elder

JEREMY FULLAM  
STEVE HOLLMAN  
JASON HUNTLEY  
DARYL NEWTON  
TRAVIS WHEELER  
Elders

## PRAYERS

### PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Joyce, Dave, Bill, Phil, Edward, Colter, and Dale

### PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

Rev. Tyler McMiller, Joshua Salas, Lorenzo Murrone, Luiz Lange,  
Michael & Nance Morizio (Lutheran Church planters & seminarians in Italy)

### PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

Tajy George, Jack George, Jr., Jeff and Jordan Gruetzmacher, Philip Hawthorne,  
Josh Martin, Matthew Morgan, and Nathan Farish

### PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Joyce Rochester

## BIRTHDAYS

### JANUARY

10- Kate Latham

11- Ingrid Hoffmann

13- Travis Wheeler

19- Jennifer Gertz

If we missed your birthday,  
contact the office:

gjordan@gracesandiego.com

## CELEBRATE THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

As Christians we believe that all human life, from conception to natural death, has value. That value isn't based on what we look like, how smart we are or how well we function. In fact, our IQs, talents and abilities are irrelevant. What matters is that we are each made in the image of God. It's that status that makes us humans unique in all creation. And it's that status that merits a special reverence for the sanctity of human life. In January, we recognize it with Sanctity of Life observations.

Ronald Reagan initiated the first national Sanctity of Life observation in the U.S. on Sunday, January 22, 1984 to celebrate God's gift of life and to memorialize those lost to abortion. A staunch prolife advocate, Reagan issued the presidential proclamation to coincide with the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Roe v. Wade, which he likened to the Dred Scott decision of 1857. He issued the proclamation annually throughout his time in office. Presidents George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Donald J. Trump continued the tradition.

This January churches across the country will observe National Sanctity of Life. Grace Lutheran will welcome a representative from CAPS, who will be available to answer questions about CAPS' mission and how you can support it.

Champion the sanctity of human life throughout the year.

- *Educate yourself about prolife issues and legislation.* Pick up CAPS literature on the CAPS table. Visit [CapitolResource.org](http://CapitolResource.org) to learn more about prolife initiative in California.
- *Volunteer your time.* CAPS has many opportunities.
- *Donate.* To learn more visit: [capspregnancyclinics.org](http://capspregnancyclinics.org)
- *Participate.* Take part in a CAPS Walk for Life.

