

THE WITTENBERG WAY



Dear Grace Family,

When the women went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning, the angels asked: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:5). The angel's Good News transformed their sorrow into unspeakable joy! The resurrection makes all the difference in the midst of our pain and tears and fears. Because Christ lives, we can face every tomorrow, knowing where we and all who have died in faith will spend eternity together.

They say there is no "i" in team, but there is one in "family." Therefore, "I" want to thank you, my church family, for your participation in our Holy Week services, as well as our Easter breakfast, and especially for all the volunteers it took to make it happen. There is nothing quite like a sanctuary filled with saints singing "Alleluias" to God after the muted season of Lent.

As we close out this Easter season, I am making plans for various summer projects around the campus. An important one near and dear to my heart is having a permanent adult Bible study space. Thankfully, Laura Latham contacted me a few weeks ago to ask if the church was in need of office furniture since her firm was moving to a new location. Due to their generosity, Steve Hollman, Philip Hawthorne, and I were able to fill a U-Haul truck with about \$4K of very nice furniture (and for my favorite price...free!). Throughout the summer, we plan to clear and paint the St. Mark's classroom, purchase and install a large television, and add the furniture to ensure the room is ready to go for the fall semester of studies.

Another project that has long been in the making is our elevator. Thanks to a generous donation over a year ago, our trustee got to work planning and bidding on what turned out to be a very complicated job that included parts delays due to the pandemic, issues with an SDG&E transformer, and countless scheduling conflicts, I am happy to announce that our elevator has been certified by the state inspector and is open for business. I want to thank Paul Himmelberger for going above and beyond to make it happen. Job well done! We will dedicate our new elevator, quite appropriately, before we celebrate the Feast of Ascension, though I am not going to sing Josh Groban's "You Raise Me Up," as Pr. Ken suggested.

This month also marks the end of Beth Schleusener's service as our Director of Parish Music as she transitions to a full-time position as a teacher for St. Paul's Lutheran School in Pacific Beach. I want to express my gratitude to Beth for all the hard work she put in to make our worship services so beautiful and meaningful. Her knowledge of Lutheran hymnody especially helped me tie the scripture readings, sermon themes, and music together. Gifted church organists are a rare breed today, and it is even more rare to find a good "Lutheran" organist, let alone one that desires to be an involved member of the church they serve. Grace Lutheran has been extremely blessed over the past decade in this respect. God providentially brought Beth to us just as Michael Burke announced his retirement, and now that Beth is leaving the bench as it were, He has once again proved faithful to provide. Starting in June, Dale Sorenson will be taking over the position. He too is extremely knowledgeable, gifted, and passionate about our liturgy and music. I am looking forward to serving alongside him in service to God and this parish.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Pastor Thomas

May 2022 Volume 9, Issue 4

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Upcoming Services

ASCENSION THURSDAY SERVICE

AND POTLUCK - MAY 26TH
at 6:30 pm

Potluck dinner at 5:30 pm

SUMMER SERVICE TIME

Beginning May 29th
at 9:30 am

PENTECOST SATURDAY SERVICE

AND BBQ - JUNE 4TH
at 6:30 pm

Courtyard BBQ at 5:30 pm

No Sunday service on June 5!



THE RETURN TO ROME

by Michael Morizio | Photography by Erik M. Lunsford | Spring 2022

In 1511, Martin Luther made the long pilgrimage from Wittenberg to Rome. Whatever high expectations he had for the Eternal City were toppled by what he witnessed there. He was confronted with the church's extravagance, corruption, monopolistic grip on the Bible (the Latin-only version, which few could obtain or even read), veneration of relics of the saints, selling of indulgences, and total neglect of the poor. Luther railed that the church of Rome had become "the most licentious den of thieves [Matt. 21:13], the most shameless of all brothels, the kingdom of sin, death, and hell. It is so bad that even Antichrist himself, if he should come, could think of nothing to add to its wickedness" ("Concerning Christian Liberty," LW 31:336).

Now in 2022, Luther is back in Rome. Not Luther himself, of course, but the confessional Lutheranism of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Four men and one woman, living in three different regions of Italy, are enrolled in a four-year, 40-course theology program at the Luther Academy in Riga, Latvia. After finishing the program, the students will receive a Bachelor of Theology professional degree, which can lead to ordination or commissioning. The students enrolled include Luiz Roberto Lange; Lorenzo Murrone; Joshua Salas; and my wife, Nancy, and me.

Back to Italy

My parents grew up in Italy and later emigrated to the United States. In the late '90s, Nancy and I tracked my family's heritage in the Abruzzo region and met family members who still lived there. We got to know the area so well that, between 2012 and 2017, we ran tours of the area. We often shared our faith with Italian friends and family, and we were grieved that few, if any, of them could say with certainty that they were headed for heaven's glory.

While I was recovering from a medical issue in 2017, Nancy and I first started talking about becoming LCMS missionaries. Nancy had previously met the Rev. James Krikava, LCMS regional director for Eurasia, at a church event, and he wanted to bring me on as one of two Eurasia business managers and the very first LCMS missionary to Italy. The next September, we left behind our children and grandchildren and moved to Abruzzo, Italy.

There was already one confessional Lutheran man living in Italy: Luiz Roberto Lange. He had been baptized, catechized and confirmed at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil in Porto Alegre and began pre-seminary studies there as a young man. But Lange did not finish his training and instead segued into studying music. He spent time in the U.S., where he eventually fell away from the faith, before moving to Padua, Italy, with his family.

In 2014, through the witness of a friend in Italy, God called Lange back to the Christian faith. He attended several different churches and eventually found a Lutheran military chaplain in nearby Vicenza. Lange attended a few services there and found himself rediscovering confessional Lutheranism. He was finally back home with the liturgy he loved, although the services were held in English. He reached out to the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) and was put in contact with Krikava.

In 2016, Lange took the initiative to fly to Prague to meet Krikava in person. They devised a plan for the Rev. Sorin-Horia Trifa, a Romanian pastor who works with the OIM, to serve as an itinerant missionary to Italy. A couple of months later, both Krikava and Trifa flew to meet with Lange, with the specific goal of starting a church plant in Italy.

The Impact of COVID-19

Nancy and I were barely getting settled in Italy when COVID-19 came along. Italians were sequestered in their homes twice under Italy's three-month lockdowns. During the first lockdown, I received a call from fellow missionary Rev. Dr. John Bombaro, who had heard about a young man in Rome named Lorenzo Murrone who wanted to become Lutheran.

I immediately called Murrone. He told me he was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church and had attended church infrequently during his youth. During his teenage years, he entered what he describes as "a season of religious confusion." He began studying Plato, Aristotle and other classical philosophers before segueing into early Christian history, the church fathers and New Testament studies. These courses propelled him to pursue a university program dedicated specifically to early Christian studies.



Luther Academy students Joshua Salas and Lorenzo Murrone study the hymnal before a prayer service in the chapel of the International Lutheran Center at the Old Latin School in Wittenberg, Germany.

A HANDFUL OF LUTHERANS HAVE COME TOGETHER

Through his coursework, Murrone began to reevaluate Christianity. He did not want to return to Roman Catholicism because of its observable disharmony with the Bible. He sought solace in both Anglicanism and Pentecostalism. Though confident that Christianity was true, Pentecostalism drove him into despair with its distorted views of sin, forgiveness and works righteousness. In 2017 at All Saints Anglican Church in Rome, Murrone met Joshua Salas, who would soon become his best friend and Christian brother.

Salas is from Pakistan. A devout Christian from his youth, he attended both Pakistani Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches. He favored the Presbyterian church for its more traditional practices. Salas' father secured a job in Rome, and eventually the whole family (mother, older sister and younger brother) moved there in 2017 and started attending All Saints.

Salas and Murrone conversed about theology and shared their mutual desire to one day become ordained. However, they also realized that the theology of the church they were attending did not match their understanding of the Bible. The head pastor suggested that they should "broaden their horizons" to accept a more liberal adaptation of the Scriptures, but for the two young men this was impossible.

It was during this period that Murrone discovered Lutheranism through YouTube. He became an avid fan of "Lutheran Satire" and the Rev. Jonathan Fisk's "Worldview Everlasting" videos. He began corresponding with Fisk via email to inquire into Lutheranism. At the same time, Murrone and Salas met the Rev. Simone Caccamo, who happened to be the pastor at the Rome Baptist Church. Caccamo invited them to attend his church, where they became enamored by the family environment they encountered — something severely lacking at the church where they first met.



The Rev. Tyler McMiller an LCMS missionary to Italy, walks with Luther Academy students Joshua Salas and Lorenzo Murrone in Wittenberg, Germany in Nov. 2021.

Through their correspondence, Fisk directed Murrone to Bombaro, who redirected him to me. Nancy and I traveled to Rome to meet Murrone and Salas and talked with Trifa about the possibility of catechizing both of them online. Several weeks later, Trifa completed catechesis instruction with both men, and Krikava flew to Rome to celebrate with us in their partaking of the Lord's Supper in a Divine Service for the first time as Lutherans.

Caccamo graciously offered the new members of the Lutheran church plant the use of his Baptist church building, which is located in Rome's historic center, just 300 yards from the Pantheon. However, COVID restrictions made it too difficult to assemble in person regularly. The young church was anxious to provide a way to meet together at least once a week. We decided to start a weekly online service. Together, we worked on translating the liturgy into Italian, along with several hymns and Luther's Small Catechism, and began offering a weekly service on Saturday afternoons.

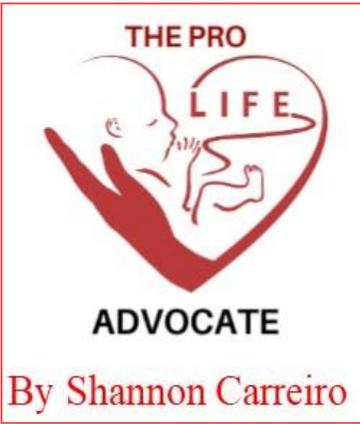
The Future of the Italian Church

These online services have been going on throughout the pandemic and have had as many as 24 attendees, with a core of around 14 each week. As Lange, Murrone, Salas and I go through the Luther Academy training to become Lutheran pastors, we have developed a calendar rotation throughout the month. We have been delivering sermons previously preached by selected LCMS pastors since the beginning of 2020. We translate each sermon into Italian and review the sermons together before it is time to preach.

After two years of online services, the new Rome church plant is still without a full-time pastor. Ordination is years away, so Krikava reached out to the Rev. Tyler McMiller, who at the time was completing his coursework at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and asked if he would serve as pastor of the church plant in Rome. McMiller and his family served as missionaries in Central and South America during much of his childhood, so he was eager for the opportunity to serve in this way.

Now a new chapter begins for the Italian Lutherans. McMiller and his family are making final preparations to deploy to the land where Martin Luther was sent 500 years ago. This time, McMiller is the one called to shepherd the flock already assembled there, to bring them the gifts of Word and Sacrament for the nourishment of their souls — with the help of God.

Reprinted from *Lutherans Engage* Spring 2022

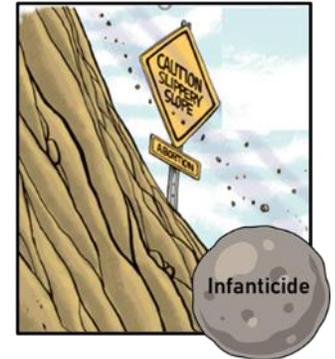


AB 2223: ANOTHER SLIPPERY SLOPE

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Assembly member Buffy Wicks introduced AB 2223 last February. It's currently in the Committee process. In its present iteration, AB 2223 states that no one shall be subject to a civil or criminal penalty based on their actions with respect to their pregnancy or pregnancy outcome, specifically citing, "miscarriage, stillbirth, or abortion, or perinatal death due to a pregnancy-related cause."

Opponents say the bill is so poorly written it will legalize infanticide for the first month after birth. The word "perinatal," in particular, has set off alarms. The meaning is imprecise. Law Insider's online dictionary offers nine definitions with varying time frames. The Medicine Net citation says, "Depending on the definition, it starts at the 20th to 28th week [of gestation] and ends 1 to 4 weeks after birth." The California Welfare & Institutions Code says perinatal covers the time "from the establishment of pregnancy to one month following delivery."



Current California Law

According to CalMatters.org, under current California law all fetal deaths at or after 20 weeks' gestation, except for abortions, are treated as "unattended deaths," meaning a coroner must investigate them. Opponents claim AB 2223 would not only take the coroner out of the picture, it would fine anyone who violates the proposed law \$25,000, including anyone who aids, incites or conspires to violate the law.

Susan Arnall, VP of Legal Affairs for Right to Life, worries that someone could starve, beat or shake a 3-week-old infant to death. Nobody could investigate it or even demand an investigation for fear of being fined. The Assembly Judiciary Committee analysis disagrees. It says AB 2223 "would not prevent authorities from being able to investigate the facts of a newborn child's death, including whether the child was born alive, and when and how the child died. The bill would only prevent further criminal investigation of the parent in the event that the death was determined to have a pregnancy-related cause." Oh, okay.

Supporters of AB 2223 say the current law is harmful to a woman's reproductive health. How's that work? Well, in 48 of California's 58 counties the sheriff is the coroner. That means law enforcement is involved in an unattended death. Because pregnant women could face prosecution, they would be afraid to get prenatal care. AB 2223 will remove that threat says Buffy Wicks. Her bill, "will ensure that prosecutions and investigations have no place in reproductive health care."

Proceed with Caution

Maybe Buffy Wicks has honorable intentions marred only by imprecise language. But that reference to reproductive health care is troubling; it's too often a euphemism for Planned Parenthood-approved policies. The Judiciary analysis wasn't very convincing, either. Vague language begets bad laws. We've been down this road before and it turned into a slippery slope that led to abortion on demand. Blink and that one-month perinatal cut-off could easily morph into two years.

You can learn more about AB 2223 at CaliforniaFamily.org/ab2223



You have most likely heard about the leaked decision from the Supreme Court regarding the Dobbs case that has the potential to overturn Roe v. Wade. Though it is not official, it does seem to be legitimate. The news has enraged activists and there have been threats and acts of vandalism, especially in Washington, DC.

What would happen if/when this decision is final? Will this mean that abortion will be illegal?

When a decision is made to overturn a case like Roe v. Wade, the authority goes to the states. State legislatures can create laws, restrictions, and/or protections and it is no longer under the federal law of legal abortion. Most of the states have been busy putting things into place since the Supreme Court first agreed to hear the arguments for this case.

- Some states will completely outlaw abortion.
- Others will have restrictions on abortion.
- Some will do all they can to protect abortion access and even help women from other states to get abortions.

This last group is where California falls and why we must be in constant prayer during this time.

The California state legislature has been busy creating and pushing through bills that support access to abortion at all stages of pregnancy and even beyond. AB2223, now moving through the state assembly, allows abortion to go beyond birth (up to 28 days). Thousands of Californians have rallied against this but the legislature has a supermajority supporting all abortion and the peoples' voices have thus far been ignored. Prayer can change all things though, we must pray. And, when it comes time to vote, please vote pro-life.

Pregnancy help organizations and especially clinics like CAPS are needed now more than ever! Thank you for your prayers and giving. Please pray for protection over pregnancy ministries throughout the nation during this trying time.

Standing with you for life,

Julie Dowler, Executive Director of CAPS Pregnancy Clinics

Q & A WITH REV. JAMES KRIKAVA, EURASIA REGIONAL DIRECTOR



The Rev. James A. Krikava serves as director of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's (LCMS) Eurasia region and as associate executive director of Eurasia and Asia operations for the LCMS Office of International Mission. In this role, he supervises LCMS work throughout Europe, Russia, the countries of the former Soviet Union, southern Asia and the Middle East. He also works with the LCMS Africa region on collaborative projects and with the Synod's partner churches in Eurasia and Asia.

1 **Ukraine has been in the news a lot lately. What is the Synod doing there?**

A: The LCMS has worked with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine (ELCU) for about four years. The bishop of the ELCU is the Rev. Serge Maschewski, who studied at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in the 1990s. Maschewski led the churches of the ELCU out of a Lutheran church body in Ukraine — affiliated with the liberal German state church — when the German state church ordered them to accept women's ordination and the LGBTQ agenda. In the last two years, the German state church, in cooperation with others, carried out a coup against the ELCU, taking over the ELCU headquarters in Odesa and seizing its bank accounts. Maschewski, his wife and their two sons were removed from the building by force.

2 **What is the current situation in Ukraine, and what is the LCMS doing to help?**

A: The situation is grave. Before the coup, we had missionaries teaching English in Odesa and Dnipro, but they had to leave the field for health reasons. Another missionary family was slated to go to Odesa but had to be diverted to Bucharest, Romania. Now, with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, we won't be able to send missionaries there any time soon, but I am in daily contact with Bishop Maschewski. Funds from the LCMS are supporting the ELCU as it provides for the spiritual and physical well-being of its members. In addition to food, shelter and medical care, the church is providing helmets and body armor for pastors who are now ministering to the sick, elderly and wounded under fire. Our partner churches in the area are also helping. About 4 million refugees have escaped from Ukraine, and up to 6 million are predicted. The outpouring of prayers and gifts from the people of the LCMS has been miraculous.

3 **What is the church's role in situations like this?**

A: It is the same role as always, except under extreme conditions: bringing God's people His gifts of Word and Sacrament. I talk to people in Ukraine every day via video. They are starting to look ragged. Their fear is more noticeable. Still, their faces express the depth of their conviction and faith.

4 **What else would you like to share about the Synod's work in Eurasia?**

A: Our missionaries deserve an A+. First there was COVID, then persecution not only in Ukraine but against our partner church in Finland, and now this war, which is affecting so many. But our missionaries are doing well, and the Eurasia region is growing, in spite of the crosses before us. Theological education has taken a quantum leap forward with the Livonian Lutheran Project. Church planting is on the rise, especially in the Balkan-Mediterranean subregion, which includes Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Perhaps many are realizing the emptiness of a faith based on human reason rather than the Word of the Lord, which endures forever.



Scenes from Ukraine and the Romanian border, where a volunteer meets newly arrived Ukrainian refugees.

EASTER EGG HUNT AT GRACE



Easter at GLC was a beautiful day beginning with our early service, followed by a delicious Easter Brunch attended by many members, families, and friends. At 9:30 am the children were called to the courtyard to participate in the annual hunt for eggs. In the photo above from left to right are: Augie Lehman, Bennett and Kristen Lee with Georgia Thompson.

In the next photo, Leo Fullam is looking for eggs in all the right places. Duncan Mellor is showing a full basket of eggs and Victoria Fullam spies one in the grasses. Many thanks to Kate, Claire and Laura Latham for filling eggs, hiding them, and coordinating this fun event and to everyone who helped with the brunch!



OFFERINGS UPDATE

March 2022 Actual	\$ 18,177
Budget	\$ 20,964
Shortfall	\$ 2,787

April 2022 Actual	\$ 18,461
Budget	\$ 20,970
Shortfall	\$ 2,509

YTD 2022 Actual	\$ 74,585
Budget	\$ 82,096
Shortfall	\$ 7,511

Giving to Grace

- Your weekly envelopes or those provided in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code to the right
- Text the amount to 84321
- On the Grace Giving Page at grace sandiego.com



OUR MISSIONARY
SUPPORT IN ITALY

AS OF APRIL 30, 2022
OUR DONATIONS TOTAL
\$2,056

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE TO GRACE



AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support Grace Lutheran Church every time you shop, at no cost to you. As of March 2022 GLC has received \$1,374 from AmazonSmile.



Ralph's Community Rewards program makes donations to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your card to Grace Lutheran Church, all you have to do is shop at Ralph's and swipe your Shopper's Card.



Thirty fourth-graders from the Cambridge School visited GLC this month to learn about traditional church architecture, art, liturgy, and music. Pastor Brian gave them a tour of the building moving from our red doors to the altar explaining the significance and symbolism of everything in our sanctuary. The students learned how to chant Psalm 1, sang a portion of Matins, and then concluded with a rousing rendition of "A Mighty Fortress is our God."



Logan David Collom was baptized on May 1st. Parents are Miriam and Nicholas Collom and grandparents are Richard and Robin Segarra. Logan's godfather is Nathan Segarra, Miriam's brother .



Pr. Brian gives the Rite of Godspeed for Jared Mindel. Jared has moved to Minnesota for his first job since graduating college. While attending Grace, Jared was a cantor on Sundays.



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brianwilliamthomas@gmail.com

Director of Parish Music
Beth Schleusener
musicdirector.glc@gmail.com

Church Secretary
Gretchen Jordan
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

Sunday Divine Service
8:00 and 10:30 am

Sunday School
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

DR. JOHN HANSEN
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA
Treasurer

SHANNON CARREIRO
Secretary

PAIGE HOOKS
School Board Chair

PAUL HIMMELBERGER
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT
Fellowship/Activities

HEATH RUSSERT
Member-at-Large

TED NILSEN
Head Elder

JEREMY FULLAM
STEVE HOLLMAN
JASON HUNTLEY
DARYL NEWTON
TRAVIS WHEELER
Elders

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Joyce, Dave, Bill, Michael, Bernie, Pat,
Andrea, Jackson, and Josh

PRAYERS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD OF GOD

Jeremy & Alma Fullam

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

William Baker, Tajy George, Jack George, Jr., Philip Hawthorne, Heath Russert
Dylan & Linka Jensen, Josh Martin, Matthew Morgan, Rev. Dave Schleusener,
and Dr. Holly Schmidt

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Joyce Rochester

MAY BIRTHDAYS

19- Paul Himmelberger
24- Kimberly Newton
27- Leslie Yoder
28- Michelle Thompson
29- Jeremy Belgau

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

DID YOU KNOW?

Pentecost was taken over for Christian use from the Jews. For them, Pentecost (50th day after Passover) was the end of the Feast of Weeks, celebrating the grain harvest, the giving of the Law, and the founding of Israel as a covenant people. Christians found in their Pentecost (50th day after Easter) a thanksgiving for the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as well as the founding of the Christian Church, the successor to the Old Testament community that now includes people from every nation. The liturgical color for this feast day is red to remind us of the original Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life" as we confess.

GRACE SUMMER SERVICE TIME

9:30 AM

Beginning Sunday May 29th
there will be only one Service at
9:30 through the summer.
Sunday School is on recess.

ASCENSION THURSDAY SERVICE & POTLUCK

MAY 26

6:30 PM

Potluck dinner at 5:30 pm
Please bring a dish
to share.

PENTECOST SATURDAY SERVICE & BBQ

JUNE 4

6:30 PM

No services on Sunday June 5
Courtyard BBQ at 5:30 pm
BBQ sandwiches will be
served. Please bring a side
dish to share.