

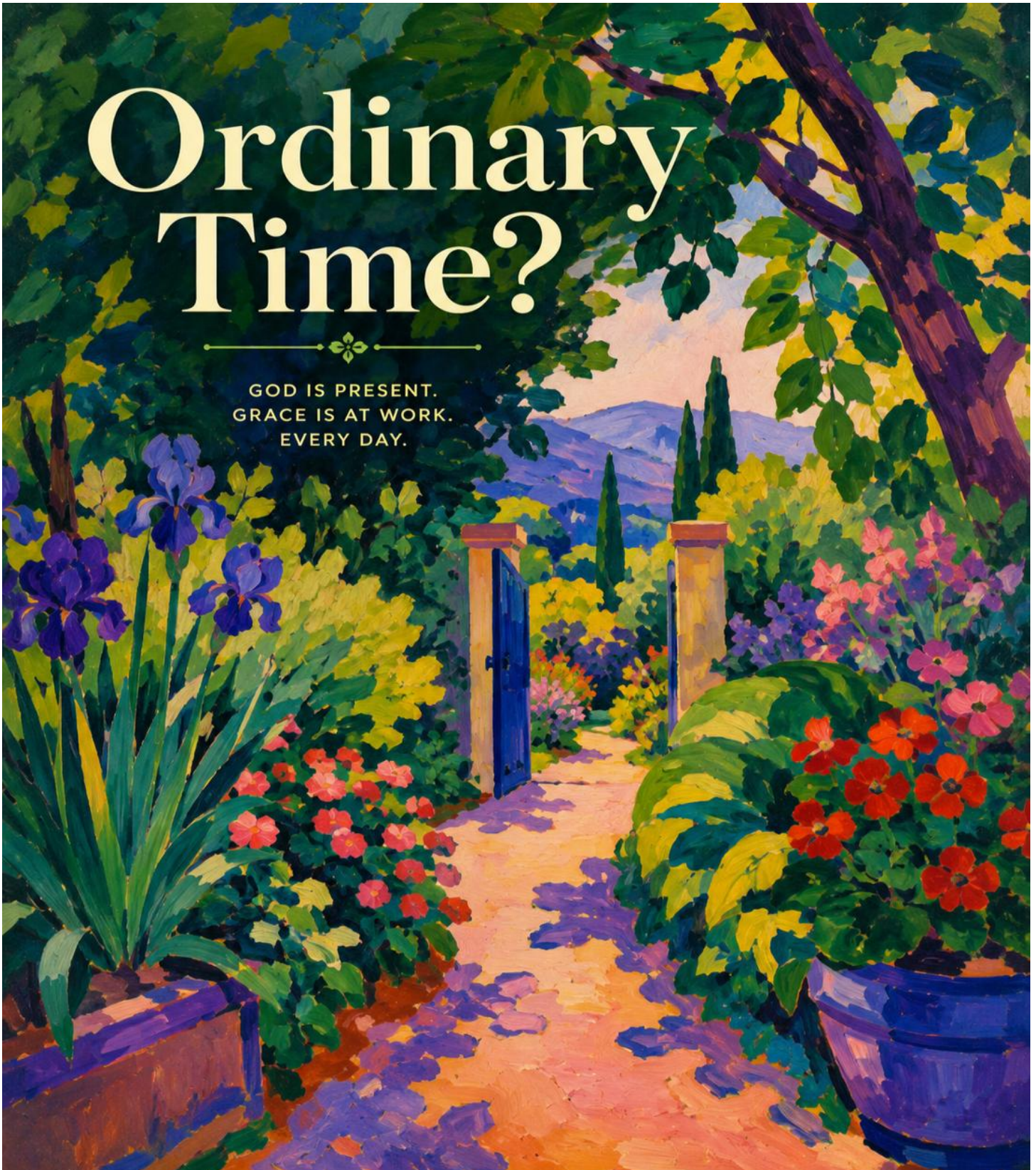


WITTENBERG WAY

Summer 2026

Ordinary Time?

GOD IS PRESENT.
GRACE IS AT WORK.
EVERY DAY.



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Pastor's Message

Dear Grace Families,

The summer color in the church is green. Not because the paraments happen to match the trees or because somebody in a church basement long ago thought green looked calming after Pentecost red. Green is there because the Church, in her wisdom, knows something we often forget: Christian life is mostly ordinary growth.

Not flashy. Not immediate. Not measurable in the ways we'd prefer.

Growth like crops. Like gardens. Like children who suddenly need bigger shoes and you don't remember when it happened.

The long green season after Pentecost is sometimes referred to as "ordinary time," because it teaches us to pay attention to something most Christians spend their lives trying to avoid: the slow work of God.

And if you're anything like me, you'd rather have fireworks.

We want dramatic transformation. We want spiritual six-pack abs by Thursday. We want sanctification to feel like climbing a ladder toward God while heaven applauds our effort. We imagine Christian maturity as becoming cleaner, shinier, stronger, and increasingly impressive.

But one of my favorite Lutheran theologians, the late Gerhard Forde, used to insist that the Christian life does not work that way. In fact, he thought most of our ideas about "spiritual growth" were just polished versions of self-salvation projects. That stings a little.

Because deep down we still believe God probably loves us more when we're improving.

We know the Gospel says we are justified by grace alone. We confess that loudly. We put it in hymnody and catechisms and confirmation memory work. But then, quietly, we sneak works back in through the side door and call it sanctification.

Now certainly Christians do grow. The Holy Spirit really does change people. Pentecost was not pretend. The Spirit creates faith, kills sin, comforts consciences, and produces fruit. Christians become more patient, more generous, more forgiving, more courageous.

But here is the hard part: most of the time, the Christian is the last person to notice. Forde famously said that "sanctification is simply getting used to being justified by faith."

That sounds almost disappointing at first. Too small. Too passive. Too easy. Until you realize how hard it actually is to believe you are loved apart from your performance.

The old sinner wants to contribute. We want measurable holiness. We want spiritual report cards. We want to know where we rank.

But the Spirit keeps dragging us back to Christ crucified. Back to baptism. Back to absolution. Back to the table where empty hands receive everything.

The green season of Pentecost is not about graduating from grace into advanced Christianity. It is about the Spirit driving grace deeper into stubborn hearts.



Sometimes that growth feels wonderful. Sometimes it feels like failure.

Because one of the strange works of the Holy Spirit is that He often makes Christians more aware of their sin, not less. A new believer may feel triumphant for a while. But older Christians often become gentler, humbler, less certain of themselves, and more certain of Christ.

That is growth too. In fact, that may be the deepest growth of all.

Martin Luther once wrote that the Christian life is not moving from sinner to non-sinner, but from unbelief to faith. Or as Robert Capon liked to put it, grace works only on people who don't have it together.

That is good news for parents who lose patience.

Good news for those battling secret sins.

Good news for saints who thought they would be farther along by now.

Good news for churches that feel small and weak.

The kingdom of God grows like seeds in dirt. Quietly. Imperceptibly. Often hidden under the surface.

And here is the truly freeing part: the plant does not strain to grow. It receives sun and rain. Life comes from outside itself.

So it is with us.

The Spirit does not sanctify you by turning your eyes inward toward your spiritual progress. He sanctifies you by fixing your eyes on Jesus.

That is why the Church keeps repeating herself every Sunday.

Same Gospel. Same Scriptures. Same Supper. Same forgiveness.

The repetition is not failure. It is farming.

God knows we forget.

So during these long green Sundays after Pentecost, perhaps the invitation is simply this: stop trying to manufacture your own holiness and start trusting the One who already declared you holy in Christ.

Live your ordinary life. Love your neighbor. Pray. Badly if you must. Come to church. Confess your sins. Hear absolution. Receive the Sacrament. Laugh often. Rest when you can.

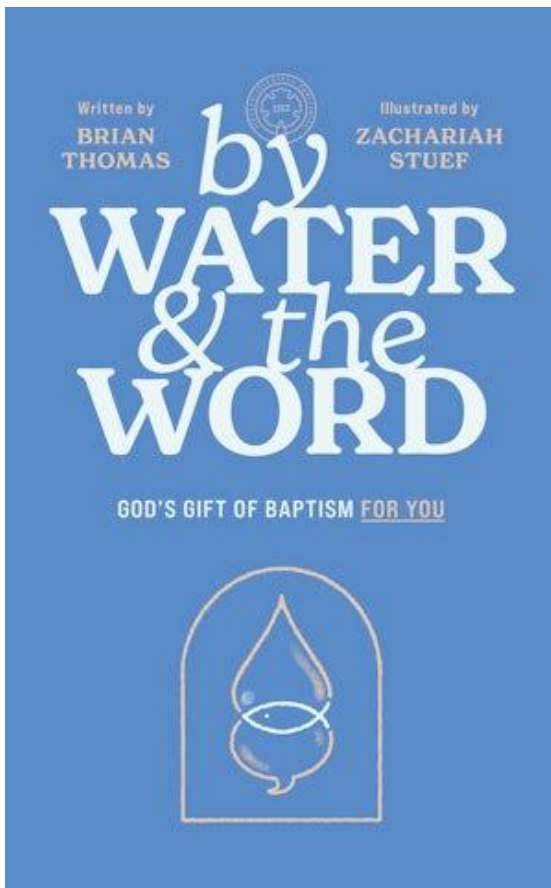
And trust that the Holy Spirit is doing more than you can see. Because He usually is.

The most beautiful gardens are not grown by anxious digging up of roots every morning to check progress. They grow because day after day they remain planted in good soil, receiving what they need. That is the Christian life.

You belong to Christ. The Spirit has been given to you. Your baptism is still true today. And the God who began a good work in you has not become impatient. Even if you have.

Grace and peace to you this Pentecost season,
Pastor Thomas

BY WATER AND THE WORD: GOD'S GIFT OF BAPTISM FOR YOU



Pastor's new book on Baptism is now available everywhere books are sold.

This book is for every worn-out saint who's been hustling to earn what can only be given. By Water and the Word isn't a pep talk in religious performance or a manual for proving yourself to God. It's a cannonball into the deep end of divine mercy. Here, baptism isn't a symbol of your sincerity—it's the drowning of your old Adam and the resurrection of someone God's not ashamed to call his child.

This is theology with dirt under its nails and grace in its bones. It drips with the kind of gospel that smells like river water and resurrection. You won't find spiritual clichés here—just a relentless God who crashes into your life with a splash and refuses to leave you alone.

This is for the kid who can't remember getting wet, and the adult who wonders if it counted. For the prodigal with pig-stink on his clothes and the Pharisee with a Bible under his arm. It's for anyone who needs to hear that God doesn't wait for you to climb up—he comes down, into the water, into your mess, and makes you his.

Baptism isn't just your past. It's your anchor. Your identity. Your daily dying and rising. In these pages, you'll hear the voice of the God who does his best work in ordinary water, tied to his extraordinary word.

2026 HERE WE STILL STAND CONFERENCE SAN DIEGO

The larger annual conference will be held in San Diego October 15 - 17, 2026 on the topic of the Scriptures, and will feature some amazing speakers, including the Christian apologist, Wesley Huff. There are still tickets available. If you have never attended before, it is definitely worth your time and money.

Register at: <https://www.1517.org/events/hwss-2026-sd>



FIRST COMMUNION



If you are considering your child's readiness to receive the Sacrament, parents are encouraged to meet with Pastor Brian or the Deaconess for guidance. Proposed class dates are Saturdays: July 18, 25, August 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29.

President's Message

CARL LEHMAN

The first months of 2026 have slipped away. Eastertide concluded with Pentecost, the school year is ending, and summer is approaching. With the midpoint of the calendar year approaching, it is a good time to take stock of where the church stands, both operationally and financially. Overall, there are reasons for optimism and gratitude in Grace's current position.

Attendance

Through May 2026 our average weekly attendance has seen a slight increase compared to the same period in 2025. While the growth is modest, it affirms that Grace's commitment to reverent, Christ centered worship continues to resonate in an increasingly secular society.

Financials

As reflected in the treasurer's report below, we are currently tracking \$2,903 behind budget. For a congregation of our size, this is a shortfall we take seriously and will continue to monitor with care. At the same time, it is important to recognize the consistent generosity and faithfulness of our members.

Encouragingly, this year shows improvement over recent years. By comparison, through May 2025 we were behind by more than \$16,000, and since the onset of COVID, the first half of the year has often presented financial challenges. Although it is still early, this pattern suggests a hopeful trend toward more steady, intentional giving—one that, by God's grace, may allow us to meet our budget this year and work toward a balanced budget in 2027.

Church Property

We have continued to care diligently for our historic property through necessary maintenance and improvements. This has included essential termite treatments across portions of both the church and school facilities.

We are especially grateful to Scott Doris, Jeffrey Doris, and Mark Jordan, who generously gave of their time and talents to repair the second-story balcony of the school after it sustained damage during the winter rains.

In addition, we are currently reviewing proposals for much-needed upgrades to the sanctuary's lighting and sound systems—improvements that will support our worship for years to come.

Looking Ahead

As we enter the long season of Ordinary Time, we should pause and give thanks to the Lord for His gracious care over our congregation. In our turn, let us continue to pray for His guidance and provision and renew our commitment to supporting Christ's Church.

I encourage you to continue to consider how you might offer your time and skills to Christ's mission at Grace. There are always opportunities to serve - whether as ushers, in fellowship, on the Church council, with the altar guild, or in Sunday school.

In Christ,
Carl J. Lehman



Treasurer's Message

DANIEL PAYLOR

At the midyear members' meeting (June 14th at 10:15am), the council will propose new liquidity requirements for the church's financial operations. These requirements will ensure that we continue to meet our Reserves and honor our Fund commitments (e.g., Generations Campaign) as we form a more optimized Investment Strategy. A one-page memo summarizing the proposed changes is available in advance of the meeting. To review the memo or join the discussion, you may speak to our Treasurer, Daniel Paylor, or email at daniel.j.paylor@gmail.com.

Feb-Mar-Apr Offerings	\$ 61,304	2026 YTD Actual	\$ 78,013
Budget	<u>\$ 61,095</u>	2026 YTD Budget	<u>\$ 80,916</u>
	\$ 209	Shortfall	\$ 2,903

FACES OF GRACE



Easter morning in the sanctuary—filled with beauty, light, and the joy of the Resurrection.

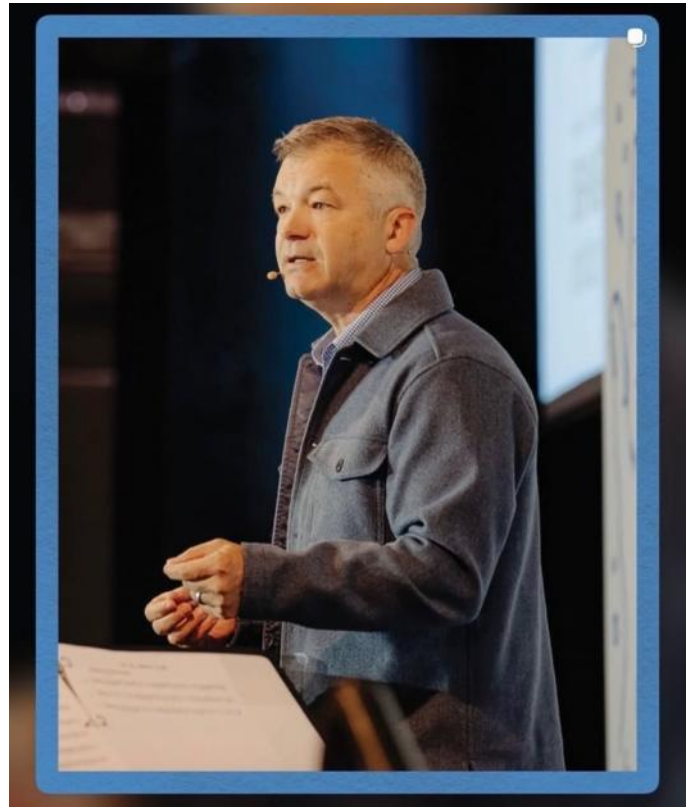


Easter Egg Hunt in the courtyard—thank you to all who joined the fun!



Congratulations to Greta on her high school graduation! She will be studying Food Science and Human Nutrition at Clemson University this fall and will be part of their waterski team. Greta has been a faithful crucifer and a dedicated helper in Sunday School. We will miss her deeply, but we rejoice with her as she begins this next chapter.

FACES OF GRACE



Pastor was invited to speak at this year's *Here We Still Stand* conference in Bentonville, Arkansas on the topic of Holy Baptism. He was interviewed before a live audience on the Podcast, "Outside Ourselves," featuring Kelsi Klembara, and then gave the morning devotion the following day.



Lots of little ones at the children's sermon these days. Such a great sight.



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OFFICE MANGER
Elsy Lehman
elsyglc@gmail.com
SUNDAY DIVINE SERVICE
9:00 am
SUNDAY SCHOOL
10:30 - 11:15 am
Nursery available

CARL LEHMAN
Council President
DANIEL PAYLOR
Treasurer
JUDY GEORGE
Secretary
HEATH RUSSERT
Trustee
RACHEL THOMAS
Fellowship/Activities
JOSH MELLOR
Member-at-Large
MARK JORDAN
Member-at-Large
JEREMY FULLAM
Head Elder
STEVE HOLLMAN
JASON HUNTLEY
DARYL NEWTON

PRAYERS

FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Dave, Eddie, Michelle, Floyd, and Kara

For Our Expectant Mothers

Jordan Gruetzmacher

FOR OUR MISSIONARIES & SEMINARIANS

Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss, Vicar Rowan Turner, and Vicar William Baker

FOR OUR MILITARY MEMBERS

Rev. Mario Ancira, Hannah Downey, Nathan Farish, Gavin Robillard,
Joshua Simmons, Jeff Gruetzmacher, Jon Lushenko, Micah Berge, and Daniel Fohey
(If you are new to Grace and in the military, please email your info to the church at:
elsyglc@gmail.com, so we can add you to our prayer list.)

FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND

Joyce Rochester, Herb & Marge Foelber, Janice Keitel

BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

10- Elvie Nichols
12- Jack George
20- Lily Newton
20- Thomas Gertz
22- Renee Thompson
28- Fran Willis

JULY

4- Sandi Garcia
8 - Natalie Lukaesko
13- Peter Gertz
16 - Chris Latham
21- Rev. Brian Thomas
26 - Judy George
29 - Conner Russert
31- Kris Fillius

AUGUST

3- Ken Licht
5- Dale Sorenson
11- Erin Dorris
14- Victoria Nilsen
14 - Henderson Hoover
19- Shannon Carreiro
19- Juliana Fullam
20- Jakobsen Belgau
24- Jackson Huntley
25- August Lehman

Did we miss your birthday?

If so, please email the church office to be included on the birthday list: elsyglc@gmail.com

HOW TO GIVE

- By using your offering envelopes or those in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- On the Giving Page at gracesandiego.com
- Scan the QR code below
- Register your Ralph's grocery card to Grace

