WITTENBERG WAY

September 2024

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FROM THE PASTOR

The Art of Welcoming the Stranger

Dear Grace Family,

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. - 3 John 5-6

Rachel and I want to thank you for the opportunity to take a summer sabbatical. It was a refreshing and productive time for us both. While on the island of Tenerife, we attended a small Anglican church for four Sundays. It is the only English-speaking church in the southern part of the island where we were staying. The parish is largely made up of retirees from England. After each service, they invite people to join some of their members for coffee at a nearby cafe since they do not own the chapel they worship in. We joined them and found them to be a lively and lovely group of brothers and sisters in Christ. Friendships quickly formed and before we knew it, we had been invited to a group dinner the very next week. Soon we were included in joining them to go to a local concert, and they even hosted a going away party for us on our last weekend there. One kind member, Philip, even took an entire day to drive us around the island where we got to drive right into the crater of Mount Teide, one of the largest volcanos in Europe at over 12,000 feet.

The entire experience gave us a renewed appreciation for Christian welcome and hospitality.

The word hospitality is a translation from the Greek word *philoxenia*, which is a compound word meaning love (*philo*) of strangers (*xenia*). We are served by a divinely hospitable God who embodies the meaning of hospitality. Thus, in the gospels, you find a Savior who daily practiced hospitality. He showed untold compassion for the physically sick and the spiritually impoverished, the demon-possessed and the blind, the crippled and the poor. He welcomed vulnerable moms and blessed their babies. He went to find the outcasts in Samaria and Sidon and welcomed them into his Kingdom. He chastised those who were inhospitable, the Pharisees and Sadducees while giving hope to those they oppressed.

But it doesn't end there because the gospel is much more than the good life that Jesus led. The gospel drives us to the cross and there we find the *raison d'etre* of Christian hospitality. On the cross, Jesus revealed his love for strangers, even enemies of God, by taking upon himself the penalty we all deserve.

One of the distinctives of Christian hospitality is that its focus is on our guests. We extend invitations to strangers as well as friends, seeking not only to deepen fellowship but also to draw people into the light of Christian community. Hospitality is part of giving, expecting nothing in return from the people who receive the sacrifice of our service, table, prayers, and love. Unlike entertaining, hospitality does not seek to impress or network or create an obligation. Instead, it seeks to serve others out of the abundance of all that our Lord has provided.

I have always found Grace Lutheran to be a welcoming place and I want to encourage you to extend that same welcome to others as they enter our sanctuary for the first time. It's quite simple. You take the time to greet and engage those who are strangers to you, asking them to share their stories, inviting them to fellowship, or even out to dinner during the week. It may not seem like much, but I can speak from recent experience. Such hospitable love and welcome is a transformative experience. Who knows? Today's stranger may turn out to be a lifelong friend.

Your Friend in Christ,

Rachel with some new friends from the Church of St. Francis enjoying after-dinner drinks on the beach of Los Americas, Tenerife

SQUEAKY, CREAKY, AND LEAKY BY SHANNON CARREIRO

The Grace Lutheran Church we worship in was built in 1930, which makes it just about five years shy of 100. At 75, I'm not far behind. And, as I am discovering, the older I get the harder and more expensive it is to fix all the things that are starting to squeak, creak and leak. So it is with our church. Some of the challenges we face:

- In the process of getting estimates, we often learn that many parts just don't exist anymore.
- Some tradesmen won't touch the jobs.
- Many of the things that met building codes a century ago are not up to current standards.
- We are a San Diego County registered historic site. Along with bragging rights, that status exempts us from costly improvements required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But we have to take care that visible changes don't risk the loss of our exempt status.
- Any time someone opens a can of worms, they may find more worms than they counted on. In a 95-year-old church that could be lead or asbestos.
- With so many things in need of attention it is difficult to prioritize. More often than not, it truly is the squeakiest, creakiest, leakiest wheel that gets the grease.

Addressing the Challenges

As we prepare for our centennial celebration in 2030, we are mounting an ongoing fundraising campaign to address the challenges. ***Generations of Grace*** will be a series of events and activities over the next several years. We are kicking it off on October 11 with ***Laying the Foundation.*** This will be a casual, family-friendly evening with catered food, live and silent auctions, plus a special surprise. Here's how to help make it a success:

- Buy tickets for your friends and family every Sunday after service or go to our website's Events page and pull down the menu for Generation Campaign.
- Donate new, unused items of auctionable value, gift cards, experiences such as vacation stays, fishing excursions, cooking or baking lessons, professional services and skills. Call Gretchen for more information about what we're looking for.
- Ask your friends and local businesses and merchants for similar donations. Donations are tax deductible to extent allowed. Gretchen can email you a form letter you can use.
- Bring in any empty gift baskets you have by October 6. We need them for packing up auction items.
- Sign up at the Welcome desk to help set-up on the day of the event or to clean-up afterwards.

What Else Are We Doing?

Plenty. Here are just a few of the things in the works, with more on the way in the new year.

- We will be pursuing state, federal and private-sector grant opportunities. If you know of any grants offered through your job or another organization, pleases forward the information to me (my email is in the church directory).
- We will be starting a crowd funding campaign in the near future. Stay tuned for more info coming soon.
- There will be a limited edition of handcrafted Generations of Grace Christmas ornaments for sale.
- We are looking for someone to fill our empty Stewardship Chair. You don't need to be a financial wiz. The ideal person is someone who can inspire cheerful giving. If you have been a member of Grace Lutheran for at least two years and are interested in serving on the council, contact Pastor Brian. Don't wait. Our annual Voters Assembly is coming up in November.

An Editorial Comment on Why This Matters

Look around Hillcrest. It seems like every day another old building comes down and something new takes its place. Unfortunately, what goes up is often a trendy eyesore or plain utilitarian ugly. Preserving beautiful architecture is important aesthetically, culturally and historically. That's even more important when the beautiful architecture is also a sacred space.

Steel window frames like ours were popular in the 1920's up until the 1950's when builders opted for aluminum. Replacing or repairing them is a challenge.

Making Room: A Modern Reformation Magazine Interview with Christine D. Pohl

At first glance, it appears that hospitality is a pretty straightforward concept—inviting people over to your (reasonably tidy) home for a meal and conversation, for the purpose of developing your relationship and deepening your friendship. Easier said than done in twenty-first-century society in the age of commuter churches, busy families, demanding work schedules, and a culture structured around the needs of the individual (instead of the needs of society as a whole). In her book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Dr. Christine D. Pohl explains the scriptural and historical contexts of hospitality, giving the reader a careful and comprehensive understanding of the tradition of welcoming the stranger. Earlier this year, Dr. Pohl discussed with Modern Reformation the recovery of the hospitable life in an individualistic world.

In the introduction to Making Room, you explain that ancient Israel understood themselves as "strangers and sojourners, with the responsibility to care for vulnerable strangers in their midst." How did this idea of the people of God influence the New Testament church?

From the covenant between God and Abram (Gen. 15) onward, the theme of being aliens and strangers was central to Israel's identity. Even after they received the Promised Land, the people of God were to see themselves as aliens and tenants in it. This almost paradoxical combination of being chosen and yet aliens operated at several levels. Partly, it helped the people to remember their dependence on God and that, ultimately, everything belonged to God and they dwelt in the land by God's grace and invitation. But also, if everyone is an alien or stranger, it has a profoundly egalitarian impact on the community. Additionally, it was one of the bases for Israel's response to the literal alien or sojourner in their midst. Because of their own experience of vulnerability and need for God's provision and grace, Israelites were to care for the aliens among them. In Exodus 23:9 we read, "You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." It is a basic part of the covenantal relation that the people of God understand themselves as aliens in the world and that they care for the aliens or strangers among them.

In the New Testament, the theme of alien identity continues. In 1 Peter, his letter is addressed to exiles—those early Christians who have been scattered. In 2:11, Peter says that you are aliens, so live as aliens. Here he uses alien identity to reinforce the idea of living distinctly from the world as God's own people, holy as God is holy.

Paul also writes that the Gentiles who have come to faith are no longer aliens and strangers but members of the household of God (Eph. 2), so the theme is powerful and multi-stranded throughout Scripture. Understanding ourselves as aliens or strangers in the world helps us to remember that we are dependent on God and are called to live in a way that demonstrates to whom we belong, that we hold lightly onto the things of this world and yet faithfully engage the world, and that we have a special responsibility to those who experience the literal vulnerability of being strangers.

Why is it so important to recognize in others the image of God? And how does this factor into a Christian's understanding of hospitality?

When we offer hospitality to someone who is usually overlooked or undervalued by their society, we're saying that the person is valuable and interesting and that their needs matter to us. This is a powerful expression of recognition. Part of the way we know that we have worth and value is by how others respond to us, and when we are systematically excluded or ignored, our sense of self is undermined. So when a person or community invites someone to be with them and gives him or her full attention, it is a way of acknowledging our common humanness, as well as the person's gifts and needs. The Christian tradition provides an extraordinary theological framework for recognition. Both Calvin and Wesley understood this well and articulated it beautifully.

So, for example—to paraphrase the insights of both men—when we encounter a homeless person on the street, we see their rough exterior and degraded position. Perhaps we see their need. But each person is so much more than a bundle of needs. Each is an individual of infinite worth with whom we share the experience of human identity, suffering, and need; each person bears the beauty of God's image. Such understandings provide a foundation for viewing every stranger as having great worth, and as worthy of our attention and response.

You believe that "hospitality is fundamentally connected to a place—to a space bounded by commitments, values, and meanings" and that part of "the difficulty in recovering hospitality is connected with our uncertainty about community and particular identity." How does the confusion of who we are and where we fit hinder our ability to share our lives with other people, even other brothers and sisters?

Making Room (cont.)

Contemporary understandings of hospitality often equate it with tolerance, where there is little commitment to anything and a minimal sense of community. But historically, the most hospitable communities had a strong sense of identity, and hospitable individuals offered welcome because of their deep commitments.

There are tensions in hospitality related to welcoming people and preserving a particular identity. It was a concern for ancient Israel and the monastic tradition, and it continues to challenge hospitable communities today. When we welcome strangers into a household or community for more than a brief period, they will be changed, but so will we. Mostly this is a blessing, but it is also a continual challenge because it requires that we think about what defines our communities, where we need to be more porous, and what it means to be faithful. Understanding that we are called by God to welcome strangers reverses the cultural focus on self and pushes us outward. We find ourselves and our place partly by caring for others and making a place for them.

What does a group's commitment to hospitality look like, and how does welcoming a stranger combine public and private life?

Hospitality is most commonly understood to be rooted in the household—homes are our most personal and intimate space for welcoming people. Inviting someone in to share a meal or a place to stay is a basic expression of hospitality. But today our households are often empty and all the adults are working outside the home. There isn't much structure into which to welcome folks—so a recovery of the importance of the household seems crucial. But it is still not enough. If our focus is on welcoming strangers, we also need to pay attention to threshold places. Before folks are welcomed into the intimacy of our homes, we often need more public spaces in which we can begin to get to know one another. In the past, the front porch and the city gate served as threshold places. Today we need to find or create equivalents—it could be our place of employment, school, or a church dinner or activity.

Hospitality, however, is bigger than the household. Because it is a way of life, we can embody it in all sorts of situations. Churches and communities are particularly important in offering welcome and in creating life-giving environments.

How does gracious hospitality effectively minister to the marginalized and vulnerable members of our communities?

In our age of specialization, we have tended to assume that there is a professional who is trained to meet every need. But people are not just a collection of needs; they are individual human beings. Untrained people often feel like they aren't equipped to welcome someone with a significant disability or a troubled home situation. But what ordinary, untrained followers of Christ have to offer is distinct. People don't necessarily need another program to meet their needs; they need a family or a community to which they can belong. They don't want to be another of our projects; they want friends. And that is what hospitality can offer—the chance to recover the significance of relationships in the healing of persons and communities.

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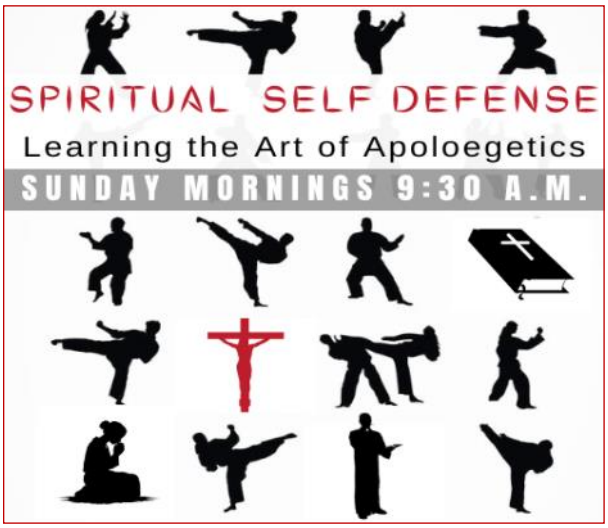
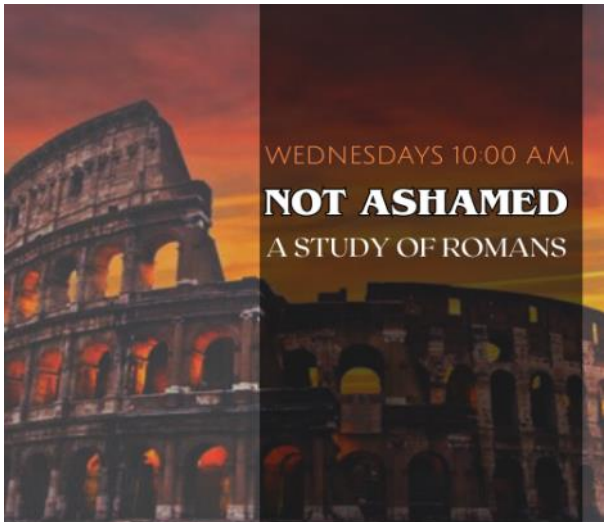


Beginning this week!

Don't miss it.



Births and Baptisms at Grace

Henderson Hoover was recently born and promptly baptized in the life of Christ by Pr. Brian. His dad, Max, proudly holds his son high as mom, Teagan stands by.

Pastor Brian meets Grant Jeffrey Gruetzmacher who was born on August 13, to Jeff & Jordan.

Duke Campbell and Melissa Millar welcomed Millar (Millie) Grace on August 26, 2024.

Thomas Mitchell Hawthorne was born on July 6, 2024. We will celebrate his baptism at Grace on Oct. 27 with parents, Rachel & Philip.

Eleanor Morgan was baptized on June 23, 2024. Her parents are Matthew & Kalisha Morgan. Her grandparents are long-time members, Scott & Patty Morgan.

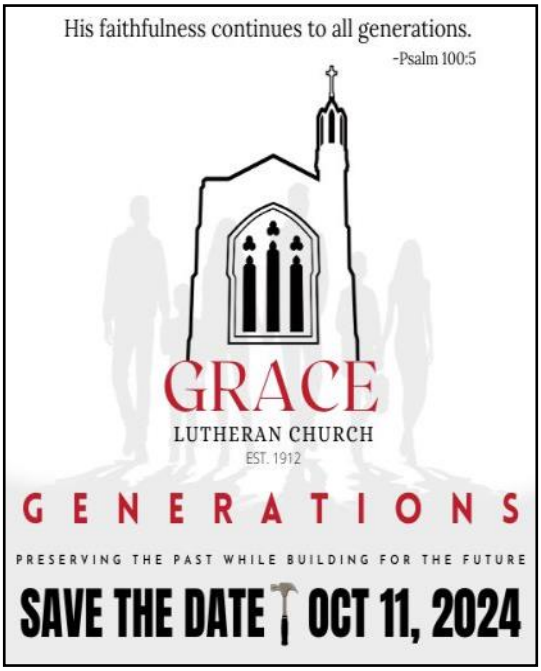
Johnathan, Tobias and Josiah Sorrels were baptized on August 25, 2024. They are the nephews of Daniel Paylor and grandchildren of Steve & Lois Paylor.

Faces of Grace

No, it's not Hawaii just a group of friends in the courtyard enjoying fellowship after the service. They all had the same idea to wear an Hawaiian print shirt to church on August 4th!

TNT - Gloria, Paul, and Karen enjoying themselves at our last Thursday Night Thing at Bay Park Fish House. There was plenty of good food and fellowship.

Congratulations to Kariff Gomez. His traveling hockey team won the championship 2-0 against Denver this past week.



Tickets are available now for the "*Laying the Foundation*" Dinner and Auction on Oct. 11. This is the kick-off event to our capital campaign. You can read more about it on page 3. Tickets are available on our website, Sundays before & after services or by contacting Gretchen in the Church office. gjordan@gracesandiego.com

June, July, & August Giving

Ju, Jl, Au Offerings	$ 55,050
Budget	$ 63,869
Shortage	$ -8.819
YTD Actual	$141,074
YTD Budget	$167,042
Shortage	$ -25,968

How to Give

- Your offering envelopes or those in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code here
- Text the amount to 84321
- The Giving Page at grace sandiego.com
- Time and Talents—see Pr. Brian

GRACE
Lutheran Church

3967 Park Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92103
619.299.2890
gracesandiego.com

The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas
brianwilliamthomas@gmail.com

Director of Church Music
Dale Sorenson
dalesorenson2@gmail.com

Church Secretary
Gretchen Jordan
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

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

Sunday School
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

Shannon Carreiro
Council President

Richard Segarra
Treasurer

Paul Himmelberger
Treasurer Emeritus

Daniel Paylor
Secretary

Heath Russert
Trustee

Kelley Schmidt
Fellowship/Activities

Josh Mellor
Member-at-Large

Carl Lehman
Education

Jeremy Fullam
Head Elder

Steve Hollman
Jason Huntley
Daryl Newton
Ted Nilsen
Elders

Prayers

For Strength and Healing
Dave, Phil, Mike, John, Heidi, Chris, Mary Jo, Marcia, John and Marianne, and Eddie

Awaiting a Child of God
Kalisha Morgan

For our Missionaries & Seminarians
Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss and Vicar Rowan Turner

For our Military Members
Micah Burge, Henry Casey, Nick Collum, Nathan Farish, Matthew Morgan, Jeff & Jordan Gruetzmacher, Joshua Simmons, and Thomas Spencer

For those unable to attend
Joyce Rochester

Birthdays

SEPTEMBER
6- Daryl Newton
7- Alma Fullam
9- Jeff Dorris
11- Andrew Gertz
11- Mark Jordan
13- Rachel Thomas

OCTOBER
1- Karen Dorris
2- Lynn Willis

Did we miss your birthday? If so, please email the church office to be included on the birthday list:
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

Clothed with Christ: A Biblical Style Guide for Sinners

Pr. Brian's latest book for 1517.org will be released on September 10. Most people do not think of the Bible as a fashionable style guide, but in this book, our pastor traces the golden thread running from Genesis to Revelation to illustrate the lengths to which the Master Tailor has gone to style us appropriately for heaven in Christ's liberating righteousness.

To preorder the book, go to:

https://shop.1517.org/collections/coming-soon

What's Happening on Oct. 11?

- The kick-off to our Generations Fundraising Campaign for necessary repairs and updates to the Grace campus, as we approach our 100th anniversary.
- A family event with dinner, a silent auction, a live auction, and a special surprise.

How to help:

- Buy tickets for the Dinner & Auction
- Donate services or new items
- Donate gift cards items for the Silent Auction Baskets
- Ask friends and local businesses for donations
- Consider donations for the Live Auction (large ticket items, stays in a vacation house, airline tickets, etc.)
- Help us make this a great event — collect baskets, sign up to help package baskets, help with set up and clean-up.