

Pastor's Message

Dear Grace Family,

I'd like to discuss why Holy Week matters in the life of a parish like ours, as there is a perennial temptation in the church to skip ahead to Easter morning. We are resurrection people, after all. We like our lilies bright, our brass triumphant, our "Alleluias" unrestrained. And yet, every year, the church in her wisdom insists that we slow down. She takes us by the hand and leads us the long way round—through palms and tears, through an upper room and a dark garden, past a charcoal fire and a borrowed tomb.

Holy Week is not spiritual pageantry. It is pastoral realism.

On Palm Sunday, we wave branches with the crowd, crying "Hosanna!"—which, we should remember, means "Save us." It is not a victory chant so much as a plea. By Thursday, we are at the table with Jesus, watching him kneel with a towel around his waist, loving his friends "to the end." By Friday, we stand at the foot of a cross and confront the uncomfortable truth that the worst thing that has ever happened is also the best thing that has ever happened.

Holy Week refuses to let us sentimentalize either our sin or God's grace.

If we leapfrog from parade to empty tomb, we risk turning Easter into a vague affirmation that "everything works out in the end." But the church will not let us do that. She makes us sit in the tension. She asks us to feel the weight of betrayal, the loneliness of Gethsemane, the injustice of the trial, and the finality of death. She invites us to name the ways we, too, have shouted "Crucify," if not with our lips then with our lives.

This is not morbid introspection. It is honesty.

And honesty is where grace does its best work.

Because when Good Friday is allowed to be good—when we see that Christ did not die as a tragic example but as a willing substitute—then Easter becomes more than springtime optimism. It becomes rescue. It becomes vindication. It becomes God's definitive "Yes" spoken over a world that has exhausted its own resources.

Holy Week tells the truth about us: we are fickle, fearful, and far more fragile than we care to admit. But it also tells the truth about God: He does not flinch. He does not retreat. He goes all the way into the dark and comes back with the keys.

The journey from Palm Sunday to Easter morning is the journey from illusion to reality—from the illusion that we can save ourselves to the reality that we have been saved. It is the slow unveiling of a love that does not depend on our consistency, our courage, or even our comprehension.

So we take the long way.

We gather in quiet sanctuaries on Thursday night. We linger at the cross on Friday. We wait in the hush of Saturday. And when the sun rises on Easter, the alleluias ring out not as denial of suffering, but as defiance of it.

Holy Week matters because Easter means something. And Easter means something because Jesus really went there—into the depths of our sin and sorrow—and brought us home.






I look forward to serving you during the Holy Week services.

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Thomas



HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

				
Palm Sunday 9:00 a.m.	Maundy Thursday 6:30 p.m.	Good Friday Noon & 6:30 p.m.	Easter Vigil 9:00 p.m.	Easter Sunday 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE AN EVIDENTIAL FAITH? BY J. WARNER WALLACE

It's a story most of us know, often all too well. If you're connected with young people—maybe a son or daughter, a grandchild, a niece or nephew—you've likely seen or felt the sting of watching someone raised in the church walk away. They hit high school, maybe college, and suddenly the faith they grew up with doesn't seem to stick. Often, they offer what sound like intellectual objections, but sometimes these are smokescreens for other motives. Whatever the reason, the result is the same: a season away from church, sometimes temporary, sometimes permanent. If you're honest, you probably have a version of this story somewhere in your own family.

Why does this happen, and what can we do about it? The problem, I've found, is that many of us in the church possess what I call "accidental faith." We grow up with beliefs—beliefs that happen to be true, sure—but we don't actually know why. We can't articulate the reasons. Ask why the faith is true, and most of us struggle to respond. Instead, we rest in the comfort of familiar surroundings, blissfully unaware of why those surroundings provide truth rather than mere tradition.

But sooner or later, blind belief will be tested. All it takes is one person—with a persuasive alternative worldview or lifestyle—to provoke doubt and offer a path away from Christianity. Sometimes, what pulls someone away isn't a rigorous intellectual argument but the simple lure of our passions. If a young person feels uncertain about the truth of Christianity, and another worldview promises a more permissive lifestyle, it shouldn't surprise us when the faith of their childhood is abandoned. That's often the real story behind the story—the "tail that wags the dog," so to speak.

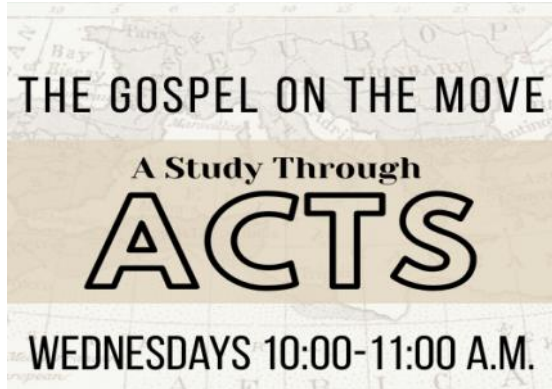
This is why I'm convinced we need more than a passive, inherited faith. We need a forensic faith—a faith built on solid evidence. Of course, this doesn't mean that every question will be answered perfectly or that there won't still be a step of trust required at the end of the day. But it does mean that the journey to belief is marked by a trail of evidence, and that evidence matters. When times get tough, knowing why the faith is true will help you stand tall. It will keep you grounded, even if circumstances aren't in your favor or you feel the pull to chase your passions for a season. Knowing what's true through evidence acts like a spiritual rubber band: if you drift too far, returning can be painful, but the truth brings you back to where you belong.

A forensic faith does three crucial things. First, it protects you from false ideas by providing a rational foundation for your beliefs. You're not easily swayed because you know the "why" behind the "what." Second, it steadies you in difficult times, giving you confidence and resilience when questions arise or when culture challenges you. Third, it provides a way home after a season of wandering. Everyone makes mistakes; everyone chases "stupid" for a while. But if you're anchored by evidence—by a knowledge not just of what you believe, but why—you have a clear path back to the truth when you're ready to return.

In the end, developing a forensic faith isn't just a matter of intellectual satisfaction. It's a way to strengthen yourself and those you love, ensuring that passing passions or cultural currents don't pull you endlessly away from what's real. Forensic faith is about more than just certainty—it's about cultivating resilience, clarity, and a genuine connection to truth. That's the kind of faith worth pursuing, and the kind that welcomes us home when life calls us back.

Article originally appeared at coldcasechristianity.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND CLASSES



Here We Still Stand is an invitation to celebrate the gospel truths reclaimed in the Reformation and a call to incite a modern Reformation under the banner of the finished work of Christ. This annual three-day event is packed with teaching, music, food, and fellowship, all focused on the radical message of God's grace toward sinners.

Join us October 15-17, 2026, (Thursday - Saturday) at the Hyatt Regency Mission Bay Spa and Marina in San Diego, CA. Our sessions will focus on proclaiming, teaching, and defending the Word of God.

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

WHAT IS A LECTIONARY?

The word "lectionary" comes from the Latin *legere*, meaning "to read." At its simplest, a lectionary is a curated schedule of Scripture readings assigned to specific days or seasons of the church year. Rather than leaving the choice of biblical texts to individual preachers week by week, the lectionary provides a shared, ordered path through the Bible — one that communities of faith walk together.

The practice of structured Scripture reading is ancient. Jewish synagogues followed a set cycle of Torah readings long before the Christian era, and the earliest church inherited this tradition.

Grace Lutheran makes use of the Revised Common Lectionary, which is built on a three-year rotation — Years A, B, and C — each centered on one of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke, respectively), with readings from John woven throughout. Each Sunday typically includes four readings: a passage from the Old Testament, a Psalm, an Epistle, and a Gospel text.

As I see it, there are at least four benefits of using the lectionary:

1. **Breadth of Scripture.** Over three years, congregations encounter an extraordinarily wide range of biblical texts — stories, prophecy, wisdom literature, letters, and apocalyptic vision — far more than most topical preaching series would ever cover.
2. **Accountability to the Text.** When the readings are set in advance, preachers are invited — even challenged — to engage passages they might otherwise avoid. The lectionary keeps the whole counsel of Scripture in view, not just a preacher's favorite themes.
3. **Connection to the Church Year.** Readings are tied to Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, rooting congregations in the rhythms of the Christian story year after year.
4. **Ecumenical Unity.** On any given Sunday, millions of Christians across denominations, traditions, and continents are hearing the same Scriptures. The lectionary is a quiet but powerful expression of the unity of the global church founded upon Christ and His Word.

President's Message

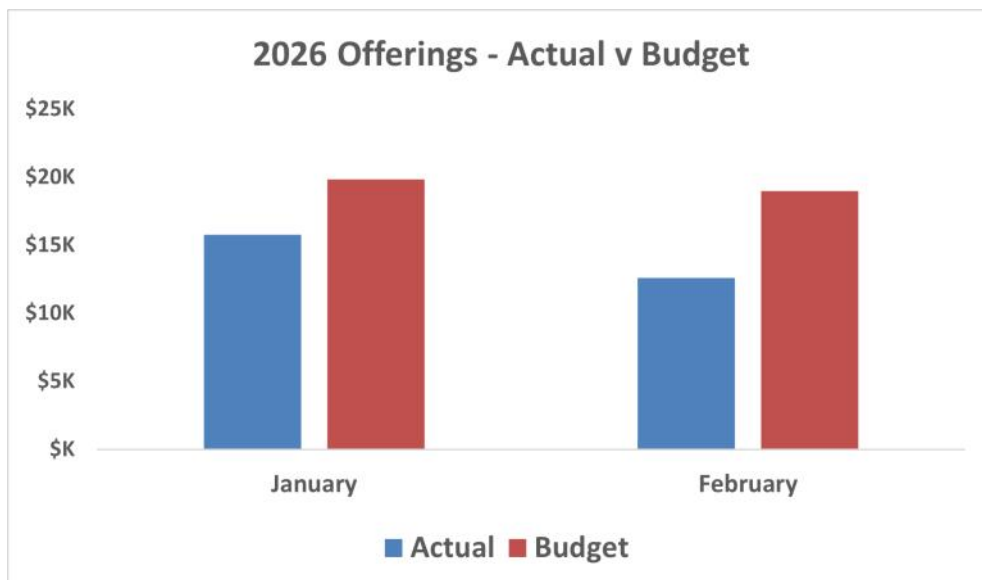
"Dad, why do we have to give the church our money?" My son August asked this with the blunt honesty of a child six months ago, and I have thought of it often since. My initial response was that we are called upon by the Word of God to cheerfully give. But I hesitated—is that the sole reason we give our time, talents, and money? I don't know about you, but there are many things the Word of God calls me to do that, because of my fallen nature, I neglect or refuse to do. Although I should, I don't always love my neighbor as myself, turn the other cheek, or do unto others as I would have them do unto me.

As I struggled with my son's question, I kept coming back not to the duty to give, but to what I receive from being a Christian at Grace Lutheran Church. Grace has given my family and me so much: the forgiveness of sins, the Word faithfully preached, catechesis, baptism for my children, the Lord's Supper week after week, pastoral guidance, and a supportive church family. This reflection made me realize that what I give is paltry compared to what I receive. When I spoke to August again, instead of saying "we give because we have to," I reminded him of all we receive from Grace and that it is only natural to give in return. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:34)

In closing, I want to thank you for all that you give. As Holy Week and Easter draw near, I also ask that you continue to support Christ's mission at Grace with your time, talents, and treasures.

Yours in Christ,

Carl J. Lehman



January-February Shortfall

\$10,424

FACES OF GRACE



Pastor Thomas joined the Fullam children during the Shrove Tuesday dinner to display his acrobatic talent.



A special moment for our congregation as we celebrated Audrey Aarstol receiving her First Communion.

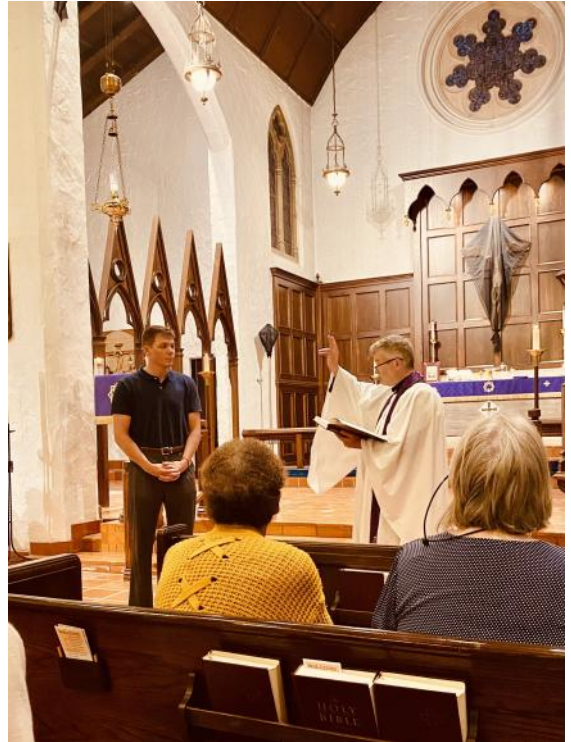


Wednesday morning bible study — full seats, open Bibles, and lots of good conversation.

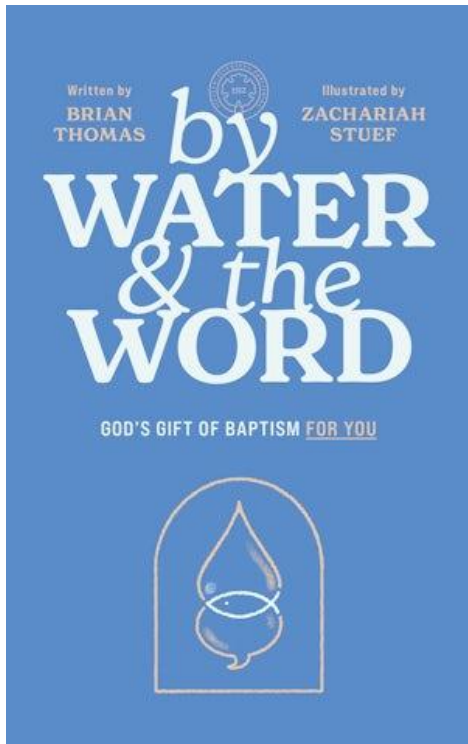
FACES OF GRACE



Our youngest members learning and growing in Christ together.



Pastor Brian performing the Rite of Godspeed for Wyatt as he transfers out of state.



Good news, Grace family!

Pastor Brian has a brand-new book coming out soon, and it's officially available for **pre-order**.

If you've ever appreciated his clear teaching, thoughtful sermons, or the way he explains Scripture in Bible study, you'll enjoy this book. It reflects the same steady, Christ-centered guidance he brings to our congregation each week.

Pre-ordering helps support the launch and ensures your copy arrives as soon as it's released. We're excited to celebrate this milestone with Pastor Brian and look forward to the blessing this book will be for many readers.

Scan the QR code to order from Amazon!





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 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, David, Phyllis, Floyd, Nancy, Lynn, and Harold

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, and Jeff Gruetzmacher

*(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

MARCH

4 - Ted Nilsen
 14- Michael Tow
 18- Molly Mellor
 18- Grant Mellor
 19- Kirschten Huntley

APRIL

1- Daniel Paylor
 1- Bobbi Roberts
 2- Jason Huntley
 6- Kariff Gomez
 8- Marilyn Licht
 9- Tony Fillius
 10- Steve Hollman
 14- Linnette Hollman
 14- Elsy Lehman
 20- Barbara Angelo
 26- Jack Gruetzmacher

MAY

17- Amy Russert
 19- Paul Himmelberger
 24- Kimberly Newton
 24- Heath Russert
 28- Michelle Thompson
 28- Fran Willis
 29- Jeremy Belgau

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

