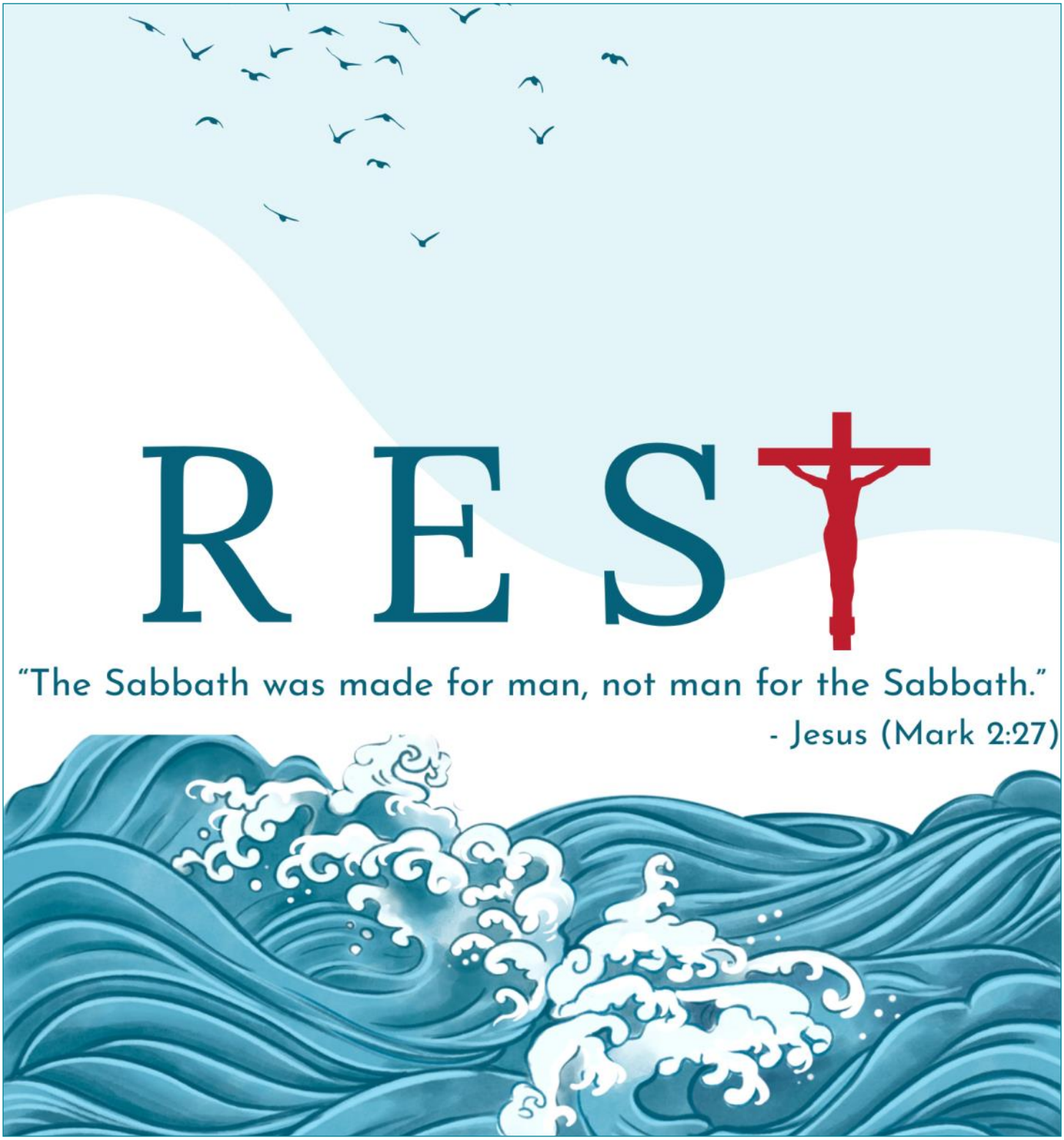
GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
EST. 1912

WITTENBERG WAY

Summer 2025



Pastor's Letter Page 2-3 | Summer Reading Page 4 | Council Reports Page 5 | Faces of Grace Page 6-7

Pastor's Letter

Dear Grace Family,

We are a restless people. We wake up already anxious. We lie down with worries buzzing like flies in our heads. We measure our worth in the currency of productivity, ticking off to-do lists like modern-day Pharisees tallying righteousness. We're tired—not just physically, but soul-tired. Worn thin by the grind of trying to prove ourselves to God, to others, to our own hearts.

But then comes Jesus. And He doesn't hand us another list. He doesn't invite us to a better technique for time management. He gives us something ancient and holy and scandalously unearned: REST. Not just a nap. Not a long weekend. But Sabbath. Deep, soul-level, Genesis-echoing, God-given Sabbath. A rest that doesn't begin when the work ends, but a rest that ends the work.

The Sabbath Was Made for Man

To understand the Sabbath rest in Jesus, we must go all the way back to the beginning. The very beginning.

On the seventh day of creation, God rested. But why? Was He exhausted from speaking galaxies into being? Did omnipotence get winded? Of course not. God rested not because He was tired, but because the work was finished. Creation was complete. And so God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (Genesis 2:2–3).

He didn't make the first day holy. Not even the sixth. But the seventh—the day when nothing was done but delight. That tells us something critical about God's design: we were made not to begin with effort but with rest. For Adam and Eve, their first full day of existence was a day of divine leisure. Their lives began in the posture of dependence, not performance.

That's the rhythm: grace before works. Rest before labor. Gift before grind.

Fast forward to Sinai. There, amid the thunder and fire, the Lord gave the Sabbath as a command: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). The command wasn't a burden but a blessing, a weekly return to Eden. A signpost pointing Israel back to the God who gives rest, not demands it. The Sabbath was a day of ceasing, not just from plowing fields or lighting fires, but from the incessant temptation to justify ourselves by what we do.

That's why Jesus later says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The Pharisees turned it into a test. Jesus restored it as a gift. And then He fulfilled it in Himself.

Come to Me, and I Will Give You Rest

Listen to Jesus. Not just with your ears, but with your soul: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

These aren't Hallmark words. They're Gospel dynamite. He's not saying, "I'll help you rest." He says, I will give you rest. In other words, rest is not something you achieve; it's something you receive.

And what's the context? Jesus had just been confronting the religious elite—the ones who made holiness a treadmill you could never stop running on. They piled burden upon burden, rule upon rule, until the people were staggering under the weight of it. But Jesus came not as another lawgiver. He came as a yoke-bearer. A rest-giver.

In Him, the Sabbath is not just a day of the week. It's a person. A living, breathing, crucified-and-risen person.

Jesus Is Our Sabbath

The writer of Hebrews picks up this theme and runs with it: "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God… For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his" (Heb 4:9–10).

This is not about taking Sundays off or observing Jewish feasts. This is about resting from your works—not just the ones you do from 9 to 5, but the spiritual striving, the moral bookkeeping, the constant attempt to prove to God that you're enough.

Pastor's Letter

Jesus is your enough--more than enough. He didn't come to help you finish the race. He ran it for you. He didn't come to make your burden manageable. He came to shoulder it Himself—on a cross.

On Calvary, He cried, "It is finished." And it was. Not just His life. Not just the work of redemption. But the restless, ceaseless drive to earn what can only be given. He died with our striving in His hands. He rose to give us rest.

Living in the Sabbath of the Gospel

So what does this mean for us? How do we live in this Sabbath rest?

First, it means we reject the lie that our identity comes from what we do. Your worth is not your resume. Your value isn't determined by your virtue. You are not the sum of your spiritual disciplines or your doctrinal orthodoxy or your church attendance. You are baptized. You are beloved. That's enough!

Second, it means we take actual, physical rest seriously. Resting in Jesus is not opposed to Sabbath rhythms—it deepens them. The Sabbath is not a relic of the Old Covenant; it's a pattern of grace that still holds. Unplug. Turn off your productivity apps. Put away your self-improvement books. Sit. Feast. Nap. Laugh. Worship. Let yourself be a creature, not a machine.

And third, it means we become rest-givers to others. A restless heart makes others restless. But a person who lives out of the rest of Jesus becomes a kind of portable Sabbath—someone who doesn't demand, but gives; who doesn't judge, but forgives; who doesn't rush, but listens. We become little Edens in a world still bent on earning.

Let's be honest. This kind of rest doesn't come naturally. Everything in us screams that we have to earn it. We feel guilty when we rest. We feel lazy when we slow down. We confuse busy for holy. But the Gospel cuts through all that noise with a thunderclap of grace: "You are mine. I've done the work. Now rest in Me. Period."

Sabbath is not a suggestion. It's not a productivity hack. It's not a day off. It is the heartbeat of the Gospel. It's what happens when Jesus finishes the work and hands you the reward. It's what happens when the Judge becomes your Justifier. It's what happens when you finally stop trying to be your own savior—and realize you already have one.

So lay down your burdens. Unclench your fists. Deep breath in; deep exhale out. The work is done. The

Gratefully Yours,

Rev. Brian Thomas

Summer Reading

In *The Big Relief*, popular author David Zahl spotlights grace as the most important, urgent, and radical contribution Christianity has to offer the world. Zahl helps readers understand the beauty and depth of grace, outlining how it provides relief from the guilt, status anxiety, and accelerating demand that characterize so much of modern life. Drawing on the witness of Scripture and a panoply of contemporary examples, he unpacks the theology of grace in fresh and exciting terms, exploring its many fruits--such as freedom, play, surrender, humility, rest, surprise, and joy--in the process.

Zahl invites us to embrace Christianity as a refuge rather than as a project, a beacon of hope instead of a vehicle of shame, and a harbor of refreshment in a worn-out world. Ultimately, he welcomes everyone to receive the gift of relief we so desperately need.

Preaching Amidst the Rubble: Why Faithful Preaching Matters

During the last days the Third Reich, as the Nazi terror struggled in its final throes and allied bombs rained down on Stuttgart, Helmut Thielicke preached a remarkable series of sermons based on the Lord's Prayer. These were days of uncertainty and death. On more than one occasion, the shriek of air raid sirens interrupted the sermon.

Thielicke writes that during this period, there were times when he felt utterly stricken: "My work in Stuttgart seemed to have gone to pieces; and my listeners were scattered to the four winds; the churches lay in rubble and ashes."

In one of the messages from this series, based upon the petition "Thy Kingdom come," Thielicke describes an encounter with a woman from his congregation. It happened as he was standing in the street looking down into the pit of a cellar-–all that remained from a building that an allied bomb had shattered. The woman approached him and declared, "My husband died down there. His place was right under the hole. The clean-up squad was unable to find a trace of him; all that was left was his cap."

What does a pastor say in a moment like this? "I'm sorry" hardly seems adequate. But the woman had not come to Thielicke for sympathy. She wanted to express her gratitude. "We were there the last time you preached in the cathedral church," she continued. "And here before this pit, I want to thank you for preparing him for eternity."

This is as good a definition of preaching as I have heard. Better, perhaps, than many, because of its stark realism. Preaching is preparing others for eternity. Preaching is having the last word. To preach is to take your stand before the pit and bear witness to the rubble of this ash heap world that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Save the Dates for Summer Fellowship

Independence Day BBQ - Sunday July 6
Midsummer Night Fellowship - Saturday July 19

President's Request
Shannon Carreiro

Help Wanted. Two Opportunities to Serve Your Church

#1 Now Accepting Stewardship Chair Candidates

This chair has been empty for several years. It could be yours to develop and take in new directions. Build creative programs that encourage Christian stewardship. Explore sound investment opportunities. Attend exciting monthly council meetings (okay, I made that up). If you have been a member of Grace Lutheran for at least two years, see Pastor Brian or a council member about standing for this important office.

#2 Clean-Up Crews

Love the potlucks, the Wednesday Soup Suppers, Sunday coffee hours, the special events? Grace Lutheran is filled with folks who enjoy good food and fellowship. Unfortunately, we're a bit lacking on people who'll pitch in to clean up after the good times have rolled. Clean-up crew is an equal opportunity vocation: men, women and kids are all welcome to help bus tables, wash dishes, sweep the floor and take out the trash. It's a fun way to get to know people and there's no experience necessary.

Treasurer's Report
Daniel Paylor

Midyear Financial Updates

- Our 7-month Certificate of Deposit (7m CD) matured, netting us $8.3k in interest.
- The rate of return on short-term fixed assets remained high, and council reinvested principal and interest in another 7m CD, maturing in November.
- Because we reinvested the interest, we removed this Investment Income from the budget. We made an additional (entirely neutral) shift to budgeted expenses to account for the correct month of a payroll-related cost.
- Council will deliberate on future investments and inform as appropriate.
- We completed the Registration and Tax Filing for the Solar Tax Rebate and expect an IRS payment of $24.9k later this year.
- A generous financial gift helped to finance the *much*-needed fence being installed in front of the parsonage driveway and walkway to afford safety and peace of mind to Pastor, Rachel, and the congregation.

If you have questions relating to the Church's finances, please reach out to Daniel Paylor.

February - March - April 2025 Giving

Feb-Mar-Apr Offerings	$ 42,250	2025 YTD Actual	$ 69,837
Budget	$ 63,882	2025 YTD Budget	$ 83,538
Shortfall	$ 14,632	Shortfall	$ 13,701

How to Give

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

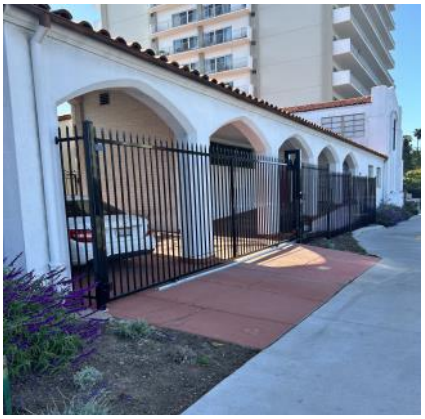
Faces of Grace

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT
Pastor and Mermaid Rachel recently hosted several children at the church so their parents could enjoy a date night. After pizza and ice cream, the pastor introduced them to one of his childhood favorites, "Tom & Jerry."

RITE OF GODSPEED
After a few years of training here in San Diego, we were sad to say goodbye to our U.S. Navy rescue swimmer, Henry Casey, who transferred to the East Coast to continue his service to our nation.

RUTH MARTHA LEHMAN
The newest addition to the Lehman family, Ruth Martha Lehman, was born on April 30, 2025. She is scheduled for the waters of Holy Baptism on Pentecost Sunday and pictured with pastor for her first selfie.

DONATHAN FAMILY
We are happy to welcome new members Chris and Britney Donathan, along with their two boys, Arthur and Franklin, who recently celebrated their first Holy Communion with us.



NEW GATE
Pastor and Rachel would like to thank our council, especially Trustee Heath Russert, and a generous donor for supporting the installation of a new gate in front of the parsonage carport. It looks beautiful and provides another layer of security, which, unfortunately, is necessary.

Faces of Grace

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Citlali Gomez (right) will be attending California Lutheran University in the fall.

Kariff Gomez (below) has been accepted into the Naval Academy Preparatory School in the fall and will transfer into the Naval Academy upon completion. Kariff was also recently featured on the local news as his hockey team here in San Diego won the state championship!

Spencer Huntley (left) was recruited by many top international universities to play rugby and chose Hartpury University in Gloucester, England. His local San Diego team just won the national championship, where Spencer was named the "Most Valuable Player!"

Pastor Brian and Rachel enjoying the Easter Brunch.

GRACE'S ANNUAL EASTER BRUNCH

A festive, delicious brunch was served on Easter morning and was well attended. Many thanks to Rachel for decorating and coordinating the brunch; Harold and Linnette for cooking and kitchen duty; and everyone who brought dishes and helped with the event.

GRACE
Lutheran Church

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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
9:00 am

Sunday School
(on recess)
10:15 - 11:00 am

Nursery available

Shannon Carreiro
Council President

Daniel Paylor
Treasurer

Judy George
Secretary

Heath Russert
Trustee

Carl Lehman
Education

Rachel Thomas
Fellowship/Activities

Josh Mellor
Member-at-Large

Mark Jordan
Member-at-Large

Jeremy Fullam
Head Elder

Steve Hollman
Jason Huntley
Daryl Newton
Ted Nilsen
Elders

Prayers

For Strength and Healing
Dave, Mike, Arleen, Eddie, Michelle, Steve, Kristi, Alma, and Floyd

For Our Missionaries & Seminarians
Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss, Vicar Rowan Turner, and Vicar William Baker

For Our Military Members
Micah Burge, Nathan Farish, Matthew Morgan, Jeff & Jordan Gruetzmacher, Joshua Simmons, and Thomas Spencer
(If you are new to Grace and in the military, please email your info to the church at: gjordan@gracesandiego.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
24 –Tony Mezzadri
28- Fran Willis

JULY
4– Sandi Garcia
5 - Scott Weselis
8 - Natalie Lukaesko
13- Peter Gertz
16 - Chris Latham
21– Rev. Brian Thomas
21 – Kelley Clark
26 - Judy George
29 - Conner Russert
31- Kris Fillius

AUGUST
3– Ken Licht
3- Stacie Mezzadri
5- Dale Sorenson
11- Erin Dorris
14- Joyce Rochester
14– Victoria Nilsen
14 - Henderson Hoover
19- Shannon Carreiro
19– Juliana Fullam
20– Jakobsen Belgau
24- Jackson Huntley
25- August Lehman
30- Maggie Jacobs

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

Spring Cleaning? Please consider donating your gently used items. Bring donations any time & store in classroom.