

THE WITTENBERG WAY

February 2022 Volume 9, Issue 1



Dear Grace Family,

In our liturgy, the person who is leading the service of Holy Communion is called the "celebrant." That's because we're doing what Kool & The Gang said to do in 1980: Celebrate! Every Sunday, we are celebrating the ridiculously good news that in Jesus Christ, God is done keeping score—every last saint, sinner, sloth, and self-centered human—are invited to the party to receive the forgiveness of their sins for Christ's sake.

So we Lutherans are good at celebrating, which is good because we have a lot to celebrate these days at Grace. For example:

- After many years of hard work (and gnashing of teeth) by many church members, which included several voter's assemblies, we finally passed a revised Constitution and Bylaws.
- Thanks to your generous giving, we have installed a new organ console and affiliated electronics to complete phase 1 of our Grace Lutheran Organ Restoration in Action (GLORIA) campaign.
- Despite the difficulties with COVID and a drop in membership over the past two years, we met our 2021 budget goals by the end of the year, so we start this new year on solid financial footing.
- Thanks to the generosity of one of our families, our new and much-needed elevator has been installed and will be operational in a few weeks.
- We welcomed several new members into our fold as well as installed some new Council members and an Elder to our boards. We have a gifted and dedicated leadership at the helm and I'm grateful for them and the work they do to support our mission.
- This year we have added some seminarians to our missions budget who are planting several Lutheran churches in Italy (more info later).
- This year 1517.org will be back in San Diego hosting the always awesome "Here We Still Stand" conference in person, and GLC plays an important logistics role in supporting this great event. If you'd like to attend, and I recommend you do, please register at: www.1517.org/events/hwss-2022

Truly, lots to celebrate and give thanks for. And I know many of these items seem so...well...ordinary. That's okay! In fact, it is precisely how God most often works. Commenting on his favorite dog, Martin Luther once noted, "The dog is the most faithful of animals and would be much esteemed were it not so common. Our Lord God has made His greatest gifts the commonest." This is so true. Each week I have the honor to be the "celebrant" where I speak Jesus' words and together we eat a little wafer of bread and take a sip of cheap wine, but undergirding this rather ordinary rite is the presence of Christ gifting Himself and pronouncing forgiveness, life, and salvation to us all.

So, turn up your Kool and the Gang, and come celebrate with me each week.

Gratefully Yours,

Pastor Thomas

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LENT

Ash Wednesday

March 2

Noon and 6:00 pm



On Monday, a woman laid her baby girl to rest. Tiny coffin. A ragged gash in her maternal soul. Now every inch forward is a mile of numbness. And, God, where is he?

On Tuesday, a couple signed divorce papers. A God-joined and man-destroyed union. Separate beds, separate homes, shared fears of a future pregnant with monstrous uncertainties.

On Wednesday, a man got to work, did his job, clocked out, and drove home, convinced that if he were simply to vanish from the earth tonight, in a year not a single person would ever give him even a moment's remembrance.

On Thursday, a mother spent morning to nightfall cooking and cleaning and correcting the three young children in her care, all the while wondering if, in the grand scheme of things, she made any real difference to the Creator of the universe.

On Friday, when the worker wheeled him into the main room in front of the television, he stared through cloudy blue eyes at the bent and haggard bodies of his compatriots in this house of aging, where daily, if not hourly, he asked the Lord why he didn't just take him home already.

Early Saturday morning, when she stumbled home from the party in darkness, her mind a blur from the miasma of drugs and a hook-up with some stranger, she fell into bed with just enough consciousness left to silently scream to the heavens her unspoken lament for a life she wouldn't be ashamed of.

On Sunday, after the pastor got home from church, he slumped into his recliner, thinking about what a wasted life he was leading, shepherding a congregation that was hemorrhaging members and seemed hellbent on dying the slow death of attrition. And lifting his eyes to heaven, he shook his head and said, "I'm beginning to think that you don't even care."

You know these people. I know these people. Some of you are these people. They are those who feel unseen, unheard, unneeded, unloved.

Maybe the stories and struggles are slightly different, but they are all caught in the universal machine of suffering that chews people up and spits them out. And in their respective griefs and fears, they are all wondering if God sees them, hears them, knows them.

Once, long ago, a pregnant runaway named Hagar was at the end of her rope. In the desert, the Messenger of the Lord met her, spoke to her, and gave her a promise. She afterward gave him the Hebrew name, El Roi, "The God who Sees." She said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me" (Gen. 16:13).

El Roi, the God who sees, the God who looks after me, the God named Jesus the Christ.

Monday through Sunday, when his children are in loss, shame, confusion, and doubt, Jesus El Roi never closes his eyes. He looks and he sees. More than that, he sits with the suffering and holds the trembling soul. There is not a bone in the body that doesn't care.

If he counts the hairs of our heads, if he counts our tears, then surely he counts the fissures in our fragile hearts, weighs our burdens, and tallies the minutes we lie awake at night. He is not a faraway Savior but is as near to us as heat to a fire, as wet is to water.

He who had appeared to Hagar as "The God Who Sees" is he who, in the fullness of time, was the God seen upon the cross. And to see God upon the cross is to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he sees you as one for whom he was willing to die.

This Jesus is merciful. He will show you mercy.

With him, you are always seen and loved.

For more of Chad Bird's writings, go to 1517.org



IN THE NEWS: "FINLAND PUTS THE BIBLE ON TRIAL"

On Monday the trial began in Finland for Lutheran Bishop Juhana Pohjola and Member of Parliament Dr. Päivi Räsänen, charged with hate crimes for teaching what the Bible says about homosexuality.

Way back in 2004, long before Finland legalized same-sex marriage in 2017, Dr. Räsänen, a medical doctor and former Minister of the Interior wrote a 24-page booklet on the Bible's teachings about sexuality, including a section on homosexuality. Bishop Pohjola's church, now in fellowship with the LCMS, published it. Dr. Räsänen was also charged for tweeting a Bible verse in response to the liberal state church being a sponsor of an LGBTQ parade and for participating in a 2019 debate on the subject. Three years ago, over a decade and a half after the publication of the booklet, the two were charged for inciting hatred against homosexuals. Finally, their case has been brought to trial.



"I will not back down from my conviction based on the Bible, and I am ready to defend freedom of speech and religion in all necessary courts."

—Päivi Räsänen

Joy Pullman of the Federalist has been covering the case and the trial. She reports that the hearing on Monday took a strange twist. Instead of focusing on the two defendants, who could be sentenced to a fine of 10,000

euros and two years in prison, the prosecutors, in effect, put on trial the Bible itself. From her article, Finnish Government Puts Christianity On Trial, Calls The Bible 'Hate Speech':

In the trial's opening arguments, which will resume on Feb. 14, Finnish prosecutors described quotations from the Bible as "hate speech." Finland's top prosecutor's office essentially put the Bible on trial, an unprecedented move for a secular court, said Paul Coleman, a human rights lawyer with Alliance Defending Freedom International who is assisting in the Finns' legal defense and was present during Monday's trial.

"The prosecutor began the day by trying to explain that this case was not about beliefs and the Bible. She then, and I'm not kidding, she then proceeded to quote Old Testament Bible verses," Coleman said in a phone interview with *The Federalist* after the trial concluded for the day. "Trial attorneys, Finnish trial attorneys who have been in and out of court every day for years, said they didn't think the Bible had ever been read out like that in a prosecution."

Never before has a Finnish court had to decide whether quoting the Bible is a crime. The prosecutors then interrogated the two about their theology, which became an occasion for them both to proclaim the Gospel!

"The booklet stands on the Christian understanding of human beings," Pohjola said in court, according to an on-site Finnish reporter, Danielle Miettinen. "Sin affects every human being to the core. But the grace of God is also universal. He wants to forgive the sins of every human being."

The booklet Rasanen wrote, called "Male and Female God Created," also affirms Christian teachings about the preciousness of every single human life to God. Christians also believe in complete human equality in both the sinfulness of every human and God's forgiveness of every sin. Rasanen and Pohjola have repeatedly publicly affirmed that they are not motivated by hate, but by love in stating the historic, orthodox Christian faith.

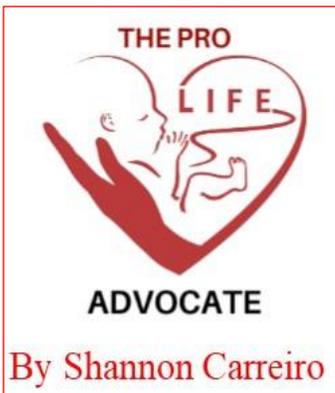
"The saving gospel of Jesus Christ has been given to us in the Bible," Rasanen told reporters outside court Monday, according to Miettinen. "The cross of Christ shows the greatest love for both heterosexuals and homosexuals."

"Although we feel the cultural pressure and intimidation, our main focus as Christians is not to wage cultural war but to share the grace, life and hope we have in Christ Jesus."

—Bishop Juhana Pohjola



The trial will resume on February 14, appropriately enough, St. Valentine's Day, named after a martyr who was also a defender of marriage. The word "martyr" means "witness."



On December 8, 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom made a stunning announcement. He intends to turn California into an abortion sanctuary. Why now? Newsom anticipates the U.S. Supreme Court will soon rule in favor of a Missouri law that bans abortion after 15 weeks' gestation. It will open a floodgate of similar bans in at least 20 other states and could deliver a mortal blow to *Roe v. Wade*. "We are looking at ways to support that inevitability and looking at ways to expand our protections [of abortion rights]," the governor told an interviewer.

Everything But a Free Lottery Ticket

Newsom's visionary plan was quickly followed by a proposal from the California Future of Abortion Council (founded by Newsom). It outlines 45 recommendations for turning California into America's abortion mecca. The scope is breathtaking.

- Provide "reproductive care" assistance that foots the bill for the abortion procedure plus travel expenses such as gas, transportation, lodging, child care, food and lost wages.
- Creation of a California Reproductive Scholarship Corps to help abortion clinics beef-up their workforce. Medical students who pledge to provide abortions in rural area would receive scholarships, help to pay-off student loans and assistance for their monthly liability insurance premiums.
- Explore ways to offer medication abortion services to out-of-state patients via telehealth.
- Remove existing barriers to abortions later in pregnancy.
- Enact legal protections for abortion patients and providers, including those who serve out-of-state patients.
- Combat abortion misinformation and disinformation while ensuring schools and community-based organizations offer medically accurate, culturally relevant and inclusive abortion education.
- Collect data on the effectiveness of public schools' sexual health programs and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on abortion services.
- More funding for abortion providers and measures to make it easier for those providers to get paid.

All Those In Favor

The proposal has the full support of Planned Parenthood. It's also backed by leadership in both chambers of California's legislature. Toni Atkins, head of our state senate, called it "an incredibly critical moment in the history of women's rights. We want to let people know that we are going to be part of the solution, that we are a beacon."

How many customers will this beacon attract? Although California does not collect or report abortion statistics, the Guttmacher Institute estimates 132,680 abortions were performed in California in 2017, or about 15% of all U.S. abortions that year. Planned Parenthood, which accounts for about half of California's abortion clinics, says it performed about 7,000 abortions for out-of-state patients last year. Jodi Hicks, president of Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, anticipates "potentially tens of thousands of patients." Much of the demand would likely come from women who are further along in their pregnancies, thus necessitating more complicated, riskier and costlier procedures.

The Bottom Line

And how will this largess be funded? CalMatters.com says the governor's abortion council recommends eliminating cost-sharing for abortion and abortion-related services for all insurance plans, and improved reimbursement rates for Medi-Cal, the state's health care program for the poor. Senator Atkins foresees a "mixture of state and private funds." A cynic might translate that as taxpayers' money from California's \$31 billion surplus and pay-to-play contributions from the providers who will serve this new tourism niche.



Governor Newsom and State Senator Toni Atkins plan to create an abortion sanctuary in California.



SANCTITY of human LIFE

TOGETHER, WE CAN OFFER

Hope

Nearly 1 Million abortions occur in the USA each year.

20% of these abortions are performed in CA.

You can help change that in San Diego.

SDNEEDSLIFE.COM

SCAN TO LEARN MORE & SCHEDULE A CLINIC TOUR



C | A
P | S Pregnancy Clinics

Pregnancy CareClinic

"It is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish."
MATTHEW 18:14

Truth TO KNOW & SHARE

THE SLED TEST

S SIZE
True, embryos are smaller than newborns and adults, but why is that relevant? Do we really want to say that large people are more human than small ones? Men are generally larger than women, but that doesn't mean they deserve more rights. Size doesn't equal value.

L LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT
True, embryos and fetuses are less developed than you and I. But again, why is this relevant? Four year-old girls are less developed than 14 year old ones. Should older children have more rights than younger ones? Some people say that self-awareness makes one human. But if that is true, newborns do not qualify as valuable human beings. Remember: Six-week old infants lack the immediate capacity for performing human mental functions, as do the reversibly comatose, the sleeping, and those with Alzheimer's.

E ENVIRONMENT
Where you are has no bearing on who you are. Does your value change when you cross the street or roll over in bed? If not, how can a journey of eight inches down the birth-canal suddenly change the essential nature of the unborn from non-human to human? If the unborn are not already human, merely changing their location can't make them valuable.

D DEGREE OF DEPENDENCY
If viability makes us human, then all those who depend on insulin or kidney medication are not valuable and we may kill them. Conjoined twins who share blood type and bodily systems also have no right to life.

In short, it's far more reasonable to argue that although humans differ immensely with respect to talents, accomplishments, and degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they all have the same human nature.

1517: SAVE THE DATE



CONSCIENCES CAPTIVE TO THE WORD OF GOD

HERE WE STILL STAND

A REFORMATION CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 13-15

2022

HEREWESTILLSTAND.ORG

SAN DIEGO CALIFORNIA

The season of Epiphany focuses on how God was made manifest in the flesh of Jesus. The church spends time hearing of the miracles, signs, and wonders of Jesus in the world. And this made plain to all that Jesus really is who He said He was. He is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only begotten Son of the Father, in the flesh. For “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

It is revealed for all the world to see that Jesus is God in the flesh. It is made manifest by His words and His work, by what He said and by what He did. And these belong together, for “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Jesus is the Word and will of God in the flesh, that is, He is the walking, talking enactment of God’s Word.

It is no different for us. We are called not just to believe in God in hearts but also to trust in God in word and deed. As James wrote: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22), and again, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? ... So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ... Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:14, 17–18, 26).

Our faith is lived out in works for our neighbor. Our trust in the Word and will of God is lived out not in word only but also in deed and in truth. In other words, the Epiphany of the Lord creates in us an epiphany of our faith in our works of obedience to God who commanded them. By this, our faith is made manifest to the world. It is, as Luther wrote of faith:

Faith is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1). It kills the old Adam and makes altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and it brings with it the Holy Spirit.

Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. And so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question rises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them.

He who does not these works is a faithless man. He gropes and looks about after faith and good works and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, though he talks and talks, with many words about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God’s grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all His creatures. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit in faith. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace.

And thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate burning and shining from fire. Beware, therefore, of your own false notions and of the idle talkers, who would be wise enough to make decisions about faith and good works, and yet are the greatest fools. (*Preface to the Book of Romans*)

So, then, let our faith be active by God’s power in the Word through the Holy Spirit. And let then our faith be made manifest to the world by what this faith does: serving our neighbor – in church, in the family, and society – with the works of faith in time, talents, and treasures.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

2021 YEAR-END OFFERINGS

December 2021 Actual	\$ 40,239	<p style="text-align: center;">Giving to Grace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	
Budget	\$ 26,273		
Overage	\$ 13,966		
2021 YTD Actual	\$273,066		
2021 YTD Budget	\$265,000		
Overage	\$ 8,066		
<i>2022 Budget</i>	<i>\$273,000</i>		

Shannon Carreiro hosted her Grace Gathering group last month for a traditional tamale-making party.

From L-R: Pr. Brian, Shannon, Kelley Schmidt, John Barber, Carl and August Lehman.



Wednesday Morning Bible Study is studying the Theology of the Cross v. Theology of Glory. We had a small group this past week but there is always room if you would like to join. We meet in the Fellowship Hall from 10 to 11 am.

From L-R: Maggie Jacobs, Harold Nichols, Shannon Carreiro, Daryl Svensson, Gretchen Jordan, and Pastor Brian. Seated are Michael Tow and Pastor Lee. Rachel Thomas is taking the photo. Come join us!



THANK YOU

MANY THANKS TO OUR NEWLY ELECTED AND EXISTING COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR ALL THEIR TIME AND EFFORTS!

We have a gifted and dedicated leadership at the helm and we are grateful for them and the work they do to support our mission.

John Hansen, President
 Paige Hooks, Vice President
Richard Segarra, Treasurer
 Shannon Carreiro, Secretary
 Paul Himmelberger, Trustee
Kelley Schmidt, Fellowship
Heath Russert, Member at Large

Jeremy Fullam concludes his service as Council member and is now an Elder. Many thanks to Daniel Hill who served as our Treasurer for two terms and all our volunteers that serve faithfully.



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The Reverend
 Brian W. Thomas
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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

IT'S EASY TO DONATE TO GLC

- Scan the QR code below with your phone
- Text an amount to 84321
- Give through your online banking
- Use your giving envelopes
- Drop your donation in the offering plate.

Thank you!



PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Joyce, Dave, Bill, Steve, Michael, Bernie, Paul, Mike
 Terry, Andrea, Nancy, and Edward

PRAYERS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD OF GOD

RJ & Christine

PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

Rev. Dr. John & Melinda Bombaro (Latvia)

PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

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

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Lorna Winterstein, Joyce Rochester

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 7- Elle Hansen | 23- Gabriel Castaneda |
| 12- Nathan Russert | 27- Laura Latham |
| 15- Gloria Berge | 27- Randy Houts |
| 16- Meriah Razak | 27- Georgia Thompson |
| 17- Lola and Ellie Mezzadri | 28- Lily Thomas |
| 17- Gretchen Jordan | |

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

EPIPHANY 6

Feb. 13, 2022
 Psalm 1
 First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8
 Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20
 Gospel: Luke 6:17-26

EPIPHANY 7

Feb. 20, 2022
 Psalm 103:1-13
 First Reading: Genesis 45:3-15
 Second Reading: 1 Cor 15:21-26, 30-42
 Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Feb. 27, 2022
 Psalm 99
 First Reading: Deuteronomy 34:1-12
 Second Reading: Hebrews 3:1-6
 Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

ASH WEDNESDAY

March 2, 2022
 Psalm 51:1-13
 First Reading: Joel 2:12-19
 Second Reading: 2 Cor 5:20b-6:10
 Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

LENT 1

March 6, 2022
 Psalm 91:1-13
 First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-11
 Second Reading: Romans 10:8b-13
 Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

LENT 2

March 13
 Psalm 4
 First Reading: Jeremiah 26:8-15
 Second Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1
 Gospel: Luke 13:31-35

LENT 3

March 20, 2022
 Psalm 85
 First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-20
 Second Reading: 1 Cor 10:1-13
 Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

LENT 4

March 27, 2022
 Psalm 32
 First Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6
 Second Reading: 2Cor 5:16-21
 Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32