

THE WITTENBERG WAY



Dear Grace Family,

September 2022 Volume 9, Issue 6

At the beginning of 2020 our parish was firing on all cylinders. The average attendance between our two services was 200-225 on a typical Sunday. Giving was solid and I was feeling a bit overwhelmed with the demand on my time, so much so, that our leadership was discussing the potential of calling an assistant pastor by the end of the year. As they say, "the best-laid plans." The pandemic hit and everything changed.

With the benefit of hindsight, I strongly believe we made the right choices during this time. Nevertheless, our attendance numbers have dropped significantly over the past two years. Poll after dismal poll shows that we are not alone. According to Barna Research, only one in three practicing Christians physically attended church during the pandemic. On average, only 18% of those remaining at home during this time participated in a worship service online, while over 50% of millennials dropped out altogether. Experts say that it takes on average 30 days to form a habit. Staying home on Sunday became a habit.

Regardless of the size, denomination, or geographical location, the majority of churches have since lost 30-50% of their pre-COVID membership. I am by nature a "glass half full" sort of guy, so one year ago, I was optimistic about a return "to normal," and expected to see a return of our members and regular attendees. After all, the writer to the Hebrews exhorts us: "Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more since you see that the Day of the Lord is drawing near" (Heb 10:25), so why in the world would our brothers and sisters neglect the precious gifts we receive each week in the Divine Service?

As the Pentecost season gave way to Advent, I realized my expectations were not aligning with reality. A few folks returned, while others moved out of state. Gratefully, new families have been added to our ranks. But overall, as our Church Council looks at our present demographics and giving each month, we are still struggling. I must confess that it is easy as a pastor to become melancholy and think that I've somehow failed to shepherd you adequately through all of this.

Thankfully, I was recently encouraged by something Pastor Christopher Esget said in a recent chapel sermon and I want to pass it on to you. He mentioned that the statistics of the LC-MS are in decline and do not seem to be turning around. Does this mean that we have failed? His answer: *Success and failure are not ours to determine*. The Lord Jesus promised, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." His *presence* is what matters.

How is Christ present? It's doesn't come from our sincerity, as though if we have enough enthusiasm people will feel it. It's not about having the right programming. It's not about better music. It's not about having a better website or social media presence, as important as those things may be. Christ's promise is for a liturgical assembly. We do not gather around a common political ideology, social status, musical taste, or skin color. We gather as those baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And in that Name, we gather to receive His Word, His Absolution, and His Supper, therefore we possess every thing we need to rescue a depraved and dying world. And even if our attendance dwindles to two or three people hiding in a secret place, Christ is present. It's the Lord's Church, not ours. He will give us what we need when we need it.

Have we failed? Yes, by ourselves. Daily. But we are not by ourselves. It is the Lord's Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Take comfort, my dear brothers and sisters. Gathered in His name, He is with us, even to the end of the age. It's Christ's promise, and He always keeps His Word.

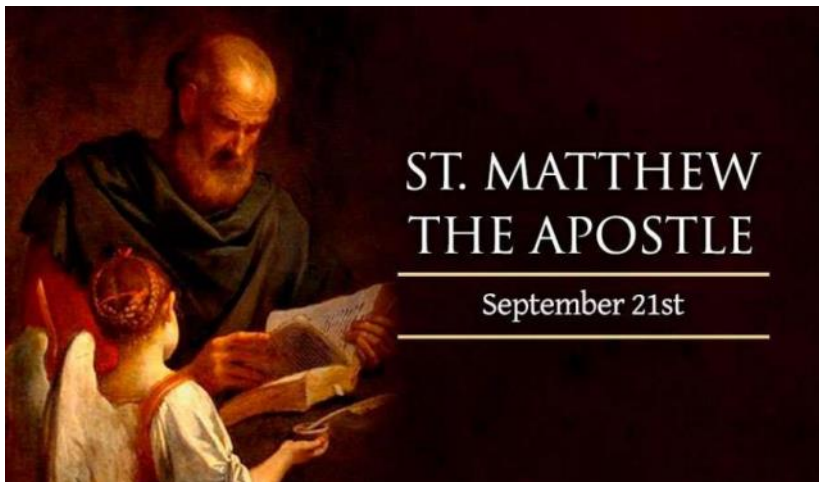
Under the Sufficient Love of Christ,

Pastor Thomas

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SALUTE THE SAINTS



ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE

September 21st

The Lutheran tradition does not believe in praying to or invoking the saints, for we have no promise in Scripture that they hear us or can aid us. Instead, the Lutheran Confessions affirm three ways that we are to honor the saints of God that have come before us: (1) Thanksgiving to God as they provide examples of His mercy; (2) They strengthen our faith in God. Just as we see God's grace and forgiveness poured out upon them, so too we are to believe that God will be gracious and forgive us our sins; and (3) They serve as models of faith and virtue to be imitated according to our vocations in life. This year we will "salute the saints" in each issue of our newsletter as I provide a little background on a particular saint that is remembered for the month at hand.

The Church celebrates the Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, on September 21.

St. Matthew appears in the list of the twelve apostles of Jesus, and according to the Gospel written under his name, he was a tax collector from Capernaum (Matt 9:9). Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi, which was his name in Hebrew. If you think you don't like the IRS, the disdain for Matthew's occupation as a tax collector would have tenfold back then. He would have been despised by his fellow Jews as a traitor and sell-out to the occupying Romans, one that not only collected for the enemy but also gained a lavish living from it. Nevertheless, Christ demonstrated that He did not judge by outward appearance when it came to those He called to "follow Him." Matthew's calling into Jesus' inner circle was a dramatic gesture of the Messiah's universal message and mission, causing some religious authorities of the community to wonder: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus' response indicated a central purpose of his ministry: "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Matt 9:13).

Matthew's Gospel is clearly written to a Jewish audience portraying Christ as the prophet greater than Moses as he divides his book into five sections (just like the Pentateuch). Christ is the Son of David, the long-awaited Messiah, the fulfillment of all God's promises to Israel (Matt 5:17). As with most of the apostles, it's hard to say exactly how Matthew died. There are several conflicting accounts about his death. The earliest records say he carried out his Gospel ministry in Ethiopia, Persia, Macedonia, or Syria (or some combination of them). While traditions vary, they all agree that he was arrested and martyred for the faith between 60-65 A.D.

Saint Matthew and his Gospel record have inspired important works of religious art, ranging from the ornate illuminated pages of the Book of Kells in the ninth century, to the Saint Matthew Passion of J.S. Bach. Three famous paintings of Caravaggio, depicting Matthew's calling, inspiration, and martyrdom, hang within the Contarelli Chapel located within the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome.

In our sanctuary, St. Matthew's window can be found in the upper section of the north-side wall above the pews next to the other evangelists. Because Matthew's Gospel emphasizes the humanity of Christ, he is often symbolized by a winged man, an artistic attempt to render Christ as both fully divine and fully human.

COLLECT FOR ST. MATTHEW'S DAY

O Son of God, our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, You called Matthew the tax collector to be an apostle and evangelist. Through his faithful and inspired witness, grant that we also may follow You, leaving behind all covetous desires and love of riches; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Trustee's Update

Greetings!

In this report, I hope to inform you of the past and future projects that are intended to maintain this incredible campus. Many items could not be deferred as a lack of routine maintenance would cause more serious problems in the future. Prior to the pandemic, we had been funding a reserve for major projects on a monthly basis. This funding has been suspended for nearly three years and we have had to dip into our reserves to complete some recent projects.

Two essential jobs required the replacement of a section of the sanctuary roof as well as the flat roof east of the sanctuary for a cost of \$17,000. The elevator, which was failing, was modernized at a cost of around \$80,000. Fortunately, these two areas were mostly covered by donors.

You may have noticed our beautiful wood floors and sanctuary tiles. This type of maintenance is necessary to maintain them for the future as well, so it is a recurring requirement that couldn't be postponed any longer, and the summer proves the least intrusive time of year to accomplish this work.

Our parking lot surface has reached the end of its life and requires a sealing top coat. This will prevent more catastrophic failures in the future. This will cost us \$8,500.

You may have noticed a not-so-pleasant odor on the last Sunday of July. We discovered a leak in our 100-year-old cast iron sewer pipe. We were prepared for the worst and expected we may have to pay \$25,000 to replace it, but thankfully, we were able to repair the current failure and learned that our pipes have some life still in them. I want to thank R.J. Smith for assisting us with this job.

The remaining sections of the roof, including the flat roof over the single-story school building, are a constant concern. In addition, there are many smaller items that continue to nibble away at our resources. We do the best we can to be faithful stewards of those gifts that we have. Our problem is that we are no longer saving for these costs. There has not been room in the budget to do so and our 2022 finances will show an unfortunate and significant loss.

I do not want to sound negative about the future. We have been in this situation before and God has always provided us with a way through it.

His service and yours,

Paul Himmelberger, Trustee

TREASURER'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

So far this year our regular giving has been about 13% below budget. Attendance is lower than last year, and summer months can be slow. However, with July trending even lower at 24% below budget, it is important to highlight the current shortfall. We've received some one-time gifts that have helped our total income to exceed our budget, but these types of gifts cannot be counted on when we create a budget.

We've had some large repair expenditures this year which were mostly funded by designated gifts. Otherwise, our spending has tracked below or close to budget in most areas.

As we look toward the budgeting for next year, our regular giving total for this year will be the key input to our estimates for income and spending. I'll continue to monitor it and provide updates as we get closer to year-end.

Please contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Richard Segarra, Treasurer

June & July 2022 Actual Offerings	\$ 35,138
June & July Budget	\$ 40,089
Shortfall	\$ 4,951

YTD 2022 Actual Offerings	\$ 129,762
Annual Budget	\$ 273,000
Needed EOM 12/22	\$ 143,238

THE INANITY OF CALIFORNIA POST-DOBBS POSTURING

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By the Editorial Board of the OC Register, published June 30, 2022 and reprinted here with permission.

Just to be clear, the U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision has absolutely no effect on California law whatsoever.

The ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization does not make abortion illegal in the United States. It does not prevent California or any state from allowing, enabling or publicly funding abortion. The court's ruling says the federal courts do not have the authority under the U.S. Constitution to make policy for the states on this issue. The justices made the decision to "return that authority to the people and their elected representatives."

So even after the Dobbs ruling, California law protects the right to privacy and the right to obtain an abortion "prior to viability of the fetus, or when the abortion is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman."

Further, the California Supreme Court, since even before Roe v. Wade, has defended the right to an abortion based on the California constitution. In other words, abortion rights are already protected by state Supreme Court rulings and state law.

If that surprises you, it could be because politicians in this state have been fanning the flames of fear, posturing to rally voters to turn out in November in a blue fury.

Immediately after the opinion in Dobbs was leaked, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that he was working with legislative leaders to amend the state constitution to "enshrine" the right to choose abortion. This was completely unnecessary in order to protect current law, but it provided the ambitious governor with an opportunity for high-profile news coverage as the defender of abortion rights.

One day after the June 7 primary, the actual wording of the proposed Senate Constitutional Amendment 10 was made public. It actually goes further than current law, creating a "fundamental right to choose to have an abortion" without any limitations. The amendment will go before voters for approval in November.

That gives politicians up to five months to fundraise and campaign on the false assertion that SCA 10 is needed to protect the rights of "women and birthing people," as lawmaker after lawmaker said on the Assembly floor ahead of the vote on the proposed amendment.

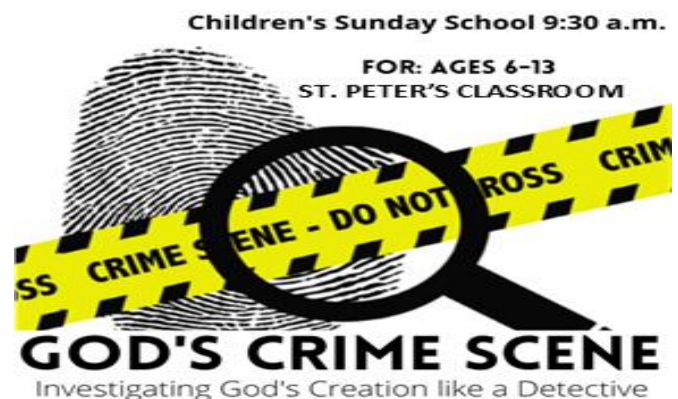
The posturing is well underway. "We're not waiting until November to take action," Gov. Newsom declared as he announced an executive order banning the non-existent extradition of patients from other states and the doctors who provide care for them. The governor also announced a splashy new alliance with the governors of Oregon and Washington to "protect patients and providers" from nothing that is happening.

Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins intoned that California is providing "a ray of hope" with SCA 10 after "a dark day." Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon suggested that "our rights are in free fall" without SCA 10.

A poll by UC San Diego's Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research shortly after the June primary found that voters were "much more likely to say that they would definitely vote in November" after they were shown a Newsweek article about abortion rights. The effect was "strongest among Democrats," according to co-director Thad Kousser, who said they also saw that this reaction "was particularly strong among young women" who are swing voters.

With other polls showing that voters are concerned about inflation and gas prices, incumbent Democrats nationwide are happy to change the subject to reproductive rights, where pollsters are finding an advantage for them.

However, in California, it is irresponsible for politicians to "stoke unfounded fear," as the majority opinion phrased it, with needless posturing.



TAKE A STAND. STOP PROPOSITION 1

SCA 10 is a proposed amendment to our state's constitution that will appear on the November ballot as Proposition 1. It seeks to make unrestricted, limitless abortion on demand up to birth a constitutional right in California. If that happens, only another amendment could rescind it – not likely in a state where one party holds a super majority.

On July 22, I watched an online town hall hosted by Real Impact to learn more about Proposition 1. Guest speaker Karen England, Executive Director of pro-life/pro-family advocacy organization Capitol Resource Institute, outlined the steps we can take to stop Prop 1.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

- *Read the Bill*

The Legislature of the State of California proposes that the Constitution of the State be amended as follows "That Section 1.1 is added to Article I thereof, to read:

SEC. 1.1. The state shall not deny or interfere with an individual's reproductive freedom in their most intimate decisions, which includes their fundamental right to choose to have an abortion and their fundamental right to choose or refuse contraceptives. This section is intended to further the constitutional right to privacy guaranteed by Section 1, and the constitutional right to not be denied equal protection guaranteed by Section 7. Nothing herein narrows or limits the right to privacy or equal protection."

- *Understand the Issues*

Read the OC Register article reprinted in this newsletter. It gives an excellent overview of California abortion laws, and explains why the Dobbs decision had absolutely no impact on those laws or a woman's access to abortion or contraceptives in this state.

- *Be Discerning*

Pro-abortion supporters will do whatever it takes to pass Prop 1. They know that 79% of people who identify as "pro-choice" oppose late-term abortion, so they will avoid saying anything about it and even flatly deny that Prop 1 allows it. They will talk about women's reproductive rights and health care. They will use bait-and-switch tactics, focusing on the "right to choose or refuse contraception," which Californians already have and no one is threatening to take away. They will gloss over the fact that Prop 1 gives even minor children the unconditional constitutional right to an abortion.

- *Stay Informed*

Sign up at www.CapitolResourceInstitute.org to receive timely updates.

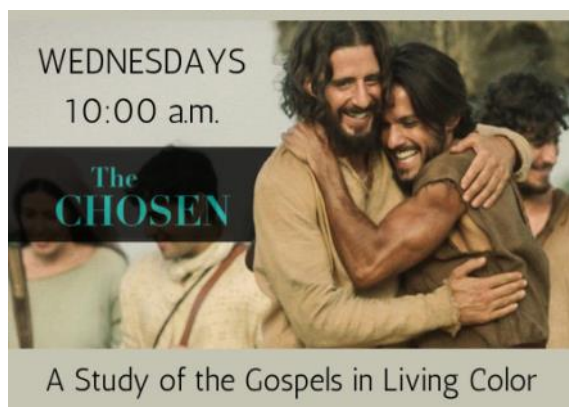
**SPEAK UP**

- Display a NO ON PROP 1 sign in your yard or window.
- Be a keyboard activist. Use your social media accounts to politely urge people to get the facts about Prop 1. Direct them to Capitol Resource Institute (<https://www.capitolaresourceinstitute.org>)
- Register voters. Learn how at Guide to Voter Registration Drives: California Secretary of State.

VOTE

Karen England concluded her presentation with a powerful statistic:

IF 70% OF CALIFORNIA'S CHURCH GOERS VOTE NO ON PROP 1, IT WILL GO DOWN TO RESOUNDING DEFEAT.

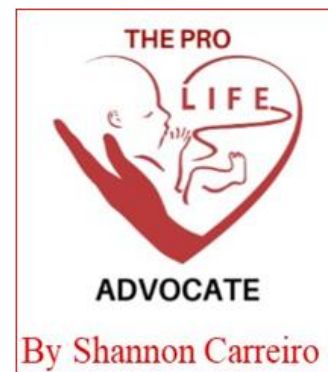


FELLOWSHIP

Mark your calendars for the Grace Fellowship Luncheons and Events this fall!

<p>BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL Sunday September 11</p> <p>IT'S CHILI Sunday October 9</p> <p>OKTOBERFEST Sat. October 29 2-5 pm</p> <p>THANKFUL BLESSINGS Sunday November 13</p>	<p>ADVENT DECORATING Sat. Nov. 26 @ 9 am</p> <p>ADVENT SOUP SUPPERS Wed. Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, and 21 @ 5:30 pm Service at 6:30 pm</p> <p>CHRISTMAS DELIGHTS Sunday December 11</p>
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Most events are potluck lunches after the 10:30 service unless otherwise noted.
Please volunteer to help with the event or bring a dish to share.





Bacon, Bible & Bros was held on Saturday July 16th with 22 men in attendance. A delicious breakfast was served by Harold Nichols and Pastor Brian lead the discussion about Biblical Masculinity Another breakfast will be schedule in the fall.



Jack Harlin Greutzmacer was baptized on August 28th. Family members were here to witness his baptism with Mom and Dad, Jordan and Jeffrey.



On June 26th we celebrated the Holy Baptism of Max Hoover.

PRESIDENT HANSEN'S MESSAGE

Cling to what is good. Romans 12:9

We are a congregation, a gathering of believers in Christ who come together regularly to hear the words of God. We worship in a church that was built for us by past congregations. We appreciate the organ's rich sound and how it beautifies our voices. We are thankful for our Pastor's sermons and our liturgical service that has remained remarkably consistent thru the generations. We cling to what is good.

With this in mind, we need to realize our church, and its physical structure, needs our continued monetary support.

This year we are significantly behind budget; our giving has not kept up with previous years and inflation hasn't helped the situation. We currently have some unanticipated major infrastructure projects that need our monetary support. Please consider giving even more generously.

The fact that a majority of us now give silently thru automatic electronic transfers creates an illusion during the offertory that only a few are actively giving. We need our children and visitors to see that at Grace we all give something. To that end, our Congregational Council would encourage all members who give electronically to complete an offering envelope stating your electronic giving and submit it during the offertory. And if you can't give monetarily, state how you plan to donate of your time and talents.

Fellowship is certainly increasing again. We are, for a large part, a commuter church. This makes getting together for fellowship even more important. Now that we are returning to two services, we would like to also restart Grace's weekly lunch fellowship after second service if there is enough interest. This would mean we will need four teams of volunteers who would be willing to once a month set up and provide a lunch buffet up in the fellowship hall. Please contact Kelley Schmidt or myself if interested.

Grace is a biblical, confessional, sacramental, liturgical church with members who enjoy being together in fellowship!

FACES OF GRACE THIS SUMMER



Pastor Brian celebrated his 50th birthday on July 21st with a delicious chocolate cake made by Grace Cake Baker, Amy Russert.



Juliana Mary Fullam was born on Friday August 19th. She joins her big brother Leo and sister Victoria.



The Annual Grace Picnic was a great 4th of July celebration this year. The courtyard was filled with good food, fellowship and fun.



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The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas
brianwilliamthomas@gmail.com

Director of Parish 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

DR. JOHN HANSEN
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA
Treasurer

SHANNON CARREIRO
Secretary

PAUL HIMMELBERGER
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT
Fellowship/Activities

HEATH RUSSERT
Member-at-Large

CARL LEHMAN
Education

TED NILSEN
Head Elder

JEREMY FULLAM
STEVE HOLLMAN
JASON HUNTLEY
DARYL NEWTON
TRAVIS WHEELER
Elders

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Joyce, Dave, Bill, Michael, Bernie, Pat, Andrea, Phil, Barbara, and Josh

PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

Rev. Tyler McMiller, Joshua Salas, Lorenzo Murrone, Luiz Lange,
Michael & Nance Morizio (Lutheran Church planters & seminarians in Italy)

PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

Tajy George, Jack George, Jr., Jeff and Jordan Gruetzmacher, Philip Hawthorne,
Josh Martin, Matthew Morgan, and Nathan Farish

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Joyce Rochester

BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

6- Daryl Newton
7- Alma Fullam
9- Jeff Dorris
11- Andrew Gertz
13- Rachel Thomas
22- Soren Hansen
30- Ruben Castaneda

OCTOBER

1- Karen Dorris
2- Lynn Willis

If we missed your birthday,
contact the office:
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

GIVING TO GRACE

- Your weekly envelopes or those provided in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code at right
- Text the amount to 84321
- On the Grace Giving Page at grace sandiego.com
- AmazonSmile is a simple way every time you shop



Back to Sunday School Potluck

September 11, 2022

After the 10:30 am service in the Courtyard

Sunday School from 9:30-10:15 am in the
St. Mark classroom (across the courtyard)

Bring a dish to share and join the fellowship
as we begin a new semester at Grace!