

# THE WITTENBERG WAY

## PASTOR'S PAGE



Dear Grace Family,

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the tradition of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which we will celebrate on February 14 at noon and 6:00 p.m. Note the focus on "our Lord's passion." Passion has come to mean a "strong desire" or "life goal" (as in the saccharine bumper sticker philosophy "find your passion"). Passion comes from a Latin word meaning "to suffer." In the church, Passion means Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

Lent invites us to look at the Lord's Passion, which may seem odd to you. Usually, we seek to avoid suffering. In the world in which Jesus lived, the death of someone on a cross produced only shock and revulsion. The idea that through Christ's death the world was saved was "repellent folly" (1 Cor. 1:18). Real gods were depicted in statuary as conquering heroes. The empire was full of such portrayals of victorious Caesars. Alongside such statues, the crucified Jesus would have appeared ridiculous, pathetic, and disgusting.

But from their earliest days, the community of Christ-followers fixed their gaze on the cross. As we move through this season of Lent in preparation for Easter, whenever you are on Grace's campus, I invite you to take notice of the great variety of crosses we have, not only in our sanctuary but throughout the church building. We may be tempted to think of them as pretty. They are not. They remind us of God's unfathomable love for sinners, and his willingness to suffer for the whole world. May these crosses on the inside and outside of our building also display what's on the inside: Sinners, saved by grace, ready to extend that grace to all who enter. As such, we will mark our foreheads with an ashy cross to remind us that we too will suffer death one day.

During the Lenten season, the gospel verse we sing is taken from Joel 2:13: "Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." The prophet Joes is actually summarizing one of the most referenced passages in the Bible from Exodus 34:6-7. The biblical authors return again and again to this rich description of God's character. Passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as one in the New Testament, quote or reuse this language, making clear how important this passage is to the story of the Bible. For this reason, I will be preaching a Lenten sermon series during our mid-week gatherings entitled, "God is...," which will delve into this great passage of Scripture to better understand the God that has graciously saved us. I invite you to join us for our Lenten soup suppers, where we will fill our bodies, and then to our vespers services, where we will fill our souls.

A blessed Lententide to you all,

Pastor Thomas

February 2021  
Volume 2, Issue 10

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Lent 2021

## ASH WEDNESDAY



February 17

Noon & 6:00 PM

Imposition of Ashes &  
Holy Communion



**GRACE**  
Lutheran Church

During his 1992 campaign Bill Clinton frequently called for abortion to be safe, legal and rare. Well, legal it is. Safe, generally. Rare? Hardly. We average 2,300 abortions a day in America, or about 186 abortions for every 1,000 live births (Guttmacher Institute and CDC data). How did we come to this sorry place? Reviewing the secular history of abortion in America provides some insight and context. However, it is an emotionally charged issue and finding unbiased historical data was a challenge. I ultimately settled on Britannica's procon.org as the source for this brief timeline.

- For most of Western history abortion performed before the detectable movement of a baby in the womb was not considered a criminal act. British common law followed this principle and was the basis for abortion statutes in most American states.
- From 1776 to the mid-1800s abortion was a state-by-state issue and was legal in most of the US. The earliest US abortion regulations were enacted in the 1820s and '30s to ban the sale of widely advertised, often dangerous abortifacient drugs. Women using them were not prosecuted.
- In 1845 New York was the first state to criminalize a woman's participation in her abortion at any time during pregnancy. In the 1850s early pro-life advocate Dr. Horatio Robinson Storer convinced the American Medical Association to call for outlawing abortion nationwide.
- By the early 1900s abortion was illegal across most of the US. By 1965 all 50 states had outlawed abortion, with various exceptions.
- Abortion became a constitutional issue with Roe v. Wade in 1973 when the Supreme Court found that a woman's right to an abortion was implicit in the right to privacy under the 14th Amendment. At the same time the court established a trimester standard to put limits on abortion. See Side Bar.
- In 1976 Congress passed the Hyde Amendment to ban the use of federal funding for abortion except in cases of rape, incest and when the mother's life is at risk.
- In 1992 the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional right to abortion but abandoned the trimester framework, allowing states to set their own standards as long as they didn't place "undue burden" on women seeking abortion. (Planned Parenthood of Pennsylvania v. Casey.)
- In 2003 the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act prohibited use after 21 weeks of a procedure that induced delivery to facilitate killing the baby partially outside the womb.
- To secure passage of the Affordable Care Act President Obama signed an executive order in 2009 that reaffirmed the Hyde Act restrictions on federally-funded abortion.
- Since 2010 hundreds of laws have been enacted at the state level restricting abortion including pain-capable laws and criminalization of sex/race selection.

## Waging the PR Word War

Abortion proponents have waged a relentless public relations war for decades to advance their goals. One of their most effective tactics has been to coopt the language. They cleverly reframed the issue of abortion as "women's health care," retooled their position as "pro-choice" and reduced a baby in utero to an insentient lump of tissue. Pro-life proponents are demonized as heartless haters who would force women to either endure unwanted pregnancy or risk unsafe illegal abortion. The most radical advocates now liken an unborn child to a parasite.

If their end game is unhindered abortion on demand, we are closer to it than ever. The original trimester standard, which was never that difficult to circumvent, is now seen as oppressively restrictive. At the end of 2020, 10 states and D.C. had legalized abortion up to the moment of birth; more are poised to follow suit. In some states, minors are allowed to abort without parental consent. Our tax dollars may soon be available to fund the murder of children, with the full support of former Hyde Amendment proponent, President Biden, who abruptly reversed his decades-long position in June 2019, saying he "can't justify leaving millions of women without access to the care they need and the ability to exercise their constitutionally protected right."

*A baby in utero at 20 weeks. 25% of U.S. abortion clinics perform abortions through 20 weeks.*



## The Civil Rights Issue of Our Generation

Since 1973, abortion has claimed more than 62.5 million preborn American lives. This is genocide on a scale unequaled by Hitler, Stalin or Mao. It was not done with a gun but with the stroke of a pen and the bang of a gavel. Over 62.5 million of our most vulnerable citizens have had their personhood denied and their inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness violated. The preborn have no choice or voice. Our silence is complicity.

### What Can We Do? Plenty!

- Pray for courage and wisdom in our elected officials, for women who have had or are considering abortion, and for those who are working to end the slaughter.
- Stay informed. Subscribe to pro-life newsletters such as National Right to Life (NRLC.org), Operation Rescue (Operationrescue.org) and American Life League (ALL.org).
- Visit the resource library at [LCMS.org/how-we-serve/mercy/life-ministry/library](http://LCMS.org/how-we-serve/mercy/life-ministry/library)
- Support pro-life organizations like CAPS.
- Take back the language. It's a baby, a preborn human being, not a fetus, a lump of cells or a parasite. It isn't pro-choice (the baby doesn't have a say), it's pro-abortion.
- Contact your elected representatives and respectfully let them know you support personhood status for the preborn and oppose any use of tax-payer funds to pay for abortions.

### SUPREME COURT ROE V. WADE TRIMESTER STANDARD

*Time frames are measured from gestation.*

0-12 Weeks – Legislative interference with a pregnancy is prohibited.

13 – 28 Weeks – States may regulate abortion “in ways that are reasonably related to maternal health.”

29 – 40 Weeks – States can regulate or ban abortion “in promoting [the state’s] interest in the potentiality of human life....unless abortion is required to preserve the life or health of the mother.”

## Faces of Grace



Grace welcomed nine new members on January 24th at both services. They are: Darlene Koopman, Michael Tow, Rev. Dave & Beth Schleusener, Philip & Rachel Hawthorne, Geary Thompson, and Carl & Elsy Lehman.

# WHEN PRAYER GOES WRONG

BY JOHN T. PLESS

Politicians find it expedient to give an occasional nod to God, whoever or whatever they conceive the deity to be. Legislative bodies in the United States have customarily opened sessions with prayer. It is a ceremonial exercise along the lines of the recitation of the pledge of allegiance and is part of the piety of American civil religion that glues many together in bonds of national unity. When Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (Democrat member of the House of Representatives from Kansas City, Mo.), an ordained United Methodist Minister, opened the 117th Congress with prayer last week, he did not so much demonstrate novelty but acted out of the assumption that religion best functions when it embraces pluralism and forsakes all claims to specificity. In such circumstances, prayer becomes a sentimental ornament that decorates national life, offering therapeutic assurance that we are connected in a cosmic web of coexistence.

Yes, at one level, the prayer by Rep. Cleaver might be read as a cute attempt of a clergyman turned politician to be “woke” as he concludes it with not only an “Amen” but also an “Awoman,” never mind that the word Amen, derived from Hebrew, has nothing to do with gender. However, something more is at stake other than grammatical naughtiness. This malformed prayer invites us to reflect more deeply on what it means to pray in accordance with the will of the Triune God and how prayers aligned with that will never measure up to the canons of civil religion.

A now sainted teacher of the church once observed that when orthodoxy goes bad, it gets hard, lifeless and cold as a rock. He continued that when pietism goes bad it becomes soft, decadent and smelly. Now, American civil religion is not the classical pietism of the 17th and 18th centuries, but it does represent a pietism with the endorsement of particular sentiments and a preferred way of life. The strongly held values of American civil religion include tolerance, open inclusivity and self-expression. In the piety of American civil religion, prayer must reflect these three. Rep. Cleaver’s prayer fits the bill, but in doing so, it forsakes any claim to being Christian prayer.

## Luther’s distinctions

Martin Luther made many theological distinctions. One of Luther’s distinctions was between “God preached” and “God not preached.” God preached is God as He makes Himself known to us in Christ Jesus, crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification. God preached is God giving us His own name so that we may call upon Him with all boldness and confidence. God not preached is unknowable, always distant and inaccessible. When people try to address God not preached, they are abandoned to the echo chambers of their own deluded imagination. They mold God into whatever the imagination dictates. Such is the “God” addressed in the congressman’s prayer, a “God” who is neither here nor there as “the monotheistic god, Brahma, and the god known by many names.”

How different is prayer to the God who is the preached God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer offered by Rep. Cleaver was a mockery of prayer as Jesus teaches it. Unlike Rep. Cleaver, disciples of Jesus know to pray in Jesus’ own words: the Lord’s Prayer.

“Amen” does not merely sign off on one’s petitions; it indicates the truthfulness of the prayer itself on the basis of God’s command and promise. The Small Catechism says, “This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen means ‘yes, yes, it shall be so’” (SC, III).

## Deceived by God’s name

God has commanded us to pray. In the Large Catechism, Luther reminds us that it is our duty to pray because of God’s commandment (see LC III 4). Luther rightly understands the entire Lord’s Prayer to be the fulfillment of the Second Commandment: “We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks” (SC, I).

Rep. Cleaver’s prayer “deceived by God’s name” by attempting to identify God apart from His name. He did not address the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who revealed Himself to us by His reliable name, but a god of Rep. Cleaver’s own imagination. In Luther’s language, this is God not preached. God has not commanded us to pray to gods of other names. In fact, He strictly forbids it.

# WHEN PRAYER GOES WRONG

In the Small Catechism, Luther notes that genuine prayer is founded not only on God's command, but also His promise. God's promise is always prior to our praying. In his "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520), Luther asserts: "For God does not deal, nor has he ever dealt, with man otherwise than through a word of promise, as I have said. We in turn cannot deal with God otherwise than through faith in the Word of his promise" (LW 36:42). There are no promises of God attached to prayers like the one uttered by Rep. Cleaver. God has not revealed His salvation in the concept of a monotheistic God, Brahma, or the multitude of gods manufactured by the human mind.

Christians pray in Jesus' name for He alone is the way, the truth and the life (see John 14:6), recognizing that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Apart from Jesus Christ, human beings have no saving access to God. Luther reminds us that if we seek God apart from Christ, we end up with the devil, thus making demonic prayer a devastating possibility.

Rev. Prof. John T. Pless (1953-) Rev. John T. Pless is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne where he also serves as Director of Field Education and Editor of For the Life of the World.




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## Transfiguration Notations

### By Beth Schleusener

Quick! Name your favorite worship service of the year. It's pretty hard to beat Christmas and Easter for worship memories. Like descanting trumpets on 'Jesus Christ is Risen Today?' Or singing 'Silent Night' by candlelight, sitting next to a loved one? I am so glad that music in worship is part of our collective experience, and today I'd like to offer inspiration to intentionally mark a few dates in 2021 to gather, sing, listen, and marvel at the role beauty in music can have in worship as we pursue a deeper understanding of the story of our salvation.

The church year, or liturgical year, is made up of Sundays, Seasons, Festivals, and Feasts. While the festivals of the Nativity, Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost are widely acknowledged and understood, the minor festivals like Transfiguration, All Saints', and Christ the King pass without much fanfare, but boy, they are rich in theme and imagery!

Transfiguration is observed on the last Sunday of the Epiphany season. It is always the Sunday right before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. This year it falls on February 14. Every year, the readings reference the same cast of characters: Elijah, Elisha and Moses from the OT, Peter, James and John from the NT. And Jesus, transfigured and blindingly glorious, high on a mountain. You will hear descriptive words like "dazzling," "whirlwind," "shining," "terrified." These readings call for majestic musical imagery to support the message: vast chords from the organ, hymn poetry that reflects wonder and awe from the mountain, loud Alleluias from start to finish (before we mute them for Lent), and... what better than some brass instruments to assist us with this task?

I'm happy to say we will host guest musicians on Transfiguration Sunday. A brass quintet of musicians from Orange County and Camp Pendleton will go to the mountain top with us.

It is my intention to mark the days of **Transfiguration** – Feb. 14th; **Good Shepherd** – April 25th; **All Saints'** – Nov. 7th; and **Christ the King** – Nov. 28th as special music days in the church year. Our faithful musicians from within the congregation will play a vital role here. Music will be planned that emphasizes the theme of the day in tone and timbre. These days can be viewed as "holidays" when we are all (mostly) in-town, celebrating together as a church family, and occasions in which it's easy to invite friends and colleagues. I'll see you on Transfiguration Sunday, and when you see me, let's greet each other with "Tis good, Lord, to be here!"

# Story Behind the Song:

## Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

by Beth Schleusener

Our featured hymn this month is really old! Not even just Bach or Luther old; this one is ancient, and may be the oldest hymn we sing in the Christian Church. *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence* dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century; its text originates in the Divine Liturgy of St. James from the Byzantine Eastern Orthodox tradition, which is the basis of numerous liturgies in Christian churches worldwide. Through the centuries, the text was translated, put to tunes, and other tunes, and finally coupled with a folk tune before it was confidently added to the English Hymnal in 1906. While it's a Eucharistic hymn for sure, it is also widely sung at Christmas time and Holy Saturday as well. It describes who God is and how we approach him – using imagery from Habakkuk, Isaiah, and Revelation. We will be singing this fabulous hymn for Transfiguration Sunday on February 14th. So, my friends of mortal flesh, let's sing it out!

The Eucharistic text is what's obvious, and points to the hymn's original use in the preface of the liturgy. Since the Lord's Supper gives the forgiveness of sins through the body and blood of Christ, Christians approach the altar only after spiritual preparation:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;*

*Ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand*

*Christ our God to earth descending, comes our homage to demand.*

Stanza 2 stresses the Incarnation of our Lord—the truth that Jesus is both God and man in flesh. (Probably the stanza that brought it into the Christmas repertoire.)

*King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood.*

*Lord of lords in human vesture, in the body and the blood,*

*He will give to all the faithful his own self for heav'nly food.*

Stanzas 3 and 4 really get rolling with glorious imagery, great SAT words, and the wonderful thought that we (with the seraphs and cherubim) will CRY out our Alleluias...with no ending, ever:

*Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,*

*As the Light of light, descending, from the realms of endless day,*

*Comes, the pow'rs of hell to vanquish, as the darkness clears away.*

*At his feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim with sleepless eye,*

*Veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry:*

*Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High!*

This text was translated into English in 1864, as part of the Oxford Movement, in which some of the early texts of the Christian church were translated from Greek and Latin into English. The tune is actually a 17<sup>th</sup> century French folk song, taken from an early plainchant, which I picture had been sung by peasants as they did their daily tasks. In 1906, Ralph Vaughan Williams married the new English translation to the old folk song melody and submitted it for publication into the English Hymnal. And this is the version that we sing today.



Pastor Brian has joined the "You Are Forgiven Radio" team at 1517.org where his sermons will be featured on local stations KPRZ AM 1210 (San Diego) and FM 106.1 (North County) on Saturday evenings (late...for those of you with insomnia). You can also listen to his sermons via Apple, Spotify, etc. via the "You Are Forgiven" Podcast along with some other excellent Lutheran preachers in the SoCal region. We are grateful for this partnership and pray it will be a blessing to our local community and serve as an outreach for our church.

# WORSHIP SCHEDULE

**THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**  
 February 14, 2021  
 Psalm 50:1-6  
 First Reading: 2 Kings 2:1-12  
 Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12-13  
 Gospel: Mark 9:2-9

**ASH WEDNESDAY**  
 February 17, 2021  
 Psalm 51:1-13  
 First Reading: Joel 2:12-19  
 Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10  
 Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

**LENT 1**  
 February 21, 2021  
 Psalm 25:1-10  
 First Reading: Genesis 22:1-18  
 Second Reading: James 1:12-18  
 Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

**LENT 2**  
 February 28, 2021  
 Psalm 22:23-31  
 First Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 16-16  
 Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11  
 Gospel: Mark 8:27-38

**LENT 3**  
 March 7, 2021  
 Psalm 19  
 First Reading: Exodus 20:1-7  
 Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
 Gospel: John 2:13-22

Servers for January 24, 2021 through February 28, 2021							
8 AM		January 24	January 31	February 7	February 14	February 21	February 28
	<b>Elder</b>	Steve Hollman	Jason Huntley	Steve Hollman	Jason Huntley	Steve Hollman	Jason Huntley
	<b>Altar Guild</b>	Jack & Judy George	Leigh Ann Bozung	Jack & Judy George	Leigh Ann Bozung	Jack & Judy George	Leigh Ann Bozung
	<b>Crucifer</b>	Devin Houts	Spencer Huntley	Connor Russert	Rachel Houts	Connor Russert	Spencer Huntley
	<b>Ushers</b>	Heath Russert	Harold Nichols	Heath Russert	Harold Nichols	Heath Russert	Harold Nichols
	<b>Cantor</b>	Dennis Hooks	Pr. Dave	Pr Dave	Pr Dave	Dennis Hooks	Dennis Hooks
10:30 AM		January 24	January 31	February 7	February 14	February 21	February 28
	<b>Elder</b>	Ted Nilsen	Travis Wheeler	Daryl Newton	Ted Nilsen	Travis Wheeler	Daryl Newton
	<b>Altar Guild</b>	Thomas Family	Cindy Hansen Kelly Schmidt	Fullam Family	Thomas Family	Cindy Hansen Kelly Schmidt	Fullam Family
	<b>Crucifer</b>	Claire Latham	Eden Yoder	Axel Yoder	Claire Latham	Eden Yoder	Axel Yoder
	<b>Acolytes</b>	Citlali Gomez & Kariff Gomez		Citlali Gomez & Kariff Gomez			Citlali Gomez & Kariff Gomez
	<b>Lectors</b>	David Yow	Jeremy Fullam	Andrew Burke	Chris Latham	Daryl Newton	David Yow
	<b>Ushers</b>	Harold	Harold	Harold	Harold	Harold	Harold
	<b>Counters</b>	Renee	Renee	Renee	Renee	Renee	Renee
	<b>Cantor</b>	Richard Segarra	Pr Dave Schleusener	Jeremy Fullam	Richard Segarra	Andrew Burke	William Baker



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The Reverend  
 Brian W. Thomas

Director of Parish Music  
 Beth Schleusener

Office Manager  
 Gretchen Jordan

Divine Service  
 8:00 am & 10:30 am

Nursery available

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Thank you!



Hearing Assistance is now available in our sanctuary.



Please see one of our ushers who will be happy to provide you with a listening device .

**PRAYERS**

**PRAISES TO THE LORD**

The birth of Annelise Rose to Gavin & Carmen Robillard

**PRAYERS FOR STRENGTH**

Victoria, Christy, Walter, Joyce, Dave, Rev. Ken, Josh, Bill, Dennis, Denise, Ernestina, First Responders, Police Officers ,and Firefighters.

**PRAYERS AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A CHILD OF GOD**

Jeremy & Jessika Belgau

**PRAYERS FOR OUR MISSIONARIES**

Rev. James May (Kenya), Daniel Conrad (Central America), Rev. Dr. Ron & Mary Anne Rall (Papua New Guinea), Rev. Dr. John & Melinda Bombaro (Latvia)

**PRAYERS FOR THE MILITARY**

William Baker, Andrew Burke, Tadj George, Jack George, Jr., Philip Hawthorne, Dylan Jensen, Jack Ogden, Josh Martin, Matthew Morgan, Gavin Robillard, Heath Russert, Linka Schleusener, and Holly Schmidt

**PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES**

Lorna Winterstein, Joyce Rochester

**BIRTHDAYS**

FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

- 4 - Ted Nilsen
- 5- Joelle Merfalen

If we missed your birthday email the church office at: [gjordan@gracesandiego.com](mailto:gjordan@gracesandiego.com)

A LENTEN MIDWEEK SERMON SERIES

**GOD IS...**

GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND ABOUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE.

Wenedays at 6:30 PM  
 February 24 - March 24, 2021