

THE WITTENBERG WAY



Dear Grace Family,

I want to thank everyone for celebrating my ten years of ministry. From the worship service to the pork-themed potluck to the cake (and yes, even to the amazing performance of the Baconettes), you all made it such a special and meaningful day, filled with love, laughter and support.

You may have recently seen reports of an unexpected spiritual revival at Asbury University, a small Christian College in Wilmore, Kentucky. The students met for their regular weekly chapel service on February 8th. The chapel's preacher for the day, Pastor Zach Meerkreebs, gave a sermon and prayed, "Lord, revive us with your love." He sat down dejected, feeling his message didn't connect, while the praise band led those gathered in song. But something strange happened. They just kept singing. For fourteen straight days, the worship continued.

Soon word began to spread and lines began to form around the building to experience the praise, prayer, and preaching of God's Word. It didn't take long for the national media to arrive and announce that a spiritual revival was taking place in this backwoods college town. As Matt Popovits asked:

What exactly has happened at Hughes Auditorium on the campus of Asbury? Was it a revival, a fresh and profound experience of heaven coming to earth? Has the manifest presence of God "shown up" in an unprecedented way? And if so, should we all be boarding buses to Kentucky to see if we can get a taste of it ourselves?

It's not my place to say what happened last month at Asbury College. But whatever took place, I do know that it was no more wonderful, meaningful, or powerful than what happens each week at Grace when we gather around God's Word and Sacraments. While it is possible that a revival took place, Christ has promised to be present in our midst through His means of grace doing His forgiving work.

It is unlikely there will be a throng of people lining up down Park Boulevard waiting to get in. And I doubt that KUSI or other media outlets will want to interview you after our service to share your experience; and if they did, they would probably be disappointed, because what you would share would sound to their ears like a pretty traditional liturgical service. Big whoop! Nevertheless, God was in our midst, strengthening His body. In fact, He is no less present week in and week out in our sanctuary than He is anywhere else, including Asbury College for those two weeks.

I write this not to judge or belittle the experience of the students at Asbury, but to build your confidence in what God is doing in our midst. As Popovits notes, "The downside of events like Asbury, where God seems to show up in extraordinary or spectacular ways, is that it can plant seeds of doubt in the hearts and minds of those who don't share a similar experience."

You don't need to book a trip to Kentucky to "experience" God. A regularly scheduled revival will take place on Sunday at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. It won't draw massive crowds or lead to viral videos, but the same self-giving God will be there. The organ will ring out. We will sing, pray, and confess. I will get the privilege of announcing God's forgiveness for Christ's sake, and together, we will kneel at the rail and "taste and see that God is good!"

Gratefully Yours,

Pr. Brian Thomas

March 2023 Volume 10, Issue 3

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UPCOMING SERVICES

- Wed. March 15 @ 5:30
Soup Supper & Lenten Service
- Sun. March 19 @ 8 & 10:30 am
Laetare Lent 4
- Wed. March 22 @ 5:30
Soup Supper & Lenten Service
- Sun. March 26 @ 8 & 10:30 am
Judica Lent 5
- Wed. March 29 @ 5:30
Soup Supper & Lenten Service
- Sun. April 2 @ 8 & 10:30 am
Palm Sunday
- Thur. April 6 @ 6 pm
Maundy Thursday
- Fri. April 7 @ Noon & 6 pm
Good Friday
- Sat. April 8 @ 9:00 pm
Easter Vigil
- Sun. April 9 @ 8 & 10:30 am
Easter Sunday





St. Patrick March 17

Time Period 5th century AD

Who was he?

A bishop and missionary to Ireland.

Did you know?

- He was captured as a teenager by raiders, taken to Ireland, and forced to serve as a herdsman.
- After six years he escaped and found his way to a monastery community in France.
- Ordained a bishop in 432, he returned to Ireland, where he devoted his life to spreading the Gospel and organizing Christian communities.
- He strongly defended the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in a time when it was not popular to do so.

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday	8:00 & 10:30am
Maunday Thursday	6:00pm
Good Friday	Noon & 6:00pm
Easter Vigil	9:00pm
Easter Morning	8:00 & 10:30am

LENTEN DISCIPLINE: DENYING THE SELF

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

We are at the beginning of Lent. During the Lenten season, the church calls to our attention the sufficiency of what God gives. It points to the sufficiency of God's grace in the atoning work of Jesus. It shows us the sufficiency of faith in Jesus' work for us. It makes known the sufficiency of God's Word in faith and life.

But Lent doesn't just remind us of the sufficiency of God's spiritual gifts — the gifts that pertain to our redemption and salvation. Lent also reminds us of the sufficiency of the physical, temporal gifts of God which pertain to this body and life. In other words, it reminds us of the importance of godly contentment and of outward discipline and training of the body.

This outward training of the body teaches us not to give in to every desire of our flesh, but to learn to say no to them. And it does this in such a way that if you fail, it is no sin. It is a way to practice without putting yourself into a compromising situation.

Fasting is a good example of this outward training. When you fast, you are practicing saying no to the desires of your body. But if you fail in this, if you break your fast, you have not sinned. But you have learned something about how your flesh works, how difficult it is to fight against it, and how you need help from above to discipline the desires of your body.

Another example is almsgiving. An increase in giving to the church and its mission during Lent is also a form of outward training. We all know that our flesh finds security in money and stuff. By committing to give more to the church, you are training your flesh. You are, by this outward discipline, training yourself to be content with what God gives. You are practicing saying "no" to your desires. Again, if you fail, you have not sinned. But you've learned just how powerful your flesh is — it leads you instead of you leading it. You've learned how you need help from above in being content with what God gives.

This is why St. Paul instructs young Pastor Timothy in this way:

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Tim. 6:6–10)

Our sufficiency is not of ourselves; it is in God. Let us learn this without sin by training our flesh this Lenten season



CHILDREN'S CHOIR

All children are invited to join Robin Segarra for the choir as they rehearse a song for Easter. Children should meet in the music room from 10:15-10:30 on Sunday mornings.

GIVING FOR FEBRUARY

February 2023 Actual Offerings	\$ 18,647
February Budget	\$ 19,760
Shortfall	\$ 1,113
2023 Annual Budget	\$269,450

HOW TO GIVE

- Your offering envelopes or those in the pews
- Online from your bank website
- Scan the QR code here
- Text the amount to 84321
- The Giving Page at grace.sandiego.com
- Time and Talents



WHEN SORROWS LIKE SEA BILLOWS ROLL

By Randolph C. Houts

Horatio Gates Spafford was born in 1828 in Troy, New York. It would be many years before an almost unspeakable tragedy brought his words into collaboration with Philip Paul Bliss, a composer, conductor, and singer hailing from Hollywood, Pennsylvania and 10 years his junior.

H.G. Spafford devoted himself to the study of law and eventually rose to prominence as the senior partner of Spafford, McDaid, & Wilson. He was a friend of popular evangelist Dwight L. Moody and served for years as an Elder in the Presbyterian church. In the spring of 1871, he invested a substantial part of his wealth in real estate north of Chicago, a city in the midst of a drought and primarily filled with aging, wooden and tar-roofed structures. On October 8 of that year, at 8:30 p.m. in the corner of a small barn at 137 W. DeKovan Street, either gambling men or Mrs. O'Leary's cow, depending on whom you believe, kicked over a lantern or otherwise set an adjacent shed ablaze, leading to the Great Chicago Fire. The conflagration rendered to ashes three square miles of the city, leveled 17,000 structures, killed as many as 300, and left 100,000 residents homeless. It was a bad couple of days for H.G. Spafford as most of his investment was lost.



In the next two years, it is said that Spafford and his wife Anna worked hard to help a shattered community and put their emotional and financial house in the best order they could. Exhausted, the family planned to travel to England in 1873. With their 4 daughters in tow, the Spaffords traveled to New York, with passage booked to Europe on the liner S.S. Ville du Havre.

The Ville du Havre was a straight-stemmed, iron, paddle steamship built by the Thames Ironworks but of French Registry; 3,950 gross tons with a length overall of 365.9 feet, a 45.9 foot beam, two funnels, two masts (for auxiliary sail power) and a cruising speed of 11.5 knots. She was built to run the regular Le Havre - Brest - New York service.

Launched in November of 1865 and originally christened the Napoleon III, by 1871 she had been lengthened, converted to single propeller propulsion, received a third mast, and in "recognition" of the recent defeat of her namesake, the Emperor Napoleon III, was re-christened S.S. Ville du Havre for her home port in the Normandy region of northern France. Sailors have superstitions about renaming ships that require physical and ceremonial removal of all vestiges of the old name from a vessel, its logs, and the "memory" of Poseidon or Neptune, who by legend record every ship's name in the Ledger of the Deep. It's unknown if these rights were observed for the Ville du Havre.

As it turned out, last minute, urgent business matters required Spafford to postpone his departure, but he saw no reason to delay the family's vacation when they had been through so much. So it was that on November 22, 1873, Anna Spafford, her 4 daughters (aged 12, 7, 4, and 18 months), a governess, and two close acquaintances became part of the 313 souls aboard the Ville du Havre, under sail and steam on a darkened sea in an age before radar or even radio, bound for the Normandy coast.

Around 2:00 a.m., in the eastern North Atlantic, the British captain of a three-masted iron clipper called Loch Earn caught sight of the Ville du Havre, dangerously close at hand and apparently unawares. Loch Earn's bell pierced the night and the helms of both vessels frantically put hard over, but the Ville du Havre came across Loch Earn's bow, which plunged into Ville du Havre amidships, nearly severing her in two. The violent collision and commotion roused Anna Spafford, along with the rest of the passengers and crew, to the deck. The captain of the Ville du Havre raced from the bridge and attempted to reassure the passengers, but it was immediately apparent that the situation was desperate and with her decks already nearly awash, the Ville du Havre would founder. One can only imagine Anna's fear, determination, and struggle to secure her children and companions and make some provision for their survival as the frigid, black water rose and a panicked melee of the desperate and the doomed roiled about her.

In moments, all order aboard Ville du Havre was abandoned and a chaotic battle for survival ensued among the passengers and crew. Some grabbed for the available life preservers and others fought mightily to wrestle lifeboats over the side. Unfortunately, the lifeboats had been recently painted in place and were mostly stuck fast to the deck. A few of the boats were eventually yanked free and a frantic, merciless fight for the few places on the boats began. Without warning, a sharp crack overhead signaled the collapse of Ville du Havre's main and mizzen masts, which crashed down on two of the lifeboats, annihilating the occupants instantly.

By all accounts, the time in which life could have been saved was very brief. The ship broke into two pieces and was consumed by the sea in less than 12 minutes. Captain Robertson of the Loch Earn is said to have worked feverishly to recover people from the water and his efforts saved the lives of 61 passengers and 26 crew of the stricken vessel. Tragically, 226 perished with only a deeply grieved Anna Spafford and her governess, Emma Lorriaux, of the family's party surviving.

WHEN SORROWS LIKE SEA BILLOWS ROLL

The following day, the survivors of the Ville du Havre were transferred to a U.S. vessel, the Tremontain, when it arrived on scene and ferried to Cardiff in Wales. On December 1, 1873, Anna forlornly cabled her husband, who would be learning of the sinking at that moment: *"Saved alone. What shall I do. Mrs. Goodwin children Willie Culver lost. Go with Lorriaux until answer..."* H.G. Spafford took the next available ship to join his wife.

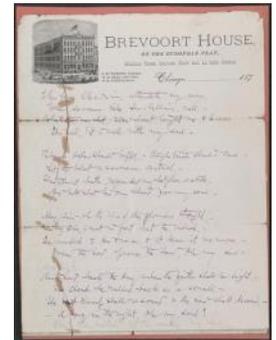
Bertha Spafford, the later born fifth daughter of Horatio and Anna, would recount that during her father's voyage, the captain summoned Horatio to the bridge, saying a careful reckoning had been made and they were passing over 47 degrees 21 minutes north - 35 degrees 31 minutes west, the coordinates where the Ville du Havre sank and his children were lost. Spafford, who had suffered tremendous financial loss and years of hardship, only to be faced with the death of his children, retired to his cabin and, on available stationery for the Brevoort House, somehow found the grace to pen what would become the lyrics of one of the most beloved and beautiful Christian hymns:

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows, like a sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*Tho' Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
My sin- oh, the bliss of this glorious thought-*

*My sin- not in part but in whole,
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul.*

*And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The triumph shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so - it is well with my soul.*



The music for what became the hymn "It Is Well With My Soul" was composed by Philip Paul Bliss (1838-1876). Raised on a farm, Bliss was introduced to J.G. Towner, a voice coach and at age 22, became an itinerant music teacher, traveling from place to place on horseback. He desperately wanted to attend a fine New York music academy, but could not afford the rather steep \$30.00 tuition. His wife's grandmother, having witnessed Bliss's "sad demeanor", was filled with sympathy and told him of an old stocking into which she had put pieces of silver over the years. It was more than enough.

While Bliss worked at teaching and music performance, he didn't achieve great success and eventually felt called to Christian evangelism, where he too came to know Dwight L. Moody. He ultimately wrote many hymns and learning of H.G. Spafford's lyrics, composed the familiar tune to accompany them. He called the tune "Ville du Havre" in remembrance of the Spafford's tragedy and poignant demonstration of faith. When you sing Philip Bliss's melody, listen for the rise and fall of the ocean in the choir's basses answering from the depths: *"It is well...It is well... With my soul...With my Soul."*

Tragedy seemed to stalk the hymn through its composer as well, though. On December 29, 1876, while riding with his wife on a train on the way to one of D.L. Moody's meetings near Ashtabula, Ohio, a trestle collapsed, pitching Bliss's car into a ravine. Philip and Lucy Bliss's bodies were never found, although a suitcase with Bliss's only known gospel lyric was found in the wreckage. "I Will Sing of My Redeemer" was later set to music by James McGranahan and was one of the first songs recorded by Thomas Edison, the inventor of the phonograph.

For their part, Horatio and Anna Spafford had two more daughters (their fifth and sixth) and a son, whom they named Horatio after his father. In a final stroke of hard fate, young Horatio died of Scarlet Fever at age three on February 11, 1880. It is said their grief at a decade of financial and personal struggle, combined with a lack of support from their church community, led the Spaffords to abandon their quest for material success and dedication to organized religion and devote their lives to a pilgrimage of the spirit and faith. They eventually founded an unorthodox - some say utopian - Christian order called the American Colony in Israel, a communal service organization that gained the respect of and served Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities by opening soup kitchens, hospitals, and orphanages. The headquarters of the Colony still stands today and is known as the American Colony Hotel. In 1992, the Hotel was the site of historic talks between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel that led to the 1993 Oslo Peace Accord.

Just short of his 60th birthday, on September 25, 1888, Horatio Spafford died of Malaria and was buried at Mount Zion Cemetery in Jerusalem. A revered Catholic Saint and Christian mystic, Padre Pio once said: *"It is through suffering that the Lord binds his chosen souls to himself."* It is often difficult to know the condition of a man's faith at the end. The tragedies the Spaffords endured, particularly the loss of five children, no doubt presented great challenges or even understandable obstacles to their faith. Yet generations have drawn closer to God because in a moment of agony and almost inconceivable insight and faith, Horatio Spafford found that even in a world torn apart, it could be well between God and his *soul*.

I find myself wishing that Spafford's sufferings could have been more finite, especially after the tragedy of the Ville du Havre. With a stroke of his shaking hand, on a heaving ship in the throes of deepest grief, Spafford tries to tell us that a faithful life is not one free of suffering; it is one in which God can purpose our suffering to help us find meaning, refine our faith, and draw us closer to him. Even in your darkest moments, though they will *always* be difficult, I pray that like Horatio Gates Spafford, you can find the strength to proclaim that while the world is often hard or unjust: ***It is well with my soul.***

PR. BRIAN'S 10-YEAR ORDINATION



There was plenty of food to celebrate for Pastor Brian's 10 year ordination anniversary. The theme was "pork", Pr. Brian's favorite. The fellowship hall was decorated in pink with little piggies on all the tables. Everything from pork tenderloin, sausage and rice casserole, pork adobo, and pigs in a blanket was served. The entertainment featured "The Baconettes" oinking *Happy Anniversary* and we topped off the celebration with a delicious cake dessert from Amy Russert. Thanks to everyone who helped with the event.

MIGHT VERSUS RIGHT. THE CASE OF MARK HOUCK.

The Thomas More Society (TMS) is named for an adviser to Henry VIII who lost his head over a matter of religious conscience. More famously proclaimed at his execution, “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first.” The mission of TMS is to defend people who, like More, face unjust persecution when they find themselves on the wrong side of powerful adversaries. Last year, TMS took on the case of *The United States of America v Mark Houck*.

The Incident

Mark Houck is a 48-year-old husband, father of seven, and pro-life sidewalk counselor. For many years, Houck has prayed across the street from a Philadelphia Planned Parenthood clinic with others from his Catholic church. That’s what he and his 12-year-old son Mark Jr were doing on October 13, 2021. Bruce Love, a 72-year-old volunteer whose job was to escort clinic patients, alleged that Houck shoved him to the ground without provocation. Love filed a criminal complaint against Houck, but failed to show up for any of the court hearings and the judge dismissed the case. That should have been the end of it.

The Charge

Six months later Houck got a letter from the Department of Justice informing him that a federal investigation into the incident was underway. His attorney told the DOJ that Houck would voluntarily turn himself in if charges were brought. Houck never had the opportunity. At 7 a.m. on September 23, FBI agents arrived unannounced at Houck’s home, arrested him at gunpoint in front of his terrified family, and took him away in handcuffs without any explanation. He was charged with violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE). He faced up to 11 years in federal prison and \$350,000 in fines.

The Trial & Verdict

The Thomas More Society assembled a team of seasoned attorneys with local knowledge and experience in similar federal cases. They built Houck’s defense on two key points:

Video evidence showed that the incident was provoked by Love, who had verbally harassed Mark Jr and ignored Mark Sr’s requests to back off. The defense also showed that Love had repeatedly violated Planned Parenthood’s own strict non-engagement policy in the past. Worth noting, only 90-seconds of video from the clinic’s exterior cameras existed; fortunately, video from Houck’s prayer group captured the entire incident.

The FACE Act was never intended to protect clinic escorts who stray beyond their essential duties.

When concerns over juror misconduct surfaced, both sides agreed to replace the offender with an alternate. Within an hour, the jury brought back a unanimous verdict of not guilty.

The Take-Away

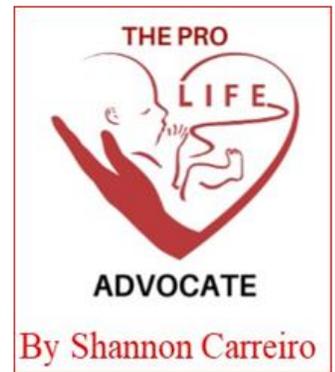
Andy Bath, TMS Executive VP and General Counsel, said what happened to Mark Houck “wasn’t done to get one guy off one sidewalk.” It was done to send a chilling message to pro-life activists to discourage and intimidate them in the wake of the Dobbs decision. It backfired. Instead, according to TMS Special Counsel Michael McHale, “Successfully defending Houck sets up a major disincentive for misuse of the FACE Act to stifle the free speech of sidewalk activists.”

TMS founder Thomas Brejcha’s advice to those attending pro-life events: Make every effort to avoid physical contact regardless of the provocation. If it can’t be avoided, always have video cameras recording the event.

Mark Houck has sound advice, too: Nobody should set out seeking persecution, but if it comes, embrace it. Facing unjust persecution is, he says, “an opportunity to meet Christ and move in union with him.”

A video of the event featuring Houck, his wife, and members of his defense team provides detailed insights of the arrest, defense strategy and jury trial. View the video at <https://thomasmoresociety.org/houck-event>.

Mark Houck and family





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Sunday Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:30 am

Sunday School
9:30 to 10:15 am

Nursery available

JOHN HANSEN
Council President

RICHARD SEGARRA
Treasurer

SHANNON CARREIRO
Secretary

HEATH RUSSERT
Trustee

KELLEY SCHMIDT
Fellowship/Activities

JOHN BARBER
PHILIP HAWTHORNE
Members-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, Phil, Edward, Colter, Connor, Mary, Daniel, Larry, Taj, Charlotte,
Pr. Burkey, and Ramey Family

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

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

PRAYERS FOR THOSE UNABLE TO ATTEND SERVICES

Joyce Rochester

BACON, BIBLE & BROS MEN'S BREAKFAST



The men's Bible Study is always filled with an awesome breakfast prepared by Harold Nichols. Before the short study, the men enjoy waffles, sausage and biscuits, scrambled eggs, and fresh fruit.

