# WITTENBERG WAY

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Summer 2024

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# From The Pastor

Dear Grace Family,

As mentioned during the member's meeting on June 1st, I am taking a short sabbatical from July to mid-August where Rachel and I will be away for six Sundays. Per my call document, the pastor of Grace is given a three-month sabbatical every five years, for which our Church Council has planned and budgeted. Since I am the sole pastor right now, we felt it would be more prudent for the health of our church if I only took six weeks away during the summer months this time around. During my time away, Rev. Brian Hamer will be covering for me. He is a U.S. Navy chaplain serving in San Diego and has filled in for me on several occasions. He is an excellent liturgist and preacher, and I have no doubt you will benefit from the service of another faithful pastor.

I understand that very few occupations get the privilege of stepping away beyond the normal vacation times, so I'd like to share with you the purpose of a sabbatical and our plans for this summer.

**What is a Sabbatical?**

St. Paul wrote of the tribulations he faced serving Christ in 2 Corinthians 11. The stress of ministry can sometimes be formidable—and devastating if not properly managed. Over the years, I've watched several pastoral friends walk away from the pastorate, which saddens me. A sabbatical is a good way to mitigate prolonged stress and renew one's spirit leading to revitalization and spiritual health.

The word "sabbath" means rest, therefore, a Sabbatical is a time of rest, prayer, and reflection away from the normal day-to-day duties of shepherding a parish. It is an intentional retreat from the mental and physical demands of ministry. But with that said, a sabbatical is not just a vacation with a "holy" sounding name. The time away provides a focused time for reading, writing, and preparing for the future.

**Why Do Pastors Need Sabbaticals?**

Jesus modeled the importance of seeking solitary times of prayer and rest. In a recent Lifeway survey of evangelical pastors, 84% felt they were "always on call." I can relate to this. Though I try my very best to take days off, it is not always possible, especially when you live where you work. While I am not a workaholic, I am committed to working hard and giving you the best that I've got. There are many demands for our small church, and most of them require my participation despite having an excellent staff and leadership.

In our tradition, a pastor practices the art of soul care, which includes preaching/teaching, counseling, hearing confessions, visitations, etc. As I share the love of God in Christ with you, I bear many of the burdens you share with me. Over a prolonged period, I have found that this has eventually caught up with me, resulting in sleepless nights and stress. A long-term study done by Duke Divinity School found that pastors deal with anxiety and depression at a significantly higher rate than the rest of our culture. I used to think that I was the exception to such findings but over the past few years, I now recognize how naive I once was. I am told by more seasoned pastors that this is a normal part of the job, so Rachel and I are thankful for the rest ahead. Let me share with you our plan and how I hope my sabbatical benefits you.

We will be spending the majority of our time away in Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands where Rachel found us an amazing and affordable place to stay. In the mornings, I plan to work on several book projects and articles that have been on the back burner as well as to prepare for next year's Sunday School and Wednesday Bible Studies. I set the bar high this year for both my preaching and teaching, and I hope to continue that trajectory in the fall season upon my return. During the afternoons, Rachel and I will explore the island getting to spend focused time together. She is not only my wife, but my best friend and I could not serve you as well as I do without her wisdom, support, and encouragement. By permitting me some time for focused study and learning, I believe this will benefit not only me but more importantly you and the broader church that hears and reads what I teach in person or through the ministry of 1517.org.

Pastors who are in it for the long haul know they need refueling to complete their journey. And, following the analogy, even the best cars benefit from a tune-up now and then. St. Paul once encouraged the Thessalonians with these words: "And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good" (2 Thess 3:13). My proverbial tank has been on low for a few months now, so I am grateful for this extended time away and do not take it for granted. My prayer is that I return with renewed energy that never tires of doing what is good on your behalf.

Gratefully Yours,

Pastor Thomas

# Freedom of Speech...From a Distance

## by Shannon Carreiro

This past March the San Diego City Council announced they were considering an ordinance that would "require demonstrators to ask permission before they interact with people visiting places of worship, schools and health care facilities, including those that provide abortion." It's that last bit that's concerning. The new law goes beyond the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE), which does not include any specific distance or buffer zone from an abortion clinic entrance or exit. Nor does FACE require that the demonstrators ask permission to speak, distribute literature or display a pro-life message. But the San Diego City Council ordinance, which became law on May 21, does all that and more.

The new ordinance creates a 100-foot buffer zone around health care facilities, churches and K-12 school grounds. (The city council admits that women's health care centers, aka abortion clinics, would be most directly affected by the new law.) The ordinance also prohibits protestors from going within an eight-foot radius of people entering or leaving such facilities unless they give their consent.

Under the new ordinance, behavior that a person *feels* is harassing or intimidating now includes attempts to pass written material, display signs or engage in oral protest, education or counsel within that eight-foot radius. The eight-foot radius applies whether or not someone is in a vehicle. It isn't clear whether that applies to moving vehicles or just parked cars.

In addition to distance restrictions, our city council tacked on a "noise limitation." Protestors may not make "any disturbing, excessive or offensive noise that causes discomfort or annoyance to any reasonable person."

Finally, anyone who *feels* their right to privacy has been violated can seek damages, with the courts authorized to impose a fine of $2,500 per offense (more than double the old $1,000 fine). Court costs and attorney fees can also be recovered.

You're not alone if all of this strikes you as disturbingly subjective and totally unconstitutional. The Thomas More Society certainly thinks so. In early May, TMS Special Counsel Paul Jonna sent a letter to our city council cautioning them against passing their unconstitutional no-speech zone law. TMS is representing San Diego pro-life sidewalk counselor Roger Lopez to protect his (and our) right to free speech. The letter states, "We strongly urge you to resist the city attorney's siren song and vote against Item #52. If you do not, our firm will spare no expense defending Mr. Lopez's First Amendment rights." Our city council ignored the warning. Stay tuned.

**According to the National Abortion Federation, the FACE Act prohibits demonstrators from using force, threats of force or physical obstruction. FACE does provide for injunctive relief in the event of a FACE violation, which could then limit the areas in which protest occurs*.

# Grace Lutheran Preschool Exploratory Team?

Dear GLC Family,

Over the last several months, the Church Council has been exploring the possibility of re-opening GLC's preschool. We have reviewed the condition of our school classrooms, gathered information regarding the licensing process, and have considered the financial viability of a preschool. To further investigate re-opening the preschool, we are hoping to identify one or more members of the congregation who are supportive of the project and willing to volunteer their time to serve on the Preschool Board. Once the Preschool Board is filled, it will identify potential staff and determine what improvements and equipment would be needed to be re-licensed by the California Department of Social Services. The cost/difficulty of becoming licensed and the availability of topnotch, value aligned staff will be driving factors in whether this project can move forward.

While we are still in the exploratory phase, I believe that there is a financially viable path for GLC to reopen a preschool. However, it will take congregational support and the time and talents of members to accomplish. Please contact Pastor Brian or me if you wish to discuss this project or volunteer your time in support of it.

In Christ,

Carl Lehman

# Marriage and the Gift of Dying to Self

By Matthew Richard

Over the last 50 years in America, we have seen a reduction in marriages to the point that marriage is now at an all-time low. However, simultaneous to the decline of marriage, the rate of cohabitation (living together apart from marriage) is increasing. Over the last 50 years, there appears to be a direct correlation between marriage and cohabitation: marriage has decreased by 65%, and cohabitation has increased by approximately 60%.

People are also getting married much later in life. In other words, those who *do* marry are not getting married in their early 20s but are tying the knot later in life.

What has led to these changes? What is bringing about this shift in views and actions regarding marriage?

One of the many factors is that our culture tells us that we have the "right" to pleasure and ease. But this cultural mantra does not jive with the reality that marriage is tough. Indeed, marriage is tough, and as we know, our culture does not like tough things but wants pleasure and ease at all costs. Thus the tension.

Martin Luther once said of marriage:

> *The purpose of marriage is not to have pleasure and to be idle but to procreate and bring up children, to support a household. This, of course, is a huge burden full of great cares and toils. But you have been created by God to be a husband or a wife and that you may learn to bear these troubles.*

We also hear about how tough marriage is from Ephesians 5:22–33: We read that the husband is to sacrifice everything — to die — for the sake of his wife. And the wife is called to trust her husband — to submit to and respect him. Now, this is hardly the setup that someone seeking pleasure at all costs would aspire to. It doesn't sound like fun. If marriage is all about dying to self to serve a spouse, this is most certainly against the tune of our culture that sings self-love and encourages us to do whatever we want as long as we are happy.

Tragically and bluntly stated, one of the main reasons why marriage is on such a decline is that marriage does not let life be about you.

Permit me to explain.

If there is no spouse or children, there is immense freedom, comparatively. An unmarried person seduced by pleasure can indulge in whatever activities they want, when they want. If they have a partner who impinges on their freedom too much, they are free to leave them. Their resources and efforts can be invested in themselves. Marriage complicates such self-pleasure and ease by calling a man to die for his wife and calling a woman to submit to her husband. Furthermore, being married with children requires a great sacrifice of money, freedom and energy for one's children.

And so, marriage has become seen as something like a curse in our culture — a "ball and chain" — something to be avoided.

But is this all true?

Dear friends, marriage is not a curse to avoid or put off for a better time. It is not something that ends dreams and ruins lives. It certainly is not a ball and chain. Instead, marriage is a gift that creates a husband and wife and a blessed family.

We must remember that Satan continually attacks marriage. Satan can never create but only pervert God's gifts. And he does just this to marriage. He attempts to distort our perception of marriage so that we will stay away from it. He holds self-love over sacrificial love as the ideal. He strips sex out of wedlock and then sets it loose to cheapen it. He entices us to place other priorities above marriage, as if marriage is some old-fashioned thing. He tries to convince us that marriage is just too inconvenient, and that we can put it off until someday in the future, when we will have supposedly more time and resources. Indeed, the evil one — with the world and our flesh — gives a false view of marriage, sex and family. They give a view that is not real.

So, what is real? What is marriage?

To paraphrase an old professor of mine named Norman Nagel, a bride and groom do not make a marriage; instead, they step into marriage and take their places. The reason for this is that marriage is God's gift. It is the perfect setup

# Marriage and the Gift of Dying to Self

and the perfect gift that men and women receive. And so, when young people in the church aspire to the institution of marriage, we should be clapping and dancing for joy. Their desire to be married is good!

But what if the couple is young and poor? Do we tell them they ought to have waited and avoided marriage? Well, no. Just as we work to be faithful stewards to financially support God's gift of life in pregnancy centers, we certainly should be good stewards to financially support God's gift of marriage given to younger Christians. Frankly stated, we should be ready to open our wallets and show our children that we believe in marriage rather than painting it as an expensive burden that they cannot afford and should not aspire to at a young age.

At this point, I can hear the voice of someone saying, "But what about having fun at a young age and taking in everything life has to give? Do younger people want to enter a marriage when they are so young?"

To this, the church responds, "Sure, there will be dying to self in marriage. That is the whole point. That is why marriage is tough. Dying to self hurts the sinful nature. But tough does not mean bad. Marriage is tough on the sinful nature, even though it is a good gift for you."

Marriage is indeed tough — but it is also a good gift. And so, let it be stated as plainly and clearly as possible: Men, as you step into the Lord's estate of marriage, you become a husband. And as a husband, you are called to deny your desire to callously assert yourself. Instead of being the King of the Hill, you are called to die to your selfish desires, ambitions and dreams. You are called to lay down your life — thoughts, words, and deeds — for your wife. When you make your wife secondary to watching reruns of The Simpsons and drinking Miller Light, you are not only demonstrating the exact opposite of what it means to be a husband but are perverting who you are as a baptized husband.

Husbands, Christ bids you to die to yourself — to love your wives with the same sort of love that He has for His church. It is a love that keeps no record of wrongs, forgives, and sacrifices everything, even to the point of death.

And wives, Christ bids you to die to yourself — to deny your desire to callously assert yourself. You are called to love and submit to your husband, just as the church herself delights in submitting to Christ, and Christ Himself submits to the Father. However, when you sigh and roll your eyes behind your husband's back while complaining to other women about how he can't do anything right, you are doing the exact opposite of what it means to be a wife; you are perverting who you are as a baptized wife.

Wives, Christ bids you to die to yourself — to love your husbands with the same love that Christ's church is supposed to have for Jesus. It is a love that strives to forgive, please, honor and be loyal while putting the best construction on your husband — even if that means excusing yourself from a group of women slandering their husbands over appetizers at a restaurant.

Husbands and wives, as you take your place in the holy estate of marriage, you die to yourself and live for your spouse. As husband and wife — reflecting Christ's sacrificial love to His bride, the church — you learn to die to yourselves for your children. This is not a curse but a gift.

God be praised that through marriage, the Lord provides and preserves families, as spouses sacrifice for and trust each other out of reverence for Christ.

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# Faces of Grace

Last week, GLC welcomed the fourth-grade class of the Cambridge School for their annual visit. They have been studying the sixteenth-century Reformation, so Pastor Brian walks them through the sanctuary while discussing the nature of Lutheran worship, liturgy, music, art, and architecture. This year we had 40 students along with teachers and parents. It was a lively bunch and they asked a lot of excellent questions.

**Randy Houts Elder Installation**

At our mid-year voter's assembly, the membership unanimously voted to approve Randy Houts to our elder board. We are grateful for Randy's leadership and look forward to his service in assisting Pr. Brian and the elders in serving our church.

**Folds of Honor Charity Golf Tournament**

As U.S. Navy veterans, Pr. Brian and Jack George were happy to participate in San Diego's Folds of Honor annual tournament. It's a worthy cause helping gold star families who have sacrificed for our country. Their team came in second place in their respective flight.

# Marathon Eve at Grace

Like the saying goes when life gives you lemons make lemonade. Once again that's what Grace Lutheran did with the disruptive Sunday morning lemon called the Rock n Roll Marathon. If you couldn't attend Marathon Eve on June 1, here's some of what you missed:

- Randy Houts was unanimously elected to our Board of Elders and inducted.
- A public service announcement by your council president touting the many ways we can all participate in church life.
- A shout-out to Pastor Brian for his exemplary Sunday School and Bible Study classes.
- News about an exploratory committee forming to reopen the preschool, headed by Carl Lehman.
- Pastor Brian will take a six-week sabbatical during July & August; Pastor Brian Hamer will substitute in his absence.
- An opportunity to tour the GLC campus and learn about the completed, in-progress and planned projects. See the Wish List below.
- Those of us who are 8 o'clockers most of the year had the pleasure of hearing the choir and Psalm during worship. A feast of Von's sub sandwiches, side dishes and desserts.

**Heath's Repair/Replace/Restore Wish List**.

This list was prepared by our Trustee, Heath Russert, who asks that we keep in mind it's based on money being no object (possibly because one of us won the lottery). The estimates are very rough. Some are based on past bids, which may be obsolete now due to inflation. If you would like to adopt a project see Heath. Our Treasurer, Richard Segarra, suggests that funds be donated as unrestricted to give us leeway to spend them where the need is greatest.

| Project | Cost | Project | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Roofing | 150,000 | Front door replace refurb | 15,000 |
| Stained glass windows | 189,500 | Sanctuary lighting | 10,000 |
| Bathrooms rehab | 100,000 | Plaster repair | 500 |
| Parsonage rehab | 100,000 | Reserve study | 2,500 |
| Plumbing repairs | 36,000 | Courtyard seating | 1,500 |
| Window replacement (other) | 30,000 | New water feature | 1,500 |
| Hearing aid T loop | 30,000 | Stairwell landing and rail | 5,000 |
| Termite tenting | 25,000 | Front Sign updated | 1,000 |
| | | TOTAL | 707,000 |

**Recently Completed Projects**

- Completed some plumbing repairs
- Roof replacement—parsonage partial and repairs under warranty
- Lighting replacement in Fellowship Hall
- Minor repairs (stage curtains, additional fire extinguishers for SDFD fire inspection)

Thanks to everyone who attended.

Shannon Carreiro, Council President

# May 2024 Giving

| | |
|---|---|
| May Offerings | $ 15,212 |
| May Budget | $ 19,652 |
| Shortage | $ -4,440 |
| YTD Actual | $ 86,824 |
| YTD Budget | $103,173 |
| Shortage | $- 16,349 |

**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—see Pr. Brian

GRACE
Lutheran Church

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San Diego, CA 92103
619.299.2890
gracesandiego.com

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

Shannon Carreiro
Council President

Richard Segarra
Treasurer

Paul Himmelberger
Treasurer Emeritus

Daniel Paylor
Secretary

Heath Russert
Trustee

Kelley Schmidt
Fellowship/Activities

Josh Mellor
Member-at-Large

Carl Lehman
Education

Jeremy Fullam
Head Elder

Steve Hollman
Jason Huntley
Daryl Newton
Ted Nilsen
Elders

# Prayers

**For Strength and Healing**
Dave, Phil, Mike, John, Heidi, Chris, Mary Jo, Marcia, John and Marianne

**Awaiting a Child of God**
Jordan Gruetzmacher, Teagan LeYanna, Rachel Hawthorne, Melissa Millar

**For our Missionaries & Seminarians**
Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss and Vicar Rowan Turner

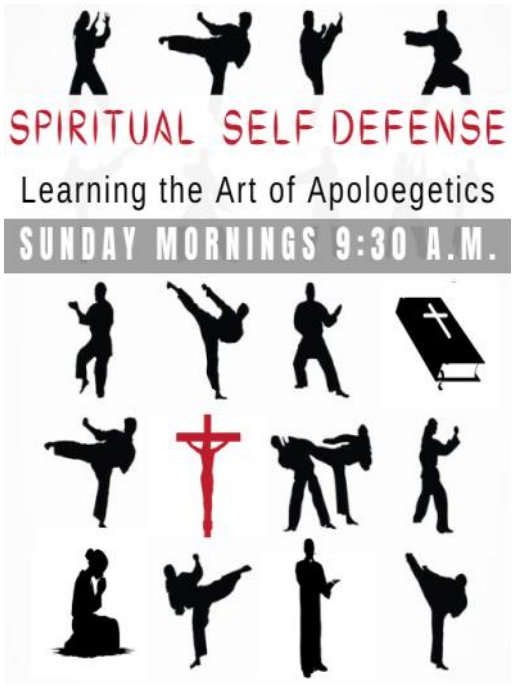
**For our Military Members**
Rev. Mario Ancira, Micah Burge, Tajy George, Daniel Fohey,
Nathan Farish, Matthew Morgan, Jeff & Jordan Gruetzmacher

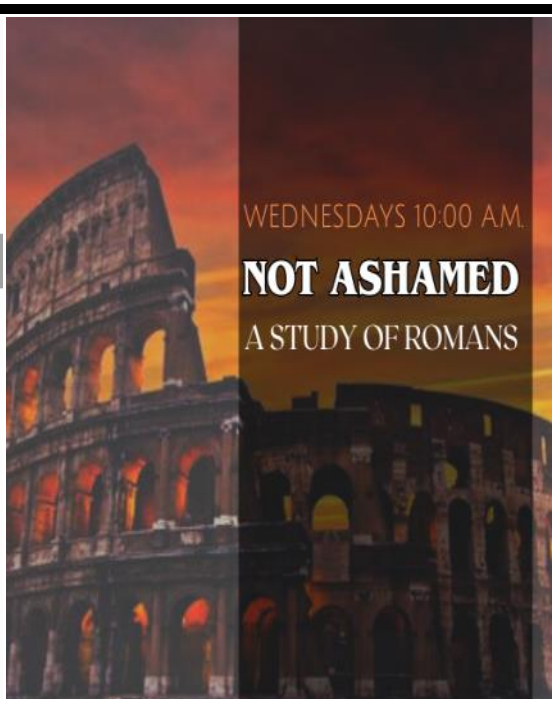
**For those unable to attend**
Joyce Rochester

# Birthdays

| JUNE | JULY | |
|---|---|---|
| 10- Elvie Nichols | 4– Sandi Garcia | 21– Rev. Brian Thomas |
| 12- Jack George | 5- Scott Weselis | 21– Kelley Clark |
| 20- Thomas Gertz | 8- Natalie Lukaesko | 26- Judy George |
| 22- Renee Thompson | 13- Peter Gertz | 29- Conner Russert |
| 28- Fran Willis | 16- Chris Latham | 31- Kris Fillius |

# Coming This Fall

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