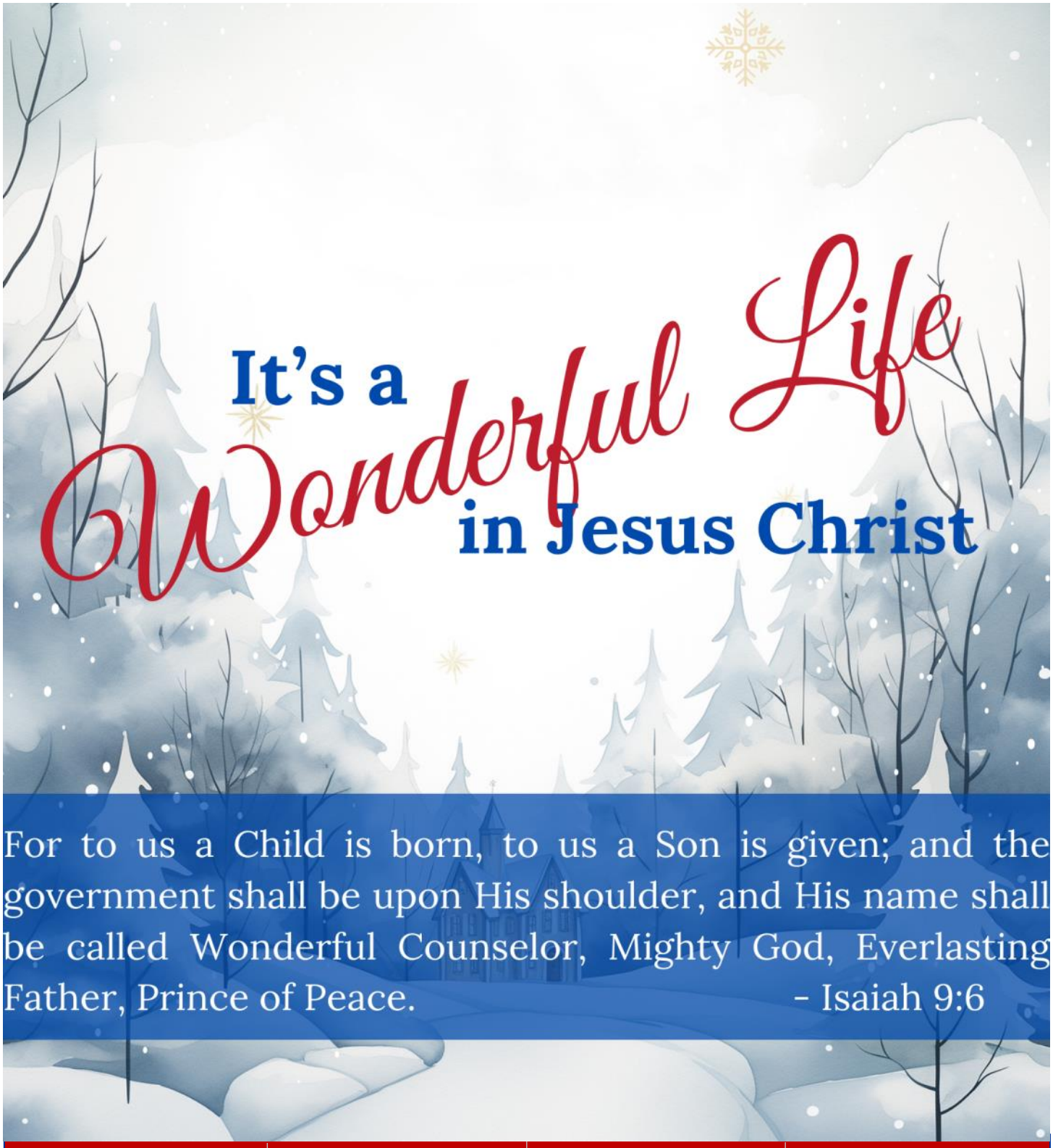
WITTENBERG WAY

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH EST. 1912

Winter 2024



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It's A Wonderful Life

Dear Grace Family,

It's that time of year. Yes, I'm talking about Christmas movies. Among the many memorable scenes in *It's A Wonderful Life* is an interchange between George Bailey and his newly discovered guardian angel Clarence. Financial woes had finally gotten the best of the long-suffering George. Uncle Billy's loss of $8000 for the struggling Building and Loan was the straw that broke the camel's back, prompting George to end his life so his family could cash in on his life insurance policy. When he leaps off a bridge into the frozen river, God intervenes in the form of Clarence. Clarence dives in too, knowing that George will save him and thus save himself.

As they are drying off, Clarence tries to convince George that he is his guardian angel, sent to help him in his time of need. George, of course, is skeptical. Finally, he says, "I know one way you can help me. You don't happen to have 8,000 bucks on you? To which Clarence responds, "Oh, no, we don't use money in Heaven." George answers, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I keep forgetting. Comes in pretty handy down here, bub."

God's currency cannot be commoditized. That's why the prophet Isaiah proclaims, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isaiah 55:1). Grace is priceless, simply because it has already been paid in full by the blood of Christ.

One of the things I often tell newcomers is that we will never put any pressure on them to do anything at Grace Lutheran. Just come and receive, and you will organically find your place and want to serve in some capacity to give back using the gifts God has given you. I have been at Grace for the better part of fifteen years and with all the ups and downs we have experienced, I find our church is more vibrant now than it has ever been in my tenure. And lest any back-patting arise, I am reminded by St. Paul that "this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:9).

We don't use money in heaven, this is true, but it comes in pretty handy down here, bub. So, in the most non-pressurized way I can manage, I am asking you to give generously to Grace Lutheran as we round out another year of God's shared grace and blessing to ensure we meet or exceed our planned budget.

It is and remains an ineffable joy to serve as your pastor. It is, in fact, a wonderful life!

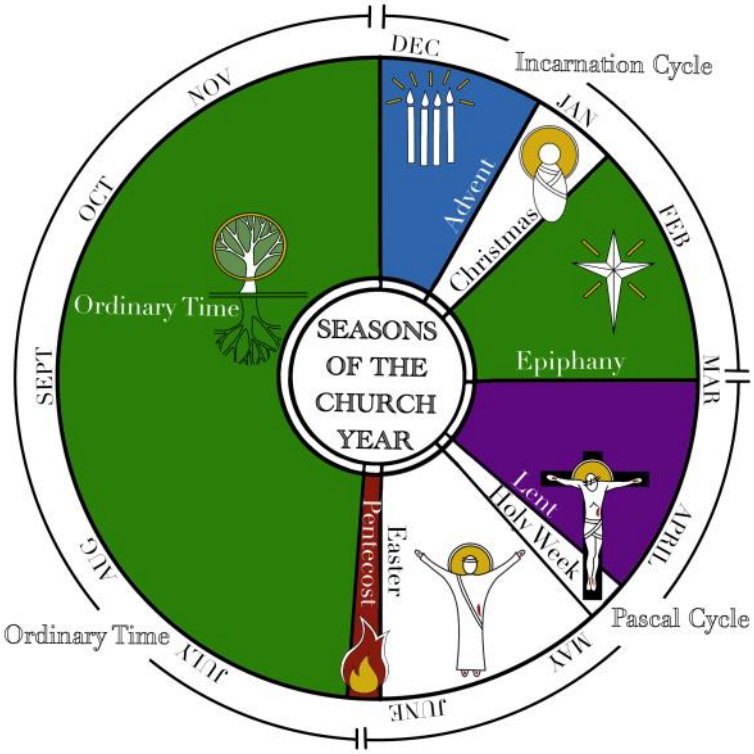
Graciously Yours,

Rev. Brian Thomas

Seasons of the Church Year

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecc 3:1).

The liturgical year celebrates a series of religious feasts and seasons. In so doing, we make sacred the ordinary time of a twelve-month calendar. During the winter months, we will experience the following seasons.



ADVENT

The first season of the church year, beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continuing through the day before Christmas. The name is derived from a Latin word for “coming.” The season is a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord's nativity, and for the final coming of Christ “in power and glory.”

CHRISTMAS

The liturgical season of Christmas begins on the evening of 24 December, with Vespers, and ends on Sunday after the Epiphany. It, therefore, lasts from fourteen to twenty days. More than Advent, Christmas is a time of great joy, because it celebrates the first coming of Jesus, who became man for the love of all of us. The liturgical color is white.

EPIPHANY

A season of four to nine weeks, from the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6) through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The length of the season varies according to the date of Easter. The gospel stories of this season describe various events that manifest the divinity of Jesus. The coming of the Magi is celebrated on the Epiphany. The Baptism of our Lord is observed on the Sunday after Epiphany. The Last Sunday after the Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration. Jesus' identity as the Son of God is dramatically revealed in the Transfiguration gospel, as well as the gospel of the baptism of Christ. We are called to respond to Christ in faith through the showings of his divinity recorded in the gospels of the Epiphany season.

ELECTED, NOT ELECTIONS

By Pastor Donovan Riley

Elections aren't going to save the world. The banners, the buttons, the endless debates; it's all smoke and mirrors. We've watched people twist their guts into knots over election cycles as if the right ballot could somehow pave the way to the pearly gates. Here's the truth: salvation doesn't hang in the balance of a voting booth, and heaven isn't swayed by the results of the latest poll. If we're putting our faith in the outcome of an election, we've already missed the point.

Let's get one thing straight: Christians are already elected. Not by some party or politician, but by Christ himself. We don't have to campaign for it, don't have to make promises we can't keep, and we don't have to compromise our soul for a seat at the table. In the grand scheme of things, all those worldly elections are just noise compared to the one that truly matters—the election of grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

That's the Christian condition. We've been called and elected not by popularity or party affiliation, but by the blood of Christ. That's where our security lies, not in who gets the keys to the Oval Office or Parliament.

But somehow, we get it twisted. We think that if we can just get the right man—or woman—into power, we'll turn the tide of history. But that's like trying to cure cancer with a Band-Aid. Sure, maybe you or I will get a few policies that align with our values. But will those policies fix the brokenness of the world? Will they mend the wound that runs through every soul since Adam? Not a chance. Even King David, Israel's golden boy, couldn't legislate his way out of his own moral collapse. His kingdom fell apart because at the end of the day, sin runs deeper than politics.

There's a Russian proverb that says, "The church is near, but the road is icy; the bar is far, but I will walk carefully." It's a parable of priorities. We choose our paths based on where we think salvation lies. And for too many of us, the road we choose is paved with slogans, political promises, and the belief that if we just vote right, things will change. We put our faith in candidates, in systems, in men and women who, despite their best intentions, are as sinfully self-interested as the rest of us.

Indigenous folklore has its own version of this misplaced trust. There's the story of the trickster, often a coyote, who convinces the people he can bring them what they need—water, food, safety. He makes promises, spins tales, and the people, desperate and hopeful, believe him. But the trickster never delivers. He's a master of deception, and by the time they realize it, they're worse off than when they started. Sound familiar?

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying elections don't matter at all. There's a time and place to vote for justice, to stand against evil, to support laws that protect the weak and uplift the oppressed. But let's not fool ourselves into thinking that our votes can elect us into heaven, or save us from hell. That's not how this works.

Christians are marked—not for four more years, but for eternity with Christ.

There's a reason Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." He knew the score. The kingdoms we build here, whether they lean left or right, whether they're democratic or authoritarian, are all temporary, all fragile. The Roman Empire fell, the Soviet Union collapsed, and one day, every government we know today will crumble to dust. But the election that counts? That's eternal because, as we confess with saints and angels, "Jesus Is Risen!"

It's not about where you drop your ballot—it's about where you place your faith. Are you trusting in the kings of this earth, or in the King of Kings? It's easy to get caught up in the frenzy, to think that the next election will be the turning point. But here's the thing: there's always another election. There's always another promise, another platform, another politician. And the cycle continues, distracting us from the real question: where is our hope?

Christians are marked—not for four more years, but for eternity with Christ. We don't need to jockey for position or worry about the shifting tides of political power. We're already part of a kingdom that will never fade, one that can't be shaken by the latest headline.

Elected, Not Elections

So, the next time you're tempted to pin your hopes on a candidate or believe that the next election will be the one that finally sets everything right, remember this: you're already elected. Elected by grace, by a power far greater than any government, to a purpose far higher than any political office. And if you want to make a real difference? Stop waiting for politicians to fix things and start living in faith, trusting that Christ never rests from making the impossible nothing, repenting us, forgiving us, gracing us, and protecting and defending us until he comes to shepherd us into Paradise. That's where real change happens—not in the halls of power, but in the hearts of the elected, the called, the chosen that have been elected and gifted with saving faith in Christ Jesus.

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Grace Council for 2025

Shannon Carreiro
President

Daniel Paylor
Treasurer

Judy George
Secretary

Heath Russert
Trustee

Rachel Thomas
Fellowship

Carl Lehman
Education

Josh Mellor
Member-at-Large

Mark Jordan
Member-at-Large

Board of Elders

Jeremy Fullam
Head Elder

Steve Hollman

Randy Houts

Jason Huntley

Daryl Newton

Ted Nilsen

September & October Giving

Sept. & Oct. Offerings	$ 50,898	YTD Actual	$194,690
Budget	$ 44,217	YTD Budget	$211,259
Overage	$ 6,681	Shortage	$ -16,569

How to Give this Advent Season

- Go to our website on Tuesday Dec. 3rd *Giving Tuesday* and donate to our Capital Campaign.
- By using 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
- Order See's candy gifts from our special yum-raising store front to support our *Generations* Capital Campaign. Here is the link to place an order and GLC will receive a nice portion of all sales through 12/31/24. https://www.yumraising.com/secure/gracelcs_grace_lutheran_san_diego92/GreJor9062/candy
- Register your Ralph's grocery card to donate a percentage of your shopping to Grace.

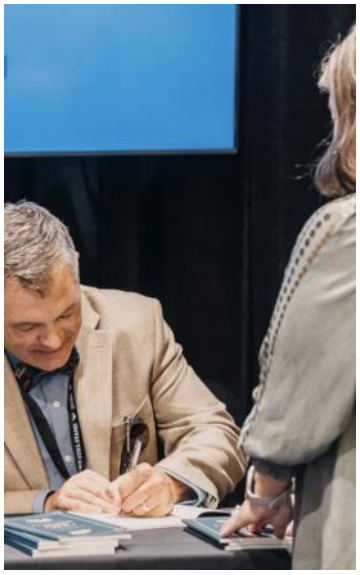
FACES OF GRACE

Two Baptisms in one day! Rachel and Philip Hawthorne returned to Grace to have their son, Thomas baptized. They brought along Eileen and Daniel Fohey as Thomas' godparents.

Millie Campbell was also baptized on Nov. 10th. There were several grandparents present with Duke and Mellissa and other family and friends.

Oktoberfest 2024. This year we moved our celebration up to the fellowship hall after our Reformation Day service where we enjoyed great food and fellowship.

Faces of Grace



The 1517 Here We Still Stand Conference. The annual theological conference was held in October at the Hyatt in Mission Bay. Several members attended and Pr. Brian's book was featured at a book signing.

On October 11, we kicked-off our Generation campaign to raise money to support our aging building. We raised $33K! Thank you to all who provided and purchased gifts for the night. A special thank you to Laura Latham who took care of the delicious meal and to Daryl Newton for being our excellent auctioneer.

Pastor Brian and Rachel hosted their annual Veteran's Day party to honor the veterans in our parish. Since it coincided with the Marine Corps birthday, Paul Himmelberger, John Downey, and Julio Gomez conducted the cake-cutting ceremony.

GRACE Lutheran Church

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gracesandiego.com

The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas
brianwilliamthomas@gmail.com

Director of Church 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

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, Mike, Heidi, Chris, Marcia, Charlie, Eddie, Marge, Arleen, Barbara, and Christi

For Our Expectant Mothers
Elsy Lehman

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

For our Military Members
Micah Burge, Henry Casey, Nick Collum, Nathan Farish, Matthew Morgan, Jeff & Jordan Gruetzmacher, Joshua Simmons, and Thomas Spencer

For those unable to attend
Joyce Rochester, Herb & Marge Foelber, Janice Keitel

Birthdays

November
18- Gloria Himmelberger
20– Logan Collum
27- Leopold Fullam
30- Claire Latham
30- Harold Nichols
30- Nick Russert

December
10 – Vanessa Yates
14- Jonathan Belgau
14– Amélie Lehman

Did we miss your birthday?
If so, please email the church office to be included on the birthday list:
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

Bach Collegium San Diego Presents

A French Twist àla Vierge Music for the Virgin Mary and the Nativity

Bach Consortium SD welcomes Guest Director, Dana Marsh.

An unusual meeting of repertoire by Charpentier, Poulenc, and Villette covering a span of over three hundred years, yet connected aesthetically by way of musical sensuousness and elegance.

For discount tickets: https://bachcollegiumsd.org/afrenchtwist with the code GRACE30.

Friday, December 6, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church
3967 Park Blvd. San Diego, CA 92103