



# WITTENBERG WAY

Spring 2025



Psalm 122:1

I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID TO ME,  
“LET US GO TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD!”



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## PASTOR'S LETTER

Dear Grace Family,

In his poem, *Little Gidding*, T.S. Eliot writes:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring will be  
To arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

Eliot here captures the repetitive nature of life, a rhythm of return. His point is that the journey of exploration and discovery is continuous, and even when we seemingly return to a familiar place, we can view it from a new understanding and depth of knowledge, as if experiencing it for the first time due to the insights gained through the journey itself.

This is the beauty of the liturgy as we move through the rhythm of the seasons year after year. We come back to the same places again and again. And yet... we are not the same as before. So the familiar becomes new.

We are returning to the season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday with the familiar call of the prophet Joel: "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Joel 2:13). Lent is a season of reflection and repentance—but also a curious type of joy. In Lent, we reflect upon our sin and the fleeting nature of this mortal life as we receive the ash mark of the cross upon our heads. We also practice repentance, which moves us past regret and into action. For these reasons, Lent often gets a knock for being the killjoy season on the church calendar where it is viewed as a long liturgical layover before the more hope-filled days of Easter. However, I think this is the case because most do not understand the nature of repentance. Repentance means an about-face in military terms. One hundred and eight degrees from where you're standing. In other words, repentance means "return." It's not about becoming a "better" you but turning away from yourself to a better Savior. "Return to the LORD!"

Lent offers a more subtle kind of joy. The kind that arises from the serene knowledge that no matter

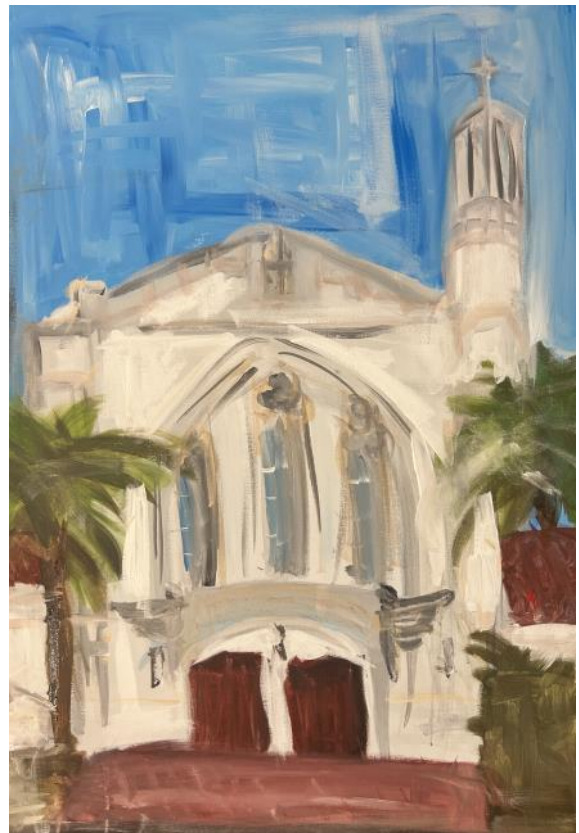
what direction you are headed when you return to the Lord, He is there waiting with outstretched arms to embrace you in His loving nail-pierced hands.

Please take advantage of our mid-week Lenten suppers and services this year. The food, fellowship, and worship will be familiar, of course, but you will bring your new experiences, insights, griefs, and joys. Whatever you bring, I know you find God's grace to meet you in that place as we "arrive where we started," which is always in Christ our Lord.

Graciously yours,



Rev. Brian Thomas



On the cover is a collage of artwork from our recent "painting with the pastor" where participants channeled their inner Michelangelo, Monet, or Matisse. The verse in the middle of the cross is the one etched into the plaster above our church doors. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Ps 122:1).



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Shannon Carreiro

Our historic church comes with historic technology, communications and security systems. The council is on a mission to bring Grace Lutheran into the 21st century before its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2030. Here's a brief summary of a few of those projects.

#### UPGRADES

A goodly portion of our electricity is now supplied by solar power. Two years ago, the membership voted for this. After some delays, installation was completed last spring with minimal disruption, and SDGE finally gave approval last October to turn the system on. This April we will file for the \$24,000 tax credit/rebate. Thanks again to our Trustee Heath Russert for initiating the project and seeing it through.

Much-needed upgrades were made recently to our spotty Wi-Fi and antiquated phone system. Rather than attempt to repair the existing low-tech/no-tech equipment, the council opted to contract with Cox Communications. Under the agreement, Cox supplies the equipment, which it services and upgrades as needed. The new phone system even has this new-fangled feature: Caller ID! And mobile devices now work just about anywhere on campus, but be advised not to test this capability during Divine Service.

Our Windows 7-era office back computer will soon be replaced with one that will actually support cloud-based backup and security.

#### GRANT SEARCH

On March 19, Matt Calhoun from San Diego Police Department will conduct a formal Vulnerability Assessment of the Grace Lutheran campus. This free service is the requisite first step in applying for Homeland Security grants. Obtaining one of these grants could conceivably fund security fencing, security surveillance systems and other safeguards to protect our church and parsonage. The downside is that grants can take up to a year to process, with no guarantee of success. However, if the report shows serious points of vulnerability that need immediate attention, the report will help us prioritize them. I'll report on the findings and actions in the next Wittenberg newsletter.

#### WE PUT YOUR MONEY TO WORK

This past summer the council voted to move \$300,000 of the Grace reserve fund into a 7-month CD earning 4%, while leaving adequate liquidity to meet any urgent needs. This risk-free investment and prudent stewardship.

#### DID SOMEONE SAY STEWARDSHIP?

Your new council was installed last December with an almost full complement of positions specified in the bylaws. *Almost--*because despite my impassioned pleas, no one has stepped forward and said, "yes, Shannon, that Stewardship Chair has my name on it." Bueller?



SHADOWS  
OF THE  
SAVIOR

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Colossians 2:17

A LENTEN MIDWEEK SERIES  
WEDNESDAYS

Soup Suppers | 5:30 p.m.  
Evening Prayer | 6:30 pm..



FEAST BEFORE THE FAST  
SHROVE  
TUESDAY

March 4, 6:30 p.m.

Empty out your cupboards for a Shrove Tuesday potluck. Sign-up at the welcome desk.

## WE ARE BEGGARS: MARTIN LUTHER'S FINAL WORDS AND THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

### Rev. Edward Killian

***Luther's final thoughts were not meant to bum you out or lead you to despair.***

I have been at more bedsides of dying people than I can remember and done more funerals than I can count. It is a profound honor to be with someone as they depart from this world and to profess Christ's mercy to them as they prepare to see him, to see their last interactions with family and friends, to hear their last thoughts, and to learn about what is important to them when all of the chaos and inconsequential things have fallen away. For the Christian, death is not just part of the "grand circle of life." It is a foreign thing, a consequence of our sin and rebellion. But as death comes to us, we often witness a person's essence and beliefs displayed in a distilled, refined form.

At Luther's death in February of 1546, those attending him found a scrap of paper in his garment pocket with his brief last thoughts written upon it. The words read, "We are beggars. This is true." At first glance, these words may seem depressing, nihilistic, or even defeatist in some way, but they are really quite the opposite. This final statement of Martin Luther stands as the distilled, refined summation of his entire life's work and the theology that the Holy Spirit caused him to rediscover. These last words do not point us to despair; they point us to Christ.

God's Word teaches us both law (the things he commands us to do and not to do) and gospel (Christ Jesus crucified to atone for our sins). These truths comprise the meaning of human existence before God. Under God's law, we learn what God's perfect standard is for our thoughts, words, and deeds. As we witness and hear of that standard, we become painfully aware of the fact that we do not measure up. Throughout the course of his ministry, Luther continually proclaimed the reality of our inability to please God with our actions, as the Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and that by the works of the law no one will be justified (Rom. 3:20, Gal. 2:16). Before God, we have no claim on the Kingdom of Heaven if we are relying

on our own resume of good works. We cannot justify our lives before God. We have no case to make. We are beggars before God's throne.

The best news for us is that the law does not have the final say. For while we were still sinners, bent on our own destruction, Christ Jesus' love was the impetus for his life-giving atonement on the cross and his resurrection on the third day (Rom. 5:8). God's law kills us with its severity, but the full sweetness of the gospel makes us alive. Christ's innocent blood shed for us atoned for our sins, canceled our debt in hell, and freed us from all those things that we fear as our own death approaches. Christ's death gives us life. While it is true that the wages of sin is death and we cannot merit salvation, it is also blissfully true that by faith, we are justified (saved) by his grace as a gift (Rom. 3:24).

*Luther also believed, taught, and confessed that salvation comes to us by Christ alone.*

In light of these realities in which we live before God, Luther believed that we live by grace alone and by faith alone (Eph. 2:8). This means that our salvation is an entirely unearned gift freely given by God, as is the faith by which we receive it. It is imperative that we understand that even the faith by which we cling to God and his truth is a gift of the Holy Spirit and not the product of our reason and strength. By grace, the faith that he demands of us, he himself gives to us.

Luther also believed, taught, and confessed that salvation comes to us by Christ alone. This is not to the exclusion of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Both the Father and the Holy Spirit give testament to Jesus. In him, we have seen the Father, and of him, the Holy Spirit teaches us. Jesus' blood atonement for the sins of all mankind for all time is the single most important act in the history of the universe, as salvation is found in no one else, and there is no other name under heaven by which people are saved (Acts 4:12). Thus salvation is found in Christ alone.

## WE ARE BEGGARS: MARTIN LUTHER’S FINAL WORDS AND THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

### Rev. Edward Killian

How do we know that all of this is true? Martin Luther believed it to be by Scripture alone. This is not to say that natural law cannot show us anything about God at all because it most certainly does! But the depth of our sin and the revelation of the person and work of Christ is found only in the texts of the Bible. Only there do we find God’s will for our lives and the promises of God. Only there do we have access to the mind of God and know him as he wants to be known. Only in Scripture can we be certain about who God is, who we are, and the meaning of life

Since it is God alone who created us, God alone who redeemed us, God alone who sustains us in this life, and God alone who is coming again to take us home, we realize that all credit and glory must be given to him. Life does not come from us, truth does not come from us, faith does not come from us, and salvation does not come from us, so neither we nor anything else under heaven is worthy of glory. All glory is to be given to God alone. This was finally Luther’s unifying theme. Truth, life, identity, salvation, and hope come from God. To Him alone be the glory for it all.

These were the beliefs of Martin Luther: grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and to God alone be the glory for all of it. Distilled down to its simplest essence, we are beggars; this is true. Luther’s final thoughts were not meant to bum you out or lead you to despair. They were meant to cause you to look outside of yourself and towards Christ, the author and finisher of your faith and the one who promises to lead you into truth as you ready to face your own death with confidence and hope. From one beggar to another, go in peace.

*Originally appeared at 1517.org/articles. Used by permission.*

### JANUARY 2025 GIVING

January Offerings	\$ 20,587	2025 Actual	\$ 20,587
Budget	<u>\$ 19,656</u>	2025 Budget	<u>\$277,497</u>
Overage	\$ 931	Needed by Dec. 31, 2025	<b>\$ 256,910</b>

### HOW DID WE END LAST YEAR?

Nov. & Dec . Offerings	\$ 66,314	2024 Actual	\$259,254
Budget	<u>\$ 51,141</u>	2024 Budget	<u>\$262,400</u>
Overage	\$ 15,173	Shortfall	<b>\$ -3,146</b>

### HOW TO GIVE

- 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](http://grace sandiego.com)
- Time and Talents—see Pr. Brian
- Order See’s candy gifts from our special yum-raising store front at:



[https://www.yumraising.com/secure/gracelcs\\_\\_sees\\_candy\\_fundraiser31/GreJor9062/](https://www.yumraising.com/secure/gracelcs__sees_candy_fundraiser31/GreJor9062/)

- Register your Ralph’s grocery card to donate a percentage of your shopping to Grace.



## FACES OF GRACE



The installation of Deaconess Doris Snashall in December.



The children listen attentively during an Advent sermon.



The 2025 GLC Council (l-r) Judy George, Rachel Thomas, Carl Lehman, Heath Russert, Shannon Carreiro, Josh Mellor, Danny Paylor, and Mark Jordan.



The TNT get together at Common Theory in January was well attended.

The Holy Baptism of Luther Morgan in January.





## FACES OF GRACE



The Epiphany Dinner was another delicious fellowship event in January.



Painting with Pastor was a fun fellowship event on Friday Feb. 14th.





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The Reverend  
Brian W. Thomas  
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DIRECTOR OF CHURCH MUSIC  
Dale Sorenson  
dalesorenson2@gmail.com

CHURCH SECRETARY  
Gretchen Jordan  
gjordan@gracesandiego.com

SUNDAY DIVINE SERVICE  
9:00 am

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
10:15 - 11:00 am

Nursery available

SHANNON CARREIRO  
Council President

DANIEL PAYLOR  
Treasurer

JUDY GEORGE  
Secretary

HEATH RUSSERT  
Trustee

CARL LEHMAN  
Education

RACHEL THOMAS  
Fellowship/Activities

JOSH MELLOR  
Member-at-Large

MARK JORDAN  
Member-at-Large

JEREMY FULLAM  
Head Elder

STEVE HOLLMAN  
JASON HUNTLEY  
DARYL NEWTON  
TED NILSEN  
Elders

## PRAYERS

### FOR STRENGTH AND HEALING

Dave, Mike, Heidi, Arleen, Lucy, Laura, Carlitos, Eddie, Charlie,  
Thomas, Ingrid, and Mary

### FOR OUR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

Elsy Lehman

### FOR OUR MISSIONARIES & SEMINARIANS

Rev. Dr. Tardelli Voss, Vicar Rowan Turner, and Vicar William Baker

### 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

### MARCH

4 - Ted Nilsen  
14- Michael Tow  
18- Molly Mellor  
18- Grant Mellor  
19- Kirschten Huntley

### APRIL

1- Bobbi Roberts  
2- Jason Huntley  
6- Kariff Gomez  
8- Marilyn Licht  
9- Tony Fillius  
10- Steve Hollman  
14- Linnette Hollman  
14- Elsy Lehman  
20- Barbara Angelo  
26- Jack Gruetzmacher

### MAY

4- Valda Houts  
17- Amy Russert  
19- Paul Himmelberger  
24- Kimberly Newton  
24- Heath Russert  
28- Michelle Thompson  
28- Fran Willis  
29- Jeremy Belgau

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

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### SHROVE TUESDAY POTLUCK

March 4 @ 6:30 pm

### ASH WEDNESDAY

March 5 @ Noon and 6:30 pm

### LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

Wednesday March 12, 19, 26  
April 2 and 9 @ 5:30 pm

### MIDWEEK EVENING PRAYER

Wednesday March 12, 19, 26  
April 2 and 9 @ 6:30 pm



**CHOIR NOTE:** Our Grace Lutheran Choir is looking for new members. We practice of 20-30 minutes after the Sunday service. If you are interested in joining, please see Dale Sorenson.