

Grace Lutheran Church

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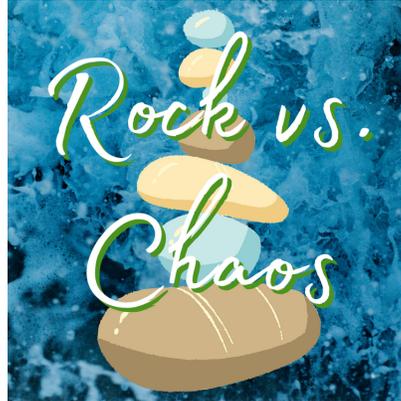
ACTION Food Pantry (626) 319-0554 actionfoodpantry@gmail.com



From the Pastor

Greeting Sisters and Brothers in Christ!

Based on my regular use of sports metaphors in my sermons, I think most of you know I am a sports fan. I have been as long as I can remember.



I find the nature of competition to be interesting if not occasionally exhilarating. And it can often be a bit of an escape from the often chaotic nature of life. One of my favorite times of the sports calendar is March Madness, which is happening as I write this article.

March Madness, as it's commonly known as, is the end of the season men's (and women's) college basketball tournament. I pay very little attention to regular season college basketball but when the 68 teams that participate in the tournament are selected my attention turns to the hardwood. It's called March Madness because of its often chaotic nature and frenetic pace. Every year high ranking favorites lose to the underdog (or Cinderella) and there are always plenty of close games that come down to the wire. The unpredictable nature creates this sense of chaos or madness and it can be thrilling for sports fans like me.

What does this have to do with a newsletter article? It certainly isn't because I love chaos in my life or in the church. I have a strong aversion to chaos. I like predictable and stable. This is why I love a routine even if it can be a bit 'boring'. There's enough crazy in the world that for the sake of my mental health I like to create an illusion of stability with my daily routine. I'm probably not alone in feeling that way.

Newsletter
April, 2024

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From the Pastor (cont.)

What does this have to do with a newsletter article? It certainly isn't because I love chaos in my life or in the church. I have a strong aversion to chaos. I like predictable and stable. This is why I love a routine even if it can be a bit 'boring'. There's enough crazy in the world that for the sake of my mental health I like to create an illusion of stability with my daily routine. I'm probably not alone in feeling that way.

But, the reality is life is unpredictable and we have very little control over the chaos that often impacts our lives. Accidents happen, illness is unavoidable and we live in a sinful world with sinners like us. Nothing contributes more to chaos than sin. And unlike watching a basketball tournament, I find the chaos to be less than thrilling. When chaos interrupts my sometimes boring life I find that my faith is the thing that helps the most.

I know it may sound cliché and predictable for a pastor to write such a thing, but remember, I haven't always been a pastor. And we are no more immune or impervious to the trials of life than anyone else. Although because of my vocation I do have the advantage of being what I have called a 'professional Christian.' A significant part of my job is to do the things Jesus and the scriptures encourage us to do in order to make our faith more functional in our lives. Things like prayer, reading and studying scripture, serving others, praise and worship help develop a greater knowledge of God and a deeper relationship with Jesus. In doing so I've discovered that the more I know God and the closer I get to Jesus, the more I find that chaos has no place with God or my relationship with our Savior.

God is faithful and steadfast in all His ways. Without getting to theological what that means to me is I can always count on God to be who and what He is and has proven to be. He is the Rock in my life, the firm foundation, and the one thing I can always count on when all else fails. That doesn't mean God is predictable, but God always acts in ways that are consistent with who God is. Easter is proof of that. Jesus said things that were literally unbelievable, yet were proven to be true. He made promises that were always kept and He always acted out of selfless love.

The joy of Easter is about so much more than the promise of eternal life. It is an invitation to a hope that is real on this side of heaven when the you know what hits the fan we have a counter to the chaos that most of us would like to avoid. When Jesus rose from the dead He defeated our greatest enemy and the source of chaos. Yes, for the sake of our eternal life, but also to help us deal with the crazy until life eternal begins. I find that to be much more satisfying and infinitely more exciting than March Madness. I am a voyeur for the chaos of March Madness but it has no impact on my life so I don't need a Rock to steady the ship. But in life I can't imagine living without the Rock who reminds me that there are no upsets or underdogs and I am the Cinderella story thanks to all that God has done for me.

Yours in Christ,
Pr. Steve

March, 2024 Council Report

From the Council Meeting of March 12, 2023

- Volunteer recognition is continuing every Sunday at the end of worship. This is very important to the council because volunteers should be applauded for giving their time and talents to Grace. If you have any volunteers you would like to recognize, please speak to Brenda.
- Sign-ups for Easter lilies to adorn the altar on Easter Sunday are now available in the Narthex or by emailing the church. Sign-ups for Easter brunch, which will occur immediately after the service on Easter Sunday, are also continuing.
- If you wish to make a contribution to the Pre-School, please make your check payable to Grace Lutheran Pre-School. It will be recorded by the Financial Secretary on your annual giving statement.
- The Pre-School children will be joining us on Palm Sunday to sing during the worship service.
- Pastor Steve and Vicki Jacobs make regular Home Communion visits to our members that aren't able to partake in Communion in person. Please let Pastor Steve know if you know of someone they may want to visit.
- All employee evaluations are complete for this year. They were done by Pastor Steve and Brenda Noriega.
- Please continue to support the Action Food Pantry. The number of clients they serve continues to grow.

In His Service,
Brenda Noriega
Council President

April Scripture Readings

Sunday, April 7, 2024
2nd Sunday of Easter



Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 133
1 John 1:1-2:2
John 20:19-31

Sunday April 14, 2024
3rd Sunday of Easter



Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36b-48

Sunday, April 21, 2024
4th Sunday of Easter



Acts 4:5-12
Psalm 23
1 John 3:16-24
John 10:11-18

Sunday, April 28, 2024
5th Sunday of Easter



Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 22:25-31
1 John 4:7-21
John 15:1-8

An Easter Message from Bishop Brenda Bos

Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat...And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive and understand? Are your hearts hardened?...Do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' They said to him, 'Twelve.' And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' Then he said to them, 'Do you not yet understand?' Mark 8:14-21, selected verses.

You may be confused to read this text as I send you Easter greetings. Generally, a bishop's greeting celebrates the empty tomb and claims the promise of resurrection. And here I am, stuck in the boat with hungry disciples. What gives?

When I was considering what Easter means to me this year, this passage came to mind. I can relate to disciples who had seen the miracles of Jesus repeatedly, but still doubted he could meet their needs. Sure, the disciples went on to be the pillars of our church. It was their witness that ushered in the Christian church. And yet, at this moment in their story, they are still confused followers of Jesus. Even though they participated in the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000, they still did not trust Jesus to feed them.

I write to some of you who are leaders in the church. People listen to your witness of the gospel. Some of us are in the part of the story where we are confused followers of Jesus. We have seen miraculous things in our lives, but we still doubt Jesus. Let me be honest, I have seen miraculous things, and I still doubt Jesus will come through in the future, even though He has come through countless times in the past. So when I find myself sitting in this boat, with these disciples, I focus on their hunger and doubt, not on the fact that they will become important leaders in the church. Today they are hungry, and cannot imagine Jesus will come through.

Perhaps the church finds itself in the same spot.

There are plenty of reasons to be fearful. The violence in the world is overwhelming. Wars rage on, terrorists attack, guns are out of control, televised verbal abuse and taunts are constant. The church is in decline, our schools suffer, our families struggle to remain intact. We tend to think our current situation is the worst anyone has ever experienced. And frequently we believe God will stop caring today, after a lifetime of proof that God has remained faithful.

As we enter the Easter season, I encourage you to come to Jesus with all your doubts. The disciples did, and Jesus remained patient. And later, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, which, apparently, was the only way those disciples would come to fully trust Jesus. It is only after Pentecost, and the appearance of the Holy Spirit, that the disciples could boldly proclaim Jesus' saving way.

So the church finds itself at this moment in the story: the crucifixion has only just happened. The resurrection has taken place, but no one understands what Jesus is capable of. The Holy Spirit has not yet come to make it clearer. Where do you find yourself in the story? Full of hope, but frightened? Despairing and cannot imagine a brighter future? Hungry, and doubting Jesus knows it?

My friends, me too. And then I remember all that Jesus has done in my life. And I embrace the Holy Spirit, who is clearly alive in my life. That same Jesus is in your life, and the Holy Spirit is capable of rekindling your faith and hope.

These are trying times, I cannot deny it. But we have Jesus with us, alive, powerful, healing, feeding, loving, caring. Trust in that Jesus, who has been with you so many times, and will be in the future. Jesus is alive, well, and longing to bring you to a vibrant, faith-filled life. Alleluia!

Easter blessings,
Bishop Brenda Bos, Easter 2024

Prayer Requests

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry – Psalm 34:15

Please pray for those with medical needs, including: Laureen Alvarez, Art James, Jaxon Turner, Margaret Henderson, Carolyn and Bill Wengel, Mariesha Ross-Richard, Kelly Florentine, Gen Alley, Sandy Streeter, Debby Gonzales, Myrna Ott, Pastor Ed McGee, Rhonda Troup, Patty VanRaalte, Ryder, Morgan, Tim Phillips, Audry and Leo Fuller, Linda Dalton, Bernie Schantz, Nance R., Melody Reich, Chris Saltonstall, Elva Maldonado, Emma Reardon, Marie O'Malley, Michelle Heyne, Stuart Merkel, Trina Clay, Billy Thompson, Connie Brown, Elena Navarette, George Fuller, Jim Oravetz, Joan and Lee Juneau, Joan Pelleren, Joyce Gower, Kari Watson, Martha Olson, Pam Elparin, Ray, Rose Marie Quesada, Sarah Encabo, Spencer, and victims of COVID-19.

Please pray for others in need of prayer, including: the family of Dakota Garske, the family of Shelly Ruiz, the family of Alma Pasos, the family of Felix Noriega, the family of Jerome Elparin, Ryder's family, Christopher Oravetz, Jeffrey Saltonstall, family and friends of Marie Dabbs, and our Grace neighbors.

Please pray for the men and women currently serving in the armed forces, who are bravely protecting us and our country, including: Richard Larini (Navy).

Please pray for all victims of natural disasters.

Please pray for those who are being faced with grief, and all who know violence and hate.

Please pray for our Grace Lutheran Church Congregation and partners in ministry.

Please pray for the teachers and children of our preschool and infant care program, and for the teachers and students of Ben Lomond Elementary School, our school districts, and all schools, that they and their families will be safe.

Please pray for hospital staff, all medical personnel and first responders, those in essential services, and the leaders of our world, state, country, and local governments.

Please pray for the ACTION Food Pantry, the clients that they serve, and all those in need.

Prayer requests can be sent to us through the link on the Grace-Covina website at www.gracecovina.org. You can also include your prayer request on your attendance card at Sunday Worship, or email bllarini@hotmail.com.

April 2024

We continue to meet in-person for Sanctuary Worship Sundays at 9:30 a.m. We are streaming Sunday Worship on our Facebook page. If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, or have had contact recently with anyone with COVID-19, we ask that you worship safely with us online. Livestreamed services are available on our YouTube page.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31 Easter Sunday 9:30 am: Sunday Worship	1	2 10:00 am: Prayer Team (1st Tuesday)	3 9:00 am: Preschool Chapel 11:00 am: In-person Bible Study 7:00 pm: Online Bible Study	4 12:00 pm: Action Food Pantry Thursday Distribution	5 6:00 pm: Evangelio Eterno Friday Worship	6
7 9:30 am: Sunday Worship	8	9 7:00 pm: Church Council	10 9:00 am: Preschool Chapel 11:00 am: In-person Bible Study 7:00 pm: Online Bible Study	11 9:30 am: Gather - Women's Bible Study 12:00 pm: Action Food Pantry Thursday Distribution 5:30 pm: TLC Quilt Guild	12 6:00 pm: Evangelio Eterno Friday Worship	13
14 9:30 am: Sunday Worship	15	16 10:00 am: Prayer Team (3rd Tuesday)	17 9:00 am: Preschool Chapel 11:00 am: In-person Bible Study 7:00 pm: Online Bible Study	18 12:00 pm: Action Food Pantry Thursday Distribution 12:30 pm: Bonhoeffer Festival	19 6:00 pm: Evangelio Eterno Friday Worship	20
21 9:30 am: Sunday Worship 10:30 am: Worship Committee	22	23	24 9:00 am: Preschool Chapel 11:00 am: In-person Bible Study 7:00 pm: Online Bible Study	25 12:00 pm: Action Food Pantry Thursday Distribution	26 6:00 pm: Evangelio Eterno Friday Worship	27
28 9:30 am: Sunday Worship	29	30	1 9:00 am: Preschool Chapel 11:00 am: In-person Bible Study 7:00 pm: Online Bible Study	2 12:00 pm: Action Food Pantry Thursday Distribution	3 6:00 pm: Evangelio Eterno Friday Worship	4

April Birthdays

Marty Spradley | April 8
Milo McCabe | April 13
Suzanne Banks | April 17
Wendy Snyder | April 19
Lauren Varela | April 23
Tyler Roset | April 23
Mary Spradley | April 24
Johna Stienstra | April 29

April Anniversaries

Dave & Jenny Brown
April 17

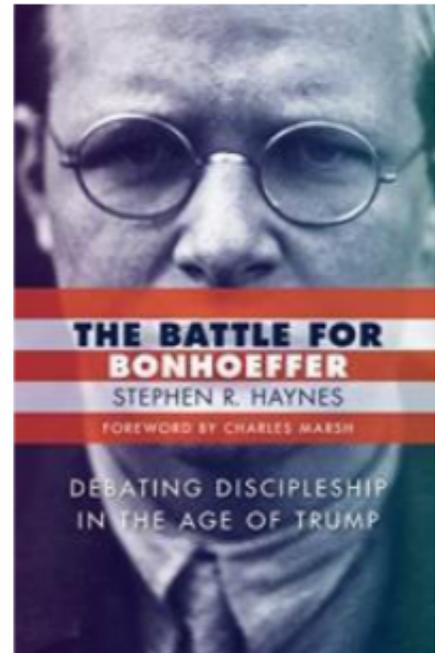
Donald & Vicki Jacobs
April 25

Bill & Carolyn Wengel
April 27

The 12th Annual Bonhoeffer Festival

Thursday April 18, 2024
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
1700 N. Towne Ave, Claremont

Theme: *"The Battle over Bonhoeffer -
Debating Discipleship in the Age of Trump"*
Keynote Speaker: *Dr. Stephen R. Haynes*
Professor of Religious Studies, Rhodes College
Author: *The Battle over Bonhoeffer*
Co-Author: *Armchair Theologian: Dietrich Bonhoeffer*



Sponsored by Southwest CA Synod (ELCA), Pacifica Synod (ELCA), & Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Claremont

Festival Schedule:

12:30pm Commemorative Lunch in honor Bonhoeffer's martyrdom
1:30pm Program: Keynote Presentation: Dr. Haynes "Battle over Bonhoeffer: Debating Discipleship in the Age of Trump"
2:45pm Panel Discussion/Q & A - led by Rev. Dr. Thomas Johnson
3:30pm Reception/Table Talk at Good Shepherd Patio

This event is free and open to Public (donations are appreciated) - please RSVP at tjohnson@cst.edu/909-802-9549.



Grace Lutheran Church, Covina

You are welcome here

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Covina, CA 91722

www.gracecovina.org

NEWS FROM GRACE-COVINA APRIL 2024

Spring