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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

"But ask the animals and they will teach you... in God's hand is the life of every living thing." –Job 12

Sometimes God sends you exactly the right message at exactly the right time. I've been receiving daily Lenten Devotions from CLU in my email, and yesterday's piece by Professor Rick Hesse was so timely it brought tears to my eyes. Actually, the tears were already waiting to spill over.

He was writing about the 10 lepers that Jesus healed in Luke 17, and, of course, the one who turns back to thank him. He pointed out something I've never seen anyone else point out before—certainly nothing that I'd ever considered. If those 10 "lepers" did, indeed, have Hansen's Disease (real leprosy), then they would have been living a life without any pain. That's one of the features of the disease; it eliminates the body's ability to feel pain. And that's what eventually kills you. Unfelt cuts get infected. Unfelt burns rot. Unfelt breaks don't get reset. Body parts quite literally depart from the body. So when Jesus heals the lepers, one of the side-effects is that he restores to them the ability to feel pain.

I've been thinking a lot about pain as I recuperate here at home. Thankfully, I haven't been feeling nearly as much physical pain as I expected from my surgery; that's all been quite manageable. But on Tuesday another kind of pain came into our lives. It was a pain we had anticipated for some time but when the moment actually arrived, anticipation didn't make it any easier. On Tuesday we had to put Milo to sleep. The vet came to our home and our great-hearted canine companion passed peacefully in his favorite room hearing the words I had spoken to him every night as part of our bedtime ritual. "Night-night, Milo. Sweet dreams. You have a good sleep and I'll see you in the morning."

I truly believe I will see my Milo in the morning, that great, getting'-up morning when we rise new in Christ to embrace all our beloved. Until then, I will cherish the memory of him and all the ways he helped me be a better person, a more whole human being.

Life is a precious gift. It is a blessing, but with that blessing, as Professor Hesse reminded me, comes the burden of pain. It hurts to be truly alive and that hurt can come in many forms. We try to find all kinds of ways to anesthetize ourselves—sin does that like a leprosy—but we forget that pain, too, has a purpose. It reminds us to deal with wounds we would rather ignore. It tells us how valuable life is. It helps us remember our need for each other and the ways our loves shape our lives. Jesus said he came that we might have life in all its fullness (John 10). Pain is part of that fullness, but because of it we feel joy all the more brightly.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

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"God, **Your** sweet spirit fills me with peace....a sweet peace that soothes my spirits and renews my mind.

I feel **Your** Love, God, as it washes gently over my soul. **Your** tender touch sweeps away any doubt and fear I have brought with me into this time of prayer and assures me that all is well. I am in **Your** constant care and keeping.

You are with me, God, in every moment of the day and night. I feel such a sense of serenity knowing that **You** are my constant companion, guiding me through every decision and action.

How peaceful I feel, **God**, as I let go of the cares and challenges of this day. I am restored and renewed during this time with **You**, and I am filled with a peace that overflows into everything I do.

The Daily Nord

**Give me a divine heart
to love those who are
different or difficult...
may forgiveness and
love abide.**

MISSIONS UPDATE — Report from the Lutheran-Episcopal Young Adult and Campus Ministry — Reverend Sean Lanigan

I am so grateful to be writing this report and thanking the people of Gloria Dei for your generous support during Beach Progressives' first 6 months of existence. I arrived in Long Beach from New York City in June, and the ensuing months have been a whirlwind of discovery, learning, and growth.

My first task upon arrival was to begin meeting people, and I'm pleased to report that I've had coffee with hundreds of people throughout Long Beach, young and old alike. I've sought especially to learn about what sort of ministry would help to address the spiritual hungers of young adults in our community. Through these conversations, I've gained a wide-ranging perspective that has helped me to shape a ministry plan, develop goals, and discern strategies for our first year.

In August, I welcomed new students at Cal State Long Beach and began a pattern of getting to know students at an information table that I set up on a campus thoroughfare one day each week. I've also gotten to know students by spending time in the Interfaith Center, a place where a diverse array of students come for relaxation, nourishment, and good conversation. Additionally, I've had coffee meetings with a wide variety of students, faculty, and administrators in order to spread the news about the programs and community we're developing on campus. As a result of the connections I've built, I was able to gather a group of students to learn mindfulness meditation, and we plan to continue exploring various contemplative practices in the spring. I also organized an interfaith panel discussion on women's religious leadership that was attended by over 60 students, many of whom expressed desire for more opportunities for interfaith dialogue on campus. In the spring, I anticipate continuing to focus on developing interfaith programming, which is a major need on campus. Through these diverse programs, I hope to also meet students who are interested in the open-minded approach to Christianity that is the hallmark of our ministry. Eventually, I hope to work with students to build a new progressive Christian student organization on campus.

In August, our emerging downtown young adult community also met for the first time, and now has 20+ active participants, with 10-15 generally present on any given evening. In our first meeting, we shared a meal together and told stories around the theme of "belonging." It was an excellent way to begin getting to know one another and to help us express the hopes that we are bringing into this new community. In September, our Gathering explored the theme of "confession," and we also discovered that folks felt ready to begin meeting more often. So, in October, we studied Genesis 1-2 and had a Gathering focused on remembering the saints of our lives. In November we studied Romans 1-2 and had a Gathering exploring the tool of "one-on-one relational meetings," which we're using to deepen our communal connection in an intentional, ongoing way. We also had our first worship service at the end of November, focused on helping us to prepare to enter deeply into the Advent season. December featured a Bible Study on Luke 1, a Gathering exploring the implications of Jesus' "Great Commandment" in our faith lives, and a Christmas celebration replete with a delicious chili supper and rousing carol singing.

In the new year, this ministry continues to grow and evolve, in both expected and unexpected ways. We will begin worshiping more often, moving toward weekly worship during the season of Lent. We will also move our worship services to Sunday evenings, as we hope to invite more young adults into our community by making our worship both more public and more accessible. We will also continue getting together regularly for Bible Study and our popular theme-based Gatherings. We held a daylong visioning retreat at the end of January, which is part of our ongoing effort to cultivate strong lay leadership. We will surely also grow in many surprising and unexpected ways, given the endlessly unpredictable God we follow.

Let me close by reiterating my thanks for the ways that you've shared your resources and prayers with us during these first months. We look forward to establishing even more robust partnerships and collaborations with you in the year to come.

COUNCIL UPDATE

Has anyone ever asked you to think about *the one problem, above all others in the world or in our community, that GOD is calling us to address. What is the one thing we are being called to focus on FIRST AND FOREMOST in our Ministries?*

This is indeed a ponderous question. And how many of us think of our life as a Ministry?

Pastor Steve posed this question at February's meeting and again at our March meeting. When life presents challenge, it becomes very important to consider purpose, not yet complete. We can become complacent, liking things as they are, but should we forget ourselves for a moment in time and really think about this challenging and yet beautiful question.

While not an easy assignment, like reading Chapters 9 and 10 of "Courage to Think Differently", Twelve of us have been ruminating about this every day.

Since we on Council are appointed on your behalf, I would ask that you also consider the question. Our Pastor Steve believes that evangelism is a duty for all who believe. Gloria Dei is not only about us, it could be so much more for others too, and we could possibly be a giving part of that. THINK! The comment box in the Nathex is empty right now, but I hope to see it filled with some of your thoughts.

On a lighter subject, we have the good fortune to have a professional architect on our Council. Look forward to seeing some needed and welcome changes to our Narthex. Carl Irwin has presented a truly beautiful plan, with minimum expense. His ideas to brighten and open up the small area amazed us and I trust that you will be well pleased with the outcome.

It came to mind today, that I have never thought that parking lots were beautiful, until now. Thank you Walter Eidam and Frank Stanley for your efforts in completing what needed to be done. It is beautiful!

As our Lenten Season progresses into Holy Week, we reflect on the events in Jesus life, from Palm Sunday to Golgotha and the magnitude of the gift given to us, which never ceases to amaze. Gloria Dei beautifully re-presents the "Meal in the Upper Room", Good Friday and Easter celebration. Join us and re-live the memory of an historic event that forever changed the potential outcome, for every person who ever lived.

Blessings to all of you - - and have a Glorious Dei !

Barbara White, President

Email: bjways@verizon.net

WHO ARE THE WOMEN OF THE ELCA?

"We are a community of women who gather in thousands of congregations across the United States and the Caribbean to grow in faith and live our faith through ministry and action."

Our own group right here at Gloria Dei is active and needs your "helping hands"! In **February** we worked on our quilt project and learned to crochet warm hats. In **March** we assembled Easter bags full of goodies for the children our local LSS serves. This month we will make Easter surprises for our own congregation and more help is needed!

Won't you please join us?

Mark your Calendar!
THURSDAY, APRIL 17 at 10:30
See you there, bring a friend!



APRIL 13

"CAN-DO" SUNDAY!

Please bring canned or non-perishable food and place in the box in the Narthex !

EASTER — VICTORIA GAMMER

I remember the first time that I attended the “Meal in the Upper Room.” It was the beginning of an emotional 3-day experience for me. We dined in a darkened room illuminated only by the candles on each table. We didn’t speak with one another—it was not a social occasion. The meal of roast lamb, nuts, fruits, cheese, bitter herbs, matzo and wine was much the same type of food Jesus and his disciples ate at the last supper before he was arrested. Throughout the meal members took turns reading to the group their assigned scriptures, preparing us for Good Friday. When finished we left quietly.

The Friday night service was more intense. The cross, draped in black cloth, set the scene for the story of the crucifixion. The music and service describing Jesus’s death on the cross really drove home the tragedy of it all. At the end of the service, when the last light in the church went out, I experienced a great sadness and feeling of personal loss. Again we were advised to leave the church in silence befitting the mood of quiet contemplation.

Easter Sunday I experienced a feeling of renewal and hope. The morning sunlight coming through the stained glass windows filled the church with a warm glow. A white lily-covered cross replaced the black shrouded one from Friday night. The congregation sang the words to the hymn “Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!” with enthusiasm. That really said it all.

If you want to add to your Easter experience this year think about seeing the newly released *Son of God* movie that covers the life of Christ from birth through crucifixion and resurrection in 138 minutes. Opening to mixed reviews, it came in 2nd to the top-grossing movie with ticket sales of \$28.9M the first week. Not bad! The critics found fault, because it didn’t fit the “big spectacle” movie mold. The general public, however, is supporting it by buying blocks of tickets for their church groups, Sunday schools and friends. It was reported that Relief ministry Compassion International bought 225,000. The producers must have done something right.

The film tells the story well, albeit, quite simply. That’s okay. Some have criticized the fact that Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado is too handsome to play Jesus. I think the critics are looking at the wrong things when passing judgment. It is refreshing to see a family-friendly movie that isn’t full of special effects, high-speed chases, sex, and car crashes, attract a huge audience in the first week. **I consider that a success and an accomplishment.**

More important, however, is the message it drives home. Jesus was sacrificed on the cross to save us. *The Son of God* delivered that message, loud and clear. The crucifixion scenes are visceral but not in the flashy way Hollywood loves. Nothing as graphic as Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, but you get the point. I think the timed release for this movie was brilliant, not only because it is close to Easter, but also because it might stimulate interest and questions for those whom are unfamiliar with the Bible at a time when statistics have shown that church attendance has declined throughout the world.

“We’re aware that many people learn through visual storytelling,” producer Roma Downey told ABC News. “And for so many people, people who don’t go to church, people who maybe have never read the Bible, this movie, *Son of God*, will be the first time that they hear and see the story of Jesus come to life.”

To that I say, “Amen.”

**** Roma Downey and her husband, Mark Burnett, produced *The Bible* miniseries that aired to record numbers on the History Channel last year.**

A WARM WELCOME...

My name is Lark Adams. I have two daughters, Morgan and Olivia, and a son, Ian. We are a family of four going through a big transition in our lives, and are so grateful to have been so warmly welcomed at Gloria Dei. You may have occasionally seen us at Christmas or Easter over the past fifteen years, or even attended one or all of the kids' baptisms. All three were baptized here by Pastor Conter when they were babies. It has been so nice to meet many of you, and to have found a place of comfort in an especially challenging time in our lives.

I was born not far from here at Martin Luther Hospital in Anaheim and was baptized at Faith Lutheran Church. By the time I was three years old we had moved to Torrance, where I spent the rest of my childhood. I am the great-grand daughter of two Lutheran pastors who immigrated to the United States from Sweden and Finland. My father's family followed a typical Scandinavian immigration pattern, having settled in Michigan and Minnesota, and spending some time in Washington state. My father served in World War II in the Pacific before meeting my mother in Los Angeles in the early 1950s. My mom was originally from New York. She came from a German family who had immigrated to the United States in the late 1800s.

After graduating from South High School in Torrance, I went on to El Camino College before transferring to Cal State, Long Beach. Upon graduating from college I taught English in Kobe, Japan for a year. It was a great experience and when I returned to the U.S. I decided to get my teaching credential. I spent many years back at Long Beach State working on my credential and a master's degree. I taught special education at Poly High School and John Muir Elementary here in Long Beach.

In 1999, Morgan was born. She is now 15 years old and is a freshman at Los Alamitos High School. She loves her friends and is a great student. She is interested in traveling and photography. This summer she will be able to get her driver's permit, and I will have the honor of teaching her how to drive.

Olivia was born two years later, in 2001. She is a seventh grader at Mc Auliffe Middle School. She loves to dance and is in the school choir. She has a great group of friends and hopes to have a career in the beauty and fashion industry. One of her favorite things to do is to drive up the coast to meet up with our friends in Carmel.

Ian was born in October 2002. He is in 5th grade at Rossmoor Elementary School. His favorite subject at school is math. He is looking forward to going to Outdoor Science School with his class at the end of March. During that week the entire fifth grade will go to camp with their teachers and learn all kinds of wonderful things about science. This will be the first time Ian will travel without his family. Ian's greatest passion is fishing. In 2011, we took a trip to Florida to visit my brother and his family. Ian had been looking forward to this trip for a long time because he knew his uncle was going to teach him how to fish. He would go fishing every day if he could, and he especially loves freshwater fishing for bass.

We are so fortunate to have a close-knit family who loves to spend time together. Some of our greatest experiences have been on trips we have taken. I love showing the children new places and hope they continue to travel throughout their lives. We have enjoyed spending our Sunday mornings at Gloria Dei. Thank you for making us feel so welcome here.

Olivia, Ian, Morgan, & Lark Adams



TURNING THE PAGE — GEORGIE LYNCH

Bird by Bird

Author: Annie LaMont

“be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”

STRIVE to be WHOLE...

~ Matthew 5:48

Anne LaMott is a writer some of us know through her book, Help, Thanks, Wow. Her honesty, quirky style reminded me of another book I had on my shelf, which I had not read. Having read it now, I bring you Bird by Bird by Anne LaMott. The author teaches writing classes and she has “downloaded” her brain and gives to us every writing tip she knows.

A writer must be honest and open and real. She certainly is. Reach into the vulnerable places, she admonishes. Being authentic gives readers permission to relate and reach into their own emotions. Then they, too, can become more real or aware. You all have books that you love on your shelves, with characters or stories that move you...

I love to write, and may someday “break free” and learn the art of it. This book is a good start. LaMott urges the habit and practice of writing. Write every day. Like practicing adagios long before playing the concert.

The process of writing has a lot to do with living. It's a discipline and an expression of self. It is an art that includes being vulnerable and willing to make drafts and scrap things that don't work, rewrite or regroup, try again, learn, grow, etc. Any endeavor requires these things. Really living hopefully includes learning.

I won't write a novel, but if anything, I am encouraged to get back to my letter writing. Who doesn't love a note from a friend? I am trying to recapture the skill and lost art of putting pen to paper, instead of moving words around via computer. This uses a part of my brain that needs some good dusting-off. LaMott just encourages any kind of writing. And it starts with a word. Word by word.

Bird by Bird's interesting title comes from a time when the author's dad had to encourage her frustrated older brother. He had put off writing a report until the last moment. As he stared at the books spread out before him, the books on the birds of North America, he was overwhelmed and just could not even begin. Dad put an understanding hand on his son's shoulder and said, “Bird by bird, buddy, just take it bird by bird.”

When Jesus calls you to be perfect, he's calling you back to your baptism. He's inviting you to see your life not as the sum total of your accomplishments and failures, but in the light of God's love for you. The standard-bearer has clothed you in the robe of righteousness. Wear it with confidence that you are called, chosen, and accepted just the way you are.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS — APRIL 2014

1 — Tuesday
BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

2 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

3 — Thursday
Happy Birthday Peggy Bockman

4 — Friday

- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

5 — Saturday

6 — SUNDAY

SUNDAY SCHOOL @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

7 — Monday
CHURCH COUNCIL MTG
@ 7 PM

Roger & Judy Powell Anniversary

8 — Tuesday
BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Lanae Caldwell

9 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

10 — Thursday
Happy Birthday Giselle Berg

11 — Friday

- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM



12 — Saturday (Bring a 'Can Good' tomorrow!)

13 — PALM SUNDAY

WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

Happy Birthday Bev Pandora

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

14 — Monday
GARDEN CLUB @ 1 PM

15 — Tuesday
BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

Milo—The Beckham Buddy



GOD's Heavenly Angel

16 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

17 — Maundy Thursday
ELCW LUNCH @ 10:30 AM

6:30 WORSHIP/MEAN IN THE
UPPER ROOM

Happy Birthday Donna Malbon

18 — GOOD FRIDAY
WORSHIP SERVICE @ 7:00 PM

- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

Newsletter Deadline

19 — Saturday



20 — EASTER SUNDAY

WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

Happy Birthday Don Melin

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

21 — Monday

22 — Tuesday
BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

23 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM
Happy Birthday David Fuller

24 — Thursday

25 — Friday

- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

26 — Saturday

27 — SUNDAY
SUNDAY SCHOOL @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

28 — Monday

29 — Tuesday
BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

30 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM
Happy Birthday Kelly Salsgiver

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Long Beach, California 90803**



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