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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

A blessed/merry/enlightening Advent/Christmas/Epiphany to you. Truly.

Let there be Light. It is the common theme, the connective tissue of these three brief seasons. The lights of Advent, hope, peace, joy and love, lead us to the light of Christmas shining from the manger. In Epiphany the light of the star that guides the Magi. The light of day that glints off the Jordan as Christ is baptized and the shimmering Spirit descends upon him like a dove. At the end of the season it is the light of Jesus' true nature that shines through as he is transfigured and revealed.

Let there be light. "What came about in him was life, and the life was the light of mankind; and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it." That's Richmond Lattimore's translation of John 1:3b-5. Some translations say that the darkness did not "overcome" the light. That's also a very good and reasonable rendering. The word in the original Greek text that's in play here is *katelaben*. It can mean to reach, to take, to overtake, to overcome, to apprehend, to comprehend, to understand. Certainly darkness cannot extinguish light, cannot overcome it. But those other meanings are worth considering, too. Darkness cannot reach light nor take it nor overtake it. But how does our understanding shift if we read that darkness did not, cannot, apprehend or comprehend or understand the light?

Let there be light. Doesn't it seem sometimes as if most of the troubles of the world are caused by people stumbling about in or charging through layers of darkness? And Lord knows there all kinds of darkness to blind us. The darkness of greed and self-interest, the darkness of anger, the darkness of graceless ideologies, the darkness of bloodlust and violence, the darkness of mistrust, prejudice and bigotry—all these things can be dissipated by the light of truth if we are willing to bring that light to bear. But standing in the light, especially the revealing light of Christ's presence, is not always easy or pleasant, especially when it shows us our own brokenness and shabbiness, or even just our need. "This is the judgment," we read in John 3. "Light has come into the world, but people preferred darkness." And why not? Darkness works very well for some. Greed and self-interest is an easy master to serve and even easier to understand. Denial means you don't have to face the difficulty even if it is sucking the life out of you. If you refuse to see it then you don't have to deal with it or try to understand it. Darkness is non-understanding but light brings comprehension. And, as Terry Pratchett wrote, "Knowing things changes you. You can't help it."

Let there be light. "I am the light of the world," says Jesus. "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) But he also says to his followers, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14).

Let there be light. Let there be light in you and in me. Let the lights of hope, peace, joy and love, the light of incarnation, the light of epiphany, the light of new life, the light of transfiguration shine through us even if the darkness cannot understand it.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

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Welcome to Gloria Dei Bring Your Brain

Our name means The Glory of God, so we try to live accordingly. Our life together as a family of faith is built on worship, service, education and friendship.

Whether we're singing to the organ or to a guitar our worship is always liturgical. Even when the instruments and rhythms are contemporary we follow the ancient order and form of the Roman Rite. We don't just do this to cling to tradition, we do it because this form of worship has been used for centuries by Christians in every part of the world. We also share in *Holy Communion* every week and all who are present are invited to participate. There's always a place for you at the table.

We place a high premium on education for all ages. We think it's important for Christians to really understand their faith.

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church Core Values (Proposed)

The following Core Values derive from the GDLC Council retreat on September 10, 2014 and from subsequent discussion in Council. We submit them for your consideration and will ask the congregation for discussion and a vote of affirmation at our January congregational meeting.

1. In seeking a path through life, we follow Jesus as he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (John 14:6).
2. We love God. (Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:27; Luke 10:27)
3. We love each other. (John 13:34; John 15:17; Romans 12:10; Romans 13:8)
4. Aware of how Grace has been extended to us we extend Grace to others. (John 1:16; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8-10)
5. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to God's grace with compassionate action. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 25:31-45; Luke 4:16-19)
6. We seek to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8)
7. We speak to our world with a prophetic voice. (1 Corinthians 14:3)
8. We believe that each person is uniquely gifted and we encourage everyone to use their gifts for the benefit of all. (1 Corinthians 12, 13; Ephesians 4)
9. We believe that Faith is a verb. We enact what we believe. (James 1:22; James 2:26)

More Wisdom + More Generosity =
MORE THRIVING
**More Wisdom + More Generosity =
MORE THRIVING**

COUNCIL UPDATE

Church Council is now four chapters into their devotional study "Everything Must Change", with good discussion led by Pastor Steve. Pastor reports that the Sunday morning Bible Study group is enjoying the Gospel of John. The Tuesday eve "Listening" study is going well, but with small attendance. He also felt that "Stir-up" Sunday went well.

Your congregation leaders have developed their statement of "Core Values", which was introduced by Pastor during our Council Retreat last September. The final draft is now completed for review by our church members this month at our annual luncheon meeting. As outlined on the previous page, we would like to *restate* our scripture based Core Values that will guide our work together:

FOLLOW JESUS

In seeking a path through life, we follow Jesus, as he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

LOVE GOD

We love GOD.

LOVE EACH OTHER

We love each other.

GRACE

Aware of how Grace has been extended to us we extend Grace to others.

COMPASSION

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we respond to GOD's Grace with compassionate action.

JUSTICE AND KINDNESS

We seek to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our GOD.

MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

We speak to our world to build-up, encourage and console.

GIFTS

We believe that each person is uniquely gifted and we encourage everyone to use their gifts for the benefit of all.

FAITH

We believe that Faith is a verb. We enact what we believe.

These Core Values can also be found on Gloria Dei's website, gdclb.org. **Please plan to be present at our Congregational Meeting on January 18, 2015.**

MAY YOUR NEW YEAR HOLD BLESSINGS IN ABUNDANCE...

Barbara White, Council President

Email: Bjways@verizon.net

FUN FACTS ABOUT HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

— VICTORIA GAMMER —

The holidays are almost over so I thought it would be fun to learn some facts about how some of the traditions began.

The Norse god of thunder, Thor, flew through storms in a chariot pulled by magical goats named Gnasher and Cracker. Was this the inspiration for Santa's "miniature sleigh" pulled by "eight tiny reindeer" named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen? The goat issue might also explain why Scandinavians display straw ones at Christmas time. For years I thought I was setting out straw reindeer and then last year I found out they were goats.

Celebrations to welcome in the **New Year** have been around for more than 4,000 years. So New Year's wins as one of the oldest festivities in recorded history, according to *The Book of Uncommon History of Common Things*. "For the Phoenicians and Persians, the year began with the autumnal equinox; for the Greeks it began with the winter solstice." They were Happy to say goodbye to the old year and look forward to life's renewal. It was thought that what had been a harvest celebration became a coronation festival for new kings combined with a sowing ceremony.

In the early days of Christianity it was advantageous to try to coordinate Christian holiday dates with the Pagan ones to make the conversion more acceptable.

When Julius Caesar established the Julian calendar in 46 B.C., the year began on January 1, in the middle of winter so the New Year's celebrations shifted to this. During the Middle Ages the European countries celebrated at various times between Mid-December and late March. The New Year's date was finally settled on January 1, in the 18th century. The colonists in the New World celebrated by firing guns or attending church—now that's quite a weird choice to pick from.

The Times Square Ball Drop in New York City began on the eve of 1908 when a 5-foot, 700-pound wood-and-iron ball lit with 100 25-watt bulbs descended a flagpole at midnight. The ball has come down every year except for 1942 and 1943 because the city was observing the wartime "dim-out." The ball used today is 6-feet in diameter and weighs more than 1,000 pounds. It is decorated with more than 500 Waterford crystal triangles, 700 lights, and 90 computer-controlled rotating pyramid mirrors.

Somewhere along the way New Year's Eve celebrations grew to include New Year's Day, which is now a federal holiday. I wonder if this happened because workers were probably not at their best the day after?

Many traditions have been established around the New Year's holiday such as singing Auld Lang Syne (a Scottish poem by Robert Burns), kissing your loved one at midnight (some people will kiss anyone handy), football games, the Rose Parade, and foods such as black-eyed peas for luck. I remember my Mother used to say that a brunette man coming through the door on New Year's Day meant good luck for the year.

And, not to be forgotten, the New Year's resolution issue. Some feel a lot of pressure to set lofty goals for themselves at this time. I think that it can be a good challenge but don't make unrealistic resolutions that will doom you to failure. Just look to the New Year as a chance to be the best that you can be and not take life too seriously. Here are a couple of examples:

"My New Year's resolution list usually starts with the desire to lose between ten and three thousand pounds."
~ Nia Vardalos (author of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*)

"This year, let's resolve to make better bad decisions."
~ someecards

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

CHRISTINE FOSTER AND EVERETT PARKER

Christine and Everett met 17 years ago through a mutual interest in sailing and still sail a Norseman 40' sailboat. Their Christian backgrounds guided them to find a church family and help form a bible study group eleven years ago (the group meets every Tuesday evening). They travel often. Past trips have included many cruises and other vacations to Europe including Iceland and Greenland. They have vacationed in Africa and South America as well throughout the U.S. They enjoy the sea days when crossing oceans and have taken several transatlantic and transpacific cruises.

Everett: I was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts although my family moved to Santa Cruz, CA when I was 3 years old. The family included my younger sister Mary and older sister Joanne. Joanne and I are the surviving family members. She lives in Edmunds, Washington. Although we are some distance apart we communicate often and enjoy the same close friendship we had as children. My only child, Thomas, lives in a group home for the developmentally disabled. He has occasional jobs and does volunteer work.

My first memories of Santa Cruz are the beach and boardwalk. I grew to love the sea and I dreamed of sailing across oceans one day. During high school I worked various jobs to help out financially and save for college. My first Christian experience was attending the First Methodist Church in Santa Cruz. The congregation had a devoted pastor, Reverend Reneau. He made a special effort to work with young people and provided me with a very positive influence throughout my teen years. After high school I moved to San Francisco ultimately graduating from San Francisco State going on to work for the Department of Defense for 31 years.

After retirement I fulfilled my dream of sailing across oceans in small boats including Hawaii twice and numerous trips to Mexico, Northern California, and Oregon as a member of a boat delivery crew.

As well as sailing I volunteer as a fire and water tender (boiler operator) aboard the **SS Lane Victory**, a 1946 Victory ship located in San Pedro.

Also, after taking the basic motorcycle course, I joined the **Christian Motorcyclist Association**. I ride my Victory Kingpin to



participate in our ministries at motorcycle shows and rallies as well as providing help to the **Bill Glass prison ministry**.

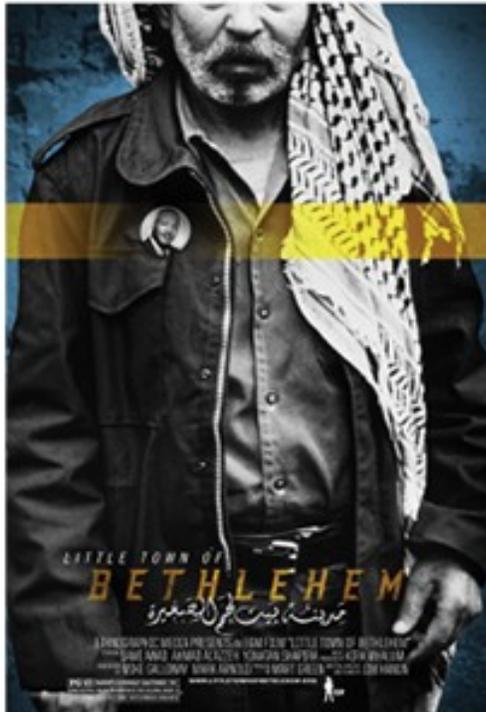
Christine: I'm a native Californian. Originally my mother's family came to California from Ohio. My father's family emigrated from Sweden and settled in the Black Hills of South Dakota. My parents built a home in Pasadena and this is where my sister and I grew up attending Westminster Presbyterian Church in Altadena where I became a member during my teen years. After I graduated from college I worked for an oral surgeon, married and had two sons. An early divorce left me with two little boys to raise. I started working for Jacobs Engineering in Pasadena and stayed with that company for 27 years until I retired in 1998. My two sons are proud fathers: Patrick is dad to Emily, age 16, and Michael and his wife Nadia are filled with joy with two beautiful girls — Natalia, 5 years and Olivia, 3 years. I really LOVE being Grandma Chris and spend as much time as possible with my three beautiful granddaughters — I'm so blessed.

Since retiring I've found time to volunteer, and I'm a member of **Childhelp** as well as the **LA County Quilt Guild**. I'm also a member of the **OC Model A Ford Club**. When I was in high school I purchased a 1931 Model A Ford because I wanted a car to drive to school, and this car was very affordable — it was \$75! I held onto it — it's fun to drive and it's really a trip down memory lane.

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A Must-see Film



Join us for a screening of

Little Town of Bethlehem

The film examines the different yet intersecting lives of three men of diverse faiths.

January 10, 4 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
6020 Radford Ave.
North Hollywood 91606

(Parking available at the church and school on Radford)

Following the film is a panel discussion with ELCA Bishop Emeritus Dean Nelson, Dr. Ahmed Soboh, Spiritual Director of the Chino Valley Islamic Center, and Estee Chandler from Jewish Voice for Peace.

\$10 (\$5 for students) includes a light "Mezza" supper

This event is organized by the
ELCA Southwest California Synod Middle East Peace Task Force.
For more information email nortonllp@charter.net

CALENDAR OF EVENTS — JANUARY 2015



1 — NEW YEARS DAY

2 — Friday

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

3 — Saturday

Happy Birthday Patty Hoffman

4 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

5 — Monday

CHURCH COUNCIL MTG
@ 7 PM

6 — Tuesday

BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

7 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

8 — Thursday

9 — Friday

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

10 — Saturday

"Tomorrow is a new day.
 You shall begin it well and serenely and
 with too high a spirit to be cumbered
 with your old nonsense."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

11 — SUNDAY

SUNDAY SCHOOL @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
PRAYERS OF HEALING SERVICE

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Cameron Chinn

12 — Monday

Happy Birthday Courtney Manley

13 — Tuesday

BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Max Berg

14 — Wednesday

CONFIRMATION @ 4 PM
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

15 — Thursday

ELCW LUNCH

Happy Birthday Karen Como

16 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Jim Brown

17 — Saturday

Newsletter Deadline

18 — SUNDAY

SUNDAY SCHOOL @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
 Noisy Offering
CONGREGATIONAL
LUNCHEON & MEETING

Happy Birthday Cyndi Manley

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

19 — Monday

MARTIN
LUTHER KING
HOLIDAY



20 — Tuesday

BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

21 — Wednesday

CONFIRMATION @ 4 PM
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Happy Birthday Dondi Buchrucker

22 — Thursday

23 — Friday

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

24 — Saturday

25 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Katherine Stoner

26 — Monday

27 — Tuesday

BIBLE STUDY @ 7 PM

28 — Wednesday

CONFIRMATION @ 4 PM
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Happy Birthday Stephanie Siemer

29 — Thursday

30 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Georgie Lynch

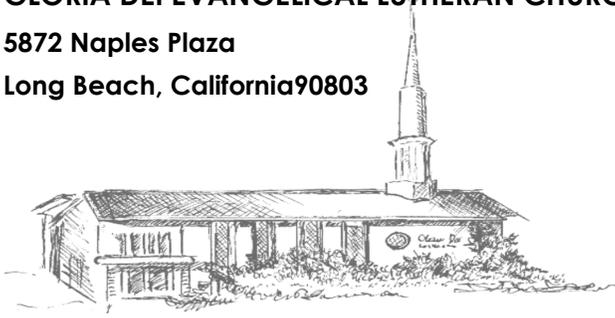
31 — Saturday

ANNUAL CONGREGATION
MEETING & LUNCHEON

—SUNDAY—
JANUARY 18

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**5872 Naples Plaza
Long Beach, California 90803**



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