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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

This is no longer a matter of personal or private faith. With politicians, social leaders and even some clergy invoking a book they seem to have never read and whose phrases they don't understand, America is being besieged by Biblical illiteracy. — "The Bible: So Misunderstood it's a Sin," Newsweek Magazine, 1/2/2015-1/9/2015.

How well do you know your Bible? Which translation do you read? Why that one? Do you read more than one? What do you know about the translation team that translated your Bible? Who are they? What were their parameters and guidelines? Who set those guidelines? Why? Do you know what role the King James Version played in the translation of the Bible you're reading? Did the translation team of the Bible you're reading rely more on the Septuagint or the Masoretic text? Which ancient Greek manuscripts did they rely on most for the New Testament?

How many books are there in your Bible? Does your Bible contain the books called The Apocrypha? Why or why not? Did you know that it was a group of Calvinist Reformed leaders meeting in 1647 at the Westminster Convention who eliminated The Apocrypha from the Bible and limited the number of books to 66? Did you know that Lutherans were not at that meeting? Nor were the Catholics, nor the Orthodox nor the Moravians nor any number of other Christians? Did you know that Luther set The Apocrypha apart in a separate section in his translation of the Bible? Did you know that he also set the books of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation apart in a separate section at the end of the New Testament and prefaced that section by noting that many scholars and church leaders argued that they should not be included in the canon of Scripture and that their authority was open to discussion?

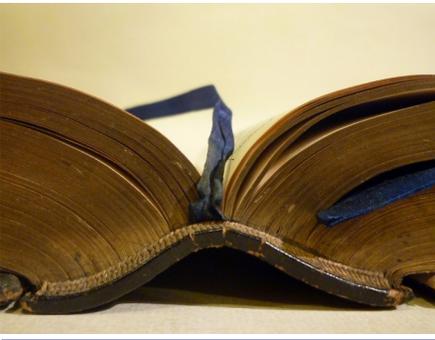
Did you know that the Christian Church in its various forms was growing and spreading for 400 years before there was any kind of official canon of Scripture—a Bible? Did you know that the Gospel of John was very nearly excluded? Did you know that a book called the Diatessaron was almost included? Or the Shepherd of Hermas? Or Paul and Thecla? Do you know what role the Council of Nicea and the Nicene Creed played in selecting the books that would become the Bible?

How do you understand your Bible? Is it primarily a rule book? Is it a living narrative? Do you think it is best interpreted privately or when read in community? How well do you know the teachings and ministry of Jesus?

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Thoughts Along the Way Continues....

Which Gospel do you read most? How do the 4 Gospels differ from each other? Why are they so different from each other?

A Pew Research poll in 2010 found that evangelicals ranked only a smidgen higher than atheists in familiarity with the New Testament and Jesus's teachings. "Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don't read it," wrote George Gallup Jr. and Jim Castelli, pollsters and researchers whose work focused on religion in the United States. The Barna Group, a Christian polling firm, found in 2012 that evangelicals accepted the attitudes and beliefs of the Pharisees—religious leaders depicted throughout the New Testament as opposing Christ and his message—more than they accepted the teachings of Jesus. – Newsweek

A few years ago our denomination, the ELCA, started the Book of Faith initiative and Gloria Dei signed on to it. The goal was that we would become a more Biblically literate denomination with more Biblically literate congregations. Since I arrived as pastor, we have consistently offered Adult Ed classes on *The Bible: How The Bible Came to be The Bible*; *Overview of the Old Testament*; *Occupy the Gospels*, and so on. Right now on Sunday mornings at 9 we're deep into the Gospel of John, the most unique and mysterious of the 4 Gospels. On Tuesday nights we've just started a study of Paul's letter to the Romans, is longest and most theological letter. In these classes we not only look at what is written, but why it was written. We look at translation choices to see if hearing a passage a different way makes a difference in how we apply it. As much as we are able, we try to hear the words in their ancient context so that they have a deeper, richer power in speaking to us as the Living Word for today.

Worship is a vitally important part of our life together, but so is the study of the Bible, the vessel, as Luther called it, that brings us the precious cargo of the Living Word. Join us on Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings for a close reading of the Scriptures. I promise you'll find your life enriched.

Pro Gloria Dei,

Pastor Steve

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.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL UPDATE

Several months ago, Pastor had us thinking about “the one problem, above all others in the World, or in our community, that GOD is calling us to address”. At that time our Devotional study was “Courage to Think Differently”. Our current study, “Everything must Change” is pulling us much deeper into the critical thinking of not just the one problem, but the “Top Global Problems”, which are being identified by several groups of world leaders in various fields. The Copenhagen Consensus is led by an economist, who brought together a panel of expert economists, together with experts in other various fields to, identify the leading 10 global problems. The United Nations, which has 191 members, has identified a list of 8 key problems, which they pledge to address by 2015. The World Bank’s vice president for Europe, J. F. Rischard, offers a list of 20 urgent problems; 6 ecological, 6 humanitarian and 8 regulatory. The last example was from Evangelist Pastor Rick Warren, who chose 5 “Global Giants”. And The United Nations University produced a list of 15 global challenges in the format of questions that the community of nations must answer.

The interesting thing about all of this, is when you compare the similarities from these diverse sources of knowledgeable thought. At or near the top of every list, was the problem of poverty and hunger, infectious diseases and population. Education appeared high on most lists. Climate change or environmental sustainability was also present. Then corrupt governance. While the order in this last situation might be more highly addressed, the problems exist and must be resolved.

If all of this sounds familiar to you, it is. Our

Sunday Prayers of Intercession include these petitions to God each and every week. It is good though, to know that others are engaged in and actively seeking solutions to the process.

Pastor Steve gave us an update on the recommended treatments for his health. While we regret this new challenge for him, he and Meri and family will most certainly have our continuing prayers and support in the weeks ahead.

The Tuesday evening Bible study will cover Paul’s letter to the Romans, a favorite of many Biblical scholars.

Turning back to the business of our meeting, the Treasurer Report was great news. We closed the year with a modest surplus.

Karen Como was scheduled to report on the planned kitchen remodel, but due to work responsibilities was unable to be present. She prepared a complete report, which Phil presented to Council. A motion was approved to proceed with Phase 1 of the plan, which includes the major portion of improvement. This will expand the kitchen by removing the wall to Sandy’s former office. It includes new cabinets and completion of the expanded space. This phase has been generously contributed to us by Dee Perretta, in memory of Venner Farley. Phase 2, which is basically new appliances, will require future funding.

In closing, a prayer for good health and happiness to all who enter our doors. May GOD’s blessings abound in your lives.

A Glorious Dei is wished for you.

Barbara White,
Council President

SUPPORT OUR LOCAL MISSION PARTNER



Dear Gloria Dei,

Greetings from the people **Holy Ground**, the emerging Long Beach-based worshipping community and campus ministry that you help to support! We hope your Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons have been filled with enormous helpings of peace, joy, hope, and love – all nourished by God's incredible presence among us in Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

As I write, Holy Ground has celebrated 17 worship services. It's amazing how much has changed since late August, when we had our inaugural liturgy. Since then, we've grown stronger in our faith and in our bonds as a community, even as we've encountered the challenges of building a worshipping community from scratch. Perhaps our biggest challenge and opportunity is that the people of Holy Ground (many of whom are in the 18-40 age range) have come from an extraordinarily wide diversity of backgrounds. Many were unchurched, de-churched, or "recovering" from church when they found Holy Ground. As a result of having so much diversity in our midst, much of our recent work as a community has focused on developing shared vision for our future together and for our mission in Long Beach. It's a big challenge to find unity among so many different perspectives, but it's also a great deal of fun, and it frequently feels like a very holy endeavor. Holy Ground has become a home for many people who never thought they could find a church that "fit" them, and it's inspiring to witness the new and renewed relationships with God that are developing as a result. Thank you for helping to make these transformations possible!

On campus at CSULB, we are focusing our energy on building a new interfaith student organization, which we're calling the **CSULB Interfaith Project**. The Interfaith Project meets weekly, offering students an environment in which to build relationships across boundaries of religious difference and to grow in inter-religious and cross-cultural literacy. We also plan campus events and programs that help CSULB students to understand the importance of interfaith dialogue and collaboration for building a peaceful global future. In February, we're excited to be taking three students to an interfaith leadership conference at USC (www.ifyc.org). There's a lot of energy among members of the Interfaith Project, and we hope to inspire an even larger movement on campus in the years to come.

I know I speak for everyone at Holy Ground in thanking you for helping to support our vision. We very much want to share the joy that we've found at Holy Ground and **invite you** to come and experience our worship any Sunday at 5:00 PM. **We worship in the chapel of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church at 370 Junipero Avenue in Long Beach.** In addition, Holy Ground board members Gary and Peggy Bockman, will be inviting some members of your congregation to participate in a group visit to Holy Ground. We want to build a relationship between **Gloria Dei** and **Holy Ground**, and we hope you'll take some time to come and discover the amazing faith community we're creating.

Additionally, if you are moved to support our work above and beyond your congregation's contribution, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution at www.holygroundlb.org. We need your help to continue **our work of inviting young adults into renewed relationships with God** and with the church.

With many thanks for all your support.

The Rev. Sean Lanigan

RECONCILING IN CHRIST

Reconciling in Christ advocates for the acceptance of all, regardless of color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity into full participation in the life of the church and in service to Christ. Congregations that embrace the tenets of Reconciling in Christ believe that Christ availed himself to all, doing so without judgment or condemnation, and continues to do so now.

From its inception in the late 1970s the objective of this non-denominational movement has been to bring an awareness to Christians that there is a community of believers who accept Christ as their Savior, embrace God's gift of grace, and strive to live in accordance with Christ's example.

To date, approximately 400+ congregations within the ELCA have embraced Reconciling in Christ, affirming their acceptance of all regardless of background or orientation, and making this known through statements on their Web site and in congregational publications.

Within the Long Beach conference of the ELCA's Southwest Synod the following four congregations are Reconciling in Christ congregations: Trinity, Resurrection, Christ, and Our Savior's.

Resources:

- A very brief recap of the inception of this movement can be found in Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ReconcilingWorks>).
- In 2009, at the Worldwide Assembly, the ELCA published its statement on human sexuality, entitled "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust". The full statement is lengthy however a synopsis is available and recommended as a starting point. The statement can be found at this Web address: <http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality>.
- Resources regarding how congregations and individuals can respond to Reconciling in Christ can be found at this Web address: <http://www.reconcilingworks.org/>

Verses in the New Testament are cited as prohibitions against the LGBT life-style. For a different perspective on how the New Testament can inform us about our response the following article 'What does the Bible Say About Homosexuality' is recommended. The Web address is <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/what-does-the-bible-say-about-homosexuality>.

MISSION FIELD

Dear Partner in Ministry,

I am thinking of you and wish you a Blessed New Year!

The older I get, the faster time goes. Looking back to the year of 2014, my heart is full of thanksgiving to God and to you. Though challenges, difficulties and even problems are never lacking, God's grace is sufficient for me in my life and ministry. I am so grateful for being used by God in China at this time.

During the year of 2014, I had more teaching and training trips outside Beijing for local church leaders. Besides traveling in China, I had the privilege to attend an International Seminar in Wittenberg of Germany in Nov. by the invitation of Lutheran World Federation. A dear friend introduced me to LWF. I enjoyed and learned a lot from the Seminar. The topic of the seminar is "The Christian and the Government: Luther's View of Temporal Authority." About 20 participants are from 17 countries. While being in BJ, I continue to teach at Yanjing Seminary and minister to different groups both within and without BICF (Beijing International Christian Fellowship). In fact, the first six-months of 2015 are planned already in my schedule. Having things to do is such a privilege and blessing!

I have mentioned before that what is most needed for the church in China is the Practical Theology. In 2015, I will teach a new course for the church leaders on how to deal with those practical issues in the ministry.

The more I minister to others, the more I realize: It is all about God's grace and nothing about me. How much your support in both prayer and finances mean to me! Without your partnership in this ministry, I could not do what I do each day here.

Please do continue to pray for me for wisdom, guidance, understanding, physical health and safety, so that I will be able to serve in my work more effectively and productively. With a grateful heart to God and to you, I pray that God will continue to bless you in 2015 and make you blessings to many others as you are to me!

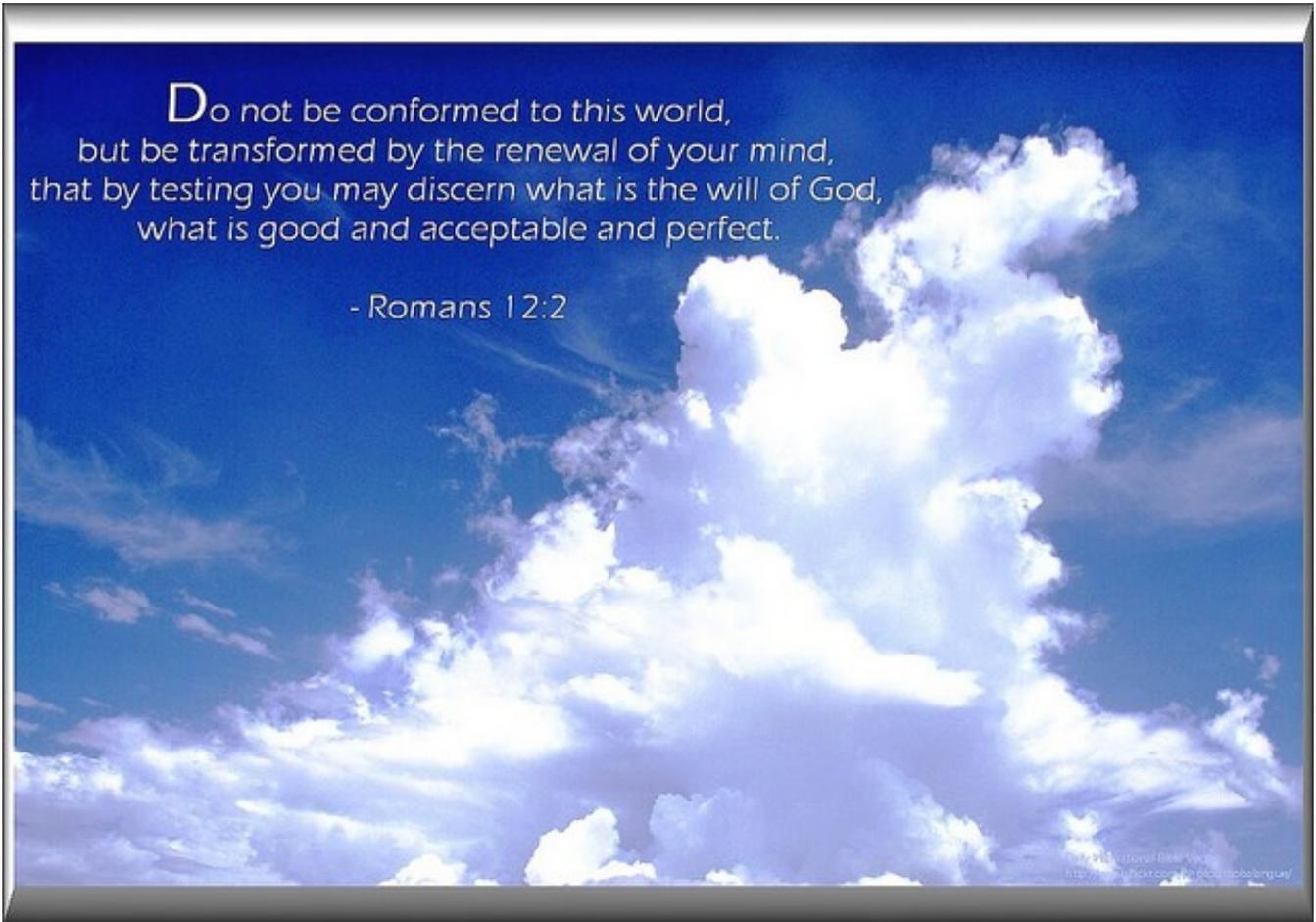
Together serving our GOD,
Pastor Dorcas in Beijing, China

CONNECTIONS & FELLOWSHIP

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO SERVE...

We need teams to sign up to host refreshments for our FELLOWSHIP gathering after worship service!

Won't you consider volunteering a few Sundays a year? — a small gesture to enhance our ability to connect and meet others at GLORIA DEI! Add your name to the sign-up clipboard in the fellowship hall...we need YOU to be part of our HOSPITALITY Team!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS — FEBRUARY 2015

1 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

David & Sarah Fuller Anniversary

2 — Monday

CHURCH COUNCIL MTG
@ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Bob Siemer

3 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

4 — Wednesday

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

5 — Thursday

Happy Birthday David Thomas Fuller

6 — Friday

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

7 — Saturday

8 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

9 — Monday

GARDEN CLUB @ 1 PM



10 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

11 — Wednesday

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

12 — Thursday

13 — Friday

14 — Saturday

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

Dolores & Peter Lovoy Anniversary

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



15 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Newsletter Deadline

16 — Monday

PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY

17 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Berlin Zook

18 — ASH WEDNESDAY

SOUP SUPPER @ 6 PM
SERVICE @ 7:30 PM

Happy Birthday Roger Powell

19 — Thursday

ELCW MEETING @ 10:30 AM

ALL WOMEN are invited to our meeting in the fellowship hall. Bring your own lunch and favorite (empty) coffee/tea cup or mug and be ready for some fun!

20 — Friday

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

21 — Saturday

22 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

23 — Monday

24 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Carrol Irvine
Happy Birthday Randy Hoffman

25 — Wednesday

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

Happy Birthday Sarah Fuller

26 — Thursday

Happy Birthday David Berg

27 — Friday

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

28 — Saturday

Help the HOLY GROUND community grow! They're helping young people who don't have much faith left in church to discover and re-discover a transforming relationship with God.
www.holygroundlb.org DONATE !



GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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



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