



Reverend Steven Beckham, Pastor
5872 Naples Plaza Long Beach, California 90803-5044
Website: www.gdlclb.org Telephone: 562.438.0929

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

Colossians 2.2 *I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

The time of waiting is almost fulfilled. As I write this, Advent is spent and the 12 days of Christmas are about to begin, yet by the time you read this Epiphany will be upon us. Still, I hope that as you read this you still have some Christmas in you even if the official 12-day season is over. In fact I hope you still have some Christmas in you even in July. I hope you always carry within you at least a little of the Christmas impulse for generosity, the Christmas capacity to wonder, to marvel, the Christmas willingness to be astonished at the way God insinuates Godself into the world. And I hope your bit of perpetual Christmas is constantly renewed with an endless series of epiphanies.

Epiphany [ih-pif-uh-nee] noun, plural **epiphanies**.

1. (initial capital letter) a Christian festival, observed on January 6, commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi; Twelfth-day.
2. an appearance or manifestation, especially of a deity.
3. a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning of something, usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience.

The Season of Epiphany is sometimes called the Season of Revealing. The truth of Jesus as the Christ is revealed to us bit by bit, episode by episode, as we reread and rehear the familiar stories of the visit of the Magi, his baptism by John, the wedding at Cana where he turned water into wine, his teaching on Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of his hometown in Nazareth, until the season culminates in the Transfiguration where he shines like the sun, and is divinely proclaimed as The Son as he stands between Moses and Elijah. In this whole progression of stories, Jesus is revealed, a little at a time, as the One the world has waited for, the One who can make us whole, the One who can show us the depths of God's love, the One who is Emmanuel, God with us.

Epiphany is called the season of revealing. But maybe we should also call it the Season of Realizing. During each of the scripture lessons of the season, not only is some new aspect of Jesus revealed, but those around him begin to slowly realize who he really is. One. Realization. At. A. Time. And isn't it like that with us?

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The older I get, the more I realize how little I really know, especially about Jesus and about what God is doing in Jesus. The upside of this is that I feel as if I am constantly realizing (or re-realizing?) new things about Jesus, about what God is doing in the world in Christ, how God is working in the world in Christ and how God is present in the world in Christ in us. In, with and under us. In, with and under all of creation. I keep having epiphanies. I continue to be amazed anew. I keep seeing and hearing new things--little things, even sometimes big things--in these stories I have known so well and for so long, I continue to encounter new realizations that make me sit with them and ponder. Realizations that open doorways that take me deeper into the mystery beyond us, the mystery among us and the mystery within us.

I keep having epiphanies. Not only through the oh-so-familiar scriptures of the season, but through the people around me and through the events taking place in the world. I keep seeing Christ at work in ways I hadn't noticed before. I keep getting glimpses of what God is trying to accomplish and how God is inviting us to be partners in the continuing work of Creation, to not merely restore the world to health but to help to bring it to that place of optimum health, that place of *salvation* (in that word's oldest sense) that God has always envisioned but that we have not yet realized.

And there's that word again: *realize*. To realize. To make real, concrete, tangible.

I keep having epiphanies. I keep having insights and experiences that help me realize that what matters most is not the creed we recite or the theology we intellectually embrace or the form of our worship, but the relationships we live in, starting first and foremost with our relationship with Jesus Christ. Starting with God's love for us, a love that comes in person.

And there's another small (not so small?) epiphany. If God can love me, invite me, accept me, and embrace me even in those times when I feel too flawed, too grungy, too worn out, too beat up, too, too, too...unworthy to be of any use or to even be acceptable, if God, in grace, can overlook all that messiness that is at the heart of me and still reach out to me with love and compassion to pulls me into that divine embrace that is forever shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the communion of saints, who am I not to offer that same grace, compassion and acceptance to everyone else? "Who are you to declare profane what I have made clean?" says the Holy Spirit to Peter (Acts 10:15 and 10:28). Who, indeed?

May you always have a little Christmas in you, and may your Epiphany be filled with epiphanies.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve



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

COUNCIL UPDATE

NEW YEAR GREETINGS AND BLESSINGS TO EVERYONE:

At this writing, the peace and glow of Christmas are still so present that one almost forgets to get back to the norm of other tasks.

December's meeting was held on the 7th and was attended by all members.

Pastor Steve brought us current regarding those of concern. He is also troubled with more hearing problems. Pray for his healing.

There was a brief review of the proposed Spending Plan for 2016, which will be finalized in January, after seeing year end results.

Phil Como's RIC committee will be holding a forum for members on January 10. You will see more information about this in this newsletter.

Mike Lynch's "**Moments for Missions**" began with our Maritime Ministry partners. We trust that you felt more informed and will introduce other missions in the coming year.

Bob Siemer covered the Constitution changes, which will bring us current with Synods Constitution and allow for electronic communication to members.

Annual reports from all committees are due before year end.

January's annual Congregation Meeting will be held on January 24, 2016 following our worship service.

Three items will be on your ballots: 1. Approval of Constitutional changes, 2. Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Church, 3. Retention or Sale of the Parsonage Property.

Please plan to attend our January **Congregation Meeting**.

Happy New Year and have a Glorious Deil!
Barbara White, Congregation President

ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING & LUNCHEON

SUNDAY—JANUARY 24

**LIVING
LUTHERAN**
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and share everyday
living faith!**

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ELCS.org/
Living-Lutheran**



**Make Some Joyful
Noise !**

**Please Join Our
Worship Team &
Contribute to Our
Sunday Gathering!**



MARITIME MINISTRY VISITS GLORIA DEI



On Sunday, December 6, chaplains Samson Chauhan and Ron Nelson shared inspiring and encouraging news from the Lutheran Maritime Ministry. As special guests for the inaugural Moment for Missions segment of our service they presented their outreach to the men and officers of cargo ships visiting Long Beach and Los Angeles Harbor.

Samson reported that about 1000 ships each year come into our port from around the world. Samson and fellow chaplain Chim Mandalia visit about 500 of those ships. They present a clear message of Christ in both word and deed.

The chaplains always make free Bibles available, along with devotional materials and other Christian reading. With many of the men, they have enjoyed long-term relationships, reuniting with seamen each time they ship into town.

A very valuable service of their ministry is helping men with tasks and transportation throughout the southland. These are often critical medical, family and shopping needs, as the men are often at sea for months at a time between ports of call.

Our church has been involved with Maritime Ministries for many years. We provide funding through budgeted gifts and many volunteer activities. We collect and deliver warm jackets, caps and gloves and Christmas boxes for distribution to the men.

Watch the Sunday bulletins and newsletters for ways that you can become involved in this important outreach.

Mike Lynch, Missions Committee Chair

Email: ml4charity@verizon.net

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

We are church together. Since the beginning, the ELCA has been one church body organized in three interdependent expressions—congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. These expressions are part of a wider church ecology that includes seminaries and colleges, social ministries, affiliated agencies and companion churches around the world. We believe that together we achieve things on a scale and scope that we could never do otherwise.

Source: Winter 2016 Seeds of the Parish www.ELCA.org



Save the Date!

January 30 10am—2pm

Synod Offices

1300 E. Colorado Street, Glendale

Dr. Sam Thomas

**Associate Professor of Religion
California Lutheran University
*will present...***

***Historical Israel and the
State of Israel Today***

Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

ELCA REPORT

The following report came from the Churchwide (Chicago) office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). As part of her trip to Jordan, December 12-15, 2015, the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, met with Syrian refugees living in the Za'atari refugee camp.

"Eaton, who was joined by Archbishop Antje Jackelen of the Church of Sweden and Gloria Rojas Vargas, former church president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, visited the camp's Peace Oasis, a compound operated by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). While there, the church leaders talked with refugee families, listening to their stories about life in the camp. Many families are facing their fifth winter being displaced from their homes.

"The Syrian refugees are incredibly resilient," said Eaton. "We met a family where the father lost two of his sons in the Syrian war. He had worked 30 years to have his own farm and lost it all. A young girl was showing me images of burned bodies on her cellphone. And yet the parents are doing everything to keep their children engaged and out of trouble. Some have painted their houses, trying to bring some beauty to such a stark place. It's incredible."

According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees are housed at Za'atari refugee camp. At the Peace Oasis, LWF offers psychosocial support to the refugees through workshops, training, music and crafts. LWF is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 72 million Christians in 98 countries. The ELCA is the communion's only member church from the United States.

"The suffering of the people in Syria is real," said Eaton. "Bombs are falling on these people who just want to live their lives."

The church leaders also met with Jordan's prime minister, Abdullah Ensour, and several members of the Jordanian cabinet. In their conversation, Ensour spoke of how important Christians are to Jordanian society. "God would not consider me a good Muslim if I didn't love Christ," he said. Stressing the need for help from the Christian community in dealing with the influx of refugees, Ensour said of the 7 million people living in Jordan, 1.5 million are refugees and only 600,000 of those are registered.

"We believe that the cross of life is where there is suffering," said Eaton. "It certainly is in that camp in Jordan, and it's our calling in God's world to alleviate these people's suffering."

Your regular giving to Operating and Benevolence helps Gloria Dei support the work of the ELCA within the United States and in many other parts of the world. Thank you for your support.

RECONCILING IN CHRIST FORUM

On **Sunday, January 10th** we will hold another **Reconciling in Christ forum**. It will be for members of our congregation and our regularly attending visitors; it will be held in the sanctuary following our church service, at 12:30. This second forum is in response to requests received by the Reconciling in Christ committee.

We recognize that members of our congregation hold 'conscience-bound beliefs' (quoting Mike Lynch) that differ from one another and, perhaps, from our own. We should expect this; we need to embrace this; we must be respectful of differing points of view. As a community of faith, it is important to remember that, first and foremost, we are called to serve in whatever capacity Christ has appointed us to serve and while our viewpoints may differ our task of caring for and serving others does not.

Looking ahead to our congregational meeting on Sunday, January 24th we will be asked to consider and **vote on the proposal** to become a Reconciling in Christ congregation and the adoption of the following **Affirmation of Welcome**:

At Gloria Dei Lutheran Church we welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to the social, cultural or economic circumstances that too often divide us. Our unity is in Christ in whom we are all made new.

In anticipation of attending the forum, I urge you to do the following:

Re-read Pastor Steve's "Thoughts Along the Way" article in the October edition of Glorious Dei. This article presents the spiritual foundation for becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. The October edition is available on the church's Website. On the Home page select the link '**News and Info**' at the top of the page, then select **15:10** in the **Glorious Dei** section of the 'News and Info' page.

Re-read my article entitled 'Reconciling in Christ' in the September edition of the Glorious Dei newsletter which outlines practical 'next steps' if we become a Reconciling in Christ congregation. Included in that article are several Internet resources for more information.

Review the ELCA's statement on human sexuality entitled "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust. The statement is located here: <http://www.elca.org/en/faith/faiht-and-society/social-statements/human-sexuality>.

In Christ,
Phil Como, Chair, RIC Committee



CALENDAR OF EVENTS — JANUARY 2016



1 — NEW YEARS DAY

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

2 — Saturday

3 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Patty Hoffman

4 — Monday

CHURCH COUNCIL MTG
@ 7 PM

5 — Tuesday

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

7 — Thursday

8 — Friday

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

9 — Saturday

10 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
RECONCILING IN CHRIST
FORUM @ 12:30

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

11 — Monday

GARDEN CLUB @ 1PM

Happy Birthday Cameron Chinn

12 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

Happy Birthday Courtney Manley

13 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Happy Birthday Max Berg

14 — Thursday

15 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Karen Como

16 — Saturday

LSS Work Party @ 10 AM

Happy Birthday Jim Brown

17 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
Noisy Offering

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Newsletter Deadline

18 — Monday

MARTIN
LUTHER KING
HOLIDAY

Happy Birthday
Cyndi Manley



19 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

20 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

21 — Thursday

ELCW MEETING @ 10:30 AM

Happy Birthday Dondi Buchrucker

22 — Friday

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

23 — Saturday

24 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

CONGREGATIONAL
LUNCHEON & MEETING

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

25 — Monday

Happy Birthday Katherine Stoner

26 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 7 PM

27 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

28 — Thursday

Happy Birthday Stephanie Siemer

29 — Friday

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

30 — Saturday

Happy Birthday Georgie Lynch

31 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

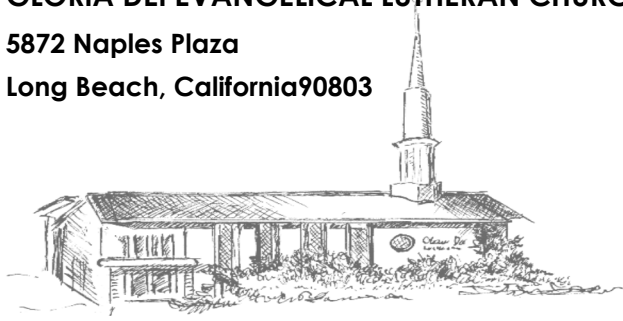
O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

THE LORD GIVES STRENGTH TO
HIS PEOPLE; THE LORD BLESSES
HIS PEOPLE WITH PEACE.
~ PSALM 29:11

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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