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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it. – John 1:4-5

We need light, both the actual and the metaphorical kind. In the most northern places in the darkest, shortest days of winter, doctors prescribe artificial sunlight to combat SAD—Seasonal Affective Disorder—a kind of depression that affects many people when they go too long without sunlight. Our bodies need light to manufacture vitamin D which is essential to our physical and mental well being. Feeling moody, short-tempered? Low energy? Thinking a little cloudy? A little sunshine could be just what the doctor ordered.

Our souls need light. There is no shortage of dark valleys through which we can wander. It's always easy and oh so tempting to go diving down into whatever rabbit hole of wrongness happens to grab our attention. We even, sometimes, make up our own darkness. We bring it into the room with us, mishearing what is said according to what we think we're going to hear, mis-seeing what is presented so it looks like what we were expecting to see. We wear our sunglasses at night. There is a part of our brains that wants to be pessimistic, that expects the worst, that even takes a perverse "see I told you so" kind of satisfaction when things turn dark. That's human nature.

"People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within." – Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Life in soul-blinding darkness is no life at all. It is the very definition of hell. Ask anyone who has struggled with clinical depression. Maybe you've known it yourself. In the 1998 movie, *What Dreams May Come*, Dr. Christopher Nielsen, played by the late Robin Williams, literally descends to the darkest realms of death, to hell, to rescue the soul of his wife, Annie, played by Annabella Sciorra. She wasn't consigned there for any grave sin, she simply followed her grief, her depression and the darkness of her own thinking into an eternal isolation of decay and shadow. She had to pass through light to get there. He has to descend into darkness to bring her up into the brighter, beautiful realms of eternity. But he can't force her. He can't carry her out. When he finally finds her he has to break through her inner darkness and somehow rekindle in her a flicker of hope,

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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



even the tiniest light of possibility that there is more than what she is experiencing, that there really is a brighter reality than what she is allowing herself to see.

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.”

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Christmas is that moment when God, whose first act of creation was to speak light into existence, brings light to us in person in order to teach us, each of us, how to shine. Christmas is that moment in history when the Author of Life takes on a human life, just like yours and mine, not only so that he can be the light of all people, but so that he can spread that light, ignite it in every human heart. Christmas is that time when the Light of the World comes to lead us out of our own dark thoughts and our tendency to follow dark pathways, so that, with the light of Christ aglow within us, we can help others find their way into a brighter place, so that, when necessary, we can be their brighter place.

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.”

– Desmond Tutu

And then comes Epiphany. The season of revealing. Light doesn't make any real dangers lurking in the darkness any less dangerous, but it does cause some of them to shrink away because they don't like being revealed. And for those real dangers that don't shrink away from the light, the light of Christ shows us what they really are, what we're really up against, so we're better equipped to navigate around them or stand against them.

Just as importantly, though, as showing us what is lurking in the darkness, the light of truth, the light of Christ reveals what is not there. When we shine the light of Christ on that dialogue that's lingering in our head, we realize that that the other person didn't really say what we thought they said or what we were told. When we shine the light of Christ on that situation we dread, we see that the fearsome monster lurking in the corner is just the shadow of a dust bunny projected against the wall of a troubled imagination.

“I am the light of the world,” says Jesus in John 8. “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” He is our Christmas gift. He is our antidote to our own tendency to build castles of shadow. He is the flame of joy that strikes up the music in our hearts and sets our souls dancing even if we are lighting our way one step at a time through the dark ballroom of this world. Ah, but if we bring our lights together, wouldn't we just light up the whole place?

“You are the light of the world,” he says again in Matthew 5. That's our Epiphany. That's our job. That's our joy—not to curse the darkness, but to dispel it with the light of our presence together, with the light of Christ shining in us and through us.

Fiat lux. Let there be light.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

COUNCIL UPDATE

NEW YEAR GREETINGS

Council met on December 5, 2016, the meeting was well attended by members. Special thanks to **Galen Anderson for his fine craftsmanship on our Christmas triple cross!** What a great way to shine our light on the Naples community and all who walk about during this holiday season.

The finance committee is developing our 2017 budget based on pledges received. The budget will be presented at the congregational meeting on January 22nd as will the **Synod Constitutional** amendments. You will receive a copy of both documents by email or snail mail prior to the meeting.

The 2016 budget is nearing our goal as I write this letter. Many thanks to those who were able to **stretch their budgets** and donate beyond their regular giving.

Pastor discussed **Living the Resurrection** workshop that the team members attended on December

**ALL
ARE
WELCOME**



**Joyful USHERS Needed...
Become Part of Our
Worship Team Today!**

3rd and the Appreciative Inquiry method of looking at our church and neighborhood. This is a two year commitment by the team and congregation members that council approved in November.

The kitchen demolition has been delayed until some-time in January.

The **LSS Children's Christmas Party** was a huge success. Gloria Dei donated \$535 and **Naples Garden Club** donated \$302 for a total of \$837. Dr. Howard Davis donated 288 family size toothbrush sets for the event.

**ANNUAL CONGREGATION
MEETING & LUNCHEON
SUNDAY—JANUARY 22**

*Stephanie Siemer,
Council President*

SEEK THE LORD AND HIS STRENGTH; SEEK HIS PRESENCE CONTINUALLY. ~ 1 CHRONICLES 16:11

MINI MINISTRY @ GLORIA DEI

We need **Usher teams** to serve once a month! See Danny Bach for details. Mother-son team? Best Buddies? Father-daughter?

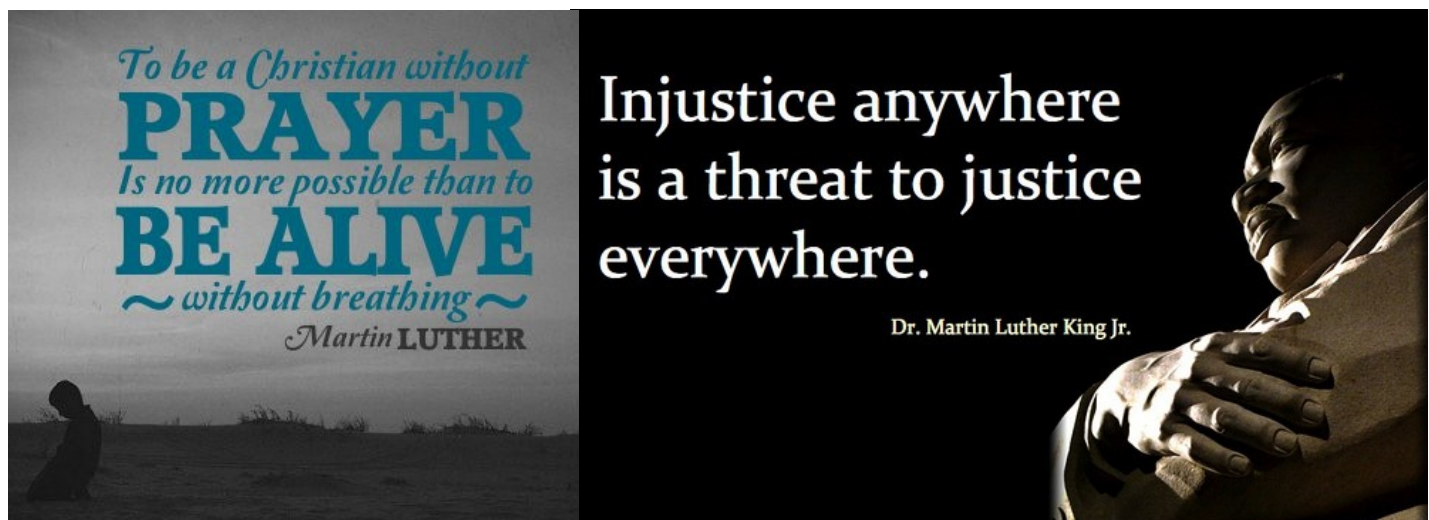
Sign up to be a **Greeter** after our worship service...help us welcome members and guests...WOW, what a easy way to contribute to our friendly congregation!

**Everybody
Can Be Great
Because
Everybody
Can Serve.**

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Won't you consider volunteering a few Sundays a year? — a small gesture to enhance our ability to connect and meet others. Contact us to learn more about this opportunity to be part of our **HOSPITALITY Team!**

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



More Wisdom + More Generosity=

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

To the **People of God** in the Congregations of the **Southwest California Synod** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: **Grace to you and peace, in our Lord Jesus Christ!**

Challenging times call us to ever greater courage; conflict and tension in society call us to deeper love and solidarity with others. As I write these words of New Year's greeting to you, I am very conscious of the anxieties and pain many of you wrestle with: some, because of personal struggles, illness, or grief; others, more out of a sense that we live in a world where, increasingly, truth is devalued and human dignity disregarded. **Where is God in all this? How do we make sense of what we are being called by God to do? How can we best follow Jesus and benefit our neighbor?**

Today I join many in our city and the world in mourning tragedies of large scale and small. From Aleppo and Syria to the attack in Berlin, our interconnected world makes even distant conflicts a matter of local, even personal concern. Our own communities and our congregations have in them cherished members who have come to us as refugees from violence in Central America and war in the Middle East. Even in the relative safety of our California communities, some live in ongoing fear of deportation because of their undocumented status. Other neighbors fear personal attack or rejection because of their religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. **However different from us, all of these are truly neighbors to us, and as Christians we share responsibility for their well-being.**

Followers of Jesus should long to help those in need, to stand in solidarity with those who are threatened, and to protest and decry prejudice and discrimination wherever it is found - whether from people on the streets, on the internet, or in the corridors of power. The year ahead may yet further sharpen the political divide in the United States that the recent presidential election has helped bring to light. **But whatever happens going forward, we Christians know that our ultimate trust is not in governments and leaders but in the God who loves us and who came to us in Bethlehem - Jesus, the Word made flesh.** Christians must defend what we believe to be right and good for our neighbors and ourselves, and we are called just as firmly to resist all that dehumanizes others or deprives them of basic care and sustenance.

As Christians, we remember that our first allegiance is not to nations or races or symbols or laws, but to each other as human beings - all alike children of God and heirs of God's promise. **We serve one another with news of God's good will toward us:** as announced to shepherds on a hillside in Palestine over two thousand years ago; as proclaimed from our pulpits every Sunday; as lived out in our actions and lives today.

As your bishop, I invite you - in this holy season and the year ahead - to renew your commitment to support your neighbor's well-being. Specifically, **I urge you to both speak and act on behalf of those who in our system are powerless: the undocumented, the homeless, the poor, and the refugee. I charge you with the duty to defend your neighbor of a different race or religion or class or sexual orientation or gender identity as you would defend yourselves.** I propose that you join together with others to do this, by joining groups that provide information with accuracy and which spur their members to action with integrity. "Truth" and "love" in this world are not debatable abstract concepts, but realities lived out in honesty and faith and self-giving care. **Live your truth - and show your love - in action that benefits your neighbor.**

Only by relying on God and the lessons of our faith can we resist the inborn urge to protect ourselves and our own comfort in the circle of those most like us, and learn instead to put others ahead of ourselves, especially those different from us. This is not natural and it requires effort. But this is precisely the effort to which God calls us, by coming among us as one of us, declaring in Jesus' Incarnation that our humanity is worthy of divine love and that we are heirs of God's kingdom.

So to the usual Christmas greetings and blessings let me add another word from Jesus: **"Be not afraid. Do not fear - because the God who loves us is greater than the human cruelty and hate that frightens us and makes us anxious. The God who created the universe is more powerful than our human ability to destroy it.** And in our human frailty, we have Jesus-friend, brother, Savior-with us and among us, bringing light into our darkness and renewed life in the face of death. May the blessings and joy of Christmas fill your hearts, and sustain you in the new year ahead! Amen. **Bishop Guy Erwin**

**'HOPE IS BEING ABLE TO SEE THAT THERE IS
LIGHT DESPITE ALL THE DARKNESS.'**

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...

That's our epiphany! That's our job! That's our joy!

Make a *Joyful* noise unto the Lord
Psalm 98:4

Let your
Light So Shine
before men, that
they may see your **GOOD WORKS,**
AND *Glorify* your FATHER
which is in Heaven.

For God so loved
the world that he gave
his only son that whosoever
believes in him shall
not perish but have
everlasting life
John 3:16



CALENDAR OF EVENTS — JANUARY 2017

1 — NEW YEARS DAY

WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

2 — Monday

CHURCH COUNCIL MTG
@ 7 PM

3 — Tuesday

Happy Birthday Patty Hoffman

4 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

5 — Thursday

6 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Morgan Adams

7 — Saturday

8 — SUNDAY

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

Hunger Envelope & Prayer of Healing

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

9 — Monday

GARDEN CLUB @ 1PM

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

10 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 10AM & 7 PM

11 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Happy Birthday Cameron Chinn
Happy Birthday Olivia Adams

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

12 — Thursday

Happy Birthday
Courtney Manley

13 — Friday

Happy Birthday Max Berg

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

14 — Saturday

Happy Birthday Edith Cheoros

15 — SUNDAY

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

Noisy Offering

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Karen Como

16 — Monday

MARTIN
LUTHER KING
HOLIDAY

Happy Birthday Jim Brown

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

17 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 10AM & 7 PM

18 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Happy Birthday Cyndi Manley

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

19 — Thursday

ELCW MEETING @ 10:30 AM

20 — Friday

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

21 — Saturday

LSS WORK PARTY 10-NOON

KATHERINE STONER
MEMORIAL SERVICE, 2 PM

Happy Birthday
Dondi Buchrucker

22 — SUNDAY

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

CONGREGATIONAL
LUNCHEON & MEETING

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

23 — Monday

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

24 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 10AM & 7 PM

25 — Wednesday

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

26 — Thursday

27 — Friday

- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
- D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

28 — Saturday

Happy Birthday Stephanie Siemer

29 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30, HOLY COMMUNION
Cookie Sunday

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

30 — Monday

Happy Birthday Georgie Lynch

31 — Tuesday

ADULT EDUCATION @ 10AM & 7 PM



GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Long Beach, California 90803



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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church is a Reconciling in Christ Congregation. 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.

(2 Cor. 5:17-19)

