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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

Here we are half way through Epiphany, fast closing in on Lent, and I can't stop thinking about Christmas. Specifically, I can't stop thinking about Incarnation.

Incarnation should be the primary and compelling message of Christianity. Through the Christ (en Christo), the seeming gap between God and everything else has been overcome "from the beginning" (Ephesians 1:4, 9). Incarnation refers to the synthesis of matter and spirit. Without some form of incarnation, God remains essentially separate from us and from all of creation. Without incarnation, it is not an enchanted universe, but somehow an empty one.

—Richard Rohr

Now there's a lot to unpack there, I know, but the essence of the idea is this: God, who is Infinite Love, has been present, incarnate, in the universe itself from the very beginning. What does Psalm 19 say? "The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament reveals his handiwork." Yes, 2,000 years ago God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth in a unique way to reach us and teach us in ways that only another human could. But God was also trying to open our eyes to all the other ways that God has been present and at work and alive in all of creation from the very beginning.

I know. You are a theologically astute bunch and some of you are thinking, Pastor Steve, this sounds an awful lot like pantheism. Yeah...no. It's panentheism. There's a huge difference in that extra little syllable. Pantheism says that God is everything. Panentheism says that God is in everything. Little syllable, big difference.

Think about it. Did you catch that phrase, "Without incarnation, it is not an enchanted universe, but somehow an empty one." The fact is, the universe is a marvelous, mysterious and deeply enchanted "place" for lack of a better word.

Here's one little example of that enchantment. Quantum physics tells us that at the sub-atomic level there are tiny little particles—except they're not exactly particles. They behave more like waves sometimes and like particles at other times. Physicists refer to them as particles purely for practical purposes. These "particles" dance around each other and bond together to form atoms which then, based on their specific properties bond to form molecules which then bond to form...everything. But what is it that makes the sub-atomic particles, which, remember, act more like waves sometimes—what makes them bond together in the first place? What makes them suddenly spin in a different direction or makes the amplitude of their waveforms change?

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Thoughts Along the Way Continues....

This question gets even trickier when you consider that if you could go deep down inside the tiny arena where they do all this quantum dancing you would find ... nothing. Emptiness. Some physicists say that there is simply a "force of intent" that makes the otherwise random interaction of quantum mechanics happen in anything like an organized way. How's that for an enchanted universe?

From the very beginning, God has been at work in all of creation pulling things together, revealing God's presence in all things. And from the very beginning of humanity God has been working hard to pull us together. What else is the Sermon on the Mount all about? (Matthew 5-7) And what did Jesus say is the greatest commandment? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30) St. Paul makes it clear that God in Christ even wants to be incarnate in us so that we might be "built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God." (Ephesians 2:22)

So if God has been working so endlessly, personally, and tirelessly to pull us all together, to, in fact, incarnate in us as a people, why do we work so hard to pull apart?

Could it be that one reason is that we have lost our sense of the sacredness of creation, the enchantments of the universe? Have we forgotten, or maybe never learned to see God's presence in everything? Could that be why so often now, in so many contexts, it seems like life is cheap? As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40)

It seems sometimes that we are so surrounded with technological wonders that we have lost sight of the really astonishing everyday wonders. Facebook is terrific. But it's not as fulfilling as face-to-face.

One of the great gifts of being Church lies in the simple fact that we still gather together every week. We gather for worship—and that's important. But I've come to believe that our fellowship time is every bit as important. It's that incarnation thing again. If God is truly present in us, then when I see your face, in a partial way at least, I can see something of God. And in the church it's more than that because we are a community that is intentional about manifesting God. We are intentional about showing God's love to each other and the world. "So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." (1 John 4:16)

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**Pantheism says that
God *is* everything.
Panentheism says
that God is *in*
everything.**

**Little syllable,
big difference.**



**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.**

Thoughts Along the Way Continues....

I think Fr. Richard Rohr is right: Incarnation should be the primary and compelling message of Christianity. We are good at showing God's love to each other here at *The Little Church with a Big Heart*. We are good at showing God's love to the community when given the opportunity. Perhaps the most loving, God-revealing, incarnating thing we can do for each other, for our community and (dare I think it?) for the world is to begin to find ways to make God's presence in each other and in all things more visible.

So...welcome to the universe. Did you know that it's enchanted? Have you looked inside the Quantum Dance? Have you pondered the evolutionary mysteries of branched-chain amino acids and mitochondrial DNA? Have you seen the nebulae where stars are born? The heavens are telling the glory of God...so no sense us keeping quiet about it.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

CONGREGATION COUNCIL UPDATE

The council met on Jan 8th.

The January meeting is mostly a review of the 2017 budget as of December 31st. Council then looks at the proposed budget that treasurer, Gary Bockman and the Finance committee prepared based on the pledges returned for 2018 plus an average of loose offerings over the past few years. I am delighted to report we had a wonderful year of giving in 2017. We met our 2017 budget with a surplus!

Thank you everyone for your support and dedication to our Church. Council's recommendation on how to distribute the surplus funds will be presented at the congregational meeting on January 28 for your approval. The proposed 2018 spending plan will also be presented for approval.

Council approved sponsoring the **New Life Band** from Tanzania. They will be traveling through Southern California the end of October and early November 2018. To learn more about the ministry of this band please go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbG9uH0QTfc>.

We could use another council member to replace Everett Parker, who is moving to Lake Arrowhead. Please consider joining the council.

In closing, a prayer for good health and happiness to all who enter our doors.

Rejoice in GOD's blessings.

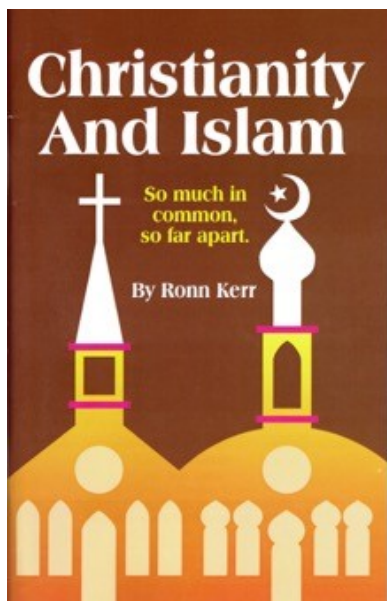
Stephanie Siemer
ssiemer@charter.net
Council President

2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- ☒ Barbara White served as committee chair and led the project/process for Living the Resurrection.
- ☒ Galen & Sandi Anderson designed and donated amazing, beautiful banners to use throughout the church seasons.
- ☒ A heart defibrillator was donated and is now mounted near the fire extinguisher in the Narthex.
- ☒ Everett Parker and Margie Brown served as Gloria Dei's representatives to the 2017 Synod Assembly.
- ☒ Marilyn Bittle continued to provide leadership and critical support for the many basic operations /needs of the congregation.
- ☒ The kitchen remodel was completed thanks to the efforts and oversight by Karen Como.
- ☒ New White Paraments were purchased in honor of Don Melin.
- ☒ Special thanks was given for Gary Bockman, treasurer and Twyla Karkut, financial secretary for their many years of service.
- ☒ A "blackboard" style Prayer Wall was installed along the side of the church adjacent to the parking lot. The local community uses the wall to post requests for prayers. It has been the most effective outreach program we have initiated to date.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE PASTOR — 2017

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 4:4-7



What a year. What a full, extraordinary year. St. Paul urged the church at Philippi to rejoice always. Sometimes that's easier said than done. It helps me to remember that Paul was in prison when he wrote that encouraging phrase, writing to a congregation facing pressures we can only imagine. It's a helpful reminder that even in grief and stress the promise of our faith is that, in the long view of eternity, life is eternal, love is immortal, and together, with Christ in our midst, we can know the peace of God which passes all understanding.

This year we said farewell to too many beloved sisters and brothers. Katherine Stoner died before the turning of the year but we began 2017 with her memorial service. She almost made it to 100. Mary Sorensen died soon thereafter, joining her husband, Andy, whose departure still seems too fresh. Bernie Vaaler left us suddenly right after Ash Wednesday and Virginia Lane died only a month later. Margaret Chomin had moved away to live with her daughter in Texas, but her loss still felt fresh when she died in September. And only days later we lost one of the sweetest men in the world, Chris Gilissen.

There were others whose loss affected us deeply this year who, though not members, were closely connected to us. The deaths of former members Marilyn Mathes and Pr. Frank Remski were a deep wound. The death of Karen Como's mother took Karen and Phil from us for some time. The tragic death of Meghan Brown Flink, daughter of former members Jim and Nancy Brown, "niece" to Meri and me and "sister-friend" to Brooke was troubling and painful. Immediately on the heels of Meghan's death, our friend Rick Harris, whose granddaughter was baptized here at Gloria Dei, surrendered in his long battle with a chronic lung disease. We even had to commend Dotsie, Sandy's canine ward and Tramp's daily partner in the important office of Church Dog, to God's eternal love and care.

In all this, though, there was cause for rejoicing. Through all these moments in the valley of the shadow, we helped each other through with the light of Christ's love, with real and profound support. And there was also much to celebrate. As I write this, I've just learned that the Inspector has signed off on the final inspection of the new kitchen! The kitchen is complete! Thank you to everyone who contributed! Thank you for your patience!

In April, just in time for Easter Sunday, we installed new video monitors to add a beautiful and enriching new dimension to worship, thanks to some very generous donors.

We received three new persons into membership this year: Ellen Hicks Rhoda, Sally Oberjuege, and Mike Meckna! Financially, we ended the year in excellent shape and continued to maintain a high level of mission support!

We made an instant impact in the community with the Prayer Wall (thank you Galen and Sandi Anderson).

We celebrated the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Some of us travelled to Germany with our Bishop, Guy Erwin, to see where it all began. On Reformation Sunday, Bishop Erwin conducted our morning worship celebration here at Gloria Dei and in the afternoon many from our choir joined singers from our sister congregations in our conference for a conference-wide celebration.

We had another robust year in Adult Education. We studied the Epistles of John, Gnosticism, Reformation Stew (all the Reformations in Europe), The Minor Prophets, Isaiah, By Heart (Conversations with Martin Luther's Small Catechism), and finally, Ecclesiastes.

Another cause for rejoicing: we embarked on Living the Resurrection. Using the tools of Appreciative Inquiry, the LfR team has interviewed many in the congregation. We're compiling the data from those interviews now and will soon begin the "imagining" phase where we begin to envision new ways to bring new vitality to this family of faith. One thing is immediately clear from our initial work, though: this really is a family of faith full of genuine love and closeness. This truly is the Little Church with a Big Heart... and I am truly blessed to be your pastor.

Pastor Steve

Be intentional about showing God's love to each other and the world.

The Reformation: From the Word to the World at the Huntington Library

Gather the family or invite your buddies and visit the "The Reformation: From the Word to the World" exhibit at the Huntington Library. Plan it right and you'll get an extraordinary experience with **Reformation historian Dr. Guy Erwin** on **February 16!** Bishop Guy will give a short talk about this exhibit and its contents, then you will have plenty of time to view it (one roomful of books and prints) and any other parts of the Huntington collections.

On the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting the 95 theses on the door of a Wittenberg Church, The Huntington Library in San Marino is hosting an exhibition of about 50 rare manuscripts, books, and prints made between the 1400s and 1648 (the end of the Thirty Years' War) – part of a flurry of written arguments and ideas put forward by scholars, clerics, statesmen, and lay believers to fuel a movement called the Reformation. These documents address the power of the written word and the relationship between it and radical change within a specific historical moment and geographical region.

The exhibition also poses the question: **What is so important to you that you would nail a statement about it in a public place for all to see?**



Reformation Day

This special exhibition will run through the month until **February 26, 2018** in the Library's West Hall. Please consider organizing a group from our congregation to enjoy both the exhibition and the Huntington's art and gardens!

You can call (626) 405-2240 for special discounted rates for groups of 15 or more.

The Huntington Library is located at 1151 Oxford Road in San Marino, and open from Wednesday through Monday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

...Listen Online

Sermon given by Bishop Guy Erwin for the
Celebration and Commemoration
 of the **Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Texts: [Micah 6:6-9](#); [Psalm 133](#); [1 John 4:7-13, 8-21](#); [Matthew 5:43-48](#)

<http://www.socalsynod.org/2018/01/15/bishop-guy-erwins-sermon-at-the-swc-synod-celebration-and-commemoration-of-the-rev-dr-martin-luther-king-jr-january-14-2018/>



LIVING LUTHERAN

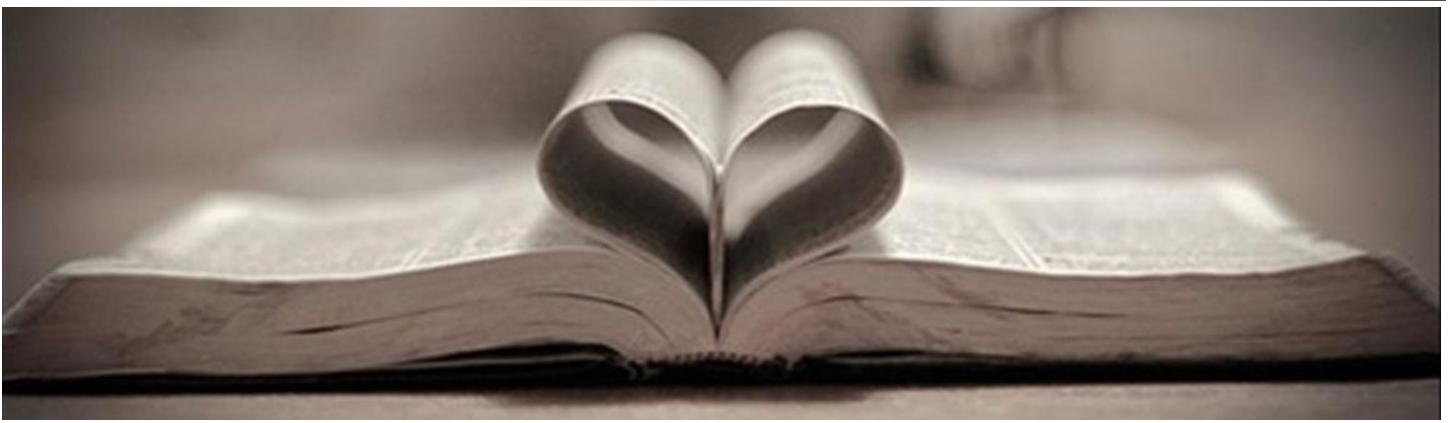
Volunteer for Social Justice 2017 – 2018 in Northern California with the Lutheran Episcopal Volunteer Network

[LEVN, the Lutheran Episcopal Volunteer Network](#), is looking for young adults (age 21 – 30) with Bachelor's degrees for an **11-month program of non-profit volunteer service** and learning about **social justice**. From the end of August 2017 to the end of July 2018, corps members will be provided housing, utilities, health insurance, transportation, spiritual direction, and a \$400/month food stipend. LEVN also offers a \$1000 re-entry grant at the completion of the program.

The placement sites for the upcoming program year include faith-based non-profits, secular non-profits, congregations, the Sierra Pacific Synod office, and the campus ministry at UC Davis. These placements address issues of homelessness, unemployment, children and youth ministries, computer literacy, and other important social justice issues facing area communities.

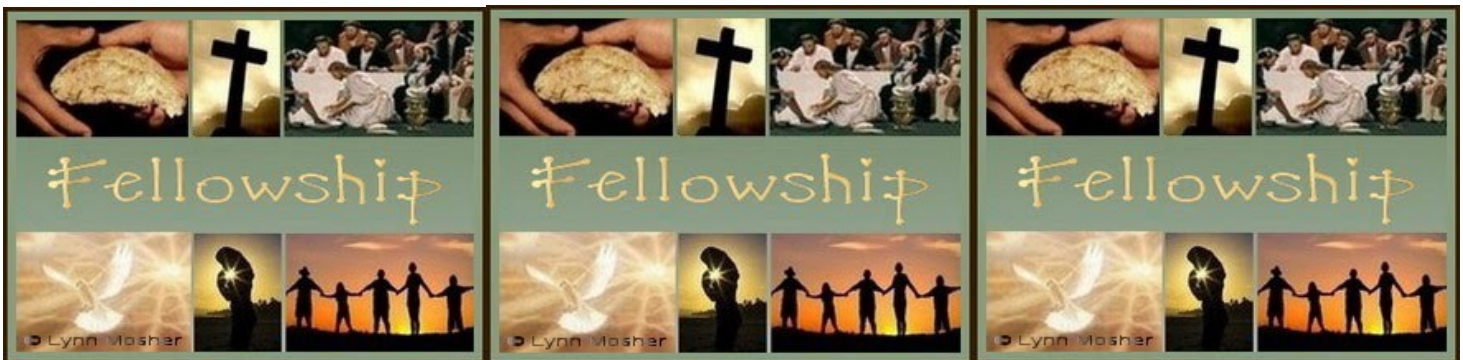
LEVN volunteers gather each week for worship, dinner, and formation. **The corps members live in intentional community in a 4-bedroom apartment in Davis, CA.** LEVN is an ecumenical program in the Episcopal Service Corps network, founded on tenets of intentional Christian community, simple living, service of others, solidarity with the poor, promoting justice, spiritual awareness, and vocational discernment. Applicants needn't be either Lutheran or Episcopal to apply – interest in **Christian spirituality** is the only expectation.

To learn more and share with your family and community network, visit levn.org.



We need teams 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 2018

1 — Thursday

David & Sarah Fuller Anniversary

2 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Bob Siemer

3 — Saturday

4 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

5 — Monday

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

CHURCH COUNCIL MTG @ 7 PM

6 — Tuesday

Christianity & Islam
ADULT EDUCATION @
10:00 AM & 7 PM

7 — Wednesday

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

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

8 — Thursday

9 — Friday

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

10 — Saturday

11 — SUNDAY

ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
Hunger Envelopes & PRAYERS FOR HEALING

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

12 — Monday

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

13 — Tuesday

Christianity & Islam
ADULT EDUCATION @
10:00 AM & 7 PM

Happy Birthday Mike Meckna

14 — Wednesday

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

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM



VALENTINE'S DAY

15 — Thursday

16 — Friday

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

17 — Saturday

LSS WORK PARTY 10-NOON
1611 Pine Avenue, Long Beach

Happy Birthday Berlin Zook

18 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Roger Powell

19 — Monday (church office closed)

PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY

20 — Tuesday

Christianity & Islam
ADULT EDUCATION @
10:00 AM & 7 PM

21 — Wednesday

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

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

Newsletter Deadline

22 — Thursday

23 — Friday

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

Happy Birthday Lyn Hicks

24 — Saturday

Happy Birthday Carrol Irwin

25 — SUNDAY

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

O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

Happy Birthday Sarah Fuller

26 — Monday

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

27 — Tuesday

Christianity & Islam
ADULT EDUCATION @
10:00 AM & 7 PM

Happy Birthday Sandi Anderson

28 — Wednesday

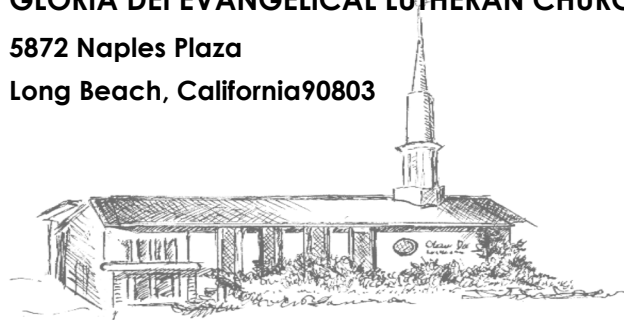
- MEN'S A.A. MTG. @ 7-8:00 AM

CHOIR @ 7:15 PM



GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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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)

