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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

In the Gospel of Luke in chapter 10, a lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by asking the lawyer a question: "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" At least that's how it's translated in the NRSV. A better translation, though, would be "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

How do you read it? How do you interpret it? How do you understand it? The lawyer replies to Jesus by quoting from Deuteronomy and Leviticus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Then Jesus says him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But this is when the lawyer really begins to answer the second part of the question "How do you read it?" because this is where he starts to look for wiggle room. Wanting to justify himself, Luke tells us, he asks, "But who is my neighbor?" And that's what prompts Jesus to tell the parable of the Assaulted Traveler. You know it by another name. But I'll come back to that.

A man was travelling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, said Jesus, when he was set upon by bandits who stripped him and beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A little while later a priest comes along, sees the unfortunate man, but passes by and does nothing for him. Not long after that a Levite comes by, a man dedicated to serving God. He also sees the assaulted traveler bleeding, bruised and naked at the side of the road, but he, too, passes by and does nothing to help. Fortunately, right after that a Samaritan happens along. He takes pity on the man. Gives him first aid, takes him to a nearby inn, gives the innkeeper two days wages to care for the man, and promises to pay for any additional expenses on his way back.

After telling this story, Jesus asks the lawyer, "Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the bandits?" "The one who showed mercy," said the lawyer. "You go and do likewise," said Jesus.

You know this story well. You have a familiar name for it. But I gave you a different name for it. I did that because the name we usually call it, "The Good Samaritan" carries a boatload of interpretive baggage.

...Continued on page 2

Inside this issue:

Assaulted Traveler	2
Christ's Church	3
Power of Hope	3
Congregation Update	4
ELCA Anti-Racism Pledge	5
The Hill We Climb	6
Announcements & Celebrations	7

A SHORT COURSE IN HUMAN RELATIONS

The **SIX** most important words:

"I ADMIT I MADE A MISTAKE"

The **FIVE** most important words:

"YOU DID A GOOD JOB"

The **FOUR** most important words:

"WHAT IS YOUR OPINION"

The **THREE** most important words:

"WOULD YOU PLEASE"

The **TWO** most important words:

"THANK YOU"

The **ONE** most important word:

"WE"

The **LEAST** important word:

"I"

**SEEK TO
UNDERSTAND
LOVE MORE
SEEK PEACE
& HARMONY**

Some context.

When Jesus tells this story he is on his way to Jerusalem. He is still in the countryside. To the people in the countryside, bandits were not necessarily bad guys. Because of economically oppressive systems inflicted by Rome and the heavy tithe system from the religious structure represented by priests and pharisees, and limited labor opportunities, many men turned to highway robbery. Those listening to Jesus tell this story probably assumed that the man who was assaulted and left for dead was a rich merchant—bandits wouldn't rob poor people, no money in it—and rich merchants were not trusted. The common people in Jesus' time had a world view of limited good; if someone was well off it was almost certainly at someone else's expense. Bandits tended to even the scales.

So bandits robbing a merchant—not shocking. But a priest and Levite walking by and doing nothing? That's shocking. These are men who have an obligation to help according to Torah. Actually, according to Torah, anyone who can should help. Most shocking of all, though, is that the person who does stop to help is a Samaritan.

I wonder if we can really understand how much Judeans hated Samaritans. I suppose I could give some examples, but I would surely offend someone. And that's the point. The people listening to Jesus, including the lawyer, would have been greatly offended that the Samaritan was the hero of the story. The mutual hatred between Jews and Samaritans had deep historical roots. When Jesus asks, "who was the neighbor?" the lawyer can't bring himself to say the word Samaritan. He simply says, "The one who showed mercy."

This is an anti-racist story, pure and simple. When the lawyer asks Jesus, "But who is my neighbor?" he's really asking "who is it okay for me to hate?" So Jesus tells him a story where the hero is a person he is going to be automatically inclined to disregard and disrespect. In the end, it turns out that the long answer to his original question of how can one inherit eternal life turns out to be, "Love God, love your neighbor as you love yourself, and that means you can't be a racist."

We call this episode "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." Earlier I called it "The Parable of the Assaulted Traveler." What if I called it "The Encounter With A Racist Lawyer"? Changing the title can change the way you read it or hear it. It can shift the focus. In the same way, learning more of the background information can change the way you understand the story. We've always heard it as a story about helping those in need—and it certainly contains that element—but it's really a story about racism.

How do you read it? This is such an important question for us to ask ourselves about the scriptures, about the news we're reading and watching, and about life.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

**"Every path He guides us on
is fragrant with His loving-kindness."**

~ Psalm 25:10-23 :5

Thoughts Along the Way Continues...

All are Welcome. This is Christ's church. There is a Place for You here.

We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

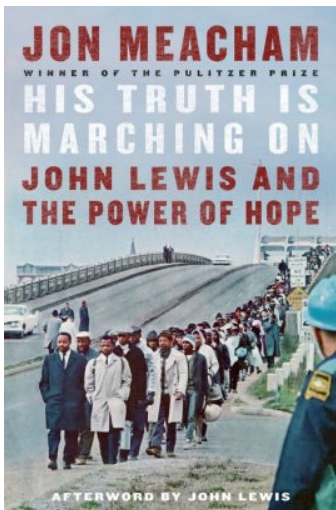
Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person--questions, complexities and all.



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.

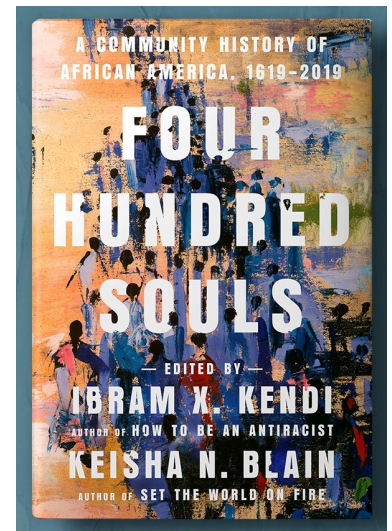
DEEPER UNDERSTANDINGS — POWER OF HOPE



**"Together, You Can Redeem
the Soul of Our Nation"**

John Lewis, July 2020... While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society. **Millions of people motivated simply by human compassion laid down the burdens of division.** Around the country and the world you set aside race, class, age, language and nationality to demand respect for human dignity.

—Support small businesses and purchase online!



**2021— Calls for us to embrace
the whole-life (body, mind,
heart) Gospel of Jesus Christ...**

PRAYER
changes things

Ibram Xolani Kendi is an American author, professor, anti-racist activist, and historian of race and discriminatory policy in America. In July 2020, he assumed the position of director of the Center for Anti-racist Research at Boston University. Kendi was included in Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020 .

**"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the time we will
reap a harvest if we do not give up." ~ Galatians 6:9**

CONGREGATION UPDATE

**GOD'S
WORK
OUR
HANDS**



**GOD'S
WORK
OUR
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Greetings to all. Now that the holidays are behind us, I am sure we are all praying that the COVID-19 days get behind us soon.

Our online **Christmas Eve Service** was held at 8pm and was enhanced by the music from **Woven Image**. Thanks for everyone who volunteered to make this a memorable experience during these unprecedented times.

Our council continues to meet via Zoom and we keep doing Gloria Dei business as best we can. Blessings to Gary Bockman for serving as treasurer. He recently stated that sometimes it feels like a full-time job, even though he is a volunteer. He keeps us moving forward with our new budget. The **2021 Budget** was discussed at the recent Congregational meeting and was passed by attendees. In addition we had an opening on the Council due to the death of Barbara White. Phil Como has graciously offered to fill this position until the May Congregational meeting when council member elections are part of the agenda.

We recently hosted a special **memorial service** for our friends whom we lost in 2021. The pandemic has made this such a difficult year--keep their families and friends in your prayers.

I recently received a personal email from a longtime friend and classmate. One of the things I parsed out of it was this:

B. I. B. L. E. means **Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth**. So now I am encouraging you to participate in Sunday and Wednesday morning education classes. Both sessions are full of wonderful things and offer us the opportunity to learn and by which we can abide.

In His Holy Name -- Have a Glorious Dei.
Margie E. Brown, President

On behalf of **Lutheran Social Services**, and those we serve, we want to thank you for your faithful support of our ministry & its programs throughout the years.

Our **23rd Annual Christmas Toy Giveaway**, made possible by your generous support. This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this event was modified to comply with local health department guidelines. Families came in by appointment only with their children. Everyone practiced social distancing and wore masks. The parents were given a nice grocery bag and a food voucher for the purchase of a ham or turkey. The children received toys & gift cards.

Thank you for helping bring smiles to low-income and homeless families this Christmas. Together with your support, we provided toys & gift cards to over 300 children! **Wendy Rubio, LSS Long Beach**



The **lending library** maintained by ELCW is still open and available to all who drop by church. We ask for a **donation** to help support our many projects; including turkeys for FE Y Esperanza, Homeless hygiene kits, Mariners boxes, etc. A **donation box** is on the shelf, even a small donation is helpful. & appreciated!
Thank you for your help.

Stephanie Siemer
President of ELCW at Gloria Dei

**MAY YOU OBSERVE YOUR
WORLD WITH LOVING
CONSIDERATION. . .**



Equipping those we serve with self-empowering tools and solution-based resources, we patiently walk alongside our clients on the road to independence.

WHAT LSS NEEDS

Canned Goods

**Pop Tops please

Chili; Ravioli Spaghetti-O's

Tuna; Soup

Chef Boyardee pasta meals

Hygienic Supplies

Wet Ones (travel or singles)

Disinfectant Cleaner

Deodorant (Men's/

Women's)

Anything Dry

Umbrellas

Sleeping bags

Blankets & Comforters

Tarps, tents, and other

shelter materials

Paper Goods/Bowls/Napkins

Paper towels/ Toilet paper

Plastic forks /Plastic spoons

Anything Warm*

Coats / Jackets

Gloves/Scarves

Socks

Rain boots

*Please only new or lightly used

VOICES OF HOPE

AND WHATEVER YOU DO, IN WORD
OR DEED, DO EVERYTHING IN THE
NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING
THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER
THROUGH HIM.

~ COLOSSIANS 3:17



We invite you to join us in the ELCA's Anti-Racism Pledge

In 2019, at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, voting members adopted a resolution designating June 17 as a commemoration of the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9—the nine people shot and killed on June 17, 2015, during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. Congregations of the ELCA are encouraged to mark this day of penitence with study and prayer.

As church we are called to confess the sin of racism, condemn the ideology of white supremacy, and strive for racial justice and peace. Beyond statements and prayers, we are called to also act and respond to injustices. We invite you to commit to one or more of the actions below:

- **Sign the pledge** below, "I commit to study, prayer and action to become an anti-racist individual in an anti-racist church," and share your participation on social media using #ELCA4justice.
- **Work to dismantle racial injustice** by listening to voices, experiences and the expertise of people of color. Learn about the ELCA ethnic-specific associations and their strategies.
- **Learn the history of systemic racism** in this country and the ways racism and white supremacy impact every aspect of our life together.
- **Join, support or attend your synod's anti-racism team** or work with your synod leadership to start one in your congregation. Study the ELCA social statement "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture" and the "Explanation of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent."
- **Explore and use on "God's work. Our hands."** Sunday the forthcoming ELCA Advocacy resources on a "Just Society Supporting the Health of All," which are focused on advancing racially equitable public policies, and by engaging in ELCAvotes to encourage and ensure voting rights for all.
- **Start where you are** by joining community organizations working for racial justice.
- **Reach out to build or deepen relationships** with Historic Black Churches. Consider using the congregational resource "Understanding One Another," co-authored by the ELCA and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or our Joint Statement of Mission with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church as a way to get started.
- **Explore and use the anti-racism resources** of our ecumenical partners through the A.C.T. Now to End Racism initiative of the National Council of Churches.

Let our prayers of lament be turned into ongoing actions for racial justice. The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop



THE HILL WE CLIMB — YOUTH POET LAUREATE

When day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never ending shade? The loss we carry, a sea we must wade. We braved the belly of the beast.

We've learned that quiet isn't always peace and the norms and notions of what just is, isn't always justice. And yet the dawn is hours before we knew it, somehow we do it, somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished. We, the successors of a country and a time, where a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect. We are striving to forge our union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man. And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first. We must first put our differences aside.

We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another. We seek harm to none and harmony for all. Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true, that even as we grieved, we grew. That even as we hurt, we hoped. That even as we tired, we tried. That we'll forever be tied together, victorious, not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division. Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid.

If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lighten the blade but in all the bridges we've made, that is the promise to glade, the hill we climb if only we dare, it's because being American is more than a pride we inherit. It's the past we stepped into and how we repair it. We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it, would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.

And this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated. In this truth, in this faith, we trust. For while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us. This is the era of just redemption. We feared -- at its deception. We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour, but within it we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to ourselves. So, while once we asked, "how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?", now we assert, "how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?" We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be, a country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free. We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation. Because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation. Our blunders become their burdens. But one thing is certain. If we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change, our children's birth right.

So let us leave behind a country better than one we were left with, every breath from my bronze pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one. We will rise through the gold-limbed hills in the west, we will rise from the windswept northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution. We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states. We will rise from the sun-baked South. We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover, in every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid. The new dawn blooms as we free it for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.

Amanda Gorman—recited at the Joe Biden's 2021 US presidential inauguration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS — FEBRUARY 2021



February 1—
**VIRTUAL CHURCH
 COUNCIL MEETING @ 7PM**



**CHRISTIANS for
 SOCIAL ACTION**

After nearly 50 years, the organization has changed its name to **Christians for Social Action** becoming the latest and most prominent example of a move away from the “evangelical” label in the US.

Christians for Social Action (CSA) is a group of scholar-activists, stirring the imagination for a fuller expression of Christian faithfulness and a more just society.

CELEBRATIONS

- 1 — Happy Anniversary
 Sarah & David Fuller
- 2 — Happy Birthday Bob Siemer
- 5 — Happy Birthday Jayne Lane
 David Thomas Fuller
- 18 — Happy Birthday Roger Powell
- 21 — Happy Birthday
 Irene McClanahan
- 23 — Happy Birthday Lyn Hicks
- 24 — Happy Birthday Carrol Irwin
- 25 — Happy Birthday Sara Fuller
- 26 — Happy Birthday David Berg
- 27 — Happy Birthday
 Sandi Anderson

“He has showered down
 upon us the richness
 of His grace.”
 ~ Ephesians 1:8

PLANT SALE

What a wonderful act of love and kindness.

A resident of Naples Island, Debbie Tebrich enjoys working with succulents. She has hosted plant sales at her home for many years specifically to donate all proceeds to charity. Plan to support the upcoming sale on February 12 & 13 (10 AM) at 170 Rivo Alto Canal. Checks should be made out to: Lutheran Social Services. Cash is also welcome—proceeds will go to LSS. . Please respect physical distancing, the surroundings and wear a mask!

**** Pre-pandemic images of
 Gloria Dei congregants!**

“The LORD your GOD loves
 you.” ~ Deuteronomy 23 :5

the newsletter

FEBRUARY 21 —

**GLORIOUS DEI
 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

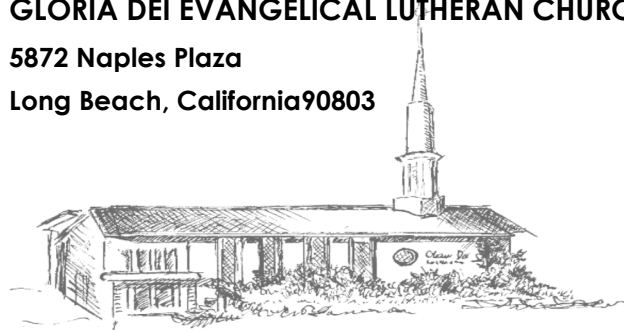
SUBMIT STORY IDEAS,
 RESOURCES & SUGGESTIONS
 to editor via email:
 PBOCKMAN@FULLERTON.EDU

**SPREADING
 JOY &
 CHANGING
 LIVES**



GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**5872 Naples Plaza
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)

