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## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

*Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching. – Hebrews 10:23-25 (The Message)*

It was three years ago this month that a virus changed our lives in ways we could not have imagined. On February 3, 2020 the United States declared a Public Health Emergency in response to the SARS-Cov-2 virus. On March 2, California declared a state of emergency. On March 4 Covid's first fatality in California was confirmed, and on March 11, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 to be a pandemic. On March 19, 2020, California issued a stay-at-home order which was soon followed by national stay-at-home orders.

I remember posting signs on the church doors advising that we would not be gathering in assembly for worship or classes but that we hoped to be opening up again in two or three weeks. Nobody thought we would be in lockdown for more than 3 weeks. Well, almost nobody. But the virus proved to be more tenacious than we thought, and too many people resisted the masks and confinement which were meant to stop it spreading. In the end, it would be more than 18 months before we were able to gather again in our sanctuary, and even then we would be doing so under certain restrictions.

When that first public order came to shelter at home, it was amazing how quickly we adapted as our computers became our lifeline. Bob Siemer swiftly set things up so we could carry on with worship, meetings and classes on Zoom, then became our dependable troubleshooter to help the less tech-savvy among us make the necessary connections. Richard Hoover provided music for worship from the piano in his apartment and sometimes we even used recorded videos of choirs and ensembles. Phil and Karen continued to change the parameters in the sanctuary with the change of liturgical seasons and then Phil would take a picture that we would use as background for

...Continued on page 2

## Inside this issue:

Pastor's Online Resource	2
40 Days — LENT	3
How Long, O Lord	3
Congregation Update	4
God's Work, Our Hands	5
Bishop Bos — Call to Action	6
Celebrations, Announcements, Events	7

*Thoughts Along the Way...*

our Zoom worship so that it looked like church. Sandy Irvine kept going to the office to retrieve mail and coordinate administrative things. And somehow we made it all work for the better part of two years.

It wasn't ideal, but it worked. My favorite part of the whole necessary experiment, though, was the coffee hour after worship. There was such a wonderful sense of camaraderie as we took time to catch up with each other. When someone shared something in our online conversation, everyone was listening. We were all together in one fellowship, one conversation, taking turns speaking instead of dividing ourselves into several little conversation groups which is what happens when we gather in the Fellowship Hall.

In Romans, St. Paul wrote, "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." During those online coffee/companionship times after online worship, this congregation showed that love at Gloria Dei really is genuine. We held fast to what is good, our mutual affection was clear, and we honored each other by listening and also, often, in very practical ways.

The virus is still out there but not the threat that it once was since most of us are well vaccinated. We still keep our masks handy since the virus has proved to be adept at mutating, and we continue to offer our worship and classes online for those who feel a need to stay at home. We all experienced some measure of grief during the worst of the pandemic as people we knew became ill or died. But when all is said and done, I think our pandemic experience brought us closer in many ways. There is a palpable joy and love when we gather on Sundays, a genuine happiness in being together.

We have called ourselves The Little Church with a Big Heart because of our amazing outreach ministries, but the pandemic has shown us that we also have a Big Heart for each other. The love of Christ abounds here.

*Pro Gloria Dei,*  
Pastor Steve



Want to revisit and contemplate Sunday morning teachings? Sermons are posted every week at

**[www.thoughtsalongtheway.net](http://www.thoughtsalongtheway.net)**  
Thoughts Along the Way and Occasional Music  
from Pastor Steve Beckham

**"Every good and perfect gift from above, coming down from the Father."**

~ James 1:17



**Spend 40 days reading one of the Gospels. Think carefully about each episode and encounter in the life of Jesus. Think about what that episode tells you about what it means to follow Jesus.**

### Love God—

- **Try** to find 5 ways every day that you see God at work in the world around you. See how often you can see God's fingerprints on "secular" or everyday things.
- **Practice** the *Lectio Divina*  
Read a brief section of Scripture, Read it again and this time see if a particular word or phrase grabs your attention, meditate on that word or phrase for a few minutes, Read the entire section again and see if you understand it differently.
- **Make** your first prayer of the morning, "God, what do you want today? What can I do for you?"

### Love your neighbor—

- **Practice** blessing those around you.
- **Pray** positively for someone you don't particularly like.
- **Commit** random acts of kindness. When possible do so anonymously.
- **Smile** at a stranger!

### Love yourself—

- **Body**—40 days is a good amount of time to make healthy changes and develop new habits.

## HOW LONG, O LORD

*"Christians in their longing for Christ find themselves deeply immersed in the sufferings of the world. Christians are not aloof spectators, watching the world's troubles. ... [F]aith leads us into solidarity with suffering."* —ELCA social statement, *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013)

As the nation watches another video exposing police violence against a Black man after a traffic stop, there will be great suffering and despair emerging from across the United States. In just over a week we have witnessed mass gun violence in California – twice – and the shooting of a protester at a future police training site in Atlanta. Each of these tragedies inspires grief, not only for the lives lost and forever altered but also for our loss of confidence in a system that continues to fail us, over and over. It's important to remember that images are powerful and can retraumatize communities. The anticipated video footage of 29-year-old Memphis resident Tyre Nichols being beaten promises to stir many emotions and reawaken the grief of tens of millions of Americans who have seen this in their own communities. It will feel personal for those who have witnessed this trauma inflicted upon their own families.

As Americans, we must all face this problem. Together we must cry out, much as Rachael wept in loud lamentation, "How long, O Lord?"

How long, O Lord, will we need to suffer at the hands of injustice?

How long, O Lord, will we hear of lives taken by another shooting and fear for our own lives and our families' lives?

How long, O Lord, will we fear a system that is supposed to protect all lives?

**Dear church, now is the time to focus, listen, learn, counsel, advocate for just reforms, and lament a grief that seems relentless, that is awoken again with each act of tragedy and injustice across this nation.**

In Christ,



**The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton**  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America



# CONGREGATION UPDATE

A new tradition was launched in February – Birthday Cake Sunday! We celebrated the birthdays of Bob Siemer, Roger Powell and Sarah Fuller following worship on February 19th. On March 19th we will celebrate these birthdays: P.A. White, Vicki Gammer, Chris Wacker, Mark and Bret Engel and Beth Rotsel. Join the celebration and bring a friend with a March birthday and we'll celebrate them too! Birthday Cake Sunday is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month (Noisy Offering Sunday). Our beautiful sanctuary is prepared for our Lenten services thanks to Phil Como, David Kahakauwila, Bob Siemer, Twyla Karkut, Jean O'Connell, Marilyn Bittle and Sandy Nelson. Hanging the lovely purple banners in the windows is a wonderful reminder of our dear friend Barbara White and the talents and contributions she shared with us for so many years.

The Ash Wednesday service was so meaningful. Thank you to those who brought soup, cookies, bread and drinks! This was the first time in 4 years that we've been able to have a 'Soup Supper' before our Ash Wednesday Lenten service. Being together is a treasure. Pastor's sermon, 'Lucky Mud' shouldn't be missed! Although we heard the sermon, we have read it and shared it with others. It's beautiful message! You can find it on our church website under the tab Messages' ([www.gdlclb.org](http://www.gdlclb.org)).



**LSS:** Rice and beans were bagged by ELCW and recently delivered to LSS. In addition, contributions of clothing and household items were delivered in February. Warm jackets and gently used blankets are needed, especially during this cold weather. Deliveries are always welcome and we typically go to LSS on Wednesdays. Please let us know if you need items picked up at your home.

**Fe y Esperanza:** Rice and beans were also delivered to Fe y Esperanza, thanks to the ELCW. Fe y Esperanza is so grateful for our donations of food, clothing and gently used household items. We also delivered \$200 in Costco gift certificates to assist them in their weekly food distribution program. The repairs to their sanctuary will be a very long process. They will continue to have worship services in their kitchen area for an extended period of time. Keep them in your prayers as they work with insurance providers and contractors to make the needed extensive repairs. Deliveries to Fe y Esperanza are typically made on Wednesdays.

**ELCW:** In February the women met and bagged 30 lbs. of rice and beans for LSS and Fe y Esperanza. The next meeting is on **March 9<sup>th</sup>** at 11:00 a.m. The women will work on preparing hygiene kits. If you have any small items from hotel stays, please bring them to church or to the meeting. Bring a sandwich to share. Salad and dessert will be provided. All women are welcome to join us for a time of special fellowship.

**Adult Education:** Pastor Steve's adult education sessions on Wednesday and Sunday are fabulous! Join us on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 via Zoom. We are reading a wonderful book by Rob Bell, 'Love Wins'. Every week is a unique discussion and you can join us anytime. On Sunday mornings at 9:00 we're studying the Gospel of Matthew using a new translation by Thomas Moore.

## Coming Events:

- ◆ Holy Week will begin with Palm Sunday on **April 2<sup>nd</sup>**, concluding with Easter on **April 9<sup>th</sup>**.
- ◆ Celebration of life for Dee Perretta will be on **April 11<sup>th</sup>** at 2:00 p.m. at Gloria Dei. A reception will follow the service. Everyone is invited to attend.
- ◆ Pastor Steve's final Sunday with us is **May 28<sup>th</sup>**. A reception and luncheon will be held immediately following worship to celebrate his ministry with us. Watch for more information and details on this special event.

The ministries and the many ways in which our church family serves always amazes me as I write this newsletter every month. Your generosity is felt locally and as far off as Turkey and Syria. Our in-person times together and our outreach in serving others, is something to celebrate and to be very thankful for everyday!

Karen Como, Council President

# A CALL TO ACTION — PRAYER MATTERS

**“Listen, your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” Genesis 4:10**

On Saturday, Jan. 21, 2023, 20 people were shot by a gunman in Monterey Park. Police found the gunman, who killed himself by gunfire, the next day in Torrance. This horrific incident took place in our cities, killing our siblings. The murderer drove through our streets, stopping in Alhambra, to try to continue the killing. Our brothers' blood cries out to us from the ground of our own neighborhoods. For many of us, we woke to the news of the mass shooting and were dismayed but exhausted. It took me a moment to realize these murders happened in our synod: this was close by. Not that that should matter—crime everywhere should be fought by people everywhere. But we have a specific responsibility here, to the victims and to the first responders.

The Southwest California Synod has a large Mandarin population in our midst, with several worshiping communities. Many of our Asian pastors report their people are afraid to leave their homes, long before this incident. News reports had said this Lunar New Year was one of the first where people were willing to congregate to celebrate. And now this.

I ask for all of us, no matter our location, to pray for the Asian community, especially that Anti-Asian hate will subside. If you have Asian friends, please check on them. If you are a member of one of our Chinese, Japanese or Filipino congregations, or are a member of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, please know we love you and are praying for you. We need to stop thinking of these as “isolated incidents.” Gun violence affects all of us.

Prayer matters, but we know we must also organize to influence lawmakers and law enforcement to make our cities and nation safer. This has been a long struggle, and we will join others who have been working on gun violence for decades. The movement always needs new voices, and I invite you to join us.

Please join me in prayer:

***God of the universe, bring us peace. Give us courage and clarity to bring an end to violence in our streets. We pray for the families who have lost loved ones this weekend in Monterey Park, and everyone affected by gun violence. Help us pass sensible laws and find ways to break the cycles of gun violence in our nation. Bless first responders who must deal with these murders. Put your hand upon the Asian community who already lives in so much fear and hate. Protect them and comfort them. Make us a better church, to offer support and care in your name. Amen.***

Bishop Brenda Bos

Pastoral Message in response to recent shooting in our Synod

# GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS

**Embrace  
Empower  
Equip**



## LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES—SUPPORT OUR LONG BEACH COMMUNITY

- Emergency Services
- Transitional Services
- Social Services



**Learn more  
@ LSS website**



**We invite you to study, pray, reflect and give with us during ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving — for our families, our neighbors and communities around the world.**

Commit to a giving goal for the Lenten season in support of ELCA World Hunger, set aside a portion each day, or make your gifts throughout the season as part of your regular Lenten practice. Visit the ELCA website to DONATE !

**We long together for the time when we "will hunger no more, and thirst no more ... and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes" (Revelation 7:16-17).**



**Set this important day of celebration & recognition on your calendar!**

**Pastor Steve's RETIREMENT LUNCHEON**

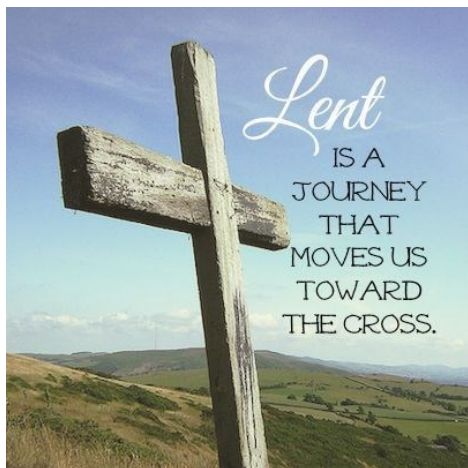
**SUNDAY, MAY 28**

**Serve the Lord with gladness. ~Psalm 100:2**

**Did You Know?** Every year, March is designated Women's History Month by presidential proclamation. The month is set aside to honor women's contributions in American history. It began as a local celebration in Santa Rosa, CA. The Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women planned and executed a "Women's History Week" celebration in 1978. The organizers selected the week of March 8 to correspond with International Women's Day. The movement spread across the country as other communities initiated their own Women's History Week celebrations the following year. In 1980, a consortium of women's groups and historians—led by the National Women's History Project (now the National Women's History Alliance)—successfully lobbied for national recognition. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th 1980 as National Women's History Week.



# CELEBRATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



LENT IS A GOOD TIME TO TAKE INVENTORY. AND TO WONDER. AND TO BE GRATEFUL.



- 5 — Happy Birthday Ranae Wright
- 9 — Happy Birthday P.A. White
- 11 — Happy Birthday Vicki Gammer
- 17 — Happy Birthday Galen Anderson
- 19 — Happy Birthday Chris Wacker
- 20 — Happy Birthday Mark Engle
- 25 — Happy Birthday Beth Rotsel
- 27 — Happy Birthday Bret Engle

'I will bless you...and you will be a blessing to many others.'  
~ Genesis 12:2

**PRESENT**

## BANDING TOGETHER

To Build Community

FREE CONCERTS

**EVENT INFORMATION**

All proceeds from the free-will offering will go toward ministries of the CCLM Mission in the city of San Bernardino & New City Parish in Los Angeles.

**SUNDAY CONCERTS**  
**3 P.M.**  
**FOOD TRUCK SOCIAL**  
**5 P.M.**

**ARTISTS**

- NEW CITY PARISH - Gospel
- WOVEN IMAGE - Celtic, Folk & Jazz
- PASTOR NATE & DÁMARIS - Hip Hop & Global Multicultural Praise
- CHRIS WINN & his PRAISE BAND feat. Nicholas & Kathleen Preston

Messiah Lutheran 4861 Liverpool St. Yorba Linda	<b>05</b> Feb 3 P.M.
Holy Trinity 9300 S Crenshaw Bl. Inglewood	<b>19</b> March 3 P.M.
Spirit of Our Savior 5050 N Sierra Way San Bernardino	<b>29</b> April 3 P.M.

Help us house 140 homeless men and clothe & feed vulnerable So California families

877-577-7267 ext. 1107

[www.lssc.org/BandingTogether](http://www.lssc.org/BandingTogether)



- MARCH 5** *Nat'l Day of Unplugging*
- MARCH 8** *International Women's Day*
- MARCH 12** *Nat'l Girl Scouts Day*
- MARCH 14** *Nat'l Potato Chip Day*
- MARCH 17** *St. Patrick's Day*
- MARCH 19** *HOLY TRINITY Concert*

**SPRING BEGINS—MARCH 20**  
 "He has showered down upon us the richness of His grace."  
 ~ Ephesians 1:8



**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 Corinthians. 5:17-19)**

**MAY YOU OBSERVE the WORLD with LOVING CONSIDERATION.....**



