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## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

*Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." – Matthew 22:37-40*

Eleven and two-thirds years. Let's call it 12. I have served as your pastor for the better part of a dozen years now but my time with you is almost done and there are some things I want you to know before I go.

First and foremost, I want you to know that I have loved being your pastor at the Little Church With a Big Heart. You have consistently made me proud to be part of this community of faith as you have demonstrated your love of Christ in your generosity and your ministries.

I also want you to know that Meri and I have loved you dearly. We have loved you as a community and we have loved you as individuals, and we will continue to love you, each and every one of you, even though we will not be able to be a part of this community and ministry after I retire. Our love, our friendship will endure.

When my class was graduating from seminary, Professor Ted Peters told us that a pastor's job boils down to two things: Proclaim the Gospel and love the People. It sounds easy, but sometimes the Gospel rubs the People the wrong way or pushes their buttons. When that happens, sometimes people respond in ways that make loving them a bit challenging. I want you to know that, on the whole, loving the people at Gloria Dei has been easy, and I think that's largely because, on the whole, you have been receptive to the Gospel. Serving here has been consistently joyful for me, and I love you all the more for that.

If I have had any great disappointment during my time at Gloria Dei, it's that more of you did not participate in our Adult Education classes. Remember that part of the Greatest Commandment is to love God with your mind. Living in faith means that we are called to continue learning better ways to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." ( Micah 6:8) Living in faith means we need to "keep awake" (Mark 13:37) when so many elements in our society would prefer for us to be complacent or asleep to all kinds of violence and injustice, or even nostalgic for a "better time" that never really was.

Having said that, I am deeply grateful for those who did participate regularly in Adult Education as we dove deeply into our scriptures and our history, and as we explored together what it means to be followers of Jesus. The journey we have taken together as we enriched our minds and deepened our understanding has bound us closely heart to heart.

*Continued on page 2*

Thoughts Along the Way Continues....

And now, I want to share with you a few thoughts as you prepare to call a new pastor who will lead you into the future that God is preparing for you. I won't have any role or say in your call process, but I do have some advice.

First, remind yourselves as often as necessary that you are NOT hiring someone. You are NOT interviewing job applicants. Being a pastor is not a job, it is a calling. The call process is a process of holy discernment. You will be trying to discern the will of the Holy Spirit, and there is no place for any other agenda. You will be trying to discern who it is that the Holy Spirit is selecting to be your pastor. On the opposite side of that equation, the pastors you will meet will be trying to hear the Spirit, too, to discern if this is the community where God is calling them to serve.

Selecting those who will be on the call committee is also a process of discernment seeking the will and call of the Spirit. Desire to serve on the committee cannot be the only qualification. For what it's worth, I think people who have been faithful and consistent in attending worship and participating in the life and ministries of the congregation are usually more open to the leading of the Spirit. Sometimes people want to serve on the committee because they want to lead the Spirit more than they want to be led by the Spirit. Some may have a particular agenda or a particular profile in mind for their next pastor. But again, the call committee's only purpose is to discern the will of the Holy Spirit and there really should be no other agenda.

In his book *Love Wins*, Rob Bell retells Jesus' parable of The Two Brothers, aka The Prodigal Son, and in that retelling he points out that these two brothers who grew up in the same household are each telling themselves very different stories about what it means to be a son and about how they relate to their father. Their actions are a result of those stories they're telling themselves, and they both make some serious mistakes because their internal narratives are flawed.

As you move forward in calling a new pastor and into an uncharted future as a beloved community, what stories are you telling yourselves? What story do you tell yourself about church—about what it is and how it works and what it's supposed to do? What stories do you tell yourself about God and about your relationship with God? What stories do you tell yourself about Jesus and how Jesus is involved with your life? What story do you tell yourself about the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit is influencing your life? What stories do you tell yourself about the Gospel, the Good News? How do you understand it? What do you think is most central? Does your story center on Jesus? What does following Jesus look like in your story? What stories do you tell yourself about the world around us and what role does the church play in that world in the stories you tell yourself? Any good psychologist will tell you that our narratives define our actions. So when is the last time you really listened to the stories you're telling yourself?

One last piece of advice for all of you, but especially for the call committee: read the Gospels. I've said this consistently throughout my ministry. Read the Gospels. Read them slowly, carefully and thoughtfully. Then read them again. Then read St. Paul's letters, especially his letters to the Corinthians and Galatians. Then read the Gospels again. Read *Love Wins* and *What is the Bible?* by Rob Bell. Read *Help, Thanks, Wow* by Anne Lamott. And pray. Pray for each other. Pray for your call committee. Pray for your Council and leadership. Pray for the community. Pray for the world. Pray for the light and love of Christ.

*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.*

*Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9)*

I will miss you all more than I know how to say. God be with you.  
With much love, Pastor Steve

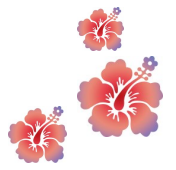
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# WE WISH PASTOR STEVE AND MERI 'ALOHA OE'!



**Wear your favorite Hawaiian attire & join us on May 28 in celebration and in appreciation of Reverend Steven Beckham's ministry and service to our little church with a big heart! Please RSVP for the luncheon!**



# COUNCIL UPDATE

Our Easter celebration continues! We are so fortunate to celebrate Easter in our beautiful sanctuary for so many weeks. Thank you to our wonderful team who prepared our sanctuary for every special and meaningful worship service throughout Holy Week. We are so grateful to Pastor Steve for his inspirational messages during this season of Easter and, over the past years he has served and blessed our church family.

As we continue to celebrate the season of Easter and moving toward Pentecost, we have some important dates to remember;

**May 21** - our annual congregational meeting.

Please plan to attend. We need a quorum to address the agenda items that include:

Approving the Call Committee appointed by the Church Council; Election of new Council members; Ratifying amendments to our Church Constitution to conform to the churchwide model; Electing 2 members to represent our congregation at the next Southwest Synod Assembly to be held in June.

**May 28** - Pentecost and Pastor Steve's final worship service with us. Bishop Bos will be joining us to conduct the 'Conclusion of Call'. Following the worship service, we will say 'Aloha Oe' to Pastor Steve and Meri at a farewell luncheon at 2:00 p.m. at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. Please let Sandy Nelson know as soon as possible if you plan to attend. We are grateful to Our Saviour's for hosting this event.

**Call Committee:** The committee's first meeting will be in June. During the call process we will be served by an interim pastor. The Call Committee and staff at the Synod office will work together to identify candidates to serve our congregation.

**LSS:** We received a thank you for our support of their annual Easter event. 60 families and 275 children enjoyed the party and celebration. Wendy Rubio said "It was a day filled with happiness, love, faith and inspiration."

At the recent **Absolute Best of Long Beach Awards Ceremony**, our partner **Wendy Rubio** (LSS) was recognized by **Councilmember Mary Zendejas** as the **District 1 'Hero'**. Wendy was

identified as someone who is doing things to make Long Beach a better place to live. Thanks Wendy for your commitment to venerable families and individuals in our community.

A special thank you to **Martie Engle** for the donation of numerous clothing items from the **Golden West College** drama department. LSS was thrilled to receive so many items of the much-needed men's clothing.

**Fe y Esperanza:** Deliveries are typically made on Wednesdays. Donate clothing and gently used household items, contact Phil Como to schedule a pick-up. During our last delivery, Phil and I toured their sanctuary. Pastor Marta shared with us that the sanctuary is a complete loss. They will continue to have worship services in their kitchen area while decisions are made about the status of their sanctuary.

**ELCW:** In April the women sorted and assembled donated baby items for Precious Life. A \$50 donation was made to the **Wounded Warriors** from the monies collected in the Barbara White Library. Plan to join the next meeting at church at 11:00am. Bring a sandwich to share. All women are welcome for a time of fellowship and service.

**Adult Education:** Pastor Steve's adult education sessions on Wednesday and Sunday continue! On Wednesday mornings we are reading '**Help, Thanks, Wow**' by **Anne Lamott**. Join us at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. On Sunday mornings we are reading '**What Is the Bible**' by **Rob Bell**.

## Coming Events:

**May 1** at 7:00 p.m. Church Council meeting via Zoom

**May 11** – ELCW

**May 21** – Noisy Offering and Birthday Cake Sunday, Congregational Meeting and Luncheon

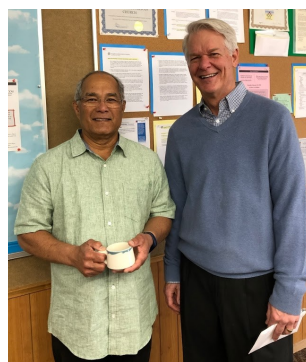
**May 28** – Pentecost and Pastor Steve's final worship service and farewell celebration

Pastor Steve coined the tagline that describes our church family as 'The Little Church with a Big Heart'. This sums up who we are and who we will continue to be. Continue to pray for Pastor Steve and Meri as they start a new season in their lives. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide our decision in calling a new leader for our church family.

**Karen Como, President**

# SPREADING JOY & CHANGING LIVES

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS



# VOICES OF HOPE



Our LSS partner, **Wendy Rubio** was named one of the 'Heroes' during the **Absolute Best of Long Beach Awards Ceremony**. The sponsors LB Living, stated 'These are people that are doing things that help to make Long Beach a better place to live'.

## EMBRACE. EQUIP. EMPOWER.

Emergency Services    Social Services    Transitional Services

Not everyone can volunteer...But, with your gift, YOU can bring hope & kindness to neighbors in our Long Beach community.

<https://www.lsssc.org/location/south-bay-long-beach/>

**There is joy in the well of God's heart for you today—and the best bucket to retrieve it with is the one that says, "GIVE."**

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.

~ Jeremiah 29:11-13

Thank You for Your greatness to save me. Thank You for using Your goodness as a way to reach me rather than a reason to reject me. Keep me from believing that I need something more complex than Your simple truths. And keep me from thinking that I can find anything more satisfying than Your selfless love.

~ Psalm 62:-11 (The Power belongs to you, God)

## INVEST TIME TO LISTEN & LEARN — EXPLORE ONLINE PODCASTS

# HIDDEN BRAIN



In NPR's **Hidden Brain** podcast host **Shankar Vedantam** guides listeners through their own cognitive missteps, biases, and blind spots. He reveals the many hard-to-see ways our decision making and judgment are influenced by various forces. There's a lot we don't know about the human brain, but Vedantam shows listeners that even what we do know can be almost impossible to notice.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS — MAY 2023



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### BE A LIGHT IN THE WORLD

**Strive to live your best life as you continue to spread hope, joy, peace and love to those around you. In your next trip around the sun, prayerfully seek to encounter God in new and special ways!**

#### MAY 8

Peggy & Gary Bockman Anniversary  
Happy Birthday Chuck Dean  
Happy Birthday Michael

#### MAY 9

Happy Birthday Dianne Keil

#### MAY 18

Happy Birthday Pastor Steve Beckham

#### MAY 19

Martie & Mike Engle Anniversary  
P.A. & Brooke White Anniversary

#### MAY 23

Happy Birthday Nancy Sansum

#### MAY 28

Happy Birthday Richard Hoover



MAY 29

**"Christians live not in themselves, but in Christ and in their neighbor. Otherwise they are not Christians. They live in Christ through faith, in their neighbor through love."**

~ Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian"



**I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.**  
John 13



## MOTHER'S DAY, MAY 14



**"SHE IS CLOTHED IN Strength AND Dignity, AND SHE Laughs WITHOUT FEAR OF THE FUTURE."**

~ Proverbs 31:25

## LITTLE CHURCH WITH A BIG HEART

A legacy of welcome is woven into our tradition and history as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Many of our Lutheran ancestors faced the pain of having to flee their homes and knew the joy of being welcomed into new communities across the United States. Because this church believes in sustaining a faithful presence in the world, it "holds power accountable, advocates justice, stands with those who are poor and vulnerable, provides sanctuary, and meets human need."

(ELCA: *For Peace in God's World*, 1995)

GROWING IN FAITH TOGETHER,  
LIFTED BY HOPE TOGETHER,  
GUIDED BY LOVE TOGETHER



**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)**



