



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

BE OF GOOD COURAGE...

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Every year of seminary, I had to go through an interview with what is now called the candidacy committee. Senior year, I had to write ordination exams and the committee interview included a faculty member. This was the last hoop to jump through to be approved for ordination. I had several weeks to write the exams, as I also did regular coursework. Seminary was not an easy ride: four full years of education, including three years of academics, a year as an intern in a congregation, and a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education, not to mention all of the interviews and other things we had to do to matriculate. I loved seminary, and I had worked hard to get to this interview to be approved for ordination. Dr. Victor Gold, the Old Testament professor, was the faculty member on my candidacy interview. He asked me "If Jesus was not resurrected, would we still be the Church?" I thought for a minute and then asked him "Is this a trick question? Because without the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there would be no point. No, there would be no Church." He laughed and said, "of course you are correct."

Without Good Friday and Easter Sunday, there would be no Christianity. Every year, we go through the events of Jesus' birth, and his life. We take the time to go through Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter to remember, once again all that God did through Jesus for the sake of the whole world.

I was more intentional about doing some things this Lent than I have been in years past. First, I signed up for the ELCA challenge for World Hunger. We were asked to choose three things each day to increase our overall health. I chose to get the daily meditation email, which I faithfully read and thought about every day. Next, I committed to walking the dog every day. I confess that I did not succeed in doing this every day. The cold rain kept me inside and warm. Gatsby doesn't care if he gets wet. His coat is so thick that he has to get really wet to even feel it. He goes out the doggy door whenever he has to do his business. Thirdly, I put aside \$2.50 a day for 40 days for World Hunger and sent them \$100.00. Another thing I did was to wear my black dress, leggings, clerical shirt, sweater, and my Converse high-tops for every service from Ash Wednesday through Good Friday, and I wore my black cassock (with 12 buttons) for every service. On the one hand, it was nice not to wonder what I was going to wear on Sunday. On the other hand, you all know how much I love wearing bright

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GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS

**Blessed are the
peacemakers, for they
will be called
children of God.**

— Matthew 5:9



**We will tell the next
generation the praise-
worthy deeds of the
LORD, his power, and the
wonders he has done.**

— Psalm 78:4

Be of Good Courage Continues.....

colors, and I got bored with it quickly. It's funny to me how just these small changes kept reminding me of this season and what it was about, intensifying my experience of the journey to the cross, as well as intensifying my anticipation of Easter Sunday.

Rejoice with the great cloud of witnesses that cross 21 centuries, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Death loses every time, as God brings life to us anew, even in the little deaths we suffer with loss, grief, pain, discouragement, betrayal, abandonment, disappointment – everything that feels like we are being diminished. God brings life out of our every bit of suffering, so that we may have life, and have it abundantly. God conquered death so that we might have life abundantly and eternally. I can't think of anything better than that.

And speaking of abundance, I am very excited about everything that is being planned for my installation, and I don't even know everything that is being planned for reception! I am excited to have friends, colleagues, and family coming to celebrate with us, and get to meet the little church with the big heart. But really this is OUR day of celebrating the ministry we have been doing together and will be doing for the foreseeable future, so you are the ones I most want to celebrate with on April 20. I hope you can all be here! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Pastor Ruth**

The Little Church That Can

Locally known as "The Little Church with a Big Heart," Gloria Dei Lutheran Church was given that moniker years ago and continues to live up to that description. Tucked away on Naples Plaza, one could almost miss it among the homes and businesses. But make no mistake, it is well known for its generosity to local charities.

Within the context of Easter and Lent, we are mindful in this time of reflection. Right now there is a lot in the world that is troublesome, but sometimes we under estimate how much each of us can do to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Government doesn't have to do it all.

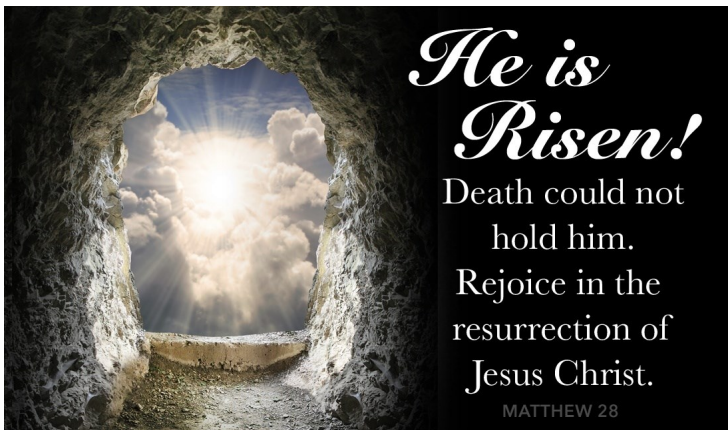
Through the generous donations by the community and the congregation, the Naples church continues to support Lydia House Women & Children's Shelter by donating used clothing, blankets and bedding.

Other community groups in need receive weekly deliveries of food, clothing, blankets, and gently used household goods. Through the Maritime Ministry they provide medical supplies, hygiene products, warm clothing, and knitted caps for the seafarers on the cargo ships.

During the 2023 holiday season, additional donations covered the cost of 150 Thanksgiving turkeys, food, clothing, and gifts for 85 families including 228 children.

The active women's group makes and donates blankets and quilts for the needy including the Long Beach Police Department outreach for children. Other recipients of their generosity include Fe y Esperanza, LSS (Lutheran Social Services), ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Relief, Lutheran World Relief and Wounded Warriors. Because we don't have administrative overhead expenses, like many of the larger charities, donations go directly to the recipients.

If you have gently-used clothing, blankets, household goods, or food, consider donating them to "The Little Church with a Big Heart." You can contact us by calling 562 438-0929 to arrange a pick up or drop off.



In her Easter message to the church, **Bishop Eaton** focuses on *three words* that describe what the women at the tomb experienced when the angel announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead: fear, amazement and being seized or possessed. “These three words really say something about the women, and I think about us and, most especially, about Easter...I think it's very important to take time to be a little amazed, to be standing in a different place, to have a sense of this awe and trembling before the Lord, and to allow ourselves to be possessed by the Spirit, who will give us power and courage in these times.”

CIVIC LIFE & FAITH — EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICAN

The ELCA is developing a **social statement on civic life and faith, the relationship of church and state**, and related matters, as called for by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Social statements are the ELCA's primary documents to address significant social issues. They are intended to aid reflection, shape conscience and set forth the ELCA's teaching and policy on the major social issues and questions of contemporary life. Social statements are developed by task forces, using an established process of study and widespread participation across the church to guide theological and moral deliberation.

At this time the task force encourages you to go online and study, then give feedback on a **draft version of the social statement**. Once you've reviewed the draft, you can also participate by filling out a survey, go online and complete the SurveyMonkey. Hearings are public gatherings where participants share their specific affirmations or concerns about a draft statement. To find out if your synod will host a hearing, or to learn how to host one, please email: civicsandfaith@elca.org

The feedback period will be open until

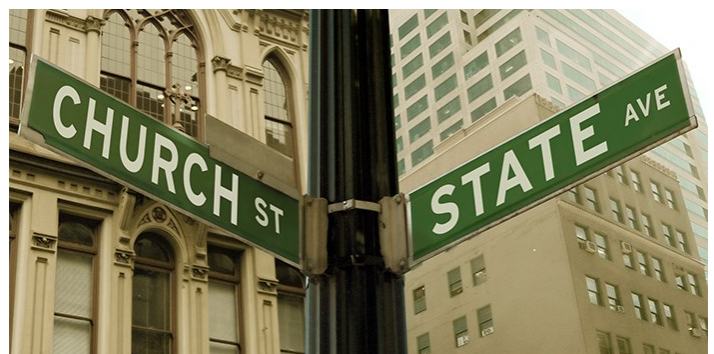
September 30, 2024. Again, to download a copy of the draft social statement, go online to the ELCA website.

In 2023, the task force put out a six-session study for public feedback. Thank you to everyone who participated and sent input. Continue ONLINE to read the report on the analysis of that public feedback, which informed the draft social statement and will continue to inform the task force's work.

**ELCA Study on Civic Life and Faith:
Responses to Study Sessions
Final Report — December 2023**
Rebecca Sims, PhD

If you have any questions, contact civicsandfaith@elca.org

The ELCA website offers more opportunities to learn more about the **task force members** and read a detailed **timeline** of the task force's work.



GLORIA DEI — CHURCH UPDATE

You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand. — Psalm 17:11

Our 'Little Church with a Big Heart' loves to celebrate! On Saturday, April 20 we will celebrate the installation of Pastor Ruth as our new pastor. The celebration will begin at 10:00 with the installation service followed by a luncheon at the **Marina Center in Seal Beach**. We look forward to a robust showing in our church with friends, family, and clergy as we start a new chapter in our family of faith. Bishop Bos will preside over the installation service and special music is planned. All members are invited to attend this very special celebration.

LSS: We received a lovely message from Wendy Rubio, thanking our church family for supporting their Easter celebration on March 23. In her message she said 'Thanks to your financial contributions, we were able to assist 55 families during this event, and 139 children who were provided with essential resources and a sense of community during these challenging times. Your commitment to our mission makes events like these possible, and we are truly grateful for your partnership. Together we are making a positive impact in the lives of families in our community'.

Our deliveries of food items and gently used clothing help to change the lives of the many people they serve. As you and your friends and family conduct their annual 'spring cleaning', please consider donating to LSS. Your donations are so important! Deliveries are made nearly every week and we'll be happy to arrange for a pick-up.

Fe y Esperanza: The members of Fe y Esperanza will be providing families with an Easter celebration following their Easter Sunday worship. This celebration includes their annual Easter egg hunt for the children. In March our church family contributed funds for their food distribution and to support their Easter celebration. Pastor Marta and her church family are so grateful for our support and look forward to seeing us at Pastor Ruth's installation celebration.

Long Beach Men's and Women's Shelter (Lydia House): Clothing items for men, women and children are always needed. A special 'Thank you' to Sandy Nelson for sorting clothing delivered to church, selecting the items most needed by the shelters, and then making the essential deliveries.

ELCW: In March the women assembled family-sized hygiene bags for the families at LSS, which were included in the distributions during the LSS Easter celebration. Join the ELCW women for their next meeting on April 11 for fellowship, lunch and a service project. All women, including friend and neighbors, are invited to attend.

Adult Education: We will have a short break in Adult Education while Pastor Ruth is on vacation in April. We will resume our enlightening discussions on April 28 at 9:00 a.m. Our weekly Wednesday morning discussions will also take a short break until May 1. Watch for more information!

*President's Update Continues.....***Coming Events:**

April 1 – Church Council via zoom at 7:00 p.m.

April 11 – ELCW at 11:00 a.m.

April 20 – Installation and luncheon celebration for Pastor Ruth, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

April 21 – Birthday Cake Sunday and Noisy offering

In March we had an unfortunate break-in at church. As a reminder, please use caution if you have a key to our church. Best practice is to relock a door as soon as you unlock it. This is for your safety as well as for the safety of Sandy and Pastor Ruth. A special thank you to Sandy, who not only cleaned up the mess that was made, but also became our resident 'detective' in finding the misplaced computer.

Thank you to all the people who so lovingly decorated our sanctuary for Easter! It's always so impactful seeing the beautiful lilies on the cross. Our sanctuary during the season of Easter is really something special. Invite your friends and family to a worship service so they too can experience the beauty of our sanctuary and celebrate this wonderful season of Easter with us.

Karen Como

Council President

God does not demand that we prove ourselves worthy of this love, but asks only that we receive it in faith. In so doing, we are truly "born of the Spirit." — John 3:6

AMAZING GRACE

Oh God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship





THE POWER OF PRAYER

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian (1906-1945) “Remember and give thanks for our siblings in Christ — past and present — who risk their lives for justice, the well-being of our neighbors and the truth of the gospel. Pray that their witness, courage and sacrifice will inspire and guide our pursuit of justice and peace in the world.”

Pray that we will each use our unique gifts and passions as disciples of Christ, called to share the gospel and serve our neighbors, and that we will trust the Spirit to equip, inspire and embolden us for doing God’s work in the world, together.

Ask the Spirit to make us purveyors of grace, joy and unexpected generosity, especially to people who live with worry, despair, turmoil or loneliness.

Lord, I want my life to be evidence of Your transforming power. May I live every day in the awareness that I have everything I need to accomplish whatever You want me to do !

Prayer Ventures for April 2024

We need to hear the gospel every day, because we forget it every day” (attributed to Martin Luther, 1483-1546). Pray that we might never grow weary of hearing the story of Easter or experiencing God’s love and mercy for the world in the gift of Jesus Christ.

Ask God to help us see the presence and influence of Jesus in our daily lives, our relationships and our conversations with neighbors, co-workers and siblings in Christ.

Pray for the people of Haiti, who have suffered multiple natural disasters in recent years and are now experiencing civil and political unrest and violence.

Lift up praise and thanksgiving to God, celebrating God’s promise of love, forgiveness and eternal life. “This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

Thomas wasn’t sure what to believe when the risen Jesus mysteriously appeared to him and the other disciples, but Jesus met his skepticism with love and understanding. Give thanks for God’s patience with us when we grapple with the mysteries of our faith, and for the Spirit having revealed truth to us through Scripture, prayer, reflection and our siblings in Christ.

Pray that the leaders of Russia and Ukraine and of Israel and Palestine will commit to their respective cease-fires and meet face-to-face to resolve their conflicts and create peaceful ways forward, ending the widespread human suffering and destruction that have impacted generations of their people.



APRIL 3

Happy Birthday Peggy Bockman

APRIL 8

Happy Birthday Lanae Caldwell

APRIL 13

Happy Birthday Beverly Pandora

APRIL 16

Happy Birthday Donna Malbon

APRIL 23

Happy Birthday David Fuller

Birthday Gift Redux

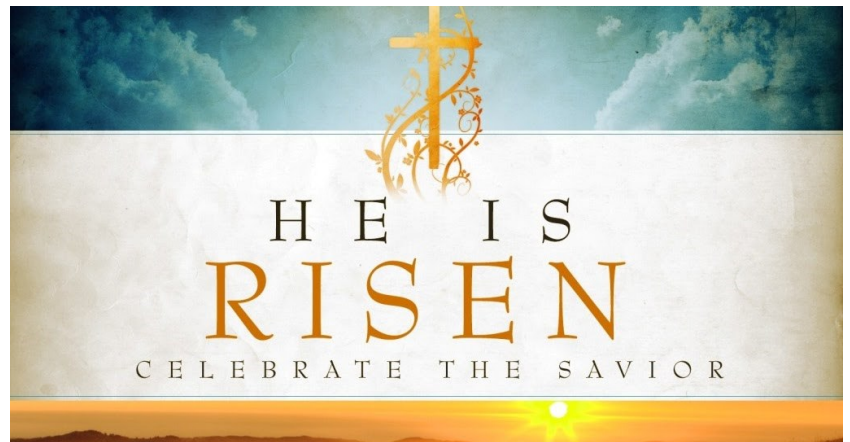
1 Instead of a traditional gift, many people ask family and friends to support their favorite charity or **donate** to a local place that is dear to their heart.

Warm Wishes Go Around

2 Give thanks, praise, or send a 'hello' to family, friends, neighbors or coworkers. Rather than buy a brand new box of greeting cards, save ones you receive and cut off the colorful front. Use it as a **postcard** or note and pass on a recycled warm greeting!

Reinvent A Circle of Love Everyday

3 Pray for others by using a **rosary** — caress each bead and lift up and name your tribe one by one! Pray for their health, a joyful heart, and that God will bless each person according to their unique gifts and needs!



CELEBRATIONS & PROCLAMATIONS

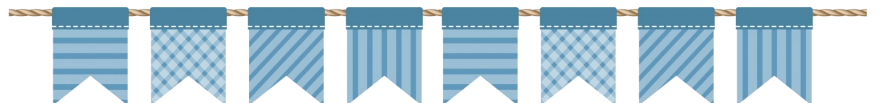


Mark your calendar! 10AM -2PM

Saturday, April 20

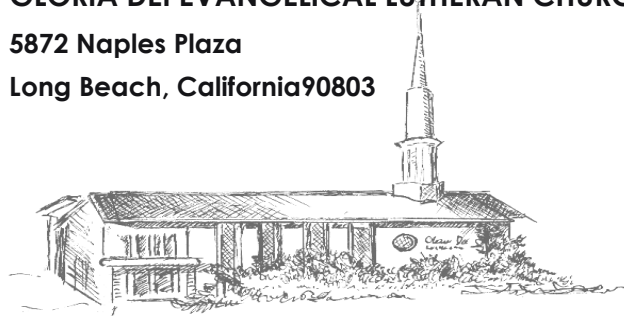
**Pastor Ruth Sievert's
INSTALLATION & LUNCHEON**

**Did you receive the EVITE invitation with details?
If not, contact pbockman@fullerton.edu — ASAP!**



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.....

