



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

BE OF GOOD COURAGE...

Our second Christmas Eve together was profoundly meaningful for me, and I hope for you as well. I loved everything about it, with the exception of my coughing. Your generosity never ceases to amaze me. Thank you for the most generous Christmas gift I have ever received. I look forward to what 2025 will be for this little church with the big heart. I look forward to the Spirit moving among us, and maybe challenging us to do new things, to reach out in new ways, to opening our hearts to new people. Because of Jesus the Christ, there is ALWAYS possibility in front of us. I pray we will all be joyously surprised. The following is the poem that I coughed through in my Christmas Eve sermon. I want to share it with you so that you might further see the beauty of it.

The Beauty We Bear by John L. Miller

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ... And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." (Luke 1:41-42, 45)

I remember her hands. It's been so long that the images run together. I cannot recall whether they were Meta's hands or maybe Grandma Lena's hands. Maybe it was both of them ... and then some.

I see two weathered, wrinkled hands, blue veins showing through shiny, thin flesh, nearly transparent on back. But that never mattered. As I remember, the hands always came together, cupping the cheeks of our children as we brought them through the door, flesh on flesh, loving delight, a sacrament of welcome celebrating the unblemished beauty of children's smiles.

I see those hands as I watch Elizabeth welcome Mary, the Mother of our Lord. I'm in the room as she hears Mary's voice calling her name. I see Elizabeth's startled face as the child in her womb kicks and turns.

And I see her as she bursts through the door and takes Mary's face in her hands and calls her blessed. I see ... and hold the moment in my heart, for it is resplendent with love's beauty, the beauty for which I long as Christmas draws near.

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ELCA Faith Practices

Urges members of this church to “put their faith into practice” by living out the promises contained in the liturgy for the Affirmation of Baptism. In that promise, we pledge as members of the body of Christ via baptism to:

- **live** among God's faithful people
- **hear** the word of God and **share** in the Lord's supper
- **proclaim** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed
- **serve** all people following the example of Jesus
- **strive** for justice and peace in all the earth



The fruit of faith is love, and the fruit of love is service.

~ Mother Theresa



COMMIT TO SERVANTHOOD IN 2025

Let us thankfully and continually celebrate the birth of Christ who fashioned us into a new creation in baptism. And, let us gladly heed the Wisdom of God, who encourages us to read and hear, and live His life-giving Gospel.

Pastor Message Continues....

Far from the desire to possess something, it is a desire to be possessed, swept up and enveloped in a loving beauty, like that of Mary and Elizabeth as they enfold each other in joyful arms.

Mary's beautiful heart, open and receptive to birth the beauty of God's great mercy from the darkness of her womb, Elizabeth blessed to see the Beauty she bears, they twirl together, arms around each other, caught up in the dance of the Love who chose them.

Watching them is a bit like being at Meta's doorstep again ... or Grandma Lena's, where Love's dance reached out and enchanted our hearts.

It's beautiful, all of it, the stories surrounding Jesus' birth, the stories of love's beauty in our own little lives. They're all the same story, of course—the story of the Great Love, who will stop at nothing in an unceasing effort to sweep us up into Love's own beauty.

Mary and Elizabeth, Meta and Lena and my kids ... and all the rest of us ... we're all part of it. And when we remember, when we tell ourselves the tales of Love's breathless beauty, the Beauty Mary birthed into our troubled world ... is born in us.

For Christ lies in our own hearts, ever waiting to be born anew. All of us are 'meant to be mothers of God,' Meister Eckhart wrote centuries ago, 'for God is always needing to be born.'

And the world has no greater need.

Faithfully, Pastor Ruth

CONGREGATION UPDATE



I wish it could be Christmas forever! Our church sanctuary is especially beautiful during the Season of Christmas. Now it's time to celebrate a calendar New Year together as we continue to care for each other and reach out into the community to serve those in need of our friendship.

Before we head into the 2025, I'd like to thank the members of our church family for sharing their gifts of decorating our sanctuary (and taking them down), for providing wonderful music to enhance our worship services, for delivering meaningful and thoughtful messages and sermons, and for the many ways our little church with a big heart provided for a brighter and more hopeful Christmas at Lutheran Social Services, Fe Y Esperanza, Lydia's House, the Men's and Women's Shelters, Maritime Ministries and, for the chickens, rooster and goats from the ELCW. Thank you for the cookies and cakes that so thoughtfully appear in the Fellowship Hall along with a good cup of coffee after worship. Thank you for the people that clean up the kitchen and take care of the altar flowers, open and close church and count the offerings every week. Thank you to our shepherds for the gift of keeping us connected during difficult times. Thank you to the ushers and Assisting Ministers within our church family.

Our friendships extend to so many during the holidays. We have received so many thank you notes and emails from our Mission partners. Their gratitude fills my heart! Our church family provided for so many other families in our community and gave them a happier Christmas.

Lutheran Social Services (LSS): We delivered many toys, food items and a check for \$500 in support of their Christmas party. 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. This time of year, warm, gently used jackets and blankets are in need and food supplies are always welcome!

Long Beach Men's and Women's Shelter: Our Narthex swelled with donations of jackets, hats, new warm socks and knitted hats for the Men's and Women's shelter. Many items for children were included in the delivery that Sandy Nelson made as she has done for many years. Thank you for your generosity!

ELCA Good Gifts: Many goats, honeybees, chickens and roosters were purchased through ELCA Good Gifts from our church family and friends in support of families in various parts of the world. If they name the goats or pigs, I hope they might call them 'Gloria'!

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Adult Education: Our adult education was on hold during the holidays and beginning on January 5th we will resume our study and discussion of the book. On Wednesday's at 10:00 a.m. join us for as we read 'American Heresy, The Roots and Reach of White Christian Nationalism' by John Fanestil.

Annual Congregational Meeting: Please join us on January 19th for our annual Congregational meeting as we share the details of the proposed spending plan and enjoy lunch together following worship. We joyfully share the love of the Lord with those we serve, and we continue to demonstrate 'God's Work Our Hands' all year long. We are a truly blessed family of believers!

Upcoming Events:

January 5th – Adult Education resumes at 9:00 a.m.

January 8th - Church Council at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. (Please note this date change)

January 9th -ELCW meeting at 11:00 a.m.

January 19th – Noisy offering, Birthday Cake Sunday & Congregation Meeting

Because of your gifts of love, concern for each other and most importantly your prayers, Christmas really is forever at Gloria Dei! Blessings for a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Karen Como, Council President

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



Supporting our partnership with Fe y Esperanza: Their annual **Los Posadas** celebration was held the week before Christmas. Pastor Jeffrey and Sandy Nelson joined their celebration as small gifts of toys were given to the children in celebration of Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem. Over 100 children attended the celebration. Our church family provided gift certificates in the amount of \$500.

BLESSINGS IN ABUNDANCE



How the Eucharist Changes Us

How we are being made one by this table of thanksgiving we call the Eucharist in spite of diverse administration and intention? When so much is broken in this world, how does mutual recognition of the promise of Christ's presence at the table promote healing? When food insecurity and scarcity seem to overwhelm many people, how might the mystery and meaning in the meal assuage our common needs? These and other questions are great conversation starters with our pastor.

“ For the Sacrament of Holy Communion has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that they are made one with all others.”

— Martin Luther, 1519

We are a church that values and practices accompaniment. Accompaniment is **walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality.**

Through long-term mutual relationships close to home and worldwide, we participate in God's mission together, share joys and sorrows, pray together, share our strengths and collaborate on mutually beneficial ministries. Together—with our global companions, partners and neighbors—we accomplish more than we can as individuals. ~ ELCA



— National Day of Racial Healing —

JANUARY 21 - (NDORH) is an opportunity for people, organizations, and communities to call for racial healing, bring people together in their shared humanity and take action together to create a more just and equitable world.

NDORH was created by W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2017, building on the work and learnings of the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) initiative, to support a national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism.

NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE — JANUARY 20



Join **Leadership Long Beach...**

- **Cleaning & Organizing:** Support Christian Outreach in Action's service space down town.
- **Letter for Older Adults:** Support older adults in Long Beach with a thoughtful letter!
- **Wetlands Restoration:** Help restore the Los Cerritos Wetlands
- **Host a Meal for a Shelter:** Join the LB Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in hosting a meal at a local shelter.
- **Beach Cleanup:** Join Algalita at Junipero Beach!

LEARN MORE: Explore the Leadership Long Beach website:

[leadershiplb.org](https://www.leadershiplb.org)

Celebrate the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Join Leadership Long Beach for the 16th annual **MLK Day of Service** benefitting Long Beach! This year, we're partnering with California Volunteers, Office of the Governor, a statewide agency that engages Californians in service, volunteering, and civic action to tackle our State's most pressing challenges while mobilizing all Californians to volunteer and serve in their communities.

Please share this opportunity with family, friends, and community groups to join us in

**"Making it a Day On,
Not a Day Off" for Long Beach.**

Creating Leadership Programs For Over 30 Years

HISTORY

"There were eight of us who came together in parking lot conversations in 1987. Community leaders representing widely diverse areas: education, business, media, law, social services, public relations and nonprofits. The conversations centered around the growing diversity of our City and the need to unite our neighborhoods and communities through a program that supported the individual development of ethical, informed and connected leaders. I so vividly recall WHY Leadership LB was founded. We were united in the belief that every person is a caretaker at heart, we (must) have the will to reach out and make the life of even ONE other person better, and a core belief that every human person has value and the power and potential to bring healing to others. **Leadership Long Beach** has had an impact on so many lives while helping make this community a better place to live."

~ **Gina Rushing Maguire,**
Leadership Long Beach Founder

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS



SAVIOR OF THE NATIONS, COME. MAKE YOUR HOME HERE IN US. FEED US WITH YOUR LOVE, THAT OUR FAITH SHINE EVER NEW AND OUR LIVES REVEAL YOUR LIGHT.

COMMIT TO SERVANTHOOD IN 2025

GOD CREATED YOU TO BE UNIQUE AND HAS GIVEN YOU TALENTS AND GIFTS TO USE IN SERVING OTHERS. IF YOU ASK, HE'LL LEAD YOU.

- Keep your eyes and heart open to those around you.
- Listen to someone who's different from you. You may have neighbors of varying ethnicities, ages, backgrounds, goals, desires—beautiful people you can learn from.
- Serve your own family.
- Acknowledge a harm you have caused; build a bridge to the person you harmed.
- Pray for someone you might not care for.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 6 — Morgan Adams
- 11 — Cameron Chinn
Olivia Adams
- 14 — Edith Cheoros
- 15 — Karen Como
Sally Oberjurge
- 19 — Jean O'Connell
- 28 — Stephanie Siemer

Rejoicing in Him daily relieves us of coveting, leaving us contented. May Jesus redeem our heart's desires, making us rich toward God.

~1 Timothy 6:6



What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

~ Micah 6:8



MAKING IT A DAY ON, NOT A DAY OFF

MLK Day of Service starts with breakfast festivities at MLK Park for the kick-off event that brings us together as a community that will collectively serve all over Long Beach. Invite friends & enjoy pancakes together, and learn about this annual event's impact!

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

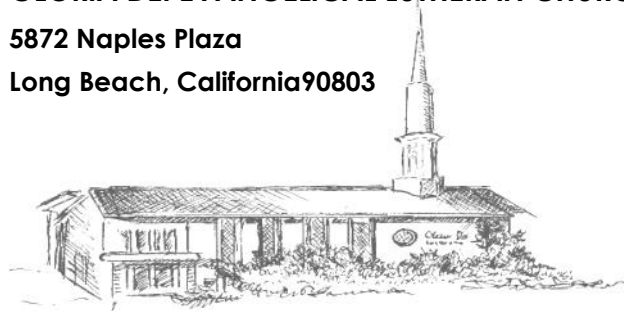


CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING @ 7 PM WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AFTER CHURCH SERVICE ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 19

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**5872 Naples Plaza
Long Beach, California 90803**



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(2 Corinthians. 5:17-19)

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.

**He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what
God has done from beginning to end..... ~ Ecclesiastes 3:11**

