When I meet people for the first time I often feel a bit reluctant to tell them I’m a pastor. The question of occupation always comes up, of course, so I can’t really dodge it. Nevertheless, the question, “So what do you do?” makes me a bit uneasy. Don’t get me wrong, I’m proud of what I do and still believe firmly that I was called by God to do it. I’m not ashamed in any way of my faith or any aspect of it. I feel better equipped than most to explain why I believe what I believe and to share how Christ enlivens and enlightens me. The problem, though, is that the minute people learn I’m a pastor the conversation almost always veers onto one of two predictable paths, both of which are, ironically about faith.

One path is The Discussion About What I Don’t Believe. This takes several forms. Sometimes the person will want to tell me why they don’t believe in God (sometimes with the implication that, because I do believe, I’m naïve, uninformed or not all that bright.) Sometimes the person will assert that “since we can’t really know” then agnosticism is the only sensible philosophical path. Sometimes the person will want to catalogue all the historical atrocities ever perpetrated in the name of religion. They’re often surprised that I not only do not rise to defend atrocious acts from the Church’s history but that I can add quite a few to their repertoire. I should also note that the god the unbeliever often describes is such a cartoonish caricature that I wouldn’t believe in him, either.

If you ever find yourself in a discussion like this, it’s important to remember that unbelief is also a kind of faith and has to be just as rigorously maintained and intellectually defended as belief. In some ways it’s harder because it is a defense of something negative and, while it’s not possible to definitively prove the existence of God, it’s even harder to disprove God’s existence. It gets even more difficult for them when talking about Jesus, an actual historical figure whose impact on history is immutable and undeniable... although, surprisingly, there are a few folks so desperate to be godless that they even try to assert that Jesus never actually existed.
Thoughts Along the Way Continues...

The second path the discussion can take is The Discussion of What I Believe, although this often would more accurately be described as The Particulars of What I Believe vs. The Particulars of What You Believe. This can often be more fun and interesting as long as it remains a real discussion, but it can quickly descend into a purgatory of tension and anger if people start accusing each other of heresy or blasphemy or “proof-texting” each other. Also, it’s easy to fall into the trap of argument and counterargument with no real listening. Two monologues do not a dialogue make.

The point of all this, the reason I don’t like to admit my profession right off the bat, is that these are the kinds of discussions best had between people who already know each other a bit and who have developed some level of connection. Most ideally they will even have some level of trust. So it’s not usually the ideal topic to start getting to know someone. Before I was a pastor not one person ever asked me about my faith right off the bat. That discussion came up later when we got to know each other and usually flowed naturally. “No, sorry, I can’t go with you, I’ve got a thing at Church... hey, why don’t you come with me? It’s a really great bunch of people. You’d love ‘em... and I know they’d get a kick out of you!”

"Companions as we are in this work with you, we beg you, please don’t squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us." --2 Corinthians 6:1 (The Message)

Faith is the center of our lives. Ideally it is the wellspring for how we live and move in the world. People should see it in our actions, hear it in our speech, sense it in the graciousness of our persons. Our faith should play out naturally in our relationships.

“Proclaim the Gospel at all times. When necessary use words.”
– St. Francis of Assisi

I’m glad to talk about my faith. I want people to know Christ and I pray the Spirit will use me to help make the introduction. But I need to know them better than most first impressions allow in order to find the best way to make that introduction. And they need to know I really care about them—about who they are and what they do and what they’re about. And that takes time. That takes a relationship.

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve

"Roughly one out of five survey respondents reported that they seldom or never encounter people who don’t share their religion, and a similar proportion said the same for race." – Public Religion Research Institute Survey
Lent is a good time—40 days—to focus on how we are loving God, neighbor, and self, and to develop new habits that enrich our lives and relationships. Some ideas to consider & act on. This Lent, you’re invited to join with fellow members of the ELCA World Hunger’s 40 DAYS OF GIVING. Experience how the grace of Christ moves us to engage in transformative works of love around the world as God call us into the ministry of hope, liberation and restoration for our world.

Love God —

· **Try** to find 5 ways every day that you see God at work in the world around you
  - Note—the Spirit moves in mysterious and often subtle ways.
  - See how often you can see God’s fingerprints on “secular” or everyday things
  - Can you hear a phrase of music or a song lyric that speaks the Word of God to you and carry it with you through the day?

· **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?”

· **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 your neighbor —

· **Practice** blessing those around you. This doesn’t just mean saying, “God bless you.” Frederick Buechner wrote: “In the biblical sense, if you give me your blessing, you irreversibly convey into my life not just something of the beneficent power and vitality of who you are, but something also of the life-giving power of God, in whose name the blessing is given.” That may mean saying something like, “May God give you strength today,” or “Let your day be filled with laughter.” Be creative with it.

· **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.

· **Mind**—
  - Read or listen to audio books
  - Converse – talk to people about interesting things.
  - Declutter—this is a physical thing that pays off with peace of mind. One way to do it is called 40 bags in 40 days. You simply remove one bag of excess stuff from your home during each day of Lent.

· **Spirit**—the traditional disciplines of Lent are prayer, fasting, repentance, and giving
  - Try praying out loud. You may be surprised at what you hear when your own words of prayer come back to you.
  - Try praying at a set time every day—or maybe three times a day.
  - Keep a prayer journal
  - Walk the labyrinth. There is one at Christ Lutheran Church. This is a simple meditative practice that can take you on a marvelous introspective journey.
CONGREGATION & COUNCIL UPDATE

Brief summary of our Gloria Dei 2018 Accomplishments:

- Completed and dedicated the Kitchen (long term project)
- Created and filled a new committee position of “publicist” for the church
- Updated the front marque
- Added a chalk tray to the prayer wall
- Remodeled the upstairs women’s bathroom
- Upgraded the men’s bathroom upstairs in the facility
- Installed new windows and new kitchen appliances in the Seal Beach property
- Repaired roof ducting to prevent leaks
- Created a YouTube video, using a question and answer format to promote our church and increase visibility (Special thanks to Pastor Steve and Fernando Chavez)
- Hosted the New Life Band and our ELCA mission partner in China (We continue to support both these efforts through our mission giving)
- Donated handmade quilts and blankets to the police department for on-the-spot comfort to victims of crime
- Donated 10 turkeys to Fe Y Esperanza Church in South Gate for their Thanksgiving mission work

If you would like further details of our accomplishments go to; gdlclb.org and select ‘about us’ and then select ‘finance’.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

I would like to give a big shout out to all our council members who volunteer their time and faithfully attend meetings, represent us at various assemblies, and work to keep our little church running smoothly. Please note that Barbara White, Candy Wood, Edie Graber, Nancy Sansum, Ruth Montague, and Phil Como serve on committees though they are not on council. Without their help our church and our worship service/events would be a different experience.

Council Chairs and committee members are an integral part of our church community:

**Property:** Barbara White and Galen Anderson co-chairs, S. Anderson, K. Como; **Finance:** Beth Rotsel chair, M. Bittle, G. Bockman, T. Karkut, R. Siemer, B. White; **Counting**, subcommittee of finance: M. Bittle, K. Caldwell, K. Como, D. Kahakauwila, T. Karkut, B. Pandora, S. Siemer, B. White; **Hospitality/Invitation:** Marilyn Bittle chair, K. Como, E. Graber, T. Karkut, N. Sansum, C. Wood; **Worship:** Phil Como chair, M. Bittle, P. Huggard, R. Montague, N. Sansum, C. Wood; **Shepherds:** Margie Brown chair; **Congregational Health:** Robert Siemer chair, M. Bittle, K. Como, T. Karkut; **Mission Support:** Vacant; **Gov’t Ministry, South Coast Interfaith Council:** Marilyn Bittle; **ELWC:** Margie Brown; **Publicist:** Victoria Gammer; **Newsletter Editor:** Peggy Bockman; **Webmaster:** Robert Siemer

Our council committee chairs and committee members share responsibilities. Please take a few moments the next time you see one of these people to thank them for all they do to help us run and represent our church community.

- Gary Bockman wins extra praise and a special Thank You for being our Treasurer for over 15 years (he cannot remember the year he started). He attends council meetings to keep us current in our financial health, keeps our books, evaluates changes in insurance coverage, provides the year-end financial summary, and develops/presents to council a possible spending plan for the new fiscal year. Gary also serves as an usher, greeter, and acolyte.
Galen and Sandi Anderson seem to be at church daily, working on property needs. Whether it be changing light bulbs (we are moving toward greener LED bulbs) creating and installing the fabulous banners, or doing light construction, they are on the job.

Beth Rotsel is currently putting together an audit committee for our annual financial audit. Beth also recruits members to input the Sunday donation and make the bank deposit. Twyla Karkut serves as the church financial secretary and monitors our giving.

Marilyn Bittle, as the chair of hospitality is responsible for all of our luncheon meeting menus, creates the sign-up sheet, sets the tables in the hall and decorates. Then she leads the cleanup. She has a committee to help with this, but she is responsible for organizing these events. She also serves as our connection and also has served on the board for the South Coast Interfaith Council.

Phil Como ensures the sanctuary adornments are appropriate to the season of the church year, communion is prepared and schedules the cantor, acolytes, and lectors for each service. This involves many people and close coordination with the pastor and the music director.

Margie Brown leads our shepherd program. She receives notice via the pastor of families who need prayers, an extra card, or some form of outreach. She then passes this information on to the shepherd staff. She also is Vice President of church council and President of the ELWC Women’s group who meet the 3rd Thursday of the month. These women raise money for various projects including Wounded Warriors and Final Salute (assistance for women veterans with health issues). They provide hygiene kits to LSS, pack Maritime ministry boxes for Christmas, help support Fe Y Esperanza ministry, and make quilts and blankets for victims of crime.

Bob Siemer keeps in touch with the overall health of our congregation and will generate surveys to the congregation if we are looking at a change that might impact our Sunday service. He doubles as the tech guy for computer glitches, backups, new software installation for computers and maintains the church website. He also is the church secretary taking minutes at council and congregational meetings. He’s a resourceful volunteer with many skills and talents.

Next month we will take a look at all the other volunteers who contribute to a myriad of worship services/events. In closing, a prayer for good health and happiness to all who enter our doors.

Rejoice in GOD’s blessings. Stephanie Siemer, Council President Email: ssiemer@charter.net
GLORIOUS WOMEN

After 67 years in business, Oberjuerge Auto Repair on Redondo near Broadway, closed. Gloria Dei Member Sally Oberjuerge’s son is retiring after carrying on the family legacy of service in Long Beach. “Back in the day, there were 10 service stations along Second Street between Bayshore Drive and Livingston—the Belmont Shore business district in the 1950s and ‘60s,” recounted family matriarch Sally. In 1952, at 21 years old, Al Oberjuerge was the youngest businessman on 2nd Street. The original gas station relocated in 1969 to 2nd & PCH on the corner where In ‘N’ Out Burger is now. In 1983, when Long Beach resident George Deukmejian became governor, he appointed Al to the State Board of Auto Repair. The governor was a good customer!

Sally’s husband died in 1995, but not before they instilled an “above and beyond’ work ethic in their children—Paul, Alan, Mark, Laura, and Lynn—all have worked for the family business at some point, with Alan making it his career. Of the 11 grandchildren, six worked in the garage during their college years! Chris Garrett, CEO and founder of TrustedGut Brewery, aware of the property’s history and the Oberjuerge reputation said, “We plan to pay homage to the family and this community. The tradition of serving the neighborhood fits perfectly with our goals.”

Source: Grunion Gazette

As most church members know, long-time member Martie Ramm Engle has spent the majority of her life as a professional performer, director and choreographer. She is currently in production for her next musical, Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Pirates of Penzance set to open on April 26 at Golden West College. Beyond that, she has three more productions lined up which will keep her busy until May of 2020. Martie will be a guest artist/director for the Cal State Fullerton Theater Arts department where she will direct a full-scale production of Disney’s Beauty and the Beast. That production will open in October, 2019. Soon after, she will direct and choreography the wild and entertaining musical The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas (November, 2019) followed by an encore presentation of Monty Python’s Spamalot in May, 2020 both at Golden West College.

Martie has appeared on Broadway (Evita w/Patti LuPone), in London (A Chorus Line), in several national tours of the US (A Chorus Line, Annie, Show Boat), and in many regional theater productions including twice as Charity in Sweet Charity and in productions of I Love My Wife, They’re Playing Our Song, The Mikado, Murder by the Book, Joan in The Guys and as Muriel in Dirty Rotten Scoundrels. Most recently, Martie starred as “A” in a play written for her titled Famous for What?

Martie is also an award-winning director and choreographer and has directed professional theatrical productions throughout the United States including Sister Act, Evita, Hairspray, Macbeth, A Piece of My Heart, Mary Poppins, Monty Python’s SPAMALOT, Noises Off, Romeo and Juliet, Boeing-Boeing, Irving Berlin’s White Christmas, Legally Blonde, A Chorus Line; NINE, Don’t Dress for Dinner, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers, Grease, The Secret Garden, A Streetcar Named Desire, Guys and Dolls, The Children’s Hour, Beyond Therapy, The Laramie Project, The Fantasticks, The Importance of Being Earnest, Cabaret and many musical revues...just to name a few.

Currently, Martie is a Professor/Director/Choreographer in the Theater Arts department and twice served as Academic Senate Chair representing faculty and serving students at Golden West College in Huntington Beach.

A big thank you to Gloria Dei members who attend her various productions. She loves the feedback and questions she gets from those folks and appreciates their continuing support.
During Lent, you’re invited to join with fellow members of the ELCA World Hunger’s 40 DAYS OF GIVING. Our congregation goal is $2 per day — special collection offering every Sunday!

1 — Friday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. Mtg.@ 1:00 PM
- D.A. Mtg @ 6:00 PM

2 — Saturday

3 — SUNDAY
- ** 40 Days of Giving Donation
- Transfiguration of Our Lord
- Adult Education @ 9 AM
- Worship @ 10:30 AM
- Holy Communion

O.A. Mtg. @ 7:00 PM

4 — Monday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM

COUNCIL MTG @ 7 PM

5 — Tuesday
- Adult Education @ 10AM & 7 PM
  Happy Birthday Ranae Wright

6 — ASH Wednesday

SOUP SUPPER @ 6PM... LENTEN SERVICE @ 7:30 PM

7 — Thursday
- Happy Birthday Frank Boychuck

8 — Friday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. Mtg.@ 1:00 PM
- D.A. Mtg @ 6:00 PM

9 — Saturday
- MEMORIAL SERVICE—11AM JANEENE CONTER
  Happy Birthday Paul Andre White

Day light savings begins… SPRING FORWARD!

10 — SUNDAY
- ** 40 Days of Giving Donation
- Adult Education @ 9 AM
- Worship @ 10:30 AM
- Holy Communion
- Hunger Envelope

O.A. Mtg. @ 7:00 PM

11 — Monday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM

NAPLES GARDEN CLUB @ 1:00 PM
Happy Birthday Victoria Gammer

12 — Tuesday
- Adult Education @ 10AM & 7 PM

13 — Wednesday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM

JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM
Walt & Erika Eidam Anniversary

14 — Thursday

15 — Friday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM
- A.A. Mtg.@ 1:00 PM
- D.A. Mtg @ 6:00 PM

16 — Saturday

LSS WORKPARTY
10 AM-Noon, 1611 Pine Avenue
[9:30 AM Carpool Available]

17 — SUNDAY
- ** 40 Days of Giving Donation
- Adult Education @ 9 AM
- Worship @ 10:30 AM
- Holy Communion
- Noisy Offering

O.A. Mtg. @ 7:00 PM

18 — Monday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM

19 — Tuesday
- Adult Education @ 10 AM & 7 PM
Happy Birthday Chris Wacker

20 — Wednesday
- Men’s A.A. @ 7-8:00 AM
Happy Birthday Mark Engle

21 — Thursday

22 — Friday

23 — Saturday

24 — SUNDAY
- ** 40 Days of Giving Donation
- Adult Education @ 9 AM
- Worship @ 10:30 AM
- Holy Communion

25 — Monday
- Happy Birthday Beth Rotsel

26 — Tuesday

27 — Wednesday
- Happy Birthday Bret Engle

28 — Thursday

29 — Friday

30 — Saturday

31 — SUNDAY
- ** 40 Days of Giving Donation
- Adult Education @ 9 AM
- Worship @ 10:30 AM & Holy Communion
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)