

Reverend Steven Beckham, Pastor  
5872 Naples Plaza Long Beach, California 90803-5044  
Website: [www.gdlclb.org](http://www.gdlclb.org) Telephone: 562.438.0929



## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

As I write this it is evening on the third day of Christmas. Earlier today was family time—opening gifts and eating our traditional Christmas breakfast of eggs scrambled with cream cheese, little smokies, bacon, chocolate waxy donuts, and orange cinnamon rolls. Last night we had the best rib roast ever, courtesy of P.A., our son-in-law, along with Yorkshire pudding, and for dessert Brooke and P.A. made a Bouche de Noel that was to die for.

I love Christmas. All twelve days of it. I love the way the house is decorated. I love the music. I love the giving. I love the tree. Most of all, though, I love it that this is a time when our family comes together. We make time for each other, not out of obligation, but because we all genuinely like each other. We love each other, yes, but more than that, we really like each other. And I think the reason we have always liked each other so much is that we've always accepted each other just as we are.

So much of the joy we've experienced as a family has been around the table. There is something about eating together that makes the conversation flow.

I've been reading a fascinating book called *After Jesus Before Christianity: A Historical Exploration of the First Two Centuries of Jesus Movements* written by Erin Vearncombe, Brandon Scott, and Hal Taussig for The Westar Christianity Seminar. Westar is the same organization of scholars who brought us the controversial Jesus Seminar a few years ago, so I'm reading it ...carefully. These scholars are highlighting the enormous diversity and variety among the various communities who called themselves Jesus followers—they rarely used the word Christian to describe themselves, and those who used it to talk about them often used it as a pejorative.

Despite significant differences in their practices and in how they understood Jesus and his teaching, most of these groups had a few central things in common. Most of them understood themselves to be engaged in a movement of resistance to the Roman Empire. Rome ran on violence from top to bottom, so these groups resisted with nonviolence. And humor. They resisted by seeing themselves not as subjects of the Roman Empire, but rather as citizens in the Empire of God. One of their chief acts of resistance—and almost all the groups did this—was to meet together every week for a meal. Some of the Jesus-follower groups, in fact, were basically supper clubs!

At these meals they could enjoy each other's company freely. They were all equal in status—there was neither slave nor free, Jew nor gentile. They would sing. They would dance. Yes, they danced. The Empire believed that they existed solely in order to enrich the Empire one way or another. They themselves, on the other hand, believed that God had created them to enjoy life in all its fullness (John 10:10). So they would gather to share a meal, to share stories about Jesus, and to enjoy each other's company. Gathering together, enjoying each other's company, and encouraging each other were acts of resistance against an Empire that saw them as mere tools. In an empire that systematically disintegrated the families of the poor through slavery, these Jesus followers formed new families. In an empire that didn't regard them as fully human, they found ways to be humane and reinforce each other's sense of dignity and humanity.

...Continued on page 2

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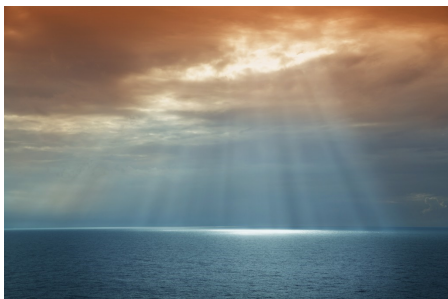
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**MAY YOUR WALLS  
KNOW JOY,  
MAY EVERY ROOM  
HOLD LAUGHTER, AND  
MAY EVERY WINDOW  
OPEN TO GREAT  
POSSIBILITY!**

~ MARY ANNE RADMACHER



**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.**



## Thoughts Along the Way Continues...

It occurred to me that the worship of these early communities of the Anointed would have looked a lot more like our family's Christmas feasting than what we typically do in church. And that got me to wondering...what would church be like if we were starting over from scratch? If we didn't have liturgy and a building and hymnals, if all we had was a desire to be together, to share each other's company and tell stories about Jesus, how would we do it? If we did find a space to meet in, how would we arrange it? What if we had tables and chairs instead of pews? What if there were no walls between the kitchen and the gathering place? What if all the furnishings were movable so that they could be put aside to make room for dancing?

What would it be like if we simply focused on following Jesus and loving and supporting each other and welcoming others to the feast? Wouldn't that be a good way to resist all the forces of modern life that try to dehumanize us?

We are entering a new year and all indications are that the Church is entering a new era. No one knows what that's going to look like. There's an old saying: I do not know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future. I wonder, though...maybe God in Christ isn't so much holding the future as leading the way into it and inviting us to dance along. Maybe, as we have said in some of our songs, in Christ there is a table set for all.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year,

*Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve*

## HUMILITY AND SACRIFICE—THE TRUE NATURE OF LOVE

How do we learn to give sacrificial love? Start by presenting yourself anew to God in prayer. Ask for His direction for you personally. He 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've caused; build a bridge to the person you've harmed.
- Give time and money to a ministry that's close to your heart.
- Pray for someone you might not care for.

The ideas are as endless as God's heart. God has shown the way by His own example and has given us His Spirit to empower us. How will you 'wash' someone's feet today?

~ Anne Cetas, *Our Daily Bread* author



## CONGREGATION MEETING SUNDAY — JANUARY 23

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.

Greetings & Happy New Year:

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 New Year together.

Before we head into the 2022, 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 Shelter, Maritime Ministries and, for the chickens, rooster and pig from the ELCW. Thank you for the cookies and fruitcake 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 for the gift of keeping us connected by providing our worship online when our members are unable to attend worship in person. Thank you to the ushers and greeters and for the shepherds within our church family.

A special thank you to Sandy Nelson, our family cheerleader who so thoughtfully prepares signs and decorations as reminders for ways to provide gifts for others and who takes care of so many things for our members and friends. Another special thank you to Peggy Bockman who prepares our wonderful newsletter every month!

As we head into the New Year, please remember to join us on January 23<sup>rd</sup> for our annual Congregational meeting as we review and approve our spending plan for 2022 (thank you Gary Bockman for all of your financial preparation and accounting expertise throughout the year). During "normal" times we would be enjoying lunch together, but with COVID still not under control, we will hold our meeting in the sanctuary immediately following worship. The meeting will be short!

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

## WELCOME NEW MEMBER—JEAN O'CONNELL

When looking back at my conversation with Jean O'Connell, I realized that I had just gotten a verbal “cliff notes” on parrots, cockatiels, Freixenet Cordon Negro, Western Ireland's Connemara Ponies, The Twelve Bens mountains, The Burren (rocky land), and Kilemore Abbey with its Victorian Walled Garden.

Jean found her way to Naples Island, and our “Little Church With the Big Heart,” with a background in all of these things. Somehow I got the impression that this soft-spoken modest lady wasn't too sure that she would have too much to write about. She was wrong.

Originally from Claremont, California, she moved north after high school to attend Chico State College, where she met her first husband. He was from Sonoma so she moved there after they were married. “When I first went to Northern California it felt like a different state and I liked it,” she recalled with enthusiasm in her voice. They did a lot of rugged camping together and somewhere along the way they adopted a young Blue-Fronted Amazon Parrot named Papaya, who is now 36-years-old and was one of the three birds I immediately heard when she answered the phone. Along with Papaya she has two cockatiels named Mister Poop and Butters. “I had no say so on those names,” she said. “They are all inherited family birds. When my husband and I divorced he had custody of Papaya and after he died, Papaya came to live with me.

She worked for Gloria Ferrer Cava Winery. Cava means ‘cellar’ in Catalan to describe their sparkling wines made using the traditional Spanish “Champagne method,” meaning the second fermentation takes place inside the bottle. The Freixenet or “black bottle bubbly” Cordon Negro is a family-owned company dating back to 1861 in Catalunya. The Ferrers winemaking family came to the United States from Barcelona and started their vineyard and winery in Sonoma. “It's a Champagne,” she said adding “but can't be technically called champagne since it is not from France, but it is a sparkling wine.” Jean worked in the marketing department and arranged scheduling vineyard tours and rides in a hot air balloon. “I went up in the balloon once but, because I don't like heights and the basket sides only come up to your waist, I just sat down in the basket the whole time,” she said with a laugh. She left the winery around the time of her divorce. “Because I had college units and I liked kids, I became a pre-school teacher,” she said. She worked there for six years and then some good friends from Chicago set her up on a date with Bob, her future husband. Although Bob was never married and retired, Jean charmed him and turned a 57-year-old bachelor into a married man. They were happily married for 16 years before Bob died from lung cancer two years ago. “It was such a shock,” she said adding, “He never drank, smoked or took any drugs. He worked out every day of his life. My daughter called him her second Dad.”

They had a wonderful life and Ireland's west coast area of Galway played a big part. “Bob came from a big Irish family and took a trip to that area when he was 23. He lived there for awhile and loved it, so he bought a small cottage there,” she explained. They visited the cottage on a regular basis and stayed there for four months at a time. “The people are so down to earth and we lived in a very rural area. Most of the people are sheep farmers and a lot of Europeans came to hike there, especially Germans,” she explained. Because they lived in the valley of the Twelve Bens Mountains, she said, “People would knock on our door to ask for directions and advice.” We got to know a lot of people and about the area. Their cottage caretakers raised Connemara Ponies to auction periodically.

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**New Member Article Continues...**

Known in Irish as the Capaillin Chonamara, the Connemara pony is a breed of horse unique to Ireland, native to the rugged west. It is officially a native breed but its origins are mainly from Scandinavia and Spain. In 795 AD, an earlier version of the breed was among the many things the Vikings brought with them to Ireland, but it wasn't until the Spanish Armada ran aground in 1588 that the Connemara pony was formed. When the Spanish sailors of the armada unexpectedly found themselves in Galway in 1588, their Andalusian horses were set loose and began to breed with the wild Scandinavian ponies in the Connemara Mountains and, voila, a new breed was born. It is said that they inherited the best qualities of both.

Within hours of their cottage is The Burren region. The Burren National Park and Geopark has a combination of features making it unique in Europe. "It is spectacular to tour," she said. "I liked to visit the Kylemore Abbey because it was built in Victorian times and has Ireland's largest walled gardens." Built in late 1800's it is a top tourist attraction and has housed Benedictine nuns since 1920.

"Because my husband was a lapsed Catholic, he was afraid to die. I felt so bad for him but in the end he did ask for a priest and a Catholic funeral." "I see a difference between people who are dying and have a spiritual connection and they seem happier, and those without it don't seem that way. The happiest people I've met have some sort of spiritual connection," she said, adding, "It feels very natural to have that."

Jean sold their Sonoma house and moved to Long Beach recently to be near her daughter Nicole. "I love it here in Long Beach and especially Naples. I can walk everywhere I need to go," she said. "I was walking around the neighborhood and thought that it (Gloria Dei) was such a cute church but it was closed then because of Covid. "When my aunt was visiting she said she wanted to go because she was a life-time Lutheran. I immediately said yes and we visited for the first time in June. The people were wonderful and I like Pastor Steve. I wanted a church where I would know everyone. I enjoy the Bible study and think he is a great teacher and the women's group has given me a lot of new friends.

~ Vicki Gammer, *Glorious Dei author*

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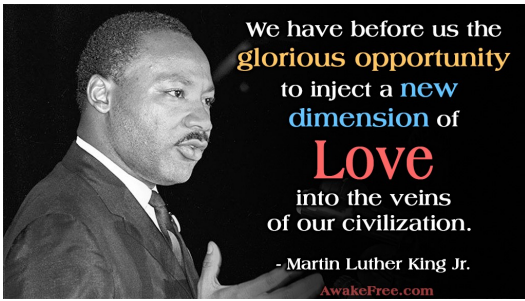
## GLORIA DEI FINANCIAL UPDATE

As I write this in late December we are waiting to compile the final financial numbers for 2021. As of November 30 expenses exceeded revenue by \$9,281 for the first 11 months of 2021. Over the last five years annual revenue has dropped nearly \$50,000 and although expenses are lower too, the drop in revenue has put our finances in the red for 2021. December is usually a good revenue month and may pull us back to positive, but if it does not we will need to use our reserves to balance the 2021 books. On the positive side, Gloria Dei members continue to support LSS, Fe y Esperanza and our other Mission Partner's with time and resources. Not only through the church spending plan, but also with specific giving to these organizations. So far in 2021 Gloria Dei members have given in excess of \$18,000 to our mission partners and our members continue to be focused on helping and serving others.

The Finance Committee will submit a 2022 spending plan to Church Council at the January council meeting. This plan anticipates a further drop in revenue for 2022 and the committee will recommend a nearly 50% cut in giving to our Mission Partner's. If approved by Church Council the spending plan will be presented to the congregation at our annual Congregational Meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Gary Bockman, Congregation Treasurer**

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Life's most persistent  
and urgent question is,  
What are you doing  
for others?

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



## COMMIT TO SERVANTHOOD IN 2022

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



The ELCA and companion Lutheran churches in Asia walk together, bringing a voice of hope that comes from God's grace. **Give now** and help grow the Lutheran church around the world. Your donations help our missionary pastors in Asia. Talk with Pastor Steve for updates on this important ministry.



### 5 WAYS TO KEEP CHRISTMAS CHEER AFTER TAKING DOWN THE TREE

Here are 5 possible ways that will inspire you to, as Ebenezer Scrooge says at the end of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, "Honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."

#### CELEBRATE EPIPHANY

It's observed on January 6 and is a celebration of Christ's Incarnation. This is seen in the holiday's focus on the Three Kings, Wise Men, or Magi. Be creative!

#### DECORATE YOUR HOME IN OTHER WAYS

Create a winter wonderland that adds warmth and light to your home. Some evergreen boughs in a vase or hung on the wall. Whatever about the winter season brings you joy, pursue that!

#### SEEK OUT COMMUNITY EVENTS

Although Christmas may be the height of gatherings, it may simply take more intentionality to find them. Often libraries and businesses host events, classes, concerts, and activities.

#### ENJOY NATURE—YES, EVEN IN WINTER

Wherever you live, there is always a way to enjoy God's creation.. Start seeds or plant bulbs that will pop in the spring. Or planning a garden for spring or summer can be



### SPECIAL THANKS...

Meri and I are so grateful for the exceedingly generous Christmas gift. This little church with a big heart has blessed us beyond counting. May your generosity return to you a hundred fold.

With much love, Pastor Steve

fun. Let your creativity guide you in how to enjoy the natural world during this season.

#### DO SOMETHING KIND FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Look for ways to help others keep some Christmas cheer in their lives and homes! Some ways to do this could be writing thoughtful notes for your neighbors' mailboxes, gift handmade wreaths, or offer to help someone with their yard or patio work.

Remember God's Spirit is alive and well in us all year around if we have faith in Christ. Even after the tree comes down, our hope and joy can remain firm in Him. ~ Veronica Olson, iBelieve author

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS



## CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING @ 7 PM MONDAY, JANUARY 3

Lord, help us to gladly hear Your trumpet call every day...In Jesus' name. Amen

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AFTER SERVICE ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 23

## CALL A FRIEND & FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN THE LONG BEACH COMMUNITY...

## MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY MONDAY, JANUARY 17

OUR LIVES BEGIN TO END  
THE DAY WE BECOME  
**SILENT** ABOUT  
THINGS THAT MATTER  
*Martin Luther King Jr.*



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

## HEAR & SERVE WITH JOY!

The apostle Paul could testify firsthand to 'the secret' of true contentment (Philippians 4:11-12) the mysterious reality that as we lift up to God our longings for wholeness, we experience unexplainable peace carried ever deeper into the depths of Christ's power, beauty, and grace.

~Monica Brands



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

6 — Morgan Adams  
11 — Cameron Chinn  
Olivia Adams  
14 — Edith Cheoros  
15 — Karen Como  
Sally Oberjuege  
18 — Cyndi Manley  
19 — Jean O'Connell  
28 — Stephanie Siemer

WE MAKE A  
**LIVING** BY  
**WHAT WE GET**,  
BUT WE MAKE A  
**LIFE** BY  
**WHAT WE GIVE.**

## ELCA Faith Practices Initiative

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

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 236)



## UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

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

**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.....**



