

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



## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

*A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. –Jeremiah 31:15*

I am writing this the day after a teenager walked into Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas and killed nineteen children and two teachers, and wounded 16 others. Before going to the school, he had also shot his grandmother. This was just 10 days after a young white racist killed 10 people and wounded 3 at a supermarket in a Black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York. Nine days ago, another gunman killed 1 and wounded 5 people at a church in Laguna Woods, just down the freeway from here. In the past 10 days, there have been 17 mass shootings across the United States, resulting in the deaths of 44 people and leaving 89 wounded. This is just a small 10-day sample of the 213 mass shootings which have already occurred in 2022. By the time you read this, that number will be higher. I guarantee it, because there were a total of 693 mass shootings in 2021 and we're already on pace to match or exceed that. You can see all the numbers at [www.gunviolence.org](http://www.gunviolence.org).

There have been a total of 119 school shootings since 2018. There were 34 school shootings in 2021, and the shooting at Robb Elementary was the 27th so far this year. There are 393 million guns in private hands in the United States, the equivalent of 120 guns for every 100 citizens. Fifty-three people a day on average are killed by firearms in the US. 79% of all homicides in our country are caused by guns.

According to Pew Research, 53% of the people in this country favor stricter gun laws, including universal background checks. NPR and Forbes place that number at 60%. Gallup breaks that down, finding that 91% of Democrats favor stricter gun control but only 24% of Republicans and 45% of independent voters. 77% are in favor of "red flag" laws that would remove firearms from the hands of persons in a mental health crisis, spousal abusers, and persons who threaten violence. All in all, the takeaway is that a clear majority want stricter gun laws. Two major gun control measures were passed by the House of Representatives last year: the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021 and the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021. Both bills are stalled in the Senate. Think about that for a moment. Fifty Senators are blocking legislation that the majority of the people in the country want to see passed.

All of that is just numbers. Those numbers describe a country that is addicted to personal weaponry far beyond all need or reason, a country where life is cheap. Those numbers tell a story of a country that is so sick in its soul that significant numbers of its people are so turned inward on their own fantasies or pain that they can't see the other people around them as, well, people. Not even children.

Those numbers tell us a lot. But they don't tell us anything about the pain of bereaved families. They don't tell us anything about the heartbreak. They don't tell us anything about the fear that scars the survivors of gun violence for life.

*Continued on page 2*

JUNE 2022

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

# GLORIOUS DEI . . .

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## GLORIA DEI—THE LITTLE CHURCH WITH THE BIG HEART

**We invite you to join us for Online or IN-PERSON worship every Sunday at 10:00 AM !**

**Visit website for online viewing and participation.**

**Website: [www.gdclcb.org](http://www.gdclcb.org)**



### Thoughts Along the Way Continues....

Nineteen kids in the 4th grade didn't make it home from school yesterday. That breaks my heart. But my heartbreak is nothing compared to the devastation the families and friends of those 19 children are experiencing.

Nineteen 4th graders. That hits so close to home that I can't stop the tears as I write it. Two of my three grandsons, the twins, are in 4th grade. Their mother, my daughter, Brooke, is a former School Psychologist. My son-in-law, P.A., is an elementary school principal. Here's what my daughter wrote on Facebook earlier today:

"This morning I talked to the twins about the Texas school shooting before school. I remembered my school psych training, where we had to practice how to discuss this exact topic with different age groups. We were taught to emphasize how rare it is for this to happen.

But...I just couldn't say those words without feeling like a complete liar. Instead, I reassured them that it is very unlikely that something like this would happen at their school and we discussed the safety measures in place.

And then I left them at school. And I couldn't stop worrying.

What if someone starts shooting at recess? What if they're in the bathroom? Where are the most likely entry points?

If they come through the office this might buy enough time for the children and teachers to get into their locked classrooms. But then, what will happen to the people in the front office, like P.A.?

What will happen to all my friends who are administrators, schools psychs, counselors, speech pathologists, administrative assistants, parent volunteers? What will happen to the teachers? WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CHILDREN?

What if one fourth grader comes out of the school, but not two? What if three kids come home, but my husband doesn't?"

The trauma from these incidents isn't limited to the victims and their immediate families. It spreads out in ripples and damages all of us. I am heartbroken. But I am also furious. I am furious with a culture that lionizes violence. I'm angry at a culture that makes life so cheap. I'm furious with a country that puts profit above health and safety. I am particularly angry at the politics that greases the wheels of all this. I'm incensed by 50 Senators holding the country hostage to this violence while their campaign chests are being stuffed by the gun lobby. And, quite frankly, I am also angry with all the people who wring their hands and say we're helpless, that nothing can be done. I am furious with all those people who work to oppose common-sense legislation to

*Thoughts Along the Way Continues....*

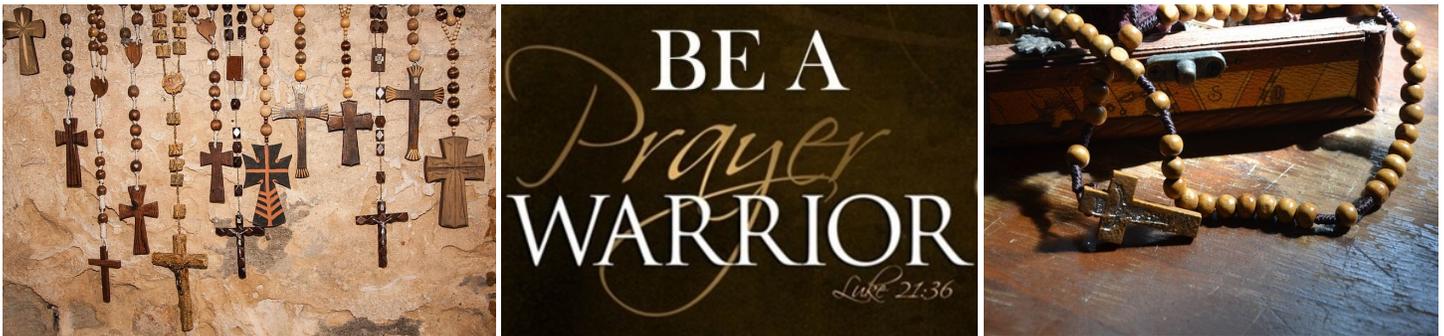
curtail the damage done by an overbroad interpretation of the 2nd Amendment. The words "well-regulated" are in that amendment. Let's start there.

We long ago crossed any imaginary threshold of an acceptable number of deaths. We are way past the threshold of patience. We have spent too much blood on the altar of alleged "rights" and not nearly enough sweat on the sacred ground of responsibility.

And yes, we need to pray. We need to hold the victims of our violent culture in our thoughts and prayers. We need to ask God for help. But we also need to ask God for the courage, the wisdom, the will, and the vision to be part of the solution as we try to find a way to disarm this country and to address the alienation and dysfunction that's at the heart of these incidents.

Finally, I know that some people who read this will not like what I am saying here. I offer no apologies. My ordination vows obligate me to speak for justice and to stand with victims. But beyond that, I want to live in a country that loves its children more than it loves guns.

### ***Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve***



### **Prayer for Children**

- And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them. —Mark 10:16

***Beautiful Savior, help me reveal Your love and presence to all people, including children. Make me mindful of ways to ensure that they can always come to You.***

### **Prayer for Hope**

- Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly beloved children and walk in the way of love. —Ephesians 5:1-2

***Father, life in all its fullness is Yours alone to give. Open my heart and hands to accept it. I praise You for Your light and love. Help me shine for You.***

### **Prayer for Courage**

- Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. —Ephesians 3:17

***Jesus, thank You for the overwhelmingly good news that the strength needed to withstand life's challenges isn't our own. Help us to grow ever-deeper roots in Your love and our place in Your family.***

### **Prayer for Unity**

- My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. —Luke 1:46-47

***Gracious God, cleanse my heart and grant me courage to speak for justice and equity for all people. Please help us to trust You more than our own eyes and hearts. When we speak on hard topics, soften our hearts and words with Your sweet Spirit.***

# CONGREGATION UPDATE

“We can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him.”

~ 2 Corinthians 3:18

It was wonderful to be together in the Fellowship Hall for our congregational meeting in May! During our meeting we elected new members to serve on our Church Council. Welcome to: Marilyn Bittle, Margie Brown, Vickie Gammer and Beth Rotsel. The retuning members of Council include: Lark Adams, Gary Bockman, Phil Como, Twyla Karkut, Bev Pandora, Bob Siemer and myself. Our constitution provides for us to have as many as 15 people on Church Council. We currently have 11 members, so there is room to add up to 4 more church members to serve. If you are interested in serving on the Council, please let one of us know. The Council meetings are held the first Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to attend the Council meetings. Please join these meeting if you are available. Your suggestions and contributions are so important. Our next Council meeting is on June 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. During this meeting we will be electing the Council officers for the year of 2022-2023.

Also, thank you to Marilyn Bittle for providing sandwiches and for coordinating all the other delicious food for our first luncheon in a very long time following our congregational meeting. The “free-will” offering was applied to the AC/HVAC and Roofing Fund.

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, Pastor Steve, Margie Brown and I will be attending the Synod Assembly meeting. During the meeting the Synod will be launching the Noisy Offering idea that our little church with a BIG heart started years ago to benefit LSS. All the churches synod-wide will be encouraged to collect a Noisy Offering one Sunday a month to benefit the LSS services within their areas (Long Beach, Pasadena or Ventura). LSS has placed the **Noisy Offering** information and marketing materials on their website: [www.LSSSC.org](http://www.LSSSC.org) (see sample on page 5). The Noisy drops in a bucket can add up to do so many meaningful things for the underserved plus it creates an additional awareness of what LSS is doing within our communities.

**LSS:** Much needed work on the LSS building on Pine Street is being done through much of June. The entire building has been packed up and food and clothing distributions are on hold until the work has been completed. Please hold onto your donations until they reopen. If you need items picked up, please call Phil Como and arrange for a pick-up time beginning the end of June. When they reopen, they will need to re-stock. If you haven't already, this will be a good time to clean out closets and to let your friends and neighbors know about the wonderful things LSS does with unwanted and slightly used items of clothing and extra canned food.

**Fe y Esperanza:** Thanks to the ELCW spring cleaning upstairs in our old Sunday School rooms, we have provided many wonderful items to support the up-coming Vacation Bible School at Fe y Esperanza. We continue to make deliveries of food, gently used household items and monetary gift certificates each month. Remember to save your grocery bags for their food distribution!

**Worship:** On June 19<sup>th</sup> we will have a very special guest, Bishop Brenda Bos. She will be delivering the message on the 19<sup>th</sup> while Pastor and Meri are on a much needed and well-deserved vacation. Invite your friends and family to join us. Bishop Bos always delivers such a wonderful message!

**Adult Education:** The last Adult Education class Sunday mornings will be May 29<sup>th</sup>. Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. is officially on summer break and will resume in the fall. On Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom we will continue with our learning about Christian Mysticism during the summer. While Pastor and Meri are on vacation, we will not have Adult Ed on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> or on July 6<sup>th</sup>. Join us! These discussions are so insightful and it's also a wonderful way to stay connected during the week.

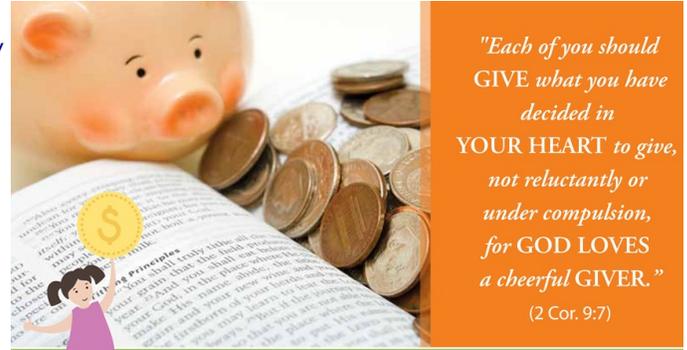
**Landscaping:** The repair work on some broken sprinklers and lighting has been completed and

new plants have been added. These repairs reduce our water usage, helps to reduce our water bill and makes us more environmentally responsible. The new changes in the parkway really enhances the front of our church.

**AC/HVAC and Roof:** We have received numerous gifts to offset the cost of our AC/HVAC and roof repairs. The gifts amount to approximately 35% of what is needed for this project. Thank you for your prayerful consideration. The work will begin in fall so there is still time to make a gift to this fund. Watch the "thermometer" poster in the Fellowship Hall to monitor our progress.

**ELCW:** The group will be going to lunch on June 9<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the beginning of summer. Join us for a wonderful fellowship opportunity. Meet at 11:00 a.m. at church and join a carpool to the restaurant.

As our Mission Statement declares "We are a congregation of Christian servants dedicated to serve the needs of the local community and the mission of the church. Our family of faith reaches so many within our community and those within our church family. We are so blessed to have each other and to share the love of the Lord to those we serve. Thank you for blessing my life with your friendship and examples of Christ-like love...**Karen Como**



*"Each of you should GIVE what you have decided in YOUR HEART to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES a cheerful GIVER."*  
(2 Cor. 9:7)

**Ministry**

Noisy Offering is, as its name indicates, noisy. On the Second Sunday of each month, we ask members to join us in bringing spare change, as a symbol of the *change* we hope to make in our communities. When your quarters, pennies, nickels and dimes drop, it is a tangible reminder of the *noisy* disruption we are called to make through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While we love the joy your small change brings, we also appreciate the impact the "kind that folds" can make. Whatever your gift, we pray it inspires you to new experiences, one *clink, clank, clang* at a time!

Today, your Noisy Offerings will go toward the programs and ministries of Lutheran Social Services of Southern California. Visit [lsssc.org](http://lsssc.org) to learn how your commitment to *change* can make a difference today!

**LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES**  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

EMBRACE EQUIP EMPOWER

# GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS



Lutheran Disaster Response is accompanying our companions in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, as well as ecumenical partners such as Lutheran World Federation and Church World Service, in their humanitarian responses to the crisis created by Russia's war against Ukraine.

## UKRAINE CRISIS: YOUR IMPACT THROUGH LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Your gifts of more than **\$2.5 million** to support relief for those impacted by the crisis in Eastern Europe are already at work. *Thank you!*

### EXAMPLES OF RESPONSE PROJECTS

- Cash support for refugees and displaced people
- Emergency items such as beds, blankets and shelter
- Food, clean water and hygiene items
- Protection and safeguarding of vulnerable individuals and groups
- Psychosocial care, pastoral support
- Gender justice and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

**POLAND**  
Partners: Lutheran World Federation, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland

**UKRAINE**  
Partners: Lutheran World Federation, German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine

**SLOVAKIA**  
Partners: Lutheran World Federation, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia

**NEW HUNGARY**  
Partners: ACT Alliance, RGDS-Phiren Amencia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

**ROMANIA**  
Partners: Lutheran World Federation, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania

Lutheran Disaster Response  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

\*Map is current as of 3/29/2022

Additional responses with partners in these countries and others in the region are expected in the coming weeks and months. Learn more and give by visiting [ELCA.org/Ukraine](http://ELCA.org/Ukraine).

**Your gifts will support people impacted by the war. Gifts designated to "Eastern Europe Crisis" will be used in full (100%) for direct response to assist those affected. Learn more: [ELCA.org/Ukraine](http://ELCA.org/Ukraine)**



## WANT TO BE MORE LOVING TOWARD OTHERS—AND YOURSELF?

Let go of resentment and regret! Sometimes forgiveness just happens; other times, it takes effort. Here at 12 tips to let go of anger and grow a more a more forgiving heart.

~Sabra Ciancanelli, Guidepost Editor

### MORE FORGIVENESS ONLINE

Check out the interactive version of this challenge at [guideposts.org/forgive-challenge](http://guideposts.org/forgive-challenge)

**God of love, You are love and to live in love is to live in You. I long to live in that fearless, joyous love. Fill me with Your Spirit, and carry me ever deeper into Your love, until fear dissolves and Your love flows freely through me.**

# GROW A FORGIVING HEART

## 1. Decide to forgive.

As Fed Luskin, Ph.D., director of the Stanford Forgiveness Projects, says, "Forgiveness changes the present, not the past—It's a choice you make to heal yourself.

## 2. Be patient.

Sometimes a hurt you thought was healed might resurface. If that happens, look at the situation from where you are now. Recognize you have grown.

## 3. Surrender the idea that you are right.

Instead of rehashing an offense, try to be kind, compassionate & understanding.

## 4. Breathe out past hurts.

When you feel stuck in anger, take a deep breath and let yourself relax. As you exhale, say, "I'm ready to move forward. I forgive."

## 5. Write your own apology.

If the person is no longer in your life, you can still have closure by writing down the words you have longed to hear. Consider them a gift to help you forgive.

## 6. Cultivate a forgiveness plant.

Use a plan that you have, or buy a peace lily or purple hyacinth, which traditionally means "I'm sorry". Every time you water it, picture yourself releasing bitterness or regret and finding peace.

## 7. Walk away the hurt.

Go outside with the intention of working through whatever is weighing on your heart. Sometimes physically moving forward can help you move on emotionally.

## 8. Forgive yourself.

Dwelling on something you wish you hadn't done? Give yourself a hug and say, "I'm ready to let go of this guilt, and begin, anew."

## 9. Look to animals for inspiration.

Often they are harmed by humans, yet they open their hearts again and again to love.

## 10. Turn to Scripture for healing.

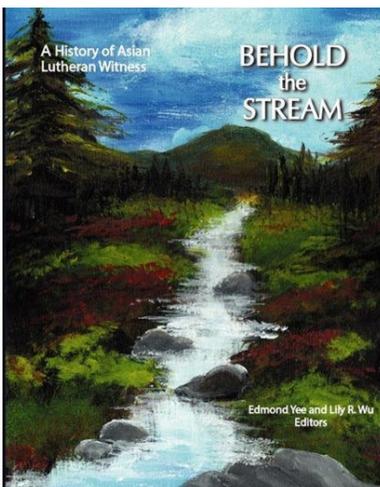
If you keep a mental list of who harmed you and how, replace it with Bible verses about forgiveness, such as 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

## 11. Don't sweat the small stuff.

Did someone cut you off in traffic? Make a snarky comment on social media? Let it go.

## 12. Envision a bright future.

Focus on feeling better by releasing the pain or guilt of wrongdoings. Every moment is a new opportunity to grow a more forgiving heart.



# SPIRITUAL NOTEBOOK

On behalf of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders–Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (AAPA-ELCA), we have co-edited a large-format pictorial book to tell our Asian Lutheran story. ***Behold the Stream: A History of Asian Lutheran Witness*** offers a history of how Lutheran church bodies in the United States first greeted Asians and how Asian ministries persisted despite institutional racism. Through historical essays, congregational profiles and brief biographies, it tells the story of how Asian congregations uniquely serve, and introduces many Asian leaders and their lifework. It charts the growth of our association, conferences and publications. And it offers a glimpse into the future. Two theological essays are included: on Bible-reading in Asian contexts and cultures, and on migration as a metaphor for Christian faith.

# EVENTS & PROCLAMATIONS

**BASK IN THE BEAUTY OF SUMMER'S FULL BLOOM !**



## GOD'S LIGHT & LOVE...

Our **God 's Work. Our Hands** approach will provide you with an avenue to serve others in our community.

Friendly, grace-filled members are eager to welcome you into our fellowship with Christ. We look forward to getting to know you as we share coffee and conversation every Sunday after our in-person service.



"For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

~Ephesians 2:10

## HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!

**SUNDAY, JUNE 19**

### MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE

- 14 — Flag Day
- 17 — Flip Flop Day
- 19 — Juneteenth
- 21 — Summer Solstice
- 22 — Kissing Day



### JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 14 — Erika Eidam
- 21 — Dee Perretta
- 22 — Lauren Mintie
- 22 — Candy Wood
- 27 — John Kildebeck

### ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

- 4 — Vicky & Steve Gammer
- 9 — John & Jean Betz
- 11 — Stuart & Laura Subke
- 14 — Carl & Carrol Irwin
- 22 — Steve & Meri Beckham
- 23 — Bob & Stephanie Siemer

...if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things.

~ Philippians 4:8



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

### This is Christ's church.

**There is a place for you here.** We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person--questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.



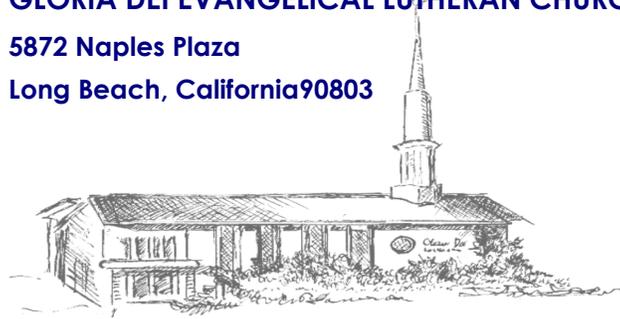
Number of times a day the average person craves a hug: **13**

Number of seconds the average hug lasts: **9**

Number of seconds a hug needs to last to have a positive, measurable therapeutic effect: **20**

**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)**

