



## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY...

*"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? ...Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" – Micah 6:6-7*

Two weeks ago in our Gospel reading from John we heard John the Baptist calling Jesus, "The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." I pointed out that *sin*, in this passage, was singular. Not *sins*, plural, but *sin*, singular. I acknowledged that it might, indeed, be a collective singular—a singular noun that functions as a plural, but then I asked, "If the world has one central singular sin, what would that be?"

In his book *Engaging God's World*, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. defines sin as a *culpable disturbance of shalom*. Shalom is the peace of God, the natural order of balance and harmony in creation and in society. Rob Bell wrote, "Shalom is how God wants things to be. Shalom is peace with yourself, with your neighbor, with the earth and with God."

As I write this on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of this new year, God's shalom is not merely disturbed, it is shattered. There have already been **40 mass shootings** in our country, three of them here in California. We are the only country in the world where firearms are **the leading cause of death for children**. As of 2018 there were more than 393 million firearms in private hands in the US —120.5 guns for every 100 people. **The next highest rate of gun ownership** among developed nations is Canada at 34 per 100 people.

Statistics compiled by the **American Journal of Medicine** are disturbing, to say the least: "US homicide rates were 7.0 times higher than in other high-income countries, driven by a gun homicide rate that was 25.2 times higher. For 15- to 24-year-olds, the gun homicide rate in the United States was 49.0 times higher. Firearm-related suicide rates were 8.0 times higher in the United States, but the overall suicide rates were average. Unintentional firearm deaths were 6.2 times higher in the United States. The overall firearm death rate in the United States from all causes was 10.0 times higher. **Ninety percent of women, 91% of children aged 0 to 14 years, 92% of youth aged 15 to 24 years, and 82% of all people killed by firearms were from the United States.**"

Clearly we need to do more to regulate gun ownership and reduce the number of firearms in this country. The horrendous statistics about gun violence correlate

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### Thoughts Along the Way Continues...

directly to the horrifying statistics about gun ownership. The guns are absolutely a problem, but they are also the deadly expression of a deeper problem.

Let's go back to that question: "If the world has one central singular sin, what would that be?" It's tempting to say that the central singular sin is violence. **Violence is addictive**, and we seem to be hooked on it in this country and throughout the world. It's altering our neurochemistry and our neurological pathways. But violence is a symptom of something deeper.

We live in a culture where media, politics and economics seem to almost conspire to pit us against each other. We are constantly pressured to segregate ourselves into neo-tribal groupings: right vs. left, conservative vs. liberal, rich vs. poor, my race vs. other races, my religion vs. other religions. There is money, power and influence to be had in manipulating this tribalism, and when the manipulation is allowed to go unchecked it ends up force feeding us a toxic cultural soup of fear, anger and mistrust which poisons our vision until we begin to see others as something less than fully human. And that leads inevitably to violence.

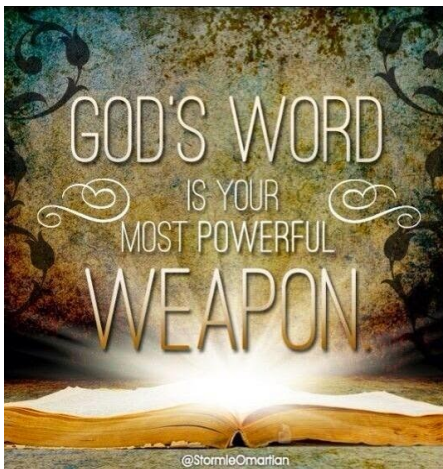
*"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the Gehenna of fire."*

– Matthew 5:21-22

God has told us what is good, said the prophet Micah, and what does the Lord require of us—what does God's shalom require of us but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with God—and with each other? Love your neighbor as yourself, said Jesus, quoting Leviticus.

If we want to stop sacrificing our children on the altar of violence, if we want to stop sacrificing the fruit of our collective body for the sin of our collective soul, we need to find better ways to show the world what kindness and love look like. We need to find ways to make "love your neighbor as yourself" at least as attractive and addictive as violence. We need to lift up the vision of God's shalom, the peaceable kingdom, as a way of restoring balance and harmony among diverse and divergent peoples. And maybe we could start by doing something about the guns.

**Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve**



## COUNCIL MESSAGE

Being together and in person for our Congregational Meeting in January was a great start to 2023! It was especially heart-warming to hear from treasurer Gary Bockman that our church family and friends gave \$25,500 to our mission partners in 2022 (\$10,500 in budgeted gifts plus another \$15,000 to World Hunger, LSS, Fe y Esperanza, ELCA Disaster Relief, Holiday Fund and other mission partners). Thank you to Marilyn Bittle for providing the sandwiches and to all who provided delicious salads and Desserts for our annual gathering.

And, even though the Christmas decorations are put away for another year, our church family and friends are still giving with such generous hearts! In January over 7 carloads of clothing, medical supplies and gently used household items were delivered to some of our mission partners. A special thank you to Debby King (Dee Perretta's niece) for the many unused medical items, clothing and gently used household items.

**LSS:** Warm jackets are needed with this cold weather! Thank you, Diane Keil, for your generous donations. 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. And food supplies are always welcomed.

**Fe y Esperanza:** Unfortunately the much needed rain destroyed the sanctuary at Fe y Esperanza. The leaks in the roof ruined their ceiling and flooring — their sanctuary is now unusable. They will be worshipping in their

kitchen and food distribution area until the damages can be repaired. They have asked us to keep them in prayer as they work with their insurance company to assess the damages. Deliveries to Fe y Esperanza are typically made on Wednesdays.

**ELCW:** On February 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. the women group will meet and bag rice and beans for LSS and Fe y Esperanza. Lunch will be served and all women are welcome to join us for a time of special fellowship.

**Adult Education:** Join us on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 via Zoom as we start a new study by Richard Rohr on his book *Jesus' Alternative Plan*. Every week is a unique discussion and you can join us anytime. On Sunday mornings at 9:00 we're studying the Gospel of Matthew using a new translation by Thomas Moore. We are so fortunate to have Pastor Steve conduct fabulous adult education studies.

**Ash Wednesday:** This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Gloria Dei's service will begin at 12 noon with a soup luncheon (the first time in 4 years) followed by our traditional Ash Wednesday service and imposition of ashes.**

Our in-person fellowship is extra special after missing our times together during the 3 years of COVID restrictions. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us for this special and meaningful service as we start our Lenten journey.

Happy Valentine's Day to everyone in our church family as we joyfully share the love of the Lord with those we serve, and as we continue to demonstrate 'God's Work Our Hands' all year long. We are a truly blessed family of believers!

**Karen Como, Council President**





## RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

*"It's been a joy, honor and a privilege to be your pastor."*

After much contemplation and consideration Pastor Steve has announced his retirement effective June 1 and his last Sunday sermon is scheduled for May 28. With a heart full of joy, gratitude and appreciation, he thanked the congregation for all that we have accomplished together as the "little church with a big heart"! We all know what a blessing his leadership has brought to the spiritual life of our church community. His intellectual stimulation and instructive sermons/messages/adult education have inspired us to learn more and continue to seek a fuller understanding of God's Word. We look forward to celebrating his gifts, talents, and contributions to Gloria Dei. In Christ's hands and each other's — look for more details in the coming months.



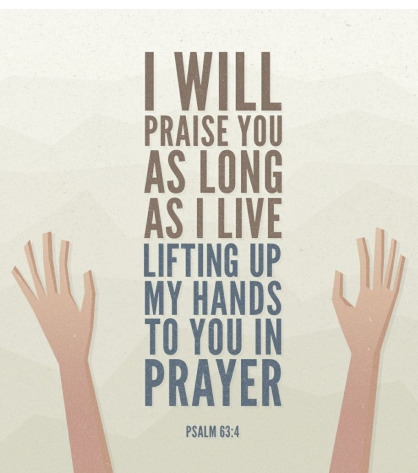
**Article: A Day to Remember**

**Author: Brian Hiortdahl**

What is revealed now, in the brilliant afterglow of Epiphany, is the disconnect and distance between who God is, unveiled in Jesus Christ, and how we currently are. The New Testament borrows an image from archery: we miss the mark. In English the term is translated as "sin." Like the fourth step in Alcoholics Anonymous, Ash Wednesday invites us to make a "a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves." Lent will offer us a full 40 days for this daunting work. That's a lot of unfiltered honesty. We have many wayward arrows to gather.

**Source: Excerpt from Living Lutheran, January/February 2023**

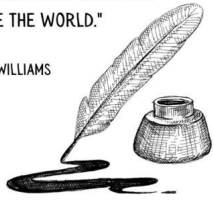
FE Y ESPERANZA  
DELIVERY



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES  
DELIVERY

"NO MATTER WHAT PEOPLE TELL  
YOU, WORDS AND IDEAS CAN  
CHANGE THE WORLD."

- ROBIN WILLIAMS



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
FOUNDATION  
www.randomactsofkindness.org

"WHEN WE SEEK TO DISCOVER THE BEST IN  
OTHERS, WE SOMEHOW BRING OUT THE BEST  
IN OURSELVES."

- WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
FOUNDATION  
www.randomactsofkindness.org

"IN A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN BE  
ANYTHING, BE KIND."

- UNKNOWN



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
FOUNDATION  
www.randomactsofkindness.org

"IF YOU HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE  
SOMEONE HAPPY, DO IT. THE WORLD  
NEEDS MORE OF THAT."

- UNKNOWN



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS  
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www.randomactsofkindness.org

## THE KINDNESS EXPERIENCE

This is a simple experiment for individuals to experience the scientific benefits of kindness.

***The positive effects of kindness are experienced in the brain of everyone who witnessed the act, improving their mood and making them significantly more likely to "pay it forward."*** -Jamil Zaki

Together, we can show the world the amazing impact simple acts of kindness can have on the recipient, the giver and anyone who witnesses it.

**Participate in the first annual #KindnessExperience on  
Random Acts of Kindness Day, February 17, 2023! You might just  
change someone's life—maybe even your own!**



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY MADAME PRESIDENT



**The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
my heart trusts in him.  
~ Psalm 28:7**



## NANCY KAHAKAUWILA



I just want to say that my dad, husband, daughter, and I have appreciated so much the love and support of our Gloria Dei community. To witness, at my mom's funeral, the fellowship hall full of people eating, laughing, and talking story was a sign of the many lives my mom touched -- and the expansive network that holds our family during this time. God's love is revealed, again and again, in the tender, loving care of our fellow humans, and it was a tender and beautiful space that our church and its membership created in honor of my mom's life.

me ke aloha, Tiana



**2022 FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT** — We thank you for your contributions to maintain our congregation and for your continued support of our Mission Partners from “the little church with the big heart.”

Revenue exceeded expenses by \$9,777 in 2022 and contributions were \$12,648 higher than the amount budgeted in 2022. Congregants gave an additional \$14,921 to LSS, Fe y Esperanza and other mission partners, plus \$30,517 to the HVAC/Roof fund. The total cost of the HVAC/Roof project was \$54,203 and our reserves were reduced by \$26,686 in 2022 to cover this expense. Looking ahead to 2023 with 19 pledges totaling \$115,440 plus rental, hall use and interest income we will need an additional \$36,560 from unpledged contributions to cover the estimated expenses in 2023. Also looming on the horizon is a major expense for the parsonage HVAC unit, which is 32 years old. Our current reserves remain adequate to cover most unexpected needs in 2023, but a new HVAC unit at the parsonage would have an impact on them.

## GLORIA DEI SPENDING PLAN

Thank you in advance for continuing to send your tithes via mail or online. A reminder that your offerings cover the cost associated with maintaining our church infrastructure. Your offerings and gifts are important to our church community—your support and contributions help Gloria Dei survive and thrive.

Website: [www.gdlclb.org](http://www.gdlclb.org)

Gary Bockman, Treasurer

**God grant me the  
SERENITY**

**To accept the things I cannot change;  
COURAGE**

**To change the things I can; and  
WISDOM**

**To know the difference.**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & HOLIDAYS

**PRESIDENT'S DAY  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20**

**14 — VALENTINE'S DAY**

**17 — RANDOM ACT OF  
KINDNESS DAY**

**22 — ASH WEDNESDAY**

**27 — NATIONAL 'SET A GOOD  
EXAMPLE' DAY**

**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY!**

**2 —**

Bob Siemer

**5 —**

Jayne Lane

David Thomas Fuller

**18 —**

Roger Powell

**23 —**

Carrol Irwin

**25 —**

Sarah Fuller

**27 —**

Sandi Anderson



Thank the Lord for the gift of gratitude! May we be intentional as we develop practical habits that boost our GRATITUDE quotient!

## COMMIT TO SERVANTHOOD IN 2023



**WHERE DO YOU SENSE THE  
HOLY SPIRIT MIGHT BE  
PROMPTING YOU TO MAKE  
SOME GOOD TROUBLE?**

**HOW CAN YOU DISCERN  
THE GODLY WAY TO DO  
JUST THAT?**

## GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS

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

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

## SEEK OUT CHURCH & COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER OPTIONS...

Self-compassion is just as important as the empathy we show others. Reflecting on our lives and resolving anything that makes it hard to feel deeply or sincerely for others is key.

**GET STARTED:  
DOWNLOAD THE  
KINDNESS CHALLENGE**  
[randomactsofkindness.org](https://randomactsofkindness.org)

We are co-workers in God's service. — 1 Corinthians

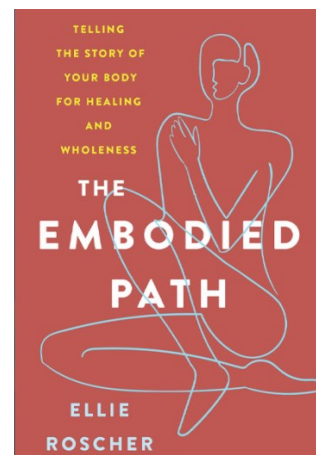
We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world—together. The ELCA opens doors to new communities of faith, help people break the cycle of hunger and poverty, respond to disasters and emergencies, and so much more.

[ELCA.org/GiveELCA](https://ELCA.org/GiveELCA)

**TELLING THE STORY OF YOUR  
BODY FOR HEALING AND  
WHOLENESS**

## THE EMBODIED PATH

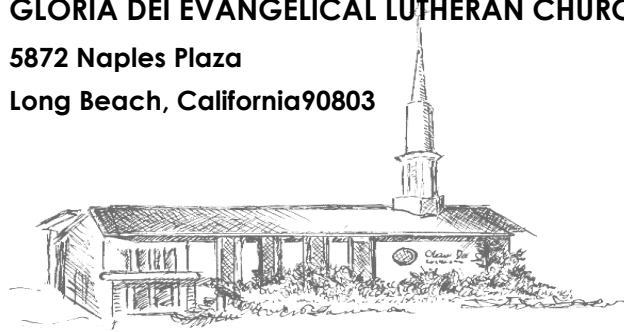
Source: Living Lutheran



**Ash Wednesday**  
— Lent Begins

**GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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



Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization  
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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**



