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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

BE OF GOOD COURAGE...

How can it possibly be December already? On the other hand, I am so excited for Advent to be here. Christmas was always a big deal when I was a child. How could it be otherwise with all those kids? Christmas Eve on dad's side of the family, Christmas morning at home, and Christmas Afternoon on Mom's side – with good food, lots of baked goods and presents everywhere! Sometimes Mom or Dad or my big sister Judy would take me to the midnight service – I always wanted to go. It was a magical service to me. Eventually, Church just wasn't a part of my life anymore.

Even after I got involved with the Lutheran Campus Ministry at College, and when I was in seminary, Christmas Eve service was a rare event, until my internship. It wasn't until I became a pastor that Christmas Eve became a shall rubric: a command event in my life and I have always loved it. Christmas became so much better when it was preceded by the season of Advent.

This is a season of waiting. I am so grateful to be reminded, over and over again, of how much I need Jesus in my life, which this season does. I love the colors of Advent, in shades of blue, reminding us of Mary, the mother of our Lord. I love planning each service, writing each sermon, anticipating our candlelight Christmas Eve service. It is a time of prolepsis: the already and not yet. We live fully as the baptized beloved children of God, graced with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And yet, we know that he comes to give us more each day. He comes again as an infant, reminding us that God became human for our sake.

After the long season after Pentecost, when we focus on the early Church and how we are and are called to be as the Church, we again focus on the one who came for each and every one of us. We revisit the events of Jesus' humble birth and life. I love singing Advent hymns that anticipate the birth of Jesus, and the Christmas Carols that celebrate it. Oh, I still love all the people – there could be 36 of us together on Christmas Day with my adopted family – good food, yummy baked goods, and presents. I would be bereft without my wonderful family parties, but it is in my faith community, and in worship together, that this season slowly blooms into Christmas. I'm so happy to be spending it with our wonderful little church with the big heart.

In anticipation. Pastor Ruth Sievert

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**AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING
FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.**

~ Isaiah 9:6



**LORD, MAKE US GOOD
GUESTS AND HOSTS
OF YOUR KINGDOM
WHO REFLECT THE
HUMILITY AND
GENEROSITY OF OUR
SAVIOR.
IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN.**



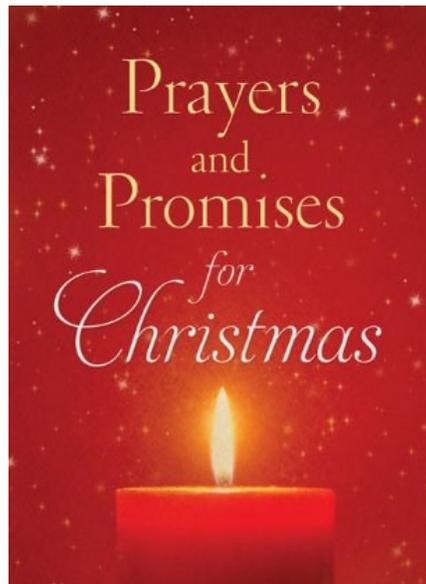
Long Beach Camerata Singers present Handel's Messiah.
Won't you join us?

We have a sign-up sheet at Church and the tickets are only \$30.00! It is at **Long Beach City College** (Clark Ave Campus) in their newly remodeled auditorium, **Thursday, December 19 at 7:30 pm.**

Sign-ups and money due to Pastor Ruth by Sunday, December 8. Make checks payable to Pastor Ruth Sievert. You will be glad you went!

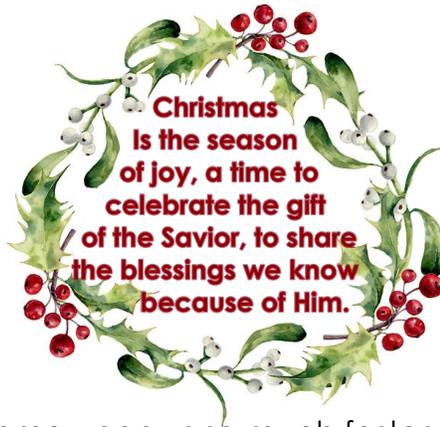
ABOUT LONG BEACH CAMERATA SINGERS

Mission Statement: The Long Beach Camerata Singers believe that music is a force for peace. We enrich and transform lives of our performers and community through excellence in performance, innovative programming and arts education.



THE RICHES — THE WISDOM — THE KNOWLEDGE — OF GOD!

WHAT A GLORIOUS DEI & SEASON OF GIVING



Advent is here - it seems to come upon us so much faster every year! I enjoy hanging onto Thanksgiving and remembering all the many things I have to be thankful for, including being a member of our generous church family.

Our Little Church with a BIG heart blessed so many people during the Thanksgiving Holidays and will continue to bless so many in need during the seasons of Advent and Christmas!

Lutheran Social Services (LSS): Along with the support of Gloria Dei and others, many families were fed at the Thanksgiving Feast on November 25. Additional groceries were also provided to families in need to ensure that a Thanksgiving dinner was celebrated.

LSS will celebrate their **27th annual Christmas** event for families within the Long Beach area. LSS has requested unwrapped toys for children 0-11 years old and Target or Walmart gift cards for the older children. They are also in need of canned goods for their food baskets as well as monetary gifts for the purchase of food and supplies for the party. Donations are needed by Sunday, December 15.

Fe y Esperanza: Pastor Marta was so thankful for our monetary gift certificates to provide turkeys for their annual Thanksgiving Feast that was held on November 26 in their Fellowship Hall. Pastor Ruth, Phil and I attended this fabulous Harvest Blessing event! The annual **Los Posadas** celebration will be held the week before Christmas. Small gifts of toys are given to the children in celebration of Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. Monetary gifts are appreciated so they can purchase the toys.

Long Beach Men's and Women's Shelter: As the cold weather approaches, the shelter is in need of gently used warm jackets, blankets and new socks. Children's jackets are needed also. Please place your donations in one of the boxes in the Fellowship Hall. These items will be distributed just prior to Christmas Eve.

ELCA Good Gifts: Go 'Tail-it' on the mountain! See our ELCA **Good Gifts tree in the Fellowship Hall** and **consider purchasing pigs, goats, cows, chickens or honeybees.** Choose an ornament, write your name on the back, enclose a check made payable to 'Gloria Dei' with 'Good Gifts' written on the memo line and place the check for your animal(s) of choice in the box next to the tree.

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THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SHIELD; MY HEART TRUSTS IN HIM.

~ Psalm 28:7

Congregation Update Continued ...

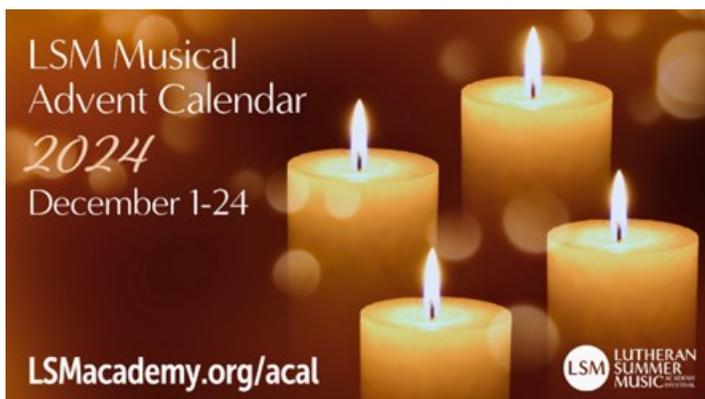
ELCW: In November the ELCW women prepared 26 boxes for the Seafarers. A special thank you to **Twyla Karkut** for her generous contribution and all those who made a donation to our 'personal shopper' for the necessary items. Thank you, also, to **Laura Subke**, our friend and former member, now residing in Florida, who made so many knitted hats to contribute to the seafarers!

In November the **ELCW purchased a goat and a batch of chicks through ELCA Good Gifts.**

On December 12 at 10:00 a.m. the women will decorate the Christmas tree with the traditional Chrismon ornaments lovingly made so many years ago and repaired so beautifully by Harry Witt.

Adult Education: We have wonderful discussions each Sunday morning at 9:00 in the Fellowship Hall as we continue to read and discuss **"Short Stories by Jesus" written by Jewish scholar, Amy Jill-Levine.** Each week is a new parable. Join us and enhance your faith journey. Wednesday at 10:00 via Zoom we continue to read a thought-provoking book, **"American Heresy -The Roots and Reach of White Christian Nationalism"** by **John Fanestil.** Jump in anytime - the zoom link can be found on our church website: www.gdlclb.org.

Adult Education will be in recess from December 22 through January 2.



Consider enhancing your Advent experience with the **2024 LSM Musical Advent Calendar.** Go to: www.LSMacademy.org/acal and register for a special piece of music everyday delivered to your personal email address throughout Advent.

Our sanctuary will be beautifully decorated for worship on December 2 to launch us into Advent. The Worship committee, led by **Phil Como**, can use your help! You're invited to join the fun in the decorating the sanctuary from 10:00 – 12 noon on Saturday, November 30.

Coming Events:

November 30th – Decorate church for Advent - 10-12 noon

December 4th – Council Meeting via Zoom at 7:00 PM

December 15th – Birthday Cake Sunday and Noisy offering

December 19st – Handel's Messiah at 7:30 PM at Long Beach City College

December 24th– Christmas Eve Service-5PM

January 19th – Annual Congregational Meeting following worship

Once again, we have so many ways to support and add joy to those within our community as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. As a result of our in-house elf, Sandy, who has made gift boxes and wonderful displays in the Fellowship Hall, many of the groups who meet at our church during week have joined us in our outreach to the community with generous donations. We thank them for their contributions and for enhancing our giving. **Please consider gifts to individual mission partners** or make a monetary gift to Gloria Dei and write 'Christmas' on the memo line.

Blessings to you and your families during this wonderful season of Christmas. Thank you for your gift of friendship! Remember each other in prayer and invite your friends and family members who are missing the care and fellowship of our Little Church with a BIG heart!

**Merry Christmas,
Karen Como, Council President**



10 WAYS TO SPREAD LOVE...

LISTEN without interrupting.

SHARE without pretending.

SPEAK without accusing.

ENJOY without complaint.

GIVE without sparing.

TRUST without wavering.

PRAY without ceasing.

FORGIVE without punishing.

ANSWER without arguing.



GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.



Our Little Church with a BIG heart blessed so many people during the Thanksgiving Holidays!

Lutheran Social Services (LSS): The 13th annual 'canned-good' parade under the direction of **Kalani Caldwell** was held on November 21st. The men's and women's swim teams from **Long Beach Poly** ran from their school to LSS on Pine St. with a canned-good in each hand to donate for the annual LSS Thanksgiving Feast.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



Give something **unexpected** this Christmas.

Find something special for your loved ones this holiday season. **ELCA Good Gifts** are sure to put a smile on someone's face! What a delightful way to surprise your family and friends by giving to those in need!



ALL MY WORRIES & FEARS I LAY AT YOUR FEET, OH LORD !

BISHOP'S MESSAGE – U.S. ELECTIONS

Dear ones, I am writing in response to our nation's elections more than two weeks after the votes were cast. I am confused, exhausted, unsure how to lead. And then it occurred to me: this "not knowing" is exactly the place God invites us to. II Corinthians 9 tells us God promised, "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness" and later Paul admits, "When I am weak, then I am strong," (II Corinthians 9). It seems to me the problem in American politics is we can never talk about weakness, except when mocking opponents. The world is filled with terrible strife and need, and each candidate must promise to have the answers in order to get elected. Of course people vote for that promise, in whatever package it is presented.

What the 2024 election clarified for me is we simply cannot convince each other about anything. People on "the other side" think I'm crazy and dangerous, and the truth is, I often feel the same about people who vote for a different party than I do.

I also think we struggle, as individuals and as the church, to know what our place in society is. Can one pastoral letter change Congress' vote? No. Can I fret enough to sway an election? Clearly not. This does not mean I can't advocate from being a religious leader; but it helps to know what my "lane" is.

Bishop Dave Nagler of the Pacifica Synod says the nation is in spiritual crisis. I agree. We are not calling for the United States to become a Christian nation – I believe that is part of the problem – believing one religion has all the answers. But the soul of our country, our compassion, our generosity, our hope, hang in the balance. How shall we respond? Jesus drew us a picture of what the kingdom of heaven looks like, filled with reversals of fortune and surprise endings and power being used in confounding ways. Why do we expect things to make sense when Jesus promised they wouldn't?

What is the church's role today? The same it always was: care for the widow and orphan, feed the hungry, heal the sick. Visit those in prison, welcome the stranger. I'm not being political, I'm quoting scripture. The Bible never said, "Secure your borders, increase productivity and make sure you hoard wealth." And look, I'm writing to the liberals as well as the conservatives here: we all hoard wealth, we all struggle with scarcity models, we are all afraid to lose too much. We all want power, and the church should be engaged in critiquing power and its use.

Intolerance, both on the left and on the right, is the devil's work. As soon as we decide our enemies are not really human, are sub-standard and impossible, we have lost any ability to move forward together. Putting up walls

against enemies is the easy answer. The most vulnerable do need protection. I am not asking them to enter into the fray. But those of us with privilege and safety must engage deeper conversations to make life possible for those who do not have those rights. This is nuanced, complicated work. Jesus knew something about that, and I believe the Holy Spirit is poised to inspire us.

Cruelty is unacceptable, in every situation. If President-elect Trump's agenda moves forward, we will personally know people who are deported, or lose their marriage rights, or lose reproductive options. Our public lands will lose federal protections, our borders will be managed differently, international war and peace will shift. We need to be ready to respond, and most importantly, we need to be ready to care for those whose lives will be damaged or destroyed.

We need to listen deeply to people who say they are suffering, even if we do not see it ourselves. Let's listen when people complain about high prices and lost wages. Let's listen when people worry about losing their marriage rights and risk deportation. Imagine that, listening and caring for all people, rather than just the ones we like. This is what it is to follow Jesus' commandments.

And here's the really bold idea: let's pray for our enemies. This is not weak – this is invoking the Holy Spirit to help us navigate our way forward. I know churches who prayed weekly for the president, until Kennedy was elected, or Nixon, or Clinton, or Trump. We seem to have missed the point: we are to pray for leaders, even if, maybe especially when, we consider them an enemy. We need divine help to heal our differences and stop hate. I'm not abdicating my responsibility to bring about change; I'm admitting we are going to need a spiritual revolution to get this done, and I for one have no idea how to do that, without spending enormous amounts of time in prayer and conversation.

We need to stand in the midst of the chaos and understand it better. We also need to call out evil when we see it. But we must be willing to see evil in ourselves, beg God's forgiveness, and be healed. I believe God will give us answers, if we ask the harder questions. Let's not rush to feel better. Let's sit in this difficult place of unrest and confusion, realize the Kingdom of heaven is being birthed, and acknowledge this is exactly the place where God abides. Jesus told his disciples he was sending them out among wolves and commanded us to be crafty as serpents and innocent as doves. (Matthew 10:16) I think it's time to take this commandment, along with love our neighbors as ourselves, very, very seriously. I will, and I ask God to help me.

Bishop Brenda Bos - bbos@socalsynod.org

PROCLAMATIONS AND EVENTS

MERRY CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 25

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD.
~ Luke 1:27

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

GIVING TUESDAY

DECEMBER 3

7 PM — JOIN ZOOM COUNCIL MEETING

DECEMBER 4

FIRST DAY OF WINTER

DECEMBER 21

NAPLES BOAT PARADE

DECEMBER 21

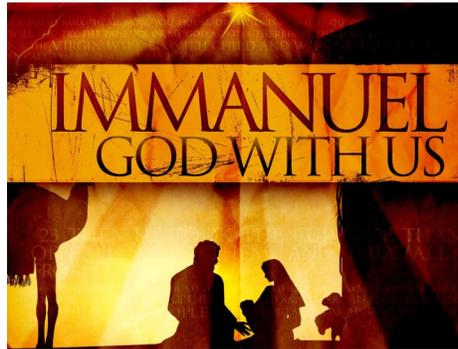
“I AM TH ALPHA AND THE OMEGA,” SAYS THE LORD GOD, WHO IS AND WHO WAS AND WHO IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY.

GLORIOUS DEI

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

DECEMBER 27

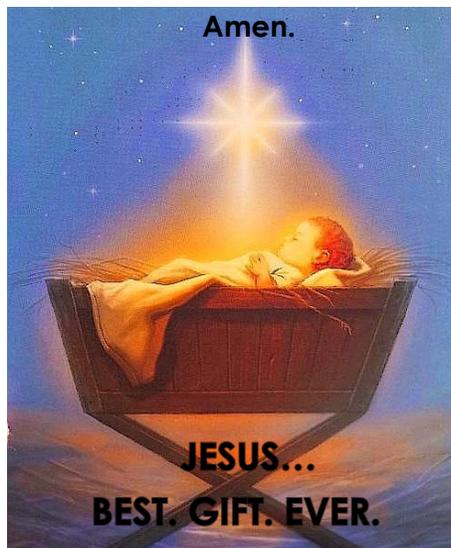
SUBMIT COMMENTS, STORY IDEAS, RESOURCES & SUGGESTIONS to editor via email: pbockman@fullerton.edu



Lord Jesus, help me to live wisely everyday and not squander my precious life. You found me and gave me life for Your good pleasure. You are the Lord of all creation and in You I trust each day. Let Your will be done in my life and may I glorify You with my words and my actions.

All my accomplishments I lay at Your feet; they are Yours. At the end of each day, may You bring me rest, joy and peace. May Your Spirit remind me of Your works in my life. Thank You for this glorious season as we celebrate Your birth. My joy comes from You and Your provision. It is my honor to serve You and others. In the powerful name of Jesus.

Amen.



JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

@ 5:00 PM

Tuesday, DECEMBER 24



ELCA World Hunger Advent Calendar 2024

Celebrate the excitement, anticipation and wonder of the birth of Christ with this Advent calendar. Each day is a reminder of the reason for the season with hymns, prayers, Bible verses and information about how ELCA Good Gifts make a difference in the world. [Go online to the ELCA website to download your copy today!](#)

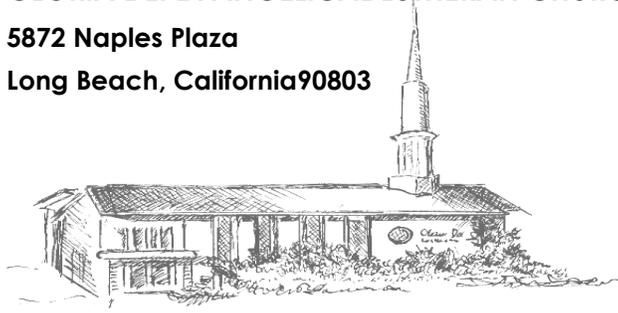
THE LORD HAS MADE THE WORLD SO SURE THAT IT CANNOT BE MOVED. EVER SINCE THE WORK BEGAN, YOUR THRONE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED; YOU ARE THE EVERLASTING. MIGHTIER THAN THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS, MIGHTIER THAN THE BREAKERS OF THE SEA, MIGHTIER IS THE LORD WHO DWELLS ON HIGH.

THE LORD IS KING, ROBED IN MAJESTY; THE LORD IS ROBED IN MAJESTY AND ARMED WITH STRENGTH.

~ PSALM 93

GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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