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Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

BE OF GOOD COURAGE...

In the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul points out that we all have gifts of the Holy Spirit, and none of us is the same. He goes on to use the metaphor of the human body to discuss how we are all connected, part of one body in Christ, interconnected, caring for one another; for the whole body. In verse 26 he reminds us that if one member suffers, all suffer with it. We all know this experience in our own bodies: when we get sick or have surgery or are injured, our whole body responds with fatigue, as everything works towards healing.

Southern California is suffering mightily from these wildfires. I know that many of us do not have connections with people who have suffered from these fires, but I do, and I want to keep us as connected as we can be to those who are suffering. As I write this, the Palisades Fire is at 81% containment while the Eaton Fire is at 95% containment. I've just learned that in the Eaton Fire, more than 10,000 structures burned with only 1,000 structures survived: 90% of all the structures are burned to the ground. The Church I served up there, Christ the Shepherd, is smaller than we are now, with 37 active participants and an average 19 people in worship. 80% of their congregations lost everything.

Our Bishop, Brenda Bos and her spouse Janice Reed lost everything but their dogs and their cars, and the clothes they had with them on an official trip out of the country. They missed the trauma of the fires coming and being evacuated, but they went to their property this week and just cried as they kind of dug around in the rubble.

A retired pastor living in Altadena shared that salvage experts came to their property this week. The pastor showed them where they might find some things that might have been saved. They found his fireproof safe which saved 38 years of hardcopy ancestry work he has done, \$200, and a hard drive and some thumb drives. They also found some dishes and most of the good silver, as well as most of their granddaughter's play tea set. EVERYTHING else, except their dog, cat, cell phones, a few days of medication, and the clothes on their back is gone. Can you imagine your home and all of its contents in ashes? Even if you have a house made of concrete and glass, like my home is, everything in it would burn after all the glass shatters from the heat. The body of Christ is suffering, and we must pray for them, think about them, give all that we can for their recovery. This recovery is going to take years, and we need to keep aware of all that is going on with them.

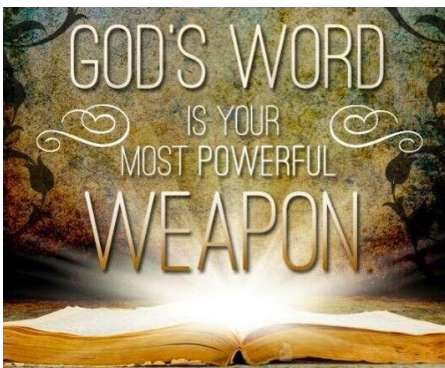
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Similar to Gloria Dei, Augustana Lutheran Church in Washington, D.C., is a **"Reconciling in Christ"** congregation, meaning they welcome all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.



Pastor Message Continues....

Our Country is suffering, too. There is so much hostility, violence, and anger being spewed all over the place. In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus makes his first public appearance in a small community, and he reads the scroll in the Temple. He reads from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

We too, are called to bring good news to the poor, work to free captives, bring healing to any that we can and work for the oppressed in our community and country. We are called to be loving, kind, gracious and merciful. One way we can do that is to refuse to spew hostility, violence, and anger towards those with whom we disagree. We can refuse to engage in disparaging the poor, refugees, immigrants, people of color, and the LGBTQ community. We may not understand them, but that is no reason to act in any other way than with kindness. I beg all of us to contribute to peace in our community and in our country.

Pastor Ruth

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a main-line Protestant church headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. The ELCA was officially formed on January 1, 1988, by the merging of three Lutheran church bodies. As of December 31, 2023, it has approximately 2.79 million baptized members in 8,498 congregations.

In 2015, Pew Research estimated that 1.4 percent of the U.S. population self-identifies with the ELCA. It is the seventh-largest Christian denomination by reported membership and the largest Lutheran denomination in the United States. The next two largest Lutheran denominations are the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) (with over 1.7 million baptized members) and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) (with approximately 340,000 members)] There are also many smaller Lutheran church bodies in the United States, some formed by dissidents to the major 1988 merger. Its members are largely descendants of Scandinavians and Germans who emigrated from countries where Lutheranism was the state religion.

The ELCA belongs to the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the Lutheran World Federation. It is in full communion with the Episcopal Church, Moravian Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

~ Wikipedia



CONGREGATION UPDATE

Did you realize that our church is reaching out and supporting the community seven days a week? In addition to our regular Sunday morning adult education class, followed by worship and fellowship, our church provides a healing place for **fifteen 12-step groups** throughout the week. These groups also support our community outreach with generous gifts and donations to Lutheran Social Services, Fe y Esperanza and ELCA Good Gifts. Our little church with a big heart is very active within the community all week long!

Thank you for attending our annual congregational meeting in January. It's a good way to start the year by reviewing the previous year's spending and approve our **Spending Plan for 2025**. Every month, at the church council meeting, we review the monthly financial reports that Gary Bockman prepares. We are so fortunate to have Gary's expertise! At our next congregational meeting in May, we will review the status of the financial plan for 2025 and determine if any adjustments can be made to increase our annual giving to **Synod Mission partners**.

The word is spreading that Gloria Dei is a place to bring donations in support of the needs of the community. Oftentimes Sandy Nelson is greeted with donation items by the church doors, donated by the **Naples Island neighbors and friends**. These donations are sorted by Sandy, then delivered to the appropriate group for the best use. Please let your friends and family know that the church office is open Monday – Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. to drop off donations, especially as the rainy season (hopefully) begins. You can also call the church office to schedule a pick-up.

Lutheran Social Services (LSS): January was a very busy month making deliveries to LSS. Thanks to Nancy Sansum and her daughter, Susan, we delivered a number of carloads of clothing and household items. So many people were blessed by their generosity. We also delivered many items to support the **LSS 'Moving-In' initiative** which supports families moving in to permanent housing for the first time. Many items for this initiative were donated by various groups who meet in our Fellowship Hall during the week. Thank you to all who continue to donate to LSS to support those in need within the city of Long Beach.

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SEEK OUT THE POWER OF PRAYER

— TAKE POSITIVE STEPS TO HELP YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY
FEEL MORE HOPEFUL AND GRATEFUL IN 2025 —

Fe y Esperanza: The members at Fe y Esperanza were blessed with many wonderful household items and a truckload of furniture donated by Nancy Sansum's family. These donations will make a huge impact on the lives of so many families and they are so grateful! Please continue to keep Pastor Marta and her son, Hector, in your prayers. Hector is experiencing many serious health issues.

Long Beach Men's and Women's Shelter (Lydia House): With the cold weather, the shelter is in need of gently used warm jackets, blankets and new socks. Children's jackets are also needed. Thank you to our former member, **Laura Subke**, for the **huge box of beautifully knitted hats**. They will certainly help to keep many people warm this winter. Please place your donations in one of the boxes in the Fellowship Hall.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Women (ELCW): Thank you to the ELCA women for decorating and undecorating the Chrismon tree. We continue to meet the 3rd Thursday of each month. We have a short devotion followed by a service project and then lunch together. In February we will be making blankets and donating them to the **Long Beach Police** department. These blankets are carried in the trunks of police cars for use when needed in a stressful situation, especially for children. Each blanket is made and sent with prayers. All women are welcome! Join us and bring a friend! The next meeting is on February 20th at 11:00 a.m.

Adult Education: There is rarely an empty seat each Sunday morning as we continue our **exploration of Jesus' parables**. Join the exploration! We meet every Sunday, in the Fellowship Hall, at 9:00 a.m. Also, on Wednesday, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom, we are reading and discussing the book, '**American Heresy, The Roots and Reach of White Christian Nationalism**' by John Fanestil.

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DOWNLOAD THE 2025 KINDNESS CALENDAR

— www.randomactsofkindness.org —



Coming Events:

February 5 – Church Council via Zoom at 7:00 p.m.
 February 16 – Birthday Cake Sunday and Noisy Offering
 February 20 – ELCW at 11:00 a.m.
 March 5 – **Ash Wednesday and Soup Luncheon**

It's so nice to see new faces and visitors at worship on Sunday mornings! Several visitors have mentioned that we are so friendly and welcoming. I think it stems from our compassion for others. We are a blessed family of believers who care for each other. We always have room for more people to join us.

Karen Como, Council President



A passionate believer in the gospel of Jesus, and a renowned religious leader, Reverend Budde recently preached about fundamental Christian values — humanity, concern, compassion, love and empathy for those afraid of what might happen to them under the new administration.



For those who wish to send a postcard of support to **Bishop Budde of the Washington National Cathedral** for her sermon on love, respect & dignity:

ADDRESS:

The Rt Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde
 Episcopal Church House
 Mount St. Alban
 Washington, DC, 20016-5094

God our Rock, you are the comfort we seek. You are the presence that strengthens us in the darkest nights and longest days. With confidence we seek You. Hold closely those facing sudden loss, those frightened, anxious, depressed and ill.

God our Uniter, increase communication and cooperation in our relationships with those of other traditions and religions. Root Your church in the radical message of Your incarnation, and enable us to pursue Your justice in the world.

LET MINDFULNESS & PRAYER HELP EASE EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD

Using Mindfulness to Cope: "It's a practice that helps us reframe our minds and shift our attention," says clinical psychologist Kerri Smedley, Ph.D. "It allows us to step back from all the uncertainties and all the scary stories our minds are telling us, and just focus on the moment."

Using Mindfulness for Self-Care: 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.

make kindness the norm.♥

randomactsofkindness.org



HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEING KIND

We feel happy when we do something kind for someone. This is in part due to elevated levels of endorphins and dopamine, which lead to feel-good emotions.

We also feel an emotional warmth during acts of kindness. These acts produce oxytocin in the brain and body, causing a release in nitric oxide in blood vessels. This dilates blood vessels and reduces blood pressure, in other words, **kindness is good for the heart** and considered cardio-protective.

Research shows that oxytocin, also produced through emotional warmth, reduces levels of free radicals and inflammation in the cardiovascular system, **slowing the aging process.**

Kindness improves relationships by reducing the emotional distance between people, resulting in tighter bonds. Thanks to our ancestors, we're wired to cooperate in order to survive and thrive.

Kindness is contagious, and it's ripple effect is well-documented. One study noted that an anonymous organ donor's

decision to share a kidney resulted in other family members of recipients to donate their kidneys to others in need. In the end, 10 people received a new kidney because of that one anonymous donor.

Be kind to yourself. You have access to many self-care tools via apps on your smartphone. Take advantage of daily mood trackers, meditations, coping tools, community support and more.

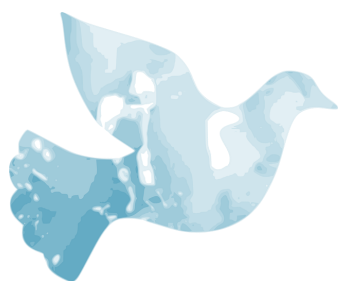
Remember, every act of kindness—big or small—can spark hope! And, inspire us and our neighbors to work together to make a positive impact in our communities and our nation!

CELEBRATE

**Random Acts of Kindness Week
February 9-15, 2025**

**Random Acts of
Kindness Day
February 17, 2025**

ANNOUNCEMENTS & HOLIDAYS



GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS

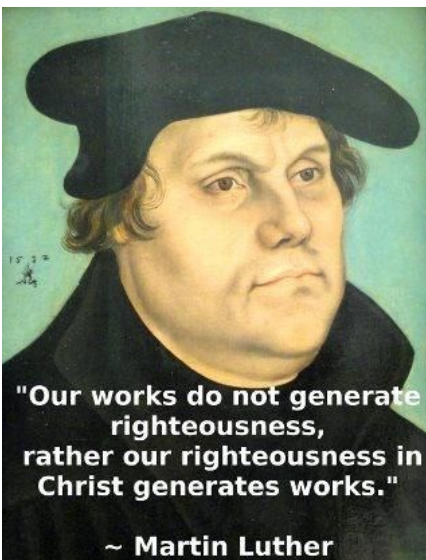
Remember to write your checks for those who have been effected by the wildfires to Gloria Dei and put **"wildfires"** in the memo line. All donations will be directed to **Lutheran Disaster**

Response. If you want your donations to go to LSS, please indicate that, too.



This is how much God loved the world: He gave His one and only son. And this is why: So that no one need be destroyed; by believing in Him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

~ John 3:16



"Our works do not generate righteousness, rather our righteousness in Christ generates works."

~ Martin Luther

COMMIT TO SERVANTHOOD IN 2025

Lord, thank you for the gift of gratitude; help us to be intentional and develop practical habits to boost our gratitude quotient. Amen.



**FIND AN OPPORTUNITY
TO SERVE !**



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

1 —

David & Sarah Fuller

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

2 —

Bob Siemer

5 —

Jayne Lane

David Thomas Fuller

18 —

Roger Powell

25 —

Sarah Fuller

PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

12 — LINCOHN'S BIRTHDAY

14 — VALENTINES DAY

**17 — RANDOM ACTS OF
KINDNESS DAY**

22 — WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

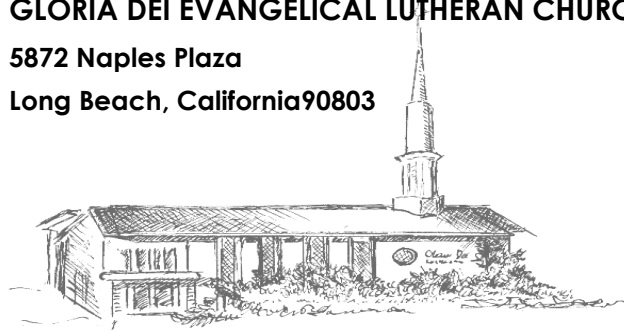
SEEK OUT VOLUNTEER OPTIONS...

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

~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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.....

