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## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

the little church with a big heart!

### BE OF GOOD COURAGE...

I have to admit that I love the seasons of the Church year that include Advent through Easter, as they are filled with so many amazing stories in the life of Jesus. There is so much drama in the anticipation of his birth and the Christmas Season. There is so much revealed in the Season after Epiphany. The journey of Lent is filled with quiet opportunity for renewal and the Easter Season is filled with new life, joy, and celebration. And we cannot forget the excitement and beauty of the Day of Pentecost with everyone dressed in red and the birth of the Church. I'm not AS fond of Trinity Sunday because it celebrates both doctrine and mystery that simply defies understanding that I find very difficult to preach a meaningful sermon on. But on June 15, we enter the long "Season after Pentecost", which occupies half of the Church Year.

The Roman Catholic Church calls it "Ordinary Time" which, I think describes it well. Because this season is void of the drama of the Christ story and is all about the birth and growth and work of the Church. Not that this is not an important part of the Church Year; it most certainly turns us to the challenge of being the Church. And that's my point: the Season after Pentecost is about the challenge of being the Church, in this time and in this place. As we are well aware, the Church has been in decline for quite some time in our country, and even longer in Europe. The only place that it is quickly growing is in Africa.

This season will challenge us to ask ourselves over and over again, "Who are we as the Christian Church, the Lutheran Church in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?" I know that we are a happy little band of disciples at Gloria Dei, with many traditions and patterns fully settled. And trust me, I am not going to challenge any of those traditions. But even as we are a church of mostly elders, we still have to ask ourselves what our role is in our community, our country, our world. How are we sharing the love and grace of God as individuals and as a community of faith. I am constantly delighted that several of the visitors who do come to worship with us since I've been here have decided to stick around. In this Season after Pentecost, I think we need to ask ourselves if there is more we can do to encourage people to walk in our doors, not just to grow our community, but so they can hear and experience the love and grace of God in this wonderful congregation. I apologize when I tell you that this is the challenge that has stumped me for years, no decades, and I don't like this

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# WHERE ALL MAY DWELL

JOIN US FOR SUMMER WORSHIP AT 10:00 AM

WE ARE A CHURCH THAT VALUES AND ENCOURAGES DIVERSE VOICES AND  
LIVELY DIALOGUE IN OUR FAITH AND LIFE.



## Pastor's Message Continues...

challenge. But unlike many places I have served in the past, I believe that at Gloria Dei, the love and grace of God, the Spirit of God is deeply enfleshed and shared. This is a life-giving, love-giving, gracious community of faith that I want more people to experience.

So, I will be keeping that in the front of my mind as I prepare my sermons in this season. I will pray and read and meditate on this, and I invite you to join me in these activities. The truth is that nobody comes to church because the pastor invites them. They come because of people with whom they have some kind of relationship invite them. They come because they see that we are not a stereotypical church that they see in the forefront these days, but because we engage ourselves with the needs of others. They come because they realize that they, too, are welcome in this "Little Church with the Big Heart".

I ask you to pray fervently about this, to imagine, and to dialogue with me about this. I invite you to look past our expectations to our mission in Long Beach, California. And maybe a few more people will come to hear and experience the love and grace of God among us. Maybe a few more people will come to know that they, too, are loved exactly as they are, without expectation that they need to change their identity.

**Joyfully,  
Pastor Ruth**

***"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"***

## THE LITTLE CHURCH WITH THE BIG HEART

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 service.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — COUNCIL UPDATE



Thank you to all who attended our Annual Congregational meeting on May 18th. We had a wonderful lunch, thanks to Marilyn Bittle and her Hospitality committee and we took care of important business for our church family.

A new slate of council members was elected - they include: **Lark Adams, Marilyn Bittle, Gary Bockman (Treasurer), Margie Brown, Karen Como, Phil Como, Vicki Gammer, David Kahakauwila, Jean O'Connell, Beverly Pandora, Roger Powell, Beth Rotsel, Bob Siemer, Candy Wood.** Thank you to all for serving our church family!

During our meeting we unanimously voted to amend Gloria Dei's Bylaws to eliminate term limits for council members. We also reported on the increased giving of \$4,800 to our Mission Partners from the surplus in offerings we have received during the first four months of 2025. The Council will review the spending plan and make recommendations for additional distribution to our mission partners in September. Also, we elected **Margie Brown and Bob Siemer** to represent our church family at the **Synod Assembly** in late May.

It's so good to see new faces worshipping with us and attending the luncheon. Jeff Rodrie, Aija O'Neil and Morgan Ginyard have become treasured new friends and it's so nice to have Patricia Baker back with us after spending time on the East coast with her daughter Heidi and her family.

**Lutheran Social Services (LSS):** We received a wonderful commendation from Wendy Rubio, director of Lutheran Social Services, and our **Long Beach Council person, Kristina Duggan**, in appreciation for the ongoing support Gloria Dei has provided to LSS and the community. Gloria Dei has been associated with LSS in a variety of ways for over 40 years.

LSS is so appreciative of our generosity as this organization continues serving families and individuals in Long Beach.

**Fe y Esperanza:** As Pastor Ruth reported at our Congregational meeting, she delivered \$900 in gift cards to **Pastor Marta** in support of their community outreach and food distribution program.



Continued on page 4

**Long Beach Men's and Women's Shelter (Lydia House):** Sandy continues to make deliveries of clothing and toys to these shelters. Donations are welcomed, especially for children. Please place your donations for the Men's and Women's Shelter in one of the boxes under the mailboxes near the kitchen.

**Evangelical Lutheran Church Women (ELCW):** Last month hygiene kits were prepared for women at various shelters. At our next meeting, on Thursday, June 12, we will be going to lunch before taking a summer break. Meetings will resume in September. All women are welcome! Again, join us for lunch on the June 12 and in September, and bring a friend!

**Adult Education:** On Wednesday, we began reading a collection of essays by Rachael Held Evans in her book, 'Wholehearted Faith'. Each week is a discussion on a new essay. We meet via Zoom, at 10:00 a.m.; all are welcome. On Sunday mornings, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, we are continuing our discussions on the parables of Jesus. Please join us for thought-provoking conversation.

### Coming Events:

**June 4** – Church Council meeting at 7:00 p.m. via zoom – all are welcome

**June 6** – Pastor Ruth's birthday

**June 7** – Remove Easter decorations (10:00 – 12:00) and prepare the church for Pentecost

**June 8** – Pentecost—**wear red**

**June 15** – Birthday Cake Sunday and Noisy offering

Sadly, Mike Caldwell, friend and former member, passed away on May 20th. We grieve the loss with Lanae, Mike's daughter and her family, Kalani and Marilyn.

On a personal note, your cards, calls, food, flowers and especially your prayers have been such a blessing and have encouraged my recovery from back surgery. It's another example, for me, of the importance of a church family whether in times of thanksgiving or in times of difficulty. Thank you for your love and concern!

**Karen Como, Council President**

## BLESSED ASSURANCE

**"Love has triumphed over hatred, light over darkness and truth over falsehood. Forgiveness has triumphed over revenge."**

~ **Pope Francis** — April 21, 2025

May 25, 2025 marked the fifth anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. In her message to the church honoring George Floyd, **ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton** calls our attention to how this "horrific act revealed the deadly reality of racism in the United States for many across the world." Eaton stressed that "racism is one of many tools of white supremacy and a sin that distorts God's image in all of us, and it stands against the Gospel we proclaim."

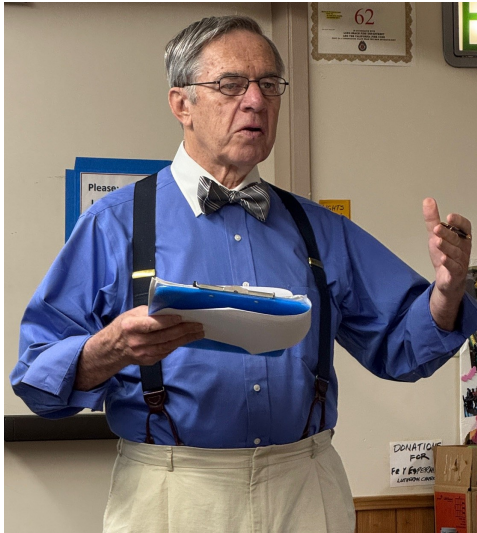


**Pope Francis 1936 — 2025**

Christians must stand up for Christian values in our day to day living—striving to treat all people with human dignity!

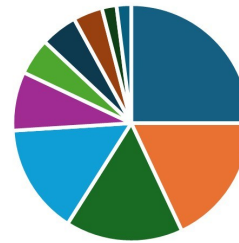


# GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.



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## Churchwide Spending



USA Growth 25.00%	International Gwth 18.00%	CWide Ministry 16.00%
Ldrshp Sp & Dev 15.00%	Technology 8.00%	Govn & Ldrshp 5.00%
Financial Promtn 5.00%	Society & Advcy 4.00%	Rsrch & Planning 2.00%
Interfaith Reltns 2.00%		

At the January Congregational Meeting, the Congregation asked that I inform them regarding how money sent to Synod is used. This article responds to that request.

Money paid to Synod is identified herein as Mission Support. For Gloria Dei, it is \$4,200 in CY 2025.

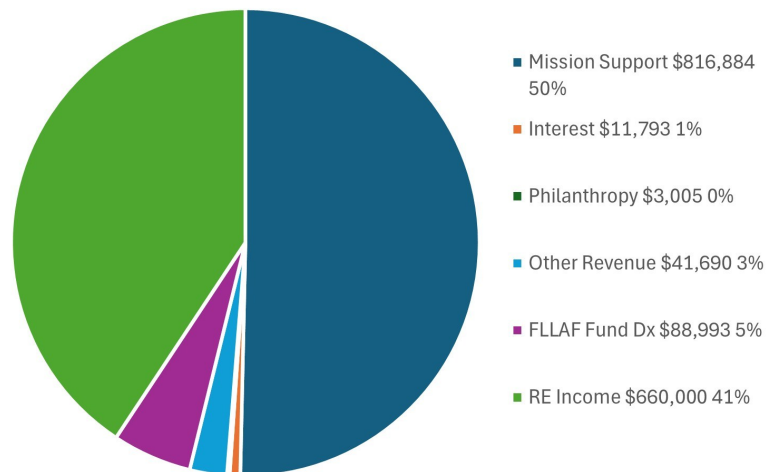
The Synod Income Statement for Fiscal Year 2024 identifies Mission Support income from all churches as \$816,884. Fifty percent of Mission Support Income is sent to Churchwide for Mission Support. The remainder is used by Synod to support staff and Synod programs. See Synod Revenue and Expense charts for more detail. A third chart sets out how the money that is sent to Churchwide is employed.

Not directly included in Synod income is revenue and expense pertaining to properties held and sold by the Synod. A portion of the proceeds from sales is transferred annually to Synod income and is identified in the Synod Revenue chart as RE income.

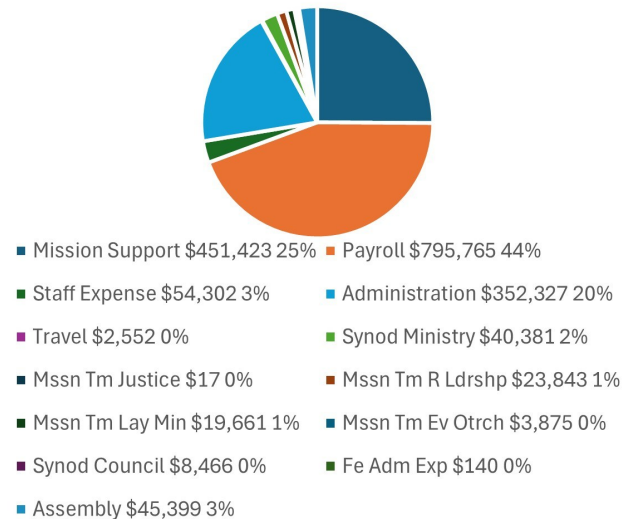
I, in addition to Synod staff, am available to respond to any questions you have.

— Bob Siemer

## Synod Revenue \$1,622,366



## Synod Expense \$1,798,151



## SPECTRUM OF SPLENDOR

**Sovereign One, come near us so we might know your grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

**Faithful God, through our words and music, may our anxious hearts find  
rest and rhythm in you. Amen.**

**Wonderous God, meet us on the way, and empower us to share your life-altering love  
with the world. In Christ's name. Amen.**

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE LUTHERAN IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

First and foremost, to be Lutheran means to be Christian. We believe and wish to live out the words of the Apostles creed, believing in God the creator, Jesus the Savior and the Holy Spirit, God's gift to the church to bring us together in love with God, each other and this world. Second, to be Lutheran means to understand that God does everything, we can do nothing without God. Instead of believing somehow we can do enough right things to impress God, we humbly admit God loves us first, reconciles with us first, offers the Holy Spirit to us first, and then, because we are loved, we have the ability to love others.

As Ephesians 2:4-5 says, **"God, who is rich in mercy, loved us, even when we were dead to sin and made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved."** Lutherans rely entirely on God's grace, this gift which was given to us to make us whole.

To be a Lutheran in Southern California means to take this love of God, a powerful healing gift, and share it with our diverse neighbors. Southern Californians live with the enormous privilege of good weather and easy transportation. We have a good economy and various ways to earn a living and an education. We have access to health care and services. This does not mean everyone has access to everything. But there are options available, and as Christians answering a call to love our neighbors generously, we work to connect those without services to meet their basic needs. We are connected to the land, the ocean and the mountains in ways many other regions of the country cannot. We have a serious need to love and care for our resources and environment.

We also have a diversity of language and national origin. We hear a variety of languages spoken on our playgrounds, in our grocery stores and at our sporting events. Our congregations need to live among this diversity, bringing love and curiosity to the richness of our environment. It is expensive to live in this part of the country, so we also need to work toward economic equity and reality. Many of our congregations cannot afford full-time pastors, so to be Lutheran in Southern California means lay leaders may need to take significant leadership roles. This provides yet another opportunity for diversity and growth.

Because of these realities, our synod is engaged with immigration issues, educational offerings and LGBTQ support. We lift up lay leaders and invite a wide variety of people to our tables, both the tables of Holy Communion, lunch tables and conference meeting tables. We experience God's abundance in this place, and strive to share it, with God's help, in everything we do.

**~ Bishop Brenda Bos**

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# EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS — JUNE 2025



Newly elected **Pope Leo XIV** appears at the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican May 8, 2025.  
(AP/Markus Schreiber)

**The first American pope!**  
So many people thought holding a U.S. passport was an insuperable barrier to the election of Augustinian Cardinal **Robert Prevost** as Pope Leo XIV, but the College of Cardinals thought differently.

As the cardinals discussed the future of the church last week, the happy shadow of Francis loomed large. They wanted someone who shared his commitment to synodality and focus on the world's poor. With Prevost, a mild-mannered man, they also voted for fewer surprises and a steadier hand at the wheel of governance, someone with experience of the Vatican Curia but not a creature of that Curia.

Source: The National Catholic Reporter



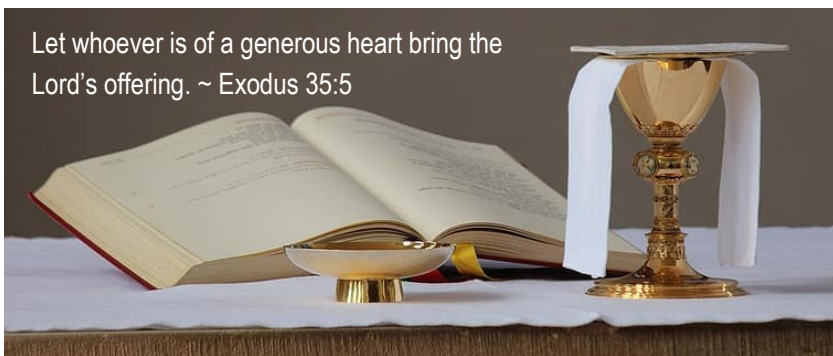
## GROWING IN FAITH, LIFTED BY HOPE, GUIDED BY LOVE

- June 4 Vicki & Steve Gammer Anniversary
- June 6 Happy B-day Pastor Ruth
- June 22 Happy B-day Candy Wood
- June 23 Bob & Stephanie Siemer Anniversary

## JUNE 20 — SUMMER SOLSTICE



**HAPPY  
FATHER'S  
Day!** JUNE 15



Let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering. ~ Exodus 35:5

**JOIN US FOR COMMUNION EVERY SUNDAY!**



God of water and word, help us grow in our faith so we can serve our neighbor and the world.

Loving God, unite us in love, wisdom and strength.

God of the rainbow, bless the beauty of all you have made in the full spectrum of your love.

**MAY YOU OBSERVE OUR WORLD  
WITH LOVING CONSIDERATION ...**

**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)



