

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

GATHERING IN CHRIST ✝ SHARING HIS LOVE

THE GLORION
September 2025

www.gloriadeielca.com

IN CASE OF PASTORAL EMERGENCY
Contact the office during regular office hours:
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Monday thru Friday
After office hours contact:
Pastor Lynn M. Fonfara via email:
pastorgloriadeileesburg@gmail.com

ADDRESS: 130 S. Lone Oak Drive, Leesburg, FL 34748

OFFICE PHONE: (352)787-3223

OFFICE EMAIL: gloriadeilutheranleesburg@gmail.com

WEB SITE: www.gloriadeielca.com

OFFICE HOURS: Monday – Friday from 9:00-2:00 PM

PASTOR: LYNN M. FONFARA

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC: LEONARD CREMISIO

OFFICE MANAGER: EVELYN ROLLINS

SEXTON: TINA JANOSA

SUNDAY WORSHIP – 9:30 A.M



September, 2025

Asking good questions

In just a couple weeks, I will celebrate a year of ministry with you. It's my nature to ask questions, and to tell stories. You've probably noticed that. My questions have mostly changed from "how do you do ... here?" to "what if we did ...?"

Asking questions is something God encourages us to do. When we ask questions of Jesus – why did he do or say such and such – we learn about God and God's mercy and love. When we ask questions of ourselves – we learn about ourselves, about each other, and our traditions.

The other day, a group of us were asking the question – "how can we bring more people into the church?" The answer is simple, and complex, and has many answers. Below are a few.

First, our focus should be on helping people know Jesus/God, and not on getting more people to worship with us. Jesus focused sharing the good news of the reign of God coming into their midst. He didn't say anything about getting people to attend worship services.

Second, we all should be talking to friends, neighbors, and others we encounter in our daily lives about our connection with Gloria Dei and how we meet Jesus there.

Third, we need to figure out how to help people find us. The simple fact is that with our out-of-the-way location, lots of people don't know we exist, especially compared with other congregations on main roads. While many people today look online for information, some folks still want their information in print, like the local newspaper, and community newsletters. So, in our conversation, we discussed the idea of advertising in the community newsletters.

The question then becomes, “does your community have a weekly or monthly newsletter? What does it cost to place an ad? If we provide the ad copy, would you be willing to take it to the people who produce the newsletter? Additionally, would you consider paying some or all of the cost, if it’s within your budget? Could several families in a community share the cost of such advertising?”

So, our question really should be, “How many ways can we identify to tell others about Jesus?” Let’s ask ourselves “How did Jesus do it? How did the earliest disciples do it?” to find the answers.

Questions are good. They lead us to explore possibilities, and to identify some fruitful responses. I look forward to asking more questions, so we can puzzle through to find some workable responses.

Pax
Pastor Lynn

GLORIA DEI WOMEN OF THE ELCA

WELCA Board Meeting

The next WELCA Board Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.** All board members are encouraged to attend as we continue our important work together.

COUNCIL CORNER

By Vaike O’Grady

A New Window to Gloria Dei: Our Website is Live!

Dear Gloria Dei family, in case you missed the news: our updated church website has officially launched!

After months of planning and development, we now have a fresh, modern digital presence that better reflects our vibrant community and makes it

easier for both members and visitors to connect with our church family. We are so thankful to our website benefactor, Forrest Berg, for underwriting and supporting this work. We want to recognize the leadership and time commitment of Len Cremisio, who shepherded the site to completion. And we're grateful for Sue and Irv Johnson, who continue to provide visual content and ideas to make the site all it can be. Thank you!

The new site features an updated design, improved navigation, and enhanced functionality that will serve our congregation well. You'll find everything from service times and upcoming events to ministry information all organized in an intuitive, user-friendly format. Most importantly, it captures the warm, welcoming spirit that defines Gloria Dei.

We need YOUR help to make it shine! I encourage every member of our congregation to visit the site and explore all it has to offer. Your feedback is invaluable as we continue to refine and improve our digital ministry. If you notice something that could be better organized, have suggestions for additional content, or spot any technical issues, please don't hesitate to reach out to the church office or speak with a council member.

We're also actively seeking content contributions from our church family. Do you have photos from recent church events, fellowship gatherings, or ministry activities? We'd love to feature them on the site! Whether it's pictures from fellowship time, bible studies or photos of the church building itself, they help tell the story of our community life together. Please consider sharing your photos – they help our website feel like the living, breathing representation of our church that it should be.

Additionally, if you have stories about how Gloria Dei has impacted your life, testimonies about our ministries, or suggestions for new features or content areas, we want to hear from you. This website belongs to all of us, and your contributions will help make it a true reflection of our shared faith journey.

Please visit our new website and share your feedback, photos, and suggestions with Len. Together, we can make our digital ministry a

powerful tool for sharing God's love with our community and beyond.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

SAVE THE DATE, Tuesday October 21st - Fall fashion show. Fashions from Fashion Labels. Guest speaker from Women Build Habitat for Humanity Lake-Sumter.

PRAYERS

We will pray for the joys, sorrows, and concerns of the following members in September:

- 9/7** Nancy Vogel, Marilyn Wahl, Judy Weigel, Joel & Sharon Weinhardt, Kenn & Marti Yance
- 9/14** Charles & Joy Yonko, Arthur Zerbel & Debbye Halligan, Helen Ames, Forrest Berg, Bill & Kathleen Birdsall,
- 9/21** Gayle Bloom, John & Janet Braun, Patricia Bressler, Brian, Chelsea and Barrett Buescher, Kathy Bush
- 9/28** Craig & Christine Carlson, Richard & Debbie Cassem, Charlotte Christensen, Josephine Cichoracki, Michael & CJ Clarke

ANNIVERSARIES

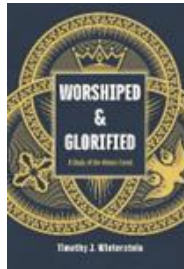
9/7	Marti & Kenn Yance	57 years*
9/27	Janet & Jon Braun	64 years*

**Special congratulations to those celebrating fifty or more years of marriage.*

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/2	Kathleen Birdsall	Quiana Menchaca	9/25
9/5	Michael Clarke	Crystal Kirkpatrick	9/26
9/11	Richard Cassem	Judy Eads	9/28
9/16	Deborah Cassem	Mary Grissom	9/28
9/23	Dottsie Grins		

BIBLE STUDY/EDUCATION



New study coming soon!

The Monday evening Zoom Bible Study will finish reading the Gospel of Luke in a few weeks. We plan to start our next topic on October 20.

Since this year is the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed, we will use the book *Worshiped and Glorified: A Study of the Nicene Creed*, by Rev. Timothy J. Winterstein. We will explore the history of the creed and why each word or phrase is essential to describing God as Holy Trinity, and how the Creed helps us avoid the heresies that still surface today.

The study is written for 8 sessions, but it may take a bit longer, as

participants bring in resources to enhance the discussion. This book includes Leader Guide for each session with key takeaways, an opening prayer/hymn, and much more.

Participants may choose to have their own copy of the book, but it will not be necessary. I have found the sources listed below. Some of you may choose to order together to avoid shipping costs.

\$18.99 paperback print at Concordia Publishing House

\$11.39 paperback print at Christianbook.com (Ships after September 8)

\$16.74 e-book Kindle from Amazon

Zoom Bible Study

Zoom Bible Studies continues each Monday night at 7:00 pm as Pr. Lynn leads us in the study of the Book of Luke. Through this fellowship we have an opportunity to discuss how the Holy Spirit is revealing the scriptures to each of us. When Pr Lynn is not available, Forrest Berg graciously steps up to lead us with special devotions. I think I speak for all of us who attend this study, that it is very enjoyable and time well spent. Try to make this hour part of your week. If you are interested in joining us, contact Forrest Berg at fberg12@gmail.com or call the church office so you can be added to the email for the zoom.

Interest in Leading a Bible Study?

We are looking for individuals who feel called to lead a Bible Study Group. If you have a passion for scripture and desire to help others grow in their faith, we encourage you to consider this opportunity. If you are interested, please speak with Christine Carlson.

What is Gloria Dei's leadership exploring?

Part of leadership is opening our hearts and minds to ways that God can help us fulfill his mission here at Gloria Dei, our community, and in the world. To this endeavor, the Church Council is reading Following God into a Hopeful Future, Leading Faithful Innovation by Dwight Zscheile, Michael Binder and Tessa Pinkstaff. Other leaders on committees are reading about leadership strategies in Catching the Next Wave, Leadership Strategies for Turn-Around Congregations by Steven J. Goodwin. Perhaps you would like to read these books, too, as we explore God's vision for our church and grow in our mission of *Gathering in Christ and Sharing his Love*.

CALL COMMITTEE

The Call Committee has been meeting weekly since early March and has now finished the hard work of completing the Ministry Site Profile. This document is what the Synod will use to begin the search for a prospective pastoral candidate for our church. Prior to sending this document to the Synod, it was sent to our Gloria Dei Council for review, corrections if needed and approval. With minor revisions the Gloria Dei council approved the document and the completed Ministry Site Profile has now been sent to the Florida-Bahama Synod office so that they can begin the search for us.

At our meeting on August 13, the Call Committee then began working to come up with the important questions that we would want to ask a prospective candidate when Synod provides us with candidates for an interview. We used a selection of a large number of questions that was offered to us in our resource book provided by Synod. We chose the questions that we felt best applied to our church's circumstances and modified those questions as needed for Gloria Dei. It was decided that when we are provided with an interview candidate each member of the committee would ask one or two questions as time allowed for the interview: followed by the candidate being given time to ask the committee any questions the he/she wanted to ask of us.

In order to prepare for our first actual interview, the committee decided to have a practice "mock interview" to become comfortable asking the questions we had chosen and to determine what length of time it might take to complete an interview. Pastor Nancy Vogel was gracious enough to become the prospective candidate for our "mock interview." Pastor Vogel chose to answer questions as the historical person of Katrina von Bora (the wife of Martin Luther, who was a significant figure in the Protestant Reformation). The committee was provided with a short resume for Katrina. It was the consensus of the committee that the "mock interview" went well and we had sufficient time to complete our questions in the allotted time. We were then asked if we needed to modify any of the questions we had asked to discuss at our next meeting on August 27.

Upon receiving a call list from the Synod, the call committee will reaffirm

their commitment to confidentiality. The names and information about the candidates are NOT to be shared with spouse/partner, family, council members, or anyone else outside of the call committee.

This Call Committee has spent many weeks meeting and through prayer and bible study at each meeting learning to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, how we can find the best shepherd for Gloria Dei. We appreciate your prayers for us and our work during this time.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Blessings,

Linda Steege on behalf of the Call Committee: Kathleen Birdsall, Christine Carlson, Richard Healy, Leone Goding, Pat Bressler, Bob Pierce

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First Impressions Up-date The First Impressions Task Force is delighted to announce that we have reached our fund-raising goal of \$27,000 for the completion of the church building’s exterior. This initiative forms a core part of The Church Building Improvement Project, as outlined in the proposal dated April 4, 2024, which was presented to and approved by the council. We are pleased to report that most elements of the proposal have already been addressed, and now, with your generous support, the final phase is set to begin on September 25, 2025, with completion anticipated by October 9, 2025, if not sooner. Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone whose contributions and encouragement have brought us to this exciting milestone.

During our recent meeting, the committee also explored options for enhancing the experience of families visiting our church. Specifically, we discussed installing a functional speaker system in the fellowship hall or preparing the large TV to broadcast our Sunday morning service live. These improvements would offer families a welcoming space to step into if their children become restless, while still allowing them to follow the service and return when they feel ready. We will continue to meet monthly and follow the progress of these projects.

Respectfully submitted Kathleen Birdsall

FELLOWSHIP

Septemper 2025
Loraine Van Haecke

Summer is almost gone! Our friends and neighbors will be coming back from their other homes to join us soon. Meantime we have had a very hot summer but it has been very enjoyable. On July 6 we had our BBQ picnic that the community was invited. We did not have the response we wanted but we did see about 20 to 25 new faces and all had a good time.

Activities are planned for September, October, November, and of course December. Watch the bulletins for more details.

We need your help to provide light snacks, juice and of course COFFEE for our after-worship gatherings. There is a signup sheet on the kitchen counter. This is our time to get to know each other better and to catch up on what is going on. Show Hospitality and Fellowship!! Please help us continue this program. Thanks for all of you that already help!

RUTH CIRCLE

KINDNESS TREE RETURNS

On September 1st, the kindness tree will again hold tags for personal care items. In addition to items donated earlier this year, in order to reach goal of providing 75 kits to Lutheran World Relief, we will need the following items: INDIVIDUAL wrapped toothbrushes, nail clippers and bar soap. A total of 150 bars are used in making 75 kits. Your generosity and thoughtfulness is appreciated.

Hebrews 13:16

And do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

NEXT MEETING- Thursday Sept. 4, 2025, 10:30am. Bring your lunch for Fellowship time. All women of Gloria Dei are welcome to attend!

BIBLE STUDY- Dianne will lead using Gather Magazine. June/July/Aug. issue. Session #2 Relationships that sustain us.

MARY-MARTHA CIRCLE

Mary Martha Circle will meet on the 4th Friday in September ONLY. We will begin quilting at 9am, have snacks at 10:30 then continue until noon. Carol Marshall Leader 352-787-0435

STEWARDSHIP

Fall is always a busy time in the ELCA churches, Gloria Dei is no different. **Please mark these dates on your calendar!**

Sunday September 7th, 2025, God's Work Our Hands Day.

This is a day in which ELCA celebrates who we are as the Evangelical Church in America.

CHANGE IN PLANS- As happens in life and in the life of the church, GWOH day celebration has changed. GWOH day will celebrate what it is we do as members of Gloria Dei to be God's Hands and Feet in this world. A display of various work done by teams will be displayed. The highlight of the talk will be the fact that between July 1 and Aug 31st members of Ruth Circle coordinated and delivered food and snacks to the children of Leesburg Elementary school. Many children are provided food only when at school. The response from the congregation was more generous than could be imagined. At this time, a count of what was given is being taken and will be part of the presentation on Sept. 7th temple talk. Kindhearted, unsparing, generous and caring are but a few words to describe the actions of the congregation for this important summer project.

Sunday October 19th, 2025 "Estimate of Giving Day.

The Stewardship team, Pastor Lynn, Arlene Kelly, Linda Steege, Allen Francis and I are adopting portions of the Stewardship program "Measuring What Matters" for this year's fall campaign.

"Measuring What Matters" will be a four-week program at Gloria Dei. Sept. 28 to Oct 19th. The plan is to capture helpful information on finances for calling a new Pastor and celebrating the generosity of our congregation. These four weeks will be a time of reflection for each of us to prayerfully consider what our investment of time, energy and resources are at Gloria Dei and do we meet our own expectations of what is important to us and what matters.

Dianne Marcotte- Stewardship chair

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THANK YOU LETTERS

July 2, 2025

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
130 S. Lone Oak Drive
Leesburg FL 34748

Attn:

Dear :

Thank you so much for your recent donations to Haven of Lake & Sumter Counties, Inc. Your thoughtfulness and kindness has blessed our organization and our clients. Please know the difference your donation makes. We are most grateful for your warm and generous human spirit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelley Smalley".

Executive Director
Haven of Lake & Sumter Counties, Inc

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Leesburg Elementary School

2229 South Street ~Leesburg, FL 34748

Phone (352) 365-6308 ~Fax (352)365-9018 ~ Website www.lake.k12.fl.us/les

"Empowering Students to Become Tomorrow's Leaders!"

Dear Gloria Dei Church Congregation,

On behalf of Leesburg Elementary, I want to extend our deepest thanks for your generous donation and continued support of our school. Your kindness and unwavering commitment to our students truly make a difference in their lives.

Without your community involvement, we would not be able to provide the level of care and resources our children need to succeed. Your support uplifts not only our students but also their families, and we are so grateful to have you as a part of our extended school family.

Thank you for being such a vital part of our mission. We truly appreciate all that you do.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Florence Katzenberger
Family School Liaison
Leesburg Elementary

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Mon.	9/1	LABOR DAY – OFFICE CLOSED
Tues.	9/2	10:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
		10:30 a.m. WELCA Board Meeting
Wed.	9/3	10:00 a.m. Call Committee Meeting
Thurs.	9/4	10:00 a.m. Strategic Planning Meeting
		10:30 a.m. Ruth Circle
Sun.	9/7	9:30 a.m. Sunday Worship / Service for Healing
		11:00 a.m. God's Work Our Hands
Mon.	9/8	7:00 p.m. Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/9	9:00 a.m. Mary Martha Circle
		9:00 a.m. LWR Quilting

		10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	9/10	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee
Fri.	9/12	10:00 a.m.	Joining Hands in Food Ministry
Sun.	9/14	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	9/15	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/16	9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
Wed.	9/17	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
Thurs.	9/18	9:30 a.m.	First Impressions
Sun.	9/21	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship / Hunger Offering
Mon.	9/22	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/23	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	9/24	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Fri.	9/26	9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
		9:00 a.m.	LWR Quilting
Sun.	9/28	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
		11:00 a.m.	Council Meeting
		11:00 a.m.	Temple Talk
Mon.	9/29	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/30	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer

SEPTEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

Assistant Ministers

Legend: R-Reader, +-Crucifer, C-Communion Assist., A-Liturgy Assist.

	<u>9:30 a.m.</u>		
9/7	R= Kathy Bush += James Menchaca A= Patricia Bressler	9/14	R= Donald Ames += A= Kathy Bush
9/21	R= Arlene Kelly += James Menchaca A= Patricia Bressler	9/28	R= Patricia Bressler += A= Vaike O'Grady

Ushers

If you are able to serve or have any questions, please contact Crystal Kirkpatrick at 552-3983.

<u>9:30 a.m.</u>			
9/7	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	9/14	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson
9/21	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	9/28	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson

Altar Guild for September: Crystal & Byron Kirkpatrick

Post Worship Secretary for September: Rita Moritz

Fellowship

9/7 God's Work Our Hands

9/14

9/21

9/28

Counters – Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

9/7	Jeanne Talts
9/14	Linda Steege & Janet Braun
9/21	Arlene Kelly
9/28	Arlene Kelly

FINANCIAL CORNER

GENERAL FUND

	July, 2025	Year to date 2025
Contributions	\$15,207.27	\$124,540.62
Expenditures	\$14,074.39	\$110,993.99

RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Beg. Bal. 1/1/2025	Donations	Withdrawals	Ending Bal 5/31/25
Altar Wine/Bread	267.90	90.00	0	357.90
AV Equipment	138.33	0	0	138.33
Choir/music	550.00	0	0	550.00
ELCA	0	75.00	75.00	0
Eternal Light	785.00	0	0	785.00
Evangelism	1,720.00	0	0	1,720.00
Fellowship	544.19	1,444.50	1,435.89	552.80
1 st Impressions Ph 4	0	23,979.00	0	23,979.00
1 st Impressions Ph 3	17,128.63	4,490.00	10,490.00	11,128.63
Flowers	400.00	860.00	0	1,260.00
JHIF	0	3,060.00	3,060.00	0
Leesburg Elementary	14.69	0	0	14.69
Oak Park Middle	0	0	0	0
Quilting	300.00	0	0	300.00
Thrive Choice \$\$	1,372.64	271.00	1,054.00	589.64
Trees & Landscaping	0	5,000.00	3,150.00	1,850.00
World Hunger	0	514.00	514.00	0
TOTALS	23,221.38	39,783.50	19,778.89	43,225.99

THE BELIEVE THE BEST PRINCIPLES

The Basics:

Every relationship has spoken and unspoken expectations. And then there are the actual experiences within the relationship. Sometimes the expectations and experiences match up, and sometimes they don't. When they don't it creates a gap:



EXPECTATION

EXPERIENCE

gap

When a gap occurs between what we expect and what we experience, we can choose to fill the gap with one of two things:

BELIEVING THE BEST or **ASSUMING THE WORST**

Believing the Best is based on trust and goodwill

Assuming the Worst is based on distrust and suspicion.

Five Principles for being a “Believe the Best” community:

1. When there is a gap that forms between what I expect and what I experience, I will BELIEVE the best. *(We will start with trust and goodwill).*
2. When other people assume the worst about you, I will come to your DEFENSE.
*(Gossip is not permitted; we will put the best construction on what our neighbor does-
the Eighth Commandment).*
3. If what I experience begins to erode my TRUST, I will come directly to you about it.
(We won't let issues fester or be shared with others, nor will we ignore them).
4. When I'm convinced I will not be able to deliver on a promise, I will inform you AHEAD of time.
(We will keep our commitments to one another).
5. When you confront me about the gaps I've created, I will tell you the TRUTH.
(We will be open to hearing others' concerns, and respond to them with integrity).

Adapted from Celebration Lutheran Church- Cypress, Texas.

2025 CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Pastor	Lynn M. Fonfara	352-249-8533
President	Loraine Van Haecke	407-252-4692
Vice President		
Secretary	Vaike O'Grady	512-827-6344
Treasurer	Linda Hide	253-740-3063
Financial Secretary	Janet Braun	412-445-7774

Members:

John Braun	412-926-3381
Joel Weinhardt	330-936-8451
Bill Birdsall	732-773-2680
Christine Carlson	516-458-7355
James Menchaca	210-913-6224
Kathy Bush	610-657-1168

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Worship & Music	Pastor Lynn M. Fonfara	352-249-8533
Evangelism/Technology/ & Communications/Webmaster	Bill Birdsall	732-773-2680
Property	Bill Birdsall	732-773-2680
Fellowship	Loraine Van Haecke	407-252-4692
Stewardship	Dianne Marcotte	352-933-5517
WELCA	Dianne Marcotte (contact only)	352-933-5517
Christian Education	Christine Carlson	516-458-7355
Finance	John Braun	412-926-3381
	Joel Weinhardt	330-936-8451

