



GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

GATHERING IN CHRIST ✝ SHARING HIS LOVE

THE GLORION
JANUARY 2026

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 phone:
352-249-8533

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

AFTER WORSHIP SEC. – GAYLE BLOOM *(In order to assist the Pastor, if you need the Pastor to contact someone or address something.)*

OFFICE MANAGER: EVELYN ROLLINS

SEXTON: TINA JANOSA

SUNDAY WORSHIP – 9:30 A.M



January, 2026



New year, new opportunities

Each year, whether we use paper or online calendars, we have a brand-new opportunity to fill the days, weeks and months differently than we have in the past. Of course, we want to begin by filling in birthdays and anniversaries and other known events like cruises or camping trips.

Maybe you always begin and end the day with prayer and you don't need it on your calendar to remember to take the time for it. But if it's not your practice, putting prayer as an item in your calendar is a handy way to start a new practice.

There are other time commitments we make as well. Susann and I and several others enjoy lunch together each Wednesday. I block out that time, arranging doctor and other appointments around it as much as possible. Of course, as a pastor I block out other events as well, like Lent and Advent services on Wednesdays.

At Gloria Dei, there will be more opportunities to block out time and attention as the Strategic Planning Team begins to implement some of its plans. For Gloria Dei to continue into the future, some things will begin to change. What those changes are is up to the congregation. Please consider adding these events to your calendar.

And, the more we know about faith, the more we believe. I hope you will add Bible or other study opportunity to your weekly schedule. The Monday Zoom study changes topics a few times a year. There are times during the week when someone could lead an in-person Bible study at the church, too. Ask Pr Lynn or Christine Carlson for some suggestions.

What will your calendar hold this year? I hope it holds time apart for God in prayer, study, and worship.

Happy New Year!

Pax

Pr Lynn

Recommendations from a Book-a-holic



Heart of a Stranger, by Angela Buchdahl

Angela Buchdahl was born in Korea, the daughter of a Korean Buddhist mother and a Jewish American father. Early in her life, she began exploring her spiritual nature, and by age 16 she began to think about being a rabbi. She faced the challenges of being an Asian American, and never quite fitting in anywhere.

Since being Jewish is passed through the mother, people wondered how she could be Jewish? How does her mother's Buddhism influence her faith practices? Her story relates her journey from outsider to officiant of the largest Jewish congregation in the US.

I found her story inspiring and encouraging. I was also delighted that since she narrated the audiobook, she sang portions of song along the way. I hope you will consider reading this book, and share your thoughts with me.

Pr Lynn



To all the elves who left Christmas gifts – envelopes and packages at my door or on my desk, thanks! As I write, I haven't opened them yet, waiting until Mike and I can open them together in a quiet moment. You warm my heart with your generosity and kindness every day.

God bless you

Pr Lynn

GLORIA DEI WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Sharing Christmas Joy with Our Homebound Members

On Friday, December 19 at 9:30 a.m., the women of Gloria Dei gathered with joyful purpose to assemble and deliver Christmas baskets for eight of our homebound members. Each basket was filled with thoughtful comforts—a soft throw blanket, cozy socks, sweet treats, and fresh fruit. Adding an extra touch of love, delicious homemade cookies were generously donated by women of the congregation.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who baked, contributed items, packed baskets, or helped with delivery. Though these members are unable to worship with us in person, they are lovingly remembered and cherished. This meaningful outreach was made possible through a \$250 grant from Thrivent.

Year-Round Service Projects

Our circles remain busy serving others throughout the year.

- The Mary Martha Circle will continue making quilts in preparation for the February 2, 2026 shipping date.
- The Ruth Circle is collecting personal care kit items and will assemble the kits on January 15. In addition, Ruth Circle members will deliver all donated food items for the children of Leesburg Elementary School.

WELCA Directories

New WELCA directories will be distributed in January. A reminder that all women of the church are members of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and are warmly invited to participate in either circle.

Church Women United

All women are invited to observe Human Rights Day on January 23 at 9:30 a.m. at St. Stephen's AME Church, 302 Church Street, Leesburg.

Next Board Meeting

The next WELCA Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 10:30 a.m.

COUNCIL CORNER

By Vaike O'Grady

Council Corner: A New Year's Message

Happy New Year!

As we step into 2026, we find ourselves in that wonderful space between reflection and anticipation. There's comfort in gathering with familiar faces, revisiting traditions that ground us, and celebrating the steady rhythms that have carried us through another year. These are the touchstones that remind us of who we are and what we value.

Yet the new year also invites us to lift our eyes toward the horizon. What new opportunities await us? What challenges will call forth our creativity and resilience? What possibilities have we not yet imagined?

This balance between honoring the familiar and embracing the new is exactly where our Strategic Planning effort finds its purpose. This important work, now underway, is helping us to thoughtfully chart our course forward. It's not about abandoning what has served us well, but about ensuring we're positioned to meet the future with clarity, purpose, and readiness.

We are grateful to everyone participating in this process. Your insights, your questions, and your commitment to our shared future are invaluable. Through strategic planning, we're not just preparing for what's next. We're actively shaping it together.

Here's to celebrating all that is familiar and beloved, while welcoming the new with open hearts and minds.

To a wonderful 2026!

COMMUNITY NOTICES

Gloria Dei Instant Church Directory Update:

It has been 3 years since the Gloria Dei Instant Church Directory has been updated. Therefore the church council has asked us to take on this task. We want to make sure the information currently in the directory is accurate and we want to take new photos of anyone who would like their current photo updated as well. We also have new members that we especially want to enter into the directory.

Because we are currently in the midst of the busy Christmas Holiday Season, we will begin this update after the New Year. On January 4th and on January 11h after the church service we will have a section of our fellowship area set aside to take photos and for members to fill out the needed form which will then be entered into the online instant church directory. If the information that is currently in the Instant Church Directory is accurate, but you would still like your photo updated, we are happy to take a new photo.

Some of you may not currently have access to the Instant Church Directory. Printed copies of the instructions for both android and apple devices to set up this directory in your computer or smart phone are available on the information desk by the entry door..

We look forward to seeing our members who want to update their photo and/or their current information in the directory and we especially look forward to adding our newer members on January 4 or January 11 after church service. If you have questions or are having difficulty setting up the Instant Church Directory app on your device, give either one of us a call.

Dick Healy, 352-223-4800
Linda Steege, 815-222-6195

PRAYERS

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

- 1/4** Marily Wahl, Judy Weigel, Joel and Sharon Weinhardt, Ken and Marti Yance, Chuck and Joy Yonko, Arthur Zerbel.
- 1/11** Helen Ames, Forrest Berg, Bill and Kathleen Birdsall, Gayle Bloom, John and Janet Braun.
- 1/18** Patricia Bressler, Kathy Bush, Craig and Christine Carlson, Richard and Debbie Cassem, Michael and CJ Clarke
- 1/25** Jo An Cleary, Ellen Clement, Lynn Crane, Marilyn Czuprynski, Marie Davids

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1/04 | Margie Geiger | 1/12 | James Menchaca |
| 1/04 | Bob Pierce | 1/15 | Nancy Kancel |
| 1/09 | Bess King | 1/18 | Allen Francis |
| 1/10 | Jean Talts | 1/23 | Paula Francis |
| 1/10 | Dennis Marcotte | 1/30 | Irvin Johnson |
| 1/10 | Chris Russell | | |

BIBLE STUDY/EDUCATION



Zoom Bible Study

The group has chosen a new study topic based on a video series from The Great Courses, called *Sacred Texts of the World*. We will spend January and February exploring the sacred writings (other than our familiar Bible) that have shaped the identities, beliefs and actions of large segments of humanity. These are texts that still exert influence in today's world.

We will watch a 30-minute video lecture and then discuss what we have learned. I also suspect we will stop the video to ask questions or discuss what we have just heard.

Our leader is Dr. Grant Hardy, Professor of History and Religious Studies and Director of the Humanities Program at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. He earned his B.A. in Ancient Greek from Brigham Young University and his Ph.D. in Chinese Language and Literature from Yale University.

Our studies will include the Hindu Vedas, the Buddhist Sutras, Daoism's Daodejing, and the Analects of Confucius, and modern faiths such as Baha'i. When we understand what people believe, several things happen: 1) we learn more about our neighbors and discover what they value, 2) we learn more about what we believe and value as we make connections between the texts, and 3) we can more easily respect those of different faiths and values.

I hope you will join the group to check out this learning opportunity, starting January 5 at 7pm. Contact the church office for the Zoom meeting link.

Still learning
Pr Lynn

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

December Up-date:

The committee did not meet in the month of December. There will be a complete year's summary of the painting project 2025 in the book of year-end reports coming out in January.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Birdsall First Impressions Task Force, Chair

FELLOWSHIP

In Christianity, fellowship refers to the profound relational bond shared between believers, characterized by a common life in Christ. It is often described using the Greek word *koinonia*, which translates to “sharing,” “participation,” or “communion.” Fellowship is expressed through the New Testament’s “one-another” commands, such as loving, serving, and bearing one another’s burdens. The Holy Spirit creates a shared life and common purpose. The Spirit bestows unique spiritual gifts to us. And these gifts are intended to build up the church and helps us to serve one another effectively. We have our social time after worship each Sunday. We can use this time to listen and share our stories with our fellow believers, so that we may better serve our friends and this community with God’s guidance. If you can help us with the Coffee and Snacks after Worship please sign up on the sheet. We appreciate your help.

Loraine Van Haecke, Phone 407-252-4692

RUTH CIRCLE

The women of Ruth Circle were pleased to host the WELCA Christmas Luncheon on December 4. The gathering was a joyful time of good food, warm fellowship, and shared laughter, celebrating the season together.

Ruth Circle will meet next on **January 15 at 10:30 a.m.** The meeting will begin with a brief business session, followed by the packing of **Personal Care Kits** for **Lutheran World Relief**. These kits will be prepared for shipment on **February 2**.

Our goal this year is to assemble **75 Personal Care Kits**. Each kit requires **two bars of soap**, and donations of bar soap are especially needed to help us reach this goal. Please place donated soap in the “**Personal Care Kit**” labeled box located in the **narthex**.

Thank you for your continued generosity and support of Lutheran World Relief and the ministry of Ruth Circle.

MARY-MARTHA CIRCLE

Mary Martha Circle will meet on the 2nd Tuesday, January 13. We will start our Mission Quilting at 9AM and have a break at 10:30. Bible Study at 11 will be out of the Gather Magazine. We will have copies of the lesson for anyone who needs one. We will also be Mission Quilting on the 4th Friday which is January 22nd at 9am. Please come and join us for fun & fellowship. Please continue to sew tops as we will continue to need them. Carol Marshall, Leader Phone 352-787-0435

STEWARDSHIP

The Art of Living: Money, Stewardship, and Generosity

Our Gloria Dei Ruth Circle group focus for our fall bible studies is about money, stewardship and generosity. In keeping with the idea of stewardship being a year ‘round program, I thought this would be a timely topic for our church members to think about as we enter a new year.

The concept of money, stewardship and generosity are deeply intertwined, particularly within a Christian perspective. These concepts go far behind simple budgeting or charitable giving, encompassing a holistic view of life where possessions are seen as tools and opportunities for fulfilling a greater purpose. The way we acquire, save and spend money demonstrates our true values and commitments. It forces us to ask: What is my treasure, what are my skills and talents and how best can I use them purposefully in my life.

The foundation of a healthy financial life is stewardship. This principle begins with a core acknowledgement: everything belongs to God. We are not

ultimate owners, but rather managers or trustees of the resources given to us— our money, time, talents and the planet which are values entrusted to our care. This perspective shifts the focus from “what is mine” to how am I using what God has provided to me.

While Stewardship focuses on the responsible management of resources, generosity focuses on the disposition of the heart. Generosity is the outward, joyful expression of a steward’s gratitude and a direct reflection of a conviction that we have received great gifts. Often, giving is viewed as a loss, but generosity operates on a principle of abundance. As we give cheerfully and with purpose, we often find not only personal joy and contentment but also a greater sense of provision in our lives.

Ultimately, the goal is to integrate these three concepts, money, stewardship and generosity into a purposeful way of life. When we recognize that we are stewards, treat money as a powerful tool, and practice generosity from a heart of gratitude, we move away from a life of anxiety and self-focus toward a life that truly reflects our deepest values for our lives.

God’s Blessings to our Gloria Dei family.

Linda Steege for the Stewardship Committee
Dianne Marcotte
Arlene Kelly

NOURISH TO FLOURISH

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who has donated food to support the children of Leesburg Elementary School. Since September 2025, the Gloria Dei congregation has faithfully contributed hundreds of pounds of food each month, making a meaningful difference for families in need.

Please note that all food donations received between **December 16, 2025, and January 12, 2026**, will be delivered during the next scheduled delivery on **January 13**.

Whether you have delivered cases of food or are able to give a single box of cereal or a can of tuna, every gift matters. **All donations—large and small—are deeply appreciated and truly needed.**

As we begin the new year, we invite you to consider donating the following items in January:

- Gallons of water
- Can openers
- Packet drink mixes
- Shelf-stable milk
-

As Scripture reminds us:

“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help, how can the love of God abide in him?” — 1 John 3:17

PRAYER LIST

Our Daily Prayer List has grown quite long over time, and many entries are now out of date. In order to keep our prayers current and meaningful, **all names will be removed from the Daily Prayer List on January 18.**

If you would like to have someone included on the updated Prayer List, please let us know so we may continue to lift up current prayer needs together.

Thank you for helping us keep this ministry active and relevant.

FINANCIAL CORNER

GENERAL FUND

	November, 2025	Year to date 2025
Contributions	\$17,323.35	\$190,429.90
Expenditures	\$14,779.28	\$175,806.41

RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Beg. Bal. 1/1/2025	Donations	Withdrawals	Ending Bal 11/30/25
Altar Wine/Bread	267.90	110.00	0	377.90
AV Equipment	138.33	0	0	138.33
Choir/music	550.00	0	550.00	0
ELCA	0	210.00	210.00	0
Eternal Light	785.00	0	0	785.00
Evangelism	1,720.00	0	1,000.00	720.00
Fellowship	544.19	1,790.00	2,054.27	279.92
1 st Impressions Ph 4	0	30,854.00	25,090.14	5,763.86
1 st Impressions Ph 3	17,128.63	4,490.00	13,680.05	7,938.58
Flowers	400.00	1,252.00	0	1,652.00
JHIF	0	4,260.00	4,210.00	50.00
Leesburg Elementary	14.69	0	0	14.69
Oak Park Middle	0	0	0	0
Quilting	300.00	0	0	300.00
Thrivent Choice \$\$	1,372.64	296.00	1,054.00	614.64
Trees & Landscaping	0	5,000.00	3,150.00	1,850.00
World Hunger	0	848.00	825.00	23.00
TOTALS	23,221.38	49,110.00	51,823.46	20,507.92

JANUARY CALENDAR

Sun.	1/4	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship/ Service for Healing
Mon.	1/5	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	1/6	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		10:30 a.m.	WELCA Board Meeting
Wed.	1/7	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Fri.	1/9	8:30 a.m.	Joining Hands in Food Ministry
Sun.	1/11	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	1/12	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues..	1/13	9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
		10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	1/14	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Thurs.	1/15	9:30 a.m.	Ruth Circle
Sun.	1/18	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship/Hunger Offering
Mon.	1/19	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	1/20	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	1/21	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Fri.	1/23	9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
		9:00 a.m.	LWR Quilting
Sun.	1/25	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	1/26	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	1/27	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	1/28	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal

JANUARY WORSHIP LEADERS

Assistant Ministers

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

9:30 a.m.

1/4	R= Kathy Bush += A= Patricia Bressler	1/11	R= Patricia Bressler += A= Patricia Bressler
1/18	R= Dianne Marcotte += A=	1/25	R= += A= Patricia Bressler

Ushers

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

9:30 a.m.

1/4	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	1/11	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson
1/18	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	1/25	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly

Altar Guild for January: Crystal & Byron Kirkpatrick

Post Worship Secretary for January: Gayle Bloom

Fellowship

1/4 John and Janet Braun
1/11 Leone Goding, Jackie Goding
1/18 Debbie Cassem, Arlene Kelly
1/25 Jim and June Rieb

Counters – Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

1/4 Jeanne Talts
1/11 Linda Steege & Janet Braun
1/18 Arlene Kelly & Lillian Ostrander
1/25 Arlene Kelly & Lillian Ostrander

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	John Kelly	352-399-6253
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

