

GLORIA DEI

LUTHERAN CHURCH

GATHERING IN CHRIST † SHARING HIS LOVE

THE GLORION
MARCH 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. – *(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



March, 2026

Faith through the years

This year, the conversation topic for Wednesday worship is faith, based on Hebrews 11:1-12:2. The readings come from a section of the letter that highlights the stories of faithful people in Jewish and Christian history: Noah, Abraham, Moses, the entire group of Israelites, and Jesus. We know these stories; they are familiar to us. Hebrews tells the stories briefly, highlighting the way each person and group was challenged to remain faithful, and persisted in carrying out their mission.

How are we faithful? How do we persist in our mission despite the challenges we face daily? How do we even know what our mission is?

It's clear that our mission changes throughout our life. When we are 16 years old, we are typically idealistic, wanting world peace and justice, enough of whatever people need to thrive. Our passion urges our elders to continue to make changes to improve conditions for those in need.

By the time we are thirty, we have honed our mission to focus on one or two main themes: welcome for all, medical care for all, for example. We commit ourselves to urging local and national leaders to fix what is wrong, locally and nationally.

By the time we are in our sixties and seventies, we have begun to understand that we can't fix everything in our focus, but we can fix some things. We have often narrowed our focus to one or two specific ministries: the women's shelter, the food pantry. We work hard to share our passion with our friends, with like-minded others in our community. And if we have the funds, we can support the missions financially.

By the time we are in our eighties and nineties, our energy and ability may have waned, but our passion for our mission still remains. We can still make phone calls and write letters or send emails to support our missions.

How can we remain so focused on these missions all our lives, when we see such slow progress? We do it with faith that God is with us in the mission, and guiding us to continue, to keep on keeping on.

So, Beloveds, I urge you to keep the faith, whatever you are passionate about. Change often happens slowly, but when God is involved, it does happen, and it happens according to God's plan.

Pax
Pr Lynn



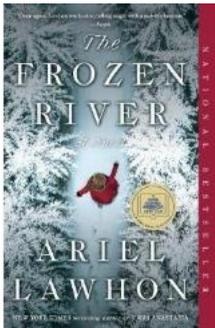
March 29: Palm/Passion Sunday Worship at 9:30, assemble in the Gathering Hall

April 2: Maundy Thursday Worship with Foot or Hand Washing and Holy Communion at 4pm

April 3: Good Friday Tenebrae (Growing Darkness) Worship at 4pm

April 5: Easter Sunday Worship at 9:30am

Recommendations from a Book-a-holic



I love historical fiction, for the images such books give me of living in a different time and place. They are usually based on some true person or story, with additional characters or storylines. *The Frozen River*, by Ariel Lawhon, is such a book.

The Frozen River tells the story of Martha Ballard, a midwife in late 18th century Maine, just as the new American republic is formed. Martha kept a diary, tracking weather, daily life, births and deaths. Midwives were responsible for reporting births, including noting which were illegitimate births, and births that were result of rape, to the court each month.

In addition to delivering babies, midwives knew herbal remedies, could recognize ailments and rashes and were skilled medical professionals.

The story begins with the discovery of a man frozen into the Kennebec River. Known for her medical skills, Martha is called to investigate the body the men chopped from the ice. Martha notices that the man is Joshua Burgess, who has been accused of raping Rebecca Foster. It is clear to Martha that Burgess has been beaten and hung before being tossed into the river as it freezes for the winter.

Martha struggles to tell the truth in court, with powerful men seeking to silence her. As a midwife she has legal status to speak in court, though on any other matters, she must have a father or husband present to authorize her testimony. The judge, Colonel North, is motivated to deny her access to the court, as he is secretly attempting legally and illegally to take control of the town, including the lumber mill and property owned by Martha's husband Ephraim.

Through the long winter, she is called to home after home to deliver babies, to women who are familiar with the process, and to women who have been "protected from the gory details", and to Rebecca, who wants nothing to do with the baby resulting from the rape. Martha's skill as a midwife is enhanced by her ability to solve problems with creative solutions.

Martha is a strong female character, facing the threats and challenges of many women of her time with intelligence and persistence. Her family strengthens her, friends support her, and her faith in justice guides her.

Pr Lynn

GLORIA DEI WOMEN OF THE ELCA

SAVE THE DATE

March 6, 9:30 am Church Women United World Day of Prayer, Edge United Methodist Church, 441 S. Main Avenue, Groveland. A late lunch will be served. RSVP to Diane 405 831-9589. Carpool available.

March 14, 10 AM. Spring Gathering at Salem Lutheran church in Orlando. Carpool available.

**Salem Lutheran Church
7900 S. Apopka Vineland Rd.
Orlando 32819**

Next meeting of the WELCA board will be on **Tuesday March 3rd, 2026, at 10:30 am.**

Here's a **country-by-country breakdown** of how many quilts and kits *Lutheran World Relief* (LWR) shipped in **2025** (LWR's fiscal year Oct 2024–Sept 2025), based on the official distribution data from the *Where Did LWR Quilts & Kits Go in 2025?* report:

 **2025 LWR Quilts & Kits Distribution by Country / Region**

Country / Region	Mission Quilts	School Kits	Personal Care Kits	Baby Care Kits	Fabric Kits
Angola	33,000	16,900	27,000	9,000	—
Djibouti	9,520	—	15,225	—	—
Georgia	65,100	—	49,500	—	—
Honduras	29,290	—	—	—	—
Jordan	6,600	6,500	—	—	—
Liberia	5,100	3,500	—	—	—
Madagascar	9,520	7,350	—	—	—
Mali	51,975	19,500	15,000	6,000	1,568
Romania	6,270	—	3,380	3,900	—
Serbia	7,425	—	6,300	—	—
Sierra Leone	15,225	—	7,350	—	—
Tanzania	9,520	—	7,350	—	—
Ukraine	8,250	—	6,000	—	—
Zimbabwe	5,100	—	3,500	—	—
United States – East	85,737	40,794	65,561	20,950	5,360
United States – Central	17,720	4,350	9,150	784	1,800
United States – West	10,581	28,036	33,800	1,200	640

 **Totals (All Countries / Regions)**

Item Type	Total Shipped
Mission Quilts	315,818
Personal Care Kits	231,811
Baby Care Kits	66,984
School Kits	179,200
Fabric Kits	9,368

 **Grand Total: 803,181 quilts and kits delivered** in 2025 across 15 countries/regions, including multiple regions of the United States.

us United States (Domestic Distribution)

In 2025, LWR's Quilt & Kit Ministry was expanded to send quilts and kits throughout the United States in response to disaster and crisis. Recipients included communities affected by:

- **Hurricane Helene**
- **Hurricane Milton**
- **California wildfires**
- **Severe weather across the South and Midwest**
- **Flooding in Central Texas**

In addition, **over \$1 million in cash grants** were distributed domestically to partner organizations helping with recovery efforts alongside the quilts and kits.

PRAYERS

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

- 3/1** Roger Hollands, Irvin and Susan Johnson, MaryJean Kancel, Nancy Kancel, Shirley Kelley.
- 3/8** John and Arlene Kelly, Bess King, Byron and Crystal Kirkpatrick, Sandy Kolb, Helga La Cava.
- 3/15** Barb Lias, Sylvia Mackey, Gail Madson, Dianne and Dennis Marcotte, Carol Marshall.
- 3/22** Evelyn Matthes, James, Julian and Quiana Menchaca, Andy and Taeko Mincer, Rita Moritz, Brian and Karen Mundy.
- 3/29** Vaike O'Grady, Lillian Ostrander, Bob Pierce and Susan Stack, Jim and June Rieb, Chris and Karen Russell

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 3/01 | Arlene Kelly | 3/12 | Roger Hollands |
| 3/03 | Helga La Cava | 3/15 | Elizabeth Sanguedolce |
| 3/06 | Carol Marshall | 3/17 | Patricia Bressler |
| 3/08 | Karen Mundy | 3/17 | Jerry Eld |
| 3/08 | MaryJean Kancel | 3/22 | Byron Kirkpatrick |
| 3/09 | Donna Smith | | |

BIBLE STUDY/EDUCATION



Zoom Bible Study

The Monday Evening Zoom Bible Study will start a new topic on February 9: N.T. Wright's *1 Corinthians for Everyone*.

“With a scholar's mind and a pastor's heart, Tom Wright walks you through 1 Corinthians in this guide designed especially with everyday readers in mind. Perfect for group use or daily personal reflection, this study uses the popular inductive method combined with Wright's thoughtful insights to bring contemporary application of Scripture to life. Thoughtful questions, prayer suggestions, and useful background and cultural information all guide you or a group more deeply into God's Word. Discover how you can participate more fully in God's kingdom.”

I anticipate we will take about 8 weeks to read and discuss our way through this study, so I encourage you to join us whenever you can. The book is available in several editions so it may not look like this image. As usual, I will post some paragraphs on the screen, to aid in our discussions.

Still learning
Pr Lynn

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ready, Set, Go! – Our Church's Path Forward

Church family, we are at a pivotal moment in the life of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. Looking at our recent trends—ranging from attendance to participation—it is clear that we are facing a season of challenge. However, this is not a time for doubt and fear, but to recognize a gift of grace in defining an opportunity for renewal.

To align with God’s vision for our future, our newly formed **Strategic Planning Team** has begun the work of assessing where we are and where we are called to go.

To turn negative trends into opportunities for growth, we are adopting a simple, actionable theme: **Ready, Set, Go!**

READY: Assessing Our Current Position

Before we can move forward, we must know where we stand. The “Ready” phase is about honest evaluation—looking at our strengths, weaknesses, and the realities of our ministry. We are not looking for someone to blame; we are looking to understand how we can best serve our community and honor God. This means asking: Are we focused on a mission to make disciples or do we get stuck in established patterns of how ministry must happen?

SET: Preparing the Strategy

Once we know where we are, we must “Set” our direction. This is where we define what we are going to do. We will clarify our existing mission statement and develop our vision to make that mission a reality. A mission statement is how we interpret God’s call to serve and a vision statement identifies the steps we will take to make that happen. We will be setting specific, measurable, and achievable goals that will align our resources, energy, and time in the same direction.

GO: Taking Action

Finally, it is time to “Go” A plan is only good if it is implemented. We will move from planning to action—to actions that will spark momentum. This requires everyone to play a role in making disciples, using the gifts God has given each of us.

Let’s do this together!

Turning around negative trends will take patience, prayer, and, most importantly, participation from all of us. We will remain committed to a healthy, biblical, and sustainable future.

Please pray for the Strategic Planning Team and congregational leaders as we work on researching, recommending, and organizing the “Ready” and “Set” phases. Be prepared to “Go” together as we implement new and exciting ways to bring the love of Christ to our community.

Team Members: Bill Birdsall, Richard Healy, Nancy Vogel, Art Zerbel

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First Impressions is temporarily on hiatus until further notice. This pause allows time for thoughtful preparation so the program can return refreshed and ready to continue serving in meaningful ways. We look forward to sharing updates and welcoming First Impressions back in the future. Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Birdsall First Impressions Task Force, Chair

FELLOWSHIP

Thanks to all of you that have stepped up by volunteering to provide snacks and coffee for after worship on Sundays. Your help is appreciated very much. All enjoy the opportunity to have this time together over a cup of coffee, hot tea or juice. If you would like to volunteer to provide snacks, cookies, juice or volunteer to make coffee, please sign the Sign-Up Sheet on the kitchen counter. As we go forward there will be other opportunities to extend our fellowship and hospitality.

Lorraine Van Haecke, Phone 407-252-4692

RUTH CIRCLE

Ruth circle will continue the year round practice of collecting items to make **Personal Care Kits** for Lutheran World Relief. Please leave items donated in the marked box in the narthex. Items include Bath towel, -dark color, nail clippers, sturdy combs, 2 bars of soap 4 oz size and individually wrapped single toothbrushes. Thank you for your continued support of this important project.

Next meeting of Ruth Circle will be held on Thursday March 5th at 10:30 am. All women of the church are invited.

STEWARDSHIP

Lent is a season that invites us to slow down, reflect, and grow closer to God. It is also a meaningful time to think about stewardship—not only as giving, but as a way of living with gratitude for the many blessings we have received.

During these forty days, we are encouraged to look at how we use our time, talents, and resources. Setting aside time for prayer and Scripture helps renew our faith. Sharing our gifts through acts of kindness and service brings Christ's love to others. Being generous with what we have, whether through donations or helping those in need, reminds us that all we have comes from God.

Supporting ministries such as Lutheran World Relief or Joining Hands in food ministry is one way we can put our faith into action. Even small efforts can make a difference.

As we journey toward Easter, may this Lenten season renew our hearts and inspire us to live as joyful and faithful stewards, sharing God's love with hope and gratitude.

NOURISH TO FLOURISH

Leesburg elementary has school vacation from March 16 to 20th. We would like to make a large delivery on March 10th to send home extra food for school vacation. Please consider if you are able to donate ANY FOOD between March 1 and 9th. Thank you!

FINANCIAL CORNER

GENERAL FUND

	January, 2026	Year to date 2026
Contributions	\$17,387.36	\$17,387.36
Expenditures	\$22,197.15	\$22,197.15

RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Beg. Bal. 1/1/2026	Donations	Withdrawals	Ending Bal 1/31/26
Altar Wine/Bread	377.90	0	0	377.90
AV Equipment	138.33	0	0	138.33
Choir/music	0	65.00	0	65.00
ELCA	0	0	0	0
Eternal Light	785.00	0	0	785.00
Evangelism	720.00	0	0	720.00
Fellowship	336.27	123.50	37.74	422.03
1 st Impressions Ph 3	7,938.58	0	0	7,938.58
1 st Impressions Ph 4	4,463.86	0	0	4,463.86
Flowers	1,271.42	150.00	420.00	1,001.42
JHIF	0	2,515.00	2,515.00	0
Leesburg Elementary	14.69	0	0	14.69
Oak Park Middle	0	0	0	0
Quilting	300.00	0	0	300.00
Thrivent Choice \$\$	665.64	74.00	0	739.64
Trees & Landscaping	1,850.00	0	0	1,850.00
World Hunger	0	129.13	129.13	0
TOTALS	18,861.69	3,056.63	3,101.87	18,816.45

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, the following categories will be removed **from the Daily Prayer List starting February 8th.**

Special Requested Prayer
Memoriam
Healing
Chronic Illness

If you would like to have someone included on the updated Prayer List, please contact the Church office at 352-787-3223 or Christine Carlson at 516-458-7355 or email at skauvold.carlson@gmail.com so we may continue to lift up current prayer needs together.

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

MARCH CALENDAR

Sun.	3/1	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	3/2	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	3/3	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		10:30 a.m.	WELCA Board Meeting
Wed.	3/4	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:00 p.m.	Lent Wednesday Service
		4:30 p.m.	Soup Supper
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Thurs.	3/5	10:30 a.m.	Ruth Circle
Sat.	3/7	11:00 a.m.	Joe La Hood Memorial
			(Bethany Lutheran Church)
Sun.	3/8	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	3/9	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues..	3/10	9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
		9:00 a.m.	LWR Quilting
		10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	3/11	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:00 p.m.	Lent Wednesday Service
		4:30 p.m.	Soup Supper
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal

Fri.	3/13	8:30 a.m.	Joining Hands in Food Ministry
Sat.	3/14	10:00 a.m.	Heart of Florida Spring Gathering (Salem Lutheran Church)
Sun.	3/15	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship/ Hunger Offering
Mon.	3/16	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	3/17	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Wed.	3/18	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:00 p.m.	Lent Wednesday Service
		4:30 p.m.	Soup Supper
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sun.	3/22	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	3/23	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	3/24	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		11:30 a.m.	Spring Fashion Show
Wed.	3/25	10:00 a.m.	Call Committee Meeting
		4:00 p.m.	Lent Wednesday Service
		4:30 p.m.	Soup Supper
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Fri.	3/27	9:00 a.m.	LWR Quilting
		9:00 a.m.	Mary Martha Circle
Sun.	3/29	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Worship
Mon.	3/30	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	3/31	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer

MARCH WORSHIP LEADERS

Assistant Ministers

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

	9:30 a.m.		
3/1	R= Dianne Marcotte += John Kelly A= Patricia Bressler	3/8	R= Kathy Bush += A= Ellen Clement
3/15	R= Linda Hide += John Kelly A=	3/22	R= Patricia Bressler += A= Vaike O'Grady
3/29	R= += John Kelly A= Arlene Kelly		

Ushers

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

<u>9:30 a.m.</u>			
3/1	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	3/8	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson
3/15	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	3/22	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson
3/29	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson		

Altar Guild for March: Crystal & Byron Kirkpatrick

Post Worship Secretary for March:

Fellowship

3/1	
3/8	Dennis and Dianne Marcotte
3/15	
3/22	
3/29	

Counters – Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

3/1	Jeanne Talts
3/8	Linda Steege & Patricia Bressler
3/15	Arlene Kelly & Lillian Ostrander
3/22	Arlene Kelly & Lillian Ostrander
3/29	Jeanne Talts

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.

2026 CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Pastor	Lynn M. Fonfara	352-249-8533
President	Richard Healy	352-223-4800
Vice President	Kathy Bush	610-657-1168
Secretary	Vaike O'Grady	512-827-6344
Treasurer	Linda Hide	253-740-3063
Financial Secretary	Jeanne Talts	352-530-6865

Members:

John Braun	412-926-3381
Christine Carlson	516-458-7355
James Menchaca	210-913-6224
Ritch Cassem	352-406-3339

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

