



GLORIA DEI

LUTHERAN CHURCH

GATHERING IN CHRIST ✝ SHARING HIS LOVE

THE GLORION
SEPTEMBER 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:
Rev. Tony VanCura, Pastor via phone:
407-765-2822

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

PASTOR: REV. TONY VANCURA

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC: LEONARD CREMISIO

AFTER WORSHIP SEC. : JEANNE TALTS

(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



September 2026

Being What God Wants Us to Be

As we consider what it means to be what God wants us to be, we are reminded of the new commandment God gives us: **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** God calls us to love one another as we have first been loved by Him.

But what does this love look like in our daily lives? We rely upon the Holy Spirit to be our guide—to shape our words, direct our actions, and lead us forward in faith. We are called to serve, encourage, forgive, and love one another as Christ has loved us.

And yet, God also calls us to care for ourselves in a similar manner. This does not mean relying upon our own strength or abilities. Instead, we are called to allow God to provide for us and care for us. God wants us to depend upon Him rather than upon our own means.

Many of the battles and fears we face in life are struggles we carry unnecessarily. We worry about what tomorrow may bring, what we may lose, or whether we will have enough strength to face what lies ahead. Yet God has already conquered every stumbling block that stands between us and eternal life with Him. If God has given us the gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit, what else should ultimately trouble us?

We need only to allow God to be the God of our lives and trust Him to provide all that we require. This does not mean that life will be without difficulty, but it does mean that we do not face those difficulties alone. God is with us.

Sometimes, faith means letting go. We need to let go of our fears and struggles and, instead, praise the Lord for all He has done and continues to do for us. When we do this, we discover the comfort and peace that come from knowing that God never ceases to care for His children.

Jesus gives us a beautiful image of this care when He speaks of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings. What a wonderful picture of God's desire to shelter, protect, and gather us close to Himself.

So, as we seek to be what God wants us to be, let us love our neighbors as ourselves, allow the Holy Spirit to guide our words and actions, and trust God to care for us as His beloved children.

God is good in all things. Thanks be to God!

PRAYERS

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

- 9/6** Milton and Carolyn DeLong, Judy Eads, Jerry and Julie Eld, Freddy and Marlene Farris, Claudia Fetter.
- 9/13** Allen and Paula Francis, Diana Frederick, James and Jayne Gable, Margi Geiger, Jackie Goding
- 9/20** Leone Goding, Bill Grese, Mary Grissom, Rose Gulbrandsen, Sylvia Hallberg.
- 9/27** Gerry Haller, Debbye Halligan, Northilt Handwerck, Dick Healy, Linda Hide.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 9/02 | Kathleen Birdsall | 9/26 | Crystal Kirkpatrick |
| 9/05 | Michael Clarke | 9/28 | Judy Eads |
| 9/11 | Richard Cassem | 9/28 | Mary Grissom |
| 9/16 | Deborah Cassem | | |
| 9/25 | Marie Davids | | |
| 9/25 | Quiana Menchaca | | |

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------|---------|
| 9/07 | Marti and Kenn Yance | 58 yrs. |
| 9/17 | Chris and Karen Russell | 38 yrs. |
| 9/27 | John and Janet Braun | 65 yrs. |

COUNCIL CORNER

Minutes of Gloria Dei Church Council Meeting of Sunday, July 26, 2026

1. Call to order and Invocation at 11:08 a.m.

2. Roll call:

Pastor Tony VanCura	✓	Chris Carlson	✓
Dick Healy, President	✓	James Menchaca	✓
Kathy Bush, Vice President	✓	Rich Cassem	✓
Vaike O'Grady, Secretary	✓	John Braun	✓
Linda Hide, Treasurer	✓	Leone Goding	✓

3. Promise: We, elected in trust as leaders of this household of faith, are thankful for grace first given us through Jesus Christ. We agree to diligently pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us to use our gifts in mission with God to grow disciples for Christ. May all our words and deeds in this assembly and in our daily lives be examples of love, faith and peace that bear witness to God's love for this community, the larger Church, and the world.

4. Adoption of today's agenda—approved

5. Approval of June 28, 2026, minutes--approved

6. Executive Committee voted to support Pastor Tony's presence at a Synod Conference on Ministry at Mission Inn, Howey in the Hills, FL from 10/5-10/7, 2026. Fees are c. \$625, paid by GD.

7. Correspondence--none

8. Pastor's report—received and reviewed; see below

9. Treasurer's report—received and reviewed

10. Any Committee reports a. Strategic Planning Team update—minutes to be shared with Council

11. Old Business

a. Electronic entry system- Dick met salesperson 7/2 at GD. Will follow up.

b. Financial Audit job description in process by Linda Hide.

c. Church brochure printed, to be distributed—in process

d. GD disaster plan—Dianne and Pastor to meet on 8/11

e. God's Work, Our Hands—September 13—Council supports special Leesburg Elementary donations and assembly of Personal Care Kits after Fellowship

f. Other old business

12. New business

a. NEW—replace fluorescent lights in downstairs conference room

b. Evelyn's second anniversary at GD and proposed increase in remuneration—motion made and carried to provide a raise of \$1/hour for her.

c. Sharing of Peace—changes made to service are working

d. Pet blessing (c. October 4, 2026)—moved to Saturday, Oct 3 and Vaike will meet with Pastor and others to discuss details

e. Guest presenter for congregants' opportunity to transfer assets to GD by bequest or trust. Dick to pursue.

f. GD 75th Anniversary Celebration. Multiple times to celebrate. Start planning in October 2026 with a brainstorming session. Vaike

g. Dates of Council membership term for each current member:

GLORIA DEI 2026 COUNCIL MEMBERS					
FIRST	LAST	ROLE	EMAIL	PHONE	COUNCIL TERM ENDS
Tony	VanCura	Pastor	pastorgdiclesburg@gmail.com	407-765-2822	n/a
Dick	Healy	President	healy-gloriadei@outlook.com	352-223-4800	2029
Linda	Hide	Treasurer	lindahide47@gmail.com	253-740-3063	2028
Jeanne	Talts	Financil Secretary	barb0511@yahoo.com	352-530-6865	n/a
Vaike	O'Grady	Secretary	ogradyvaike@gmail.com	512-827-6344	2027
Christine	Carlson		skauvold.carlson@gmail.com	516-458-7355	2027
James	Menchaca		JTM1281@yahoo.com	210-913-6224	2029
John	Braun		jobraun02@gmail.com	412-926-3381	2027
Kathy	Bush		msbush13@aol.com	610-657-1168	2029
Leone	Goding		leonegoding@centurylink.net	352-223-1925	2029
Ritch	Cassem		richardcassem@gmail.com	352-406-3339	2029

h. Other new business -- need new bulbs in the downstairs conference

13. Next Executive Committee meeting-Thursday, 8/20/2026 at 11:00 on Zoom

14. Next Council meeting- Sunday, 8/23/2026 at 11:00 in downstairs meeting room

15. Who does what? (Captured above.)

16. Benediction

17. Motion to adjourn—moved and approved 11:48 pm



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Leesburg, Florida

Pastor's Report to the Congregation Council for July 2026:

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8 NRSVU)

- **Thank you** to all who serve in a host of ways to keep Gloria Dei Lutheran Church functional, financially operational, and welcoming to members and visitors.

- Changes to the service have been well accepted; no negative feedback. The singing of the Lord's Prayer will often be done without notice; therefore, it will not be in the bulletin or PowerPoint publications.

- In speaking with Evelyn and considering the time and resources available; we will print a single bulletin in two sizes. We will also print a standard image (the Church Logo) on the cover to reduce color printing costs.

- A special Sunday observation of Pastor's Indian name will be held on August 16 to commemorate the 15th Anniversary of receiving his name from the Chippewa Cree Tribe. A very special thanks to Leone and the Ruth Circle for making packs of Prayer Ribbons to be given out during the service. Another Sunday of remembrance with commemorative 'poppies' is planned for the Sunday prior to Veteran Day.

- Pastor Tony has visited all homebound and will continue to do so each month (or more often as necessary). Additional, he is also sending cards to members and visitors from a supply of custom made card (created by his wife Karen).

- Pastor Tony is seeking council approval to attend the Synod 9 Conference on Ministry, which will welcome the ELCA Bishop Yehiel Curry. The conference will be held at the Mission Inn in Howie in the Hills from Oct 5-7 at a cost of \$625, which includes meals. Due to the proximity of this event, it would be prudent to attend and represent Gloria Dei.

- Respectfully submitted and signed: -s/ Rev. Tony VanCura

BIBLE STUDY/EDUCATION

Zoom Bible Study

During September, Pastor Tony will lead the Zoom Bible study each Monday at 7:00 p.m. with a different “scripture based” topic each week.

WELCA

WELCA stands for *Women of the ELCA*, which means every woman of Gloria Dei is already part of WELCA. As seasons of life change—through moves, health concerns, or aging—we have seen fewer women able to participate as actively as they once did. Even so, the heart of WELCA remains strong and welcoming. If you are able, we warmly invite you to consider becoming more involved through either the Mary Martha Circle or the Ruth Circle. If monthly meetings aren’t possible, your presence and help with projects or special gatherings are always appreciated and needed.

The Mission Statement of WELCA is “*Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.*” Our Purpose Statement further reminds us who we are and why we serve: “*As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, society, and the world.*”

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE SEE LEONE, DIANNE OR LORAINÉ.

WELCA – Next meeting will be held on Tuesday Sept. 1st at 10:30 a.m.

RUTH CIRCLE

Next meeting will be held on Thursday Sept. 3rd at 10:30 a.m. Please bring your lunch and plan to stay for time of Fellowship.

MARY MARTHA CIRCLE

SEPTEMBER

Mary Martha Circle will meet on the 2nd Tuesday, September 8. 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 September 25 at 9am. Please come and join us for fun & fellowship. Please continue to sew tops as we will continue to need them.

Leone Goding for Carol Marshall, Leader Phone 352-787-0435

STEWARDSHIP

FALL IS UPON US

For many churches, fall is a natural season to reflect on stewardship because it often coincides with planning for the coming year. Stewardship, however, is about much more than finances—it's about faithfully managing all God has entrusted to us.

Here are some good stewardship practices to encourage during the fall:

- **Practice gratitude.** As the harvest season reminds us of God's abundance, take time each day to thank God for His blessings.
- **Review your giving.** Consider whether your financial giving reflects your gratitude and trust in God. Prayerfully plan your estimate of giving for the coming year.
- **Share your time and talents.** Fall ministries are beginning. Look for opportunities to volunteer, teach, visit homebound members, sing in the choir, or serve on a ministry team.
- **Prepare for generosity.** Set aside resources to help families during Thanksgiving and Christmas through food drives, gift collections, or local outreach.
- **Care for God's creation.** As gardens are cleaned up and leaves begin to fall, remember that caring for the earth is an act of stewardship. Recycle, reduce waste, and appreciate the beauty of God's creation.
- **Review your priorities.** Fall often brings a busier schedule. Ask whether your calendar reflects your commitment to worship, prayer, family, and service.

- Share your faith. Invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to worship, a Bible study, or a church event.
- **Plan wisely.** Just as farmers prepare for the next season, Christians are called to plan wisely, save responsibly, and trust God with the future.
- **Tell your stewardship story.** Share how God has provided for you or how giving and serving have strengthened your faith. Personal stories often encourage others more than statistics.

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”— 1 Corinthians 4:2

GOD’S WORK. OUR HANDS

“God’s work. Our hands” is the ELCA’s annual day of service, taking place Sept. 13, 2026. Congregations celebrate who we are as a church, engage in projects that explore who we are as Lutherans; that all life in Jesus flows from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace. The ELCA is one church, freed in Christ, to love and serve our neighbor every day.

Two projects will be happening on GWOH day at Gloria Dei.

A one-time/one day in-gathering of specific cleaning items will be collected that day to provide much needed items to the families of children at Leesburg Elementary. This project will work as an adjunct to our “Nourish to Flourish” program which year-round provides food to the families of children at Leesburg Elementary. The ONLY requested items are: laundry detergent, dish soap and trash bags.

The second project of the day will be a demonstration of how Ruth Circle members put together Personal Care Kits to be distributed by Lutheran World Relief. **Cleanliness may not actually be next to godliness, but it certainly helps a person feel more human. When families find their homes destroyed, or must flee for their safety, soap and a towel rarely make the cut for what they can carry. Arriving in a refugee camp or other place of safety, they are scared, vulnerable and dirty from the travel. The simple items included in a Personal Care Kit provide much needed self-care, critical germ fighting supplies and the chance for our neighbors in need to regain dignity amidst fear and uncertainty.**

Lutheran World Relief distributed 231,811 Personal Care Kits worldwide across 15 countries, including the United States.

A LITTLE SOMETHING TO ENJOY

Looking for a new puzzle? A selection is available on the shelf in the narthex—please feel free to take as many as you want and enjoy.

CALL COMMITTEE

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

The heart of a thriving congregation is found in the volunteers who raise their hands and say, “Yes, I’ll do what needs to be done.” Working together as a team, these dedicated volunteers have helped Gloria Dei cross the finish line once again.

From the beginning of the call process to the celebration of Pastor Tony’s installation, this journey took sixteen months. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gave their time and talents to bring us to this joyful moment.

First on my list is the Call Committee, whose members logged well over 300 combined hours throughout this process:

- Kathleen Birdsall, Chair
- Christine Carlson, Chaplain
- Linda Steege, Communications Specialist
- Dick Healy, Computer Specialist
- Pat Bressler, Member at Large
- Leone Goding, Member at Large
- Bob Pierce, Alternate Member at Large

Additional Support During the Call Process, Evelyn Rollins, Office Manager, was a blessing to the committee throughout the entire process. Although she was not a member of the committee, her skills were called upon many times over the past sixteen months.

Vaike O’Grady, Press Relations, helped ensure Gloria Dei’s presence was shared in newspapers and online.

The Congregation Council also played an important role in the process. They reviewed the committee’s work and interviewed Pastor Tony to be sure he was the right fit for our call.

Richard Healy, President
Kathy Bush, Vice President
Vaike O’Grady, Secretary

John Braun, Council Member
Christine Carlson, Council Member
Leone Goding, Council Member

Linda Hide, Treasurer
Jeanne Talts, Financial Secretary

James Menchaca, Council Member
Ritch Cassem, Council Member

For the installation service, Pastor Tony worked closely with the Synod and the Worship and Music Committee to create a beautiful service steeped in meaningful tradition. A heartfelt thank-you goes to everyone who gave their support to our new pastor.

Thank you to the following individuals and couples who shared their time and talents with planning, décor, set-up, and take-down:

Pat Bressler
Dick Healy
Irv and Sue Johnson
Rich and Debbie Cassem
Bill and Kathleen Birdsall

Linda Steege
Leone Goding
John and Arlene Kelly
Lillian Ostrander

Christine and Craig Carlson
Loraine Van Haecke
Byron and Crystal Kirkpatrick
Marie Davis

To anyone I may have missed, please accept my heartfelt apologies. It has been my pleasure to work with all of you, and I thank you deeply for sharing your time and talents to make the gift of a new pastor such a meaningful event.

It takes a flock to do the work of the church.
Kathleen Birdsall

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Tues.	9/1	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		10:30 a.m.	WELCA Board Meeting
Thurs.	9/3	10:30 a.m.	Ruth Circle
Sun.	9/6	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Service/ Brief Order for Healing
Mon.	9/7	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/8	9:00 a.m.	Quilting
		10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
Fri.	9/11	8:30 a.m.	Joining Hands in Food Ministry
Sun.	9/13	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Service
Mon.	9/14	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/15	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Sun.	9/20	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Service/ Hunger Offering
Mon.	9/21	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/22	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal
Fri.	9/25	9:00 a.m.	Quilting
Sun.	9/27	9:30 a.m.	Sunday Service
Mon.	9/28	7:00 p.m.	Zoom Bible Study
Tues.	9/29	10:00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		4:30 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal

FINANCIAL CORNER

GENERAL FUND

	July, 2026	Year to date 2026
Contributions	\$17,255.06	\$129,077.66
Expenditures	\$19,656.86	\$127,815.25

RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Beg. Bal. 1/1/2026	Donations	Withdrawals	Ending Bal 7/31/2026
Altar Wine/Bread	377.90	45.00	67.89	355.01
AV Equipment	138.33	0	0	138.33
Choir/music	0	140.00	0	140.00
ELCA	0	0	0	0
Eternal Light	785.00	0	0	785.00
Evangelism	720.00	0	0	720.00
Fellowship	336.27	963.28	1,277.57	21.98
1 st Impressions Ph 3	7,938.58	0	0	7,938.58
1 st Impressions Ph 4	4,463.86	25.00	0	4,488.86
Flowers	1,271.42	724.06	916.02	1,079.46
JHIF	0	5,525.00	5,525.00	0
Leesburg Elementary	14.69	0	0	14.69
Misc Ministries	0	553.52	553.52	0
Oak Park Middle	0	0	0	0
Quilting	300.00	0	300.00	0
Thrivent Choice \$\$	665.64	823.00	88.96	1,399.68
Trees & Landscaping	1,850.00	0	0	1,850.00
World Hunger	0	493.13	493.13	0
TOTALS	18,861.69	9,291.99	9,222.09	18,931.59

SEPTEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

July Assistant Ministers

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

9:30 a.m.

9/6	R= Linda Hide += Julian Menchaca A=Patricia Bressler	9/13	R= Chris Russell += Leone Goding A= Kathy Bush
9/20	R= Arlene Kelly += Leone Goding A= Patricia Bressler	9/27	R= Dianne Marcotte += Leone Goding A= Vaike O'Grady

Ushers

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

9:30 a.m.

9/6	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	9/13	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson
9/20	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson	9/27	Byron Kirkpatrick Ritch Cassem John Kelly Craig Carlson

Altar Guild for September: Crystal & Byron Kirkpatrick

Post Worship Secretary for September: Jeanne Talts

Fellowship

9/6

9/13 June & Jim Rieb

9/20

9/27

Counters – Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

9/6 Jeanne Talts

9/13 Linda Steege & Patricia Bressler

9/20 Arlene Kelly & Lillian Ostrander

9/27 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.

2026 CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Pastor	Rev. Tony VanCura	407-765-2822
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
Leone Goding	352-223-1925

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Worship & Music	Rev. Tony VanCura, Pastor	352-249-8533
Evangelism/Technology/ Communications	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