

# DeiMinder

90 Years of Celebrating the Glory of God • January 2017 Newsletter



**GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH**

# GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Sharing the peace of God's Grace with the World*

2600 Pontiac Road • Auburn Hills, Michigan 48326

Office Phone: 248•373•5222 • Office Email: office@gloriadei.cc

Online: www.gloriadei.cc • Facebook: www.facebook.com/gloriadeiluthchurch

**Sunday Worship with Holy Communion: 10:30 a.m.**  
**Bible Study: Each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.**

*Welcome to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church! You're invited to join us in worship each Sunday at 10:30 AM. Those who are interested in learning more about our congregation, or are considering becoming a member of our congregation, please speak with LLM Charlie Martin, (248) 373-5222 or email pastor @ gloriadei.cc*

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## **Annual Meeting of the Congregation: Sunday, January 29**

Members of Gloria Dei should plan on attending the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, to be held at noon on Sunday, January 29. If you have information for the annual report, it is due to Scott Johnson no later than Thursday, January 19, 2017. (You can drop it off in the office or e-mail to scott\_a\_johnson (at) yahoo.com) All committee chairpersons should submit a report. Volunteers are needed for serving on the Congregation Council; if you are interested, please contact the Scott Johnson, or any member of the council.



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## **From Minister Charlie**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to all, and may the peace of God be found with you.

In our just past Advent season, we focused on preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ, and for us in this time, we assure that we are prepared for the next coming of Christ. So the first time when Jesus was born into this world as a little baby, just as we all came into the world, we were not very well prepared for that to be the way for God to break into our lives, our world. God always does the unexpected, we see this so many times in our lives, when we can look back and realize that God entered in, and had us in that right place at the right time to help someone. We sometimes tell ourselves to be more observant to see what it is God has us doing, but it is harder than that, we just don't see very well in our forward vision. What we can look for in this next Church season is the Christ as revealed to us on earth. We have those missing years from when they came back as a family until the Baptism event, when the realization that the Messiah really is here occurred. That revealing continues for us through the time up to Lent, and even in and after that, this revealing, was being done by Jesus all along those wilderness paths that he took, to shine his light into this dark world. As we hear this revealing message, let us focus ourselves on being good mirrors, letting that light shine off of us and from us into this world, that desperately needs to know this beacon of God's love.

May God Bless us as we act as Christ's body in this world,

Minister Charlie

***Mostly About People*** *Volunteers are needed to help with the church inventory project; if you are able to assist, please contact Scott Johnson ..... Offering envelopes for 2017 are in the east hallway by the library; ..... Offering statements will be mailed out by mid-January ..... Consider donating non-perishable groceries to the Lighthouse; peanut butter, jelly, spaghetti sauce and noodles, tuna, and soups are always in need. Drop off your donation in the baskets in the narthex at church .....*



We thank Rick Rajala and Bruce Robertson for their many hours of work on the church furnaces and being at church for the repair technicians ..... The mitten trees are still up in the narthex; please bring handmade or store-bought mittens, hats and gloves, which will be distributed to local children in need ..... Gloria Dei celebrated its 89th Christmas as a congregation; we thank all who helped prepare for and who served at the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service; we also thank those who purchased poinsettia plants which adorned the chancel ..... Please help yourself to a copy of "The Lutheran" magazine, which is available each month in the narthex. Also available ..... are new devotional guides for the first quarter of 2016. Don't forget to check out the "CareNotes" which are available near both front entrances.



### ***We remember in prayer...***

Please remember in prayer all those who are sick, hospitalized, homebound, or recovering - Tabitha Bedker, Sharon Cook, Lynne Danielson, Donna Williamson, Sally Mickel, Aaron Carlson, Gena McGree, Mark Carlson, Alice Toss, Donna Polasek, MaryAnn Ferry, Judy Coller, Jeff and Faye Gorecki, Andrew Cook, , Dorothy Chilkott, Danny Holmquist, Victor DiRita, Teresa VanderPerrin, Margie Vantongeren, Roxie Alfsen, Marie Niedzwiecki, Patty Bohne, David Kangas, Roger Teply, Mary Lou Barrie, Bill Davidson, Doug Ingamells, Jerry, Dennis Hurd, Victor DiRita, Bill McCabe, Therese Dean, Kenneth Reese, Marty McNabb, Walter Hermann, Family of Jerry Dougherty, The family and friends of Kathy Meyer, Family of Angie Desormeau, and the family of Lea.

### ***We thank our choir!***

Next time you are in church, please take the time to thank our organist and choir director, Karl Sliter, and our choir members for a job well done: Dorothy Chilkott, Sharon Cook, Chris Danielson, Kay Danielson, Lynne Danielson, Elizabeth Jackovatz, Ray Lucas, Charlie Martin, Rick Rajala, Terry Rajala, Austin Sliter, Donna Sliter, and Gene Steensma. We are grateful to all for their many hours of preparation and service to our Lord and congregation!



# Our New Year's reformations

## Living Lutheran in 2017

By Meghan Johnston Aelabouni

Wherever January finds us—among city lights, frozen fields or sun-drenched palm trees—it brings the promise of a new year. With eager anticipation or weary relief, we turn the page on our calendars and look ahead to the future yet to be written. Many of us also make New Year's resolutions, setting out our hopes and plans for what might be different from and better than the past. Yet the past stays with us and, if we pay attention, we may find that our history has insights that still matter for our lives.

This year Christians worldwide will observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. To mark the anniversary, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton has encouraged congregations and individuals to study Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Luther intended this short volume, containing his explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the sacraments, along with daily prayers and Bible verses, to be used by ordinary people in churches and households.

"The catechism is built on the experience of a God who loves us," said Kirsi Stjerna, professor of Lutheran history and theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif. She said that experience was, first and foremost, Luther's own: "Luther was so burdened ... he felt like an utter failure. Then he read the word and felt free from the burdens of his conscience. He was able to see himself in a new light as someone who is free, and he wanted to share it."

Luther described the burden of sin as being *incurvatus in se* (curved in on the self). That inward curve can be marked by pride and selfishness, but Luther found that sin is also manifested in the ways we focus on ourselves with anxiety or shame. We know "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but often we don't stop there: we pile on the ways we have fallen short of our expectations and those of others. Whether we curve in on ourselves in self-righteousness or self-deprecation, the more inward our focus, the more isolated we become.

Even our well-meaning New Year's resolutions can contribute to the inward curve. Commitments to lose weight, save more money or try to make the world a better place are not, in and of themselves, unhealthy choices. But it's worth asking: Why do we make resolutions? Are we the problem we are trying to resolve? Resolutions focused on making ourselves better often arise from the deep fear that we aren't good enough. This fear is reinforced by a commercial culture that profits from our feelings of inadequacy, promising that freedom lies in the right diet, the right look, the right product.

Anyone who has ever made New Year's resolutions knows that these often fail. Even when they succeed, our best efforts can't free us from the trap of *incurvatus in se*. We can't free ourselves—but then again, we don't need to. This is what God does for us through Jesus Christ.

For Luther, this was the gospel and the good news was more than just news. As Timothy Wengert, emeritus professor of Reformation history at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, remarked, "The gospel is not just information, but an experience of God's mercy."

The catechism, then, offers not a new "to-do" list but an experience, a new posture of freedom. In Christ, God gently reaches into our hearts to liberate us from self-focused anxiety and turns us outward so we may recognize how we are called and gifted to serve our neighbors. "What are you free for?" Stjerna asked. "You're never free for your own sake, but for others."

In that spirit of freedom, this article explores how insights from Luther's Small Catechism might "reform" some common resolutions, creating "New Year's reformations" for living Lutheran in 2017.

### **Lose weight Lose shame**

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties" (Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed).

"I wrote the word acceptance on my hand yesterday," said Elyssa Salinas. A graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Salinas is now pursuing a doctorate, studying connections between body image and Luther's theology of creation. Like Luther, her theological interests are intertwined with personal experience. "I've had my own body issues this year and it's been very difficult," Salinas admitted. Weight loss often tops the list of goals for the new year—and the root of this resolution is often not just health but feelings of shame about our bodies. "This voice of pain says, 'You're not enough,'" she said. "[Losing weight becomes] a constant ladder, these constant stairs you're never going to get up."

Losing shame, Salinas finds, begins when we remember that we were made by God. "You weren't just created; you were created with purpose," she said. "It is so profound to consider your body as something purposefully made—as art."

This liberating word allows Salinas to accept her body “as it is today,” to share her struggles with others who love her and to continue a journey focused on health, not weight.

“If I really believe I am God’s beloved creation, then what is the mirror God holds up to me? There’s no shame in that mirror,” she said.

### **Meet your #goals Meet your grace**

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. What does this mean? We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves ... but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs’ (Luther’s explanation of the Ten Commandments).

The hashtag “#goals” is often used in social media to comment on someone else’s accomplishments or possessions. Though mainly employed as a compliment, this practice also reflects the human temptation to compare our lives to others. When our “#goal” is someone else’s life, we’re coveting—a practice that can lead to envy, resentment and isolation.

Grace offers the antidote, freeing us from coveting others. Vitor Westhelle, professor of systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, said God’s grace enables “the capability of a person just to be herself, [to say] ‘This is what I am; this is good enough.’”

Whatever your goals in a new year, Westhelle insisted that “you do not need to pretend to be who you are not.”

Mary Joy Philip, assistant professor of Lutheran global theology and mission at Waterloo (Ont.) Lutheran Seminary in Canada, finds that focusing on grace rather than goals also builds relationships: “When I talk about goals, it comes from a place of control and power. It implies that I can by my abilities and power make things happen. But when I am not in that place, I have to rely on another [and] be vulnerable and open to grace, and that is precisely what makes for community.”

### **Find more in your budget Find enough**

Give us today our daily bread. What does this mean? In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving. What then does daily bread mean? Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies ...” (Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer).

Earn more, save more, pay down debt—financial and material concerns dominate New Year’s resolutions. Far from chastising people for desiring worldly things, Luther expanded the definition of daily bread to include not only food and drink, clothing and shelter, and family, but also “good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

Many of us, even if we receive this daily bread, keep looking anxiously for more that will make us feel safe, rather than recognizing and celebrating what is enough. In contrast, Luther’s notion of daily bread echoes the freedom of Jesus’ invitation not to worry about what we will eat, drink or wear (Matthew 6:25).

As God frees us from the fear of scarcity, we are opened up to generosity, to sharing daily bread with those who need it. “We pray for ‘our’ daily bread and not ‘my’ daily bread,” Philip said. “The whole prayer is in the plural, if we only paid attention to that.”

### **Go to church Be church**

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith” (Luther’s explanation of the Apostles’ Creed).

Resolving to make it to church more in 2017? It’s not unusual for Christians—and even Lutherans—to assume that attending worship, praying, reading the Bible and other good works will bring us closer to God or make us better Christians. Luther absolutely rejected this notion. Even the faith through which we are saved does not happen by our own “understanding or strength” but by the work of the Spirit, he asserted.

For Luther, it’s clear that faith is “not something we do but something we experience,” Wengert said. Understanding faith as an experience rather than a product of our efforts can liberate our faith practices. Stjerna argues that Luther’s instructions in the catechism rest on his belief in “the absolute presence of God in my living ... in the holiness of each life, each person, each location.”

Whether it's in worship, prayer or participation in a church community, Stjerna invites Christians to focus on God's presence inside us. "When you do that, God will speak to you," she said. "It's the mystical reality of God. We need a tool to be illumined and sensitized and really hear God talking to us."

It's often said that we don't go to church; we are the church. Like a good tree planted to bear good fruit, God makes us holy, and "being made holy means living life, then, for others," Wengert said.

Read the rest of this article online: <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2017/01/new-years-reformations/>

## **Presiding Bishop's Message** Bishop Eaton; January 3, 2017

Ah, a new year! It opens up before us with infinite possibilities like brand new notebooks at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of football season in Cleveland—everyone has a 4.0, everyone is undefeated!

At the turn of the new year it seems possible to slough off the failures and disappointments of the past, leave one's old self behind and start a new life. In this glow we begin to make all kinds of resolutions, not just for the amendment of our lives but for the perfection of our future. It's a wonderful space of hope and potential. It's also ephemeral—morning dawns on Jan. 2. We are strange creatures—bounded and finite, yet aware of the infinite; marked by brokenness, yet with the memory of Eden. I think this tension becomes more acute at nodal times: the beginning of a new year, venture or relationship, the move to a new place or a new stage in life. We know, as the psalmist wrote: "Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5).

And we know that we are not quite right "... since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

This is a very Lutheran understanding of the human condition. We know we are simultaneously saint and sinner. It's when we deny this truth or when we believe that we can fix the sinner and become the saint all by ourselves that we get into trouble. Our efforts for perfection bring frustration and real pain to ourselves and to others. The demands we place on ourselves to get our lives together, especially when can't quite bring it off, lead to despair or at least to fatalism. Or, believing that we have got it all together, we can fall into the trap of self-righteousness.

Here is where the great gift of grace, especially as it comes to us in baptism, helps us make sense of our lives and resolves the stress of New Year's resolutions—it acknowledges that we are broken and does away with the false hope or the intolerable burden of our being able to make ourselves right. "It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all those who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare" (Small Catechism).

And it joins us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

We have already died the only death that really matters—we have died to sin and its consequence, death. We are a kind of walking dead—with all of popular culture's fascination with zombies, we may have found ourselves a niche!

New Year's resolutions can be a burden because, except for the most disciplined among us, it's a good bet we will make the same resolutions next year. The old creature is to be drowned daily but, as theologian Karl Barth once wrote, "the old creature is drowned in baptism but is a good underwater swimmer."

Here is where it is necessary to hear Paul's letter to the Romans—"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"—not as final, nor as a bludgeon to get people to fall into line, but as the truth.

The very next thing Paul wrote is: "They are now justified by his grace as a gift" (Romans 3:24).

Now we have the possibility of daily repentance because we have been given the gift of new life. Now resolutions can be made and attempted, not because our life depends upon them, but because we are free. Happy New Year!

## *DeiTimer Calendar*

Sunday, Jan. 8	9:30 AM	Bible Study
	10:30 AM	Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Thursday, Jan. 12	7:00 PM	Council Meeting
Sunday, Jan. 15	9:30 AM	Bible Study
	10:30 AM	Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday, Jan. 22	9:30 AM	Bible Study
	10:30 AM	Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday, Jan. 29	9:30 AM	Bible Study
	10:30 AM	Morning Worship with Holy Communion
	12:00 Noon	Annual Meeting of the Congregation

## *Sunday Helpers*

	<u>January 8</u>	<u>January 15</u>	<u>January 22</u>	<u>January 29</u>
<b>Asst Min</b>	Gene Steensma	Terry Rajala	Chris Danielson	Gene Steensma
<b>Lector</b>	Sharon Cook	Helen Englund	NEEDED!	Ray Lucas
<b>Greeter</b>	Gene Steensma	Helen Englund	NEEDED!	NEEDED!
<b>Sacristan</b>	Sharon Cook	Terry Rajala	Linda Nelson	Sharon Cook
<b>Coffee Hr</b>	Sally and Bruce R.	Gordy Green	NEEDED!	NEEDED!

## *January BirthDeis*

Rochelle Englund, Jan. 3  
 Evelyn Bogan, Jan. 6  
 Tracy Martin, Jan. 6  
 Rick Rajala, Jan. 6  
 Logan Smith, Jan. 8  
 Jan MacCormack, Jan. 17  
 Derek Firman, Jan. 20  
 Gay Wittenstrom, Jan. 20  
 Paul Chilkott, Jan. 29



If your birthday is wrong/missing, please contact Scott Johnson.