I’m seeing things a little differently these days. Specifically, I had to get new glasses. It wasn’t something I planned on doing just yet. It hasn’t been even a full year since I got my last glasses and my prescription hasn’t really changed all that much in the last 10 months. Still, two doctors and a therapist strongly suggested that I would be better off looking at the world a different way.

Even though I’ve had progressive lenses for at least two decades, it’s not a good idea for me to wear those lenses anymore. Don’t read too much into that metaphorically. Did you know that the eyes and the ears work together to help you maintain balance? The brain is constantly evaluating information from the vestibular (balance) organ in the inner ear against information from the eyes to keep the body balanced. The brain is also processing data from the feet and other parts of the body, too, but the eyes and ears do most of the work, and if the vestibular-ocular reflex is out of whack, your world starts to spin.

It seems, according to the two doctors and the balance therapist, that the seamless shift in focus that makes progressive lenses so desirable and efficient in so many ways was actually causing me a problem. Because I have Meniere’s Disease, those lineless lenses with their fluid shifts in focal lengths were probably contributing to more frequent bouts of dizziness and vertigo. Their field of focus at all focal lengths isn’t wide enough to give good clarity to peripheral vision and my formerly nimble but now aging neural processor can’t adapt the way it used to with things going in and out of focus. There’s a metaphor you can go to town with.

So I’m seeing things a little differently. I now have to use multiple pairs of glasses—distance and reading bifocals, computer and reading bifocals, distance only. Sunglasses, of course. It takes some getting used to, this business of switching out glasses depending on what I’m doing and where I’m looking, and like anything that takes some getting used to I have moments when it all seems excessively bothersome and I’m sorely tempted to go back to my one-lens-does-it-all spectacles. But even when I’m grousing about it I have to admit that I’ve already noticed an unexpected benefit—I’m actually seeing everything more clearly, at least when I’m wearing the right glasses at the right time. Feel free to play with that metaphor, too.
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” says Jesus in Luke 4 as he reads from the scroll of Isaiah in his hometown synagogue. “He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind...” Recovery of sight to the blind. Jesus was speaking of restoring the actual capacity for sight to those with physical visual impairment, of course, but I think he also was speaking in a broader metaphorical sense, after all, he frequently referred to the eyes and to sight as metaphors for perception and understanding.

“There are none so blind as those who will not see,” wrote John Heywood in 1546. We all have our blind spots. We all have areas of life where it would do us good to switch out lenses, to make sure we’re getting the whole picture, to make sure we are really seeing what is right in front of us and what is off to the side and what is coming in at an oblique angle...to make sure we’re focused on the right thing at the right time with the right lens.

The problem is that we get so comfortable with our old lenses that we might not even notice that they’re distorting our vision of the world; it might not occur to us to take them off and try on something with a clearer view.

One very popular lens that we cling to as we get older is “The Way Things Used To Be” and its even more astigmatic variant “Back When Things Were Great.” The world we see now seems to have gone askew but we think it’s because the world has become twisted and it doesn’t occur to us that it might be the old lens that’s skewing our vision. Sure, things are different, things have changed, but is it really so bad as it looks or are we seeing it through a skewing lens? Ah, that old lens that’s so comfortable, that we’re so used to—that lens that we carefully ground for ourselves out of years halcyon memories. It’s a great lens.....the problem is that it never really was anything like accurate. Sure, Things Were Great “back then,” but only if you were one of the people included in the category of People For Whom Things Were Great. If you broaden your focus to the larger number of People Who Are Not You and then look at People For Whom Things Were Not So Great you’ll get a more realistic picture of how things were and how things are. But you’ll have to change lenses to do that.

There is a whole family of “Idealized” lenses. Some skew the world toward the positive and some toward the negative but they’re all distorted to some degree. Take, for instance, the “Everything Is Perfect” lens. How anyone manages to navigate the world with this lens is beyond me, but people do. They tend to stumble a lot over things the lens obscures, things which are not perfect but which they just won’t allow themselves to see. There’s the “Everything Will Be Perfect When” lens which, while it gives a more realistic view than its cousin, tends to keep one’s focus narrowed in on a few small things which need to get fixed in order to achieve either personal or collective utopia. For all its claimed farsightedness this lens can be dangerously myopic.

There is, of course, the polar opposite of the “Idealized” family of lenses, the “Cynical” family which not only distorts but darkens everything you see, and not in a good Ray Bans on a Sunny Day kind of way. These lenses make you see the world through a perpetual fog of gloom. So what lenses are you wearing? How are you seeing the world? Jesus came to restore sight to the blind—to all of us who are blind in any way. Jesus came to change our lenses, to teach us to see the world and each other anew through the lens of God’s love, and then to become opticians of the heart so that we can bring the clarity of God’s love, God’s vision, to others.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. -- Matthew 13.16-17

Pro Gloria Dei, Pastor Steve
CONGREGATION COUNCIL UPDATE

Happy New Year Greetings! Your Council met last on January 4, 2016.

After opening with prayer, Pastor Steve reviewed our devotional studies. It was decided to turn to another devotional study. One not quite so global in nature and more directed to being a purpose driven church serving our community. He will select another study for the coming year.

We were given an update on those of concern in our fold.

Tuesday Adult Education will be on Genesis and its poems and meanings and Sunday morning classes will continue into 2nd Corinthians. These studies are presented in depth. Pastor uncovers the full meaning, things easily overlooked in just reading. The studies truly are an enlightening, enriching experience.

Gary Bockman reviewed the 2015 year-end results, which ended with a deficit of $4,593. It was decided to cover the deficit with $2,500 planned for the Conference Youth Program in 2015, which was not yet needed and the remaining $2,093 from the “undesignated memorial” provision. He then reviewed the 2016 Spending Plan recommended by the Finance Committee. It was moved and approved to accept the Spending Plan presented, for referral to the congregation for their approval.

Mike Lynch and Frank Stanley gave us a little preview of the upcoming “Moment for Missions” guests from LSS. Dr. George Bell delivered the sermon on Sunday, January 17th.

Everett Parker has completed his work on the Internal Audit Procedure, which Council will review at our next meeting.

Pastor Steve and Bob Siemer have been working on our Computer Policy, which Council will address in March.

Both the Property and Audit committees could use help from additional volunteers. We certainly welcome members willing to serve on any committee of interest.

Blessings to you and have a Glorious Dei...

Barbara White, Council President

Our name means The Glory of God, so we try to live accordingly. Our life together as a family of faith is built on worship, service, education and friendship.

SPECIAL THANKS...

Once again this year Meri and I are overwhelmed with the generosity of your Christmas gift to us. Thanks to all who contributed and for all the good wishes. We are truly blessed to be part of the life and love of the little church with a big heart and you show that big heart to us in more ways than we can count.

With much love and gratitude,

Pastor Steve and Dr. Meri
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT — BROOKE & P.A. WHITE

Q: Where were you born?
Brooke: I was born at home, in East Long Beach. I’ve been told that I was “denim” blue until my dad (Pastor Steve) put me into a bath of warm water where I relaxed and turned a lovely shade of pink.
P.A.: I was born at a hospital in Deerfield Illinois. My parents were Baptist missionaries and they had just come back to the United States from serving in Reunion, a small island off the coast of Madagascar. When I was six months old we went on a mission to Bangui in the Central African Republic.

Q: If you could go anywhere in the world on vacation, where would you go?
P.A.: I would love to go Machu Picchu one day.
Brooke: I would like to go to Tahiti or Italy on vacation.

Q: Of all the places you’ve traveled, where is your favorite place?
P.A.: That’s a tough choice, but I think the island of Kauai is my favorite place.
Brooke: Kauai is my favorite too, but Ireland is a close second.

Q: What’s your favorite city? What makes it so memorable?
P.A.: I always love Paris. I love the museums, the parks, the culture, and the food. I spent much of my childhood near Paris when my parents were missionaries in France and I have great memories there.
Brooke: My favorite city is Hanalei Bay in Kauai. I have wonderful memories of summer trips with my parents, brother, family friends, and extended family. We love to go to the beach, watch the tropical rain storms roll in, play very competitive card games, eat great food, and explore around the town. P.A. and I have also been there many times together, and once when Gus was a baby. P.A. used to drive Gus all around the island of Kauai in the wee hours of the morning when he refused to sleep, and they would end up at the Kilauea Bakery for coffee and croissants when it first opened at 5 a.m.

Q: What was the last film you saw at the cinema? What rating would you give it and why?
Brooke and P.A.: We just saw the new Star Wars movie and we loved it. We saw it first in 3-D with Brice Beckham at the Mann’s Chinese Theater in Hollywood, it was a rare date night for us and a fantastic Christmas gift from him. We saw it again with all the boys (Gus, Casey, and Elijah) and Brice over Christmas break. We give this movie two thumbs up, and P.A. describes it as “the most perfect movie ever.” We have always been very into the Star Wars movies at our house, and having three little boys that love to play Jedi and know all about the movies made this movie even more exciting for us to see as a family. We can’t wait until it comes out on DVD and we can watch it all the time.

Q: What is your middle name?
P.A.: This is a funny question for me because I don’t have a middle name. My first name is Paul-Andre, so people often think that Andre is my middle name, but my parents didn’t give me a middle name.
Brooke: My middle name is Judith, and I was named after the singer Judy Collins. It was going to be that or Joni, after the singer Joni Mitchell. My parents always explain this with a shoulder shrug and by saying, “We were hippies.”

Q: What was your most memorable birthday? 
P.A.: My most memorable birthday was when I was 22 and Steve and Meri Beckham gave me my first car, a 1981 Volkswagen Rabbit. It made me feel like I was a part of the family, and I know that they are always looking out for me. Brooke: My most memorable birthday was a surprise party that P.A. threw for me when I turned 19. We had only been dating for about a month and P.A. invited all of my college friends, my best friend from home, and my family to a birthday party at a restaurant near the CLU.
RECONCILING IN CHRIST

Reconciling in Christ advocates for the acceptance of all, regardless of color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity into full participation in the life of the church and in service to Christ. Congregations that embrace the tenets of Reconciling in Christ believe that Christ availed himself to all, doing so without judgment or condemnation, and continues to do so now.

From its inception in the late 1970s the objective of this non-denominational movement has been to bring an awareness to Christians that there is a community of believers who accept Christ as their Savior, embrace God’s gift of grace, and strive to live in accordance with Christ’s example.

To date, approximately 400+ congregations within the ELCA have embraced Reconciling in Christ, affirming their acceptance of all regardless of background or orientation, and making this known through statements on their Web site and in congregational publications. Within the Long Beach conference of the ELCA’s Southwest Synod the following four congregations are Reconciling in Christ congregations: Trinity, Resurrection, Christ, and Our Savior’s.

Resources:

- A very brief recap of the inception of this movement can be found in Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ReconcilingWorks).
- In 2009, at the Worldwide Assembly, the ELCA published its statement on human sexuality, entitled “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust”. The full statement is lengthy however a synopsis is available and recommended as a starting point. The statement can be found at this Web address: http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality.
- Resources regarding how congregations and individuals can respond to Reconciling in Christ can be found at this Web address: http://www.reconcilingworks.org/

Verses in the New Testament are cited as prohibitions against the LGBT life-style. For a different perspective on how the New Testament can inform us about our response the following article “What does the Bible Say About Homosexuality” is recommended. The Web address is http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/what-does-the-bible-say-about-homosexuality.

MISSION FIELD

— Lutheran Social Services —

Moment for Missions in January

Since its beginnings in the mid-1940s, LSS of Southern California has been a servant to those in need. With creative, dynamic programs, LSS is active with multiple programs in all of our local counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego.

Dr. George Bell and his team lead our Long Beach LSS, which is a major focus of Gloria Dei’s mission outreach and service. LSS is our largest ministry recipient of budgeted and designated contributions (over $13,000 in 2015), and many of our people serve as key LSS volunteers.

Dr. Bell visited Gloria Dei on Martin Luther King Sunday, as LSS was the focus of our January Moment for Missions. He presented a thoughtful and challenging message, both thanking our members for their service and giving, and provided biblical encouragement for all Christians to engage with the poor.

Our Long Beach LSS currently serves about 4,000 people each month with a full range of services: food and clothing distribution, employment workshops and referrals, ESL classes, baby food, diapers, hygiene items and blankets, and in the summer provide lunch for children ages 2-11.

The larger LSS family in southern California serves more than 60,000 individuals and families in Emergency Services, providing food and clothing, healthcare, temporary shelters and related services. In addition, LSS offers over 50 specialized Program Resources, focusing on education and training, housing, senior programs, disability and refugee/migrant services.

Get more involved with our mission partners...seek out our committee chair, Mike Lynch.
CONNECTIONS & ACCOLADES

We need teams to sign up to host refreshments for our FELLOWSHIP gathering after worship service! Won’t you consider volunteering a few Sundays a year? — a small gesture to enhance our ability to connect and meet others at GLORIA DEI! Add your name to the sign-up clipboard in the fellowship hall...we need YOU to be part of our HOSPITALITY Team!

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO RECYCLE & DONATE...

NAPLES FLEA MARKET - June 2016

Our Gloria Dei Women's Group (ELCW) is planning to participate in this annual event this year.

We need your discarded "valuables" or items no longer needed.

The money earned will go to replacing the sofas in our church fellowship hall.

Please help us make our booth at the Flea Market a success.

Call the church office if you have any questions (562) 438-0929.

PEACE MAKER OF THE YEAR

The Rev. Dr. Pamela Joan Swarts Challis was named Peacemaker of the Year by the Long Beach Area Peace Network. Pastor Challis cited her "passion for peace in the Holy Land [which ] began with her first call with colleague, The Rev. Dr. Said Ailabouni, a Palestinian Christian born in Bethlehem...." She has served five Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations, the latest of which is Christ Lutheran Church in Long Beach.
CALAER OF EVENTS — FEBRUARY 2016

1 — Monday
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING @ 7 PM
David & Sarah Fuller Anniversary

2 — Tuesday
ADULT EDUCATION @ 10:00 AM & 7 PM
Happy Birthday Bob Siemer

3 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM

4 — Thursday

5 — Friday
• A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
• D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM
Happy Birthday David Thomas Fuller

6 — Saturday

7 — SUNDAY
TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD
ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

8 — Monday
GARDEN CLUB @ 1 PM

9 — Tuesday
ADULT EDUCATION @ 10:00 AM & 7 PM

10 — ASH WEDNESDAY
SOUP SUPPER @ 6 PM
SERVICE @ 7:30 PM

11 — Thursday

12 — Friday
• A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
• D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

13 — Saturday

14 — SUNDAY
ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM
ST. VALENTINE'S DAY
Dolores & Peter Lovoy Anniversary

15 — Monday
PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY
Newsletter Deadline

16 — Tuesday
ADULT EDUCATION @ 10:00 AM & 7 PM

17 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM
Happy Birthday Berlin Zook

18 — Thursday
ELCW MEETING @ 10:30 AM
ALL WOMEN are invited to our meeting in the fellowship hall. Bring your own lunch and favorite (empty) coffee/tea cup or mug and be ready for some fun!
Happy Birthday Roger Powell

19 — Friday
• A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
• D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM

20 — Saturday
LSS WORK PARTY 10-NOON
1611 Pine Avenue, Long Beach

21 — SUNDAY
ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
Noisy Offering
O.A. MTG. @ 7:00 PM

22 — Monday

23 — Tuesday
ADULT EDUCATION @ 10:00 AM & 7 PM

24 — Wednesday
JOIN THE CHOIR... @ 7:15 PM
Happy Birthday Carrol Irvine
Happy Birthday Randy Hoffman

25 — Thursday
Happy Birthday Sarah Fuller

26 — Friday
• A.A. MTG. @ 1:00 PM
• D.A. MTG @ 6:00 PM
Happy Birthday David Berg

27 — Saturday

28 — SUNDAY
ADULT EDUCATION @ 9 AM
WORSHIP @ 10:30 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
COOKIE SUNDAY
PACIFC FLUTE ENSEMBLE @ 4:00 PM

29 — Monday
GLORIA DEI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
5872 Naples Plaza
Long Beach, California 90803

Return Service Requested