

VOICES OF HOPE



DR. LASHARND A BECKWITH

MISSION

*Ignited by faith,
we live out God's love by embracing,
equipping and empowering
vulnerable people in
Southern California*

VISION

*Sharing the love of Christ,
we are a community to care
and be cared for...
Where the vulnerable are
safer and stronger
Where the dependent
are self-sustaining
Where the isolated dwell in community
Where the weary will be given hope*

VALUES

*Compassion / Advocacy
Collaboration / Respect
Innovation / Stewardship*

Happy Friday!

I hope your week has been one of the best. I am old enough to know that there will be times when I will want to throw my hands up in the air and say, "why bother?". I am also old enough to know that when I look at challenges through that kind of lens, everything will always look bleak...my mountains will appear too tall to climb, and my mind will begin to play head games that will lead to negativity and defeat.

You know what? I say "No" to that. I choose how I will respond to stressful situations. I decide how I approach hard times with a sense of optimism or pessimism; I am the one who decides. The same is true for all of us. We get to choose if difficulties will dictate how we respond to life. We can give God praise in challenging times or pout, which does not glorify God. We can lash out at others, or we can show grace.

This brings me to what I have been concentrating on lately---Galatians 5:22-23, where it says, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law."* These are the behaviors that should be demonstrated by those who follow Jesus.

The first one listed is LOVE. We need not forget that we are all unworthy. Yet, the one who represents perfect Love, forgives our mistakes. The second one listed is JOY. The Bible tells us to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:1-2). Joy comes in knowing that God's favor and grace cover our lives even during the times we mess up.

Too many times, we seek to please people. We want people to like us. We want them to understand us, and when they don't, conflict, insecurities, uncertainties, and challenges show up. The Bible tells us, "there is none righteous; not even one." So, I will tell you the same thing I constantly have to remind myself, *"do your best and when your best isn't good enough for others, remember, your **best** is always good enough for God"*. When we focus on pleasing Him rather than people, we will show others love and experience joy.

As we end this week, think about your part in showing love, creating joy, and supporting others. Also, remember that we are all one agency, Lutheran Social Services of Southern California. Whether we are in San Bernardino, San Diego, Fullerton, Long Beach, Riverside, or Garden Grove, we are all one family. When one succeeds, we all succeed.

This week begins a week of giving. Show your support through the efforts of the LONG BEACH GIVES project event that you will see advertised all week. Remember, we are the hands and feet of Jesus. Always...

Dr. LaSharnda Beckwith
President & Chief Executive Officer

