

Ecclesia Clear Lake Elder Profile

Name: Lori Arnold_____

**1. How long have you been a part of the Ecclesia Clear Lake church family?
What initially drew you to the community?**

I have been part of the ECL Church family on-and-off since fall 2008. I had recently moved back home after volunteering at a Christian ministry for three years, where I met my husband, Nathan. Before moving to the ministry, I had been attending a large mega Church with my parents. However, I knew that Nathan was not a fan, and I was also more interested in attending a smaller, local Church. I was invited to ECL by a barista I worked with at Starbucks and I was immediately drawn to the authentic community. I also knew that I wanted to attend ECL because I felt the Holy Spirit during the worship service. Every time I am looking for a new Church, I always pay attention to whether I feel the Holy Spirit present during the service. There were not any charismatic demonstrations during the service, but I knew that the Holy Spirit was evident in this community and that I wanted to be part of it.

2. In what ways do you currently serve in the church and in the community?

I currently primarily serve leading prayer and teaching several times a year. I have had multiple roles over the years I've attended ECL including volunteering in the Children's ministry. I appreciate that when we returned to ECL in 2018, Coby recognized my gifts for teaching and invited me to begin leading prayer and eventually begin teaching occasionally. It is such a fun challenge for me to learn how to write a sermon and I have gradually become more comfortable teaching in front of the congregation. Right now, I also support our family serving by making the sure the rest of the family gets to Church on days when Nathan is either serving in the youth ministry or running the media.

3. Share an overview of your faith story.

I've shared a lot of my faith story in Church before, so I'll just briefly recap it here. I was raised by two parents who were deeply committed followers of Jesus. Saved in the Pentecostal Church, both of my parents taught me about praying in tongues and we believed in praying for healing, miracles, etc. Neither of my parents are preachers, but they both served actively in Church as I was growing up. My father could be found behind the soundboard most Sundays and my mother taught Sunday School in the children's ministry. I'm grateful for the example my parents set for me.

A true child of the 90s, my understanding of faith growing up was extremely individual. I prayed a salvation prayer at age 7 and was baptized at age 8. Throughout my teen years, I attended Church, volunteered at Church, and tried to be the best Christian I could be. However, as an adult, I have become much more interested in developing a strong connection to a Church community. I am grateful that ECL has been my Church community for the majority of my adult life. Not only are my husband and I both committed and connected to the Church, but our children are also growing in their spiritual lives through the connection to Kids Connect and the youth group.

4. At ECL we long to have deep roots in the historic Trinitarian Christian faith of the global church. Reflect on your understanding of the Trinity.

I was certainly raised with a traditional understanding of the Trinity as the God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a non-physical manifestation of God on Earth. As I've interrogated my childhood understanding of Christianity in adulthood, I find the Trinity to be a beautiful representation of the harmony of God's love. If we compare other ancient religious traditions to the Trinity, we see that these religions often have multiple deities that compete with or are in constant conflict with each other. As choreographer Silas Farley represents the Trinity in his ballet, "The Four Loves," the Father, the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit, dance with each other in perfect harmony as an overflow of the Love that is God. This is my understanding of the Trinity currently, but I expect that will change as my faith continues to grow.

5. At ECL we long for deep bonds of connection in human relationships within our church and in our community. What is the role of authentic and healthy community in church and in faith formation?

As we have been discussing frequently during our worship services, the Church on earth is meant to be a reflection of the relationship between the Trinity. Each person has something to contribute through the gifts that they've been given. In addition, the Church community is meant to meet the needs of both the Church community and our local community. Our family seeks to support our Church and community by giving both our time and our resources, which we have done throughout our time at ECL.

6. At ECL we long to be actively engaged in matters of compassion and justice in our community and world. Why is this an important longing? What does a healthy posture of pursuing this longing look like in our context?

Being actively engaged in acts of compassion and justice in our community are important because we seek to follow the example of Jesus Christ and the teachings

of the New Testament. Throughout his time on Earth, Jesus sided with the poor and powerless against the wealthy and powerful. He treated widows, orphans, and the disabled with dignity and actively made their lives better through miracles. A healthy posture of pursuing compassion and justice involves seeking to ally our Church community with ministries and organizations that are already involved in this mission as well as openly speaking truth to power when we see injustice or oppression taking place.