



# *St. Thomas Lutheran Church News*

February 2021 XXXXIII, Issue 2

---

## **Pastor's Column...**

Krister Stehndal, New Testament scholar and bishop of Sweden, once spoke about having *holy envy* for other traditions. I have a deep envy for the Jewish tradition *Yahrzeit*, the marking of the first anniversary of a death. Often, the burial marker is placed or unveiled on this day. I am envious of it because it is a reminder that anniversaries are hard when it comes to grief. It is also a reminder that grief doesn't respect tidy boundaries. Even when life seems to go on after death, so does grief. All of this is to say that we are near to the one year anniversary of the start of the pandemic. Ash Wednesday will be the last "first time" we will be celebrating a liturgical date virtually. What a mess.

And it has been a mess. In a particularly grief-filled year, I joked to a friend that I didn't need to give anything up for Lent - *living* was my Lenten practice. But that was last Lent, when, with the swift closing of our doors most of us retreated into the comfort of whatever we had intended to fast from? What do we do in a second pandemic Lent?

Of course, we're going to run into problems if we let the pandemic be the source of our messiness. For the better part of the year, I've been moaning the loss of several just-flourishing habits I'd started at the beginning of 2020 which floundered under the reality of life in a pandemic. I've been so ready to blame the pandemic for every setback in my life, but the reality is, I let those habits collapse. And when it became apparent that things were going to be this way for a while, I sat around playing the blame game when I could have connected more deeply with what was around me. Once, the Times of London had asked many thinkers to weigh in on the question: "What is wrong with the world?" Not only did they get an assessment of what was wrong, but who was to blame. And then G. K. Chesterton took up the question. He wrote simply, "Dear sirs, I am." I get nowhere passing the blame onto others. I get everywhere by admitting I've made a mess and trust that, even here, God brings blessings.

We pray that God will bless this mess. While I love "A Mighty Fortress," my favorite of Luther's hymns is "Out of the Depths I Cry to You," his setting of Psalm 130. As the title suggests, the Psalmist states plainly that this is not a good place in which she has found herself. But then, she writes, "I wait for you, Lord; my soul waits; in your word is my hope" (verse 5). Luther, of course, imbues these verses with all the poetry of grace: "In you alone, O God, we hope, and

not in our own merit. We rest our fears in your good Word and trust your Holy Spirit. Your promise keeps us strong and sure; we trust the cross, your signature, inscribed upon our temples." I love that this psalm and hymn are honest about the depths of frustration and despair where we often find ourselves. I also greatly appreciate how they trust that this is exactly where we can expect God to act.

God's promises are meant for us when our lives are a mess. God has no expectation that we clean everything up ourselves. But there is a promise, that out of every mess we find ourselves in, God will create something beautiful. It is just God's specialty —life out of death; hope out of despair, blessing out of misery.

Lent is upon us, beloved. Our staff has chosen *Bless This Mess* as a theme for our Lenten journey together. As you read this newsletter, watch out for opportunities for us to be honest with ourselves about where we are and for opportunities for us to call out for God's blessings that, with God's aid, things may be different.

*Pr. Adrienne*

## **MINISTER OF YOUTH AND CHRISTIAN NURTURE**

I am excited to be here and to serve among you as Minister of Youth and Christian Nurture. When a child is baptized in our church, the people of God, on behalf of the whole church, make promises to support them and pray for them. Together, I pray we can create a place where every child and youth - and every person - knows they are deeply loved by God, is equipped to embrace their baptismal covenant and is fully included in the life of the church.

While this is a big vision, my initial plans include creating Sunday School boxes to support Christian Education in the home, creating a plan to address Confirmation classes for this year, and meeting with high school youth to hear their hopes and concerns. Additionally, I will launch an email newsletter targeted specifically for youth and families at STLC.

I look forward to getting to know each one of you in the STLC community. For anyone who would like to meet, especially families with youth and children, I invite you to sign up for a time with me on Zoom. In the coming weeks, we will also have times for different age groups to meet together with me on Zoom. Watch for more information to come!

Your partner in the journey,  
Pastor Lecia

**\*Youth Group Meetings:** High school students are invited to monthly meetings on Zoom, the second Sunday of each month at 5:30 pm, beginning February 14. **\*Parents of confirmation students** are invited to a meeting with Pastor Lecia on Monday, February 1 at 7:30 to discuss plans for classes this year. If you did not receive the login information or have questions, for either of these events, please contact Pastor Lecia ([pastorleciabeck@gmail.com](mailto:pastorleciabeck@gmail.com)).

## WORSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

### New Members

Have you been worshipping with us through the pandemic and want to relate more closely with our congregation? Have you recently moved to the area and are looking for a congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to worship with? We are eager for you to join us. Pr. Adrienne will be hosting new member classes in March (Sundays, March 14, 21, 28 at 10:10am on Zoom). If you are interested in participating or in meeting with Pr. Adrienne, please email her ([pastoradrienne@gmail.com](mailto:pastoradrienne@gmail.com)) or contact the church office.

### Virtual Narthex

Bring your own coffee to our next virtual narthex, Sunday, February 7 at 10:10am. Last month we heard about Zoom bookcases sold to enhance the image of your Zoom background. What weird or interesting book or object would you put in your Zoom bookshelf to tell others about you? The link to join is: <http://bit.ly/3qTE3U5>



### Thank You

Thanks be to God, the work of and at St. Thomas continues in spite of the pandemic. Gratitude is due to a number of individuals and groups who continue to care for our facilities.

- ❖ The landscape committee, chaired by Kathleen Boggess, has tidied up our outdoor spaces. Drew Balcam and his “crew” of family and friends trimmed trees and removed bushes; despite the winter dreariness, this has made a great improvement to our property. Lindsay Smith donated four redbud trees which were planted behind the office and education wing.
- ❖ Sam Eichmiller and his property committee continue to meet at St. Thomas twice a month. Notably, Jim Pankow has repaired several toilets and secured the donation of needed plumbing supplies.
- ❖ Jim Halvorson donated a set of Ikebana bowls for the flower guild. Ikebana is a type of flower arranging that is beautiful in its minimalism and often depends on a spiky “frog” to hold the arranged flowers and objects in place. The bowls Jim created mirror beautiful the design of the baptismal font. As we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and remember those who died, that detail can remind us of our vocational call as children, spouses, parents, and faithful believers in all we do.

# Bless this mess

## **A Word about Lent**

The imposition of ashes is a reminder of the consequences of sin—death—but are made in the shape of the cross, on which our salvation is worked. On **Ash Wednesday**, February 17, ashes will be available in a number of ways:

- Ashes for self-imposing and hand sanitizer will be available in the main door vestibule. Please wear a mask.
- We will provide do-it-yourself instructions, if you happen to be hanging onto an old palm branch.

In many ways, Lent is an opportunity to be honest with ourselves about our sin, its consequences, and God's action in response to sin. Therefore, we will begin our Lenten practice with confession. Our service on Ash Wednesday will be live-streamed from the sanctuary to our **YouTube channel at 7pm**.

Throughout the season of Lent we will explore the theme *Bless this Mess*. In addition to guiding our worship theme, contact Pr. Lecia ([pastorleciabeck@gmail.com](mailto:pastorleciabeck@gmail.com)) to reserve a **Lent Box** or for a set of Lenten devotion cards on this theme. These boxes are for all-ages, so please sign up!

**On Wednesdays in Lent** (February 24-March 24), join Pr. Adrienne for **Prayer at Noon on Zoom**. The link to join is: <http://bit.ly/2020lentnoonprayer>. If you cannot join us, but have a prayer request, please contact Pr. Adrienne. **In the evening**, join us on our **YouTube channel at 7pm** for Compline and reflections on the appointed Old Testament texts.

**Maundy Thursday, April 1**, will begin with an extended and personal confession with opportunities for you to create a unique Maundy Thursday practice that will give meaning to what has come before in the season of Lent and what is yet to come over the next three days. This service is at **7pm on our YouTube channel**.

On **Good Friday, April 2**, we will again go live from our worship space at **7pm on YouTube** with a simple service around and about the cross. We will say, "We adore you O Christ, and we bless you. By your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

Finally, **on Easter Sunday, April 4**, we will have two opportunities for worship. First, a festival virtual worship will go live **on YouTube at 11am**. We need your help to add to the joy of this service. Submit a video of you and/or your family saying "Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!" to <http://bit.ly/2021eastervideos>.

We will also have live, **in person Easter service of Holy Communion at 8am**. Please wear a mask and bring chairs or a blanket to sit on. This is a rain-snow-or-shine event, so please be prepared for the elements.

## Mission & Ministry News

### **Homelessness in Bloomington A Forum with Rev. Forrest Gilmore and Emily Pike Wednesday, February 3, 7 p.m. via Zoom**

Please join us on Wednesday, February 3, at 7 p.m. for an online forum about homelessness in Bloomington with Beacon Director Rev. Forrest Gilmore and New Hope for Families Director Emily Pike.

Homelessness is a long-standing crisis in the city of Bloomington. We've seen photos and videos of the evictions of homeless people from Seminary Park. Beacon has just opened a new low-barrier overnight shelter to better serve some homeless clients. Most of us probably have more questions than answers: How many people in Bloomington are homeless? What factors lead to and perpetuate homelessness? Why have some homeless people refused to go to certain shelters? How can the city and social service agencies work together? What are the daily and long-term challenges faced by Beacon and New Hope, and what can our faith community and others do to help?

Rev. Gilmore and Ms. Pike will speak for 30 minutes; the other 30 minutes will be open for questions.

This event is sponsored by the St. Thomas Mission Committee. We're planning other events, as well as opportunities for advocacy and service, as we begin a year emphasizing the crisis of homelessness in our community.

To join the forum on February 3 at 7 p.m., go to:

<https://zoom.us/j/92117865116?pwd=U1Voc1czTi9JUTVwc25HRzlvS1d1QT09>

Meeting ID: 921 1786 5116

Passcode: 601765



## Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU

Spring Semester 2021 has arrived at IU Bloomington! After a winter break that seemed both long and short at the same time, students are back in classes and many are back in Bloomington. Hope and excitement fill the air when talking about some of the fun, faith-filled activities that we at Rose House Lutheran Campus Ministry have planned during the next few months. Since we had a successful service project during the fall semester where we partnered with the Jubilee Campus Ministry (United Methodists), we decided to connect with them again this spring for a socially distanced Mardi Gras Party. We will have a mask making contest and eat some sweets on the last day before Lent begins. We also hope to join together with Jubilee and possibly other groups for service projects and learning experiences. Rent-A-Puppy has been a highlight of the Rose House Lutheran Campus Ministry for many years and we are anticipating being able to host that event again as well. Additionally, this spring we aim to spend some time focused in prayer and worship.

With everything going on, it can be difficult to slow down and appreciate living in the moment, being grateful for each breath we breathe and the small blessings in life. Ash Wednesday is a God pause in the midst of our hectic schedules to confront the reality that no matter how much money we make, what kind of car we drive, what brand of clothes we wear, or how busy we make our day to day schedules- we are all mortal. "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." The day though also serves as a reminder of the promise of the resurrection. For when the ashes are traced on our foreheads they are done so in the sign of the cross—a remembrance of the promises made at baptism that we are claimed by Christ and clothed with his righteousness.

My prayer for you all this Ash Wednesday and upcoming Lenten season is that you remember that our God is gracious and merciful and loves you (and your neighbor) not because of how many things we cross off a to do list, how busy our lives are, or what possessions we own, but because of whose we are. May the knowledge that you are enough free you to live out God's call to love and serve our neighbors and joyfully share the good news of what God has already done for us. Amen.

Peace,  
Pastor Amanda Ghaffarian

## MCUM – DID YOU KNOW?

COMPASS EARLY LEARNING CENTER is a year-round childcare facility with five classrooms - one toddler, one 2-3 years, and three pre-k rooms.

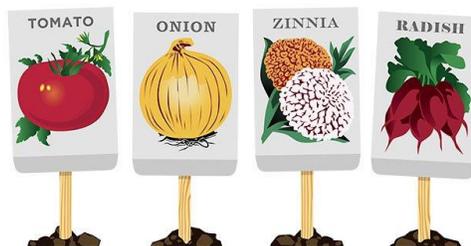
- Licensed childcare program for children ages 1-5 years old
- Full-time early childhood mental health therapist on site
- Serves daily meals and snacks
- Follows NAEYC accredited curriculum
- Tuition is determined on a sliding fee scale; no family will pay over 10% of their income on care
- Eligibility to attend Compass is based on both parents working and/or pursuing education or job training

Helen Ingersoll, MCUM Contact for St. Thomas  
[hingerso@indiana.edu](mailto:hingerso@indiana.edu)/812.339.9610

## The St. Thomas Community Garden is Gearing Up for 2021!

New gardeners are welcome to begin signing up in February for information and to apply for open garden plots. Available plots will be assigned on a first-come, first sign-up basis.

Contact Kaye Hill at [kayehill48@gmail.com](mailto:kayehill48@gmail.com) and she will send you the STLC Community Garden Contract and a 2021 Registration form.



### NEW HOPE FOR FAMILIES

#### Special Request: Household Needs

When families leave the New Hope for Families' shelter for their new home, New Hope tries to supply them with the basic items these families will need to maintain a long-lasting home. New Hope for Families relies on donations of new and gently-used housewares for their families. This year, despite the pandemic, they have served more than twice the number of families as normal. As such, the speed with which they are helping families into housing has used up their supplies of household goods twice as quickly! They urgently need the following items to help these families start their new lives on the best possible footing:

- Trash cans (tall kitchen size)
- Brooms
- Mops
- Laundry baskets
- Shower curtains, shower curtain liners and shower curtain rings
- Measuring cups and measuring spoons
- Baking pans/sheets



Donation deliveries are **by appointment only**. Please call New Hope's office at 812-334-9840. Deliveries can also be dropped off at St. Thomas after first calling.

Additionally, checks can be made out to St. Thomas Lutheran Church with New Hope for Families in the memo line.

Grateful thanks for your continued generosity and prayers for the most vulnerable in our community.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

League of Women Voters of Indiana

Voter suppression does not end after elections. A powerful way of suppressing the vote occurs every 10 years, after the U.S. Census, when legislative districts are redrawn. In Indiana, where redistricting is done by our legislators, both chambers and the governorship are currently controlled by one party. Single-party control increases the risk of gerrymandering — manipulating district lines to favor one party.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana is sponsoring a film series offering deep insights into the tactics of **voter suppression**. We invite you to attend this series and learn how you can help bring about a fair and transparent redistricting process in 2021.

The films are free, shown from 7:30-9:00 p.m. by Zoom. Q&A panels will follow each film.

***UnCivil War: U.S. Elections under Siege*** will be shown on **Thursday, February 4**. Directed by Indiana native Tom Glynn, it exposes a web of threats to free and fair elections. Panelists include Sheila Kennedy (former Prof. of Law and Policy, School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI), Paul Helmke (former Ft. Wayne Mayor, current Dir. of the Civic Leader Center at IU), and Peggy Welch (former IN State Rep., gerrymandered in 2011).

***Line in the Street*** will be shown on Thursday, **February 11**. This award-winning documentary is about citizen activists and a landmark win for voting rights in the 2018 Pennsylvania Supreme Court case *League of Women Voters Pennsylvania V. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. It will be followed by panelists Jesse Kharbanda (Hoosier Environmental Council) and Jennifer McCormick (former IN State Superintendent of Public Instruction).

You must register in advance at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tz0rc-2qpz4pHNzfroVQZCT-X4lvk7N7m-ng>. A confirmation email will be sent with information and a unique link to attend the programs.

To sign up for updates or to volunteer with the redistricting reform campaign, contact [redistrict-1@lwv-bmc.org](mailto:redistrict-1@lwv-bmc.org).

**As Lutherans and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America we are called to advocate for many social service issues.** To assist the community to be informed and involved in local Monroe County issues, the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County, with its co-sponsor the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, will hold Legislative Updates via Zoom. These sessions will allow the public to follow the work and priorities of the State legislators representing Monroe County. There will be opportunity for attendees to ask their legislators questions.

Please go to [www.lwv-bmc.org/leg-update](http://www.lwv-bmc.org/leg-update) to register for the Zoom meeting. All legislative updates are free and open to the public. Legislative Updates are scheduled for February 13, March 6 and April 10.