

# *Saint Thomas Lutheran Church News*



**January 2021    XXXXIII, Issue 1**

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

Last month, I wrote about waiting. Since then, we've turned both church- and calendar-year pages and, *still*, we wait. That is the reality of Christmas more than 2000 years after the birth of Christ. Still, we wait.

I'm not very good at waiting. I wasn't raised by people very good by waiting. I often received birthday and Christmas presents before the actual event because my parents were so eager to see the joy on my face. I try to do the same, much to Matt's chagrin. I'm learning to embrace waiting.

Three and half years ago, we'd finally emerged from the terrifying dread of life with a very premature baby only to learn that just because the scariest complications are behind you, you don't just get to take that tiny baby home. What is yet to come is so much worse. They call it the "feeder-grower" stage. Where you wait and wait and wait for the baby to learn to eat enough on her own that she will thrive outside of the hospital. This was more than a third of our NICU experience, and it was torture. Everyone I'd loved there, I resented. Every routine that was so soothing became a chore. I contemplated interventions I'd rather not disclose. I'm only now coming to terms with that time. I'm only now beginning to unwrap the gifts that time left for me.

I bring this up because, I suspect, the beginning of 2021 will feel so much worse than all of 2020. The end is in sight. We have hope. But we are still stuck. We are still waiting: waiting for our turn to get vaccinated, waiting for a vaccine for kids, waiting for the end of masks and social distancing (though, we might want to retain some of those habits!), waiting to see family and friends again, waiting for something that offers the comfort of "normal." Now is the time to open your emotional toolbox. Remind yourself what's in there. Think about what you could stand to pick up in the months to come. Let me offer you two I'm working on:

Routine. Create a routine for yourself. Give yourself the gift of predictability. One of the best books I read in 2020 was about an alternative to 12 Step recovery programs (it was called *Quit Like a Woman*). The author, Holly Whitaker, cited a number of studies about willpower. According to these studies, we have a limited amount of willpower each day. So, the author suggested an easy way to game the system and make sure you have willpower

when you need it later in the day: develop a morning routine that you stick to day after day. Limit the amount of decisions you need to make about trivial things and you'll have more in the reserve to make decisions about more difficult things. Crafting a routine for the next few months might also allow you to add a few habits (daily Bible reading? Letter writing?) that may help provide some meaning for the long, quiet winter we have before us.

Prayer for Others. At some of the lowest points in my life, I found it difficult to pray for myself. When it came to my problems, I lacked the words to ask for the miracle I so desperately needed. I was so lucky to belong to a community of people (the Church) who didn't lack those words and prayed earnestly for me. But, I still craved the closeness of prayer. I grew weary of waking each morning and complaining to God about where I was. Praying for others became a lifeline for my faith. It didn't change my circumstances, but for a few minutes each day, I could sit with something other than my own problems. When Lucy was in the NICU, my closest friend was also going through major upheaval in her life. Spending time praying for her peace of mind gave me mine. I could exist for reasons beyond my own pain, frustrating, and stagnation.

Beloved, there are not really words for missing people you've never met, but I do. I miss those of you I've had the briefest of conversations with. I miss those of you I've heard about (have you met so-and-so yet?). I miss you who have sat on Zoom meeting with me. I pray daily for you - that you will have the strength to endure what is yet to come, that this time will be instructive to you, that you will have a sense of calm in your hearts and in your homes, and that we will have peace on earth.

God bless you,  
Pr. Adrienne

## *Epiphany Service*

Epiphany is the church's celebration of the arrival of the Magi to worship the infant Jesus. This story reminds us that the work of Jesus to save and redeem is for the entire world. We invite you to join us for a brief, spoken service on this day, January 6. The service will be live-streamed to our YouTube page, [youtube.com/c/stthomaslutheranchurchbloomington](https://www.youtube.com/c/stthomaslutheranchurchbloomington), at 7:00pm.

## *Virtual Narthex*



The next virtual narthex gathering is on Sunday, January 3 at 10:10am. The topic is "What is your favorite Christmas carol?" Join here: <https://bit.ly/virtualnarthex>

## *News From the Congregation Council:*

On Sunday, December 20, the council voted to hire the Rev. Lecia Beck as our next Minister of Youth and Family Nurture. Pr. Lecia recently concluded a call to Risen Lord Lutheran Church in Bargsville. She is a graduate of Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. Before seminary, Pr. Lecia worked for the YMCA of Central Ohio as Director of Outdoor Programs and Afterschool Program Director. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Leadership from Malone College. Pr. Lecia will transition into the part-time Minister of Youth and Family Nurture position after the first of the year.

## *Mission & Ministry*



During this season of compassion and giving, would you please consider making a donation to New Hope for Families? Checks can be made payable to St. Thomas Lutheran Church with New Hope for Families in the memo line.

Your donation will be going to an exceptional organization! They are having success helping families impacted by homelessness gain and maintain stable housing, as well as providing accredited, early childhood development aimed at breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

200+	Families sheltered to date
10,000+	Nutritious meals served every year to children in New Hope's child development center
Over 83%	Of New Hope families move into stable housing (vs. a statewide average of 52%)

Can these vulnerable families in our community count on your support?



Thank you for your prayers of support and for considering supporting this important local mission.

## **Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU**

Reading through the Winter 2020 issue of Thrivent Magazine, I found myself pausing for longer than usual on the very last page. It said, "Before you go- With a new year comes a clean slate and a fresh start. It's the perfect time to set a new goal or dream for yourself. What are some dreams you have for 2021?"

To be honest, in any other year I would have likely answered this question by listing places I would wish to visit, races I would want to run, or activities I would like to try. Add to that the usual financial, career, and health goals and the list would have become slightly long, but still fairly achievable. As most of us understand though, the clock striking midnight and the arrival of 2021 won't automatically flip a switch making all of the issues we faced throughout 2020 go away. Instead, figuring out a new post where we are now normal will be a gradual process.

This means we may need to reevaluate what our dreams and goals might look like for the coming year. Perhaps 2021 will be the year in which we refocus our lives on what is most important to us and cut back on things that are cluttering it, that are not life giving. Perhaps 2021 will be the year in which we choose to live in the moment and appreciate it as a gift. Perhaps 2021 will be the year in which we work to intentionally deepen our spirituality and connection with God our creator.

As we begin to brainstorm goals and dreams for Rose House for 2021, I am reminded of the song *Dream Small* by Josh Wilson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOBaLrItEyc>). The song serves as a good reminder that while it is commendable to have big dreams, important moments are sometimes small and need not be overlooked as less meaningful. Therefore, for 2021 our primary goal at Rose House will simply be to attempt to make moments meaningful whether they are for big events like our annual Rent-A-Puppy or small gatherings of just a few students. God is present with us in both places and the reminder of that may be as important as the events themselves.

As we continue to ponder what God is calling us to accomplish in the new year, I invite each of you reading this to pause and take a moment or two to dream a dream or set a goal for 2021- big or small (feel free to share it with me if you wish). May God guide you with wisdom and grant you what you need while on the journey towards meeting your goal or seeing your dream become a reality.

Peace,  
Pr. Amanda Ghaffarian

## Prayer Chain

Want to join our St Thomas email prayer chain?  
Do you have prayer requests?  
Contact Susan Colston for further information.



## Community Events

### **Bloomington Multi-faith MLK Celebration: A Single Garment of Destiny**

Join us as we gather together, people of all races, abilities, traditions, religions, classes, and unite in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. and his wisdom, action, and vision he gifted our country and the world.

"In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the inter-related structure of reality."

--Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

This event will be on Zoom. Watch the weekly announcements for more details of the service.

### ***Coffee with CASA – From Your House!***

Join us for Coffee with CASA on January 12<sup>th</sup> at 8 a.m. on Zoom. Monroe County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) provides advocacy for children that are involved in abuse or neglect cases in the Monroe County court system. If you have ever considered becoming a CASA volunteer or board member, please join us! The number of children assigned to the CASA program by the court continues to grow, so additional volunteers are needed! To receive an invitation to the Zoom meeting, email [amber.shride@monroecountycasa.org](mailto:amber.shride@monroecountycasa.org) or look under the events tab at [facebook.com/monroecountycasa](https://facebook.com/monroecountycasa).

Amber Shride

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Unsubscribe from this list or update your preferences by emailing: [susank@stlconline.org](mailto:susank@stlconline.org)