



# St. Thomas Lutheran Church News

## August 2021

XXXXIII Issue 8

### From the Pastor

I am so tired of the pandemic, Beloved. I am so tired of weighing my options. I am so tired of the millions of decisions each day includes that I would never have imagined two years ago. I am so tired of being angry about what isn't. I am tired of delayed, complicated grief. I am tired of making sense of the nonsensical. I am so tired of being afraid. Every piece of good news seems to precipitate a fall into an even deeper point of hopelessness. How long, O Lord?

Months ago, we hoped that by fall, this messy business would be far, far in our rearview mirror. And then there was the Delta variant, the rise in the cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, even among a small number of people who had been vaccinated. How long, O Lord?

Before I go any further, Beloved, let me tell you that our council members are watching the situation closely, are listening to your concerns, and making sure to have appropriate contingency plans for the future. This letter is not to tell you about what is changing. Our current plans remain in place. We encourage you to be vaccinated, to wear masks, and to check in with one another when making plans to ensure the health, safety, and comfort of all. We just hoped that even contingency plans would be, more or less, a thing of the past by now.

Later this month, we will kick off a worship, preaching, and education series on Sorrow, Lament, and Hope. The reasons for this series are many. There have been a great many changes in our community since quarantine began in March 2020. Pastors and staff have gone and come. Beloved members have breathed their last and joined the Church Triumphant. Our children, who grow so fast as it is, have lived a whole school year absent from our community. Some among us have experienced untold loss: loss of loved ones, loss of health, loss of precious time. How long, O Lord?

Therefore, Beloved, you are especially invited to worship beginning the last Sunday in August to lay what you have lost and what you hope to gain at the feet of the Great Physician and to join us in prayer for the healing of the whole world. In addition to being the theme for worship and preaching, the Worship and Music Committee will debut a public art installation in the Narthex. Installed for the period of one year, members will be invited to write, seal, and affix prayers to a giant prayer wall. Next year, we will give ourselves the opportunity to look back on what we've lost, how we've healed, and what is yet to come. On the First of September, a book discussion group will meet on three successive Wednesdays to discuss *The Cure for Sorrow: a Book of blessings for times of grief*. We will explore what it means to be blessed, even in the midst of sorrow.

Ultimately, we do not know, Beloved, *how long*. Once, I thought that I could endure anything if I knew how long it would last, but time showed that to be a red herring. Some paths are simply made to be walked, and knowing their duration will not make it more endurable. It is the Psalmist who asks this question, "how long?" "How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?" (Psalm 13:2a). Ultimately, the Psalmist trusts in the steadfast love of the Lord, in God's *chesed*. This isn't the word for the melancholy emotions of lovers, but what biblical scholar James Limburg calls "the utterly dependable sort of love." We do not know how long, Beloved, but we do know what will bear us through whatever is year to come and into the hope of the future: the steadfast love of God.

*Pr. Adrienne*

## **From the Minister of Youth and Christian Nurture**

*Youth ministry is everyone's ministry.*

Hearing that from the Minister of Youth and Christian Nurture, you may think that I am trying to shirk my responsibilities, yet my call is to empower the whole congregation to minister to and with the youth and children here.

When I consider the other students in my confirmation class or those in my high school youth group, I often wonder what was different. Like them, I grew up in the church with parents who were active in the church, yet I have stayed connected while they did not.

I believe that one reason is due to relationships. As a high school student, I became involved in the life of the church beyond youth group activities, but it was not the activities that made the difference. I played in our handbell choir, but I am no great musician. I maintained our church website back in the days when you wrote code by hand.

The activities were not important, but they brought relationships that were. I remember Mrs. Snelson driving me home from bell choir and the conversations in the car. I remember conversations with Mr. Antol about the website that drifted into what our church believed and why that was important. I remember Dr. Schmidt talking to me about school and occasionally helping me understand calculus problems during the coffee hour while also showing me how his occupation was also his vocation. In these relationships with caring adults, I knew that I belonged in the church and that I had other adults who I could go to if I didn't want to talk to my parents.

Lifeway Research released a study in 2007 that examined the church attendance habits of young adults. They found that "teens who had at least one adult from church make a significant time investment in their lives also were more likely to keep attending church. More of those who stayed in church - by a margin of 46 percent to 28 percent - said five or more adults at church had invested time with them personally and spiritually."

Each adult in our congregation has the potential to be one of those caring adults for one of our children and youth. Genuine relationships of care do not happen overnight, but take time to grow. Be alert for opportunities to meet our children and youth, to learn their names and begin to learn about them. I encourage you to pray for the Holy Spirit to show you who might need you to be an important adult in their life. In the coming months, watch for ideas of how to enter

conversations or ways you can serve among our youth and children. While Mrs. Snelson, Mr. Antol and Dr. Schmidt were being their ordinary selves, God used them in an extraordinary way - and God can also use you.

Your partner on the way,

*Pastor Lucia*

## **Please Welcome Erica Whichello**

Erica, our new parish administrator, is a native Michigander who moved to Bloomington in the year 2000. She is a member of the Unitarian Universalist church here in town. In a previous life Erica studied library science, and later worked at IU in graduate education. She and her husband Chris live in town and enjoy hiking, cooking, gardening, and playing board games.

Contact Erica at [parishadmin@stlconline.org](mailto:parishadmin@stlconline.org) or by calling the church office at 812-332-5252

## **Upcoming Events**



### **Save the Date!**

Pr. Adrienne's Installation  
on the First Anniversary  
of our Ministry Together  
September 12, 2021, 4pm  
Bishop Bill Gafkjen, preaching

## **Back to School Backpack Blessing**

As August begins, we pray for all students who are returning to school, as students, teachers, administrators and other school staff. On Sunday, August 1, all students and educators are encouraged to bring their backpacks and briefcases for a blessing at either worship service. Invite your friends and neighbors who may also appreciate beginning a new school year with blessing!

We especially pray for those who are entering college:

- Antonia Daleke who will be going to Indiana University to study theater.
- Leah Knipstein who will be going to DePauw University to study vocal performance and the arts.
- Lilly Rademacher who will be going to Butler University to study biology.
- Natalie Schacht who will be going to Butler University to study theater with a focus in directing.

## God's Work. Our Hands.

You are invited to join us at Rose House (314 S Rose Ave) on the morning of **Saturday August 7th from 8am-11am** for our annual God's Work Our Hands Service Project. Please take a moment to fill out [this form](#) so we know how many people to expect: Please bring your own work/gardening gloves. If you have any questions, please email [Pastor Amanda](#) at or text 419-410-7447

## Youth Group Kick-Off

All high school youth and their families are invited to kick off the year with a cookout at the Iversen's house (518 N Colony Ct) on **Sunday, August 15 at 5:30pm**. We will enjoy dinner together and discuss our plans for the coming year. Please RSVP to [Pastor Lecia](#) (and include any dietary restrictions) by Thursday, August 12.

\* We will consider COVID precautions and follow any guidelines that may change for group gatherings on the date of the event.

## St. Thomas Table at Bloomington PrideFest

Celebrate 25 years of welcome and inclusion at St. Thomas by volunteering at St. Thomas's table at Bloomington PrideFest on **Saturday, August 28**. Sign up for a two-hour shift to be a friendly face at our congregation's table. No experience necessary, you simply need to be able to tell others what you like about St. Thomas! Sign up [here](#).

## Word in the Woods

Our first Word in the Woods hike gathered folks of all ages for a time of worship, hiking and community. We marveled at the many fungi and beautiful trees, admired tiny toads and enjoyed the shady trees. Our conversations and connections were rich as we met new people and deepened existing relationships.

We will continue to gather monthly. You are invited to join us for our next Word in the Woods hike on **Tuesday, August 31**. We will gather at the Griffy Lake Boathouse Parking Lot at 7pm for a 1.5 mile worshipful hike. Please let [Pastor Lecia](#) know by August 30 if you plan to join us.

## Book Discussion: *The Cure for Sorrow*

Join Pr. Adrienne for a discussion of *The Cure for Sorrow: a Book of Blessings for Times of Grief* by Jan Richardson. Richardson's husband, Gary, never woke after what was supposed to be a routine surgery. Richardson had already been writing blessings for many years before meeting and then losing her spouse. But, according to the introduction to this small volume, writing became a way of coming to terms with and making sense of "the rending that came with Gary's death." You might find these discussions fruitful if you are coming to terms with your own personal loss, or contemplating the global loss due to COVID-19, or wanting to be more compassionate to others who are grieving. The book is divided into three sections which will be discussed Wednesdays at 7:30pm:

- September 1, "Getting the News: Blessings in the Rending"
- September 8, "The Sweetness that Remains: Solace Blessings"
- September 15, "What Fire Comes to Sing in You: Blessings of Hope"

Offered in a hybrid format, you can join the group at St. Thomas or via [Zoom](#).

# Ministry Opportunities

## Sunday School and Faith Formation for Children, Youth, and Adults

Part of the vision of St Thomas is that we would be a community that prepares us to live our faith in daily lives and equips disciples for outreach. Gathering on Sunday mornings to study together is one important way we do this. When we gather for Christian Education, we become fluent in the language of faith and we grow in relationship with our siblings in Christ so that we can find ourselves in God's story. Christian Education is not just for children. While childhood can be an important time to learn the fundamental stories of our faith and strengthen the faith lessons learned at home, it also builds a habit of lifelong faith formation. Our understanding and application grows and deepens throughout our lives. Children need to see adults modeling this continued growth in faith and knowledge.

As we move toward a new program year, we have begun making plans for **Sunday morning adult faith formation beginning Sunday, September 12**. In keeping with the tradition established through previous series, *Living the Questions* and *Jesus Redux*, and in order to provide a variety of topics, yet go deeper with each one, we are moving to a series of 5-7 week sessions, each with a different focus. We are committed to offering a variety of topics with various instructors in order to meet your spiritual growth needs. Some of our sessions will also benefit from shared learning with our Confirmation students as a way to invite them into deeper learning and build positive relationships with adults. In the first session, Pastor Adrienne will lead a six-week session on the social statements of the ELCA. Social statements are the teaching and policy documents of the ELCA. They help the church think and discuss social issues through the lens of our faith. These statements are written about issues ranging from race to sexism, abortion to genetics, criminal justice and the death penalty. We can, do, and should talk about these issues in church, and you are invited to participate in these conversations.

We are also planning **classes for all our children and youth which will begin on September 12**. In order to help us understand your family's needs and concerns in returning to Sunday School, please complete [this five-question survey](#). This will help us shape classes that will begin on Sunday, September 12. If you are interested in helping as a teacher, classroom assistant or planner, please contact [Leah Iversen](#) or [Pastor Lecia](#).

Our goal in all our Christian education programs is to nurture the faith of all people so that they become fluent in the faith, grow in relationship with our siblings in Christ and find themselves in God's story. We hope you will join us on Sunday mornings at 9:45 as we walk together this journey of faith.

## Seeking Volunteers to Welcome New Members

To extend hospitality to those considering joining St. Thomas, we are planning to offer new member classes after worship, over lunch. Would you consider coordinating a luncheon or providing food to share? Would you be able to provide childcare for about an hour? Tentatively, these lunches are planned for September 19 and October 10. Please contact the church office to volunteer: 812-332-5252 or [parishadmin@stlconline.org](mailto:parishadmin@stlconline.org)



## Rides to Worship

Several Members of our community are in need of rides to worship. Would you be willing to give a ride one month at a time? We will strive to assign rides based, more or less, on people who live near one another. If you are able to help, even if it is only as an occasional substitute, please fill out [this form](#). If you need a ride to church, please contact the church office.

## Racial Justice Spiritual Growth Group

Join a still-forming interfaith, spiritual group of people passionate about increasing our understanding of racial justice in our country. Building on the efforts of national groups, including the ELCA, we want to work to do something positive in our community. Contact any member of our small group to join in - Carol Seaman, Lindsey Smith, and Helen Ingersoll from STLC and Lesley Levin from Congregation Beth Shalom. We meet monthly via Zoom. Contact Helen for the link or for more information: [hingerso@iu.edu](mailto:hingerso@iu.edu) or 812-339-9610. Please join us and share your thoughts!!

## Angels Among Us

Resident elves are getting a head start on creating a St. Thomas Christmas tree to be auctioned off at the 2021 New Hope for Families fundraiser in November. They are on the hunt for a stout, 7-foot artificial tree and would ask anyone in the St. Thomas community who has or knows of someone who might have such a tree to donate, to please contact Kim or Gayl. The elves have been busy gathering items for this year's tree with the theme focusing on angels and music. However, some of these angels are not light as a feather. The elves could not resist the beauty of these angels and are now finding some of them will need very sturdy branches to land on in order to avoid toppling the tree. Thanks for any consideration.

Gratefully,

Kim Filiatrault 317-840-2577 and Gayl Laughman 812-320-7738

## Notes about Outdoor Services

Consider becoming a worship volunteer. For the summer opportunities are set up/tear down for the 10:15 outdoor service, also lector and usher/greeter.

Please bring your own lawn chair to the 10:15 outdoor service, if possible.



## Giving

St. Thomas is supported by your generous donations. We are so grateful to our members for supporting our congregation. In addition to giving in the offering plate or box at Sunday worship, you can also give on [our website](#), or on our mobile app. To get our mobile app, search for "Vanco Mobile" in the app store. Once downloaded, enter St. Thomas's code, RTTMYX. Many members have had trouble with setting up regular giving via Tithe.ly, so we are transitioning our online giving to Vanco. You can make both one-time gifts and establish regular giving through the mobile app. Thank you for your generosity.

## Prayer Chain

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



### **Altar flowers**

You may sign-up for altar flowers by contacting the church office or signing the sheet on the bulletin board behind the welcome desk. The cost is \$18 and you may take the arrangement home after the indoor service, return the vase later.

## **Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU**

As we get ready to welcome new students and returning students to campus, I find myself dwelling on the words of Matthew 25:35, "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

On the surface, this passage seems simple enough and easily relates to our ministry and outreach with students-- feed students, give students something to drink if they are thirsty, and invite students to be active participants in the ministry. Last year, even though we were limited on what we could do in person, we were able to provide healthy individually packaged snacks, Capri Sun, and a place other than the dorms for students to study and meet socially distanced. This year our hope is to expand our ministry and outreach while maintaining appropriate health and safety regulations. We hope to prioritize regular meals together and intentional invitations for students to become more fully involved at both Rose House and St Thomas.

Revisiting the Matthew passage, the message goes deeper than just the tangible food, water, and welcome that we are immediately drawn to thinking about. If we read the text again, this time focusing on the intangible, we can envision what ministry might take shape when considering this passage, "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Students often come to us spiritually hungry-- they are seeking, questioning, doubting, learning, living, and looking for their place and purpose in this world. We are called here by Jesus to feed them-- through Bible Studies, Worship Services, pairing them with OWLS Mentors, and the reassurance again and again that God loves them and they are not alone. Similarly, these students thirst for justice, for hope, for something that normal water cannot quench. So we then as members of the body of Christ, share with them the promise of the life giving water Christ gives, share with them the blood of Christ at the table, and share with them the cup of God's mercy that overflows with love. The hospitality Christ calls us to in this situation is more than just letting people know that they are welcome, but actively taking opportunities to listen to people no strings attached, to be intentional that when we say people are welcome we adapt to meet the needs of the people, and when we open our doors we do so remembering that each person who walks, rolls, or crawls through them is reflecting the image of God.

So dear beloved ones, I invite you each to dwell in this passage as well. What do these words of Christ speak to your heart? Where might you live this passage out in your life? May God be present with you through your study and all the days of your lives. Amen.

Peace,  
Pastor Amanda Ghaffarian  
Rose House LuMin

## **Do you know a student planning to attend college in the Fall?**

Help us to get the students in your life connected with campus ministry whether at IU Bloomington or at another college/university. Please go to the LuMin website and fill out the ["refer a student" form](#).

## **From Our Ministry Partners**

### **Advocacy Workshop: Sponsored by the IK Lutheran Synod Racial Justice Team.**

Have you ever wanted to reach out to your local, state, and national representatives, but not been sure how? Wondered if your voice even matters on issues important to you? It does! Your representatives want to hear from you; they want to know what you support, what matters to you and your communities of faith! In this training, we will learn, from members of the Interfaith Action Network in Indiana and the League of Women Voters in Kentucky, how to reach out to our representatives in writing, phone calls, and setting up meetings to talk with them. Learn skills and tools to use to have these valuable conversations with the elected officials who represent you, our communities, states and country. Thursday, August 12, 6:00 - 7:30 (CDT)/7:00 - 8:30 (EDT): [Please register in advance](#).

Contact Pastor Joy Heine at [pastorjoy@bethelmiller.org](mailto:pastorjoy@bethelmiller.org) for questions or additional information. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Messiah Lutheran, Brownsburg, IN is beginning a book study** later this month on "My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies" by Resmaa Menakem. Anyone from the synod who is interested in participating may join them. Meetings will be by ZOOM on Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Eastern (6:00 p.m. Central), following this schedule: July 19 - through Ch 5; July 26 - through Ch 11; Aug 2 - through Ch 17; Aug 9- through the end. The group will discuss what ideas are important to participants, body practice experiences, and Re-memberings at the end of the chapters. Here's a [link for more details about the book](#). If you would like to participate, please contact Julie Oehme, who is the coordinator and will send you the Zoom meeting information.

**Third Lutheran Church, Louisville, and Grace & Glory Lutheran, Goshen, have a monthly online book club, called Ethos Book Club.** The group meets monthly beginning July 22nd at 6:30 p.m. Eastern (5:30 p.m. Central) on Zoom. It is an ecumenically diverse group that is focused on reading and discussing books that educate us further on systemic racism, racial discrimination, and learning more about the black experience. We invite others across the Synod to join us by [pre-registering here](#).

**Due Date for September Newsletter Articles: Friday, August 20**

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