

St. Thomas Lutheran Church News

September 2021

XXXXIII Issue 9



From the Pastor

This time is not lost. It is very tempting to act as if we have merely been looking for the thread of normalcy—routines and milestones—that was simply lost to us. It is very tempting to act as if, since March 2020, we have put our lives on pause, laying them aside to pick up again when things return to normal. It is very tempting to act as if this time has not mattered; as if we pushed pause on the grand narratives of our lives. But, Beloved, if anything, this time will push us closer to the Really Real, a term I'm borrowing from Barbara Brown Taylor.

A few weeks ago, on a rainy Saturday, my family wandered into the new Morgenstern's Books. Obviously, being new to Bloomington, the only nostalgia we had was related to our love of independent bookstores and, well, paging through real books. Someone in our family (ahem, not me) limited our purchases to just *one* book per person. Along with my kids I agonized over just one selection, and finally ended up with a little poetry anthology called *How to Love the World: Poems of gratitude and hope*. In it was this gem by Kim Stafford called "Shelter in Place:"

Long before the pandemic, the trees
knew how to guard one place with
roots and shade. Moss found
how to hug a stone for life.
Every stream works out how
to move in place, staying home
even as it flows generously
outward, sending bounty far.
Now is our time to practice—
singing from balconies, sending
words of comfort by any courier,
kindly our lonesome generosity
to shine in all directions like stars.

This time is not lost, beloved. It may prove to be merely a training ground for something that requires even more of our attention. It may be the workshop wherein tools are created that aid us on the next part of our journey. It may simply be the time where we learned that if all we do is just to be, then that will be enough.

The pandemic, today, promises to stretch on into future much longer than any of us want. It has already stretched on longer than any of us would have imagined. But, look, Beloved it is not what you *do* in this time that matter most. What will matter most is what you do *because* of this time.

In my life, it has been all too easy to count the moments spent in tribulation, in terror, in tears as somehow invaluable, and, yet, there is something in that which rings false. It was in wrestling with God on the eve of his reunion with his brother that Jacob found his true identity. It was when he was incarcerated by the Philistines that Samson found his true strength. It was in being the scandal of the whole town that Mary found her true calling. It was on the cross that God worked salvation for us all. This time is not lost, beloved. No, it may very well be the moment just before the sprout emerges from the soil, just when the pieces are able to be rejoined into the puzzle, just before the tomb is discovered—empty!

Pr. Adrienne

From the Minister of Youth and Christian Nurture

Youth ministry is everyone's ministry.

When children are baptized, we make promises on behalf of the whole church. Just as the parents and sponsors make their promises, the whole church is asked, "People of God, do you promise to support [this person] and pray for them in their new life in Christ?" Whether a child was baptized here or in another congregation, we carry out these promises made by the people of God. Sometimes our support and prayers are invisible, yet how meaningful when the recipient knows that we care and are praying!

After over a year of socially distancing, we are slowly moving back into sharing space together. During the last program year, much of our activities and opportunities for connection took place over Zoom. While activities continued, relationships were formed and new members found St Thomas, there was less opportunity for informal connection and cross-generational connection.

As we begin a new program year, I am excited to see folks in the same physical space, able to have some of those informal conversations that we missed out on. As we gather together again, this is a great time to reconnect with the youth and children you know and to meet others - and to let them know that you support them and pray for them.

Research has shown that teens who have five or more adults invest in them personally and spiritually are twice as likely to stay in church. One way we can think about this is to "reverse the youth ministry ratio." We usually talk about needing one adult for every five students at an event, yet what if we considered that every student needed five adults to thrive? (*Sticky Faith* by Dr. Kara E. Powell, Brad M. Griffin and Dr. Cheryl A. Crawford, 79) You may not be that adult for every one of our youth and children, but you could be that for one of them.

It can be intimidating to start a conversation with someone younger than you because we often feel too far removed from youth as we get older.

So how can you get going? You don't have to be the epitome of cool or have any special powers. The first step is to let them know that you care and listening makes a big difference. There's an old adage that we have two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak. As you get to know our young people and learn what is important to them, this may be the most important step. "Listening is a practiced skill. Most of us do not listen well, even in one-on-one conversations. Instead of listening carefully to the words that are being said, we are planning what we're going to say next. When we're first getting to know someone,

it is easy to fall into this trap. Remind yourself to pay full attention to the content as well as the delivery" (*How to Talk to Any Young Person* from the Fuller Youth Institute).

Since it is the beginning of the school year, you could begin by asking how school is going and truly listen to the answer. As students have experienced time away from school and changes in how it is done, they may have a lot to say. If you are interested in an intentional role supporting our youth and children through our programs, please let me know!

Your partner on the way,

Pastor Lucia

Please Welcome Jason Blessing

Jason has been a permanent resident of Bloomington since 2007 after having also lived here from 1994 to 2001. He has 2 teenage children that also reside in Bloomington. After a 20 year career in restaurant management, he went back to school and completed his associate's degree in accounting at Ivy Tech in 2017. Currently he works part time for Recreational Sports at Indiana University in addition to joining us here at St. Thomas Lutheran.

Upcoming Events



Save the Date!

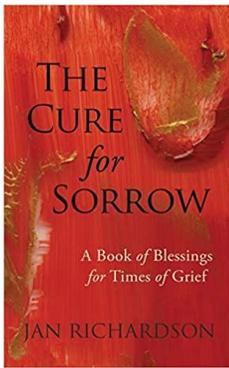
Pr. Adrienne's Installation
on the First Anniversary
of our Ministry Together
September 12, 2021, 4pm
Bishop Bill Gafkjen, preaching
Cupcake and punch reception to follow (outside, weather permitting)

Prayer at Noon on Zoom

This calm, quiet moment in the middle of week provides a space for participants to rest with God. Join us for a simple service praying the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and requests of those gathered on the **first Wednesday** of the month. Our next gathering will be **Wednesday, September 1 at noon** on [Zoom](#)

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 members classes after the 11am worship service on **Sunday, September 19 and October 10**; a light lunch will be served and, if needed, childcare can be provided in the nursery. These two meetings will provide a very brief overview of St. Thomas and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and provide an opportunity to meet our staff and some of our leaders. New members will be received in worship on Sunday, November 14. If you are interested in participating or in meeting with Pr. Adrienne, please [email her directly](#) or contact the church office [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.



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](#)



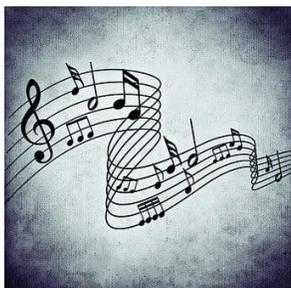
Sunday Morning Faith Formation Opportunities

Sunday morning faith formation will begin for all ages on **Sunday, September 12 from 9:45am to 10:45am!**

- **Children:** Those age four through kindergarten are invited to join our Godly Play class. Elementary students are divided into two classes, first through third grade (room 12/14) and fourth through sixth grade (room 13/15). Please fill out a student information form as you drop your child off in their classroom.
- **Confirmation:** Students in grades seven and eight will be part of our confirmation class in room 16. Please have a parent accompany your student for our first class on Sept. 12.
- **Youth:** High School students will meet in the youth room.
- **Adults:** 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.

Parents of children who are under four years old are welcome to gather in the nursery with their children for conversation and time to play while others are in class.

For more information or any questions about faith formation, please [contact Pastor Lecia](#)



Adult Choir Returns!

Adult choir resumes leading worship on **Sunday, September 12!** Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings at **7pm** in the sanctuary and will begin on **Thursday, September 2**. We always welcome new voices and would love to have you join us! Please contact [Katie Gardiner](#) or [Mike Powell](#) with any questions.

High School Youth Group

We look forward to a new year of gathering together! We gathered for a Kick-Off Cook Out in August, gathering youth and their families for a time to reconnect. If you were not able to attend that event and you did not receive the distributed materials in an email, please [contact Pastor Lecia](#). Before your youth attends any activities this year, please make sure an adult fills out their student information form.

Our monthly youth group meeting with dinner will take place on the **fourth Sunday** evening of each month at 5:30pm to 7:30pm. We will gather on **Sunday, September 26 at 5:30pm**. In order for us to plan for food, please RSVP to Pastor Lecia by Thursday, September 23. If you are interested in providing dinner for one of our gatherings this year, please talk to Pastor Lecia.

Women's Bible Study Begins!

It is rumored that the Women's Bible Study will begin at St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Indiana! Lutherans of all ages are pondering, can this be true! People of other denominations and faiths say, "Lutherans don't study the Bible". This is a false lead.

But, Ha! It is true!! The Lutheran of St. Thomas are indeed having a Bible Study. It is called the Women's Bible Study, but men can come too. We begin on **September 12**, between the services. We will always meet on the **second Sunday** of the month. Let's try to start as close to **9:45am** as is possible after the first service. We will meet in the room off the kitchen (room 17). We will sit 3 to 6 feet apart with masks on. I will bring paper copies of the study and Bibles. If you wish to bring your own Bible, that is great too.

I am excited as the Fall Bible Study has the theme of: The Gift of the Spirit.
September will be: Spirit of God: Revealer and Resource
October will be: Breath of God: Reviver and Reformer
November will be: Wind of God: Refiner and Re-Router
December will be: Advent Devotional

Then from January to April will be: The kingdom of God. A 4 session study on the kingdom of God will kick off the New Year with a look at Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God, a present and future reality. Together we'll look at Jesus' parables, and other scriptures about the present, future and eternal life.

Yours in Christ,
Kari Esarey
812-219-4177 or kariesarey@gmail.com



Word in the Woods

You are invited to join us for our next Word in the Woods hike on **Tuesday, September 28**. 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 Monday, September 27 if you plan to join us.

Volunteers Urgently Needed

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 [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.

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 [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.



Ministry Opportunities



St. Thomas Prayer Wall

Deepen your spiritual journey through the upcoming sermon series, "Lament, Sorrow, and Hope," with a prayer experience new to St. Thomas. Inspired by the Western Wall (or Wailing Wall) in Jerusalem, the St. Thomas Prayer Wall is positioned in the narthex. All ages are encouraged to take part. Write a prayer sentence, a word, a scripture, a drawing, or the name of a loved one on the provided parchment paper, then seal it and tuck it into the wall. The St. Thomas Prayer Wall offers us a symbolic opportunity to leave our burdens with God, alongside the prayers of the

St. Thomas Body of Christ, giving expression to both our personal and collective loss.

- The Worship Committee

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 or 812-339-9610. Please join us and share your thoughts!!

Monroe County United Ministries donations

Thanks to David Ellies for delivering our St. Thomas donation to the [MCUM](#) pantry totaling 92 pounds! Thanks to everyone who donated!

Climate Change Advocacy with Beth Shalom

[Beth Shalom](#) has invited the members of St. Thomas to collaborate on a long-term letter writing campaign to advocate for climate change legislation. The Jewish Earth Alliance (JEA) is a grass-roots organization that solicits letters from congregations across the nation specifically to members of Congress advocating for upcoming legislation that addresses global warming and climate change. While Beth Shalom has been part of this effort since 2019, they would love for this to be a multi-faith and interfaith effort.

How does it work? Through the JEA, Beth Shalom receives a monthly task regarding legislation with sample letters. They provide a sample letter and congregants only need to sign with their address and contact information (or of course they are welcome to write their own letters). Then they scan the letters and send it on to a representative at the JEA who prints them out and hand delivers them to our members of Congress: Trey Hollingsworth, Mike Braun and Todd Young.

This collaboration would be an opportunity for letter writing on the **first Sunday** of every month around 10am. No need to sign up in advance, just stop by the table outside Beth Shalom to add your voice. If have any questions, please contact the church office [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.



NEWHOPE
FOR FAMILIES

New Hope for Families

When families with children are experiencing homelessness, one of the ways [New Hope for Families](#) welcomes them into their shelter is by supplying them with fresh clean sheets, towels, toiletries and other such items they need to make the place feel comfortable, peaceful, and safe.

New Hope relies on donations of new and gently-used items to provide this important support to the families they serve. A list of [immediate needs](#)

can be found on the New Hope for Families website. Donations can be dropped off at the church in the marked bins in the narthex. Checks are also appreciated-- please make them out to "St. Thomas Lutheran Church" with "New Hope for Families" in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity in supporting this vital local ministry.

MEF Accepting Applications

The Mission Endowment Fund provides funding for special projects at St. Thomas Lutheran Church, local outreach, and missions beyond the local community. If you have a project in need of funding, please submit an application before October 31st. [Application forms](#) can be found on our website. If you have questions, please contact [Keith Knipstein](#), Chair of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee, or the church office [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.



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

Please consider signing-up to provide altar flowers. The cost is \$18. You may take the arrangement home after the indoor service and then return the vase later. To sign-up: contact the church office [via email](#) or sign the sheet on the bulletin board behind the welcome desk.

Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU

Announcements:

A big THANK YOU to everyone who participated in God's Work Our Hands Service Project at Rose House at the beginning of August. We really appreciate everything that was done to help us get ready for the fall semester. If anyone is interested in continuing to be involved with maintenance and upkeep or becoming a member of the Rose House LuMin board, please see Tim Smith or [Pastor Amanda](#).

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Students are back on campus! This year- unlike last year- classes are in person, a full schedule of Welcome Week activities was possible, and excitement for what the future holds is present. While we know things could potentially change at any moment, there is a guarded hope that this year may be a time where students can find friendships, have faith conversations, and fill their lives with positive memories.

During Welcome Week, I was privileged to participate in several events on campus where we were able to meet and connect with new students. While there were many students who stopped by our booths at the various events who already had an idea in mind of what they were looking for, there were just as many whom we met who were seeking something that could not quite be articulated. It was beautiful and holy in those moments of interaction where it was evident that the Holy Spirit was zipping around gently nudging individuals to take the first steps towards the booths. It was humbling and holy to be gifted the possibility to help guide those students to where God might be calling them, knowing that while in some cases our ministry would be a good match for them, in some cases their faith needs would be best served by one of our ecumenical or interreligious siblings. We welcome all at Rose House but respect that sometimes during this time in their lives when so much is changing, some young adults find comfort in the religious traditions and practices more familiar to them and will find that better elsewhere.

This year at Rose House, we will be seeking to strengthen some of those bonds with our ecumenical partners through joint worship services, a Fall Break Spiritual Retreat, an alternative Service-Learning Spring Break Trip, and lots of service activities. In a divided world, we wish to unite with our siblings to share God's love to the world.

Beloved at St Thomas, we ask for your prayers as we journey into this new school year, but also your willingness to walk with the young people who may come to worship with St Thomas as things start to settle down a bit. Please, if you see an unfamiliar face, introduce yourselves and let whoever it is know that they are welcome here. For some will come seeking, some will come certain of God's love, and some may come only by the nudging of the Holy Spirit. May God's spirit be with us all as we go forth on this journey of life together. Amen.

Peace,

[Pastor Amanda Ghaffarian](#)

Rose House LuMin

From Our Ministry Partners

Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly

The Indiana-Kentucky Synod held its first ever online Assembly June 11-12, 2021. They met under the theme "We Are Called." It required the use of two computer programs.

Videos of all Synod Assembly sessions are to be available on YouTube thirty days after the Assembly.

The Assembly began with worship on Friday evening. Bishop William O. Gafkjen presided and preached the service. During the worship service, the bishop declared Roots of Life Lutheran Community a duly organized and constituted congregation of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Bishop Gafkjen called the Assembly to order on Saturday. A video greeting from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton spoke of the resilience of the church and her desire to build the future with each of us. Rev. Dr. Javier Goitia, ELCA Director, Formation for Leadership, presented the ELCA Churchwide Report.

During Bishop Gafkjen's Report to the Assembly, he gave thanks to congregations and people willing to proclaim the mighty and gracious acts of God in word and deed. He gave thanks for the life of Judy Bush.

New Compensation Standards for Ministers of Word and Service and for Ministers of Word and Sacrament were adopted by the Assembly for 2021-2022 and those can be found on the synod's website.

Synod Vice President Ted Miller's report was of thanks for the many congregations and people who have helped within the synod.

The Assembly adopted the Synod Budget for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Proposed changes to the Synod Constitution were also adopted. The changes incorporated actions taken at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and clarified some synod committees.

The Assembly included video greetings and presentations from several ministry partners.

The Reference and Counsel Committee presented its traditional Final Resolution thanking those who participated in the Assembly.

There was an unusually large number of people to elect at the Assembly. Bishop Gafkjen installed those newly elected with thanks for their willingness to serve the synod.

[This was composed with many excerpts from the 2021 Synod Assembly Recap shared by the Synod Office.]

[Marilyn Saum](#), delegate from St. Thomas Lutheran Church to the Synod Assembly

Naomi & Nick Svenholm

Preparing for school in Bratislava, Slovakia with Central Europe Teachers.

August brought New Teacher Orientation. Three new teachers spent eight days (re)learning the basics of teaching and living within a Slovak context. Highlights included a language class that rotated locations around Old Town for practical outside instruction, lessons taught to actual students (pictured having lunch after the lessons), negative COVID tests, meetings with our school and church partners, and a final blessing and commissioning (pictured in top photo by Anna Svennungsen).



Here's what's coming next for Central Europe Teachers:

- The first day of school with students is September 2.
- At the beginning of the school year, students and teachers will be required to wear masks, vaccinated or not, and COVID tests are recommended but not required upon return.
- Vaccination is slow despite supply. Vaccine hesitancy is keeping rates below 45%.
- Pope Francis will spend four days in Slovakia.

Please pray over these upcoming events.

I also have a personal request: my allergies have been quite bad this year and my ear has been plugged since the plane ride back to Slovakia, about 3 weeks now. Please pray that my hearing goes back to normal before I'm with the students in the classroom. Calmer allergies would help, too. :)

Thank you for your prayers and support.

[Naomi Sveholm](#)

Nick and Naomi are teaching in Slovakia with the kids as representatives of ELCA's Global Mission program. They've asked the people of St. Thomas to contribute towards their continuing transportation and child care expenses. If you'd like to contribute, just mark SVEHOLM on the memo line of your check to St. Thomas.

Indiana-Kentucky Synod

Third Lutheran Church, Louisville, and **Grace & Glory Lutheran, Goshen**, have a monthly online book club, called **Ethos Book Club**. The group meets monthly on Zoom. Last month's book was *The Personal Librarian* by Heather Terrell and Victoria Christopher Murray.

Ethos Book Club was formed as a online gathering, sponsored by Grace & Glory Lutheran and Shiloh United Methodist churches in Goshen, KY, for those interested in racial justice, anti-racism, race history, and race culture to learn how we, as people of God, might become better allies for our sisters and brothers of color, and to do this in a safe, non-judgmental setting.

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 October Newsletter Articles: Monday, September 20

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parishadmin@stlconline.org**