

# St. Thomas Lutheran Church News

St. Thomas Lutheran Church is a Christ-centered community that lives, shares, and celebrates God's grace with all people!

## February 2022

XXXXIV Issue 2



### From the Pastor

During the past several weeks, our New Testament lesson has taken us through the latter part of 1 Corinthians. St. Paul is writing to the conflicted congregation at Corinth about spiritual gifts. The Corinthians believed gifts were what set them apart, gave them power and privilege in their community, and proved their connection with God. Gifts were for the benefit of a special few and became a source of division in the community. In contrast, St. Paul says true gifts are given by the Spirit for the common good. They are given for the sake of one another to unite us as one body. They aren't to determine who is special but to make us more attuned to the needs of our neighbor, congregation, and community. Gifts help us discern who is in need and how to help.

There is no exhaustive list of gifts, which is also Paul's point. It is wise to work to discover and name—to discern—your own gifts. But, remember, this work is meant to complement another process: discerning God's call. We are gifted, how do our gifts help us make sense of God's call? Our community, too, is gifted, and how does that factor into our next faithful step?

We always want this work—discernment—to be a once-and-done kind of thing. To be able to do the work of deciding on a mission, a path forward, a program, or a solution, and then to carve it in stone. There. We did it. But discernment is a life-long process (the life of the person or the life of the institution). It is contextual, and what we decided now may not hold up in a year or a decade or a millennia. But that shouldn't keep us from working to discover our next faithful step.

We know our world is changing rapidly. In fact, some aspects of our modern lives, such as technology, are now changing at such an alarming pace that some scholars think the rate of change has exceeded our ability to adapt. As a result, we approach discernment with fear and trembling - "what if we're too late?" holds us back almost as much as "what if we get it wrong?" Oh, Beloved, but "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Let us trust that we were given what we need for this moment, to be God's love right now.

A season of discernment is on the horizon. This month, we will begin the work of calling Pr. Lecia officially as our pastor. That process will no sooner wrap up than we anticipate welcoming Amy Balcam back on our staff as part-time pastoral intern and hiring a new choir director. Our youth program is in the midst of transition. And our neighborhood—our community—is growing and changing, and we will need to discern our place in it. There are the perennial and pressing problems, too: the pandemic, global climate change, our quest for a just and equitable society.

A question you'll hear me ask again and again in the process (which I learned from church consultant the Rev. Dave Daubert) is, "If God had God's way in our congregation/in this ministry/in your life for five years, what would it look like?" Let us ask good, faithful questions. Let us approach change with curiosity. Let us embrace what God is calling us to do next.

God be with you,

*Pr. Adrienne*

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

Dear Siblings in Christ,

We have all heard the saying that the only constant in life is change. That plays out in many ways in the church, especially in ministry with children and youth. Just as our students are growing and changing, the ways we connect to them, walk with them, and respond to their needs also change. Our programs cannot stay the same forever. Yet in the midst of change, we know that we can always depend on God, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We are entering into a season of change in our youth ministry.

Peter Iversen recently decided to step back from volunteering with high school youth activities at St. Thomas as he engages more in county governance. We are grateful for his many years of service as the high school Sunday School teacher and youth group leader. Peter will still be part of the St. Thomas family and we will be glad to see him at youth events from time to time.

Many students have been blessed by their relationship with Peter. While we are sad that his ministry will not continue in this way, we trust that God will bring other adults into significant relationships with our students. The possibilities for creating relationships are wide; it could be hosting a coffee club, serving the community together, knitting or creating art together, mentoring into church leadership, facilitating a conversation on social justice, starting a running club, or teaching a unit in Sunday School. It might be on-going or short-term; weekly, monthly or just occasionally. If God may be calling you to this ministry and you would like to explore it further, please reach out to me at [pastorleciabeck@gmail.com](mailto:pastorleciabeck@gmail.com). I would love to dream together how God might use you and your interests, passions and skills.

At St. Thomas, we are committed to our youth and creating space for them to explore the big questions of identity, purpose, and belonging through Sunday School and Youth Group. We know we have a big hole to fill, but we are also confident that there is a great and meaningful future for youth ministry at St. Thomas. And we know that God does not leave us alone in any of it.

Your partner on the way,

*Pastor Lecia*

# Upcoming Events



## Congregational Meeting February 6

A congregation meeting has been called for **Sunday, February 6**, immediately following the 11 a.m. worship service. The meeting will be hybrid and you can join via Zoom here: <https://bit.ly/359dFA8> The purpose of this *short* meeting will be to establish a call committee to officially call the Rev. Lecia Beck as pastor to St. Thomas.

## Prayer at Noon on Zoom

Life can feel frantic and hectic. On Sunday, we say we'll find time to pray or space in week to spend time with God. Then we hit the ground running on Monday. Join us for a calm, quiet moment in the middle of the week to share requests and pray together. Our next gathering will be **Wednesday, February 2 at noon** on [Zoom](#).

## Women's Bible Study

Come One, Come All! For we have a Ball! Come to St. Thomas Women's Bible Study. Our next Meeting is **February 13 at 9:45 a.m.** (between services) in room 17 (off the kitchen). This month's theme is The Kingdom of God: Mysteries in the Kingdom. Join the discussion in looking at what the Bible calls the 'secrets' or 'mysteries' of the Kingdom of God. For more information contact Kari Esarey at [kesarey@mccsc.edu](mailto:kesarey@mccsc.edu) or [kariesarey@gmail.com](mailto:kariesarey@gmail.com)



## High School Youth Group

As we enter a new year, we have a new opportunity with our youth group! We have been invited to meet together with the youth groups from Trinity Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian Church for the next few months.

We will gather on the last Sunday of each month 5:30-7 p.m. In January, we will meet at **First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, January 30**. Youth are invited to meet at St Thomas at 5:10pm if they want to ride over together, otherwise they can meet us there at 5:30 p.m. On **Sunday, February 27, we will gather at St. Thomas** and host the youth from Trinity Episcopal and First Presbyterian. Please let [Pastor Lecia](#) know if you plan to attend.



## Word in the Woods

Welcome the winter as we experience God's presence in creation! Join us **on Sunday, February 20 at 3 p.m.** as we gather at Griffy Lake Boathouse for a worshipful hike. We will contemplate scripture together, pray and celebrate communion across the 1.5 mile trail. Please RSVP to [Pastor Lecia](#).



### Lent Mini-Retreat

Mark your calendar for **Sunday, February 27 at 9:45 a.m.** Join us in Heritage Hall for a Lent Mini-Retreat! You will learn about Lent and how to use this time to grow in spiritual practices. Activities are intended for folks of all ages, individually or as households. You can come for the whole hour or just part. Children will have a better experience if they participate with an adult. This will be in place of Sunday School on February 27.

### The Bloomington Bach Cantata Project

Bloomington Bach Cantata Project invites you to join us here at St. Thomas in the worship space on **Sunday, February 27 at 2:30 p.m.** The Bloomington Bach Cantata Project brings together students and faculty from Indiana University, as well as professional artists from around the region, to present cantatas by J. S. Bach in performances modeled on his own.



## Ministry Opportunities for Getting Involved

### International Mission Partners

Celebrate our International Mission Partners and their ministries in an Adult Forum Series on Sunday February 20 and March 13.

On **February 20**, we'll meet Carrie Stengel, executive director of Sister Parish International and our representative to Chichipate, over Zoom. Carrie will update us on the changing situation in Guatemala including the pandemic, environmental degradation, increasing poverty and famine. We'll get an update on the food aid and emergency relief we sent at Christmas time and hear about the ministry of our sister parish, Iglesia Santo Domingo de Guzman.



Sister Parish  
Connections

On **March 13**, Karen Anderson will zoom in to tell us about Educaci3n Popular en Salud (EPES) / Public Health Education for Health in Santiago, Chile. EPES uses grassroots organization to raise up and train health educators. Health educators return to their communities to teach about nutrition, cancer prevention, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence.

## **A New Initiative to Reduce Homelessness in Bloomington**

Much of the important work of making Bloomington a better, more humane place to live is carried out by non-profit coalitions of caring people from different faith communities—or no faith community—working together. St. Thomas supports many of these coalitions with budgeted funds. MCUM, New Hope for Families, Beacon, and Community Kitchen are examples—you'll find a complete list of these on the [church website under the ACT link](#).

Individual church members care deeply about these coalitions and the Mission Committee depends on these people to tell us how the St. Thomas community can help. **They are our incarnational links to the wider caring community.** When you see a collection of housewares for MCUM, Christmas trees being decorated for New Hope, clothing being collected for Bloomington Area Refugee Network, **you are seeing our incarnational links at work.** They keep the Mission Committee clued in. They let us know how to help, and we recruit you all to pitch in.

**There's something important happening about homelessness in Bloomington.** Several nonprofits have worked together to create a new community partnership of nonprofits, local government, real estate developers, landlords, and other local businesses to sustain and increase low-income housing in Bloomington. In a recent interview with WFIU, Forrest Gilmore from Beacon said, "We will not shelter our way out of [homelessness]" and added that warehousing people is not a solution; the real problem is moving people into homes. Mary Morgan, newly hired director of United Way's Housing Security Initiative, added, "When we get crisis-oriented, we make bad decisions."

The United Way is the coordinating agency for this community partnership and, friends, **St. Thomas could really, really use an incarnational link to what's going on**—someone who understands the problems of landlords, someone who can read a balance sheet, someone who can understand broad community planning. We're not asking you to build houses or hand out sandwiches on cold nights, but we'd like you to connect with the project and update us. We need to understand what's happening, so we know how to support it. If you are interested, Pastor Adrienne or I would be so very, very happy to talk with you.

Pamela Smith, on behalf of the Mission Committee



### **Property Committee Work Day**

The Property Committee will meet for work days on **Saturday, February 5 and Tuesday, February 15, 10 a.m. until noon.**

Upcoming projects include touch up painting indoors, changing light fixtures, replacing light bulbs, and fixing carpet issues. Masks are required. For more information contact Sam Eichmiller at [via email](#) or 812-279-5197.

### **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 **January 31**. [Application forms](#) can be found on our website. If you have questions, please contact the church office [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.

## Summer Camp with LOMIK

Camp is a place to grow in faith! For many youth, camp activities in a Christ-centered community creates a way for faith to take deeper root in their lives. Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Indiana-Kentucky has camps for children **entering 1<sup>st</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades**.

[More information is available from LOMIK.](#)



Lutheran  
Outdoor  
Ministries  
Indiana-Kentucky

## STLC@LOMIK

Confirmation students **entering 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade** next fall are invited to join us at Lutheran Hills for Confirmation Camp June 19-24, 2022. St. Thomas will contribute \$75 towards registration for each of our students. If more financial aid is needed, or if you are interested in going, please contact [Pastor Lecia](#).

For current confirmation students **entering 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> grades**, you are invited to participate in Servant Camp at Lutheran Hills that same week. St. Thomas will contribute \$75 to your registration also.

## Prayer Chain

The Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar once said, “the most we can do through genuine prayer, is to make as much room as possible, in ourselves and in the world, for the kingdom of God, so that its energies can go to work.” We invite you to be part of a little group making room in the world for God to work in people’s lives. When prayer requests come, we receive an email and pause to pray. Occasionally we receive an update about those we hold in prayer. If you are interested in joining us, [email](#) Susan Colston.



## Prayer Requests

Martin Luther said, “Pray, and let God worry.” When something worries you, others can carry you along in prayer. Send requests for prayer to Susan Colston [via email](#).



## Altar Flowers

Flowers bring the beauty of creation to our worship. To reserve an arrangement, contact the church office [via email](#) or sign the sheet on the bulletin board behind the welcome desk by Wednesday each week. The Flower Guild makes the arrangements, and you may take the flowers home after the 11 a.m. worship service and then return the vase later. Each arrangement costs \$18, with “flowers” in the check memo line.



# Celebrating Our Ministry

## Volunteer Spotlight: Josh Ratzburg

*“Can you tell us a little about your upbringing?”*

Josh grew up in an LCMS church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he went to a Lutheran school from preschool through high school. He always had issues with inclusion in the LCMS church and feels more at home with ELCA.



*“Tell us about your family.”*

Josh and Sarah met in 2014 and married at St. Thomas two years later. Kristopher was born in September of 2017. He is growing up fast and is obsessed with superheroes.

*“Tell us about your job.”*

Josh works for IU as a Tier 2 tech support for the University and School of Medicine.

*“How do you spend your time outside of work and church?”*

Outside of work and church he mostly spends time with the family playing board games, or whatever Kris wants to play. The current family obsession is Mario Kart. Josh plays a lot of games online—right now his favorite is Hearthstone, a virtual card game, like Magic the Gathering. He supports all the IU sports teams, specifically the men's and women's basketball teams. The Colts are probably his favorite of any team, and he is also a big Cubs fan.

*“How did you get involved at St. Thomas?”*

Sarah grew up in St. Thomas so when they moved back to Bloomington they naturally joined back up. Even then, Josh had a vision to set up livestream to enhance St. Thomas's outreach, but the timing wasn't right. COVID, of course, pushed things along. Thankfully, Josh has known Adam Carroll for years—Adam's expertise in tv production really helped get everything set up. Josh's background in technology (and dabbling in streaming games online) made for a perfect fit assisting with the livestream.

Josh and Adam have created a system to easily produce the livestream worship service. After some final equipment tweaks, Josh will make training videos so that anyone who is interested in helping would be well-equipped to run the livestream.

Josh is currently one of our only trained video techs serving the congregation on Sunday mornings. If you would like to contact Josh to thank him for his service to St. Thomas, you can send him an email here:

[joshratzburg@gmail.com](mailto:joshratzburg@gmail.com). We are actively seeking volunteers to help run our livestream, [contact the church office](#) to volunteer.



# Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU



At a Wednesday evening Bible Study earlier this semester, our group was watching a video that featured Rick Steves guiding the viewer through the Apostle Paul's journey. It was a video that has been around for several years, and that I have watched it multiple times with various groups. As I watched it this time alongside the college students, I found myself thinking about ministry in the past, the present and the future.

Two of the Biblical scholars in the video were professors of mine in college/seminary—one whom has since entered the church triumphant. Seeing these professors on screen, I was whisked mentally back to the

past—to the energy and excitement of learning more about different insights in the Bible for the first time, but also to the impact that these professors have had on my own growth as a person of faith.

As I glanced away from the screen, and looked at the college students watching the video, I found myself pondering the present—how much of the information is new to them? Who are those Biblical and Spiritual leaders that are making the most impact in their lives? How is the Holy Spirit using what we are watching and discussing to inspire them to deeper faith?

Turning back to the screen, I found myself drawn to the future. What might it be like to one day bring a group of students to the Holy Land to see these places in person? What would it be like to have persons of all ages walk with us on that journey—in the footsteps of St. Paul?

As we turned off the video for the night, I was left with more questions than answers, but also with a renewed spark and a reminder of why I studied theology in college and went to seminary in the first place—God is big and mysterious, the Holy Spirit is all around us, and Jesus is the Key to understanding any of it.

If anyone is interested in watching the video about the Apostle Paul, is thinking about touring the Holy Land in the future, or just wants to talk theology more, feel free to reach out. May God bless you all and grant you the spark of excitement to learn more about faith, the Bible and Jesus. Amen.

Peace,

[Pastor Amanda Ghaffarian](#)

Rose House LuMin

## From Our Ministry Partners



mcum

### MCUM

Our partners at [MCUM](#) report that donations to the food pantry are down. St. Thomas accepts non-perishable food, hygiene products, and cleaning products in baskets behind the welcome desk in the narthex. We accept donations for the pantry Sunday mornings and whenever the office is open—Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Thank you for your donations and to our liaison, Helen Ingersoll, and donation driver, David Ellies.

## **Beacon, Inc.**

[Beacon, Inc.](#) provides emergency and transitional housing and supportive solutions to people in poverty and those experiencing homelessness in Bloomington, Monroe County, and Southern Indiana. Executive Director Forrest Gilmore is celebrating 12 years of leadership. The Beacon board is made of a diverse set of community members including two client representatives (people who have personally experienced homelessness). Recently, Beacon received a significant grant from the Indiana Housing Authority, and the organization is discerning how to aid in recovery work for the increasing number of clients with drug-related issues.



## **Monroe County CASA training available**

Monroe County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is a volunteer-powered program which provides representation in juvenile court for child victims of abuse and neglect. They provide support to these children to ensure that they remain at the forefront of the court proceedings and find a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible. To learn how you can change a child's story, please visit [the website](#) or call 812-333-CASA.



If you have ever thought of getting involved, now is a great time to sign up. Volunteers need to be able to give approximately 8-15 hours per month, have some daytime flexibility, are 21 years of age or older and can commit 1-2 years to volunteering. The need for volunteers is great as the number of children in need of services is always changing. CASA is now accepting applications for the upcoming February training session. The next training begins February 2<sup>nd</sup> and is held on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings from 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. on Zoom.

**Due Date for March Newsletter Articles:  
Friday, February 18, 2022**

**Due Date for Weekly Announcements:  
Printed (Bulletins): Wednesdays  
Emailed (MailChimp): Thursdays**

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

## **ST. THOMAS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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*Partners in ministry with*  
**Lutheran Church of  
the Living Waters**  
Cherokee, North Carolina

*Linked with*  
**Sister Parish**  
Iglesia Santo Domingo  
de Guzman, Chichipate  
Parish of San Pedro, El Estor,  
Izabal, Guatemala

*In covenant with*  
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Mike Powell,  
Director of Music and Organist

Dr. Dale Heidebrecht,  
Interim Adult Choir Director

Melissa de Graaf,  
Children's Choir Director

**St. Thomas Lutheran Church and LCM-IU  
are Reconciling in Christ Ministries**

**We are a Christ-centered community that lives,  
shares and celebrates God's grace with all people!**