

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 2023

XXXXV Issue 2



From the Pastor

For many years, I have not given anything up for Lent. To get through the full forty days (skipping Sundays!), fasting requires planning and forethought, which, in turn, requires an amount of margin my life doesn't always have right now. I have consoled myself, thinking, Lent doesn't *require* Christians to give things up. But fasting can be a fruitful experience which offers us solidarity with our neighbor (especially our neighbor whose needs aren't being fully met) and a means to resist evil (including the evils that plague our everyday life).

To plan a Lenten fast, the first thing is to investigate the despair of the world. What do you notice needs right-side-upping? Where is evil winning? What neglected corner of your life, your neighborhood, your community, or world needs love? So often, we begin with ourselves, and our needs, and what we think we can accomplish. We make completing the fast its purpose, rather than how and what God might reveal to us through this discipline. "Finishing" is an unrelenting idol that robs us of the opportunity to be fully present in our lives. If we begin with the world's deep need (as Frederick Buechner so eloquently put it); if we begin with a question, even with wonder, we need not worry about failing to complete the fast, because we can trust that God can use even a brief fast to resist despair and contend against hopelessness by making us more away of others.

The next thing to consider is your own fitness for the task. Are you in good (enough) health—heart, soul, and mind? Of course, you might choose or use a fast to help bring your health into alignment (a fast from red meat might both resist the evils of saturated fat and bring one into solidarity with those impacted by climate change). But we should admit that there are some years where living is, essentially a fast. Maybe you are walking beside someone who is dying, or you are undergoing intense treatment for your own mental or physical health, or you are just bone-weary. Your fast may simply be to lean into your own reality—a holy enough task for any human.

Finally, consider what you might do without for about six weeks that might further reveal what has lead you from God and neighbor. Think about what you eat, what you wear, where you go, who you pass on the way. It is okay to chose the easy thing that matters and to avoid the hard thing that is simply too impossible to consider (there are no points awarded, let alone bonus points for difficulty). Chose something you can let go of without fanfare. The purpose here is not

to draw attention to ourselves (as we will hear from Matthew's gospel on Ash Wednesday) but to let God work on our hearts of stone, replacing the with hearts that beat, that dies, that, by the grace of God and through the waters of baptism, can be raised each and every day to new life.

If you find yourself moved by our virtual visit with our sister parish in Guatemala, you might consider giving up palm oil or investigating your relationship with nickel. If you are concerned about climate change, giving up meat, cheese, or shrimp—farms for which release huge amounts of methane—might be an interesting place to start. Or investigate some practices that will reduce your food waste. If you are concerned about folks in poverty in Bloomington, try a fast where you donate one item a day to Opportunity House, whose mission supports MCUM's Compass Early Learning Center. Concerned about mental health or queer kids? Fast from mindless screen time this Lent and train to become a crisis line volunteer with a non-profit like the Trevor Project.

Beloved in Christ, most of all, may your Lenten fast make you hungry for the feast that is spread before us each and every Sunday—a feast which sets us free, saves us from despair, brings in those on the margins, and offers us a foretaste of what is yet to come.

God be with you, *Pr. Adrienne*

From the Pastor of Youth and Christian Nurture

What is the Bible?

Every year in confirmation class, we circle through the same topics that are core to our faith as Lutheran Christians: the Bible, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. In two years of study, students learn about each topic twice, each time coming from a different angle or mode of learning.

We are ready to ask the question "What is the Bible?"

If you went to confirmation classes once upon a time or have been hanging around the church long, you know the Bible is a collection of books that we hold sacred, that the Bible tells the story of God and God's people. We know the Bible wasn't written all at once but through generations. Some of it is stories that were handed down before being written down, some of it contains songs sung in worship, some of it was written to record a specific story, some of it is correspondence between the people of God.

For most of us, our main experience with the Bible is what we hear in worship, yet that is only a small percentage of what is actually there. Many Christians find working their way through books of the Bible to be an important spiritual discipline. Several years ago, I read through the Bible in a year, revisiting many stories that I had forgotten about or understood differently as I got older.

As our students delve deeper into the Bible, I would love to share with them your favorites - What is your favorite verse? What is your favorite story? What do these passages mean to you? Send me an [email](#) to share your answers so I can share them with our class!

Your partner along the way, *Pastor Lucia*

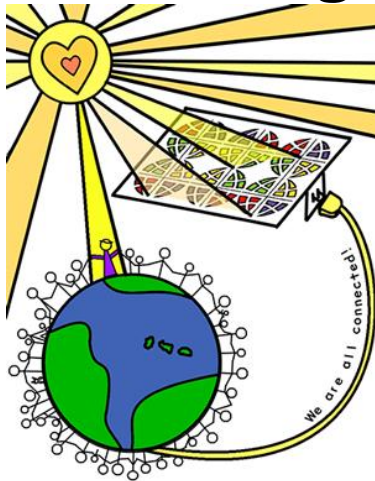
From the Director of Music and Organist

The first five months of my time at St. Thomas have been a joy. As we look forward to the next few months, I'd like to draw your attention to the organ's broken combination action. The combination action is a blend of buttons, wires, and technology that change the organ's sound. This is essential for hymn playing and choral accompanying because organists can use a richer variety of sounds "with a push of the button" rather than taking time to adjust every stop. This repair will cost an estimated \$12,000, which is a large number, but is still less than we initially expected. The Judy Torvie Memorial Fund is the funding source for the repair. This is a long-term solution to what has been a problem for several years and is a worthwhile investment in the future of St. Thomas's music program.

[Matthew Benkert](#)



Celebrating Our Ministry



Creation Care Calling

Interested in reducing your household's impact on the environment? The City of Bloomington's Office of Sustainability has initiated a program called "Zero in Bloomington" to encourage residents to take actions to limit climate change. The program offers a website where residents can enroll and enter information about their housing, eating and driving habits, appliances, and more. Entering this information takes perhaps 20-30 minutes, and sections can be skipped if the information is not available.

Once the information is entered, the website shows a comparison of your own household's carbon footprint to national and local averages. More important, it offers personalized recommendations for actions to reduce your environmental impact (and often save you money as well). These range from no- or low-cost items such as eating red meat fewer times per week or installing LED lightbulbs, to modest lifestyle changes such as taking a bus instead of driving for some errands, to larger-scale investments such as an electric car or solar panels. You can check off the actions that you have already done, and put others on your "to do" list for the future. As you complete further actions you can return to the website to enter them and improve your score. The city even has funds available to help qualified lower-income families afford some of the actions.

Most of us sincerely want to reduce our environmental impact, but find it hard to know exactly what actions would be most helpful. This is a great source of recommendations that are tuned to each specific household's situation. Entering the information for the website could even be a family activity including middle-school and teen-aged children, who might be pleased to learn that their actions can make a real difference. The Creation Care Committee recommends this valuable service.

More information about the Zero in Bloomington program, and a link to register and participate, can be found [here](#). Bloomington residents and non-residents alike can participate, although the registration process is slightly different for non-residents (see information at the bottom of the linked page). Information about the potential loan or rebate funds from the Bloomington Green Home Improvement Program [here](#).

from Members of the Creation Care Team



Katie Gardiner Awarded Prize by Choral Cohort

Our former choir director and Jacobs alumna, Katie Gardiner (DM Choral Conducting '21), has won the 2021 Julius Herford Dissertation Prize for her document, "A Conductor's Guide to the Music of Hildegard von Bingen," by American Choral Directors Association. The annual prize is named for the late Professor Emeritus of Music, who served Indiana University from 1964 to 1971. Gardiner is Interim Director of Choirs at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. Read Dr. Gardner's dissertation [here](#). Read more about the Herford Prize [here](#).



Upcoming Events

Souper Bowl of Caring: STLC vs. Rose House LuMin

St. Thomas demands a rematch after losing the Golden Charger to Rose House LuMin in last year's Souper Bowl of Caring (peanut butter vs. cereal). The 2023 Souper Bowl of Caring is a PASTA ROYALE. Members and friends are invited to bring in dried pasta to support Rose House LuMin and pasta sauce to support St. Thomas. The community with the greatest number of boxes or jars will be the winner and will host the Golden Charger for the year.



Worship at Redbud Hills

St. Thomas members, especially those who live at Redbud Hills Senior Living Community, are invited to Worship with Holy Communion in the chapel on the third floor of Redbud Hills on the **second Monday of the month at 10 a.m.** St. Thomas members who are not residents are invited to sign up on the welcome table to be a part of the hospitality team—greeting worshippers, passing out bulletins, helping with communion, and participating heartily in the service.

Sharing Blessings—Virtual Visit 2023

Our Virtual Visit with Iglesia de Santo Domingo de Guzman is an exciting opportunity to share the life and culture of our respective communities. The week of the virtual delegation, February 5-12, we will share livestreamed worship services in both communities and three Zoom calls to reconnect with our brothers and sisters in Chichipate and grow in our relationship.



Sister Parish Connections

On **Sunday, February 5** our **8:30 am liturgy** will be livestreamed, so please sing out on our Spanish-language music! During **Adult Forum at 9:45 a.m.** Pastor Adrienne will introduce the study guide from the ELCA Task Force on Civic Life and Faith. And there will be a **2 p.m. Zoom conversation** with the delegation from Chichipate, which you can join from home.

On **Tuesday, February 7 at 7 p.m.** we'll Zoom in for **A Sustaining Faith: Hearing the Story of a Chichipate Elder**. Maria Maquin will tell us about her life and the lives of women in Chichipate. Maria Maquin will tell us about her life, about her experiences during Guatemala's civil war, and about the lives of women in Chichipate.

You can Zoom from home to hear Sra. Maquin or get together as a group at St. Thomas—and **if you do want to get together, you're invited to come at 5:30 for tacos**. We're offering this taco meal as an experience of *convivencia*. We'll contribute to it together, serve it together, eat together, and clean up together. **Please sign up** on the Virtual Visit table.

On **Friday, February 10 at 9:00 p.m.** we're planning a watch party to **watch a video about Guatemala**. We've chosen a late time because the video won't be appropriate for little children. Watch in your own home and we'll make a place for comments online to share what we're thinking. Details to follow.

On **Saturday, February 11 at 4:00 p.m.** we'll have a Zoom conversation on refugee resettlement with a presentation by our refugee team. You Zoom in to this from home.

On **Sunday, February 12** during **Adult Forum**, Pastor Adrienne will continue our discussion of *Civic Life and Faith*. Then we'll have an opportunity to experience **10:30 a.m. Sunday worship at Santo Domingo** on Zoom. We'll setup a video in Heritage Hall and you're invited to attend their service, our service, or stroll back and forth between the two. And after our 11:00 a.m. service, let's get together for a **farewell photograph**.

Zoom information for all Zoom calls

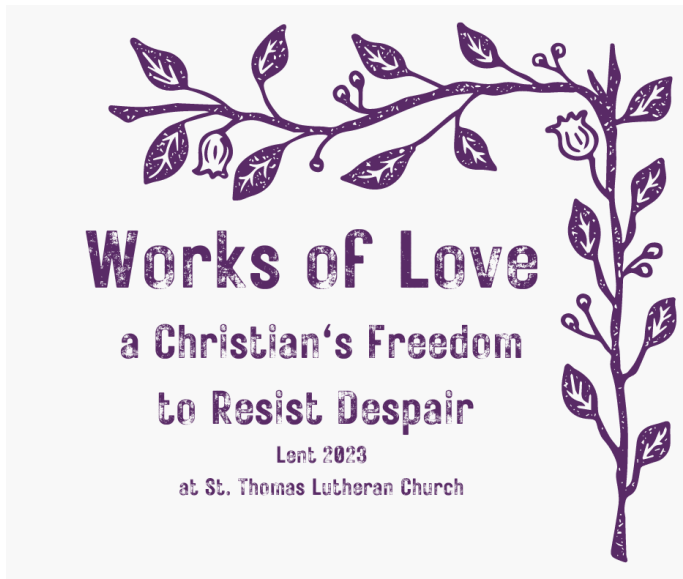
Topic: Sister Parish Call

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89072509560?pwd=c1RTaWFIZTNaa1BjTIUvYzRDOW9yUT09>

Meeting ID: 890 7250 9560

Passcode: 111



Works of Love: a Christian's Freedom to Resist Despair—Lent 2023

Lent Mini-Retreat

Mark your calendar for **Sunday, February 19 at 9:45 a.m.!** Join us in Heritage Hall for a Lent Mini-Retreat. You will explore the theme Works of Love: a Christian's Freedom to Resist Despair and learn how to use this season 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 19. The mini-retreat will also be available to visit before Ash Wednesday worship on Wednesday, February 22.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is **February 22**. The Psalmist sings, "a broken and contrite heart, God, you will not despise," and, so, we begin the season of Lent with confession. The imposition of ashes reminds us of our brokenness, our sin, our mortality—but in the symbol that points to wholeness, forgiveness, and resurrection: the cross. Join us for worship at 7pm in the worship space.

Lenten Midweek Services

Each Wednesday in Lent, **beginning March 1**, we will explore the world's despair and the works of love Christians—and not just any Christians, but members of St. Thomas—employ in order to resist hopelessness. Our worship will feature music from Holden Village by Marty Haugen, including Holden Evening Prayer and Holden Prayer Around the Cross: Beside Still Waters. **Midweek worship will be held in Heritage Hold at 7pm.**

Lenten Worship and Lunch for Seniors

IN EARLY PLANNING STAGES—St. Thomas's 60-plus-year-old members are invited on select Wednesdays in Lent for lunch and midday worship with the pastors. Dates and details will be advertised in the weekly eNews and bulletins.



Bloomington Bach Cantata Project

Music & the Arts Concert Series presents The Bloomington Bach Cantata Project. Continuing its thirteenth season, they present cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach in performances modeled on his own. The format is unique: a performance of a cantata, a short talk about it, and a second performance in which we hope you hear new things. Performances are free and take place on Sunday afternoons at St. Thomas. We are grateful for the support and look forward to sharing this music with members of the St. Thomas community. The next performance opportunity is on **February 26 at 2:30 p.m.** "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland" BWV 61, directed by James Walton.



Christian Nurture



Prayer at Noon on Zoom

If your New Year's resolutions include spending more time with God, another opportunity is Prayer at Noon on Zoom, our monthly time to share in prayer with one another. We spend a few minutes naming our prayer intentions and then participate in a brief prayer service all on Zoom at noon on the **first Wednesday of the month, February 1**. Join us [here](#).

Women's Bible Study

The St. Thomas Women's Bible Study will meet on **Sunday February 12** in Room 14 to continue our look into the Ten Commandments. Please come and join this very interesting study! We didn't finish Session 1 last month, so we will continue with that and move into session 2.



February in the Adult Forum

In 2019, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly indicated the need for broad social teaching on Civic Life and Faith. When the church creates social statements—our highest and most influential social teaching statements—a task force concludes an extended period of study by releasing study documents for the whole church to review and provide comments. Join Pr. Adrienne on **February 5 and 12** to explore this study guide and prepare comments and feedback to the task force.

There will be no adult forum on **February 19** so folks can participate in the **Lent Mini-Retreat** in Heritage Hall.

On Sunday, **February 26**, St. Thomas will welcome the Rev. Grace Kozak, State Organizer of Bread for the World—Indiana. Rev. Kozak will introduce the work of Bread for the World and introduce the advocacy work Bread for the World will be doing for this year's farm bill reauthorization. St. Thomas participates in Bread for the World's annual Offering of Letters, we hope you'll attend this adult forum with questions and wonderings about this vital organization.

Youth Group

Sunday, February 26 is Game Night at First Presbyterian Church (221 E. Sixth St)! Junior high students are invited to join youth from other congregations for board games and pizza from **4 - 5:30 pm**. Senior high students will meet for games and pizza from **5:30 - 7 p.m.** Join us for an evening to relax and have fun together while getting to know other youth. If you have a favorite game, you can bring it to share. Please let [Pastor Lecia](#) if you plan to join us!



What is an Urban Plunge?

Students in junior and senior high are invited to join us this summer (June 27-29, 2023) for an Urban Plunge! We will immerse ourselves in Indy while serving at local non-profits. Students and their parents can join us on **Wednesday, February 8 at 8 p.m.** for a short Zoom meeting to learn more about the Urban Plunge, meet the leaders and learn how to be involved. Contact [Pastor Lecia](#) for the Zoom link.

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 first grade through twelfth grade. [More information is available from LOMIK.](#)



On **Sunday, February 12**, we will welcome camp staff to lead the elementary Sunday School class and share information about summer programs. Stop by to see them in the narthex and pick up a brochure!

Ministry Opportunities for Getting Involved

Property Committee Work Days

This month the Property Committee meets **Saturday February 4 and Tuesday February 17 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** to paint, caulk, fix light bulbs, and a wide variety of other small jobs—many of them outdoors. Feel free to join us! For more information contact Sam Eichmiller at 812-797-2807.



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 [here](#). If you have questions, please contact [Kristin Marsh](#), Chair of the Mission Endowment Fund Committee, at or the church office [via email](#) or 812-332-5252.



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 10:15 a.m. worship service and then return the vase later. Each arrangement costs \$20, with “flowers” in the check memo line.

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](#).

Lutheran Campus Ministry at IU



Rose House LuMin invites all college students- undergrads & grads- to join us for what promises to be a fun filled February. During our Tuesday evening gatherings, we will explore intellectual wellness together. According to Portico, Intellectual Well-Being is:

“Using our minds keeps us alert and active. Stay curious, ask questions, and seek answers. Explore new responsibilities, experience new things, and keep an open mind. And remember, knowing when and how to let your mind rest is as important as keeping active.”

Each week, we will tackle a different aspect of intellectual wellness with planned activities including but not limited to: a Rose House Escape Room Experience, learning tricks for time management, and developing a new skill (the skill that we will learn will be voted on by students at the end of January). In addition to Tuesday evenings, our students will be given the opportunity to participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring collection of food for MCUM, a weekend retreat with the Episcopal Campus Ministry, and Ashes to Go at Sample Gates on Ash Wednesday.

Everyone is invited to keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram accounts to stay up to date with everything going on around Rose House. If you have any questions or would like to meet with Pastor Amanda for hot chocolate and conversation, please email lutheran@indiana.edu.



Peace,
Pr. Amanda Ghaffarian
lutheran@indiana.edu



Caring for Our Neighbors



An Update from Naomi Sveholm

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the care package sent to us! We received it right before going back to school in January. I loved looking through the carefully curated items that fit us and shared some of the special projects happening in the parish. And our children excitedly adopted the hand puppets (our youngest is in a unicorn phase, so that one was especially desirable) and the books. Thank you!



As I write this, I've recently finished the whirlwind that comes just before grades are due. Much of this semester's grades for my graduating class consisted of videos that they recorded to help them prepare for the oral portion of their school leaving exams. I spent hours listening to problems young job-seekers face, advantages and disadvantages of globalization, and economic challenges in Slovakia. My dad, overhearing the videos from the other room, was quite impressed. I am too. Here's a sample question from the school-leaving exam:

English and English-speaking countries influence Slovakia in many ways. Discuss native English-speaking countries and English as a language from the following perspectives:

1. Why do you think the English language has become so universal? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the fact that English is such a dominant, global language?
2. Should all students in Slovakia be required to learn some English? Why or why not?
3. Is the widespread presence of English-language cultural products harmful to Slovak culture? Should more be done to make sure good Slovak books/films/music are not pushed out of the marketplace by English products?
4. Compared to most English-speaking countries, awareness of Slovakia abroad is quite low. Could/should more be done to increase the visibility of Slovakia in other countries? Why or why not? What could be done?

During their final oral exam, students see the questions for the first time 20 minutes before they must speak to a panel of three judges (one of whom they have never met) for 20 minutes. The preceding question is half of the oral exam. For the other half, students must also answer a literature question and act out a role play with one of their examiners. The exam is incredibly stressful, even for the best of students, partially because they complete these oral exams in four or five different subjects the week before they (hopefully) graduate.

Young people are expressing mental health struggles to a greater extent these days than even a few years ago before covid lockdowns. The exam doesn't help students' mental health and is not even required for entry into many universities. Yet there is at least one significant benefit to requiring these exams, and that is the fact that these amazing students who have learned about economics, and health care, and their country's relations with the world, in addition to a dozen other themes, are much more prepared to be global citizens. I'm not certain it is worth the stress for the students (and teachers), but it certainly is an honor to be teaching things that truly matter.

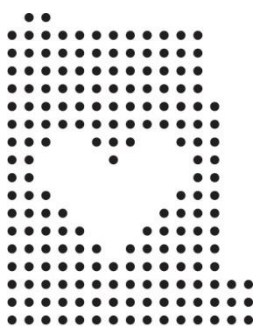
As Albert P'Rayan stated, "Teachers become educators when they realise that they have a deep sense of responsibility towards society and feel the need to act as agents of social change. Educators are not mere givers/sharer/creators of knowledge; they enable students to think creatively, critically and productively. Educators are teachers who believe that they have a mission to save the world from disasters and make it a better place to live in." I would argue this is also the job of a missionary. And I'm proud to call it my job.

Thank you for supporting me and the other Central Europe Teachers. Please follow us on social media and send potential educator-missionaries our way, since interviews for the 2023-24 school year have already begun!

[Naomi Sveholm](#), Central Europe Teachers

Check out Naomi's work with the Central Europe Teachers Program on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Monroe County United Ministries



A big THANK YOU to David Ellies who recently took 96 lbs. of food pantry donations from YOU to MCUM...much appreciation to all!

This Winer's MCUM fundraiser is neat and I'm hoping you will participate because we, at St. Thomas, are such good supporters of MCUM AND it will be fun! The event is called "SUDS FOR SERVICES" and will be held on Thursday, February 9 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Upland Brewing Company on 11th Street. Come have some food and drinks, visit with friends, hear a little about MCUM, and participate in a silent auction, if you wish. Event registration is online only and can be found [here](#). If you would let me know you are registered, I'll appreciate it. Thank you, Helen Ingersoll - hingerso@indiana.edu or 812-339-9610.

mcum

Saving the Arctic Refuge

I write this article to St. Thomas people aware of what is happening in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. At 19.3 million acres, roughly the size of South Carolina, the Refuge is one of the largest intact ecosystems left on earth. Thanks to Indigenous leadership and management, it has remained largely unchanged for ten thousand years. It's a wonderful mixture of mountains, forests, rivers, coastal plain and alpine tundra. Polar bears, arctic foxes, musk oxen, and the amazing Porcupine Caribou Herd are just some of the wildlife that live there. In the coastal plain alone, more than 200 species have been identified. It has never been developed or industrialized. The Gwich'in people call it "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins."

The Porcupine Caribou Herd, at 218,000 animals, is the only herd in North America at its recorded maximum. Because of its low reproductive rate, however, the herd is more vulnerable to poor years of reproduction. Both the US and Canada issue licenses for hunting, and the Indigenous peoples can take what they need (Their culture emphasizes taking only what one needs.) without destroying the herd, as we did with buffalo in this country. The calving and post calving ranges are within the Arctic Refuge.

Currently, there are two major threats to the Arctic Refuge. One comes from the oil and gas extraction industry. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act opened the Refuge to oil and gas leases for

drilling, and the Trump administration offered twelve leases for sale. Five were purchased by oil and gas companies. The Biden Administration put a hold on the development of the five and the companies turned them back in. With the current emphasis on sustainable energy sources, Indigenous peoples are optimistic about preserving the Refuge in its natural state, but no one knows what a future administration might do. The 2017 Law stands as a continuing threat to this pristine wilderness and, more importantly, endangers the way of life of the Indigenous peoples.

The second threat comes through climate change. It's a complicated issue, but as I understand it, five governments-Canada, United States, Russia, Denmark and Norway- all claim sovereignty over large areas of the Arctic Ocean's seabed within at least 200 nautical miles of their shores. The law of the sea, established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, gives each of the five nations control over their portions of the Arctic lands and waters off their shores as far out as the continental shelf and, in some circumstances, beyond that.

The Indigenous peoples have been living on the Arctic lands and ice and using the waters in the Arctic Ocean for thousands of years, and they consider it their sovereign territory. With climate change the ice has melted to the point where it has become water for much of the year. That means the seabed is now accessible for oil and gas extraction. If the Law of the Sea becomes operative, it will threaten The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The question of which applies is an undecided legal matter. Does control go to the countries or the Indigenous peoples. These threats and related issues have led to the Imago Initiative.

The idea of the Imago Initiative came from Karlin. Itchoak, a member of the Nome Eskimo community and the Wilderness Society's Senior Director for Alaska. The Imago Initiative would turn over management of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the Indigenous peoples, using their values, leadership, and wisdom to transition to a sustainable rural economy. The developing their values, leadership and wisdom to transition to a sustainable rural economy. The extraction of fossil fuels would not be allowed.

Karlin Itchoak, other staff of the Wilderness Society, and leaders and members of the Gwich'in and Inupiat communities are working together to develop the Imago Initiative. It would recognize Arctic lands as the ancestral home of the Indigenous peoples, who have inherent and sovereign rights to the area.

Meda DeWitt, a Tlingit Traditional Healer, and a skilled groups' facilitator, using Indigenous methods, joined the Initiative in 2020. Karlin, Meda and Gwich'in and Inupiat leaders formed the Imago Task Force as a brain trust to keep the Imago Initiative moving forward. This group provides ideas and information, serves as a sounding board, and keeps the communities informed.

In July of 2021 the Task Force brought together twenty-two Indigenous and conservation partners for eight days on Inupiat ancestral lands to talk, listen, and learn from each other. The focus was on the protection and management of the Arctic Refuge. The task Force held a second retreat in the summer of 2022 with a broader representation of Gwich'in and Inupiat peoples, including youth and emerging leaders. This meeting explored public land protection that honors Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

These summer meetings fed into the planning for the Imago Initiative, which had reached the point of developing proposals for the Biden Administration. Karlin Itchoak summed up the meetings this way: “No one has a greater stake in protecting Arctic lands and waters, nor greater experience and knowledge to offer for sustainably managing these lands.”

What does this mean for St. Thomas. First, it provides information on another group of Indigenous peoples who face threats to their way of life. Second, it fits with St. Thomas’s view of sustaining God’s creation by protecting an intact ecosystem, The National Arctic Wildlife Refuge that is threatened by the 2017 Law. Fortunately, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is within only the US and Canada, and Canada already has a treaty with its Indigenous peoples. For more information you can view an 18-minute film at Wilderness.org/imago.

References

The Karlin Itchoak quote is taken from America’s Wilderness, The Wilderness Society, Member Newsletter, Fall 2022, page 5 and for much of the information in this article.

Fact Sheet: Porcupine Caribou ([//www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/porcupine-caribou-Fact-sheet](http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/porcupine-caribou-Fact-sheet)).
Government of Northwest Territories, Barren Ground Caribou in the NWT, Porcupine Herd.
The Center for Public Legal Education, Alberta, Canada. An Introduction to Inuit Rights and Arctic Sovereignty, Robin Campbell, May 7, 2015.

from [Jerry Smith](#)

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Due Date for **March Newsletter** Articles:
Friday, February 17, 2023

Due Date for **printed** Weekly Announcements: **Wednesdays**
Due Date for **emailed** Weekly Announcements: **Thursdays**

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**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!**