

NOVEMBER 2022 | ISSUE NO. 6

connections

STORIES OF GRACE & PEACE | PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



CONTENTS

p. 3

a mountaintop experience

p. 6

for the love of gardening

p. 10

forward in faith

p. 13

new member spotlight

p. 14

home communion ministry

p. 16

connection for moms

p. 18

meet our new staff

p. 22

Bible study: where do we go from here?

p. 24

God's work our hands

p. 27

for all the saints

p. 28

on the horizon

PASTOR'S NOTE

“Go back?” he thought. ‘No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!’ So up he got, and trotted along with his little sword held in front of him and one hand feeling the wall, and his heart all of a patter and a pitter.”

~J.R.R. Tolkein, *The Hobbit*

Bilbo Baggins was a reluctant adventurer. Early in the story he says of hobbits, “We are plain quiet folk, and I have no use for adventures. Nasty, disturbing, and uncomfortable things. Make you late for dinner!” Bilbo didn’t want to leave the Shire, but the moment was upon him, and again and again, he rose to challenge.

We have all felt the newness of this day. Try as we might, we simply can’t put the world back in the same box that it came in three years ago. This means that there is a new adventure ahead, and often we may not feel prepared. But when we are linking arms and walking forward together, on the other side of our challenges lies a land filled with new opportunities, and profound experiences of God’s love and grace.

In the following pages you will find stories of what the beginning of the path forward looks like here at Prince of Peace. You will see that the most profound experiences happening through our ministry are not found in consuming programming, but rather by proactively engaging in God’s mission and community.

I pray that these stories inspire you to find your place on the path as we seek together a world restored with grace and peace. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our mission here at Prince of Peace. Now, on we go!

In Christ,
Pastor Jonathan



Prince of Peace
LUTHERAN CHURCH

A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE

by Michael and Amy Dakoske

*Lord, prepare me, to be a sanctuary
Pure and holy, tried and true
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for you*

*When he comes, in shouts of glory
And our work here on Earth is done
How I long to hear him saying
"Faithful servant, well done."*

Imagine these words floating through the evening air as close to 50 high schoolers and adult guides gather around a glowing campfire with a view of a pristine lake and the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background. Not only did these words echo throughout that evening, but also throughout our week of service and connection during the Discipleship Tour (D-Tour) in North Carolina this past July.

Our vision statement at Prince of Peace calls us to Serve the World, Connect in Community, and Grow in Faith. The D-Tour was an experience where we truly lived out this vision.



We served in many capacities at a variety of sites in the greater Asheville area. We helped build a Habitat for Humanity house, organized and distributed meals at food pantries, assisted senior citizens with household tasks, and beautified outdoor spaces for veterans and others living in group homes. One of the participants said, “I got to see right in front of me the impact I was making on people’s lives in a positive way.”

Commenting on her time at Habitat for Humanity, another participant said that she was moved knowing that she was helping to build a house where someone would live and make memories.

We had the opportunity to truly connect and learn the stories of the volunteers in the Asheville community we were serving with as well as many of the recipients of our volunteer efforts. One participant noted he learned valuable life lessons from the people he served at the retirement home. This young man connected with one gentleman in particular who had retired from a career that he himself was interested in. They even exchanged contact information before we left!

Not only did we connect with those we served, but we also connected with each other in new ways through these shared experiences. New friendships were formed, and comfort zones were challenged in positive ways. More than half of the participants who sent feedback to Mary Ellen after the D-tour mentioned the significance of the connections they made. One participant said, “It’s both fun and hard work, but it will connect you deeper with God, yourself, and the youth



group. It helps you create deep and enduring connections.” We all got to know new people as our car groups, roommate groups, service groups, and adventure groups were unique.

We also had opportunities to connect with others at Lake Junaluska, the retreat center where we stayed. A youth group similar to ours from Epiphany Lutheran Church in Dayton was staying in the same area. We enjoyed connecting with them through fellowship, singing around the campfire, and worshipping together. One participant commented that she loved interacting with the group from Epiphany, and she made a new friend in doing so.



Through this week of being immersed in servanthood and connected in community, we all saw our faith grow. One participant summed it up by saying, “I saw God in the people I was with, the beauty of the area, the service we completed, and the lives that we touched.” He described the trip as being life, or at least year, changing. “Just to spend time with such a wonderful group of people, serving, laughing, worshiping, living, and loving was incredible. God truly is at the heart of everything and going on a [D-Tour] helps one to see where God fits into their life”

The D-Tour was a mountaintop experience – both literally and figuratively! So, where do we go and grow from here? On our final night in Asheville we bid a tearful good-bye to the large group of graduating seniors. Under the leadership of our new Youth Director, Tanner Stinnett, the youth group is already growing with many new members joining in the activities this fall. And certainly we look forward to serving, connecting, and growing our faith throughout the year and into next summer with the promise of another amazing D-Tour! ■



LAKE JUNALUSKA NC





FOR THE LOVE OF GARDENING

by Sheryl Melvin

"The Prince of Peace Community garden will be a place where people grow relationships, care for God's creation and learn from one another."

- Vision statement of the POP Garden Team

How does a new ministry begin? How do the ideas take root and sprout? A year ago this month, Toby Lyke, Fred Boehner, and I looked at each other and shook our heads. Why start a community garden when we could each just increase the size of our own gardens and donate the yields to LIFE? In the beginning, our answer was no.

Then the Spirit moved. We started talking to people about what if, the needs, the community, and I decided we had to test the waters by setting up a straw bale demonstration garden on church grounds near the basketball hoop. Fred was determined to keep it neat and wielded the weed whacker. Mindy Stonerook and her family offered to water the straw bales when my grandkids and I could not. We grew an abundance of Tennessee Heirloom and Early Girl tomatoes, zucchini, cantaloupe, basil, and cucumbers (the kale and peppers had a miserable year).

Toby started testing further waters. He reached out to the LIFE Food Pantry, who enthusiastically embraced the idea of fresh produce and garden opportunities for their clients. I met women at PoP book studies and Revitalize events who asked questions and then told me about their experiences with community gardens elsewhere.

For some, the love of gardening is about:

- the joy
- the harvest, fresh picked, ready to be savored and shared
- the peaceful space where one can connect to the earth and its Creator
- celebrating the joys of each of the seasons, experiencing over and over the cycle of life
- connecting to another place and time

No matter why we love gardens, gardeners feel the connections that build community and love to share and support fellow gardeners. There's always something to learn, share and teach.

Sometimes it's as simple as - a few hours in a garden is just plain "good for what ails ya"!

- Kathy Leigh-Manuel

Their stories were powerful witnesses to building relationships while working side by side with others. A new friend told me she had helped create community gardens at three different churches in eastern Ohio. Another told me of her efforts to organize volunteers at a 17 acre community garden in Indiana. A new member quietly told me she had a degree in horticulture and would love to be on the newly dubbed Garden Team.

Each shared story reminded me that God does the actual work of growing a ministry.

I am impatient. I wanted to start last season with 40 families growing produce, but the time of waiting was important. Instead of a handful of us developing this project, we have a committee of 21 Prince of Peace members who are anxious to get started. We have written a covenant to spell out expectations and are applying for grants to finance deer fencing, straw bales, water, and equipment. We have the LIFE team prepared to help us contact any of their clients who would like to garden with us, and we plan to market the community garden to our neighborhood churches on Durango and West Main, Tuscarora, Seminole, Navajo Drive, and more.

People who are food insecure, those who wish to learn to garden, those who do not have space or sunlight for a garden, those who want to support the LIFE food pantry, are all invited to join us in the garden.

Helping people learn to grow produce is one goal. The main goal is to be God's Hands in POP's immediate neighborhood. We are most effective in doing that when we have built real relationships with our neighbors.

Our vision for the Prince of Peace community garden is for it to become a gathering place for Loveland neighbors who will get to know each other while growing and harvesting food. We hope that working alongside each other, families and individuals will come to know one another, develop relationships, and eventually build a community.

Gardeners might be neighbors who walk or drive by the garden, interested clients of the LIFE Food Pantry, or others we haven't yet envisioned. Ideally, the gardeners will reflect the diversity of the garden itself. –Barb Stein



“We plant the seeds and God grows the rest!”

–POP Garden Team Motto



The new garden will be created using straw bales as the growing medium. This greatly reduces weeds, requires very few tools, enables people who have difficulty bending to the ground to tend their plants, and allows for changes in the dimensions of the garden from season to season. Classes will be offered to those who'd like to learn more about this method.

Our plan for 2023 is to have ten sets of ten bales, or enough for 20 garden sections. Approximately one third of the gardeners will be from the PoP congregation, one third will be LIFE food pantry clients, and one third will be neighbors of the church. Audrey Hawley will facilitate our communication with LIFE. Linda Bergholz, the LIFE director, has pledged to support our efforts. All gardeners will agree to donate at least ten percent of their harvest to the LIFE Food Pantry.

For me, gardening is a spiritual experience. It brings me closer to God when I nurture seedlings and harvest the fruits of my labor. From growing flowers for enjoyment to growing crops for nourishment- there's no better way to be closer to God's beautiful nature. Digging my hands in rich soil is a sensation of sheer delight! I'd love to help instill this sense of peace and wonder in others by helping to bring a rewarding yield of crops from a season (or more) of nurturing plants. Not only can one draw closer to God and His beautiful Earth- but gardeners can learn from each other and grow friendships that can last a lifetime! We are spreading seeds together that will draw the POP community (and neighboring gardeners) together to celebrate God's bountiful harvest of delicious crops and cultivate beautiful fellowship. -Alli Hampton



As harvests begin, we hope to offer cooking classes to share recipes and preservation techniques. We intend to hold social events (like potlucks) in the garden. We will invite LIFE client gardeners and Loveland neighbors to join our Garden Team to share leadership with us.

We plan to take good care of God's creation by composting the plant materials and straw bales at the

end of the growing season, turning them into soil for future raised bed gardens to supplement the 2024 straw bale gardens.



To be true to our values of sustainability, care of God's creation, and overall waste reduction, we felt that composting needed to be an element of our gardening efforts at POP. So, as a companion project to the Community Garden, a three bin composting system has been constructed by Toby Lyke, Mike Wood and Sheryl Melvin. At the very least, this will accommodate any vegetative waste produced by the gardens, and could also certainly handle some members of our congregation contributing kitchen scraps. If you are interested in turning your compostables into soil rather than being brought to a landfill, please contact Toby directly. Moving forward, there is available grant money from Hamilton County Solid Waste to improve and expand this kind of project. If it can be determined that there is interest from our church

community and some volunteers to help manage a more serious composting effort, we will proceed with applying for those grant funds. The grant money would cover all supplies and materials associated with a small-scale composting effort, including special buckets for collection, tools, wheelbarrows, construction of a more durable composting system and much, much more. Again, please contact me directly with any questions or to find out how you could get involved. -Toby Lyke

Please pray for us as we develop this new mission. Pray that we grow real relationships with our neighbors, and that God uses us as His hands and feet in a new way here in Loveland. ■



FORWARD IN FAITH

by Pastor Lorne Hlad

As we entered a new ministry year in January, there was a high level of uncertainty in our lives and within our ministry.

Will this year be more of the same?

Will the pandemic finally get under control?

How does the Church need to adapt and innovate moving forward?

What will the post-pandemic church look like?

How is God calling Prince of Peace to build the Kingdom moving forward?

The above questions, among others, stand out for me because so many things have changed due to the pandemic. Fast forward to now, and we can all attest that our lives are not the same as they were in 2019, prior to the pandemic. The same is true for Prince of Peace. Our congregation is not the same as it was before the pandemic.

Leading a congregation through the pandemic felt like walking into a dense fog where you can't see what's ahead, how long the fog will last, or what's on the other side.

Thankfully, as weeks and months have passed, I have sensed the fog, slowly but surely, beginning to lift. It seems that over the past few months we have marked a turning point in our life together as a congregation and community. Said another way, it looks like we have closed one chapter in our story and are beginning to write a new one.

Accompanying this turning point is a greater sense of how the pandemic has impacted congregations, including Prince of Peace.



First, social scientists and religious leaders now understand that the pandemic was a significant, disruptive event that reoriented many people's daily lives and schedules.

The disruption in daily patterns caused by the lockdown "shuffled the deck" in people's routines and habits. Faith communities everywhere felt the impact of this shuffling, most notably in worship patterns and attendance. Nationwide, the pandemic resulted in weekly worship attendance dropping 30-60 percent compared to 2019 data. Our congregation is not immune from this reality. Since re-launching in-person worship, we are experiencing a 30% reduction in weekly (in-person) worship attendance compared to pre-pandemic numbers. While some of that reduction can be accounted for by online worship, there is no escaping the reality that the pandemic has negatively impacted faith communities' weekly worship participation. For decades research and data has pointed to the long slow decline of worship attendance in America. The pandemic served to accelerate the trend.

On the other hand, as the "fog" has lifted over recent months, it has simultaneously led others to search and seek out a spiritual community.

While Prince of Peace lost the engagement and participation of some members, it experienced a significant increase in engagement with others. Thus far in 2022, Prince of Peace has welcomed 91 new members into the life of our congregation (the most in any given year since 2014). There is a strong sense that those who are present and engaged in the life of our

ministry are doing so with a deep sense of passion and intention. The disruption of the pandemic inspired many to seek a more profound sense of connection and meaning in their lives which has cultivated a hunger for spiritual community and hope.

Finally, the pandemic has reinforced the lesson that while our ministry methods may change, the mission remains the same.

The pandemic accelerated the rate at which we adopted ministries like live-streaming, online studies, community groups, video production, and social media usage. Crises have a profound way of sparking innovation and change. These methods (among others) are just some of how congregations have been stretched to expand their ministry reach for the sake of the Gospel. The mission hasn't changed. The methods have just expanded..

"Trauma is the change that happens to us that we don't choose. Healing is the change that happens to us that we do."

The last two years have been traumatic on multiple fronts. We have been forced to change and adapt in ways we never could have imagined. The question for us now is, how do we move forward? What is the change we will choose for ourselves to support restoring God's world with grace & peace?

Knowing what we now understand, where do we go from here?

The answer to that question is simple, but not easy. We press on with a renewed commitment to help people learn to live & love like Jesus. We remain committed to the Church's calling to be a witness to the resurrection of Christ and, in so doing, pursue God's vision of the world being restored with grace and peace.



During our strategic vision process earlier this year, the vision task force felt strongly that our clear sense of mission and guiding vision for our congregation are as relevant or more relevant than when originally adopted in 2015. The mission remains the same because we are still the Body of Christ, entrusted with the work of discipleship, and proclamation of the Gospel. In support of our ongoing mission, the taskforce and council adopted the following guiding principles for our congregation:

As the community of Prince of Peace, we are committed to helping people...

Grow in Faith

Faith is a dynamic force in our lives. As disciples of Jesus, we are invited and challenged to grow and change as we embrace our identity as children of God.

Connect in Community

Authentic relationships are the heart of Christian community. We help people cultivate connections with others for every stage of life.

Serve the World

Faith in Jesus calls us to live as servants of all. We actively seek ways to love and serve our neighbors, our community, and the world.

As the community of Prince of Peace, we are committed to building a culture where...

Love & Life Win

God has defeated the powers of sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus. Our world is filled with hope when we embody and share the Good News!

All Means All

God offers the gifts of the Spirit freely to all. Our community is enriched when acceptance, grace and dignity are extended for every human life.

Generosity is Contagious

God generously gives to us, so we share our whole selves with each other. Our lives are transformed when we see the world through the lens of God's abundance.

Moving forward, we want to enhance the ways in which Prince of Peace helps people grow in faith, connect in community, and serve the world. Our congregational leaders, both staff and lay, are excited to create new opportunities for people to grow in their discipleship and support one another. New life is already springing up in our midst through the community garden initiative and the refugee resettlement team. Moving into 2023, we are also looking at new opportunities to create clear discipleship pathways for people to take the next steps in their faith and grow together. We also plan to explore ways in which we can strengthen existing group ministries, while also launching new grace groups so that more people can build authentic Christ-centered connections.

As we do the important work of ministry together, we are also committed to creating a culture rooted in the beliefs that love & life win, all means all, and generosity is contagious. After all, the center of our unity as a congregation is the Gospel of Jesus, which declares these things to be true. While we do not know what the future will bring to our world, country, or community, we can rest knowing that Prince of Peace Lutheran Church's mission is part of God's broader mission for the world. As we lean into the future, I pray that you know the impact and significance your engagement makes in support of our mission. Your dedication to worship, community, and mission make all the difference in the vibrancy of our congregation. Thank you for the many ways you have genuinely chosen love and chosen peace this year.

Together, may we all cling to the crucified and risen Lord, trusting in God's unfailing love and mercy to lead us into the future. ■





NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Faye and David Saleh

by Stephanie Vock

In 2022 alone, Prince of Peace has welcomed over 90 new members (and counting). As we look to the future and how our church is choosing to show up in and for the community, we thought we would take a minute to get to know some of our newer members and find out what brought them to POP.

Faye Saleh and her grandson David share a love of music. A love they like to express through singing and playing various instruments. Think trombone, piano, and maybe some guitar if David gets his wish. In addition to their musical talents, Faye and David share a love of science and enjoy swimming, reading, and traveling together. On top of all that, seven-year-old David is also quite the LEGO builder, according to his grandmother.

Unfortunately, in 2019, Faye suffered terrible loss when her husband and the love of her life passed away. A year after that the pandemic began and soon thereafter, lifelong Lutheran Faye found herself looking for a new church that she and David could call home. After so much change and loss, it's not hard to imagine that Faye wanted to find not only a place to worship, but an inclusive community that fostered growth and sparked a sense of belonging for her and her grandson.



As Faye will tell you, searching for a new church was not something she took lightly. She did her due diligence and spent time researching four different churches. She and David even attended worship and participated in church activities to get a feel for the community of each congregation.

Ultimately, Faye and David, “felt Prince of Peace was the best match.” They were most excited about the possibilities for service, growth, and connection that come with being a member at POP. Whether that’s through children’s ministries like Sunday School and Vacation Bible School for David, or bible study for Faye, or simply through gathering for weekly worship.

In this new chapter, Faye and David are truly excited to build lasting relationships at their new church home and grow their faith in Christ as part of the Prince of Peace community. ■

HOME COMMUNION MINISTRY

by Kathy Haugen

"The body of Christ, given for you... the blood of Christ given for you..." How many times have we heard these familiar and comforting words and participated in the Sacrament of Holy Communion either at Prince of Peace or some other community of faith, on a mission trip or at church camp? Communion brings us all together as one in God's Kingdom and we are reminded of Jesus' love and sacrifice each time we participate.

Our congregation is blessed to have a Homebound Communion Ministry. This ministry exists to bring communion to our members who are unable to come to worship at church for various reasons.

My husband, Glen, and I have been blessed to be involved in this ministry for many years along with other members of our church. We have found that the relationships we have built with the saints we have visited over the years have been one of the highlights of our lives. We have found that the recipients are so grateful and throughout our visit, we not only get to celebrate the Lord's Supper with them, but we get to hear about their lives, their families, their past work experiences, their faith journeys, and their joys and sorrows as we visit before sharing in the sacrament.




One special member who comes to mind is Dorothy Proudfit. She was recognized as one of our oldest members at a special church service. Dorothy was a delight to visit and lived in Mason Christian Village. We would talk about her memories of being a life-long Lutheran, having started her faith journey in Pennsylvania in her childhood. She and her dear husband moved to Cincinnati to be closer to family and joined Prince of Peace. They were active until her husband passed away. We would talk about world events, books, and her son and grandson's family, who she simply adored. When it was time for communion, she could almost recite the confession part of the service by memory and would always lead me in the Lord's Prayer. When the pandemic hit and I couldn't visit her in person, we would talk on the phone. I was able to see her at a "door visit" that Mason Christian Village arranged and we talked to each other over FaceTime. She passed away a week later at age 99. She was finally with her Lord and Savior, her beloved husband and her other son who died at an early age. What a faith pillar example she was to me!

Glen and I would visit Todd and Jane Heckamen together at Sem Villa to bring them home communion. They had been active members at Prince of Peace until Jane was diagnosed with

Alzheimer's and it was too much for Todd to bring her to church. They were married for many years and Todd was so tender and loving toward his dear wife. We would sit and listen to Todd tell stories about his long teaching career and then he would share exciting stories of how he and Jane would take their two kids to Yellowstone or other National Parks where he would work as a Naturalist for the summer. Since we love visiting the National Parks too, we were fascinated by his stories. When it was time to share communion, he would lovingly place the communion wafer in her mouth and encourage her to chew it. Then he would patiently bring the wine glass up to her lips and encourage her to just sip a little bit of it. They have both passed on and they are a dear memory that we will never forget.

We have had volunteers from our faith community take communion to non-members as well and they have many wonderful memories of participating in this ministry.

This ministry is such a blessing for both the participants and the volunteers. You truly feel the presence of God through the Sacrament of Communion and in the friendship that you share with the participant. ■



I would like to invite anyone to become a volunteer for this ministry. At present, we don't have many homebound members who are requesting communion in their homes, but we anticipate that this will change in the future. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, I'm the coordinator and would be happy to train you. We have home communion kits that the church provides that contain wine and communion wafers and the service is printed in large print booklets for you to take to the participants. The goal is to visit once a month if possible. You personally contact your Home Communion participant and schedule the time.

If you are interested in receiving Home Communion, you can reach out to the pastors, Mary Ellen Helms or me and we will get the visits set up for you.



CONNECTION FOR MOMS

by Karen Vance

Kate Reed, a mom of three, ages 9, 7 and 3, says she has always been a quiet person and was intimidated at first about joining a group, but then she made a friend in the pick-up line at POP Kids School. They agreed – I'll join if you join. That's when she became a part of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) at Prince of Peace.

Jennifer Hendren also describes herself as shy, but she's found herself leading the MOMS Next group – a program that's new this year at Prince of Peace for moms with children in first grade through high school. "It's about finding your tribe," she says. "Joining MOPS and then continuing on in MOMS Next is the best decision I ever made. I felt a nudge from God. Even if you're shy, there's always someone you can talk to who understands. We're all going through similar things, and we can be there to support each other, to help each other or to say, 'I've been there before.'"

MOPS International was founded in 1973 as a way for parents to share their lives and parenting journey and has mothers of children from infant to kindergarten. MOMS Next started to host mothers after their youngest child graduates from kindergarten.



There are groups affiliated with churches and other organizations in 68 countries, and both groups follow a Christian curriculum provided by the MOPS International organization to equip mothers and provide a forum for learning, fellowship and service.

MOPS meets at POP monthly during the school year on the second Thursday of each month. Childcare is provided. MOMS Next meets at POP on the first Wednesday evening of each month.

Kate says that this year more than ever, the kind of fellowship and community MOPS and MOMS Next offers is necessary. "After COVID, we all forgot how to be social and how to communicate and make new friends," Kate says. "I don't ever want anyone to feel intimidated. I want each person to feel like they are wanted and they are welcomed."

"WE'RE IN THE TRENCHES, AND IT CAN BE VERY ISOLATING,"
SAYS KATE REED ABOUT THE PHASE OF LIFE SHE'S
CURRENTLY LIVING IN – MOTHERHOOD.

Prince of Peace's emphasis on connecting in community is being lived in the conversations that happen each month in these groups.

"It's really a sign from God that we're doing the right things," Jen says. "We're connecting and talking



about things that really matter, learning new things, and we're also going out and serving in the community together."

Meetings include discussions among the moms at each table, a speaker and sometimes a craft or project. Each table group is encouraged to meet and connect outside of the monthly meeting as well. "We build deeper relationships – at dinner, with playdates," Kate says. "We also do a lot of service projects, like putting together (Operation Christmas Child) Samaritan boxes or volunteering at Matthew 25 Ministries."



For MOMS Next, Jen appreciates the opportunity to continue with that fellowship as her children grow up. She has a freshman in high school and a first grader.

"As a group, we're very much on the same page as POP. We want to serve in the community, and we want to do things together," she says. "We don't want anyone to feel left out." ■



MEET OUR NEW STAFF

Get to know the newest staff here at Prince of Peace and be sure to say hi the next time you see them around. Maybe you can connect over a love of board games with Mary Ellen and Tanner, or ask Hannah for her family's cranberry Jell-O recipe, or even compare hiking stories with Becky!

by Stephanie Vock

Tanner Stinnett Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Tanner has been part of the Prince of Peace community since he was baptized by Pastor Tom in 1998. As the new Director of Youth and Family Ministry, it's only fitting that his first official day on staff was the first day of the 2022 Discipleship Tour this past July.



What is your favorite part about your position on staff?

I'd say working with people that have known me since I was a little kid.

What has been your favorite place you've traveled?

Asheville, NC - for the Discipleship Tour. I loved going to Asheville because it was amazing to see many of the adult guides that

were also on the D-Tours and retreats when I was a student in the youth group at POP.

What is your favorite way to connect in community at POP?

Seeing everybody during and after worship on Sundays!

How do you like to spend your free time away from POP?

Playing in a volleyball and soccer league, as well as hanging out with my family and playing video and board games.

Do you have a favorite POP event?

The rummage is sale is my favorite event because you never know what kind of items you're going to find there. Some of my favorite (ugly) sweaters I got from the rummage sale and still wear to this day.

What is your favorite Thanksgiving side dish?

GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE!

What are you most excited about for your new position on staff?

Getting to coordinate all the retreats and future Discipleship Tours. I can't wait to plan and lead the future D-Tours and retreats because as a student I had so much fun while on them, now it's my turn to be the person that makes those trips so memorable.

What is your favorite Halloween candy?

Butterfingers and/or Kit Kats.

Anything else you want to share about you or your position at POP?

I will say that I recently got my hair cut by the high school students here at POP and it was quite the look!



Hannah Bockbrader

Pastoral Intern

Pastor Hannah joined Prince of Peace in August for a year-long internship.

What is your favorite part about your position on staff?

I like that because I'm the intern, I get to try a little bit of everything! I get to lead and follow, work with all ages, preside, preach, learn administrative work, help plan events...the list goes on! I love being able to observe and learn and grow with all the different ministries and communities at POP.

What has been your favorite place you've traveled?

Miyajima Island in the Hiroshima Bay in Japan. All of Japan was incredible, but this island had it all! There was hiking up the mountain, a big shrine on the water's edge, tons of maple trees, specialty cakes shaped like maple leaves, and small deer that freely wander the island. I asked if I could stay on the island forever, but the professor leading the trip said that meant paperwork for him so no.

What is your favorite way to connect in community at POP?

I love meeting people one on one or in small groups, visiting local coffee shops, restaurants, or parks. It's a fun way to get to know people, plus I love learning about the places people like and how they interact with their communities. I love learning about what makes a place unique, whether it's the people, the location itself, or the culture that has been created there!

How do you like to spend your free time away from POP?

I love being outside (despite my allergies)! Fall is my favorite season, and I love feeling the warmth of the sun and admiring all the colors of the leaves. When I'm inside, I like cooking and baking, writing letters, taking naps, and spending time with my two cats, Hobbes and Spirit, and my chinchilla, Phil.

Do you have a favorite POP event?

Not yet! I am looking forward to any event that involves the community. I love seeing the traditions churches have at Christmas and Easter, so I am excited to be a part of those services at POP.

What is your favorite Thanksgiving side dish?

My family has a special "Bockbrader Cranberry Jell-O" that is ONLY made for Thanksgiving dinner. Just some cranberries, pineapple, and some red gelatin (raspberry is best but strawberry is acceptable), and you have a side that's sweet, tart, and all around wonderful.



What are you most excited about for your new position on staff?

I am most excited to build relationships and become a part of this Christ-centered community. I'm looking forward to learning about this small part of the greater Body of Christ. I'm also excited to be doing ministry in a different capacity than ministry at the seminary. While I do love being in class, I was ready for a change of pace after a year and a half of online pandemic learning.

What is your favorite Halloween candy?

I'm that lame person that likes Heath and Mounds bars, but I am also a staunch believer that it's not a holiday until you get your thematically shaped Reese's peanut butter cups. For Halloween, they are, of course, pumpkin shaped.

Anything else you want to share about you or your position at POP?

I am incredibly thankful to be able to have my internship at POP, and I look forward to the rest of my time here! Thank you all so much for making this a welcoming learning experience!

Becky Lange

Parish Administrator

Becky and her family first came to Prince of Peace in 2016 when they moved from Minnesota. She officially joined the POP staff this past September.

What is your favorite part about your position on staff?

I think becoming more familiar with the weekly readings and worship materials leading up to weekly sermons helps everything resonate more, which is fun. I am also grateful for the flexibility that allows me to work part-time, be home with my kids in the mornings and evenings, and volunteer at their schools. The timing was perfect as this is the first year my kids are both doing full days now. Not to mention, I love that I get to spend my time working for a meaningful organization and learning more about how the church building also serves the community by offering a meeting space for other organizations.

What has been your favorite place you've traveled?

I love outdoor adventures – each region is so unique, but being in the mountains in Colorado has probably been the most breathtaking place I have been. This summer we spent time hiking in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine and they were also amazing places to visit!

What is your favorite way to connect in community at POP?

We have elementary age kids and are so thankful for the amazing children's ministry programs at POP through Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, etc.

How do you like to spend your free time away from POP?

I love running, reading, and spending time outside.

Do you have a favorite POP event?

I love Christmas and Easter services – just seeing the church overflowing with people is always so heartwarming.

What is your favorite Thanksgiving side dish?

Obviously, the stuffing!

What are you most excited about for your new position on staff?

I love meeting and getting to know so many members who come in the building to volunteer or for events during the week that I had not previously met or known very well.

What is your favorite Halloween candy?

Twix unity!



Mary Ellen Helms

Director of Care and Connection

Mary Ellen and her family came to Prince of Peace in 1996. She joined the church staff part-time in 2008 and joined full-time in 2010. While Mary Ellen may be a familiar face on our staff roster, she recently took on a new role as the Director of Care and Connection!

What is your favorite part about your position on staff?

I love Prince of Peace and the many people who make their way through the building on a weekly basis. My favorite thing I get to do is sit down with individuals and see what brings their faith alive – service, Bible Study, worship, or relationships!

What has been your favorite place you've traveled?

You'll always find me happy around water... I have a soft spot in my heart for Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, and I love the beach we visited in Haiti! One great big ocean!

What is your favorite way to connect in community at POP?

I love our POP events! Trunk or Treat, Empty Bowls, daily devotions with the staff, there's so many great ways to stay in touch with this place!

How do you like to spend your free time away from POP?

Currently I'm a student at Xavier working on my Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling – so that is taking a lot of my free time! When I'm not there or here, I love spending time with my family and friends. Oh, and I am a board game geek!

Do you have a favorite POP event?

Pie Night on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, what is your favorite Thanksgiving side dish?

Stuffing!

What are you most excited about for your new position on staff?

Experiencing and sharing the love of God through community.

What is your favorite Halloween candy?

Reese's peanut butter cups

What else would you like to share with the POP community?

I just want to say thank you for being a part of this community! You make up the Body of Christ at Prince of Peace and we are better because you are here. ■





WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

A Bible Study by Pastor Tom Stroeh

We were a family of hikers. We trekked many trails in parks, hills, and woodlands around the country. Occasionally, we would reach a point in our hike where the trail divided. Sometimes there would be a sign to guide us, sometimes we'd ask, "Where do we go from here?" It's a question all healthy congregations ask themselves periodically. Believing the amazing truth that God seeks to work in and through us, we want to live according to God's will. We want to live out the Prince of Peace vision to live and love like Jesus.

1. We are called to grow in faith through study and worship.

a. Bible study (personal and corporate) gives us the basic content of faith through the teachings of Jesus, and the words of others on their journey of believing. An aspect of such study includes learning the gems of scripture. There are countless examples of people in stressful situations for whom learned passages (like Psalm 23, Philippians 4:11b-13, Matthew 11:28-30) enabled them to deal with the challenges of life. (Verses which sustain me daily are Lamentations 3:22-24.) Do you have a favorite "gem"?

b. Corporate worship gathers us for prayer, praise, and thanksgiving around the Word and sacraments. (Psalm 98, 103:1-5, Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 14:22-24). It reminds us that we are part of a family of faith, imperfect, certainly, but deeply loved by God.

c. The truth - the powerful reality people most need is the grace (unearned and undeserved) of God (Romans 3:21-25). How have you experienced grace?

d. One of the biggest challenges in our busy life is to take the time for quiet and reflection. At the time of greatest stress, Jesus goes off by himself for prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-36). It's life-giving for us to have a balance of being and doing. St. Paul could not have done the kingdom work he did without a life of prayer and reflection (e.g. Philippians 4:4-9). How are you cultivating that balance?

2. The connections we have with one another are essential to our growth in Christ.

a. Consistently in the New Testament the word "you" is used in the plural. It's assumed that Christians live in community with one another (e.g. John 15:16, Hebrews 13:20-21, etc.).

b. From one generation to another, faith is to be instilled (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

c. We can affirm the spiritual gifts God has given to one another (Romans 1:8-12, Ephesians 4:11a, 12-13). This affirmation often is cultivated in small groups.



3. A constant question for us is, "How can we best serve God in our community, country and world?"

a. Jesus set the example for us when he knelt and washed the disciples' feet, John 13:1-17).

b. The startling and blessed reality is that when we serve others, we are serving Christ (Matthew 25:31-45). Therefore, an ongoing question we must ask is, "who are the least of these?" Also, does this mean that often we're not bringing Christ to others as much as we're called to recognize his presence in others? This implies that we are to do more intentional listening than speaking. Is there someone to whom God is calling you to listen to their personal story? What are the biblical implications of a ministry like the LIFE Food Pantry?

Our ministry is to extend to the world. (John 3:16-17). The sponsorship of refugees from abroad and our support of the Haitian Timoun Foundation are two obvious examples of this ministry. Our membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) links us to the needs of our Cincinnati Conference, the Southern Ohio Synod, and outreach agencies like Lutheran Disaster Relief and ELCA World Hunger.



4. Underlying each of the above are these assumptions:

a. Through the resurrection of Jesus, God has assured us that the powers of sin and death are defeated.. When we embody the Good News of the Gospel, we give hope to the world. Hence, love and life win.

b. God offers the gifts of the Spirit to all with no exceptions. Our faith community is enriched when acceptance, welcome, grace, and dignity are extended to everyone. Hence, all means all.

c. God has generously blessed us so that we can share our whole selves with each other. This generosity, this grace of God, transforms our lives. Hence, generosity is contagious. ■

God's work. Our hands.

by Leslie Green

Serving the World as We Grow Together as a Church

Do you feel that you have ever gotten a glimpse of heaven? Perhaps you were marveling at a sunset or holding a newborn baby, singing a favorite song in worship, hiking in the woods, or gathering around a table with family? In these precious, almost perfect moments, God feels closer than ever and heaven breaks through just a little.

When hundreds of people from our church family came together in September in matching shirts to love and serve our neighbors, I saw glimpses of heaven right here in Cincinnati. Friends laughed and joked in the kitchen while they prepared food for others. Families new to our congregation served on projects alongside those who have been a part of our community for many years. Volunteers stretched themselves by helping at places they'd never before visited. At one site, 10 people from one extended family all served together. In another location, kids took shelter cats to get fresh air outside in a stroller ride. If taking a cat for a ride in a stroller isn't a sign of heaven, then I don't know what is!

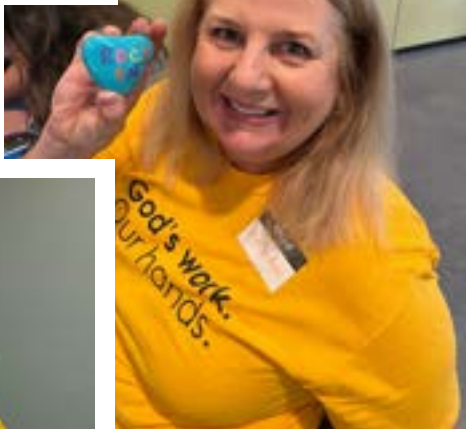
The people of Prince of Peace were striving to be the hands and feet of God by working toward justice and meeting real needs in a hurting world. In doing so, we brought heaven a little closer to earth.

10 years of service

Each year, our dedicated weekend of service - God's Work. Our Hands. - falls the weekend after Labor Day. It's a pause between summer and fall activities to do something out of the norm and dare to share God's love in new ways. This year we celebrated 10 years of GWOH, and proudly proclaimed that the people of this congregation continue to value serving together as we grow as a church!

In all, 225 Prince of Peace community members, including 65 kids and youth, served in diverse ways. Thanks to our collective and ever-increasing attempts to live successfully with Covid-19, our number of volunteers increased by about 50 people over last year. The combined number of all hours served in just this one weekend was approximately 500 hours!





Connected in Christ

For many, the signature gold t-shirts are one of the main hallmarks of God's Work. Our Hands. Did you know that ELCA congregations all over the country wear this same gold shirt? In fact, one of our former members continued to wear her Prince of Peace gold shirt when she moved to California and served with her new congregation. The shirts are merely a symbol, but they show our connectedness with all of the nearly 9,000 ELCA congregations across the country. For one weekend each year, thousands of ELCA members engage in the church's dedicated day of service to help make a positive change in their communities, build and deepen relationships, and share God's love.

Many needs, many ways to serve

The needs of our world are so great that it can sometimes feel overwhelming. But where the need is great, the opportunities to make a difference are also great. This year, members of our congregation served in 25 different locations – 19 out and about in the greater Cincinnati area and 6 in our own church building.

There were service opportunities in almost all corners of the city. For example, in Loveland we maintained trails at a learning garden and helped a local senior citizen with exterior home maintenance. In Mount Auburn and Lower Price Hill, we served dinner to young adults overcoming homelessness and wrapped diapers. We planted native trees in Mason and maintained clean facilities at an after-school center in Morrow. Pleasant Plain found us clearing weeds in a service-dog training center while in Batavia we crafted dog toys. We worked to sort emergency supplies in Blue Ash and shared free laundry supplies and prayer in Sharonville. Finally, in West Chester and Mt. Healthy we sorted clothing for foster families and helped care for an urban farm.

Our own building was also buzzing with projects for the good of others. In the kitchen, a group of 12 people prepared 400 peanut butter and jelly or ham and cheese sandwiches for Our Daily Bread, a soup kitchen and social center in Over the Rhine. Another group packed 70 autumn-themed craft kits that will help brighten the experience of families staying at Ronald McDonald House near

Cincinnati Children's Hospital. In another room, people of a wide range of ages explored their creative side by painting cheerful designs on rocks that will be placed in a rock garden for foster families at Hope's Closet.

New sites

While some service locations have been mainstays that we return to year after year, we were pleased to welcome two brand new sites to our line-up this year.

Tiger Birthday Bundle is a local non-profit started in spring 2022 by Erica Riggall of Loveland. The goal is to make sure each child in need in Loveland will receive a gift for their birthday. Erica has partnered with Loveland Schools and LIFE Food Pantry to help identify kids in need and distribute

the gifts to them. For God's Work. Our Hands., volunteers wrapped many gifts for one of the first distributions this fall.

New Life Furniture Thrift Store opened June 2022. The store raises funds to support the work of New Life Furniture Bank in furnishing homes for people that are moving into their own housing after difficult circumstances. For God's Work. Our Hands. Volunteers sorted books, displayed incoming merchandise on shelves, sprayed and tagged upholstered items, and tidied the warehouse area while also having fun and fellowship with each other.

Flexible opportunities

Service projects that were flexible in time and place allowed more people to participate, including people with health and safety concerns or busy schedules. Around 150 households aided LIFE Food Pantry by shopping for some critically-needed items. We can estimate that POP donated at least 2,250 food items, paper products, and personal hygiene items through our collection drive. More volunteers who were able to serve on-site then sorted, boxed and delivered everything directly to the food pantry shelves just down the road.

In another flexible project we focused globally. Volunteers shopped for and assembled school kits (notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, etc.) and personal care kits (towel, soap, comb, toothbrush, etc.) that will be distributed through Lutheran World Relief to places around the world that are coping with poverty, disaster or conflict. Kits from recent years' collections at POP have been sent to countries including Lebanon and Nicaragua. These tangible kits offer comfort to those suffering and express love to our neighbors in need across the globe.

A World Restored

Like so many of our experiences at Prince of Peace, God's Work. Our Hands. is about the intersection of people and God. It's about opening our eyes to those who are suffering in our world. And it's about the people of our entire church coming together to be a witness of God's love by meeting real needs. As a congregation we look forward to many more years of service so that we may help work toward a more just community and world, one that more closely resembles heaven here on earth. ■



FOR ALL THE SAINTS

We celebrate the new saints of the church who were baptized
and remember the lives of the saints who entered the
church triumphant since June 2020.

Baptized

Anneliese Amstutz
Rayna Amstutz
Rosalie Amstutz
Lilly Berry
Sloane Berry
Brynley Bobo
Reid Bowerman
Carter Burkhardt
Brekken Cappelletti
Hudson Day
Ty Dickinson
Jackson Dooley
Paisley Downs

Norah Dreyer
Liesel Finlay
Kira Fogle
Luke Hampton
Rees Hannah
Webb Hannah
Casey Harriman
Jude Hendrickson
George Karle
Christopher Kephart
Katrina Kephart
Colton Koppenhafer
Garrett Laibe

Emelia Lipschutz
Sadie Longhenry
Dawson Niezgoda
Adelynn Nussbaum
Jackson Obringer
Olivia Obringer
Brooks Petersen
Avery Rohm
Nellie Scheeler
LoRena Spencer
Matthew Vock
Wyatt Vock
Elias Weimer

In Memoriam

Ollie Binford
Linda Boehner
Fred Goehring
Karen Johnson
Stan Kephart

Sheryl Kuritar
James LeVan
Jeanne Martin
Jerry Martin
Chuck Miker
Margaret Miller

Ervin Palmer
Dorothy Proudfit
Rudi Rieger
Judy Schmeling
Lila Zickuhr

ON THE HORIZON...

Join us for these upcoming events

Special Worship Times

Thanksgiving Worship & Pie Night - Tuesday, November 22 at 7 PM
Advent Midweek Prayer Service - Wednesdays, November 30, December 7 & 14 at 7 PM
Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24 - 4 PM Family Service, 6, 9, 11 PM
Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25 - 10:30 AM *One Service
New Year's Eve, Saturday, December 31 - *No 5 PM service
New Year's Day, Sunday, January 1 - 10:30 AM *One Service

Sunday, November 13 - Lunch & Play for families with young children (11:30 AM)

Sunday, November 13 - Jacob's Porch dinner at OSU (4 PM)

Sunday, November 20 - Advent Breakfast (9:45 AM)

All are invited to begin the Advent season celebrating and learning about the four gifts we receive throughout the season: Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace. Enjoy time together and spend some time creating your own Advent Wreath, making an ornament, grabbing an Advent Devotional and much more. A light breakfast will be provided.

Tuesday, November 22 - Thanksgiving Celebration followed by Pie Night (7 PM)

Celebrate the fruits of the land and the fruits of our lives, gifts given to us by God's generous hand. We will be hosting our Annual Pie Night when we join in thankful fellowship in the Gathering Space following 7 PM worship.. Anyone can bring a pie (pre-cut) to share and EVERYONE is invited to eat dessert!

Wednesdays, November 30, December 7 & 14 - Soup Suppers (6:15 PM) and Advent Evening Prayer (7 PM)

Come together in community and share a meal with one another, then enjoy an evening of quiet contemplation and sing songs of expectancy and hope during brief prayer services at 7 PM on Wednesdays in Advent in the Sanctuary.

Friday-Sunday, December 2-4 - Senior High Retreat

All high school students are encouraged to attend the retreat at The Convent in Norwood. Be ready for a fun weekend of serving, playing games, worshipping and relaxing together as a youth group. Invite a friend and come ready to experience this community in a whole new way.

Friday - Saturday, December 9-10 - Middle School Lock-in at POP

Sunday, December 11 - Decorate the Gathering Space for Christmas (9:45 AM)

Sunday, December 18 - No-Prep Christmas Pageant (9:45 AM)

Come to the Sanctuary at 9:45 AM and bring out your inner child as we sing along to favorite Christmas hymns. Everyone will have a chance (if they'd like) to take part in the pageant that will tell the story of Jesus' birth. All you have to do is show up and pick out a supplied costume - the narrator will take it from there!

Saturday, December 24 - Christmas Eve Worship Services (4, 6, 9 and 11 PM)

Celebrate the birth of our Savior at Christmas Eve worship! Each service will include candlelight and hymns. The 4 PM Family Service will have a child-focused message. At 6 PM, we will feature the children's choir, Joyful Noise and there will be a Children's Worship Activity during the sermon. The Adult Choir and Bells of Peace will perform at 9 and 11 PM.

Sunday, January 8 - Christian Education Returns (9:45 AM)

