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connections



STORIES OF GRACE & PEACE | PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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PASTOR'S NOTE

In this edition of *Connections*, we explore the theme of “Life-Changing Hope” and the ways in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ changes everything. Read the words of the Prophet Jeremiah:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

—Jeremiah 29:11

Maintaining “a spirit of Hope” in today’s world can often feel challenging. The world is anything but perfect, and we all know the realities of suffering, injustice, and pain that plague humanity and the earth God created. Yet, as people of faith we are called to maintain the ethic of hope in the midst of life’s trials.

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

—Romans 5:3-5

Clinging to hope is one of the hallmarks of the Body of Christ. Because of God’s redeeming action through Jesus Christ, and the eternal promise of life and love to all who believe, we hold onto hope that any present trials will not have the final answer in our lives. Hope – or trust in God’s promised future, is contagious. My prayer is that as you read reflections and stories from our community on the following pages, you too will find renewed resolve to cling to your faith in the crucified and risen Lord.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Connections*, and I pray that it offers you inspiration and hope for the living of these days.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Lorne

A HOUSE OF HOPE

BY ADRIENNE WINFIELD

I was asked to write an article on Hope. So I questioned.... What is hope? Did I really know the meaning? According to the dictionary, Hope as a noun is “a feeling of expectation and desire for certain things to happen”, and as a verb, it means “to strive for a wish, want something to happen”.

I considered this concept. In its simplistic form, “hope” can be big or small, for the young or old; it does not discriminate or judge. We have all heard the expression, “What is a world without hope?” I am sure we can all recall a time where we had the desire for certain things to happen, whether it was for a raise or promotion at work, an ill relative to recover to good health, a special gift for our birthday, or simply the cute boy or girl at school to talk to us.

So I chose to reflect on a time where the promise of hope had a transformational impact on me, the young adults of Prince of Peace, and the lives of people in need.

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In June 2019, nearly 60 high school youth and adult guides embarked on the week-long D-Tour to Baltimore, Maryland. Partnering with many organizations throughout the Baltimore area, the youth set out every day in service to the area communities.

The mission? To Live & Love Like Jesus...

- by growing in a life of discipleship and exploring personal faith journeys.
- by rejoicing in the collective power of our youth at Prince of Peace, and the difference they can make in this world.
- by restoring faith through serving communities in need.
- by sharing God's love through kindness, hard-working hands and unconditional love.
- by providing Hope for a better tomorrow, as well as a better today.

On our first day of service, my service group and Kim Donaldson's service group spent the day at Harford Family House. It was a dreary and somewhat chilly day in June, with non-stop damp and rain, heavy at times – a day when most of us



would have rather stayed in bed. When we arrived at Harford Family House, a small apartment complex with about eight units, we were greeted by Tony Mackenzie, Director of Facilities, who welcomed us into the main office with an appreciative smile and explained the mission of Harford Family House and its importance to the surrounding community.

Have you ever hoped for a place to live, with a roof over your head to protect you from the weather? Have you ever hoped for your own bed, with sheets, blankets and pillow to keep you warm and comforted at night? Have you ever hoped for a bathroom where you can take a warm shower, brush your teeth with your own toothbrush, and have a cabinet stocked with toiletries and towels? Most of us are fortunate enough to never know that feeling. For those who are homeless, however, this is not the case. Homelessness is often hopelessness, a lack of faith and the inability to see a way out.

Harford Family House of Aberdeen, Maryland is an organization founded to help families and unaccompanied young adults who are experiencing homelessness transition into permanent housing. Their mission, through housing support and resources, is to help families regain their independence within a year.



After hearing about the organization, we descended the stairs to the basement of the main building of Harford Family House where all their donations are stored. From overflowing shelves of toiletries, laundry detergent and cleaning supplies, cutlery and pots and pans, bedding, shower curtains and towels, small appliances such as coffee makers and microwaves to larger furniture such as beds and mattresses, kitchen tables and chairs, this is where it all began. Our job that day as volunteers was to help Tony clean and set up a small 2-bedroom home for a mother and her two young children. We were to choose all the things necessary to set up an apartment or home when you have nothing to begin with. Tony explained the process, and a seemingly overwhelming task was made easier by a 'pick-list' of all the suggested items that were needed to set up a fully furnished home for its new family.

The young adults made quick work of the task, by separating into teams to select items for specific rooms of the house. Many of them had never thought about ALL of the items needed to set up a home, and for others, this was an opportunity to learn what they may need to take to college with them.



They put their love into carefully selecting bedding in colors and styles that would be appropriate for a mother and her children. They selected stuffed animals and decorative pillows for the children's beds to provide comfort to them during their transition, as well as games to put in the closet so they would have something to play with. With a vision in



mind, they picked the best table and chairs for the kitchen, pots, pans, dishes, cups and silverware so that this family could share many meals together in a warm and safe place off of the streets. They chose sofas, chairs, end tables and lamps to welcome them home each time they would walk through the front door. Tony and the kids loaded the delivery truck with all the essentials for the first trip, and we all followed behind, caravan style, just a few blocks away to the house that we were to transform.

As former residents had moved out and left some debris behind and the house had been newly painted, some clean-up work was in order after unloading the truck. Again, the kids separated into teams and tackled all rooms of the house: vacuuming and washing floors, cleaning refrigerators and stoves, wiping down blinds and windows and scrubbing bathroom showers and toilets. We listened to some music, worked together as a team, and joked that they probably didn't clean this well in their own homes! Beds were made and assembled. Furniture was arranged in the living room. Medicine cabinets and linen closets were stocked with the essentials. Pots and pans, dishes and silverware filled the cabinets in the kitchen. Decorative items like clocks, lamps and pillows added finishing touches.

As we spent time with Tony that day, we saw his passion for what he was doing, and the ability to help change lives of the homeless. Apologetic at times for his lack of energy and needing to take breaks, and not having the strength to be able to help move the heavy furniture, we learned that he had cancer and had been undergoing chemotherapy treatments. He had a doctor's appointment later that week and was hoping for good news, that the treatment plan he was on was working. He was extremely grateful for the help that we provided that day, as without volunteer help, he would have had to set up the home himself. He demonstrated to us the meaning of selflessness by putting aside his problems to be able to assist others in need.

We made several trips back and forth as the teens wanted to get the house "just right". And back they went to the basement to collect more items – things we forgot, switching out wrong-sized bedding, or for decorative items like clocks, lamps and pillows to add finishing touches.



Toward the end of the day, a small group went back to the house one last time to finish cleaning, collect the trash, and do a final walk-through. When we were done, as I was the last one out of the house, I stopped and looked around. My heart was filled with pride as I took in the transformation. What had started out as an empty house, with dirty floors and rooms that echoed, was transformed into a clean, inviting, move-in ready home. Not only had we filled the home with material things, but we filled it with hope. Hope for its new family to begin their journey toward independence.

As I turned out the overhead light and shut the front door one last time, I said a silent prayer of hope and whispered "Welcome Home" for the new family moving in. ■

"For I know the plans
I have for you,"
declares the Lord.
"Plans to prosper you
and not to harm you.
Plans to give you
hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11

The Summer 2020 Discipleship Tour will return to Baltimore, Maryland • www.popluther.org/dtour.



ADVENT MISSION PROJECT

BY JULIE SKARE



"La Esperanza en la Vida Eterna"
(The Hope in Eternal Life)

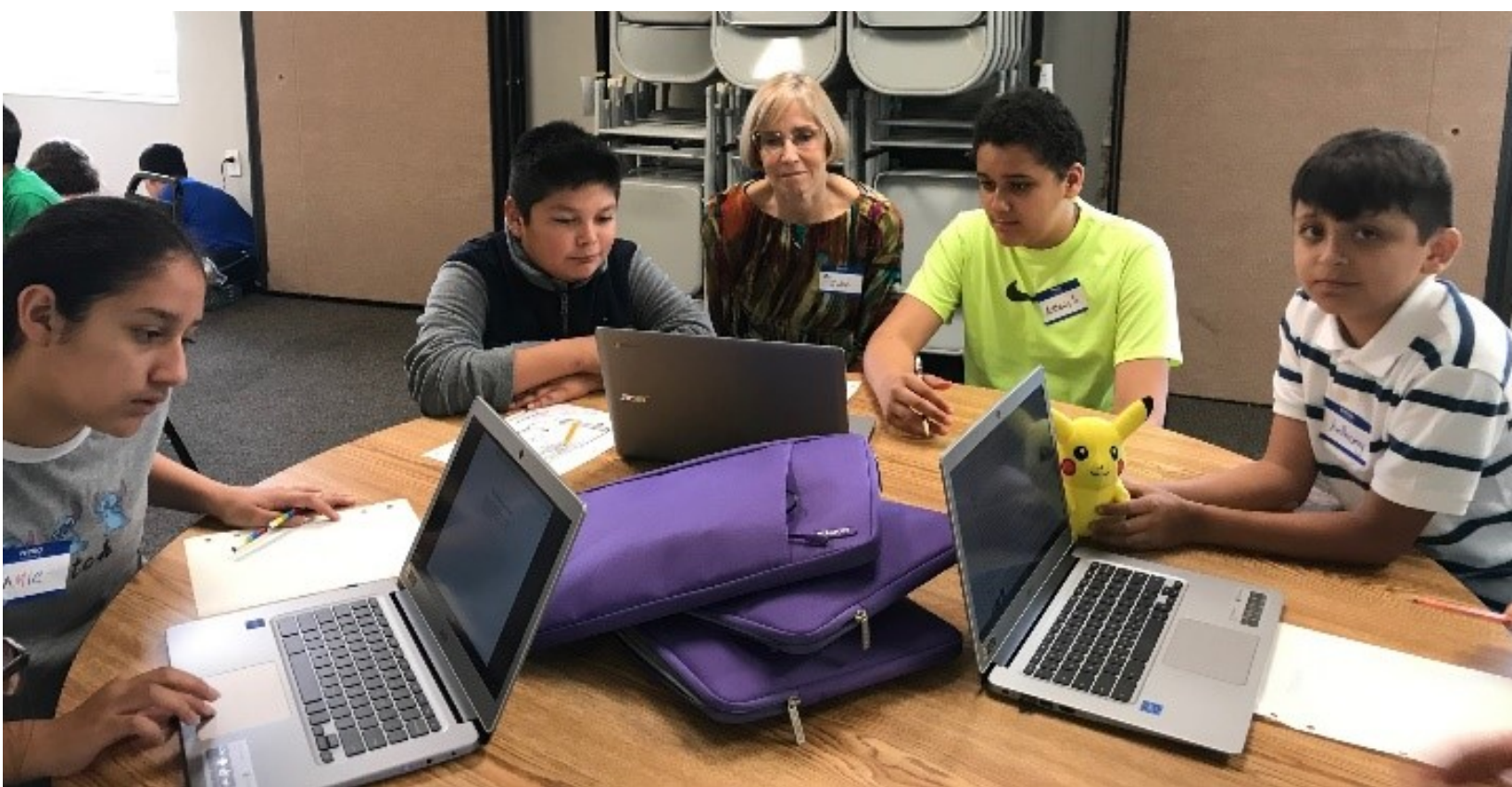
Blessings to all of you as we are experiencing the Advent season and reflecting on God's gift of the birth of our Savior. This year our Advent Mission Project is to share "La Esperanza en la Vida Eterna" (The Hope in Eternal Life) with our brothers and sisters in faith at VEIL. What is VEIL? VEIL (Vida Eterna-Iglesia Luterana — Eternal Life Lutheran Church) began as an outreach ministry of the Southern Ohio Synod in late 2010. By 2011, the ELCA and the Synod assigned this ministry as a Latino mission church with Deaconess Carmen Colón-Brown as its pastor. Members of VEIL come from many different countries, which is unique as a Latino congregation; this speaks highly of the community. VEIL meets for worship, fellowship, and study at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in West Chester. They have grown from a small, hesitant group who knew little of the Bible or God's grace to a cohesive group, hungry for the Gospel, participating in many aspects of worship as lay participants and open to Christian education. VEIL is a vibrant congregation with engaged youth.

Our Advent Mission Project supports the youth of VEIL through their education and faith formation programs; our goal is to raise \$5000.

A key youth program we are supporting is the Homework Fellowship Program which consists of an Annual Summer Science Camp, Weekly Service Learning (tutoring/homework help), and a new robotics program.

Last year our Advent Mission Project provided funding for the Summer Science Camp focused on climate change and weather. The teachers, Emily Hoops (Good Shepherd) and Autumnlee Brown (Lord of Life), were phenomenal! We were also able to have Science Mayhem (Lisa Bacu of Lord of Life) present experiments three times. Pastor Alex Hoops (Good Shepherd) presented engaging Christian Education via caricature drawings of Bible stories. I enjoyed every minute of my volunteer time there! It was a great opportunity to meet some great and very eager children. Please keep this in mind as a volunteer opportunity for next summer. Right now during the school year, you can volunteer for tutoring/homework help on Sunday from 2:00-4:00 pm. The children are in elementary grades, needing assistance with reading or basic math. There is no need to speak Spanish, and you can come just once or as often as you like. Contact me if you're interested (julie.skare@gmail.com or 513-543-4959).

An exciting new part of the VEIL Homework Fellowship program is the robotics program. In this program, a team of students design and build a robot that can complete a series of specific challenges. Some teams participate in robotics competitions where they develop and program a robot, adhering to list of preset rules and regulations. To create a competition-ready robot, students use a number of soft and hard STEM skills (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Creativity and problem-solving are essential in building a robot or robotic

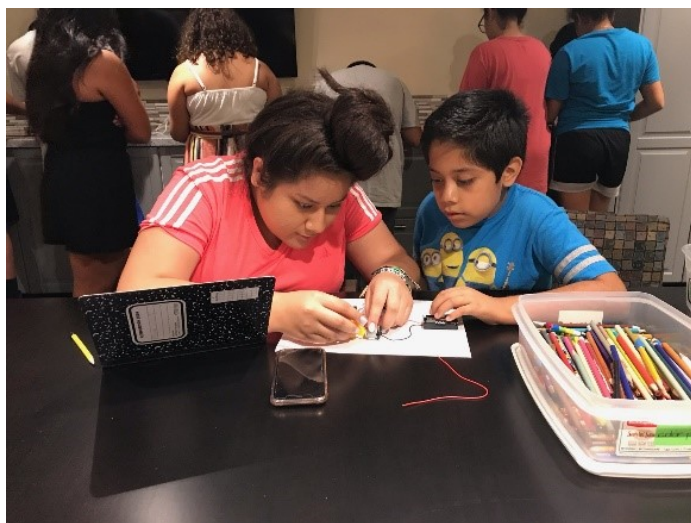


system which can complete obstacles. This program teaches and requires skills which colleges and employers are seeking. Joining a robotics program/club can open the door to many scholarship opportunities for VEIL students. These educational support programs at VEIL have inspired and empowered several youth to go to college and strive for a better life for themselves and their families. This year VEIL blessed three of their youth who began their first year of college!

Faith formation for VEIL youth is also something that warrants high priority. Monetary donations from POP that exceed those needed to support the Homework Fellowship Program described above could be earmarked to support VEIL youth participation in the next ELCA Youth Gathering and in MYLE (Multicultural Youth Leadership Event) to be held in 2021. MYLE is a pre-event to the Gathering. It empowers young people of color and those whose primary language is not English. In 2018, the cost to send VEIL youth to the Gathering and MYLE was around \$6,700. About a third of this cost was covered by fundraising events at VEIL. The remainder came from generous donations from people like you.

Just a few final words about how important our financial support is for VEIL and its youth. As with all other ELCA mission congregations, ELCA and Southern Ohio Synod financial support of VEIL is incrementally reduced each year as they become self-sustaining. VEIL currently receives some financial support from other neighboring ELCA congregations, including POP, and such support is vital to VEIL. The vision for sustaining VEIL in the face of decreasing ELCA and Synod support is that VEIL will receive complete support by neighboring ELCA congregations within the next few years. This support will be critical since 98% of VEIL members live below the federal poverty level. In this

generation, this mission congregation cannot be financially self-sustaining. But we can faithfully support the VEIL youth in their education and faith formation and ask God to bless and guide our support so that it bears fruit for the future. ■



To keep up to date with the many activities of VEIL, visit <https://www.lol-lutheran.com/ministries/veil-latino-ministry>

SHINE!

BY JOEL PETERSEN

I want to thank everyone who attended the “Look To The Sky” event this past November. The evening was filled with stories from the film *Look to the Sky*, a heart-felt message from Annie Melvin and stories shared by several POP members. Following Annie’s story, we broke into small groups to discuss and share stories of hope we’ve seen in our own lives. Hearing the personal stories of hope amongst the participants was inspirational and reminded me of how blessed we are in our POP Community. We have a loving and caring community at Prince of Peace, supported by our staff, Stephen Ministers and our loving parishioners.

One of my favorite Bible verses on community is Luke 5: 18-25:

Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.



Faith motivates the paralytic's friends to bring him to Jesus to be healed, carrying him on a stretcher. Real hope is based in faith. Because of this abiding faith, the men confidently bring their friend to get real help. At times, we may not have the strength nor the ability to help ourselves. It is through the help of the community of saints that we are able to see the hope promised to us by God. I know there have been times in my life that I needed others to be my stretcher bearers. I thank God for those who have shown the boldness to be that hope for others, and I encourage each of us to faithfully look for opportunities to be someone's stretcher bearer.

“Faith lifts the soul,
Hope supports it,
Experience says it must
and Love says...let it be!”

- Elizabeth Ann Seton

The Sunday following the event, Pastor Jonathan shared in his sermon one of the stories from *Look to The Sky*. The story, about a little girl named Violet, teaches us that we can learn to take darkness in our world and turn it into light. We can then learn to find strength in our weakness. When Violet was 6 months old, she was diagnosed with retinoblastoma in addition to having a rare condition where every cell in her body could become cancerous at any time. Violet and her family could easily have been overcome by darkness. However, she and her family made a conscious choice to spread compassion and hope. After meeting many other kids who have been through similar experiences with illness, Violet

and her family were inspired to put together “blessing bundles” to deliver to sick children. While the blessing bundles included many of the child’s favorite toys and games, what was more important was the connection Violet made with the kids when she personally delivered them. She was the hope those children and their parents were looking for, even if just for that day. We are touched by Violet because deep down we know there is something in her that lives in us too. She is constantly struggling against something that threatens to swallow her whole, but the brightness of her light is magnificent. We are broken, too, and at times feel as though we can be consumed by darkness. However, each of us can be a Violet to others who are struggling. We can be that sliver of hope that will make someone smile, lighten their load or have their faith renewed. Even with all of the challenges we face in our world and our own lives, I believe in hope, and that the light and love that is within Violet also lies within each of us.

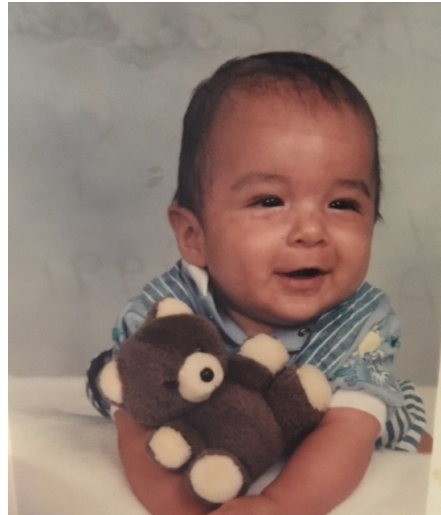
We give thanks for those who bring that light into the darkness and pray that we can find ways to be light and hope to others. ■

MY LIFE'S JOURNEY OF HOPE

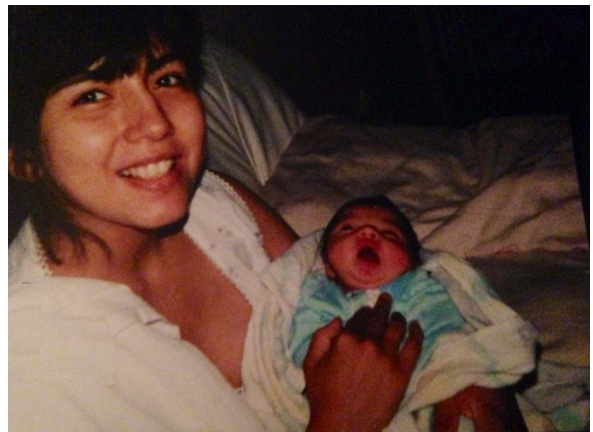
BY MELINDA GARZA MORAN

The Early Journey

As a senior in high school my life was filled with hope and expectation as I applied for colleges and prepared to graduate – the sky was the limit. I was active in my church's youth group and had dreams of going on a mission trip to Mexico after graduation. We had some missionaries visit our church and I remember thinking how cool it was to go to another country and tell others about Jesus. During the Christmas break, I met a guy through mutual friends. He was a year older than me and I was excited to meet someone new. Things got serious very fast and as I started my first year of college, I found myself pregnant. I had to make the life-changing decision to continue school or become a mom. Growing up as a child of divorced parents, the oldest of five siblings but an only child between my parents, I was always trying to fit into each family that I visited. Now I was facing the decision of having my own family and in my 18-year-old wisdom I decided to become a mom and a wife.



My future was about to take a hard turn fast. College books turned into diapers and bottles, but the love I felt when I held my son Eli was beyond words. His birth changed my life and gave me a new hope. At this time, my heart was being pulled toward Christ and I wanted more than ever to be the best mom I could be and to raise my son in a home that knew Jesus. I began attending a non-denominational church with my mom. This church was very different from the Catholic church that I attended as a child. It was charismatic and spirit-filled. They taught us about the power of the Holy Spirit but not a whole lot about grace. Three years later, I was blessed by the birth of my daughter, Alyssa. As I grew in my role as a mom and wife, my marriage was falling apart and at the age of 28, I found myself as a single mom of two.



The Next Path

During my divorce, I was very blessed to have the support of my church family. My kids and I spent a lot of time at church and I began volunteering in the children's ministry. I started in the nursery and continued until I had worked in every area. As our church grew, the Children's Ministry Pastor asked me to become the coordinator. He said that he prayed for a co-leader and God put me on his heart. I was the Children's Ministry Coordinator for several years. At that time, our church had over 3,000 members. I coordinated volunteers for seven services and worked with hundreds of volunteers and families. It was quite a journey! I learned so much about ministry, leading and serving. This was the first time that I felt a call on my life. My life was at peace, but I no idea that a storm was coming.





Hope in the Storm

At the age of 13, my son was “outed” by the discovery of a Mark Wahlberg photo under his bed. The photo was found by his step-mother. My ex-husband went into a rage. When I asked my son about it, he confessed to me that he thought he was bi-sexual. I struggled to accept that because it did not line up with my beliefs. How could God let my son be this way? I was serving all the time in church. I was obedient to HIM – it didn’t line up for me. A few days after my son took back his words, but I knew he was only saying it to make me feel better. For the next four years our relationship was strained and I lost my son. Not physically, but I lost my relationship with him. I didn’t know who he was, because I didn’t want to know who he was. I wanted him to be the image that I created in my mind and not who God created him to be.

A year later, my daughter went through an experience with depression and began to self-harm by cutting herself. I was so lost as a mother and thought that I was going to lose it. But God kept me sane and showed me that my children were God’s kids and God would always protect them. It was during this time that God showed me new things in my life. A new journey of hope was beginning.



New Journey of Hope

In 2008, after much prayer, I decided to leave my church. I felt there was a disconnect between where the church was going, and where God was leading me. I counseled with my pastor to make sure that it was God’s will for me to leave and not just my own. After counsel and prayer, he gave me his blessing to leave.

I began studying the Bible full force and took a Bible class in college. This class taught me about the history of the Bible and the Christian faith. This is when I first heard of Martin Luther. I was amazed with his journey. A man who believed that God could be accessible to all and not just the religious leaders. Someone who wanted to make the Word of God available for everyone to read. I never knew this part of the Christian history. I learned that the bible is sectioned into different books: history, poetry, the law, and the prophets. That the stories connect from the old testament to the new testament and how the early church just wanted to share the Good News of Christ. I also learned that as humans we have messed things up in the name of religion. We have used the Bible to condemn others and to spread hatred, discrimination, and death.

In the past, I had used the Bible to hurt others and to make my son feel like he was confused his about his identity. My eyes were open to the truth that I was a lost sheep. Luckily, my son gave me another chance to make it right. Another chance to admit that what he was telling me about himself was truth. I always knew in my heart that my son was gay. I just never wanted to admit it. I couldn’t admit it.



After learning more about myself and God’s Word, I felt a strong call on my life to serve God’s people. I began volunteering with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) community and met some amazing people. Many of them grew up in church and were rejected after they began to live as their

true, authentic selves. They were also outcast by their families and everyone they knew. Not only had their families failed to accept and love them unconditionally, so had the church. My heart broke every time I heard a story.

God's Revelation of Truth and Hope

One day I was volunteering at a transgender health fair and I had the privilege of meeting a young man who had just finished transitioning. He shared with me how his mom struggled to reconcile her Jewish faith with her transgendered teen. I remember feeling like that young man's mother when my son was a teen. At that moment, I heard a clear message in my spirit "these are the people that you need to serve" and as I thought about those words, it wasn't just the LGBTQ community but also the faith community and families that I was being called to serve. This was the second time that I felt the call to service.

As I continued my search for a new church home, I was invited by a coworker to visit his church. He said it was an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). I attended his church and I loved it! This particular ELCA church was very contemporary and I felt like I had the best of both worlds – my Catholic beginning and my evangelical foundation. This is the first church I attended that focused on God's grace, mercy and love who were inclusive and missional. I was finally home.



I attended the New Member class so I could join the church. After attending the class, the pastor asked me for feedback on the class. He also shared that he wanted to change it from a full-day class to a series of classes. He explained that he was sharing this with me because he knew of my background in developing programs at my previous church and wanted to know if I was interested in working on it with him. I agreed and it was an amazing journey! I had the opportunity to help develop and co-lead the small group sessions with him and his wife. I then began serving as a small group facilitator for women until I moved to Ohio in 2017.

My move to Ohio was the best move of my life. I found a cute little house in Loveland that had a beautiful church at the end of the street. I was excited to learn that it was also an ELCA church. God put me within walking distance of Prince of Peace. After attending the church for only a couple of months, I took a major step of faith and signed up for an out-of-country mission trip to Haiti. This had been a lifelong dream of mine and I was excited to take the plunge. It didn't take too long for me to begin serving at Prince of Peace. I began serving with the high school youth, the welcome team and serving as an assisting minister.

Once I found my new home church, I got connected to the LGBTQ community. I began volunteering with Safe and Supported Families (Lighthouse program), LoveBOLDY, and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). All of these organizations work with youth and families.

Finding Life-Changing Hope in Service

I have always felt a call on my life to serve Christ and his people. In the past I have answered this call through volunteer experiences and in my own personal life. I decided to research the possibility of working for the church professionally. After speaking to a church pastor, he shared with me that when he went into ministry, he had to financially prepare for the change since it was a second career for him. This would have also been a second career for me as well. This pastor spoke over me and confirmed the call upon my life that I have always felt. Not just to work in ministry but to lead a church. He prayed for God to show me direction and prepare me for the call. He prophesied that God was going to expand my territory to do great work in HIS name. A few weeks later, I left for Haiti.

Serving in Haiti was more than I could imagine. It was emotionally, physically, and spiritually life-changing. The main purpose of the mission trip was to hold a summer Bible camp for elementary and middle school aged children. While we were in Haiti, the citizens began to protest against the government over the hike in gas prices. The missionaries in my group were so blessed to have wise and obedient leaders, who sought God's wisdom and kept all of us safe.



The people of Haiti, especially the children, will forever be inscribed in my heart. It was hard for me to process the level of poverty in this country, as well as the level of joy the people showed each day. This experience opened my eyes to the realization that God is not limited and God's kingdom has no bounds. Witnessing hundreds of people all races, ethnicities, disabilities and languages come together and worship God – it was a picture of Heaven and it was breathtaking!

While in Haiti, we held nightly devotions and talked about different experiences. One evening, we shared how we have seen God in someone that was serving on the trip. Someone from our church talked about how she sees God in my interactions with others. My pastor agreed with her statement, and gave a word of prophecy. He said that God has a call on my life and I would be an amazing pastor. This was the second confirmation I received about God's calling on my life to serve as a minister of Word and Sacrament.



Jesus Christ my Hope

Jesus Christ has always been present in my life. HE is my source that keeps me strong and hopeful. Through the many ups and downs of motherhood and marriage, HE walked with me. In death and in life, HE gave me peace. During my children's life experiences, and as they accepted themselves for who God created them to be, Jesus was with me!

In 2013, when I survived a heart attack, Jesus showed me that it wasn't my time.... he has more for me to do. Jesus my Savior, who loves me just as much today as he loved me on the day he sacrificed himself. The call on my life has been strong for many years and God has been preparing me along the way. The things that I have experienced will help me be more compassionate and loving to all of HIS children. I believe that God uses our natural and spiritual gifts for his glory. My natural gift of administration will serve me greatly in my ministry work. As will the connection that I have with the LGBTQ community. I see now how all the pieces in my life have brought me to this next step in my journey of hope.



As I think back upon my life, it is awesome to see that I never walked alone. Christ has always walked with me, and at times, walked ahead of me preparing the way with each step I took. As long as I kept taking steps, he made the path. I thank God for my second chance at life and I plan to serve God and the church to my full capacity. ■

LIFE-CHANGING HOPE: a Bible Study

BY PASTOR TOM STROEH

Consider how in our daily lives we use the word “hope”. A sports fan says, “I hope our team wins the game this weekend.” An observer of a neighbor who keeps getting into trouble sighs and says, “It seems that he’s just a hopeless case.” With excitement, a child says, “I hope Mom buys that for me!” We look at the state of our world (the greater world or our own smaller, personal world: which may seem so disturbing and crazy that we might find it hard to look ahead and be “hopeful”). Therefore, it is helpful to consider **what scripture has to tell us about hope.**

Biblical hope is not simply wishful thinking. It’s not self-produced, but has its source in God. It is the result of trusting in the grace, the unconditional love, forgiveness, and faithfulness of God. A Bible verse which I often recite to myself as I get up and greet the new day is from Lamentations 3:22-24, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore, I will hope in him.’” (See also Psalm 38:7; Psalm 62:5; Psalm 71:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:16.)

Biblical hope is not just a desire for something good in the future but a strong and confident expectation of God’s redeeming work, dealing with things we cannot see or haven’t received, or both. (Romans 8:24 “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” If we deal only with what we can see, discouragement and despair come easily. But add to the situation what might be called the “God factor” and the possibilities for good are so much greater.

Knowing the Word of God enables us to have this hope. We learn the promises of God through our knowledge of scripture (Romans 15:4 “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” (See also Colossians 1:5-6; Psalm 119:105; Psalm 121; Psalm 139:7-12; John 14:25-27.)

Biblical hope is the gift empowered by the Holy Spirit. It results in the blessings of joy and peace. (Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (See also John 14:25-27.)

God’s gift of hope gives us strength, courage and boldness. (Psalm 31:24 “Be strong, and let your heart take courage all you who hope in [some translations say ‘wait for’] the LORD.” (See also Isaiah 40:28-31; Romans 8:31-39.)

This hope gives us endurance, comfort and confidence in the face of death. (1 Thessalonians 4:13 “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others who have no hope.” (See also John 3:16-17; Philippians 1:6; James 1:12.)

The Gospels give us only one relevant verse using the word “hope” (a quote from Isaiah 42 in Matthew 12:21 referring to the Servant in whose name “the Gentiles will hope”). However, as we look at the portrayal of Jesus’ ministry, teachings, death and resurrection in the four Gospels, we see how he embodies hope and brings tangible, in-depth, life-giving hope to others and the world, (e.g. Matthew 28:16-20; the healings in Matthew 8-9, etc.). ■

FOR YOUR REFLECTION

- How does your life give witness to the Biblical kind of hope?
- What makes it challenging for you to have this kind of hope?
- How does the church manifest hope in its ministry and help you to grow in hope?
- What role does prayer have in your living out Christ-like hope?
- Do you know someone who needs the gift of hope in his or her life?
- How could you be God’s person in bringing hope to that person?
- How are you cultivating hope within your family life (as a parent, son or daughter, husband or wife, grandparent)?

LIFE-CHANGING HOPE IN HAITI

BY DANETTE MILLER AND DEBBIE HEIDRICH

DANETTE MILLER:

Webster's dictionary defines hope as "a desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. Hope differs from wish and desire in this, that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired or the possibility of possessing it."

In August, twelve people from around the USA went to Haiti with The Haitian Timoun Foundation. The email invitation read like this "HTF – Exciting travel opportunity! The HTF-supported cohort of women who entered the Chemen Lavi Miyo (CLM) program in February 2018 are graduating next month!"

Chemen Lavi Mayo (CLM) - *The pathway to a better life*, is a Fonkoze program to help eradicate ultra-poverty in Haiti. CLM provides the tools and support to empower Haiti's poorest women, lifting them out of ultra-poverty. HTF sponsors one hundred CLM participants every eighteen months, providing life-



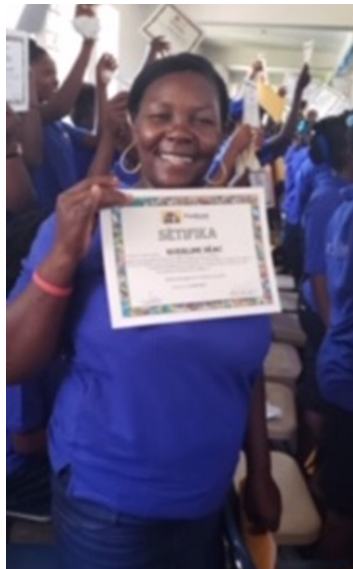
changing hope and vision for their futures. This effort impacts their family as well as their community. In our travels to Haiti, we've met participants in each phase of the program. We've been there on the day that they enter the program, witnessed a graduation ceremony and visited them in their homes to see their accomplishments throughout the eighteen months.

To understand the amazing accomplishment that these graduates earned, I want to help you understand the environment in Haiti and the obstacles they overcome. In Haiti, the average person lives on less than \$2/day. Women entering CLM live on less than \$1/day. Many are single moms with multiple children, living in very rural areas, with no assets (such as a home, chickens, goats) and food is scarce. Because of their vulnerability, they are often taken advantage of and will make choices that put them in harms way so that they can feed their family. They may not have a home; they walk miles to get dirty water to drink and cook with and they don't have the money to send their children to school. These women live day to day. Many cannot dream or have hope beyond today. Their hope is to survive this day.



During this program, these women are provided with the means to build a home, a water filter so that they have clean water, a latrine, assets such as chickens or goats and a weekly stipend. They meet weekly with their assigned case managers. During their visits, the case managers provide each member with confidence-building, enterprise management, and life skills training. They also help teach the woman to successfully navigate the unique challenges she encounters throughout the process and to build a plan for her future as she moves forward. In turn, the women provide the hard work, determination and resilience to succeed.

These women entered the CLM program with hope that their life would be better. In August, I witnessed a community celebrating the accomplishments of these amazing, brave, resilient women. I watched their faces light up as each name was called to receive their certificate and smile with pride as they saw their name printed. I barely knew these women but shared their pride. I was so proud of each one of them! These women are on a path to a better life. Life changing hope!



DEBBIE HEIDRICH:

The crisis of human suffering in Haiti is all too real and devastating, especially in the past year with widespread political chaos and rioting. Yet, even in the midst of despair in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, those who have had the privilege of traveling to Haiti with HTF witness life-changing hope when they visit the women (and some men) participating in the CLM program.

When I visited Haiti in 2015 on an “Immersion Trip” with a group from POP, we visited several women who were less than 6 months into the CLM program.

I saw a woman who looked at the ground as she answered questions, not having the confidence to look us, or even her case manager, in the eye.

I saw another woman who was living with her four children in what I can best describe as a shanty, with spaces between the wall boards and palm branches for a roof while working on building a more secure home with the assets provided through CLM.

I saw a 3-year-old who was no bigger than most 18-month-olds who had orangish-blond discoloration on the ends of his hair – a sign of past malnutrition.

In August 2019, our group visited with some women before graduation.

I saw a very proud, confident woman who spoke to us with her head held high outside her weather-resistant home with a tin roof and water collection system she used for irrigation of her crops.

I saw another woman who proudly showed us her livestock and poultry and had plans of continuing to build these assets and purchase more land for her children and

grandchildren.

I saw children who had jet black hair and knew that meant they were not suffering from malnutrition.

And, on this trip, we attended the graduation ceremony for 250 individuals who completed the CLM program, including the 100 in the cohort HTF sponsored.

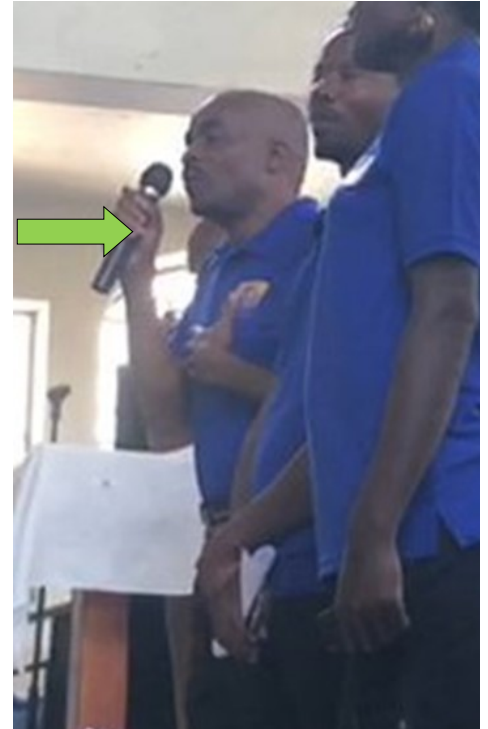
I saw 250 people march into ceremony with heads held high as they were cheered on by friends and family.

I witnessed the laughter and community among the participants.

I heard the passion, pride, and confidence in the speeches by several of the graduates.

One of the graduates who spoke at the ceremony was Guilbo, a man who was eligible for the program because of his disability of blindness. While I couldn't understand anything he said, I think I got at least part of his message. During his talk, he crouched down very low to the floor and spoke in a quiet voice. As he talked, he slowly stood up and his voice became stronger and more passionate. He, and his fellow graduates, went from a very low place to a place of hope. Life-changing hope!!

The participants of POP's first Immersion Trip were so moved by the life-changing hope evident in CLM and other important programs that HTF supports, that the seeds of starting a “Resurrection Project” in the spring of 2015 to raise money for CLM were planted on that trip. In 2015, POP raised \$13,500 specifically for CLM – enough to support 9 participants. Through our ongoing support of HTF as a Covenant Community, our annual Resurrection Project, and assisting with the summer camp in Haiti, POP is committed to ensuring programs that offer life-changing hope for individuals and the country of Haiti continue. ■



HOPE HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD

BY PASTOR JONATHAN EILERT

Study abroad is getting rather ubiquitous in this generation, but it was not a part of my experience in college or in seminary. Looking back on those years, it is one of my few regrets, so I was excited to be invited to participate in the “Stand with Africa Campaign” trip as part of a delegation of ELCA leaders in 2002. I would now have the opportunity to go abroad and be immersed in a culture different from our own. I was excited. I thought I was prepared, but I was not ready for how transformative the experience would actually be for my life. I remember walking around in a fog upon my return. In many ways I could no longer comprehend the concerns of our middle-class American lives. How could all the existentially irrelevant questions of our possessions,

social mobility, or achievement too often take center stage in our culture? “What are we doing?” I kept asking myself. I got more than a little depressed by it all, but then I began to remember what was really at the core of our visit. While the juxtaposition of their priorities with our first world priorities was disturbing, the incredible faith and will of the people to persist in places with such great challenges relative to their basic needs we awe-inspiring. At the center of the experience, when seeing all the challenges set against the amazing will and faith of the people, there was a persistent theme of hope. “Suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” Roman 5:3-5

As we come to the Christmas holiday, we often look around the world with a more global mindset. The holiday engenders in us a feeling of goodwill toward all of humanity. Often in our culture this mindset is dominated by a perspective of charity. Given our abundance of resources, our charity is certainly a noble ambition, but our partnerships around the globe enable us to have a broader, more faith-filled, and more deeply meaningful encounter with our brothers and sisters in other countries. When we know them as partners in the ministry of Jesus, then our relationship is transformed from one of charity to one of mutual accompaniment. We walk together in ministry learning a growing from each other. And one the main ways we do this is through an exchange of hope.

When we visit and when we share financial resources of support with our brothers and sisters in challenging circumstances, we offer them the gift of hope. There are resources out there to fuel their dreams and provide for their basic needs. They are not lost and forgotten. Our support gives them the gift of hope. At the same time, when we engage our partners with more than just our financial resources, when we get to know them and their resiliency in the face of challenges. Their faith and tenacity can transform our lives with hope as well.

Here at Prince of Peace, we engage with the people Haiti through the Haitian Timoun Foundation. We know that they need hope now as the country stands in crisis. We also continue to support the work of Lutheran World Relief and the Lutheran World Federation through our support of the ELCA and by sponsoring an ELCA missionary family. I was able to see the transformative



impact of that work firsthand when I was in Africa in 2002, and I have met many leaders from Africa over the years that have come to the U.S. as part of our ongoing partnership. We have families here at Prince of Peace that have travelled with Matthew 25 ministries, a local relief agency with projects all over the globe. Some other members just told me about a mission they are supporting in Central America. Another family supports work in Pakistan.

There are many ways to engage, but a consistent experience. Supporting our global partners enriches our lives. It brings us hope. I pray that in this season of giving one of the things that you do is find a way to support others around the globe. Make a donation that leads to greater partnership and deeper experience of the hope of God that transforms our lives and the world around us. ■



ALWAYS A MOM

BY JENNIFER HENDREN

I have always wanted to be a mom. I wanted a handful of kids and pictured the memories we would make. I imagined summers by the pool or at the ballfield, picnics and barbecues. Halloween costumes and going trick-or-treating. Thanksgiving dinners as a huge family with all the fixings. Baking Christmas cookies, eating candy canes, and sipping hot chocolate in front of the tree. Valentine's Day would be fun decorating a Valentine box for the school party. Easter egg hunts and baskets full of goodies, oh my!

As I got older, I was afraid that motherhood may have not been in the cards for me. A failed marriage equaled no kids, my future was not working out how I had planned it. I then met Frank. He was a single dad and I loved how he loved his kids. We fell in love and I was ecstatic to know that he wanted more kids! We married and began trying for kids right away. Around Christmas 2006, we found out we were pregnant. Our Christmas present that year was knowing that we were going to be parents together.

We went to the doctor, at the beginning of the new year, and were able to get an ultrasound. What a relief when we saw that small beating heart. I began sobbing, I was going to be a mom! I was having a great pregnancy. Halfway through the pregnancy, and on my birthday, we found out we were having a boy! Blake Joseph Hendren! His name had been picked out for months. We were finally able to read, talk to, and call him by name.

After 22 hours of labor, Blake graced us with his presence on August 15, 2007. The love I had for that tiny human was the purest of loves. I couldn't believe I could love someone as much as I loved him.



A couple months of being home we just couldn't get rid of his cradle cap and a rash all over his body. We knew something was different with Blake, but he was such a happy baby, rash and all. The pediatrician recommended we remove dairy from his diet, and he was put on a special formula. We were also referred to a dermatologist to help with his skin, because he had been diagnosed with eczema. We saw the dermatologist through February, and she recommended that we see an allergist, because even with her help, we could not get his skin cleared. I did not want to see an allergist. I didn't want them to poke and stick my sweet baby boy all over his back. I had to do what was best for Blake. Reluctantly, I made an allergist appointment and in May they did that annoying back poking and sticking. He had quite a few allergens show up on his skin testing and the allergist wanted him to get his blood tested. A few days after giving blood, I received a phone call.



"Mrs. Hendren, this is the allergist office. We need your pharmacy information. Blake has an extremely high allergy to egg and we need you to get to the pharmacy as soon as possible to get an EpiPen." I had no idea what this meant but I replied, "I don't plan on giving Blake eggs." The nurse sternly said, "It does not matter. You need to get this EpiPen as soon as possible. If your son comes into contact with egg he could go into anaphylactic shock and die." My heart dropped. I never expected, and I will never forget, this phone call. This wasn't in my plans of motherhood. Plans changed that day; that was the day I became a Food Allergy Mom.

So far in my story you can see that there is no mention of God. We have always believed in God; we just were not practicing Christians at the time. Frank and I grew up in church but we both drifted away as we got older. Blake was born naturally spirited so we knew that God was always close because Blake had a genuine connection with God.



Flash forward nine years, almost to the day. Blake is nine and we have a one-year old daughter, Baylea. Blake has 15 food allergies, most of them life threatening. He is also allergic to many seasonal and environmental allergens, has asthma, and eczema. Baylea also has some severe food allergies but not as many. We had heard that Disney World was great for food allergies. Since Blake had never eaten in a restaurant, we booked a trip with a food allergy travel agent and headed to experience restaurant dining as a family. Blake had an amazing experience the first night! He was treated like a king and had huge towers of safe foods made for him to gobble down. The chef was amazing and so caring. He took his time preparing so many safe foods for Blake. We will always cherish that beautiful moment and it is a frequent topic of conversation at our house.



The next morning, we were not so fortunate in having an amazing experience like the night before. My gut kept telling me something wasn't right during breakfast. The chef seemed to be preoccupied and not paying attention. Blake began eating and seemed to like it, at first. All of a sudden, I could see a change in Blake. Something was wrong with him and he just wanted to leave. Something inside me told me to pull the EpiPen up to the top of bag and get it ready. As we began to walk out, Blake motioned that he was going to get sick. Blake and I started running but we couldn't make it to the bathroom. He got sick inside of the restaurant. I could see fear and doom in his eyes, and I knew that this was it, this was an anaphylactic reaction. I needed to use the EpiPen and now! Luckily, I had pulled it to the top of the bag. I laid Blake on the floor, told him that I was going to use the EpiPen, he was crying and was starting to have trouble breathing. I knew I had to do it now. I administered the EpiPen to his right thigh, and he screamed, but within seconds I could see the relief in his eyes. The epinephrine was working. I did the right thing, the thing I was told to do. He told me he felt so much better. An ambulance was called, and we spent the day in the ER making sure he was ok. Everything turned out well and we were all relieved to know that the EpiPen works! We had gone nine years without having to use the EpiPen, but that day some of our worries were lifted because we learned the EpiPen works and it saved his life. This incident put a damper on our trip but, through the help of our travel agent and the Disney Chefs, we had many great eating experiences the rest of the week. They made it so magical for Blake, and by the end of the trip he was begging to go back someday!



This trip changed our family and we noticed that God had been working on Frank and me, all these years, through Blake. We had not noticed it until this trip but when we would think of years passed, we began seeing all of Gods hard work. I was very thankful to God that week and all the weeks since.

Things began to change for me spiritually after our trip and I knew I wanted a closer relationship with God. I began taking online Bible studies and began my renewal of my faith journey.

Later that year my grandmother was not doing well. Blake had a very close relationship with Grandma GG and after she passed, he had a hard time dealing with her loss. At her funeral, which was in a church, I could see a light in Blake. I could see a peace come over him, he felt the comfort from being so close to God. A week after the funeral he asked if we could start going to church. Blake was right. We really needed a church we could call home. We found Prince of Peace and immediately felt a calmness and a sense of peace, even though it still took us a few months to let our guard down. We eventually gave into God and let him lead us to a community that would be understanding and compassionate. The members of Prince of Peace have opened their arms and hearts to our family, especially Blake. They immediately wanted Blake to be included and to feel safe. We had never experienced anything like this from such a big community—inclusion! It has been a heart touching experience for us.

My life hasn't been the way I planned, but instead, it has always been God's plan. My life-changing hope began with Blake, took a detour through Disney and it continues through Prince of Peace! Thank you, Prince of Peace family; your caring hearts, kindness and love continue to give our family life-changing hope every day!

Thank you, God, for unanswered prayers, the beautiful gifts you have given us, and for guiding us to be a part of such an amazing community. Prince of Peace is one of the best things that has happened to our family. Amen! ■



FOSTERING HOPE

BY KAREN SKARDA

“God bless you for fostering a child in your home; I just don’t think I could ever do that.” This is the response that our friend, Melissa Regan, often gets from people as she shares that she is a foster parent with her husband, Scott. Her response is, “But they are not your children. Your goal is to get them back to their family. But you treat them as if they are your family. And yes, it hurts to give them back. You are human.” Melissa shared that fostering a child is very hard, but the rewards totally outweigh the hardships as you get to take part in helping a child become the person that they are able to be, providing them hope in a time of need.

According to a Columbus Dispatch article from December 20, 2018, “Ohio is consistently near last in the nation in state funding for child-protective services, while the number of children entering foster care has exploded - another financial and human cost of the opioid epidemic, according to a 2018 report. Ohio children are entering foster care at a rate never before seen, hitting 16,154 in 2018, an increase of 3,500 — or 28% — in five years, said the Public Children Services Association of Ohio”.

Melissa and her husband decided to become foster parents several years ago since her first child was born prematurely with many medical challenges, they were getting older, and thought that there were just too many kids that were in need of good homes. She had it in her heart that foster care was the direction they needed to take.

They began taking weekly classes (all day on Saturdays) in late 2017 and were able to be licensed within six months. Because they were being licensed through a private agency as a treatment home (one that would be able to take care of a child with special medical needs), their training was expedited because they were aware of a child that would need a treatment home placement. Typically, it takes about 8-12 months for someone to be licensed as a foster care parent. Right before their licensing, the child needing medical placement was placed with a nurse that could provide more complete care, but the need still was great. The evening that they were licensed, they were called and notified that they would be receiving a 3-day-old baby girl for foster care. They had just left for a vacation to Tennessee to celebrate being done with the classes...and had to return early to bring home a newborn.

The newborn baby was not your typical foster care situation. Her parents were young and inexperienced and already had a 5-year-old daughter who had been in foster care. The mother had not completed the plan that was needed before the birth of her newborn, so the newborn was placed directly into foster care. Melissa and Scott cared for the baby girl for eight months, doing everything that you would do to care for your own child,



in addition to ensuring weekly visits with the baby’s parents and sister. Ultimately, the baby was returned to her parents and as Melissa hears from the case worker, they all are doing great!

They got back on the list to be open to fostering again. Their next child’s case was much more typical, and more difficult. Because I can’t use his real name, I’ll call him Connor. Connor was found at the age of 3 with his mother who had died, right there with him. His father was in jail and died of an overdose during the time that Connor was being fostered with the Regans. So much trauma for anyone, let alone a 3-year-old boy. Melissa and Scott cared for Connor just as their own son, ensuring that he received OT, PT, speech therapy and the counseling that he needs for the trauma that he has endured. It is amazing to hear that they have a great relationship with Connor’s grandparents, who want to ensure that he is in a good place, and they know that they have found that with the Regans.

I am pleased to announce that any day now Melissa and Scott are going to be adopting Connor! They have signed the papers and are waiting for the court date to make it official. I asked her when they knew that they would adopt Connor. She responded that was in the plan all along. That was their hope to be able to provide a solid, loving, permanent home for a child in foster care.

I asked Melissa what has been her greatest joys in fostering. She commented that yesterday she was able to hear him spell his name, something he couldn’t do before. At his preschool, they gave them a photo of him from one year ago. She was so pleased to see how far he has come during the time he has been with them.

What advice does she give to anyone who is considering fostering? Simply to open your heart and let it happen.

Maria and Dan Mueller, members of Prince of Peace, had opened their hearts and home to become foster parents back in 2013. With both of them being in the field of education, they felt that their skills and training could be very helpful in fostering school-age children. Unlike Melissa and Scott, Maria and Dan were choosing to be licensed for foster only, without an intent to adopt.

Their first foster experience was also a brand new experience for the three brothers placed in their home, as they were new to foster care. Even with all the training in the world, there is nothing that could replace first hand experience, so they all grew and learned together.

Over the course of six years, they have fostered eight children, from brothers to sisters to individual children. Fostering is hard work, but nothing can replace the beautiful memories that they have been able to make with each child. One favorite memory of theirs is of driving down the road and breaking into song with teenage brothers, their first foster children, riding in the back. They knew that they loved country music, so they made sure that they learned some country songs so that they could sing them together in the car.

The goal is always to return the children to their family if possible, so when the boys were being reunited with their family, Dan and Maria gave them each an iPod with those country songs on them so that they could keep the memories with them.

One special memory was seeing the impact they had on two sisters they were fostering. The older sister, 16 years old, had been more of a mother to the younger sister and her other siblings. Dan and Maria wanted to ensure that she could have time on her own and be “16”. They each had their own rooms, however, the youngest had such separation anxiety that she couldn’t sleep alone in her room. So for over a month, Dan moved a bed into the hallway and slept in the hallway so she could sleep. She was so fearful of being alone that she always had to be on the same floor of the house with someone else whenever she was home. Little by little, Dan was able to sleep further and further away. When the sisters went to move in with their great-grandmother, they felt very proud of the progress that they had made with her over a period of months.

Then in 2016, Tori came to them needing foster care. As a teenager, she had been in the foster care system for a long time. Her sister had been adopted and her brother was in a care center. Tori’s immediate first question was if she could be adopted. Dan and Maria were only licensed for foster only, not with an option to adopt, and that was their original intent.

There are times in life when one really would love to press ‘rewind’ and do something over. Tori had transitioned to a healthier spot living with Dan and Maria, but her need to be adopted was great. A family in Pennsylvania was interested in adopting her in her sophomore year, however, after moving it quickly became apparent that this would not be a positive place for her. Dan and Maria welcomed Tori back to their home to

provide the care that she needed.

As her eighteenth birthday approached, Tori began meeting with her foster care resources to establish permanency as foster care ends at age eighteen. Many eighteen-year-olds, though they are adults, still need safety, support, guidance and mentoring, even if they grew up in stable homes and not in foster care. Dan and Maria realized that to provide Tori this guidance and to extend to her legal rights (safety support), they needed to adopt her. When they notified the agency that they wanted to adopt Tori, the normal bureaucracy moved fast! Tori was adopted on November 5, 2018 and is now officially a part of their family. The road of the future is never easy, but she now has Dan and Maria there to help direct her as she grows and matures.



So where has God been through their journey in foster care? Maria laughs and says that God has maintained her sanity; God’s been right there the whole way. They feel very blessed to share God’s love and support and to extend that to children needing care. They have renewed their license to foster for another two years, so who knows what will happen next. God does, and He will continue to be right there with them every step of the way.

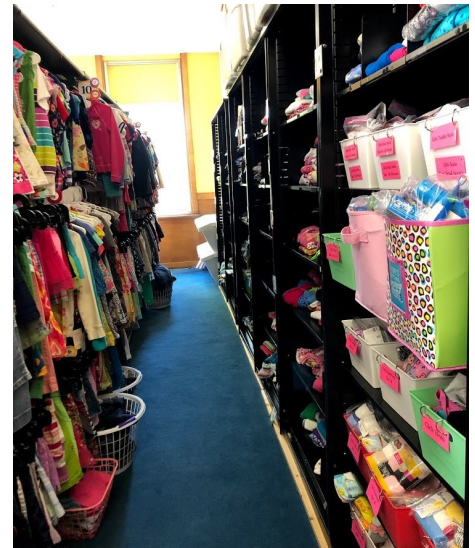
Becoming a foster parent is a significant life change and not meant for everyone. But we can all help bring hope to others in foster care in other ways by supporting local foster care organizations. Recently, for God’s Work. Our Hands (GWOH) weekend of service, my POP Grace Group served at Hope’s Closet in Hamilton, Ohio. This was a new location for us for GWOH and we were truly blessed to be there. Hope’s Closet exists to enrich the lives of foster children and their families through foster and adoptive parent support, foster parent recruitment and training, whole family activities, birthday club program, and a clothing boutique. Through these activities, they endeavor to build intentional relationships to restore broken families. At Hope’s Closet, we sorted clothes for their clothing boutique. We were amazed at how organized and beautifully this boutique was maintained.

Hope’s Closet’s Clothing Boutique is available to any child currently in foster care. They offer 6-8 outfits, pajamas,

undergarments, coats, socks and shoes to children twice a year (winter/summer), at back to school, and when there is a size change. They also have baby equipment and accessories available as needed. They even have a special room filled with fun teen accessories (e.g. necklaces, scarves). As we sorted clothes during GWOH, we learned their standards were high: nothing outdated, nothing with holes or showing wear. By providing children with new or gently used and up-to-date clothing, and supplies, they can help raise their self-esteem, allowing them to feel good about themselves regardless of their situation.

You can learn more about Hope's Closet at hopes-closet.net. At this time, their greatest need is for financial donations. You can check out their current volunteer needs on their webpage. Jack's Closet, a Ministry of Clough United Methodist Church located in Anderson Township, is another local ministry providing clothing for children in foster care. Learn more at cloughchurch.org/jacks-closet.

As Melissa shared, when you receive the call to foster a child, you can't be fully prepared for the exact age or their exact needs, so these agencies are so helpful to provide needed clothing and supplies. This enables foster care parents to be able to fully welcome children into their homes, so they can care for them as they would their own children, being a beacon of hope to each child. ■



Life-changing HOPE

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit
Romans 15:13

Know also that wisdom is like honey for you:
If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.
Proverbs 24:14

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
Psalm 130:5

GUIDE ME IN YOUR TRUTH AND TEACH ME,
FOR YOU ARE GOD MY SAVIOR,
AND MY HOPE IS IN YOU ALL DAY LONG.
PSALM 25:5

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.
Hebrews 10:23

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know
that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.
Romans 5:3-4

Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.
Psalm 31:24

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened
in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you,
the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.
Ephesians 1:18

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:31

FOR ALL THE SAINTS

WE CELEBRATE THE NEW SAINTS OF THE CHURCH WHO WERE BAPTIZED AND REMEMBER THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS WHO HAVE ENTERED THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT SINCE EASTER 2019.

BAPTIZED

Tallulah Bender
Allegra Bodenmiller
Grayson Dorton
Aubrie Eilert
Lincoln Evans
Logan Evans
Lilly Hansel

Christina Jeranek
Christopher Jeranek
Jane Jeranek
Connor Marks
Edith Melvin
Charlie Nussbaum
Charles Petersen

Carson Reed
Isaac Reed
Carter Reese
Caroline Stinson
Brody Thompson
Brooklyn Thompson
Jaxin Thompson

IN MEMORIAM



SYLVIA HEIN

November 19, 1937 - October 22, 2019

Sylvia Ann Hein, 81, died on Tuesday, October 22, 2019, after moving from Maineville to South Carolina to be with her daughter. Sylvia joined Prince of Peace in 1977, together with her husband, Robert Sr. Their daughter, Paul-Ann and her son, Robert, were confirmed and grew up in the church. Sylvia worked in the Kings Schools district and sold Avon for many years, and made so many friends who were her customers. She never knew a stranger, had a wonderful sense of humor and a deep faith. She loved animals, flowers and nature. She received home communion for 8 years after she had a stroke and was unable to drive. She was a blessing to all those who knew her.



MICHAEL KELLER

September 28, 1964 - May 14, 2019

Michael Keller of Loveland died at the age of 54 on May 14, 2019. Michael was a graduate of St. Xavier High School and Xavier University in Cincinnati and lived in Loveland across from Prince of Peace. He was beloved by his late fiancée Donna Ziegler, his parents, his daughter and his stepsons. Michael loved coming to worship at Prince of Peace on Sunday mornings, enjoying the coffee, the community, and especially loved the music. His smile is missed at POP!



DONALD LUCKERMAN

April 27, 1937 - October 1, 2019

Donald Luckerman, age 82, died on October 1, 2019. Don joined Prince of Peace in January 2002. He regularly attended worship services and often was an usher. He also attended Adult Sunday School and Wednesday Senior Bible study. When his health began to fail and he could no longer drive, he moved into Meadowbrook Care Center in Montgomery and received home communion from our church for many years. He enjoyed hearing about POP, reading through the bulletin, annual reports and other publications to stay current. Don had many jobs in accounting throughout his career. He also was a retiree of the USAF Reserves. Don is survived by his daughter and his sister, Nancy, who visited him regularly at Meadowbrook and was his health advocate there.



EMMA (JEAN) SCALF

July 25, 1928 - November 8, 2019

Emma Jean Lamb Scalf, 91, formerly of Maineville, passed away on Friday, November 8, 2019 in Golden, Colorado. She was a member of Prince of Peace since 1970 and was a clerk with Safeco Insurance. Jean was active with the Shriner's and at the Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, OH. She was preceded in death by her loving husband: John Scalf and her son: Jeff Scalf. Jean is survived by her daughter: Julie (Jim) Ziruolo; sister: Ruth Petrik; 4 grandchildren; and 5 great-grandchildren.



STEPHANIE VESPER

November 21, 1984 - May 5, 2019

Stephanie Vesper (nee Frank) of Loveland, died in a biking accident on Sunday, May 5, 2019 at the age of 34, doing something she loved with the man she loved. Beloved wife of Roderick Vesper. Loving and exuberant mother of Malachi List, Alexandra Vesper, Gideon List and Phineas List. Devoted daughter of Stephen and Nancy Frank. Dear sister of Michael Frank and his wife Kandice Whalen. Stephanie was a nurse at Cincinnati Children's Hospital's adolescent psych facility and a classically trained chef who liked nothing better than to feed people. She fed and cared for many children each year during POP's Vacation Bible School as the Snacks Leader. She was a fierce friend and a loyal coworker. Her joyful spirit and energy are greatly missed.

ON THE HORIZON

ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF

Tuesday, February 25, 6 pm

Bring your appetites or your best chili to be judged in our annual chili cook-off on Shrove Tuesday.

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

Wednesday, February 26, 12 pm & 7 pm

We begin Lent with the disposition of ashes during Ash Wednesday worship.

CONNECTED JOURNEY

During Lent - Weekly beginning in March

Be part of the five-week CONNECTED Journey, growing in community and faith in a small group and during worship/sermon series during Lent. Group sign-ups begin in mid-February.

HOLY WEEK & EASTER

April 9, Maundy Thursday, 7 pm

April 10, Good Friday, 7 pm

April 11, Easter Vigil, 7 pm

April 12, Easter Sunday, 8, 9:30 and 11 am

Beginning with Palm Sunday (and a pancake breakfast!) on Sunday, April 5, we enter holy week where one service bridges over the three days before Easter. On Saturday, we celebrate with our most unique worship service of the year with the Easter Vigil, where we begin outside around a fire, share family faith stories, and then celebrate baptisms and the resurrection of our Lord. Easter Morning there are three special morning worship services celebrating the resurrection of our Lord.



Prince of Peace
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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