

LYDIA'S HOUSE // SUMMER 2014



LYDIA'S HOUSE *offering a nurturing home for women and children in crisis and transition*



## PRESSING NEEDS:

At a recent core community meeting we talked about what our most urgent needs are. We mentioned food and then said "well Redeemer stocked our pantry and Children's Hospital gave us a grant for meat and produce so we think we're ok." Then we said "How about toiletries?" and were quickly reminded that Susan Fraley mobilized Madeira Middle School to stock our cabinets. Household goods? Thanks to Sandra Murphy and Kathy Aerni's house shower we're covered. In many ways, we realized, our cup is running over. But there's one place that we desperately need help: volunteers!

If you are able to commit to at least two 4 hour shifts a month, have a background that would make it safe for you to work with children, and are interested in being in relationship with our guests in a consistent and pastoral way, we need you. We call this kind of volunteering "House Duty" and house duty volunteers make life at Lydia's House possible. We will have a volunteer training on June 28 from 9am - noon that is required for house duty volunteers. Please RSVP to [intern@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:intern@stlydiashouse.org) if you'd like to come.

Thank you to Jill Stoxen, Taffany Duggins, Joanne Budny, Sally Evans, Phil and Nora Beckman, Veronica Ballard, Elizabeth Shankin, Anne Householder, Jane Gerdsen, Lou Puopolo, Angela Pancella, Andrea Bardelmeier and Kara Sheldon. Without you we couldn't have offered space to the women and children that we're serving.



House duty volunteers Anne Householder, Joanne Budny, Lou Puopolo, Phil Hartman and Taffany Duggins

## A NOTE FROM ELIZABETH COYLE OUR NEW LIVE IN VOLUNTEER

I don't think it's a coincidence that, for me, the road to Lydia's House began less than two miles away at Xavier University. Since my time as an undergraduate there, my faith has led me to friendship with the homeless in Nashville, deported migrants in Tijuana, former refugees in El Salvador, and fellow campus ministers in San Diego. Still, as I pack up my life in California and move back across the country, I know I'm coming back to the heart of my faith in more ways than one. Jesuit martyr Ignacio Ellacuria once said: "There is no conversion to God if there is no conversion to the oppressed." If that's true, then I became a true Christian right here in Norwood, Ohio as I first began to see God's face in the lives of the poor and vulnerable as a freshman in college.

Life since then has been very full, and for the past three years, I have found deep joy in working as a campus minister at the University of San Diego. I have been privileged to accompany students in their daily lives. Through University Ministry, students are invited to explore social justice as an integral part of their faith through service at a homeless shelter or on immersion to El Salvador. I've found that it's during these times when I am at my best.

When I returned from El Salvador a few months ago, I inadvertently quoted Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement; I told a colleague that, in El Salvador, it was "easier for me to be good." It was perhaps a paradoxical statement because life there is anything but easy for my host family in their poor rural village. Neither was it always easy for me to build solidarity with Salvadorans across the barriers of my privilege. Yet there I found God clearly because God is always with the poor, the suffering, the lost, and the left out. When I am with those in need, I am with God. When I am with the poor, I always find it's exactly where I need to be.

It's clear to me, crystal clear, that I am called to the community of Lydia's House. I bring with me all I know from my time in ministry and with the homeless, as well as all I have yet to learn. I hope that at Lydia's, I'm able to be my best self: a positive and joyful presence, a compassionate listener, a mediocre cook, and an amateur but enthusiastic gardener. I seek to see the guests and the wider community as my teachers as I listen, receive love, and continually let my heart be broken by the suffering of others. I look forward to mid-June when I join Lydia's House not just in prayer but in daily life. I can't wait to thank each of you personally for helping create a place where it is easier to be good and to do good for our world.



Photos: pictures of Elizabeth Coyle doing ministry at University of San Diego



# HOUSE JOURNAL

By Meridith Owensby

The work of hospitality had been so long in coming that when we finally welcomed our first guests the last weekend in April it was with much rejoicing. **Elizabeth Coyle** visited that very same weekend and jumped right into the work of the house (including emptying a long neglected compost bucket). Our inaugural community meal included **Josh and Jill Stoxen**, our neighbors and partners in ministry. We had so much extra food that we were grateful for the shared Mass with the parishioners at **Bellarmino Chapel** on Sunday evening, followed by an al fresco potluck where the kids romped around the yard.

**Dennis and Georgia Bishop** helped update our front door, so now it is accessible for volunteers and guests alike with a pretty fancy code system. **Taffany Duggins** joined us as our most frequent house duty volunteer, bringing her thoughtful, story-telling children **Kaleb** and **Kourtnie** with her. A bevy of volunteers offered up their professional skills, from **Debra Krumel's** cooking tips to **Courtney Prince's** job seeking skills to **Anne Housholder's** dermatological prowess. **Brad Dale** began teaching piano lessons every Wednesday for the children of guests and volunteers. We're grateful for that piano, painted a lovely blue by **Elizabeth Shanklin** and we continue to marvel at how having it at the center of the living room increases the joy of the space.

**Amanda McKenzie** made sure our refrigerator stayed filled, and **Laura Menze** conveyed our farm share to us every week. The parishioners at the **Episcopal Church of the Redeemer** positively stocked our pantry shelves with non-perishables, delivered by the **Klinefelter** crew. **Phil and Nora Beckman** proved a dynamic house duty duo, tackling every to-do list with aplomb. **Sally Evans** was unfazed by the many organizational tasks we handed to her, giving our labeler a workout as the pantry and office slowly emerged out of chaos. **Kara Sheldon** tried out some of the card games we'd been donated, quickly raising some (including Uno) to house favorites. **Andrew Parlin** earned treasures in heaven

for moving a guest's belongings to a storage unit, a task high on the list of unenviable volunteer opportunities, as were **Carl Fosnaugh's** bookshelf painting jobs.

The **Yungbluth family** dodged raindrops to assemble the basketball goal they donated from young Nicholas' charity fund, a gift that has proved popular with many members of the house. Also popular with the house was our first movie night, a living room-filling event complete with all 5 **Stout** children. By 9pm we found kids sprawled on every available surface while the adults sat on the porch and chatted in the late spring breeze. A **Go Cincinnati** group arrived mid-May to assemble our backyard play equipment, leading to many leisurely evenings of swinging for kids and adults alike. **Erin Lockridge** and **Fred Leymann** saw that our raised bed gardens were constructed, and at our May worship service we asked for God's blessing on the plants that would grow and the hands that would tend them. **Joanne Budny** understood the need for respite care and made room for us in her schedule.

WE'VE HAD SO MUCH HELP, AND IT'S REAFFIRMED FOR US THAT TOGETHER IS THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IN THE WORK THAT GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO.

May also saw another homeless guest join the Lydia's House community. **Kathy Aerni** brought dinner, fresh flowers and stimulating conversation, converting our new friend to the virtues of turkey soup. **Rick Boydston** cut our grass while neglecting his own yard and came to our aid in times of difficulty. **Janet Barr** and her boys came bearing food during a time of sickness in the house and did a whole load of dirty dishes while here. **Veronica Ballard** asked "What do you need to get done?" and didn't flinch when the list included cleaning the crisper drawer and figuring out if all the eggs had frozen.

This, friends, was our first month of hospitality. It honestly makes me a bit dizzy to go through the logbook for the house, remembering how full the weeks have been. We've had so much help, and it's reaffirmed for us that together is the only way forward in the work that God has called us to do. Thank you for choosing to walk this path with us. We hope you'll keep comin' back!





## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES AT LYDIA'S HOUSE

Since the first days we imagined Lydia's House we hoped it would be a place that welcomed families—both as guests and volunteers. We'd like to highlight some of the unique opportunities we have for families to volunteer. To learn more visit [stlydiashouse.org/volunteer/](http://stlydiashouse.org/volunteer/)

### **Mom's Mondays:**

Every Monday from June 2 - August 25 from 9:30-noon. We'll welcome moms and kids of all ages to work in our garden under the leadership of Erin Lockridge (an excellent outdoor educator and leader of the Norwood grows program.) Together we'll learn how to garden, get dirty, and then eat lunch. Please bring a couple of lunch items to share. Child care will be available for kids who aren't interested in gardening. RSVP to [maryellen@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:maryellen@stlydiashouse.org) or just show up.

### **Celebrations and Birthdays:**

We have a long list of holidays we'd like to celebrate, from Epiphany to All Saints Day but we need help. We'd also like to celebrate each guest's birthday in a special way. If this sounds like a way your family would like to contribute, check our website for more info. Kids of any age can participate.

### **Meal Angels:**

Prepare a meal at home or in our house. Dinner is served Sunday at 5:30 and Monday- Thursday at 6:30pm. Plan to prepare for at least 10, and please stay and eat with us if you're able. Mary Ellen used to do this at another Catholic Worker with Annie when she was 18 months old and it worked well!

### **Movie nights:**

Watch our facebook page for updates. Occasionally we'll host movies on our big projector screen in the living room or in the yard. Typically these will be on Fridays starting at 7:30pm. Our first try at this, featuring Frozen, was a sweet success complete with several neighbor kids asleep on the couch.

Photo Caption: Erin Lockridge and Anders Stout help start our garden; Sam Eilerman does his happy dance on the driveway; Rachel Bohl joins us for mass



# ON LYDIA, MEAGER BEGINNINGS, AND FOLLOWING CHRIST

By Hilary Wolkan

I've been thinking a lot about Lydia lately, her background, and the hospitality she offered to Paul on his journey.

It all started with a tangent about murex shells.

You see, I didn't start my life in the non-profit sector. My passion consisted of Roman archaeology. Most of my year took place in dingy classrooms, my nose pressed to worn, antiquated books, desperately trying to siphon some sort of knowledge into my brain; summers, on the other hand, were spent in dirt trenches, slowly excavating villas and temples ten centimeters at a time in the hot Mediterranean sun. I loved what I did, loved uncovering the lives of people who existed two thousand years ago and yet were so similar to us in so many ways.

So, naturally, whilst reading Acts 16 for the umpteenth time, the archaeologist in me wondered about the process of dying purple fabric, a procedure with which I was rather familiar in grad school, as a fellow student wrote her whole masters' thesis on the subject. It's really the worst job you could have in the Roman world (aside from fullers, who used vats of urine to clean the woolen cloth). One little murex shell only made about a drop of purple dye, and the process was so smelly that workshops had to be located a good distance from the town so that the people didn't have to smell the awful process every day. Even modern archaeologists who are geeky enough to try the process themselves have said that it produces such a foul smell that they can barely make it through without wanting to vomit. Suffice it to say, it wasn't a glamorous job. But because of the process, and how many shells it took to dye one piece of fabric (we're talking thousands), purple fabric was an expensive commodity. It was so valuable that you could tell what social rank someone was based on the amount of purple they wore: for example, for a while, the only people who were allowed to wear fabric that was completely dyed purple were emperors or deities. Only senators and priests or priestesses were allowed to wear purple borders or stripes on their otherwise white clothing. This is how valuable the fabric was.

Thinking about purple dyers made me wonder what else we can find out about Lydia. We know she somehow worked with purple-dyed cloth, and that she had some sort of home she could welcome travelers to. What else can we tell about

her life? Is there anything else in her story we might be missing?

Now, the word used in Acts to describe Lydia does not indicate that she is actually a dyer (lucky for her!). The adjective in Latin, *purpuraria*, or its corresponding work in Greek, *πορφυροπώλης* (*porphyropolis*), means "dealer in purple." People who dyed cloth rarely sold the cloth at markets—dying was a full-time job (plus, I doubt anyone would buy cloth from someone who smelled so horrible!). There are carvings in tombs of textile merchants that actually shows the weavers of cloth bringing their product to merchants to inspect.

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WORLD.

It's more likely that Lydia got the cloth from somewhere, and sold it herself. It wasn't unheard of for women to be merchants, especially in the town's market place or in shops that lined the streets. It was frequently a family business, so everyone would be involved in selling (women included), and often the store-front was attached to the home of the seller. That's probably the sort of building Paul would have been invited to.

Okay. So Lydia sold valuable cloth. She probably had some sort of weavers she got the fabric from. None of this is really new information.

But what about her name? We have no recorded last name for Lydia. While this might not be a big deal for us, it was in the Roman world. Romans had three names, kind of like us, and it was important to have a family name. Family names indicated your clan, yes, but they also indicated how long your family has been around. The Julian clan, the family Julius Caesar belonged in, was one of Rome's oldest, wealthiest families. Belonging to that family gave you instant status. The only people who didn't have family names were slaves, or people who were formerly slaves.

The naming of slaves is also interesting, and a little sad, because they frequently were just named by Roman slave auctioneers after the place they came from. We know that Lydia comes from Thyatira, part of the territory of the area known as Lydia, located in modern Turkey. The fact that Lydia comes from the area of Lydia, and has no last name, means she probably was a slave at some point, and that the slave auctioneer couldn't think of any other name for her aside from the country she came from.

But since Lydia seems to have her own business, or at least be a merchant, we can safely assume she is now a freed person. In the Roman world, slaves could be freed. They could save up enough money to buy their freedom, or often their owners would free them themselves. Some Romans even married their former slaves. Frequently, slaves would learn the trade of their owners, and then, once freed, continue to work in that trade, usually as a sort of employee of their former-owner.

It just so happens that Thyatira was known in the Roman world for being one of the best places for purple fabric. Kind of like how Cincinnati is known for being great for chili.

With all of this in mind, Lydia was probably a former slave whose owner was a merchant, who was familiar with the process of dying and selling purple fabric (both from her life in Philippi and in Thyatira), and now that she is freed, is selling purple fabric by herself.

Phew. Okay. That was a lot. You can see how my inner-Roman-archaeologist is showing.

But what does this mean for us? Why does it matter who Lydia was?

For me, the more I contemplate Lydia, the more inspired I am by her story.

Lydia came out of servitude, was brought to a land hundreds of miles away from her home town, lived in this city for an unknowable amount of time, gained her freedom, and made a life for herself. Though she would definitely not be considered upper class, or even upper-middle class, she is doing pretty well for herself considering where she came from.

Based on this, most prominent Romans would have expected her to fully embrace the Roman attitude of accumulating as much wealth and status as possible. You see, status was everything to the Romans, and many would call you crazy if you did anything but strive to climb the social ladder.

Lydia, however, doesn't seem to care about status. She is described as "colens Deum," or caring for God. We know that at this time, being a Christian was really unpopular with the Roman government: Nero had persecuted Christians, and there was a constant question of what exactly to do with people who refused to acknowledge the emperor as a god. Lydia already has one strike against her for this reason. But

instead of striving to make up for this, and to tenaciously hold on to whatever status she has, she asked Paul and his companions to stay at her house. Paul who, although he is a Roman citizen, is not highly regarded by those in power. Paul and his companions, who were known in that region for actively speaking about this new religion which defied the imperial Roman government in many ways.

Lydia was housing someone in active rebellion against the Roman government and imperial cult, and she not only didn't care, she asked him to judge her as being faithful to God, the God which the emperor was trying to squash.

For this reason, Lydia doesn't only represent someone who provides hospitality for those who need it; she represents a woman whose faith and love for God calls her to something much bigger than this world. Lydia doesn't seem to be concerned with social expectations and customs of her time if they hinder her from serving God and His people. She sees an opportunity, one which could get her into a lot of serious trouble with very influential members of the Roman world, and takes it. She doesn't take time to rationalize the pros and cons, considering her potential arrest or the sacrifice of status for associating with such delinquents. Rather, she hears Paul's words, is convicted to not only get baptized but also baptize those living with her, and does whatever she can to help Paul in his journey.

I hope and pray that as a community, we continue to strive not only to provide hospitality for those in need, but also to complete God's work in the face of whatever obstacles our culture and society throw against us. Hospitality for the homeless is not always seen as a worthwhile endeavor, especially when it involves sacrificing our own wealth and status in order to help others get back on their feet. May Lydia continue to be an example for those who desire to serve God's people and follow Jesus even when our world tries to hinder us.

References:

- J.D. Wild "The Textile Industries of Roman Britain" (2002)
- B. Johnson "Lydia and Pricilla: Role Models for Today" (2012)
- W.M. Ramsay "Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia" (1905)



Hilary Wolkan was an intern at Lydia's House through the Floral House Episcopal Community. She served us from September – June of the last year. In the coming weeks she'll move to Boston where she'll continue her work on behalf of the homeless in a new place. She will be missed.



# PRAY AND WORSHIP WITH US

Lydia's House is a temporary home for homeless women and children, but it's also a home to a core community of workers who are supported by committed volunteers outside the house. We're a group that holds the daily life in the house, shares the intricacies of good times and bad with the guests, manages the fundraising and communications for the ministry, and shares prayer and worship. We'd love it if you'd join us by praying for us on your own or with us at specific times at the house.

## PRAY:

**Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 7am at 2024 Mills Ave.**  
**Prayer group meets in our living room.**

## WORSHIP:

**Saturday June 14 4pm:** Service of sending and welcome for intern Hillary Wolkan, board member Andrea Bardelmeier and new resident volunteer Elizabeth Coyle. The Rev. Jane Gerdson presiding. Light refreshments to follow.

**Sunday July 20 5pm:** The feast day of Mary Magdalene with our friends from the Resurrection community. Rev. Debra Myers presiding. Prayer service will be followed by a potluck dinner. Child care provided.

**Sunday August 24 5pm:** The Catholic Feast of St. Lydia. Mass followed by a catered dinner. Childcare provided.

**Saturday September 27 5pm:** Women for Women prayer service and dinner at the home of Maria Krzeski. This event is a time for women to gather and pray for the women of Lydia's House and those women around the world that are in need. Donations will be accepted for our general operations. For directions or more info email [intern@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:intern@stlydiashouse.org)

**Sunday September 28 5pm:** Movable Feast sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio "Fresh Expressions" program. Child care provided.

**Sunday October 26 5pm:** Kids worship in story and song. Potluck to follow.

**Sunday November 28 5pm:** Catholic Mass with our own Elizabeth Coyle as homilist. Potluck to follow. Child care provided.

*Note: all worship is at 2024 Mills Avenue unless otherwise indicated*



*We asked our friend Angela to give us a story or poem from life in our neighborhood. We said "We'd love something that speaks into the challenges of this season of opening our doors to guest in need." Here's what she provided:*

## A SUMMER STORY OF NORWOOD...

We walked the weed-reclaimed train tracks as we left Upper Millcrest Park—myself, a friend, and her three-year-old daughter. We were taking the "secret shortcut" a young neighbor had shown me leading through jungle terrain back to our street. Honeysuckle vines and pokeweed formed clutching branches overhead. Every step offered chances to marvel at new growth and buried railway dreams as we jumped from one wooden tie to the next. We knew we'd reach the world of bright sunshine eventually, but at the moment everything was dense and dark. Suddenly the youngest of our team of explorers quoted "We're Going on a Bear Hunt":

*We can't go over it!*

*We can't go under it!*

*We have to go THROUGH it!*

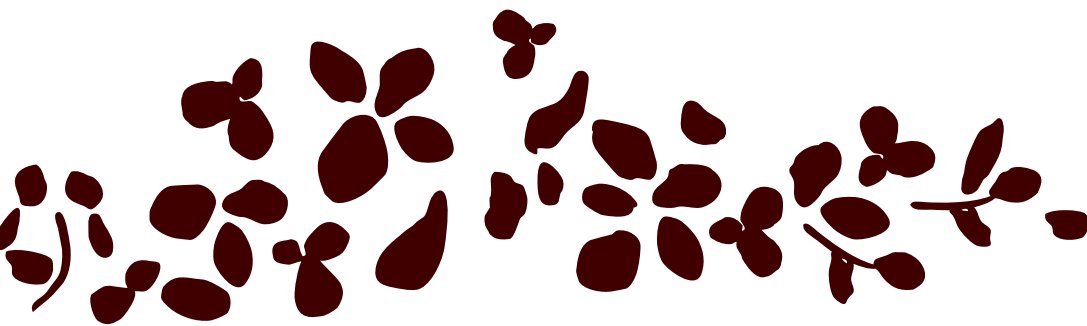
Oh, you are wise, I thought. I'd been preoccupied all through our picnic lunch in the park's new shelter, all through watching her play on the swings and the slide, with my own thoughts of unsolved problems. It took this brave huntress traveling through the child-sized wilderness behind my house to remind me to take it all as adventure.

*by Angela Fancella, who cultivates the common good in our west Norwood neighborhood as director of Woven Oak Initiatives*

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LYDIA'S HOUSE

## SHARE A MEAL WITH US

Come share a meal with us! We have communal dinners Sunday at 5:30pm and Monday- Thursday nights at 6:30pm. If you'd like to visit us at table please email [meridith@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:meridith@stlydiashouse.org). If you'd like to volunteer by bringing a meal, sign up on volunteer spot <http://vols.pt/mbUKT1>.



## WHO WE ARE

Lydia's House is a Christian community that provides transitional housing to women and children in crisis. Drawing from the Catholic Worker tradition, we endeavor to do small things with great love. We are a committed group of volunteers who share regular meals, prayer, and a good portion of our lives together, following the model that Christ set with his disciples. We look for the light shining in the darkness and Christ coming in the guise of the stranger at the door.

We are not an agency with professional titles and set office hours. We believe that we are all children of God, and as such we provide family-style hospitality, with all its messiness and beauty. The core of this community lives together, mostly under one roof but all in one neighborhood. We are committed to seeking wholeness, recovering from addictions and providing accountability to one another.