



LYDIA'S HOUSE

WINTER NEWSLETTER • MAKING ROOM

LYDIA'S HOUSE TIMELINE

June 2013: Demolition teams fill two dumpsters with plaster, carpeting, unwanted fixtures, etc; A children's festival is held in the yard of Lydia's House to raise funds for the renovation.

July 2013: Plumbers, electricians, and HVAC professionals remove outdated systems and begin installing new mechanicals, including adding 4 bathrooms; Community groups around greater Cincinnati host fundraisers for Lydia's House and surprising donations pour in from around the country and world.

August 2013: The Catholic Feast of St. Lydia is celebrated in the under-construction living and dining rooms of 2024 Mills. Lydia's House passes the \$100,000 mark on fundraising for the renovation. Volunteers complete the framing of new rooms and walls; New board member Sister Mary Lou Knapke is welcomed along with intern Hilary Wolkan.

September 2013: An eight passenger van is donated to Lydia's House; All rooms are sponsored; New roof is completed.

October 2013: High efficiency HVAC system is completed. A professional crew insulates the attic and hangs drywall throughout the house; painting begins.

November 2013: Meridith, Mary Ellen and Hilary move their office to 2024 Mills Ave.

November - December 2013: The new kitchen is installed. Tile work begins and flooring is installed.

January 2014: The many friends of Lydia's House celebrate how far we've come at the Episcopal Feast of St. Lydia at Calvary Church in Clifton.

February- March 2014: Finishing touches and decorating are scheduled to be completed.

Anticipated Opening: April 2014 (pray for this)

NEW BOARD MEMBER

This fall we welcomed a new member to our board of trustees, Sister Mary Lou Knapke, SC. We asked her to say a few words in our newsletter and this is what she shared with us:

I am Mary Lou Knapke. I am a Sister of Charity recently retired from after-crisis massage care within several fire departments within the Cincinnati area. I believe what G. K. Chesterton once said: "We men and women are all in the same boat, upon a stormy sea. We owe to each other a terrible and tragic loyalty."

("Christmas" essay, THINGS CONSIDERED, 1908)



OUR NEW INTERN

We at Lydia's House are excited to introduce our new Intern, Hilary Wolkan. After studying to be an archaeologist, Hilary felt God calling her to a different vocation, one which served those who were broken and wanting a new start. Following this new direction, Hilary came to Cincinnati after a year in England to be a member of the Floral House community, an intentional living community local to Norwood. As the intern for Lydia's House, Hilary helps with administration, communications, events and construction support, and any other way she can help Mary Ellen and Meridith. We look forward to the many blessings Hilary's year with Lydia's House will bring!





On a recent Sunday I lamented to our pastor, Father Dan, that this renovation was exhausting. He'd asked me how Ben and I were doing, so I thought I'd be honest. He commiserated with me for a moment, having taken on projects like Lydia's House himself and then said, "The renovation is a lot of work, and that's the easy part."

In the spring of 2014, (God willing) we'll accept homeless guests at 2024 Mills Avenue and our lives and those of Annie and Sam will be very different. Meridith, Ben and I will have entrenched ourselves in the maze of the very poor and we'll grapple daily with words like empowerment, solidarity and self care. As we look ahead to the hard work of making space for homeless families, I'd like to say a bit about why we've decided to upend our normal routine by saying yes to Lydia's House. I'd also like to say thank you to those that have come before us and around us, inspired us and made us think, "We can do this, we should do this, and we'll be better for it."

While we weren't ready to offer our own home to those without, we'd like to first express our deepest respect for people like Lou and Ang Puopolo, Steve and Becky Novotni, Ariel Miller and Peggy Becker Jackson—people we've long known or just met—who have done this work in different ways for many years, no tax status or fundraising dinner required. They've known a friend of a friend whose son or daughter just needed a place to be for a while so they opened up their extra space and said "come on in." They've reached out to pregnant teens, people from church, or recently released prisoners and made room. This is nuts, we've thought... what risk... but it's true, they've brought needy strangers into their homes and many continue to do so.

We'd like to acknowledge, too, some ordinary radicals in our midst who've challenged us to try this. Ben's parents, for two, who quietly give to those in need, invite the lonely into their home, host elaborate holiday meals and have a special heart for disabled adults. It's Thanksgiving. Does anyone in the family know someone who needs a place to be? Bring them to the Eilermans, and they'll be welcomed as honored guests! (Note: This is just an example. Wait to hear from them.) This principle extends to my own mother as well. During my childhood, I remember several times when we woke up to find her co-worker or someone from church sleeping in our basement. I know now those women had been evicted or were being abused. I remember storing furniture for them, babysitting their children, or helping them look for apartments. They came back to our house over the years that followed, dropped in, or joined us for holidays. While she was alive, my mom had a heart for those in need and she made room for them.

Lydia's House has its ideological roots in the Catholic Worker Movement, a loose conglomeration of houses of hospitality that give housing and food to the very poor and follow closely the scriptural mandates of Matthew 25. In this movement we find lovely souls who work for very little, live simply and give out of their own pockets to share with those in need. Our mentors there include the Open Door Community in Atlanta, Grace Place Catholic Worker on the west side of Cincinnati, and Casa Guadalupe in St. Paul, MN. They've made room for those that are on the margins of society, and made it again and again. May we and Lydia's house one day be counted in their number. But for today, we confess we're scared of the unknown, fearful we may not do this right, and juggling a lot. We ask for your prayers, grace on the mistakes we will inevitably make, and especially for help holding this house and the sacred lives within.

Picture caption: The Mitchell-Ellerman family camping in their trusted VW bus, Beatrice



OUR DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

**Gifts given as of
October 28, 2013.**
*Our hearts are full of
gratitude for each of
you.*

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FROM STRUCTURE TO STORY:

HOW A BUILDING BECOMES A PERSONAL LANDMARK

On our first work day Meridith gave this reflection. We've come a long way since then but we'd like to share it, and thank the many workers who've been part of the sacred work of building a house that, we hope, will honor God.

I'd like to start this morning's reflection with a passage that probably doesn't make it onto the lectionary all that often. It's a reading about the construction of the temple that comes from 1st Kings Chapter 6, starting with verse 11:

¹¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, ¹² "Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. ¹³ I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."

¹⁴ So Solomon built the house, and finished it. ¹⁵ He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. ¹⁶ He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the rafters, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place. ¹⁷ The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. ¹⁸ The cedar within the house had carvings of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, no stone was seen. ¹⁹ The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ²⁰ The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.

My mother's family is from a small town called McDonough, about an hour's drive south of Atlanta, Georgia. In McDonough there's a small church named Sharon Baptist. Almost every time I drive by that church with my grandmother she casually says, "You know, your great grandfather helped build that church." And I say, "Yes ma'am, I've heard." Whenever I drive by that same church with my aunt a similar story is told, as it is when I drive by the church with my mom. And you'd better believe, when I bring a friend down to visit that small town and we drive by that church, I inevitably say by way of introduction, "See that church with the big windows? My great grandfather helped build that church."

No doubt for those who were involved with the building of the temple in Solomon's time, or those whose fathers, or grandfathers, or even great grandfathers were involved, the stories of planning and construction were told over and over. There is sense of accomplishment that comes along with helping build something that changes lives, a certain level of intertwinement that is both lasting and permanent.

Welcome to Lydia's House first formal workday. You are helping to create the space which will house a ministry for some of the most vulnerable of God's children. You are giving of your time in a way that will link you permanently to this house. It sounds a bit lofty, I know, but you will always be able to say to your future passengers, "You see that house with the white columns there? I helped renovate that house. I pulled down the old chimney, fought the basement funk, tore out the old so the new could be built."

Thank you for being willing to put your bodies and time into this endeavor. I don't think our work plan will go into any future editions of the Bible, but know that this time, this hot and dirty demolition, is holy time. We give thanks to God that you're here to share in it.

Let us pray.



PRESSING NEEDS

- **1 set of stackable washer / dryers**, in very good condition
- **Durable, sturdy, solid wood dressers & chests of drawers**
- **Personal items** including toilet paper, tampons/pads, diapers and wipes, toothbrushes, tooth paste, soap, shampoo and deodorant, children's soap and shampoo (full size rather than travel, please)
- **Cleaning supplies** including dish soap, dishwasher tabs, bleach, laundry soap, dryer sheets, hand soap, soft scrub, wood floor cleaner, paper towels, vinegar, baking soda, rags, sponges, scouring pads
- **Hosts for fundraisers or showers** to help us collect the needed items for day to day operations at Lydia's House
- **Monthly donors** who will commit to giving (a minimum of 12 months) to support our operations
- **A volunteer garden manager**, to start March 2014

If you are able to help in any of these ways please email intern@stlydiashouse.org or call us at 513-549-7752.

We also have a registry available on amazon.com. Go to <http://amzn.com/w/33UH68EMDZ6JY>

If you would like to give a Christmas gift off our registry in honor of someone let us know and we'd love to send them a card letting them know you remembered them (and us) in this special way!

Join us in prayer

Sister Carren Herring offered this prayer at our October 26 "Women for Women" event. It struck a deep chord with us, and we're pleased to share it with all of you.

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Ps 127

Creating God, bless all those who are building Lydia's House. Fill their hearts with love as they create each room as a space of welcome and rest. Reward their generosity and let them experience the fruits of their labor.

Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head. Matt 8:20

God incarnate, you experienced what our guests also know. Bless each one who will come to us burdened with fear and worry. Strengthen us to be a safe haven and to empower our guests to continue their life's journey knowing we are a community that cares.

Lydia was a woman of means who opened her home in hospitality and service.

Spirit of God, thank you for the many who have joined us in sharing their gifts in service to homeless women and children. May we be one with you each day and may the power of love transform lives in us and through us. Amen.

LIVE-IN VOLUNTEER

We are looking for one faithful woman who is called to live at Lydia's House alongside Meridith, as a live-in worker. If you would like to begin a conversation about the possibility of answering this call please email info@stlydiashouse.org or call 513-549-7752.

In collaboration with a small group of friends, this volunteer will be responsible for:

- Creating a safe, welcoming and hospitable environment for women in transition and crisis, and their children
- Organizing and maintaining a household; keeping up with basic home maintenance; keeping the house stocked with food and other daily use items
- Maintaining the structure and safety of the house for guests and volunteers; overseeing screening of guests and volunteers to make sure that the house is a safe space; establishing and enforcing day to day guidelines
- Providing spiritual and mental support for guests; coordinating a monthly on-sight mass and community potluck
- Helping create a prayerful community, committed to praying for guests and one another and maintaining the ministry as Christ centered and in line with the ethos of Catholic Worker values
- Living in such a way as to promote simplicity and sustainability, faith and stewardship of resources; modeling sustainable spiritual and financial practices and providing an example of a healthy and balanced life for guests in crisis

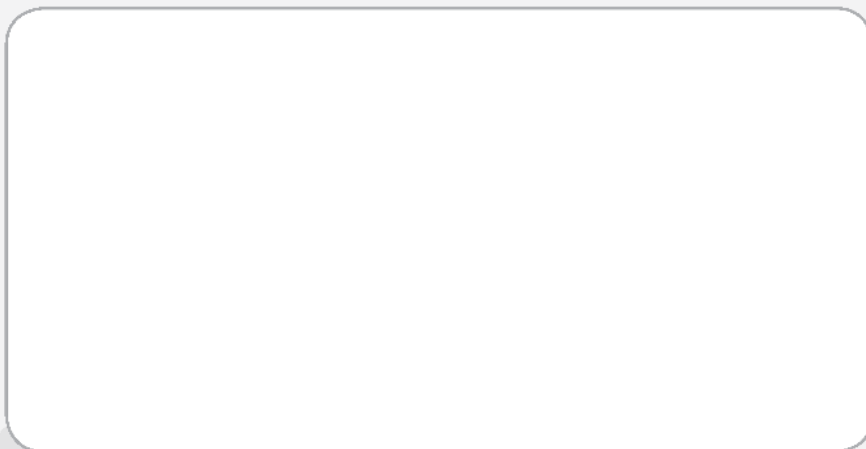
If this sounds like a job you'd like to do, contact us for a full description of benefits and expectations. We'll be praying for you even though we don't yet know who you are!



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CALENDAR

December 14: Ten Thousand Villages Fundraiser, O'Bryonville, 2011 Madison Road Cincinnati, OH 45208. 9am - 5pm. Just mention Lydia's House and 15% of your purchase price will be donated back to us!

December 18- January 5: Time of rest for Lydia's House. Offices are closed and renovation work is suspended.

January 11, 18, 25: Work days at the house. 9am – 5pm. 2024 Mills Ave.

January 26: The Episcopal Feast Day of St. Lydia: A Celebration of God's grace and our work together. 5pm. Calvary Church in Clifton: 3766 Clifton Ave. Cincinnati Oh, 45220. Dinner is included and child care is provided!

February 22: The Big Cleaning Day from 9-5 at 2024 Mills Ave.

March 2, 9: Prayers of Preparation, 5pm. Evening prayer and a light meal at Lydia's House, praying for the future guests and the work we will do together. Some additional house cleaning and preparation may also take place.

March 23: House dedication and open house. 3 - 5pm at 2024 Mills Ave. Norwood.

April 27: Monthly worship: First monthly worship service is held at 2024 Mills with a potluck meal to follow. This service will be a Catholic Mass starting at 5pm, celebrating the liturgical season of Easter and the resurrection. Please bring food to share.

May 18: Monthly worship: Mother's memorial prayer service, potluck and time of planting. Join us in the act of worship that is beautifying our yard, as we remember and honor mothers—our own and those we serve at Lydia's House. Yard celebration/ planting starts at 3pm.

