

## Mary

At first a fluttering  
then a kick,  
his fist pummelling my ribcage  
when I knelt to pray.

They sent me away,  
my belly burgeoning  
shame on his name,  
his eyes looking right through me.

Amazed, he took me back.  
He muttered  
he'd seen him too  
but best not mention it in company.

I sang then,  
hymning prophecies  
that were poetry  
inventing themselves on my tongue.

The riots and the cold  
you know about.  
The roadblocks.  
That donkey.

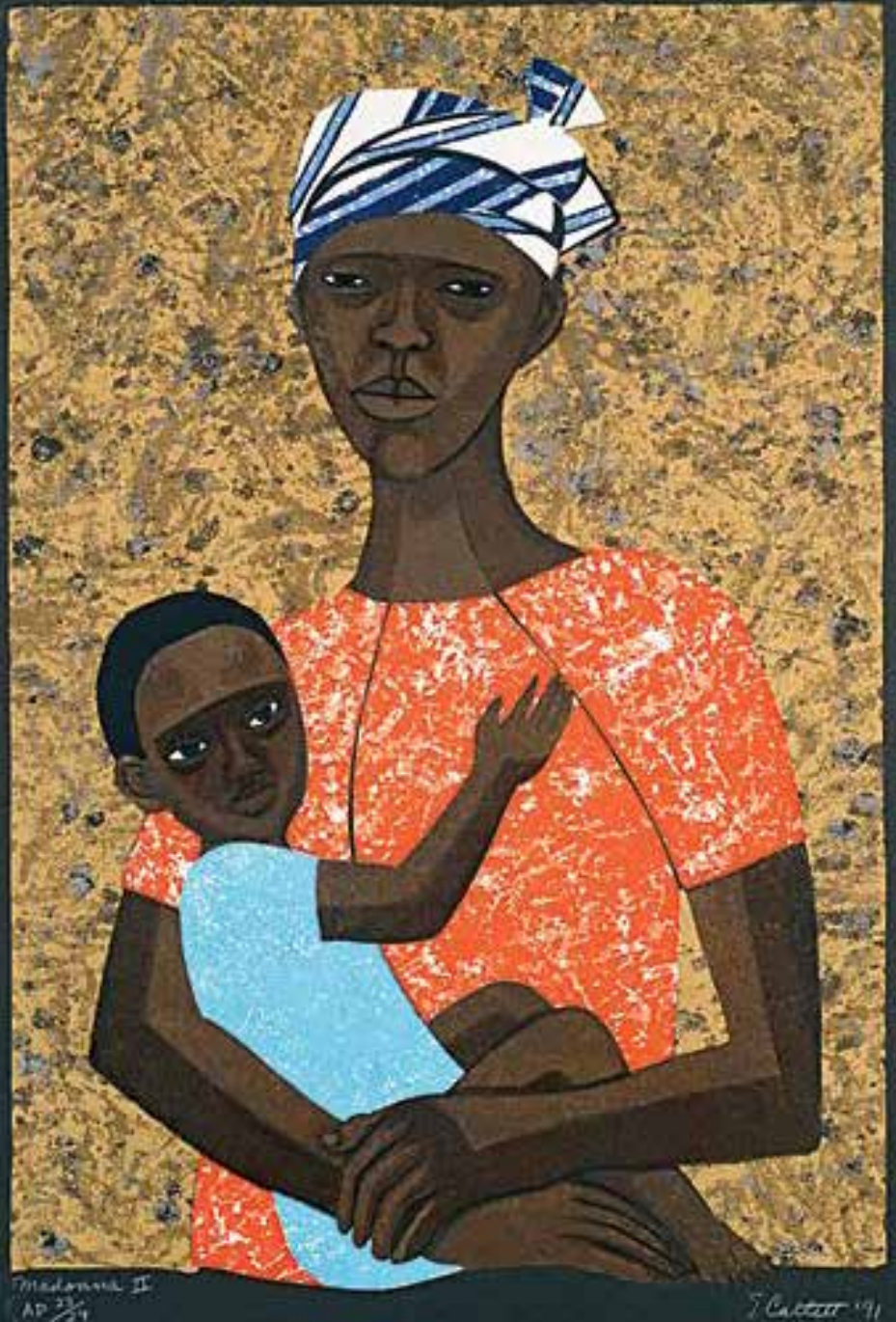
Let me tell you  
nothing prepares you  
for that O  
cracking your pelvis,

his fists flailing in air  
as if from nowhere,  
tarnished wings  
of an angel.

They say I said nothing  
but treasured these things in my heart.  
Pain overruled my throat  
and hasn't stopped since.

None of us gives birth  
in silence.  
I was no one's favourite girl  
till this.

- BY ANTHONY WILSON



# PAULI MURRAY IS THE 2017 SAINT OF THE YEAR!

An activist, feminist, lawyer, priest and poet, Rev. Murray inspires us by her work, her life, and her refusal to take no for an answer.

Born Anna Pauline Murray in 1910 in Baltimore, Pauli lost both of her parents at an early age. She left Maryland for Durham, North Carolina to live with her aunt and finish high school.

Pauli enrolled in college but the Great Depression caused her to leave school and seek work. She ended up in a Works Program where she met Eleanor Roosevelt, whom would later become a life-long friend. Pauli also became a published writer during this time for her poems, articles, and stories.

Pauli grew in her involvement with the Civil Rights movement. In 1938 she began a campaign to enter the all white University of North Carolina, which was unsuccessful but brought attention to the policies. In 1940 she was arrested for refusing to sit at the back of the bus in Virginia. This was 15 years before Rosa Parks!



In 1941 Pauli enrolled at Howard University in DC. She graduated top of her class and received a fellowship to Harvard Law, but they took the fellowship back when they realized she was a woman. Pauli continued her education at the University of California where she received a degree in law.

In the early 1960's Pauli worked with the mainstream civil rights movement, including Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King Jr. She was unhappy about the way women in the movement were put on the sidelines in favor of male leadership.

In 1977 Pauli became the first African American woman to become an Episcopal priest. She died in 1985.

Pauli was ahead of her time in many ways. She also identified as gender non-conforming, and would be considered part of the LGBTQ community today. She lived proudly as the child of God she was created to be, and shows us what bravery and commitment look like.

# ALL SAINTS SERVICE



Our annual All Saints service was a time to remember and honor the saints that each of our rooms is named for. It also served as a former guest reunion and an opportunity to try on our nun habit costume.



# HOUSE NOTES

Summer and Fall 2017 in review

In the early summer, we welcomed guest Shaina, 5 months pregnant, and her 6-year-old daughter, Janae. Now there were two 6-year-olds in the house! Kids Janae and Alex, along with the various kids, toddlers, and babies, generated a lot of energy, noise, and fun. For these kids we put together a summer of many camps: Camp Joy, Upspring Summer 360 and YMCA Daycamp.

Two babies were born in June, both with "K" names. One mom transitioned soon after delivery to living with her fiancée; we have kept in touch and she has recently moved into housing of her own. The other new mom moved in with family at the end of the summer. Also in June, we welcomed guest Natasha and her toddler, Jamal. Both mom and son are funny and friendly.

Portions of the staff made it out to the Ohio Valley Catholic Worker Gathering in Indiana, and then, a month later, to the Wild Goose Festival in North Carolina. At the Goose, Anne, Meridith, and Mary Ellen gave a presentation on the celebrations at Lydia's House. At both events we were delighted to reconnect with other communities and hear great speakers and music.



We tried to absorb as much of summer's sunshine and green trees as we could. The house took a trip to Gorman Farm, thanks to our dear friend Kathy Aerni, there encountering goats and chickens (with some trepidation). We also took an overnight trip further afield, to the homestead of the Wuest family in Adams County. Former and current guests came along on this campout; children swam in the river and helped Karen Wuest make cheese from their dairy cow's milk. Everyone enjoyed the Wuests' fresh cooking and song circle. This pastoral foray was restorative and relaxing.

Besides the big occasions, Lydia's House life in summertime is comprised of lots of backyard playtime, many trips to Ameristop for slushies and soft-serve, Friday nights down at the Speckled Bird Café for pizza, forays to various parks and playgrounds, grilling dinner on the barbeque when the feeling strikes, and, once, a water balloon fight. We celebrated births and birthdays, guests and volunteers who've stayed for 60 days, new arrivals and fond departures. Our community photographer Juli Thompson took lots of photos. Marykate, our summer farmer, worked hard to keep our garden growing. We watered the flowers, picked tomatoes, ate lots of delicious greens, and attempted to keep up with mowing the lawn.





# HOUSE NOTES

Summer and Fall 2017 in review



We are deeply grateful to our steadfast volunteers, but even they like to take vacations in summer time! This created an opportunity for new folks to bring dinner to the Lydia's House table, and we have met and delighted in all the new faces this summer—too many to list!

The last big hoo-rah of summer was our whole-house trip to Family Camp at Procter Center, with the support of Redeemer Episcopal Church. Everyone was eagerly anticipating this trip on the first weekend of August. Less rustic than the Wuests' farm, this camp offered cabins, a swimming pool, and (many moms' favorite) arts and crafts. It was Jamal's first time in a pool! To close this fun weekend, Mary Ellen, Anne and Annie were launched into the lake via THE BLOB. It went so well that we plan to go back over Christmas for "Winter Camp."

The delights of summer wound down, and we were facing a new school year. Mowing the lawn began to give way to raking leaves and picking up strange spikey balls that fall from the tree. Janae started first grade, and her mother began an 8-month course of study towards

becoming a Medical Assistant. Also in August, we welcomed a new guest, Nina, and her adorable baby, Avery.

In September, Shaina found an apartment of her own, so her little family moved out of Lydia's House. Their bonds of friendship with the staff and other guests have ensured their continued presence in the life of Lydia's House, and we were very happy to be at the birth of Shaina's daughter and to host Shaina for a few days post partum in October.

September and October were very active months for events and outings. Lydia's House began sharing our decision to develop next step apartments in Norwood, and invited people to visit the new building at two "Come & See" events. We celebrated the completion of Home Health Aide training for Natasha.



Throughout October, Lydia's House staff and guests, in partnership with Woven Oak Initiatives and neighborhood kids worked on a temporary mural project. Many people contributed to these panels, which depict local flora and fauna and now cover the formerly broken windows of our new building, enlivening and beautifying that corner. We celebrated Halloween, mostly by cooking over adorable baby costumes and



# HOUSE NOTES

Summer and Fall 2017 in review

were delighted by our favorite costume: associates Taylor and Deb as Maria from the Sound of Music before and after the convent.

The leaves of our maple tree have now faded from green to yellow, eventually letting go altogether. The garden next door is being put to bed, and the weather has finally committed to a wintry chill. Last week we celebrated Thanksgiving together, with residents,

volunteers, and staff old and new and were grateful for eight turkeys delivered from St. Susanna parish! In our sun-brightened dining room, we broke bread together and remembered our answered prayers and many blessings from the past year. Lydia's House is a place of continual change and transition, but the core community is steadfast, the house shelters us all, and every night we gather around the table for dinner together.



## DID GOD COUNT THE HAIRS ON HAGAR'S HEAD?

Genesis 21 and Matthew 10

A Sermon by Mary Ellen Mitchell, given in the summer of 2017 at Vineyard Central Church in Norwood, Ohio

Thursday is our garbage day. I try to remind myself not to walk on Thursdays, and especially not on Thursdays in the summer. Unlike Anderson Township, where I spent my childhood, here in Norwood garbage cans are often left till the wee hours of the evening, turned over, garbage spilled or not in cans at all. Last Thursday as I started walking I noticed a particular pile of garbage not far from Lydia's House: a small mattress with the crib sheet still on, a play kitchen relatively intact, a dresser less intact, and a stroller that I thought I'd remembered buying. I knew what this meant: a former guest of ours, one who had a lot of promise in terms of earning potential, was being evicted. We'd not heard from her in the final moments, as we often do, and we'd not been given the opportunity to try to bail her out. She'd gone quietly and we could only speculate: was it a new boyfriend, a job loss, a combo? We'd known her \$700 monthly rent was too much but she wasn't up for listening back when she took the apartment. All we know now is that it didn't work out; a landlord is no doubt frustrated;

she's likely unstable.

Here in Norwood, there's no way to miss eviction. No street is particularly spared, though we see it most down Mills, on Cleveland, and on the rough parts of Carter.

"SEND THIS SERVANT  
AWAY WITH HER SON!  
THIS SERVANT'S SON  
WON'T SHARE  
THE INHERITANCE WITH  
MY SON ISAAC."

My Bible calls today's old testament passage "Hagar and Ishmael evicted," and it goes like this:

<sup>8</sup> *The boy grew and stopped nursing. On the day he stopped nursing, Abraham prepared a huge banquet. 9 Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Send this servant away with her son! This servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac."*

<sup>11</sup> *This upset Abraham terribly because the boy was his son. 12 God said to Abraham, "Don't be upset about the boy and your servant. Do everything Sarah tells you to do because your descendants will be traced through Isaac. 13 But I will make of your servant's son a great nation too, because he is also your descendant." 14 Abraham got up early in the morning, took some bread and a flask of water, and gave it to Hagar. He put the boy in her shoulder sling and sent her away.*

*She left and wandered through the desert near Beer-sheba. 15 Finally the water in the flask ran out, and she put the boy down under one of the desert shrubs. 16 She walked away from him about as far as a bow shot and sat down, telling herself, I can't bear to see the boy die. She sat at a distance, cried out in grief, and wept.*

<sup>17</sup> *God heard the boy's cries, and God's messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "Hagar! What's wrong? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy's cries over there. 18 Get up, pick up the boy, and take him by the hand because I will make of him a*

(Continued on following pages)



*great nation.” 19 Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went over, filled the water flask, and gave the boy a drink. 20 God remained with the boy; he grew up, lived in the desert, and became an expert archer. 21 He lived in the Paran Desert, and his mother found him an Egyptian wife.*

What to make of the story of Hagar in the history of the world? For those of us who have grown up buffered from the worst injustice, can we even imagine that Hagar really existed? Of course, her eviction is not the beginning of her story. Looking back to Genesis 16, we find Sarai, soon to be Sarah sending her husband Abram to rape her slave Hagar. Upon getting pregnant, Hagar is pretty fed up with Sarai and the Bible reports she “no longer respected her mistress.” Sarai ups the bad treatment and ultimately Hagar runs away. From forced servitude to rape to displacement, Hagar’s life is perhaps as bad as a human life can get. And yet, in this the Lord manages to convince Hagar to return to Abram and bear a child that ultimately, the Bible tells us, will be really hard to deal with.

Hagar returns, has the baby and presumably counts on Abram to care for them, seeing that he forced

her to conceive. But Sarai ends up conceiving her miracle child Isaac, and when today’s lectionary passage comes up, Sarah sends Hagar away once and for all, and Abraham takes solace that this is God’s will.

There’s a lot here. And it cuts into some of our deepest theological questions. Who’s really hearing the voice of God? Does God tell Abraham to send his baby into the dessert with a flask of water? How can there even be a sovereign God in a world that lets things happen like those that happened to Hagar?

Worse than having her crib mattress put to the curb, Hagar leaves with nothing but a baby in a sling and a flask of water, sent by her baby’s father possibly to die in the dessert. And yet, God’s work in this is bigger than Hagar’s despair.

Today’s Gospel reading from Matthew 10 is about the sending of the 12 disciples into a world that will likely not accept them. Exile is a common theme in scripture and the exiled are often shown as having the special protection of God. Initially juxtaposing the commissioning of the disciples to the eviction of Hagar is a stretch. But when we frame both Hagar and the disciples as being sent by God into peril that will ultimately result in their liberation, the choice of these passages starts to make sense.

God’s ultimate provision in these stories of exile aside, I have to imagine that walking in the wilderness with her baby, Hagar did not feel protected. While Abraham presumably knows there’s a good outcome on the horizon, Hagar does not. As she starts to face the indefinite horizon of dessert, could she ever believe a promise like the one Jesus later makes to his disciples in Matthew 10 “Don’t be afraid of people that can kill the body but not the soul. Even the hairs of your head are counted.”

My own experiences of God’s providence and protection, while real, find themselves buffered by race, class and privilege. Hard choices I’ve made, including the one to leave paid employment and start the journey

of Lydia’s House, were made softer by education and connections that allow me to warp out of this chosen wilderness anytime I might desire. And so often I speak of “God’s providing for our family” or “trusting in God” and I do believe it and I want to thank God for it, *but I’ve never been evicted with my baby.*

To be frank, despite the advice given Jesus’ followers in Matthew, I **am** afraid of people that can kill my body and I think Hagar was too. We see a particularly awful moment in Genesis 21 when Hagar runs out of water and puts the baby under a tree to walk away because she says “I can’t bear to see my baby die.” Is there a lower low? And it’s here that a messenger of God comes in and says “God hears these cries.” It’s the Old Testament equivalent of God counting the hairs. It’s God saying to Hagar and her baby, “you who matter to no one matter to me.”

It doesn’t take prophetic imagination to see the connections in the stories of many Lydia’s House guests and that of Hagar. We know our guests have been evicted, sometimes multiple times; lived in cars and storage units with their babies; debated trips to Children’s Hospital when their child gets sick in fear that authorities would take the child away. Our guests are abandoned by baby’s fathers, give birth alone, and reach desperation when they call our intake line.

As we hear their stories of exile, we wonder “Are the hairs of your heads really counted by God? Like the followers of Jesus in Matthew, are your babies worth more than a sparrow?”

If Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, a light shining in the darkness of those Old Testament stories that for so long seemed a bit off, what does Jesus have to say to Hagar? If Jesus is the Savior of today, what does he have to say to those who call Lydia’s House looking for help?

Perhaps it’s something like this, pulled straight from Hagar’s lowest moment in Genesis (my paraphrase) “Get up. Pick up your baby. And take him by the hand because I have



great things for him. Look over there. There's what you need. I'm going to take care of you."

If we return to Matthew we see that Jesus essentially promises the worst to his chosen followers. It's hard to believe that good people could be treated in such an awful way, but from Genesis to Matthew there's an important sub text that we'll be remiss if we miss: We live in a troubled world. Awful things can and will happen to good people. Just after giving instruction for going out, Jesus warns (Matthew 10:16-21):

*<sup>16</sup> "Look, I'm sending you as sheep among wolves. <sup>17</sup> Watch out for people—because they will hand you over to councils and they will beat you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup> <sup>21</sup> Brothers and sisters will hand each other over to be executed. A father will turn his child in. Children will defy their parents and have them executed.*

This dystopian awful may not be our experience of the world, but for the very poor and those without power, this awful can be daily. The world of Hagar: slavery, rape, forced exile, we've seen that all at Lydia's House. We know that 70% of calls made by homeless women with children to the shelter hotline in our city are turned away. We know that women, living within a stones throw of us, lose their babies because they can't afford to keep them or because the babies die; our region has one of the highest

infant mortality rates in the country.

Not long ago, Audrey Debose wept for her son Sam Debose, shot on camera by an officer of the law, whose case for justice was once again thwarted with a hung jury. She stood outside the court room and seemed to echo the resignation of Hagar. She said to the on looking media, simply "God's will is sufficient," or perhaps said another way, "Justice may not come on this side of heaven." And outside of the awful that happens in our own city, we know the unspeakable happens. Newspapers reported in December of 2016 that women killed themselves in Aleppo rather than be raped by incoming soldiers capturing their homes.



But persecution wasn't the only story for Jesus' disciples; desperation wasn't the only narrative for Hagar. Jesus promises that not one of these people will fall to the ground without our Father knowing about it already. Jesus commits to knowing how many hairs are on each of their heads. But how do we know the homeless moms, see the evictions on the curb, watch innocent person after innocent person shot at traffic stops, or watch the news of Syrian devastation and make sense of God's commitment to each of the seemingly forgotten?

The truth is, we don't really. The Christian walk is not an intellectual untangling but a way of living. There is no philosophical proof that will lead you or Hagar, Audrey Dubose or the world's refugees to God's goodness. The clarity, if there is any, comes only in the living out—and sometimes the living out requires that we lean into Jesus' words that we can't live in fear. Indeed, hiding ourselves away, avoiding confronting the hard and sometimes perilous work prescribed to us leads to a death worse than the death of our body.

The best answer I've found in response to this troubling world is in Matthew 10:5, the passage known as the commissioning. Pay attention because it's as close to marching orders as we get. If we're to avoid despair this is our work, the work of the followers, the work we're privileged to do because it trumps the worst case and is the path to true life:

**Go to the Lost Sheep. Make this announcement "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, throw out demons. Give without demanding payment. When you go into a house say Peace. Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves.**

Amen



## TARA'S STORY

My name is Tara. I'm 28, a mother of two, and a former resident of Lydia's House.

My life has never been easy. My parents divorced when I was three. My siblings and I were left alone often. Both parents' households were chaotic and sometimes violent. I was abused, and once was nearly drowned by one of my mother's boyfriends. I never had a stable home life. I became violent and fought my family. I spent my teen years as a ward of the state of Nebraska, the state where I was born and raised, in and out of foster care and institutions. My grandparents, the most loving and steady part of my life, died when I was a teenager.

At 19, I graduated out of state care and moved to Ohio, where my mom was living. She'd told me she was living alone and I could live with her and we could work on repairing our relationship. I arrived to find her living with a boyfriend. I can't deal with lying. Within a couple weeks, I was no longer in her house. Because I had been diagnosed with mental illness, I was receiving disability payments, and I went to stay with friends in North College Hill. I had a boyfriend and we were planning to take a bus to New Mexico. He bought drugs with our ticket money, and when I yelled at him for this, he laid hands on me. I moved back to my mom's. It was either that or be homeless.



This pattern repeated itself again and again. I'd move out — sometimes moving out of state, to North Carolina, to Chicago, to Detroit — and then a crisis — either in my own life or in my mom's — would bring me back. For a time, in 2009, I was homeless, but even then, I had everything I needed to live. It wasn't a perfect life or an easy one, but I made it work.

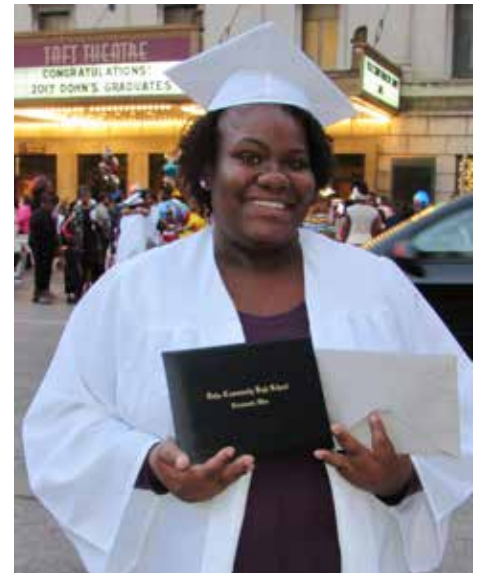
When I found out I was pregnant with my daughter, I quit drinking, quit everything else I was doing, and moved in with a friend and then my mom and her husband again. I was living there when my daughter was born in 2010. It was chaotic — three adults and three kids including my mom's step-children in a two-bedroom trailer. But it gave me time and space to learn how to be a mom myself.

I moved out, got a place of my own. My mental health improved, so I stopped accepting disability payments and got a job. I still was restless: we moved for awhile to Chicago and then back to Ohio. But my daughter was with me, and I made it work. By 2015, I had a job working third-shift at Amazon and my mom took care of my daughter. Everything was fine — until I found out unexpectedly that I was pregnant again. My job required me to do 75-pound lifts; I had to go on leave. I found another job at Wal-Mart, but a miscommunication when my managers switched they scheduled me to work during my doctor appointments. I lost that job.

I was pregnant, very pregnant. I had no job. I lived in a boarding house in Evanston that I couldn't bring my daughter to, let alone a baby. I didn't know how to make this work. I was looking for answers.

That's when the nurses at Tri-Health referred me to Lydia's House. Within 48 hours, I had a phone interview. I

don't like asking for help because I feel like I have to pay it back 10 times over. I don't like asking for help because I want to do things my way. But Lydia's House was help that was easy to accept. They're really a great group of women who are helping women who want to help themselves.



I moved into the house in March 2016; my son was born in May. The Lydia's House staff were there all through my labor and delivery — literally right there in the room. They got my daughter in the YMCA camp that summer. They helped me save money and apply for assistance and food stamps. By July, I left the house to move into Winton Terrace.

While at Lydia's House, I took a sales class that enabled me to get a job at selling cars. Unfortunately, I lost that job because of a medical emergency with my son. I found other retail jobs and worked for awhile at a daycare. Illnesses — my own or my children's — have made steady employment hard. Another time, I needed to stay home to sort out childcare because my daycare shut down without warning. I need





# THE LORD'S PRAYER

(as recited at Lydia's House worship services)

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

May your name be kept holy.

Set the world right, as heaven is right.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

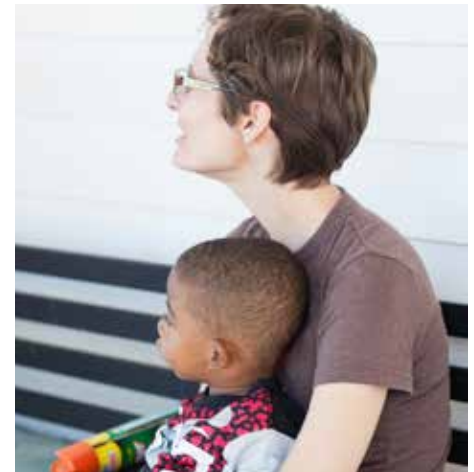
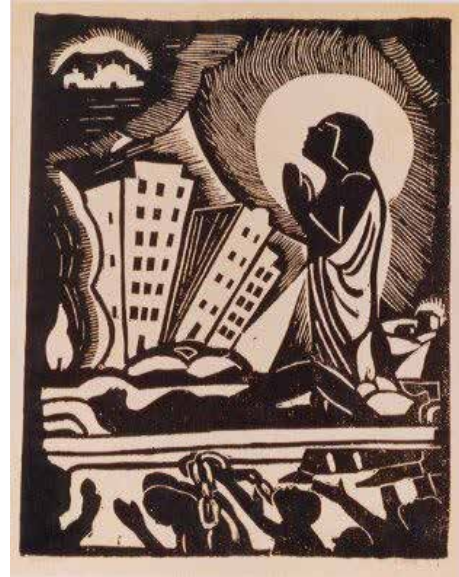
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.

From trials too great to bear, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,

now and forever. Amen.



*(Tara's Story continued)*

a car to get to my jobs, but the one I could afford is a 1998. It has issues, and car problems and costs also complicate life. I'm looking for work again now. I know I'll find something and make it work, but it can be stressful.

I've stayed in touch with the women at Lydia's House. They continue to be a support in my life. A couple of times they've helped me with rent money and with transportation. I had a lot of problems with

my daughter's public school in Kindergarten and for a while she didn't go. I was gonna put her in online school but they helped me get her enrolled in a charter school. Deb picked her up for tutoring and bought her school uniforms and has made sure she makes it to school on days she misses the bus. They bring me clothes for my son. They pick us up for parties and holidays at the house. They celebrated my birthday and my daughters and gave us

gifts. Recently, when my daughter got off at the wrong bus stop and everyone was panicking, Meridith found her and made sure she was safe. Living far from them makes all this hard but they make it work. A lot of times I come over and we get pizza together. We talk about things. They have become kind of a part of my family, especially Meridith and Anne. They help me make my life work. Without Lydia's House, I don't know where I'd be.



## WE'RE EXPANDING!

We bought an apartment building. By Fall of 2018 we hope to offer long term apartments for families who've achieved stability at Lydia's House. As the pictures below show, we have a long way to go, but we've never been shy about ambitious renovation projects.



## PROJECT TIMELINE

**November 2016** The Leadership of Lydia's House commits to a season of prayer and increased awareness around political advocacy for our guest population

**January 2017** Meridith, Anne and Mary Ellen begin participating in coalitions working to respond to poverty in our region

**February 2017** "Housing Affordability in Hamilton County" is released, detailing that Hamilton County is 40,000 units short of affordable housing for those earning 30% area median income or below. This report is extremely significant to the community because all of the women we house at Lydia's House fall into this income category.

**May 2017** A large building two blocks from our shelter property becomes available for purchase

**June 2017** The trustees of Lydia's House add "housing development" to our mission

**July 2017** Lydia's House hires a director of community housing development AND buys an eight unit apartment building

**August-September** Ben Eilerman leads crews of neighbors, students, church goers, teachers, and more to remove eight dumpsters of debris from the building. The Ohio Finance Fund offers predevelopment funding and the Women for Women campaign raises \$125,000 for the project.

**October 2017** Lydia's House and Woven Oak Initiatives partner on a mural project. Associate Taylor Hand collaborates with neighborhood leader Erin Lockridge and artist Elizabeth Hatchett to create temporary murals in order to beautify the commercial space during renovation. Neighborhood children paint the murals and they're installed by Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

**November 2017** With support from US Bank, The Conway Foundation, The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, Christ Church Cathedral and many individuals the capital campaign reaches \$450,000. Only \$350,000 to go!

**January – August 2018** The building will be under interior renovations, creating seven two bedroom and one three bedroom apartment

**Fall 2018** Anticipated opening of apartments

**Winter 2019** Renovation of commercial space





# THOUGHTS ON THE VISITATION OR WHY WE WOMEN MUST NOT SCATTER

*A reflection from our 5th annual Women for Women event by event hostess Maria Krzeski*

In preparation for this event I was reflecting on the reasons why we have decided to call this event "Women for Women" and limit it



to women only. At some level it is perhaps obvious, after all Lydia's House is run by several talented women and it is a house for women and their children.

However, when I originally thought of "Women For Women," I had something else in mind. I would like to revisit the story of the first two women in the history of our Christian faith, Mary and Elizabeth. If we have theologians among us, forgive me for my imaginary approach to that Gospel story.

We all know about the Annunciation. The Angel appears to young Mary. I have always thought that this encounter tells us something that is never mentioned about Mary: that she was a very smart woman who could think on her feet. Her answer was a very mechanistic biological question – "How will it happen?" She knew her reproductive biology 101 and she was thinking quite analytically. How?!

We know the story of Joseph; how he was upset about what happened, wanted a divorce, but then had

a dream and agreed to continue the relationship with Mary. And while the story seems to brush over Joseph's deeper feeling and emotions, we can imagine that he remained upset, perhaps deceived, perhaps angry, not understanding, practicing his trust in God, but maybe not winning this spiritual struggle right away. Maybe he needed more time and maybe he was not there for Mary as much as she needed, still confused herself. Maybe he did not talk to Mary. It was a difficult time for both of them.

Grace and miracles happen so easy and shiny when looked at from many years/centuries later, but in their making in real life the miracle and grace may become overlooked in our daily human struggles.

So smart Mary decides to give Joseph time to come to terms with his feelings and reaches out to another woman. And not her mother, or sister, or close friend next door. Perhaps this would be too difficult. Perhaps many people including her own family have not come to terms with what was happening. A "too early" in the marriage pregnancy was a stigma. Mary used to be a good member of her family, and now she became an outlier. So she reached to Elizabeth who lived further away, herself irregular, pregnant at an old age and with a husband who did not talk either.

When I think of the Visitation, I remember seeing a video installation by Bill Viola portraying the meeting of the two women: their warmth, tenderness, joy, their touch and kiss and hug. The very moment when they truly meet, see each other, acknowledge each other in all the complexities of their lives.

They are together. And Jesus is quite literally between them.

I think that this is such an intrinsically women's gift made holy by the example of the Visitation: to gather and not to scatter. Down deep in our hearts, when we think of our families, our mothers, grandmothers, daughters, friends we understand what it means to keep it all together with the help of God, so that everybody stays connected and does not scatter.



And if they scatter how much does it hurt?

This is exactly what St. Lydia does to the women she serves. Women are gathered, acknowledged, seen. They have a name, they are safe and are helped. In her wisdom Lydia's House realized that, although the 3-12 months is a long time, it's not long enough. Once women leave they often scatter and they need an anchor. That is why they bought and are renovating the apartment building, so that women who graduate from Lydia's House can remain gathered and not scattered.

Amen

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

All Donors September 1, 2016 through November 1, 2017

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## WOMEN FOR WOMEN

Women gathered together in a spirit of friendship and solidarity to support our new project. The Women For Women campaign raised a total of \$125,000!

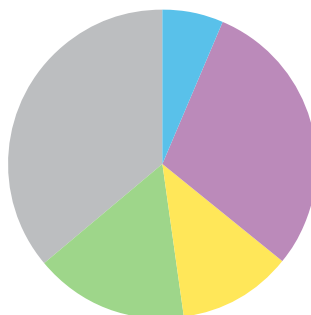




# ANNUAL REPORT

## INCOME 2016

Grants and Foundations	6,527
Special Events	30,000
Churches and Religious Orders	12,055
Trustees and House Leadership	16,245
Other Individuals	36,384
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101,211</b>

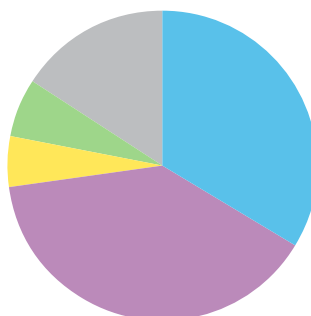


## INCOME 2016

- Grants and Foundations
- Special Events
- Churches and Religious Orders
- Trustees and House Leadership
- Other Individuals

## EXPENSE 2016

Stabilization <i>(includes house expenses, insurance, maintenance, utilities, food, bus passes)</i>	28,846
Support <i>(includes volunteer stipends and all expenses related to guest support personnel)</i>	33,515
Community <i>(includes worship, outings, support for other ministries, newsletter, community outings)</i>	4,419
Wholeness <i>(includes YMCA, counseling, garden, medication support)</i>	5,326
Administration and Fundraising <i>(includes office expenses and supplies, software and hardware, accounting professional expenses, fundraising professional expenses)</i>	13,374
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>85,480</b>



## EXPENSE 2016

- Stabilization
- Support
- Community
- Wholeness
- Administration and Fundraising

## SUPPORT OUR WORK:

In the enclosed envelope you'll find an opportunity to support us financially. Our year end goal is to raise \$20,000: the funds necessary for our utilities, insurance, and maintenance for our main property for the coming year. We need your support to (literally) keep the lights on in 2018!



LYDIA'S HOUSE  
PO Box 128808  
Cincinnati, OH 45212

**STLYDIASHOUSE.ORG**  
**513-549-7752**

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## LIVE AND WORK WITH US

Would you like to live in intentional community, in solidarity with women and children experiencing homelessness? Lydia's House is currently looking for one associate volunteer to work alongside our core community and live in our main property. This is not a professional social work job but rather a commitment to shared life and service. The term is a minimum of one year but could lead to a longer commitment, and applications are currently being accepted for a Spring 2018 start. We ask that all applicants for the Associates Program be at least 23 years of age. We are seeking women of faith who desire to embrace life in a Christian community and commit to regular prayer and the works of mercy. Married couples will also be considered. Volunteers should be passionate about living alongside the poor and living simply. For more information, visit our website at [www.stlydiashouse.org](http://www.stlydiashouse.org) or contact Mary Ellen at [maryellen@stlydiashouse.org](mailto:maryellen@stlydiashouse.org).

