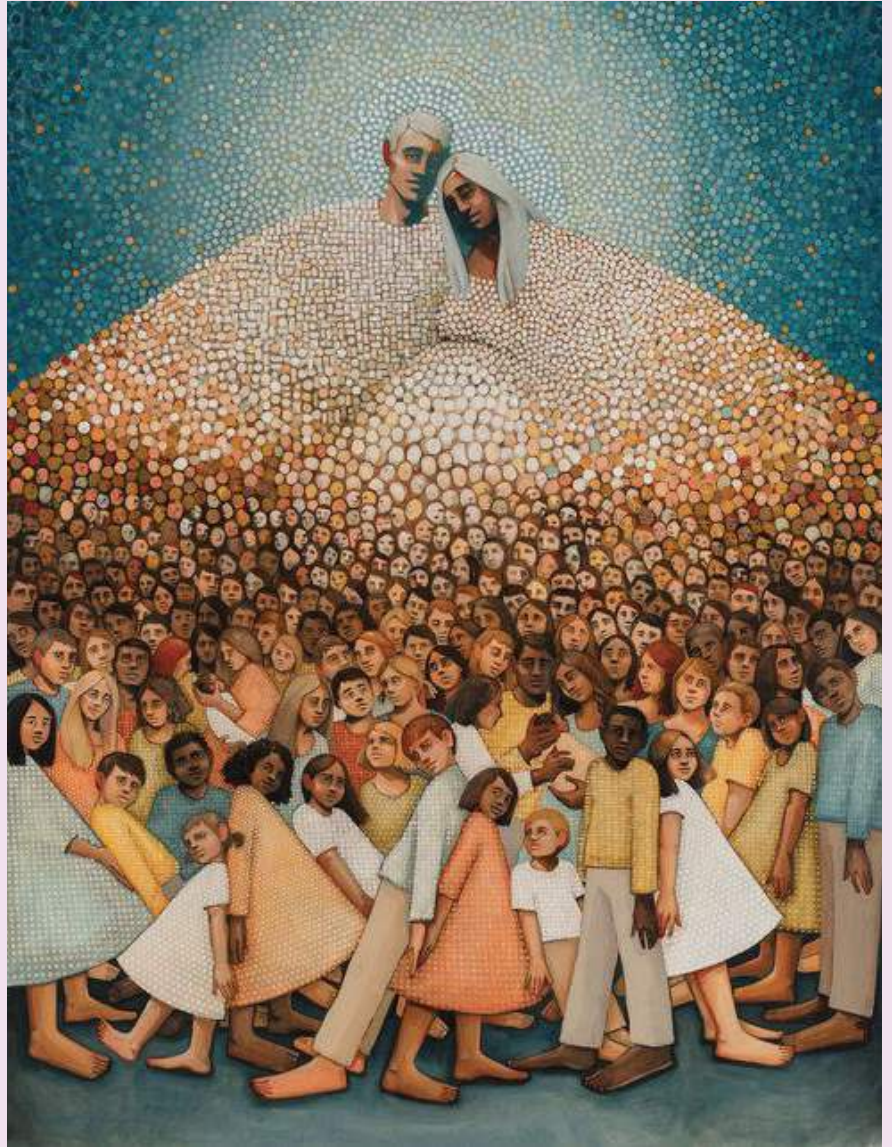


Every Family Is a Holy Family

Every family is a holy family, if you look closely enough,
Because every person bears the breath of God.
Isn't that the wonder of the incarnation?
It's Joseph who waits in a cold parking lot,
Hoping for a day's work to feed his family.
It's Mary who cradles a crying Jesus
Under the blue tarp of a refugee camp.
It's Joseph, too, who changes your oil,
Mary who scrubs your toilet,
Jesus who plays hide and seek
In the crowded aisles of your laundromat.
Just as the holy family sought admittance to an inn,
So these holy families seek admittance to our hearts.
May we not only gather them in,
But may we accept their welcome, too.
And as we dine together, at their table, at ours,
May we know that the bread we break is sacrament,
The communion between us—something sacred.
Amen.

- Cameron Bellm

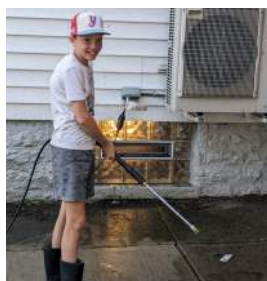




HOUSE NOTES: MAY - NOVEMBER

by Meredith Owensby

When last we left off, Lydia's House was ending our spring Atrium season and preparing for the start of our first ever summer camp and enclave of Notre Dame summer interns. Atrium's final session included a Pentecost service and a chance for each kid to ask for a gift of the Holy Spirit. We also offered the verbal affirmations to each child, noting how they had contributed to our classroom. We were delighted and surprised when they turned the tables and offered impromptu affirmations to the teachers!



In May, we hosted work days to get our new property at 2028 Mills moved into and the yard cleaned up. The Eilerman kid crew showed up with shovels and pressure washers, to set the stage for the yard renovations and summer programs. Over Memorial Day, the live in community at Lydia's House and some members of our newly formed support sodality



ventured together to join the **Bloomington Catholic Worker** for the regional Catholic Worker gathering. As always, we enjoyed the large group square dance.



In June we started summer camp with a big week of orientation that included a scavenger hunt, Kings Island trip, swim lesson training and a visit from our friends **Tim and Fran Hochstetler**



and family from the Spring Valley Bruderhof. June brought with it 14 hours days of what would come to affectionately be referred to as "baby spa" because our camp included unlimited snacks, pool days, quiet reading, and bucolic afternoons in the nature playscape. It was spa for kids, but not so much for the large and hardworking crew that kept it afloat with care, transportation, meals, and constant clean up. Many thanks to **Calvary Episcopal Church** for the snacks!



The kids went on many field trips including a Reds Game, a FC Game (**thanks Mercy Health**), library trips, a movie trip to see Inside Out 2, a Gorman Farm trip (**thanks Kathy Aerni**), a zoo trip, the driving range (**thanks Avon Fields and Roger Howell**) an Acres Mini Golf trip (**thanks Acres**) and a 4th of July blowout with **the Nobbe's**, complete with lunch and water games. We also held a big party and blessing for our new playset (**thanks Lauren and Mike Schott of the HCS Foundation and Rev. Olivia**).





Over the summer we were pleased to finally get our "Bread and Roses" mural under construction. As a gift from **Elizabeth Hatchett**, local artist extraordinaire, it faced many bureaucratic hurdles, but with the help of many neighbors and **Artworks and Laura Yrigoyen**, this dream became a reality. We even included two guest work days to contribute to the art.

We ended June with a trip to Procter Episcopal Camp with a record number of 28 guests, staff and their kids attending. Camp was difficult due to the heat emergency but we made it through, carrying mattresses from the cabins to an air-conditioned meeting room for better sleep. The hottest afternoon sent us in search of a waterpark, and we trekked 45 minutes away for a lazy river, slides, and a chance to cool down.

Into July we welcomed **Tiffany Nirschel** from the Bruderhof, and it's hard to imagine now how we ever survived without her. She quickly stepped into Meridith's role as head preschool teacher for summer camp, and seamlessly took over the job of in-house birthday cake baker. Over the next month we also welcomed **Marion Zumpe** of the Bruderhof, **Laurel Stoltzfus** with Mercy Volunteers, and **Hanna Leser** from the INvia gap year program in Germany. We said goodbye to **Julie Van Bergen, Grace Sanford, Ashley Martin and our Notre Dame interns Joe, Aracely, Alison and Dominik.**

In August we turned our attention fully to finishing our giant renovation, yards, and some more art. It was round the clock painting, assembling furniture, hanging lights, and moving. In September we welcomed a team of young people from **Spring Valley Bruderhof** and they saved the day by moving our Atrium from the old space to the new and preparing our old staff housing building, 2005 Mills, for sale.

September also included a trip to Washington, DC, where Ben received the Charles L Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award for his new project, the Barrister, which also happens to be home to three former Lydia's House guest families. **Melissa Roberts and Sister Diane, RSCJ** provided warm hospitality during Ben and Mary Ellen's stay, and Mary Ellen took advantage of the proximity to Senator Sherrod Brown's office to lobby on



behalf of individuals who use or need the Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program.



In late September, we took our annual field trip to the Cone. As the Cone is currently for sale, this may be our final trip to that soft serve mecca. If anyone is considering purchasing an awesome cone-shaped ice cream establishment, please consider this one!



The first weekend of October was our big 10th anniversary celebration. We welcomed back many former guests and volunteers, and spent the afternoon praying, listening to the vocal stylings of the **Muse Choir**, and celebrating in our new space. We feasted on Mediterranean delicacies afterward, the menu an echo of our first Lydia's House gathering way back in 2012. Special thanks to **Anne Housholder** for coming to town and working all weekend to make the event a rousing success.



After a couple of weeks of recovery we restarted our Wednesday night Atrium program, this time at our new shelter campus. The dining room has proven a huge boon, as all 30-40 attendees can eat together, rain or shine. We started an adult religious formation offering for adults opposite the kid Atrium time, and the enthusiasm has been infectious. We've acquired Bibles for everyone and continue to explore collectively what's between the covers of this tome. **Nancy Hopkins-Green** has served as a ministerial supervisor for this effort, and her wisdom and support have been precious indeed.

HOUSE NOTES (CONTINUED)



October's end included kids in cute costumes asking for candy, despite the weather being rainy and awful. The Lydia's House staff transformed our currently unoccupied commercial space into a Halloween Wonderland (Horrorland?), complete with yarn spider webs, glowstick ring tosses, spooky soundtracks, and sugar galore. Staff also distributed hot chocolate and over 70 hot dogs to parents and kids alike throughout Norwood.

Election season was in full swing by the time November rolled around, and our overburdened mail carriers walked heavily under the weight of the political flyers that blanketed our neighborhood. We held a "Get Out the Vote" dinner the Tuesday before election night and went to our neighborhood board of elections to vote early. See our article on page 12 to hear guest and former guest opinions on the election outcomes.

November ended with a semi-traditional Thanksgiving dinner at Lydia's House, **courtesy of Calista and Anthony Smith**, and December is shaping up to be full of St. Nick's surprises, our Moose Lodge Breakfast with Santa, and other in-house offerings from our enthusiastic staff members. We continue to give thanks for all of our new space, and the wintertime flexibility it will provide for the six families who can now reside at the shelter simultaneously.

LYDIA'S HOUSE ROCKSTARS

We've added these rockstars names to our rock garden. Thank you to each of you for contributing in an "above and beyond" kind of way to our community!

Jeannette Maxey - Our longsuffering real estate attorney, writer of many contracts, companion in prayer and poetry

Juli Thompson - Our house photographer since the earliest days, patient arranger of children and moms to put them in the best light

Drew Chestnut - Project manager extraordinaire for our addition

Grace Sanford - Last year's Mercy volunteer, swim instructor to many, line dancing instructor to a few, haunted trail organizer, transporter of guests to umpteen housing appointments

Ashley Martin - Keeper of the shelter, last minute cook, straight shooter, friend to many a guest child, cheesecake baker and birthday cake maker

Jacob Boehne - Stations of the Cross artist, iconographer, neighbor, man of faith and co-laborer

Will Midtbo - Landscape designer, lover of beauty and precision, patient re-printer of many plans and companion in Mary Ellen's back yard vision for our shelter

The Zlatic Family - Renovators, cleaners, removers of nails and now our newest landlord partner, with a property on Cleveland Ave

Elizabeth Hatchett - Designer of the "Bread and Roses" Mural at our 1801 building and our logo, purveyor of art and lovely things for our shelter+donor, neighbor, friend

Laura Yrigoyen - Painter of the "Bread and Roses" mural, atrium dioramas, living room art + de-facto neighborhood art therapist, farmer, cook and longtime companion on our journey



WE ALL WANT OUR OWN PLACE. SHOULD WE?

by Mary Ellen Mitchell

*Questioning privacy, housing
silos and policies that limit our
humanity*

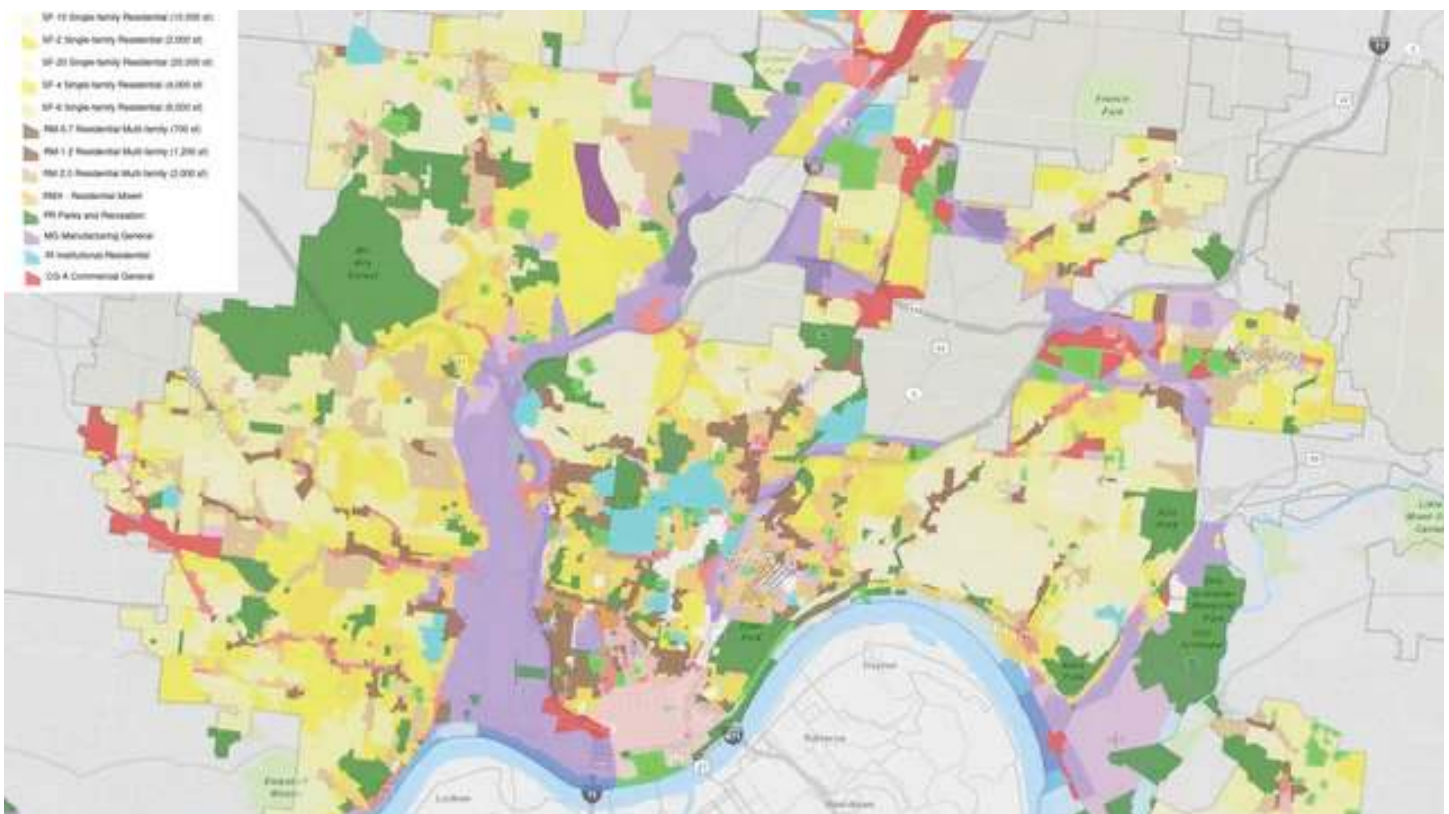
Several years ago our staff read *The Warmth of Other Suns*, a Pulitzer Prize winning bio epic detailing the great migration. In it, Isabel Wilkerson describes families moving from the deep south and living together in groups to be able to afford their new homes in places like Chicago, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, St. Louis and New York City. As arriving Black families changed the demographics of working class areas, white neighbors quickly organized to exclude the newcomers by law, using zoning as a framework for who could stay and who would need to go. Their most effective tool was the single family zone. By the 1950s it covered America.

Affluent and up and coming communities highlighted the single family home as the ideal, and codified it into large tracts of land (zoned “R1” or “A”) meant only for coveted nuclear family inhabitants. The zone was exclusionary, by definition, because it prohibited multiple families from sharing a house and the costs implicit.

To illustrate the proliferation of this zoning type, until earlier this year 70% of land in Cincinnati was zoned single family (see map below, with single family shaded yellow). This zoning preference meant that, regardless of previous types of construction that might have been in historic neighborhoods, any new construction in the yellow zones would be for 1 family, living alone. This master planning effort was achieved over time, with plans approved in 1925, 1948 and 1980 and then

updated in 2012, each codifying more land as single family only: <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/planning/neighborhood-plans/approved/>.

The preference for single family homes is evident in each plan. The 1925 plan states that zoning is necessary because “a number of apartment homes are invading open detached home districts.” The 1948 plan identifies a growing population and the need for more housing, post war. Of the 135,000 homes planned, 60% were intended to be 1 or 2 family homes. New density restrictions were released for the whole city to prevent “a large number of families” from occupying one building. When the plan was updated in 1980, the economic fallout of white flight to surrounding counties permeated the tone of the planners’ document. Hoping to reverse this trend, the text

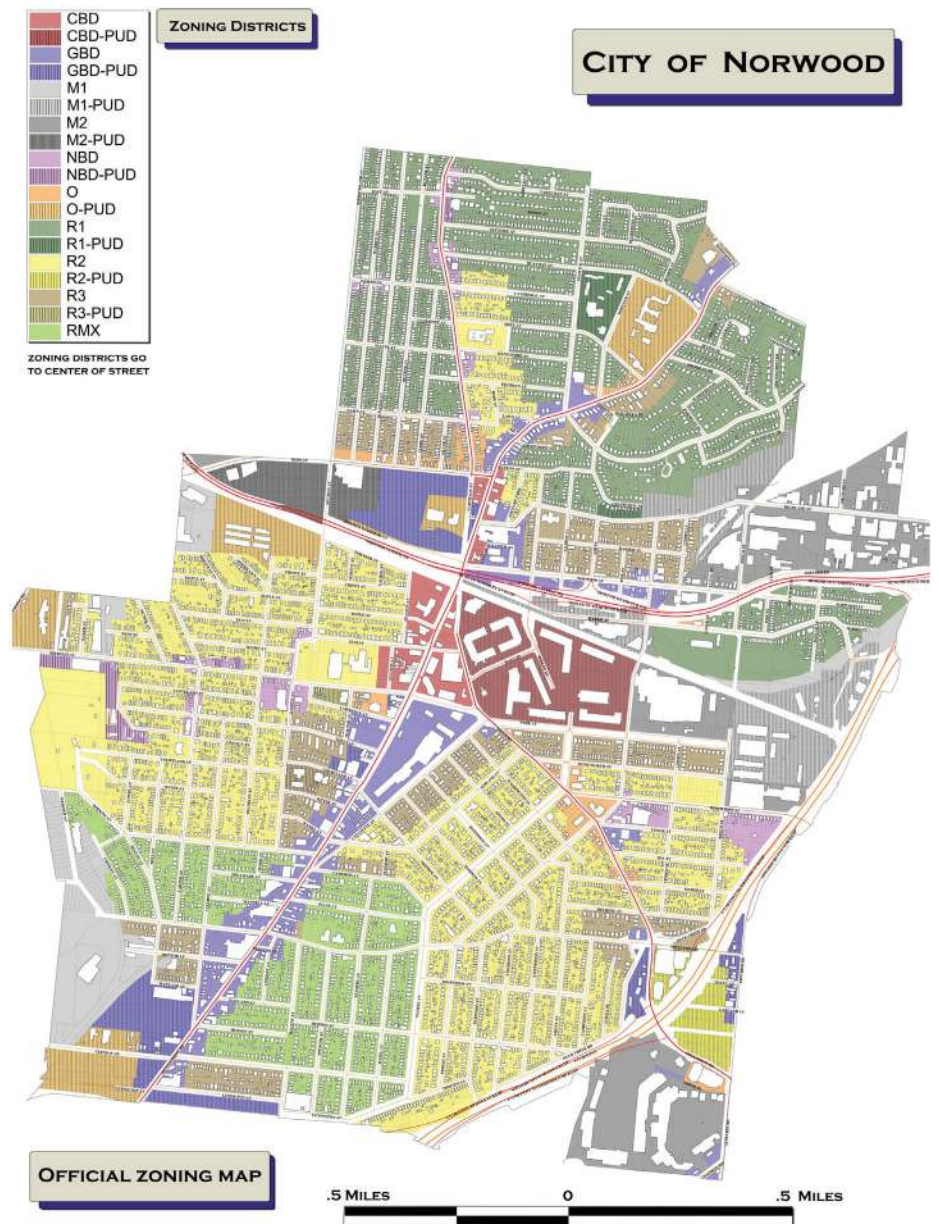


states “single family residential shall be retained, maintained or rehabilitated and protected from other kinds of development.”

While many of us might see the value of silos of families, couples and singles living side by side and enjoy the privacy of this version of the American dream, the proliferation of this urban housing paradigm was fast tracked by Jim Crow. Left with no way to stop trainloads of Black families from getting off in their neighborhood, white people could either move to suburban outposts (white flight is a commonly known phenomenon) or work a bit harder and make it difficult for those arriving with no job to find a place to live affordably. “It’s not that we don’t want Black people,” I could imagine them saying, “it’s just that house sharing is illegal.”

Cincinnati took the bold step, just this year, to address the density restrictions imposed over the last century when the city declared a crisis of affordable housing and the council passed the “Connected Communities” ordinance, allowing new regions for 2, 3 and 4 family homes and eliminating parking requirements along transportation corridors. This ordinance faced significant neighbor outcries, and is still facing protests, including certain wealthy neighborhoods seeking historic designation to avoid the integration of multi-family dwellings.

The neighborhood where I live and Lydia’s House is located, Norwood Ohio (adjacent to Cincinnati), has the more affluent northside reserved for R1 homes. It was also a sun-down town well into the 1970’s



and home to valuable union jobs at a (now closed) General Motors plant. When my husband Ben and I started a process to open this Catholic Worker family shelter, we learned quickly that such a shared living space would be difficult to make work within Norwood’s zoning law, regardless of where we put it. And we were chastened by the struggle of Anna Louise Inn, 5 miles away, that was being shuttered over zoning lawsuits. Ben, an architect, warned me, “We must find compliance in the zoning code. The devil hides in

that detail.” We were positive that we needed to focus our real estate search on a narrow path along the main street, where zoning is R3 (or 3+ family units are allowed per lot). We managed to find a large home in this tract, and made a contingent offer– the contingency being a zoning variance. After hours of scouring the code manual he kept bedside, Ben decided we would move forward with our request to house 6 adults and 6 children together using an antiquated framework: the boarding house, a conditional

use in R3 at that point.

I learned from my 65 year old neighbor that, when her father came up from Kentucky to work at the GM plant, he lived in such a house. He rented a room and shared it with other men; he sent home remittances to his family in Harlan county, made possible by his cheap rent, which included meals. It struck me that several people were probably made less poor, back in 1968, because boarding houses existed. No doubt, the house mother earned a living by renting rooms and my neighbor's family of 6 children were able to eat and be clothed off their father's excess, gleaned from cheap living expenses during the weekdays.

By 1985, as sun down politics and practices faded, so did the lingering acceptance of congregant living. The city made many updates to their zoning code that year. Over the next 20 years they continued to add more restrictive limitations to adult group homes and congregate living facilities, including limiting the presence of these shared housing forms to a max of six in the city, as of 2005, and limiting the permitted use of "boarding or lodging house" to a very small swath of the zoning map.

I was grateful that my husband found this option in a list of non-traditional housing forms, buried in hundreds of pages of size 12 font. Though allowed, it was neither prominent nor publicized, and we still required a variance to house more than 4 unrelated adults together. Eventually we received said variance and moved forward to renovate Lydia's House back in 2013. As we redesigned the giant property I imagined that

once, long ago, a stately house mother sat in the floral print kitchen dispensing unsolicited advice to new arrivals from the rural south. I knew that our iteration would look different, with a younger house mother chasing toddlers in a domicile of mostly Black, single parents. In spirit though, our version offers a modern displaced demographic a way to save and plan for a better future, just as it did the factory workers of another era.

Shortly after we opened Lydia's House, Ben took a job overseeing new project development for a local affordable housing developer: Over the Rhine Community Housing. As owners of 500 units of "deeply" affordable housing, OTRCH had seen it all when it came to housing policy, zoning, and cultural ideals. At the time of his start, 2019, a single new unit production was running \$300,000 and the federal government required units to have air conditioning, private kitchens and a variety of other amenities. While housing advocates had fought hard for these standards, he and I were both floored by the price. How in the world, we would ask, could we house all of the homeless families in our region if they are each required to have all of these amenities at this cost? At the same time the per unit cost was rising- it's now over \$400,000- and amenities now include required dishwashers and washer/dryers. Simultaneously, HUD's preference for privacy was dismantling the existence of single room occupancy (SRO) housing arrangements (boarding houses by another name) for homeless singles.

As Ben learned the limits of

federal housing policy, the crew at Lydia's House was consistently serving families in congregant living. The year we opened (2014) our operating cost to serve 10 families, each for approximately 3 month stays, was \$80,000. Families were required to learn some shared living lessons like how to keep dishes from piling up or the necessity of headphones when watching a loud movie, but there was surprisingly little conflict between those in our carefully monitored shared living arrangement. Three months, however, is a short time, and we acknowledged that our guest's desired what the housing advocates fought for: single family units at the very least, and single family homes as a long term dream.

While "my own house" aspirations were shared at the long dining table each night, we also began to see that group living was working well for some of our families and some moms even quietly expressed a desire to stay longer than their designated tenure. The women we served who grew up in foster homes, especially, would thrive in the busy kitchen or after dinner porch chats. Children, especially, loved the bustle of large meals and impromptu play times. When they left some would request to move back in. Apartment keys were met with excitement but also fear.

Even if they want to stay, however, we have no good way to offer long term shared housing to our families. It was a battle to open one communal living property, complete with 31 testimonies on our behalf begging the board of zoning appeals to let us pull "boarding house" out of the zoning vault.

When we meet with families in shelter to discuss housing, their next step options are limited to market rate, which they can't afford, Section 8, which currently is on a budget moratorium eliminating new voucher placements, income based housing (also known as housing projects, which few want to live in) and the Scholar House, apartments for single parents going to full time college, which you have to move out of upon graduation. As we pursue any or all of these options, we criss-cross the city putting a woman's name on every housing list, and we cajole and pray that somehow, in a reasonable time, her name will be called. If it's not, we often ask her to persuade a family member to let her move (back) in, with the promise that eventually independent housing will come together.

We have learned over the years that while some women might *prefer* congregating if it were an option, others **must** have other adults to live with. In those cases, we make the housing plan from shelter "find someone to live with." For women who are deeply depressed, extra traumatized, using substances or developmentally delayed, the single family unit option is not just lonely and expensive, it can be dangerous, especially if they are caring for young children. For those that prefer to live alone in a unit, we've found that they too struggle to pay utilities, find childcare, and keep house. They might find some reprieve if the boarding house or shared living model were available as an option.

Women we serve, however, have been told that living alone is best, and their families believe that continuing to house them

is a burden that they should not have to bear. The mere possibility of income based housing, no matter how limited or hard to come by it is, makes it a rainbow that the women at our shelter have been told to chase and makes shared housing all the more unattractive.

Meanwhile, rising housing costs in our region, combined with a growing desire of millennials to locate in the urban core, means private housing options on a bus line, near services, are becoming less and less available for the poor. As if the preferences and zoning for single family housing wasn't enough, a new price point of \$400,000 + for market rate single family homes makes the renovation of multi-family buildings into one family domiciles both possible and lucrative.

Running parallel tracks of my husband building affordable housing using federal funds while I direct Lydia's House using scraped together church donations gives me a unique perspective on housing. What I know for sure is that homelessness will not be solved at the price per unit that federally subsidized housing currently costs. Nor will it ever be solved by single family homes. What I also know is that, while privacy is a high priority and a valued luxury, it brings with it added expense, less support with children, and loneliness. For most of human history, in most cultures, humans have shared living space in some capacity. The roots of ultra private housing are not in meeting the highest and best desires of the human experience, but rather in fear, affluence and exclusion.

As our neighborhood, Norwood, changed and developed over the last century, the leadership bought into exclusionary assumptions and turned them into ideals. These ideals make little room, today, for non traditional living arrangements like those enjoyed by the GM workers of the mid century, and quickly are pushing out the poor from our neighborhood altogether. Norwood is not alone in this trajectory; if anything we are behind other regions in eliminating affordable options. At the same time, progressive calls for erasing the single family zone have echoed across cost burdened coastal regions for the last two decades. Hats off to Cincinnati for boldly moving forward with increasing density, even as seemingly everyone in the region complained about its implications! Recent victories aside, the cultural ideal of the private dwelling remains an aspirational norm that may be harming all of us.

Years of managing and being formed by community living has taught me the lesson that shared life has costs, but so does private life. While we are quick to count the costs of shared life, or shared housing, we fail to fully internalize the negative externalities of living alone or in small family units. That failure serves to strip away the humanity of the affluent and its downstream effect on the poor leads to women and children living in cars or places not fit for human habitation. Letting go of the single family home dream, or even the hope for private housing for every family unit, might be the housing solution that could save us, rich and poor alike.

THE NORWOOD RUNNER

By Joe Plummer, Lydia's House summer intern



"You'll have to be his buddy" and "he likes to run." These were the first words I heard about Tre. Within the close-knit community of Lydia's House, Tre's reputation preceded him. Though he has been a handful for the staff, Tre is a boy of few words but brimming with thoughts, often punctuated by latent anger. His presence is felt by everyone, and his story is one that begs to be told.

Part of the Catholic Worker Movement, Lydia's House is a shelter that aims to serve women in crisis and their families, helping these families get back on their feet. While sheltering its guests, Lydia's House assists with applying for government aid, medical appointments, jobs, low-income/Section 8 housing, etc. The organization also offers this support to former guests, along with other programs for their children, like Atrium and summer camp.

Tre has participated in many, if not all these programs. Throughout the summer, I was able to connect with him at summer camp, a new program that tends to the needs of the children while attempting to develop key life skills, such as swimming and reading. Each day, camp was held at the Green Building, an apartment complex owned by Lydia's House that assists past guests through affordable housing. The children would arrive between 8:15 and 10:00 AM, depending on their mother's work schedule. The first half of the day was composed of morning circle, stations, and buddy reading time. This time was beneficial, as the kids got to meet one another on a deeper level and had the opportunity to improve their reading skills. The children looked forward to the different activities, such as cooking, building legos, and crafting clay.

Also, Lydia's House worked with the Norwood Public Library's summer reading program to reward the children for their efforts and to encourage them. The children enjoyed library trips and their love for reading grew. In buddy reading, the kids would partner up with a high school intern or a Notre Dame intern depending on who they were assigned. If there weren't enough counselors then some kids had to share their counselor with one other kid. This 20-30 minute period provided the greatest amount of improvement. The children were able to show off their reading skills, but also had the opportunity to ask questions if they were stuck or struggling. With the beginning readers, counselors would trade off every other page with the kid, which made it a better experience. These positive book completions made reading time something the children looked forward to, which was a key objective for Lydia's House.

During buddy reading, I was always with Tre. A loud "YES!!" usually followed the announcement of our partnership, even though it was a daily occurrence. This was a time where Tre and I had the

chance to spend one-on-one time with each other. However, this was not the most enjoyable part of camp for Tre. Even though Tre is eight years old and heading into the fourth grade, he is lagging behind his peers significantly when it comes to reading. For example, his little brother is six years old and can easily read high level books on his own; whereas, Tre can barely get through the first page in the same amount of time it took his little brother to read the whole book. Tre did not have the same schooling experience his little brother had, but it was still Lydia's House's goal to bridge the gap between the two. We started out with beginner BOB books and worked through each level until I was confident that Tre could move onto the next level. Tre would become easily frustrated with himself when he struggled, but the successes of completing easier books led to greater improvement. Though he still lags behind his peers, we had a successful summer when it came to reading and he is in a much better position heading into the school year.

Summer is often a time when children engage in various activities, but reading is usually not one of them. However, summer is actually the perfect time for kids to dive into books, offering numerous benefits that are overlooked. Because the children at Lydia's House carry stress and trauma with them, they need activities and experiences that work to minimize these weights. Reading works to enrich children's vocabularies, makes children empathetic and is an early indicator of school success. Heading into the summer, Lydia's House was aware of these benefits and made it clear to the interns that school success is important to the organization. The higher reading level a child is at, the better they perform in school. When children perform well in school, they are more likely to stay in school and graduate high school. The children at Lydia's House are not positioned well to succeed in life, whether it be financially, in relationships or in education. They need to put in the extra effort to make up for it. Reading is a skill that comes at a low cost and can be done anywhere at any time. In becoming proficient readers, the children



will realize schoolwork comes easier to them. They will be in positions to attend higher education and school will be more important to them. Encouragement surrounding reading must be done early and continue throughout childhood.

For the second half of the day, camp was centered around swimming. They wanted to get to the pool as soon as possible and jump in, with an instructor in the water of course! Swimming lessons were held at the Xavier University pool for about an hour. Similar to buddy reading, each intern/instructor would have one or two kids to work with. Once again, Tre was with me. We had the most fun in the water and created memories that will last a lifetime. The goal of the swimming lessons was to provide the children with the basic skills, so that they are equipped in case of an emergency. Many of the children were afraid of the water, so it was crucial to make them feel comfortable around the pool. Swimming is an area that Lydia's House children do not have much experience with and is a skill that can position them alongside peers who have had more privileges.

Swimming is an important skill for children to learn at an early age. Teaching this skill not only makes children safer around water, but provides immense benefits. Drowning is the leading cause of death for children less than five years old. Children learning to swim, especially those who are afraid of the water, need one-on-one lessons to become comfortable and start the learning process. Because the guests at Lydia's House are primarily Black and low-income, the directors realized that swimming is something that they must teach these children. Research shows 64% of African American and 79% of children in households with incomes less than \$50,000 have little to no swimming ability. There is a commitment and duty to help Lydia's House kids walk alongside their peers and mitigate the gap that stems racial and social inequality.

The first time we went to the pool, I found out that I would be working with Tre. All the children were circled around the rules board near the pool; however, Tre was sitting by himself as far away from the pool as possible. Standing next to my fellow interns, we exchanged a look that said, "What am I getting myself into?"



When the other kids sat on the pool edge with their instructors, Tre and I remained on the wall. I tried to encourage him to sit with the other kids but he would not budge. Eventually, he took off his shoes and shirt and stood with me next to the pool. We slowly worked our way into the water, but Tre was still full of fear and thoughts of what could go wrong. I never realized how much Tre thinks and how little he speaks until this first day at the Xavier pool. We took baby steps and got used to the water. However, for the first two weeks, Tre would not take off his lifejacket. I could not figure out how to make him feel safe enough to take it off until I had a conversation with my dad late one night. I asked him how he taught me to swim and he let me in on a trick he used with my brothers and I. He found out what our favorite candy/treat was and used it as motivation for us to try new skills or feats. The next day, I asked Tre what his favorite candy was and after much thought he came up with gummy worms. I told him that he would earn gummy worms if he pushed off the wall to me, standing a few feet away from the wall. He gave me a nod, but continued to stare at me, thinking hard about what could go wrong. I reminded him that I was there for him and that he could trust me. Finally, he did it and reached me with a cheer of victory. We continued to take baby steps and found the right combination of arm movement and leg kicks to stay above the water on his own. Many of my fellow instructors would have called it a day and job well done, but Tre and I were not satisfied. We knew we were capable of more, a lot more.

Besides being a life-saving skill, what are the added benefits swimming provides to children? Swimming teaches goal-orientation and is a confidence-building sport. Kids have something to strive for and achieve the goals that they set for themselves. This goal achieving mindset continues outside of the water. In

school, in relationships and in everyday life, the children realize that if they put their mind to something then it can be accomplished. Also, these achievements build confidence at the same time. They are confident in their abilities and more importantly in themselves. The children have doubted themselves for quite some time because they lack behind their peers. However, when they accomplish feats that seem impossible, then they are more likely to take more risks later on in life. They will not hold back themselves after seeing their courage pay off in the pool.

Tre's confidence was restored and he continued to try new things once he found his swimming stroke. He tried these tasks on his own with minimal encouragement. He swam to me and then to the backstroke flags and even further. We made it to the six feet deep end and eventually to the 11 feet deep area. We went down big water slides and jumped off the diving board at the Norwood pool. We swam across



the 11 feet deep end on our own and retrieved goggles from the bottom of the pool. Outside of the water, we picked out harder books and attempted to construct larger lego buildings. We taught his siblings how to ride a bike by leading by example. The progress Tre and I made this summer is a byproduct of the confidence we built together. Tre was capable of all these feats before I came around, he just needed a little encouragement and a buddy he trusted.

I set out this summer to be more than a buddy, but someone that Tre can look up to. Being someone that he trusts and can turn to for advice or support is something I am committed to. Forget about the Norwood Runner. He's the Norwood swimmer now.

INTRODUCING: ADULT ATRIUM

For the past four years we've been on a steady journey to offer Christian spiritual programming to our guests, noting that our true north is Jesus Christ. More than food stamps or job placement, we've always hoped to share the light of Christ. While hospitality and friendship are certainly ways to let that light shine, we discerned in 2019 that we would also like to offer more explicit Christian education as an optional evening addition. We've been amazed at how many families chose to participate, and we are really grateful to have many children come week after week. We started with a 3-6 year old program, then added 7-11 year old programming (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level 1 and 2) and this fall we added our own original offering "Adult Atrium." Meridith is developing the program by using the CGS Level 1 training and adapting it for adults under the supervision of a pastoral mentor team. This effort is considered her "ministry placement," a necessary component of her Masters in Divinity pursuit with Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana.

The first month has been such a surprising and wonderful experience, with moms we've just met coming alongside moms we've long known, asking questions about Jesus and the Bible, sharing joys and concerns, and even asking to go to Church with us. Pray for us as we continue to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit!



WHY TRUMP?

by Mary Ellen Mitchell and the Lydia's House Community

In 2016 we assumed a position of unanimous opposition to Donald Trump, as a community. We didn't survey but were incredulous that anyone in our guest or staff circle would cast their vote for the reality TV star. The official Lydia's House mood was condemnation of Trump, to such a level that we attended protests together. This year seems different. In our "Get Out The Vote" effort, several guests told us that they planned to vote for Trump or did vote for him in 2020. We also have live in community members that sympathize with the agenda that he has put forward. In an effort to seek understanding, and hopefully a better way in the coming years, I reached out to those in our circle that share a different view point from mine and this is what I heard:



Miranda (current guest): I didn't vote, but If I did I guess I would have voted for Trump. I wasn't registered, so I couldn't vote. But Trump gave out extra money last time he was president. He helped. He gave out those stimulus checks and he helped a lot of people. I also heard Kamala was going to take away a lot of things, like food stamps. I saw it in the NYnewspaper and on TikTok. (where did you find this NYnewspaper, I ask?) I see it on Facebook and I click the links.

Princess (former guest): I couldn't vote because I didn't register, but yea, I would have voted for Trump. He was a good leader when he led last time. And I want to deport the immigrants that are bringing Fentanyl into our country. And Kamala hates Christians. Did you see that video?

Lashawnda (former guest): I voted for Kamala this time but in 2020 I voted for Trump. I just liked how he's really honest and says what he means. I'm like that, and it gets me in trouble, but I'd never seen someone in power like that. You could trust him to say what he means. But he lost in 2020 and so I'm done with him.

Bree (current guest): I heard that Kamala is going to cut food stamps. Is that true? I saw it on TikTok. (We looked up some information and she began to believe that Kamala wasn't anti-food stamp. In the end she voted for Harris, citing her indignation at the credible accusations of sexual assault associated with Trump)

Miracle (former guest): I voted for Trump. I didn't agree with everything he stood for. I don't agree with his stance on immigration but I do agree with his gun laws and I agree that we should be running America like a business. I also feel like I never got to see everything Kamala stood for. And was made to feel like I had to vote for her. They didn't run her campaign very well at all.

Tiffany (Bruderhof community member): Honestly, I was relieved when I learned that he won this morning. It's not that I like him as a person but, morally, I identify more with the Republicans, in terms of values. I hope the persecutions stop. I mean, I know we are supposed to face persecutions as Christians, but also if we can stop them we should. (Me: What persecutions?) Well, mostly around gender and gender change. I think offering gender change surgery to children should be outlawed and is evil. I just don't think that it should be offered to children, and we need to protect them. We as adults need to tell children that God didn't make mistakes.

Odelia (former guest): Trump has saved babies. Abortion is wrong and it is murder. Christians should be opposed to abortion, and there's no way to be a Christian and support abortion. Kamala wants people to be able to have sex with whoever they want, and then just solve the problem by aborting babies.

Marion (Bruderhof community member, live in volunteer): I'm very opposed to transgender activism. There are men swimming on women's swim teams and I think this is wrong. The Democrats want to make all of that legal, and normal, and it isn't normal. It isn't fair to female athletes. Overall I think the economy was better under Trump and we weren't involved in wars. And I just think the right wing of this country is more Christian. There was someone at a Kamala rally that said "Christ is King" and Kamala told him he was at the wrong rally. I really don't agree with the left agenda.

Not all of our guests sympathized with Trump:

Destiny (former guest): I'm deeply concerned about how recent and future policies could impact women, especially those facing abusive relationships, rape or situations where access to abortion becomes a critical medical need. It's worrying to think that women may not only lose access to essential care but could even be prosecuted for making personal healthcare decisions. This is an issue that impacts countless women, making them feel unsafe, unsupported, and vulnerable to even more harm. I also think about the many women I've worked with—women who are just like me, maybe even more deserving of a safe life here, yet living under constant threat of deportation. Also, If DACA is revoked, it could have devastating effects on so many women, families, especially the children who rely on stability to succeed in school and thrive. And beyond individual policies, there's this larger atmosphere of division and hostility that seems to be intensifying. The hate and violence surfacing around this election are heartbreaking, as they strain communities and create fear rather than unity. I'm hoping for a future where we find solutions rooted in compassion and empathy, ensuring everyone has the freedom to live safely, make their own choices, and pursue better lives.

Ja'Nell: (current guest): I cried when I learned that Trump won. I'm worried about safe and legal abortion. There was a woman in Georgia that had an abortion and had complications and they wouldn't care for her in the emergency room and she died. I read project 2025 and Trump supports that. It includes deporting all the Muslims and getting rid of birth control.



Ultimately, it's important to both Meridith and I not to claim to represent our guest's interests at a policy level without listening carefully to what those interests are. Perhaps our understanding of their greatest needs and their understanding is different. In several cases, the most important issues for our guests involved culture, the definition of the human person, and being seen. These issues overtook an alignment with the Democratic party policy agendas of expanding health care, childcare, or housing. We continue listening, and are committed to getting out the vote at every election, next time with a clearer voter guide and a greater effort to educate our guests and volunteers on policy, if a politician has made policy plans clear (which they often don't, preferring to ground campaigns in culture war issues). We also seek to hear what's important to them and critically assess what we offer, such that it responds to their deepest needs. Finally, we will continue hosting elected officials and letting our guests share who they are and their hopes with those that represent them.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JEANNETTE MAXEY

by Meridith Owensby

It's not often that Lydia's House needs a lawyer, but when we do, we reach out to Pro Bono Partnership. This organization links attorneys willing to volunteer their time and knowledge with nonprofits that need their help. When it came time to apply for a property tax exemption on our newest apartment building, we submitted the project and waited for a real estate lawyer to step forward.

Enter Jeannette Maxey, a northern Kentucky lawyer with an unwavering ability to make the complicated simple. Jeannette can take a proposal with many "what ifs" and distill it down to a workable plan. She shows us where to sign, counsels us through negotiations with potential landlord partners, and makes sure we have what we need to settle real estate transactions.

Jeannette and I bonded over our southern roots (hers Appalachian, mine Georgian), and she has ministered to my soul by showing up at Thursday lunch with blackberry cobbler and ice cream. She's excellent at planning hiking adventures and sending just the right Bible verse on a tough day.

We are overjoyed to have Jeannette as part of the greater Lydia's House community, and we look forward to sharing times at table together in the future. Jeannette has nourished us body and soul, and we appreciate the way she brings her spiritual, professional, and personal skills to this life together.

OUR NEW SHELTER CAMPUS

We are bursting with pride at our new shelter campus. 10 years after we opened our doors to guests, we are pleased to present Lydia's House 2.0! We now have a dining room for 40, an outdoor dining space for 40, a full sized playground, a prayer garden, adjacent offices and staff housing, adequate storage space, guest rooms for six families, a main floor playroom, a sports court, and two classrooms, all together on Mills Ave.

MAJOR DONORS TO OUR CAPITAL PROJECTS AND 10TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN:

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and the office of Denise
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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Debbie and David Baumgartner, for coordinating the meal and seating, and our board and sodality for bringing sides and desserts

The Notre Dame Bridge summer interns, Xavier Eigel fellows, Nick Fiorelli, Mark and Joe Zlatic and Bruderhof Youth for renovation projects and moving furniture

Dane Miller, Dennis and Georgia Bishop, Dan Aerni, Steve and Amy Whitlatch, Julie VanBergen, Carol Carlin and Phil Beckman for painting and miscellaneous extra needed help

Silas Baird and family for building the deck

Jacob Boehne, Stations of the Cross artist

Sarah Fuller, "Kingdom of God" print artist and door mural artist

ArtWorks and Ellie Wallace, driveway mural artist





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LYDIA'S HOUSE

In the enclosed envelope, as always,
you'll find an opportunity to give.

This season we're collecting funds
to subsidize our families who live in
market rate apartments and don't yet have
Section 8 (income based) vouchers.

Last summer our Metropolitan Housing Authority
stopped processing new vouchers
because of a budget shortfall,
rooted in rising rents in our region.

As a result, our housing plan
for many shelter guests was upended.

While we believe vouchers will start processing
again in 2025, in the meantime
we've created our own housing subsidy.

Please give generously to this needed work.

