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Prayer to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots

Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, Mother who never refuses to come to the aid of a child in need, Mother whose hands never cease to serve your beloved children because they are moved by the divine love and immense mercy that exists in your heart, cast your compassionate eyes upon us and see the snarl of knots that exist in our lives.

You know very well how desperate we are, our pain and how we are bound by so many knots.

Mary, Mother to whom God entrusted the undoing of the knots in the lives of His children, I entrust into your hands the ribbon of our lives. No one, not even the evil one himself, can take it away from your precious care. In your hands there is no knot that cannot be undone. Powerful Mother, by your grace and intercessory power with Your Son and My Liberator, Jesus, take into your hands today this knot:

(insert any of the many prayer requests here)

We beg you to undo it for the glory of God, once for all, You are a source of hope.

O my Lady, you are a consolation God gives our community, the fortification of our feeble strength, the enrichment of our destitution and with Christ the freedom from our chains. Hear our plea. Keep us, guide us, protect us, o safe refuge!

Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for us. Amen.

A prayer prayed by our community this Lent as we confronted local gun violence, inmates on death row, children without homes, immigrants in detention, and wars around the world.





HOUSE NOTES: WINTER 2025 - SPRING 2026

When last we left off we were entering the holidays, a very busy time in the life of Lydia's House. Late November (2025) was marked by Mary Ellen starting a 15-day radiation treatment regimen for breast cancer. The community rallied around her with meals and prayers. In light of this complication, we held a very small Thanksgiving lunch at the shelter instead of our typical large dinner. By mid-December she was feeling better, just in time for the roll-out of Christmas and the birth of 2 baby girls in the house. We were grateful for our neighbors at the **Moose Lodge** and **Christa Juhlman**, specifically, for hosting another successful breakfast with Santa, complete with gifts for each child, crafts and a sing-a-long. Later in the month, we celebrated with



Into the new year, we were grateful for a visit from our former volunteer **Tiffany**, who swooped in for a blessing of baby **De'Liyah**. We also saw 3 guests move into new apartments, including two into our affordable building. New families began taking advantage of the daycare, and we enjoyed a weekly daycare lunch during which Mary Ellen taught the children stories from the life of Jesus. The **Nobbe family**



guests by hosting a Karaoke party in our expansive dining room where the highlight was 10-year-old CJ singing a heartfelt "We Three Kings" for the adoring crowd. The families were grateful for a very generous offering of gift cards from **Bellarmino Chapel**. We finished the season with a night of "Songs and Stories" (aka lessons and carols)

hosted by the Mitchell-Eilerman family with grace notes of a plated Italian dinner served by candlelight and a community sing-a-long of Happy Birthday to baby Jesus. All in all, considering we were navigating a health crisis, the season was respectable, even joyful.

joined the community for Thursday dinners, integrating life in the daycare and shelter even more. A week of snow days was quite a disruption, but **Annie Eilerman and Ava Nobbe** stepped up and sponsored 2 days of winter camps, to give moms a break.



February brought the re-start of Atrium and family programs. Our crew of faithful volunteers: **Joan, Brendan, Erin, Laura, Shannon, Annie, Jessica and Claire** were the linchpin in an often-complicated combination of dinner, fellowship and religious education each Wednesday night. The older kids completed a lovely "Sacred Heart of Jesus" mosaic in their class and



the cover). We prayed for a new intention and wrote an advocacy letter each week to ask for change re: local gun violence, statewide death row executions, immigrants in detention and the war in Iran. We ended the prayer practice with a Stations of the Cross in our backyard prayer garden. Just before Holy Week, we also joined over 10,000 people downtown to petition for an end to the Iran war and immigration detention.

The Easter season brought as much attention as Christmas, which seems theologically appropriate. We completed the family program year with a "Liturgy of Light," celebrating the light of Christ entering the world through the resurrection. Even



did an endearing re-enactment of the Last Supper, complete with foot washing. February also saw a heart felt Galentines event in our dining room, complete with manicures and special desserts by our in house baker, **Marita**.



the youngest kids tried hard to hold their candles steady as we sang Alleluia choruses of all varieties. In addition to the liturgy, we offered a well-attended taco party and Easter egg hunt. We continued Wednesday night programming with a laundry night where we rented out a laundry mat for families to catch up on their wash and followed that with a family photo night with our photographer in residence, **Juliana Boehm**.

Almost everyone took a vacation in between the events, with our German volunteer Theresa showing her family some of the United States, Erin going back to visit her crew in Connecticut, Marita making a retreat, and Mary Ellen, Meridith and Annie taking a pilgrimage to the LA Catholic Worker, to join them in prayer, protest and serving at the soup kitchen.



Lent was especially poignant in our house this year. We engaged in a new prayer practice, inviting friends and volunteers to join us on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to pray a "Mary Undoer of Knots" novena (see image explanation

Into the summer months, we're planning for arts-based Family Nights on Mondays, a summer day camp, camp joy and a Family Camp, sponsored by our friends at **St. Tim's Episcopal Church**. We're grateful for partners at **Xavier, the Eilerman kids, Matthew Owensby, Joyce Mow and Karis Stoxen** for stepping up to help us make summer fun a reality. More to come on that in our next newsletter.

THE CALL TO SUFFERING WITH

A sermon by Meridith Owensby, Lydia's House co-founder and co-director

Earlier this month Meridith graduated with her Masters in Divinity degree from Bethany Seminary in Richmond, Indiana. The following is her sermon, preached as a final project for her degree.

Our scripture reading this morning comes from Paul's letter to the blended Jewish and Gentile church in Rome. His letter to the Romans is widely regarded as Paul's last existent letter, written as he looks toward his eventual visit to this city. Our passage for today is from chapter 5, and verse one starts begins with this encouraging sentiment:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

This first verse is a great verse to lift out of its surroundings and put on a key chain or sticker. Faith and peace and grace and hope and glory? This is Paul at his motivational best, boasting in our hope of sharing the glory of God, a glory that scripture says the angels sing of without ceasing.

But you and I know that Paul is not a motivational speaker for long. In fact, his very next thought would not make it on a keychain. Picking up at verse three:

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings.

It's quite the tonal shift here. I can imagine the letter being read aloud, the crowd asking for this line to be read again. We are boasting in our sufferings?

But Paul knew his audience. He was writing to the church in Rome, a church familiar with pain. The founding members of this church, those coming from Jewish traditions of understanding God, had been banished from Rome under the emperor Claudius around 49 CE. As of the writing of this letter, the Jewish Christians are back, with all of the conflict and difficulty entailed in returning to a community that doesn't quite know how to reincorporate you.

This return does not mark an era of political and religious tolerance, however. The emperor who allowed the Jewish Christians to return is none other than the infamous Nero. We know that Nero is not going to tolerate this group of believers for long. In 64 CE there will be a great fire in the city. Nero will accuse the Christians of arson and punish them accordingly. Tradition tells us that both Peter and Paul will be martyred in this city. Suffering will abound in Rome.

So, this church has known hardship. They will know it again. This is a difficult reality, a reality that Paul doesn't shy away from addressing. Paul knows that the church collective and the church members individually will experience trial as a result of following the risen Jesus. And he is going to talk about it.

However, suffering, as Paul has experienced it, is not a static state. It transforms. The transformation sequence is spelled out in the following verses:

We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Here's Paul's first affirmation about the experience of suffering:

We can bear it. Somehow, we will endure. Suffering produces endurance.

Romans is not the only letter where Paul affirms that suffering is not an end, not finality. We can look to his second letter to the church in Corinth for another example. Here's second Corinthians, chapter 4, starting at verse 8:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed.

Standing in suffering with God's love means we can endure far more than we would have expected ourselves to endure. And that others can endure far more than you would have thought possible. The endurance that faith grants us, grants others, is tremendous. We may be afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, but we won't be crushed, hopeless, forsaken, or destroyed.

Now, we are not members of this early Roman church. And we are not likely to see members of our individual churches banished summarily by our government. But for all of us, some suffering will come from loving others, from being in community with others, and from being present in a body that was born and will die.

We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance

But hear me out: Your own sufferings, the slings and arrows of your outrageous fortune, the things that are wrong and will be wrong in our individual lives, are insufficient for boasting in the Christian life. We are called to go toward those who are suffering.

A friend of mine, a hot-headed Catholic Worker preacher, used to tell me "You have to have enemies. Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies. If you don't have enemies, who are you praying for?"

By the same line of reasoning, I'll assert you need suffering. If you are presently without it, you are called to accompany it. Who is suffering? The naked. The hungry. The stranger in our land. The sick. The dying. Those in prison or detention centers. **As Christians, we are to go where the suffering calls us.**

Let's reread what Paul has to say about suffering again:

We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Suffering, as described by Paul, is dynamic. What was acute becomes bearable. What seemed unendurable is endured. And the net effect of this endurance is character, a change in our personhood for the better.

Note that I say better, but not smoother or more elegant. The process that brings forth character can be disfiguring. We don't get to stay pretty, to stay intact, to keep our hearts free from piercing.

I started at Bethany as a theopoetics major, so I'm quick to reach for a poem. Today I'd like to share a poem by May Sarton that illustrates the development of character Paul is alluding to:

An Observation

*True gardeners cannot bear a glove
Between the sure touch and the tender root,
Must let their hands grow knotted as they move
With a rough sensitivity about
Under the earth, between the rock and shoot,
Never to bruise or wound the hidden fruit.
And so I watched my mother's hands grow scarred,
She who could heal the wounded plant or friend
With the same vulnerable yet rigorous love;
I minded once to see her beauty gnarled,
But now her truth is given me to live,
As I learn for myself we must be hard
To move among the tender with an open hand,
And to stay sensitive up to the end
Pay with some toughness for a gentle world.*

Sarton's mother's hands had character, because she did not shield them from the effects of sharp thorns or insect stings or the work of caretaking. Our personalities, our cherished ideas about ourselves and others, even our bodies, none of these are guaranteed to escape unscathed. In fact, I assure you they will be scathed. You are going to develop some callouses from the use of your heart. That is what suffering, what accompanying suffering, will do.

*suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character,
and character produces hope*

As we ourselves are transformed by suffering, we will somehow see suffering transformed. We will get to see the hope that is laced through this human experience, the hope that does not disappoint. And we will know that this is a God-given miracle.

I can preach this because I have seen it. I brought today's scripture passage to a group of moms who currently or previously lived at our shelter. They turned it over and over, comparing Paul's words with their own experiences. They have suffered and are suffering. They have known abandonment, abuse, scarcity, fear, loneliness, hunger...just about every form of domestic deprivation imaginable.

One mom, whom I'll call Desiree, was new to the Bible study circle. She stated emphatically that her entire life had been suffering, and she did not know where God had been in her trials. Another mom, Marisa, responded, telling her own stories of hardship. Marisa said: "I used to cry out to God. I didn't understand why me."

And yet Marisa testified to God's enduring presence in her life that Bible study night. She ended that Bible study giving her number to Desiree, who could not yet testify to God's enduring goodness. Marisa's suffering had been transformed, and she is in the business of being near to suffering others to assure them of the possibility of this transformation. She, as the Psalmist affirmed, can sing of God's goodness in the land of the living.

But wait, you might say. What of the suffering that we don't see transformed? What of those who die in pain? Those who are unloved or unloving? Those who relapse or return to abusive partners? If we don't see transformation, can we shield our hearts? Wash our hands? Walk away?

Let's see what Paul has to say on the matter. Picking up in our reading at verse 6: *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.*

If you fear that your kindness is wasted, that your efforts are

coming to naught, look to Jesus, our savior, who wasted all sorts of kindness and whose efforts ended in a public execution. I'm sorry, friends. This is the savior you have devoted your lives to serving, the suffering servant. You really could have chosen a better role model if you wanted to be effective, assured of your return on investment.

You don't get full knowledge of the effects of your labors on this side of heaven. You just don't. That's why Paul said we would receive hope, not justification.

We are called to suffering. Suffering will transform. Going toward the suffering is the work God has given us to do, the work where Jesus told us we could encounter him.

So let us go forward, as Paul encourages in the end of this passage, to boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. You and those you minister to will endure more than you thought possible. You will develop bumpy, scarred, transcendently beautiful characters. And you will know the sort of hope that does not disappoint, because it is shot through with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYERS ANSWERED AND REQUESTS

During this challenging year we've been especially grateful to know that we have been prayed for by communities around the country. Thank you to the Bruderhof communities, the LA Catholic Worker, the Jesuits of Cincinnati, The Pentecostals of Jonesboro Arkansas, and all the individuals that have told us they are praying for us. Mary Ellen's health is in a relatively stable place, and we hope that the protocol from here on out will be scans every six months with no future incidents of cancer.

As we head into this summer, we'd like to ask for your prayers:

- for the five children from our extended community who are in foster care
- for Meridith, having completed her MDIV as she steps more fully into the role of "pastor" of Lydia's House
- for wisdom for us as we consider future property acquisitions
- for our deaconate program, the new framework we're creating to give guests more leadership
- for the Mitchell-Eilerman family as they plan a move closer to the shelter property
- for continued volunteers to help with the day to day operations of the shelter

Please let us know how we can pray for you! Or join us. We meet Tuesdays and Wednesday at noon at the shelter for prayer.

THE WORLD WILL BE SAVED BY BEAUTY

A Lenten reflection by Mary Ellen Mitchell, Lydia's House co-founder/ co-director

When we were young, Meridith and I took a road trip up the east coast to visit intentional Christian communities and imagine our futures. Our journey included *Jubilee Partners* with their care for refugees and *The Simple Way* with their love of water ice and street carnivals. We spent a weekend in Baltimore, starting at *Jonah House* with debates about the role of Christian Peacemaker teams, and ending at *Viva House*. It was at the *Viva House* that we pondered over a mural on the side of one of their buildings pronouncing, "The World Will be Saved by Beauty." We learned that the quote, originally from Fyodor Dostoevsky, was a favorite of Dorothy Day. The mural was humble, some details imprecise and already fading, but that image is a formative memory. It left an impression that Christian redemption would not, could not, be accomplished without the beautiful.

Thus, when we opened Lydia's House, if Meridith's contribution was to insist on goodness, mine was to champion beauty.

A theme of my life lately—particularly since by breast cancer diagnosis— has been holding more than one feeling, almost more than one reality, at once. In one version of this season's telling, life is awful in its exact details, and screaming behind every thought of late is war and rumors of war, forced detention, children in limbo, crucifixion. Zooming in from the global apocalypse, winter was a hard one in my nuclear family: Sam broke his wrist, Annie faced a disappointment about her schooling and my latest cancer med caused weeks of daily migraines.

In southern Ohio the weather pivoted from near summer heat with humidity that called forth baby flowers to, suddenly, roaring storms that ripped the nascent magnolias off the tree framing my entry door, plunging us all back to cold and gray. What's left now is a brown, wilted mess on my stoop. More than once, I've looked out the window at downed limbs and snow flurries in March to proclaim, "why?"

While two distinct realities can seem to co-exist in daily life, I also add to that complexity a third dimension: the inbreaking of the divine. I've been turning this over, wondering with my new spiritual director, Father Del, what constitutes the altar of the ordinary. It certainly can include failed cancer meds, weepy magnolias and broken bones. But these feel less like the structure itself and more like its shifting adornments.

His question to me was, "What is the reality the divine interacts with?"

After some time with it, I find myself leaning toward this: **that the foundation of human experience is the good, the true, and the beautiful.** In a previous writing (<https://slowprocessing.substack.com/p/goodness>) I spent time contemplating goodness, so now I'll pay tribute to Dorothy Day by turning to beauty.

Outside my office window, the daycare kids have come to play on the meticulously constructed Amish

"farmhouse" style play set, a new love of all Lydia's House diaspora children. They sit on the adjacent deck,



the daycare director Amanda between them, allowing them to indulge their toddler addictions to fruit snacks and uncrustables, like adults sneaking a glass of wine at Friday lunch. Just behind them, the driveway mural is a painting backdrop for a Seurat style impression, the Norwood edition, with bright blue and red shapes and similarly vibrant flowers framing the preschool picnic. The sun is shining, itself a simple shot of sublime, never promised in this region.



On Thursday night, we had a leave taking celebration for a guest who got an apartment. A new and enthusiastic meal volunteer brought a dinner with a salad that presented as a design of food, crafted such that we wondered if it was really meant to be eaten: radish leaves interspersed with crispy romaine, peppered with tiny carrot and squash slices. She even brought a cylinder of the "good ranch dressing." The guests exclaimed over the whole meal, fit for a banquet, but it was just our weeknight shelter offering.

Above the buffet line and tables set with engraved napkin rings, our new "celebration banner" swayed down over babies bouncing balls and a scattering of iridescent magna-tiles. The banner's colors are rust and aubergine, butter and mint, thoughtfully chosen to complement the dining chairs painted navy, moss and rose. All these colors interact with the deep tonal hued door murals and a floral framed "community affirmation," the artistic



offering that our German volunteer Hannah inscribed on the western wall of the dining room last summer.



Because the banner is so long and gangly, like a string of 2 dimensional pearls, we dared not risk letting it hang up over the weekend. After dinner, Meridith and I wrapped it back on its storage reel. Slowly taking down each piece, chatting as we put colorful circle after colorful circle back to rest, we were almost dancing with the floor sweeper and dish washer, everyone working to complete the after-dinner tasks.

Friday afternoon a friend dropped off soda bread at my office. I came home briefly before taking my 9 year old Jacob to confession and laid it out next to Sam's latest sourdough, an art he's realizing with greater perfection weekly, today's offering complete with petals carved into it's skin, sprinkled with flour to highlight the contrast of crust and bud. The breads made up our dinner, noting that Fridays in Lent are fast days, and life without meat at our house is mostly carbs. When I got back from Mass I put butter on a piece of the soda bread, dotted with raisins and dried fruit pieces and plated it a slice of Sam's creation. Sam pulled out a mason jar to peel off a bit of his starter, a gift for our teenage neighbor Karis, who asked for a share in



this precious concoction.

Not satisfied with bread alone, Sam requested transportation to the church fish fry. As I walked in, I looked at the building, as if for the first time: mid century elegance with large stone portions and a terracotta roof was suddenly stunning, highlighted by the unexpected sunbeams. Inside, naive style paintings of Pope Francis and the Black Jesus greeted us, as did a slew of human greeters, and an intricately crafted table of pop cans, maroon Dr. Pepper adjacent to deep brown Root Beer. The giver of drinks was an elegant, older woman with a skin tone that matched the Root Beer, her hands moving quickly to replace peeled off drinks, intent on maintaining a visual balance in each precise line.

I've been grateful to Renée Darline Roden for introducing me to the early Commonweal Essays of Dorothy Day. Not typically about houses of hospitality, these pieces are slices of life from her travels and friendships. In them one can see that the (now) Servant of God appreciated life unfolding around her, in dinners and celebrations, births and funerals. She loved meeting new people, listening to music, and eating delicious food. She returned to these joys even as she accompanied people in their lowest times and experienced her own "long loneliness." She wanted to see life as, first, beautiful, so much so that she called delight "a duty."

I know we all hit dark nights of the soul, low points that we might blame on the devil, imbalanced mental health, cancer or, lately, the leader of the Executive branch. I'm also wondering if noting beauty is really a matter of choice and posture; if just as the universe tends toward chaos it also tends toward beauty? If even our most ardent efforts to pave paradise are always counteracted by creating visual rows of shiny cans or observing the constellation of children at the playground? Is the work, then, to cultivate eyes that see, because the reality can't help but continuously present itself, fighting through the awful, saving the world in some small way every day, compounding toward Parousia by the force of beauty's totality— sunset upon sunset, mural upon mural.

Given the options, doesn't it seem a better one to be attuned to this treasure in the field, looking for it even if most people don't know or care that it's there?

The cancer med induced headaches have lessened to not daily and mostly dulled to manageable. My cloud of witnesses came around me with prayer and inquiry, the salve of community holding me in the intermittent darkness. This lent, the work was to look for beauty.

A copy of this writing was published in the Catholic Worker Roundtable (<https://catholicworker.substack.com/>) on Substack. It's a great publication of weekly writings from Catholic Workers and their fans nationwide. We recommend subscribing and supporting the work if you can!

CHRIST LIGHT DAY NURSERY: A MUSTARD SEED ENDEAVOR

When we opened the doors to Christ Light Day Nursery last September, we knew we were beginning something both simple and profound: a place where children would be safe, known, and cared for while their families worked to rebuild their lives. We hoped for a daycare with the charism of Lydia's House.

Eight months in, we find ourselves thinking less about what we've *accomplished* and more about what might be growing as we listen for the urging of the holy spirit to take us deeper into our collective vocations.

As of publication, ten children fill our space, give or take, from day to day. Five come from the shelter, two from our affordable housing building, and three belong to the extended web of staff and volunteers who help carry this work forward. It is a small group by most standards—but it's given us the ability to slowly start building a program. We are learning the ins and outs of how our guests want to use childcare, what the needs of children experiencing trauma are, and what staffing looks like for a special program of this nature.

Much of these first months has been about creating order out of what could easily become chaos. **Amanda Nobbe, our administrator and director,** has been amazing at trying out routines and problem solving: figuring out how to move a group of toddlers from breakfast to circle time without losing anyone (physically or emotionally) and learning how to structure a day so that children who have experienced instability can begin to trust what comes next. We've added in a weekly field trip to the shelter, allowing the

children to learn in our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classroom. We're troubleshooting nap times. We're getting our money's worth out of the adjacent nature playscape and our recently acquired 4-seater stroller.

And, just as importantly, we've been building a team.

One of the most encouraging steps forward is the **hiring of a new teacher with many years of classroom experience, Melody Yoder, who will join us in June,** working with us while also supporting a local Mennonite church plant. Her presence will help us strengthen consistency in the classroom, maintain appropriate ratios, and deepen the kind of engaged, attentive care that our children deserve. She'll join Amanda and our other full-time worker, Jada. Their work is supplemented by aides through the Xavier work study program and teenagers, including Amanda's daughter, Ava. Staffing has been one of the quiet but essential challenges of this first year, and it feels like we are beginning to find our footing.

Another significant step comes this summer, when we begin participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through a partnership with the United Methodist Church. This means that every child in our care will receive nutritious meals and snacks at no cost to their families. For many of our children, this is not a small thing—it is a direct response to food insecurity, wrapped into the ordinary rhythm of the day.

Behind the scenes, we are also **stepping into Ohio's Step Up to**

Quality system. We will begin at the Bronze level, working with a mentor through 4C for Children. This process asks more of us—more training, more structure, more intentionality—but it also gives us a framework to ensure that what we are building is not just loving, but excellent.

Financially, this season has required investment. **Over the first eight months, we**



spent about \$29,000 on staffing and materials, while bringing in about \$19,000 through childcare vouchers. This gap is not a surprise; it is the reality of starting something from the ground up. We have chosen to invest early in people, in classroom environments, and in doing things the right way from the beginning. As enrollment grows and our food program begins, we expect that gap to narrow. **For now, we are grateful to the HCS Foundation, The BGR Family Foundation, The Harrison Foundation, The Van Amerongen Family, The Bruderhof Communities, Xavier University and the Sisters of Charity for subsidizing our start-up phase with funds, materials and/or volunteers.**

So what comes next?

Our focus in the coming months is clear: grow enrollment, especially in our preschool classroom, welcome and support new staff, launch the meal program, and secure our initial Step Up To Quality rating. But underneath all of those goals is something harder to capture or measure: continue becoming a place where children can flourish and families experiencing hardship can breathe a little easier.

If you know a child that might be a good fit for our program, we are accepting new students. You can fill out the application at the QR code following this article.

Like all things Lydia's House, we lean into the Kingdom of God parables. Christ Light day nursery is like a mustard seed growing,

already with enough branches for children to rest. It's like a treasure in the field, that one finds only if you spend time day in and day out with the children that come. It's like a seed falling to the ground and dying, with our initial ideas about how it would work already being upended, and replaced with new life, life that can only be found in a faithful process.

Thank you to everyone that has supported this unique venture.



EIGEL CENTER THANK YOU

We are so grateful for our partnership with the Eigel Center for community engaged learning at Xavier University, and specifically for the work of their service scholars. Each semester 2-5 students choose Lydia's House as a placement for service hours, coming to help with house duty, children's programs and meals. After a year with the Jesuit Volunteers, one of our former Eigel Fellows, **Molly Babcock** will be returning to Cincinnati to be a live in community member at Lydia's House this fall. To a person, Eigel fellows have been a source of light and life. Thank you to this year's fellows:

Brendan, Izzy, Claire, Grace, and especially **Hailey and Liv**, who graduated in May after 3 years of weekly, faithful commitment to Lydia's House and our daycare.





MAKING MEMORIES

In late April we had a fun night of summer camp sign-ups, family photos, and we gave away a van to a former guest. It was a really festive and special evening and we can't say thank you enough to our photographer, Juliana Boehm, whose been taking guest family photos since we opened. Here's some shots from the day!

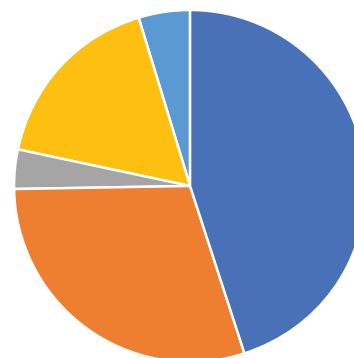


2025 ANNUAL REPORT FINANCES

INCOME 2024

Individuals	\$438,713
Private and Business Grants	\$290,210
Cash Holdings	\$36,159
Earned Income	\$163,795
Churches and Religious orders	\$45,748

TOTAL **\$974,625**



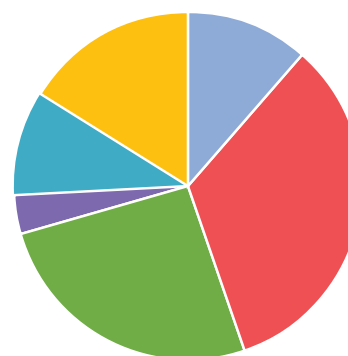
INCOME 2025

- Individuals
- Private Grants
- Cash Reserves
- Earned Income
- Churches and Religious Orders

EXPENSE 2024

Stabilization <i>(includes utilities, food, bus passes, insurance, personal care spending)</i>	\$66,577
Support <i>(includes expenses related to guest support personnel)</i>	\$191,638
Community <i>(includes spiritual and family programs, outings, newsletter, aftercare)</i>	\$148,092
Admin and Fundraising <i>(includes office expenses and supplies, software and hardware, accounting professional expenses, admin professional expenses)</i>	\$21,102
Maintenance and Upgrades <i>(includes yards, furniture, building maintenance and maintenance staffing)</i>	\$54,413
Depreciation/Other	\$92,500

TOTAL **\$574,322**



EXPENSE 2025

- Stabilization
- Support
- Community
- Admin and Fundraising
- Maintenance and Upgrades
- Depreciation/Other

Lydia's House 2025

58 served in shelter + 135 after

Emergency Shelter at Lydia's House



22 Families were provided Emergency Shelter for stays between 13 and 30 days

82% Continued into Transitional Housing or Safe Stable Housing

Each Family Received:

- On-Site Staff Support
- 24/7 Shelter Access
- Nutritious Meals
- Private rooms
- Case Management Services , including Applying to Housing and Benefits Navigation



Women Served:

- Average Age = 23.4 Years
- Average ACE* Score = 4.3
- 31% Experienced Domestic Violence in the Past Year
- 27% Spent time in Foster Care as Children
- 9% Had a Mental Health Diagnosis
- 86% African American; 14% Other category
- Shelter guests named an average of 1.8 people in their social support network **

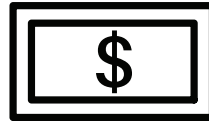
Transitional Housing Program at Lydia's House



18 Families Continued onto Lydia's House On-Site Transitional Housing Program
Transitional housing is offered for those that stay in shelter longer than 30 days



58%
Received
Needed
Mental Health
or Medical
Care



42%
Obtained and/or
Maintained
Employment or
Getting Job
Training



58%
Obtained
Government
Benefits



58%
Obtained
Necessary
Documentation

Things 2025 Guests do differently because of their time at Lydia's House:

"Being prioritized and keeping up with my scheduled routine"

" I attend school, and I wake up early every day!"



*ACE = Adverse Childhood Events, A tool used to assess traumatic events individuals experienced during childhood, higher scores correlated with negative health outcomes, Score 0-10

**As measured by the Sarason Social Support Questionnaire - Short Form, among those who completed their stays and questionnaires in 2025

Year in Review

care = 193 Individuals Served



Average Total Length of Stay: 76 Days

91% Moved into Stable Housing



17% Received Legal Assistance



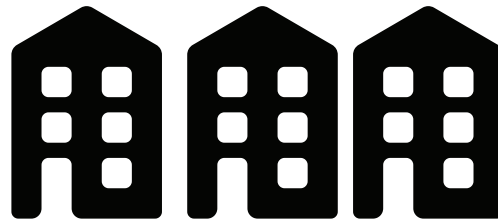
58% Received Assistance in Enrolling Children in a New School or



5 Guests Supported in Pregnancy

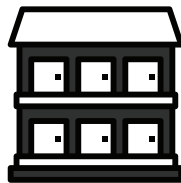
"I take my responsibilities more seriously. And appreciate every blessing..."

Lydia's House Aftercare Program 48 Families Served



- 8 Parties Offered to Aftercare Families (Winter Pool Party, Galentine's Day, Easter Egg Hunt/Liturgy of Light, Birthday celebration with Ice cream truck, Stricker's Grove, Laundry Love, Halloween Camp Fire, Christmas Karaoke)
- 12 Families Attended Family Camp and 24 kids attended LH's second in-house summer camp
- Summer family fun offerings included Science on Wheels, a Magic show, Line dancing, an Opera Performance, Laundry Love, and Roller Skating
- \$53,000 Spent on Aftercare Families
 - \$31,000 Provided in Financial Assistance, such as Rent, Utilities, and Bills
 - 53 Children Provided Funding to Strengthen Family Bonds, including Birthday Parties, Vacations or Family Outings
- 8 Families Provided Legal Assistance, including Trained Tax Preparation
- 12 Families Provided Case Management
- \$2500 Provided for, School Supplies or Clothes/Uniforms
- 1 Family received a restored used car through a joint effort of Drive to Thrive, Bellarmine Chapel and Lydia's House

Norwood-based Supportive Housing



- 18 families housed, including 34 kids
- \$25,000 Provided in Rental Assistance to Tenants

Christ Light Daycare

We completed the state licensure process, hired and oriented a full staff, and opened our own daycare in 2025. Highlights included:

- Starting Step up to Quality Process
- Served 17 kids with reliable, daily care



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In the coming year we'll be starting a "Mutual Aid Society" for our guests to prayerfully discern how to support one another and their friends and family. Noting they are the experts on their community, we want to give them power to distribute funds and do home visits, in the spirit of the St Vincent De Paul society. All funds from this newsletter will go to that aid, for the alleviation of poverty in our extended circle.