

To the People of God at THE LIFE

By Pastor Justin Vetrano

I have sat down to write this cover article at least three times over the past few weeks, and--as Pastor Crocitto mentioned in his sermon this weekend--it is amazing how quickly time keeps marching forward. Before we know it, March will be here, and we know that means LENT 2022 will begin.

Our January Church Council meeting was such a joy-filled and hopeful time, as each person on the Council had the opportunity to report on our last calendar year of ministry. It was a truly inspiring evening to hear about the state of THE LIFE, that despite numerous challenges this past year, THE LIFE continues to shift, adapt, and thrive. Each area of our ministries is working twice as hard during COVID times to adjust to fluid circumstances, and yet we have been overjoyed to see how these challenges have been met.

Though our youth group has been temporarily scattered, the confirmation classes continue, and several events have been planned to engage the teens. The Altar

Guild continues their work, even though our worship practices keep changing. The mission team celebrated a record year, because of your generous donations of food, baby items, and winter coats. The outreach team has been working hard to communicate with everyone, and to tell our story, and to share information about our ever-changing circumstances.

ESL continues in the best ways possible, with strong student engagement, and teachers who have worked hard to adapt while teaching via Zoom. Our Day School is going stronger than ever, with an increase in programs, and new families enrolling nearly every week. Sunday School runs smoothly with a terrific group of faithful teachers and excited parents, who are truly thankful that we continue to engage the children with fun and learning.

Weekly worship services continue, with increasing attendance, and we are thankful to finally be able to engage more volunteers to assist in worship. Our livestream team has perfected our online

presence, and we have people joining us from all over the country and around the world. Bible Studies have stronger attendance than pre-pandemic numbers, and I consistently hear from people how much they truly enjoy our variety of studies and those leading them.

December into January was a true highlight of the year for us as we sent out another fabulous Advent Box, organized one of our largest tree lighting events ever, and gathered for meaningful Christmas worship services.

The ordination of Pastor Crocitto (as we shall now call him), was a powerful image for us of the working of the Holy Spirit in and among THE LIFE. Three years ago, Pastor Crocitto and I sat in a restaurant, dreaming and praying that God would use him as he felt called into ministry.

The fact that THE LIFE serves as a training center, with so much support from the Council and Congregation, truly displays the strength and mission of our church. The work of our Pastoral ministry team (Pastors, Vicars, and Deacons) extends well beyond THE LIFE; on any given weekend our team will simultaneously cover three churches in our District.

Now we move onward into 2022, in which we look forward to celebrating the Ordination of Vicar Dan Giardino, and have another candidate, about whom we will share more information in the near future, set to enter into the seminary, and begin his work in pastoral formation. God's blessings abound as we proclaim the Gospel here at THE LIFE, and the Holy Spirit moves to shape our faith and the future church.

Moving forward we are all very excited and relieved by the direction of the pan-

Join us for Worship and more!

Sundays **Worship & Communion, 9 & 10:30am***
Children's Sunday School, 10:15am
Mondays **Monday Night Bible Study, 7:30pm****
Thursdays **Worship & Communion, 7:15pm***

*In-person and live-streamed
**Via Zoom

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Getting to Know...Mimi and Rob Edwins

By Joni Mazer

I am blessed to call Mimi Edwins my friend since we met about 20 years ago. We became acquainted through our involvement in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML). Mimi is a woman of wisdom, honor, and grace, with a large measure of humor in the mix. These attributes all come to her through her love for the Lord, and she is always willing to convey that to those around her. I've known Rob through her, but recently had the wonderful opportunity of meeting him in church, where they are new members. It is my pleasure to introduce this wonderful couple who lead a family of 7 children, 19 grandchildren, one great grandchild and one on the way, many of whom are also members of our amazing church.

Joni: How long have you been worshipping at THE LIFE, and what brought you here?

Mimi: A bit over a year. Some of our family members were attending church at THE LIFE, and friends were telling us to come and see, so we did, and we stayed!

Joni: What do you like most about THE LIFE?



Mimi and Rob Edwins on vacation in Key Largo.

Rob: You feel such joy in the worship service. The music is wonderful. You leave knowing that you've been touched by the Holy Spirit.

Joni: Are you involved in any activities and/or ministries at THE LIFE?

Rob: We enjoy participating in Bible study.

Joni: What do you do outside of church?

Mimi: We have a large family and enjoy spending time with them. Rob loves the outdoors, and I love the beach. Together, we enjoy going to Broadway shows and dining out.

Rob: Our favorite vacation spot is Key Largo. We've gone to many beautiful beaches, art galleries, and great restaurants there.

Mimi: The biggest decision every day is what pair of shorts to wear! It's so relaxing.

Joni: I know you recently celebrated a momentous occasion. Can you tell me a little about it?

Mimi: Our children planned a surprise party for our 60th anniversary. Everything was done right in front of us, but we didn't notice. One day, our daughter, Sharon, ran into our house in her pajamas, grabbed my cell phone and said she needed to check something. We later found out that I was on the Edwins family texting thread with the party plans on it! The event took place at The Milleridge Inn with the entire family there, except for our grandson, Christian, who is in the Navy submarine service.

Joni: Do you have a favorite Bible verse?

Mimi: Isaiah 43:4 "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life." Alma Kern was our LWML retreat leader many years ago, and the entire weekend was focused on God's love for us.

Rob: Psalm 42:1 "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God."

Joni: How has God worked in your life?

Rob: In 1981, while at an evangelism weekend at Tuscarora Retreat Center, I accepted Christ into my life. It was a life changing experience for me.

Mimi: I know that God is always there for me no matter what happens.

Joni: How has your faith in God helped you through a difficult time?

Rob: God gave me His peace as I prepared for multiple heart surgeries.

Mimi: At the most difficult times in my life, I always knew He was there. He knows my grief and holds me in His loving arms.

Joni: When do you feel closest to God?

Rob: We both feel closest to God during worship and prayer time. **L**

the **LIFE**

LUTHERAN CHURCH
& DAY SCHOOL

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Pastoral Formation at THE LIFE

Each week, in the back of church under the stained-glass cross, Pastor Vetrano meets with a small group--Vicars and Deacons--who are training for the ministry, discussing theology, practical ministry, and spiritual formation. There is no better place to delve into these important and formative topics than at the foot of the cross.

Since THE LIFE has been called into being, six pastors have been raised up in our midst. It began with Pastor Vetrano, who was still a vicar when he came to THE LIFE in 2008. Pastor Vetrano went on to identify and mentor four additional people from THE LIFE who are currently serving in Pastoral ministry: Rev. Anthony Giordano, Rev. Adam Schoepflin, Rev. Brian Crocitto, and

soon to be ordained Vicar Daniel Giardino.

THE LIFE has been a true training and formation experience for people to serve in ministry. Rev. George Baum served full-time with Pastor Vetrano for six months before he was called to Ohio and ordained. Rev. Baum continues to serve on our staff as content editor and social media coordinator and has shared how THE LIFE helped prepare him for his current ministry.

THE LIFE also welcomed home Rev. Tim Anderson for his ordination. Rev. Anderson grew up at THE LIFE when it was Redeemer Lutheran Church and was helpful in the early days of THE LIFE when he was home from seminary.

The weekly mentor meetings have been a gift not only to those studying for the ministry, but also to Pastor Vetrano. "I don't see it so much as me mentoring young pastors. To me our meetings are times when the Holy Spirit works among us to lead us and shape us into who God has called us to be. We serve as a team and support one another. I have never seen God raising up so many Pastors from one place before!"

THE LIFE is excited also to walk alongside Alex Rubino, who has submitted his application to the seminary, to begin studying and being mentored at THE LIFE to serve as a Pastor and Chaplain.

Have you ever felt God's call to be a Pastor or to serve as a Deacon? Perhaps you are next? **L**

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demic metrics; with each passing week we are moving toward less and less restrictions because the "coast is becoming clearer." This past Sunday we brought our coffee hour back; the joy we all experienced being able to catch up after services was palpable. Since we first planted THE LIFE, it has been my firm belief that our time connecting after services is an extension of what we celebrate in the sanctuary. Seeing people talking and laughing and having the children running around enjoying their time after church is reflective of our days before the pandemic, and we look forward to lifting all restrictions sometime soon.

We have our eyes fixed on the Cross as we move further into this new year. Lent is only a few weeks away. With that we are actively planning a new Lenten/Easter box, working to coordinate our nightly Compline and Evening prayer services, and setting up our Holy Week

schedule. So many people have been asking if we plan to do the Living DaVinci on Maundy Thursday this year; we are excited to set it in our schedule, and we will begin preparations for it shortly.

Over the past 18 months or so, Deacon Paulina has been hard at work compiling and editing our stories in a pandemic journal from THE LIFE. We are looking forward to publishing this book and can't wait to get it into your hands. (I have asked not to see the book beforehand as I want to experience its full impact at the same time as all of you.) I have had modest input into the vision of the journal; and the few things I have seen and heard from Paulina and her editing team is nothing short of remarkable. A body of work like this will be a gift that will share our story for generations.

Also, in the days ahead, be on the lookout for more Bible Study opportunities,

new member meetings, First Communion classes, movie nights, and other fun fellowship gatherings, as the cold of winter steps aside, making way for a warm and bright spring.

Words cannot express how thankful we all are that God has blessed us with the opportunity to be church here at THE LIFE. It is a true joy for me to connect with you all each week. We have missed you in so many ways. We hope to see those whom the pandemic has scattered finding their way back to THE LIFE, to join with myriad new people who have come to us during these difficult times, to celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ as one in the body of Christ.

Jesus said, "I have come that you may have LIFE, and have it abundantly."

See you around Church,

Pastor Vetrano **L**

Day School Children Explore Fall, Halloween

By Lori Shaw, Day School Director

The Day School children have been very busy exploring, learning, and participating in Fall and Halloween fun! Our “Pumpkin Patch” was tons of fun, and the children enjoyed decorating their very own pumpkin.



Our “Pumpkin Patch” was tons of fun.

Day School families came to school to enjoy an outdoor Halloween Parade and to



Day School families participated in the Halloween “Trunk or Treat” event at THE LIFE, with amazing themed displays .



The Day School children learned about Thanksgiving, family, and friendship, and gathered to feast before the Thanksgiving recess.

They also learned new holiday songs to sing for the Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 4.



see and hear their children sing Fall and Halloween songs. The fun continued over the weekend with our Halloween “Trunk or Treat.” The children and families had a wonderful time Trunk or Treating, eating hot dogs, cotton candy, ice cream and popcorn, playing in bouncy houses, having their faces painted, and seeing their friends. The event was a huge success!

Registration Now Open

THE LIFE Lutheran Day School is accepting registration for our Summer Camp 2022 Program and also for the 2022-23 school year. Registration is open for new families as well as current Day School families. Enrollment is on a first come, first serve basis. For more information, contact Lori Shaw at 516.333.3355 or dayschool@thelifeny.org.

Devotion: Soul Tired? Take Heart!

By Melissa Essigman

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

The season of Lent is almost upon us. This is a season to open our hearts to God’s refining grace through quiet reflection.

The past year of teaching has been the most difficult one of my career. I devoted myself to teaching at a young age, and thirty years later, I have found myself working at a small Lutheran school in Malverne teaching grade five. Although I am a veteran teacher, I am new to elementary school and all of the nuances that ac-

company working with younger children. I am also teaching math and science, two unfamiliar subjects to me until I made the decision to take on this job. Adding to these hurdles are Covid rules, remote instruction, and honestly, the challenges of daily life. If I’m honest about it, I feel soul-tired.

Recently, our class did an activity in which we wrote Valentine’s cards to one another. Each student started with their own blank card and then circulated the room to every other card, writing a nice word or sentence about their classmates. The students wanted to include me in this activity, so I started with my own blank card at station #16. When I circled back and read my card, I was struck by one student’s sen-

timent: “Ms. E sacrifices so much to give us everything, so that we can have great days at school.”

In the stillness of that evening, I thought about the upcoming Lenten season. I decided to reframe my perception of sacrifice as being something that has been draining me, and instead, to view this ministry as a gift I have been given by God. After all, didn’t God make the greatest sacrifice through His son Jesus Christ, so that we may live an eternal life?

If we allow our perspective to shift, and see sacrifice through the lens of Christ, it is with humility and reverence that we can give of ourselves freely and take heart, for through this sacrifice, God has overcome the world. 