

March 2024

**If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation: everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new!"**

**[2 Corinthians 5:17]**

## **A Message from the President:**

Dear Families, Friends, and Supporters,

As we welcome spring, we share with you new growth at St Luke's Guesthouse. With office space now available to the staff on the ground floor, we have a room available for a mother and child. The staff continue to embrace growth through professional development programs funded by a grant from United Way, and by taking on new responsibilities and initiatives to better serve our guests. We welcome Tricia Gay as our Volunteer Coordinator - please reach out to Tricia if you would like to share your talent, time, energy, and passion for empowering our guests to be self-sufficient.

We thank Marie Smoker, former Director of St. Luke's Guesthouse, for her selfless dedication and passion for our mission and we wish her well in her new home and ventures. We could have charged forth and engaged a new director, but instead we started the year reflecting deeply on St. Luke's Mission and Vision. Now we look forward to growing the seeds that germinated during the winter:

- Engaging with volunteers and growing our circle of friends, supporters, and donors, be they individuals, civic groups, churches, businesses or foundations.
- Partnering with supporters and friends who can make donations of goods so we can use our funds to support our mission and to pay our bills.

As we move into Spring look for information about our new website and the option to receive emails with Guesthouse news, events, and newsletters. We plan to repeat our 2 successful new fundraisers: a car wash sponsored by Holy Gutters, and the Sleep Out. Watch for more information.

Thank you for your continued commitment to St Luke's as together we empower our guests to become self-sufficient.

Tamsin Lucey  
President of the Board  
of Directors  
Friends of St Luke's Inc.



## **We welcome our new Volunteer Coordinator**

Hello, my name is Tricia Gay, and I have taken a position as the **Volunteer Coordinator for St. Luke's Guesthouse.**

I have been involved with the homeless population for several years, first as a coordinator for IHN in Worcester and then the Southbridge network. In my previous employment, I oversaw a team who worked closely with the homeless population, helping them to access services and find suitable housing.

I have known St. Luke's Guesthouse since its inception and am looking forward to working closely with you. We have a variety of volunteer needs and if you are interested in donating some of your time and talent, please let me know. I can be contacted by cell: 774-230-3589 or email:

[stlukesguesthousetricia@gmail.com](mailto:stlukesguesthousetricia@gmail.com)

Thank you.



## **Lizzy's Story**

Lizzy (not her real name) and her nine-month-old child came to St. Luke's after an altercation with the people she lived with. The father of her child is incarcerated. While she hopes to reconcile with him, she wants stability for herself and her child. Upon arrival she was hired quickly at a local factory. She had assistance from family with rides and daycare. Unfortunately, that job was only temporary. Lizzy is seeking employment through MassHire and temporary agencies. By her own admission she lacked skills to budget and save money. She has been improving with this and contributes to her savings regularly. She is motivated by wanting to support herself. She is focused on seeking housing and continues to seek work. Meanwhile, she has begun high school courses online. Lizzy is very excited about earning her diploma.

## **Reflections from a Board Member**

Hello everyone!

By way of introduction my name is Pastor Dan Purtell, Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Sturbridge and member of the Board of Directors of Friends of St. Luke's, Inc. I wanted to take a moment and share a little bit about why I serve on the Board and why the ministry of St. Luke's is so critical for our community.

During Lent I have been participating in an online Lenten study sponsored by the New England Synod. During one of those meetings, the following question was raised: *“How can we get into the world, so God’s people can thrive?”*

I think this question lifts up one reason why I’m on the Board. We know the world that we live in is a broken place for far too many people. We see that in Southbridge and our surrounding communities every day. Far too many people struggle to find shelter and a place to call home.



I have been drawn to serve at St. Luke’s because it not only provides shelter for those without housing, but it also extends that mission to equipping our beloved siblings by providing

assistance in money management skills and providing connection to community resources and other opportunities, including the Finding Hope Program. It is not enough to help folks survive; we want to ensure folks are able to thrive when they leave the Guesthouse. Everyone deserves that, and that is primarily why I’m on the board--so that we can ensure this good and holy work continues to provide these opportunities.

Grace and Peace,  
Rev. Daniel Purtell

### A View from the Staff

Recently we at St. Luke’s have been engaged in discussion about the challenges that many are facing with housing. Rents continue to increase, as do landlords’ expectations. With so many seeking sustainable housing, landlords are inundated with applicants. Many of our guests have poor housing and/or credit histories. While there are agencies that offer assistance for move-in costs, monthly fulfillment is a concern. Landlords, too, need to be able to meet their costs.

The other issue we are seeing is the increase of the immigrant population in our area and services they need. Many of those coming to the United States do not realize that they must go through a lengthy process for work permits, identifications and more. Not having these items impedes their ability to find housing as well as employment. The agencies working to assist these individuals are overwhelmed. We at St. Luke’s have been discussing our role in the community and how we can best serve this population as they seek our help,

Mary Jo Mason, Case Manager

### News from the Guesthouse

- In January we provided 290 nights of shelter and case management for 7 families.

- In February we provided 319 nights of shelter and case management for 7 families.
- At the beginning of March we had 14 guests (7 families) at the Guesthouse. This includes two young mothers with 10-month-olds, a single father with a 4 and a 5-year-old, and an immigrant family of three. All 7 families are seeking affordable housing despite the severe housing shortage and rising cost of housing. We live in Hope!

### Finding Hope/Preventing Eviction

Many families are struggling financially, behind on their rent and at risk of losing their homes. Finding HOPE/ Preventing Eviction is an outreach program of Friends of St. Luke’s that provides the support necessary to prevent an individual or a family from being evicted. **We currently have openings for the Finding HOPE program.** If you or someone you know is behind on their rent or bills call us at **774-230-6416** to see if you might qualify to join the program.

### What Is St. Luke’s Guesthouse?

Founded in 2017, St. Luke’s is the only homeless shelter serving single men, women, and families in the fifteen towns of southern Worcester County. St. Luke’s receives no government funding and operates thanks to the generosity of local donors, churches, and grants from local businesses, United Way of South-Central Mass, The Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Spectrum Health Systems, The Wagner Foundation, and St. Vincent’s Healthcare Fund. We also collaborate with other local organizations in our community to serve families in need.

*For all you do,  
For all you are,  
All our thanks!*

*We simply could not be more grateful!*

We are especially grateful for the donations of supplies and gifts during the holiday season and for the gift of a microwave oven and the other offers!



United Way  
of South Central MA



Please be sure to follow us on Facebook to stay updated on what is happening with Friends of St. Lukes.

