

CONGRATULATIONS GRADS of 2020! GODSPEED to



MOLLY BANWART
Algonquin, IL
B.A. Linguistics, French, Scandinavian Studies



MELANIE ROHLA
Lisle, IL
B.A. Environmental Science and Global Studies



DAMIEN BEHYMER
Midlothian, IL
B.A. Computer Science, Linguistics



JOHNEE SCHULTE
Ohio, IL
B.S. Kinesiology



HANNAH BURSON
Ph.D. Mathematics
Combinatorial approaches to problems involving q-series and integer partitions



MARSHALL SHRINER
Urbana, IL
B.S. Computer Engineering



DR. JOEL MULLER
Moving to Australia (home) in July.



SIMON TIFFIN
Ottawa, IL
B. Music: Open Studies



December 2019 Graduates:
KAITLYN REED
MONICA HOH
M.S. Library and Information Science



DANIEL (LONGXIANG) ZHU,
Shandong, China
Returning to China (home) in September to complete his Ph.D. in Nuclear Engineering



(L) Supporting each other by attending one another's concerts and events. (R) One of many Zoom worship, Bible study, and fellowship gatherings. Where two or more are zooming in Christ's name, there he is among them.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Rev. Janet Lepp, President; Heather Pierce, Treasurer; Rev. Priscilla Geerdes, Secretary; Jim Anderson; Bob Coverdill; Michelle Rome; Garris Graham; Cheryl Light Shriner.

COUNCIL 2019-2020: Brendan O'Shaughnessy, President; Molly Banwart; Melanie Rohla; Ray McDermott; Joel Muller; Maddi Vogel; Daniel Zhu.

STAFF 2019-2020: Amy C. Thoren, Pastor/Director; Simon Tiffin, Music Minister; Melanie Rohla, Student Minister of Faith in Action; Molly Banwart, Student Minister of Communications; Truman Silberg, Facility Caretaker; Rachel Rasmussen, Office Administrator.



Summer 2020

Lutheranism gets another chance

Nathan Sonnenschein, MS Library Science

When I approached St. Andrew's doors for the first time this past January, I was hesitant and nervous. I had just started taking graduate classes at the University of Illinois, and I felt isolated and disconnected from the campus community, as new students often do. While walking between class and work, I had seen the sign outside of St. Andrew's inviting passers-by to partake in food and fellowship on Wednesday nights. The rainbow flag hanging in a window spoke to theologies unlike those of the conservative churches I grew up attending; it encouraged me to give Lutheranism another chance.

After I shuffled through the doors, I was quickly greeted by Pastor Amy and several students. After I was introduced to everyone, we spent the evening eating, conversing, and baking bread for the Eucharist. I thought I was an outlier because I had no personal history with the ELCA, but I quickly discovered that the students at St. Andrew's came from varied backgrounds. Like me, many of them were on a journey of discovering or rediscovering their faith.

Since that first day, St. Andrew's has become my "church home" in Champaign. During Sunday services, I can let go of my day-to-day stresses and be reminded of what truly matters: compassion, justice and love. Through Bible study conversations with church leaders and fellow students, I have begun to realize that the Bible is deep and complex in ways that literal interpretation cannot explain. All the events at St. Andrew's have moved online in the wake of COVID-19, but church is still as meaningful as ever. I have been forced to attend class and work from home, so interacting with the St. Andrew's community online is an invaluable social outlet for me in these trying times.

I felt nervous and hesitant when I approached the doors of St. Andrew's. How things change! Now, I feel bold and empowered. I am excited to continue growing in faith, and learning what being Lutheran means to me. ☐



Nathan



Monica

ST ANDREW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CAMPUS CENTER

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Photo: Darrell Hoemann

Lutheran campus ministry must exist before, during and after global pandemic

Board of Trustees member Michelle Rome of Good Shepherd Lutheran, Champaign



The importance of campus ministry during my own college years is the major reason I now serve the St. Andrew's Board of Trustees. The friendships and experiences I gained were a significant part of my faith journey and provided a support structure through that time in my life. Part of my job at the University of Illinois involves interacting with a few hundred undergrads a year, and I see many who lack a safe, positive support network to ask the hard questions in life and intentionally develop their faith. Campus ministry provides this environment for students who face a great deal of competition, stress, and anxiety during college.

While campus ministry exists to support students, it is also a great blessing to the church and world! The young adults who attend St. Andrew's learn and practice leadership in worship, on Council, as Student Ministers, over-

Grad grateful for virtual connection

Monica Hoh, December 2019 Graduate

As days turn into weeks, and weeks into months, I've looked for silver linings as the pandemic forces us into distancing practices that isolate us physically from one another. In February I moved to a new state, into a new apartment, and to a new job. My social circles were already pretty small and the spread of COVID-19 has thrown almost all plans to expand them out the window for now. Among those plans was finding a new church, something I'd barely worked on.

But with in-person gatherings prohibited, church programming moved online. St. Andrew's responded to its community's needs by making this move as well. This change meant I could stay connected even from afar. Virtual dinners with folks who are a full time zone away are a non-negotiable part of my weekly routine. Worshiping, having good and intense conversations in Bible study, watching movies, playing games, and celebrating life achievements characterize most of our time spent together, and I couldn't be more blessed. Although we are apart and facing uncertain times, the St. Andrew's campus ministry community continues to gather and sow immeasurable hope, joy, and love in my life and I pray others feel this blessing too. ☐

From the pastor



Dear friends in Christ,

If you read closely, you will notice that there are no articles in this newsletter from our Council or Board presidents (senior student Brendan O'Shaughnessy and Rev. Janet Lepp). They have written for the newsletter in the past, and it is always good to hear from these particular and wonderful people, but the unique reason they are not featured this year is that we have *so many other* strong leaders whom God has raised up for the ministry at St. Andrew's: current students, alumni, and Board members. This means *we are growing in faith, in mission, and in leadership*. Through the words, stories, and reflections of these varied leaders, I hope you will get a sense for the ways God is making a difference in many lives through our ministry.

With this growth come improvements to our facility. After consulting with local architects, we had started honing in on a plan for an accessible first floor kitchenette when the novel coronavirus hit US shores. The crisis of pandemic brought unprecedented changes to campus ministry as I know it did to your lives and communities of faith. I pray each one reading our newsletter is in good health, and where there has been trauma and death, please know that you are in our prayers for healing and comfort.

By the grace of God and the technology skills of many, we have maintained a vibrant campus ministry presence through weekly online gatherings of worship, Bible Study, games, movies, and even shared meals. Our ministry normally becomes less active in summer when students are away from campus, but we have continued through the summer with all our offerings, and they've been well attended. We are taking every precaution necessary for the safety of students as we look toward fall semester, and we will go ahead with the kitchenette only as we are able to do so safely.

Please keep in prayer our students, graduates, and high school graduates newly enrolled at UIUC this fall. For all of these, life suddenly involves far less certainty than it did a few months ago. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing financial and prayer support! With you, we will keep sharing the Gospel with students God has entrusted to us.

Grace and peace in Christ, Pr Amy Thoren ☐

(con't from p 1) seeing outreach, service, education, and more. They are actively living their faith, serving others, and caring for each other and our world. COVID-19 changed the whole world just after I joined the Board of Trustees in January. It's been amazing to see this campus ministry pivot and adjust to the current world situation. It is important that ministries like St. Andrew's exist before, during, and after world pandemics.

As a student church where those who attend do not have income, St. Andrew's depends on regular support from far beyond campus. All gifts are greatly appreciated and used to further God's work in this place. We're excited about current building upgrades that will make our facility accessible and functional for all, and we are launching a St. Andrew's Ambassador Program that will seek out creative and new ways to sustain this ministry! Please prayerfully consider making a donation to St. Andrew's. There is a box on the donation return form (enclosed) for you to indicate your desire to learn more about the Ambassador Program. Stay safe, and maybe we'll interact in the future as part of the St. Andrew's Ambassador Program! ☐

To give online go our website (www.lutherancampuscenter.org) or send a check using the envelope provided.



We transformed our sanctuary into a dining hall to feed the St. Olaf Choir before its Feb 8 concert at UIUC's Krannert Center.

Finding St. Andrews via ESL

Daniel Longxiang Zhu, visiting scholar from China

I'm so lucky that I met St. Andrew's two years ago. Since Ray McDermott, the St. Andrews ESL instructor whose class I attended, introduced me to this community, I have been embraced by the greatest welcome, precious friendships, and marvelous caring from all the beautiful people in our congregation.

St. Andrew's shows me the meaning of 'loving your neighbor' despite the different ethnicities, our different cultural backgrounds, and nationalities. St. Andrew's taught me there *does* exist a word connecting us human beings: that word is LOVE. ☐



Daniel special ordered for us a scroll we hung in the sanctuary that tells the story of early Christian communities in China.



GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS



From top left clockwise: volunteering with Books to Prisoners, digging into Scripture in our Lenten Bible Study, composting pumpkins after Halloween, raising funds and awareness for the hungry in the CROP Walk, installing a succulent garden at church, and cleaning up the local Sangamon River by canoe.

Inspiring conversations in a welcoming space

Joel Muller, Ph.D., UIUC Counseling Center

Campus ministry has a special place in my heart, and St. Andrews has been an important community to me in the last 3 years for worship and connecting with folks from a variety of faith backgrounds who are invited to come as they are.

I appreciate that it is an open, welcoming, non-shaming, and affirming space for people of differing social identities, and I'm grateful for the inspiring conversations I've had here regarding the church, faith and science, LGBTQ+ issues, racism, refugee issues, and environmentalism.

I came into this community as a young professional (psychologist) and for 2 years served the Council, where part of my role was to work with an architect to create a clearer plan for our facility that is consistent with our mission and values. We've taken big steps toward an accessible first floor kitchenette that can be used in the near future, and we are developing a more extensive long-term plan for the full building.

I'll be moving to Australia this summer, and I'm eager to watch these projects take shape from afar. I'm excited for the future of St. Andrew's ministry! ☐



Joel (L) engaging in conversation, with an eye toward welcome and accessibility.

I have found my people and I'm excited to serve

Emilie Schramer, class of 2022

As a sophomore studying Linguistics, Speech and Hearing Science at the UI, I am honored to be able to serve as Student Minister of Communications this coming academic year.

I grew up in the Christian faith, attending Lutheran churches, and so I felt a connection to the ELCA that I wanted to preserve in my time at college. At the same time, I wanted a different church experience than what I had growing up — I needed a tight community that would engage my personal faith journey. I did my research before arriving on campus, and knew instantly that St. Andrew's was a match for what I was seeking.

It is important to me to be a Student Minister of Communications, as looking through St. Andrew's Facebook and website was the deciding factor in my attending church here. I will continue to provide this communication to new students and established members in order to create virtual and physical connection that draws us closer to each other and God.

In my first year at St. Andrew's, I have felt welcomed, invited, and included by all. I have grown in my personal confidence, curiosity, and most importantly, my trust in God. In the past years, I have struggled with what I had been told about Christian beliefs, and what my personal beliefs are. After attending St. Andrew's, I felt a weight lifted off my shoulders as I am no longer told I have to sacrifice love and acceptance to be truly faithful. I never thought I would be at an amazing church where we study contradictions in the Bible or attend talks by queer Christians, and I will continue to promote events like these. I have found my people, and I am excited to serve in a greater capacity as your Student Minister of Communications. ☐



Students offer music and spoken leadership for worship pre-COVID in person and recorded from home during pandemic.