

LuMin Receives the UT Tower Award



- by **NATALIE JAECKS**, *Senior, Mechanical Engineering.*

I remember those quiet Tuesday night meals – prepared by a local church or the students themselves. We would file in around 7:00 and stand in a circle to pray before making our plates and sitting down to eat and chat with the same 10-15 students. We “welcomed all,” but only those who knew the door code. We “invited all,” but only those who received the newsletters.

I am blessed to have seen LuMin’s COVID transformation first-hand. When they re-branded the Tuesday night dinners as Tailgate Tuesdays, I showed up expecting the normal dinner with an outside, grab-and-go twist.

Instead, I saw a line of students I didn’t recognize stretching halfway down the block. Surely, this was for some other event – there aren’t that many Lutherans in the entire city of Austin!

Looking to the end of the line, I see Pastor Brad, entirely in his element. His longhorn apron black with charcoal, he is flipping burgers like there’s nowhere he’d rather be.

As an introvert, I’ll never understand why he felt the need to know every student’s name, major, and hometown. But as a student at a university of 50,000, I know exactly how important it is to feel like more than a number.

Tailgate Tuesdays have brought new meaning to Pr. Brad’s weekly communion invitation, “All are welcome at this table!”

To turn a pandemic into an opportunity to open our doors to all is not something that just any organization would do. That’s why it’s no surprise that LuMin was awarded the Outstanding Student Organization Tower Award for exceptional community engagement efforts.

From my place “in the pew,” LuMin’s Tailgate Tuesdays have brought a new meaning to Pastor Brad’s weekly communion invitation, “All are welcome at this table!”



“Look, Ma! I can braid bread!”

My Bread-Baking Lesson

- by **SAXTON RIOS**, *Junior, Radio, Theater, and Film Major*

I am a firm believer that the best decisions in life are made on impulse. The thoughtlessness of it all connects one to their innermost desire and instinct. In retrospect, these decisions often seem random, senseless, or even strange, but in the moment, the urging of a compulsion simply cannot be ignored.

While I am by no means a master of living in this “flow state” I have slowly become attuned to these moments of heightened action and encourage myself to simply not think too deeply about where my next step lands. This mindset is precisely what drew me to an energetic Lutheran pastor and his Goldendoodle one afternoon.

Pastor Brad (as I came to know him) and I sat and talked. At first, we exchanged pleasantries.

“How was your day?”
“This weather, huh?”

But soon our conversation evolved into truly depthful topics. We parsed the great questions of religion, confronted the harsh reality of becoming an adult, and covered everything in between. Truly a great meeting of the minds had occurred.

At one point Pr. Brad shared his love for baking. The passion which rose from him was astounding. He had shown his hidden pearl, I knew this was why I had encountered Pr. Brad.

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The tradition continues! After a four year hiatus, LuMin caps off the school year with a river cruise! L-R: Anna Bardenhagen (Sr.), Magdalena Shen (Jr.), Natalie Jaecks (Sr.), Linda Eaker (Admin), Jimmy O'Brien (So.), Vicar Wes Isberner-Louwagie, Ashlynn Althaus (So.) Nicholas Hancock (Sr.), Shannon Perry (So.) Emily Reis (Sr.), and Britta Dalton (Sr.)

Bread baking lesson (continued...)

I was invited to join him and some other students in a bread-making seminar where we would learn the finer points of dough mixing and kneading, loaf braiding, and other useful baking techniques.

Beneath all these new bread baking skills, however, was a greater message not lost to me. The bread was simply a vehicle through which I was to connect with this pastor and other students. We experienced the power of community amidst a loaf of challah. As I left that day, loaf in hand, Pr. Brad urged me: "Do not let this stop with you, share this with those you love." Isn't that poignant?



Muslim Students Share an Iftar with LuMin

- by **MAGDALENA Y SHEN**,
LuMin President/Junior Bio Major

During one of the last nights of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, students from the Dialogue Institute joined at LuMin to have a meal for iftar.

For Ramadan observers, Iftar is the meal that breaks daylight fast at sundown. It is a time when family and friends come together to feed their souls, both literally and figuratively. Growing up Lutheran, I have never participated in an iftar before, which is why I was so excited to attend.

Before the sun set, we heard testimony from members of the Dialogue Institute and participated in discussion about the experience of practicing Ramadan during the pandemic and the political oppression faced by Muslims in Turkey.

One of the most remarkable quotes from Dr. Yetkin Yildirim, a Dialogue Institute leader, was that even though we practice different religions and have very different backgrounds, a lot of our core values are similar.

I find a lot of comfort in the fact that despite the ever changing, extremely dynamic political and social situations in the United States, there are commonalities that can bring us together. I learned from this Iftar at LuMin that interfaith relationships are both helpful to living an enriching life individually and crucial to a civil life communally.

Just look at who showed up to serve
@ 2100 San Antonio!



Bp. Sue Briner, SW Texas Synod



Pr. Lamon Wells, LuMin-Network Director



Meri Marcks, LuMin Alumna '21



Ann Howard, Travis City Commish & Husband, John



Pr. Jaime Bouzard, TX State LCM



Pr. Brad Highum, Abiding Love L.C.

Vicar Reflection on Tailgate Tuesdays

- by **VICAR WES ISBERNER-LOUWAGIE**
LuMin Seminary Intern

In the light chill of an early February evening, dozens of students sang "Happy Birthday" to a bewildered Pr. Brad, who, in addition to his usual clergy shirt and Longhorn apron, wore a sparkly gold crown and an "It's My Birthday!" sash. Over the next two hours, everyone who came through the line got a party hat and gummy bears to welcome them to the celebration! Later that night, long after the last burger was flipped and the tables wiped down, these hats were spotted still being worn on the Drag.

A month later, our group was overwhelmed: not enough volunteers, too many students. Brad pulled a couple folks from the end of the line, saying "Hey, the first shall be last and the last shall be first, right? Wanna help for a bit?" As these young men assembled tacos, Brad and I got to know their hometowns, their majors, their stories. They stayed on to volunteer far longer than we expected, and, at the end of the night,

we sent them off with delicious tacos and deep gratitude.

The next week, much to our surprise, they came back. They spoke excitedly about the joy of volunteering and how connected they felt already – how this is where they want to be on Tuesday nights. And they've been back every week, helping serve, learning to grill, and shining their light.

These two snapshots capture the heart of our Tailgate Tuesday ministry this semester. Coming through the darkness, isolation, and trauma of the pandemic has left many people – especially students – depressed, anxious, and lonely. In tending to one aspect of their needs, their hunger, God has given us ways to tend to their souls – offering levity, purpose, and connection. It has been an honor to walk alongside our regular volunteers and get to know the people who line the block on Tuesday evenings, all of whom hunger not only for a warm meal but for community and hope.

Life TOGETHER (finally)

- by **SHANNON PERRY**,
Kacie Brekhus Intern for Evangelism and Outreach

This past semester has been a testament to God's faithfulness in how students connected through LuMin have grown in relationship with one another, and strengthened our sense of community.

We went to a drive-in movie theater, and there we were underneath the warm light of the big screen as we all huddled TOGETHER with our significantly overpriced snacks. We went paddle boarding on town lake, and there we were - TOGETHER - surrounded by jaw-dropping scenery as we leisurely paddle boarded around Town Lakes.

This LuMin congregation laughed, cracked jokes, and shared stories that have turned otherwise strangers into friends. These community building activities have been imperative as we enter a post-pandemic world.

During this pandemic, LuMin has remained a peaceful place for students to gather and worship God. 2100 San Antonio has served as a refuge from the intimidating and anxiety-inducing realities of the pandemic. For over a year, we've seen the same people congregated in a space, and this has been lovely. But this past semester - feeling more comfortable with in-person gatherings - it's been important to come together...to build community beyond 2100 San Antonio, and to explore and enjoy together the the greater Austin area!

Loving one another and having intentional time to get to know each other is reflective of God's love for us, and how God intentionally seeks us out daily. Our in-person community building time has marked a notable and needed shift in morale among us. From silently worshiping with masks covering our faces, to eating meals together, making memories in the sun, and taking short road trips to experience all that our college town has to offer...all of this has greatly enriched my experience in this, God's beloved community. I rejoice in how these fun relational in person ventures have similarly impacted my fellow Longhorns who joined in.