
Living Out the **WORD**

It has been six years since [Lena](#) and [Geoff Levendoski](#) started Strick's Gift to honor the memory of their son, Strick. On the Strick's Gift website (stricksgift.org), Lena speaks movingly of an idea borne of grief, the idea to collect and supply new and gently used clothing to Nashville area hospitals for newborn children whose families are in need. But what she would like her church to know is the strength and encouragement she and Geoff have received from Westminster through the years; indeed, how their personal journey has become a shared journey with a people of faith who have walked alongside them and supported Strick's Gift since its inception.



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In the beginning Lena recalls a long and difficult grieving process: *"Carson Salyers walked with us through that. He was our six foot personal angel."* Then, after they decided to launch Strick's Gift, *"I can't even tell you how Strick's Gift got into Westminster."* From the initial formation of the 501(c)(3), to being supported by the Benevolence Committee and included in the Alternative Christmas Sunday (*"our major funding source"*), to receiving help with the design and sourcing of reusable Strick's Gift giftbags, to being part of FaithWorks day, Lena recites a list of people who have come alongside her and supported the growth of Strick's Gift.

Every Member Has a Mission



“It really validates our ministry. Strick’s Gift has had an impact on people that is hard to explain. It draws people in. I had one person tell me ‘I don’t know why but I feel compelled to help you.’”

Another interesting part of Lena’s journey of faith has been her participation in Westminster’s Disciple classes and related Bible studies, which has given her a new language to interpret her calling and the confidence to name it as a mission. *“In the beginning, I saw myself staying in the background, because I didn’t want Strick’s Gift to be about me...you know, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”* Her Disciples classes and the wise counsel of a friend and advisor helped her realize she needed to tell her personal story to help Strick’s Gift move forward. *“It’s still not about me. I truly feel I’ve been ‘hired’ to do this work.”*

Strick’s Gift currently operates at Baptist Hospital (aka St. Thomas), Monroe Carell, Jr. Children’s Hospital, and Nashville General Hospital at Meharry. Centennial Hospital was recently added, and Strick’s Gift is exploring the idea of expanding to selected rural hospitals in the surrounding area. In addition, Lena is looking for help in locating some additional commercial-type space that could accommodate larger groups of volunteers on an as-needed basis.



Lena continues to tell the story of Strick’s Gift with energy and enthusiasm, recalling the early years of being part of the Alternative Christmas Sundays at Westminster when few were familiar with her work. But she admits to enjoying the Alternative Christmas Sunday even more now: *“It’s nice to know that people know who we are.”* She also realizes her work has made her more compassionate: *“I see things now that I didn’t see before. I know that women are out there (like I was) that are in a lot of pain, and I ask myself how I can walk alongside them.”* Finally, she knows that her children Henry and Parker are watching, and she trusts *“they see and understand why I’m doing it (the work). I hope they are learning it truly is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

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