

## Introduction

### The Why

We are living in difficult times. We name this to start a conversation about where we go from here. For those of you who attend the Worship Labs or watch the services on YouTube, you know that we address the context of the times and history in all meetings. We realize that some of you are only connected to us through this email list. As such, allow us to engage with you here about how we can heal and work towards easing the suffering in this world, while working to build a kinder, gentler world alongside it.

Our hope for this newsletter is to continue building beloved community and brave spaces to heal from trauma and disconnectedness. Please share your concerns, questions, and hopes to help shape the conversation going forward. Let's grow this as a monthly place to forge deeper understanding with one another.

**Rev. Amie Vanderford**

Co-Founder/Pastor



# SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH



## SEPTEMBER 2022

# THE LAB NEWS

**September is Suicide Prevention Month**, and during this month, Pastor Amie will be sending weekly emails about suicide prevention. Please subscribe to our email list for updates. If you are in crisis, please call or text 988 for immediate assistance!

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### *The Truth Will Set You Free*

In this month's pastoral reflection, Rev. Amie Vanderford shares the joys and pains of being truly honest.

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### *The Garden Lab*

The fall crop has been planted, and the neighborhood cat ministry has received a name and has expanded to welcome a new kitten.

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### *Self Talk (The Art of Managing Self)*

In this month's mental health column, Minister of Mental Health Thaddeus describes some techniques to help manage against negative self-talk.

**The Incubator**  
Where ideas take root...

## Our Team

### Co-Founder/Pastor

Rev Amie Vanderford, MDiv

### Co-Founder/ Minister of Mental Health

Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., MFT, CSAYC

### Minister of Food Outreach

Jill Phillips



A Monthly Publication of...



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## Pastoral Reflection

# The Truth Will Set You Free

by Rev. Amie Vanderford

Did you know that there is a current movement towards radical honesty? Author Brad Blanton wrote a book called *Radical Honesty*, and his work continues beyond his books through his organization that focuses on training and workshops centered on teaching the practice of radical honesty. The work they do is centered on some core values including that “lying is the primary cause of suffering” and that “radical honesty is a living, walking, talking out-loud meditation that moves you from reactivity to being a creator of your own life.” I bring them up not because they invented the concept of honesty, but because it says a lot about the dishonesty of our times when simply telling the truth becomes a radical act. In these days, I’d say it’s even become a revolutionary act, and for that I appreciate all of the work they are doing to try and bring the truth forward. This resonates with the biblical statement, “the truth shall set you free,” so let’s talk about what that might look like.

*“Telling the truth can be dangerous because it changes the status quo...”*

**Trigger Warning:** Telling the truth can be dangerous because it changes the status quo (in your life and even societally), and so you will often be scolded, admonished, or even shunned from some people/groups for telling the truth. This is because much of our culture is founded on lies and lying. Politeness, niceties, cultural norms around staying silent about harm that has been done to us... these are lies. And who is protected by lies? Primarily those systems and people doing harm. Because of this context, the path to being free through honesty doesn’t come without risks and issues. This is why people will often refuse to get free, because the comfort of the “devil they know” is easier than the path it takes to get totally honest and totally free. I would even suggest that the high levels of ‘mental illness’ in this country are a result of people being made sick by having to adapt to soul-crushing, harmful norms that we are not even built to follow. The truer mental illness in this time

is being well-adapted to toxicity. What follows then is that our view of mental wellness essentially needs to be reversed, and that sounds a lot like the Beatitudes, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last, the hungry will be fed, and the well-fed will be hungry... whether we take this literally or metaphorically, the flipping of the script and reversing the current world order is the charge.

Once you start the healing process of becoming more honest, with both yourself and others, even as it has setbacks and hardships, you will also feel the gains, and these help keep you motivated to keep going and keep pursuing more healing. Sure it’s a lifelong journey, but since life is a series of peaks and valleys anyway, why not put the effort in to really embracing the journey and getting better and more free all the time? Go against the grain of staying in our place, and boldly live into the glory of who God created us to be... for ourselves and one another. We all benefit from interacting with each other’s most authentic and most free selves!





# the garden lab

This month has been busy in the Garden Lab! As mentioned last month, there are currently three seedlings of the purple sprouting broccoli variety under grow lights inside, and they are almost ready to transplant to the raised beds. The kohlrabi and beet seeds that were planted last month are sprouted and are doing well thus far. This month we rounded out our fall crop by planting mustard greens, along with more spinach, kale, leaf lettuce, turnips, and radishes. This is the first year for attempting fall and overwintering crops, so we are eager to see how it goes and what new things will be learned!

Harvests of greens and root veggies have continued to trickle in, and the most pleasant surprise were the Lima beans. The amount of the harvest has not been quite as large as expected; however, the flavor of these little beans has exceeded all expectations! Pastor Amie also pickled some jalapeños that were shared by a fellow gardening friend of the church, and would like it to be noted that pepper burn is a

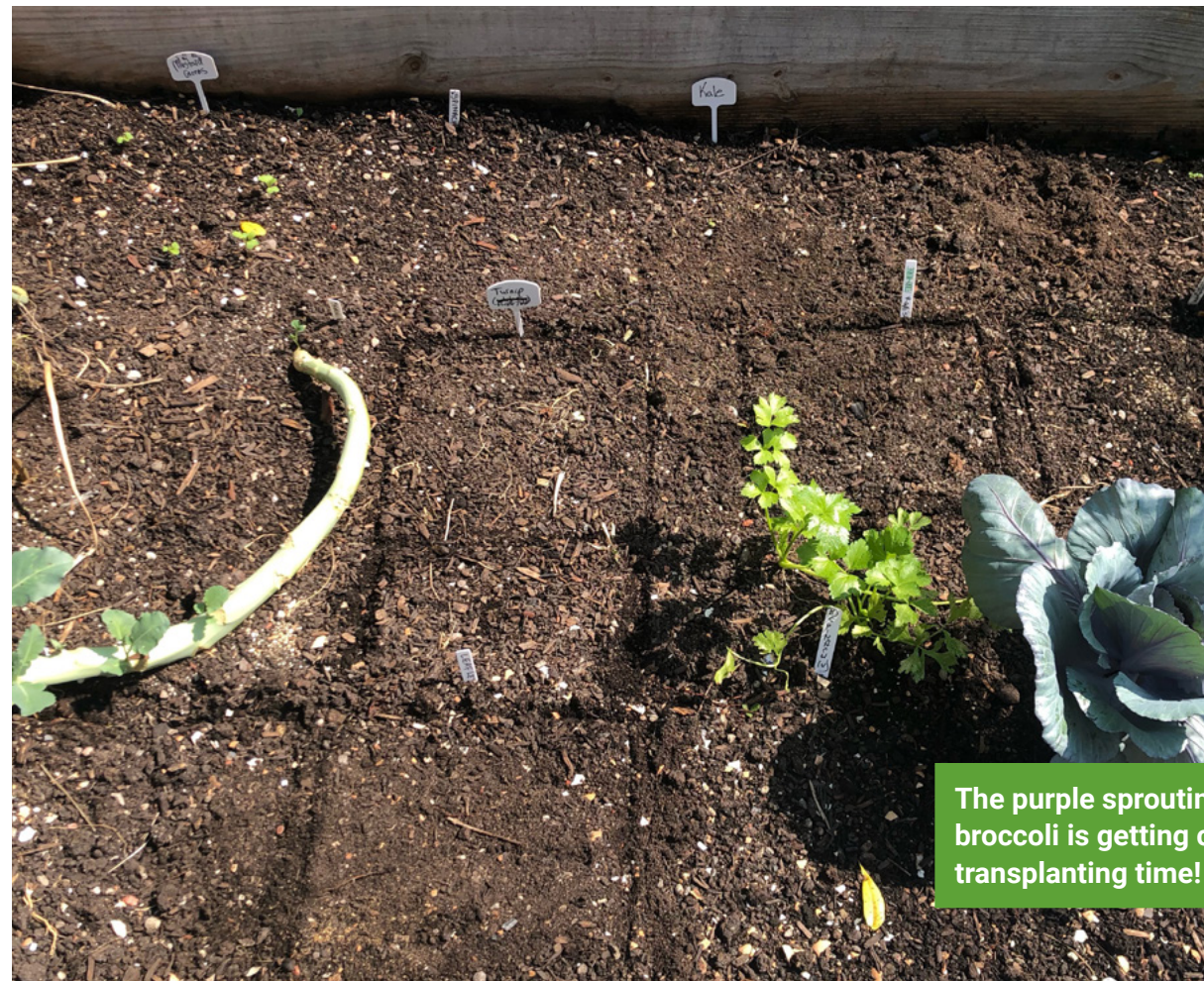
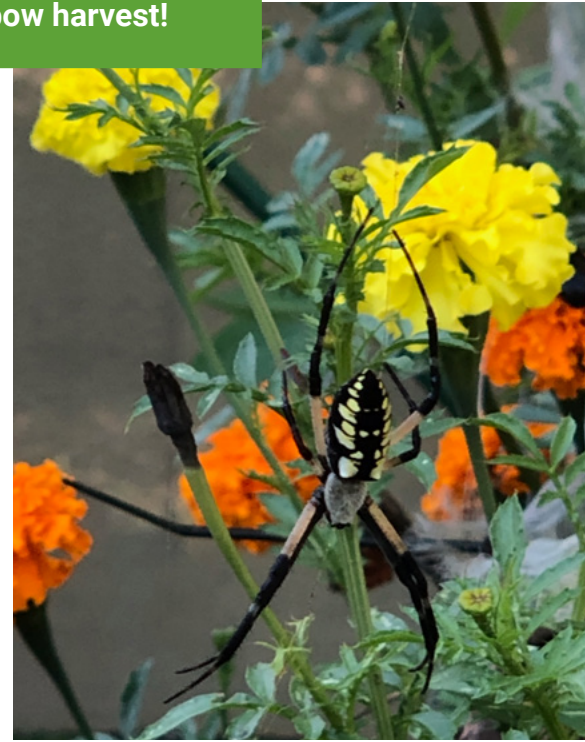
real thing, so when you try this, make sure you have gloves that don't break in the middle of the process!

In farm cat news, Blink has now been joined by a new kitten, and he has become a regular feature after three weeks of regular feedings. He will be taken to get neutered soon. We continue to be thankful for those supporting this new neighborhood cat care initiative. One of our supporters has even given it a name: meownistry! This new pantry initiative has allowed us to both feed and take local strays to the vet, (for shots and spay/neutering) so that we have a healthier, population-controlled cat community. Because we don't currently have the capacity to bring all the cats being fed and medically helped indoors, the next item on the agenda for the meownistry is to create outside shelters for winter.

As always, if you want assistance getting your first plant(s) going, we are happy to help! Simply send us an email, [info@thelaboratorychurch.org](mailto:info@thelaboratorychurch.org) and let us know what you need.



The rainbow harvest!



The purple sprouting broccoli is getting close to transplanting time!





## Mental Health

# Self Talk (The Art of Managing Self)

by Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., MFT, CSAYC

As you might know by now, at this church we hold God's call for focus on The Fruit of The Spirit at the center of our faith-walk. We believe this focus encourages, comforts, and give us hope in strange times. Following the Fruit is productive. It promotes growth! Look at the life of plants; even in the coldest time of the year when everything seems dead, seeds and bulbs are literally "spring loaded" in anticipation of the coming season.

The Fruit of The Spirit is concerned with love, joy, compassion, patience, faithfulness, and self-control. Therapy focuses on many of the same concerns just from the secular viewpoint. In clinical therapy, individuals and families get to engage their own values and worldview in terms of progress, growth, and healing. The subtext of those values and feelings are worked out in conversation with one another (and in the case of believers: The Spirit).

Negative thoughts and emotions can equal resistance in relational work, and they can block the healing benefits of 'The Fruit,' and even injure the actual faith

of believers. This could be due to the feelings of drag that moves through the mind and body when heavy emotions present. The influence of these thoughts and emotions can be difficult to overcome.

Essentially, we are talking about 'Self-talk', so what is it, and how does it work? According to Psychology Today:

*"Many people are conscious of an inner voice that provides a running monologue on their lives throughout the day. This inner voice, or self-talk, combining conscious thoughts and unconscious beliefs and biases, provides a way for the brain to interpret and process daily experiences."*

*"Our self-talk can be cheerful and supportive or negative and self-defeating. Self-talk can be beneficial when it's positive, calming fears and bolstering confidence. Human nature, unfortunately, is prone to negative self-talk, including sweeping assertions like "I can't do anything right" or "I'm a complete failure."*

Remember, the subconscious brain only listens and records, it does not make judgment, as that's the logical mind's job. The subconscious provides us with whatever belief is held deeply in our hearts. This is why it matters what we take into our consciousness, and what words we use to communicate with self and others. This is why the believer is commanded by faith to remain focused on Jesus (who became one with Sophia/Wisdom). By intentionally redirecting yourself back to The Holy Spirit each time, this reprograms the brain over time, and can provide immediate relief when casting your cares on God.

Well, what if your brain or internal self-talk is extremely loud or simply won't shut off? One thing that we practice in the face of the "running monologue" is remembering that we have the ability to choose what will be our primary focus, and thanks be to our Creator for the freedom to choose. Even when we choose our preferred focus and have the ability to continue on, negative thoughts can still be invasive and influence our focus. People can, and often do, have actual problems that need processing space running in the background, and that naturally puts drag on our performance, our attention span, and our ability to check-out and rest.

By now you might be thinking, "that's the problem; when my brain is running, what do I do to redirect it?" Here's the secret, if you feel stuck, try to use what you love to unstick yourself. How do I do that, you may ask? Start by finding the mindless or mindful productive thing you love to do (that's not harmful) and immerse yourself. Things such as making art, gardening, putting puzzles together, walking outside, and playing with pets are all productive check-outs. After awhile you might notice the intrusive thoughts ease in the moment, and because your processor is no longer as bogged down, you might receive information/inspiration from your gut for you to consider.

Now, are these the only answers? Emphatically, no! You see, beloved people of God, we have to know enough about ourselves to know what thing, activity, or state allows our brain out of the loop of reactivity and trauma. Just know that you are the expert in your own experience, and only you understand the depth of your perspective. The things we focus on take up psychological and emotional space in us. This space is finite, so self-knowledge is necessary, and when we can't seem to figure out what's going on, because sometimes we need outside help to truly see ourselves, therapy is an incredibly important tool. If you do not already have a therapist, we can help with referrals. Shalom.

## There are many ways to support The LabOratory Church and Stay Connected

### Ways to Support

Support the work financially through any of the giving links at the end of this newsletter.

Volunteer to help at the **4KEEPS Mobile Pantry** and/or **Garden Lab**

Participate in the mentoring program: **Project L.E.A.S.T.** (Love Everyone As Self Training)

Donate or lease farmable land for our use

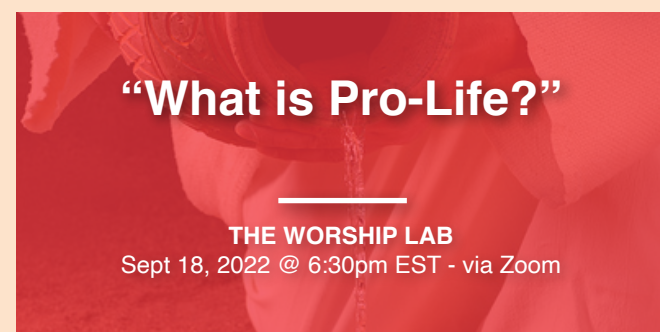
Link your **Kroger Plus card** to the 4KEEPS Mobile Pantry, and we'll receive a percentage of your total grocery bill as a donation. There is no cost to you, and it won't affect your other Kroger Plus card benefits!

#### How to link the card to The Laboratory Church:

- Log in to your account: [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com)
- Scroll to and then click on **Community > Kroger Community Rewards**
- Click on **Search for your organization**
- Search by NPO number GS580 or "The Laboratory Church"
- Select the organization and click Save
- Your **Donation Summary Status** should display as "Enrolled."

### Ways to Connect

Attend The Worship Lab via Zoom on the **1st & 3rd Sundays** of the month **@6:30 pm ET** (link is below and on our website: [thelaboratorychurch.org](http://thelaboratorychurch.org))



Share this newsletter with friends you think might appreciate it, and/or on your social media.

Subscribe, Like and Share content from our [YouTube channel](#).



#### We want to hear from you!

Via the QR code, please share your questions, concerns, and hopes to help to shape the conversations going forward, and if/how you have been impacted by our work.

### Support our mission

Looking to get involved!? All are welcome & encouraged. See below for ways to contribute!



[thelaboratorychurch.org](http://thelaboratorychurch.org)  
[info@TheLabOratoryChurch.org](mailto:info@TheLabOratoryChurch.org)  
[@thelaboratorychurch](https://www.instagram.com/thelaboratorychurch)



At **The LabOratory Church**, we couldn't do the work we do, without financial support from people like you.

To make a donation, please visit any of the links below or contact us with questions.

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*Stay Tuned for the October Issue of The Incubator!*



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