

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



April 2022

CHURCH NEWS

Easter is coming! Be sure to check the website for the Zoom link to **The Worship Lab on Sunday, April 17th!**

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Lenten Reflection

In this issue, Pastor Amie continues her reflection on Spiritual Critical Thinking and the Fruit of the Spirit.

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The Garden Lab

In this new monthly column, we will keep you informed about the progress in The Garden Lab community garden, along with gardening tips to help in yours.

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Gardening Workshop

The Gardens on Oxford are offering a workshop on gardening for beginners.

The Incubator
Where ideas take root...

Our Team

Co-Founder/Pastor

Rev Amie Vanderford, MDiv

Co-Founder/ Minister of Mental Health

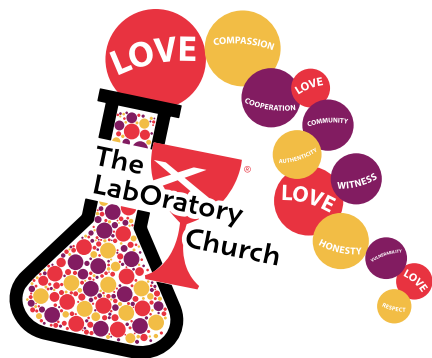
Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., MFT, CSAYC

Minister of Food Outreach

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Lenten Reflection

Spiritual Critical Thinking and The Fruit of the Spirit

By Rev. Amie Vanderford

As we continue the conversation from our last issue about spiritual critical thinking, I want to further discuss why it benefits us as Christians to keep our faith separate from government legislation. There are many who have claimed that Christians and 'Christian values' in this country are being persecuted, and this notion often fuels the implementation of problematic and biblically inaccurate legislation. Yet, with no hint of irony, I have heard many of these same Christians state their fear that if/when we elect a Muslim politician, this person will enforce 'sharia law' and take away our Christian, American values. In a nation that allows the freedom of religion, one singular religion must not bend the secular law to its 'interpretation' of that religion. Separating the law of the land from our so-called Christian values is necessary, not only to protect the practices of folks who believe differently from us, but also to protect us within Christianity. *In case you have not noticed by now, there is a huge range of diverse interpretation about what it means to be a Christian!* We do not want the government to decide our faith, so we cannot allow the government to make unjust laws in support of the power structures in this world based on the guise of their religious beliefs. We must protect the free will granted to each person by Godself, for who are we to stand in the place of God?

Sadly, evil has been done in the name of God, and under the banner of Christianity specifically, and this country has been exceptionally prolific at this. Why is it so crucial for us to address this now? I believe we are at a turning point. We can either try to learn from our mistakes by finding ways to build healthier community, bring greater unity and reconciliation, or we can be silent and continue to allow the grotesquely anti-Christ path that the previous administration exacerbated. The latter path has led to increased demonization and oppression of any person who does not fit their agenda. The danger of this direction is not only the full implementation of fascism and the end of

Even if we do not understand the path or experience of another, we are called to love.

this country's experiment in democracy, but also that it is being done in the name of Jesus Christ. As a pastor who loves and follows Christ, I cannot stand by and watch politicians brainwash and manipulate even well-meaning citizens through the door of their faith, nor should anyone else who truly aims to emulate the teachings of Jesus.

It is time to take back our faith, and show the true good news of Jesus Christ, which is bringing relief to the poor, and letting the oppressed go free. The good news of Christ is not limited to the afterlife, but to this life, as well! God created this beautiful world, and each of us, to live in harmony, and with enough for everyone. Our calling as Christians is to reject all hate and oppression, and instead live out the command to love our neighbors as ourselves and care for creation as its stewards. There are pastors that preach that social justice and the golden rule are "leftist perversions" of the gospel. They say that God has already saved us, so we don't need to 'do' anything, but all of the Hebrew Bible prophets, the book of James, and Jesus himself would beg to differ. When any person tries to use the biblical texts to drive us to fear and hate, we have to dig deeper into the scripture to counter this and judge it by its fruit. Any laws that attempt to dominate, control, and take away our God-given free will are going against our very Creator. God created us in all of our diversity, and called creation good. Even if we do not understand the path or experience of another, we are called to love. I leave you with these words from Galatians 5:16-26:

The Works of the Flesh

16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Fruit of the Spirit

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.



Each year is a new approach to how we grow food to share. As we begin our 4th year of growing, we are going down a new path. This year's beds have partial sun, so we are focusing on greens and root veggies. Additionally, we are planting everything from seeds, and learning of all the new considerations such as ensuring sufficient light for germination and keeping seedlings from getting too 'leggy'. We don't know how they will turn out, yet we love learning and being able to share what we experience with fellow gardeners. We call our community garden *The Garden Lab* because we are learning as we go, and allowing nature to teach us as we go.

The joy of seeing each seed turn into a sprout simply never gets old, and we have noticed the incredible mental health benefits of being able to do the work of growing food from seed to harvest. Even when the plants don't produce as we had hoped, it is always a learning opportunity. The wisdom of God's creation is a beautiful teacher indeed.

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

Check out this season's progress, and meet our neighborhood cat, Slink.



Learning Opportunity

Gardening Basics with The Gardens on Oxford

Are you in Indianapolis and would like to learn more about gardening? Our wonderful friends at **The Gardens on Oxford** are offering gardening workshops to beginners!



They have **5 spots left** for the April 16th class from 10 am - 12 pm!

The cost is \$25 per household if paid prior to April 15th, and goes up to \$30 if paid the day of.

To register, simply email Bethany at oxfordinterpreting@gmail.com with your name and how many would like to attend, and she will send you a Venmo code to pay.



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

Ways to Support

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

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

Participate in our 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 benefit our 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
- 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 @ 6:30pm ET (links can always be found on our website).



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.

See below for ways to contribute!

GROCERY BAG GIVEAWAY

MON, April 11th @ 2:30pm

Join us in the parking lot of
Healthy Harvest Brookside Market
10th & Oxford Streets, Indianapolis,
46201

TheLabOratoryChurch.org
info@TheLabOratoryChurch.org



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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*Next Issue
Coming in May*

