

The Incubator

Where **ideas** take root...

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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



Photograph courtesy of
Amie Vanderford Photography as seen in
Ken Burns Presents "Hiding in Plain Sight:
Youth Mental Illness"

AUGUST 2022

THE LAB NEWS

The LabOratory Church & Project L.E.A.S.T. share thanks for the participants and attendees of the screening of **Ken Burns Presents "Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness"** and the subsequent Q&A on Mental Health. See page 8.

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Noticing Our Emotions

In this month's pastoral reflection, Rev. Amie Vanderford shares some practical questions and tips to help us notice our emotions in conversation with others.

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The Garden Lab

The potatoes and root veggies are producing, and the neighborhood cat ministry expanded to welcome Blink.

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Foraging Garfield Park

In this month's mental health column, Pastor Amie and Thaddeus share what they learned foraging with Persimmon Herb School.

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Our Team

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A Monthly Publication of...



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Pastoral Reflection

Noticing Our Emotions

by Rev. Amie Vanderford

In last month's reflection, I discussed the situation of white folks doing anti-racism work who say "we want to listen and learn from others," yet often become defensive or shut down. Our work is to first learn to listen in order to become safe to the people from whom we say we want to learn and whose work we want to join.

What most people are asking of us when they share their feelings about something that hurt them, whether directly related to us or not, is that we listen deeply, and sit with them in the truth of their experience. So this month, I am exploring the potential defensiveness, and other feelings, that often block our ability to do deep listening.

One way to help manage defensiveness is through learning to notice and understand our own feelings. Some internal questions to ask ourselves about what we feel:

- What is going on with me when I hear these words?
- What am I feeling, exactly?
- Can I locate that feeling in my physical body?
- What does that feel like?
- Is it a tightness of chest, a clenching of jaw, feeling nauseated in my stomach, tightness in my throat, etc?

As the feeling is located and better understood, now we begin to ask questions to see what it is trying to tell us.

"You don't have to answer every question, this is simply starting a process of seeking more information and understanding."

- Why do I feel this way?
- Does the feeling remind me of something else that happened to me?
- Has this person caused me pain, or not?
- Am I feeling guilty about something, either real or imagined?
- Is there something I need to attend to?
- Am I safe in this conversation with this person?

And, breathe. You don't have to answer every question, this is simply starting a process of seeking more information and understanding.

You see, it is better to sit with the discomfort around these feelings in order to better understand, rather than suppress, or simply react to them without further exploration. The pressure our culture puts on being the best, and being right, fills us with such shame about ourselves when we make mistakes. This is ridiculous, because we all make mistakes, and we are all ignorant of things until we learn differently. You've likely heard the phrase "When you learn better, do better."

In my experience, asking questions about my emotions allows me to become better at understanding myself and what is going on in my mind, body, and spirit. As I do this, I find myself better able to notice that I sometimes have difficult emotions with complicated back stories. When I accept them, rather than try to suppress or resist them, they provide

deeper information, and some of the physical sensations dissipate quicker.

Like many parent-child relationships, my mother and I have had our ups and downs, and when decades build up, so do expectations, judgments, and evaluations. At one point in our relationship, I found myself closed off to hearing her, or being snippy if I felt she was being too repetitive. I had a picture of her in my mind, and that picture unfairly became how 'she always was/is.' I unfairly put her in a box too small to hold a whole person.

By changing how I thought about her, and seeing her full humanity in the moment, rather than my perception, our interactions have become less tense. By noticing my emotions about my image of her, it allows me to then set them aside, and be fully present with her. We've had some surprising and fascinating talks about our family history as a result! I am now able to accept the obvious: that she is a big part of who I am, and as I learn to love the difficult parts of her, it teaches me to love the difficult parts of myself, and vice versa. I still have all of the freedom to set boundaries, give and receive respect, speak hard truths, work through conflicts, and take time apart when needed, just with love rather than judgment.

This is why we listen, this is why we observe and seek to understand our emotions, while trying to slow our reactivity... because we need each other. This is the type of work that creates safety for deeper and more authentic relationships. This makes way for [Christ in Community](#).



the garden lab

The Garden Lab surprise this year was how well the very first batch of potatoes produced! Apparently there may still be more hiding in the depths of the beds, so further ground will need to be investigated. Two of the tomato plants were blown over in a recent straight line wind event, and although the fallen green tomatoes were recovered and used, the plants appear to remain in a bit of shock. Some spaces in the garden beds have been cleared out, and another round of peas, beets, and purple kohlrabi have been planted in new locations. In this round of seeding, we realized that part of the reason the last round of kohlrabi failed was because we misread the number of seeds for the area, and planted 9, rather than 4, seeds. Whoops! There are some lima beans and celery maturing now, both first-time plants this season, and just this week, the overwintering purple sprouting broccoli was seeded for the first time. Apparently these will mature in late winter/early spring next year! It will be exciting to see the results!

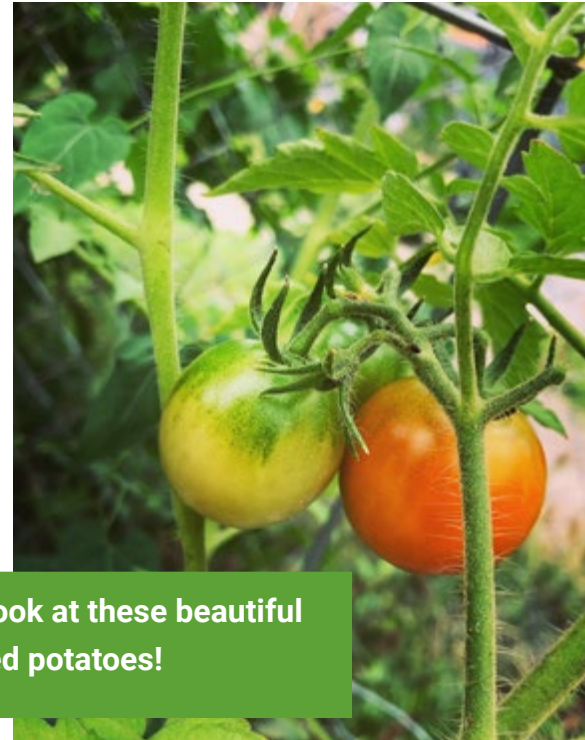
Blink, the newest Garden Lab cat, is the biggest news this issue. When we first met, near the end of June, she was so very hungry, dirty, and skittish. We think she had been sneaking some food left out

for Slink prior to that, but when we saw her under one of the cars, and opened a can, the sound brought her running. From that day forward each of them got their own cans, so they would co-exist. Because she was underweight, and truly appears to have no owner (unlike Slink, who does) her feedings increased to two cans per day. That sealed the deal, as she has essentially moved onto the property. Because she has claimed this space, we took her to the neighborhood clinic to get spayed, and kept her inside for her recovery. Now she is back outdoors ruling her newly claimed area. While Slink basically invited the squirrels over for tea, Blink's presence keeps them up in the trees and in other people's yards rather than in the garden beds. Farm cat extraordinaire! This extra neighborhood animal care, a new aspect to the 4KEEPS Mobile Pantry, was made possible thanks to generous donors who send us cases of food, and money for veterinary care.

We continue to love learning all The Garden Lab teaches us. 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 and let us know what you need.



Look at these beautiful red potatoes!



These are the Chioggia beets roasted and chopped up. So tasty!





Ginkgo Nut



Elderberries



Chicory

Hemlock (foreground)
Wild Carrots (background)

Mental Health

Foraging at Garfield Park with Persimmon Herb School



by Pastor Amie & Thaddeus

The more we learn about nature, the more about nature we want to learn. We signed up for this foraging tour because we want to continue learning about native plants of this area, including which ones are edible. They began the tour by acknowledging the Kiikaapoi and Myaamia peoples, on whose land we were standing. The discussion on the ways we can ethically forage started with looking at what nature gives us in the form of fallen (Ginkgo) limbs, nuts, and fruit.

Greg taught about which plants were native to the park, and which were invasive. He took time to explain about the most common poisonous plant we might encounter, the hemlock, and how closely it resembles a native edible food, the wild carrot, or what we often hear called Queen Anne's Lace. Some key differences that help distinguish between the two include that there are purplish knobs and a

smooth skin on the hemlock plant stems, whereas the wild carrots have fine hairs on their knob-less stems. Among the local edible foods was chicory, and it turns out we have some chicory growing in our yard.

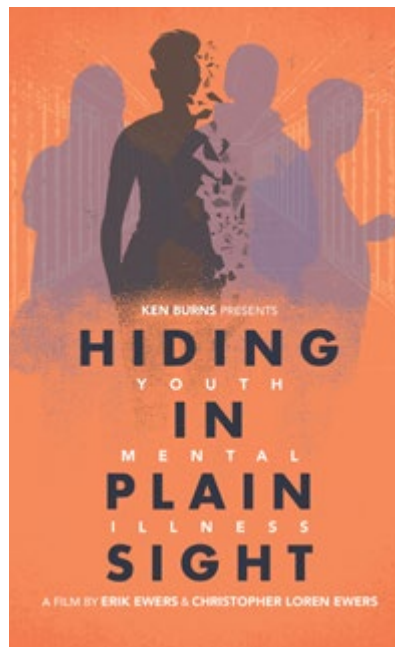
Being connected to what grows naturally around us helps us all understand a deeper connection to nature despite the many ways our culture teaches us to 'conquer' our surroundings. We are meant to steward God's creation. We often think about the garden of Eden and how humans and animals lived amongst the plants, and how this story still holds so much wisdom about our relationship to the land. Our responsibility is to be in harmony with all of God's creation. We are grateful for the abundance that is divinely designed in Their creation, and we seek always to become ever better stewards of our shared world.

Event Thanks

On July 31, 2022, The LabOratory Church and Project L.E.A.S.T. invited youth, parents, and mentors to attend a special 1-hour condensed screening of the new mental health documentary Ken Burns Presents: "Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness" A film by Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers.

A youth-focused mental health discussion and Q&A followed, and we offer a very special thank you to all of the panelists: Erik Ewers, Co-director of the film, Na'Kole Watson, Suicide Prevention Expert, Min. Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., MFT, CSAYC, James Wilson, CEO of Circle Up Indy, Vasjon Douglas from Circle Up Indy, and Pastor Amie for her event facilitation. Their expertise, personal stories, and practical everyday advice to parents and youth alike were so crucial in these times.

We are so grateful for all who attended, for funding from the National Benevolent Association to ensure all could attend for free, for WETA who provided the condensed film version, as well as coordinated the participation of the filmmaker, Erik Ewers, for Downey Avenue Christian Church for providing the screen and projector, for Jill Phillips and the million ways she helped support the entire event (and the church everyday), as well as Swindle Way Catering for preparing the food and helping with set-up and take-down and Kevin Davis for providing his DJ skills. We hope that this important conversation and community building around youth and young adult mental health continues, and brings with it deeper healing connections.



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
- 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)



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!



Stay Tuned for the September Issue of The Incubator!

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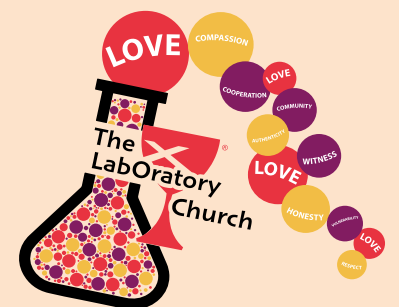
At **The LabOratory Church**, we couldn't do the work we do, without financial support from people like you.

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

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