

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



NOVEMBER 2022

THE LAB NEWS

November is Native American Heritage Month, and during this month, the U.S. Supreme Court is deliberating on whether to uphold the Indian Child Welfare Act. ICWA was passed by Congress in 1978 when as many as one-third of all Indigenous children were taken from their homes and sent to live with white families or in residential boarding schools. The resulting deaths from those boarding schools is a horror which can't be repeated. [Click to learn more about the case over at PBS.](#)

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Breeding Respect Rather Than Contempt

In this month's pastoral reflection, Pastor Amie discusses the idea of being the kindest and most polite to ourselves and those who are closest to us.

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The Garden Lab

The fall crop is being tested by an early snow and frigid temps, and the cats are enjoying their winter shelters.

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Ways to Connect with The LabOratory Church

Check out the many ways to connect and support the work of The LabOratory Church.

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

Our Team

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Rev Amie Vanderford, MDiv

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A Monthly Publication of...



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Pastoral Reflection

Breeding Respect Rather Than Contempt

by Rev. Amie Vanderford

About twenty years ago, I had a friend Noemi who shared an insight that has stuck with me all of these years later. I was making excuses for the negative way someone close was consistently speaking to me. She named that people closest to us should be the kindest and most polite, as we ought to be with them. She noticed that we instead seem to hold our tongues to keep the peace for, and are polite and kind to, strangers rather than our partners, closest friends, and families. She explained how this practice was backwards, and that we should always be the kindest to our partner (and/or inner circle) relationships. My mind was blown by the absolute truth of her observations.

Let's take this a step further, and notice how we treat ourselves! If, for example, I don't love and respect myself, and beat myself up, then I am going to allow others to do the same to me, and concurrently, I may be more likely to beat up on others, whether through harsh words or actions. People who truly love us will always care about our feelings and will want to make repair attempts when harm has (inadvertently) happened. Our part in improving interpersonal relationships includes using our words to name when harm has been done. Nobody should be expected to be a mind reader in relationships.

"... we should always be the kindest to our partner (and/or inner circle) relationships"

I recently got a deeper look into how I have sometimes contributed to my relational trauma. When I have allowed folks to talk to me with contempt (whether mean jokes, judgmental assumptions, sarcastic commentary, condescending explanations, or other checks to see whether I will accept mistreatment) without letting them know when it landed hurtfully on me, it set the stage for more of the same. This never ends well. This helped me to notice how deeply I'd been indoctrinated into explaining away any disrespectful language said to me in service to the comfort of others. As bold and vocal as I often am about problematic cultural norms, I was still succumbing to the nonsense of being nice and polite at my own expense. I'll be honest, that shook me!

Further, I noticed that now as a pastor, sometimes when I held safe space for people in a non-judgmental sense because I saw why they were hurt, I was not holding the person accountable when they were disrespectful to me. Because pastors (and other caregiver, helper roles) also get abused in this space, this is not acceptable, even while holding space for others. Caregivers' safety matters, too, and so when we hold our boundaries and call out disrespect, it is still pastorally appropriate. In fact, it is

more pastorally appropriate because it holds grace - with accountability - which makes space for modeling relational safety, repair, and health, whereas NOT naming nonsense allows it to become normalized and instead models relational degradation and even abuse.

Setting healthy boundaries is the ultimate call to action, and in this case, setting edifying boundaries around how we interact lovingly and respectfully with one another. Loving, respectful words start with ourselves, and need to be present as we work out the interpersonal kinks in our closest relationships, especially if we take seriously the command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our closest relationships are the spaces where we learn how to better love ourselves and each other, and when we do right by these, we are able to be kinder in the larger community, as well. Remember that our salvation is communal, not individual, so the way we relate matters deeply. Let's practice showing the love and respect that we want to see in the world, starting with how we speak to ourselves and one another!





the garden lab

The garden had its first snow, and the fall and over-wintering crops showed their hardiness. It was quite a surprise that the snow actually stuck and lasted into the next day, when just the day before it had been 75 degrees. That snow, along with a week of below freezing temperatures, has finally finished off the lingering summer plants.

Another garden project that is continuing to develop is our composting process. We have enjoyed a compost bin (SubPod) for a couple of years now, and we tended to avoid adding citrus because the compost worms aren't big fans. Since some of our soil needs more acidity, we are testing out drying citrus peels separately and then grinding them up for soil abatement. We haven't yet seen the more immediate nutritional benefits of eggshells in our compost, as they take awhile to break all the way down, so we have begun to hold them out separately to bake and grind down to powder in order to replenish calcium in the soil.

The goal with this better level of understanding compost is to be able to produce, rather than purchase, different types of fertilizer. We also learned about a horse ranch where we can get composted horse manure for free. It's always good to learn healthier and more affordable options for sustainability!

In Meownistry news, Stretch has warmed right up to being social, and will be getting spayed and vaccinated soon. Because of the cold stretch, the winter shelters have been serving the neighborhood cats well!

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. If you would like to support the work of The Garden Lab or the Meownistry, we always [accept donations on our website](#), and soon we will be launching a wish list for items in need. Stay tuned, and thank you for your support!



In the Mews: Blink loves the winter shelter!



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!

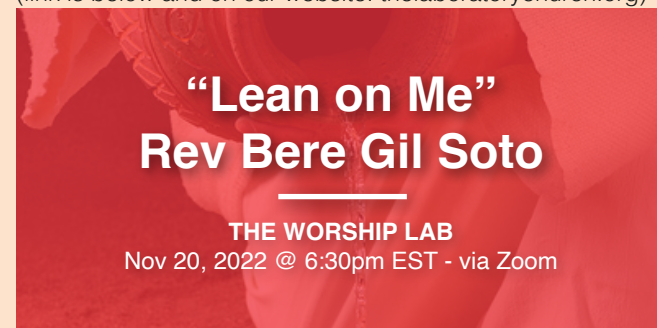
How to link the card to The Laboratory Church:

- 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

Support our mission

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



thelaboratorychurch.org
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 December Issue of The Incubator as we will be announcing changes happening in the new year!



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