

The Why of Sharing

Sharing... it has different meanings in different situations. The 4KEEPS Mobile Pantry shares in multiple capacities. The sharing of resources is primary, yet we also share our time and presence, whether in distributing food or in supportive conversation and community with others.

In those conversations over the last few years, we've heard many stories of need and desperate times from our visitors. We've also heard that the food we've shared will in turn be shared with a neighbor, roommate, or friend who can't get out. This tells us that the ministry is fulfilling one of the main tenets in Christ's teachings, loving our neighbors as ourselves, and having a positive impact beyond the small parking lot.

We would love to see the mobile pantry continue sharing and even expanding its reach, so we need your help. There are many ways to sustain and grow the ministry: organize a food drive, volunteer one month, and/or encourage friends and neighbors to donate food or money. Plus, to make it even easier, we're excited to introduce a new way to donate: our Amazon Wish List. Click here (<https://tinyurl.com/4KeepsPantry>) to view the list where you can order items to automatically ship to us!

Please prayerfully consider how you might be able to share in your time or resources to keep this vital ministry going in 2023 and beyond. Thank you for all your support, and blessings to you and yours this season!

Peace,
Jill Phillips, Minister of Food Outreach



DECEMBER 2022

THE LAB NEWS

December is a time of holy Advent waiting, followed by the joy of the birth of Christ, which culminates in our reflections and resolutions for the New Year. Change is the bedrock of growth and healing, and so we approach this season of waiting and change with joy. Further, in a season that can be filled with tasks, we instead take time to rest and listen for where the flow of the Holy Spirit next leads us. May you all find peace, love, hope, and joy, and be renewed in this holy time of year!

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New Direction for 2023

In this month's pastoral reflection, Pastor Amie discusses the big changes in store for The LabOratory Church in 2023.

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The Garden Lab

The garden beds have received a protective cover of wood chips, Stretch got spayed and vaccinated, and the food dehydration learning begins.

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Waiting with Uncertainty

Minister of Mental Health, Thaddeus, shares suggestions on how we can be meaningfully active during stressful times of waiting.

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

New Direction for 2023

by Rev. Amie Vanderford

Next month is the third anniversary since we launched the first Worship Lab! I marvel at the way time both flies by, and seems to stand still. When we reflect on what we thought the church would be before COVID-19, and what it became just two short months after launching, there is so much to be thankful for, even as we concurrently shared in the immense amounts of collective grief.

The vision with the launch was to eat a meal for communion together with each worship for learning and fellowship in the Near East Side community of Indianapolis. We had ideas for some online components even then, but the meal and building deeper relationships in this neighborhood were to be the primary focus. When we switched to Zoom-only worship in March 2020, it broadened our reach beyond this physical neighborhood boundary.

The Garden Lab and the 4KEEPS Mobile Pantry were launched shortly thereafter, and this added in-person connections. When weather allowed, we also had outdoor events centered around the Garden Lab. We developed the Project L.E.A.S.T. mentoring program with volunteer events, as well as regular Zoom meetings to keep youth connected even as we were otherwise physically isolated. We took regular Nature Walks in various parks around Indianapolis, and we shared the occasional patio meal together. We were also blessed to be able to share a film screening of Ken Burns Presents, "Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness" for youth and families this past summer. We look forward to doing more events like these in the future.

When we named this congregation The LabOratory Church, it was to be a reminder that we are free in this community to experiment in how we can

"The new name for this effort will be The LabOratory Live, and will launch on YouTube Live @ 6:30 pm on Sunday, January 1st!"

better serve God and one another in order to do our part to build beloved community aka the kin-dom of God. As in all experiments, there is a time to try, a time to reflect, and a time to decide what serves the community well and what doesn't, and act/adjust accordingly. The flow of the Spirit is key in this, as is a willingness to accept uncertainty and change as part of the journey.

As mentioned earlier, starting a church during a pandemic brought unique challenges and opportunities. Although we were blessed with early grant support to launch the church, those funds are no longer available. As we tighten our belts without consistent funding, part of our future restructuring is a focus on priorities. In a community spirit, there are many ways we can connect together while continuing to sustain the ministries and growth of the church. Some specific ways that you can help include: commit to a monthly tithe to support our work and ministries, help pay specific church bills (such as phone, internet, email service, website hosting for the year, insurance costs, facilities, and so on), participate or donate to special projects or ministries, volunteer for a 4KEEPS Mobile Pantry day or work in The Garden Lab, encourage new visitors to our LabOratory Live events, whether via 1st Sundays on YouTube, or in-person on 3rd Sundays, suggest and/or organize a church event and/or fundraisers, order from the pantry wish list, or organize a food drive. It takes a village to build communities that truly support one another!

With this celebration of where we have been, and in anticipation of what comes next, let's get into some specific plans for 2023! For starters, we will be shifting this newsletter back into more frequent content via our existing email list. Subscribe on our website, if you haven't already. December 18th will be the final Worship Lab in its current format. We will switch from meeting via Zoom to streaming via YouTube Live on the 1st Sundays of the month. (For alerts, subscribe to our channel with notifications: youtube.com/@thelaboratorychurch.) This move will allow us to comment or "chat" together, and reach a broader audience, including those who prefer a less visible interaction, as well as those who need a break from the Covid phenomenon of Zoom fatigue. The new name for this effort will be *The LabOratory Live*, and will launch on YouTube Live @ 6:30 pm on Sunday, January 1st! Our 3rd Sundays will shift to in-person gatherings at St. Joseph's Brewery on College Ave, and this will launch on Sunday, January 15th. These will be informal times to learn about God, justice, and share in fellowship together. The cost associated with 3rd Sundays will be whatever food and beverage you choose to purchase.

We would like some additional input! Please let us know if there is another touch point that would be connecting for you beyond the First and Third Sundays. As one example: would a monthly mid-week prayer or topical Zoom* chat time be helpful and of interest to you? (*As we are ending our paid Zoom subscription, sessions in that format would be limited to 40 minutes.) We look forward to hearing from you!

Many blessings, and may you stay safe and find peace even as the world tries to add stress to the joy of this season!



the garden lab

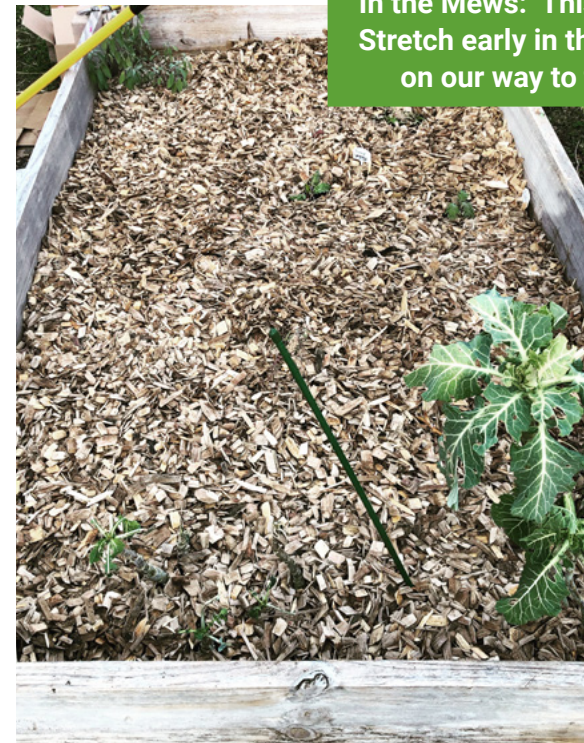
The extended cold of winter is settling in, and the growth of even the hardiest plants has slowed. In anticipation of spring, and in order to replenish and protect the soil, a thick layer of wood chips has been added to each bed. The next step is to pick up the composted horse manure mentioned in the last issue.

Another first: we have delved into the world of dehydrating food! There are so many wonderful ways to preserve and extend the usability of the food that we grow (as well as buy), from blanching and freezing to pickling and canning to many other options beyond. Learning in stages, so as not to get overwhelmed, is a crucial part of the process, at least on our end. After we delve deeper into dehydration, the next planned preservation technique to learn will be canning. A tip: If you still have grandparents who lived through the WWI and/or WWII eras, it would be

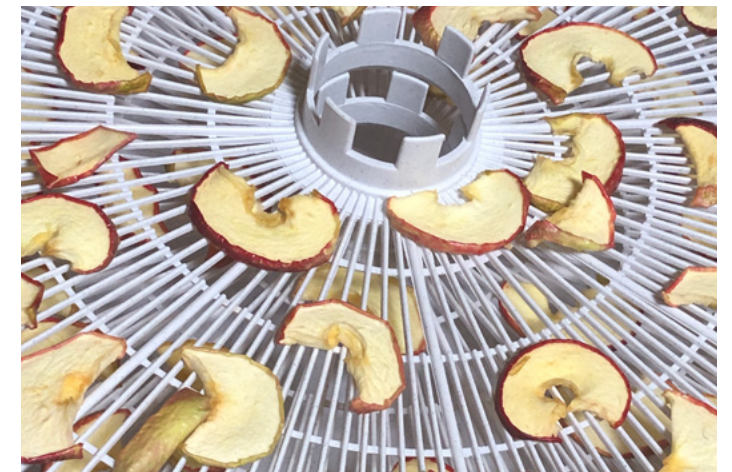
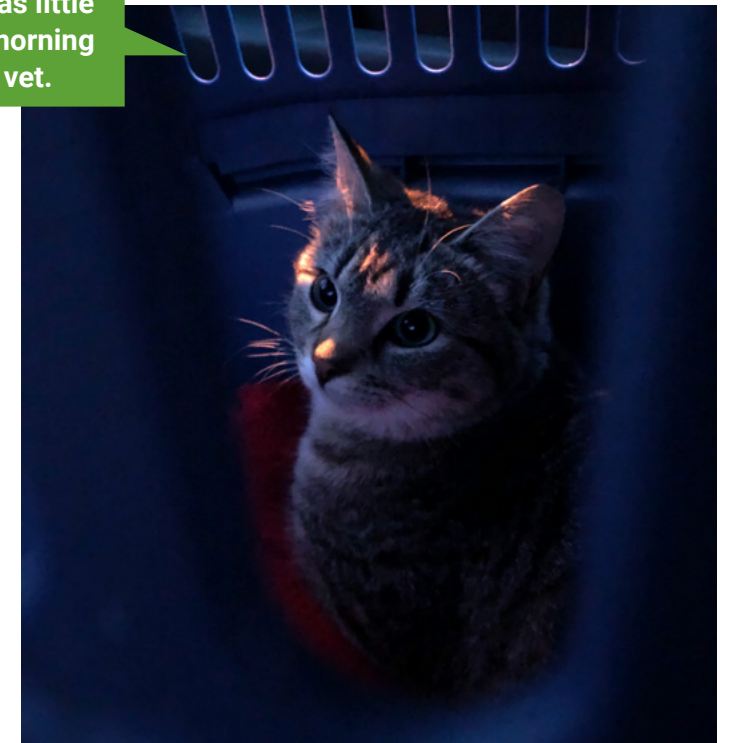
a great thing to try and learn their techniques and carry them on for our current and future generations. If you do not, there are many YouTube and TikTok channels that are sharing their techniques, so check those out.

In Meownistry news, Stretch got spayed and vaccinated this month and is doing well! The cats are staying warm and well-fed, and as the cold increases, we have noticed a few new visitors, along with increased visits from some infrequent guests.

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 we thank you for your support!



In the Mews: This was little Stretch early in the morning on our way to the vet.



Mental Health

Waiting with Uncertainty

by Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., MFT, CSAYC

Happy holiday greetings and Shalom. It is customary that during this time we, the members of The Body of Christ, wait in anticipation of the appearance of our deliverer. The time of waiting is sometimes a challenge as we ruminate on each fearful possibility. Waiting can be downright stressful, especially if we're unable to find meaning in the passing moments as we wait.

As a child, I remember the ad campaign of a popular catsup brand. The ad showed a closeup of a child's face and expression as he was fixated on the condiment's progress through the bottle. In the background you hear the song lyrics "anticipation... anticipation is making me wait." I guess that's why the tune "Anticipation" by Carly Simon reached No. 3 on the Billboard Adult Contemporary chart in 1971. It is a very common thing to have our patience stretched to the point of discomfort.

In last week's mental health moment, we considered how to live with uncertainty. We have

many questions about what is to come, and the lack of clarity can be rough. It can go as far as to trigger a trauma response that completely shuts us down, as if we were in active danger. Yet, we are never alone in this condition due to its commonality across the entire human domain of experience. What can we do or try while we wait, besides getting caught up in unproductive activity or busy-work?

According to that video (*Feelings of Uncertainty and How to Manage Them*) we were encouraged to ask ourselves important questions about what we know, and what we don't know, about situations that cause us stress. "Know that you can still do the things that matter to you and bring worry and uncertainty with you" the speaker said. I'm encouraged by this suggestion. So, in this time of giving and waiting, allow me to share the gift of this wise presenter: It might help to write down a list of things you know you did to produce your desired outcomes. You might also notice other positive things about yourself,

personal relationships, and fun things you enjoy. And what about self care? Are you harsh with self judgment? Have you had the amount of rest you feel is needed? These questions might help prompt a dialogue with self and provide help finding what we really want to know.

So, let us give of ourselves while we wait, but not to things that drain us further. Let us give to the things that really matter on the deepest levels, things that liberate us, and create deeper and uplifting connections between us. This is the evidence that we are the people to whom the deliverer has come. Let us continue to seek the manifestation of God's realm on earth as we have been assured by faith.

As we await the promise of Christ's birth in this season of Advent, let us hold one another up in confidence and in prayer.

May the light of God's coming be sufficient to comfort us in these great and dreadful days and times. Let us begin preparations to be different and better versions of ourselves and community every day as the days go by. 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
- 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 last Worship Lab** via Zoom on **Dec 18th @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!



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.

 Cash App

 PayPal

 Givelify

Going forward The Incubator will show up directly in subscribers' email.

Catch the inaugural LabOratory Live on YouTube Live @ 6:30 pm ET on Sunday, January 1, 2023!



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