



UPDATE

May 2016

Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

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Tra-la, it's May!

Warmer weather at LPPC means we may begin worshiping with the door open, being a more inviting presence in the neighborhood, and while we may get fewer spiritual points for showing up in pleasant weather rather than the harsh chill of winter, it makes for an all-around enjoyable church experience.

This month's Update contains reflections on how we may express the love of God to each other, and live out God's plan for us as loving beings, connected to each other through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.

We also have some thoughts on Earth Day, the future of our church, the upcoming Crop Walk this fall, the next two selections for the women's book group, upcoming concerts at LPPC,

and, of course, birthdays.

Happy May weather to you all!

-Alice Burton

THE *Greatest* OF THESE IS *Love*

On Sunday, May 1st, the Narrative Lectionary Text was 1 Corinthians 13. Such a familiar text can be a challenge because so many of us hear it in the same ways we have always heard it. Rev. John Hobbs shared with our clergy group a reading that was used by Christian Peacemaker Teams that helps bring the words of 1 Corinthians 13 into the year 2016. After it was read in church, many of you asked for a copy so here it is in written form. What we talked about overall with 1 Corinthians 13 was that it is, first and foremost, a call to be community in a way that actions speak louder than words. May we continue to be intentional about loving one another as we ponder these powerful words!

-Beth

If I speak about courage and justice, and siding with the oppressed, and speaking truth to power no matter the cost, but do not speak about love... I am just a loudmouth orator, a white saviour, a shameless self-promoter.

If I am excellent at nonviolent communication, and I take great pictures, and I know all the latest anti-oppressive lingo, and I can analyse racist systems so as to dismantle them entirely, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I fully embrace the work of prophet and activist and martyr, and get dragged away by the riot police or bombed by the military of my own country, but have not love, that is no use to anyone.

Love is patient. Love survives evil, war, oppression. It remains when the teargas clears and the children go back to school. It is still there when the

water is protected. Love is kind, not arrogant, not insisting on its own way, but making space for joy and truth even in the hardest circumstance.

Whether it is love between two people, or love of a person for their community, or love of a community for its land, or love of justice and peace and equity, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Clever words will be forgotten. The most interesting facts are subject to revision. The best sermon you've ever heard – you will forget. Right now, everything we do is flawed and inaccurate. But. One day we'll experience Truth with a Capital T. And then all this will be unnecessary.

Before I was mature, I was immature. In becoming mature, I left behind ways of speaking, thinking and reasoning that were immature.

Right now we're hearing murmurs, reading translations, seeing shadows on the wall, but one day we'll see face-to-face.

Right now, half of the time I'm guessing, but one day I will know beyond all doubt – and I will be fully known.

*What remains when it is all stripped away is three things:
Faith that the flawed world as we see it is not all that there is;
Hope that the next generation will live in a better world;
and Love to give us the strength and motivation to build it.*

The greatest of these is Love.



Why Earth Day Connects Us

Making church meaningful for all ages is one of the elements of worship I genuinely enjoy about Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church. If you missed our Earth/Family Day Sunday, let me share from my heart about its impact on my spirit.

With an Earth Day mantra: "reduce, reuse, reclaim and recycle," in our worship experience, it was exciting for me to see how we work individually to honor the Creator through our respective care and concern for the environment. This worship experience was a collaborative venture, with table hosts putting together some elements and others bringing in items from home. The fun came as conversation around these item-laden tables sparked a number of memories and several great new ideas. Many of those ideas I can start using here in my tiny city garden.

I am grateful for the efforts of everyone involved and was especially thrilled to introduce our guest speaker for the morning, Erika Herrera. I thought Erika did a tremendous job of "preaching" to us a message about Fair Trade.

As owner of Sandpiper Imports, a wholesale fair trade company, and a board member with Chicago's Fair Trade association, Erika noted that her own spiritual beliefs played an important role in choosing a career that incorporated ethical and sustainable business practices.

"Fair Trade seeks to offer current generations the ability to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," she said in her talk. Erika added that Fair Trade merchants actively consider the implications of their decisions on the environment and promote the responsible stewardship of resources. "Members reduce, reuse, reclaim and recycle materials wherever possible," she said. "They encourage environmentally sustainable practices throughout the entire trading chain."

Herrera also emphasized how supporting Fair Trade businesses builds dignity for individuals and families around the world by establishing ethical, not exploitive, treatment of workers.

She spoke about how she met and established a business relationship with a silversmith community of fifteen artisans in a small village an hour outside of Ubud, a city she said was well-regarded as the cultural and artistic heart of Bali.

Hearing stories of struggle and of the success of a few people in Bali - told by a young woman based in Chicago who has developed a business relationship with them - may seem to some an odd way to feel spiritually fulfilled. But for me, these are stories that give me hope and encouragement on my walk with God. I am hopeful that we, as a society, can do better. We can support, not exploit, the people who make the products we use and consume.

As a Christian, I need to find those things in the world that affirm and value all of God's people, as well as to put my time and energy into a movement that protects and sustains this creation, so earth can sustain all life, not just human life.

Thank you for being a congregation that allows such meaningful worship for someone like me. Thank you for sharing information, ideas and creative expressions of sustainability in our Earth Day observance, and for allowing Fair Trade in the Sanctuary. I have great respect for each one of you and deeply appreciate the opportunities you have provided me in this faith journey.

-Ronda Howell

Clerk's Clippings: Where Do We Go from Here?

At our April 26 Session meeting, after reading the Vision Statement aloud together, Mike Sordill provided the opening reflection and prayer. Below are his thoughts:

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Temptation, sweet temptation. We all know its seductive pull, that quick fix, feel good easy way out laced with danger that makes us want to go where deep down inside, we know we shouldn't. Yet, we find ourselves discovering all sorts of reasons why it would be ok to succumb to the lure of temptation.

Though we all know right from wrong, "Thou Shalt not" but yet, we do. Can't really be of any major harm to do this one thing now, can it? Who's gonna even know, and no one will really be hurt. So we may use this to justify not declaring that one little cash payment on our taxes as the government is just going to waste my money anyway. As the Queen of NY real estate Leona Helmsley once famously said, "Only the little people pay taxes". Of course, she ended up in prison for not paying hers.

Or maybe we are tempted to disregard the doctor's order not to eat or drink certain foods - some of this or that won't really hurt, and I really like that stuff so I'm gonna do it...until I have an attack of some sort and end up in the ER.

We all have our own history of temptation - I often find myself tempted, when we read the charge together and get to the line "honor all people" to add "except Donald Trump". Whether we give in to the lure or not, we all know what its like to be torn between what we know is right and what is wrong. This doesn't make us bad - it makes us human.

It's not God who leads us there, and it's not the Devil either. No, we lead ourselves into temptation when we indulge the urge to allow our selfish, short-term desires to dictate our actions.

God can help us save ourselves from acquiescing to our baser instincts and wants. Sometimes, when we most need God's help, we are tempted to turn away from God. Though most of the time we know what we should do, we sometimes act contrarily. So the real truth is this: It's me God, standing in need of a prayer, and this one was authored by my brother Willie:

"God of Deliverance, when I'm leading myself into temptation, hear my confession. Take pity on me, and forgive my foolish ways, full of rationalization and weakness. Deliver me from myself and lead me into the self you want me to be. I know this isn't the last time I'll be having this talk with you, so thanks for your patience."

Amen.

As is our usual practice, we looked back at the previous month, and lifted up what had gone well, not so well, and what we had learned. We highlighted all of Holy Week, and specifically the Seder service on Maundy Thursday, and the early morning Good Friday

service. The cantor for the Seder really helped us understand the meaning of the service, and she was also very welcoming. And our own Good Friday early morning service, topped by (for those who could stay) breakfast together, was powerful. It was good to offer our own service on Good Friday. Easter was quite the celebration: excellent music, including brass, wonderful attendance, including a number of fresh and young faces. Our very recent Earth Day service had a variety of leaders responsible for various parts, and great participation. The projected bulletin was also a highlight. And learning more about Fair Trade from Erika Herrera was an important element, too. We then shared personal joys and concerns, especially for Gale Morgan-Williams about her mother’s upcoming knee surgery, and Gale’s care-giving role as her mother recuperates.

Our April Focus Topic was: Where do we go from here about our future Vision, and specifically about the Compassion Movement? Beth asked us to lift up what excites us, inspires and motivates us about this vision.



One elder said that he had spent much of his life trying to define “community”. Changing the concept of our Vision from “project” to “movement” is really important to him. It is all about building a compassionate community. That galvanizes and excites him. “This IS the next big thing!” said another elder. “What is the call to us in this after-Easter time? To be disciples”, she challenged us. Another elder reminded us that this is an incubator, a “start-up” idea. One more elder offered her enthusiasm for this. “This is our history as a congregation, this is our call to ministry, this is who we are!”

We discussed how to proceed. We need to share the written presentations from April 10 with the congregation, as promised, so that everyone will have a clearer understanding of what the Vision is, what the Compassion Movement is. The congregation will get behind the Vision once they understand it better. We need to provide leadership to help this happen, as well as good and thorough planning. Establishing a not-for-profit as part of this process is essential; it will help develop the Vision further, and will also help defray the costs. We will need a well-thought-out structure, so that we can go to donors and funders to ask for financial support. Once there is this kind of coherent plan, donors and funders will want to

share in our work. While this does seem to be “the next big thing”, it still needs focus, because it is very big.

This is an experiment, a pilot project, and there isn't anything just like this. Even though we will have a plan and structure, we will need to be flexible, both because events may happen in the community that will call for altering plans, and because we will involve partners, who should also have a say in shaping this. A key piece early on will be to do something that will involve the community: for instance, a speaker or series of speakers, to which we would invite the community. We would gather people around common interests, based on our deeply-held values, such as interfaith and intergenerational participation. We hope by such efforts to promote a different kind of community than what we have now.

We will need to find key people for the teams: the Creative Team, the Space and Green Team, and the Tech Team, while continuing to support the ongoing work of our ministry teams. Session leadership is essential in all of this, and we agreed wholeheartedly to our role.

The Property and Finance team brought an important action to Session. They had been doing research about our church's insurance, because it seemed to them that our premiums were quite high. In their research, they worked with an advisor from the Presbyterian Church (USA), who helped them to find another provider with better coverage and reduced rates. We approved this change in insurance enthusiastically, and thanked Jerry Homsy for his role in researching this matter.

We were excited to learn more about the “On the Table” event coming up May 10, and our part in co-sponsoring it with the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. We'll hopefully have participation in this evening from across many sectors of our community, and the dinner tables could be both upstairs and downstairs. We are inviting people from many agencies, public schools, and DePaul, and the Shelter is inviting some of their guests, together with their some of their volunteers and supporters. Dinner guests will be strategically “mixed up”, so that each table will have a broad representation of the Lincoln Park community. Salvatore's will provide the meal, and both the Shelter and LPPC will provide the “table hosts. The hosts will facilitate the discussion from prepared questions, provided by the event's sponsor, the Chicago Community Trust. Events like these will be happening all over Chicago on Tuesday, May 10. Be sure to RSVP so that you can be part of this exciting event.

It was a very full Session meeting, filled with spirited discussion and (as Beth noted in the E-Weekly) a good deal of humor (see Mike's opening above for one example). But we also determined with some clarity, as well as thoughtful reflection, where we go from here. That's an exciting accomplishment!

-Gail Russell, Clerk of Session



**2016 Chicago CROP Hunger Walk
September 25, 2016
St. James Cathedral Commons
65 E. Huron**

Join us this year as we continue to commit to ending hunger one step at a time. We ask that you participate in this important work any way that you wish, by walking, fundraising, or cheering us on. **Our goal of 2016 is to have 500 people walk to end hunger and raise \$50,000 to fight hunger locally and globally.** We look forward to walking with you on **September 25!**

If you're interested in helping plan and organize the Walk, please contact Derek Elmi- Buursma or Gail Angel at ChicagoCROP@gmail.com.

Women's Book Group

"The Inheritance of Loss" by Kirin Desai will be discussed at the Women's Book Group on **Saturday, May 14**. Set in the 1980s, the novel explores such contemporary international issues as globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorism with insight and an intimate story. The discussion will begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Lighthouse Lounge on the 14th floor at **The Admiral at the Lake, 929 Foster Ave.**

All women are invited and light refreshments will be served.

The group will meet at the same time and location on **Saturday, June 11** to discuss author Ann Patchett's look at her deepest relationships in "This Is The Story of a Happy Marriage," essays that blend literature and memoir. .

-Sharon Stangenes

- *Spring Soirée of Song* -
Earth ~ Air ~ Water ~ Fire
 When the Elements Become Alchemy

Saturday, May 14, 7:00 pm
Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church
 600 W. Fullerton, Chicago

Featuring singers from The Floating Opera Company and Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church performing music with a spring flourish!

Chungers Kim **Paul Hamilton**
Music Director *Pianist*

Suggested donation: \$10 / \$5 students & seniors
 Wine Bar Reception to Follow

Music Recital

Jennifer Nicholson's graduate recital in voice will be Saturday, May 28th at 5 PM the DePaul School of Music, 804 W. Belden Ave. We invite you all to attend.

May Birthdays

- 3 Kirsten Stangenes
- 7 Kent Organ
- 7 Zaida Rodriguez
- 18 Steve Hunter
- 21 Jean Sheadel
- 22 Gerri Mead
- 23 Katherine Zartman
- 25 Alice Burton
- 25 Ben Ho
- 26 Sharon Stangenes
- 27 Virginia Braxton