



# UPDATE

June 2015

## Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

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### Obladee, Obladah!

Last Sunday we bid a fond farewell to Marta Johnson-Letofsky. It was a combination goodbye party and baby shower, and a joyous occasion. (See the photos and tribute song on pages 6-9).

Marta's baby is due now, basically, and she decided her impending motherhood and work/life balance would not fit continuing on as our Music Director. With all the gifts she brought to us, it is normal to ask the question, "what now?" I think the answer is that life goes on.

Marta came to us about a year ago to lead our music program. She played beautiful piano and organ. As a member of the choir, I can attest to the fact that she was outstanding in forming and leading our choir.

Up until her arrival, I had only sung with the choir very occasionally. But, in large part due to Marta's energy, enthusiasm and strength of will, I became a regular. She also convinced several other members of our congregation to join. Marta took people of varying skill levels and turned us into a choir that I believe sounded pretty darn good.

Best of all, it was a choir made up of members of the congregation. Previously the choir contained a number of paid soloists and professional or near professional singers. Now it is made up of passionate members of LPPC.

Marta also drew a variety of talented singers and musicians from inside and outside of the church to put on the Spring Soiree of Song, a fundraiser for our music program. She also worked well with Beth to pick the music for worship services.

So, now that the uber-talented Marta has moved on, what happens? Will we have a choir? Will we have music? Yes we will! Life goes on and so do we. Marta was wonderful, but she did not do it alone. The search committee that found Marta is back on the job and I fully expect another excellent Music Director to be discovered soon. The choir will continue to sing after the usual summer hiatus, and if a few additional members join us we can be better than ever. We can build on what Marta helped to create, even after she is gone.

So, rest assured the music will not stop and the choir will continue to sing. In the Fall, consider being part of it!

-Steve Hunter

## Pastor's Reflections

Dear Friends,

At our Annual Congregational Meeting last January, the LIFT (Living Into our Future Together) Team told you that we were hoping to make enough progress by the end of 2015 to be making some big decisions. We think we are on track for that to be a possibility. As you know, we are not going to surprise you with anything or spring anything on you! To be sure we don't, we have been very intentional about communicating with you regarding our progress. We are at a point now that we want to share with you the findings of the past 6 months of conversations with people in Lincoln Park, conducting a demographic study, doing neighborhood walks, and filling you in on conversations in the other swimming lanes as well. We would like to invite you to a Congregational Gathering on Sunday, June 14th, for a potluck lunch following church. The LIFT Team is eager to share with you some of our findings and to learn your thoughts and responses to what you hear. Please be there if you are able so we can get as broad a perspective on our efforts to date as possible.

As you may remember, one of our swimming lanes was the possibility of merger with Church of the 3 Crosses. When I first talked with Rev. John Hobbs about the idea, he encouraged me to use the word partnership rather than merger because Church of the 3 Crosses is not where we are in terms of conversations about the future. In talking with the LIFT Team and John, we decided it would be a good first step to do some partnering in ministry this summer. To that end, we are going to begin by having what we are calling "Social Justice Conversation Dinners." LPPC will host one and Church of the 3 Crosses will host one. We are hoping to have a good mix of people from both congregations at each dinner. John and I will be at both. The purpose is to engage in conversation about social justice and what is changing about the nature of social justice work, (for example, the difference between charity and social justice), and how churches are and can be changing their approaches to social justice. In addition, we want to talk about what we feel passionate about and how to prioritize

commitments. We want to hear what each of our congregations is involved in and whether we want to partner with one another in any actions. The first dinner is Sunday, June 7th at LPPC and the second dinner is Monday, June 22nd at Church of the 3 Crosses. We hope to see you at one of the dinners for this important conversation and the beginning of partnering together!

Later in June we will also join with Church of the 3 Crosses to have a Pride Sunday worship service. The service will be at LPPC this year at 9:30 am. For those not going to the parade or who like a later service, Church of the 3 Crosses will offer a Contemplative Service at 11 am at their location.

Last week I was working on some planning for the summer and I am excited about the variety of worship experiences we will have together. Be sure to invite your friends! My prayer is that with a different pace and some different experiences this summer, we will all be nurtured in our spirits and our spiritual journeys.

Giving thanks for each of you,

**-Beth**

### **June Birthdays at LPPC**

4	Michael Devlin (child)
8	Edmund Bradfield
9	Abby Van Kempen
14	Barbara Guibord Homsy
14	Marty Knorre
16	Hannah Russell (child)
17	Don Hunter
18	Charles Rich
22	Lucas James Devlin (child)
28	Jack & Kate O'Donnell (teens)
28	Alex Wilkinson (child)

## **Confirmation Reflection**

Confirmation, and spirituality in general, is not about finding all the answers. That much I know. When I started my confirmation journey several months back, I found myself confronted with this underlying fear, for lack of a better word, of being wrong. I wouldn't know God, or the Bible, or the Church in the way I was supposed to.

In school and the media, we are constantly being told that we need to have the right answer, but that's not how God is. The way I think of God may be different from how the others saw God, but in the end that's not the point. What is the point then? If it's not to find the right answer, then what? Connection.

When we conversed about prayer Jordan, Alex, and I all had to loosely define what prayer is. We agreed that it's a conversation with God. Everything I learned came back to a connection. Trying to find a way to create a relationship with this spirit, this force that can be so completely difficult to feel. That is part of the beauty. Even if I'll never completely understand, that doesn't bother me. I don't need total understanding. In the end, that I'm pursuing a connection, that I am able to feel God and learn despite limitations, that I care enough to take the time to make God a part of my life and recognize them, that is what matters. That is the point.

**-Mia R. Prekop**

## **Swimming Lanes**

Anne and I started swimming again a few weeks ago. Back in the 80s, three times a week, we got up at 6, were in the pool by 6:30 and Anne still has a trophy for swimming 100 miles. These days we don't have to be up and out so early, but it feels good and it feels healthy.

LPPC has also been occupying several swimming lanes over the last months. That is a metaphor we have been using to describe efforts to investigate possible futures for our church. On the 14th

of June, following worship, the LIFT (Living Into our Future Together) team invites you to a congregational meeting to share progress in our swimming lanes. Progress will be measured not so much in miles covered, although the session did walk several miles to get reacquainted with our neighborhood. Progress will be measured by stories heard, by information gathered and by patterns discerned.

At our Session retreat on Saturday May 9, Rev. Joy Douglas Strome, pastor at Lakeview Presbyterian Church, helped us to capture the observations we had made as separate teams wandering around the neighborhood. Then she shared with us data generated by a report for the Presbytery, specifically about the kinds of folks living in our neighborhood, and some projections about the folks who are likely to be here in the coming years.

So save the date, June 14. Let's figure out together what these stories and these numbers might mean, and what kind of church God is calling us to be.

**-Bruce Hunt**

## **Women's Book Group**

On Saturday, June 13, the Women's Book Group will discuss "The Invention of Wings" by Sue Monk Kidd. The tale of abolitionist Sarah Grimke and her slave Hetty, this historical novel begins on Sarah's 11th birthday when she is given 10-year old Hetty as a gift. The book recounts their entwined lives as each struggles to find freedom. The conversation and refreshments begin around 9:30 a.m. in the Lighthouse Lounge at The Admiral at the Lake, 929 Foster Ave. All women are welcome!

On July 11, the Women's Book Group will meet at the Wisconsin cottage of Gail Russell and Gerri Meade. The book is "Still Life with Breadcrumbs" by Anna Quinlan. All women are invited. Contact Gail or Gerri for information and directions.

There is no WBG meeting in August but the group will resume Sept. 8 with a discussion of the "The Goldfinch" by Donna Tartt.

## Shelter Meal Volunteers Needed

As warmer weather arrives and calendars fill with activity, remember to "save the date," for a special time with guests at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. Cooking teams are needed for June, July and mid-September.

If you are new to the church, the shelter is housed in the lower level of the church. Team leaders coordinate each meal, and teams prepare, serve and share a meal with guests.

It is a wonderful opportunity to put action to one's faith, to get to know folks from the church and to hear from those guests who are getting a hand up through services provided within the shelter.

Summer dates are June 20, July 18 and September 19. The meal is hosted on the third Saturday evening of each month.

June's team leader is Sharon Stangenes, and she could use a few more helping hands. Team leaders are needed for July and September. Please check your calendars and take time this summer season to share in this special mission of the church.

**-Ronda Howell for Church & Society Ministry Team**

## So Long, Marta!

Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> was a combination goodbye party and baby shower for our dear friend and Music Director, Marta Johnson-Letofsky. During the service the congregation surprised Marta with a tribute song (shown below) while Barry Smith played accompaniment the piano. After the service, hospitality turned into a baby shower for Marta and "baby Letofsky." The picture above



shows one of the creative centerpieces made by Leticia Martin. Other photos of the party are below. Cake, cupcakes and fun were in plentiful supply. A great time was had by all.

### **"Ode to Marta"**

Words by Gerri Mead

May 31, 2015

with apologies to Beethoven (tune) and Henry Van Dyke (lyricist)

Joyful, joyful, Marta, Marta,  
Oh such gifts of note and song!  
Fingers flying o'er the keyboard,  
Urging us to sing along.  
Even when our voices faltered,  
Or the times when pitch went flat,  
Still you smiled and kept us singing,  
Always we'll remember that.

"Practice, practice", that you taught us,  
"Learn your part and sing it strong!"  
But there's something else that matters --  
Always hear each other's song".  
Then we put it all together.  
What a night the Spring Soiree!  
Yet that was just one of many  
Times when your song showed the way.

Marta, Marta, how we'll miss you,  
Though we know the reasons why.  
Babies come and life moves on – and  
All things work out by and by.  
But your leaving leaves us grieving,  
Yet you've left us songs to sing.  
Marta, Marta, blessings on you!  
Thanks so much for everything!





## **Clerk's Clippings: Courage, Honesty and Inspiration: Then and Now**

Mike Sordill opened the May 26, 2015 Session meeting with a reflection which was based on Barry Smith's Lenten meditation. Mike told us he was very moved by Barry's thoughts about David Sindt, a member of LPPC in the 70's and 80's. Mike added, "Unfortunately I did not have the good fortune of knowing David." But he learned from Barry's reflection that David was an openly gay man in an era when it was difficult, even dangerous to be out – the loss of job, apartment, disavowal of family and friends were very real possibilities in that time. David was nominated from the floor at an LPPC congregational meeting to be elected to the Session as an out gay man. At the same time, Barry, who had been nominated by the Nominating Committee for Session, was elected, and David lost by one vote. Barry was not yet out, but was so inspired by David's courage and honesty, that, three years later, when he was eligible for a second term on Session, he came out to the Nominating Committee, and ended up being re-elected. Mike said that he was very inspired himself by both David's and Barry's courage and honesty. He added, "It's a lesson well worth learning and re-hearing..." and he closed his reflection with this thought: "May God grant us David's courage and honesty."

Our focus topic at this meeting was Confirmation, and meeting with two of the three young people who have completed the Confirmation Class, and are seeking to join LPPC: Mia Prekop and Alex Wilkinson. The third member of the class, Jordan Bellmund, was in Washington, DC on a school class trip, and met with Session on Sunday, May 31, after she returned. I will summarize here the discussion with all three confirmands. These young people exhibit the courage, honesty and inspiration that Mike Sordill lifted up in his opening reflection.

All three introduced themselves by stating how long they had been coming to LPPC, as well as some highlights from their confirmation process. Among the highlights:

- Really enjoyed the hands-on activities, especially helpful in expressing who I am and what my faith is

- Related to our faith; who God is, who Jesus is, for us today, rather than what I used to think (examples: God an old man, Jesus a white guy with long hair and blue eyes)
- Faith was a “thing” before; now it’s personal, and it’s deepening
- I really liked how we all had different views, and felt free to express them
- The small group was really good for sharing our thoughts
- Confirmation taught me a lot about church, and what it might mean to be a member of church
- Nobody talked “at us”

We asked them what was new as a result of participating in Confirmation. Here are some of their responses:

- Have a clearer view of who I am, a deepened understanding of my faith
- It’s OK to use our creativity to express our faith: collage about what is and isn’t Christian, play-dough to depict God

Some surprises in the process:

- I’m surprised at how my faith is more focused, more real
- I didn’t know there were so many chapters in the Bible
- Since going through confirmation, I see more clearly the relation between my daily life and my “church life”; they are connected, not separated

Why join the church? And why join LPPC?

- It’s a calling; my faith is more focused and I am drawn to LPPC
- This church is small; I know everyone and everyone knows me; it’s intimate and it’s part of me
- A smaller church is more fun!
- When I was part of a large church, I didn’t really know anyone except a few people. LPPC is really welcoming, and it provides a comforting sense of community. It’s inclusive, and doesn’t have a standard of dress or anything
- You can reflect at church (during worship), and then have a nice time at the Time for Refreshment
- Church is an important part of my life, and joining the church is an important next step

We asked the confirmands what we could do for them, and what they really enjoy doing, related to church. Here are their responses:

- Ask me to be involved; offer me opportunities
- I hope to come more
- Outdoor stuff!
- Technology; I could help with the website
- I enjoy helping with Shelter meals
- I love cooking, including for the Shelter
- I like participating in small discussion groups
- Greeting is fun
- Keep being welcoming



They asked us what the Session is all about, and what we do. We described the various ministry teams and other groups doing various work for the church, as well as our roles as leaders of the congregation, and caring for the congregation.

We were thrilled and excited to approve Jordan Bellmund, Mia Prekop and Alex Wilkinson for membership in LPPC. They will be publicly welcomed and confirmed (and Mia will be baptized) at worship Sunday morning, June 7. At that time, they will also be sharing their statements of faith, banners they have created, and helping to lead the entire service. Jordan, Mia and Alex are amazing young 21<sup>st</sup> century examples of the same courage, honesty and inspiration that David Sindt lived out in the 1970s and 1980s. Thanks be to God for such witnesses!



**-Gail Russell, Clerk of Session**