



UPDATE

November 2015

Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

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New Update Editor, New Church Treasurer

In February of 2007, I wrote in this very space to announce that I was taking over as Editor of Update from Barry Smith. Time sure flies. But now I am writing to let you all know that Alice Burton will be the new Editor of Update starting next month.

I have enjoyed working on Update, and I expect to continue to contribute articles, but I was asked to become the church Treasurer, taking over for John O'Donnell, and I agreed.

Working on Update and being Treasurer, along with other church activities I am involved in would have been too much. I have been learning the ropes of being the Treasurer, reviewing accounts, and meeting with John O'Donnell and the church bookkeeper. The learning curve feels like it is nearly vertical. Still, it could be asked why not just stay on Update?

The answer speaks to the nature of our church home. When I was asked to take over Update, way back when, I was in charge

of our church's efforts to make weekly sack lunches for the shelter. I told the people asking me to take over Update that I would only do it if someone else agreed to take over the Sack Lunch program. Gerry Parker stepped up, and I moved over to Update.

This highlights one of the things that makes LPPC so special. Someone always steps up. I sometimes am reminded of the scene from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. *"What happened then? Well in Whoville they say, the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day. And then, the true meaning of Christmas came through, and the Grinch found the strength of 10 Grinches, plus 2!"*

Not a perfect analogy, but hear me out. Our congregation has a big heart. People like Gerry and Alice volunteer to do things without knowing if they will be enjoyable, or easy. They step up because they see the need and want to be part of the collective effort to do God's work. Someone always steps up. And so, we have the strength of ten churches, plus two.

-Steve Hunter

Pastor's Reflection

Dear Friends,

Some of you are on social media and some of you are not. One of the benefits and drawbacks to being on social media is how much more information is put before you each day if you choose to look. There is no doubt that part of the reason #Black-Lives-Matter took off so forcefully and part of the reason we have continued seeing images of black bodies being abused, injured and killed, is because of social media. Awareness has grown because of the number of stories and images and personal accounts that are sent daily. In the past year, from the shooting of Michael Brown forward, the images have been coming more often and with more disturbing details. Every time I watch another one, I feel sick to my stomach and outraged and saddened and I wonder what I can do to prevent another incident.

Of all of the disturbing images I have seen in the past year, nothing hit me quite like the image from last week. The entire incident was captured on film. It happened at a suburban high school in Columbia, South Carolina. A 16 year old black female student was being defiant. She would not do what the teacher was asking her to do. The assistant principal went into the classroom to remove her but she wouldn't budge. She wasn't yelling or making a scene, she just wouldn't budge. So they called the Police Resource Officer (many campuses have police officers assigned to the campus) to help with the situation. The white, male police officer apparently asked her to leave the classroom. She continued to sit quietly. What the video shows next is the officer grabbing her so forcefully that her desk flips over with her in it and then he throws her from it to try to get her out of the classroom. At no time did she resist, at no time did she try to hit back and at no time does she do anything physically or verbally threatening to anyone in the classroom. Only one other student in the classroom spoke up and that young woman was arrested for yelling at the officer to stop the abuse.

Later, when the assistant principal and the teacher were interviewed, they both went on record as saying the officer used appropriate force. After the young woman was taken to the hospital and treated for multiple injuries, the Sheriff's office fired the deputy for having used excessive force. In one of the

interviews the Sheriff explained that the officer had every right to put his hands on the student, but it was only when he threw her and slammed her against the floor and wall that the force was excessive.

As is the case with every situation of abuse or murder that has happened between police officers and black men, women, and youth, there are many who are saying it had nothing to do with the fact that the young woman was black and everything to do with her defiance. I cannot and will not condone any statements, such as those, that deny the existence of racism and how it shows itself when someone becomes angry. As a parent, I have experienced the kind of defiance when a child simply refuses to do something. I have felt my anger, my fear, and my lack of control and my sense of frustration. There were times like those when I had to remind myself not to touch my kids because if I had touched them in those moments, the fear and anger and frustration would have gone right through my body and hands onto their bodies and they would have surely felt pain. I empathize with the teacher, the assistant principal and the resource officer right up until the point at which any of them think it's okay to put their hands on a student. It is not okay for any adult to put their hands on a student ever (unless a life is being threatened) and especially not when anger or frustration or hatred or racism or assumptions or made up stories exist.

Is there anything we can do to prevent another student from being harmed? Maybe we should begin a petition to CPS that asks for a new rule that specifically states an adult cannot put their hands on a student unless someone's life is in danger. Or maybe you have an idea we might consider?

Black bodies are at risk all the time. We need to step in. Somehow. Help me think of how we might do that. I hope to God if any of us had been in that classroom, we would not only have yelled at the officer but actually been willing to step in and put our bodies in between them.

Let us pray daily for police officers to do their jobs with integrity. Enough is enough.

Heartbroken,

-Beth

Clerk's Clippings: Renewed Leadership, Traveling Together into the Future

Part I – Congregational Meeting and Election of Officers

On Sunday, October 25, we held a brief congregational meeting to elect elders and congregational representatives to the Nominating Committee for 2016.

We elected the following people to the Session Class of 2018:

Claudia Gladstone

Barbara Guibord

Bruce Hunt

We also elected Gail Russell to the Class of 2016, as Clerk of Session. There is one more elder who is yet to be nominated and elected; we will hear more from the Nominating Committee about that soon, and will have another congregational meeting to elect that person.

Further, we elected Rebecca Devlin and Robert Guenther to the Nominating Committee for 2016, representing the congregation.

Part II – Session

Jen Seat opened the October 27 Session meeting with a reflection on the current Syrian refugee crisis, and how it might relate to our congregation and its journey into the future. She compared this crisis to some challenging Biblical times. She congratulated Beth for a recent powerful and creative worship service, which demonstrated in a way not only what it would be like to leave your home and belongings, but perhaps even your family.

These refugees have had to run for their lives, go to faraway countries, and essentially start over with only the clothes on their backs. And the countries where they flee really don't want them because of the economic impact, or just because they are different and disliked.

The worship service focusing on the plight of refugees made Jen think about her own family – her father and his mother fleeing Germany and Nazism in 1935. They resettled in the US, but never heard from any family members who didn't leave Germany again.

And her father and grandmother never spoke of this in the family again.

She lamented the role of the US government in the current refugee crisis. Instead of looking at the humanitarian point of view, economic concerns seem to come first. Our government seems to believe that taking in many refugees will hurt our economy, and is therefore admitting only a few. Meanwhile some authors point out that refugees have not had a negative effect, but rather a positive impact on economies which have accepted and included them. Refugees do not choose to become homeless; they have been pushed out by war. They have had to work harder than most to have anything that resembles normalcy. They work hard, spend money on services, pay taxes, and worship together. They are the same as most Americans. Jen believes that in Jesus Christ we are made new every day, and in the refugees' hardships, the human spirit is prevailing.

Jen also believes God is at work in our congregation. God brought us together, and we are working to find our mission. We may at some point be facing the hardship of change. We won't have to leave our country, but we may have to leave our home here. What will we take with us in our brown paper bag? It has not been decided yet what we will do. But through prayer, thoughtfulness and work, our LPPC family will make that decision together. Jen reminded us that what is important is that we do it together. If we can learn something from these refugees, maybe it's that no matter where we are together, we are where we should be. Change is an inevitable part of life. She asserted that we are the caregivers of the soul. We have compassion and we reach out to help those who are suffering. It is our gift to the people we help and a gift to ourselves.

Jen ended her reflection with a prayer for clarity and focus, grateful for the gifts we have, asking for the strength to continue our work in faith, and for the wisdom and vision to plan our future together.

Bookkeeper Paul Strome joined us for a discussion of our finances, and where we are now, as well as beginning to plan for the 2016 budget. First of all, he and we are pleased that Steve Hunter will be our new Treasurer. Paul shared with us the good news that we are very close to the planned income for the year to date. While we have needed to transfer funds from the reserves, we have only transferred \$60,000, and it is possible that we will not have to draw any more funds out to meet expenses. This is more good news, because the budget going into the year noted the need for \$80,000. Even though there were several extraordinary building repair expenses this year, we are still within budget. Another piece of encouraging news that Strome shared is that pledges are at about 97% of what was budgeted for the year to date. We were very pleased with this news, and so glad to have such a generous and committed congregation for this to be true.

Session Class of 2018

Claudia Gladstone

Barbara Guibord

Bruce Hunt

Gail Russell Class of 2016, Clerk of Session

In sharing what has gone well, not so well, and what we are learning, Elders thoroughly enjoyed the Fall Festival., and were especially impressed by the teens who made chili and pie! Thanks to Claudia Gladstone and her team for making it all happen, and for all the shared fun. The worship service focused on the experience of refugees was really powerful. We have enjoyed having Chungers Kim teach us the Sending Hymn, and appreciate how he is getting the congregation singing. The new KidSpace curriculum seems to be working well for both the teachers and the children. The website is almost ready to launch! Several Elders expressed thanks and appreciation for Beth's sermons, and for her letters to the congregation in the E-Weekly. Then we shared personal thanks, joys and concerns.

The Focus Topic for the evening was an energy check-in: where is each one of us on the "Energy Scale"? Is there a lowering of energy because the journey seems long, because it's taking some

time to discern our future as a congregation? Other factors for lowered energy could also include people feeling weighed down by national election politics, by the refugee crisis, or by what seems to be rampant racism and police brutality. We each took time to share where we were on the energy scale, particularly related to LPPC and our leadership roles. While we all acknowledged that this process is taking perhaps longer than we thought it would, there was unanimous energy about working on this together as a faith community, and about finding our future together. We expressed how much energy we derive from each other and from the congregation, as well as the energy we gain from worshipping together. We might walk into worship or a meeting feeling low energy, or worried about the future – whether concerned for the world, the nation, for the congregation or for ourselves. But everyone finds new energy by being together, working together, and worshipping together.

This discussion was a great introduction to the stewardship campaign and stewardship training. Gerri Mead told us that Financial Secretary Gerry Parker, who keeps the pledge and giving records, is amazed that at the end of the 3rd quarter, our pledging is so strong! The financial support and giving of the congregation is inspirational. Gerri had prepared materials that she distributed about the stewardship campaign, including contact lists for each elder of five or six individuals or families to call. You will be receiving a call, an email or a note from one of us soon. Mostly these contacts are for checking in with you, but they are also to share our excitement about the congregation and its generosity and commitment, and why we hope everyone will be as excited as we are, as we move into the future.

We are traveling into the future together, and while we don't face any of the hardships or suffering that refugees face, we can learn from their courage as they are unafraid to step into the future. May we also find the strength, wisdom and vision to do just that – together!

-Gail Russell, Clerk of Session

Dateline Sunday, September 27, 2015: Another Day at the Beach!

It was a pleasant late summer/early fall day when 30 people made their way to the Fullerton Avenue Beach to launch our second clean-up of the season. Working under the guidelines of the Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach™ program, about 15 LPPC members and friends were joined by 15 folk from the community – primarily students from Whitney Young High School and their parents.

Altogether, we collected 24.1 pounds of garbage, and 7.75 pounds of recyclables. This was a lot less than our Earth-Day clean-up in April, but we didn't pick up the asphalt this time. Also, the Alliance had hosted a major clean-up event just a week before so



perhaps that contributed. Like last time, cigarette butts topped the list. See below for the most common and the most unusual findings:
Cigarette butts – 936 (way up from 201 in April)
Food wrappers- 196

Plastic bottle caps – 193

Plastic pieces – 159 (down from 281 in April)

Glass pieces – 95 (down from 279 in April)

Straws/stirrers – 93

Knives – 2

Shotgun shells – 2

On this occasion we found few items that were recyclable (such as glass and plastic drink bottles and cans - 13 in total), or



banned (only 2 plastic grocery sacks). Perhaps that means people are more likely to put recyclables into the recycling bins when they are available, or perhaps more of these items were collected at the recent beach clean-up event. The Alliance tallies and interprets overall findings so it's always a good idea to check their website (www.greatlakes.org) periodically for updates and reports. As we know, the goal is source reduction, so reducing our own personal consumption of single use disposables is a great way to start helping the environment overall. Be looking forward to another day at the beach come spring!

-Gale Morgan-Williams

Women's Book Group

On Saturday, November 14, the Women's Book Group will discuss "Being Mortal" by Atul Gawande at 9:30 a.m. in the Lighthouse Lounge on the 14th floor at The Admiral at the Lake, 929 Foster Ave. This slim thought-provoking volume by a physician considers the realities of elder care and end-of-life decisions informed by his experience as a physician and a son who witnessed his own father's decline and death.

All women are invited to join the conversation beginning Light refreshments will be served.

Those with questions about the book group or in need of transportation, see or call Sharon Stangenes, 312-203-4666.

Join the Choir!

Consider singing with the choir occasionally, if not regularly. The music is fun to sing, and the choir has a great time. You don't have to be able to read music to participate, just a willing heart. Choir practices, which are a lot of fun, are currently Tuesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., and we have run through on Sundays at 9:45 a.m. Consider joining the fun.

LIFT in November

Last month we introduced the notion of asset mapping, and then we practiced it as a congregation following a powerful worship service (refugees and world communion) on October 4.

When the LIFT team gathered (actually we did not gather because we met by phone) on the 12th, we were puzzled and a little confused regarding what we had learned from the exercise. We realized that the participants were puzzled and a little confused by the exercise, too. We're used to thinking of assets as something you can touch or something you attach a number to. "Persistence" as an asset may take some getting used to.

Trying to connect assets in a creative way ("connecting the dots", we called it) was fascinating. How to account for the numbers of us who identified an arts center as a likely place to put our energy? How to respond to Barry's observation that many of our proposed future options did not require us to be a church?

The LIFT team, therefore, is wrestling with the question of how to identify and deploy our spiritual gifts (another kind of asset) so that we demonstrate what God desires for us in Lincoln Park. Observers and pundits have noted the disconnect between the spiritual hunger that appears to be growing rather than shrinking (see spiritually themed blogs and books) and declining church membership and attendance. LIFT has noted the same disconnect. We go back and forth in our deliberations: "we are enough" vs. "this is not sustainable," "which swimming lane should we pursue?" And Beth's questions from a few weeks ago: "what do you receive from LPPC that you do not receive anywhere else? What do you give at LPPC that you do not give elsewhere?"

Discernment is hard work; but there are those flashes of clarity that represent milestones for us. And above all, we welcome the experience of "traveling together as God's joyful community." More reports from the trail next month.

-Bruce Hunt for the LIFT team

Redistricting? Who Cares? Maybe You Should*

You may have seen some determined-looking women at public events, standing with clip board and pen in hand. They were probably there to get signatures for a petition to change the way Illinois redistricts.

So, you ask, what is redistricting? Currently Illinois is divided into 118 State House districts and 59 State Senate districts. We vote for a State Representative and a State Senator based on the House district and the Senate district we live in. Each of these districts should have about the same number of residents. Because populations keep shifting, these districts must be redrawn after each 10-year census.

How is redistricting done now in Illinois? Under the Illinois Constitution, the General Assembly has the power to draw the redistricting maps. The legislative leaders of the party in power draw the maps—surprise, surprise--to protect favored incumbents so the party can win as many seats in the Illinois House and Senate as possible in the next election. Instead of the voters choosing the legislators, the legislators choose the voters they will represent through gerrymandering.

What does this have to do with social justice? As long as the party in power draws the map, their primary objective will be to protect the interests of the party in control and their incumbents. The result is that over half of the 2014 State legislative races (82 of 137) were uncontested.

When candidates are discouraged from running, there is little election competition. The result is limited debate on important issues. Voters lose interest. Fewer people vote. Democracy suffers.

What would the petition amendment do? It would establish a non-partisan, independent commission responsible for redistricting. It would contain clear criteria for the redistricting process, including protecting minority voting rights and respecting political

boundaries (like cities). It would be more transparent, providing for public participation and citizen comment.

So, how do we change this system? One way to change the Illinois Constitution is for voters to propose a change by a petition. A petition to amend the Constitution to have a more rational redistricting process must have almost 300,000 valid signatures. Even if the petition drive is successful, an opponent may go to court, challenging the amendment language as unconstitutional. Amendment supporters are confident it will survive a court contest.

The legislative leaders of the party in power draw the maps—surprise, surprise--to protect favored incumbents so the party can win as many seats in the Illinois House and Senate as possible in the next election

If these requirements are met, will the petition amendment be on the ballot in November 2016? Yes. It will become part of the Illinois Constitution if it receives the approval of a majority of the people voting in the 2016 election or 60 percent of those voting on the amendment question.

Who is supporting the amendment? A broad, state-wide, non-partisan coalition supports the amendment, including the BGA, the League of Women Voters of Illinois, the Illinois Farm Bureau, and the Metropolitan Planning Council.

Want to learn more? Go to <http://www.mapamendment.org/index.html> and, click on “Everything You Need to Know about Redistricting”—an engaging power point presentation <http://www.lwvil.org/redistricting.html> and scroll down to “Additional Information”

Interested in signing the petition? See Marianne Nesler or Gail Russell.

--Marianne Nesler

LPPC Walks to Fight Hunger

The 2015 CROP Walk had a large LPPC contingent. Ten walkers trod through the streets of our fair city, raising money and awareness. Claudia Gladstone, Barb Guibord, me, Gerri Mead, Gale Morgan-Williams, Marianne Nesler, John O'Donnell, Gail Russell, Nayoung Ha, and daughter Kaya all enjoyed a sunny Chicago Sunday. Unfortunately, Beth Buckingham-Brown had hurt her back and was unable to walk this year, but raised money and awareness too, in the days leading up to the event.

At the time of this writing, our church's totals have not been released by walk organizers, but it is estimated to be well above \$2000.00. Once again our congregation had equaled or exceeded the results of larger congregations. Not that I'm competitive.



The walk started at St. James Episcopal Cathedral Commons, at 65 E. Huron, went north on Wells, angled Northwest on Lincoln, then went right past our church! A

few of our intrepid band, (okay everyone but me and Gail Russell), may have bowed out at that point. Shhhhh!

Our efforts helped raise money to fight hunger and poverty locally and world wide. Local groups such as A Just Harvest, Presbytery End Hunger & Homelessness Mission are three local groups we helped to support. We hope to see you walking with us next year!

-Steve Hunter



Fall Festival

For me, the Fall festival was a bittersweet experience. Sure, it was perfectly organized: the small cups allowed for tasting the whole range of chili offerings. And there were a remarkable variety of tastes available. And the kids were engaged and creative in the decorating of the pumpkins for display on the front steps. The pies were elegantly displayed, lovely to look at and delightful to eat. To be sure, the system was much cleaner this year. Unlike past



Chili champions Luke, Rebecca and Michael Devlin

competition. Unlike the last two years, I was not able to declare myself the winner of the chili contest. In fact I did not even place in the top three.

How the mighty have fallen. The bar has been raised. New entries have challenged old (and perhaps complacent) performers. See the rankings in the sidebar. Therefore, LPPC benefited to the tune of almost \$400, which will go to Refugee One and to create more intimate space in the sanctuary.

-Bruce Hunt

years the counter of votes did not have an entry in the

Chili and Pie Cook Off Results

Chili

- 1st- Jalapeño Pepper Chicken Chili; the Devlin Family
- 2nd- Eat at Your Own Risk; Jerry Homsy
- 3rd- Turkey Calico; Gail Russell and Gerri Mead

Pie

- 1st -Teen Titan Apple Crumble; Drew and Alex Wilkerson
- 2nd- Apple Cranberry; Gail Russell and Gerri Mead
- 3rd- Homegrown Apple Pie; Dave Geilen

Votes in Dollars
Total Raised, \$394.85



Scenes from a fabulous Fall Festival!!

November Birthdays at LPPC

- | | |
|----|-------------------|
| 3 | Fernando Carbajal |
| 9 | Bruce Hunt |
| 11 | Ryan Jones |
| 14 | Walt Meyers |
| 16 | Zoe Prekop |
| 22 | Margaret Bailey |
| 22 | Steve Baker |
| 28 | Janet Kindred |

Welcome to the Journey!

It's our fall stewardship season, and we invite you to celebrate all the ways that we are "Traveling Together as God's Joyful Community." That's the theme we've chosen for stewardship this year because our congregation is definitely in the midst of "traveling time," We are doing a lot of searching. We are asking a lot of questions. We are intentionally seeking what God is calling us to do next, and we're trying to determine what direction that will take us next. What is unique about our journey is that we are traveling with a faith community that cares deeply about each other and that also has a lot of fun along the way. Just think about all the ways you have been surprised by joy at unexpected moments in our life together.

So we invite you to consider what your part will be in these travels of our joyful community. Are there talents and abilities that you are willing and able to share? Are there financial resources that you will contribute? As a fellow traveler, are there resources and support that you need from us?

As you think about all of that, please put these important dates on your calendar:

Friday, November 6: Stewardship packets will be mailed. Be sure to look for yours. Its contents might surprise you.

Sunday, November 8: come to worship to hear Barry Smith tell us about his commitment to LPPC.

Sunday, November 15: come to worship prepared to make your stewardship commitment. Also be prepared to hear Gail Russell's testimony about our church and its importance in her life. **THEN STAY FOR OUR CELEBRATION LUNCH!** No presentations. No talking, talking, talking. Just fun and a free lunch. Who could ask for more?!!!!

-Gerri Mead, for the Stewardship Team