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## Building on Relationships

LCI is all about relationships. From its inception, its philosophy, and through its growth, LCI has "happened" because of relationships. Described in a previous issue, the beginnings of LCI sparked from Bill Clark supervising a lay counselor, Barbara Giuliano, a newcomer to the Northern Virginia area. Watching Barbara work, demonstrating wisdom, gifts, and fruit in her counseling, stimulated the idea of training other lay persons to counsel. Together as partners, Bill and Barbara have dreamed, planned, taught, and watched as God has connected them with others who have who have desired continued personal growth and a readiness to be prepared to help others. It was the positive reception of the LCI Training that led to formal incorporation so that what LCI offers might be strengthened and widened to more people and churches.

A key figure in the development of the ministry of LCI is Cindy Hunter. She is presently a professional counselor in Maryland who also teaches counseling at Capital Seminary. She developed and oversees the lay counseling ministry at Mount Oak United Methodist Church in Bowie, Maryland.

Having received some counseling from Bill just after college, she was a part of a small group that Bill and Barbara led. "Bill and Barbara were powerful advocates in my life," Cindy stated. "Their influence and the group affected my decision to go into counseling." She attributes much of her basic theory of counseling to what she picked up from Bill Clark. "Bill impacted me in seeing that change happens in the context of relationships. I had a strong desire to give to others the help that had been given to me." To that end, Cindy left Virginia to pursue a graduate degree in counseling from Colorado Christian University.

George Anderson, Cindy's pastor since her undergraduate days, then recruited her to begin a counseling ministry at Mount Oak Methodist Church in Bowie, Maryland. As Cindy started her counseling practice there in 1996, she drew on Bill in a supervisory capacity. To her, it seemed only natural to again draw on Bill's knowledge as her church sought to begin a Lay Counseling ministry. "He



*A group of counselors-in-training gather after a recent "Level 1" meeting in Reston.*

is an incredible teacher, every bit as gifted as Larry Crabb and Dan Allender (she studied with both)."

Cindy describes the strength and emphasis of the LCI Training. Other approaches present many important truths, "but don't encourage counselors to really enter their clients story at the junctures where the pain is greatest. LCI is a Christ centered program that doesn't simplify the complexity of human suffering." Bill Clark's character has shaped the strength of what LCI offers. Cindy says of Bill. "He cares deeply and shares his own life, not just academic information. He presents a clear counseling model from a personal perspective. He lives what he speaks."

Mount Oak's current pastor, David Wentz describes Cindy and the Lay Counseling ministry as a real godsend. Having someone he knows and trusts well to whom he can refer clients is a tremendous resource. Having her recruiting, overseeing, and supervising a team of lay counselors has taken considerable pressure off him as a pastor and has brought more help to more people.

Genuine investment in others growth not only sees the person helped strengthened, but it gets passed on to others. Godly counsel helps a wounded person in pain not only cope in a more healthy way, but to connect with God's strength in weakness in a fresh way. This greater dependence upon God builds life, character, and wisdom that prepares and moves the growing person to connect with others in similar difficulty. The growth presses us forward in deeper relationship with God and others, "comforting as we have been comforted" (2 Corinthians 1). This is a hallmark of LCI, its history, its mission, and its approach.



## Our Mission

*The Lay Counselor Institute (LCI) is a non-profit organization that consults with the local church to design, organize, and maintain a ministry of care and counsel led by gifted and trained individuals. LCI helps train and guide believers into roles which serve members of the congregation and those outside the church. Through three separate levels of training, LCI provides the equipping and ongoing supervision for lay counselors, helping them continue to grow in skill and capacity to help others.*



*...the evening presented a fuller picture of the breadth and depth of the ministry*

## LCI Developments

### Church Relationships

LCI continues to work alongside four churches providing the main training vehicle for their care ministries, operating three lay counseling ministries. Plans are underway to begin lay counseling ministries at four new churches late this year. There are an ever expanding number of churches that are regularly utilizing LCI for training and preparing their members for care ministry. LCI is now connected with over 30 churches stretching from the Waldorf and Bowie areas through Northern Virginia out to Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Interest in using LCI is also being explored by several churches in Richmond, Virginia.

### Training

LCI has held three Level 1 Trainings thus far in 2004 for 85 participants. At present, four Level 2 Training groups have trained 32 people to prepare to be lay counselors. A new supervision group is beginning this November. LCI also led a training workshop for the Care Team Leadership of McLean Presbyterian Church and Grace Presbyterian, D.C.

### 2nd Annual Golf Tournament and Fund Status

LCI's Second Annual Golf Tournament was held recently at Raspberry Falls in Leesburg, VA on August 25. On a gorgeous day, 80 golfers enjoyed the golf, dinner, and prizes, two foursomes achieving the amazing low score of 13 under par on a very challenging course. As a fund raiser, the tournament exceeded its first year total by \$2,000, raising slightly over \$11,000 for LCI.

2003 was LCI's first full year of operation. It was a year in which LCI learned the pace of the development of the ministry, the realities of costs, and the task of raising funds. While falling over 50,000 short on an aggressive budget plan, significant adjustments were made to modify the plan and meet most of our necessary commitments for 2003. Having a track record has enabled the 2004 budget to be more carefully planned. As of November 1, expected income is short of budgeted expenses by a little over \$20,000.

### First LCI "Celebration"

After nearly two years of expanded operation since incorporating in 2002, LCI held its first "Celebration" in May 2004 over dessert at McLean Presbyterian Church. The gathering of LCI Board members, supporters, and graduates of LCI's two training programs was aimed at providing a chance for renewed connections for those that had experienced significant benefits from their expo-

sure to LCI. A history of LCI, its developments in recent years, and its vision for the near future was presented to the group. Small discussion groups met to dream and scheme of where LCI could go in the coming years.

The reunions were greatly enjoyed and many new ideas were presented that the LCI Board of Directors has been using in its planning and development for the ministry. Since many of those who attended had experienced LCI through one or two contexts, the evening presented a fuller picture of the breadth and depth of the ministry. Many felt a great benefit of the evening was a clearer and more integrated sense of the history, depth, and possibilities for the ministry.

### LCI Board Expansion

Flowing from strong feedback from LCI's Celebration Meeting came ideas on ministry development and expansion, business development, fund raising, and organization. The Board of Directors has considered and responded to the many great ideas by pursuing an expansion of the Board. This will provide for the development of a committee structure that will enable the organization to increase its manpower to tackle many of the challenges and development needs of a growing organization.

The Board will be increased up to 25 persons with 5 committees that will deal with ministry development, communications, administration, business and finance, and fund raising. These will be coordinated by an Executive Committee. Board expansion is well underway and should be implemented by its December meeting. This will provide for good positioning for the full year of 2005 to see many issues addressed and many initiatives pursued. It is encouraging to see the readiness on the part of many to commit time and effort to see the LCI ministry advanced.

### Important Dates:

#### Level 1 Training Dates:

- At McLean Presbyterian Church in McLean, VA
  - January 28-29, and
  - February 25-26, 2005

At South Potomac Church in Waldorf, MD

- April 22-23, and
- May 20-21, 2005

#### Level 2 Training

Beginning in December 2004 in Tyson's Corner, VA

Beginning in January 2005 in Bowie, MD

## The Development of Church Care Ministries

Each church is unique in its philosophy of ministry and its people which shape its way of expressing the caring ministry to which all churches are called. This issue we are featuring the lay counseling ministry at Mount Oak United Methodist. This church presents an example of a well developed plan that is seeing much fruitful ministry in the lives of its own members and is being used to draw others into its fellowship.

In the 1990's, George Anderson, Mount Oak's pastor, had a great sense of the need for a full orbbed array of care ministries. He defined a vision for that and pursued the personnel needed to bring it about. He pursued Cindy Hunter, a member of the church who had begun a counseling degree program at Colorado Christian University with Larry Crabb and Dan Allender. He "bugged" Cindy repeatedly letting her know that he wanted her to come back to the Bowie area to work with him and help begin a counseling ministry at Mount Oak.

Cindy responded to the opportunity at the church and to counseling in the Bowie area, since she knew of few Christian counselors in that area of Maryland. The relationship was established that Cindy was in private practice and was not on the church staff, but a close relationship was established with the church and her counseling practice. She was a main referral source for the church and was enabled to see clients in a house on the church property. The arrangement maintained a very close relationship between the church and a counseling practice but maintained separation regarding any liability for the church and enough separation from the church for the sense of confidentiality for clients.

A second phase of the counseling ministry was advanced from the start in using Cindy to help develop a lay counseling ministry at the church. Having relational ties to LCI, Cindy used LCI's training as the vehicle to prepare Mount Oak members for caring ministries. Mount Oak has yearly set aside some of its budget for lay counseling ministry to assist in the cost of providing LCI Level 1 and Level 2 Training for its members and to assist in other auxiliary expenses. Mount Oak's first folks went through the LCI Training starting in 1999, several of whom proceeded to the Level 2 Training and have been a backbone of the lay counseling ministry at the church.

George himself, along with his wife, took the LCI Training in 2001, when Mount Oak hosted the Level 1 Training for the first time. Already committed to the need for counseling, the training

served to enhance George's motivation to see lay ministry advanced. A variety of care ministries have developed at Mount Oak in the past several years, all led by lay persons. The church began ministries for Divorce Care, Single Mothers, Recovery (from various addictions), and First Place (weight loss) in addition to Lay Counseling.

George left Mount Oak to retire bringing David Wentz as the church's pastor. David has been excited about what has developed and has sought to enhance and advance each ministry. Having had many days in earlier pastorates filled with counseling, he has found he is not getting as many calls himself, taking much of the pressure off and allowing energy for the "normal" emergencies and short term counseling that he needs to provide as pastor.

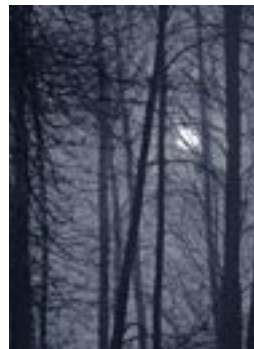
David sees his role as given from Ephesians 4 to "train and release the people" to do the ministry. LCI has been a "great way of equipping the saints." He sees the LCI training as a way to help train leaders for the many care ministries the church now has and for their roles as Youth leaders and Small Group leaders. David has elevated the visibility of the ministry at the church, introducing graduates of the training to the congregation and giving opportunity for them to give testimonies of what the training has meant to them. This sparked interest in many to attend the last LCI training Mount Oak hosted in May of 2004. Cindy Hunter states that the ministry has "taken on a life of its own" with the momentum and development of the ministry and expects it to keep developing. The visibility of seeing these "touched" by the ministry has drawn in others.

In all, Mount Oak has trained over seventy-five persons through LCI's Level 1. Twenty-three of those have gone on to complete the Level 2 Training and are using that preparation in various ministries at the church. At present, Mount Oak has ten lay counselors who actively participate in a supervision group led by professional counselor Cindy Hunter and are seeing clients. For Cindy the supervision is "compelling." She has been drawn in further by "the infectious enthusiasm of the lay counselors. They are eager to grow, meet with people, and see the Lord show up."

This is center of the church's ministry – to have those affected by the Lord's work in their hearts, prepared and invested in the lives of others to be a part of the work God desires to do in their hearts. LCI is committed to helping the local church equip its members to invest in this kind of ministry, shaped uniquely according to that local body's philosophy of ministry and its gifted leadership.



*"They are eager to grow, meet with people, and see the Lord show up."*



*This is center of the church's ministry – to have those affected by the Lord's work in their hearts*



*“Sometimes He is subtle like a bare breeze, a still small voice, a phrase that only those truly listening will understand.”*

## The Director’s Couch



### *How odd of God to choose the Jews...*

I was a just-graduated-from-college Young Life rookie and this was the memorable line from my first seminary class (in 1974), Old Testament Survey. The professor was a fascinating Jewish Christian who, having fled Germany during WW II, personally understood the meaning of the sentence.

When he said it in class, he meant that it was strange for God to choose, for His “people,” this race, which wasn’t really a race at all in the beginning. Abraham came out of Ur and, after hearing (the) God speak; he took his family and wandered toward what would become the Promised Land. He didn’t know where he was going; he went on promises and “faith” (which saved him) that he would father a nation.

By the time the Jews were large enough to be a “nation,” they were in captivity. It was in their frightening deliverance from Egypt that the nation met their God, the God who chose to meddle in their affairs. After receiving freedom, they received the Law of God and, after 40 years, they received the “promised land,” all of which they had trouble keeping (time and time again).

Abraham and the Jews did not choose God, God chose them. He did not choose them because they did something to warrant being chosen. God chose a tough, ragged and frequently victimized people because in them, in their exploits and failures and all of the in-between, it would be increasingly if sporadically clear that their God was different. Time and time again, individuals, nations and the Jews themselves could not help but notice the uniqueness of this God, the singular nature of His power and will.

Throughout the Biblical story God is maddeningly odd. It was odd of God to put one forbidden tree and one hateful enemy in the garden with the naïve first man and woman. Odd to flood the world (the first holocaust), to harden Pharaoh’s heart and set up the 10 (odd) plagues, to provide that odd food manna, to make the Israelites wander for 40 years! It seems odd to make Moses wait 40 years for his calling, to choose the least of Jesse’s sons, to save the evil Ninevites. Odd to tell one prophet to marry a whore and another not to mourn his wife’s death. Odd to impregnate a virgin teenager in a miserable small town. Very strange to come to earth in that helpless form, to become human at all! Odd to come at that time in history, to Israel, when it was again in captiv-

ity. (What is it with God and captivity?) Jesus’ disciples were odd (not one religious leader in the bunch!). Odd, especially to the disciples, that God was not interested in freeing Israel from Rome. (What is it with God and captivity?) Perhaps what is most odd, unbelievable to many, is that God would deal with the sins of the world by allowing humans to torture and crucify His one son. (And all before He made it clear to the disciples what and how they were to proceed!)

God does not think like we do. He does not do what we would do and He certainly doesn’t do it when we would do it. Sometimes He is silent (like for 400 years between the testaments!). Sometimes He is subtle like a bare breeze, a still small voice, a phrase that only those truly listening will understand. Sometimes He is global, loud, violent, and frighteningly real; like a volcano, a flood, a famine or an evil army marching on Jerusalem. It is as if He delights in being unpredictable.

His oddness is in my counseling office every day. God does not always stop abuse, even of infants. Instead, He (eventually) uses it. He does not predictably heal families and spread wealth or wellness around...he seems more enamored with the use of pain and brokenness. He still lets decades of wandering take place. He may not (seem to) answer prayers or honor efforts to alter wayward children or spouses, addictive habits, bizarre compulsions, or chemical abnormalities any more than He dealt with Rome or social inequity in the Gospels. (What is it with God and captivity?)

And though we now possess the Law and prophets, the Gospel and the Epistles, He still is short on answers or insights we desperately desire and believe we need. What He does provide is often paradoxical or vague, incomplete or lacking example, both for the individual and the Church. He still wants nomads. He still uses captivity. He still wants to make it clear that He is the God, that He is different (too strange to be a figment of human imagination), that He ultimately chooses us and we had better choose Him and then try to trust Him.

God is who He is. Good. Sovereign. Insistent. Always up to something; His will. And it will be done. It is part mystery and part revealed. It is merciful and just. And odd.

*The Lord will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim,  
He will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon –  
To do his work, his strange work,  
And perform his task, his alien task (Isaiah 28:21)*