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*"The results are a deepened community that prepares the church for outreach beyond the body of Christ."*

## LCI Beginnings

The Lay Counselor Institute began as a way to facilitate one lay counselor in one local church. The small, unplanned beginning put us on a path that allowed us to avail many churches of our present lay counseling program.

Those who find God's help in their time of need and work through their own struggles know at least one path to share. God instructs us in II Corinthians 1:

*"He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us." (The Message – Peterson)*

Supervising one lay counselor, Barbara Giuliano, along with a firm belief in the verse above, I began to wonder how to reach others. Who else would be able to come alongside? Barbara shared my desires. Out of our beliefs, we began by developing and teaching a Sunday school class in 1990 within our own congregation. People came faithfully every week for a year. This reinforced our thoughts. There needed to be a way to reach other churches and offer training.

The true inception of LCI occurred on a walk around Herndon golf course. One evening, my wife Debbie, Barbara and her husband Lou and I went for a stroll around the links. We began to dabble in thoughts about a format for a lay counseling training program. By this time, Barbara and I had worked together leading counseling groups and continuing supervision for the people she counseled individually. We were comfortable with our teamwork. So, on our walk, on about the 4th hole, we had a basic plan. On the 9th hole we decided Larry Crabb's model for lay counseling



had to be at the core of all we did. By the 13th hole, a name was chosen and mental brochures were printed. As we approached the 18th hole, we were leaping with excitement and all four of us were in agreement for our new adventure.

The first training weekend began over ten years ago with twenty people and over four churches represented. God has continued to bless our original desires. Others began counseling and our experience in several churches has helped to sharpen the model and the design of Lay Counseling.

More than ever, we are committed to the concept of lay counseling and lay care giving in the local church. At the very least, it encourages and equips honest and open fellowship and strengthens friendships within a congregation. The results are a deepened community that prepares the church for outreach beyond the body of Christ. Equipping lay counselors makes the church more available to address the hurts that are bombarding our schools, our homes and our world.

LCI is focused on developing partnerships with the local churches. We strongly desire to help train their members and assist leaders in establishing care ministries.

*Bill Clark, PhD. and Director*

## LCI Developments

### Church Relationships

LCI began 2003 with two main church relationships where LCI was the main training vehicle for the church's care ministries and lay counselors were being equipped. Two more churches committed

to use LCI this year. The Church of the Epiphany has called on LCI to train care leaders and help it organize a Lay Counseling ministry which began this summer. McLean Presbyterian Church began its partnership with LCI this spring and is enlisting LCI to help enhance its care ministries

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## 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.*

*... "I get very excited about what we can bring to the community outside the church in our area through the lay counseling."*

### *Developments – continued from page 1*

by reorganizing and broadening leadership, and is adding new ministries with Mentor Couples and Lay Counseling. Several other churches are sending members regular to LCI Trainings and are exploring a more formal relationship with LCI for the future.

## Training

LCI has held three Level 1 Trainings in 2003 for over 80 participants. Three Level 2 Training groups have been held in 2003, for 26 participants. We anticipate a new supervision group for lay counselors beginning in early 2004.

## Lay Counseling

Two churches have begun active lay counseling ministries this spring. Mount Oak United Methodist has launched its lay counseling ministry under the supervision of Cindy Hunter. Cindy counsels in Bowie, Maryland and is a member of Mt Oak. She has been instrumental in organizing and developing the lay counseling ministry and serves as supervisor for the active lay counselors as they counsel others. Church of the Epiphany in Herndon has also taken the necessary steps and began its lay counseling ministry this summer (see following articles).

## Funds

2003 has been a challenging year for LCI as we seek to expand the ministry. LCI held its First Annual Golf Tournament at Raspberry Falls in Leesburg, VA on August 27. Though rain shortened, it was a great day of golf on an excellent course. LCI was able to net a profit that has provided much needed operating expenses.

## Important Dates:

### Level 1 Training Dates:

At Reston Bible Church in Reston, VA

- January 30-31, 2004 and
- February 27-28, 2004

At Mt Oak United Methodist in Bowie, MD

- April 23-24, 2004 and
- May 21-22, 2004

### Level 2 Training

Beginning in February, 2004 on Monday nights.

## New Ministry Beginning at Church of the Epiphany

Twice our host for the LCI Level 1 Training in 2003, Church of the Epiphany in Herndon, VA has launched its lay counseling ministry. Epiphany member Martha Petersen, who attended a previous LCI Training and has completed both levels required to become a lay counselor began counseling this summer. The church finalized arrangements to establish and organize the new venture to supplement their existing lay caring ministry. They have included Martha on their church liability policy, and have a system to direct clients to her for counseling at the church. Martha attends bi-weekly supervision meetings with LCI for oversight for her counseling and further growth in her ability.

Rector Robin Rauh and Assistant Luke Lucas attended part of the Training and were very excited about the potential for the ministry at Epiphany. Luke's role involves him to a greater degree in care and counseling relationships than Robin, however, both are clear that their involvement can only be brief. "There are lots of new

people coming and they bring with them lots of needs. I'm not good at long term counseling. It's great to have folks trained who are gifted," Robin explained. Considering the long term benefits for the church, he said "It's great to have people really helped, and I get very excited about what we can bring to the community outside the church in our area through the lay counseling."

Assessing the training, both Robin and Luke wished that they could have attended the full training. Robin described the training as "very intriguing". "I really appreciated the humility of the approach. You were clear that we don't have to give answers, but to see and help others see what God is doing in their life."

Three other members completed the Level 1 Training, two of whom participated in the Level 2 Training. Further recruitment and training is being planned to prepare and equip others to join Martha in the ministry.

## The Making of a Lay Counselor

Martha Petersen is beginning to heed what she believes is God's call to counsel others. A process spanning many years, it was through her own counseling, mailings for counseling training that caught her attention, and encouragement from a church leader that brought her to begin to recognize that God was drawing her through the doorway into a counseling ministry.

"It's not something I would have chosen. You just have such a huge impact on someone's life. It is an overwhelming thought. This whole direction is scary to me." Yet, she is trained and is now serving as the first lay counselor at her church, Church of the Epiphany in Herndon.

It all began with her getting counseling herself. "It was one of the hardest things I ever did. It was life changing. I grew in my faith and in maturity." Then, she began to pay attention to some leading she believes God was orchestrating. She received materials on a counseling course and decided to begin some training. After completing this training she heard about the Lay Counselor Institute and completed both Level 1 and 2 Training through LCI in 2001. Martha still wasn't clear that she should actually become a counselor. She took the training with one eye toward using it but another for her own growth. "You can benefit from it as a person right away." Later, in a conversation discussing potential ministry roles with one of her pastors, Luke Lucas, she received his feedback that he saw her as a counselor.

Luke's encouragement has been echoed in other places. As a part of LCI's training, feedback is given to each individual about their style of relationship and their fitness for a counseling ministry. Martha was encouraged after both Level 1 and 2 from LCI's leaders that she had gifts for a counseling ministry and should pursue using them. She has found herself using the training "unofficially" with people she is seeing at church and other places. Finding herself used by God in their lives has encouraged her to pursue this calling farther.

Martha is very excited about the kind of training the LCI does. "Bill (Clark) and Barbara (Giuliano) are very gifted." Describing LCI Training, she said, "The training deals with our core selves, which is where it has to start. God is right in the center of it all. Of all I have read and the other training I have received, it is far superior to anything I have seen. With other training, I just got techniques. This is so much better."

She is excited about the potential for the ministry at Epiphany. "There are so many hurting people that could benefit. We can do a whole lot more than ignoring or placating each other." So Martha is committing herself to do as she takes the plunge to be available to counsel others, with humility and some fears but with much confidence that as God has helped her, using others in the process, He can use her in much the same way in the lives of others.



*"You just have such a huge impact on someone's life. It is an overwhelming thought."*

## The Director's Couch

### "The Impossible Dream"



One of the more common pressures that I see Christians alternately resisting and buying into is perfectionism. It comes in a variety of forms. One person's "definition" is like an inner voice that warns in certain situations, "Do it right. Don't blow this. Say and do the right thing – what Christ would do." Another is obsessed with neatness, order, checked off "do lists." Another's version centers on being the perfect parent; protecting their child(ren) from trauma, handling every unexpected or new situation correctly, rebuking themselves for negative emotions, etc. Yet another may struggle to let others do some task they feel they can or should do – quietly thinking they do it the right way. Another equates

perfectionism with spiritual disciplines – perhaps assuming that spiritual growth, like losing weight on a diet, comes with strict observance of the rules. The list could and does go on.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, the Word and the Church can be used to reinforce the notion of perfectionism. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), for example. Don't you feel pressure even as you read it? My mind reacts, "Man, the Lord really wants me to be perfect – or maybe He truly expects that, with all He's given me, I can be!" Never mind that I'm not sure what God means by perfection here. Never mind that most definitions of perfection contradict the doctrine of human depravity. Never mind that many of us would not agree about the definition of perfection either! We don't neces-

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*Director's Couch – continued from page 3*

sarily think about that – we just recall the verse (raising it to a command status) in a situation or relationship and imagine the Lord is reminding us that He expects perfection at the moment.

The Lord Christ is also used to reinforce this perfectionistic pressure. After all, He was perfect – and He's the other one we are to be like. But how was He perfect? Would His daytimer have checkmarks next to every item? Or does His perfection mean that He didn't even need a daytimer because He would never forget a name, date, appointment, face, or promise? Did Christ's perfection include His physical being? Did He ever stub His toe? Was He in perfect shape? Do you suppose He ever had seconds at a meal? How about neatness? Can you imagine Him leaving dishes for the morning? Committing a "fashion don't"? Dropping a piece of trash? How about manners? Did He always say or do the appropriate or acceptable thing? Was He ever rude?

Obviously I'm bordering on the absurd here (am I not?). Most of us don't imagine that's the perfection we're to focus on. We're more likely, I think, to say, "Well, Jesus perfection means He never sinned." Meaning? ... Purity of thought? Infallible discernment? Pure and positive emotions? Consistency in relationships? Absolute morality? Total control of His mind, will, and emotions (and every situation He was in?)

I can't help but think of the character of Lancelot in the musical/film Camelot. His "perfection" in thought, body, and performance drove others crazy. Did Jesus? Do you suppose the disciples ever felt like I feel when I see the perfect bodies on the health club commercials? Can you see them muttering, "Look at Him, He never goofs up. He never mishandles anything. Nothing gets to Him. I could never be like that." Or, conversely, do you suppose they looked on Him in awe, idolizing the way He was; "Man, is he together. That's how I want to be – cool, calm, consistent, clever. Kids love him, women love him, and no one stumps him. He can handle anything!" Today's version might be, "Look at him! He prays without ceasing, smells the roses, spends quality time with children, returns every call, overflows with joy and praise," etc., etc.

Obviously, I'm raising more questions than providing answers here. Or better said, I'm more aware of what the Lord does not appear to mean when He expects us to be perfect. Perfectionism, and all of the effort that goes into it, is not godly.

Its purpose can often be revealed as a strategy to a) control ourselves or our environment in a manner which appears justifiable, b) control the opinion of others (including God), c) create or maintain relational distance and safety, or d) provide a justification for avoiding other tasks, issues, situations, or relationships. Or, it is a means of reducing anxiety, relieving feelings of worthlessness, repressing emotions and thoughts, and enhancing a feeling of safety and security. It is motivated by fear, justified by a false belief that it is right or godly, and an evidence of our sinful desire to control our own lives. It is a stubborn determination to avoid the messiness of sin and life this side of heaven.

Still not convinced? Let me close with a metaphor. Imagine you are a truck – an 18 wheeler designed to haul huge loads over long distances. When you committed your life to Christ, you were bought by a new trucking company. The owner completely overhauled you. New engine, new fluids, new tires, new paint, etc. His logo is on the side, His cargo is inside. You are steam washed and waxed, shiny and impressive. Now what does He expect of you? To stay new, clean, and ready for use? To stop every 50 miles for a wash and wax, oil change, fluid and cargo check? To be so clean and impressive that other trucks on the road or at the truck stop will be painfully aware of their ordinariness or dirt or poor ownership? Or does He want you to just move, knowing that as you carry your load through all kinds of conditions that you will get dirty, break down, get lost or have to change plans? Doesn't He know that the business of hauling important cargo is messy, somewhat unpredictable, and highly dependent on the environment? Wouldn't He be more concerned with how you are running than with how clean or neat or together you look (or feel)? Of course, He would encourage time off, service checks, tire changes, an occasional wash and wax, etc. But the emphasis is on movement, with a belief that we can handle the messiness and carry the load. Love covers a multitude of sins (and imperfection).



*"Perfectionism, and all of the effort that goes into it, is not godly."*

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