

LANSDOWNE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Hull Memorial)

Monthly Church News

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October, 2006

Friends,

Disciples of Christ

What needs to take place in our life as a congregation that will make it a presence in the community and a light to the community that will

draw folks to us? These are not easy questions. We do worry about the future of the congregation, and we feel, sometimes, as if there might not be a very long future. Why we find ourselves in this situation, asking ourselves these questions, is no easier than the question about what we should do. It is little comfort that we are not alone in our situation. There are those in our midst, some who are among the most faithful and ready contributors, who have already experienced the closing of a church that was no longer strong enough to sustain itself. We should probably ask them to share with all of us what it was like.

Not only do such questions happen to other small congregations, but they are being asked by what were once called mainline denominations in America. It does seem as though something in the time and culture has passed us by. I know that our own denomination is struggling both at the General and the Regional level. A good friend of mine is a Regional Minister in the Midwest and he has been faced with reduced income and reduced staff.

There are a couple of things to note. We have made an impact on the community through Music on the Patio. As mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter, we need to push the contribution we have made. Brian had been able to take our identity into the community through his involvement in community groups and organizations and his own work with the Youth Leaders Group. We also cannot forget the outreach we have done with the Grand Army Day in the Spring of every year. We may need to think more about how we might make an invitation to the congregation through these contacts.

If we could begin now working on how we might recruit and transport children to the summer arts program at Christian Temple financed by Baltimore County, or see if we could open a satellite of the same program here at Lansdowne Christian Church. Of course we all know that this would take a great deal of work, and whether we have the time and energy to do it,

or whether we could recruit community leadership is not an easy question. Although, as I write this, it might be the case that we could link the work that Brian has done with leaders of youth activities in the community with this chance to offer a program in the arts in our immediate area. It is something to think about.

Do we need another sign along with the sign for the concerts, that welcomes community people to the church on Sunday mornings? It might make a difference.. This is something that we might want to think about. We could really play with the idea of how we can create signs of welcome to the neighborhood that are on display weekends. Let me know if you have any ideas.

We can't do much in terms of many new people until we are able to offer something for children that we are not now able to offer. None of us really knows how much Cynthia has provided us as a congregation, but in recent weeks she has been so hindered by health issues that if we had children come, we wouldn't be able to provide them anything. Even when Cynthia returns and is able to handle children, we would need to do some work on creating a small core of children that any new children might be able to join. Is there a way to recruit children for the community for a Sunday morning experience? We need to think about this as well.

We need to ask if there is any kind of program we could



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offer other, than Sunday morning, to which we could invite interested people in the community. Do we need to do a Bible Study on a weekday or weekday evening? The resource that I have told you all about called The Bible Workbench could very well be used in a Bible Study. We would need to have a core of us, and we would need to get the word out to the community. Think about it and let me know.

In all the above, we need to think about the role of mailings which helped us with the summer concerts.

We need to constantly think about our worship service, what we do and how we do it, and ask if it is an experience that touches people in a direct and profound way. Do we need to offer other things in worship than we do? If so, what would that be? Are there things we always do that we need to do differently? What? Think about this and let me know.

We need to make ourselves known in the community through the service we offer. We need to be more intentional about our relationship to SWES. We need to be more intentional about being open to the diversity of the Lansdowne community. How could we do this?

We need to do some things that we already do. We need to be very attentive to meditation and prayer. We need to meditate on this community of which we are a part even though many of us do not live here. This community needs to be part of our meditation and prayer. Maybe there is some program or activity that we could do that would make us more deeply aware and engaged in the Lansdowne community. What do you think.

We may also be interested in a program offered by an organization called Bridge. A couple of people from this organization were at our last Clergy meeting. They have a program of congregation conversations that make us more aware of who we are and what we need, and more aware of how to think about relations to our community. Bridge will host an introductory meeting on October 5 at 7:00 PM at Redeemer Episcopal Church on Charles Street in north Baltimore, near Roland Park. I would like for a few of us to go. We will talk about it in the After Worship Discussion Group.

Of course, one of the things I keep thinking about, is how much more demanding my job could become if we decided to go forward on some or all of these suggestions, or others.

Keep thinking and praying.Peace, Trent

Brian's Corner

Now that school is back in full swing and I am physically well, I have resumed helping out at one of the youth programs with which I work in our Youth Program Leaders meeting. This program is CAN (Community Assistance Network) Riverview, operated by Amy Lipstein. Located in one of the town homes in Riverview, a largely poor, African-American neighborhood bordering Lansdowne, CAN provides various sorts of assistance and education to the residents during the day, and then has an after school program for children and youth from about 2PM until 5PM, or even later. I have been attending on Wednesdays.

Though very limited in space and funding, Amy has an excellent program for these children and youth because she helps them with their homework, provides them with a safe and healthy after school environment, and strongly encourages good behavior while in her center. Almost all of the children who attend the program live in another town home in the complex. After they come home from school, they enter the town home, and are required to immediately sit at a table near the entrance and do their homework. If they do not have any homework with them, they are not allowed to enter. After Amy (and I, when I am there) help them finish their homework, they are allowed to get a snack, and can then go upstairs, where they can play board games or play on the center's computers.

Since each group comes to the program as they finish school, first come the high school kids at a little after 2, then the middle school maybe 30 or 45 minutes later, and then the elementary kids awhile after that. Maybe 6 or 7 kids from each age group will attend on a given day. Helping at CAN Riverview has been a rewarding experience for me, as I have seen that these are mostly intelligent kids who want to learn and do well in school, but they have difficult backgrounds and societal influences that often help prevent them from achieving.

One girl told me she wanted to be a doctor, and another a veterinarian. A boy named Ryan frequently has a difficult time focusing on his work; his head turns as other kids in the center create a disturbance, and I have to encourage him to look back at his work. But he always seems to want my help and has talents at math. He does not just want to get it done, but wants to do it well. There is unfortunately much prejudice against young, lower-class African-Americans, especially males. And these kids can be difficult, noisy, and rambunctious. But there is a light inside them. And by the grace of God, we may be agents to help let it shine.

COMMUNITY

Lansdowne events

Monday, October 2: Leadership Through Athletics will have a full day of activities for kids as they have a day off school. Any volunteers would be appreciated.

Wednesday, October 4, 11:30-1PM: BLR community meeting at Arbutus library.

Thursday, October 5, 7PM: BRIDGE informational meeting about how to work on housing issues in our community; at Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 5603 N. Charles St.

Monday, October 9, 7:30PM: Lansdowne Improvement Association meeting at St. Clements Hall.

Wednesday, October 11, 11-12:30PM: Youth Program Leaders meeting at Leadership Through Athletics.

Christian Temple events

Wednesday, October 18: FF&O is going to a matinee of "Kiss Me Kate" at Toby's Dinner Theater. With 20 or more people, we can get a special rate of \$33.40/person. Call Jane Byers at 410-869-8581.

Sunday, November 5, 5-7PM: Sunday Night Food and Fellowship, at the home of Betty Moore; 410-465-2030; 9375 Tiller Drive, Ellicott City. Subject: "What Would Jesus Drive (Part 2)?" Please bring a dish to share!

Sunday, November 5, 5-7:30PM: Sunday Night Live for youth.

CONGREGATION

AROUND THE CONGREGATION

SUMMER CONCERTS CLOSE

On Sunday September 10, we hosted the last concert of the summer Music on the Patio. This was the third year of the concerts. On September 10 there were several of us from the congregation who were not able to attend, but we had a good crowd and a lively one. We succeeded in some respects this summer in making contact with the community. The people who attended really seemed to get into the music of Annapolis Junction and seemed to have a great time. We need to work on a few things as we look towards next summer. We need to start early and work on how we do better in offering hospitality to those from the community who attend. We

have an excellent opportunity to introduce ourselves to new people and we have not really figured out a way to do that. Secondly, the concerts still provide us the chance to address the religious dimension of life we all share, but we have not figured out how to do this. I keep thinking that there is a way to do it, but have never been able to discover what it is. I know that it might have something to do with brief presentations at a break in the music, but what form it should take I don't know. I hope that over the course of the coming months we will be able to think about this matter and come up with some creative ideas. Another idea that we have toyed with but not been able to implement, was using the concerts as a time to introduce community resources to those who gather. We need to work on this over the months of the Fall and Winter as well.

PEOPLE IN OUR LIFE

We were all grieved by the sudden death of Todd Cepeda late in September. Todd was diagnosed with a serious illness in the Spring, but we thought we would have him with us longer than we did. He was able, after the treatment he was receiving had some results, to attend worship with us a couple of times. But then suddenly, he died. Todd's funeral was on Saturday September 23 at Central Baptist Church in west Baltimore. This church is the church of Todd's family and the minister who serves the church is a close friend to many in Todd's family. The church is an African American Church and most in Todd's family are African American. The service was filled with the passionate and moving music of that community, there was deep sorrow and soaring joy in the service that honored Todd. There were folks from Lansdowne Christian Church at the service and these two communities to which Todd belonged were able to meet as we mourned his death and celebrated his life.

Cynthia Neilson not only had to endure the loss of Todd, her companion of at least five years, but she is having to face her own health problems. She had to get permission from her doctors to leave the hospital where she was confined to deal with pressing health problems, to attend the visitation and the funeral for Todd. On Saturday night, after the funeral and family get together, she had to return to University Medical Center where she is still a patient as of this writing.

Tammy Hand had surgery on Monday at Harbor Hospital. The surgery went well, and Tammy was able to go home on Tuesday. She is recovering well. She would welcome cards and phone calls.

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**LANSDOWNE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(HULL MEMORIAL)**

BOOK CORNER OCTOBER, 2006

 Disciples of Christ	101 Clyde Avenue Baltimore, Md. 21227 410-242-4821 Web: www.erols.com/lanscc E-mail: lanscc@erols.com
	General Announcements: Tina Neilson at 410-923-6056 e-mail: neilson@erols.com News Letter Information: Submit by 3rd weekend of the month to: e-mail lanscc@erols.com (subject line: News Letter)
Contacts: Pastor: Trent Owings (410-444-9017) 5606 Rimmell Avenue, Balto. 21206 e-mail: trentowings@comcast.net Asst: Brian Adams (443)632-5218 e-mail: brianpadamsus@yahoo.com Organist: Randy Neilson (410-923-6056) e-mail: neilson@erols.com Custodian: Peggy Lowe (410-789-2990) Worship: Peggy Lowe (410-789-2990) e-mail: peggylowe@msn.com Property: Jerry Brewis (410-255-1784) Education: Cynthia Neilson (410-859-3390) Outreach: Vernon Neilson (410-859-3390) Membership: Lois Neilson (410-859-3390) e-mail: loisneilson@yahoo.com	

Tina Neilson recently introduced me to Mannette Ansay, a young American novelist who I had not heard of before. I have read two of her books, River Angel and Midnight Champagne. The books are very short, written in a spare and beautiful style, and filled with quirky and intriguing characters. In River Angel, a father and his young son flee their past life, and seek a new life in the father's hometown in Wisconsin. In the course of the novel, we are introduced to a number of characters who are brought vividly to life, but soon are left behind. The deep mystery of ordinary human life is expressed through a community story about their being an angel who lives in or around the Onion River that flows through the town. At the center is the sad, then tragic life of the boy we were introduced to in the opening paragraphs of the novel.

The whole story of Midnight Champagne takes place in a strange resort in another Wisconsin town that is hosting a large wedding. We are introduced to the bride, her family, her former boyfriend and all the children of families who attend the wedding. Again, Ansay is able to take us into the dark and mysterious places in the lives of ordinary people and she is able to make them, strange as they might be, people we come to care about. Again, this book is written with the same economy and beauty of River Angel. What captures me in these books is what captures me in most of the novels I like. The characters feel real, but more important they are disclosed to us as enormously complex and very deep and in touch with something mysterious at the center of life. Take a look at these books. They are really good.

Newt Shank continues his slow recovery at home. He has had a few difficulties, but is able to move around. Slowly, he is regaining strength. We hope to see them with us again at church in the not too distant future.

But Gerber had surgery the last week of September and was able to go home this last Wednesday. He will be recuperating at home. We wish him well.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Regional Assembly will be October 20th through the 21st. The Theme for the Assembly is Promises to Keep----Together. It opens on Friday October 20 at 9:00 AM and runs through Saturday afternoon. Friday afternoon are the interest groups. In the evening will be a gathering in which Dr. Dolores Carpenter, Professor of Religious Education at Howard Divinity School and serves Michigan Park Christian Church, will be the speaker. The business session of the Region will take place Saturday morning and Dr. Tony Campolo, professor emeritus at Eastern University will be the final speaker of the Assembly. We need to send official delegates and we need to send as many persons as participants as possible. The Assembly can be a time to get reacquainted with old friends, become familiar again with the resources of the Region and find our place within the larger church again.

HOME COMING SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2006

In looking for ways to touch base with former members and friends and perhaps encouraging them to participate with us again at Lansdowne Christian Church, we started talking, in the After Worship Discussion Group, about a Homecoming Sunday. We haven't gotten much farther than getting the idea, for the next few weeks in the After Worship Discussion Group we will be doing the hard work of planning an event to which we can invite old members and friends and perhaps some new folks as well. It needs to be a fine Sunday of activities, and we need to work together to decide what those activities need to be. Join us each Sunday for the next several weeks with your ideas on how we can make Homecoming Sunday a great day.

SUNDAY FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP AT CHRISTIAN TEMPLE.

The first Sunday of each month through till Spring, Temple will conduct its traditional program of Pot Luck and discussion for adults as the children do Sunday Night Live at the church. We at Lansdowne are invited to participate in the program for adults. The first session available to us will be the evening of the Sunday when this newsletter is published. Directions, travel and themes will be announced in worship and we will try to travel together to the pot luck and discussion.