



## Is There Life Behind the Bars?

by Lyndon Miller  
*We Care Ministries Renew Hope 2016*

Why are you here? That is a question that I heard many times throughout the week that Cletus Yoder and I spent in Alabama in late January. We left at 5 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, and went to Montgomery, Alabama, where we met up with other volunteers from across the U.S. to spend Monday through Thursday in 21 of Alabama's prisons. Of the 21, 18 were men's and 3 were women's. The goal was to have up to 12 volunteers on each team who would minister in one assigned location. You could specify your choice when you signed up, but you were not guaranteed that location. With the winter storm Jonas passing through just days prior to us leaving, it created travel problems for some volunteers, specifically in Pennsylvania. About 90 volunteers were unable to attend. During the Sunday morning session, We Care President, Don Metzler, asked Cletus and me if we would be willing to relocate to help build a team to replace one that couldn't make it due to the storm. After a short conversation, Clete's words were, "This isn't our work here. It's God's work. If he wants us somewhere else, then let's let Him decide where we go." So, we told Don to assign us where they needed us. Originally we were scheduled to go to Holman Correctional in Atmore, Alabama. After the Sunday morning session, Don told us that we would be going to Draper Correctional and staying in Montgomery. When we met as a "team" we discovered that our team was made up of only 4 people total, with only 1 who was originally scheduled to go to Draper.



Draper is a medium-security facility that houses 1200 inmates. We were just slightly outnumbered. Slightly! Our day typically started by getting up around 6 a.m. for breakfast, and then driving to a church where we would meet other teams in the same area for a worship and prayer time before leaving to go to our respective locations. We would usually arrive at the prison around 11 a.m., and then we got the opportunity to talk to them throughout the day and had a chapel time from 5:30 to 7:30. Arriving at the facility Monday morning, it just seemed right. The team was at peace and the inmates were very receptive to us being there. We were allowed to go through the

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## Vision and Shoes

by Keith Scheffel

On the evening of January 31, Steve and Phyllis Swartz teamed to give LCF an interactive and challenging presentation on the Conservative Mennonite Conference's vision for Leadership, Discipleship, and Partnership. LCF is a member of the Conservative Mennonite Conference along with 100+ other churches stretching across the U.S. and into Canada. The theme verse for the evening was Isaiah 52:7 "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news..."

The Swartzes took us through a whirlwind tour of the lives of Caleb, Jesus, and Moses, pointing out the ways these men exemplified Leadership, Discipleship and Partnership. They encouraged us to list take-away challenges for these three areas in which we can personally grow and be involved.

Part of the presentation included guessing the owners of three well-worn shoes they had on display. These shoes belonged to individuals within our conference who exemplified each area. The leadership shoe belonged to Mel Shetler—a conference leader who recently retired from pastoring a church in Goshen, IN, where he served for 40 years. The Discipleship shoe belonged to Naomi Byler—a mother of 12 children and pastor's wife who is passionate



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London Christian Fellowship seeks to develop authentic and passionate followers of Jesus Christ.



# Anticipating Easter

## A Message from the Pastor

by Reuben Sairs

Easter arrives March 27, 2016. I'm writing this article in early February for the March Connection! Now I'm going to make a connection. The church

calendar dates that are pressing on us while I'm writing happen today and Wednesday—today is Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), and tomorrow is Ash Wednesday, and thus will begin the season of Lent. Lent ends at Easter. Fat Tuesday is a time of revelry before the fun stops for Lent. On Ash Wednesday you may see some Catholic friends with ashes on their foreheads, perhaps in a sign of the cross—to show penance & grief. Don't helpfully suggest they need to look in the mirror or try to wipe their brow.

We (my family) lived in Mobile, Alabama, for 13 years. An old French city, Mobile considers itself the home of American Mardi Gras—not New Orleans. The Mobile holiday is a bit more subdued than the one in New Orleans, but it's still pretty wild. I worked downtown and was often caught in the revelry, which from time to time turns violent. One year I worked with the Mardi Gras street outreach and witness. It didn't work very well for me. Most people thought the street witness was spoiling the party. I'm not apologizing, but I didn't go back the next year.

Mennonites (the denominational world with which LCF is affiliated) haven't made much use of the church calendar. Will we celebrate Lent the traditional Mennonite way (ignore it), or will we do something that resembles a fast? We've (Vicki and I) done something for Lent before, and it isn't an unworthy spiritual discipline. It's another way to keep your eyes on Jesus. Lots of Christians observe some kind of Lenten practice. Incidentally, often I hear of Christians doing health-related things in the name of Lent—like Lent is a fine occasion for a weight-loss program or a time to lower your triglycerides. I think that shoots a little wide of the mark. Lent is to get you ready for Easter.

There would be plenty of room for observing more of the church calendar at LCF, as far as I'm concerned. The church calendar provides a rhythm that helps order the world, and even challenges the secular calendar. Let the world handle the chocolate sales at Easter. We're about the resurrection from the dead. We're talking about life and death, serious business.

You will be reading this a little late for starting any kind of Lenten fast, but it might help just to know that you are in that season right now. Looking ahead, it might help you to think of Palm Sunday—the Sunday before Easter, and Maundy Thursday—commemorating the last supper before Easter Sunday, and then when we come together Easter Sunday morning—you won't be racing to catch up and orient yourself and maybe artificially try to pump up some enthusiasm through the sugar rush, egg-stuff, and family obligations. Your mind will already be considering Jesus—who rose from the dead.

*"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."*

1 Corinthians 15:20-22



## Upcoming Activities

- March 6 - Potluck after the morning service
- March 20 - Hymnsing at Shiloh Mennonite Church, 7 p.m.
- March 24 - Maundy Thursday Service with Communion and Footwashing, 7 p.m.
- March 27 - Easter Brunch and Service

# Council Update

by David Perkins

*As we tread through the cold into March, it is exciting to know that warmer, spring weather is just over the horizon. Soon, there will be much more daylight available to us and we will begin planning on all kinds of fun outdoor activities. Speaking of fun activities, you must be wondering what the LCF Council has been up to lately and what you can expect in the coming months here at LCF.*

*First, the Council would like to thank every member of LCF who participated in the voting process for the 2016 Budget. We are thankful for the careful review and the projection of how church funds will be distributed for the 2016 year. We are also thankful to those in the Finance Committee for the budget planning.*

*Over the course of the year, the Council is hoping to develop a variety of fundraisers to go towards mission trips and other activities here at LCF. We have a few ideas brewing that literally put the "fun" in fundraising, so keep a lookout for announcements and we will let you know how you can help out. Also, we would like to invite any ideas from the congregation for fundraising, so feel free to bring those ideas to any member of the Council.*

*That is all we have for now, but as the Council continues to meet over the coming months, we will be sure to keep you up-to-date on everything we are working on. So, keep an eye out for your next LCF Council Update.*



CMC Vision...continued

about discipling others. The Partnership shoe belonged to Dan Byler—a single man who has dedicated 30+ years to missions work in Central America and Asia.

We concluded our evening by jotting down a favorite quote or two from various ones that were hung around the room and sharing one we picked within a small group. I jotted two quotes down. *"If God is your partner, make your plans BIG!"* by D.L. Moody. And, *"None of us is as smart as all of us,"* by Ken Blanchard.

We rounded out the evening with a good time of fellowship and pizza.



# Getting to Know the *Hochstetler* Family

*Interviewed by Theresa Hennis*



*On January 12, 2016, Myron and Mandy Hochstetler became members at London Christian Fellowship. Since LCF is such a small and friendly church family, chances are that you already know them; but whether or not you have officially met them, we hope that this interview with Myron and Mandy will help you to learn a bit more about them and their family.*

## **Where are you both from, originally, and how did you end up living in London?**

Myron: We both grew up in Minerva, Ohio. Mandy's family moved to the Plain City area in 1997.

Mandy: Myron & I had just started dating. He moved down in 1999, right before we got married.

## **How many members/children in your immediate family?**

We have five children. Meredith is 14, Vernon is 12, Maddie is 6, Vinny is 6, and Vaughn is 5. We have been foster parents for the last 9 years, so we often do respite for other foster families and have other children in our home.

## **What work do you do?**

Mandy: Myron is a self-employed contractor. He specializes in remodels and room additions.

Myron: Mandy is a stay-at-home mom, soccer mom, girl scout leader, volunteer at London Elementary, parent rep with Madison County Family Council and Madison County Advisory, a member of Phi Beta Psi sorority that raises funds for cancer research, and on the Parent Advisory board at Children's Hospital for the Audiology/ENT clinic.

## **What brought you to LCF?**

We wanted to be a part of a church where our children could be involved in Sunday school and youth group, and we had friends that attended LCF.

## **What are your favorite hobbies/activities?**

Mandy: reading, sewing, embroidery

Myron: hunting, attending sporting events

Both: doing things together as a family

## **Do you have a favorite bible verse, and why?**

Mandy: Matthew 5:14. It was the first verse I remember memorizing as a kid, and now that I know what the verse actually means...it's beautiful.

Myron: John 3:16. I love it because it says God loves me regardless of my flaws.

## **Who do you most look up to or who has influenced your life the most?**

Mandy: Rosemary Blakeslee, my one-time neighbor that I now claim as a grandmother. She's 88 years old, and when my babies were first born, for 3 years she would come over to my house every Monday and sit at my kitchen table and fold baskets upon baskets of laundry. She would listen to my woes and give wonderful advice. She now lives in Columbus, and I have the honor of taking her grocery shopping and out to lunch each week, and she's still my listening ear and still gives wonderful advice.

Myron: Uncle Joseph Overholt, a godly man that taught me most of what I know about construction.

## **What is something interesting that no one really knows about you or what you like to do?**

Mandy: I gave birth to Vaughn at home.

Myron: I was totally freaking out when Mandy gave birth at home - but everyone thought I was quite calm.

## **What do you think is the most important thing about a church family?**

Having like-minded people worshiping God, and being there for each other.



*Pictured from left: (back row) Meredith, Mandy, Myron, Vinny, Vernon, (front row) Vaughn, Maddie*

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On Saturday, January 30th, Harmony's friends and family enjoyed showering her with love and gifts in preparation for her upcoming wedding. Two weeks later, on a cold and snowy February 13th, Rob Devlin and Harmony Troyer were married at LCF. Congratulations Rob and Harmony!



*Life Behind Bars...continued*

dorms and talk to the inmates and give them multiple tracts and other books that were previously approved. Even on our first day there, we were able to see the "inside" church and the life that was already there. We were so blessed to see and interact with many believers who came to know Christ behind the bars. Some had incredible testimonies, and a few said that they are convinced that God had allowed them to be in prison so that they would have the opportunity to know Him.

On Tuesday we were given the privilege to go into segregation, aka "the hole", "hell", "the pit". Let me just say this, it is not for the faint-hearted. The sounds, the yelling, the kicking on steel doors was gut wrenching. The cells are solid concrete walls with narrow hallways and steel doors with a small tray opening about 24" off the floor. This was basically the only means of communication. Most of those in there were very receptive to us. We had multiple opportunities to pray with them and even had the opportunity to lead one to Christ through the small opening.

Tuesday evening I had the privilege to speak at chapel and to share what God has done in my life. I shared how God loves to use our past mistakes as building blocks for others if we allow Him. Wednesday and Thursday seemed to fly on by, and soon it was time to head home. We spent the first several hours on the trip home just reminiscing on the week about the many connections we made, and the opportunities that we encountered, and our desire to go back again. Yes, there is life behind the bars.

Again...Why are you here? Where are you from? Why would you drive that far to come here? The answers were simple. We are here to share with you what God has done in our lives. Without God in our lives, this would be pointless. God did not design any one of us to throw us away. He designed and created each one of us for a purpose. Society will throw many people away because of their past. And yet, God still pursues and has a plan for each of us. Sometimes we are like those in segregation. We build walls around us so others can't see us or the sin we are trying to hide. Inside we are screaming and begging for God to reach us. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to hear that call from God asking them to be willing to go somewhere, may it be a distance or just out of your comfort zone. To sit on the floor in that narrow hallway. To share with someone through that small tray opening to give them the tools to break down those walls. To share with them that God does care and that He hears. Why are you here? What are you doing? Is God calling you to step out and to walk with Him and to allow Him to use your past as stepping stones to build His kingdom?



*Cletus, Don, and Lyndon*

*Hochstetters...continued*

**What do you think is a key to being happily married and a happy family?**

Communication, laughter, listening ear, and loving each other through thick and thin (literally).

**What one piece of advice do you wish you could give newly married couples?**

Don't go to bed angry, stay up and fight. In all seriousness, though, take care of the problem so you don't go to bed angry.

*We want to thank the Hochstetters for sharing their story, and we hope you get the chance to meet them and welcome them to LCF. We are glad they have joined our church family, and we look forward to getting to know them even better.*

*The LCF Connection*

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What did you think? If any of the stories in this Connection sparked an idea or opinion you'd like to share, email us at [connection@lcfweb.org](mailto:connection@lcfweb.org). Editors: Doris Swartz, Trish Eaton, Theresa Hennis, and Amie Smith  
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