

The LCF Connection

November 2017

A Thankful Heart

By Doris Swartz

It has been one month since Rob and I returned from our sabbatical, which included a 10-week trip out West. I don't think a day goes by that I don't think about how thankful I am for that incredible gift! We are so thankful to God, to London Christian Fellowship, and each person who blessed and provided for us in many different ways! Here are some of the specific blessings that come to mind.



We are thankful for:

- LCF providing us with those three sabbatical months.
- Those who prayed regularly for us, especially for our health, safety, and restoration.
- Each person who helped to cover our pastoral and administrative responsibilities.
- Safety as we drove and hiked a lot of miles.
- Individuals and ministries who donated lodging and meals.
- The pastoral care and helpful input that we received at the pastoral retreats we attended.
- The many scenic places we were able to visit and be awed by our Creator God.
- A rekindled love in our marriage and our relationship with God.
- The ways God spoke to us through nature, his Word, various books, etc..
- The rest that God provided; the way he restored our souls and renewed our minds.

This list is quite easy to make and could go on! We will treasure the experience, lessons learned, and memories for the rest of our lives! However, we all know that the list of things we are thankful for does not always come so readily. I am aware of many difficult situations—people dealing with pain in various forms, problems that seem to have no solution, broken relationships, tragedies that are hard to understand—reminders that life can be very hard and painful as we live in this broken and fallen world. I admit, it's a lot harder for me to have a thankful heart in the midst of these types of situations.

Continued on page 3...

Inside this Issue

A Thankful Heart	1
Fall Harvest Party	1
Where is God in Natural Disasters?	2
Painting Party Fundraiser	2
Elders' Notes	3
Everyday Life, Here and Abroad	4

Fall Harvest Party

With temperatures in the 40s, it was a perfect evening to enjoy a big pot of chili and all kinds of delicious fall foods. About 60 people gathered at the Headings barn on Sunday, October 29th, for LCF's annual Fall Harvest Party. There was a lovely hum of chatter all evening as people enjoyed the opportunity hang out together and catch up. Thanks so much to the Headings and the Fellowship Team for hosting the evening!



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

Where is God in Natural Disasters?

A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz

If God is good, then why does he allow hurricanes, tornados, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc.? It's a good question and one that is not easily answered. Neither will we come close to solving it in this short article. ☺ But here are a few things to think about.

(1.) God's judgement?

Whenever a disaster happens, inevitably there is a proclamation by someone that it was God's judgment on those people. We heard such language after 9/11 and after the earthquake in Haiti, for example. The Old Testament has many stories of God judging people and also of prophets warning people of judgment. God caused a flood to judge mankind in Genesis. The Red Sea closed over the Egyptians and drowned them. Later on, the ground opened up and swallowed a group of people who were rebelling against Moses. God caused a storm to threaten the ship Jonah was on. It's true that these things could happen today, but who are we to say? In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus refers to the killing of some Galileans by Pilate and the falling of a tower on some others. Was this some special judgment? Jesus says, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

(2.) The earth is cursed

God said to Adam as part of his punishment, "Cursed is the ground because of you." (Genesis 3:17-19) What does that mean? We don't know many specifics of what this meant, but God gives us some clues. "In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life...Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." What was the earth like before and after this curse? Maybe a summary statement could be that the earth would resist mankind in many ways and make it difficult for them. Does this mean that earthquakes, hurricanes and other disasters appeared after the fall? Nobody knows for certain, but it's possible.

It's also possible that before the fall, all of these natural phenomenons existed but mankind may not have been affected by them. Maybe God would have always protected them before they turned to Satan's influences. Maybe they were somewhat indestructible and could fly through a hurricane or survive an earthquake. ☺ It's interesting to theorize, but we simply don't know how it could have been.

What we do know is that things changed dramatically on the earth after Adam and Eve sinned. In fact, Paul says in Romans 8:19-21, "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set



free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Paul also says that all creation "groans" in anticipation of when it will be freed. Creation is not the way God made it in the beginning. It is "broken" and waiting for redemption just as we are.

(3.) Acts of God?

As terrible as natural disasters are, they are a reminder to us that we are not in control. Our society calls them "acts of God," essentially recognizing that there are powers in this world that are far beyond the reach or control of mankind. If you watched the coverage of hurricane Irma, you saw the endless lines of traffic streaming north to escape the hurricane. You saw people boarding up homes in hopes of preserving at least some of their possessions. These natural phenomenons can remind us of the fact that there is only one who is sovereign and in control, and that is God. Scripture is replete with verses comparing the vastness of God to the finiteness of mankind. We know from scripture that God is sovereign and has complete control over all of creation.

So after all that...why does God allow these disasters to happen? We still don't ultimately know. My guess is that natural disasters/phenomenons always existed. They are a part of creation that help us understand the vast power of God. I believe the fall somehow changed how they affect us. I believe God deeply cares about each person who suffers in this world, no matter what the tragedy might be. In some cases, he intervenes miraculously and in other cases he seems not to. Who can say exactly what he is doing? He is an all-powerful God who is not to be trifled with...but he is good. And someday we have the promise that everything will be put right again as it was in the beginning, and that includes creation itself. We all look in eagerness for that day! In the meantime, he has placed his children here to show his love and compassion toward all who are suffering. Consider being a part of an MDS (Mennonite Disaster Service) team or something similar to help those who have suffered from a natural disaster. Check with Cletus Yoder or Kevin Duncan about opportunities. ■

Painting Party / Youth Fundraiser

Saturday, October 28, 2017



Thanks to Karla Knief for helping these ladies to paint so many beautiful fall scenes and thanks to the LCF youth group for hosting the creative fundraiser and providing childcare and delicious food! For more pictures see LCF's Facebook page.

Elders' Notes

by Donna Sauder

It was so good to meet back at the home of Rob and Doris on October 17, 2017. We missed them while they were gone but were excited to share in all that they have learned. Rob gave us a glimpse into their 3-month sabbatical. They enjoyed time at several different retreats learning about rest, understanding themselves, Sabbath, and healthy ministry practices. As they took time to disengage from ministry, they found their vision and ideas for ministry returning. They were left in wonder and awe of the beauty, majesty and mystery of God's creation as they sought out solitude in nature. They found a renewal of their marriage as they focused on ministering to one another. Their time with the Lord was improved drastically as they found new rhythms of rest, Bible reading, prayer, fun, and work. They are excited to be back and put into practice all that they have learned and continue to learn about shifting their priorities and making regular spiritual renewal time a priority so they can operate from a place of fullness. We at LCF have also learned that there are responsibilities that Rob and Doris have taken on that we should be doing. So we move forward as a congregation to grow and to make changes that will glorify God.

Can you believe that Christmas is right around the corner!? LCF Family Christmas will be on December 24th this year. Does anyone have any ideas for ways to make this a special time for our congregation? The children at LCF have already begun practicing for our children's Christmas program being held on Sunday evening, December 17th.

In preparing for the new year, we have several leadership positions that need to be filled. Jerry Sauder's one-year term ends December 31. He and Donna have plans to attend the Olentangy Mennonite Church in Columbus, beginning in the new year, so continuing as an elder for another term is impossible. Dave Stewart's term on the Council is also ending. After taking nominations from the congregation for each position, the elders and council will process the nominations and then take names back to the congregation for an affirmation vote. We also have need of a new benevolence team leader since Jennifer Cooper has moved to Columbus and will no longer be available after the end of the year.

Also in the new year, Rob is planning a licensing service for the Olentangy Mennonite Church. He will license Andrew Sauder and commission the leadership team of this new church plant.

You have noticed by now that we have been trying some new things with our Sunday morning prayer time. Instead of having an open mic available for requests, we are giving several other options. You are welcome to write your praise or request on the communication card and the moderator will include them in his/her prayer at the end of the service. If you would like to have someone pray with or for you individually, you are welcome to come forward at the end of the service, where we have 2 men and 2 ladies available to pray with people. We will continue to send an email out each week with the submitted prayer requests and praise items. We hope you will feel comfortable using these methods to bring your concerns to the Lord. We want to be loving and caring in bearing one another's burdens and bringing our praise to the Lord. As always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback.

We will meet for our annual Elders' retreat in Plain City on November 10-11. If you have any concerns that we should discuss, please talk to one of us before that date. We appreciate your prayers. ■

A Thankful Heart...continued

But, we know that God instructs us through the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to "give thanks in ALL circumstances, for this is God's will for you."

I was challenged this past week as I read a book by Larry Crabb titled, "Shattered Dreams." He says:

"We will not encounter Christ as our best friend, as the source of all true goodness, as the One who provides the sweetest pleasure to our souls, until we abandon ourselves to Him. And full abandonment, real trust, rarely happens until we meet God in the midst of shattered dreams, until in our brokenness we see in Him the only and overflowing sufficient answer to our soul's deepest cry."

I think that if we truly understood how God uses the really hard and painful situations in our lives to draw us closer to himself and give us his greatest blessings, then maybe those hard and painful times would rise to the top of our list of things we are thankful for.

So, whether it's the evident blessings of our recent sabbatical rest, or the challenges we face as we return to daily life and ministry, I want to grow in learning how to see God's goodness and thank him in each and every situation. I want to have a heart that

*Give
Thanks
to the Lord,
for he is good.
His love endures
forever.*

Psalms 136:1

overflows with gratitude when God's good gifts are clearly evident to me and a heart that trusts him and his sovereign plan enough to sincerely thank him through my times of questions and tears.

I encourage you to consider writing out your own gratitude list. Look for the ways God is showing you his gifts and goodness—from the practical to the intangible, from large things to the small, from things that are easy to recognize as "wonderful," to the difficult times that help us to experience God in a deeper way. May each of our hearts overflow with thankfulness—and not just in November, but every single day of our lives! ■

*Note: We will be having a
Thanksgiving Celebration
at LCF on Sunday, November 19. Come prepared to
share some of the things you are thankful for.*

Upcoming Activities	
Nov. 10 - 11	Elders' Retreat
Nov. 10 - 12	Drama at RBC
Nov. 27	6:30 p.m - Caroling at London's Old-Fashioned Christmas
Dec. 10	RBC Choir at LCF
Dec. 17	Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 24	LCF Family Christmas

Everyday Life, Here and Abroad

by Molly Rosati

“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” Psalm 96:3

We write our LCF Connection Newsletter to keep our congregation updated about what’s going on with our church family, here and abroad. We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter together, as a family. We bring you this article about our missionary children in Thailand and our children right here at LCF to encourage conversations about what matters to them. Be thinking about how you can pray for them to share Christ’s love as they go about their daily routines

Take a moment to show these photographs to your family and friends. Have your child, your niece, nephew, or any child in your life whom you care about read this with you and share their answers to the questions we posed to our volunteer subjects – What’s your favorite breakfast? Tell us about a pet. Are you in a club or on a team? What’s a chore you often do?

Knowing that our missionary families’ day-to-day lives are not that different from our own might help us understand that whether here or abroad, we can make a difference wherever God places us. ■

Si loves running! He ran cross country and track and field at school this past year. This summer he runs at the park in the early mornings with his dad.

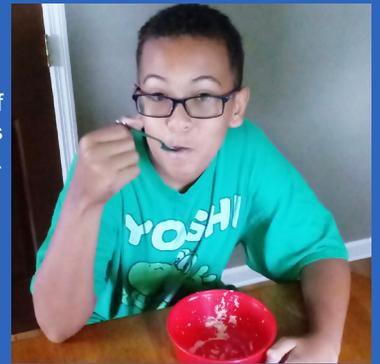


Sports / Clubs

Kayleigh sewed this sundress and bolero jacket in 4-H and took it on to the Ohio State Fair.

Breakfast

Derek fixes himself Frosted Mini Wheats in the morning.



Si is having rice porridge for breakfast, called jok. It has pork meatballs in it, and Si enjoys it with soy sauce. His review: “I normally love it but today it had too much ginger.”

Evan makes his bed and cleans his room most days.

Chores



This past summer, Claire went to Laos for a week to babysit Lukas. She loved this job!



Eliza with her pet African Spur Tortoise, Eltrut (turtle backwards). He’s munching a favorite food, cactus.

Pets



Janelle and Kristen holding Oreo, who “unexpectedly” adopted their family last year with pleading meows at their Grandparents’ doorstep. “Although he regularly hangs out with cat friends and neighborhood children, he frequently springs back to us for cuddling and playing.”

The LCF Connection

A monthly newsletter designed to enhance communication at London Christian Fellowship

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 secretary@lcfweb.org. Editors: Theresa Hennis, Amie Smith, and Doris Swartz
If you prefer that we do not use photos of you in the Connection, you may opt out by emailing us at connection@lcfweb.org.