

The LCF Connection

February 2018

New Members

We had our annual "Celebrate the Church Sunday" on January 14th. During the morning service we received Grace Raber, Jeff Stanforth and Pam Stanforth as members. We welcome them to our LCF Family and encourage you to learn to know them. ■



Happily Ever After...

by Becky Hostetler

Marriage. Ideals. Happily ever after. For anyone who grew up watching Disney princess movies, the heroine always overcame immense obstacles and was then rewarded with her true love and they lived happily ever after. Why, then, is real life so different?



While Phil and I were dating, we were both in college. I lived on campus and usually came home on the weekends. On my Sunday evening drives back to campus, I often thought about the cozy, well-lit homes I passed. I was so looking forward to having my own home with Phil someday and not being out in the cold dark driving back to school. In all of those happy thoughts, I never once imagined any challenges - only marital bliss. We were both Christians, we grew up in the same community (actually on the same road), we loved each other, and we could hardly wait to get married. What could go wrong? Well, for over 18 years now I have shared a cozy home with the love of my life, but it has not always been easy.

For one thing, we were/are two selfish people. The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* No one knows you better, and no one sees the good, bad and ugly more than the people you live with! Selfishness creeps up daily, but one area of selfishness that we had to overcome early on as a couple was where to attend church. We were both very committed to the churches that we had grown up in. Our parents and other family members attended these churches, and neither of us was willing to leave. It may sound silly to some, but this was a huge issue for us. After two long years of discontent, a counselor encouraged us to put our marriage before ourselves and find a new church in which to start over. This was a sacrifice for both of us for the good of our marriage. That is how we ended up at LCF.

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Ready to Read A New Book?

by Linda Schlabach

There are lots of possibilities in our LCF library waiting to be checked out with our new digital check-out system. If you have tried to use the new system in the past and had difficulties doing so, we would like to encourage you to give it another try. Thanks to a new online server and those who made it happen, the library computer check-out system runs smoother than before. So step into the library, select an inspirational item to read, to watch, or listen to, then simply swipe your library card under the ever-ready barcode scanner (or type in your library code). Watch for your name to appear on the screen. Then scan the LCF library barcode on the item that you would like to check out. It's as simple as that—and you are all set to go!



We hope that you will accept the challenge to try out the new library check-out system so that you can make the most of this valuable resource! If you have any questions at all or if you need a library card/code just talk with Linda Schlabach, Janelle Schlabach, or Sammy Waweru. We would be glad to assist you in any way we can. ■



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



Liberal or Conservative?

A Message from the Pastor
by Reuben Sairs

What do liberal and conservative mean when you are referring to Christians? These two terms are thrown about, you might say, liberally. They are hard terms to manage. In the church we refer to liberal and conservative theology. In most ways, this has almost nothing to do with politics or how the terms are used in contemporary discussion. Just a word on that discussion. My free pastoral advice is that Christians should avoid owning either label, or attaching it to someone. The terms can be meaningful, but more often now, if my Facebook newsfeed and perusal of the opinion media are correct, depending on your perspective, everything that is wrong, crooked and perverse belongs to the other label. If you're a conservative, liberal is shorthand for evil. If you're liberal, conservative is a shorthand for everything wrong. But it gets ridiculous. For example, it seems to me that moral failure is equally distributed in both camps, along with some other human traits like inconsistency and incompetence. Maybe those very human and very universal flaws, sins and shortcomings are the "enemy" so to speak, and aren't necessarily generated out of the human heart based on our political or social persuasions. We hate to see ourselves in the moral mirror.

But back to religion—what I really care about! What does it mean to be conservative, theologically? When I was younger, there was really only one test of this, and that was your beliefs about the Bible. Those who believed (I'm still one of them by the way) that the Bible was inspired at the level of the words chosen, and was without error, were the conservatives. They varied in their interpretations, and didn't necessarily assume they were perfect, but they did agree on what they were looking at—a Bible inspired by God through his Holy Spirit who led the writers to specific words and expressions. It was largely assumed, probably a bit naively, that everyone then arrived at orthodoxy—the Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, etc. Practice was thorny, but it wasn't necessarily charted out on a liberal/conservative axis the same way. At least that's how I remember it.

A theological liberal was one who thought the Bible was uneven—a document about inspired events, but inconsistent in its understanding of them. A Christian had to judge the scriptures like any ancient document, and use the best tools and understandings of modern science, academics and contemporary thinking to find the gems embedded in a very human report. The Bible was especially unreliable in whatever rankled the modern mind most at the time. Early on it was miracles, the virgin birth and angels. Later it became gender, sexuality and the issues that are on our plates today.

In this sense I'm a conservative. I believe the Bible speaks timelessly and beyond the cultural confinements of its own era. It still speaks, guides and brings God's light to our very good and pressing questions.

At LCF I hope we don't confuse the political and religious use of the terms liberal and conservative. Christians are free to apply their minds and come to their best understandings in politics and on social issues. I recommend stepping back from politics, but few follow. In church, I preach, teach and try to live by a conservative approach as defined above. But you probably won't hear me say it, I'd rather just explain myself and not use those terms. Romans 14:4. ■

Elders' Notes

Deepening our Prayer Life

by Vicki Sairs

When the leadership team met on January 9, we had some empty seats: Donna and Jerry Sauder have moved on to Olentangy Mennonite Church, and Doris was recovering from carpal tunnel surgery the day before our meeting. It seemed a little lonely around the table!

After opening with prayer, we discussed the question, "What do we do with prayer time on Sunday morning?" Our goal is to deepen our approach to prayer in the service. Although personal requests and a time of praying for them are good things, we want to avoid being one-dimensional in our gathered prayer life.

Praise, thanksgiving and confession also belong in our prayer times, as well as intercession that goes beyond the personal: we can pray for the community, for our nation's leaders, for our culture, for the global church, for the lost, for international situations that cause great suffering. And we can pray for our own spiritual development and character. So many ways to go, but to get there, we have to be intentional. We are hoping to encourage our moderators and worship leaders to think about this when planning for Sunday morning, so they can model some of these approaches and guide the congregation in practicing them.

If you have ideas or thoughts on this, please let us know. And please be patient. We know we won't find a solution that makes everyone happy—we come from different backgrounds and have different preferences. But together, we can help each other grow in prayer, and that's a worthy goal. ■

Chelsey's Shower

On Sunday, January 7th, the ladies and girls of LCF enjoyed a delicious luncheon, guessing baby food tastes, and showering Chelsey Williams with gifts for her new apartment and baby. Little Logan arrived 2 weeks later, on January 21st. ■





Have you seen the recent Subway advertisements about Mr. Reuben meeting Miss Vickie? We thought it would be good to take this opportunity to learn how our very own Mr. Reuben met Miss Vicki.



Happily Ever After...continued

Another area of struggle was expectations. Tasks that my dad did around my house growing up, Phil's mom took care of instead. To add to this, early on in our marriage I was in a young married women's Sunday School class. The teacher meant well, and thought it would be a great idea to study the Proverbs 31 woman. At the time I was teaching and pouring hours into preparation and grading. I didn't have time to keep up with the cleaning, we ate whatever we could scramble together, and the idea of incorporating all of the wonderful things that Mrs. 31 did was overwhelming!

Finally another area of struggle was money. Money is such a tricky thing to have a healthy view on. We need it to survive, yet "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). This was an area I did not think we would have trouble with. My dad taught me the value of a dollar; I felt I was conservative with my finances. Well, compared to Phil, I was the big spender! So, we've had some challenges along the way.

Even though marriage is not the fairy tale I had dreamed about, God has been showing Phil and me how to live out the vows we made to Him and to each other on our wedding day. Some of the things He has taught us include: Wives respect your husbands (Ephesians 5:33). Speak highly of him to others, and tell him how proud you are of him. Husbands, love your wives (Ephesians 5:25). Take time to truly listen to her. She needs to feel cherished and valued! I remember my mother saying that if a man would love his wife the way Jesus loves the church, the wife would be falling at his feet.

Another practical thing I've learned over the years is to try to keep stress to a minimum. Easier said than done with kids, work, and chaotic schedules. I've found if my stress level is minimal, then it carries over into a more positive home life. So I've had to learn to let some things go. It is helpful for me to ask myself, "In the big picture of life, is this really important?"

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with one of my favorite verses: "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) If you are married, you will certainly encounter many challenges. Keeping this verse in mind will help you to love your spouse the way God intended you to. None of us will ever have a perfect, fairy-tale marriage, but by God's guidance and grace, we can work toward that happily ever after. ■



Conspiracy Theory

By Vicki Sairs

When I told one of my professors that Reuben and I were going to get married, he was pleased. "Marriage is like a conspiracy," he said. "It's the two of you against the world."

His words have been proven true over and over in our life together. I know this doesn't fit the pattern we're taught in marriage seminars; God has to be in there, holding it all together. And that's true. Yet the idea of being co-conspirators is also useful, rich and apt.

I first met Reuben when he was 17 and I was 23. That sounds pretty dicey, I know. But what can I say? We fell in love, surrounded by Christians who knew us and loved us and helped us along. Our families were skeptical at first, but never mean. They wanted what was best for us.

Now, so many years later, I look back and think, ha! By God's grace, truly, here we are, still in love, still conspiring on the project that is our shared life and legacy.

We were asked to "give a little insight into [our] relationship and what makes it tick, the fun things, the struggles, and the rewards of a committed 'couplehood.'" Whenever you start looking back over decades, you run so many risks, especially if you tend toward the neurotic. Did this really happen that way? Did we really do that? Am I really such a mess? But I'll give it a try.

Our relationship and what makes it tick: Stubborn love, private jokes, a shared sense of what matters in life and a willingness to sacrifice in order to pursue those things; honesty about who we are, how we can hurt each other, and what we can and can't do to change that; a clear sense of the bigger picture—we are not our own, we belong to each other and to God.

The fun things: Being with each other, loving ethnic food and foreign languages, traveling; delighting in our sons and their wives and friends; supporting each other's artistic endeavors (Reuben, music; Vicki, writing); talking about ideas and issues and things bigger than ourselves.

The struggles: Poverty and discovering that living simply is never simple; parenting and realizing that each of your children is his or her own person, and that's a good thing, even if it's messy and not easy to get through.

The rewards: Having each other's highly prized company and support; knowing and being known, yet still loving each other; experiencing comfort and solace coupled with determination to press on in the face of the things that would defeat us.

And just for fun: conspirators often speak in code. Can you translate the following sentence? The milky way is in the tilly-o room, but the dread Corridor is invisible. ■

Celebrating Decades of Committed Marriages!

These 25 couples from LCF represent over 720 years of marriage!! Each couple has been married for 18 years or longer! How many of them can you identify? We applaud all of the married couples here at LCF for continuing to work hard at and invest in your marriages—day by day, year after year—serving, communicating, forgiving, persevering, growing in Christ, and displaying the beauty of his love and grace in your marriage! ■



Row 1: Phil & Becky Hostetler (18), Myron & Mandy Hochstetler (18), Kevin & Kristen Duncan (18), Merv & Linda Schlabach (18)
 Row 2: Dale & Sharon Headings (20), Dave & Colleen Wolford (21), Jim & Annette Jones (23), Keith & Lisa Miller (23), Tim & Pam Shay (23)
 Row 3: Dave & Boni Stewart (24), Keith & Shannon Scheffel (25), Abraham & Naomy Ndungu (26), Lyndon & Sheila Miller (26)
 Row 4: Bob & Betty Jo Zachrich (29), Rob & Doris Swartz (30), Lonnie & Dalea Combs (30), Tim & Trish Eaton (31)
 Row 5: Steve & Lisa Merkle (32), Jack & Molly Rosati (33), Ray & Grace Raber (33), Gary & Anita Stanfield (34)
 Row 6: Russ & Sandy Haug (35), Reuben & Vicki Sars (39), Steve & Phyllis Swartz (42), and our longest married couple...Levi & Cora Miller at 67 years!



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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.