

The LCF Connection

June 2014

Saying Good-bye to a Dear Member of Our LCF Family

(Excerpted and adapted from "Eulogy for Brenda Freed" by Phyllis Swartz)

Here at London Christian Fellowship, we've been accustomed to seeing Brenda Freed at church, almost every Sunday. And that's been true for decades. We've seen her with the worship team. We've seen her carry centerpieces to the front of the church. We've seen her behind the counter at fellowship meals and in the foyer warmly greeting people. We've been able to count on



Brenda here at London Christian Fellowship. This is part of her legacy--her faithfulness. Brenda has been faithful and forthright in her living, but she has also mixed a bit of the mysterious into her faithfulness. Just who was Brenda Freed, the woman we appreciated and loved?



Brenda played many roles in her time. Brenda was the first-born child of Levi and Cora Miller and the first of their children to reach heaven. She was a big sister, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a founding member of London Christian Fellowship, a volunteer—at the Madison County Hospital, the Country Closet Thrift Shop, and the London Correctional Institution, and a joiner of book clubs, exercise groups, and a 15-year-old Bunko game group. Brenda biked for fun, with family and friends, and to raise money for missions.



But those of us who loved Brenda and ache at her passing, remember Brenda for more than her roles. Actually, those of us who have known Brenda long, remember Brenda in two distinct phases—the first 55 years of her life before encephalitis robbed her memory, almost her life, and altered her personality—and the seven years since then.

Her parents, of course, enjoy the longest memories—as, according to Brenda's Aunt Martha, the prettiest baby in Washington County, Iowa, as the toddler who didn't like to be left alone and who jumped her childhood chubbiness off on the school trampoline one summer, as the big sister who at six-years-of-age changed her siblings' diapers and who loved to read so much that, instead of playing with her visiting cousins, she read with them. They remember that when Hula Hoops first reached their community in the late 1950's Brenda Hula-Hooped with the best of them—and, incidentally, maintained that skill, even after her brain infection. And they remember that Brenda loved to sing.

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In fact, Marcus and Brenda sang together in the touring chorus at college. Marcus was attracted to Brenda because of her quietness, her stability, her organization, and, most of all, her love for God. This June 14 would have been their fortieth wedding anniversary. Brenda was also a passionate young mother.



Brenda's daily activities shifted seven years ago, as well. Brenda had taught school for 25 years, many of these years as a reading specialist at London Elementary School, where she was known as a master at motivating disinterested students to read and to feel good about their successes. In her disability retirement,

Brenda continued to participate in life. She served on the worship team and fellowship committee at church, hosted book clubs, Bunko parties, and volunteered an average

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

Nicaragua Bound

A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz

On Monday, June 2nd, my daughter Danae and I are headed out to Nicaragua for 2 1/2 weeks to help in a rural medical clinic. Is this a good use of our time and resources? Airfare is

expensive. I can't speak the language. There's a good chance of getting sick. We will miss some of the comforts of home. Will we be effective? Is it worth it? These are some of the questions I often ask when considering mission trips.

Several years ago my wife Doris & I decided to allocate a portion of my inheritance from my parents to take each of our children on a mission trip. What will this accomplish? We

aren't sure exactly, but we hope for some things. We hope our children develop a vision for sharing the gospel both at home and abroad. We hope to show them what God is doing around the world and the tremendous need for people willing to go wherever God might send them. We hope that we will gain an appreciation for the diversity of people and culture around the world and view all people as equal and precious in God's sight.

I asked the missionary we are working with whether she thought we would be of much help to her. She said, "I'm sure you will, but I always wonder about the bigger picture. I went on a mission trip to China when I was a teenager. I don't think I contributed very much, but it changed my perspective on the world and God used it to bring me where I am." I expect that Danae & I will be some good help for her in the clinic, but most likely we will be the ones who are impacted the most. We hope to come home as different people and so we take this step of faith expecting God to change our hearts and our minds that we may serve and love the world more than ever before.



Leadership Team Notes

Peace and love at the Leadership Team meeting

by Vicki Sairs

In April and May your leadership team met in the church library to pray and talk together about things that matter at LCF. Peace and love came up both times, so let's start there.

We discussed how we as a church can be committed to our position of peace and nonresistance, as taught by Jesus in the New Testament, and at the same time show love, care and appreciation to those who hold different views. Often in the past, we haven't said anything on Memorial Day or Veteran's Day; we don't want to keep doing that. We want to use these times as opportunities to pray for the safety of those who are serving in the military, to pray for healing for those who've been traumatized or wounded, to pray for comfort for those who grieve. And to pray for peace. Because this has to be handled with sensitivity and clarity, we think a pastor or elder should handle these prayers.

Other topics of discussion:

- *Should LCF have its own cemetery? (Still discussing that one.)*
- *Do we support Community Action's application for a grant to help "STOP Violence Against Women"?* (Yes!)
- *Do we like the idea of supporting Clete Yoder's wheelchair ministry?* (Very much!)
- *What will we do with last year's budget surplus?* (Complete the playground! Put some outside lights up! Decorate!)

Good things happening at LCF:

- *Lots of new faces—welcome to all of you.*
- *We're having a baptism at Little Darby Creek on June 22.*
- *Nicole Ayers is putting together a retreat for singles—great idea, Nicole.*
- *Rob and Danae Swartz will be on a mission trip to Managua, Nicaragua June 2-18. ¡Vayan con Dios!*

Library Link

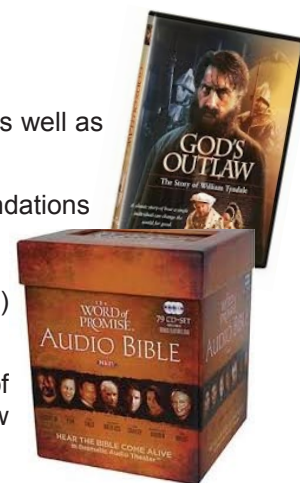
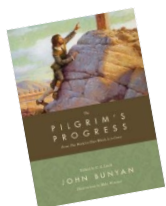
by Linda Schlabach, Assistant Librarian

Thank you to those of you who gave gifts to LCF's Library last Christmas! We appreciate your gifts as well as gifts given throughout our church life which grew into our current library.

I invite you to sample our varied and growing collection in the front library room. Some of my recommendations include:

- Watch "God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale" (Adult Section)
- Listen through the dramatized "Word of Promise Bible" with audio CDs (Adult Section)
- Read Pilgrim's Progress (Junior Section)

From DVDs and CDs to books and Group Bible Studies, we truly do have a wealth of shared resources. We pray that they will help each of us to continue to learn and grow spiritually. Watch for up-coming comments from some of LCF's library users.





Notes from the Roller Coaster*

A story of re-entry

by Candice Mast

There is a book I read when our family was preparing to leave for our assignment in Thailand called *Re-entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home* by Peter Jordan. It compares the re-entry of mission workers into their home culture, to a space shuttle's "fiery and turbulent" re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. To me, re-entry felt more like a roller coaster ride. Not just the emotional roller coaster ride that people refer to (although it was that also), but the feeling of whipping around turns, plunging down steep tracks, and the disoriented dizziness you feel as you screech to a halt. To our children (Claire, 10; Eliza, 8; and Silas,

5), leaving Thailand after seven years was leaving the comforts of their home and landing, off-balance, in a place where the customs were unfamiliar. It meant leaving their favorite noodle shop, the little friends they played red light/green light with, the garlicky-cooking-fumes-mixed-with-bus-exhaust that was the particular smell of our neighborhood. It was saying good-bye to a team that felt like family. Even our house itself, the mango trees, the buried pets, and the bubble tea stand down the street had taken on their particular kind of childhood significance and were hard to leave.

Landing here in our "home" country was stepping dizzily from the roller coaster into many unknowns, especially for the kids. Silas often commented on how everyone was speaking English and how strange it was to understand everything. We marveled at the carpeting, warm water in the bathroom faucets, expanses of grass, and the wide open spaces. One day, driving in the Rosedale area, Claire mentioned that we hadn't seen a single person since we got off the interstate about twenty miles before. After the crowds of Bangkok, it was almost surreal and spooky. We needed to describe what farms in America were like and why the houses were so widely spaced. We explained the rules of sports that seem like a natural part of every American childhood. Our kids didn't know the rules or even the names of balls used in basketball, football, and baseball. We noticed that some people seemed to be obsessed with sports! We observed that people here were extremely busy and laughed and talked loudly. They even wore shoes inside the house which felt strange to us.

Tom and I had this dream, maybe a crazy one, that we could help our kids find identities in two cultures; a dream that they could feel comfortable enough (and uncomfortable enough, too) in each country to flow between the two. We knew that realistically our family would continue to be a part of two cultures and wondered if it was possible to make them heart citizens of both or at least give them the opportunity to bond more deeply. So the next two years would be an experiment for our family. We knew we were returning to Thailand in 2015 because of our commitment to the long-term work in that country. We long to see God's Kingdom come there. For the kids, thinking of our return to Bangkok is a wonderful thing; they are eager to return to their life in the city. They are homesick at times. In the meantime we are blessed to have two years to work at the RMM office in support of the work in Thailand and to experience many new aspects of American culture.

Through all the changes we've experienced, Jesus has been our anchor. He has answered our prayers every time and helped us to regroup as a family and work toward new relationships. While we want security and roots for ourselves and our children, we face the reality that our lives will continue to feel somewhat uprooted and we want to continue to see physical and spiritual momentum and movement in our journey as a family. We are so thankful that we have a sense of his leading hand and peace in his calling for our family.

We still don't know how this experiment will end. We don't know if our children will adjust here and still want to return to Thailand at the end of two years. However, we believe the Holy Spirit has led us to Thailand and *that* is the calling of our whole family. We know that following the Holy Spirit often feels like hopping on that roller coaster again. So, we trust him and continue to re-enter.

Tom and Candice and their family attended LCF from 2001-2006, before being sent by LCF and their mission agency, Rosedale Mennonite Missions, to Thailand. They have been attending LCF for one year and are making plans to return to Thailand as mission workers in the summer of 2015.

**This story is excerpted from the June edition of the Beacon, our Conference publication. To read the complete article, pick up a Beacon from the table in the foyer.*





LCF Youth Group
Servant Auction Fundraiser,
May 18th



Mother's Day Brunch, May 11th



Child Dedication, May 25th

Brenda..continued from page 1

of 32 hours per week. Just as in her childhood, Brenda liked to be with people; she preferred not to be alone.

Seven years ago, Brenda's family and, we, her friends, said good-bye to her once. We said good-bye to the Brenda we knew. But, you know, Brenda wasn't finished teaching us a few things. When we were with the changed Brenda, we often thought about the words of Jesus: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." In the last seven years, Brenda's thinking simplified, her focus on earth narrowed. But at the same time, her awareness of God and of heaven expanded. In many ways, she was other-worldly.



At one of the last family gatherings, Brenda's grandchildren sang for her. They sang her favorite song: "To God Be the Glory". Brenda was already slipping away from us. Her eyes were closed. It seemed she might not even be hearing. And then, her hand lifted from the bed. Her arm stretched as far as it could toward heaven. Brenda worshipped God. And now, Brenda is whole. And we pray that Brenda's earthly life (the two parts of it), Brenda's death (with all its sorrow), and Brenda's new complete, perfect heavenly life (with all its joy) will bring all of us as well, to a new level of wholeness.

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 connection@lcfweb.org. Editors: Doris Swartz, Trish Eaton and Candice Mast
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.