

The LCF Connection

January 2015

Remembering God's Blessings at LCF This Past Year



In **January** we had our 1st annual membership celebration, followed by a potluck.



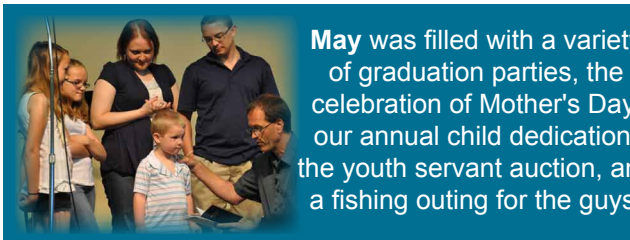
The Fellowship Team hosted a lovely Valentine Banquet in **February**.



In **March**, 20 couples strengthened their marriages by attending the Art of Marriage Conference.



April brought sadness as we grieved the loss of Brenda Freed, yet gladness as we were reminded by Easter that our Lord has conquered death.



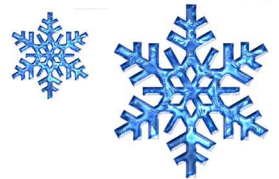
May was filled with a variety of graduation parties, the celebration of Mother's Day, our annual child dedication, the youth servant auction, and a fishing outing for the guys.



| Inside this Issue | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Remembering God's Blessings | 1 |
| Thoughts for the New Year | 1 |
| Disagreements? | 2 |
| Elders' Notes | 2 |
| Prison Ministry | 3 |
| Prayer Focus | 3 |

Thoughts for the New Year

by Naomy Ndungu



"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12 (NIV)

For a long time, whenever I read this scripture, I only thought of it in terms of age and lifetime; how short and limited our days here on earth are. Recently, it occurred to me that there are other aspects worth considering besides thinking of our days before we die.

It is true we will not always be kids, teens, young adults, or young moms and dads. Neither shall we always be Sunday school teachers, church elders, pastors, or even the teachers, managers, doctors, nurses or whatever it is we do in our day to day living. We will not always have the same neighbors, prayer partners, clients, colleagues, students or even cars and homes we have today.

There are circumstances, distances that separate us, and, if none of these, death will ultimately do it! The big question is, are we conscious enough to use the days we have wisely? What would we do with all we have, the beloved and even the unlovable people within our reach, if we numbered our days aright?

My thinking is, we would see the beauty in our kids, spouses, friends, and workmates. We would want the best for them. We would impact them the best way we know how... and, especially, be invested and invest in those values that are eternal. *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* (KJV)



255 US 42 NE London, OH 43140
(740) 490-2121

www.LCFweb.org

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



Disagreements?

A Message from the Pastor

by Reuben Sairs

How to disagree without being disagreeable.

If we're honest, we'll admit that disagreement is a common experience in church. We disagree with opinions, behaviors, and decisions that others make. Most Christians have trouble with this. We are supposed to love one another, so doesn't that mean we should always agree? The Holy Spirit is supposed to bind us together. Still we disagree and it annoys us. What should we do? First let's tour through some Bible passages to see disagreement in action.

There are lots of passages that tell us to agree. Jesus prays for us to be one (John 17:21). Paul tells us to be of one mind. (1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 2:2) There is no shortage of similar passages. There are also numerous passages that tell us about disagreement in the church. 3 John 9 is an interesting glimpse, check it out. Some important disagreements are left without moral comment. In Acts 15:39 we see, "...and there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus..." This disagreement will heal eventually.

But not all disagreement is bad and it doesn't have to be destructive. The passages that I just referenced all have to be seen in their proper contexts. We can be one and of one mind and still disagree with one another about some things. The often cited Proverb (20:17) says, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." It implies that disagreement might help keep us sharp.

Disagreement is a threat and an opportunity. All those verses that tell us to forgive and to be kind to one another suggest that there will be things to forgive and times to be kind. Some disagreement needs to be processed. Matthew 18 tells us how we might process a case when someone sins against us. We can handle disagreements constructively or destructively. We can use them to bring the best out of ourselves by affirming true love, and when necessary, forgiveness. Handled correctly, disagreement isn't so bad at all.

Forgiveness is one tricky part of the discussion. It is not a sin to disagree with me or you, and we don't necessarily need to seek forgiveness for disagreeing with one another. Sometimes we simply have too many opinions that we think others need to share. Consider all those passages about not judging others: Matthew 7:1, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Romans 14:4. Judging others is one of the most common and destructive sins.

So what do we do with disagreement? On the destructive side I have usually seen three things happen. The most common response is to be cold and to simply avoid and dislike the other person. We are very adept at silently stewing in our own juices as if somehow we can telepathically hurt the other person. Sometimes we try to force our view on others. After all we're being reasonable and we're clearly right, and those with whom we disagree simply need to get with the program. We know that's usually off track. As we all know, some disagreements don't resolve, and I'd say that they don't need to resolve. We have to learn to live with the reality that other people see things and do things differently. A third destructive response is particularly painful in the church—we go away. We simply withdraw. In all cases we're missing an opportunity.

Wouldn't it be better to learn to live with disagreement and to learn to love another person who really does see and do things differently and is not likely to change according to our wishes? We could even learn to enjoy our differences. Wouldn't a group of Christians who could disagree, but do so lovingly, and even to a certain extent joyfully, be impressive? Wouldn't it indicate the infusion of the Holy Spirit?

December Elders' Notes

by Vicki Sairs

The Elders' Team gathered for prayer and consultation on December 9 in the church library. Although it was a full-length meeting, what we discussed can be condensed as follows:

We prayed for the church, and then discussed our adult discipleship class. We were especially grateful to our new teachers, Jesse Diller and David and Brenda Perkins, who led us through the Kingdom Come curriculum.

The congregation unanimously approved the LCF Council proposal, and Dave Stewart and Pam Shay have agreed to serve on it, along with representatives of the Finance Team and the Building & Grounds Team (still undetermined at the time of our meeting). The council will organize itself, determining the chair, vice chair, etc. One of their first tasks will be to present their proposal for future team formation to the congregation for approval. They will start meeting in January and we plan to introduce the team to the congregation on January 18.

"Celebrate the Church" Sunday will be held on Sunday, January 18th. The day will include bringing in new members, having current members reaffirm their membership, giving appreciation to all who have served at LCF this past year, and providing opportunity for people to sign up to serve in the coming year. We will conclude with a potluck meal.

We approved the 2015 budget, with some discussion and a few changes. We also requested (and the Finance Team approved) that the \$1,000 in the general missions category of the 2014 budget be divided between two worthy missions for which help has been requested recently. We will give \$500 to Regions Beyond Ministry in Kenya to build a new well, and the other \$500 to Bethesda Ministry in Nicaragua to purchase a laptop computer for their clinic.

Upcoming Activities

- January 3 - Baby Shower for Ashlie LeGrand, 2 p.m.
- January 10 - LCF 101, 10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- January 18 - "Celebrate the Church" Sunday and potluck

Ministering to Those in Prison

by Amie Smith

I am sure you have heard about the Horizon prison ministry during a Sunday service at LCF; whether it was through the birthday cards passed around once a month that you sign or the updates from Marcus Freed. When I started regularly attending LCF I had little understanding of the Horizon initiative, however I knew that I wanted to volunteer my talents somewhere. Since I make cards as a craft, I had inquired to Marcus about helping with the birthday cards. In May, my husband Nathaniel and I visited the Horizon meeting of last year's cycle. During the meeting we were able to meet and greet the participants and get a better understanding of the Horizon program.



Horizon is a faith based program that is developed for incarcerated individuals. Volunteers are taught to listen and love as they mentor through weekly sessions. At the beginning of the program, individuals are grouped in families of seven or more. In these families they learn to coexist and to live in a functioning family.

The goal of having groups of families is to help the participants gain a deeper understanding of what brought them to prison and to assist them in contributing towards a larger community.

"Horizon prison ministry is a good program that helps us to learn to know

and love others, regardless of the past mistakes we have all made. We are able to be positive representatives of the same society that shuns them and we're able to show that change is possible in any environment and it starts with yourself. It has been a blessing learning with the inmates." ~ Nathaniel Smith

Throughout the program different tasks are given to the participants that they work on together and complete as a family. All of these assignments are related to handling conflict, managing feelings, and developing listening skills. Another part of the Horizon program is for individuals to gain a deeper understanding of their chosen faith by keeping faith in mind and reflecting on how it affects conflict in a community.

Another prison program that volunteers from London Christian Fellowship are a part of is Outside Brothers. This is a weekly program in which participants meet with a mentor on Tuesday evenings. This program is not faith based, but is a way for the participants to meet with volunteers from outside the prison. They are able to connect with their mentors on a deeper level and build caring relationships.

"What would I say about the Horizon prison ministry... when Marcus first invited me to the Prison I thought it would be cool to share with others the grace that God has given me. I was excited to see how I could help someone. What I did not expect was that I would instantly be hooked and how much it has helped me. I leave there every Tuesday night feeling like I got more out of it than I put in. I feel so blessed to be part of such an awesome ministry! It is a bunch of guys both inside and outside brothers sharing God's love with each other." ~ Jeremy Hisey

A Letter from an Inmate:

*Dear family at LCF,
God bless you all and thank you for taking time to send me a card for my birthday. It touched my heart to know that someone thought of me on this special day God chose for me to come into the world. I've known of God all my life but never knew him. I've taken this time that he has given me to really get to know him. I was in LOCI 7 or 8 years ago and thought that I had a good understanding of what God wanted for me, but I let the things of this world get in the way by not doing what God said to do. I need new friends that I can trust and lean on in times of trouble. I didn't do this the last time I got out and God gave me more time to get right with him. I thank God that he sent Jesus for my sins. Amen! Once again thank you and God bless you all. We all need Christian friends to help us in our walk through life. Amen!*

Volunteers have found both the programs rewarding in different ways. Creating relationships and spending time with the prisoners are the volunteer's way of demonstrating Christ's love. As stated in John 15:12-13, we as Christians are to love others as Christ has first loved us. Our hope is that the inmates reciprocate these acts of love throughout the program and thereafter.

LCF PRAYER FOCUS LCF's Junior Youth

Jeremy & Mandy Hisey and Danny Ndungu are giving leadership to LCF's newly revived junior youth group. They meet every other Sunday evening from 6 - 8 p.m. for a Bible lesson, games, fun, and food.

- Pray for wisdom and creativity for the leaders.
- Pray that the junior youth would form good friendships and would grow in their knowledge of and love for God.
- Pray that the junior youth would bring their friends and more lives would be touched with the gospel.



June was busy with more graduation parties, five baptisms, and youth trips to SamaKuma at RBC and Bethel Camp in KY.



We learned through various conferences during July: Xenos Summer Institute, Choral Camp, a Singles' conference at LCF, and Conservative Mennonite Conference in upstate New York.



In September we began the "Kingdom Come" CMC curriculum for our Sunday morning Adult Discipleship Class. Farm Science Review volunteers earned money to purchase a volleyball net.



August was a time to relax and enjoy time together at our annual church camp-out and, to minister to others at London's Be The Church event.

We had a wonderful evening of fellowship, fun, and fall foods at the Harvest Party in October.



In November the Leadership Team enjoyed a retreat at the Procter Center and the church gave approval to add a council.



We celebrated the birth of Christ in many special ways during the month of December: caroling at London's Old Fashioned Christmas, special music by RBC's chorus, our annual Christmas program and LCF Family Christmas.



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, Candice Mast, and Amie Smith. 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.