

The LCF Connection

December 2015



A Recipe for a Meaningful Christmas

by Amie Smith

As the Christmas season approaches we are often reminded of our favorite childhood memories—from hanging ornaments on the tree, to baking cut-out cookies, to shaking unopened presents under the tree, or the traditional celebrations with family and friends. For our children, this holiday is still being impressed upon their future memories. This is why we, as parents, need to make sure that what they remember is packaged in precious truths about how God's love reached out to a dying world on one silent night in a little town called Bethlehem.

The events included: shepherds watching their flock and hearing the good news of the birth of our king, the angels singing praises on high, and how the almighty God our Father loved us so much that He sent His son to be born on earth as part of His plan for personal redemption from sin. On this miraculous Christmas day, the beautiful story of the birth of Christ still has the same meaning and joy that it has had for over two thousand years.

Included here are a few ideas of activities to do with your children to help remember the meaning of the season:

- Celebrate Advent every Sunday leading up to Christmas. Make it special by lighting a candle each Sunday and reading scriptural passages. Then finish with a prayer and a yummy dessert.
- Instead of buying a material gift for a loved one, have your child pick out an organization and make a donation in their name. This will show your child that they can give a gift of meaning for a greater cause.
- Put the Christmas cards that you receive in the mail in a basket. One night a week have your child pull out a card, read it together, and then pray for that person.
- Have a baking day with your child and make cookies and sweet treats. Then package them in tins or boxes and take them around to neighbors.
- Make some hot chocolate and bundle up in warm clothes. Surprise some family and friends by singing Christmas carols outside their homes.



So this Christmas, as you share in the festivities with your family, try to practice some meaningful traditions that will honor the greatest love story ever told. May we all remember the true meaning of the holiday when we celebrate our Emmanuel, God who is with us.

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Bible Reading Plans for the New Year

Interviews by Theresa Hennis

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1

With the new year almost upon us, our minds turn toward resolutions. Nothing is more rewarding than resolving to seek God and learn more about him and how he loves us. His Word is open and available to us, and LCF offers many opportunities to know God more intimately through Bible study classes, a well-stocked library full of resources, and One Year Bibles and Bible study plans offered for us to take advantage of before the new year begins.

We interviewed some of our members to see what Bible study aids and Bible plans or devotionals they use to seek after God. We hope you'll be encouraged to find your own personal study plan and enjoy the rich rewards of becoming closer to God.



Janelle Slaubaugh: "One thing I do is turn my room into a Bible collage. This idea is based on "The BBC Manual" by Gregg Johnson, a current devotional book that I'm working through. Basically, I put up a scripture poster called the "WORD on the Wall" and post Bible verses related to each lesson. That way you daily meditate on the WORD when you see it - it's a reminder to do devotions. This practice helps me to understand God better. It gets me thinking about what I believe."

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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.



Serving Together

A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz



Yay for wheelchair ramps! The day before Thanksgiving a team from LCF, headed up by Clete Yoder, installed a wheelchair ramp in about four hours for a family located in London. I had the opportunity to help with the project, and it got me very excited about these great opportunities coming our way to minister to those around us.



It is our desire at LCF to be involved in active ministry to our community. We believe it is part of why we are called together as a church. We desire to be a representation of God's love to people who live around us. We want to work together to minister to people as Jesus ministered to people; meeting their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.



The wheelchair ramp ministry is one opportunity to do this very thing. Clete Yoder has a vision for installing wheelchair ramps, free of charge, for those who are wheelchair bound and have no handicap access to their home. He brought this vision to the elders with the desire of seeing LCF take on this ministry and seeing it flourish. We love to see people responding to God's call on their lives.

As we worked together that day, it was clear that God had called us to minister to this particular family. We had a great time working together, and Clete had everything planned out and organized very well. We had people from 13 to 85 -years-old, men and women, skilled laborers, and some of us not so skilled. ☺ There was something for everyone to do. Some cut boards, some ran screw guns, some measured, some dug holes, some spent time connecting with the family, and some took pictures.



Many of you are already ministering to people in our community, but maybe some of you have not found your place yet. If you haven't, I would encourage you to find it. God has someone he wants you to touch. Who is that person or family? Maybe you can help at the next wheelchair ramp installation or maybe it will be something totally different. Whatever the opportunity that comes your way, don't let it pass you by. As you minister to others, God will minister to you. I experienced this as I helped on this wheelchair ramp project. It was a privilege to be a part of what God was doing; to be a part of his work in our community. Thanks Clete, for following the vision God gave you and giving us the opportunity to join you.



Council Update

by David Perkins

It is hard to believe that we are in December already. It is certainly starting to feel like it outside. I am glad that we have our LCF Council meetings inside in the warmth.

Speaking of the Council, we are wrapping up our first year as a new team here at London Christian Fellowship. We have come a long way since our beginnings and have established a great team. God has definitely blessed us as a team with various strengths and abilities.

From Pastor Reviews and Team Reviews to arranging our first Congregational Meeting in a long time, the Council has been working hard at the many tasks on our "To-Do List". We want to do our best to continually improve LCF as a church.

Thank you to all of those in the congregation who have participated in our activities and who have given us feedback throughout the past year. Some exciting new things and opportunities will be coming as we enter the new year. Have a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and keep a look-out for your next LCF Council Update.

Upcoming Activities

- Dec. 13 - LCF Christmas Program, 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 20 - LCF Family Christmas and Brunch, 9:45 a.m.
- Dec. 30 - A fun youth fundraiser from 6-8 p.m. at Adrenaline Trampoline Park. More details coming soon!
- Dec. 31 - New Year's Eve Celebration and Worship, 7:30 p.m.

Preparing for December 13

by Colleen Wolford



Did you know that there are some hidden musical talents among the children of LCF? They are working hard to prepare for this year's Christmas program.

Invite a friend and join us at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 13, for a special celebration of Christ's birth. The evening will include a traditional storytelling of the Christmas story mixed with various instruments and singing. It will be an enjoyable evening of worship to our Savior!

Bad Shepherds, Good Courage, and Itching Ears

by Vicki Sairs



So with a title like that, you're probably wondering, "Good heavens! What happened at the elders' retreat?" Here's a brief attempt to answer that question:

We (Rob & Doris Swartz, Reuben & Vicki Sairs, and Bob & Bettyjo Zachrich) met with our overseer Roger Hazen and his wife, Sharon, at the Procter Center from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening, November 6 - 7. We were delighted that our RBC pastoral intern, Benji Martin, could spend part of Saturday with us.

During the retreat, we focused on prayer and pastoral care, with discussions on discipleship, leadership training, and sound doctrine. Rob had asked Roger, Bob, and Reuben to prepare devotions for each session, and the scriptures they chose dovetailed remarkably well with our agenda.

Friday evening

Molly Rosati, who lives near the Procter Center, surprised us by setting up a space in a private corner for the women to do their nails and get foot massages before the evening meal. So thoughtful of her!

Roger led us in a devotional from Ezekiel 34:1-10 about shepherding those under our care. (Here's where the "bad shepherds" in the title comes from!) We recognize that we can become tired and cynical in ministry and need to be balanced in caring for the broken and hurting. We want to be examples, encouragers, and gatekeepers who protect the sheep, pointing them to Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. In other words, we want to be good shepherds. After Roger's devotions, we spent time praying for people in the church.

Saturday morning

Bob led us in a devotional from Joshua 1, in which God repeats the instruction to "Be of good courage." Leaders need to be courageous; we are thankful that God is with us.

We noted that with the addition of the council, we have been able to focus more on the things listed in our job description such as discipling and shepherding. This has been wonderful.

As we spent more time praying for LCFers, Reuben reminded us that God is at work among us. Challenging situations are not a surprise for an outreach-focused church, and it's not unusual for people to experience tension between the world they have come from and their new Christian life.

The lack of response on the recent pastoral reviews seems to indicate that this is probably not the best way to get feedback from the congregation. Somebody suggested that we could invite anyone who wants to hang out and chat with the pastors to bring a sack lunch on a specific Sunday. We hoped the November congregational meeting might be helpful in this, and we want to continue to invite participation and feedback.

We reviewed Reuben's proposed leadership path document and discussed how we can intentionally train leaders. We will continue to encourage discipleship and leadership development in a wide variety of ways such as: parents teaching their children at home; Sunday School teachers, junior youth leaders, and youth leaders building on that teaching at church; individuals reading the Bible or listening to scriptures on their own; small groups studying God's Word together; pastors and others preaching and teaching at LCF; and perhaps starting a new winter Bible study.

Rob and Reuben will make an intentional effort to communicate how the various pieces of the Bible fit together so that everyone at LCF will be able to have a solid Anabaptist foundation for understanding God's Word.

Beyond this basic teaching, we will plan to provide a series of specific classes for leadership development around the end of February, March, and April 2016.

Saturday afternoon

Reuben led us in a devotional time, reading from 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (the "itching ears" part of the title). The church as we know it, he said, is changing. There is a growing sense of disintegration in evangelical churches. Some churches continue to be based on Scripture, while others are based more on "experience" or on "prophecy" (a "new" understanding or revelation). We want to make sure that LCF is based on sound doctrine and the teaching of God's Word. What we teach, how we teach, and the confidence with which we teach it, is of tremendous importance now and in the coming years!



Rob shared his proposed document for Discipleship Vision at LCF. Items that we discussed include: providing leadership training sessions this coming winter/spring; upgrading our church library so that it can be catalogued and accessed on-line; considering participation in CMC's Reverb (discipleship and leadership development program); providing annual times to strengthen and equip marriages; working on a comprehensive plan for preaching and teaching; reviewing the children's Sunday school curriculum/plan.

Please remember to pray for our pastors and the Elders' Team!

Congregational Meeting

by Keith Scheffel

It's always a dangerous proposition to have a meeting right after a delicious lunch, but the congregational meeting held after the November 13 potluck was informative and fast-paced enough that it didn't appear eyelids were yielding to the force of gravity.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the congregation to hear from the Elders' Team and the Church Council. We learned that the Elders will be offering leadership training classes beginning in January. A goal continues to be adding additional members to the Elders' Team. We learned from the Church Council that they've been performing a comprehensive review of committee structures and will be making some updates. One update will divide the current work of the fellowship team into three different areas/teams that will provide additional people the opportunity to serve in a more focused area. Additional information about this and other committees that people can serve on will be forthcoming with new opportunities to begin serving in January.



The meeting also provided a forum for the congregation to suggest ways to use a budget surplus if we end our fiscal year with a surplus. We will likely see additional meetings of this nature in the future to provide opportunities for the congregation to provide input and ask questions.

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Bible reading...Continued



Kristen Slaubaugh: "I have my Bible on my electronic tablet. Right now I read Bible stories downloaded from an old Bible story book. I read whichever Bible story is next. We pray together as a family before we go to bed. I pray by myself, too."

Bob Zachrich: "I use the Our Daily Bread as a daily devotional. It provides an opportunity to focus on a topic of the day and how God wants to use that focus in drawing me even closer to him today than yesterday. For Bible reading, I use the audio Bible downloaded to my iPOD. I listen to it each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for about an hour as I drive to the gym and back. I am an auditory learner, so this is by far the most effective method of general study for me."



Rosanna Miller: "It can be pretty challenging to find time to spend with God. I have a pretty crazy schedule with work and school. I've been reading Jesus Calling by Sarah Young. I love it! There's a perfect short little devotion for every day and then there's a few verses that correspond with it. I read one every day and then spend time in prayer. I usually do my devotional time early in the morning before I leave for school at 6:45. Once in a while, if I accidentally sleep in, I'll have my devotional time either before I go to bed in the evening or right after school before I go to work. It's hard setting time aside to spend with God, especially when I have so many things on my mind that I need to get done. But when I spend time with God it's refreshing and I find that I don't worry as much."



Cora Miller: "Levi and I are both reading a devotional written by Billy Graham. "I like to read before I go to bed, in the One Year New Testament. Last year I went through the entire Bible."

Levi Miller: "I like to study in the One Year Bible in the mornings. The Psalms and Proverbs are included in it."

Levi and Cora: We read through certain portions over and over again, and we always find and learn new things each time we study. We read and pray together. We pray for one family every day, and we pray for the church and for the conference."

Have you chosen a Bible Reading Plan yet for the New Year?



During the month of December there will be some Bible reading plans and One Year Bibles in the foyer for you to borrow.

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, Theresa Hennis, 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.