

The LCF Connection

April 2018

Celebrating Jesus' Successful Mission to Conquer Sin!

by Pam Stanforth



As I think to years past, my childhood and that of my children, I recall Easter traditions of boiling lots of eggs, coloring them in a dye-vinegar mixture and waiting for Sunday morning when the Easter Bunny would come to bring baskets with candy and goodies. I recall going to early sunrise service and later to enjoying what we called dinner on the grounds (a tradition in some churches of celebrating events by having a congregational outdoor meal on the property). As part of the tradition, many folks would fast from the night prior until after taking part in communion on Easter Sunday.

Traditions can be beautiful, enriching and fun; but when our traditions overshadow the true and eternal message of our hope, it may be time for us to step back and re-evaluate those traditions. In this case, we must evaluate how well they bring focus to the one most important, impactful and defining moment of our Christian faith—the pivotal moment when Jesus was successful in His mission to conquer sin and establish the new covenant between God and His people that will continue throughout time eternal.

The establishment of the new covenant did not happen at the triumphant entry of Jesus when the people praised Him as king, throwing down palm branches and even their coats. It did not begin as he shared the Passover meal with His apostles, establishing communion and clearly defining the power and blessing as they partook (and we) partake of His Body and Blood in the bread and wine. And the new covenant was not established in the brutal torture and cruel Roman crucifixion Jesus suffered, cursed as He hung upon the cross,

Continued on page 4...

Inside this Issue

Jesus' Mission to Conquer Sin	1
Endless Possibilities	1
Season Your Speech with Grace	2
Council & Elders' Updates	2
CMC Disciple Making Challenge	3
LCF's Child Protection Plan	4

Endless Possibilities

by Linda Schlabach, LCF Librarian

"Now? How? What do I say? What if . . .?" Nettling questions swirl within our minds and target the resolution to obey the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share with a particular someone about Christ. With a down-to-earth, witty, and personable presentation style, Doug Pollock impressed upon God Space workshop attendees, including about a dozen people from LCF, the endless possibilities for creating God space while conversing with



non-followers of Christ Jesus. The interactive workshop held at our sister church, Shiloh Mennonite, was conducted by Doug Pollock: author, motivational speaker, a chaplain in the YMCA, and passionate Christ-follower. Pollock defines "God space" as a natural opening within conversations to talk about and experience

God. He fleshed out, in practical and doable terms, an authentic approach for natural conversation that opens the door to powerful discussions of Spiritual concerns. This conversation leads directly to or hopefully lays seed for Christ-seekers in accepting Christ as Saviour. Applying specific and practical tools, while relying on and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, opens endless possibilities. We extend the invitation for you to explore God Space concepts as taught by Doug Pollock. Check out the Activating God Space group study kit or the book God Space from the LCF Library. ■



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



Season Your Speech with Grace

A Message from the Pastor
by *Reuben Sairs*

I come from a family that loved sarcasm. It was one way we showed our affection—we teased. I don't remember taking offense or feeling belittled by it. When someone was sarcastic, somehow it said they were listening closely and they cared. I have had to learn that the whole world doesn't converse this way. It takes a while to sort this out. I can still fail spectacularly. What I say affectionately could be interpreted as simply hurtful. Oh, but conversation without sarcasm seems so flat and boring, and like no one really cares about anything or they would listen carefully and respond with a quick and ready wit. Oh well...

I have learned a couple of things. With some people you (1) need to tone down sarcasm. But I've learned, too, that (2) the most wounding things that are said aren't usually sarcastic—they are pious. Free pastoral advice: we should allow people to speak with their own style and not pass judgements or try to improve them by making them more like ourselves. It takes all kinds.

Christians, I think appropriately, try to clean up their language. Jesus said in Luke 6:45, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." I still have a long way to go, but I try, I really try. And rather than try to change myself from the tongue to the heart, I try to make the route run the other way—from the heart to the tongue.

Family communication for me had some other elements besides sarcasm. These elements I wish I could magically purge from my under-my-breath vocabulary. But speaking like a Christian is far more involved than avoiding some words (there is no list of words in the Bible that you are not supposed to use), or making pious insertions in your speech. There's a big difference between being prissy and being righteous.

Speaking like a Christian means using our language to help, heal, fortify, support, and encourage others. Proverbs 15 is a fine chapter for anyone working on this issue. Verse 4 says, "a soothing tongue is a tree of life."

Take a look at media—social media, TV, radio, conservative or liberal, it doesn't matter, and you will see the mirror side of verse 4, "but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit." If you REALLY want to have your spirit crushed read the comments section of almost any internet article from any perspective. The things people write! It is particularly distressing to think some of them may be Christians. They are harsh, they bully, they mock, they distort, they are vulgar, they are usually not well informed. They show contempt and hatred of whomever they oppose. They might do it without profanity, but it cheapens all of us. It is completely unworthy of a servant of Jesus Christ.

It may help to think about those occasions when we let the bitter overflow of our heart come out of our mouth. For me, driving. No more to say. Political arguments are notorious for bringing out the very worst in people. Maybe we should all have fewer opinions about just about everything. This advice reflects another passage that helps guide us. From James, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." ■

Elders' Notes

by *Jesse Diller*

As usual, we began our meeting with prayer, this time using the Lord's prayer as a framework

We discussed LCF's schedule for the next few months. Our leadership team has a number of upcoming travel dates which necessitated some shuffling of preaching duties.

We continued with the discussion from our previous meetings about the Sunday morning prayer and sharing time. We feel it is important to have a consistent format, perhaps with some built-in variation. We wrestle with the many pros and cons as we continue to process and tweak this part of our service. We will be working with our moderator team to continue to improve.

The team reviewed the 2018 membership commitments. We are thankful for each active participant at LCF and for the new guests among us. We noted those who have moved away or are no longer actively involved at LCF, who have not renewed their membership. We will remove them from the membership roll.

Rob believes God is speaking clearly and consistently to us about the priority of evangelism and outreach. We talked about recent and upcoming opportunities that have also highlighted this emphasis: CMC Pastor's Conference, Steve and Phyllis Swartz's message and workshop, the GodSpace workshop at Shiloh, etc. We want to keep the Church's vision for outreach in front of people, and discussed various ways we can encourage our congregation to have a passion for and reach out to the lost.

We also talked about how best to use the money currently in our mission fund that needs to be allocated to specific ministries.

Reuben closed our time with prayer. Our next meeting: Tuesday, April 3. ■

Council Update

by *David Perkins*

Spring is upon us, and very soon we will emerge out of our comfortable habitats to embrace the, hopefully, warmer weather. It tends to be a very busy time as more activities become available to us. As you all know, the LCF Council is continually busy with activities involving the church. We are constantly striving to help in and improve on all areas that make LCF function smoothly. We hope that all of you will join us for our annual spring workday at the church on April 21st. Many hands make light work!

With Vacation Bible School just around the corner and other miscellaneous activities involving our youth being planned, we are happy that Pam Shay has volunteered to lead by aiding us in updating some of LCF's Child Protection Policy. The council is looking into all the logistics to make sure that we keep our children and youth safe, and to make sure all of the volunteers have the tools they need.

Since Jim is currently in Florida, our March and April meetings are being held via phone conferences. We are thankful for technology that allows us to work together across the miles. Keep an eye out for your next update to learn more of what the Council is up to around the church. ■

CMC Disciple Making Challenge

by Elisabeth Yoder



On Sunday, March 18, Steve Swartz, who serves as the Conference Pastor for our church's conference (Conservative Mennonite Conference), along with his wife, Phyllis, delivered the message at LCF. (For those of you who may not know: Steve & Phyllis are charter members of LCF, formerly know as Shalom Community Church. Steve served as pastor here from 1985 - 2002.) Steve & Phyllis spoke of CMC's vision for disciple making and church planting, and how we can be a part of that vision. We were encouraged by stories of Biblical figures that crossed difficult thresholds to do great things, as well as stories of people who are currently crossing thresholds and dying to themselves to reach the lost.

After the morning service, Steve and Phyllis held a workshop for those in leadership at LCF as well as those who would like to be developed as leaders in the church. The workshop dug deeper into the content of the morning sermon and also focused on practical ways that we can cross thresholds and change lives.

The cycle of disciple making which Steve and Phyllis presented has six steps. It begins with a call to adventure when a willing individual feels the urge and call to take action. In order to take action, however, we must cross a threshold, which is the next step. Crossing a threshold means moving away from what is safe, comfortable, and familiar towards the unknown and frightening. In the workshop we discussed thresholds that LCF has crossed as a church. These include the Wheelchair Ramp Ministry, starting Bible School, and sending out and supporting people from our church as missionaries, to name a few.

However, when we cross a threshold and take steps towards making disciples, we face challenges and temptations, as well as death. This work is not easy and calls us to die to ourselves and be a part of a broken world. We must spend time with those we wish to reach, people who are wounded and battered. When we spend time with wounded people, we will be wounded as well. Steve and Phyllis used nuclear bombs and nuclear reactors as an example. In nuclear bombs, neutrons accelerate quickly, ricocheting off of each other and causing massive destruction; however, a nuclear reactor contains rods which absorb the neutrons. As Christians, we are the rods of a nuclear reactor. We absorb the pain of others, bringing stability, but if we remove ourselves from the world, pain will act as neutrons, ricocheting, accelerating, and causing immense damage.



Proximity matters as we seek to make disciples. It is important that we live in and are a part of the communities we are reaching out to. Steve and Phyllis gave the example of two young couples who moved with their young children into downtown Flint, Michigan, where they are immersed in a community that is often dangerous and uncomfortable. They made this move because they recognized the need to leave their comfort zone and reach out to people in hard situations, and in order to meet the community's needs, they need to be a part of the community.

After death comes resurrection, which is followed by reproduction. In reproduction we see the results of our death, sacrifice, and labor. Esta is a missionary who writes dramas and plays as a means to spread the Bible message. She worked in Turkey for many years without seeing results. But after 13 years, she finally saw reproduction. Over 60 churches have

access to her plays, and a Turkish T.V. station broadcasts her work to over 30 million people in multiple countries. Reproduction takes time, and it may feel as if the results will never come, but our dedication and death produces effects we cannot even imagine.

At the end of the workshop, Steve and Phyllis challenged us to brainstorm ideas for new thresholds we can cross as a church. A few of these ideas are hosting addiction support groups, reaching out to those at a homeless camp behind the truck stop by Route 70, a home repair ministry, and even using the old church building for ministry opportunities. LCF has already crossed many thresholds as a church, and I look forward to the thresholds we will cross in the future. ■

LCF's Child Protection Plan

by Jim Jones, Chair of the LCF Council

Are you aware that LCF has had a Child Protection Plan in place for 21 years? Our current child protection plan began in 1997. We are currently in the process of reviewing and updating it.

What is the LCF Child Protection Plan? It ensures that all procedures and compliance are followed to protect our most precious resource at LCF: our children, as well as every child that comes through the doors of LCF. The LCF Child Protection Plan encompasses screening procedures for volunteers who work with our children, youth, and junior youth, training, and compliance procedures to ensure that all these procedures are accomplished so that the children among us can learn and grow in a safe environment.

LCF is in the process of adding a new electronic background check to the screening process. We hope that it will be more efficient both comprehensively and administratively. Watch for details about it in the near future.

What does that mean for you? If you work with youth, junior youth, and/or children at LCF, your screening process will need to be updated. You will receive an email with a link to complete a form at backgroundcheck.com. There will be a few lines to fill out which includes your social security number (it is not shared with anyone at LCF). A report will be generated and returned to LCF within a few days, which will be reviewed by the LCF Child Protection Team. The Child Protection Team consists of The Children's Ministry Coordinator, LCF Administrative Assistant, and a member from the leadership team.

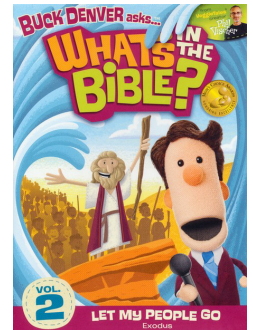
Thanks so much to Pam Shay for being willing to oversee our current policy and application for revisions and compliance. If you have any questions or concerns about LCF's child protection policy, feel free to contact Pam Shay or myself. ■

Check it Out!

by Linda Schlabach, Librarian

Over two-hundred additional library items, as of the last few months, await for you to explore. From a combination of generous donations and library purchases, numerous books and DVDs for all ages recently found a home in our library.

We're excited about a newly donated DVD series titled *What's in the Bible?* in which children learn about Bible origin and content. This series consists of a memorable Bible survey gathered into fun, manageable, and flowing vignettes. Created by Phil Vischer, the originator of *VeggieTales*, this instructional Bible series delights adults and children alike.



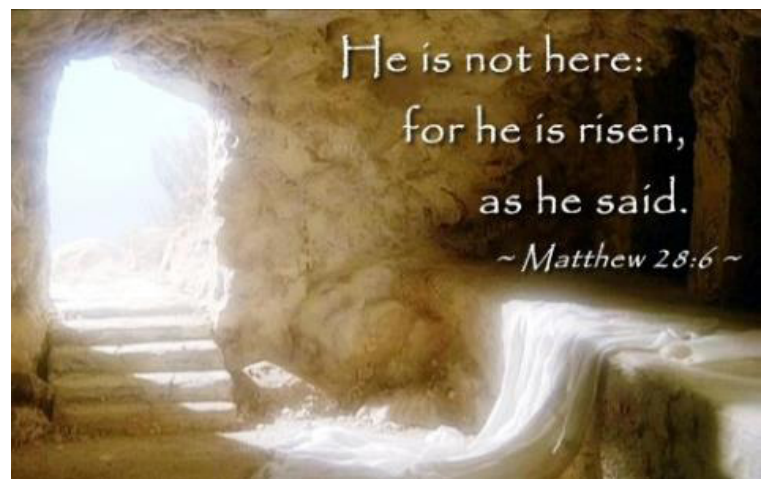
But . . .shhhhhh... don't let your children know about the instructional part. *What's in the Bible?*, found in the front library room with the Junior DVD section, spiritually enriches the whole family. Check it out—literally! ■

Jesus' Mission...continued

nor at His death or burial. The new covenant was established when Jesus was resurrected from death of His own power. It was not when the angels rolled away the rock that Jesus arose. The angels rolled the rock away so that the women and the apostles could see into the tomb and see that Jesus was not there but had risen; he had risen indeed! The huge rock was removed so that you and I could see into the tomb and know that everything Jesus said was true. He is alive and, in Him, we too will rise in glory.

In Jesus Christ is new covenant, that we may enter into the Holy of Holies and into the Presence of a Holy God. He is the perfect sin-free only Son of God in Whom God is well pleased; the Holy Lamb of God; our Sacrifice forever; once-for-all sin for all men, being our High Priest forever; our new Covenant established making us joint heirs with Christ Jesus; sons and daughters of the one triune God.

So, shall we throw the Easter Bunny out with the eggs? In taking a brief look at the Easter tradition, we find that it came to us in the 1700s with Germans who settled in America and celebrated the Bunny as a symbol of new life, abundance, comfort, fertility, and procreation. The Easter parade has its roots all the way back to the 13th century. From a Christian perspective, the eggs represent Jesus' emergence from the tomb. The rolling of the eggs represent the rolling of the stone away from the tomb. Even the word, Easter, is found, only once, in the English translation King James Version found in Acts 12:4 (Greek: 'Pascha'). These are traditions filled with beautiful imagery of what Christ established in His Death and Resurrection. As for me and my house, we will keep traditions but focus on the gift of life given to us through Jesus Christ, established in the new covenant and made available to all who believe in Him. Happy Easter...He is Risen! ■



Suggested Scriptures for further reading: Hebrews 8:6, Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Jeremiah 10:29, Hebrews 8:13.

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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, Elisabeth Yoder, 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.

Upcoming Activities

April 8 to May 27 - Spring Adult Discipleship Class taught by Reuben Sairs

April 21, 9 a.m. to noon - LCF's Spring Workday