

The LCF Connection

February 2019

From A Single's Perspective...

Often, in past February issues of the LCF Connection we have featured something about love and/or marriage. This year, we would like to feature singles. We asked some of the singles here at LCF to share their thoughts with us, as a church body, to better understand their perspective. Thanks to those who replied for their willingness to be vulnerable and share their thoughts with us.



Being Single with God

by Grant Shoemaker

Being 52 and a single Christian for the majority of my life has taught me to "lean in." I have learned to lean in on friends, family, and most importantly, God. You may be asking, "How does one lean in towards God?" Maybe read my Bible more, or go to church and church events as often as possible? Those are all great things to do; but there's more to it. I've learned to lean in through being mindful and having my eyes open to communicating with God. This could also be described as

praying; however, as a truck driver I wouldn't recommend closing your eyes and bowing your head while driving. ☺ I have learned to talk with God as I would my father, my mother, or my best friend. Why? Because he is all of those people to me. It's not always easy. He disciplines me like a father. He loves me like only a mother can. He is a good listener, just like a best friend.

One thing I've learned is that love doesn't come from your cats, dogs, or even people. Love comes from God, alone, who dwells within us. One of the best ways I've found to feel God's love, myself, is to follow his example and give to others. Giving love to others comes in many different forms, and I will leave that for you to meditate on. ■

Single Awareness

by Katy Miller

Most little girls grow up dreaming of their love story. Meet the handsome prince, he sweeps you off your feet, enjoy a perfect, blissful, married life, have babies, chauffer kids to soccer and ballet in the minivan, and then come home to a suburban home surrounded by a perfect white picket fence...



Many grow up to view marriage as a milestone or a rite of passage into adulthood, marking success, and the alternative must mean that you failed at some aspect of your life and no one wanted you...at least that's how I viewed it. I mean, I used to play Old Maid as a kid—the Old Maid was an ugly, single lady. Right?!

Marriage was just kind of expected, especially in the Mennonite community that I grew up in. I'll admit, I had a timeline for my life...get married at 22 and have my first kid by the time I'm 24—at the latest. Well, God saw that and chuckled, I'm sure. ☺ I have to admit that still being single at the age of almost 26, and having my younger sister get married before me, is difficult for me. Many of my peers are married and have children—something that I would like to have in my life.

When we look around and see others who seem to be happy and enjoying life's great moments, it is easy to feel disappointed with where we are. In my case, I am single and struggling with figuring out God's plan for my future. I'm not going to lie. Sometimes it is hard for me to be genuinely happy for everyone celebrating their milestones;

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What is Love?

by Richard Troyer

For a long time I wanted to be like the men in romantic comedy movies or in country music songs. I thought that was love. I would say I lean a bit more towards being a romantic than most guys. I didn't miss Valentine's Day, birthdays, or anniversaries, and I like to write poetry. And, while these are times we can show love and have warm feelings towards another, they can often be shallow, too. Well, after going through a divorce 4 years ago, I struggled with questions such as: "What is love?" and "Will I ever love again?"



My longings took me to the source and best example of love...

Jesus. I read and learned how he treated others, especially those with messed up lives—like me. For much of my life I felt judged, and I have judged others. But over these past several years, I have learned that when I shared my "dirty laundry" with others and became vulnerable, that there were

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How Many People are in Church?

A Message from the Pastor
by Reuben Sairs

How many people are in church on a given Sunday? For many years the Gallup organization reported that about 40% of Americans attended church on any given Sunday. That statistic didn't stand up. As often appears to be the case, when people answer pollsters' questions they sometimes don't tell the truth. Maybe they're hiding it from themselves? In any event, the real statistic these days seems to be that less than 20% (one report says 17.7%) of Americans might be in "church" on Sunday—this would include all Protestants and Roman Catholics. So, if there are a hundred people on your street, probably fewer than 20 will be in church. If there were five cars in the driveway during the week, only one would be found in the church parking lot on Sunday. If I found a 20 dollar bill—four dollars would be your share.

"Even with a broader definition of church attendance, classifying a regular attendee as someone who shows up at least three out of every eight Sundays, only 23-25 percent of Americans would fit this category."*

What does this tell us? It may tell us about the nature of Christian commitment to church. It is undoubtedly true that there are Christians who have little energy for church. I'll leave the distressing question as to whether you can be a Christian and not be a part of a specific church aside for now.

I'll use this statistical information to make an even more basic point, and that is, that there are fewer of us than we might realize. There is a lot of nominalism when it comes to Christian faith. Nominalism is the 'in-name-only' faith. It isn't real or at least isn't what it purports to be. It might on occasion speak the language of faith and church, but the reality of the situation is something else.

Nominalism fools us. I simply say that there aren't as many Christians as we often think. We're a minority, and that has wide-ranging implications. We can't expect to dominate. We shouldn't approach the world as if everyone is a believer, and that some are just more active than others. Most importantly we should be ready to live with the fact that we won't get the last word. There are other opinions, values and approaches. Learning to communicate graciously and lovingly is one of the great needs of the church today.

When I first became a Christian, I was completely enmeshed in a secular world. I assumed that I, and my newfound friends, were vastly outnumbered. It didn't bother me in the slightest. I had found "a pearl of great price." Matthew 13:45-46. That story appealed to me early on.

Don't be surprised as the blogs and articles and preachers freak out as they discover that the world isn't Christian. This story is nothing new. There has always been a fair amount of nominalism. The world was not more Christian 50 or 100 years ago, but what was true then is true now. If you have found Christ, "You are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. ■

If you're interested in statistics try these sites:
http://hiir.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#attend

*<https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/139575-7-startling-facts-an-up-close-look-at-church-attendance-in-america.html>

Caring for One Another

by Amie Smith

Sheila Miller has done a great job leading the Congregational Care Team for the past several years. Mandy Hochstetler played a big role in helping to organize many activities, such as the Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations. Both Sheila and Mandy used their creativity and kind hearts to provide service in different ways for the church. We are so thankful for their time and commitment that they gave to helping to care for the church. At the end of the year they both have decided to come off of the team, and I agreed to take on the responsibility of giving leadership to the team.

With the transition into the new year there are several new faces on the team. The team currently consists of: Sandy Hauge, Lucy Elfrink, Theresa Hennis, and myself (pictured below, from left). We are looking forward to working together as a team to provide the utmost care for our church family.



We, as the Congregational Care Team, help to organize and encourage visits, meals, etc., for those who are going through difficult times such as experiencing an illness, grieving a loss, recovering from surgery, etc., or even a joyful, yet stressful, time like welcoming a new baby. Visiting people is a great way to care for one another in our church family. Just a few moments of letting someone know they are loved and cared for and/or praying with them, can be such a huge encouragement! We, as a team, are always looking for people who are available and willing to help out. If you have interest in serving in this way, just let us know.

One of the current needs for love and support is for our dear friend, Dorothy Jones. Her son, Jim (the chair of our council), and his wife, Annette, are spending these winter months at their home in Florida. Dorothy misses Jim immensely when they are gone. So from now, until Jim and Annette return at the end of March, we encourage you to consider taking a few minutes to visit Dorothy at the Bluebird Retirement Community and/or send her a note. During the month of February there will be a basket of blank cards in the foyer. Feel free to write an encouraging note, favorite memory, or Bible verse for Dorothy and place it in the basket. Feel free to contact any of us on the team for details or more information about visiting her. Thanks so much to those who regularly stop in and see her.



We look forward to many new things among us at LCF this year! We are so thankful for the love and support that we see by the many meals you provide, your prayers, cards, and friendly visits. Those acts of service do not go unnoticed! Thank you LCF family! May God bless each and every one of you! ■

An interview with *Chris Conte*

Interviewed by Elisabeth Yoder

If you could instantly become the leading expert in any field, what would you choose?

I would probably choose marriage counseling or family counseling.

What is a long-term goal you would like to work towards?

I would like to become a good jazz pianist.

What are three items on your bucket list?

(1) Skydiving, (2) a motorcycle trip to California, (3) a month of backpacking in Europe.

What is the most interesting piece of trivia you know?

In 1897, Indiana state legislators tried to pass a bill that would have legally defined the value of pi to 3.2. Congratulations, I just wasted 10 seconds of your time.

What is a Bible verse that recently made you stop and think?

Acts 17:28- "For in Him we live and move and have our being." This verse reminded me that we literally don't do anything independent from God.

What is a personality trait that you strive to exemplify and why is it important?

I want to know my goals and focus on going after them. This personality trait has only recently become important to me as I was reading about my personality type. My type of personality tends to simply gravitate to surrounding people's interests and goals. I want to find the proper balance of knowing my own goals and interests without abandoning the goals and interests of other people.

What is something you think everyone should do at least once in their life?

Go on a missions trip to a third-world country. It will give you a whole new perspective.

What hobby would you love to get into if time and money were not an issue?

I would fly a paraplane.

Who is a person who inspires you? What do you admire about them?

Jon Foreman, the leader of the band Switchfoot, inspires me because of his recognition of the beauty of God. It is easy to allow our view of God to become purely functional, but God is beautiful beyond belief. Jon Foreman's lyrics have helped me to recognize this truth.



What is one of your favorite hymns or worship songs and why is it meaningful to you?

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" is one of my favorite hymns because it invites us to simply lay our concerns, anxieties, and needs down at His feet. We can have peace in doing this.

What book or movie has had a big impact on you?

The Lord of the Rings movies have had a big impact on me. The battle of good vs. evil presented in the movies and the way that the characters deal with hardship is particularly inspiring to me as I think about my current struggle in a cursed world.

What is an issue that you care a lot about and think is important?

Lack of unity in the Church as a whole.

What gifting of yours do you enjoy using in the church and for God's glory?

I really like using my people skills to encourage those around me in the body of Christ.

What characteristic of God has been especially impactful for you recently?

God's love. His love makes me want to pursue Him more and learn to know Him deeper and deeper.

We welcome Chris Conte to our LCF family! We hope that this interview with him has helped you learn to know a bit about him. We encourage you to introduce yourself to him and learn to know him even more! ■

Elders' Notes

January 8, 2019

by Jesse Diller

We began our first elders' meeting of 2019 with a time of praying together about the things we would like to see God do among us at LCF in this new year. We also prayed for those who are dealing with sickness.

We spent a period of time discussing a snippet from Dallas Willard's book "Hearing God." We want to be a leadership team, as well as a congregation, that hears from God. This means that humility and teachability are very important, as are our listening skills. We want to be a church who believes everyone is hearing from God. We want to listen to what God is telling others among us, and give opportunity for the members of our congregation to share how God is speaking to them. This included some discussion on how to resolve conflicts in which people disagree.

We spent a considerable time talking about our teaching formats for Sunday School and Adult Discipleship Classes. We discussed several possibilities such as offering multiple classes, various teachers, different class times, etc. We want to make sure that we understand what the congregation is needing, and that there is significant support for making any changes. To that end, we are planning to poll the congregation in the near future to get a feel for what people at LCF would like to see for our Sunday School/Adult Discipleship Class format and options.

We discussed our various Coordinator positions that are open (Sunday School Coordinator and Children's Ministry Coordinator), what they entail, and the gifts the positions require. We talked about possibilities for those positions in the future.

We spent the remaining time talking about:

- Upcoming services (schedules, dates, and times for various events, special music, communion, etc.).
- Security changes LCF has implemented recently and our desire to see LCF provide both a welcoming, as well as safe, environment.
- Various concerns that LCF members have expressed to us recently.

Reuben closed our time with prayer remembering the situations we discussed. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday evening, February 12th. ■



Single?

by Marcus Freed

Yes, I am single, and I also gave my heart away!

“I am my beloved’s and He is mine, his banner over me is love” has been sung by many of us over the years. Being single

again, for me, gave it new meaning.

Several months ago, a visiting single missionary lady, serving in a dangerous country, visited our church. One thing she shared that stuck with me was that she stated her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ promised to love and care for her no matter what, so she talked to God as her perfect spouse. God never let her down.

Technically, being single now five years, I realized anew that I gave my heart away a long time ago. And nothing pleases Him more than my steadfast love for Him.

Solomon’s love songs remind us of our God’s love for us. “I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me” (Song of Solomon 7:10 NIV). This clearly expresses our God’s passionate love for us and His desire for our unequivocal love in return. ■



As you are probably aware, Pam Stanforth spent quite a bit of time in Louisiana recently, caring for her mother following the death of her step-father. Pam is the one who usually takes care of all the seasonal decorating here at LCF. After Christmas there were lots of poinsettias, lighted Christmas trees, wreaths, etc., to be put away. Several ladies served by meeting at the church on January 2nd to put away and organize all of the Christmas decorations. Among them was Audrey Maust, pictured on the left, who was “caught in the act.” Others who helped out included: Shannon Scheffel, Becky Hostetler, and Doris Swartz. Thanks to these ladies, and especially to Pam Stanforth, and each person who helps to keep our church looking welcoming and well-decorated! ■

What is Love?...continued

people who showed me acceptance and love instead of judging me. If anyone had a right to judge, it is Jesus. Often after knowing others’ “dirty laundry” he accepted, loved, forgave, and healed. I learned to see people as Jesus does and it transformed me. Now I can show more kindness and true love.

Another way I learned about love was by studying 1 Corinthians 13. While reading those examples of what true love looks like, I was struck by the ones I needed to work on. Each one of these areas takes an attitude adjustment. They get the focus off of me and help me not to judge. These truly are the ways Jesus showed love so that is what I strive to do, also.

Lastly, if you ever get the privilege to have grandkids you will get to experience another dimension of love, as I have. It has been healing to love uninhibitedly. ■

Upcoming Activities

Feb. 19-21—CMC’s Pastors’ Conference will be held in Chambersburg, PA.

Feb. 24—The Music Men of London Barbershop Quartet will sing several songs during our morning service.

March 2—Marriage Date Night, 6 - 9 p.m.

Single Awareness...continued

but then I remember: God has a perfect plan and he is working it out—even though I can’t see it right now. I am merely human—incapable of comprehending such a beautiful and complex map that our Creator has intricately designed.

Although I struggle at times with not knowing my future, I find peace in knowing that he knows my future. He knew me before I was born. He knows everything. I am so thankful for God and his grace. Even though I don’t have all the answers and I am not experiencing super “happy” times like some of my Facebook acquaintances...my time will come.

I also have to realize that although people may label me as a “single,” they don’t mean it as a negative term, and I am not a failure. I still have an aching heart from time to time, but I try to remember to enjoy the present time. Thank you for listening to all of my rambling thoughts (believe it or not, but this is a revised version)! ☺ This Valentine’s Day, or rather “Singles Awareness Day,” I encourage you to remember your single friends—they like roses and chocolate, too! ☺ ■



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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, 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.