

# The LCF Connection

December 2019

## Christmas Traditions

by Theresa Hennis

Christmas traditions are important to families, because coming together during the holidays means spending time with those we love most. Christmas is a special time of year to remember the most important relationship we can have, which is with Jesus. Our saving relationship with Him is one of drawing near to Him, not only at Christmas, but every day. His gift of salvation is the best gift we could ask for this Christmas season, and the special people whom He has given us to love are presents we get to open every day. How well we love one another is a true reflection of Christ's influence on our lives, not only at Christmastime, but all year long. Here are several Christmas traditions some of our LCF family enjoy.



*Audrey Maust:*

Every year my third and fourth graders create an old-fashioned village. We use milk cartons, white icing, pretzels, and different kinds of cereals to make each log cabin.



*Sandy Gregg:*

Our family has some simple traditions. Everyone (including adults) has a Christmas stocking with their name embroidered on it that gets filled. There is also lots of food and a gift exchange; then we end the day watching movies and playing games.



*Mandy Hochstetter:*

Our Christmas traditions include making gingerbread men and gingerbread houses, receiving new Christmas "jammies" on Christmas Eve, going to see the lights at the Columbus Commons and the State Farm life-size nativity downtown, and then stopping for donuts and hot chocolate on the way home.

*Jim Jones:*

We always look forward to mom's homemade pumpkin pie and macaroni and cheese. That is a highlight and what's held our family together. (I talked to Jim



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## Steadfast in Gathering

by Naomi Ndungu

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." ~ Acts 2:42 ~ My mother's fireplace helps me relate to this verse as I think of the fire, the zeal, the clear manifestation of the presence and power of God evident in the early church. Broken pieces of wood placed closely together kept my mom's fire aglow; any negligence to keep the wood in place led to gradual diminishing of the fire. The believers in the early church "... devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." The results were clear: many wonders and signs performed, unity, generosity, gladness, praise, more souls saved and added to the church body.*



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# What's on Your Wish List?

## A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz



Are you content? This time of year there are millions of dollars being spent to make you and I discontent. Black Friday. Cyber Monday. Christmas commercials. Companies work hard to sell us endless products that they want us to think we can't live without. It's very ironic that this

happens around the same time when we give thanks for all that we already have and celebrate the greatest gift ever given. It should be the time of year when we are most content. ☺

Each of us struggles with contentment and are tempted to think that if we just had that one specific thing or situation, *then* we would be happy. What is that "thing" for you? You know the problem with things, though? They get outdated, break, wear out, and eventually end up in the trash. Even people and circumstances will change, fail, and disappoint us.

Discontentment is prevalent in this life and produces so much stress, anxiety, and conflict as we compete and strive for those things that we think will satisfy us or bring happiness. But God has a better way! It's the opposite and is called contentment. Contentment produces joy, peace, and rest—even in a world that seems uncertain and out of control.

The apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:11b-12, *"For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."* What is the secret he found? The secret is that true contentment can only be found in God himself.

Paul is not saying that we should do away with all earthly possessions; he just sees them as being immaterial to his happiness. In fact, just before this, he gives thanks to the church in Philippi because they had sent him a gift to help meet his needs. He is very grateful to them for thinking of him. I too, am very grateful for the things that God has allowed me to have and experience, but he is teaching me how important it is to hold those things with "open hands." Life is fragile. We are fragile and none of us knows what tomorrow may hold. Any of those things or people could be taken away. What then? Will my life be over or will I still be able to be content?

Another clue to this secret is found in Psalm 37:4. It says, *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."* This isn't a secret formula for getting whatever we want, although some would try to explain it that way. It is a clue that helps us understand that it is only God himself who can truly satisfy every desire of our heart. We were created by God to be in a relationship with Him. We all have a God-shaped hole in our hearts and only God—the God who created the universe and the God who made us—can fill it. The problem is that we try to fill this infinite hole with finite things. Finite things can never satisfy an infinite hole; only an infinite God can do that.

It's only as we learn to know God that we discover that he really is all that we need and want. I pray that each of us will allow him to fill that hole in our hearts as we delight in him—the infinite creator, God. Then we will be able to say with Paul, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." ■

# Elders Notes

by Rob & Doris Swartz

The elders met on November 12th for our monthly meeting. We began by sharing prayer requests (including for Jesse, who was sick and unable to be with us) and taking them to our Heavenly Father in prayer and asking him for wisdom and guidance in our meeting.

We shared updates and talked about things God has been teaching us as we work through various, sometimes difficult, situations.

We spent time talking about leadership positions that we are in need of at LCF, including 2 elders and a new council member. Jesse Diller's 3-year elder term and Jim Jones' 3-year council term both end on December 31. Both teams extended an invitation for them to be considered for a second term. They have agreed, so we are proceeding by seeking an affirmation vote from the congregation. Since we still have an open position for our 3rd elder, we will take this opportunity to solicit new nominations and pray that God will show us who he is calling to serve in this role.

Since we do not currently have a Benevolence Team, the council and elders have been in conversation about how to help a family among us who is experiencing difficulty and is in need of financial help. We agreed to provide some assistance from the Benevolence Fund and are applying for a matching grant from Everence. We will make the need known to the congregation and allow them to help give towards it as well, by making donations to LCF's benevolence fund.

We closed our time with prayer asking God to be at work in the various situations we discussed. Our next meeting will be at the Swartz home on Tuesday, December 10. If you have any questions or feedback, we always welcome you to contact any of us on the elders team.

We ask you as a congregation to keep the Council and Elders Team in your prayers as we work on details such as the yearly budget, find people to serve on these and other teams, and as we seek God's direction for LCF in the coming year. ■

## Council Update

by Jim Jones

In November the LCF council discussed the Team Leader positions. Sharon Headings is fine with continuing another term as the Food and Fellowship Team Leader. Jim agreed to another term as Church Council Chair pending congregational approval. The Children's Ministry Team Lead position is open, and Rob is going to solicit input from parents concerning the direction Children's Ministry at LCF will take.

The budget was discussed at length. Before the final budget is released, the council would like to see where we are in December regarding YTD giving. October giving was below average (\$9764.19) compared to monthly expenses of \$13,475.93 which left a deficit of \$3710.93. That brought our YTD deficit to \$4742.41. November appears to be above average as of the first two Sundays. ■

## Upcoming Activities

- Dec. 2 - Caroling at London's Old-Fashioned Christmas, 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 8 - Elder/Council Affirmation Vote and Nominations
- Dec. 8 - RBC Chorus leads us in worship, 10:00 a.m.
- Dec. 22 - LCF Family Christmas; Brunch at 9:45, followed by a special Christmas celebration for all ages at 10:30
- January 19 - Celebrate the Church Sunday



# A Warm Christmas Greeting

from Jeff & Pam Stanforth

Hello to our LCF Family from Mt. Vernon, Texas, and our new “digs,” a 30-foot camper, way back in-the-middle of trees beside a passel of horses. It has been my desire for a very long time to celebrate Christmas in the south with my family! However, Jeff and I miss our LCF family and all the events of celebrating Jesus’ birth with you.



We are both retired now, and Jeff is about helping me to check things off my bucket list. What we are finding is that life’s learning events are present in each day and those simple-listed items to be checked off can prove to be far from simple! LOL! So far, we have traveled about 4,500 miles and visited many dear friends and family. As we interact with others we feel the effects of sharing in many aspects of their lives once again. Now that we are settled in a bit, near my son’s house, we are enjoying sharing life’s normal routines with some of my children and grandchildren.

One of the items on my bucket list that we are trying to accomplish is to visit churches where children whom I taught in Sunday School many years ago now serve as pastors, worship leaders, etc. What a joy it is to see what God has done and continues to do in their lives!

We have been reminded often that we all face challenges, but God’s mercies, grace, and love are always there to meet the needs of every soul. We are learning to cherish the beauty we encounter along our journey. Sometimes it is obscured by strong winds and rain, unexpected cold, less-than-convenient/comfortable places, sand burrs, etc. (To say it another way, we are missing our own bed and spoiled/pampered lives! LOL!) ☺ Simply put, we are finding beauty in the simplicity of life—and it is not always an easy find. Read that again, please?



By now, you may be wondering what this has to do with Christmas? Everything! One main purpose to this bucket list journey is to share Christmas in one location with all my children and some of my siblings. This is something I have not experienced since my children were young, and they are now all in their forties. It remains to be seen if things will work out as planned, since, as you know, when life’s events play out, sometime they offer challenges and changes along the way. Regardless, it will be a very special Christmas!

A cherished event happening in this space and time is that I am learning from one of my sons how to see Christmas not just as some point on a time line, an exact day or date; in his words, “these are of minor importance.” (By the way, Jake, Dawn and family recall with love their time spent at LCF several years ago, and send their hellos and blessings to you.) Anyway, Jake has been asking me some questions:

- *When did God start loving you?*
- *When did Jesus come into existence?*
- *When did Father God shower grace on mankind?*
- *What was the purpose of Jesus entering humanity?*
- *What was His purpose in his death and resurrection?*
- *What gift is the greatest of all?*



A few of the horses and our big Christmas tree.

He said, “Mom, I want to share with you how we are learning to celebrate Christmas, Christ’s birth, every day, all year. You see, God loved you and me before the world was founded. His son was with Him and, in fact, all that is, was made by Jesus. There would be nothing without Him. God the Father, full of grace, mercy and love, has always been, for He is a God that changes not, and always is. The gift of Jesus’ birth is for each of us—individually and united. He came, displaying to us how to live, how to overcome, how to die. His death displays His great love for us, and His resurrection gives us what men of old, in faith, were looking forward to, and what we look back to, in faith—Victory! Jesus is the event! He is the point in our time, our eternal sacrifice. He is God’s holy Lamb—perfect, without spot or blemish—restoring forever our relationship with Father God. In his death and resurrection, He did what we could not! He declares victory, taking the keys of hell and death and leading captives free. His obedience to the Father overcame the first Adam’s disobedience. He is our forever-living sacrifice, who now sits at the right hand of Father God. We live because of him; and because of him, Christmas is alive in our hearts every second of every minute of every day!”

I think that kid is pretty wise—and he gets it from his Father, God! As we journey, we are finding that nothing in this world is perfect. Events do not happen perfectly, despite all our greatest planning. We are all imperfect people. Our perfect Christmas plans may well work out like—The Griswold’s in National Lampoon’s Christmas. We are reminded there is only One who is perfect—Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God. And as for the perfect gift—it’s LOVE—the love that He showed us by His birth, life, and death, and the love that He gives to us to share with others! May Christmas be in our hearts every second of every minute of every hour of every day!

We hope all of you have a wonderful Christmas!!! We love and miss you and look forward to seeing you when we get back to our home in London (probably sometime in March). ■



# Baked Potatoes with a Purpose

by Meredith Hochstetler



On Sunday, November 10, the LCF youth hosted a Baked Potato Bar Fundraiser after the church service. We provided a hot lunch for donation to benefit our next summer mission trip. We made \$431!

A big thank you to all of the hard work put in by the youth, our youth sponsors: Ray & Grace Raber, Katy Miller, and everyone who came and supported us! ■

## Christmas Traditions...continued

at church to ask him about his family's Christmas traditions, and when I repeated what he said to Dorothy, who was sitting with Jim, she raised her eyebrows and said, "That's what held our family together?" in true Dorothy fashion!) ☺



### Andrea Biscup:

We haven't formed any Christmas traditions with our own family yet, other than sledding if there's snow. My favorite traditions with my extended family are shrimp cocktail for Christmas Eve and cheese fondue for Christmas dinner.



### Jesse Diller:

In the days leading up to Christmas, we'd read sections of the Christmas story and then we read about the birth of Jesus on Christmas Eve. Dad would read it, and then as we grew up, we'd take turns reading.

We hope that among all the various

traditions of the season that you have a joyous and meaningful time celebrating the birth of our wonderful Savior! ■



## Steadfast in Gathering...continued

"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2: 43-47



A coyote attacks a sheep. Contributed photo from bluemountaineagle.com.

Another thought that helps me think through this verse is on sheep grazing in open fields. Growing up, my brothers and I spent significant hours of the school holidays in the woods and open grass fields looking after the family livestock. I recently came across this picture and remembered how scary it was for us whenever we missed any of the animals under our care, which was mostly the case with sheep. This was not just because we were accountable to our parents, but because we were cognizant of the existence of predators.

Scattered sheep are an easy prey. The enemy of our souls uses the scattering tactic to make us easy prey. Ongoing fellowship with fellow believers cushions us against predatory attacks and extinction of our fire flames. Although Sunday worship services provide a forum for meeting for believers, the need for continued devotion to teaching, prayer, and fellowship remains for the rest of the week. What a joy it is to have this need taken care of in the engaging conversations that occur immediately after the Sunday worship services, small groups, ladies' LIFE groups (pictured on the right), men's fellowship, and many more! The letter to the Hebrews reminded believers of the need to maintain fellowship. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10: 24-25



I find there is a lot today that works against continuous fellowship. Weather issues, strained relationships, busy schedules, absorption in technological devices, a false sense of self-sufficiency and failure to recognize our desperate need for one another, to name but a few. As the wintry conditions slowly set in and keep us indoors for the next few months, let us be intentional in using the channels available to continuously connect with fellow believers. ■



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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](mailto: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.