

# The LCF Connection

March 2020

## Don't Underestimate the Gift of a Simple Card

by Amie Smith

The purpose of a card ministry is to send cards to people to celebrate an event with them, to cheer and encourage them, to bring comfort, and to let them know someone is praying for them. The card ministry of LCF's Congregational Care Team is one way in which we try to encourage those who are ailing or celebrate with those who have a praise.

We began the card ministry in 2013 when I started attending LCF. When Marcus Freed introduced me to Horizon Prison Ministry, I wanted to help with the birthday cards that he was sending to the inmates at London Correctional. I love making greeting cards, and so I was excited to be able to use my passion to encourage others.

Horizon is a program that helps promote unity amongst men who are grouped into "families." Within the families they learn how to relate to others of different faith, learn from their past, and determine how to exist within their setting and when they are released.

About every six months Marcus provides me a list of the inmates who have birthdays coming up. There are typically 6-8 birthdays each month. I set out the cards on a table in the foyer for you, our LCF church family, to sign your names (first names only). Then, a couple of days before their birthdays, I pray over their cards and mail them to them.

LCF has received various thank you letters back from inmates who felt so blessed and encouraged from receiving this unexpected gift of a personalized birthday card from people they have never met, who care about them. We often post these notes of thanks on the bulletin board in the foyer for you to read. One letter stated this: "Hello Friends, I am writing this letter to tell everybody thank you very much for the birthday card. My birthday was much better getting a card from you guys. It really brightened up my day a lot more. Thank you very much and God Bless."

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## What is... Everence®?

by Elisabeth Yoder

Throughout scripture, Christians are repeatedly called to practice good stewardship over the resources God has given them. This call is neither simple nor straightforward, and Everence is an organization that seeks to aid Christians on their journey.

Everence is a faith-based financial services organization that equips believers with the tools to manage their resources well and the ability to make a difference in their communities and the world through unique giving and investment opportunities. Becoming a member of Everence grants access to benefits such as free budget and debt counseling, the potential to gain college scholarships, discounted home equity and auto loans, as well as much more.



Everence seeks to support churches as they minister to those in need. One way they do this is by partnering with churches to provide shared/matching grants based on eligibility. Individuals can contribute to the Everence Sharing Fund directly or simply by using Everence services.

If you would like to learn more about Everence and the services they offer you can visit [www.everence.com](http://www.everence.com) or talk with Clete Yoder who is currently the Everence representative at LCF. ■



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



# Do You Know How to Disagree?

A Message from the Pastor  
by Reuben Sairs

I think a great skill for Christians to acquire is the ability to disagree. The first step comes easily and automatically. It is only human to disagree with other humans. We all have opinions, preferences, and dislikes, and these lead to disagreements because someone else with just as much sincerity, energy, and conviction doesn't see it our way. The nerve of that person! Shall we call down fire from heaven? Taking that solution off the table, how should we deal with disagreements?

We could discuss pineapple on pizza or politics but these would be a distraction. If your opinions on pizza or politics are causing you to disrupt, break, or limit fellowship in the church, then I'd recommend you quit reading this and pray for a while. I don't think you can use such things to cause dissension, and not see it as sinful. Of course I imply that there are many issues that fall into the pizza and politics categories.

A church is bound to be full of disagreements, and it is hard to classify them. Is your preferred approach to prayer, singing, or preaching a serious doctrinal issue, or is it simply a matter of taste? Can two faithful people disagree on any point of Biblical interpretation, or must one of those persons yield to the other, preferably with some grovelling? Are you reacting to a personality or to a position that someone holds? Sometimes we just can't find a wavelength with another person. The other person is different culturally and stylistically, and we don't have common interests and conversation seems strained. And sometimes I think people are just in disagreement with reality—where they live and what the possibilities and limitations of their circumstances are. Somehow they find a personal target. An unhappy person is often a disagreeing person.

What could you do?

Recognize that this situation is common in church life, and a great opportunity to grow and be the church. God calls us to share a church with others, and others can be annoying or worse.

Remember that each of us is the "other" to someone else. How we live with our disagreements is a tremendous measure of who we are spiritually.

- The scriptures never allow us the privilege of judging another person.  
Try this Bible study:  
Matthew 7:1-2, Romans 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 4:5
- The scriptures never allow us the privilege of speaking harshly.  
Try this Bible study:  
Matthew 5:22, Philippians 4:5, 1 Peter 1:22
- The scriptures never allow us to be unkind, cold or unforgiving.  
Try this Bible study:  
Ephesians 4:25-27, Colossians 3:13, Philippians 2:3-4
- The scriptures help us to reduce most disagreements to proper proportions—most of them are not that important in the long run.  
Try this Bible study:  
2 Timothy 2:23, Titus 3:9, 1 Timothy 1:3-7 ■

## Elders' Notes

by Jesse Diller

We spent most of our time at our February 11th meeting discussing what we think God's priorities are for us as elders and what we should focus on at our monthly elders meetings. Two big things that we recognize as God's top priorities for elders are to be spending significant time in prayer and his Word.

We talked about possible ways we could grow in our time of prayer, such as: praying individually for each person in the church, or praying about broader issues that relate to all of us, all of the time—unity, love, spiritual growth, reaching the lost, etc. We talked about the importance of studying scriptures together that relate to congregational life, church leadership, etc. We are in agreement that according to scripture, the role of the elders is to give priority to prayer and the Word, and we want to be faithful to do that.

We would like to have more time to devote to both; however, we recognized that we already struggle to get through our usual agenda each month. To accomplish this, we will need to be creative in trying to free up some time in our monthly meeting to enable us to spend more of our time together in prayer and the Word. We spent a good bit of time discussing various possibilities.

One thing we will do is to work at setting up a better group communication platform so that we can more efficiently process and work on things together throughout the month. We are confident that "prayer is the work" and that when we spend more time praying about things, God will give us wisdom and insight to make decisions and solve problems much better than we could ever do on our own.

We discussed the importance of equipping the saints for ministry. We were glad to see the good response we received from the "Opportunity to Serve" handouts at Celebrate the Church Sunday, and talked about how to follow up and get everyone who expressed interest involved. We discussed what qualifications are necessary for various roles and leaders.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, March 10th. ■

## Council Update

by Jim Jones

At our meeting on February 18th we discussed an offer from AT&T for high speed DSL. It would be three times faster than what we have now. The cost would be \$40 per month vs our current rate of \$65 per month. It would be a yearly agreement, which would need to be renewed annually to get the same rate. Dan is going to check with our current provider to see when our contract ends and if it will meet our requirements.

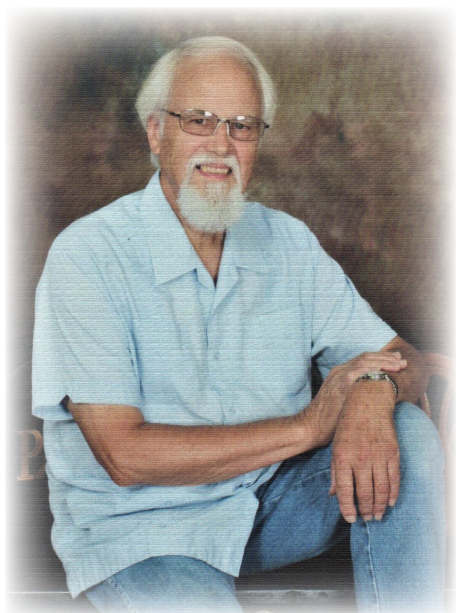
Our next meeting will be Wednesday, March 25. ■

## Upcoming Activities

- March 1 - Annual Child Protection Training, 11:30-12:15
- March 9 - We Care Banquet at Der Dutchman, 6:30 p.m.
- March 15 - Baby Shower for Julie Freer, 2:00 p.m.
- April 4 - Spring Workday at LCF, 9 a.m. - noon

# Getting to Know...Allan Patterson

Interviewed by Theresa Hennis



*It has been a joy and an honor to interview LCF members over the years. I recently interviewed Allan, and he is a wonderful storyteller. I could have sat all day and talked with him. Next time you see Allan, spend some time with him to hear more of his stories about his life experiences and the things he loves.*

## **Where are you from, originally?**

I am from Plain City, as was my wife, Betsy. We were raised on farms but I knew from an early age I couldn't be a farmer because I was allergic to just about everything. I sneezed off 10 to 15 pounds every summer. In high school I decided to be a teacher and pursued that career at Bluffton College, a Mennonite School.

## **Do you have any hobbies or special interests?**

I loved roaming the fields as a child, looking for Indian arrowheads and artifacts. I have three big flower beds in my yard. I planned each bed to bloom at different times so there is always something blooming next. I've raised Dahlias for years, and I have tubers that date back years.

I like canning and preserving. I grow tomatoes and make salsa. My son likes very hot salsa, and I've challenged myself to make it hotter, but he says it's still not hot enough, even after I use poblanos and jalapenos, seeds and all. I like to make soups. My wife Betsy (who died last March), and my daughter are No. 1 pie makers. My daughter's church orders pies from her. The secret is not to bake on a cloudy day. The sun has to be out, or the dough doesn't work up right.

I also like to restore furniture. Before Betsy died, she wanted to see a cabinet restored that we had carried from home to home over the years, but it was too cold to do it right. After she died and spring came, I worked on it until it was done, in her memory.

## **You were a pastor and a teacher. Where did you lead, and what did you teach?**

I have a Masters of Arts In Teaching from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. I served with MCC in the Teachers Abroad Program in Newfoundland, Canada, from 1967 to 1969. I taught World History and English for two years as alternate service to the Vietnam War military service plus taught Vacation Bible School for two summers around the Newfoundland island. I taught seventh grade Social Studies at Oberlin School for twenty years. After our children were old enough, Betsy went back to school and also became a teacher of seventh grade math and later 4th and 5th grade Title One math and reading. The Lord called me to pastor the Elyria Peace Mennonite Church, a position I held for nineteen years. In 2010 my wife and I retired after 39 years in Oberlin, to London. I was hired to be interim pastor of Cornerstone Mennonite Church in Plain City for two years.

## **When were you married, and how many children/grandchildren do you have?**

I knew Betsy was the one for me from the beginning when I met her at her parents' home while I was visiting her sister. When I was at university, we wrote back and forth. We wanted to get married, which we did on December 19 of 1971. We were married 47 years when she died.

We have three children, a son, Matthew, our middle daughter, Laura, and our eldest, Katherine, and we have five grandchildren. I always claimed our daughters competed on who would get married first, have the first child, etc.



## **You're a conscientious objector (CO). How did you come to that decision?**

The best teachers are your friends, and I had a roommate in college who attended a Mennonite church. I thought Mennonites were pacifists because of tradition. I have a Calvinistic understanding. When my roommate told me about the Anabaptist teachings and what it meant to choose to be of the faith, I began to think it through. God put it on my heart to be a pacifist and not kill.

Both of my brothers were in the service, and my mother thought I should do the same. I told her I would have to step back, and that it meant I would probably go to jail. She did everything in her power to get me to change my mind. I told her it took more guts to say no to the government. It was very hard, and I was torn. I ended up doing alternative service for the Mennonites in the Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) in Newfoundland.

## **How did you come to know Jesus?**

The summer of 1964 after my sophomore year at Bluffton, I signed up to do volunteer service at Camp Friedenswald, a Mennonite Camp in Michigan. I was a camp counselor for high school students when we were observing communion on the lake shore. The bread and grape juice were passed around, and it hit me like a ton of bricks—I thought, this Jesus is real, it's not a fairy tale. I had a sense in my heart of rebirth, which was a new concept to me, because in the Presbyterian Church you're considered chosen. I had no training in any of the concepts of choosing to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

## **What is one thing you are passionate about people knowing?**

Ask Jesus directly about what you want. He already knows it. Don't beat around the bush. Be specific, because you have to know when he answers your prayer. When you read the Bible, have a question in mind. The answer will come as you read. ■

# Hearing God Speak at Pastors Conference 2020

by Rob Swartz

Pastors Conference this year, which was held in Hicksville, Ohio, February 17-20, gave me much to think about. I was challenged, encouraged, and “stirred up” in a good way. ☺ For those of you who don’t know, CMC, the church conference that we are affiliated with, holds their annual Pastors Conference around the middle of February each year. It is a time where all the pastors of our conference churches, along with their wives, are invited to meet together for several days for good teaching, fellowship, and also a business meeting. Reuben & Vicki Sairs, Steve (who serves as CMC’s conference pastor) & Phyllis Swartz, our overseer, Roger &

Sharon Hazen, and Doris & I were all able to be there this year, along with around 300 others (151 men, 102 women and 55 children). It was inspiring to hear from some younger pastors in our conference and also from some guest speakers who have been involved in mission work around the globe.

God is speaking to us. I hear him through those of you at LCF, and I heard him clearly at Pastors Conference. I’d like to hear how you are hearing him speak to you. Here are a few things that resonated in my soul from Pastor’s Conference. They aren’t new, but they’ve been stirred in a fresh way in my heart.

Nik Ripken reminded us that persecution for the believer is normal.

He shared many stories of our brothers and sisters in other countries who have suffered and continue to suffer significantly for their faith. He encouraged us to follow their example by persevering in our faith in the midst of pain and suffering, and also to pray for them. Obedience always leads to persecution. May we be willing to follow Jesus’ call—wherever he leads us!

Yemiru Tilahun, from Ethiopia, encouraged us to be a people of prayer. Meserete Kristos Church is the largest Mennonite church in the world and is in the midst of a tremendous harvest of believers in Africa. Yemiru acknowledged that this is simply God’s work and that we should not be discouraged because we are not seeing the same results, but challenged us to pray fervently for God to do his work among us. Yemiru’s wife, Zway, doesn’t usually travel with him, but felt the Lord impress on her heart a message to bring to us here in the United States. She felt led by God to share with us the message in Ezekiel 37 about the dry bones coming to life. She prayed a passionate prayer for us and encouraged us that God is going to revive and bring new life to the dry bones that we see around us!

I’m excited because these words at Pastors Conference simply confirmed things that God has been saying to our elders team, to Doris and I personally, and to others in our congregation. God told Ezekiel as those dry bones came to life, “I have spoken, and I will do it.” I truly believe he will! I encourage us to be faithful in prayer, and I look forward to seeing what God is going to do in and through us. “So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 ■

## *The Gift of a Card...continued*

Receiving thank you letters back from the inmates is a great encouragement to the card ministry, and hopefully, you, as well. This goes to show that what you do matters. So, when you see the cards in the foyer to sign, take a moment to help put a smile on someone’s face. I encourage you to say a short prayer for the men as you sign your name on the cards.

Every year Marcus also lets me know how many Christmas cards are needed for their Horizon families. This past year we were able to make enough cards to provide two cards for each inmate to send home to their families. My best friend, Lydia Kitchen, and I make the Christmas cards every Friday night starting in the summer. This Christmas we handmade 16 groups of 9 totaling 144 and 152 individual cards, making a full total of 296 Christmas cards!

This past June at the graduation ceremony for the Horizon program, I was honored to receive a painted portrait of Nathaniel and I from an inmate. They wanted to recognize me for the cards that they have received over the years. I had several men come up to me and thank me personally. It was a very emotional day, and it gave me a drive to keep going. The reason I make these cards and send them is to bless these men. May they feel love on their special day and feel Christ’s love through the ministry. ■



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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](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.*