

The LCF Connection

July 2020

Caught
in the
Act!



Serving with Joy—Behind the Scenes

by Doris Swartz

Have you ever thought about how few weeds you see in LCF's gravel parking lot? When I stopped by the church on a recent Monday, Phyllis Swartz was there walking around the parking lot spraying poison on any weeds she could find. I've seen her there doing that quite a few times over the years and thought this would be a great opportunity for a "Caught in the Act" photo for the LCF Connection. ☺



Out of curiosity, I asked Phyllis how and when she got started doing this menial, behind-the-scenes task of poisoning the weeds in the parking lot. She said she doesn't remember exactly when she started—but that it's probably been over 30 years ago. She said she was embarrassed by how the church property looked from the road and thought people might feel we weren't showing much respect to God.

I always love to hear Phyllis tell stories and true to form, she had a "story" to share about why she was motivated to voluntarily begin serving God in this unique way.

She said that she recalled a clear memory from her childhood—one that her dad doesn't even remember. She and her dad were walking across the driveway from their church in Flint, Michigan (where her dad was the pastor) to the parsonage where they lived. They had worked hard all day to clean the church, fold the bulletins, mow the grass, and prepare food for Sunday guests. Her dad stopped in the middle of the driveway and looked up at a full moon above them and said, "Phyllis, I know we worked hard today, but I think God is pleased." Then he proceeded to quote a verse from Haggai 1:4: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" "That," he told her, "is what we are not doing."

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A Time to Remember

Usually during the summer months many of us at LCF attend camps, conferences, and other group events. We often ask various ones to write an article for the LCF Connection about those experiences and what you have learned. Who would have ever imagined that this year those large group gatherings and activities would be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic!



So we thought we would take this opportunity to invite all of you to share some of the things you have been experiencing and learning during these last 4 months of sheltering-in-place and figuring out how to navigate such an unprecedented time. Thanks to each of you who took the time to respond to the survey we sent out. We hope you enjoy this glimpse into some of the things we as a church family have been experiencing and learning during this time while we have been, and continue to be, apart. (Individual responses received are listed under each question in no particular order.)

What is **SOMETHING NEW** that you did for the very first time?

- Piano lessons and school online, getting up before dawn to stand in line to buy toilet paper
- Got to meet and see more neighbors with more people walking in neighborhood
- Wore a mask ☺
- Zoom conferences
- Virtual meetings with over 100 people
- Had a baby!
- Tried not to see many people in person
- Deposited a check online via my phone
- Used Kroger's grocery pick-up service
- Taught by Zoom
- Had a weekly book exchange with friends
- Enjoyed an empty calendar
- Yoga Burn, Zoom, game "Code Names" which became one of our family favs
- Played lots and lots of table games with family, became obsessed with washing my hands frequently
- Taught classes live online, preached sermons online, served as worship moderator a couple times



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



Rejoicing in Mystery

A Message from the Pastor

by Reuben Sairs

*“The simple believes every word,
But the prudent considers well his steps.”
Proverbs 14:15 (NKJV)*

Have you ever believed in a conspiracy theory? I can't remember that I ever have. I'm a little too skeptical of the human ability to work together and execute any plan. There is always someone only half-in, someone barely competent or lazy, someone who decides to work against the group or plan. I've been a teacher long enough to know that most people don't follow instructions very well. I remember, too, something Gore Vidal (not a Christian) said that I find true. People who think alike don't need a conspiracy. There is no back room deal, no loyalty oath, no committee, no plan. It is just people automatically doing what people do.

I think G.K. Chesterton (a Catholic Christian) said some of the smartest things about conspiracies, and how to free someone who is trapped in that kind of thinking. He pointed out that conspiracies are wrapped tightly in rational arguments. “The madman's explanation of a thing is always complete...” Of course people deny there is a conspiracy because that is what conspirators do. “...their most sinister quality is a horrible clarity of detail; a connecting of one thing to another in a map more elaborate than a maze.”

How can you break free? Chesterton says, “A small circle is quite as infinite as a large circle; but though it is quite as infinite, it is not so large.” The trouble with conspiracies is not that they don't make sense as much as that they make too much sense. The world is bigger, less predictable, populated with complex people each with his or her own mind. Conspiracies are small circles, small little theaters of the mind. They make sense in a little world, but the problem is what they leave out. Chesterton says we shouldn't be concerned so much “to give it arguments as to give it air, to convince it that there was something cleaner and cooler outside of the suffocation of a single argument.”

I don't know about yours, but my Facebook feed is full of conspiracy theories these days. Many of those forwarding the various articles and memes are not foolish people. Something has gotten hold of them, though, and by my thinking they are trapped. If they could just step back a few paces, the whole conspiracy would begin to look pretty shoddy, not just unlikely but truly impossible. The problem is to get them to step back, not step in. The further in they go, the more complex the spider web of connections grows, and it is almost impossible to be freed by rational arguments, to hear new information, or to consider other possibilities.

I avoid arguments with those proclaiming a conspiracy. I don't think the arguing will do much good in most cases. I try to simply change the subject in such a way that makes the world a bigger place, a less predictable place, a rowdy place in which plans are made and go forward unevenly and results are often surprising.

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17 makes a statement that should cause us to rejoice, not despair. *“When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”*

Let's rejoice in the world as God made it with unpredictable futures, persistent questions and lots of mysteries to explore. In such a world, you learn what it means to believe and have faith. ■

Elders' Notes

by Keith Scheffel

The Elders were involved in a lot of communication in late May/early June as we grappled with what things could/should look like when we re-opened the church building on June 7 for our first worship service back together. There were a myriad of questions that needed to be thought through. We felt it important to have a measured, moderate plan—one that gives grace and space to people at all points on the spectrum. We are very grateful for the involvement of the church council and for the techies (Dan Frederick, Jesse Diller and Sammy Waweru) who did a lot of work to set things up so that we could continue livestreaming the service even as we began meeting in person again.

We had our monthly Elders' meeting on June 9 via Zoom. We are thankful for technology that allows us to meet in this way, but admit that we hope this will be the last one we need to use Zoom for.

We continue to spend the first part of our monthly meetings in prayer. Reuben facilitated our prayer time as we prayed for the world and related issues, then narrowed our focus to pray for the church, and finished by praying for specifics and individuals that are on our hearts.

We continued to process the formalization of LCF serving as a sending church for Larissa Swartz in her ministry with IFI-Dayton.

We also discussed how the first service back together (June 7) went and whether we needed to make any modifications for the next Sunday. We heard positive comments—both from those who attended in person (around 65) as well as those who watched the livestream (around 60 views). We will do our best to remain flexible and follow God's leading as we move forward, noting that there are still many things we don't know yet.

Our next scheduled meeting will be on Tuesday, July 14th, at 7 p.m.—hopefully in person on Rob & Doris' patio. ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The LCF Council met via phone on June 16th. Equipment requirements for livestream services was discussed. Currently we are using equipment borrowed from our generous members of our sound/audio team. The technical team wanted to know what amount was available from our budget to work with. The council discussed our 2020 budget and looked at what was available from our YTD surplus. We unanimously approved \$2000-\$5000 to be used towards new tech equipment needed for live streaming our services. Our next meeting will be July 21st. ■



What did you **most MISS** not being able to do?

- Church, the most!
- Having birthday parties with family
- Hugging my grandchildren
- Hanging out with friends
- Meeting and hugging our children
- Hugging our parents, visiting with family
- Attending physical church
- Meeting people in person
- Praying together, feeling safe
- Singing and worshipping with our church family
- London Public Library
- Spending time with family and friends
- Seeing new people in the room
- Family gatherings
- Getting out of the house
- Freedom to mingle with fellow believers
- Doing activities that take us out of the house and give us interaction with others such as sporting events
- Socializing with others
- Visit my parents and my grandma

What special **GIFT** did you discover during this time, for which you're thankful?

- Extra time in God's Word and for prayer (x 2)
- Zoom calls with extended family (x 2)
- Patience...I really learned to slow down and enjoy the simple things
- My health
- More time with my wife ☺
- Family and nature trails
- Being home more than I've been in 18 years
- Daily walks outside, extra time at home with my husband, looking back through old scrapbooks
- I don't think there was just one. Staying at home, just in our own house, was different. We're out and gone a fair amount. It was interesting to get that "at home" feeling. I'm also quite ready to get out and travel somewhere again!
- The time we got to spend together as a family
- Family time—dinners that were not rushed or stressed and a more consistent devotional time

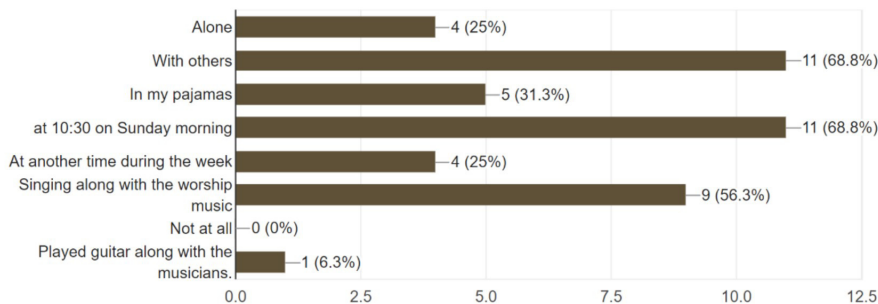


What was a **HUMOROUS** experience or one that you'll always remember?

- Our house becoming increasingly small
- Constantly asking what day it was
- Passing bikers wearing masks
- Collecting/saving some of our favorite memes and humorous comics related to the pandemic (x 2)
- Zach made a truly awful no egg/no milk cake
- Ringing my parents' doorbell every day with my elbow
- Ella earned the 5th grade citizenship award. Due to no school and social distancing, the teachers each drove by our house—honking, waving and holding signs—to congratulate Ella as we stood in our yard waving back.
- Matthias, age 3, threatening to reopen the playgrounds no matter what the government says
- Watching Naomi restraining herself from hugging our sons
- Zoom party for Dorothy's 100th birthday. We made a sign, but didn't realize we should have written it backwards, so that it would be correct on the camera. Oops! ☺
- Lydia learning how to ride her bicycle, driveway visits with our "We miss you and we love you" signs



How did you usually watch LCF's **LIVESTREAM** service?



What was a **SCRIPTURE** or **SONG** that encouraged you?



- Song: Goodness of God (x 2)
- Psalm 90 and 91 (x 2)
- The hymn, It is Well With My Soul (x 2)—The author lost most of his family in a tragic accident when he wrote this song. 2020 has been a rough year for me even without the pandemic, and this hymn just reminds me that God is here through all of it.
- "Never be lacking in zeal, keeping your spiritual fervor." Romans 12:11
- 2 Chronicles 20: 12 "Our God, won't you please judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."
- Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know..."
- I read the book of Ruth and was reminded that God is still working even when we do not see it now.
- "Be still and know that I am God."
- The Beatitudes
- Isaiah 41:10
- I valued reading a "daily verse" in the NASB in an app then looking it up in the Greek (another app) to refresh my reading. I did this many mornings and it was a happy moment every time.

Don't forget to check on your extroverted friends during this time of isolation! ☺

What **LESSON** has God been teaching you?

- Patience! (x 3)
- God is in control
- To have my priorities right
- That time alone is a gift
- Knee-mail is most important
- To give thanks in all circumstances
- To be flexible and enjoy the good in every situation
- To understand that God is sovereign and we are not in control
- Trust in the Lord. He is returning. Share the Gospel with others.
- To trust God—even when I don't understand. He is working out his plan!
- That God is sovereign, and we need not worry. To think of others, and not be caught up in all the things WE are missing out on. Instead, focus on being a blessing to others.
- You can cool your heels without losing your mind or becoming a slug, and it is probably good for you to do that once in a while.
- I believe God is using this time to show me that He is in control and that we should step back and take time for the important things in life. I have been out of work for several months which has put a strain on our household finances, but I am grateful for the extra time spent with my family. My kids will be going off to college next year so I am thankful for the extra talks and time spent enjoying the outdoors with them this summer. I have also had a lot of time to think about how people have strong feelings about certain subjects, and I have come to the conclusion that being a good listener and following Jesus' lead to love everyone is where I should be and want to be.
- Count your blessings—each day is a gift
- "Pray, trust, wait"—These words I have framed in our living room. Little did I know when hanging them in early March how fitting they would be for the next several months.

What **PROJECT(S)** did you enjoy working on?

- Plants
- Discussions on the education of minority groups
- Relearning piano recital pieces from years ago
- Gardening
- Setting up our business storefront
- Playing tennis as family. ☺
- Cleaning out and organizing our basement and closets
- An indoor clubhouse for the boys
- Sewing a baby blanket for Ruth
- Sending lots of snail mail to friends, family, & even strangers
- Writing
- Working in flowerbeds
- Puzzles, Cross Stitch, and updating our half bath
- Cooking
- All of them

The Spring of 2020

by Andrea Biscup

Spring greens and blossoms
White and cheerful
Loud with birdsong
Both mocking and relieving
My isolation

Weeks at home
New faces only on screens
Weary but all-consuming topic
First in every conversation

Stale between same four walls
But unable to relax safe anywhere else
Unclean

Scrubbing chapped hands with stinging alcohol
Recoiling from accidental touch

Longing tears
Remembering pressing crowd
Any crowd
Congregation singing together
Family celebrating together
Town parading together
Friendly noise and careless touch

Daily news addiction
Counting down minutes until new update
Anticipating changes
Hoping for hope
Craving certainty
Exhausted with caution and vague answers

But thankful
Family closer, time for each other
Projects, creativity, innovations
Spring, vibrantly unrestrained

And sovereignty, faithfulness, goodness
Far beyond and outside any virus' reach
Constant through any global calamity
past, present, and future
Love manipulating darkness for glory
Never isolated ■

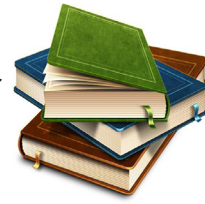
Andrea with her husband, Aaron, their boys, Matthias and Silas, and daughter, Elana Peace, who was born this spring.



A Time to Remember...continued

What good **BOOKS** did you enjoy reading?

- *Teaching From Rest* and *Mama Bear Apologetics*
- *12 Rules for Life* by Jordan Peterson
- *Camp Nelson, A Civil War History*
- I re-read some of my all-time favorites: *Blacksheep Squadron*, *Tom Sawyer*
- All the Places to Go by John Otberg
- Ted Dekker's *Circle* series
- The only one I've been reading is *What to Expect: The 1st Year*
- I am reading *The Language of God*. Not real easy to read but it gives good scientific reasons for our faith.
- *The Sensible Shoes* series by Sharon Garlough Brown *Choose Joy* by Sara Frankl
- *Before We Were Yours* by Lisa Wingate, *The Lost Wife* by Alyson Richman
- *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* by Eugene Peterson; *Reality, Grief and Hope* by Walter Brueggeman
- *Rocket Men*, *The Stranger in the Woods*, *Just Mercy*, *Endurance: My Year in Space*
- I finished 5 books during the "at home" time. *The Overstory* by Richard Powers (a long novel that I really didn't like at all); *Everyday Life in South India* by Coopeswamy—a look at a Christian convert's life in India in the late 19th century; *Santaram*—a swash-buckling novel set against the underworld of Mumbai, another really long one; Conrad Richter's *The Trees*—a novel about the very earliest pioneers in southeastern Ohio, and *The Fall* by Albert Camus
- Kids books: *Fiona's Lace*, *Lumber Camp Library*, *Thimbleberry Stories*, *The Pink Umbrella*, *The Book With No Pictures* ■



Our cleaning lady just called and told us she will be working from home and will send us instructions on what to do.

Serving with Joy...continued

So...that's why you can find Phyllis in LCF's parking lot with weed killer almost every Monday from May to October! Thank you so much Phyllis, not only for helping to keep our parking lot looking so nice, but also for your beautiful example of faithfully serving Christ without recognition. Thanks for your stories that inspire us and for this reminder of the opportunities we have of "teachable moments," especially as parents.

Have you noticed the beautiful flowers, fresh mulch, and lack of weeds in the flowerbeds around LCF lately?

As you have driven by the church this summer, you may have noticed a couple working in the flowerbeds. Dave & Karen Brown began attending LCF last fall. At our "Celebrate the Church" Sunday in January they expressed interest in helping out with the flowerbeds. The past several months they have been busy purchasing items, planting flowers and watering them, pulling weeds, and spreading mulch. They say that they feel very blessed to be able to do these tasks—especially considering that Karen takes chemo pills every day for blood cancer and Dave had open-heart surgery last fall.

On a recent Saturday when I went to the church to copy the bulletins I "caught them in the act" of planting a few more flowers. Join me in thanking Dave and Karen for giving of their time, energy, and resources to honor God and help adorn His house in such a beautiful way! ■



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 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.

