

# The LCF Connection

December 2020

## “Through” Tells the Story

by Kevin Yoder

Greetings, brothers and sisters! Grace and blessings to each one who reads these words. It's a privilege to be asked to write in this month's edition of The Connection. It hardly seems possible that in early 1987, my wife, Carla and I, started attending



Shalom Community Church, later named London Christian Fellowship. It was among that small group of believers that I led worship and we formed so many friendships. It was there, in the early '90s that I was chosen, and accepted the call, to be an assistant pastor, serving with Steve Swartz. Then, in 1993, with three children, ages 4, 2, and 3 months, we accepted the invitation to move back to Greenwood, DE, and teach music at Greenwood Mennonite School. Living in the Plain City area for 7 years allowed us to become acquainted with many people. We returned every year to the area, beginning in 1999, to assist with Choral Camp at Rosedale Bible College. For me, it was always a bit like home as we interacted with friends each year.



Little did we know how vital the closeness with the Plain City and Rosedale community would be. While attending RBC, on November 7, 2010, our 2nd child, Karissa, was in a car accident on the way home from church. Ten years is a significant amount of time, yet each year the memories are fresh and vivid. Karissa suffered a traumatic brain injury that day; was in a coma for nearly three months, was given a prognosis of remaining in a vegetative state for the rest of her life which included the grim possibility of never being granted physical therapy at a rehabilitation facility.

But she was given a conditional grant to stay at Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital where she slowly came out of her 3-month coma and began the journey of recovery. There is SO MUCH to write. SO MUCH to reflect upon. I would like to tell you what a miraculous recovery process it has been—given her prognosis her life is miraculous. Karissa probably has 50-60% functionality and has been granted a sweet and gracious

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## A Season of Celebration

by Elisabeth Yoder

Many people look forward to December as a season of celebration. As Christians, we celebrate the Advent, joining our brothers and sisters around the world in celebrating and focusing on the wonder of Christ coming as a baby to bring us life.

- In the Philippines, people decorate their homes with star-shaped lanterns as an emblem of the Star of Bethlehem.
- In England, people love to create incredible light and decoration displays outside of their homes. They then place a can in their yard and passersby put change into the can which is then, traditionally, donated to a charity of the family's choice.
- In Portugal, Christian families set up a nativity scene but wait to put baby Jesus in the manger until they come home from Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Children also put their shoes out for Jesus, not Santa Claus, to fill with treats.
- Australians take advantage of Christmas taking place in their summer by celebrating with picnics and singing Christmas carols at the beach.
- Similarly, South Africans look forward to having a barbecue after Christmas Mass.



Our own **Naomy Ndungu** gives us a glimpse into celebrating Christmas in Kenya. “Growing up in a rural part of Kenya, Christmas brought with it an air of celebration. The few people working in the cities would come home to be with their folks for an extended time period. People in my village looked forward to Christmas Eve. Under the leadership of trusted persons, normally people affiliated to different churches in the area, they would gather at designated places and start moving from house to house within a given radius, singing Christmas carols, talking about “baby Jesus” and inviting those in those households to join them in singing. This was also a time to collect gifts for baby Jesus, whose birth they were

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## Thy Will Be Done

### A Message from the Pastor

by Reuben Sairs

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Matthew 6:10. We can skip the

Elizabethan English of course, but so many people know it in that form! Your will be done. Jesus said something similar on a night in which he literally sweat blood for us. Matthew 26:39. *“And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”*

As a point of prayer, I can hardly think of anything more important. I’m stunned once in a while when I hear a prayer telling God what to do, or announcing what God thinks, without adding this prayer as a “nevertheless.” In almost all cases when decisions need to be made, we don’t know for certain. We never know the future. We don’t even know all about our own motives in many cases. At the same time, we are not told to just be quiet, God invites our requests, but I don’t think there is any scripture that follows our requests with an “our will be done.”

There is a false teaching in some quarters that suggests that if we believe in our own prayers without doubt, then things will happen as we have dictated. If we don’t get what we want, then it is because we doubted. I think this is utter hogwash. It is based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 17:20. He replied, *“Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”* As I see it, Jesus wasn’t talking about the strength of our faith as much as he was telling us about God and the confidence we should have in him. He alone can move mountains. As we grow in faith, our prayers see more answers because we are more in tune with him.

This problem of “our will” is particularly acute when people ask for healing. I’m familiar with several cases in which a Christian or a group of Christians insisting that God was going to heal, didn’t get what they wanted. But don’t get me wrong. God can heal you, and he invites you to ask for that healing, but I think it should be followed with “your will be done.”

It is clearly important to pray, and I don’t think that God is ever selectively deaf. He is greatly interested in working in us to bring comfort in trying situations. But even if it were true that I got to call the shots, I wouldn’t want to have my will come in ahead of God’s. I want my prayers to carry a strong element of doubt in my own perception of things. I want what God wants for me. He alone knows the future. He alone knows me fully—see Psalm 139. He alone knows what is happening to me on the inside—see Romans 8:26-27.

When I say your will be done to God, I rest in that surrender. He has proved his perfect love. He has promised an eternity of joy. In short, I trust him or, at the very least, commit myself to trusting him. It isn’t a lack of faith that says “your will be done,” it is at the very least a mustard seed of faith and, in some cases, much more than that. It’s a hard prayer, sometimes. We know what we think we want. We know what we think should happen. We might even think we know the mind of God on a matter, but we can’t say that with final certainty. Praying “your will be done.” is a wonderful release of our own anxieties and puts matters in God’s hands. It isn’t fatalism. It isn’t unfaithful. It is simply the affirmation that “You are my God.” ■



## Elders' Notes

by Jesse Diller

Over the last month, the elders team has continued to use online communication quite a bit, to work out details of upcoming church services, share prayer requests and advice, and discuss upcoming opportunities and challenges.

We enjoyed having Steve and Phyllis Swartz share at LCF on November 8th. They shared from John 6, challenging each of us to offer the “barley” we have in our hand to God, for him to use and multiply. They met briefly with Reuben & Vicki and Rob & Doris after the Sunday service, and then joined us as an elders team, for the main part of our elders meeting on November 13.

After spending time in prayer, Steve and Phyllis shared more with us about the vision for CMC churches to Mature and Multiply. They talked about the 3 areas that make up a healthy profile of a church: Biblical Text, Missional Context, and Faith Community, and gave us several group exercises to help us think about various profiles and where we see LCF fitting. We recognize that all 3 areas need balance and need to be led with much wisdom and grace.

We talked about how to help those who are going through difficult times right now. We want to love and support each person well. As we deal with situations beyond our expertise, we are committed to prayer and trusting God to work miracles of healing and transformation.

Rob shared about multiple conversations he has been having with young people over the past several months. There seem to be many young people who are feeling disenchanted with ‘traditional church.’ We want to be a safe place where they can feel loved and able to engage in meaningful ways. We talked about several possibilities, and will continue to think and pray about this need. Our next scheduled meeting will be December 8th. ■

## A Special Christmas Season

On November 23 the Madison County Public Health issued a “COVID-19 Prevention Directives and Advisories Statement” that strongly advises churches to not meet in person but rather use online services through December 31. In accordance with this advisory and our desire to help mitigate the spread of COVID, LCF in-person services will be discontinued through Dec. 31, 2020.

The Christmas season is a very special time in the life of the church, and we look forward to celebrating it with you in meaningful ways. We encourage each of you to participate in the online service and to find creative ways to stay in touch with each other.

The details of “LCF Family Christmas” always vary from year to year but this will be our first time ever to celebrate it via livestream. Thankfully, Pam Stanforth already had the vision of producing a video for this year’s celebration and has been working hard on it for the past few months. We know you will enjoy seeing it on December 20th.

We hope you will join us online to celebrate the birth of our Savior, who came to live and die so that we might be saved and experience unshakable peace, hope, and joy—even in times like this. ■



# An interview with *The Swain Family*

Interviewed by Theresa Hennis

*In these uncertain times when we're told to keep our distance from one another, it is even more important to feel connected. We hope that helping you get to know your LCF members better, even while many of us are apart, will encourage you.*

*The Swain family have been members of LCF for a while, but some of you might not have met them yet. We asked them some questions about themselves, and we hope you enjoy these insights into their lives.*

## Where are you both from, originally?

Lara: I am from Marietta, OH; Joel: Prague, Czech Republic

## How did you meet and where, and are there any funny/special stories about that?

Both: We met in a small group through the Vineyard Church we were going to at the time.

## Is there anything special/ funny about your engagement/wedding?

Lara: My sister forgot one of the wedding rings and had to run and get it mid-ceremony at our wedding, haha.

Joel: I proposed in Mohican State Park when the waterfall was frozen. My best man was hiding in the woods wearing camo and taking pictures; then he delivered hot chocolate and roses. 😊

## What are your professions?

Lara: Finance at Cardinal Health

Joel: I am a stay-at-home dad. Prior to Mira being born I was a property claims adjuster for Nationwide Insurance.

## Do you have any special hobbies/ministries?

Lara: I enjoy reading, hiking, and doing crafts when I get the chance.

Joel: I like DIY projects around the home, woodworking, hiking/backpacking, and marksmanship.

## Any pets? Anything unusual or special about the pets?

Both: We have two dogs (Remington and Rogue) and a Russian tortoise named Sheldon.

## What are the names and ages of your children?

Both: Mira is 2 and Jack is four months

## If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Lara: I've always wished I was better at sports.

Joel: I would be a little more disciplined with the goals I set for myself.

## What is something you'd like to accomplish before you die?

Joel: If there is ever an opportunity I would like to through-hike the Appalachian Trail. Maybe with one or both of my kids once they are older.

## What do you wish people knew about you that they might not know?

Joel: I grew up overseas.

## What is a rule or discipline you try to live by and why?

Lara: Trying to treat others kindly even when faced with unkindness.

## How long have you been a Christian, and how did you come to know Christ?

Lara: I was raised in a Christian home and have been a Christian from a young age.

Joel: I became a Christian when I was young. I prayed to accept Christ with my older brother and mother.

*Thanks, Joel & Lara for helping us learn to know you a bit better. We are thankful to have you as part of our LCF family! ■*

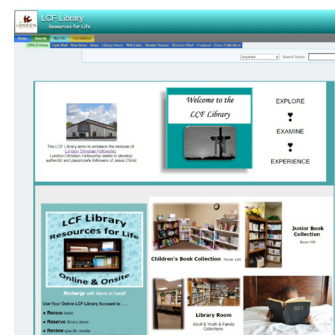


## Library Link

by Linda Schlabach

With the current recommendations to stay at home and the upcoming cold weather and Christmas season, it's a great time to check out some books and videos from LCF's library! Even though we are not currently meeting in person you can reserve library items that you would like through LCF's online Library and pick them up at the church. It's as simple as 1, 2, 3!

1. **Access LCF's Online Library**—Go to LCF's website (lcfweb.org) and find the library link at the bottom of the drop down menu on the Resource tab.
2. **Log into your LCF library account**—in the top right corner enter your name and library number.
3. **Reserve and then...pick up**—Browse through the books, videos, and other resources and reserve the ones you would like. Once you reserve them, our librarian, Linda Schlabach, will contact you to arrange a suitable time for pickup.



If you have questions or need assistance with your LCF Library account, contact Linda Schlabach. ■

## Council Update

by Jim Jones

The council is finalizing the 2021 church budget, while looking at expanding the sound booth and replacing the obsolete library computer. The possibility of remote thermostats is being researched along with a keypad entry for the side door. ■

*Through...continued*

spirit that is an unspeakable blessing. Yet she has tremendous losses. Poor memory. Very poor eyesight. Limited use of her right hand (her right side has palsy-like symptoms). All her progress has come at great sacrifice and hard work that is nearly indescribable. Carla became her therapist as we embarked on a non-traditional, at-home recovery program tailored by the incredible professionals at The Family Hope Center near Philadelphia, PA. Spending 8-10 hours a day of intense therapy, we saw Karissa slowly improve. She hated it, yet somehow understood it was for her good. And we tried our best to be gracious in her times of "hatred" and gave our all in helping her by implementing the program.

Meanwhile, life began to unravel. It seemed while Karissa was improving, our lives were experiencing a dark season of grief, resentment, anger and bitterness. We—I began to feel the effects of deep loneliness in our journey. I had to step down from teaching. I was experiencing great anxiety as a worship leader and associate pastor at Greenwood and resigned myself from all responsibilities there.

What have I learned? I've learned I still ask questions that I know don't have answers. I've learned what it is to walk in dark, desert places. I've learned what it is to have pain and suffering as companions. I've learned that God's grace enables me moment by moment. And as I falter, stumble, fail, doubt and strive for a "better" recovery, God is gracious.

In the box to the right are the words from a song that the Lord brought back to my mind, and I have listened to it...lots and lots.

I have been reading these days in Hebrews. I came upon the end of chapter 10 and all of chapter 11. The writer to the Hebrews urges the Jewish Christians to persevere through the conflicts, trials and persecution they were facing. It would appear that the writer was aware that in such seasons of life, believers struggle as well. A believer struggles with faith; with wanting to go back to how things were before (remember how the Israelites traveling in the desert wanted to return to Egypt?); with trust in God's goodness, His unfailing love, sovereignty and grace. The writer to the Hebrews encourages them to "not throw away your confidence," that "we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved." So then, it is in that context that we are given a list of names, and a whole "cloud of witnesses" who are un-named, who did not shrink back but persevered. . . through.

Our culture may only worsen. Our circumstances could easily become all the more difficult. But Scripture is full of promises stating over and over that our God is with us, He is for us, and He will never forsake us. I want our stories to always tell of "the God whose power and mercy will not fail to take us . . . through." We love you all and trust we will have time in eternity to share our "through" stories. Blessings! ■

\*CCLI Song # 5000186, Written by Gloria Gaither | Michael Sykes | William J. Gaither; © 2005 Mal 'N AI Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Gaither Music Company (Admin. by Gaither Copyright Management)

*Season of Celebration...continued*

*celebrating, (and was thought to happen at midnight on Christmas eve). Moreover, Christmas time was also a time when extended families would meet. Food, much food, and foods that were rarely made at other times, like chapati, were plenty. The other thing that we looked forward to was acquiring new clothes and/or shoes. For most families, this was the only season such items would be available. It was especially so after parents were done paying school fees for the year, and then received bonuses from coffee sales (coffee was our main cash crop and main source of income). Today, most of these traditions have changed and what folks mainly look forward to is the opportunity to meet with members of extended families. A time for deep, uninterrupted conversations about life. It is my favorite part of Christmas, cherished, nostalgic."*

Although the means of celebration vary, the purpose is the same. Even here at LCF, we enjoy celebrating in a variety of ways.

- **Andrea Biscup** particularly enjoys her traditions of cheese fondue and watching her children put the baby Jesus doll in His homemade manger.
- **Zach Freer** told me, "My favorite Christmas tradition is driving around with a group of my friends, visiting people in their homes and singing Christmas carols to them."
- **Patrick Shenk** looks forward to gift giving with his family.
- **Shepherd Ndungu** really enjoys a good glass of eggnog.

This Christmas season may be unique in the circumstances we will be celebrating under, but our reason for celebration has not changed. As we adapt our favorite traditions and build new ones, may we all experience the deep joy of the Lord. Emmanuel has come, and we rejoice! ■



## Through\*

*When I saw what laid before me  
"Lord", I cried, "what will You do"  
I thought that He would just remove it  
But He gently led me through*

*Without fire there's no refining  
Without pain no relief  
Without flood there's no rescue  
Without testing no belief*

*Through the Fire  
Through the Flood  
Through the Water  
Through the Blood*

*Through the dry and barren places  
Through life's dense and  
Maddening mazes  
Through the pain  
And through the glory  
Through will always tell the story  
Of the God whose power and mercy  
Will not fail to take us through*

## 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](mailto:secretary@lcfweb.org). Editors: Theresa Hennis, Elisabeth Yoder, Kelli Dean, and Doris Swartz  
*If you prefer that we do not use photos of you in the Connection, you may opt out by emailing us.*