

The LCF Connection

March 2021

Introducing LCF's New Benevolence Team

by Angie Stukey



A "socially-distanced group picture" of LCF's New Benevolence Team: Sandy Hauge, Lara Swain, Joe & Angie Stukey, Pam Shay, and John Shenk

Hebrews 13:16 tells us, "Do good and share with those in need." That is the goal of LCF's Benevolence Team. Yes, we are back up and running again! We had our first meeting via zoom on February 1, 2021 at 7 p.m. We spent time discussing our vision for the team, setting up guidelines and details for how the team will function.

Miriam Webster defines benevolence as, "the disposition to do good, an act of kindness; generous gift." The benevolence fund is a way for LCF as a body to show God's love through financial assistance to those in need—both inside and outside the church. We believe that giving generously of what we have is an important part of becoming like Jesus. It is intended for urgent/emergency situations and is a temporary way to address one-time or short-term basic needs.

The Benevolence Team will evaluate each case of need and make a decision about whether and how to help. Sometimes helping may involve non-financial support, like financial counseling or referral to an appropriate agency. We as a team are committed to confidentiality, to praying diligently about each situation that we work with, and being wise with the funds entrusted to us as we make decisions in how to best help those in need.

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One Year Later...

by Elisabeth Yoder

In mid-March, we will hit the year mark since the world, and our lives with it, was turned a bit topsy turvy. As we look back on the year we have experienced in the era of Covid-19, it is easy to see the many harsh realities stemming from the pandemic. From Covid-19 alone, millions of people have been sick, some are suffering from long-term health repercussions, and many lives have been lost. Even beyond the illness, our lives have been deeply affected on a global, national, and personal scale.

Pam Shay's mother moved in with Pam and Tim this year, but when the pandemic hit, she was at high risk and needed to stay home. The change to her social life and daily routine was incredibly difficult as she had previously been very active, and the necessity for her to stay home was also difficult for Pam and Tim as they worked through the adjustment with her.



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What is Truth?

John 14:6 and 18:38

by Allan Patterson (who pastored at Peace Mennonite Church in Elyria, OH, over 20 years)

What word would you choose to describe the last year and the entrance into the new year? I am sure a popular word would be pandemic or Covid-19; maybe separation, prevention, mask, or death. What if you had to narrow the one word to a word that has influenced Christianity

the most in this past year into today? One might switch to plague, or hell, maybe eternity, judgment, or apocalyptic, or seven if you have been reading Revelation.

I choose the word “truth.” Today the word truth is pitted against alternate truth. Perhaps in no time in history is the term more in need of a concrete definition for Christians. What is truth? Two thousand years ago Pontius Pilate was puzzling over this word. He represented the most powerful empire of the time, while Jesus was a simple Galilean prophet with a limited following. Pilate wanted to keep the peace and had the power of capital punishment; the religious leaders wanted Jesus executed, and Jesus wanted to fulfill prophesy. These three purposes came together needing resolution. Before Pilate stood a man the religious leaders wanted executed over his words to bring a new kingdom, threatening their rule in religious matters and threatening Rome’s rule over Israel. Only Rome could carry out executions, and this situation before him promised to bring the potential of chaos to his rule, something Rome would hold him accountable for. Pilate asked Jesus, who had been brought before him by the religious leaders, “Are you king of the Jews?” Jesus answered “Yes.” But Jesus made no reply to the accusations the religious leaders made about him. Pilate told the religious leaders to judge him by their laws because he saw no guilt in the man. They reminded him only Rome could carry out capital punishment, which revealed their intent to have Jesus executed. He had Jesus brought to him in the palace where the religious leaders would not step. He again asked, “Are you king of the Jews?” Jesus questioned Pilate if he had reached that conclusion or someone else told him. Pilate’s answer shows he was irritated by the questioning, “Am I a Jew?” It was the chief priests and his people who accused him. They were the Jews. Jesus now responded with his longest statement—that he was a king but not of this world. He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to him. For Pilate this answer was alternate truth to what the religious leaders were telling him. Confused by this paradox, he responded to Jesus in frustration with the question, “What is truth?”

Back to the religious leaders, Pilate gives one of several pleas that he finds no basis for the charges against Jesus. On learning Jesus is a Galilean, he sends Jesus to Herod. Herod, fearing the return of John the Baptist (whom he had beheaded earlier) sends Jesus back to Pilate. Meanwhile Pilate’s wife warned her husband to have nothing to do with this Jesus. He had caused her to have a very disturbing dream pointing toward trouble in their future. Jesus was back again under his authority, and he probably felt trapped. To get out of the trap, he proposed to release one of two men during their Passover feast: Barabbas, accused murderer and an insurrectionist, or Jesus the king of the Jews. Certainly they would choose Jesus. They chose Barabbas. When he asked what he should do with Jesus, the cry rose up, “Crucify Him.”

For Pilate the answer to this predicament was to release Jesus to the crowd’s will under the supervision of Roman authorities. So Jesus was given over to the Roman soldiers to carry out the wishes of the crowd—crucifixion. With a bowl of water and a towel he washed his hands of guilt for what was going to happen. The crowd let him know that they and their children would take on the guilt for this punishment. We can only guess what Pilate was feeling and thinking. The next we hear of Pilate is when he was asked for the body of Jesus and he was surprised to hear Jesus’ death was so quick.

For us, the truth Jesus was responding to is what we believe today. Our faith tells us an alternate truth to what Pilate and the religious leaders believed. As Jesus told them, he was the king of a spiritual kingdom, heavenward. He was in the process of voluntarily giving up his life to save all people from their sins, because of his deep love for them. His resurrection would give proof to this truth. God’s purpose was fulfilled using Pilate and the religious leaders, unbeknownst to them. This sacrifice, this truth, saves us from eternal punishment. In the midst of this pandemic, all this turmoil in our government, any family crises, this truth brings us comfort and peace. It is this truth of Jesus that gives us hope for the future. We have the opportunity to draw closer to God. Could this be exactly what God wants from us at this time in history and this exact time in our lives? I think it is! ■

Elders' Notes

by Jesse Diller

Our last meeting was via Zoom on February 9th. As usual, we began by sharing updates and concerns and then spent time praying together about them. Some of those include congregation members dealing with illness, the LCF youth group, vision and spiritual growth during these challenging times.

We continued our discussion about the youth group. We are still continuing to work through maintaining leadership and participation. Rob has been meeting with various individuals and will continue to do so and see how God leads. We will continue to be praying that God will guide and provide.

We are very thankful to have a functioning benevolence team in place once again. They have met and discussed details and processes, and have already been working at providing assistance to several situations.

We discussed plans for having communion in upcoming services, as well as our children’s ministry. We don’t have a lot of children yet at the Sunday service at church, but we are thankful for the leadership we have! We also discussed a number of future service plans and preaching schedules.

Joe closed our time leading us in prayer for the things we discussed. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 9th. ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The LCF council met via phone on Tuesday, February 16. The LCF 2021 budget proposal passed unanimously on Sunday, January 31, 2021. There were 28 votes (15 via email, 11 via text, 2 via hard copy) and 0 no votes.

At the end of 2020 we were blessed with a surplus of \$21,920.84 over our expenses. After a thoughtful discussion, council unanimously agreed to put a large portion of that amount (\$15,000) towards our mortgage and the remainder in savings. Our current principal balance of \$135,981.51 has been reduced to \$120,981.51. This will reduce our payoff time to just over 36 months in addition to saving interest. We are thankful for the congregations continued generous giving. ■

A BIG Thank You to Ray and Grace!

by Shepherd Ndungu

Over the last three and a half years, the youth group has been blessed with having Ray and Grace Raber as leaders and friends. The youth began meeting at the church on Sundays, but soon shifted to meeting in the Raber's home which made every meeting feel much more personal—like a family gathering. Meeting together became less of a formal assembly to study the Bible and evolved into a gathering where friends could be vulnerable and learn from one another each week. Ray and Grace led in many Bible studies that addressed questions brought up by the youth, and their knowledge of God's Word became evident in the studies. They were amazing leaders outside of the routine meetings of the week. With their help in organizing fundraisers and planning the annual youth trips, it always drew the youth closer to one another and inspired them with a great passion for serving.



We cannot thank Ray and Grace enough for their time serving the youth of LCF. Below are reflections from some of the youth, along with pictures of some of the great memories we've made together over the past several years.

Please pray for the youth as they transition into their upcoming phase of leadership, and for Ray and Grace as they continue to pursue what God has in store for them next. Ray and Grace, we love you and thank you for all you have done! ■



Meredith Hochstetler:

One of the earliest memories I have with Ray and Grace takes me back to the youth's 2017 summer mission with City Challenge. I think it was then that I first got to know them as the truly kind and easy-going couple they are.

It was through their leadership in the youth that Grace discovered my love for baking and reached out to me about working for her. Going on a little over four years now, she has not only been a teacher to me by spurring that said love, but has also been a listening ear that I can comfortably talk life with...a close friend.

Even outside of their time serving the youth, Ray and Grace have helped me in too many ways to count. And I am so grateful to have that continued relationship with such dependable people in my life.



David Stuke:

Ray and Grace were always super great hosts and they really helped improve my youth group experience!



Reid Gates:

Thank you, Ray and Grace, for being so welcoming when I joined the youth group and being basically

a family for me. Thanks for helping me with whatever I needed. I feel like I can come to you about anything, and that means a lot.



Austin Fox:

Ray and Grace were always willing to have their house open to us. As far as memories go—the campfire Bible studies were great and playing “around-the-world ping-pong” in their basement was always a lot of fun!



Willing to Grow and Be Stretched

by Doris Swartz

There are few things more inspiring than seeing young people grow in their walk with God and be excited about studying God's Word—willing to do whatever God asks them to do, even when it's hard.

Last September Rob and Reuben began a "Preaching Class" with five young men from LCF. The guys vary in age from 21-42; some of them are college students, all of them have full-time jobs, and a few are married and have kids—but each one has expressed a desire to grow spiritually and be developed as a leader. Rob has been serving as facilitator of the group and Reuben has been doing the teaching. The seven of them have been meeting monthly via Zoom to learn about and discuss things such as how to interpret the Bible, sermon preparation and delivery, leadership qualities, etc., while completing recommended reading and other assignments in between each meeting.

On Thursday evening, February 18, (a cold, snowy evening in which a few of them got stuck in the snow in the church parking lot) they met at the church and each of the guys delivered a "mini message" that was 5-8 minutes in length. Rob said that he was encouraged and impressed with the content and delivery of each one of the messages.

Each of these five young men are now scheduled to preach twice in the next five months on a Sunday morning at LCF. I am looking forward to hearing how God is going to speak to us through them and want to remind us to pray for them as they prepare for and deliver these messages, and also, to ask ourselves how God is wanting to grow and stretch each one of us, as well. ■



From top left: Zach Freer, Shepherd Ndungu, Jeremy Hisey, Chris Conte, and Peyton Miller

Benevolence...continued

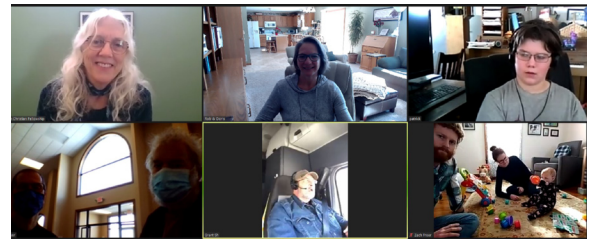
If you have any questions or know of someone who is in need of emergency assistance, please contact any of us on the Benevolence Team: Sandy Hauge (team leader), Lara Swain, Joe and Angie Stukey, Pam Shay, or John Shenk. LCF's Everence Representative, (currently, Clete Yoder) serves as an ex-officio member of the team. You can find the contact information for all of the team members in LCF's online directory. If you're unable to get in touch with a team member, feel free to contact one of the pastors or elders.

LCF budgets a certain amount of money each year for benevolence needs. Money is also raised by individual donations. If you would like to contribute financially to the Benevolence fund you can do so by writing a check (and noting "Benevolence Fund" on the memo line) or by donating online (from the "Give" tab on LCF's website and then selecting Benevolence from the drop-down list). Hopefully soon, we can again have fundraisers. I know I miss the coffee bar and youth donuts at church! May each one of us be faithful to be the body of Christ as we do good and share with those in need. ■

One Year Later...continued

Doris has been missing our ability to have our usual church activities together such as potlucks and socials, in-person small groups, the coffee bar, and more, as well as the comforting closeness of hugs and handshakes. In my own life, my role as a daycare teacher has been chaotic as rules, expectations, and schedules have been changing constantly in the wake of the pandemic, and I miss the freedom to see loved ones with, what now feels like, reckless abandon.

Although there is very little normal about this "new normal," we have also been able to find silver linings. As Pam reflected, despite the difficulties this time has brought, she has loved seeing the ways that everyone is willing to help one another. She has been especially touched by those who give from what they have to alleviate the burden of others. She specifically mentioned those who take supplies to nursing homes, deliver groceries to shutins, and many more. Doris is thankful that LCF now has a livestream service option so that people can participate no matter where they are, and for the ways we have learned to connect on Zoom for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, etc. Personally, I am blessed that my job has remained stable through this as well as by the many ways God has provided for us.



It has been a hard year and we may still have a significant storm to weather. As we reflect on the past year and look towards an uncertain future, may we give ourselves space to process the painful realities of this time but let us also look for all the ways God has continued to bless us. Our lives have changed significantly, and we have yet to fully grasp the ripple effects this time will continue to have. However! We have the surety of knowing that God in His infinite love, mercy, and grace is walking beside us, and He will provide. ■

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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. 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.

