

The LCF Connection

December 2022

Growing in Gratitude

by Linda Pratt

Sunday, November 6th, was a very special day at London Christian Fellowship. Jeff Gates came up with the idea to have a Sunday dedicated to celebrating the many blessings we have received from God. We called it "Gratitude Sunday." The service was a unique combination of scripture readings and special music that honored God and reminded us of all that we have to be thankful for in Christ.

This special service allowed us to utilize some of the talent God has showered upon us at London Christian Fellowship. There were many different readers, vocalists, and instrumentalists featured—reminding us in many ways to give thanks.

Pastor Rob shared a short message challenging us to have a thankful heart every day. He noted that it can be very difficult to rejoice and give thanks in all situations, especially the hard times. God wants us to trust Him and to know that He is always with us and working for our good in all things. Knowing God personally is what enables us to trust Him and give thanks.

It was obvious that Gratitude Sunday was a big hit with our church family, as many people suggested that we do it again. Thanks to those who planned it and to each person who participated in the beautiful music and the inspiring readings.

We were left with the challenge from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." May God help us to grow gratitude during this Christmas season and in whatever this new year may bring! ■



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Ready For an Explosion!

by Mike & Karen Baker

The LCF youth group kicked off this fall and is going strong! We are excited to see the connections that have been taking place and the growth that is happening in the lives of our teens. We have been enjoying creating our "hang-out space" in the former small group room, where we meet each Sunday evening.

Upon starting up, we wanted the teens to feel ownership of their youth group, so we let them choose a name for themselves. After taking suggestions and then voting, the group decided to be called C4.

As you may already know, C4 is an explosive and that is exactly what we want for LCF youth. We want them to be explosive for God! We want them to grow in their faith with boldness and courage and be an explosive part of God's kingdom. We want them to learn to talk about their faith to their non-believing friends, to invite friends to come to youth events and Bible study. We want them to live out their own personal faith in ways that exemplify Christ.

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My Deep Pastoral Concern

A Message from the Pastor

by Reuben Sairs

I have a philosophy of ministry that steers me away from trying to run other people's lives for them: telling them what to do and how to do it, policing and enforcing what I think is sound practice. My view is that God gives each person his or her own life and they alone are responsible for it. I often decry what I call an infantilizing approach to pastoral ministry—treating adults like children and not giving them room to make their own choices, and when necessary holding them responsible for their own mistakes and sins and finding their way to restoration with God and others.

What do you do then as a pastor if you're not meddling in personal lives? The scriptures give a clear picture of that: providing sound teaching—this means preserving and passing on the faith that is given in the scriptures through the Holy Spirit by the "pens" of the apostles, equipping through counsel, warning when there is a danger of sin, praying, encouraging, and as much as it is possible for a sinful human—modeling a Christian life. Pastors are to fend off wrong-headed and heretical ideas. If we're using the scriptures as our model, the pastor is not solely responsible for church growth, providing a slick social structure, or "growing" the church. That all comes from modern business models and finds no place in the scriptures.

Mostly in our day and age, there is little immediate authority or credibility given to pastors. For some, the pastor exists merely to live up to their high standards, to their view of the faith, and to run the church according to their vision. The pastoral office is an empty vessel to be filled by stronger influences in the church (often traveling by way of media and celebrity ministries that for some reason do get given authority and credibility). I would suppose there is less teachability, less seeking counsel, less asking for prayer than there was in much of the history of the church at large. No complaints, though. This is the time I live in, and the time for which I was born!

All that said, I'm about to meddle. One of my deepest pastoral concerns is for us (now speaking to LCF specifically) to develop a church culture in which it is normal, and you might say "expected," that we take time daily under normal circumstances to read the Bible and pray. AND I'm going to offer the meddlesome counsel to shut off your phone and devices, even music, lay aside canned materials and screen out the voices of media teachers, and be alone, quietly in the presence of God. You, your Bible, the Lord. There are many approaches to prayer—some more formal, some less. There is room for all kinds. Do not allow yourself the excuse of being easily distracted or too busy in the brain to settle down. Of course you are; we all are.

If you take my counsel, I think you will grow in the Lord. I think you will find more peace in your life. I think you will get better at it and desire more of it as you practice.

Okay, done meddling, but before I quit writing what good pastoral counsel would close without a biblical zinger! Let's go with Luke 11:9-10: "So here is what I say to you. Ask, and it will be given to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find. And the door will be opened to the one who knocks." ■

Elders' Notes

by Rob & Doris Swartz

We began our elders' meeting on Wednesday, November 16th, with a time of sharing updates and prayer requests and then praying for one another. Following that, we spent time sharing about those with whom we have had the opportunity to shepherd and care for this past month and prayed for those in our congregation.

Gideon Eichorn has consented to be considered as an elder. We will proceed with taking the recommendation that Gideon serve as elder to the church for approval.

Dan Frederick shared with Rob that after much reluctance he and Jenn have decided to attend a church that is closer to where they moved this summer. Dan expressed much appreciation for LCF and acknowledged how difficult this decision has been because of their many friends and connections at LCF. We will miss them! We will give them opportunity to share briefly and pray for them some Sunday before they leave at the end of the year.

We have been encouraged to see so many people participate in our "Reading Through in '22" Bible reading plan this past year. Some have been asking what we are going to do for 2023. We discussed various possibilities. Rob and Reuben will take the thoughts and suggestions shared and come up with a proposal for 2023.

We look forward to having our annual Celebrate the Church Sunday—when we have membership renewal, bring in new members, take a group picture, and end with a potluck—on January 15, 2023.

We talked about our desire to see our church family grow deep in their faith and discussed various ways that we could encourage this to happen such as a specific sermon series, a Saturday class or Sunday morning Adult Sunday School class, etc. Some of the areas we noted which we would like to cover included: apologetics, the biblical canon, Old Testament and New Testament survey, history of anabaptism, end times, etc. We will discuss this further at our next meeting and come up with a plan to try for 2023. If you have any thoughts about this, we invite your feedback.

Abraham led us in our closing time of prayer. ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The Council met via phone on Tuesday, November 15th.

Rosy Shenk accepted the position as the LCF Child Protection Team Leader.

Dan Frederick will be stepping down from his council position effective January 1, 2023. Dan and his family have relocated and are attending a church closer to where they live. His council term was originally until December 2024. Nominations for a new council member to replace Dan will be taken on Sunday, November 20th.

Sarah received inputs and special requests from the Audio/Visual Team, the Benevolence Team, and the Decorating Team for the 2023 budget.

The Council made recommendations/revisions to our Premise Use Policy. The Building and Grounds team indicated that our furnaces will be requiring service and repair and to expect some HVAC expenditures.

Our next meeting will be December 20th. ■

An interview with Trevor & Morgan Schrock

Interviewed by Elisabeth Yoder

We would love to get to know you better! Please give us a brief background of your lives thus far, how you came together as a couple, and how you landed here in Ohio.

We grew up in Maryland and attended the same church. Through youth group we realized there was a lot about each other that we liked, but we didn't start dating until 2018, after both completing REACH. After REACH, I (Morgan) led a team back to Thailand (where I worked with Tom and Candice Mast both years) and Trevor served for one year at RI as an Outreach Coordinator Intern. When I returned to the US, I decided to attend Rosedale Bible College. A few months later, when Trevor finished his internship at RI, he joined me there for Winter Term and Spring Semester. Shortly after Winter Term we were sent home due to COVID, where we finished classes online. We got married in August 2020. In June 2020 we helped our pastor start a small business of building home goods and furniture. Since our pastor will begin a sabbatical in January 2023, and we have been contemplating what God has next for us, we decided to take the opportunity to return to Rosedale as a couple. Morgan continues to work remotely, as well as take a few classes, and Trevor is a full-time student. We are using this time to seek God's will for our future and potential ministry and look forward to graduating together from RBC in May 2023.

What are some passions you have as individuals and together as a couple? How have you seen your passions grow or change since being married?

We have a lot of the same hobbies, including: leading music/worship, hosting people, learning more about the Bible, going on walks with ice cream in a mug, and playing *Settlers of Catan*. Our passions have grown to be very similar because a lot of our day-to-day life has been spent together at work, church, or with friends and family.

What are some long terms goals you would love to accomplish together?

To maintain meaningful friendships and create a family. A big part of our future is still unknown and we're excited to see what it will hold.

What is, in your estimation, the most interesting fun fact about each of you?

- Morgan about Trevor: He is usually very aware of "social geometry" and how people are positioned in a group.
- Trevor about Morgan: When she was younger, she used sneak away and drink syrup straight from the bottle.

How do you enjoy spending your free time, as individuals and as a couple?

Trevor enjoys disc golf, spikeball, and guitar. Morgan enjoys calligraphy, volleyball, and spending time with friends.

Has there been an event/season in your lives that was especially impactful for you? How did it impact your walk with God?

- Morgan: One of the very formative times for me was during my childhood years when my family did foster care. This involved a lot loving, letting go, and readjusting. Youth group was also very formative for me as we had a very solid group, and I saw myself growing in leadership and skills, as well as letting myself begin to wrestle with questions that I had about God. REACH and Rosedale were probably the most impactful in my relationship with God and included some of the best and hardest moments of my life.
- Trevor: When I spent 6 months in Laos with my REACH team of four and learned that God can do really great things through hard relationships. When two people are wanting to follow Jesus, there's a lot of difficulties that can be worked through to have a good relationship despite our differences.

Trevor and Morgan are doing an informal pastoral mentorship with us here at LCF while they are at RBC this year. He will be preaching several times and assisting in various ways. (Also, he is Audrey Maust's nephew.)

If you could time travel, what time period and place would you love to visit?

- Morgan: I would like to travel back to my great grandparents' time or when Jesus was on earth.
- Trevor: I want to time travel to my hometown 10,000 years from now.

What is a biblical truth you wish was better understood or emphasized in the body of Christ?

- Trevor: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you." We can seek His kingdom in every area of life because He will give us what we need to live that way. We are free to seek His Kingdom in our relationships and our conversations.
- Morgan: "Build one another up in love." This can mean confrontation as well as encouragement, looking out for the good of others, and our speech being "seasoned with salt."

What are three words that describe the person you each aspire to be?

Trevor: Kind, listener, truthful. Morgan: Dependable, caring, trustworthy.

If money were a non-issue, what hobbies or interests would you love to pursue?

- Both: Fly to a variety of places to sightsee.
- Trevor: Travel to play disc golf and partake in exotic cheese-tasting.
- Morgan: Go to more symphonies or other entertainment things; get into pottery.

What has been something you have especially enjoyed about being at Rosedale?

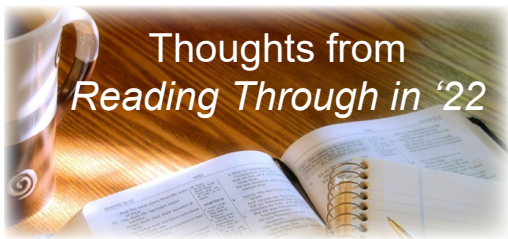
- Trevor: Quality (older-than-me) people.
- Morgan: Being able to step away from "normal" life at home and experience quality-learning about God and to step into a tight-knit community as a married couple.



How can we pray for you as you study and live here in Ohio?

Direction for our future and knowing how to balance time spent together, working on schoolwork, with friends, etc.

Thanks for giving us these insights into your lives. We look forward to learning to know you better while you are here at RBC! ■



Thoughts from Reading Through in '22

Celebrate... and Get Ready for 2023!

by Doris Swartz

Here we are at the end of 2022! Hopefully you've been able to read through the whole Bible (or at least parts of it) along with many of us these past 12 months! If so, "Congratulations!" I know how much time and discipline it takes to stick with it—especially through some of those long books of laws and prophetic messages...and through super busy times, vacations, holidays, etc.

Regardless if you "made it through" or not, I hope you have been inspired and changed by whatever time you have spent reading God's Word. I have grown to look forward to that time each morning when I get out my Bible, highlighter, and journal—and listen for God to speak to me through His Word. I've found that "quiet time" with God is what encourages me, strengthens me, and settles my anxious heart. It's where I am reminded of how much God loves me and how He wants me to live and to love others.

I hope that through reading God's Word we learn to know God better, discover things that we didn't know before (or didn't remember), and develop a desire make it a priority and continue to read it day after day, year after year—not because it's something we *have* to do, but because it's something we *want* to do (and can't imagine not doing)!

I tend to stay more consistent and engaged when I have a specific reading plan. I like to take the opportunity each year to choose a different plan, a different pace, and/or a different translation. It's time to think about what that plan will be for 2023. LCF will be giving us some options to consider. Watch for details coming soon.

May we not be satisfied with just *reading* God's Word, but grow in our desire to study it, meditate on it, obey it, memorize it, and be transformed by it! I want to be able to say like the psalmist in Psalm 119: "I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word...It is more precious to me than gold...Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long." ■

You can find some Bible reading suggestions and plans on LCF's website. (<http://lcfweb.org/bible-teachings/bible-reading-suggestions>).



Thanks for Being a Blessing!

by Nathaniel Smith

I would like to thank you, our church family, for the wonderful blessing you are to me and my family. We have been so blessed through the accommodations you have made for Abe, the work Clete has found for me, and so much more. The devotion of Rob and Doris to our family blesses us daily. Their great examples of living a life for Christ impact my daily decisions. These people are not perfect and are not superheroes, but they are pillars of support that hold me up and encourage me.

Not only these whom I have named, but each one of you at LCF. You are such a blessing to us—from the meals you've brought to our home to the wonderful friendships I've gained by being a member here. So to you, my LCF family—I am saying, thank you so very much! You are doing a great job of what 1 Peter 4:10 says to do, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's verified grace." ■

Celebrating 72 Years of Marriage

by Rob & Doris Swartz

We stopped by Wooded Glen in Springfield recently to visit with Levi and Cora Miller (who were part our church family here at LCF for over 30 years). Our hearts were touched as we watched Levi lovingly care for Cora (who is not able to respond much anymore, but still knows and loves him) and heard him talk about the mission God has given him to show the love of Christ to many people there. What a beautiful blessing to see people "finish well"—loving God, their spouse, and others around them to the very end.



Levi and Cora will celebrate their 72nd wedding anniversary on Christmas Day! Thank God for the blessing they have been to LCF and so many of us over the years, and pray that God will give them both grace and comfort as they live out these last years together. ■

Explosion...continued

A verse that we have always loved is 1 Timothy 4:12, "Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." This is what we pray for each teen who is a part of C4. We invite you to join us in praying that our youth would grow in their faith, life, love, speech, and purity.

We meet each Sunday evening from 6-8 for Bible study, prayer, games, and snacks. If you would enjoy hosting the youth group at your place some Sunday evening, let us know. We look forward to having other events that will encourage growth and bonding as young believers. In March, we will be going to TobyMac's Hits Deep concert. If you're interested in joining us for the concert, watch for more information in the new year.



We consider it a privilege to get to serve with a couple other young adults, Shepherd Ndungu and Austin Fox, in leading LCF's youth group, as we together invest in the teens of LCF and beyond. We look forward to seeing what God is going to do! ■

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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, Delaney Yutzy, and Doris Swartz

