

The LCF Connection

April 2023

What's in a Name?

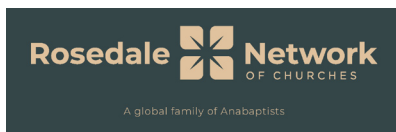
by Rob Swartz

Doris and I attended Pastors Conference at Fairlawn Mennonite Church, in Apple Creek, Ohio, February 20-23. During the pastors' annual business meeting, which was held there, the pastors of our conference voted to change our conference's name, that was "Conservative Mennonite Conference" for many years, but most recently, known simply as "CMC," to "Rosedale Network of Churches." This decision came about after many meetings and much discussion over the past several years.



The pastors' business meeting on February 23. Photo credit: Jenell Shrock

Why change the name? As in all decisions like this, there were people who were for and others who were against the change. Most agreed that the word "Conservative" in "Conservative Mennonite Conference" was a very loaded word capable of provoking strong feelings as well as misunderstanding. Many of us pastors agreed it was a good word to remove. However, removing "Mennonite" from our name was not as readily agreed upon. My preference is that we would have kept it. I hold denominational affiliation gently, and have no desire to see it prevent people from worshipping with us based on some negative or confused understanding of our theology, but we are unashamedly Mennonite and Anabaptist in our beliefs. These names help to describe our understanding of the Bible and how we apply that understanding. I have come to greatly appreciate what Anabaptists bring to the conversation with the broader church, especially



during these times. LCF has no intention of turning from these beliefs. We will continue to preach and teach from this understanding of Scripture. The Anabaptists are the group that I identify with most closely on how to interpret and apply Scripture. I'm willing to change if there are good reasons, but so far, I'm sticking with them. 😊

However, I voted for the name change. I wasn't planning to. I don't "love" the new name. So, why did I vote for it? I believe there are bigger issues for us to be discussing. It was time to move on. The name has some importance, but the bigger question to me is what we believe—whether we will continue to be faithful to God and His Word. Ultimately, whether you are known as an Anabaptist or Mennonite is not that important. (I mean no disrespect.) I greatly appreciate that heritage and those beliefs, but the real question that I understand is, "Is my life about Jesus?" Am I following Him and being obedient to His Word? Am I passionate about the gospel and sharing it with others?

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C4 Connections

Update from Mike & Karen Baker, Shepherd Ndungu, and Austin Fox

What a month it has been; March has flown by. We mentioned a logo for C4 last month, and by the time you read this, we will have voted on a logo and hopefully will be in the process of ordering shirts.

We completed our first 30-hour famine and raised just over \$6,000, which feeds 200 kids for a month or 17 kids for a year. (Pictured below: C4 with trash they collected.) A couple of quotes from the kids:



From left: Austin, Josiah, Derek, Patrick, Isaiah, Jolene, Ella, Everly, Micah, and Mike

Patrick:
"It was eye-opening to see how teens like me live—in other places around the world."

Derek:
"I was thankful to help others in need and surprised it was not as hard as I thought."

We had a blast and look forward to discussing things we hope to accomplish and add to the event next year.

Another fun highlight was C4, along with 8 adults, traveled to Dayton on Monday, March 20th, and enjoyed the Hits Deep Tour. We heard from several artists, including Crowder and TobyMac. We had a fun night, jumped a lot, lost our voices, and praised Jesus for 3 hours—a great deal for only \$15.

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



A Changed Life

A Message from the Pastor by Reuben Sairs

How can Jesus change your life? At LCF, of course, we teach the basic idea that by seeking God's forgiveness for our sins and placing ourselves under Jesus' lordship, we acquire eternal life. We'll call this salvation. We teach that this must be acquired. It is not the common property of the entire human race, but is given to those who place themselves in Jesus' hands. But sometimes that sounds like a passport has been stamped, the ticket to heaven issued, and now we wait for death.

Our lives also change here and now when we give ourselves to Jesus. How else does Jesus change our lives? We change our behavior, at least as best we can. We are now aware of sin and the damage it does. Primarily, we need to grow into people who keep the two greatest commandments—to love God and to love others. All the other issues of trying to live righteously follow those two commands, or they remain hollow (Matthew 22:40). These are changes the Holy Spirit begins to work in us and with us.

How else, though, does Jesus change a life that has been given to Him? Consider several passages of Scripture that point to a life that is being restored, refurbished, renewed and restarted here and now. Favorite verses for me come from Matthew 11:28-29.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Many people desperately need to rest. Other passages come to mind. In John 15:10-11 Jesus says,

"If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."

Speaking of those desperate needs, to love and be loved and to be joyful are precious possessions, but the question is where to find them or how to acquire them?

Another great and pressing need is to have a sense of purpose. We don't believe that we live in a cold, impersonal and accidental universe. We believe that God intends for each of us to be here, and not a single one of us is a matter of cosmic indifference. In Matthew 10:29-31, Jesus says,

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

These are ways Jesus changes our lives in this life. Only a savior who rose from the dead—who is still here, can do these things. A philosopher or teacher lying in the tomb cannot fulfill such exalted promises. We believe Jesus can. ■

Elders' Notes

by Keith Scheffel

The Elders met on March 9th. A summary of our meeting:

We noted that Roger Hazen has accepted our invitation to continue as the LCF overseer for another three-year term.

We spent time praying for the various needs within the LCF family.

We noted several upcoming events at LCF including:

- April 6 - Maundy Thursday service at 7:00 p.m.
- April 9 - Easter Sunday; Jeff Gates is planning some special music
- June 25 - The Mast family (missionaries in Thailand) will be at LCF, and we will have a potluck after the service
- July 9 - Darren & Caryn Peachy will be at LCF to check in with our church and share about Rosedale Network of Churches
- November 10-11 - 2023 Elders' Retreat at the Procter Center
- TBD - The youth, along with the Bakers, will plan and lead a Sunday morning service
- TBD - A baptism for anyone interested

We reviewed and gave feedback concerning some revisions to the LCF constitution. We concluded our time in prayer. ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The Council met via phone on Tuesday, March 21st. We discussed selling or keeping our adjoining lot that we currently lease for farming. We were unanimous about keeping the lot since it leaves options for future expansion.

LCF received a significant decor fund donation that should cover expenses for the rest of the year. As far as larger changes to decor, the team will work with Building and Grounds regarding paint and possibly some stage background and/or lighting upgrades.

We approved the purchase of a security doorbell. They are simple to install and inexpensive (\$200). This would give us added security and will be handy for false security alarm activations. It should be operational by late spring.

We received an estimate for parking lot lights and two additional outlets for the foyer coffee makers. The parking lot lights came to \$12,160, which would include two 25' light poles. We unanimously agreed to put this as a priority in the summer of 2024 when the church is paid off and before daylight savings ends in November. The two additional outlets for the foyer coffee makers would come to \$1,535.00. ■

C4...continued

As we look ahead, we are excited to have begun planning a youth Sunday. Be on the lookout for this sometime in late summer or early fall. Many youths want to be baptized, so we are working with Pastor Rob to plan an afternoon/evening of worship, testimonies, baptism, and food. We will share the details once we have them worked out.

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Getting to Know... Mabel Sommers

The Heritage of Faith

by Elisabeth Yoder

The third verse of the hymn *Faith of our Fathers* reads as follows:

*Faith of our Fathers, we will love;
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach thee, too, as love knows how;
By kindly deed and virtuous life.*

This hymn came to mind as I talked to my Grandma Mabel Sommers about her life. She turned 90 on March 15th, and the hallmark of her 90 years has been her faith and the diligent way she has lived it out.

It's hard to comprehend the eras she has lived through. When she was born in 1933, the first concentration camp was being built in Nazi Germany, and the world was in the throes of the Great Depression. She remembers experiencing blackouts and rationed supplies as a child during World War II, but when we spoke, she focused on happy moments of her youth. She reminisced on walking along the fences on their dairy farm with her brothers, helping in the garden, and doing the chores. She remembered with particular fondness going to visit her grandmother next door to their home, a memory that resonated with me as I spent many afternoons of my childhood walking across the field between us to spend time at the same home. Grandma lived in that house from birth until 2022 when her health made it impossible to stay alone.

She married my Grandpa Willis Sommers in 1955, and they were married for 63 years. When I asked her once what she liked about Grandpa, she replied, "He cared for me and I cared for him. What more is there?" While this may be lacking in sentiment, actions speak louder than words, and when Grandpa had a stroke in 1998, Grandma shouldered not only caring for him but also the responsibilities he could no longer manage. Although he regained many physical abilities, his mind never truly recovered. As we celebrated her birthday and life the weekend of March 18–19, people spoke with admiration of watching Grandma step up and take the helm as she adjusted to life as caretaker and decision maker. Grandpa lived for 19 years after his stroke, and throughout my childhood, I saw Grandma continue to be his steady, caring, loving wife. After Grandpa died in 2018, Grandma expressed to me that she had lost him twice, first with his stroke and finally with his death. In her words, "When he died was nothing like when he had a stroke. When he had his stroke, that was a deep, deep grief." Yet she lived in that grief with a steady faith and assurance that Jesus walked beside her. When people praise her for her dedication and work in that time, she points them back to God, always expressing that her faith carried her through and gave her strength.

I asked her what her advice is for living well and, without pause, she said, "Wherever you are, be grateful for what you have. That is what I live by." Much like her love, Grandma's faith has never been showy or extravagant, but a steady, undeniable constant in her life and in how she treats others. I have had the privilege of watching her choose to be grateful and worship God in word and deed even in the hardest times. Of my many blessings, the heritage of faith given to me by my grandma and those before and after her is one of the greatest.

Birthday Celebration and Life Now

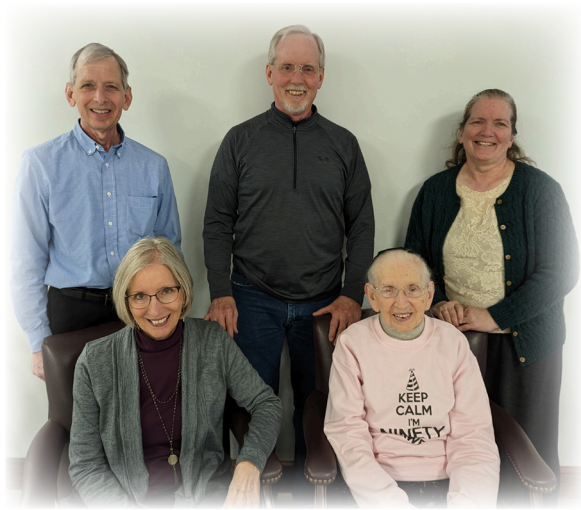
Grandma and Grandpa were blessed with 4 children: Steve, Ed, Rhoda, and my mother Rosy. They are pictured with her in the top left picture at her 90th birthday celebration on Sunday, March 19. The picture on the top right is me and Jeff with Grandma holding our 10-month-old daughter, Maia Mabel, whom we named after her.

Uncle Steve lives in Phoenix, Arizona, but her other 3 children live in the London/Plain City area. They have worked together to make sure Grandma's needs are met, and Grandma now lives with Aunt Rhoda in the Amherst Meadows neighborhood. They attend Rob and Doris' small group, and she is enjoying learning to know their neighbors and studying God's Word with them. Grandma loves spending time reading the Bible, doing word search puzzles, and, of course, spending time with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. ■

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C4...continued

On a note of sadness, we will say goodbye to Austin for the foreseeable future as he heads off to work at Skyview Ranch from April–August. This could turn into a full-time position for him. We are excited to see how God will work in this situation, but sad that he won't hang out with us each week. ■



Hanging On to Faith in the Hard Times

by Theresa Hennis

Writing an article about my relationship with God has been a challenge from the get-go! I think I must begin by saying that, in the body of Christ, there are many different personalities and backgrounds, and that's just the way He planned it. If I'm not honest about where I am on this journey, then how can I help anyone else who might be struggling with the same issues?

We learn more about who we are, as Christians, and how to develop our abilities to reach others who don't know Christ, by understanding that this walk we're on will not look like anyone else's and was never intended to.

I often think how wonderful it would have been to be raised by a Christian family who instilled the things of God in me from an early age. But that was not the reality of it. I had a very dysfunctional family that was never taught healthy relationship patterns. I have come to understand that God uses every part of our stories, no matter how dark, messy, or unorthodox.

In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul writes, *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed – not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence – continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his purpose."* The fear and trembling part confuses people but, in studying this, I understood that it means having reverence and a healthy respect for God. And the key part of that Scripture, to me, is "work out your salvation." How we do that will look differently for each of us.

Some days, working out my salvation is so messy that I don't even want to share what it looks like, but despite that, God brought me through every challenge and is still bringing me through today. I am one of those people who question their faith a lot, and thankfully, God is more than able to handle that. Working out my salvation looks like three steps forward and six back, most days. That's not to say that I don't see the blessings in my life or that I'm not grateful for what He and you, my church family, have done for me.

Being thrust into the role of a single grandmother raising two grandsons on my own was not what I pictured, ever. Some days, just finding enough energy and resources to make it through the month is daunting. And I cry when I look back over how God steps in, each and every time, to bring me exactly what I need, when I need it. He has done that through you, as a congregation—an encouraging card at precisely the moment I want to throw in the towel, the phone call to let me know I'm not forgotten, and so many more blessings. And when I consider blessings, these two boys with whom God entrusted me are blessings in their own right. Their energy and appreciation for life give me a new perspective, every day, on what is important and precious.

Keeping a journal of those prayers answered and blessings so abundant refreshes my memory and is something tangible to look back upon when the little black raincloud threatens to settle in over my head. Ultimately, though, the working out my own salvation rests on when I finally accept that, in the end, it's just myself and God in those hard places, paring away what I have come to rely on other than Him.

Everyone comes at this Christian walk from different viewpoints and perspectives, and HOW they work out their salvation is between them and God. For those of us coming from a deficit, the struggle is real. As I mentioned, I fight against depression often. The only thing that gets me through is knowing that God accepts me right where I am and allows me the freedom to work through my salvation, with His help. I can't imagine life without Him.

I might not always work out that salvation perfectly, and who of us does? But what sustains me is knowing that He doesn't expect me to be perfect or do it perfectly. He just wants me to keep handing my mess over to Him, working with Him on changing me, one day at a time.

So, if you think you're not "doing" this faith walk correctly, just remember—your walk is not anyone else's, and God knows you even better than you know yourself. Let Him help you figure it out. ■

Name...continued

That includes loving my enemies and doing good to those who hate or persecute me. It includes preaching what the Word of God says and allowing it to change me. It includes loving the Church, serving one another, and all the other outcomes of a life surrendered to Jesus.

If you would like more details about the name change, feel free to check out the Name Change Handout and Vision Flyer from Rosedale Network of Churches that is posted on LCF's bulletin board.

What's in a name? Sometimes, not very much. But then again, sometimes everything. There is one name that is above every name and that name is Jesus. I very much appreciate our affiliation and the accountability we have to what is now known as the Rosedale Network of Churches, but in the end, all structures, traditions, denominations, and even theologies will cease, and we will no longer see through a glass darkly, but we will see Him face to face. People from every tongue, tribe, nation, and denomination will be gathered around the throne in worship, and we will no longer know one another by any of those other names. We will know Him and we will be known by Him. That's it. ■



*Theresa with her grandsons
Luke (9) and Logan (5)*

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, Delaney Yutzy, and Doris Swartz

