



# The LCF Connection

May 2023



From left: Rosy, Phyllis, Harmony, Angie, Vicki, Naomi, Lucy (Not pictured: Maggie)

## Uniquely You

by Angie Stukey

The 2023 women's conference "Uniquely You" was hosted by Shiloh Mennonite Church on April 14-15. There were 8 of us from LCF who were blessed to be a part of it. Friday night's praise and worship recharged the ladies and kicked off the conference with a panel discussion on how every person's journey is unique.

Unfortunately, due to my unique circumstances, I was unable to attend this portion of the conference. My son, David, was running the Steeplechase event at Washington Court House. The race began on time at 4:45 p.m. David and his running partner started out strong and were leading—over jumps, and then over a water hazard. As we watched, David fell in the water hazard, but he came out still running—limping, but still running. He finished the 2000 meter race in first place.

He limped off the track, and we went to the infield to check on him. An hour later, we were in the ER having an X-ray done on his foot and learned that he broke the 5th metatarsal and should take 2 weeks to heal. No running, no training for 2 solid weeks. Like I would learn at the conference on Saturday...everyone's journey is unique.

Saturday morning arrived with a beautiful sunrise and a wonderful carpool driver. Lucy Elfrink filled me in on Friday night's panel discussion. We arrived early in hopes of coffee from the Rocky Mountain Coffee trailer, but the line was LONG.

It wasn't long, though, until the worship began with praising the wonderfulness of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Immediately following was a 3-person play titled, "Unshakable." It was every female's conversation with God and the Holy Spirit. The theme was to care more about what God thinks of you than what others think. A very good message, indeed!

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## Happy Mother's Day!

by Anna King

It's that special time of the year when we think about our mothers and what they mean to us.

I am enjoying teaching the elementary Sunday School class (grades 1-4) this quarter. It's always fun to hear their answers to various questions. Recently, I asked them what some of their favorite activities to do with their moms are and what some of their favorite memories were. Here is what they said:

Favorite things to do with my mom:

- Zaria: going to the pool
- Cameron: going to the water park
- Hadley: painting nails and reading
- Jaxson: going on trips
- Scarlet: spa night and painting nails

A favorite memory:

- Zaria: going to the park
- Cameron and Jaxson: going on vacation
- Scarlet and Hadley: going to the beach

It reminded me of when our kids, Davy and Kelli (who is the mother of Jaxson, Scarlet, and Hadley), were little and how much fun it was to do things like that with them!

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Pictured with Anna from left: Zaria, Cameron, Hadley, Jaxson, and Scarlet



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# Building Bridges, Not Walls

## A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz

What does it take to stay together? I've been wondering about that lately. I mentioned in a sermon recently that a temptation of mine can be to write someone off. I think you know what I mean. It could be over any manner of things: a difference of opinion, a perceived insult or slight, a different theological perspective, a different way

of doing church, or, a perceived difference in spiritual maturity. It is so easy to write someone off or more accurately, build a wall between us and them.

The ironic thing to me is that as believers, we can sometimes be the best at this. We find many ways to separate from others. Often, when someone leaves one church to attend another, the connection to the former group is completely broken. Now, practically, it's impossible to maintain all the connections we would like, but something always seems broken here. Judgment occurs either by the people who left or the people who stayed...or by both.

I have let walls build up in the past, and I want to do things differently. I want to be a bridge builder and not a wall builder. It doesn't mean that there aren't necessary boundaries in relationships. Healthy relationships always have good boundaries. There might even be a few that require pretty high boundaries, but I want to lead with the same grace that has been extended to me.

How do we do this? Well, it almost always starts with a proper view of ourselves. We need to be confident in who we are in Christ and what He is calling us to, but we are not better than anyone else. We are all equal at the foot of the cross. We all are undeserving of God's grace, and God doesn't play favorites with us based on our behavior, our theology, or our socioeconomic status. Is He thrilled with our obedience and disappointed in our failures? Absolutely, but it doesn't change His love and grace toward us. God calls us to do the same.

People who build bridges have gotten good at loving others regardless of differences they might have. They extend a hand of friendship. They meet your eye when you see them. Their smile opens the door to a relationship. They don't avoid you, but extend the opportunity to connect. They don't look to use you, but rather look at how they might be there for you. They are not a consumer of relationships, but a builder; an investor. They don't force themselves on you, but you know they genuinely care about you. They leave it up to you, but you know the door is always open. They don't criticize your opinions, but are confident in their own beliefs as well; not forcing them on you, but not intimidated by differences either. They're most interested in just loving well and leaving things to happen as they happen without the need to control.

It reminds me of Paul's 1 Corinthians 13 passage. We could be the most persuasive speaker. We could be the most intellectually sound person. We could have amazing faith and the best theology. We could be involved in the best causes, attend the best church, sing the most amazing worship music, go to the best Christian school or college, be an amazing missionary, and the list could go on. But...if we don't have love, Paul tells us that none of it has any worth. That's a strong statement! If we build walls instead of bridges, then all the other good we are accomplishing essentially gets wiped out. Even if we are right about all of it, it's worth nothing.

Paul isn't saying that these things aren't important, but if they cause us to elevate ourselves over others or build walls between us and others, they are actually counterproductive. Any good that might have come from them is actually negated.

I want to learn how to build better bridges and actually tear down walls. I want to show grace with humility as Jesus did to us. He built a bridge between us and God. None of us deserved it. He met us where we were. We are called to have the same mind as him, counting others more significant than ourselves. I know I have lots to learn, but I'm hopeful that in Christ, I can become a better bridge builder and retire from building walls. ■

# Elders' Notes

by Keith Scheffel

On April 13, 2023, the Elders' Meeting was held on the patio at Rob & Doris' place. Attendees were: Gideon Eichorn, Abraham & Naomy Ndungu, Reuben Sairs, Keith Scheffel, Rob & Doris Swartz, and RBC Intern Trevor Schrock and his wife, Morgan.

- As always, we began and ended our meeting with prayer.
- We shared prayer requests and shepherding updates.
- We talked about the upcoming baptism and possibilities for the date and place for it to be held.
- We discussed ways to encourage growth in prayer at LCF.
- We continued to work on modifications for the LCF constitution, which we have been in the process of updating.
- We scheduled our next meeting for May 16th. ■

# Council Update

by Jim Jones

We, the LCF Council (Jim Jones, Russ Hauge, Rhoda Sommers, and Sarah Eichorn), met via phone on April 18th. We discussed the idea of removing the wall and combining the two rear classrooms to accommodate our expanding youth group, small groups, and adult Sunday School. The existing wall would be replaced with a sound resistant accordion-type divider. The divider would still provide future versatility.

Our playground needs some attention. The mulch has worn away, and some of the equipment needs repair. We are going to look into the possibility of rubber mulch. Also, enhancing our outdoor space for activities and fellowship was discussed for the long-range future.

Our overhead projector was no longer operational and was replaced for \$1599.00. The lumens will be brighter, and it offers a 30-day return if we are not satisfied. A big thank you to Yoder Tools for allowing us to borrow a lift, to Merv for transporting it, and to Sammy and Rob for installing and setting up the new projector!

Our next meeting will be on May 16th. ■



# Real People, Real Life

by Pam Stanforth

Often, we read the stories in the Bible as though they were only fictional characters, or at best, biographies of people long-dead—historical accounts that have little to no bearing upon our own lives. We see them as heroes/heroines of their time, determining that they must have had special powers to have performed deeds we see as beyond human ability, or that God interacted differently with them, giving them special gifts, powers by His Holy Spirit in and for that time alone. In other words, we are somewhat disassociated, so that once we are finished reading the account, we walk away unchanged, and unimpacted by the message from God within the story.

The truth is that these were REAL-LIFE people! We can bring it home by thinking this way: this was someone like my great-grandfather or perhaps my grandmother. Stop and ponder what they may have thought or felt. When we look closely into the lives of the people of the Bible and take the time to delve into their backgrounds, character, choices, and responses, we will see real people—much like ourselves. They battled with anger, guilt, sin, and poor choices. They faced climate disasters, plagues, the joys of births and celebrations, pain from loss and deaths, financial stresses, family chaos, peace, war, and more. We tend to focus on their victories and skim over the sufferings of their journeys. These were men, women, teenagers, children, mothers, fathers, grandparents; they were people just like us—people who were loved and chosen by God to be a part of His big story.

Many people of biblical times waited until their rope was not just at its end, but frayed and next-to-impossible to knot before crying out to God. Sadly, this sounds a lot like me! Yet, God's Word assures me that the moment I cry out to Him, He hears (1 John 5:14, Psalm 18:6), and He will answer. He has given us everything we need to overcome and do what He has called us to do—just as we see He did with the people that we read about in His Word. Real People, Real Lives!

My confidence in God's Word and the stories it contains is great because I know that every jot and tittle, every story, every place and person noted is God breathed and Holy Spirit inspired. It has been preserved through the ages and is free from error (2 Timothy 3:16), timeless (Proverbs 30:5-6), without corruption (2 Peter 1:21), and trustworthy. It is the ultimate final authority that unlocks all the mysteries of life. It provides instruction and encouragement and is absolutely reliable to lead, teach, and guide me through this chaotic life (Isaiah 40:7-8).

My personal takeaway and my encouragement to each of you is to do as God's Word advises us:

- Let it renew your minds. (Ephesians 4:23)
- Be transformed by the renewal of your mind. (Romans 12:1-2)
- Prepare your minds for action. (1 Peter 1:13)
- Having your minds renewed by His Word, stay in constant communication with God through prayer. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

As we read the stories in God's Word and meditate on what it says to us in our situations, may we learn from them and grow to understand more of who God is and who we are in Him. ■



Above photo credit: Jenell Shrock

## *Uniquely You...continued*

Next was our own Phyllis Swartz with "The Journey of a Heroine." She spoke about the comfort gifts she gave to family at Christmas—everyone needs a warm blanket! Through this beginning, she weaved a thread from a Moabite woman to Jesus. We are not purely one thing, but made up of a touch of this and a pinch of that. Everyone's journey is unique, and everyone is uniquely created.

Phyllis's main points were: Everyone must walk while they wait. You must leave the ordinary. Always bite off more than you can chew! So much good advice for a woman who is unique!

Next on the agenda was speed learning 101! These sessions were packed with information, quickly delivered. The first session was titled,

"How Has God Shaped Me?" Mmm, well, He could have made me taller, less wrinkled, smarter, and quicker with less back pain. The session was NOT about our flaws, but about our unique gifts that were shaped before we were born for a specific purpose. We should care more about what God thinks of us than others anyway! The bell rang. On to the next session!

In the following session, we completed a personality check. We all discovered parts of us that are untapped and even useful to serve the Lord. Yes, I'm energetic and annoying, but those traits can be useful to Him! Who knew? He knew. The session ended with a quote from Oscar Wilde. "Be kind to yourself. The person in the mirror will be there forever."

Then it was time for lunch: taco salad, fresh fruit, yummy cupcakes, and a very short line for coffee! I learned about the history of the Mennonite Church in America. A quick stroll around the grounds in the warm sunshine was the recharge I needed!

A dramatic art performance followed lunch. It was presented by Jewel Showalter and titled, "Keep No Record of Wrongs." As women, we all have this record, but do we need to keep it or give it to God? Give it away and let God show us that everyone is uniquely created, and everyone's journey may be different, but only God knows the end of the story. We are all unique and on a unique journey.

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## A Time to Pray, A Time to Think, A Time to Be Still...

by Trevor and Morgan Schrock

...that's what led us back to the little town of Rosedale. We came asking a lot of questions about our future and were excited to have the unique opportunity to seek God's direction as we study at Rosedale together. Throughout our time here, we've seen the hand of God leading us. We have been soaking in the teachings from our classes and have been thankful for the community we found. We have met so many people who have acted as mentor figures and who have invested in our lives, both at LCF and Rosedale.

We previously attended Rosedale in 2019–2020, when COVID sent us home for the rest of the year. Returning to Rosedale, it felt like familiar territory, but also brand new as we hardly knew any students or what was ahead of us. It has been fun to go through the Bible college as a married couple, but it was a big change from our lifestyles in Maryland!

Leading up to Rosedale, we were asking God questions about our calling, specifically in regards to church and career. God hasn't given us those answers yet, but we have learned more about ourselves, the Kingdom of God, and how God simply asks us to be faithful and seek Him in each small step, though we don't have the big picture yet. Our plans at this point are to return to Maryland at the end of May. Morgan will be working full-time between our church and the Christian school located inside our church as an office manager and bookkeeper. Trevor will be working 3-4 days a week for a local construction company and 1-2 days for our church (Cherry Glade) doing a pastoral internship similar to the one that he has been doing with Rob and Doris.

We have really appreciated the blessing of LCF and the platform it has been to learn more about church function, to ask questions, and to seek God together. We have been greatly encouraged by you guys and see God at work in and through you. In a way, going home feels much like when we returned to Rosedale this year. Very familiar, yet full of unknowns.

We ask that you continue to keep us in your prayers as we finish our time at Rosedale, head back home, and readjust to a new normal. We will also be praying for you as you continue to be the church here in London, OH. It is awesome to serve a God who is at work no matter where we are and what season we find ourselves in. Thank you for the investment you've made in our lives and for welcoming us in, and we pray God's blessing over you in the years to come. ■



### Mother's Day...continued

It is so important for us as mothers to set a godly example for our children. They are always watching us. I think that sometimes they learn more by what we do than by what we say. Some of the many ways we can glorify God and be a good example to our children include:

- Reading our Bible regularly
- Praying together at meals and bedtime
- Going to church and worshipping God together
- Having family devotions
- Talking about God as we go about our daily lives

Proverbs 31:30 says: *"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."* As this Mother's Day approaches, I encourage you to spend some time reflecting on some of your favorite memories and things that you enjoy doing with your own mother. Take a moment and thank God for her. If she is still living, be sure to let her know how much you love her and appreciate all that she does for you! ■

### Uniquely You...continued

The last session was given by the daughter of Jewel, Rhoda Miller. She and her family have lived all over the world. She showed pictures of their family in various parts of the world as she spoke about their adventures and the uniqueness of their journey! She shared many unique stories, such as the one about she and her husband creating emojis to use if one of them was detained by an unwelcoming official.

Journeys are unique, and the people on them are also uniquely created for a time such as this. You, too, are uniquely created with gifts that can be used for the Kingdom! ■

## The LCF Connection

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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](mailto:secretary@lcfweb.org). Editors: Theresa Hennis, Elisabeth Yoder, Delaney Yutz, and Doris Swartz

