

# The LCF Connection

August 2023

## We Have Always Been Building a Home

by Vicki Sairs



Abraham and Naomy Ndungu became first-time homeowners in June and moved into their Springfield home on July 1st. With the help of family and friends, they loaded their possessions into vans and trucks—lots of furniture, lots of clearly labeled boxes, lots of (happy) work.

Did anyone notice the sticky note on the old cabinet from their bedroom?



Bright yellow, a bit wrinkled, it bears these words, all written on a roughly sketched cross: *Trust in the slow work of God*. Abraham heard those words years ago at a conference, and he and Naomy have lived them out. Some background: Naomy and Abraham moved from Kenya to the U.S. in December 2009 and settled in Irwin, Ohio, with their children: Danny, then 15, Grace, 13, and Shepherd (who used to be tiny), almost 10. They arrived in a bitterly cold winter, made the Rosedale apartments their home base, and followed their game plan: get the kids into good schools, continue pursuing their own education, find good jobs, and then see about a home.

I asked Abraham what it means to be a homeowner in Kenya. He said, “It is manly for a Kenyan to have a home. When a boy becomes a man, he’s supposed to have a house of his own. Mostly you build it next to your parents . . . and even before you are married. It’s an assurance for your wife. But in the era of emphasis on professions and careers, that is no longer a norm.”

He smiled at Naomy. “I was so busy with school and then with jobs and family that I never built a house for my wife. I was a renter through the years. This is the first time we are owning a home, that we will call *our* home.”

Naomy said not building a home in Kenya “has never really bothered me, because when we met, we were both pursuing our education. Even in our first dating and courting encounters, we were able to spell out to each other what we really were pursuing, so it *never* became a priority.”

*Continued on page 2...*

### Inside this Issue

We Have Always Been Building a Home	1
It’s All in the Word	1
Council and Elders’ Updates	3
Celebrating 30 Years As Secretary	3
Day Planner	4
Serving at Aim Right	4
Need a Good Book?	4

## It’s All in the Word

by Maggie Gates

My faith journey has had many twists and turns. As a child, I did not experience or know many of the things our children know. I have been learning piece-by-piece and often have many questions. At the end of June, I volunteered to help serve at Bethel Camp for a week and discovered that for the many questions I have, Bethel Camp 2023 provided some insight.



At dinner the first night, campers were given booklets that contained rules, schedules, etc., along with Bible verses—100 verses, to be specific. To receive snail mail or email during the week, the kids would have to share a Bible verse from memory, including its reference. (They only got away with John 11:35 during the first lunch!) At the closing chapel service, the kids received various awards and recognition for accomplishments during the week. I was shocked that three kids had memorized and recited all 100 verses in their booklet over the course of a week!

How many could I recite? Sure, I could quote Genesis 1:1, John 3:16, John 11:35, Psalm 23, and a few others—but not many. Why bother? Why spend time memorizing? Who would know if I do so or not? For me, the answer I discovered is that memorizing the words of God and Jesus helps to provide a deeper understanding of what it means to be a person of faith—a Christian. Mark 9:23 says, “*Jesus said to him ‘If you can believe? All things are possible for one who believes.’*” “All things...”. In these words from Jesus, life is simplified as we see that all we need to do is to “believe.” May God help me to grow in memorizing and learning from His Word, the Bible! ■



LONDON

255 US 42 NE London, OH 43140  
(740) 490-2121

LCFweb.org

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

Home...continued

When they got married, they were in a very nice rental. She never felt like she didn't have a place. But a home of their own was a long-term goal. "We were busy buying lots from the word go." These lots were investments and places for them to construct their house. "Essentially, we've always been in the process of building a home."

Abraham added that the lots came in handy when they moved here. "We sold them and raised money for travel, to come and settle down here."

Naomy smiled. "We've always been in the process, but it hasn't worked!" One thing that kept them from building in Kenya was their investment in helping their families. "That took quite a bit of our resources."

They continued prioritizing needs once they landed in Ohio. First and foremost, said Abraham, was making sure the kids were in good schools that they liked. Fairbanks fit the bill for them! "They liked it so much," he said. "And they still have great connections now."

The next priority was to continue pursuing their own education. In the next ten years, Abraham got a Master of Arts in Practical Theology and a Doctor of Ministry (DMin), both from Ashland Theological Seminary; Naomy graduated in 2019 with a Doctor of Education (EdD) in Leadership Studies from Ashland University.

At the same time, they needed jobs. Both of them arrived here in the US with advanced degrees and decades of professional experience. Abraham taught as a professor of environmental studies at Kenyatta University and got his first doctorate from Tongji University in Shanghai, in urban planning. He also pastored a branch of the Kenya Mennonite Church on the outskirts of Nairobi and served as academic dean in the Regions Beyond Ministry (RBM) Bible College.

Naomy taught high school from 1987–2009. She became the academic dean at her last job, worked with the Christian Unions in different schools, and taught education-based courses at RBM.

And yet, finding jobs that used their gifts was hard. It's been a long haul to get where they are now: Abraham is the Protestant Chaplain at London Correctional Institution and Naomy works in the Springfield City Schools as a Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

They both had to take jobs that were not a good match for their education and skill level, sometimes for years. But they never gave up. "God does not hurry, and He does not rush," said Abraham, quoting a Kikuyu saying. "He is never late or early. He is on time." Referring to their new home, he said, "This is the best time."



what it takes to be employed, it's just that the right employer has not come."

Naomy encouraged him greatly. "Sometimes, I would feel like, 'I am not going to wash those dishes again in the restaurant!' and she would say, 'No, no, no.' She would have a way of encouraging me, and I would find myself going back to that job the next day."

Now they are looking forward to making their new home a place of hospitality for family, for friends, and for their new neighbors. One last comment from Abraham: "We don't want to say we wished we owned a home twenty or thirty years ago. This is the best time." ■



Naomy held up the sticky note with the words *Trust in the slow work of God*. "We've learned to wait and to count on the faithfulness of God," she said. "Knowing who we are in Christ is very important. Our value is not defined by what we do."

They walked together and talked through their frustrations and doubts. When Naomy was "worn out" balancing work with getting her degree, she told Abraham, "I'm not sure what's going on." He encouraged her to keep moving. "We know," he told her, "we *know* what we are doing."

Having a fellowship of believers in their life and knowing that people were praying for them also carried them through this time.

Abraham said even when things weren't working out, they never stopped applying for jobs. "Sowing in the morning, sowing in the afternoon, sowing in the evening."

When they faced people who didn't seem to understand the qualifications they possessed, they thought of friends who knew them well. "The way they affirmed us helped us to know that we are not all that stupid! We have

## Elders' Notes

by Keith Scheffel

The Elders' Meeting on July 5, 2023, took place at Rob and Doris Swartz's residence. Attendees included Gideon Eichorn, Abraham and Naomy Ndungu, Reuben and Vicki Sairs, Keith Scheffel, and Rob and Doris Swartz.

The meeting commenced with prayer requests and shepherding updates, followed by collective prayer. We discussed the Missions 101 initiative from Rosedale International (our church conference's mission agency). We plan to show four short videos at LCF in September and provide opportunity for people to contribute financially.

The Elders also shared their thoughts on various topics, such as supporting future missionaries, planning the usage of upcoming freed funds from our mortgage payment, utilizing the church building, offering financial training, strengthening marriages, teaching Scripture, reintroducing the Adult Discipleship Class, and enhancing outreach efforts.

We concluded our time with prayer and scheduled our next meeting for August 16. ■

## Council Update

by Jim Jones

The Council met by phone on July 18th. We have requested LCF's Tech Team's expertise as we look into purchasing some security cameras for the church property. We are wanting to have four cameras that cover both entry doors, the playground, and parking lot with the support system and cables.

The playground is ready for kids to enjoy! Thanks so much to everyone who helped out with preparing the playground and spreading mulch after church on July 16th! Thanks to Nathaniel Smith for coordinating the efforts, Rich Pratt who showed up with a Kubota, and the many volunteers who worked hard on a hot summer day to complete the task efficiently. Soon a chainlink fence will be installed by a local contractor around the 36'X36' perimeter with one entry gate adjacent to the side entry door.

Our next meeting will be on August 15th. ■



## Celebrating 30 Years as Secretary

by Doris Swartz



Thirty years ago, Steve Swartz contacted me and said that he and the Elders' team wondered if I would be interested in doing part-time secretary work for the church, which was known then as Shalom Community Church. The timing was perfect, as Rob and I had our first child (18-month-old Larissa) and were expecting our 2nd child in January. When we began having children, I gave up my job as a dental assistant to be able to stay home full-time with our children. Money was tight, and we were looking for a way that I could make a little extra income from home. This seemed like a good opportunity to do so and also to serve the church, so I accepted the invitation.

August 1, 1993, I began working from home—before that was a common thing for people to do. I worked for Steve for 9 years until he resigned from pastoring to take a position at Conservative Mennonite Conference (now known as Rosedale Network of Churches) in 2002. I remember hearing our young children (by then, we had 4, ranging in age from 4–10) saying their bedtime prayers and asking God to “help mommy to get a good boss.” Little did we know that God would answer those prayers by calling Rob to begin serving as pastor (and thus, my boss)—first part-time, and then several years later, full-time. Working from home and having my husband as my “boss” has been challenging at times, but overall, has proved to be a perfectly suited job for me over many years!

The flexibility of it has been great! When the kids were young, I could work when they took their naps or after they went to bed at night. As they got older, I was able to work while they were in school and then be available to help with homework, attend sporting events, etc.

It's a part-time job that has dovetailed nicely with full-time ministry. Sometimes, it's hard to know if I'm doing something because it's my job as secretary, because I am the pastor's wife, or simply because I am a servant of Christ. They intertwine and work well together.

Needless to say, a lot has changed in the last 30 years—especially with technology! When I began working as secretary, I had to cut and paste things to create the newsletter and then take the copy to a printing company. I copied song lyrics onto transparencies to be displayed on the overhead projector during worship. Pictures had to be taken on a roll of film and developed. We didn't have a website, Facebook page, color copier, or the ability to text. But the responsibility of attending to details and working behind-the-scenes to aid in communication and help things run efficiently at LCF has remained the same.

I love my job and am very grateful for it; but both Rob and I believe in the value of equipping and enabling the next generation to give leadership and take things to the next level. I pray that even now, God is preparing the next person that he wants to serve as LCF's administrative assistant and that He will make it clear when it's time for me to transition the responsibility over to them. Until then, I continue to count it a privilege to serve Christ and our LCF church family in this way! ■



## Reflections

### Day Planner

by Cynthia Troyer

We say we don't have enough of it. Sometimes, we have none of it. We lose it, find it, or can't find it. We push it off. We look forward to it and back on it. We complain it's too long or too short. We label it "good" and "bad." We try to capture it, but it escapes us. We can budget and spend it, but never earn it back. We try to reserve it and preserve it, but it always goes away. In the end, it is totally outside of us, yet we are forced to operate within it.

*Time:* It is at the center of my thoughts, prayers, and struggles these days, since in the past eight months I have entered a new city, state, family structure, line of work, doctoral study—and a new marriage! Now, Richard and I are learning to manage time together, balancing the priorities of work and relationship. *Time:* elusive and intangible, yet powerful enough to both build and destroy.

God says that time is both inside and outside of our control. Genesis tells us that God created time as a part of the world that man was instructed to manage. I recall hearing my father quote from Proverbs 6: *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.* Certainly, I did not want to be a sluggard or a fool!

In college, I became a master planner, creating lists and charts to calculate every minute. I carried a large, impressive planner. When, inevitably, I was far from my calculated schedule by the end of the day, I felt like a failure. So I bought more time management books. But a question lingered: *Does God view time through the scribbles in our day planner?*

While we strive to make the best use of our time (Eph. 5:15–17), we must also recognize that time is independent of our control. Proverbs 27:1 states, *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.* James echoes the wisdom of Solomon: *...you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.* For the believer, *a person plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps* (Proverbs 16:9). And while we are told to number our days, God also reminds us that *with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Peter 3:8).

God operates both within time and outside of it. He created time and chose to step into it, as an ant like us, so that we who began inside of time will not end in it, but will live with Him for eternity. Our minds, let alone our day planners, cannot begin to hold the mystery nor the magnitude of time.



God keeps His day planner too. Psalm 139:16 says, *Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when yet there was none of them.* He knows my days from first to last. Thankfully, His mercies are new each morning (Lamentations 3:22–23). *Lord, teach us to number our days, and grant us grace for each one, that we may gain a heart of wisdom* (Psalm 90:12). ■

## Serving at Aim Right

by Reid Gates

During the month of June, I had the pleasure, once again, to spend the whole month in Phoenix, Arizona, with Aim Right Ministries. This summer looked much like last summer, which included Vacation Bible School and a summer camp for teens.

I love working with Aim Right because I love watching the kids that they work with grow. This growth does not just happen spiritually, but also in their everyday lives.

Aim Right is a ministry that I greatly respect and hope to work with for years to come. I am so thankful for the opportunity I have been given to serve there. I plan to use those experiences to enhance my studies when I return to college at Mount Vernon Nazarene University. As a Youth and Family Ministry major, the work of Aim Right Ministries fits right in line with my calling.



Thanks so much to each of you for your thoughts and prayers while I was in Arizona. ■



Pictured with my cabin from teen summer camp (above) and with my fellow Aim Right staff (below).

## Need a Good Book?

by Linda Schlabach

Does summer reading grab your attention? Is there someone you know (of any age) who loves to read? Or perhaps as an effort to reach out, you may choose to read aloud a book of choice with a friend or neighbor.

Our LCF Library contains over 3,500 items from which to choose. Yearly, we update library accounts according to the church directory. A library account provides you the ability to scan your borrowed item for check-out, to renew borrowed items, and to track your borrowed items through the LCF Library online catalog. Thanks so much to Angie Stukey for the great job she does reshelving the books and other items!

If you have questions concerning your LCF Library account or would like an account set up, contact Kelli Dean, Linda Schlabach, or Sammy Waweru. ■

## 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, Delaney Yutzy, and Doris Swartz