

The LCF Connection

November 2023

Desert Water

by Phyllis Swartz

Two years ago, Steve retired after serving several decades with Rosedale Network of Churches, our church's conference. The gift for his retirement was a trip to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. So for twenty days last October, we explored a part of the world that was new to us. This is a blog post I wrote on Apple to Apple to describe one day of our trip.

And now, exactly a year since our trip, violence and suffering dominate the region. Please pray for peace and for those suffering.

I quit feeling sorry for David on this trip to Israel. At least partly. It couldn't have been easy for him to know the king was hunting him down. But if he had to hide, En Gedi was the place to do it.

Maybe because we had just come from the Dead Sea. Maybe because the land around us had been scorched and craggy and brown, brown, brown. Maybe because without the early rains, water had been scanty. Maybe for all these reasons, it felt like God had touched his finger to En Gedi, making it a patch of paradise. No wonder many people call it the most beautiful place in Israel.

We hiked Wadi David that runs through En Gedi. But instead of the dry desert river bed I had expected, water spilled into crystal basins along the trail, ran off rocky ledges, dripped from giant reeds and cattails, and flowed into pools large enough for swimming.

We trailed along an amazing labyrinth of narrow gorges and through tunnels created by decades of dried reeds that thatched into each other, making a roof over the trail. Sometimes we descended to the creek bed, where we stepped on rocks to keep our shoes dry. And we climbed to David's Waterfall, which cascades a forceful 120 feet into the pool below.

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Numbered Envelopes and Beautiful Feet

by Sarah Eichorn

"Jesus to the world, the world to Jesus." That is the heartbeat behind Rosedale International, our conference's mission agency. If you would like a reminder of it—there are still bracelets with the slogan, available in the foyer, that you are welcome to help yourself to.

During the month of September, LCF had the opportunity to participate in missions in a practical way through RI's Missions 101 initiative. There were 101 numbered envelopes posted around the bulletin board area. Each person was invited to choose an envelope with the number for the amount they wanted to give. This provided the opportunity for everyone to be able to participate and give anything from a small amount to a larger donation. My favorite moment was explaining to our 7-year-old daughter the purpose of Missions 101 and then helping count her tithe dollars and finding the envelope that matched the amount of funds she had to give.



A big thank you to everyone who gave and participated! Together we raised \$2,432 to support RI's mission endeavors to continue to take Jesus to the world.

While funds are often a necessary resource in mission outreaches, a greater, indispensable resource we have is prayer. Praying for missionaries, missions, and lost souls is vital, but perhaps it is beneficial to turn our prayers

inward first, and ask God how He wants to use us to share the Good News. It brings to mind Romans 10:15 where it says: *"How beautiful are the feet of them who bring good news."* Whether sharing Jesus with a lost neighbor or to an unreached people group overseas, may we all have "beautiful feet" because after all, it's all about Jesus! ■



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Asking Questions about Faith

A Message from the Pastor
by Reuben Sairs

I have met Christians who have told me that growing up in their family and attending their church that they got the message early on that you should not question faith. Raising a question was really just doubt. Questions should be feared as the wedge by which faith is undone. Don't even think about it! In short it was a believe-what-you're-told faith.

I think most of us would agree that different approaches to questions are appropriate for different ages. The way we handle the questions that a 5-year-old asks requires a little more shaping, and assumes the general acceptance of an answer given by parents. It would be quite an insecure childhood to lack all guardrails. I suppose all families are different in these matters and it takes all kinds, as we say.

The way we handle a teenager's questions, though, should probably begin to recognize a higher level of personal sovereignty and choice. A defensive and angry response to a question probably just signals to a teenager that "as I suspected, my parent, pastor, teacher doesn't really know, and is insecure and uncertain." By college age and young adulthood, I could say I pity the parent who still tries to tell their children what to believe or how to live. Even unsolicited advice will often land badly, and an agenda behind even gentle guidance is sniffed out pretty quickly. But I'm not writing about parenting. I'm addressing adults.

There is a word in the Bible that we shouldn't overlook. The Greek word is *dialogomai* and its several forms. It has often been translated as reasoning or disputing. Thayer's Greek-English lexicon: "to think different things with one's self, mingle thought with thought; to ponder, revolve in mind." You'll see Paul doing a lot of this as he takes the gospel to the Greco-Roman Pagan world. See Acts 17:2, or especially 19:8-9 where we see him take this approach with both Jews and pagans. He has dialogues. I'm going to assume that means posing questions, considering answers and making his case.

We do not build our faith by suppressing questions—we weaken it. We must ask of our faith difficult and adult questions. Because I believe our faith to be real and the Bible to be the authentic word of God, I don't think any question is out of bounds, and I'm confident that the answer I settle on won't fail me. Questions might challenge an assumed or even a cherished belief, but like other types of trials that is probably part of what it takes to refine gold. (1 Peter 1:7) An answer might require us to change our interpretation or our practice in order to line up with the truth. What would we lose? Nothing valuable—a bad idea for a better one. That's how we grow. ■



Pictured at LCF's Pastor Appreciation potluck on October 15th.

Thanks so much for the many ways you show your love and appreciation to us!

We are thankful for each one of you and for the opportunity to serve with you here at LCF!

Rob & Doris,
Reuben & Vicki

Elders' Notes

by Keith Scheffel

The LCF Elders met at the home of Rob and Doris, attended by Gideon Eichorn, Abraham and Naomy Ndungu, Reuben and Vicki Sairs, Keith Scheffel, Rob and Doris Swartz, and RBC Bridge Intern Evan Jenkins (EJ).

The gathering began with updates, prayer requests, and discussions about future plans at LCF, including nominations for a new elder, a potluck, Elder retreat, and holiday-related events.

We reviewed the various small groups that are currently in place and discussed two potential new groups starting.

Rob noted that he, Jesse and Sammy have been jointly filling in as music coordinator, but Rob would like to recruit someone to assume those responsibilities more permanently.

There was a consensus that we'd like to give more focus on worship through giving and will explore various approaches.

As a group we've been experimenting with communication through the BAND app and will plan to continue using it for the next several months. We concluded our meeting with prayer. Our next gathering will be the elders retreat at the Proctor Center, November 10-11. ■

A Special Offer for Parents



Hello, everyone! My name is Micah Baker. I am 16 years old. I love reading, fun crafts, exciting games, and most importantly, KIDS! I've baby-sat for multiple kids over the years and have experience

with kids from ages 2-13. I am always looking forward to meeting another energetic kid! 😊

Parents, if you need someone to watch your kid(s) so that you can do some shopping, get extra work done, or just have a date night, let me know. I'd love to serve you in this way. If you'd like to get to know me before trusting me with your kid(s), I'd be glad to get together and you can ask me whatever you'd like!

I am willing to baby-sit for kid(s) of any age, although I have to warn you, I don't know how to change a diaper yet. I'm willing to learn, but at this moment, it's very unknown to me.

I don't have a specific wage. You can decide what you want to pay me, according to your budget; and if it isn't in the budget, I could even baby-sit for free. I hope I can be useful to anyone who needs some help! (My contact info is listed in LCF's online directory.) ■



Connections

by Mike & Karen Baker

Five teens from C4 enjoyed attending Bethel Camp's fall high school retreat this year. It was a weekend filled with fun, fellowship, and spiritual growth. The retreat took place in the hollers of Kentucky, allowing us to connect with nature and appreciate God's creation. During our time at the retreat, we participated in various activities such as hiking, boat races, and games.



One of the highlights of the retreat is our time spent in worship and Bible study. We had several sessions throughout the weekend where we gathered together to praise God and learn more about His word. The fall retreat is also an opportunity to disconnect from our daily routines and focus on our relationship with God. We had quiet time to reflect on our faith and pray together.

A highlight for our youth group is Jayce's decision to get baptized. He has been attending church for several years and has grown in his understanding of God's love and grace. He was baptized at LCF's outdoor service in front of his church family. Pray for Jayce and all of our youth that they will continue to grow in their faith and honor God in all they do and say. ■



Crafting Together

by Lance Beachy

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. On Earth as it is in Heaven." One of the most meaningful parts of being a Christian for me is those lines in the Lord's prayer. I love the concept that we, as Christians, can be like God and work to help bring down a little bit of heaven to earth.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It takes nine words (and a small bit of extrapolation) to establish the following: God is a creator, artist, scientist, and an author. If any of these appeal to you, why not join us in one of my favorite ways to be like the Lord, and do art in community?

September 29th was one such night when some artists and crafty folk got together at LCF. We had a charcuterie board, some sweets, and some coffee. Most people brought art projects to work on, and those who didn't used some of the supplies Pam Stanforth graciously provided.

One of my favorite parts was the sheer variety of arts—we had crochet, knitting, embroidery, greeting cards, painting, Perler beads, writing, stone sealing, homemade puzzle painting, and drawing. I enjoyed the positivity and encouragement in the atmosphere, and loved seeing what everyone else was doing. We have more space to add even more variety, so if you're thinking about showing up but don't want to do any of the aforementioned activities, feel free to bring your own unique craft, board games, etc. or just come enjoy everyone's company!

I plan to have more of these evenings in the near future and will probably add themes to some of them, if people are interested. For example, one in early December could be a great time to decorate ornaments or make Christmas cards and the suchlike. I would also like to do a portfolio night in which people have an excuse to bring and show off the things they've made and are proud of, without feeling bad about it. Let me know if you have any ideas on what to do or how to improve it. I hope to see you around the craft table! ■



Upcoming Events

- November 10-11—Elders' Retreat
- November 10-12—Anne of Green Gables drama at RBC
- November 19—Gratitude Sunday and Thanksgiving Potluck (Turkey will be provided.)
- December 3—RBC Chorus will lead us in worship
- December 11—MCBDD's Christmas Cabaret, 7 p.m.
- December 24—LCF Family Christmas

Sore Feet and Full Hearts

by Shannon Scheffel

In September, our family had the opportunity to travel to Alaska to visit our son, Justin. We flew into Juneau where we spent three days exploring. Highlights in Juneau were: seeing the Mendenhall Glacier, Nugget Falls, a whale-watching tour, and lots of beautiful hiking.

On day four we took a six-hour ferry ride up the Inside Passage to Skagway where Justin has lived for the past six months. Highlights in Skagway included:

- Spending time with Justin and getting to see firsthand why he loves his job. Justin wasn't sure what his work schedule would be like, but he was able to take off all three days we were in Skagway and was our personal tour guide.
- Taking a train ride on the White Pass Railroad and learning about the Klondike Gold Rush that happened in 1897.
- A raft ride on the Lynn Canal where we counted seven bald eagles and learned the water which we were upon was a 1500-foot-deep fjord.
- More great hiking with beautiful views.
- The best day of all was a helicopter flight with Justin as our pilot and guide to the Meade Glacier. Walking on the glacier, seeing beautiful, yet scary moulins (a vertical or nearly vertical shaft in a glacier—best described as big, deep holes in the ice!), and flying high along some of Alaska's gorgeous landscapes exceeded our expectations in many ways.



Several reflections on our trip:

I remember when the kids were young and finances were tight wishing and praying we could travel more. So this trip and a couple of others that we've taken in the past few years have felt like a fulfillment of prayers prayed long ago. God's timing is best!

We are so grateful we were able to take this trip with our adult children. Our two daughters and son-in-law joined us. For everyone to clear their schedules and get off work was a gift.

I was thankful for good health, hiking shoes and rain gear. We hiked every day. Some hikes were mild to moderate, others were strenuous. It rained every day but two, so we embraced our activities like Alaskans and didn't let the rain keep us in.



I am thankful for smooth travels, connections, and safety along the way. Our only casualty was one piece of luggage that got forgotten on the ferry. ☺

The sights were unforgettable, causing us to be in awe of our Creator. *"Splendid and majestic is His work, and His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonders to be remembered; The Lord is gracious and compassionate."* Psalm 111:3

We came home from this trip with full hearts knowing we just experienced the trip of a lifetime. ■

Desert Water...continued

Above us ibex scampered on the mountain rocks. Around us sweet dates, balsam, and persimmons grew. And in our ears was always, always the sound of water that is perhaps the freshest and most nutritious in the world.

This is what makes En Gedi—the water. But what also makes En Gedi is the desert. The desert is necessary to truly appreciate the water. More than opposites, the desert and En Gedi are also aspects of the same thing.

On this waterside hike, I thought about the famed encounter between David and King Saul at En Gedi. Given Saul's animosity, what gave David the courage and grace to cut a corner of Saul's cloak instead of killing him?

I don't know, of course. But maybe desert water helped. ■

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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, Annika Miller, and Doris Swartz