

The LCF Connection

December 2023

Giving Thanks Together

by Linda Pratt

On Sunday, November 19, London Christian Fellowship celebrated Gratitude Sunday—a special service on the Sunday before Thanksgiving that focused on giving thanks to God for the many blessings He has given to us. It was a great reminder that sometimes we focus more on our problems and worries and forget how truly blessed we are.

The service was planned and directed by Jeff Gates. Jeff selected scripture readings that prompted us to look at our lives and count our blessings. We also enjoyed a lot of special music that spoke to our hearts. Psalms 23:4 reminds us that even in the darkest times of our lives, Jesus is always with us, helping us and encouraging us to overcome our challenges. We are never alone when we call on God to be with us.

The whole service was very inspiring and encouraging. Afterwards, we enjoyed a Thanksgiving potluck in the Fellowship Hall. The food was delicious and a great way to share with each other and begin the week of Thanksgiving. ■



RBC Student Volunteers

by Annika Miller

This year, we have six students from Rosedale Bible College who are helping out in various ways here at LCF. As part of the Explore program, each RBC student chooses a ministry which they are interested in and serve in that ministry over the course of their time at Rosedale. This is a way for them to connect what they are learning in the classroom with active ministry experience.

They've all gone through LCF's screening process and are helping out with youth or children in various ways. Since they will be working with your children and/or youth, we wanted to help you learn to know them a bit. On page 3 you will discover some interesting things about them, along with hobbies, future plans, what God has been teaching them, and ways that you can be praying for them.

Continued on page 3...



Inside this Issue

Giving Thanks Together	1
RBC's Student Volunteers	1
A Beautiful Reminder	1
God's Faithful Provision	2
Council Update / Elders' Retreat	3
Reading God's Word	4
Child Protection Meeting	4
Upcoming Events	4

A Beautiful Reminder

by Pam Stanforth

When I was a young girl, I recall seeing many of my family members wearing crosses around their necks with Jesus on the cross. It was a constant reminder of Jesus' suffering, and my child thoughts about this horrific scene were often filled with fear and wondering if He was still in pain. When I went to church, I saw large crosses with statue-likenesses on them, depicting the tortured body of Jesus, I did not comprehend, and I was definitely frightened by these. Later I came to understand that crosses depicting the tortured body of Christ are reminders of the horrible pain that He suffered in my place.



Cross donated by Jeff & Pam Stanforth and installed by Kelvin Snider.

As I grew older, I became familiar with beautiful, creatively-designed, celebratory crosses, which did not hold or depict a tortured body. Seeing an empty cross brings great joy to my heart because it is the essence of my salvation! It reminds me that Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, is no longer on the cross, but that He has risen in victory over death and the grave! He lived a sinless life and became the perfect sacrifice to pay for the price of my

sin, and the sin of the whole world. As we celebrate His birth during this time of the year, may we remember that he was born to die—to die for us so that we can be reconciled with God—and that He conquered death and now sits at the right hand of God in Heaven! The empty cross is a celebration of my salvation!

Continued on page 4...



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.



God's Faithful Provision

A Message from the Pastor

by Rob Swartz

On Sunday, November 27th, the Council and Elders gave an update on LCF's financial position indicating that we have been significantly exceeding our budget for almost every month in 2023.

How should we think about this information? It reminds me of a conversation Doris and I had recently with our daughter, Larissa, about what it looks like to depend on God to supply our needs. Her dad (me) was arguing that there is a balance between trusting God and being responsible while Larissa was suggesting we should simply trust God to provide for what we need. She's onto something, and I think it's the way we should think of our situation at LCF.

We should trust that God will supply our needs "according to his riches in glory." Do we have a responsibility? Yes. Of course. But none of this ministry at LCF over the past 39 years is a result of human effort. It's the result of God's work in people and through people to accomplish his purposes. We can't really take credit for any of it. Should we worry about it? No. If we need to make financial cuts should we feel discouraged? No. As Reuben reminded us at our elders retreat, "God's not out of money."

I see God at work among us. I see our church giving in many different ways to benevolence, to missions, RI (our mission agency), Rosedale Bible College, etc. You are a generous church! I see people growing in their faith. I see young people bringing their friends to youth group. I see older people still faithfully serving after many years of serving the church. I see new people and new vision and new ideas for ministry. I see God at work, and my guess is that you do, as well. He is faithful. Jesus is building his church and nothing will stop it. I have no idea how long London Christian Fellowship will exist, but I'm confident that "The Church" will prevail and that God will supply everything needed for that to happen. It may not look like I think (and most times it doesn't), but this is not a time for hand-wringing or worry. It is a time to trust in God.

Are there things for us to do? Sure! We can give. We can be careful about spending. We can pray. And we can continue to preach the Word, share the gospel, care for the fellowship of believers, love the lost, worship our King, and all the other things we are called to do by the head of the church, Jesus Christ. As we do those things, we can be confident that our Heavenly Father will supply every need that we have.

As a pastor, I feel blessed to be a part of our fellowship at LCF, and I'm looking forward to continuing the work he has called us to, as well as to doing the new things he is preparing for us in 2024. I'm thankful for each one of you and your part in the ministry at LCF! ■

Council Update

by Jim Jones

The Council met via phone on November 21st. LCF's financial situation was the biggest part of our discussion. Here's a snapshot of our average monthly giving over the past four years: 2020: \$15,700, 2021: \$15,000, 2022: \$16,900, and 2023: \$12,600.

Historically, our working budget is \$200,000. Given our average 2023 monthly income, our 2024 budget will be \$160,000. Our 2023 cash reserves have dropped from \$86,500 to \$62,000 (- \$24,500). Even with our church mortgage payoff in 8 months (\$3,000 per month) it is not feasible to maintain our current income-to-expense ratio.

That \$40,000 difference will leave many ministries and missions starting off this new year unfunded. Our hope and plan is to start slow and finish strong. As giving increases we will take the surplus to fund the ministries and missions. We will look to the Elders Team to prioritize those needs.

Because of the urgency of our high electric rate and propane costs, \$600 will be used to purchase WiFi enabled thermostats. In addition, the church-use policy for special events is being reviewed to determine if a fee should be assessed to help cover the high energy costs. The council is also searching for some bid comparisons for lawn care and snow removal.

There have been some questions regarding our coffee-use policy. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and related hot beverage supplies at LCF are available for Sunday morning services and other LCF sponsored events. Since these supplies are primarily utilized for Sunday morning services, individuals choosing to use the hot beverages for their LCF sponsored events are responsible to alert the Sunday Morning Coffee coordinator when the group consists of more than 10 individuals consuming hot beverages to ensure there are adequate supplies for Sunday morning fellowship. Individuals and groups renting or reserving the church for functions are expected to provide their own hot beverages and supplies.

Our next meeting is scheduled for December 19th. As always, we invite you to contact any of us (Russ, Sarah, Rhoda, or myself) with your questions and comments. ■

Elders' Retreat Notes

by Keith Scheffel

Our 2023 Elder's Retreat took place at the home of Rob and Doris on November 10 & 11 due to a scheduling mishap at the Proctor Center. Attendees included: Roger and Sharon Hazen, Reuben and Vicki Sairs, Abraham and Naomy Ndungu, Gideon Eichorn, Keith and Shannon Scheffel, Jeremy and Mandy Hisey, and Rob and Doris Swartz. The retreat began with Friday evening worship and sharing of joys and struggles from the past year. Saturday morning involved reading and discussing Ezekiel 34, reflecting on ways we've seen God at work, and discussing dreams we have for LCF, including growth, clear Anabaptist witness, congregational participation, community service, and biblical literacy.



The financial situation of the congregation was a significant topic, with a decrease in the average monthly income from \$17,000 in 2022 to \$12,000 in 2023. Plans to pay off the mortgage in July 2024 were mentioned, but concerns were raised about potential budget cuts in 2024. The elders suggested communication with the congregation, prayer, and a careful approach to any budget adjustments.

Other topics we discussed included the Lifepointe Family Center, financial counseling initiatives, and plans for events like Valentine's Date Night, Celebrate the Church Sunday, and acknowledging the 40th anniversary of Shalom/LCF on April 22. The elders also expressed support for using the BAND App for church communication in the coming months. Our next meeting will be on December 1st. ■

Getting to Know...Our RBC Student Volunteers

Interviewed by Annika Miller



Tra Abshire

Tra is a second-year student at Rosedale and hails from Richmond, KY. He will be serving during this school year by helping out with C4 as well as teaching Sunday School. He enjoys writing, woodworking, and pranks. After RBC, Tra plans to volunteer at Bethel Camp and eventually continue his education at Asbury University to become a pastor and a teacher. An interesting fact about Tra is that he has fallen off a 32-foot cliff in the Canadian wilderness.

"In this season of life, God has been teaching me patience and to rest in Him more. You can pray for guidance and patience as I decide what to do in the future and that the Lord will provide the funds and means to continue my education and see what the Lord is calling me to do as I wait and trust in Him."



Keisha Miller

Keisha is a second-year student from Arthur, IL. She will be helping out by teaching Sunday School here at LCF. During her free time, Keisha enjoys music, singing, and most active sports. She plans to pursue more schooling after RBC, but is not yet sure what she wants to pursue in terms of a career. A fun fact about Keisha is that she bit through her whole tongue when she was 3.

"God has been teaching me that He is closer than I think, and trusting Him is better than trying to lead myself through life. LCF can pray for me to walk away from my own independence and step into full surrender to the Lord."



Emily Hile

Emily is a second-year student at RBC and comes to us from Apple Creek, OH. Emily will be helping with providing childcare during Joel and Lara's small group meetings. She enjoys writing, acting, reading, swimming, crocheting, singing, and playing instruments in her free time. After her time at RBC, Emily will be working and might be helping to open a new business in London. She eventually hopes to open her own cafe and theater. Something fun about Emily is that she has flown in many airplanes and would love to get her pilot's license, but is slightly afraid of heights.

"God has been teaching me that He knows where I am supposed to go, I just need to trust him. You can pray for me that I will have patience as I wait for my options in the future to work out and that my stress can become under control again."



Melissa Delagrangre

Melissa is a second-year student at RBC from Hicksville, OH, and will be serving here at LCF by teaching Sunday School. She enjoys baking, hiking, gardening, playing spikeball, and hanging out with friends and family (speaking of family... she is the second oldest of nine kids). After Rosedale, Melissa is not sure what she will end up doing. For now the plan is to return home and serve in her community there.

"Something God has been teaching me lately is the importance of trusting Him and his ability to provide. Pray that I would stay focused on God's will for my life and be open to the new opportunities that He places in front of me."



Phoebe Ziegler

Phoebe, a second-year RBC student from Paynesville, MN, will also be helping out with teaching Sunday School. She enjoys reading, embroidery, and playing board games in her free time and is a certified archery instructor. She spends most of her summers teaching 8-17 year olds archery. After RBC, Phoebe plans to work at a summer camp for the summer then attend a local university for a currently undecided degree.

"Right now, God has been teaching me to bring my burdens to Him and trust that He will provide. You can pray that God will show me what He wants me to do, as I look towards an uncertain future."



Brooke Oxley

Brooke comes to us from Phoenix, AZ, and will be serving LCF by helping out with childcare for Joel and Lara's small group. She is a first-year RBC student, but not a first-year college student. Before attending RBC, Brooke graduated with honors with her Bachelors Degree in Biology with an emphasis in pre-physical therapy. She loves reading and playing any kind of game with good friends during her free time. After Rosedale, Brooke plans to continue her educational journey and get her Doctorate Degree in Occupational Therapy.

"In this season, God has been teaching me to more fully trust and depend on Him. I would love prayer for life over the next year as I continue to figure out what all God has in store for me."

We are so thankful to each of these students for the ways they are serving at LCF during this school year! We hope you will get to know them and express your appreciation to them. ■

The Challenge and Blessings of Reading God’s Word

by Becky Hosetetler

Last year about this time, Doris told me about a year-long Bible reading plan called “The Bible Recap” and invited me to join her in reading it in 2023. I was finishing up “Read through in ‘22” with our LCF family and, while I found that rewarding, it had been a challenge for me, and so I was not sure I was ready to commit to reading through the entire Bible in a year again. But when 2023 began, I found myself in the habit of daily Bible reading and needed some sort of direction, so I cautiously began The Bible Recap reading plan. Here it is, almost the end of 2023, and I am getting ready to complete my 2nd time reading through God’s Word. It takes a lot of time but has been so rewarding.



The Bible Recap plan is set up chronologically. After reading the portion of scripture there is a 7-10 minute follow-up video that I watch on YouTube (or you can listen to a podcast of it if you prefer). Tara-Leigh Cobble gives a “recap” of what we just read and adds some commentary. After her recap, she shares a daily “God Shot” about something we can learn about God from that day’s passage. She always closes by reminding us that “He’s where the joy is.”

I love to study the Bible. I highlight, underline, circle, make notes, etc., all over the pages of my Bible. There is always something to learn, and often the more I study, the more I realize how much I don’t know or understand. I am very thankful that I live on this side of the cross, in a time in history where the Bible is so easily accessible. The Bible is God’s Word to us. How amazing is that! The story of Jesus runs through it—the whole way from Genesis to Revelation. It teaches us how to live and how to love. It shows us the path to salvation. Let’s not take it for granted.

Whether you are trying to decide on a reading plan for next year or if you have never read the Bible before—I encourage you to make time to read and study God’s Word every day. Before you read it, ask God to speak to you through it. The Bible tells us: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). I like to begin by praying the words of Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.” I hope that all of us will learn to know and love God better as we spend time in His Word! ■



LCF 101

On Saturday morning, November 18th, there was much laughter and discussion as a diverse group of 6 individuals—a young adult who grew up at LCF, a Spanish-speaking grandmother, and two young couples who discovered

they were from the same general area in Indiana—enjoyed getting acquainted with one another and learning about LCF at the home of Rob and Doris. We thank God for the new people God brings to our church family and look forward to learning to know them better! ■

Child Protection Update

by Jodi Traverse

Thank you to everyone who attended our Child Protection Trainings! Ensuring that our children get to learn more about Jesus in a safe environment is extremely important to us. We had a lot of good discussion on our current policies and heard some pretty good ideas for things to consider adding in the future.

If you missed attending one the training meetings which were held on October 29th and November 5th, please contact either Rosy Sherk or myself to discuss keeping your approval to work with children and youth current.

Thanks so much to each one of you who help out with our ministry to children and/or youth in so many different ways. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me. ■



Upcoming Events

- December 8 - Arts & Crafts Night, 7-10 p.m.
- December 11 - MCBDD’s Christmas Cabaret, 7 p.m.
- December 24 - LCF Family Christmas, 10:30 a.m.
- January 21 - Celebrate the Church Sunday and Potluck
- February 16 - A Valentine’s “Date Night”

The Cross...continued

One day, as I visited shops along Main Street in London, I noticed two beautifully-designed wooden crosses in a resale shop. I asked the owner about them. She said that her son created the crosses and was known for his unique craft. I could not resist asking if he would design one for London Christian Fellowship and gave a brief idea of the size and design. When I returned to pick it up a few weeks later, I was tearful as I reviewed his work, recognizing the God-given gift he had to create such a piece. The mixture of various woods and the unique offset way the pieces perfectly fit together remind me of our church body. We, too, come from various backgrounds, have different personalities, viewpoints, etc., yet in Christ, we uniquely fit together, to create something beautiful that brings honor and glory to God.

A big “Thank You” to Kelvin Snider for installing the cross where it can be seen easily and often, and is securely attached. You’ll find it displayed on the wall near the water fountains, just outside the Fellowship Hall. My hope is as you look upon this cross, that it will bring joy to your heart and be a reminder of your salvation and the fact that Christ is risen and is coming again! ■

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, Annika Miller, and Doris Swartz

