

Reflections from Campout *by Andrew Sharp*

I had fun at the church campout a few weeks ago, even though I had to work on Saturday and so was unable to get injured playing sports in the afternoon. I've always enjoyed church campouts over the years. When I was a kid, I spent about 98% of the weekend on a bike, and the rest of the time eating. That percentage has shifted considerably since then.

As I've spent time at campouts, I've learned a few things. Here are some of them:

People stay in cabins because they look kind of like small houses, when in fact they are barely more comfortable than sleeping outside under a small wispy oak tree. There are concrete floors, no insulation and no decoration except charming phrases written by summer campers, which tell you that Brian loves Sarah and that Kelsey and Katie stayed here in 2009 ("Cabin 6 forever").

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

The Jones' Try To Keep Up With Themselves *An update on the George and Stephanie Jones family*

Stephanie: Our family is actively involved at Dayspring Mennonite Church. I am still homeschooling Bryan and Daniel although many of Bryan's classes are outside now. I spend much of my time in the car transporting them to various activities, although I think I drive less in Virginia because things are a bit closer.

I have been participating in a ladies Bible study on Tuesday mornings where we have done several of Kay Arthur's precept studies. Currently we are halfway through the book of Revelations.

If anyone wants to visit the Washington, D.C. area, our home is always open.

Daniel: I have lived in Virginia now for more than six years. I have made many friends both in church and in other activities, but still miss my friends at LCF.

I am involved in many activities. I play basketball and still take swimming lessons (I'm in level six now). I was a Cub Scout for four and a half years and this month bridged to Boy Scouts. I am involved in a music group called SCORE (Strings Choral Orff Recorder Ensemble) where I am playing the string bass. I am taking piano and string bass lessons. I also convinced my dad to continue coaching a Lego robotics team (he wanted to retire after five years of doing it with Bryan). We build a robot using legos and compete in a regional tournament sponsored by First Lego League.

I enjoy church, especially when our pastor takes us hiking in Shenandoah National Park. I am still being home-schooled and especially enjoy history and reading.

Bryan: Well, I've lived in Virginia for six and a half years now, over 40 percent of my life. I've already been through two years of high school, and I am now about four weeks into my junior year. Hard to believe how fast time flies.

This year is particularly busy for me. I am doing precalculus, advanced chemistry, Spanish III, college-level English composition, American government and American literature.

On top of all of that, I am in Boy Scouts. I am now a Life scout, working on my Eagle Scout project, which is installing a playground at our church. Last Monday, I was elected Senior Patrol Leader, the highest position in the troop. I am now in charge of running all the meetings and helping to organize all of our outdoor activities.



From left: Stephanie, Bryan, George and Daniel Jones attended London Christian Fellowship before moving to Warrenton, Virginia in 2003.

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The Life of a Pastor

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz



What exactly does a pastor do? I have to admit I didn't have much of a clue until I became one. I knew what it was like to work on a farm, as an electrician, at UPS, and in a manufacturing environment. I knew what was involved in troubleshooting electronics, filling orders, helping customers, writing software, testing software, and managing departments. Now, I'm finding out about pastoring.

While each job has had its significant challenges, I have found pastoring to be the most challenging so far. The primary objective of helping people grow in their relationship with God is quite clear, but knowing how to do it is sometimes confusing and the results are often hard to see.

At UPS I needed to sort all the boxes to their appropriate bins. It was clear what I needed to do, how I needed to do it, and when the boxes were all gone, I was done. It's harder to evaluate the job I'm doing as pastor. Much of my time is spent in study—preparing for a small group, youth study, Strive meeting, or a message for Sunday. A typical message takes me an average of 15-20 hours of study and preparation time. What did I accomplish? It can be difficult to measure. Other parts of the job are the same way. What are the results of the hours I spend in prayer, conversations, or counseling? Sometimes they are unclear.

In farming, we had planting in the spring, a lot of work in between, and then the harvest where we could see the fruit of our labor. I always enjoyed the harvest time of the year. In manufacturing we could look back and say how many widgets we cranked out last month and how many we were going to crank out next month.

That's how I would like to be able to measure my success as a pastor—by looking at tangible results like the size of our budget or the number of articles published about our church. But I would be off track to look at success that way. My job is to work with people's souls. In much of my work I must simply trust that God is using it for his purposes.

I am often asked how it's going in my new role and I think I am beginning to settle on an answer: "God has been faithful." The truth is that, for this job, I won't know the results of my labor until I am called to my final home. All I really know for now is that God's expectation of me is to be faithful with the time and talents he has given me. After all, he is the only one who can really work in the souls of people. I'm simply his assistant and I am very grateful for the opportunity he has given me to be involved in His work.

Unlike my eight-to-five job at Command Alkon, pastoring consumes my life. There are no real boundaries. I talk to people, study, sit in meetings, and think and pray at all hours of the day or night. It's never done, and having a job that's a lifestyle can be challenging. But with God's help I hope to be successful as He defines it, taking my goal from Paul's words in Colossians 2:2-3:

"My purpose is that you may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that you may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that you may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Elders' Notes

Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings

To increase the number of small groups at LCF, Rob and Doris are considering opening up their neighborhood small group to the church. The group has been meeting for the last several years and has the usual small-group format including Bible study, sharing and prayer, and social times. "I feel being involved in a small group can be vital to 'going deeper' with each other," Rob said. "I feel the need is significant for LCF and Doris and I would like to make another group available if possible." He said the group wouldn't make any significant changes other than inviting people from LCF to get involved.

A congregational feedback meeting is planned for Sunday, January 10 to evaluate how the church is doing and discuss where God may be leading in the coming year. The idea is to divide people into small groups and have the groups move around to different tables, discussing and brainstorming about a different topic at each table. Rob said he thinks this approach would be more fun and interactive than filling out a survey. "I would hope for some lively discussion and some good ideas that the elders team could look at." Those who have input they don't want to share with the whole group will be able to write down feedback privately, and can also meet with someone from the elders' team.

Mark your calendars for Sunday evening, January 10, 2010.

The elders are in favor of continuing to have communion four times a year on Sunday mornings. Mornings seem to work better because there is better participation and evening services conflict with youth and junior youth meetings.

Phil Hostetler's three-year term as an elder is up at the end of this year. As a congregation we will nominate and select a new elder in October.

Getting to Know... *Jesse Diller*

Where did you grow up? I grew up down south in central Mississippi. I lived in a little town called Macon, county seat of Noxubee County, where I was in the racial minority. I lived there until I was about 17. It would have been 1998 when my family moved to Belleville, Pennsylvania.

So you spent most of your life in the South. Yes. Once I left Mississippi, then I started moving around. I spent one year in Pennsylvania, where I was homeschooled for my senior year of high school. Then I went to Rosedale for a year. I moved to State College, Pennsylvania, and went to Penn State for four years. Then I moved to Virginia, near Washington, D.C., where I lived for about five years. Now I'm back in Ohio.

And in the meantime you lost a little bit of your southern accent. Yes actually, between moving from various places to places like Rosedale and Penn State where you have people from all over the place, you kind of stick out if you start talking with a southern accent. The accent doesn't come out now as much as the language. I'll say "fixin' to" or "ya'll."

What's something people may not know about you? I have, in my day, crocheted some scarves and quilted my own quilt, things like that. That was many years ago.

What are your hobbies? My hobbies have recently included various Frisbee games like ultimate Frisbee and Frisbee golf, volleyball, or reading a good book—I enjoy good science fiction. Movies are always fun, and hanging out with people.

What's your favorite dessert? That's a really tough question because there are levels of favorite, and I think there are half a dozen things in the top level of favorite. I would have to say homemade ice cream, or homemade chocolate chip cookies. It's hard to beat apple pie and ice cream.

Favorite color? I would have to go with probably a navy. Dark blue.

What's a household chore you hate to do? Washing dishes.

What degree did you get from Penn State? I have a bachelor's in computer engineering.

Where did you go after college? I worked at the patent office in D.C., in their computer memory circuitry division. Basically I was a patent examiner who would look at the new memory inventions that people would send in and research them to determine whether they were new or new enough to get a patent.

What do you do now? I'm working at Rosedale Bible College developing an online course system for them. Officially. Unofficially, that has expanded to everything related to computers, from "Why can't I connect to the internet?" to "What happened to the printer?"



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I am still very interested in music. I recently made first violin in an orchestra comprising students from all over northern Virginia. I am also preparing a piano concerto to play with a local orchestra, and I play piano with the worship team at our church.

George: Greetings from the Jones family in Virginia. We think of you all often and are happy to see you at Choral Camp, Conference and elsewhere. Time does indeed fly. Bryan will be driving soon (late) and may be at Rosedale next year (early)...he may need rides to church. Daniel is now older than Bryan was when we moved. And Steph and I are just older. We're pretty well settled into the community.

I just finished six years as a Cub Scout leader. We really appreciate Dayspring. The men's class is in Genesis 15 after about 2 years. Read it. Slowly. Read it again. I just spent two Sunday evenings teaching "Two Kingdom Theology" with help from Jon Showalter (notes). Get the book "Why I Am a Conscientious Objector" by John Drescher. Read it. It's not an academic issue.

Bryan and I go over to the Shenandoah Valley two or three times a year for "Harmonia Sacra" singing (that's where we get the hymn 606). We love hiking in Shenandoah National Park. Bryan and I have backpacked all of the more than 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail through the park. We miss you all. Pray for us. Life and related decisions never seem to stop.

In the cabins, there are two available light settings, glaring and pitch black. These are both designed to keep you from leaving. If you try to get out, say for a midnight bathroom run, you have two options: lights on and lights off. With lights off, the challenge is to get out without plant a foot in a suitcase, squishing your bottle of shampoo all over your underwear, and stubbing your toe on one of the various beds. You can also try the lights on option. The instant blazing light leaves you blinded, so you do the lights off scenario but with everyone in the cabin able to watch and laugh.



They'll probably be needing some entertainment, because they've been sleeping all night on the cabin mattresses. I don't know where they buy those mattresses—I've never seen any like them for sale in an actual mattress store. "And this here is our Lower Back Inflater 3000 model, half as thick as a standard mattress. It easily stains and is designed to collect the odors of everything in the room. It also keeps humidity down by absorbing all moisture in the air—perfect for your camp or penitentiary."

The bathhouses at campgrounds generally have cold concrete floors, spider webs, and are painted the color that nobody wanted to use on the rest of the camp. The countertops look like they're covered in germs but are generally clean enough that you can't prove anything. So you try to take out your contacts with one hand while shooing away some of the larger and more aggressive bacteria with your other. If you have to use one of the toilets, it's a good idea to try to forget where you are—perhaps by composing an epic poem or a complex piece of chamber music.

The activities at camp outs can be what is called an "adventure." Generally, they are designed to be "creative," "humorous," and "fun." These are three adjectives that are very dangerous when put together. The result often involves using food or clothing in ways not recommended by the manufacturer, with humiliating results. It's generally admitted that a church camp is the very best place to get whipped cream in your ear.



Between the sleeping arrangements and the "adventures," people can have trouble being friendly in the mornings. The universal camp remedy for this is big pots of coffee and hot chocolate. If you know a person well, you can tell a lot about their cabin's mattresses by how much coffee they consume. One cup more than usual and they probably had a decent night. If it's three cups more you may want to do something really nice for them during the day.

The best thing about campouts, though, is that the chance to just hang out together and overcome hardships helps people connect in ways they might not during the rest of the year. Stephanie and I found ourselves in groups that we would rarely be in if we were just talking to people after church, and we had a good time getting to know people better.

Makes you wonder if we could find more ways to get together and connect during the rest of the year. Maybe having campout every month would be a little much, but surely someone has an old barn or shed they could clean out for a guest cabin and put lumpy mattresses in. You could have someone over for campout-style hospitality and wouldn't even have to share your house.

Just brew an extra pot of coffee.

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If you'd like to make comments on any of the stories or "LCF Connection" in general, email us at: connection@lcfweb.org.

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