

Rivers, Reservoirs and Bogs

By Reuben Sairs

Our overseer, Roger Hazen, recently encouraged the leadership team with an illustration based on rivers and reservoirs. I've added a bog to the analogy. Roger gave us the illustration while we were discussing a subject that is hard to talk about—people leaving the church.

All churches face this. Some people leave for jobs out of town. Some leave in a positive search—seeking something beyond their current context. Some go away in good will. Some leave with criticisms. I've also found that sometimes people don't really know why they are restless, wanting to move on. They just sense that it's time.

There are stated and unstated reasons for leaving. Sometimes you suspect you don't know the "real reason." Pastors sometimes know reasons that can't be shared—confidentiality is a high priority for competent pastors.

When people leave a church, it always stings a bit. Even when there are positive motivations or circumstances clearly beyond our control we ask ourselves, "Why aren't we good enough? What did we do wrong? What could we do better?" Maybe it's time to mention rivers and reservoirs.

Roger said he had read somewhere that churches weren't meant to be reservoirs, into which water flows but

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Church Fundraising Ideas



The fundraising committee (Richard and Robin Troyer, Tyler Knief, and Audrey Maust) had a brainstorming session and came up with some ideas for raising money for the new building. "What we would like is for the congregation to let us know which ideas they like or don't like," Richard Troyer said. "There have been and are still other fundraising efforts going on and we don't want to overwhelm the congregation."

So here are some of the ideas they thought of:

Auction – This would take place sometime in 2010. Local businesses would donate items, services and food to be auctioned off. In return, the businesses could get banner advertising on the church property for the auction and their names would be announced during the event. Church members could also donate items.

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Good at Failing

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz

The bar idea seemed like a good one. I had thought about it several times. Wouldn't it be cool to go and meet people where they're at, in their environment, instead of expecting them to come into my world? How do you do that, though? I wasn't sure.



As I floated the idea with friends, I got some good feedback. Was it too contrived? Would it be perceived as reaching down to those poor damned sinners at the bar? It gave me much to think about. Were my motivations pure? Maybe it was a bad idea. I still wondered though...are there people there I can connect with? Are there people there who need someone to share the love of Jesus with them? I thought so...

So...off we went, Preston Yoder and I. While the ladies were having their Christmas tea, we wandered down the street to the local sports bar, where we went in and looked around. There didn't seem to be many people for a Friday night and those who were there didn't look very interested in talking with us.

We wandered over to the pool table and shot a poor game of pool, trying to keep our eyes and ears open for an opportunity to strike up a conversation. None seemed to be evident, at least for two introverted guys like us. So we went up to the bar, ordered a couple of soft drinks and waited. Nothing happened. No one sat beside us or even acknowledged we were there, so after awhile we headed back home.

Was it a stupid idea? I'm still not sure. In regard to what we set out to do, it was definitely a flop, a failure. I think it's safe to say that Preston and I don't have a clue how to minister in that environment. I won't rule it out completely for the future, but it's not likely that it will be an effective ministry for us.

I'm glad we did it, though. Sure, it was a failure, but it's not the end of the world. The fact is, this experience was just one of my many failed attempts to share the good news. I'm getting pretty good at failing, in fact. What I mean is that I recognize it as a normal part of our experience as we try to engage the world and it doesn't affect me as much as it used to. Some doors open while others close. We don't know until we try.

As I walked home from this particular "failure" I had a renewed passion to pursue the opportunities God has already provided for me: with my neighbors, my kids' school friends, and all the relationships our family has developed in our community. I'm also excited about what new possibilities God may have me pursue. I expect to experience some more failures, but also some great new opportunities to share the wonderful news about Jesus.

Getting to Know...

Preston Yoder

Where are you from originally?

I am from Grantsville, Maryland.

What was your family like growing up?

My family was crazy. Five brothers and two sisters, and four of us guys were born within a period of six years, so...we had a lot of fun.

So what brought you to Ohio?

Rosedale Bible College. I concentrated in pastoral studies. Then I went to Cincinnati for a few years to be an assistant pastor, and then I came up here to get married and go to Ashland Theological Seminary for a master's in divinity.

What are your hobbies?

Writing is a definite hobby. I like to journal about anything and everything. I like to write poetry. I write like I'm a philosopher even though I'm not. I write books, too, or I try. I like to write stories.



Also playing football.

And hiking with my wife. We hike at metro parks. Prairie Oaks is our newest favorite. I have a motorcycle, a Yamaha Virago 750. Mostly though I think for my hobby, and I imagine things and ideas.

My latest idea, I saw somebody drop a quarter in Wal-Mart—I saw them bend over and pick it up but I could tell they almost didn't bother. And I started thinking, what if I would just go up to every person that I met and ask them for just a quarter. And if I got 100,000 people to give me a quarter I'd have \$25,000.

If you could go back in time to anywhere, where would you go?

1789. And I would want to meet John Adams. Because I'm listening to his biography. He was a fascinating man. He'd be president or vice president at that point. I would want to tell him what the United States becomes and ask him what he thinks of the whole thing.

Have you read any good books or seen any good movies lately?

The latest movie that I saw was Batman Begins. It was just good; there was a lot of symbolism about good and evil and facing fear and getting courage. I liked it. Good action scenes.

What are your future plans?

Future plans are to finish seminary and find a church where we can serve.

Elders' Notes

Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings

At the November elders' meeting, overseer Roger Hazen led the elders' team in a time of sharing and reflection on how they would evaluate the "state of the church" at LCF. Some of the thoughts Roger shared:

- One church is not able to minister to everyone.
- The church should be thought of as a river rather than a reservoir.
- The leadership team should see God at work in every situation with a good sense of humility.

The elders agreed to move ahead with affirming Richard as a new elder. There were two strong candidates, but one of them declined consideration for the position.

Sometime in late January the elders plan to meet to process the feedback from the January 10th congregational meeting.

Kelvin Snider will be installed as the new leader of the buildings and grounds team. The team is in charge of maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and grounds, including tasks like snow removal and salting the sidewalks. Kelvin has a lot of experience with the team, having served for several years already.



The Finance Team, which puts together the church's annual budget, has a vacancy. The elders' team is considering people who might be able to fill this role. (*Editor's note: Recently, Levi Miller has consented to serve in this position.*)

The elders' team is praying specifically for the following people this month:

- Dorothy Jones (Ryan and Kris)
- Karla and Tyler Knief (Phil and Becky)
- Tom and Candice Mast (Reuben and Vicki)
- Audrey Maust (Keith and Shannon)
- John McConnell (Rob and Doris)

Rivers continued...

out of which comes very little. Churches are more like rivers—they keep flowing. They have a current. Building a dam might seem like a good idea, but it might not work very well.

That's when I began to think about bogs. Little water flows in except for rain, and little goes out other than that which evaporates. Think mosquitoes. I like the idea of flowing water. The Lord is moving us all the time. Rivers get to the sea. Reservoirs stay put. Bogs stagnate.

I have been impressed with the approach the LCF leadership takes to people leaving. I'm glad to be part of a group that tries very hard to make sure that no one leaves by just drifting away unnoticed, that no one goes away with whom we need to reconcile ourselves, and that no one goes away without having been heard.

It's unfortunate that we've had to deal with these kinds of issues in the last year or two. In each case, we do our best to reconcile, to provide, to hear, and to respond to criticism redemptively. Doing that, though, doesn't guarantee that people will stick around.

Because of confidentiality issues and sometimes uncertainty about the reasons for the decisions, we don't usually make public announcements about people leaving. If anyone wants to know details, then those on the leadership team are all willing to share what they can from their perspectives within the bounds of confidentiality and the limits of their knowledge.

The elders and pastors who I work with at LCF deal with these issues very responsibly. We discuss and reflect on the issues that are raised when someone decides to leave for any reason. Like everyone else, I don't want to see people go, and I especially don't want to see anyone leave in frustration. We make every reasonable effort to ensure that doesn't happen. But we are a river, not a reservoir or a bog.

Family Giving Can or Box – Participating families would designate a can or box to hold money saved by doing things like skipping a meal, having “missionary meals,” collecting loose change, holding a corn-hole tournament, holding garage or bake sales, selling items on Ebay, shoveling snow, etc. This kind of fundraising would allow each family to come up with their own ideas and to go ahead and carry them out. Many smaller fundraisers can be done without involving the entire church, therefore conserving energy for a few “bigger” fundraisers.

Doubling the money – Children could each be given start-up money of around \$20 to use in such a way that it would at least double. Perhaps a business would be willing to donate some starter money for each child to begin with.

Serve-a-Thon – Church members could send letters to businesses asking if they’d be willing to donate funds to help build our church if members would serve others at no cost. The form letter would indicate the services we’d offer and the number of hours we’d serve. We could put an ad in the Madison Press thanking all the businesses who donated and noting the various services that they offered.

Food booth – The church could sell some kind of food, like a breakfast sandwich, during the fair week in July, the Strawberry Festival and the Farm Science Review.

Golf Scramble – Area businesses would be asked to sponsor a hole (their name would be on a plaque near the hole). There could be prizes, raffles, a grilled meal, and possibly some balls signed by Jim Tressel. An ad for this fundraiser should run for several weeks prior to the event.

Theater Meal – In 2011, after the new church kitchen would be built, Vicki might be able to plan a play and we could serve a simple meal.

Carnival – January would be a good month to hold a carnival at Acorn Cabinet Company or another location. Maybe the youth would like to use this as a fundraiser for their trip. Some ideas: plaster the Pastor (with cream pies), duct tape the pastor, sell popcorn and balloons.

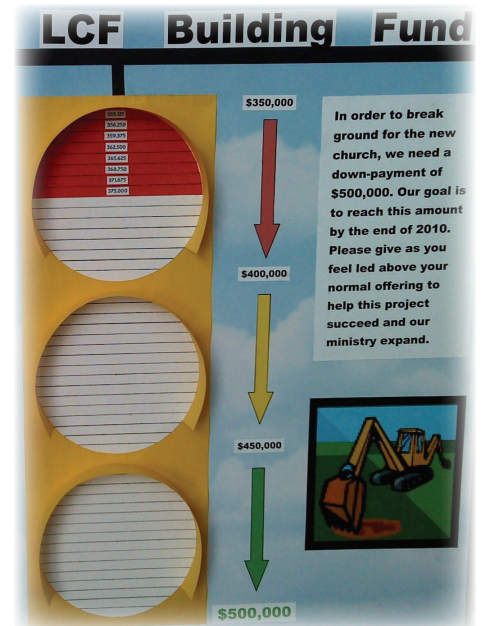
Heaven or Hell? – We could construct our own LCF version of the two for Halloween 2010 and sell tickets.

Harvest Festival – In October we could ask Tom Reninger to leave the corn up so we could chop a maze through it. We could sell tickets and have a pumpkin patch, wagon rides and more. We could sell food and drinks like hot cider, apple dumplings, caramel apples, and popcorn balls. It could be a two or three day event, and could be combined with the auction idea.

Valentine’s Day Meal – February 13 or 14. It could be catered, and have a theme like “What does love look like?” A few people could share on this topic. It would be good to sell tickets ahead of time to save waste. The youth could possibly babysit during the meal.

For some events it would be possible to ask businesses to sponsor ads to run in the Madison Press or other publications.

If you have any comments on these ideas, you can send us an email at connection@lcfweb.org, or talk to someone on the fundraising committee.



The LCF Connection

A monthly newsletter designed to enhance communication at London Christian Fellowship

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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