

Catching up with Justin and Julia Kurtz

It's hard to believe that it has been almost five years since we last attended London Christian Fellowship. We look back on our one year there with fond memories and often find ourselves telling a story that includes the phrase "...when we were at LCF..."

However, even during our time there we knew that we would not be in the area forever and so it happened that we had to move on. After graduating from Rosedale, we spent three years in Asheville, North Carolina, where Justin grew up. There Julia got her degree as a Physical Therapist Assistant and Justin worked for his father installing security systems, central vacuums, and other low voltage items in residential construction.



We also became very involved at Asheville Mennonite Church, taking roles as youth leaders and members of the worship committee and teams. Justin also served a three-year term as an elder. It was during this time at Asheville Mennonite that we felt the call to return to Bethel Camp, a place that has meant so much to us over the years and played a large role in the shaping of our lives.

As we explored the possibility of moving to eastern Kentucky to serve at Bethel Camp, God opened doors, provided funding, and solidified His calling on our hearts. On January 3, 2009, we moved into "The Cottage" at Bethel Camp and have enjoyed it as our home for the last year. Life and work at camp is a unique experience. We go from an extremely fast-paced, activity-filled life, saturated with friends, to the eerie stillness of an empty camp once an event is over. It is truly a blessing to be a part of so many people's lives especially knowing the work that God continues to do here at camp.

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Word of the Month

By Reuben Sairs

υποκριτες (hypocrites) – "hypocrite"

"Woe to you scribes, Pharisees and hypocrites!"

The first two woeful types Jesus spoke of are interesting, but let's identify the third. I don't think there are any actual scribes or Pharisees at LCF, but I suppose we've all played the part of a hypocrite at times. The English definition is simple: "a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion."

The Greek word in the original New Testament was hypocrites. This word has a dramatic history. Originally a hypocrites was an interpreter of dreams, then later the word was used for an actor. The actor wears a mask and depicts roles. At that time, Greek and Roman actors would wear large masks with mechanical devices for increasing the force of their voices.¹ About 500 years before Jesus, comedic actors "wore grotesque masks, and their costume included artificial exaggeration for comic effect."² Eventually the word took on the meaning we can assign it in

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

A Woman Who Fears the Lord Is to be Praised

A Message from the Pastor
By Rob Swartz



After Doris and I were engaged, there were several times when I got “cold feet” about getting married, even up to a couple of weeks before the wedding. I tend to be cautious when making decisions and the idea of committing myself to someone for life seemed huge. There’s no return policy. I was really nervous about it. What if we weren’t compatible? What if our marriage didn’t work? What if Doris wasn’t the “right one?”

The day of our marriage finally came and all of those fears disappeared, never to return again. I look back now and wonder, “What I was thinking?” Proverbs 31 says, “A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.” I agree. Not to discredit anyone else, but Doris is a rare gem. (Maybe all husbands think about their wives this way?) Even so, it seems that I often take her for granted. Mother’s Day may be a Hallmark holiday, but I see it as an opportunity to honor her and reflect on the gift she gave me some 22 years ago when she committed her life to me in marriage.

There is not enough space or time to say what I want to. She is adept at household management, food services, childcare, financial management, medical assistance, transportation management, administrative assistance, and counseling services, to name only a few. Some of these qualities are listed in Proverbs 31. However, I’d like to focus in on one of the last and most important qualities. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”

I find Doris to be very beautiful and attractive, but what I am most impressed by is her love for God. Her life centers around a deep relationship with Him. She spends consistent time in Bible reading and prayer. She has a heart for ministry and is a great teammate. She is supportive, encouraging, and has a very positive attitude about the work God has called us to do. She does many things behind the scenes that no one knows about and that contribute to the ministry at LCF. She and I share a passion for reaching people in the London community. I can’t imagine working without her and I know that all that I am able to do in ministry is largely because of her support and assistance.

Is she a perfect person? No. She would be the first to say it. I simply want to honor her for all that she is and all that she does. I take her for granted too often, and as her husband, I should rise up and call her “blessed” as Proverbs says. Through God’s help, I’ve been able to find a true gem, a woman of noble character. “A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised,” and so I praise her.

Elders’ Notes

Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings

Bob Zachrich, Andrew and Stephanie Sharp, and Levi Miller have agreed to serve on the Benevolence Team. This team will handle financial aid to people in need, both in the church and in the community. There are funds for this in the church budget; after those funds are used they can be replenished with offerings as needed. Ryan will be the elders’ representative and serve on the team for the first year or so to help them get started and establish policies.

The topic of healing has come up several times over the past few months. The elders discussed various viewpoints on healing and faith. They are going to take a deeper look at the topic and discuss it at the next meeting.

Rob suggested moving forward with a pastoral evaluation this year. The evaluation would be fairly brief, about three to five questions. There would be no anonymity. The pastoral team would give their input into the questions, and the lay elders and the overseer would review the results.

LCF will not have Sunday morning services on Sunday, August 1, and everyone is encouraged to attend the CMC Conference service at Cedarville.

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

Bob and Bettyjo Zachrich (Ryan and Kris)
Daniel Ziegler (Richard and Robin)
Aaron and Andrea Biscup (Reuben and Vicki)
Tonya Brenneman (Keith and Shannon)
Mike and Tamera Brookins (Rob and Doris)

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In addition to working at camp, Julia works at a nursing home in Jackson as a Physical Therapist Assistant and Justin is looking forward to starting classes in the fall at Eastern Kentucky University to pursue a degree in Recreation and Park Management. This will change our role at camp a bit, as our time commitments will be different, but we will still be heavily involved in the planning and implementing of summer camp and retreats.

We have also added to our family since being at LCF. Miles Landon Kurtz was born August 3, 2009. Parenthood has definitely changed our lives. Miles brings excitement as we anticipate what new thing he will do next. The experience of being parents has definitely changed our perspective on life. We are grateful for the time we had as a married couple, and now enjoy the time we have as a family of three.

Blessings to you and yours as you continue the work and ministry at LCF,
Justin, Julia, and Miles Kurtz

His Hands and Feet

What people in the church are doing in the community

Featured this month: Preston and Elizabeth Yoder took training this year to help out at Lifepointe Family Center; Elizabeth is volunteering there now and Preston hopes to start when he has more time.

What is the purpose of Lifepointe Family Center?

Elizabeth: It's a place to help women, particularly mothers or women who are pregnant. One of the services they offer is counseling, so if women want to come in and talk to somebody they can. The second thing would be if they need any kind of diapers, baby clothes, wipes, powder, shampoo, we offer that. And we're always in need of people to donate pampers, diapers, and wipes, that kind of thing. And we also have a mom's program where they can come and watch videos and do training on parenting, and pregnancy.

So what is it that you do?

Elizabeth: On a weekly basis, I go in and as women come in, I greet them and ask what they need. And I have done pregnancy tests for women; I give them clothes for their babies, clothes for themselves, maternity clothes, and lots and lots of emergency supplies. The main thing is just building relationships with women. Also, if somebody comes in and has been abused we can refer them to places to get help.

What kind of training did you get?

Preston: It was basically a counseling approach. If a woman comes in for a free pregnancy test, and it comes up positive, how to talk to her about keeping the child, and the value of the baby. And to listen first of all, understand the situation, and not pass judgment. Then to talk about the options that they would have of adoption or keeping the baby as opposed to abortion. If somebody wants an abortion, they make sure that they understand what an abortion is.



So when do you go in?

Elizabeth: I go in on Monday afternoons. Currently we're open Mondays and Thursdays. Last Monday, we had three people staffing the building, and within two and a half hours we had almost two dozen women come through. And if one person comes in and needs to talk for 20 minutes, that has one volunteer tied up. So they really want to open a third day and kind of spread that out, and get more volunteers.

So how did you guys get involved with this?

Elizabeth: It probably started last summer when we went to the freedom museum in Cincinnati. And we were saying "Slavery was such a horrible thing." But it was such a norm in the culture. And we said, "Well, what is a horrible thing that is happening today, that is just a norm in our culture, and we don't even think about it?" And abortion was what we came away saying "We want to do something to make a difference in this."

Preston: And we think the best way is to love people, because it's a complex problem, it's not just simply that there are people who want to kill babies. So what better way to do it than to show the value of life by saying "Hey, you had a crisis pregnancy, you have needs, we'll help you out."

Elizabeth: And seeing how that walks so closely with a peace position for Mennonites on war. Why not be pro-life for the lives of babies too? I think that's when we first started getting a vision for it and really wanting to get involved.

From the Editor

Generosity has been a strong theme at LCF lately. Ryan talked a few weeks back about generosity in giving—don't tie yourself down with a percentage, but give freely. Then Steve spoke on loving each other, which ties strongly into generosity because loving involves giving of yourself.

Generosity shows up in this issue of the Connection as well. We are starting a new feature that will highlight ways that people from the church are giving of themselves in the community. This month Preston and Elizabeth share about their work with Lifepointe Family Center. Hopefully these stories will inspire you and spark ideas for new ways to serve.

There are right and wrong ways to serve. In his recent message, Steve pointed out that the evidence that we have been touched by God's love is that we love each other. So we can't serve out of duty or guilt (see Reuben's piece on hypocrisy for more on that). Instead, when we have encountered God's love, we pass it on to others.

Another pitfall is to serve for our own benefit, so that we feel positively about ourselves or become better people. But the point of service is what it does for the people you are working for. The goal is to please God and changes the lives of others for the better, and that's how success in service should be measured.

So let's listen to the advice we've been getting lately and continue to give generously, not just money but also ourselves. And let's ask for the grace to do it all from an honest heart that has been changed by love.

Word of the month - continued from page 1

English: "A counterfeit, a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character."³ The image of wearing a mask illustrates hypocrisy pretty well.

The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology identifies several different states as hypocrisy in the scriptures. These include:

1. Performance for applause.
2. Pretense in devotion to God.
3. Pretense in personal relationships.
4. Unconscious inconsistency between belief and practice.
5. Blindness toward the truth.

I suspect if we don't think we're guilty from time to time on items 1, 2, 3, and 5, then we are certainly guilty of number 4! Here's a famous quotation from Francios de la Rouchefoucould to ponder: "Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue."

(Endnotes)

- 1 Vine's Expository Dictionary
- 2 Oxford Classical Dictionary
- 3 The Complete Word Study New Testament

Recent LCF Events & Activities

April 17-18: eight guys from LCF had a great time white water rafting in WV (in spite of the cool temperatures).



April 25: the youth and their parents enjoyed a delicious Costa Rican meal as they discussed details of the upcoming youth mission trip to Costa Rica (July 7-16).

Looking Ahead...

May 16: Open forum after church to discuss compensation for Associate Pastors; followed by a Worship Team meeting

May 23: Church social and potluck at Lake Choctaw beginning at 2:00 p.m.

The LCF softball team has games every Friday evening. For details, see the online calendar at www.leaguelineup.com/londonbaptistsoftball.

The LCF Connection

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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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