

# The LCF Connection

December 2010

## Why the Incarnation is Cool

by Andrew Sharp

Sometimes people try to tone down everybody's fun at Christmas by pointing out that the baby we are celebrating came so he could grow up, be tortured, and die, so shouldn't we all think about that and be sort of gloomy? It is true that we can ignore the hard parts of the story. But did Jesus come just to die, or was there more to it? I think there was, that the incarnation was an amazing gift to us that we can celebrate cheerfully.

One reason is that God had always been hard to relate to. An eternal, everywhere-present, all-knowing, perfect being is so outside what we know that it's extremely hard to imagine talking to or being friends with such a being. And in the past, meeting him didn't necessarily solve the problem. "Everybody who met God in the Bible was afraid of Him," Donald Miller points out. "People were afraid of even the angels, so the angels always had to calm people down just to have a conversation. I would think that would be very annoying if you were an angel, always having to settle people down just to talk. It makes you wonder if the first five thousand years in heaven will have us running around screaming like we would during an earthquake, the whole time God saying to us in an enormous, booming voice, *Calm down, calm down will you, it's just Me.*"<sup>1</sup>

The incarnation bridged this gap. "The Word was God," John says. "He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." A few sentences later, he marvels, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory." We could talk to God, ask him questions, and watch the way he acted. He shattered our preconceptions, and the shockwaves are still shaking our lives.

Not only could we get to know him, we could be sure he knew us. Of course, intellectually, we would have known that God knew what it was like to be a human. Since he knows everything, and all. But it wouldn't feel like that. We would want to say, "Why don't you come down here and try it before you judge us. You'd find out it isn't so easy being human."

Well, now he has. We question why he allows evil and suffering, why he allows our hearts to break and our lives to fall apart. I work with a woman at UPS who was despairing the other day over why God would let her life be so terrible and unhappy. I

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

### Word of the Month

By Reuben Sairs



#### "Prophet," Part II

Last month we found that the words related to prophecy aren't really clarified by studying Greek and Hebrew.\* Exactly what is a prophet in the New Testament? Certainly they exist. Joel's prophecy is fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes to the church. "Your sons and daughters shall prophesy." Corinthians tells us to strive for this gift and to be eager for it (chapter 14).

Just like in the rest of the Bible, New Testament prophets come in many shapes and sizes—male and female, quiet and flamboyant (check out Agabus in Acts 21:10-11). Some prophecy is about prediction, but there is much more to it. What should we expect from a prophet? There are only little glimpses in the New Testament, but I think they show us the limits of what to accept. There is some prediction. 1 Corinthians 14 uses different terms though—prophets speak "for upbuilding, encouragement and consolation...to build up the church." Also prophecy might "reprove an unbeliever, and disclose the secrets of the heart."

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## Space: The Next Frontier

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz



As we crammed 150 people into London Christian Fellowship this past Sunday, I got excited.

While we squeezed through the tiny foyer and struggled to find seats for everyone in the auditorium, I wondered where we would be next year. As we waited for the children to dismiss so the RBC chorus could find seats, I dreamed of the very real possibility that next year we would have plenty of room for them. As the kids put their coats on to brave the cold on the way to their modular classrooms, I envisioned that maybe next winter they would be able to stay inside.

We have raised \$453,974 toward building a new facility! Many of you have given sacrificially towards the new building and we are all grateful for God's provision through your generosity. Even in these unsettled economic times, God is providing. We have sold subs and filled giving cans, made pledges and performed dramas, and the fundraising is continuing. After church I sat in on the fundraising team's meeting and was excited again to hear the energy, ideas, and enthusiasm for a benefit dinner auction in the spring. Soon you will be hearing details about how you can help with this event. I think it will be a great fundraiser and we will have a fun time doing it.

I'm excited to hear from the expansion team as they finalize plans and collect bids from contractors. It's good to hear that banks appear ready and willing to lend to us. We are gaining momentum and groundbreaking finally seems possible.

Are you ready for this next step? I hope so. Within the next couple months we will be asking you to vote on launching this project. This new building is *not* what we are about, but I do believe it will be a great tool to enable us to expand the reach of the ministry God has entrusted to us. I'm excited about it, but I'm much more excited about the great potential our church has to reach even more people with message of hope through our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Looking Ahead...

December 12 - LCF Christmas program and "Follow the Star" musical, 7:00 p.m.

December 19 - LCF Family Christmas and brunch, 10:00 a.m.

## Elders' Notes

*Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings*

The leadership team approved a proposed budget of \$139,000 from the finance team. It appears there will be a sizeable surplus at the end of 2010. The team approved using \$1,100 of the surplus to purchase a new computer and software for projection needs. They will also recommend to the finance team that part of the money be used to pay the building architect's bill (estimated around \$10,000) rather than taking money from the building fund. They also will recommend making a donation to Rosedale Mennonite Missions' Rosedale International Center in Columbus.

Rob mentioned that several people at LCF have expressed interest in taking a mission trip, possibly to Haiti. The team will think and pray about this possibility.

A sizeable portion of the church's budget goes to Rosedale Mennonite Missions. The team wants to make sure people in the congregation are aware of who RMM is and how the church is connected with them (RMM is the missions agency for the conference of churches of which LCF is a part, helped financially in starting LCF, and a number of people from the congregation work there).

Considering circumstances like the economy and job loss, Rob wondered if the amount slated for his salary is in line with the incomes of the people in the congregation. The elders felt that the guidelines used to set the salary amount were objective and that God has been faithful to provide the money the church needs every year. They feel his salary is at an appropriate level at this point. Rob expressed his desire to be flexible with his pay anytime the need arises.

It was suggested that LCF consider starting a scholarship fund to help church youth attend Rosedale Bible College. This will be passed on to the finance team for consideration.

The team discussed a list of questions for pastoral reviews. Names will be required on the surveys but will not be seen by the pastors. The elders and overseers will compile the results, then go over them with the pastors. The plan is for the congregation to take the survey sometime in January or February.

It looks like the church should be able to get a loan for the building project without any problem. Possibilities include Merchants National Bank, FirstMerit Bank, and Everence (formerly MMA). The Expansion Team has a meeting scheduled with Weaver Construction on December 15. They are still waiting to hear back from other contractors. It may be the end of January before they can present several proposals to the congregation.

Roger Hazen's term as overseer is coming to an end in April. The leadership team unanimously wants to see Roger continue to serve as overseer. Roger has said he would be open to a 2-3 year term. The next step is to seek approval from the congregation and Conservative Mennonite Conference.

Marcus Freed and Todd Miller have agreed to teach an adult Sunday school class. Abraham Ndungu has also agreed but will be in Kenya during the next quarter. Others may teach as well. Before Reuben leaves for Bolivia he will confirm which teachers and classes will begin Jan. 2.

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# Getting to Know...*Lisa Miller*

## Where did you grow up?

In Eastern Kentucky, and I still miss it. The closest town was Jackson, about a 15-minute drive. My Dad was the pastor at the Bowlings Creek Mennonite Church so I grew up in the parsonage. Besides the people, I miss the hills. My mom is still there. We get down there at least once a year; it's not very much. My dad is buried there and I rarely get to visit the cemetery, so I miss that. And just the hills themselves, it's almost as if they have a personality, the culture is all wrapped up in it too.

## What brought you up here?

Work. I went to Rosedale for a year, and after that I transferred to Cedarville. At that time there were only two universities or colleges that would accept credits from Rosedale. I interviewed for jobs in the area; I didn't think there would be work at home. Jobs are pretty scarce.

## Do you like the winters here?

I don't mind the winters, I don't mind the cold, but the wind? It's just so hard to get used to up here, we never had wind at home. And when the snow fell, you could know if it was snowing or raining just by glancing out the window. Here, you have to look to see if people have their umbrellas up. It's just the same if it's raining. The gray sky comes all the way down to the horizon, and the rain falling against the gray sky—you just can't see it.

## What was your degree in?

Management Information Systems, so computer programming.

## What do you do now?

I work for Nationwide. I work in the pensions department—small to medium-sized 401(k) plans, and the software that we develop and maintain is used by the customer service center. Right now we mostly take care of bugs and enhancement-type requests, no real big projects.



## What do you like to do when you have spare time?

I don't have a whole lot, but I enjoy gardening, vegetables and flowers. I enjoy scrapbooking some, artsy-craftsy kinds of things. I'm not the kind of person who can just envision something and make it, but I can if I have a pattern to follow.

## Any long-term goals or plans?

Keith and I have now seen all 48 of the lower states, so I guess a goal would be Alaska and Hawaii yet. I'd like to see the kids hit a few more too. They've already got a good start, we've been doing some trips out west. Two years ago we took a trip out west on Route 66, we saw a lot of things along the way and had a great time. We ended up at the Grand Canyon.

## What's something people might not know about you?

I'm the youngest of nine kids, so that was interesting. I ended up playing by myself a lot when I was a kid. My next oldest sister was five years older than me, and from there on up, by that time they don't want to be playing with the babies.

### *Elders' Notes continued...*

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

- Kelli Reed (Ryan and Kris)
- Tom and Lois Reninger (Richard and Robin)
- Goldie Rosati (Reuben and Vicki)
- Jack, Molly, Anna, and Amy Rosati (Keith and Shannon)
- Sean and Barb Sabulsky (Rob and Doris)

### *Incarnation continued...*

didn't know the answer, but I could tell her that God had a rough time of it too. He was tempted to sin, misunderstood, hated, treated unfairly, abused, and murdered. We can't accuse God of not understanding our pain.

In fact, it's a great relief. He understands! "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin," the writer of Hebrews says. "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

That's why the incarnation is more than just an introduction to the brutal story of the crucifixion. It's a twist in a much longer story that makes our mouths drop open. It's a reason to celebrate!

(Endnotes)

- 1 From "Searching for God Knows What"

# My Take Favorite Christmas Traditions

*Word of the Month continued...*

I said last time that a New Testament prophet can't say, "thus says the Lord" the same way the old prophets did. The New Testament invites us to "weigh what is said." I take this to mean that we "know in part, and we prophesy in part." Thessalonians says "Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything, hold fast to what is good..."(5:20-21).

Remember you are responsible for what you accept as prophecy. There will be many false prophets even in our time—the unstable, the deluded, the "carried away," the deceivers, the charlatans. God has never once told us to shut off our minds, our reasoning, our logical tests, our careful examination, our caution. Beware of prophets who demand that you hurry up and accept their ideas.

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\*Sometimes a little knowledge of the biblical languages can really help us understand a passage. Serious Bible readers might want to invest in a good dictionary of biblical words that can explain Greek and Hebrew meanings. One of the easiest to find and cheapest to buy is "Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words" (about \$20 at Amazon). It is dated and limited, but the price is right. More dedicated Bible students might consider buying the one volume edition of "The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament" edited by Bromily (\$62 at [christianbook.com](http://christianbook.com)). It will tell many readers more than they want to know!



## Brittany Parsons

Picking out a tree and decorating it, baking a bazillion batches of cookies with Mom, and watching classic Christmas cartoons on Christmas Eve while drinking hot cocoa!



## Steve and Phyllis Swartz

We like having people from church at our home for London's Old Fashioned Christmas, and roasting hot dogs and marshmallows in our fireplace with our grandchildren. And we like to worship with Handel's "Messiah."



## Todd Miller

We had many traditions. Here are a few blended from both DeAnn's family and mine: start reading a Christmas story during family devotions beginning at Advent, open one gift on Christmas Eve, sleep in front of the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, make Christmas cookies with a set of friends, and take a picture of the kids covered in wrapping paper.



## Doris Swartz

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is an annual Christmas letter. I enjoy taking the time to get out my photo album and reflect back over our past year as I write it. It's a tradition that my mother started many years ago. Often I will read the Christmas letter that she wrote when my siblings and I were the same ages as our children are currently. Of course I love getting the mail during the month of December, and receiving letters, cards and pictures from family and friends both near and far!



# The LCF Connection

*A monthly newsletter designed to enhance communication at London Christian Fellowship*

If you'd like to comment on any of the stories or "LCF Connection" in general, email us at: [connection@lcfweb.org](mailto:connection@lcfweb.org).

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