

The LCF Connection

October 2011

Ghosts, Chocolate, and Jesus

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz



What to do with Halloween? It is with some amusement that I look back over the past 20 years and remember how my wife and I have answered that question. When our kids were young, Halloween was definitely out. We were young, cautious parents and neither of our families had celebrated Halloween. We also had a person in our small group at the time who had been heavily involved in the occult and Satanism. For them, Halloween was a deep, dark celebration of all that is evil. Did

we want our family to participate in that? Not really. So we hid out in our basement while the trick-or-treaters made their rounds.

Soon after that, however, I heard some negative stories from some of my friends at work about one household in their neighborhood that was vehemently opposed to Halloween. To my friends, they appeared stuck up and anti-social. That didn't seem to be the kind of witness I wanted to portray.

A couple of years later, with a different small group, we got a hay wagon together, painted a "Treat yourself to Jesus" sign on the side of it and drove through town handing out candy and Halloween tracts. I look back on that and have to wonder who came up with that crazy idea. Doris is sure it was one of mine! It seemed like a good idea at the time.

When we moved to the Amhearst Meadows neighborhood in 2003, we began to take a different view on Halloween. We saw that it was a huge social event. Everyone in the neighborhood came out on that night and it was a great opportunity to connect with our neighbors and people from around town. So we let our kids go trick-or-treating for the first time. We sat out on our front steps and handed out candy, and more candy, and more candy...and still the people kept coming until we ran out. The next year we bought even more candy and we still ran out. Over 500 people swarmed in on our neighborhood from all over Madison County. By the third year, the crush of strangers invading our neighborhood was beginning to wear on me so we escaped for the evening and had a family night out.


What are we going to do this year? I'm not exactly sure. I think we will get a modest amount of candy, hand it out until it's gone, and then spend the rest of the time wandering around the neighborhood visiting with our friends and neighbors.



How we respond to Halloween is a great example of learning how to live in the world, but not *of* it. How do we show the love of Christ to the world, but not buy into worldly values or promote things that are dishonoring to the Lord? It's not an exact science and requires some thought and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. We have to constantly re-evaluate situations like these. I'm not going to tell you exactly how I think you should do it. I trust God will direct you in what it looks like to love him and love your neighbor.



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

Getting to Know *Lucy Elfrink*

Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Kenya. I was born in Central Province, which would be like a state here. I was raised in the country, but then when I went to high school I went to town. After high school I went to the city, where I was working before I came here.

How did you end up in the States?

My sister had come previously with her family, and she invited me several times just to come see them, and I was like "I think that's too far." With America you're talking about many miles and I was scared. Having to leave my folks back there, and because I was single, I thought "If I go to America then I might miss Mr. Right." I was praying about it, and God gave me some faith and opened an opportunity where I was able to come and visit with my sister.



So how did you end up in London?

I was in Indiana. I was thinking if I came to America, that was it. Suddenly I met Mr. Philip Elfrink, and you know what the Bible says, "Where you go I go, your people will be my people." I know the next question is going to be, "How did you meet him?" Everybody has to ask me, "You being in Indiana, and he in Ohio, how did you meet?" We did not meet on the internet. A friend of mine knew a friend that knew him, and through friends we got connected and we started talking and talking. You know, a five minute talk, then a ten minute talk, fifteen, half an hour, one hour, and finally, somebody had to come up with the big question. And I said "Yes I do." I guess I was praying and he was praying and through a friend it worked out. And here we are.

Where do you work?

I work at the Staples fulfillment center here in London, in the warehouse. We have people ordering stuff online and probably some by phone, and once their order comes in we prepare their orders for shipment and then ship them out.

What is your favorite thing about London?

It's that I have my family here with me. I remember when Phil and I were courting, he asked me how I would feel coming to a church and being the only colored woman. That was a good concern because actually I was the first black person in the church. And I said "You know what if, if the God they are worshiping is the same God that I do, I have no problem with that." And they really made me feel so comfortable when I moved in here, and I have never felt at home the way I felt when I came and joined LCF. I love it, it's my family. My family back home, I know they are there, but now the people that take care of me are my family that I have in the church.

What do you like to do for fun?

I like traveling if I can. Sometimes even watching a movie is quite refreshing. But now I normally find myself watching what Derek wants to watch; it's not much like what we used to watch. But I realized sometimes even those kids' movies are good. Sometimes I like having African friends come, and that way I can exercise my African cooking.

What is your favorite vegetable?

I like what Phil doesn't like. I like cabbage but he doesn't like it; I like spinach and he doesn't like it. Sometimes we have to meet in the middle.

Are you a fast driver or a slow driver?

I think I'm slow, depending on where I am going and when I leave the house. If I only have 5 minutes until work sometimes I'll speed up although normally I'm a slow driver. I don't like speeding. When my sister was in Indiana I used to tell Phil "If you want to get there tomorrow I will drive, if you want to get there today you drive."

What's something you would like to do someday?

Someday very soon I would love to get into an airplane with my family and say "Kenya here we come!" That is one big vision and dream that we have. As much as we would like to make plans to go somewhere here, we have given that the first priority. I have a brother and sister back home, I have my nephews and my nieces, and of course my mom. It has been a long time desire to be able to go home. Phil hasn't been there, Derek hasn't been there, and they are dying to go. We would give ourselves two or three weeks, if we can get that time off.





Mennonite Disaster Service: Responding, Rebuilding, Restoring

When tornadoes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters strike in North America, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is there to help. People from a wide variety of Brethren in Christ, Amish, and Mennonite churches show up and begin the rebuilding process, which often goes on long after the news media has forgotten about the events. (There are still MDS workers in Joplin, Missouri, and even in New Orleans cleaning up from Hurricane Katrina). A number of people from LCF have served with MDS in some capacity, some as volunteers for a week, and some longer term. In this Connection, we'll look at several recent trips these volunteers took.

A Week in Birmingham, Alabama

In April, more than 60 tornadoes hammered Alabama, taking 243 lives and damaging 13,000 homes. Kelvin Snider and Kevin Duncan, who have both worked with MDS in the past, traveled to Birmingham October 9-15 along with a couple of people from Shiloh Mennonite Church. They joined a number of long-term MDS staffers in some construction

work on storm-damaged houses. "It was just amazing the devastation the tornadoes did," Kevin said. He described one place where the tornado's path could be clearly seen where it had sliced through a woods and some apartments. At the center of the path, buildings were leveled right down to the foundations. A little further to the side, the buildings had one story standing, and on the edge only the roofs had been ripped off.



He said the work in Alabama will continue for some time. Kelvin agreed. "A lot of the initial cleanup is done," he said, "but there are just a lot of houses that are damaged; there are houses sitting there with furniture in them...looks like people just left."

The crew worked hard, getting out to the job sites by 8 a.m., where they installed shingles and did some framing and gutter work on different sites throughout the week. After work, they had showers, supper, and then according to Kevin, "We would play [card] games all night then go to bed." When pressed for more details about these late night parties, he admitted that by "all night," he meant 10 p.m.

Volunteering didn't mean there were no rewards. They fared well with rations, Kevin said. "All home cooking from elderly Mennonite ladies who had a little experience in the kitchen."

Aside from the meals, why spend a week away from home and work on this and past trips? "Just being able to help others and show Christ's love through our work for them," Kevin said. "And meeting with people and talking to them about their experience was interesting...[I] learned a lot."

Kelvin echoed that sentiment. "One of the mottoes of MDS is being the hands and feet of Christ, so it's one way I can help make a difference in somebody's life...hopefully people understand why we're there and it will point them toward Christ."



Three Weeks in Minot, North Dakota



Clete Yoder is chair of the East Ohio MDS unit, and volunteers as a project director and foreman when needed. That's why he recently spent three weeks in Minot, North Dakota, where the winding Souris river had spent some time exploring the town and countryside at the end of June. The basement of a Mennonite church in the area had been flooded out and the water reached four feet deep in the sanctuary.

Much of the work in Minot at this point involves "mucking out," or cleaning waterlogged and moldy possessions out of the houses, as well as weatherproofing basements to keep them from being further damaged by frost. Clete's job was to work out the details with the homeowners and coordinate the volunteers and necessary supplies.

With groups coming from around the country there is the potential for inefficiency, but Clete said many times just the right people will show up at just the right time for the work that needs to be done. "That's not coincidence," he said. "It happens too often." He told a story from his time in Minot of a volunteer who had been coordinating the work on the damaged church, and had been unable to finish before he had to leave. "He felt so bad that he didn't finish the project," Clete said. Then another volunteer showed up, an architect from Idaho who was only planning to help clean out houses. Instead, he was able to take over the



unfinished project, make needed drawings, and organize the necessary committees to get everything done. "Only God could send the right person at the right time," Clete said.

He has been watching answers to prayer like this for a number of years. He started his work with MDS after he retired from his job as a civil engineer. "I knew about [MDS], and I just didn't realize that I should be doing this while I was still working; I waited until I was retired," he said. "But I see how many people take vacation time and do it, and what a blessing that is."

One of his favorite aspects of working with MDS, he said, is watching God work in people's lives after disasters. "You see... people responding to him and wanting to talk about him." The volunteers try to be part of the healing that is taking place. "Our motto when we go out to a job site is to lay the hammer down if the homeowner comes by and wants to talk," Clete said. "It's more important...the healing of that person is what we're there for."



How to Get Involved



The MDS program can use anyone, Clete said, regardless of skill set—as a project director he's always been able to find a place for people. "I've never been stumped yet," he said.

A good place to start if you're interested in working with MDS, either short-term or long-term, is to talk to Kevin, who serves as a congregational contact for MDS. Kelvin or Clete would also be able to provide information. You can also check out the website at www.mds.mennonite.net for more information about projects and needs.

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