

The LCF Connection

September 2013



Blessed at Belleville

by Jessica Stewart

Conservative Mennonite Conference held their 2013 annual conference on August 1-4, in Belleville, Pennsylvania (about 6 hours from here). This year's conference held a great reminder for us as Christians. The theme "Behold I am coming soon" filled each person who attended with a new sense of joy as they returned home from Pennsylvania with a missional heart.

Even though the Locust Grove Mennonite Church was not the original venue planned for this year's event, the church graciously welcomed the 1,000+ brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the US and the world, with open arms. To accommodate the wide range of interests and generations, there were various sessions held at several different locations in the area (a few other Mennonite Churches and a Christian school). This allowed a more richly tailored opportunity for each group by having relatable speakers, worship, and content.

Much prayer went into the weekend, including times of prayer in the dedicated conference prayer room at Locust Grove. Along with breaking out into the diversified locations, there were also times when we would gather as an entire group to worship and hear various speakers. Due to the space constraints of the church where we met, part of the group would meet in the sanctuary and the other part of the group would meet in the large fellowship hall, where they watched the service via live stream on a large screen. Throughout the weekend a lot of connection and visiting took place over meals, as well as before and after each service or break out session. Conference is always a good time to make new friends and to reconnect with old ones.

With performances from Salt and Light, as well as the Rosedale Chorale, those attending the Conference were able to get a small glimpse of what Rosedale Bible College is doing. Attenders also heard from missionaries and learned more about Rosedale Mennonite Missions. There were various speakers throughout the conference, including a man from the Belleville area who reaches out to the local Amish community.

Continued on page 2...

Inside this Issue

Blessed at Belleville	1
Be The Church 2013	1
Prayer Requests	2
Leadership Team Notes	2
Interview with Marcus Freed	3
Reflecting on 20 Years...	3
Baptisms and the LCF Camp-Out	4

Be The Church 2013

by Kristen Duncan

This year I had the opportunity to be LCF's contact person for Be The Church (BTC). It was a lot of work, but the end results were awesome! It was exciting to see what can happen when a group of believers from many dominations come together to show God's love.

We met at the Madison County Fairgrounds on a beautiful Saturday morning (August 17). We began with a worship service at 9:00 and then went out as groups to work on various projects from 10:00 - 1:00.

This year we had 150 volunteers (30 of them were from LCF). There were many projects that were done including: yard work, painting, visiting elderly people at the nursing home, and the big rummage giveaway. I had the opportunity to

Continued on page 2...



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Prayer Requests

A Message from the Pastor

By Reuben Sairs



Prayer requests. I said it, and now I sense the resistance and fatigue. We want to pray, and to be the kind of people who pray, but I've been a pastor long enough to know that many Christians struggle with prayer. Actually the struggle is kind of wimpy. Mostly I sense helpless surrender. Many Christians don't pray very much. There are the well known supports like prayer lists, but they are like books we buy and never read. Usually at best they just remind us of our good intentions, and keep fresh in our minds a picture of the person we would like to become. Among other things, I think we are bogged down. Our imaginations aren't serving us well with our prayer time. Our prayer life is as confining as wet clothing and oddly selfish. Our prayers begin to sound like a grocery shopping list recited to heaven.

The Bible tells us to pray. It says "pray without ceasing." "Ask and it shall be given." Remember the importunate widow? The answer is clearly to beat ourselves over the head with these types of Bible verses until we see the light and start to pray. If only we felt guilty enough we would become prayer fanatics.

Let's try a different approach this week. I'd like to invite you to quit praying. Here are six suggestions. Try one a day. Just one prayer time in one day, please. In other words don't give these suggestions a piggyback ride on any other devotions you might do. Set aside a special moment for each of these. Hint: don't become an over-achiever about any of these. It will backfire. Also I'm not suggesting that these ideas become your total prayer life. There is lots of time to pray about you.

Day 1. Quit praying for yourself. Consciously screen out prayer requests that affect you in any way, pray for others. Pick a couple of people or remember some prayer requests from Sunday.

Day 2. Quit praying about, at, and against others. Consciously screen out prayers that are aimed at getting others to straighten up. Ask yourself what it means to pray FOR a person. Pray for others assuming that God knows how to reform them, and doesn't need to be reminded by you today.

Day 3. Quit praying for things you want. Consciously screen out things that involve God giving you stuff. Pray about your character issues and attitudes. Don't beat yourself up, but ask yourself these questions. What is greed? What is malice? What is pride? What is self-centeredness? Why am I angry? What are the opposites and how can I become that other person?

Day 4. Quit asking God to bless you. Consciously screen out prayers that are intended to lead you toward success, happiness, ease, comfort, solving your problem, fixing things, or even healing you. Ask God how to grow in faith in him and love for him from where you are on this day if nothing else were to change in your life.

Day 5. Quit praying for your church. Pray for someone else's church. Pray for unity of the body of Christ.

Day 6. Quit talking. Listening for God's voice is one of the most difficult approaches to prayer. Count on your mind wandering. You can call it back. Try a few moments of simply asking God to get through to you.

Day 7. Tell us in church Sunday how it went for you.

Leadership Team Notes

Ohhh, noooooo,
not the membership discussion again!

By Vicki Sairs

Yes, that's what we talked about at our Leadership Team meeting on August 21. And, unlike so many times before, we actually made progress! That was in large part thanks to Rob's hard work on a proposal about membership at LCF; this document summarized and clarified our previous discussions and gave us a framework for productive discussion.

You'll be hearing more about it in the near future, once we've tweaked it and consider it ready for prime time, so to speak. Membership is a complicated but important issue, and we spent most of the meeting discussing things like: What does it mean to be a member? How can we incorporate a yearly membership celebration into our church calendar? How can we encourage intentional and active membership in the body?

Other items of note: Bob Zachrich did a great job of leading the meeting, and Reuben will teach our next Adult Discipleship Class October 13 - December 1st. Stay tuned for the topic!

Conference continued...

My time at conference was an encouraging experience filled with challenging messages, new outlooks, and a tiny taste of what heaven may be like. The conclusion of the Saturday evening service was a highlight for many, as the church was filled with the majestic sounds of the "Hallelujah Chorus", while people danced worshipfully and others carried flags signifying all nations coming together as one, to worship our Lord. It was a beautiful sight! We left with the words of Jesus ringing in our ears: "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done...." Revelation 22:12

Be the Church continued....

help with the rummage giveaway. I was excited to see that almost everything was gone at the end of the time. I saw many families that I knew, and enjoyed helping them find the things that they needed. I was even able to share a little bit about Christ with them.

Everyone returned to the Fairgrounds at 1:00 and enjoyed a delicious potluck meal together.

Some people went to the school to serve a meal to the staff and teachers there on Monday evening.

I am thankful that I was able to participate with BTC and I look forward to helping again next year.

An interview with *Marcus Freed*

Why have you taken on this "shaggy look" recently? A few months ago, my son, Ryan Freed, knew he was going to be the youth speaker at Conservative Mennonite Conference on the theme of Christ's return. Ryan wanted to challenge the youth to do something with "the end" in mind and not just be complacent and inactive about their faith. Ryan asked me to grow a beard and let my hair grow out so that I could dress like a homeless guy and hold a sign saying "The end is near". The idea evolved a bit more to include a sign on the other side saying, "Free Prayer Here".



How long did you sit along the road with the sign?

I sat beside a road from around 8 a.m. until around 5 p.m. for three days.

How many people stopped by? The first day I sat near a stop sign and probably 15-20 stopped. The other two days I sat along a busy highway and probably 5-10 stopped by each day.

What was the most meaningful part of this experience for you? The most meaningful part was that even though I looked needy, people over-looked my appearance, and seriously took my offer for prayer.

How did people respond to you? Most were open to being prayed for. I only had one couple that said no to my offer.

What responses from people surprised you most? I was surprised by the generosity of people. All three days I was offered food, which I graciously accepted. Two days I was given money. I told those giving me money that I would give it away, and they still persisted in giving it to me. I donated all the money I received to RMM's "Ride for Missions".

How has this experience changed you personally?

I now look at the return of Jesus being more eminent. Also, I am much quicker to pray for people. For instance, if someone on Facebook requests prayer for something, I leave a comment on their post that includes my prayer for them.

What did you learn from this experience that you would like for us as a church to understand?

If the reality of Christ's return and the importance of prayer were totally comprehended by us as a church, we might act and react differently.

How long do you plan to keep this new look? :)

I am having a hard time parting with the new look. If anyone knows a great stylist for my hair, I'm open for suggestions.



Reflecting on 20 Years...and Many Changes!

by Doris Swartz

Twenty years ago, I was 4 months pregnant with our 2nd child and looking for a way to be able to stay home with our kids and earn a little money. In August of 1993, God provided me with a wonderful job - that of being a part-time secretary for Shalom Community Church.

Since then, much has changed:

- **My "office"** - what started as my office, quickly turned into a nursery; thus my office was relocated to our bedroom, until we moved to larger home. Now it is located in the main hangout room of our house (the den/kitchen area) where I can monitor the comings and goings of our busy household.
- **My boss** - I worked for Steve Swartz for 9 years. When he moved on to be the General Secretary for our church conference in 2002, our children (then, ages 4, 6, 8 & 10) prayed that God would give me a good person to be my new boss. Little did any of us know, that the answer to that prayer would be their dad, my husband Rob, whom I have worked with, and for, now for 11 years.
- **My pay** - I began as hourly and later was changed to salary. I've learned there are pros and cons to both!
- **Our church name** - In 2004 we went from being known as Shalom Community Church to London Christian Fellowship.
- **Technology and thus, my responsibilities** - It goes without saying how much technology has changed in the last 20 years! When I began my job 20 years ago, we did not have digital pictures, a website, mp3's, MediaShout or PowerPoint, Google docs or Google Voice (which allows me to answer phone calls made to the church from my own home during work hours). One of the greatest additions to my list of "helpers" over the years has been our wonderful color copier at the church!
- **Our church building** - just this past year, we built and moved into our new church building, where we now have a dedicated "administrative office".



Continued on page 4...



We rejoice in the baptisms that have taken place this past month!
"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; The old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

LCF Camp-Out August 23-25, 2013



Below: Steve & Phyllis helped us to discover some interesting things about each other.



- Highlights of the weekend:**
- Relaxed time with friends
 - Activities such as soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, and Corn Hole
 - Time in the creek - kayaking, playing, and searching for critters
 - The Sunday morning service that included a challenge for us to have "Intentional Fellowship"



Reflecting on 20 years continued...

In spite of these changes and many more, I still LOVE my job! (Just ask my family how hard it can be to get me out of my "computer bubble".) :) I thank God often for allowing me to serve Him in this way! It has been such a blessing to have a job that can flex around our constantly changing family schedule; and with Rob being pastor, it allows us to work and minister together in a unique way. I never imagined that I would be a secretary or a pastor's wife; but I thank God for the path he has led me down, and look forward to what lies ahead. *"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; Your love, O Lord endures forever - do not abandon the work of your hands."* Psalm 138:8

The LCF Connection
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What did you think? If any of the stories in this Connection sparked an idea or opinion you'd like to share, email us at connection@lcfweb.org. Editors: Doris Swartz and Trish Eaton
 If you prefer that we do not use photos of you in the Connection, you may opt out by emailing us at connection@lcfweb.org.