

NEW MEMBER CANDIDATES

**NOV
2023**



LEFC

LANCASTER EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

NEW MEMBER CANDIDATES – November 2023

Mandy and Jason Bell
Barb and Bob Buehrer
Megan and Samuel Counts
Monica and Connor Diver
Ashley and Justin Eberly
Abigail Gehman
Lynn and James Herbert

Ky-Leigh and Chris Leighty
Becky and Rob Marshall
Lucy and Steve Martin
Steven Reynolds
Linda Sams
Emma and Stephon Smith

Evelyn and Daniel Teti
Janet and William Thompson
Janet and Bob Travis
Patricia and Albert Travis
Emily and Zach Wilkerson
Carissa and Isaac Williams



MANDY BELL

I grew up in a Christian home and cannot remember a time when Jesus and church were not a part of my life. I remember sitting around a campfire at church camp at age 7 and after someone preached the salvation message, we entered a time of prayer. They asked for kids making a first-time decision for Christ to raise their hands. I cautiously leaned over to the counselor sitting beside me and said, “Jesus is my savior – I know that...but I don’t remember if I ever officially prayed about it! What do I do? Can I still raise my hand if I maybe did it before?” She sweetly put her arm around me and assured me that I could raise my hand if I wanted to, but that she’d pray along with me as I confirmed my decision to live for Jesus and to accept his gift of salvation. I will never forget praying with her that night!

As is true for many of us who met Jesus at a young age, life rolled along as I continued to go to church, Sunday school, and eventually youth group. I was growing in my knowledge of the Bible, Jesus, and God, but as my teen years progressed, I found myself wondering... why did I believe what I did? How can we KNOW the Bible is true? Am I really the “good girl” everyone thought I was? Could I choose something else? I spent much of my high school years testing boundaries, my beliefs, and expectations. The more I tested, though, the more God called me back to himself, showing me truth after truth about himself and the beauty of following the ways of Jesus. As I questioned Him and myself, he continually opened my eyes to the enormity of my sin and the great vastness of His love, mercy, and grace, and he showed me the beauty of trusting in His design for my life. He proved over and over that His ways are always better than what the world promises, and that while the world rarely delivers on its promises (and, in fact, left me high and dry), God’s promises are always sure! At the age of 16, I was baptized and joined the church.

Fast forward to September 2005: I had graduated college, moved home to save money and to attend HACC for a Paralegal Certificate, got plugged back into my family’s home church, and began dating my not-so-future husband! Our relationship progressed quickly, and in February of 2006 we were married but decided to wait a few years before growing our family. We devoted ourselves to our church body: we served as youth leaders, I led the band and played the organ, and Jason was heading up the audio/visual team. It wasn’t long until I was tapped for leadership and took on the role of Worship Commission Head, all the while working full time as a paralegal/bookkeeper/office manager. I was busy but felt fully bolstered and fulfilled by the Spirit. Everything was going smoothly until we decided to try to have a child.

Two years of trying, and nothing happened. We were weary, and I was broken. I knew God made me to be a mom, yet He was not blessing us with a child! Was the timing not right or was this just not the path God had for us? After MUCH prayer, we determined that it was time to be tested. The results were in: science told us that our chances of conceiving naturally were less than 1%. We knew

we had the almighty, miracle-working, world-creating God at our side and that He could still bless us with a baby....but would he? I was able to carry a child, and science had ways of making that happen....but should we? Very quickly God showed us that he did have plans to grow our family, but that science was not to be our path, and I learned one aspect of what Matthew 5:4 means: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." I mourned the loss of an experience I would never have, but over time God provided much comfort as a father does his child. What came next was nearly 10 years of learning that trusting God means trusting His timing as we considered and explored fostering and eventually adoption.

In January of 2015 we took a step on our journey that finally felt right from the moment it began. We connected with Bethany Christian Services and started paperwork for a domestic infant adoption. Nine months later (the significance was not lost on me), we were fully approved and excited to have our profile shown to birth moms. We had made it! The work was done, we survived the many years of waiting and hoping, and I was certain that God would match us in no time! We said yes to having our profile shown to birth mom after birth mom...and a year and a half later, we still had no match. I thought I had learned all there was to waiting on the Lord....I had waited more than 8 years, after all! During that year and a half, I spent so much time literally crying and screaming out to God. Were we still on the right path? Was it time to walk away from this dream? Did he plan to use my pain and struggle for a different purpose? Every single time I cried out to him, God was faithful to answer and confirmed that we were still on His path - that we were still following His will! Whether it was a well-timed song on the radio, a card or text from a friend, an anonymous donation to our adoption fund, or a stranger sharing their adoption story or connection...God showed up and encouraged us every step! And of course....His timing was PERFECT! In March of 2017 we were matched with a birth mom who was very early in her pregnancy, and we had the awesome privilege of walking through pregnancy with her! God blessed us with so many wonderful experiences as our son grew and developed, and with the incredible gift of time to get to know his birth mom. In August, our little miracle was born 5 weeks early and only 4lbs 8oz. We weren't done waiting, though, as he was taken directly to the NICU, but by this time we were finally ready to simply trust because we had learned that trusting in God means trusting in His timing—and Praise the Lord, after only one more week of waiting, we brought our son HOME! In no time it was clear that the waiting had been worth it. This little boy was most definitely meant to be our son. We were and are a perfect match.

Through all of that waiting and learning, our church had been changing. New pastors came and went, families were leaving at a rapid pace, and all efforts to grow the church seemed to fall flat. There seemed to be a general lack of transparency and authenticity. Jason and I were weary from attempts at finding true community in the church, were longing to be truly seen, known, and challenged in our faith, and felt alone in our adoption journey (though they supported us as best they knew how). Church felt more like a club where we patted each other on the back and put band-aids over sin instead of a place where we were challenged to name our sin, chase after Jesus, and change. We had considered finding a new church, but we were asked to consider effecting change through leadership. 6 years on the Ministry Council, and I was weary of fighting battles. Not only that, but our young son had no peers, and the church didn't seem interested in investing in young families. In fall of 2018 we finally made the decision to look for another church and spent much time in prayer. Our Sunday morning responsibilities left us with ONE free Sunday in October, and we wanted to make the most of it. We asked God to direct us to a church that wouldn't waste our time. A church where we would find true community, be challenged by Truth, and one with a thriving children's ministry. Boy, did He deliver! God used that one Sunday to bring us here to

LEFC, and that one Sunday was all it took. My term in leadership was set to end in December, so we committed to finishing out the year in service at our old church.

In January of 2019 we began attending LEFC regularly, and we are so thankful for all that God has done in building this beautiful community and for the opportunity to join in what He is doing in and through LEFC. We were hesitant to join another church too quickly, so we took our time, but the last few months we felt the Lord saying that it's time to officially join! In a world so tossed and broken, it's important to us that our son will grow knowing that his family is committed to the Lord and to a body that Loves God, Loves People, Lives Truth, and Proclaims Jesus.

JASON BELL

My journey to Christ happened much later in my life. Looking back now, I realize how God had a plan for me and was there for me every step of the way.

My father passed away when I was only two, leaving my mom to raise my brother and me alone. It was probably in elementary or early in my middle school days where I started having questions like "When will the world end?" or "What happens when you die?" These questions quickly turned into nightmares. I had always believed in God but never knew what that meant, and since no one in my family really had any biblical knowledge, I felt terribly lost. We did own a Bible, and I was told to read Revelations to maybe find some answers. I would sometimes go with my friends to youth group or to their church, but I always felt terribly out of place. I felt I didn't belong there and that I couldn't participate because I didn't know anything.

My mother did a wonderful job of raising my brother and me. We were raised to be respectful, kind, and to be good people. I thought that this alone meant I would get into Heaven.

Fast forward to when Mandy and I started dating. She had finished college and was back home in Ephrata, and I was living at home (also in Ephrata) since I stayed local for college. We started dating, and I started attending her church. At that church I was really shown God's love and what it meant to be part of a church family.

Mandy is such a blessing; she was able to help me answer many of the questions I struggled with as a child and was there every step of the way during my journey. It was one night after we had come back from dinner, sitting in her parents' driveway talking about God and what he did for us on the cross that I gave my life to Christ. At that moment, all the anxiety and worry that I had felt all those years went away. Later, as an adult, I was baptized and shared my testimony and was fortunate that my mom was in attendance.

It is amazing to look back now and see that God had a plan for me this whole time. From bringing Mandy into my life to joining the Church. I count my blessings every day and owe everything to Him!



BARB BUEHRER

I was born and raised in a Christian home by loving, caring parents in the Berkeley, California area. I have a younger sister and brother. I was raised going to church every Sunday, AM and PM, Wednesday nights and was involved in a vibrant young people's group.

After being in public high school through my sophomore year, my parents decided it was best that the three of us start attending Christian schools. I graduated high school in 1973 and attended

dental assistant school. I worked as an Orthodontic assistant until the fall of 1974 when I then attended Christian Heritage College in San Diego. That is where I met my future husband, Bob.

After we were married in 1976, we made our home in Bellevue, Washington. We bought our first home a year later and stayed in that home for 46 years. I worked in the Orthodontic field until I retired in 2020. Bob retired in 2022, and we relocated to Lititz where our son and his family were living. They were attending LEFC, and that is why we attend LEFC.

I came to know the Lord as my personal Savior when I was 7 years old realizing that I needed Jesus. My mother led me to the Lord.

Verses that have helped me on my spiritual journey are:

Hebrews 13:5 — Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee

Ephesians 4:32 — Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Proverbs 3:5 — Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:6 KJV — In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

BOB BUEHRER

I was born into a Christian family. My mother was the pianist, and my father was the song leader at First Baptist church in Tucson, AZ. I was raised in the church and attended every time the church doors were open. I was baptized in the same church when I was 10 years old.

I received Christ as my Savior at a Billy Graham crusade in Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, AZ in the early 1960's.

My family and I moved to Bellevue, WA in 1966, and I started going to Sammamish Bible Camp (Sambica) as a camper. I started working at Sambica in 1969 on the maintenance team, and in 1971 I worked as a Jr. Counselor. After Sambica, I worked 2 years at Island Lake Bible Camp as a Counselor, and in 1974 I was a Counselor at Clydehurst Christian Ranch in Montana.

In the fall of 1974, I attended Christian Heritage College in the San Diego area. That is where I met my wife. After a year at Christian Heritage College, I returned to the greater Seattle area where I owned several general contracting businesses in both residential and commercial construction.

My wife, Barb, retired from the dental field in 2020, and I retired in 2022. We then moved to Lititz to be close to our son and his family. We have three grandchildren, and all attend LEFC.

Some of my favorite verses are:

Ephesians 2:8-9 — For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Galatians 3:1, 3 — You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?



MEGAN COUNTS

James 1:2-3, “Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” I’m excited for the opportunity to write out my testimony. I grew up in the church, and once felt that because of this, my testimony was rather boring. Now at 26 years old, I clearly see how God’s hand in my faith journey carried me through each and every trial, perfectly placed along my journey.

Born into a Lutheran and Methodist background, my parents named me Megan, a hearty Irish name that perfectly matched the spunk and grit I exhibited throughout my childhood. In sixth grade I accepted Christ at a youth conference and remained committed to my youth group through high school. I enjoyed church; at the time my church nurtured my love of singing and playing the flute, and my youth group was a social hub which helped me form friendships.

I later followed my peers to Messiah University, where I met my husband Sam, and graduated in May 2018. After graduation I moved to Lancaster for my job, and that’s when I started attending LEFC. Scripture-based preaching is one of the reasons I kept coming back to LEFC, but I’ve always felt inspired by the LEFC congregation. Everyone is friendly, transparent, and challenges me in my faith. I am in awe, and it gets me fired up every Sunday! In October 2021, Pastor Randy Hunt married Sam and me in my hometown, and I changed my name to Megan Counts.

I have a blessed life, but it has not been without trials. My relationship with Christ started when I was a child, but each trial, each time I persevered, it has matured my faith, and taught me to seek comfort in Christ and His word. Similarly in times of trial, LEFC has provided me comfort, and outside of trials, I have been challenged by the thought-provoking and scripture-based preaching that matures my faith. As a Christian I am not promised a life without trials, but as a follower of Christ I am promised a Savior to walk through trials with me, and everlasting life.

James 1:12, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

SAMUEL COUNTS

My name is Sam Counts, and I have been attending LEFC full time for about 4 years. I grew up in a traditional Christian family here in Denver, PA and have one twin sister. I attended Lititz Christian school from kindergarten until I graduated and then attended Messiah College for undergraduate studies. I met my wife at Messiah our freshman year, and we started dating about a year after. We got married in October of 2021 and currently live in Manheim.

Growing up in Lancaster, I was very fortunate to have community around me that really focused on Christ, and you can clearly see that throughout this area. My parents were very diligent at taking my sister and me to church growing up and getting us involved in different activities such as Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Growing up, I thought being a Christian was just the “right” thing to do, and I expressed my desire to follow Christ around age 5 and was baptized at our church.

From elementary school to ninth grade, I don’t really recall having a deep relationship with God. I continued to go to church and spend time in prayer, but I wasn’t devoting a whole lot of time outside of Church and school. One thing that helped continue to grow my faith is that since I went to a Christian high school, we had Bible class every day. In my mind, this kind of substituted my need for doing any devotions.

In tenth grade, I started to have doubts about if I was truly saved, or if I did it correctly. I had several long talks with my parents and teachers about prayer and faith. There were definitely other distractions in my life that contributed to fueling this doubt. It was important for me to turn these over to God and know that Jesus' death and resurrection covered all of our past, present, and future sins. One of my favorite verses that I referenced during my period of doubt and other struggles is Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest". This verse is a great reminder that God is always there for me, no matter the situation.

Fast forward a few years to my college career. The first semester, I struggled if this is where I was really supposed to be. I felt alone and was not making many connections; the decision seemed like a mistake. However, with prayer and perseverance, God answered and blessed me with a great group of friends and an incredible wife. I continually thank God for the people that he placed in my life that I connected with at college. I truly believe my relationship with God would not be where it is today without them.

My wife and I began attending LEFC during some weekends and holiday breaks with my parents while we were in college. After graduation, we began attending full time. LEFC has become a place we can gain spiritual fulfillment and learn more about God on a weekly basis. We have several friends who attend as well and have met lots of new people. Our goal in the next few years is to begin growing our family, and we wanted to have a rooted connection in a church as we begin that process. We are especially grateful for the many individuals who have poured into us as we prepared for our wedding, and I hope as members we can start to give back.



MONICA DIVER

My name is Monica Diver. I have been married to Connor for just over a year, and we have a lab puppy named McKenzie. I work at Kissel Hill Elementary as a Behavior Support Assistant. I'm new to this area; I lived in Buffalo, NY until we got married. Since I was new to the area, we were looking for a new church together. A friend from Buffalo recommended LEFC to us, and we loved it. After a few months, we took the Starting Point class, where we met some people who invited us to their Life Group. We loved the Life Group, and it gave us our foundation at LEFC.

I grew up in Buffalo in a Christian family. The church we attended rented out a church on Saturday nights, so children slept in the Sunday school classrooms, and my siblings and I were "home-churched" on Sunday. My parents taught us good doctrine about the Bible, God, and Jesus, but due to being bullied when I was young, I struggled to find my identity in Christ alone. I looked to others to tell me what I should do or say to fit in. For most of high school, I also thought I could follow God and do what I wanted.

I was at a church event in high school where a pastor shared his life story, which motivated me to give my life to Christ. I was blessed to have several mentors throughout high school and college who always pointed me to Christ, but identity is something I have continued to struggle with. But I strongly believe, as Paul says in Philippians 1:6, that "He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion at the day of Jesus Christ." The Holy Spirit continues to sanctify me each day and make me more like Jesus.

I have learned the importance of meditating on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When I am struggling with sin, or finding my identity in others, I reflect on the immense gift I was given by Christ's death and Him taking on the punishment for my sins. There is nothing I could ever do to

deserve that, and no one but God could do that for me. It really puts things in perspective. That truth seems so simple but is so profound.

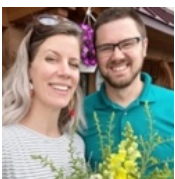
I continue to work out my salvation daily, knowing the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

CONNOR DIVER

My name is Connor Diver. I am 33 years old and married to my lovely wife Monica. I grew up on a farm in the Poconos in northeast PA. I grew up working with horses and playing sports. My mother and father took my brother and me to church but did so out of tradition as an Irish family, not to worship Jesus. As soon as I was old enough, I stopped attending.

My love of dirt bikes came with a frequent visit to the hospital and many prescriptions for pain pills. By the time I graduated high school, I was addicted to drugs and alcohol. After many years of living for just me, in and out of jail and rehab, I ended up in a faith-based program in Pittsburgh. One night at a small church, God replaced my heart of stone with a heart of flesh: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26). My normal church night consisted of drawing on the bulletin and daydreaming about motorcycles. This night was very different. I honestly thought the pastor had researched my life and put a sermon together for just me. That was when things started to change. My convictions changed along with the things I pursued. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in my life was overwhelming. Not long after that night I received a letter in the mail from my mother. She started the letter by saying that she was “grateful for my addiction”. She explained that had been struggling with where I was in life, and one Sunday she went for a drive to get out of the house. On this drive she noticed a church and felt something telling her to pull in and check it out. Someone then invited her to the next service that started in a couple of minutes. That was where her relationship with Jesus truly began. My father was a little slower to walk through the doors, but a few years later he served as an elder in the same church my mother wandered into. When she wrote in that letter, she was referencing Genesis 50:20 where Joseph is talking to his brothers saying, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20a). This is the essence of my testimony and the verse that I live by.

Time and time again, God has shown me purpose behind struggle, and this gives me a peace I never had before. My wife and I just got married a year ago and she moved from Buffalo, NY. A friend of hers suggested LEFC, so we began attending just after we got married. Our search to find the church we felt God called us to was becoming difficult. Almost immediately after beginning to attend, we felt plugged in. We started with the Starting Point class, and in the very first class we sat at a table where nearly everyone there was a part of the same Life Group. We were invited to the group and began attending immediately. Our Life Group is one of the most impactful things that has happened in my walk with Christ. My wife and I have no doubts that we are supposed to be here at LEFC.



ASHLEY EBERLY

My name is Ashley Eberly—I’m a mom of three mischievous boys, a pup, and have been married to Justin Eberly for 10 years. I’m the Digital Director at a small branding agency in Lancaster called Infantree. More simply: I make websites and, yes, life is very busy.

Three adjectives I would use to summarize my life story: dysfunctional, bruised, but guided (by God's hand). I won't go through all the broken details here, but it's very much part of how God has created me to be a disciple that can relate to others in hard situations.

I grew up in a "culturally Christian" household. I knew a thing called Christianity (and religion) existed, but I didn't really know details, nor did I care. In spite of my indifference, my mom would gift me Christian-themed items from time to time: a beautiful Bible, a journal with Bible verses, and a few kids *Left Behind* books.

It was the *Left Behind* books that eventually made me curious about who Jesus is (at 16 years old). "What is it about this Jesus that moves these characters so deeply?" I asked my mom for help in reading anything past Genesis because I had tried and gotten nowhere. She said, "Oh! You need to read the New Testament." "There's two of them?!"—suddenly thinking there were two Bibles (I still chuckle remembering this).

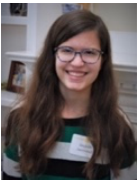
From there, it was just me with the gospel curled up on my bed. By the time I got to John 9:7 (Jesus healing the blind man), I was in tears, and that was it. I knelt on my bed and welcomed Jesus to wash over me again and again. For the first few years I rode "solo" in my spiritual journey: me, my Bible, hitching rides to church with neighbors, and getting baptized with no one I knew watching. I just kept following wherever God led me... and that's still how it is today. Learning, growing, breaking down all the noise to hear God's voice and follow Jesus amidst all the chaos of life.

JUSTIN EBERLY

My name is Justin Eberly. I grew up in Manheim and moved to Lititz soon after getting married. My wife Ashley and I have been married 10 years and have 3 energetic boys (a 6-year-old and 3-year-old twins). I am an auto mechanic for Rohrer's Service Center, a division of Rohrer's Quarry, and have been attending LEFC since March 2022.

In some ways my journey to Christ feels "boring": I grew up in a Christian home, accepted Christ around age 6 and was baptized at age 12. However, over the years, God has constantly been teaching me. At age 19 I went to Cambodia for several months, teaching English and working at a local technical school where God pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught more reliance on his provision and opened my eyes to different cultures and beliefs, making it more crucial for me to know what I believed. During college and following, I became more involved at our previous church, leading the youth for a bit and leading worship regularly. My wife and I got married in 2013, and the boys came along in 2017 and 2019. As a dad now, God has been teaching me about His Father heart and how to lead my family well.

December 31, 2019, started the hardest 2 years of my life. One of our boys was admitted to the hospital at 5 weeks old, and through various complications, needed a lot of assistance and several surgeries over the course of those two years. So many prayers for healing and intervention that felt like they went unheard, and many times in the midst of the hardest moments and numerous setbacks, I questioned God's goodness. We praise God for His work through doctors and surgeries that our son has come through most of his complications, and I also praise God that we came through with our faith intact. I still have lingering questions of "Why didn't God intervene? Why did He not respond to our desperate pleas?" But I do believe He is good, and His grace extends beyond my doubts and limited understanding as I strive to seek Him more.



ABIGAIL GEHMAN

My name is Abigail Gehman, and I graduated from high school in 2022. Currently, I am working as a waitress. I was homeschooled and grew up in a good Christian home. My parents took me to church regularly and read the Bible to me and my siblings. When I was two years old, I started asking lots of questions about God and heaven. One evening, as my parents were reading the Easter story to me, I asked Jesus to be my Savior. Five years later, when I was seven, I re-dedicated my life to Christ because I wanted to make sure that I really understood what the Gospel meant when I asked Jesus into my heart as a two-year-old.

Since then, I have made a regular commitment to have my own personal devotions and pray often. Since I love writing hip-hop songs, I often study the Bible and incorporate songwriting into my devotional time. Someday I hope to go into music as a fulltime Christian rap artist.

I started attending LEFC last December. I decided to start attending LEFC because I was looking to find community among believers close to my age group and build relationships that would help me to continue to grow in my faith in God. Since I started coming here, God has taught me lots of things. This year I have experienced a lot of changes, and God has been teaching me to trust him with my life and with my future. One verse that really encouraged me this year is Psalm 84:11 "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." This verse reminds me that no matter what changes happen in life, God will not withhold anything good from me. Sometimes I do not understand His plan, but He has my best in mind and His purpose will be accomplished.

Having Jesus as my Savior gives me joy because I know that I don't walk through life alone.



LYNN HERBERT

My name is Lynn Herbert. I am the oldest of five and have always been "independent." Curiosity had gotten me into a lot of trouble with my mouth. I started searching for the truth of God's word when I was 14. At dinner with a priest one night, I let him know that I would no longer call him "Father Frank" and that there is only one Father-God. This journey of mine had started.

When I went to Oswego State for college, I lived in a mixed-sex dorm. I had a very persistent RA, and he told me, "I see how you're living, and God doesn't approve!" Some nerve of him! I did start going to a Bible Study with him and continued throughout the semester. One night, a Christian Group (I can't remember their name) came to the campus. When they gave an altar call - I went up and gave my life to Christ. I ran across campus after that to call my mom (she had accepted Christ when I was 13 and never told me until I left for college). My journey had begun.

Psalm 119:65-67: You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge. For I believe your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

JAMES HERBERT

My name is Jim Herbert, and my wife's name is Lynn. We relocated from CT to PA in October 2018, after I retired from serving the City of Stamford as a Police Officer for 38 years. My wife and I have been happily married for 40 years, and we are blessed with two children - Jennifer and Andrew. They are both married and have given us eight lovely grandchildren. I grew up in the Catholic church, but in the late 80s, I accepted Jesus and became a Christian.

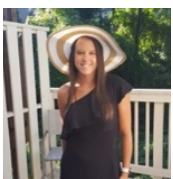
I am enjoying my retirement and keeping busy with website development, photography, and flying my drone whenever possible. My family and I have been attending LEFC for about five years now. We searched for a church in the area and found new friends within the LEFC community. Let me give you a brief version of how I came to believe in Christ.

In 1980, I joined the Stamford Police Department. On November 30th, 1985, just three days after our third wedding anniversary, my wife was five months pregnant with our son, and our daughter was almost two years old. Our lives changed dramatically, and at that time, my priorities were work, family, and friends, and God was not a top priority.

I called this the worst day of my life; years later, it also became the best day of my life. What happened that day is what we call a Critical Incident. In short, two other officers and I were dispatched to a mentally unstable male. What happened takes time to explain, but I should have died that day. Part of the story is, at one point, the suspect turned from me to grab a weapon. In doing so, I immediately tried to jump on him and then realized it was too late. I was committed to going forward to stop him when something unknown to me pulled me back away from him, and I was able to get a safe distance away, saving me from death. This unknown force that pulled me back from death was unbelievable, and I could not explain it. So much happened that day and in the next 5-7 years, leading to depression, second-guessing, and much more. There was no support from the department or any church support, as we did nothing wrong that day. As I said, I was not a Christian that day or the following years. I did have a wife who was a Christian and a strong supporter. Years later, when I accepted Jesus Christ, I realized that on that day in November, Jesus Christ pulled me back and said I have a plan for you. You're still in this race.

The verse that somehow came to me early on in this journey was 2 Timothy 4:16-18, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me, the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Today, I realize that if I were a Christian back then, that road would have been much smoother to travel with God in my life.



KY-LEIGH LEIGHTY

All stories have a great starting point. My story happens to start the day I was born, May 18, 1992. I took my entire family by surprise as I was born 16 weeks premature, weighing in at 2 lbs 4 oz. My family was absolutely shaken, as the doctors told my family I had a 25% chance to live through the first night. My story didn't start and end on May 18, 1992; it was only the beginning of God's great faithfulness.

As I grew stronger day by day, the doctors said I was strong enough to go home. My family was ecstatic, but I wasn't out of the clear yet. I had constant doctor appointments, wellness checkups, and much more. The doctors told my parents to raise me as a normal child, as if nothing is wrong. Being born so early, my motor skills and development were delayed. I loved being active and spending time with my big brother. As I began to walk, I walked toe heel, instead of heel toe.

My parents had a concern to how I began to walk as it wasn't normal or natural. The doctors ran tests, and they came back and told my parents that I have very mild Cerebral Palsy in my right foot. The best way to describe it, my Achilles tendon in my right foot isn't as strong or long as it should be. There was nothing that they could do as it was so mild, and it wasn't a big concern physically. I

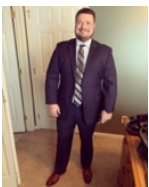
would go through physical therapy to assist with my balance, strengthen muscles, and learn at-home stretches. Sure—I had small daily challenges that I would learn to overcome with living with CP, I wasn't going to let that get in my way. I wanted to live my life and become successful at whatever I did. At 12 years old, in my sixth-grade class, a friend Julie asked me if I wanted to go to church with her and her family. Again, I was always open to new things, and I thought going to church couldn't possibly be bad for you! Let me tell you — I had a blast. I was a sponge, absorbing as much as I could about Jesus. As the weeks went by, I kept going back to church on Sundays. In turn, I was invited to youth group by the youth pastor. As I began to attend youth group, I started to develop an awesome relationship with friends and most importantly, Jesus!

As youth groups do, they attend a lot of crazy fun events. I decided to go to a concert with the group. At the concert, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. It was at that moment I began dividing in deep with Jesus, I understood that my life was going to change, but for the better. No matter what came my way, I not only had my family to lean on, but I had the ultimate protector—Jesus.

Once I accepted Jesus into my life, I felt like my life was falling apart. Just as I was on this awesome journey exploring my faith, my family was hit with a low blow. My parents announced that they were separating. I had no idea, I was shocked, caught off guard, and hurt. I was angry, every emotion under the sun I felt. How could God let this happen? Why would He do this? What did I do to deserve this? I had just committed my life to Jesus, and this is what happens next. At twelve years old life was not fair. Not fair one bit.

I began to learn to navigate this life change. I clung to Jesus knowing that only He could get me through this tough time. I grew older and realized that my parents weren't going to get back together. I learned that Jesus has a plan for his children. I've been able to help others who struggle with the same thing.

From coming into the world at 16 weeks premature to having a 25% chance to living through the first night to accepting Jesus as my Savior, my life journey has had its ups and downs, but I wouldn't want my story any other way. I know that Jesus will always have my best interest at heart, and it's exciting to think about my future because I know one thing will always remain the same — Jesus.



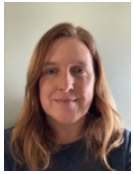
CHRIS LEIGHTY

My testimony starts from birth. When I was born on March 13, 1991, I was born with a hole in my heart. My oxygenated blood was mixing with my carbon dioxide blood and would cause me to get very tired very easily. The fix was open heart surgery. Through that process, my dad was brought to Jesus Christ.

Growing up in a Christian household, we started attending LEFC as a family with my parents and sister in 1995. I remember helping my dad paint the office modulars at LEFC. I remember accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior in the car on the way home from Vacation Bible School one summer. I remember the one teacher, Lenny, and was sharing his testimony and I felt it move me and that I needed to accept Jesus into my life. I believe I was 8 years old. I then was baptized in the creek by Pastor Doug Winne alongside my dad, who was also baptized. It was September 10, 2000.

I recently have felt God calling me to a career in Law Enforcement. There have been ups and downs during this process as I try to step into the capacity that God has called me to and feel Satan trying his best to stop me in this process. It has been a spiritual battle that I have not had to

deal with before. It has been challenging, but I know that God always wins and that he has what is best for me.



BECKY MARSHALL

My name is Becky Marshall. I'm married to Rob Marshall, and we have a daughter, Sarah, and a son, Nate. I am a substitute teacher for Warwick School District.

I was fortunate to be raised in a Christian home. My three older brothers and I were raised to love God. I attended Sunday school, church, and Vacation Bible School. I don't remember an exact moment of accepting Christ because he was always a part of my life. I was baptized in my early teens.

Youth group played an important role in my life. I developed a deeper relationship with Christ and a better understanding of the Bible. I served on several missions trips while I was in youth group and in college. These experiences opened my eyes to the needs of people around me and how I could use my gifts to help others.

After high school, I went to Millersville University to become a teacher. I was active in a church on campus throughout my four years at college. I met my husband the first week of college, and we got married after graduation. We attended church, had children, and raised them to follow Jesus.

Last summer, we decided to look for a church with strong Biblical teaching, and that led us to LEFC. I have enjoyed all the sermons I have heard by Tony, the other pastors, and elders. I've been inspired to read my Bible more and to seek God more each day.

Philippians 4:6-7 is a verse that has helped me throughout my life, but especially in the past year in which both my mom and oldest brother died. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."



ROB MARSHALL

My name is Rob Marshall. I am married to Becky Marshall, whom I met at Millersville University. We have a daughter, Sarah, who attends Lebanon Valley College and a son, Nate, who is a senior at Warwick. I am an accounting manager for Raytec Manufacturing.

I am thankful that I grew up in a Christian home with my parents and brother. I accepted Christ as my Savior as a child and was baptized as a teenager. I participated in youth group when I was in middle school and high school.

I have relied on Matthew 6:34, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own," to get me through many difficult times.

I came to LEFC because I was looking for a church with traditional biblical principles. I like that sermons are preached based on the Bible and they don't try to change the Bible based on changes in society.



LUCY MARTIN

My name is Lucy Martin. I grew up on a small family farm in northern Chester County. It was a “truck” farm where I learned the hard work of raising, harvesting, and selling produce along with caring for laying hens and beef cattle. I was the youngest of 5 children and attended church with my parents. When I was about 13 years old, with the prompting of my sister, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior and have walked closely with him throughout my life.

I went to Millersville University where I obtained a Special Ed degree and stayed in Lancaster County working with adults with developmental disabilities. I later married my husband, Steve, and we raised three children who are currently young adults. I spent time at home with the children in their early years. Around 2006 – 2007, our family journeyed with cancer as Steve was diagnosed with leukemia. Over this time, I took an interest in Nursing and eventually went to nursing school. Since then, I’ve worked as a nurse in skilled nursing facilities and currently in hospice care.

I grew up in a Mennonite church and continued to attend Mennonite churches through early adulthood. After marrying Steve, we attended an independent church where I have grown spiritually and developed many friendships. A little over a year ago, we felt God stirring us to attend a different church due to some personal and family issues. After much prayer, we chose LEFC.

Throughout key points in my life, I can testify that God is good even though there were struggles that I went through. God has provided in many ways, especially through the rough spots in our lives. 2 Timothy 1:12: “I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”

A theme verse for my life is: “He has shown you, O mortal what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

STEVE MARTIN

My name is Steve Martin. I’ve lived in Lititz for almost twenty years, just over one-third of my life. Other mailing addresses where I’ve lived include Lancaster, Millersville, Allentown, New Holland, Atglen (Pennsylvania); Goshen, Indiana; Edgewood, Maryland; Bangkok, Thailand; and Saigon, Vietnam, where I was born and lived most of my first ten years. My parents served there with a Christian organization.

I obtained a degree in Industrial Arts and Technology Education from Millersville University in 1990. I married Lucy in 1996, and we have three young adult children. My current occupation involves specialized manufacturing.

Following some years of restlessness at our former church home, along with some events in our family, Lucy and I began attending LEFC in October 2022. We feel that this congregation is a good place to grow in our faith and in our relationships.

I am here at this point in life because of God’s mercy and the prayers of many people. I grew up hearing the Gospel of Jesus. At times I have felt that Jesus was terrifyingly unavoidable, but behind all of His scathing words, I believe that He loves me. I don’t believe that anyone else besides Jesus is both brutally honest about our self-centeredness while also seeing us with hope. And I have come to believe that Jesus is worthy of my unrestrained and unwavering love and obedience.

Some anchor verses of mine include:

- Romans 3:4a: "...Let God be true, though every human be found a liar...."
- Revelation 1:17b-18: "Do not be afraid! I am the first and the last and the living One. And I was dead – and look – I am alive forevermore! And I have the keys of death and Hades."
- Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all who are tired and who carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."



STEVEN REYNOLDS

I grew up in Nebraska and was baptized in the Presbyterian Church. I greatly enjoyed Sunday School and singing songs about Jesus. When I was 14 years old, we started attending a small church in Illinois. It was very different. They focused on evangelism and studying the Bible. I met with the grown men who had done a lot of Bible study, and I asked a lot of questions. I decided to commit my life to following Jesus Christ, and I was baptized by immersion.

Like everyone, I've had many ups and downs. But I've always felt the Holy Spirit is guiding me. I am greatly blessed. I've been attending LEFC for four months, and I feel the Holy Spirit each time I walk through the doors. I now want to serve the Lord by becoming a member of LEFC.



LINDA SAMS

Hi, my name is Linda Sams. I grew up in a household that went to church on Sundays. I was baptized as an infant and sang in the youth choir, but I was never taught to read the Bible or what it truly meant to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. It was more what you did, not who you are.

Once out on my own, I stopped going to church, got an administrative job, got married and had 2 beautiful baby girls. I wanted my children to have a faith background like I did, so I found a church that suited us, became a member, and the three of us would attend pretty regularly. Church was often a very emotional experience, and I now realize that I was being resistant to allowing God to work in me.

But I found that God would use tragedy and pain to move me closer to Him. At a really low point, when I felt totally broken, I finally surrendered to Him, confessed all that was wrong, and asked Him to heal me. I started to open up to people who would help guide me, attend Bible studies to learn more about God's Word, and serve in Youth ministry with my girls in attendance.

God, through the Holy Spirit, transformed me over the years, changing my dreams and desires, and I grew to be on staff and a leader in my church. He equipped me and used my talents and abilities to help build His Kingdom for which I am eternally grateful.

In 2016, my husband and I moved to the Lancaster area to be close to our growing family of grandchildren. After being on staff of a pretty large church, I had a hard time figuring out what church would feel like home to me. I tried several churches in the area before coming to LEFC in the Fall of 2021. I knew right away that I would be calling LEFC my home church. And knowing that the only way to connect in a large church was to join a group, I immediately decided to join WBF on Thursday nights.

I have been fortunate enough to see God perform miracles in my life and in the lives of others. I am blessed to have a faith that has carried me through adversity, assured in the fact that God's love never fails and that He will continue to perform miracles.

I'm relying on the Holy Spirit to help me discern where God will lead me to serve Him as I look into the future including retirement from my full-time job as an Office Manager. To God be the glory!



EMMA SMITH

My name is Emma Smith. I was born in Coatesville, PA and was raised in a Christian home as the third of four kids. I was homeschooled from kindergarten to twelfth grade and attended Lancaster Bible College after I graduated. My now-husband, Stephon, began attending LBC the following year and introduced me to LEFC in 2015 while we were dating. Following Stephon and my graduations, we married in 2018. Our family continues to grow as we welcomed our first child, Theodora Jean, in August of this year.

I came to Christ as a child at my great-grandmother's funeral. I knew of Jesus and that He loved me but did not know Him as my Savior until I understood what death meant (John 3:16). I asked my parents to help me, and they confirmed my understanding and led me in a prayer of acceptance. I thank God that the gospel is simple enough for a child to understand as I was saved from a life of sin and separation from Him (Matthew 19:14).

Since coming to Christ, He has given me a deeper understanding of who He is through the gifts of His Spirit and His Word. Through sickness, I have come to know Him as grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). Through brokenness, I know Him as a Father (2 Corinthians 6:14). Through marriage, I know Him as perfect love (1 John 4:18). Through motherhood, I am learning His sacrifice (John 3:16). As I know Him more every day, I love Him more every day.



STEPHON SMITH

My name is Stephon Smith and I have been attending LEFC for a little over 8 years. I ended up at LEFC after needing a place to land when I started at Lancaster Bible College. I was able to do my Worship internship at this church as well. Now, I am glad to attend weekly with my family.

I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home in New Jersey. My family went to church and served in various ministries over my early years of life. I was always involved in Awana and the children's choir.

When I was 7, we moved to Delaware. We kept going to our church in New Jersey for several months until the 4-hour-round-trip drive became too much. Several years later, after family went through some different health issues, I found a new church home when I started attending their Christian school.

I was able to grow in that church and be a part of that community. We had weekly chapel services in school, and one week we had special guest speakers. I don't remember the organization's name, but they were a recovery center described to us as a half-way house for Christians. They shared their testimonies and explained the pathways that led them back to relationship with Christ. While listening to them, I realized that I did not want to be like them. In Luke 15, Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal Son. He goes off to spend his life how he pleases until he reaches his lowest point. When he returns to his father, there is a celebration for his return, but I didn't want my life to look like that. I didn't want to be the one who leaves God and has to fight my way through the sin of the world to get back to Him. I wanted to be the one who stayed and didn't stray from the path. I gave my life fully to Christ that day and have done my best to stay on the path ever since.

**EVELYN TETI**

Hi, I'm Evelyn Teti. My husband Dan and I have been attending LEFC since Oct. 2022. Together we have our son, Owen, and have another baby boy on the way in January 2024.

Growing up I had a happy childhood, but that's not to say things weren't tough. My mom was very sick when I was little, and my dad was stressed providing and caring for four children (in addition to his wife). My parents always tried to make sure we had a good, Christian foundation. though, and in addition to going to church regularly, my parents sent us to a Christian school. This was both helpful but also harmful when it came to my relationship with Christ. It was hard for me to differentiate between not fitting in a Christian environment (be it different economic status, clothes, or things of that nature) and not necessarily fitting in with Christ.

The church I grew up attending also amplified to me where church officials/leaders can stray from the word of Christ and pursue their own, sinful nature. As an adult I can now look at those experiences and see the importance of putting our faith and identity in God and not in a church or person.

Though my teenage years I would say I was probably mad at God for the experiences where adults failed me. I still identified as a Christian but would look at having bad experiences as examples of where God was letting me down. I didn't "see" God's plan for me, and I definitely couldn't see a bigger picture of where he was working in my life.

In 2016 (a month after getting engaged to Dan), I was in a severe car accident where I rolled my SUV on black ice causing damage to my hands and breaking my back in five places. The fact that I survived that car accident was a miracle let alone that I wasn't paralyzed/more severely injured. However, losing my independence and ability to walk without a walker, get up, shower, or go to the bathroom on my own all were tough. Again, I initially felt as though I was "forgotten" by God. After all, how much can one person take?

It took a lot of work and time, but I made a full recovery from my accident. During this time, Dan and I got married and started attending a church near us. It also took a lot of work and time, but I started down a journey of healing my relationship with God. I finally could see where all those moments that I felt God had "forgotten" me that he was really leading me to something better. There were all these moments where I could finally look back and notice God was really pursuing and shaping me.

My car accident was a really important moment in my life where I could see God's love and mercy in full effect. I know I could have died that day in 2016, but God had other plans for me, and I am so thankful for this "second chance" at life. No longer is this relationship one-sided...He doesn't just pursue me, but I am actively pursuing him.

**DANIEL TETI**

Hello, my name is Dan Teti. My wife Evelyn and I have been married since 2016, and we have a 3-year-old son and another boy coming in January. We also have a dog and a cat.

Evelyn and I met at French Creek Bible Conference in the summer of 2007 (we were going into 9th grade). We kept in touch but didn't date until our last year of college. I grew up in the AG Church for 10+ years before moving to the OPC Church for another 10+ years. I grew up in the church and was baptized in 2004, having never known a time without Christian influence in my life. I am very

thankful to my parents and extended family for prioritizing their faith and giving me godly examples to follow.

There have been plenty of times in my life that I wandered or didn't take my faith seriously, but a couple years ago Evelyn and I started regularly attending a local church in the Reading area where we met Bill and Janet Thompson in a small group. Through this growing friendship, we learned about LEFC and decided to give it a try. This was in October 2022, and since first coming here, we have been more regular in our attendance at church since either of us left home. I personally have seen the Holy Spirit work in my heart since coming here through increased prayer, scripture reading and engagement in the sermons.

Once again, I look forward to being at church to be nourished by God's word and a strong community of believers. Evelyn and I are also foster resource parents for the state of PA and hope to grow our family by supporting children in need as James 1:27 describes. We feel that this is a spiritual calling for our family and have been so blessed to see the biblical values of Loving God, Loving People, Living Truth, and Proclaiming Jesus at LEFC.



JANET THOMPSON

My name is Janet Thompson. I was born into a believing Christian family in the 1940's just after World War 2. So I am one of the first baby boomers. I attended Peirce Business College in Philadelphia and during that time met my husband, Bill, who was a mechanical engineering student at Drexel. I initially worked as a secretary before having children. After our youngest entered high school, I went back to work at Princeton University in New Jersey. I retired from Princeton 18 years ago.

My faith journey began when I was either 4 or 5 years old. I have a vivid memory of my experience and of the date which was August 31. My dad had spoken to me the evening before about having to make a decision for myself to become a Christian. I do not remember any particular emphasis on my need of forgiveness of sin, but I do remember asking Jesus to come into my heart the next morning and telling him that I did not want to be an "UnChristian". I then told my mother about my decision. I still remember the joy that welled up in me.

I could not stop sharing with my neighborhood friends. One of them, who also attended our church, couldn't understand why I was so excited because she had already heard about it at church and did not think it was such a big deal. Another memorable thing that occurred is that I could not stop singing the chorus of a hymn sung at church, which I did not fully understand intellectually. It was "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day." That chorus would gain special significance for me many years later.

My understanding of sin came after my initial childhood experience and continues to this day. I realize more and more each day the truth in Tim Keller's quote, "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared to believe, yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

WILLIAM THOMPSON

My name is William Thompson, "Bill" to my friends and acquaintances. I was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and have one younger brother. I'm 79 years old and have been married to my wife, Janet, for 57 years. We have three children (ages 54, 52, 42), seven grandchildren, and one

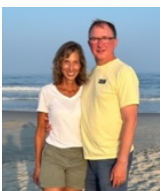
greatgrandchild. Each of my grandchildren know they are my favorite! My one-year-old greatgrandchild is not old enough to participate in the charade.

I attended Drexel University and received a B. S. Mechanical Engineering degree in June 1966. I continued my education at M.I.T., receiving an S.M.M.E in August 1967. I worked in the technical division of the old Bell System and its offspring companies for almost 5 decades, retiring in 2013. At that time, we moved from Central New Jersey to Mohnton, PA near Reading. We have been attending LEFC since November 2022.

I was raised in a God-fearing Christian home that was part of a small denomination that meet like Quakers with no paid clergy. Most children in my church family were 'saved' at 6 to 8 years old and baptized at 10 to 12. I believed at an early age but was stubborn especially because they made such a public fuss about being saved and then baptized. The situation became more intense as I grew older; at a Sunday night Gospel meeting the visiting itinerant preacher would ask: "Are there any unsaved?", "Yes, only one, Billy Thompson!" If I got saved in my early teens, every member of the close-knit denomination in Philly and the suburbs, would know in 24 hours and would attend my baptism! During my time in high school, I lived a double life: upright and true-blue to family/church, and crude/rough at school and with neighborhood friends. Everything started to change when at 17, my best friend at church died in a single car accident. Everyone thought I'd get saved then as a consequence, but I still resisted. I did, however, stop the double life. About a year later, my girlfriend dumped me for a football player at another school. This happened at a Labor Day weekend Family Bible Camp. Everyone I knew was there...how embarrassing! Well, I might as well get saved! Really spiritual! After returning home, I was baptized. I also became involved in Drexel Christian Fellowship and received much counseling from the DCF President, who became my spiritual mentor.

Two months later, as I waited on the steps of the Drexel Activity Center for the Drexel Christian Fellowship visiting speaker, a young pretty blonde and her friend, who were not Drexel students, asked me if I knew where the DCF Meeting was located. I directed them to the meeting location, and I knew I had better get the courage to ask her out! I did, and after a little over a year of dating, Janet and I were engaged in 1965 and married in 1966. Janet's family and friends had a profound effect on me spiritually.

I've learned through this sequence of events of my salvation, joining DCF, and meeting Janet, that God has directed me through many seemingly coincidental circumstances. Such is the case with our arrival at LEFC last year: a lunch with old friends from that Bible Camp group where one of them mentioned they attended LEFC; a month later visiting one of the retirement communities in Lititz and putting our names on the waiting list; and then, attending LEFC for the first time on the week the SE Asia outreach was initially introduced to the whole congregation, thereby striking a cord in our hearts because of the 13 years that our son and his family served there.



JANET TRAVIS

Because I began attending a church when I was young, I learned quite a few of the stories in the Bible in my childhood. As a teenager, I understood and believed that Jesus had died on the cross for people's sin. I saw myself as included in that generic group of "people" for whom Jesus died, but Jesus' death and resurrection had no personal, transformational impact on my life.

As a high school senior and college freshman, I remember occasionally reading the Bible and deeply sensing my own lifelessness and lostness. I felt empty inside, and that hollowness longed to

be satisfied. As a second semester freshman, I reluctantly agreed to attend a student-led Christian fellowship with a senior student from my dorm floor. During the gathering, a student read several passages from 1 John on the topic of love. The love he described was not like the love I was accustomed to giving or receiving. It was the love of God, which is not conditioned on performance, worthiness, appearance, outward behaviors or seeming compliance with the rules. It is based on the character of God, who loves us because that's who He IS. God is love. He loves us because He loves us by his grace displayed in Jesus. Inside I knew I had not personally experienced that kind of love. And I felt desperate for it. I knew I had found the truth that would finally satisfy my aching heart.

After the student finished speaking and we sang a few songs, the gathering ended. I asked Steph, the senior who had invited me, if she would come back to my room to talk. There in my dorm room, I explained my religious history to her. In return she invited me into a *relationship* with God my Father. As Steph explained the gospel to me, the words resonated so personally for me, not like before. They were the words of life, the vitality I had been missing. I needed Jesus to rescue me from my sin and to give me His righteousness. God had prepared my heart, and I was ready and willing to place my faith in Jesus that day.

That dorm-room conversation and my conversion took place many, many years ago. Today, while I am devoted to knowing, loving, and honoring the Lord with my life, even on my best day there is plenty of evidence to convict me of falling far short of His glory. The spiritual battle rages on for my heart's affections. So I aim daily to make a habit of reveling in the present realities of the gospel – the depth of my sin and the unfathomable capacity of God's mercy and love -- and to cultivate a repentant attitude in my relationship with God and others. I pursue deepening my love for Jesus through prayer, Bible reading and study, and fellowship with other believers, trusting the Spirit to change me and bring growth in me.

BOB TRAVIS

I grew up attending a fairly liberal church, and Christianity for me was more about attending church than a relationship with Christ. By my early teen years, my childhood friends became the partying crowd, and I joined them in that lifestyle. I can remember feeling guilty for the choices I was making, but apart from Christ, that guilt didn't lead to repentance. However, God used two youth staff at my church to show me the truth of the gospel. It took some time for me to surrender to Jesus, but at the age of 17, I trusted Christ for the forgiveness of my sins. As I look back, so much of my early Christian faith was about me trying to do, through human effort, what I thought Christians were supposed to do. If I could check off the boxes I created of "Christian behavior", I felt good about myself, but if I couldn't, I felt like I let God down. I had very little understanding of Christ's finished work on my behalf or of the glorious grace of God.

While attending Penn State University, I was active in Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. In 1984 I attended the Urbana Mission's Conference in Illinois. At Urbana I met two career missionaries with the Wycliffe Bible Translators mission agency who challenged me to participate in a summer-long missions trip after my college graduation. That summer, I participated on a three-month short-term missions project in Ecuador with the Gospel Missionary Union. The trip was led by a very godly, faithful, and humble couple who modeled for me a deep and consistent Christian faith. I realized that there was something about their faith that was missing from my life. It was on that trip that I was confronted with and convicted of how much in my life I had failed to surrender to Christ.

After returning from Ecuador, I took a marketing position with a secular company where I worked for nine years. During this time, I served as a volunteer youth leader at Oreland Presbyterian Church

in Oreland, PA. In my mid-twenties I attended a Bible study at a nearby church where I met my wife, Janet. After our engagement, we made that church our church home. We became part of a very strong engaged and young married couples' small group. We also were mentored by a couple in the church in a one-to-one discipleship ministry in which we became very active. The more involved we became in discipling relationships and were part of seeing God working in the lives of people, the more I began to feel the pull to full-time ministry. In my last two years at the church, I served as an elder. At the age of 31, after nine years with the company where I was working as Marketing Manager, I resigned to pursue my Th-M at Dallas Theological Seminary. My faith at this time, while growing, was still very much about my performance or doing the things I believed were the "right" things to do. My struggle with sin was still much more one of personal effort than a worshipful response for all that Christ has done for me.

Since seminary, I have served at four churches in pastoral ministry. Over this time, God has significantly grown my love for Christ and deepened my appreciation of my own sinfulness and my Savior's perfect holiness. I've come to realize and understand that Christian discipleship is a life-long process. For example, looking back I can see how at times since becoming a pastor, I allowed "ministry success" to become my identity rather than who I am in Christ. Over the years, I have grown in gospel repentance. This includes recognizing my sin, understanding that my sin is an offense to a holy God, turning from my sin, and turning to a God-honoring life. I have learned to cherish more and more the grace of God. It is truly through God's grace that I have grown as a disciple of Christ. As I increasingly become aware of my absolute need for Christ's grace, forgiveness and strength, my heart for sharing the good news of Jesus and for being a disciple maker continues to grow.



PATRICIA TRAVIS

I was raised in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania. I attended the same church until I got married and we moved away. This church was a big part of my life. At age 12, I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I still remember that day, so happy and sharing the good news.

Through our 60 years of marriage, God has blessed us so very much. I can't imagine life without Jesus at my side. He is my light to guide me and my salvation to deliver me. I look forward to joining LEFC; it will be a big part of my life.

ALBERT TRAVIS

I was raised in a small town in Schuylkill County, PA. My parents were strong believers and they attended church weekly. In this church I grew up knowing Christ as my Savior.

I graduated from Penn State and was drafted into the US Army, serving two years in Germany. During those years, I always knew God was with me.

I met my wife in the church we both grew up in. We have been blessed with 60 years of marriage, one son, and three grandsons.

At age 86 I recall the many times God was there for me. I look forward to being a part of LEFC.



EMILY WILKERSON

For a while, I thought my testimony was growing up in a good Bible-teaching Christian family. I was saved at around 5 or maybe 6, did mission trips as a teenager, went to Bible college, got engaged to a Pastor. I thought it was a pretty typical situation, so I never thought much about it. Well now, as I look back, I see that my testimony is actually about the Holy Spirit whispering through the lies and manipulation of a distorted Christianity to pull me where I needed to go.

When Zach and I got engaged, I was working on my Bachelor's in Counseling at LBC. Through my degree and while preparing for marriage, I started realizing that I'd endured spiritual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect my entire childhood. I moved around 17 times before I turned 14, everywhere from England to the Caribbean to Canada. I'd grown up without a church community, without friends, and without any connection outside my nuclear family.

I went to therapy, and the more I worked, the more underlying trauma I discovered. I didn't want children because of all the baggage, but then I got pregnant on our honeymoon, and was furious with God because motherhood trapped me in my unresolved childhood trauma. The next years were a blur of depression, rage, struggles in our very new marriage, and anger towards God. I sat in church while Zach was on stage because the Pastor's wife had to keep it together or it might affect Zach's job. I was the only young mom at church, and our church culture did not engage with suffering, so we learned to keep my depression and our marital struggles hidden because our community reacted harshly and dismissively if it came up. Finally, I begged Zach to quit so we could go to a different church because we so badly needed community. We were deeply lonely, and church was the only way we knew how to build community. Alex Swann had been bugging us to try LEFC, so we finally agreed to go, only once, to make him stop bringing it up. We were barely in the door before Grace Messersmith and tons of other college acquaintances greeted us, and we walked out of church that Sunday having been invited to three different social functions, after having been on staff at a church for years where we were never once invited to lunch. I'd forgotten what it was like to be seen at church, though I'd always been in the front row.

Fast forward a few years. Through Life Group, Mosaic, and LEFC, for the first time in my life, at age 30, I have a community of people who have walked through the trenches with me and have called me to a higher standard when I need it. Because of the Christ-like love of my community at LEFC, I've been able to heal and begin the long journey of breaking generational sins and beginning a new, God-honoring legacy for my sons.

My testimony isn't about a "salvation moment" since that happened for me at a young age. My testimony is about carrying a distorted and broken faith, stumbling in pursuit of a God who never lies, and always saw me when no one else did. God was the opposite of everything I knew in life. Even though Christianity was pressed onto me through the lens of manipulation and control, the Holy Spirit whispered through the lies and pulled me to a Bible college and community where I could finally discover Christianity apart from the lies, learn God's heart, continue my journey of faith, and hopefully build a legacy that honors God.



ZACH WILKERSON

I am the oldest of seven children, raised in a Christian home by my mom and dad. My dad has held various church offices my whole life, including that of an elder at my parents' home church. For as long as I can remember, I've been going to church, and I prayed a prayer of repentance and trust in Jesus at 6 years old. At 6, it's impossible

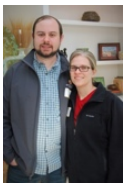
to actually understand what that means, so my whole life, I've been learning more about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

As I grew up, I believed that God was leading me into worship ministry, so I left my home state of New York and went to Lancaster Bible College to study music and biblical studies. In college, I met my wife Emily, and we got married a year after I graduated. At the time, I was working as a pastor at a small church in Maryland. Although neither of us intended on having children any time soon, we immediately became pregnant with our first child, Gabriel. This was really the first time I was faced with the choice of whether I was going to trust God with my life or try to take control on my own. Within 3 months of being married, we had moved back to Lancaster, both found new jobs and a new apartment, and struggled to find any peace with our situation.

I quickly found a part-time job as a worship leader at a large church here in the county, but I was unable to find any sense of community or a place to feel heard as we struggled to make ends meet, learned to care for an infant, and at times processed very deep spiritual wounds. Emily was similarly struggling, and her depression became so bad that she was barely functioning. I left my position at the church by the time Gabe was 2, and I nearly gave up on the church altogether.

In the early summer of 2021, a friend who I went to college with suggested, as he had several times, that we try visiting LEFC. Within a month, other old friends from college had us over for dinner and had invited us to join their Life Group. For the first time in my adult life, I found a true church community. I found believers who rejoiced with those who rejoiced AND wept with those who wept. I found true and sacrificial worship, demonstrated not just through song but through the sharing of time, talents, and resources. I began to heal from the lies that I had believed about God.

Now, I can look back at my history and see signs of the Lord's faithfulness where I was blind to them before. I look forward to the future with hope, trusting his sovereignty and goodness. Difficult and even impossible circumstances do not overwhelm me as easily as they once did, because I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. And when I forget that, I have brothers and sisters and a community of faith that reminds me of who He is. My walk with Jesus is so much more intimate now than it has ever been, and I look forward to the future and the ways that I will continue to see the Spirit work to bring me and those around me into deeper relationships with him.



CARISSA WILLIAMS

I grew up in a Christian household, and always thought of myself as a Christian. I went to church with my family every Sunday and was involved in youth group as a teenager. However, I never really understood what it meant to have a relationship with God, and I didn't read the Bible outside of church.

In my teenage years up until I was about 21-22, I struggled with a little bit of rebellion. For whatever reason, it discouraged me whenever someone would try to encourage me in my faith. I think it was because I was very independent and liked to do things myself. The years continued, but despite trying to do things myself, I still never felt complete.

At the end of 2013, I was with a small group of friends, and we were doing a Bible study on James. A particular passage caught my attention: James 2:14-26, where it talks about faith and deeds. After going through these verses, I began to realize that I had faith, but was not doing anything that attributed to it. How are people going to know I am a Christ follower without seeing proof? Just like verse 24 says, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone."

On Sunday, February 9, I had a lot on my mind, felt desperate for God, and decided to go to a church I've only been to once, instead of the church I normally went to with my parents. That morning, the worship pastor was speaking on "Blessed are Those Who Hunger for More of Him." After watching the water baptism service on March 23, 2014, God began to really speak to me, and I began to connect more deeply with Him: doing devotions, praying, and talking with others about my faith- something I didn't think I would ever do! Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God is faithful and He HAS given me hope and is doing something wonderful in me. After a lot of thinking and praying, I felt God telling me to submit to Him and be baptized, which happened towards the end of 2014. God has been working in me, and through me, since.

ISAAC WILLIAMS

My name is Isaac Williams. I'm husband to Carissa and father of our 3 kids, Nehemiah (6), Norah (4), & Andrew (3). I grew up in a Christian home, attending church on a regular basis. I remember asking Jesus into my life and asking for forgiveness for my sins when I was 5. I thought I knew what it meant to be saved, but I didn't. It wasn't until I was 14 at a youth camp at my church that I realized, after listening to a sermon, that I needed a Savior. I saw that my sin was separating me from God and that I needed Jesus to be the propitiation for my sins. I thank God for that moment when God convicted me and drew me to go and talk to my dad and ask for his help to hold me accountable. Two years later, I knew I wanted to be baptized and make a commitment and statement of faith before my friends and those gathered, that I am a disciple of Christ, and my life has been changed ever since.

I grew up in the UK until I was 9 when I moved to the US in March of 2001 with my parents, brother, and sister. We moved into the greater Philadelphia area where I spent the rest of my childhood until college years. I'm a pilot since 2013 but rarely fly anymore. My wife and I married in 2015 and lived in Ephrata before moving to California for 6 months, getting pregnant, and coming home to Ephrata with our firstborn son, Nehemiah. A year later we moved to Lebanon, Pennsylvania where I'd started working for Lebanon Area Youth for Christ (Now True Life Youth Ministries) as an Operations Director and lived there for 4 years where Norah and Andrew were born. In 2020, I started working for Hope Walks in Dillsburg, PA and was there for 18 months as a donor services coordinator for them before getting laid off. God led me to Water Street Mission in the Advancement Department as the Advancement Operations Manager. We then moved to Lititz, PA to be closer to work and so I could spend more time after work/school with the kids.

After moving to Lititz, we were looking for a new church to call home, and after trying a few, felt welcomed and quickly got connected at LEFC and started attending regularly in February 2022. We met some families we knew, some we already had connections with, and quickly started attending an ABF. That led to us wanting to know more about LEFC, so we visited Starting Point, Connect Group, have helped host a new Life Group, and attend membership classes where I've been impressed with the intentionality behind polity, statement of faith and the leadership here.

I've learned that God is always faithful to meet us wherever we are, through the highest accomplishments and peaks and the lowest disappointments, struggles and valleys. His faithfulness never ends.