

The Pastors Connection

August 2010

Training Children

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
Proverbs 22:6*

Commentators tell me the word “train” has the connotation of shaping, as is done by an arborist to form a bonsai tree. The call is to invest in children such that they too walk in the ways of God.

The above verse is a principle; not a guaranteed promise. We all know godly parents who saw one child walk in the ways of God while another went “wild.” God created us with free will. No matter how faithfully you invest, how generously you sacrifice and how powerfully you pray; you cannot override a child’s right to walk away from faith. Influence free will, yes; but override it, no.

Having stated that qualifier, let us also declare: our calling is to train children to follow Jesus! I am grateful God is beginning to bring more children to us. The investment of Bob and Karen in our youth group has new youth participating. Dot’s leadership and Cindy’s investment is bearing fruit with young families. We yearn for the trend to grow! But we’ve turned a corner.

As I write we are one week past another immensely creative leadership of Community Day by Kathleen Weaver; and one week beyond introducing Roger Hoffner as our M4:6a Promise Administrator. It was a blessing to watch both ministries make visible the Malachi promise of the hearts of fathers turned towards children!

The use of our facilities by home schooling parents complements our generational partnership in Conestoga Christian School founded and supported by members and leaders. Other parents prayerfully discern to send their children to one of our excellent public schools. All are grateful for the partnership in training children by teachers during Sunday School, and other venues of ministry.

As a Pastoral Team we wrestle to know how to reduce the cost for parents who wish to send their children to a Christian School such as Lancaster Mennonite or Conestoga Christian. We accept designated gifts into a Christian Education fund. In most recent years, five hundred dollars was given towards the tuition for each child attending Christian School. In spite of increased tuition costs we have discerned to not raise our commitment due to the reality that we annually need to draw on budgeted dollars to supplement designated gifts.

One of our recent brainstorm has been to ask “What if we, Conestoga Mennonite Church, started a “Founders Endowment” for Christian Education? Would members see this as a worthy means to extend influence for generations to come such that they would

make gifts of cash, pledges or estate distributions? Might such gifts match or exceed what the Zook's entrusted to us for missions?"

What we know is that we must faithfully train the children of our congregation and beyond to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Your counsel is welcome!

Joyfully living Christ's story with you, Pastor Bob