

Home and Family, Diaconal Workshops Guide and Support

The LLC's Home and Family committees were established in 2012. In September of that year, committee representatives from many congregations gathered at Stony Lake Camp to discuss and organize this work. In recent years, congregations have requested workshops in their areas to continue discussing the work and how to best support others. God's love causes His children to desire to help all neighbors in need. This year, such workshops were held in Menahga, Minn. and Dunblane, Sask.

Preventative Gospel Work Home and Family, Diaconal Workshop Held in Menahga, Minn.

The Work Continues

Earlier this year, Keith Waaraniemi, of the Minneapolis congregation, and Jouko Haapsaari, of the Rockford congregation, journeyed to Menahga, Minn. to visit with the northern Minnesota congregations' Home and Family committees about this important work.

Waaraniemi brought out that this is not new work, as Jesus taught in the Second Commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). Home and family and diaconal work are about personally believing and then preaching this gospel of the forgiveness of sins to others. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Rom. 1:16,17). The gospel is for the support of both families, and individuals. We need to encourage those with heavy trials and help them to remember the joy of believing and the joy of our families.

We learned much about supporting homes and families. We were reminded how God's Word is our foundation, and we can turn to it for instruction. God's grace and truth is revealed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our faith helps to protect against harmful influences. Connections to believers is a source of strength. Marital relations can be nurtured in God's kingdom.

The Work is Not Done Alone

In visiting about the work, the committees were reminded of their duty to guide, while engaging the help of other congregation members. Apostle Paul reminds how there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit (1 Cor. 12:4). We desire to support the small home congregation, where the teaching is the most important. By using the gifts in the congregation, the hands of a tired and weary traveler can be lifted by a circle of friends who are willing to help. This circle includes those closest to the person or people in need of help, and can be guided by the Home and Family committee. This is all God's work, and all honor and glory goes to Him.

Preserving the Family Unit

"Preserving the Family Unit," presented by Haapsaari, was timely and based on God's Word. He shared examples of his life when touching on many issues. Forgiveness is needed to preserve the family unit. God's Word instructs

husbands and wives how to treat each other, using Christ as the example. God's kingdom is a level-headed flock, and the family is a small congregation where children can be taught about God's kingdom. The home should be a good and safe place to dwell, where above all things, love prevails. Forgiveness is not only from our lips, but from our heart. Love is like the mortar between bricks that holds everything together. It is good if we can join into the hopes and prayer of Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Isaac Ylitalo, of Menahga, came to the workshop. "It was nice to listen to the committee's ideas and to hear the supportive comments from others in our area," he said. "It seemed that everyone was wanting to learn more ideas, rather than only trying to teach."

Scott Hillstrom and Rod Nikula

Let Us Love One Another Home and Family, Diaconal Workshop in Dunblane, Sask.

Members of the Home and Family and diaconal committees in Saskatchewan and Alberta gathered in May at the Dunblane church for a workshop led by Keith Waaraniemi and Adrian Pirness. As one participant put it at the end of the day, "It was a wonderful day."

God's Love Guides the Work

The workshop began with opening devotion by Waaraniemi, during which we were reassured that despite feelings of emptiness, we can "pour oil" from one vessel to another, or work together and move forward. We were reminded of the love that Jesus had for Mary and Martha at the time of their brother Lazarus's death. God's love among the believers, also today, constrains us to do this important work.

Pirness' presentation that followed focused on the history of Home and Family work and the nature of preventative gospel work. It has been done through the ages. God's Word directs us to believe in God and love one another. If our focus is on support and encouragement of our families and each other, we can prevent problems from occurring. But when trials do come, we are instructed to "bear one another's burdens," through our connections with other believers. As committee members, we can ask ourselves— what can we do to help to strengthen connections, and to help foster love among the members of our congregations?

Focusing the Work

During the discussion, we talked about where we should be focusing our efforts in our congregations. Each of the committees reported on activities that have been organized in their areas, and Waaraniemi gave examples from other congregations. It was interesting to note how the needs in each congregation can differ depending on its size and demographics. Some activities that work well in one place may not be as fitting for another. The work also happens on its own, without formal organization from a committee.

The afternoon discussion touched on how congregation members can become involved in the work. Fostering connections between the elders and the children and youth would be beneficial. Inter-generational friendships bring much joy and benefit to each side! There were discussions on providing congregational support for students going to opisto, or for one or two couples to attend couples camp. The topic of addictions also came up. This is an

issue that is prevalent in our time, and where education and discussion are needed. Technology and the need for vigilance in this area was spoken about as well.

Trust in God's Help

Duane Pirness gave the closing devotion, reading from Colossians 3: "Put on...bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness...put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness...do all in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God." The matters discussed during the day are all part of the time we live, and we want to trust in the Heavenly Father's help. Even though the times, temptations, and phenomena change, God's Word does not change. It is the foundation on which we can base our lives. The love that Christ instructs us to have for one another helps us to forbear and forgive each other. God has revealed to us that Home and Family work is important, and we do it according to His will and timeframe.

Workshop attendee, Krista Simonson, of Saskatoon, Sask., says, "It was a chance to discuss timely matters and the most important matter, which remains the same over all time. We were reminded that God will continue to help and guide. We can trust in His good care."

Laura Pirness