Finishing Well

On October 28, Life Matters hosted a one-day conference, Engaging our Aging. Our speaker was Dr. John Dunlop – author, practicing geriatrician, and faculty member of both Trinity International University and Yale School of Medicine.

His theme was finishing well. Most of us desire that for ourselves and loved ones, yet what does it really mean? Contentment? Happiness? Freedom from pain? Is it simply being able to maintain dignity at the end of life and enjoy loved ones? These are worthy goals yet, as Dr. Dunlop says, there’s a more profound, uniquely Christian approach.

He led us to Philippians 1:20-21 where the Apostle Paul says, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

Paul longed to honor God right up to the end. He looked forward to being in God’s presence, where he knew Christ would be honored all the more.

According to Dr. Dunlop, finishing well means God is glorified throughout our lives and by the legacy we leave.

I can’t help but think of two women from partner ministries whose lives ended on just such a high spiritual note. Donna Leuck served at the Pregnancy Resource Center of Lapeer, Michigan, for more than 20 years, after serving 36 years in church ministry alongside her pastor husband. She was faithful in service to the Lord right up to the day she entered His presence this past August 15.

Another sister in Christ, Sarah Wisler, was a founding member of the Pregnancy Helpline of St. Joseph County in Sturgis, Michigan. Except when forced to take a sabbatical, she served on the board its entire history – close to 25 years – and many times as board president. In 2015, well into her 80s, she passed away one morning at the center. The staff had just closed a time of prayer. Imagine saying, “Amen” and finding yourself in the presence of Jesus!

Both centers wondered how they’d ever replace these servants. Neither had known the meaning of the word “retire.” I’m confident both heard the blessed greeting, “Well done, good and faithful servant … enter into the joy of your Master.”

I’m inspired by their faithful service and ask myself how I’m doing. Am I on a path of finishing well? Are you? May we all lead a life of faithful service right up to the end – for His glory and for the legacy we leave behind!

As Paul said on another occasion, in Acts 20:24 – “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus.” Amen!
training. I must say I was skeptical when you and I first started talking about doing a training for our board. But surprise! The second night they opened up and participated. They could see that the training was going to be a benefit to all in the room. Ideas of how to be a better board started to pop up and soon even a friendly discussion with opposing views. Tom, I am personally very grateful for your help and all that Life Matters does throughout the world. Thanking God for the ministry you provide.”

On October 29 Tom Lothamer went to Columbia, Missouri, to participate in a PCC leadership conference hosted by the Alliance for Life of Missouri. He spoke in four workshops and represented LMW. Tom says, “What a blessing to engage in fellowship and teaching with these pro-life leaders. The energy and passion they exhibited and the desire to serve the Lord was amazing!”

Tom Lothamer traveling to Odessa, Ukraine, on August 16 to lead a board training and provide consultation and teaching for our partner, Choose Life. The board retreat was well received; some time was spent working on a revision of the ministry’s constitution. Tom also presented the Word of God in two churches on Sunday, August 20.

He then went on to Bucharest, Romania, to lead a board and staff training for Signs of Life Maternity Home. He also spent time with foreign and national mission leaders to discuss development of PCCs and how we can work together for the cause of Christ. His time with missionaries in Romania who are with the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism was especially encouraging.

In the end, it was the times of extended prayer for God’s direction for ministry, and the meals and fellowship shared with brothers and sisters that was so encouraging and profitable!

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Life Matters is pleased to welcome two new staff members this fall:

David Stout takes the position of Director of Resource Development. He’s been working in his family’s business, Stout’s Gourmet Snack Foods, while completing an MBA from Western Michigan University. He belongs to New Life Baptist Fellowship in Byron Center, Michigan, and serves as worship leader.

Eric Verstraete comes to us from the Pregnancy Resource Center of Grand Rapids, where for 13 years he coordinated the Willing to Wait leadership team and taught abstinence in public and private schools. He has a master’s degree in educational leadership from Geneva College. His position with Life Matters will be as President Pro Tem; he will become President in 2018.

What does that mean for Tom Lothamer? Having served as President for 15 of his 28 years with Life Matters, he’ll stay on in that capacity into 2018 to assist in the transition of leadership. After that, the Executive Board has asked him to continue as an ambassador for Life Matters will be as President Pro Tem; he will become President in 2018.

UPCOMING BANQUET

Please mark your calendars for our annual banquet at Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids. It will be March 15 and our guest speaker will be David Bereit, formerly with 40 Days for Life. David spoke at our 2013 banquet and was well received.

If you’d like to host a table, call our office or email Debbie at debbie@lifemattersww.org. To learn more, visit lifemattersww.org/Get-Involved/Give/Banquet.