

# Covenant Connections: BUILDING THE CHURCH TODAY AND TOMORROW

Children's Ministry Leadership Training Retreat @ Ridgehaven 

Our denomination has an amazing branch of ministry called the Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM) and wow; have I been discipled in the area of Children's Ministry! Each year, in the spring, they offer a 3-day Leadership Training Retreat (LTR) in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina at the PCA's camp and retreat center, Ridge Haven. By God's grace, this is the fourth year I have been able to attend (March 29-31, 2022). It is hard for me to express in words what this experience is like, though I will try. Several things made this time such a blessing.

One of the main blessings is a time set apart to pray. I had the privilege of praying with over 100 CM leaders, most from the PCA, and from all across the country. This cannot be overlooked as a nice thing to do. It is more than that, it's life changing. Not only did we get to pray together in large groups and small, we got to worship together, as well as attend a full worship service on Wednesday night. This year, the sermon was on Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents. Dr. Stephen Estock, pastor and CDM coordinator, had us think about the parable in terms of what our master (whom we work for) is like. He is generous, encouraging, and joyful. **Prayer and worship**, that is part of what makes LTR so amazing.

In addition, there was teaching, lots of teaching from loving saints who have served in all different kinds of PCA churches around the country. The CDM CM leadership team is amazing. In particular, this year, I attended 3 plenary sessions on our Covenant connection to God, to God's church, and to God's world. Additionally, I took courses entitled "3-Year-Olds Turn into 30-Year-Olds," "Developing a Vision and Plan for Special Events and Outreach," and "Cultural Engagement for Families: Fear and Anxiety." Choosing which course to take was not easy, as they offered many and I wish I could've gone to all of them! Additionally, lots of excellent resources were shared by the leadership team and more were available to purchase at the PCA bookstore's booth. **Learning**; that is part of what makes LTR so amazing.

In addition to prayer and worship, as well as learning, there is connection. I was able to meet in person with Steve Collins from Adults Protecting Children who has been guiding Brian and I in writing an up to date and functional Child Protection Policy. Not only that, he is able to guide me in how to implement and train our church to ensure we are being the stewards of children that God wants us to be. More to come on this in the future. I was able to meet with Lisa Updike, author of several books and creator of the VBS program we will be using this summer, to discuss with her what this could look like in our church. I was able to meet with Heather Molendyk, author of a fairly new children's curriculum on the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, as well as a brand-new curriculum



for little ones on understanding the covenant. **Connecting:** that is another part that makes LTR so incredible.

There is also the beauty and revealed majesty of being in the mountains of North Carolina and sharing meals with my 2<sup>nd</sup> church family, the CM leaders from around the country in the PCA...plus the food is really good and I didn't have to plan, shop, prep, make, or clean it up! What a treat and blessing! Seriously!



I hope you can appreciate how beneficial and influential this time at LTR was for me. God has been so gracious to allow me to go for the past 4 years, to grow me, to grow His church through His children. I pray that I can be a blessing to the church as I pass along knowledge, resources, and continued prayers for our children, the future of the church. May God continue to strengthen the entire body of LRPC, inviting us in to His work of making lifelong disciples of Jesus; children who know, believe, and tell the glorious deeds of the Lord and set their hope in Him!