

# networker

.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



*A Message From  
The Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister*

## Dealing With Conflicts That Can Tear Churches Apart

*There's a story told of a man who was stranded on a desert island. After several months, a rescue boat finally arrived. The captain asked the castaway, "What are those three huts?" "That's my house and that's my church," the man answered, pointing at two of the structures.*

*"And what's that third one over there?" asked the captain.*

*"Oh, that's where I used to go to church," replied the castaway.*

What is it that causes people to leave a church and look for a different one? While the reasons are sometimes rather benign (moving to a new neighborhood, getting married and finding a new church together, etc.), more frequently the reasons have to do with **dissatisfaction and conflict - or both!**

When someone leaves a church because of dissatisfaction, there's usually not much that can be done about it. If a person chooses to move on from a church because they "don't like the preaching," or "aren't happy with the music," or "want the children's or youth ministry to be bigger or more to their liking," most of the time, a congregation simply needs to accept the loss, wish the person the best and then continue to do what they can to make their ministries as effective as they are able - which can be challenging, particularly in smaller churches.

On the other hand, when people start leaving a church because of conflict, that's when real damage can be done and church leaders need to become very intentional and biblical in how they navigate the church through periods of tension.



## Welcome to the Association!

During the past several months the following churches, pastors and individuals have chosen to become new affiliates of the Evangelical Association:

**Immanuel Church**  
*Spring, Texas*

**Rev. Susan Ohl**  
*Hamburg, Pennsylvania*

**Rev. David A. Sims**  
*Louisville, Kentucky*

**Rev. Dr. Samuel E. Allen**  
*Lincoln, Delaware*

**Grace Lower Stone Church**  
*Rockwell, North Carolina*

**Rev. William "Bill" Mallernee**  
*Walnut Creek, Ohio*

**Zion-St. Peter UCC**  
*Pershing, Missouri*

**Rev. Larry E. Burd**  
*Nazareth, Pennsylvania*

**St. James UCC**  
*Morrison, Missouri*

**Calvary Church**  
*Milford, Delaware*

# Networker

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## Refresh – Revitalize - Release EA Convocation Planned for September 16-18 in Maryland

The purpose of the EA annual gathering is to have a time of worship, fellowship, teaching and building relationships among the wide variety of pastors, church leaders and lay people from churches across the country who enjoy connecting with the wider body of Christ through the Evangelical Association. Since the Evangelical Association does not conduct business meetings, churches **can send anyone they want** to the annual convocation. It's a wonderful opportunity to network and be energized for more effective ministry in your own local church.

**Detailed information about this year's gathering as well as registration, lodging and travel information can be found and printed out by visiting the special convocation website which is:**

<https://eaconvocation.weebly.com>

*If you do not have internet access and need a paper copy of the convocation brochure, please contact Salem Reformed Church at (301)739-9212. Give them your name and mailing address and a paper brochure will be mailed to you.*

## Regional EA Youth Retreat in Texas

A group of Evangelical Association pastors in the Texas region are planning the *Central Texas EA Youth Retreat*. The camp will take place at Camp Lost Pines in Warda, Texas from August 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. The theme will focus on John 15:1-17 and the idea that "Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches." In addition to worship sessions (led by EA pastors) there will be small groups, games, swimming, a bonfire, and many other fun activities. For more information or if you are interested in having the youth of your church attend this event, contact Pastor Jason Ford at [Jhford72@gmail.com](mailto:Jhford72@gmail.com) or (210) 658-5874.

## Welcome to the Association!

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**Susan Lowe**  
*Schertz, Texas*

**Rev. Dean Klossner**  
*Morrison, Missouri*

**Rev. David Thomas Fitzgerald**  
*Jefferson City, Missouri*

**Rev. Tad Michael Schlegel**  
*Kempton, Pennsylvania*

**Stephen Seth Britt**  
*Sugarland, Texas*

**Rev. Brent Mangus**  
*Chambersburg, Pennsylvania*



Hagerstown, MD

### **GREAT FELLOWSHIP**

Enjoy time together with other EA affiliates by joining in various tours, golf outing, or spending time with intentional revitalize sessions.

### **GREAT FOOD**

Experience local cuisine that is only known in the Maryland area. Did someone say crabcakes?

### **GREAT WORSHIP**

Inspiring messages/presentations by local EA ministers that will leave you refreshed-revitalized-released!

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September 16-18, 2022 | Salem Reformed Church  
13182 Salem Church Rd. Hagerstown, MD 21740

<https://eaconvocation.weebly.com/>

# Living Stones and Praise to Our God

## *Reflections on Convocation 2021 by Pastor John Richter*



*Dinner included a regional favorite.*

Cliff Knechtle reminded us during the closing keynote session Saturday evening at Convocation 2021 that praise is the height of our expression of love for God. If last year's gathering was indicative of anything, it was that pastors and congregational leaders in the EA continue to cry out to the Lord in praise through vibrant and enthusiastic worship. For those of us who come from congregations where singing is often timid, those praises served as an encouragement and reminded us that there is great joy for us in praise too as we come before the throne of grace in song.

After missing Convocation due to Covid-19 in 2020, we had all the more reason to praise as we joined together in worship and fellowship in the picturesque surroundings of early autumn in Connecticut. And yet we remember that praise is often hard won. It certainly came at great cost to the Father who spared not his Son, who endured the ultimate hardship bearing our sin and shame on the cross. Praise be to God who has given us a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). Between the praise, however, could be heard the weariness in the voices of many who have struggled with the challenges of the last few years. But praises poured forth none the less! So, indeed, praise be to God who refreshed and renewed our spirits as we gathered

together. It was a testimony of faith and perseverance in the midst of the challenges we've endured.

In fact, our opening keynote speaker, Nate Parks, set the tone for the weekend, exploring Psalm 16 and admonishing us to "set the Lord always before [us]." He is our strength and shield, our solid rock and fortress. Therefore, we can live in the present because he is present. We can endure the present moment of crisis, real or perceived, because we are in his presence.



*Musicians leading congregational singing during convocation.*

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# *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

## *1 Peter 1:3*

*continued from page 4*

And as we have now returned to do ministry in our own context, the encouraging story and words of Karl Vaters still serve as a needed reminder to persevere honestly not only in our personal faith but in the ministries God has called us to, each unique and according to God's own purposes as he builds his spiritual house.

The EA is grateful to host Pastors Steve Darr and Jonathan Gouthier, all of the EA pastors in New England who were part of the planning team, and the people of First Congregational Church of Torrington for their prayerful efforts to serve us. We are grateful for the healing reminder that as we turn to the Lord in humility, in faith, and in praise, he has chosen us and is building us as living stones into a spiritual house and priesthood for his glory and the good of our communities.



*Incoming EA president Tom Hendershot delivers the morning message at First Congregational*



*Keynote speaker Karl Vaters reminds church leaders that recovering from pandemic protocols may mean the church looks different in the future.*

Several years ago, *Leadership* did a survey of nearly 500 pastors on the topic of conflict. The bad news is that 95% of the pastors reported having had to deal with conflict in their churches. The good news is that 94% reported that once they made their way through the conflict, there were some positive results in their congregations. On a sad note however, 68% reported that one of the negative results of conflict in the church is damaged relationships.

Having been a local church pastor for 24 years and now the national minister of the EA for 13 years, I’ve seen the truth in these statistics played out in many churches all over the country. As a result, I believe it’s critical that churches and pastors do all they can to avoid making some common mistakes when it comes to navigating through a time of conflict in the life of the church. Here are a few thoughts:

First, **don’t let threats dictate actions.** Let’s say your church has 50 people who regularly attend on a Sunday morning. During a congregational meeting, one man stands up to complain about the style of music being used in the worship service. Debate ensues on the floor of the meeting. Finally, realizing that not everyone agrees with him, the man says, “If this church doesn’t take action and start having this particular type of music as a regular part of the service, my family and I will probably have to leave the church.” Now, this man and his family have been part of the church for more than forty years and both he and his wife have been in leadership for much of that time. The rumor is that this guy is also a big financial giver. Immediately many in this smaller congregation begin to get scared and start saying, “Maybe we need to change our music to satisfy his desires because we don’t want his family to quit the church.” Big mistake. The response to such a threat needs to sound more like this, “We appreciate your concerns and your many years of faithful service to our church and we would be sad to see you leave. Decisions about the kind of music that will be used in our worship service will continue to be made by our pastor and music leaders (or whoever is designated to make such decisions) taking into consideration the best interests of our congregation as a whole.” Hopefully the man and his family will choose to stay, but if they don’t, the church needs to let them go, along with their financial donations, and not allow threats to dictate congregational decisions.

Second, **don’t expect unanimity in every decision.** One of the challenges in many smaller congregations is that the church falls into the trap of believing all decisions in the life of the church need to be unanimous. While it’s always nice if the vote of a church board or even a congregation can be unanimous when a big decision is being made, the truth is, often times it is not. For this reason, the constitution and by-laws of most churches clearly state which votes require a simple majority or a two-thirds majority. Despite what is written, in smaller churches, the unwritten assumption that many have is that a big decision cannot be made if even one person isn’t happy about it. When this way of thinking takes hold, a church can become paralyzed and will not be able to move forward for fear of upsetting one or a small group of members. Over the years I’ve seen many congregations essentially “held hostage” by one or two very vocal or outspoken members who simply will not get on board with a new idea that the rest of the congregation is willing to embrace. In those situations the best conflict resolution is to take the vote (using a secret ballot so that peer pressure doesn’t apply), register the negative votes and then move on - even if it means those who voted against the decision are unhappy.

Third, **don’t deal with conflict via email, texting or social media.** A number of years ago I told one of my then teenage children to call someone and talk to them about a particular issue. The response I received was, “Oh dad, phones are so 1980’s!” Now, in the year 2022 we see the truth in that statement. Many people have completely stopped having phone conversations (or in person conversations) with other people, instead choosing to send texts and emails or post on one of the various social media platforms. While these electronic tools have many helpful uses, when it comes to dealing with conflict in the church, they tend to make things worse rather than better. If you recall Jesus’ words in Matthew 18, the Lord basically says that when we have a conflict with a fellow Christian we should discuss it with the person privately and if that doesn’t work, bring in a couple of respected fellow Christians to mediate, and if that doesn’t work, only then bring it to the wider body of the church. The problem I see in many churches is that conflicts between church members and/or leaders often take place online

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# Ministry & Employment Opportunities

To learn more about the following ministry & employment opportunities, please visit our website: [evangelicalassociation.org](http://evangelicalassociation.org)

## Eden Church of Edwardsville

Illinois (suburban St. Louis)  
Director of Worship Arts

## Middleton Congregational Church

Middleton, MA  
Senior Pastor  
[www.middleton.org](http://www.middleton.org)

## Becks Reformed Church

Lexington, NC  
Full-time Senior Pastor  
[www.beckschurch.com](http://www.beckschurch.com)

## Grace Lower Stone Reformed Church

Rockwell, NC  
Pastor  
<http://gracelowerstonechurch.org>

## Beulah Congregational Church

Beulah, ND  
Full-time Pastor  
[www.beulahcongregational.com](http://www.beulahcongregational.com)

## St. John's Christian Church

Archbold, OH  
Full-time Pastor of Music and Worship  
<https://stjohnsarchbold.org>

## Trinity Church

Mount Vernon, IN  
Full-time Pastor

## St. John's Morgan Hill

Easton, PA  
Full-time Senior Pastor

## St. John's United Evangelical Protestant "Burry's" Church

Rochester, PA  
Part-time Youth Director  
<http://burryschurch.org>

## Calvary Memorial Church

Racine, WI  
Full-time Senior Pastor  
<https://cmcracine.org>

## Peace and St. Peter's UCC Churches

Just North of Harrisburg, PA  
Full-time Pastor  
[www.sites.google.com/site/peaceucc0316/home](http://www.sites.google.com/site/peaceucc0316/home)

## Zion Congregational Church

Cheyenne, WY  
Pastor

## Is It Time for You (or your Church) to Join the Evangelical Association?

Affiliation with the EA is open to entire congregations as well as to individual pastors, students and lay people. Perhaps you've been reading and hearing about the EARCCC for a while, but you've never stepped across the line to actually affiliate with the association and become a part of the network. The EA is only as strong as those who choose to affiliate with us each year, so if you have never signed on, please visit our website at ~

[www.evangelicalassociation.org](http://www.evangelicalassociation.org) where you can download and print an application form. If you need to know more about the EA or if your church would like to have an informational presentation, please contact the national minister's office at ~

[namin@evangelicalassociation.org](mailto:namin@evangelicalassociation.org)  
or 314-347-9994.

## BULK COPIES OF THE NETWORKER ARE NOW AVAILABLE

If you would like a bulk shipment of ten copies of each edition of the Networker to make available to the members of your church, just contact the national office:

[natmin@evangelicalassociation.org](mailto:natmin@evangelicalassociation.org)  
or at 314-347-9994

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rather than in person. Harsh words are sent or posted electronically which makes them part of the permanent record. Beyond that, emails, texts, tweets and posts can be misinterpreted and then forwarded to people both in and outside of the church, escalating the conflict to a whole new level without doing anything to help bring biblical resolution.

The truth is, conflict is a likely reality in most churches. How a congregation and its leaders work through times of conflict will go a long way in determining the future success of the church and the ability of that congregation to do effective ministry. The list of mistakes to avoid that I've mentioned here is by no means exhaustive, but hopefully it will help if your church is one of the 95% that is dealing with, has dealt with or at some point will have to deal with a major or minor conflict.



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