



.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



No Pain No Gain

Enduring the Challenges of Church Renewal

A Message from the Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister

If you're the pastor or a member of a church that is more than ten years old, chances are you're dealing with the challenge of change. In the twenty-first century, attitudes, modes of communication and the demographic makeup of many communities are changing so fast, the typical congregation is finding it hard to adapt. As a result, many older established congregations are seeing the need for their churches to be renewed and refreshed. Those same churches are also discovering that the **process of renewal is difficult, challenging and even painful** once it is started.

A friend of mine recently began a rigorous new exercise program. In describing the program, she said, "I dread going to the gym every time, but I go because I need to go." Following the intense workout, she reports aching all over for a day or two after - yet she continues to do the program, because she knows that in the long run, her body will be healthier for having endured the pain.

Similarly, in the church, we need to come to grips with the reality that seeing our churches change and adapt to meet the challenges of twenty-first century ministry is going to involve pain. It means that existing members of churches are going to have to accept that the **way we've always done things in the past** may not be the **way we need to do things in the future** if we are going

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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:

First Congregational Church of Buena Park
Buena Park, California

Christ Reformed Church
Duncannon, Pennsylvania

Jeffrey Gillen
New Bern, North Carolina

Rev. David Podsaid
Traverse City, Michigan

Rev. M. Bryan Rice
Milford, Delaware

Rev. Scott A. Fleming
Winter Garden, Florida

Memorial Evangelical & Reformed Church
Lexington, North Carolina

Rev. Dr. Daniel Lute
Bernville, Pennsylvania

Rev. Milton "Trip" Weiler
Sheffield, Massachusetts

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to effectively reach a new generation for Christ.

Believe it or not, some of the things we consider “normal” in most modern churches were not always so ordinary. Consider the whole idea of Sunday school for a moment. Sunday school has only been around for a little over 200 years of the Christian church’s 2000 year history. Even though most modern American Christians consider Sunday School to be an institution of the church that’s been around since the beginning - it’s not.

Some of the first Sunday schools were started back in 1780 by a businessman named Robert Raikes during a time in history when young children were being worked to death in sweat shops and factories before there were laws to protect them. As children were often working 15 hours a day, six days a week, Sunday became the only day a child could go to school, so Raikes established a Sunday school with these poor children so they could learn to read, write and do arithmetic. **Raikes saw a need among the people in his community and he mobilized church people to meet that need by doing something they had not done before.**

What is also interesting is that this idea of Sunday school was frowned upon by many Christians back in the early 1800's who thought it was a radical new thing that might be bad for the church. At the Boston Park Street Church in the year 1817 a group of church members met to discuss the formation of a Sunday school, but many in the church objected giving the following reasons:

- Having a Sunday School might be a desecration of the Sabbath as people would be doing “work” on Sunday.
- Children ought to be taught religion by their parents at home, not in the church.
- Professing Christians ought to be engaging in reading, meditation, and prayer at home instead of going out to teach the families of other children on the Sunday day of rest.

So, you can see, even the idea of Sunday school, which is considered a necessity in most churches these days was, at one time, considered to be a **radical new and preposterous idea!**

I share that story to remind you that any church that is willing to seek new and creative ways of ministering to the people in the world around us is **going to have to adapt**. Some of this adaptation, like a tough workout, is going to hurt - but it will be

well worth it.

As believers, we cannot compromise on the essential truths of our faith, the person and work of Christ, the authority of scripture and other non-negotiables. However, when it comes to the methods we have used over the years to convey those truths to those who have yet to hear the Gospel, we must remain flexible and willing to change for the glory of God’s Kingdom.

The EA is now on Facebook!

Want to connect with other EA members around the country?

Check out the EA's “Group” and “Fan” pages on Facebook. Just search for *Evangelical Association of Reformed & Congregational Christian Churches* and check us out!!

Evangelical Association Mission Network (EAMN)

Identifying and Connecting Missionaries with the Local Church

by Ed & Shirley Briggeman, Steve Darr, EAMN Coordinators

The Evangelical Association Mission Network is a ministry of the association that seeks to identify faithful missionaries who are serving the Lord around the world and help them connect with local EA churches for prayer, support and ministry partnership. These missionaries are highlighted each year in the EA Desk Calendar can often serve as an excellent resource to help local churches develop and expand their congregation's commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Currently, the EAMN has 18 missionaries and 10 mission projects in the network. If there are missionaries from your EA church who are not yet part of the EAMN, application forms can be found on the EA website (evangelicalassociation.org) by clicking on "Network" and then "Missions."



The Lion of Judah Academy

EAMN Mission Project: Lion of Judah Ministries

Greetings from Lion of Judah Academy! If you haven't yet seen the photos of the new dorm project at Lion of Judah Academy in Tanzania, please visit the

link below...it will take you to the school's Flickr Albums site...there are also other photo albums there you may enjoy. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thelionofjudah/albums>

We are expecting about 750 students this year, in classes from Awali (kindergarten) to Form 6 (university preparation)...that includes 14 grade levels. The new dorm was just started in December while everyone was on break, and it will be done sometime in March, but students have already moved into some of the rooms for the new semester.



*Josephales Mtebe, Director
The Lion of Judah Academy*



Returning students

Pray about the start of the school year;

- for the safe arrival of all returning students...some travel from as far as three days away
- for God's Holy Spirit to equip all the students and all the staff with the spiritual graces they will need to succeed academically, and thrive spiritually
- for need financial resources for all the students and families; and for God's provision of needed supplies, materials, equipment and food for the school.

Pray about the Drought in Tanzania and food shortages – the entire nation of Tanzania is currently suffering a major drought with the related food shortages. Drought can be serious in North American and European countries, but there are almost always alternative food supplies...even if they are expensive. That is not always the case in East Africa. A growing drought problem is gripping the entire country. We know, from experience, this means significantly elevated food prices for the supplies the school needs...and if the spring rains are not sufficient for a harvest, people are going to experience drastic food shortages. Please pray for relief and for rain. The spring rains are due in March-April-May.

Pray for our School Director Josephales Mtebe's father who has become seriously ill, and is currently hospitalized. He has pneumonia, but also, he is unable to keep down food and needs nutrition. Please pray for Sosthenes Mtebe. He is a wonderful man, and a dear supporter of the ministry of Lion of Judah Academy.

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Recent Prayer Requests from EAMN Missionaries:

From Liz M., church-planting in France:

- Pray for funds (\$28,000) to complete the necessary replacement of the façade at Lighthouse of Friendship where I work daily in Lyon, France, building relationships with those who don't know Jesus.
- Pray for the Lord to call godly men to lead Alliance, the church plant here, so our new friends may worship in their own language and culture. To God be the Glory!



From Ken & Judy Hollingsworth, helping Bible translators in Cameroon:

- Urgent personal request for our grandson, Cole: 3 months old, hospitalized in mid-January for an infected lymph node in his neck, had surgery and is home recovering. Tests will determine the cause, but Judy has flown to NC to care for Cole for 3 weeks so his mother may return to work.



- Pray for the wife and 10 children of a faithful translator on the Mofu translation team. Jean-Pierre Kotchitang was in a serious motorcycle accident Jan. 21 and died Jan. 28. He was also a Baptist pastor and will be greatly missed by our ministry.
- Praise report: the computer we sent to the M-H group arrived in Cameroon, now in the hands of the translator with the proper software installed, and a mentor ready to help. Pray for technical issues to be solved so translation may continue. Thank you!

From Joel & Sylvia Curtiss in the Philippines:

- Pray for our transition and sale of all our belongings in leaving the Philippines, and for God's provision in affordable housing, transportation, furniture, appliances, clothing, and more, when we return to the USA to be closer to our family.
- Pray for our travels back to northern Michigan in mid-March, where we will serve Emmanuel Evangelical Church in Petoskey as Associate Pastor and assist in Ministry/Leadership Training. Thanks for all your encouragement, prayers, and support over the past 5 years. We are blessed!



From Leo Seminov with The Evangelistic Association of Russia (TEAR) in the Ukraine:

- Please pray for people to join our short-term missions to Ukraine being planned for 2017: (deadline March 15) for April 21-30 (visiting several schools and orphanages around Lviv)
- June 2-11 (Summer Camp program)
- October 20-29 (English Camp, teaching)
- Or any other dates your missions team requests through-out the year!

For more information about any of these missionaries and projects, contact the EAMN Missions Coordinators at missions@evangelicalassociation.org

From Wild Hog to Apple Dumplings

A Culinary Tour of EA Church Cuisine

Food events are mainstays for most local churches. Many congregational leaders report that the simple act of getting church people working together to prepare food (and inviting the community to join them) creates a wonderful sense of unity and is, simply put – fun!

In the Evangelical Association, the church food events held across the country are as varied as the respective congregations and their committed and gifted members. Let's visit some of our EA churches and learn of the food events they offer each year. Maybe you could make plans to visit some of them!

Barbecue in Berne, Indiana...

We begin our journey in the Hoosier state of Indiana, in the town of Berne where we find Cross Community Church holding their spring auction and barbecue - a great tradition for 45 years. The purpose of the event? To support a variety of missions and ministry organizations. The pig and half chickens are roasted, and potato salad, baked beans and applesauce are prepared to make this an incredibly delicious meal! Professional auctioneers are even brought in to make their spring event more fun and exciting.



Auctioned to the public are various homemade food items such as caramels, turtles, cinnamon rolls and pies.

One year, a ground cherry pie was offered up for auction. As the bidding began to increase, the person who had baked the pie began to bid for her own pie! She continued to bid even when the auctioneer tried to convince her that she could bake another for herself. The lady won the bid for \$105 and later confessed that she it had occurred to her that she had forgotten to add sugar to the pie and didn't want anyone else to get a sour pie. Now, each year the auctioneer will jokingly ask if her pies contain all the ingredients.

Also, in the fall of the year, a women's group at Cross Community Church hosts a soup, sandwich and salad luncheon just before packing Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. Appropriately, the group's name is LIFE.

Chili in Northwest Ohio...

From Indiana, our next stop is a church in beautiful Northwest Ohio. Krista Payne describes her church's tradition of harvest festivals which began as a family friendly alternative to Halloween. A festival featured favorite is the chili cook-off where chili samples may be tried for a free-will offering. For many years, there have been over 30 chili entries. More recently, a *Steeple-to-Steeple 5K* has been added with another church ... that congregation happens to be 3.1 miles (5 kilometers) from Krista's church!

Years ago, the big food event for the church was the spring Chicken Dinner which included homemade bone-in chicken, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, coleslaw, rolls and a dessert. Ladies in the Women's Guild would cook for days and serve hundreds of meals. Since most of the ladies have passed, the church now receives a "Chickenless Supper" offering in honor of those wonderful ladies' many years of service. Funds are used to help with many small, church-centered ministries.

Dumplings in Bernville, Pennsylvania...

A seven-hour jaunt eastward will bring us to Bernville, PA, where the women of St. Thomas Church have their annual, fall Apple Dumpling sale. Each year the ladies make 1,500 to 2,000 dumplings ... by hand! The apples are hand-peeled, the dough is made fresh and the dumplings are baked at the church.

Retired pastor Bill Miller reports that proceeds of the sale go to missions and repairs on the church building.



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Barbecue and Chili in Hagerstown, Maryland...

A few hours from Bernville, is Hagerstown, MD where Salem Reformed Church had their very first barbecue/chili cook-off a year ago.

The event was a fundraiser to help cover the costs of their upcoming Marriage Enrichment event, Valentine's Day weekend, followed by a six-week Bible Study on the subject. Those events are then followed by a weekend Spring Marriage Enrichment even at Camp Shepherd.

Great food, to be sure, but what a wonderful, intentional focus on strengthening marriages!

Chocolate Eggs and Ham Pot Pie in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia...

Southwest from Hagerstown, nestled in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia is Mayland Christian Church. The small congregation has become quite famous for their chocolate-covered eggs made each Easter since 1986. The eggs are produced in three mouth-watering flavors: peanut butter, coconut and cherry. Powdered sugar is used as the base, the three flavors are added and then the eggs are dipped in chocolate. About 2,000 eggs are sold each year!

Another popular event at the church is their country ham pot pie. Made with country ham broth, dumplings, diced potatoes and shredded ham. The pot pie is sold by the quart.

Brunswick Stew in Elon, North Carolina...

Over 200 miles south I'm sure you'll enjoy visiting Shallow Ford Christian Church in Elon, NC. Pastor Steve Regan reports that his congregation has quite a history making Brunswick Stew. Last fall, as time for the sale approached, the phone just continued to ring for more requests. As always, the stew was a sellout: 1,500 quarts!



Chicken Pie in Lexington, North Carolina...

Less than an hour away, just off of I-85 South we find Pilgrim Reformed Church in Lexington, NC. Long before anyone can remember, Pilgrim Church has served chicken pie suppers. Although lunch has been added, it's still referred to as "supper." Originally, for these fund-raising meals, chickens were killed at home, cooked and brought to the church to be made into pies.

In fact, to help pay for a new educational building, the church members held a chicken supper each quarter. Later, a new sanctuary was paid for in the same way.

Once a year, about 350 chicken pies are made and sold unbaked and frozen. Nearly the same number of pies are made in November for their annual supper, along with chicken and dumplings and ham biscuits.

By-the-way, a special group of ladies in the church call themselves, "The Quilting Sisters." This small group meets together each Wednesday morning at the church to stitch quilts. One of these quilts is always raffled away at the November Supper and another sold by silent auction.

Not only have these suppers paid construction costs for church buildings, but proceeds are shared with local charitable organizations, such as the homeless shelter, food for the elderly, a backpack program providing food for needy children, etc.

Hog Roast in Concord, North Carolina...

Only forty-five minutes from Lexington, we visit a third North Carolina congregation: Boger Reformed Church, Concord. Each fall, the congregation holds its annual *Lord's Acre Sale* - a tradition for about 50 years!

To prepare for the event, some of the men of the church stay up all night cooking hogs for the barbecue. The ladies bake cakes and other desserts, while other members make preparation for the influx of people coming from all over the community.

In the parking lot, crafts, pottery and yard sale items are also available for purchase. Most everything is donated by the generosity of members and friends of Boger Church.

Proceeds go to a variety of church projects and missions but one of the most important aspects of the event is bringing friends together from across the community.

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Wild Game Dinner in Cibolo, Texas...

To get to the last church in our journey, by car, you must travel nearly 18 hours west, across the Mississippi River, to Cibolo, TX! St. Paul Evangelical Church is located in the San Antonio - New Braunfels area.

This congregation's approach to church fundraisers are a little unique as, each year they sponsor a community *Wild Game Dinner*! At one recent dinner, eight wild hogs were butchered along with other game. Included is an archery contest and other game-theme events.

Pastor Jason Ford says the Wild Game Dinner is "always well attended and always lots of fun!"

I hope you enjoyed this brief excursion. Many thanks to the representatives of these churches for submitting their information!

Article written by Steve Disher

Spring Regional Gatherings Planned

Mid-Atlantic Regional

Saturday, March 25, 9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Host Church in Bernville, Pennsylvania. The theme will be "Overcoming Obstacles" and will include workshops, worship and lunch. Cost is \$10 per person and registration information can be found on the EA website. If you need more information, contact the church directly at 610-488-1150.

North Carolina Regional

Saturday, April 22 at Shallow Ford Christian Church in Elon, North Carolina. The day will include worship, lunch and a seminar by our National Minister, Jim Barnes called "New Life for Old Churches." More information will follow.

Ministry and Employment Opportunities

St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church

Cullman AL
Minister of Music and Worship Arts
Full or part time

Church of the Valley

Santa Clara CA
Pastor—Full time

Sharon Congregational Church

Sharon CT
Pastor—Full time

First Reformed Church

Bluffton IN
Director of Children and Youth
30 hours per week plus housing

Zion Countryside Church along with St. Paul United Church of Church

Near Fairbury NE
Pastor

Shiloh Reformed Church

Faith NC
Pastoral Assistant—Part time

Memorial Evangelical and Reformed Church

Lexington NC
Pastor—Full time

St. Paul's Evangelical Church Trail Run

Small rural congregation near Sardis OH
Pastor—Part time

Grace Reformed Church

Troxelville PA
Ordained Pastor—Part time

St. John's Church of Mt. Aetna

Mt. Aetna PA
Pastor—Part time

Swamp Christian Fellowship

Reinholds PA
Senior Pastor—Full time

Trinity Christian Church

New Bloomfield PA
Energetic Pastor

Mount Bethel Church

McClure PA
Interim Pastor

Salem Reformed Church

Bethel, PA
Pastor—Part time

To learn more about these ministry and employment opportunities, please visit our website: evangelicalassociation.org

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Desk and Digital Calendars Now Available

The Evangelical Association 2016-2017 Desk Calendar is the official desk calendar of the Evangelical Association. The 16 month calendar (September 2016 through December 2017) features useful tools to enhance your church's ministry including lectionary readings for Sundays and major Christian holidays, liturgical colors, a pictorial listing of missionaries in the Mission Renewal Network, a listing of valuable ministry resources, along with contact information to connect you with EA officers and ministries. The EA Calendar is a great ministry tool not only for pastors but also for church council leaders, mission committees and worship planning teams. Make sure you order enough copies for all of the ministry team leaders in your congregation. Those who purchase the printed calendar also receive access to our downloadable digital desk calendar powered by BibleGateway.com for use on personal computers, tablets and other mobile devices.

The calendars are priced as follows: \$15.00 each for 1-2, \$13.00 each for 3-5 and \$12.00 each for 6 or more. The "digital only" version is \$10.00. Prices include packing and shipping at no extra charge To order the EA Desk Calendar with a credit/debit card, visit the EA Store (www.evangelicalassociation.net/earccc/store/) OR to pay by check you may send an email to natmin@evangelicalassociation.org or phone toll free 877-424-1472. Be sure to indicate quantity and the address to which you want the calendars shipped. Advance payment is not required. We will enclose an invoice with your order from which to pay - we trust you!

