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.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



When A Pandemic Gets Personal

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

When the pandemic was announced a few months ago, I had to look the word up. The word “epidemic” was familiar to me, so I wondered what made this different. Of course, I soon discovered that a pandemic is just a giant version of an epidemic in that it spreads across the entire country or even the whole world.

Now given that a pandemic is something that happens on a global scale and impacts literally hundreds of millions of people in multiple countries, it’s easy to start having all kinds of opinions about it, particularly if you live in an area that doesn’t seem to have very much of the disease nearby. In recent weeks, people have started taking sides, calling names and becoming very entrenched in their opinions as to whether this virus scare is a “huge problem” or just an “overblown panic reaction” that is destroying the world economy and putting millions out of work.

In keeping with my intentionally boring presence on social media, I generally keep my opinions to myself when friends start taking sides and casting blame. However, one thing I do know is that regardless of your opinion about the seriousness of our society’s reaction to the virus - **when the pandemic gets personal it will mean something to you.**

Back in March, when many states were only just beginning to report confirmed cases of the virus, I found out that one of those cases was an old friend of mine. No one knows how he contracted the disease, but by the time I learned of the situation, he was already in the hospital on a respirator, unable to receive visits even from his own family.

The man was someone I had known for more than thirty years. Over the years I had spent many fun times with him and had also prayed with him during tragic and difficult moments in his life.

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:

Eden Church
Edwardsville, Illinois

Lakeview Community Church
Burlington, North Carolina

St. John-Hill UCC
Boyetown, Pennsylvania

Rev. Dr. Scott R.P. Janney
Hellertown, Pennsylvania

Robert L. Miller
New Braunfels, Texas

Rev. Thomas A. Kiepert
Jacobus, Pennsylvania

Rev. Kevin L. Becker
Spring Grove, Pennsylvania

Samantha M. Grass
Concord, North Carolina

Robert A. Pineda
Deltona, Florida

Nathan Williams
Cullman, Alabama

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Sadly, a few weeks after contracting the virus, my friend succumbed to complications of the illness and departed for his home in heaven. The funeral service was of course, private and small in keeping with the stay at home order in effect. Perhaps at a later date there will be a larger celebration of his life that friends will be able to attend.

The simple truth is - I will miss him. We only saw each other a few times each year at various social gatherings - but now that he is gone, there will be someone missing the next time we're able to meet again.

When the pandemic gets personal, it hurts.

I'm reminded of one of the shortest verses in the Bible which is found in John 11:35 where we read, "Jesus wept." The context of this verse is the situation where Jesus has been notified of the death of his good friend Lazarus - and as Mary (Lazarus' sister) is weeping, so too, Jesus himself weeps over the death of a friend.

As our world and the church continue dealing with the impact of this international pandemic, let us never let the "global" nature of it cause us to forget the individual impact of these events on specific people. For some, the events of the past few months have barely registered economically and socially, for others they have been cataclysmic resulting in the loss of employment, housing or even someone's life.

Jesus lived and walked among us during a time of massive social upheaval during the days of the Roman Empire. Nations would rise and fall around him and disease would claim the lives of people in the communities where he walked. Yet in the midst of it all, **Jesus always kept it personal**, weeping at the death of a friend, reaching out to heal the sickness of someone who reached out to him and encouraging his followers to do the same.

Always remember that **even a global pandemic is personal** - if not for you, then for someone else who will need the love and mercy of Christ to get them through.

Please Support the EA with your Gifts and Prayers

The Evangelical Association continues to exist financially with about half of our expenses covered by the annual dues of our affiliated churches, pastors and individuals and the remaining budgeted needs being met by additional donations from those who are led by the Lord to support the ministry. During these current uncertain times, we ask that you prayerfully consider continuing or beginning to support the work of the EA through your financial gifts and prayers. Donations can be mailed to the national office or made electronically by going to our website and clicking on the "donate" button.

He Won't Touch Them With A Ten Foot Pole

Churches deal with financial impact of the pandemic

Evangelical Association pastor Kevin Becker knew that with the suspension of regular worship services at his church in Jacobus, Pennsylvania, there was a chance that financial giving to the church might suffer. In an effort to comply with “distancing” rules in his community while inviting his parishioners to continue their weekly giving, he came up with a creative plan. “I let the people in the church know that on a certain day each week I would be at the church building to receive their gifts,” Becker said. “I also promised them that I wouldn’t touch them with a ten foot pole.” He fulfilled this promise by strapping a container to the end of a long flag pole. Whenever someone drives up to bring an offering, he approaches their vehicle with the pole and bucket so they can drop their offering in while still maintaining generous physical distancing.



First Protestant Church volunteers offer free prayer outside a local market

While not every church is using a pole and bucket, pastors and church leaders across the country are dealing with the financial implications of the current pandemic in a variety of ways. For many congregations, the suspension of “in person” worship services is leading to an increase in online and electronic giving. In churches where a large percentage of the congregation do not use computers or have an online presence, pastors are using traditional mail to send notes of encouragement to their people and asking church members to continue to support the work of the church by mailing in donations.

At the Heart of Christ Church, Pastor Rich Dubbs reports that the number of people tuning in to their online Sunday services is more than double the number of people who regularly attend in person. “We’ve actually been receiving donations to the church from people we’ve never met who are watching our services online and receiving encouragement from them,” reported Pastor Dubbs. Meanwhile, other churches are dealing with the fallout of seeing people in their churches losing jobs and other sources of income.

In the uncertain economic environment our country is currently facing, many congregations in the Evangelical Association are continuing or beginning outreach and service ministries designed to help those who are suffering. At Bethesda Evangelical Church in St. Louis, Missouri the congregation organized a “drive up” food donation event to help restock a local community food pantry while the members of Beaver’s Chapel Christian Church in Zebulon, North Carolina continue to offer a limited food pantry out of their own church facility. Meanwhile, at First Protestant Church in Texas, members of the church received permission to set up a “free prayer” table to offer spiritual assistance outside a local market, complete with hand sanitizer and face masks.



Bethesda Church in St. Louis conducts drive up food collection for local pantry

Churches Adapt Public Worship Services



Pastor Duane Howser leads drive in worship at Ruslin Hills Church in Dover, Ohio

With federal, state and local officials suggesting or even mandating that groups of no more than ten people gather at one time and that in all public gatherings, people maintain physical distance from one another of several feet, churches across the Evangelical Association made fast and dramatic changes to the way they do public worship. For many pastors, the first week of corporate worship after stay at home orders went into effect was nothing more than the pastor speaking from home being recorded on a smartphone to be uploaded to the church's social media page, video sharing service or website. Within a short time however, most congregations became more creative, not only by enhancing the quality of their "video" services, but also by adding such things as "drive-in" worship as options to continue the practice of praising the Lord, hearing his Word and even celebrating the sacraments on a regular basis.

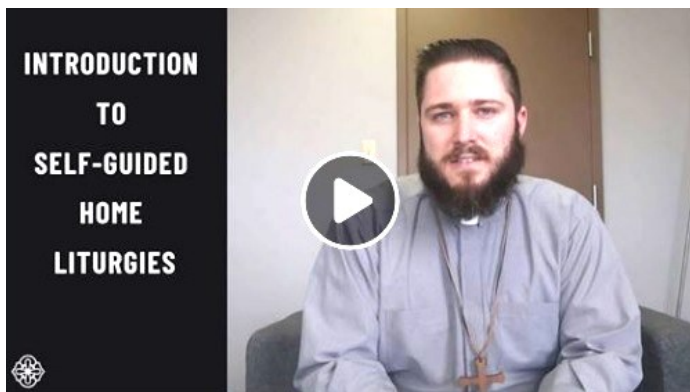
Pastor Chris Kruchkow of Cross Church in Berne, Indiana preached his Easter message from the back of a flatbed truck set up in the parking lot while broadcasting through a small FM transmitter into the car radios of his parishioners. Others, who did not have access to the radio equipment, simply cranked up the volume on the sound system.

The Rev. Jeffrey Willey of Femme Osage UCC (Evangelical and Reformed) in Augusta, Missouri communicated with all of the neighbors within ear shot of the church parking lot, letting them know in advance that they might hear the worship service coming from the church parking lot on Easter

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Worship team at Church of the Valley in Santa Clara, California goes online with lyrics for congregational singing



Pastor Chris Hirschy at Salem Magley Church in Decatur, Indiana designs online liturgy for the congregation

Online and Drive In Events Become Popular

Sunday. Fortunately, no one objected, and people from neighboring churches that had simply canceled their worship services also chose to attend.

The Femme Osage church has continued drive-in services even after Easter and was able to purchase a small FM transmitter to increase the quality of the event. Pastor Willey said, “Our normal attendance during the planting season might be twenty to thirty people, however our drive-in services have been running as high as 90 people, many of whom are coming from surrounding communities. It’s much less threatening for our members to invite friends to our drive-in service than it is to ask them to come into the church building and we are seeing many people visit who otherwise would not be at our church.”

As the country slowly begins to reopen, pastors and church leaders are being faced with the challenging task of determining how and when they will begin holding public worship and fellowship events. With the idea of “physical distancing” remaining popular, even as things begin to open up, some churches are planning to add worship services to reduce the number of people in the building at one time. Pastor Ron Shifley of Immanuel Evangelical Church in Needville, Texas has already reopened with a new “seniors only” service, followed by a second service and a continuing online service to reach as many people as possible. How and when to resume Sunday school programs, activities for children and youth, preschools and other common parts of a church routine is on the mind of many in church leadership.



Pastor Jeffrey Willey preaches outdoors during drive in worship at Femme Osage UCC in Augusta, Missouri



Arriving for drive in worship at Salem Church in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania



Immanuel Evangelical Church in Needville, Texas reopens with an additional worship service for seniors

**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

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
or 877-424-1472.

Stay At Home Orders and Travel Restrictions Impact EA Events

As political leaders continue to evaluate each state and county's response to the pandemic, numerous stay at home orders and travel restrictions have resulted in the postponement of the EA Mid Atlantic regional gathering which was to be held in March in Bernville, Pennsylvania. Similarly, the organizers of the North Carolina regional gathering decided to cancel this year's event which would have been held at the end of April.

Currently, the host church and organizing team for our Evangelical Association national gathering are still moving forward with plans for our annual event. The theme of this year's national convocation is *You Are Living Stones* which is scheduled to be held **October 16-18, 2020** at First Congregational Church in Torrington, Connecticut. Given that the event is still several months away, it has not been canceled or postponed.

With all of the uncertainty about the spread of the contagion however, the planning team will make a final decision by the middle of the Summer as to whether or not the travel and gathering restrictions resulting from the current pandemic are still at a level that would prevent our convocation from being held safely. If the event ends up being postponed for this year, it will be held at the same location in October 2021. As this is the first convocation of the EA held in New England, the date has been moved to the month of October to give people the opportunity to view the famous autumn foliage in that part of the country. For current information on convocation visit <https://firstcong.com/ea-2020>.

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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@](mailto:natmin@evangelicalassociation.org)

evangelicalassociation.org

or toll free at 877-424-1472

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!!**

Steve Hollinger to Serve as EA Regional Representative

Given the great concentration of EA pastors and churches in the Mid-Atlantic region, the board of directors recently appointed the Rev. Steve Hollinger to join the EA team of volunteer regional representatives who serve among our association. Pastor Steve is recently retired from full-time ministry and has more than 35 years of local church ministry experience. His first church was in suburban Philadelphia followed by 24 years of service as the pastor of Salem Evangelical and Reformed Church in Reamstown, Pennsylvania. Steve has been part of the EA since 2006 and has been involved in regional activities for many years. Responding to his recent appointment, Pastor Steve said, "I want to do my best to minister to pastors in local churches and hopefully be instrumental in building and strengthening the relationships between pastors and churches in the EA in our area." Pastor Steve can be reached at revstevhollinger@gmail.com or 717-468-5449.



*Rev. Steve Hollinger appointed
Evangelical Association
Regional Representative*

Ministry and Employment Opportunities

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

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Decatur, Illinois
Pastor—Full Time

St. Paul's Reformed Church

Clear Spring, MD
Pastor—Full Time

Middleton Congregational Church

Middleton, MA
Senior Pastor

St. Paul's Reformed Church

China Grove, NC
Pastor—Full or Part-time

Pleasant Ridge Christian Church

Greensboro, NC
Music Director—Part-time

Shallow Well Church

Central North Carolina
Pastor—Full Time

New Life Fellowship Church

Newton, NC
Pastor—Full Time

Beulah Congregational Church

Beulah N.D
Pastor—Full Time

Loyal Evangelical Church

Loyal, OK
Pastor—Part-time

St John Hill, UCC

Boyertown, PA
Pastor—Full Time

Scotland Community Church

Scotland, SD
Solo Pastor

Immanuel Evangelical Church

Needville, TX
Youth Pastor—Full Time

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National Minister

**Evangelical Association
of Reformed and Congregational
Christian Churches**

**9051 Watson Road #241
St. Louis, MO 63126**

E-mail:

natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

Web

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Desk and Digital Calendars Now Available

The Evangelical Association 2019 - 2020 Desk Calendar & Ministry Planner is the official desk calendar of the Evangelical Association. The 17 month calendar (August 2019 through December 2020) 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 EA Mission 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.

The calendars are priced as follows:

\$15.00 each for 1-2 / \$13.00 each for 3-5 / \$12.00 each for 6 or more

(Prices include packing and shipping at no extra charge)

The EA also offers a 2019-2020 Digital Calendar & Ministry Planner that can be utilized on a iPad or other mobile device. The Digital Calendar is a PDF version that contains the same information as the spiral bound print edition, but also allows the user to read the lectionary readings powered by Bible Gateway, and add notes and appointments to editable calendar dates. A free Adobe Acrobat Reader App needs to be downloaded on your mobile device for full functionality.

The "digital only" version is \$10.00

You can order the EA Desk Calendar by:

1. Sending an email to natmin@evangelicalassociation.org or calling toll free 877-424-1472. Be sure to indicate quantity and the address to which you want the calendar(s) shipped. No advance payment is required. We will enclose an invoice with your order from which to pay – we trust you!
2. Visiting the online store found on our website <http://evangelicalassociation.org>. There you can place your order making a secure payment with a credit/debit card through PayPal and we will then send the calendar(s) to you and/or you will receive the required link to download your digital copy.



EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION
2019-2020 Desk Calendar and Ministry Planner

