

FALL ~ 2016

networker

.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



Nones on The Run... And Not Toward Your Church!

A Message from the Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister

In his book *The Rise of the Nones*, James Emery White points out that the fastest growing religious group in America are those who, when asked if they have a religious affiliation, answer with the word “none.” A recent study by the Pew Forum reported that nearly one in five Americans (19.3%) now claim no religious identity and the National Study of Youth and Religion points out that a **full one third of Americans under the age of thirty claim no religious affiliation.**

So who are the “nones?” Well, according to White, in some cases they are those who were raised totally outside of organized religion, others became unhappy with their religion and left, and the rest are generally people who never really engaged with religion in the first place even though they were raised in a religious household. The reality is, even those who were raised in church are not coming back, instead, they are simply choosing to remain unaffiliated.

What is perhaps even more disturbing, is that many of the “nones” are not seeking a religious identity either. During the past three or four decades the trend in Christian churches was to find ways to welcome and invite the “seeker” to come to church. This was based on the assumption that people were looking for God and/or a religious identity, and the church simply needed to adapt to make such people feel more comfortable. The new religiously unaffiliated are, by and large not even seeking, instead, **they are “religiously indifferent”** according to White—they’re not actively against religion, it’s just not a priority for them. They may report believing in God, but seeking *continued on page 2*

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:

Rev. Harold Nance
Raleigh, North Carolina

Rev. Phillip A. Ross
Marietta, Ohio

Rev. Mark S. Drinkall
Petoskey, Michigan

Grace Community Church
Grantsville, Maryland

Rev. Dr. Wallace C. “Junior” Gaither
Salisbury, North Carolina

Zion Countryside Church
Fairbury, Nebraska

Rev. Darlene King
Trenton, North Carolina

St. Paul UCC
Jansen, Nebraska

Rev. Steven R. Azzara
Rosenberg, Texas

Networker

FALL—2016

Publishing Staff

Editor: Pastor Jeff Siems

Design Editor: Judy O'Neil

Networker is published quarterly as the official newsletter of the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches. Inclusion of an article or advertisement does not indicate endorsement by the Evangelical Association.

Subscription:

Networker is a free publication. To receive a copy of the *Networker*, e-mail circulation at: natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

Printed in the United States.

To reprint any *Networker* content, contact the editorial office by e-mail: natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

Order:

To order back-issues or additional copies of the *Networker* e-mail: natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

Board Officers:

Rev. Jeff Siems, President
Rev. Dr. John Richter, Vice President
Rev. Rich Dubbs, Secretary
Rev. Ed Briggeman, Treasurer
Rev. Daryl Higgins, Representative of the Corporate Member

Nones on the Run...and Not Toward Your Church!" continued from page 1

to understand God in the context of any religious system just isn't something they're interested in doing.

So what does that mean for the church? Well, it means we need to adapt and change our strategies for reaching out. I remember talking to an older pastor who led churches during the 1940's and 1950's in America. When I asked him how the church grew in those days, he said, "We would go out into the neighborhoods and knock on doors. When people answered, we would ask them if they were Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. If they said 'Protestant,' we would invite them to church - and that's how our church grew to several hundred."

The problem many congregations have is we're still trusting in that same model that worked for many churches fifty or sixty years ago. We assume that if we have a nice church building, call a pastor who can preach a decent sermon, have an adequate music program and a good ministry for children and teenagers, people will come looking for us - they will wander into our church buildings and say to themselves, "This is what I've been looking for, I think I'll start coming every Sunday." But that is not the response that the new generation of the religiously unaffiliated typically have when they drive past a church building.

Instead, those of us who are part of the institutional church in America today need to realize that **just because we've built it, that doesn't mean they will come.** The religiously unaffiliated aren't even looking for a church - it's not on their radar. As a result, those of us who are part of the 21st century church in America are going to have to start thinking and acting more as missionaries to people living in a culture where Christianity is no longer the dominant "public" religion. We are going to have to recognize that outreach to those living in our increasingly secular and religiously unaffiliated culture will need to involve having conversations with those who do not share our world view or even a basic understanding of a Christian value system. Like ambassadors in a foreign country, the job of the Christian in America is increasingly going to be to show the people around us what it's like to hold citizenship in the Kingdom of God while continuing to live in the kingdom of this world.

The good news is, God has been touching hearts and the Holy Spirit has been converting people throughout the world in those kinds of situations since the beginning. For those of us who are American Christians, it will take some getting

used to - but for our fellow believers in other parts of the world, it's the way things have always been - and guess where Christianity is still growing? In those other parts of the world!

Even though we're facing a cultural shift in the West (America, Europe, etc.), in places like Africa, Asia and what is often referred to as the "Global South," **Christianity is growing at an unprecedented rate - so take heart!** Although we may be facing some challenging days here in our country when it comes to reaching the "nones" for Jesus, nothing is impossible for God. As believers we need to be open to the opportunities God will place before us as we seek to be ambassadors for Christ in a culture of increasingly disinterested people.

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!!

KNOTS IN THE NET

Getting to know the Congregations, Clergy and Laity of the Evangelical Association

275 Years of Celebrating God's Faithfulness

The Rev. Steve Darr - First Congregational Church – Torrington, Connecticut

The banners read "Celebrating God's Faithfulness" and can be seen hanging on the side of the old white colonial church on the corner announcing the church's 275th anniversary. Gathered on October 21, 1741 by settlers who were still subjects of the King of England, the First Congregational Church of Torrington is the founding church of the city. During the early years, the church played a significant role in American history as the congregation was the first in America to ordain a man of African descent, the Rev. Lemuel Haynes who went on to serve as the church's pastor for two years during the late eighteenth century. According to current pastor, Steve Darr, "While the act itself was not that significant historically, the name associated with it is – beyond that, the famous abolitionist John Brown was born just up the road and baptized in our church."



As one of the oldest churches in the Evangelical Association, Pastor Steve says the congregation is excited about the future. "God is blessing us in so many ways," he stated. "The church has had its ups and downs but we continue to remain focused on Jesus. We are a Bible based, Christ centered, Holy Spirit led church. We have committed ourselves to the authority of Scripture and to minister together to our community." Although the church has been around for a very long time, the congregation is mobilizing to meet the needs of a new generation.

"We recently completed a new addition to the building which houses Christian Learning Center," Pastor Steve continued.

"The congregation knew how important it is to attract young families to the church, so we decided to build the addition. Trusting in God's provision through the generosity of the church membership and a gift from an estate, we were able to complete the project debt free. That is just a small example of how God has been faithful to us. We continue to pray to remain faithful to him. The future looks bright as we seek to do the will of God. We are looking into opening a Christian Day Care for infants and finding other ways to serve our neighbors."

The old white church on the corner is still vibrant and alive. God continues to work in their midst. His faithfulness never fails.

Pastor Steve Darr, in full 18th century costume, is prepared to celebrate the 275th anniversary of the First Congregational Church.



CONVOCATION 2016

St. John's Church, Cullman Alabama

"You Will Be a Blessing"

In September, people from all across the country gathered in Cullman, Alabama for the 18th Annual Convocation of the Evangelical Association. This year's theme was *You Will Be a Blessing* based on the passage in Genesis 12:2 where God promises to bless all nations through Abraham and his offspring. Given that the culture of the United States is becoming increasingly post-Christian, several of the speakers at this year's event focused on how modern day Christians can continue to fulfill this promise of being a blessing to others even when the people around us may not view God or His plans in a favorable way.



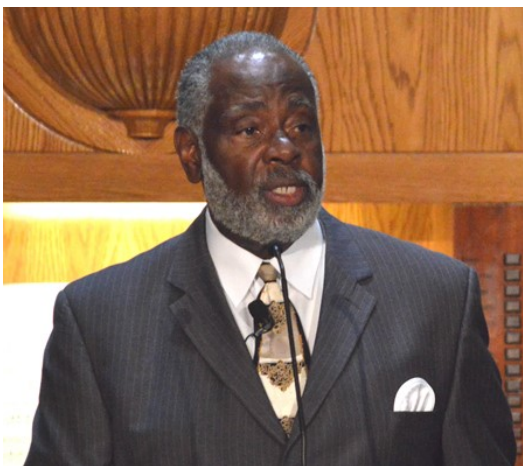
Rev. Dr. John Richter
welcomes everyone to
St. John's

The convocation opened on Friday morning with a presentation by Larry Taunton who is a Christian apologist most well known for being a friend of well known atheist Christopher Hitchens. prior to Hitchen's death a few years ago, Taunton had the opportunity to debate and even travel with Hitchens, during which time they became friends, despite holding to very different world views. Taunton used his friendship with Hitchens as a model for how Christians living in this generation can have meaningful conversations, even with those who consider themselves irreligious.



Larry Taunton, author of
"The Faith of Christopher Hitchens"
talks about sharing Christianity
with people in a post Christian culture

On Friday night, worship continued with a sermon by Dr. Robert Smith of Beeson Divinity school and then on Saturday morning with a message from Dr. Mark Gignilliat, also of Beeson. Numerous workshops were offered on Saturday with a very popular presentation being given by Todd Gerelds , son of the legendary Alabama high school football coach Tandy Gerelds who told the story of God's transforming grace at Woodlawn High School in the midst of racial tensions. Todd recounted the story of how future Miami Dolphin Tony Nathan was on the team at Woodlawn and how his father knew that playing an African American ahead of other players at the school would be highly controversial. Nevertheless, coach Gerelds made the decision to play Nathan because the issue was bigger than football and involved doing what was right for Woodlawn and Birmingham. The story told in this inspirational workshop is also the topic of a movie called *Woodlawn*.



Dr. Robert Smith of Beeson
Divinity School preaching
during Friday night worship

On Saturday night, convocation participants were uplifted by the musical talents of the Aeolians, a massive choir made up of students from Oakwood University who performed a series of Christian classics. Throughout the weekend, attendees were also treated to the hospitality of the people from St. John's and a menu of traditional Southern food including frog legs, fried green tomatoes, Cajun Jambalaya and catfish fillet.



The Rev. Bob Kurtz, past
president of EA, offers the
opening prayer



Harlean Kettler, of Bethesda Evangelical Church in St. Louis, leads a workshop on mobilizing the local church for world mission



Praising the Lord during Convocation worship



The Aeolians of Oakwood University, perform a concert of classic Christian music on Saturday evening



Carmen LaBerge, president of the Presbyterian Lay Committee and host of a daily radio program, challenges those gathered to bring God into the conversation on the issues of the day

SAVE THE DATE
2017 EA CONVOCATION
SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2017
BECK'S CHURCH
LEXINGTON, NC

Ministry and Employment Opportunities

These churches and organizations are seeking to fill the following positions:

Amano Christian School

Chingola, Zambia
Secondary school teachers, Primary school teachers,
Dorm Parents and support staff.

Baguio International Church

Baguio City, Benguet Province, Philippines
Lead Pastor

St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church

Cullman, Alabama
Minister of Music and Worship Arts

Church of the Valley

Santa Clara, California
Pastor—full-time

Sharon Congregational Church

Sharon, Connecticut
Pastor—full-time

First Reformed Church

Bluffton, Indiana
Director of Children and Youth

St. Paul's Reformed Church

Clear Spring, Maryland
Pastor

St. Paul's Evangelical and Moniteau Advent Evangelical Churches

Jamestown, Missouri
Pastor—full-time

Bethel Bear Creek Reformed Church

Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina
Pastor—full-time

Shiloh Reformed Church

Faith, North Carolina
Youth and Children's Director—full-time
and a Pastoral Assistant—part-time

Shallow Well Church

Sanford, North Carolina
Associate Pastor—full-time

Memorial United Church of Christ

Lexington, North Carolina
Pastor—full-time

Emanuel's Christian Church

New Bavaria, Ohio
Pastor—full time

Immanuel United Church of Christ

Clarington, Ohio
Pastor—part-time

The United Church of Huntington (UCH)

Wellington, Ohio
Senior Pastor

Swamp Christian Fellowship

Reinholds, PA
Senior Pastor—full-time

Trinity Christian Church

New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania
Pastor

Mount Bethel Church

McClure, Pennsylvania
Interim Pastor

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

evangelicalassociation.org

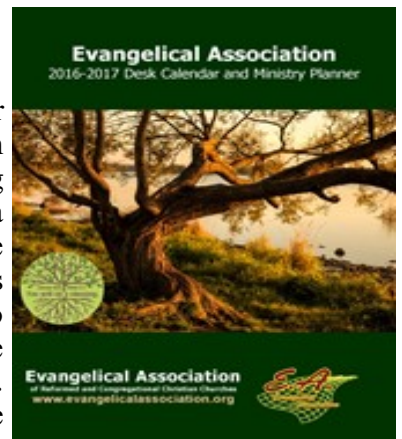


Is It Time for You (or your Church) to Join the Evangelical Association?

Affiliation with the EA is open to entire congregations as well as to individuals 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 web site (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 natmin@evangelicalassociation.org or 877-424-1472.

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!



***Just in time for Christmas
SHOP OUR ON-LINE STORE!***



EA Embroidered Logo Polo Shirts

Made of Pima Cotton—\$30 each plus shipping

Women sizes—S—2XL

Men sizes—M-4XL

In your choice of color: French Blue, Forest Green or Black

**Do you want to see more? Just go to our website
evangelicalassociation.org—click on Ministry Resources—Store**

**Evangelical
Association**

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 2828
ST. LOUIS MO

Contact Information:

National Minister

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

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

E-mail:

natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

Web

www.evangelicalassociation.org

Toll Free Number

877-424-1472

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**

If you are no longer interested
in receiving the Networker
Newsletter, please tear off this
address page and return it to:

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

Receive Your Networker Via E-Mail!

To sign-up, all you need to do is e-mail your name
and e-mail address to

natmin@evangelicalassociation.org

You will begin receiving your Networker
via e-mail with the next edition.

**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

or toll free at **877-424-1472**