

networker

summer 2010

...working the nets for kingdom advancement

Message from the National Minister

The Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister



LETTING PEOPLE KNOW WHERE YOU STAND

Why Your Local Church Needs a Statement of Faith

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

1 Timothy 4:16

In the culture of our day, one of the greatest perceived virtues a person can possess is “tolerance.” Just a few weeks ago, evangelist Franklin Graham was “dis-invited” to the Pentagon’s National Day of Prayer ceremony. During an interview with two writers from *Newsweek* magazine, Graham held fast to his conviction that Christ is the only way to salvation as he said, “I am who I am. I don’t believe that you can get to heaven through being a Buddhist or a Hindu. I think Muhammad only leads to the grave. Now that’s what I believe, and I don’t apologize for my faith.” Graham’s comments during the interview appeared to aggravate at least one of the *Newsweek* writers who stated that he was “offended” by Graham’s views. (*Newsweek*, May 17, 2010)

Unfortunately, the reaction of the *Newsweek* writer to Graham’s strength of conviction was not at all surprising. The fact that he appeared to view Graham as rigid and narrow minded only confirmed my suspicion that the whole idea of believing in absolute truth is a way of thinking that has become very unfashionable in sophisticated circles these days!

Nevertheless, whether it is fashionable or not, I would suggest that it is very important that churches in the Evangelical Association take the necessary steps to assert their belief in certain absolute, unchangeable truths by adding a formal *Statement of Faith* to their church constitutions. While many in our association spent years watching denominational leaders in other places slowly water down the essential truths of the Christian faith, it is critical that we remain fearless in our willingness to assert our steadfast commitment to those basic beliefs that are at the very core of our faith.

When you read the history of Western civilization and of Christianity in particular, one thing you will discover is that throughout the past two thousand years, our predecessors in the faith were always willing to publicly proclaim what they believed. Christians were not generally known over the centuries as shy, passive people who refused to take a stand - instead, they gained a reputation as people who were willing to proclaim the truth, even when threatened by angry crowds or brutal monarchs.

As Christians living in the twenty-first century, we know that the immutable truths given to us by God stand as unshakable as ever. That is why, in this culture where all “truth” is considered suspect and where the meaning of the word “tolerance” has been stretched to unnatural ends, we must be willing to **state what we believe** regardless of the consequences.

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Fall 2010 Edition:

August 15, 2010

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GREETINGS FROM THE EA PRESIDENT

The Rev. Bill Miller, President of the Board of Directors



The warm months are upon us and soon schools will be out and then it will be vacation time for many. Churches in the EA are gearing up for Vacation Bible Schools, mission trips and other summer ministries. Whatever may be in your plans for the coming months, be assured of this: **GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US!** We may come and go, but our God never leaves us or forsakes us. In fact God never takes a vacation but is on “duty” 24/7! God is faithful every day. As the old hymn states:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed thy hand hath provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

I look forward to seeing all of you at Convocation 2010 in the “Heart of the Pennsylvania Dutch Country”, Berks County, Pennsylvania. The people of St. Thomas Church look forward to welcoming you and offering good hospitality to all their guests.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Youth Ministry – St. John’s of Cullman, AL is seeking a full-time Youth Minister to use his/her skills to provide organizational and visionary leadership for youth ministry within the dual context of family life and the larger church’s ministry.

Music Ministry (full time) – St. John’s of Cullman, AL is seeking a music lover who understands and appreciates the variety of ways God can be worshipped vocally and instrumentally. St. John’s is seeking to call a lover of Christ who can provide creative leadership within the context of the church’s ministry and who can provide direction and guidance for multiple worship styles. The position is full time.

For more information on either of the above positions please contact Rev. John Richter at jrichter@stjohnscullman.com or at 256-734-0344.

Pastor (part time) – Nativity United Church of Christ of Livonia, MI is seeking a Bible believing pastor with a giftedness to reach out. Nativity is a conservative UCC church with seventy members. Average worship attendance is forty. For more information on this position please contact Marilyn Borrusch at 734-421-5406 or NativityUCC@provide.net. You may also mail inquiries to Nativity UCC, 9435 Henry Ruff, Livonia, MI 48150.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
AND SAVE THE DATE!

*The 2010 Evangelical Association
National Convocation!*

“Not Ashamed”

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ!”
Romans 1: 16*

**SEPTEMBER 17—19,
2010**

**ST. THOMAS CHURCH
BERNVILLE, PA
(near Reading)**

~Featured Speakers~

Rev. Dr. Joe Batluck

President & Exec. Director of Teen Challenge

Rev. Dr. Michael Sigman

President of Evangelical School of Theology

~Featured Musicians~

“New Creation” from Teen Challenge

David McClintock, Piano Ministry

**WORSHIP FELLOWSHIP
LEARNING FUN!**

Registration materials coming in June!

Letters

We want to hear from our readers concerning the articles within the *networker*.

Send letters to:

EMAIL:

Office@bethelstpaul.org

POSTAL:

The Evangelical Association
c/o Bethel-St. Paul Church
4004 Shelbyville Road
Louisville, KY 40207
Attn: networker

Unsigned letters will not be accepted. Receipt of letter does not guarantee publication. Letters are edited for clarity and space.

HELP US IMPLEMENT A COST-SAVING MEASURE!

*Receive Your Networker
Via E-Mail!*

As a cost-saving measure, and also as a means of obtaining your newsletter a lot earlier than usual, we would like to e-mail your *Networker* directly to your PC. To sign-up, all you need to do is e-mail your name and e-mail address to~

office @bethelstpaul.org

You will begin receiving your *Networker* via e-mail with the next edition this spring. Thank you for your support!

MID-WEST REGIONAL GATHERING A POWERFUL EVENT

IMPACT 2010 proved to be a high energy, Spirit-filled event as members of the Evangelical Association gathered in Bluffton, IN for the Mid-West Regional Gathering.

The all day event held at First Reformed Church, Bluffton, IN on Saturday, April 24 featured dynamic worship, powerful preaching, helpful workshops, networking and fellowship. Around 110 people attended the Regional Gathering from Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri.



Rev. Dr. Gene Bell, host pastor, welcomes attendees.



Rev. Jim Barnes preaches during afternoon worship.



Rev. Bob Russell delivers the keynote address.

Opening worship featured special music by First Reformed Church's Choir along with a "human video" production by OnceDeadTwiceBorn drama team from Bethel-St. Paul Church, Louisville, KY. Rev. Bob Russell, retired Senior Pastor of Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY, presented the keynote address.

Afternoon worship was led by Tony Mellinger and the praise band from Cross Community Church, Berne, IN. Rev. Jim Barnes, EA National Minister, delivered the message on how EA churches can impact the world through discipleship.

The Regional Gathering featured three sessions of workshops to help equip church leaders on a variety of topics: developing personal and family faith times, how to face tough times in ministry, developing a dynamic church, personal and church financial management, parenting issues, developing drama ministries, and issues related to ministry within the Evangelical Association. A separate youth track, led by Jarrod Kunkel, youth pastor, First Reformed Church, Bluffton, provided fellowship activities for teens.

During lunch, attendees at the Regional Gathering heard from four mission speakers who had displays showcased at the event.



Cross Community Praise Band leads worship.



*A powerful skit by OnceDeadTwiceBorn.
Bethel-St. Paul Church, Louisville, KY*

Closing worship featured special music by Tony Mellinger, youth pastor at Cross Community Church, Berne, IN, and Rev. Dr. Gene Bell, host pastor from First Reformed Church, Bluffton, IN. OnceDeadTwiceBorn performed a humorous skit on trusting Jesus. Closing worship ended with a celebration of the Lord's Supper led by Rev. Randy Luther, Cross Community Church, Berne, IN, and Rev. Dick Resner, Broadway Christian Church, Kimmell, IN, along with a final thought from the keynote speaker, Rev. Bob Russell.



Rev. Erich Christman shares during a workshop.

Special thanks goes out to the members of First Reformed Church for their hospitality in making IMPACT 2010 such a spiritually refreshing experience.

MID-ATLANTIC REGION HOLDS “DIFFERENT” KIND OF GATHERING

For several years now, the Mid-Atlantic region of the Evangelical Association has gathered for a regional event that was a mini-convocation, focused on worship, workshops, and of course, eating and fellowship! This year we decided to try something different.

During our monthly pastor’s lunches, we all agreed that one thing we needed was leadership training for our churches’ lay leaders. Many of us love the programs offered by Lay Renewal Ministries, but smaller churches can’t always afford them. So an idea was born!



Gary Beauchamp provides training.



Rev. Bill Miller, EA President, makes a presentation.

On Saturday, April 10th, forty-seven folks from fifteen churches gathered at St. Paul’s-Wolf’s Evangelical Covenant Church (EA Pastor Matt Stillman) in York, PA, for an all-day seminar on Leadership Effectiveness Training. Our trainer was Grant Beauchamp from Lay Renewal Ministries. He led us through an exploration of the components of the effective church, involving personal and leadership team exercises. We learned how to sharpen our church’s focus in ministry and mission. Every attendee received an information filled training workbook, and each church present received a training CD to use back home.

Of course, being members of the Evangelical Association, we couldn’t be just about learning and “business”! We also had wonderful worship sessions led by Rev. Mick Allen, and welcoming words from EA President Rev. Bill Miller and special guest EA National Minister Rev. Jim Barnes. And of course our hosts at St. Paul’s-Wolf’s Church provided plenty of luscious food - we all provided the fellowship! It was a busy, but fulfilling day.



Attendees share thoughts during open discussion.



Rev. Mick Allen leads worship at the Regional Gathering.



Participants enjoy food and hospitality provided by St. Wolf’s Evangelical Covenant Church.



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!!

“ROAD TRIP WITH THE REVS”

A CREATIVE IDEA FOR MINISTERING TO YOUTH

John Richter, Minister of Parish Life

St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church

Entering the new year without a youth minister, the ministry team at St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church in Cullman, AL needed a plan to engage their teenagers during Wednesday night activities. “After several years of fruitful ministry with our youth, Brian [Ferguson] moved on to a wider, faith based community outreach. This left us wondering how we might continue an effective youth ministry,” said John Richter, Minister of Parish Life and EA Board Member.

Steve Wood, St. John's Minister of Christian Education, had the right idea—a road trip! Developing an idea he heard from his cousin, Wood suggested taking the kids beyond the boundaries of the church to help them “see how our faith in Christ impacts every facet of our lives.” “That's when the challenge began for us,” commented Richter. “Where to go and why?” they asked.

Believing smaller groups would be more manageable, they divided the youth into three groups, recruited church member Buddy Franey, and began planning. Six locations were decided upon and each leader designed a Bible study to fit the location. Reverend Wood chose a vacant house to discuss outward appearances and the heart, as well as a spot by the train tracks to discuss life's journey. Buddy Franey selected the high school to discuss the mission field, and he also took the youth to the Aquatic and Wellness Center to talk about training and discipline in our faith. Reverend Richter had a local bank unlocked to talk about greed and generosity. He later took participants to a local shopping center, gave each student ten dollars, and challenged them to consider how they might be a blessing to others.

“The latter offered them an opportunity to put their faith into practice,” said Richter. Some kids simply approached random people and gave them the money, while others pooled their resources to do larger works. Among other things, Bibles were bought and distributed, new parents were given gifts, and canned goods were bought for the local food pantry.

“Overall the road trips proved to be a valuable exercise,” he commented, “helping us in a time of transition, while more importantly, providing visible and tangible illustrations of Christ's presence in the world and his call to serve him in every realm.” One student found the visual aids to be particularly helpful, commenting “I really liked the road trip Bible studies... The thing I liked most about them was that the location went very well with the lesson.”

What's next for St. John's youth? Besides an ongoing search for a new youth minister, the ministry team is considering a series entitled “What I Wish I'd Known in High School”, a study that will help build trans-generational relationships in the church, as adult members of the congregation share their relationships with Christ by discussing their personal successes and failures with the youth.

CRISIS IN ATLANTA RESOLVED!

UCC Loses It's Case Against Center Congregational Church!

In the last edition of *"The Networker"*, we brought you a controversial question with an accompanying story: "Is the United Church of Christ the only remaining entity of the Congregational Church?" The reason for the question focused on an attempt by the Southeastern Conference of the United Church of Christ to remove the 100 members of Center Congregational Church in suburban Atlanta, GA from their property after they withdrew from the UCC.

Shortly after this story went to press in the early spring, Pastor J.R. McAilley III wrote to declare the good news: "WE WON!" The six-page decision, written by the Honorable Christopher S. Brasher, stated that the "Congregational Denomination" has many existing entities and thus denied the motion of the UCC Southeastern Conference that the property should be relinquished to them.

As you will recall, Center Congregational occupies a modest brick building on the edge of Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood. The sanctuary seats 100 people with an average worship attendance of 36. Center withdrew from the UCC in 2006 and joined the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. The UCC Southeastern Conference, however, learned that the property was owned by a trust—not the church—and that the terms of the trust were spelled out in a handwritten document from the 19th century. In 1895, Harriet Cox, the first pastor's mother-in-law, gave the congregation a quarter-acre of land to build a sanctuary. She stipulated that the plot be used "for church purposes of the Congregational Denomination." In its lawsuit, filed last year in

Fulton County Superior Court, the conference claimed that the UCC was the "Congregational Denomination" and thus Mrs. Cox's true heir; thus, the motion asked that the congregation of Center Church be ejected from its premises.

The stakes in this case were very high. Not only would Center Congregational lose their building and property, but if the case was ruled in their favor, the UCC would be named the only legal successor to the "Congregational Denomination" title. The written judgment clearly objects to this position, much to the relief of congregations across this country seeking to leave the UCC for other ministry/mission venues. "This case was not only to benefit Center Congregational," writes Pastor McAilley, "but also will help give support to others seeking to realign in their affiliations and associations." For this, we should all be grateful for the battle that Center fought.

Even though Center Congregational Church won the war, the cost of victory was high. While the church would like to thank everyone who prayed on their behalf, the need going forward is significant. "We still have \$30,000 outstanding in legal fees (barring appeals)," writes McAilley. They request that we join Center Congregational in prayer that provision for these fees will be supplied.

If you would like to be directly in touch with the church, their contact information is as follows: The Rev. J. R. McAilley III, Pastor; Center Congregational Church; 1055 Moores Mill Road NE; Atlanta, GA 30327-1627; (404) 351-2747 or (770-455-7526); JRMALILEYIII@netscape.net.

~Pastor Jeffery Siems, Editor

THE EA REMAINS STRONG IN 2010

Every February the churches and individuals who comprise the Evangelical Association are asked to renew their affiliation for the coming year. As of May 17th, renewals have been received by 67 churches, 169 pastors, and approximately 10 individual lay members for 2010. It is, of course, not too late to renew or apply for recognition. Appropriate forms can be found on the "recognition" page at www.evangelicalassociation.org.

Evangelical Association

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If your church has never taken the time to formulate and adopt a strong theological *Statement of Faith*, I would encourage you to move such a process high up on your priority list. While the *Statement of Faith* of the EARCCC affirms some key “convictions” around which our association has been formed, it does not adequately address issues that your church needs to have in a comprehensive faith statement. A good statement will include what your church believes about God, the nature of the Trinity, the authority of Scripture, your understanding of who Jesus is, what He came to do and how He accomplished it, your understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, eschatology (the second coming of Christ) and your theology of the Church.

To begin writing a *Statement of Faith* for your church, you will need to understand your congregation’s history and faith tradition. Beyond that, it may also be helpful to visit the web sites of other churches in the Evangelical Association to look at the variety of faith statements that have already been adopted by other congregations. This may help you in the preliminary stages of drafting your own document.

If you want to find out what other churches in the EARCCC are doing, visit our web site, click on “network” and then “network affiliates” to see an interactive map showing you all of our churches and many of our individual affiliates.

May the Lord bless you as you seek to let people know where you stand!