

networker

spring 2011

...working the nets for kingdom advancement

Where Does Evangelism Fit In the Life of Your Church?

A Message From the Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister



One of the **scariest parts** of my training to become a minister was **not** the year I served as a chaplain at a maximum security jail during which time I sat face to face with men who had committed murder and other serious crimes. It was also **not** the difficult task of studying Greek and Hebrew, knowing that passing these classes was a requirement of my graduation from seminary. No, to be honest with you, the **most frightening part** of my training to become a minister happened after seminary when I voluntarily chose to sign up for Evangelism Explosion training to learn how to share the basic Gospel message with strangers.

If you know anything about Evangelism Explosion, it was a movement in the church started years ago by the late Dr. D. James Kennedy and it was based on asking people two "spiritual" diagnostic questions: First, "Do you know for certain that you will go to heaven when you die?" and then the follow-up, "If God were to ask you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?" As we spent a few days learning how to articulate the basic salvation message, **the scary part happened when our instructor said, "Now it's time for field training."** We were then sent out in teams of three with the task of going up to total strangers, asking them these questions, and then sharing the message of the Gospel with anyone who was willing to listen.

The truth is, "**evangelism**" is a scary word to many Christians - including many pastors. For many, the idea of evangelism stirs up fears of rejection or of not being prepared to answer tough questions posed by those living outside of a relationship with Christ. As a result, many of our churches have allowed the whole idea of evangelizing unbelievers to be relegated to the "bottom of the list" in our prioritization as we develop ministry strategies in our churches. There are churches that are very excited about Christian education and dynamic worship - even churches that are reaching out to serve people in their community through acts of kindness and mercy - yet evangelism is never an intentional part of the plan.

One of the greatest challenges facing many churches in the Evangelical Association (as well as plenty of other churches that come out of the historic Christian traditions in America), is that of an **aging and declining membership**. I would suggest that the key to dealing with these challenges must be to recapture a sense of **urgency about evangelism** in the church and in our personal lives as Christians. If we truly believe that "there is only one way to salvation: through Jesus Christ" and that "we are sent by Christ into all the world to proclaim the atoning

continued on back page

networker

**Spring 2011
Publishing Staff**

Editor: Pastor Jeff Siems
Design Editor: Leslie Spanyer

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:

office@bethelstpaul.org

Printed in the United States.

To reprint any *networker* content, contact the editorial office by e-mail:

office@bethelstpaul.org

Letters:

Please send comments to:

office@bethelstpaul.org

Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Order:

To order back-issues or additional copies of the *networker* e-mail:

office@bethelstpaul.org

Board Officers:

Rev. Bill Miller, President
Rev. Jeff Siems, Vice President
Rev. Rich Dubbs, Secretary
Rev. Cliff Poirot, Treasurer
Rev. Daryl Higgins, Representative of the Corporate Member

**PRINT
DEADLINES
FOR THE
NETWORKER**

Summer 2011 Edition:
June 15, 2011

Fall 2011 Edition:
September 15, 2011

Winter 2011-12 Edition:
December 15, 2011

Spring 2012 Edition:
March 15, 2012

Meet Me In St. Louis.....

for the

Annual Convocation of the Evangelical Association!

Friday, September 16 - Sunday, September 18, 2011

Crown Him Lord of All

The national gathering of the EARCCC is usually described as a time of great fun, fellowship, worship and spiritual growth by those who attend. Please put the dates on your calendar and begin planning your trip to St. Louis, Missouri where the people of Bethesda Evangelical Church will be hosting the event.

This year, the convocation will begin earlier than usual for pastors and their spouses with a special seminar on Friday morning (from 9:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.) entitled *Ministry: Sharing His Cross - Sharing His Crown* led by the Rev. Dr. A. Mark Friz. Pastor Mark is an EA pastor who has served in full-time pastoral ministry for almost thirty years. During his ministry career he has provided leadership to an inner city congregation in Chicago, a rural church in Western Missouri, and now serves as senior pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Church in the suburbs of St. Louis. Bringing a wealth of experience with him, Mark's seminar will focus on Philippians 3:10 as pastors and their spouses will have the opportunity to reflect on both the pain and the joy of ministry.

YOU MAY NOT BE ALONE!

New Map Feature Launched On Web Site

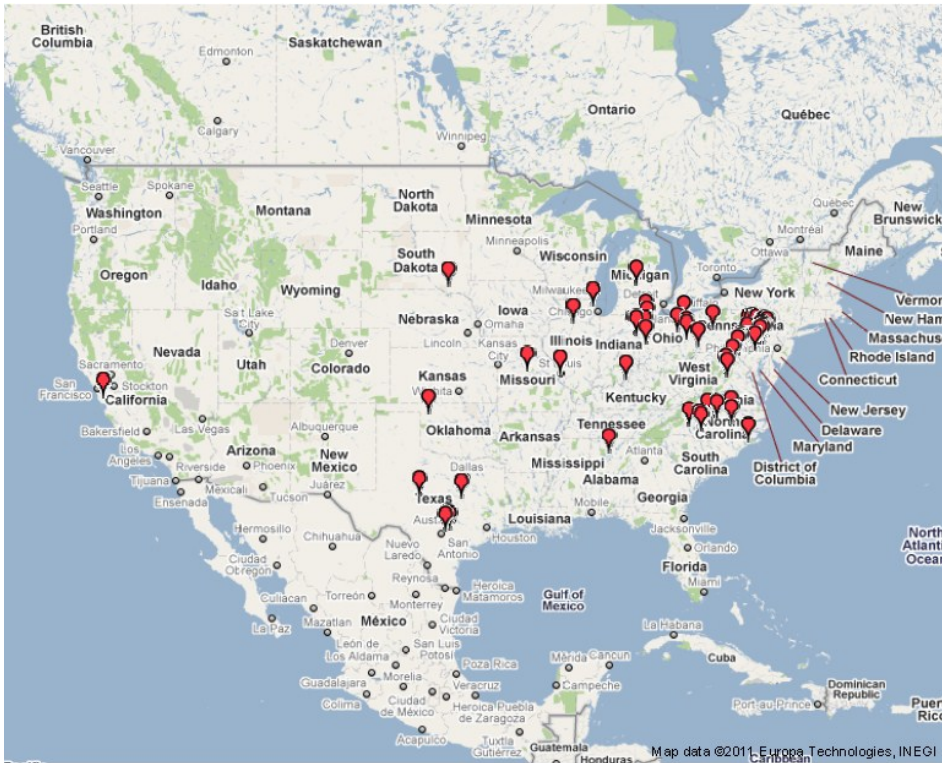
Helps Users Discover

Location of Evangelical Association Affiliates

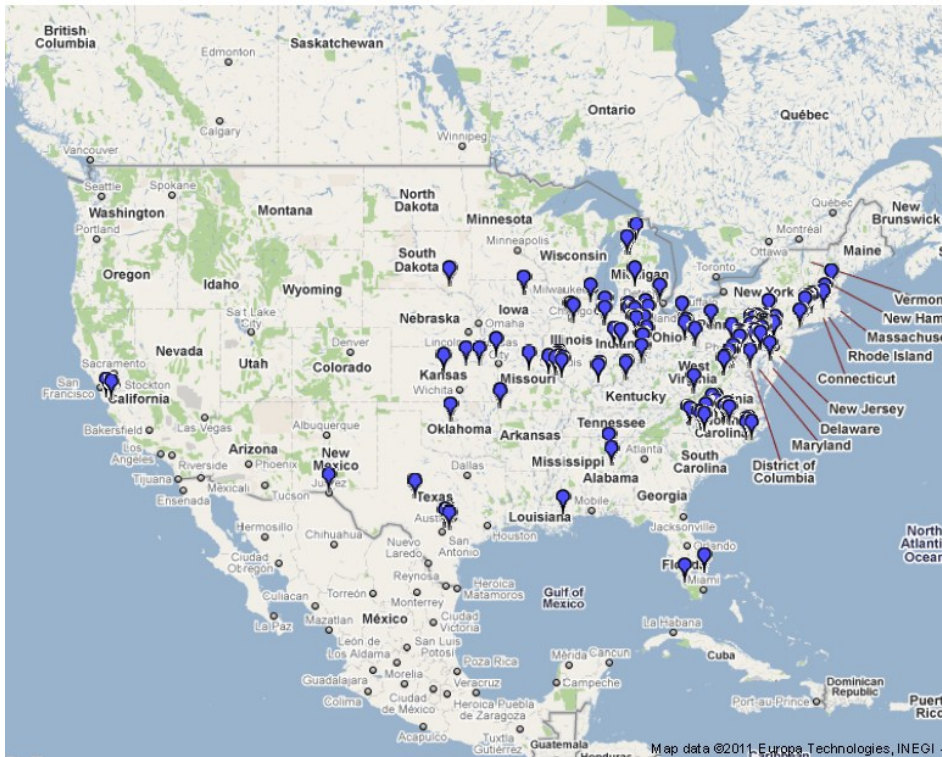
The Evangelical Association is only as strong as the churches, pastors and individuals who make up the network. In order to promote communication between constituents of the EARCCC, a new map feature is now available on our website (evangelicalassociation.org) under the category of "network" and "network affiliates." (*Maps shown on page 3.*)

These two interactive maps identify the churches (red points) and individuals (blue points) who make up the Evangelical Association in 2011. These maps are interactive as you can zoom in on a particular geographical area and move the maps around using the mouse on your computer. When a church has provided their website, visitors to the maps can click through directly to the church's site. Similarly, individuals and pastors are listed by city and e-mail (for phone numbers you may call the national office). Please use this helpful tool to reach out and make contact with your brothers and sisters in the EARCCC!

CHURCH LISTINGS MAP



INDIVIDUAL LISTINGS MAP



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 summer. Thank you for your support!

MID-ATLANTIC AND MIDWEST REGIONAL GATHERINGS

Workshops on the practice of infant baptism, pastoral counseling, developing a purpose statement and youth ministry were just a few of the options available at the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest regional gatherings of the Evangelical Association held in March and April. Participants enjoyed Saturdays filled with worship, fellowship, teaching and, of course, great food.

The Mid-Atlantic regional meeting took place at St. Jacob's Kimmerlings Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania on March 12th (*see pictures on this page*). Host pastor Rev. Rich Dubbs led worship featuring the musical gifts of the St. Jacob's choir. The keynote message for the day was delivered by our national minister, Jim Barnes and was entitled *Being Evangelical*. Pastor Jim focused on several elements in the EARCCC Statement of Faith as he emphasized that being "evangelical" Christians in the Evangelical Association involves recognizing that Jesus is the only way to be saved and that the job of an evangelical believer is to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth.

On April 2nd, more than eighty people gathered at St. Luke Church in Decatur, Indiana for the Midwest Regional one day seminar event organized by Pastor Mike Wertenberger and the EA clergy members who meet regularly in northern Indiana (*see pictures on page 5*). Worship was led by the praise team of St. Luke Church with special music by Ryan Hirschy and Brad Byerly. The theme of the day was *Not Ashamed* in keeping with the theme of the last EA national gathering in Pennsylvania. In the morning, speakers included Mark Zurcher, co-owner of Zurcher Tire with over 200 locations throughout the Midwest. He was followed by Ken Honegger, founder and co-owner of a CPA firm and Jim Eicher, co-owner of Moser Motors, the oldest Ford dealership in the state of Indiana. All three of these men shared what it means to be unashamed as they live out their Christian faith in the business world.

Workshops were led by Erich Christman, Jim Barnes, Rick Elwell, Brad Byerly, Ryan Hirschy, Elliot Ripley and Ann Flaningam on a variety of topics and several missionaries also spoke on ministries ranging from a Christian gardening program in Alaska to homes for abused women and teens in Northern Indiana. A moving highlight of the day was a testimonial offered by a young woman who had been sexually abused by her father who was later arrested and sentenced for using his child as the subject in his child pornography business. She shared how a local ministry had helped her find the Lord and get her life back on track.





Not Ashamed!





FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCH HOSTS LUNCHEON IN TEXAS

The national board of directors held their meeting in March at First Protestant Church in New Braunfels, Texas. Pastor Daryl Higgins organized a lunch for Evangelical Association affiliates in the area to meet the board members and enjoy a time of fellowship and Texas barbecue! Those who attended were also able to hear from Jim Cook of the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) which is the organization the EARCCC is now partnering with to offer comprehensive benefits for church employees. He was able to provide valuable information on the often difficult issue of how churches can provide health and disability insurance to their staff members.



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!!

**How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? —Psalm 13.1-2**

A Little Hunger—A Big Change

*Rev. Dr. Randall J. Forester
St. Paul's Community Church of Chicora, PA*



Approaching 40 and being hyper-critical of myself, I noticed my failings more than my successes. I looked in the mirror and could not see beyond my gut; I looked within and saw God pointing to the recesses of my heart that could use a good cleaning. I decided I needed a wakeup call—and a radical one at that—so I decided to go on a 40 day fast.

Armed with a copy of *Starving Jesus: Off the Pew, Into the World* by Craig Gross and J.R. Mahon and a dream, I began a 1000 hour fast that began in November and ended at 4 PM, 23 December 2010.

I never realized how many people my fast would impact. One woman had a stroke, and she was concerned how I was doing on my fruit and vegetable juice diet—I later added tomato soup and oyster crackers after my body quit producing heat and the shivers became unbearable. My wife awaited the moment she would have to take me to the hospital. Total strangers asked me about my experience. My in-laws felt guilty eating Thanksgiving dinner in front of me. One good friend was more amazed at how I—a coffee fiend—could forego the almighty java bean.

Don't get me wrong—there were as many downs as there were ups. The time was amazing—every moment a reminder that I was dependent on God. Every moment of contentment and euphoria were a gift from His hand. Every pain and discomfort reminded me that I need Him—oh, how I need Him.

Jesus heard His name constantly on my lips, and the Holy Spirit heard me whimper for strength, endurance, and encouragement just as constantly. My heavenly Father felt me sink low into His arms just as my little children crawl into mine when they are worn out and tired.

People watched the pounds fall off my frame—32

in all—and people congratulated me on my will power and the goodness of this “diet.” Each time I would remind them that this was no diet but a spiritual discipline—I witnessed about God more in 40 days than I probably have in my previous 15 years of ordained ministry.

When I got to the end of the fast, I looked down and cringed—I could still stand to lose more weight—most of which [save 13 pounds] has crept back onto my frame. Inwardly, I cannot say I was utterly reborn, but I don't beat myself up as much as I used to. Yes, I still struggle to make time to properly exercise and find my Sabbath rest. I'm not excusing my weaknesses, but I find that my Father loves me with an unfailing love, and I can accept that love a little more than I could before—yes, I still struggle, and I can admit that a little more freely now too.

God turned my eyes to II Peter 1.1-11 that I am preaching through in the New Year until Lent begins. God used my journey inward to inspire others “to be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure” (1.10) as God focused me on doing in my time of fasting.

During the fast, God seemed so close in every single moment. I long for that sense of God's closeness, but I do pray I'm never called to fast like that again. Still, I would do it again in a heartbeat. As I learned, my journey of faith has a way of reaching others and inspiring them in ways I never expected.

When you listen to God's calling, He will provide the means to see you through. Along the way, God uses our experiences to bless others in their faith. Even when He carries us in a radical direction, those in the world will see God at work in us and give Him the glory. I'm living proof.

Evangelical Association

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 5
Masonic Home, KY

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
04/15

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

Networker
Email: office@bethelstpaul.org

Web
www.evangelicalassociation.org

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

Bethel St. Paul Church
4004 Shelbyville Road
Louisville, KY 40207

continued from page 1

death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to bring every person into a life of faith, discipleship and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ" (EARCCC *Statement of Faith*), then we are without excuse if we ignore our obligation as believers to spread the Gospel message.

On January 1 of this year, two of my kids participated in the Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena, California with their high school marching band. As my wife and I sat in the stands waiting for our kids to pass by, we saw a man wearing a t-shirt that said that the world would end on May 21, 2011. He was actively passing out information. While I do not have much confidence in his prediction about the return of the Lord on May 21, I do appreciate the sense of urgency and commitment this man had to getting the message out. When you believe that the world is ending in a month, it gives you a reason to take action.

Jesus admonishes us with these words in Matthew 24:42-47 as He speaks of the end times and says, "*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. **Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.***"

My friends, the Lord has **entrusted us with His Gospel** and instructed us to make disciples of all nations. As those charged with the task of carrying the "living water" and commissioned to offer the "bread of life" to all who will receive Him, let us make certain that we are acting as faithful and wise servants, **offering this spiritual food to those who are hungering for eternal life**, knowing that the Master could return at any moment!