

Fall ~ 2020

networker

.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



When God Redirects The Conversation

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

Our country just went through one of the most contentious elections in recent history and conversations between friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers and even fellow church members have been running very hot. I know plenty of people who have changed the settings on their social media accounts so as not to have to see or hear the political opinions of those in their networks with whom they disagree.

The danger of living as a Christian in our highly polarized society is that we can easily get swept up in the “us versus them” thinking that is a characteristic of so many political discussions. When that happens, we as Jesus’ followers run the risk of writing off half of the people in the country “on the other side” as those with whom we have an adversarial relationship. Once we identify someone as, for lack of a better term, our “enemy” (politically speaking), it becomes easy to stop loving and reaching out to that person.

So the question is: how can believers rise above it and keep their focus on God and His mission in a politically polarized environment?

Recently, a rather obscure scripture passage was brought to my attention in a sermon I heard right around the time of the election. The story is from the book of Joshua in the Old Testament and it tells of Joshua’s encounter with an unidentified man (who commentators generally believe to be an angel or messenger of God). In these verses, the walls of Jericho have not yet fallen and Joshua is outside the city. According to the Bible:



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Welcome to the Association!

During the past several months the following churches and pastors and have chosen to become new affiliates of the Evangelical Association:

Rev. Fred A. Walthour
Jacobus, Pennsylvania

Emanuel Reformed Church
Thomasville, North Carolina

Good News Church
Quakertown, Pennsylvania

Rev. Jeffrey A. Hicks
Scott Air Force Base, Illinois

Rev. Dr. Andrew J. Keuer
Athens, Greece

Rev. Joseph A. Hall
Fayetteville, Pennsylvania

Zoar UCC
Evansville, Indiana

Rev. Sid Mitra
Richmond, Texas

Church of Christian Outreach
Newmanstown, Pennsylvania

Rev. J. Eric Dehmer
Brenham, Texas

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When the Virus Hits Your Home

In August, EA Pastor David Franks of First Reformed Church in Landis, NC (dfranks@frclandis.org) began a personal battle with the Covid19 virus.

The following is a reflection he shared with his congregation in September.

He and his family have since recovered.



Thought I would take a moment and share some reflections on our Covid19 experience. To say it's been interesting would be a huge understatement, and at the same time I've learned so much I never would have known otherwise.

It began three weeks ago with a sore throat. I attributed it to allergies or a summer cold and thought I would be done with it in a day or two. Unfortunately it persisted and got worse over the next several days. After about three days I began experiencing both sweats and chills, but no fever at that time. On August 23rd, my wife and I made an appointment to be tested the following day for

Covid19. We then received confirmation that I tested positive and my wife was negative.

As I've now talked to others who tested positive, there is something that mentally and emotionally hits you when you receive word that you have the virus. It truly changes how you will live and think for the next few weeks. The thought that you are the one personally affected makes you realize that this virus is real, and not just some sickness that only impacts someone else. It also affected everyone else living with me, which meant that just as I would be quarantined so would my family...much to their angst!

Over the next week other symptoms began showing up. Fever came and went. There were several days of nausea and diarrhea (oh boy!) I lost any sense of smell or taste, which helped me lose 15 pounds in less than two weeks. And then came the worst part for me, the persistent coughing, low oxygen levels and trouble breathing. The word "ventilator" came to mind over and over again, and this caused me a great deal of concern.

After two trips to the Emergency Room several days apart, I ended up being admitted to the Atrium Virtual Covid Hospital, which is an attempt to keep Covid patients out of the hospital and at home with hospital care. I have personally found this to be an answer to prayer. I came home from the ER on oxygen, with an inhaler, and calls from nurses several times a day to check on me and give me instructions for breathing treatments. At this point I am still on oxygen and limited conversations, but see slow and steady improvement.

Since first being tested, my wife and daughter have been tested again after both began showing mild symptoms. Thankfully their symptoms were not

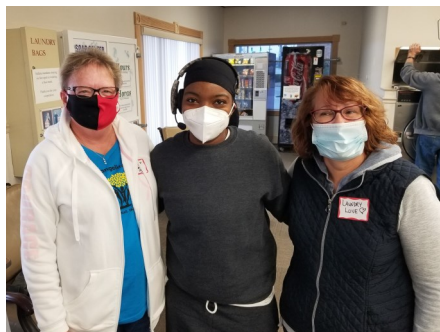
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Responding Carefully to a Complicated Crisis

For many months now, churches in the Evangelical Association have been required to adapt to various changes in how communities are dealing with the coronavirus pandemic as they find creative ways to continue their ministries. In some parts of the country, lockdowns have been the norm with public gatherings limited or even stopped by law. In other areas, the restrictions have been less rigorous and choices about how to respond have been left up to individual congregations and businesses.



National Minister Jim Barnes participates live from St Louis in a virtual installation service for Pastor Andy Underhile at Friedens Reformed in Tripp, South Dakota

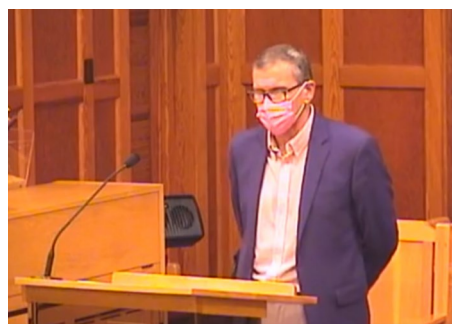


Volunteers from the Laundry Love ministry at Zion Evangelical in Shelbyville, Indiana blessing a long haul truck driver passing through town by paying to do her laundry at a local laundromat.

Given the autonomy and freedom that is present in the Evangelical Association, individual churches in the EA have taken a variety of approaches as to how they handle their corporate worship events. Some churches have continued to have relatively normal worship services with congregants sitting a little more spaced out from one another than usual. Other congregations have limited the number of people allowed in their buildings at any given time by requiring people to make “reservations” to attend worship services. Others have continued with outdoor services and online streaming services.



Outdoor worship led by Pastor John Peters at First Congregational, Buena Park, California



Pastor Junior Gaither gives a masked altar call at Lyerly Evangelical in Rockwell, North Carolina

While EA churches are handling the crisis according to the decisions of their own leadership, a study by the Lake Institute at Indiana University found that when it comes to re-opening churches for in-person services, 79 percent of conservative congregations had planned to re-open by August, while only 20 percent of liberal churches had similar plans. This could account for the reason so many churches in the Evangelical Association report that while they have restarted in-person worship, other churches in their towns have not.

The Lake Institute further reported that in the congregations they sampled, 52% reported an increase in participation, while 42% reported a decline in giving since March of 2020 (similar results have been reported by the National Association of Evangelicals). The Barna Institute takes things even further by suggesting that one in five churches face permanent closure in the next couple of years if they cannot recover from the losses sustained during the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the impact of the shutdowns on churches nationwide could be significant going forward.



Pastor Steve Watson delivers the benediction with appropriate social distancing during a worship service at St. Paul's Evangelical in Jamestown, Missouri

EA Mission Network News

Identifying and Connecting Missionaries and Mission Projects with the Local Church

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 who 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 both individual missionaries and mission projects in the network. If there are missionaries from your EA church (or who are being supported by 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." Mission projects initiated or supported by EA churches are also eligible to be part of the EAMN.

For more information about the EA Mission Network, contact the EAMN coordinators at missions@evangelicalassociation.org



School director Mtebe stands in the flooded pumphouse

Lion of Judah Academy in Tanzania, Africa

The Lion of Judah Academy (LOJ) is an English language Christian school for underprivileged children in Tanzania, East Africa, especially for AIDS orphans and the children of poor Tanzanian pastors. The school was founded in 2001 on the shores of Lake Victoria and is led by the Rev. Josephales Mtebe, an ordained Evangelical Association pastor. In the spring of 2020, the school experienced historic flooding compounded by the economic consequences of COVID restrictions that have been happening at the same time. They are praising the Lord that staff and students have not been seriously affected by the virus, but the school was shut down for over four months during which they were receiving no tuition, causing many teachers to face hard times.

The school director, Mtebe and his wife, Pili have been hard-pressed on every side, and are trusting the Lord for His continued provision and protection as they work to rebuild the damaged buildings. The school is now running a full schedule but the Dental Training Mission was cancelled and other work mission trips to LOJ have been postponed until 2021. Back in June, their students finishing high school were tested and scored very well, giving Lion of Judah Academy the recognition of being #2 in their region of Tanzania. National testing of younger students will happen before the end of the year and prayers for good results are requested. The quality of scores determine how far the students are allowed to continue their education.

For more information on Lion of Judah, visit www.thelionofjudah.info. You can also connect with them on Facebook by searching Lion of Judah Academy.

Brian & Melody Whitaker serving in Detroit, Michigan

The Whitakers are serving among immigrants near Detroit, Michigan. They have been blessed to have "in person" classes with students preparing for citizenship since July. They began teaching English as a Second Language

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EA Mission Network News

classes in October and were able to continue teaching a Biblical Worldview/Literature class for High School students. The classes are small, but they have enjoyed the interaction.

In October, they hosted a Harvest Party at Springwells Church. Many people filled the rear parking lot of the church as they played games, had a fire pit, served chili and hot dogs, and shared the Gospel message.

Brian & Melody will be leading Christmas Caroling and a Christmas outreach sometime in the first 2 weeks of December. If you'd like to support their work or receive their monthly newsletter, send Brian an email at bwhitaker21@gmail.com. And please pray that the Lord would continue to open the hearts and minds of their new friends to the Gospel. (John 4:35).

Pat & Tammy MacLeod serving with CRU in Boston, Massachusetts

The McLeods have been working on a new outreach tool to reach students from Harvard on the topic of anxiety. In the midst of the pandemic restrictions, they created what they call "Unfiltered Conversations" – a virtual communal space where students may express their anxieties and share with others in conversations as they seek to connect their stories with Jesus and the Gospel. Pat & Tammy have begun meeting online with 10 Harvard students from around the country. One of their exercises asked the students to write a poem expressing the source of their anxieties. Here is an excerpt of one poem (shared with permission). For the complete text, contact Tammy at tammy.mcleod@gmail.com.

My Anxieties Are From...

My anxieties are from my cell phone
A device that conveniently centralizes all my anxieties.

My anxiety comes from my news app,
From hearing one tragedy after the next, facing a global pandemic,
And feeling so small and powerless about it all.

My anxiety comes from my Google calendar,
From all the events that fill up my schedule,
Constantly pulling me in all different directions,
Making me question if my commitments are even worth my time.

The final paragraph below follows several other descriptions of what this person's anxiety is from... including the honest, personal admission:

My anxiety is really not from the cell phone, ... but
from the pockets of reality that unveil my deepest fears.

Overwhelming busyness, family dynamics, high expectations, body image,
Broken hearts, uncertain futures, and quite frankly, much more,
This is what my anxiety comes from. (written by a Harvard student)

Pat and Tammy have recently published "Hit Hard," their personal family journey through ambiguous loss as a resource for those who are struggling. Contact Pat for more information: pat.mcleod@gmail.com.



**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.

**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. As we draw near to the time when our affiliates are asked to renew with the EA for 2021, 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.

National Gathering Postponed to 2021

The annual convocation of the Evangelical Association for 2020 was postponed and has been rescheduled for October 15-17, 2021 at First Congregational Church in Torrington, Connecticut. As originally planned, the gathering will be held in the month of October to give people the opportunity to view the famous autumn foliage in that part of the country.

For those who like to plan things far in advance, the convocation in 2022 is currently scheduled for September 16-18, 2022 at Salem Reformed Church in Hagerstown, Maryland.

"When the Virus Hits Your Home" continued from page 2

nearly as intense, and they are doing well. All of us have experienced the body aches and fatigue, but looking forward to being past these symptoms soon. My wife did make a trip to the ER and has experienced some high blood pressure and irregular heartbeat. Possible Covid symptoms as well, which just goes to show how this virus hits people in different ways.

As I said to begin with, I've learned and experienced so much. For someone who hated Gatorade, it became my drink of choice! I've experienced what it's like dragging an oxygen hose around the house, and what it's like to wake up in a bed in a puddle of water. I've learned how to stay away from everyone else in the house, and how much I miss being around people. I've also seen how easy it is to get discouraged when you aren't getting better as fast as you want or have in the past. And I've seen, that while many have taken this virus lightly, I won't do this again. It's a monster that hits everyone differently, and even the healthiest and strongest can give way to sickness and weakness in a matter of days.

But to close, I've also learned and seen how good God is in all of this. My wife has truly been a prayer warrior, as she's stood outside my bedroom door and prayed over and over again when I didn't feel like getting up. And so many others have added their prayers to ours, and we've seen and felt the effects of a gracious and healing God. We have been so blessed to have had folks bring food, groceries, medicine and supplies, and offer to do anything and everything for us. Nurses in our church family have been there for us day and night - these ladies have been our medical angels for sure. As I've said, we've been blessed beyond measure and we know it.

So that's my story to this point. If we can help anyone going through this, please don't hesitate to contact us. This is just a part of our story, but I wanted to share it while it was still on my mind. Blessings on all of you, and stay healthy!

“When God Redirects The Conversation” continued from page 1

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5: 13-15, ESV)

Now the reason I share that passage with you is to remind you that Joshua was clearly in the midst of a polarized situation. He is leading the Israelites and in front of him is the city of Jericho, controlled by those he would consider his adversaries. Joshua was in the midst of an “us versus them” situation, with real enemies facing him. Joshua was on one side, pursuing a cause that he believed to be right and those who opposed him were similarly passionate about their position.

Does that sound at all familiar?

It is then, as Joshua is on high alert, concerned that his enemies might be seeking to do him harm, that he runs into this unknown man who just happens to be standing before him with a drawn sword. And Joshua does what any intelligent person would do in a highly charged situation, he basically asks the guy, “Whose side are you on? Are you a friend or an enemy?”

Instead of giving him the answer he expects however, the man looks at Joshua and simply says, “No.” In other words, the unknown man basically says to Joshua, “Your question is wrong.” What matters in this situation isn’t whose side the guy is on - all that matters is that he is representing God and is the commander of God’s army. The man then goes on to command Joshua to remove his shoes, “for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua falls on his face to worship as he recognizes that the one before him is God’s messenger.

One thing I believe we can learn from Joshua’s encounter with the “commander of the Lord’s army” is that there comes a point in any polarized situation when God will need to remind us of who is really in charge. In this passage, Joshua asks the commander of the Lord’s army to identify “whose side” he’s on, but the answer he receives reminds Joshua that submission to God is what is actually required. These days I fear there are people on all sides of the political spectrum (and Christians are not always immune from this) who are more than happy to fight with each other but who have utterly forgotten God’s sovereignty and power in the midst of acting on their political passions.

The truth is, God is always in control, no matter who fills any political seat. As followers of Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that regardless of the outcome of any election anywhere, our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). We are called to be “ambassadors” of God’s Kingdom in this world who submit to and worship the Lord as we proclaim Jesus’ message of reconciliation, forgiveness and salvation (II Corinthians 5:18-20) to all people who are living outside of a relationship with Him. Jesus Christ has come to **save all sinners** - regardless of how they voted. That means, **as Jesus’ followers**, we must continue to **love and share the Gospel with all sinners** - regardless of how they voted.

Historically speaking, Christians across the ages and around the world have frequently lived in political environments that could be considered less than ideal or even dangerous. Certainly the early believers whose stories we hear in the New Testament were a group of people without political power living under the crushing weight of a pagan Roman Empire and laws that even made it legal to persecute them. In spite of all that, they continued to proclaim the Good News. As believers living in these politically charged days, we too must continue to proclaim the Gospel, secure in the knowledge that nothing will stop the Word of God from bearing fruit.

Ministry Opportunities

Due to the space constraints of this edition, we were unable to include the Ministry Opportunities.

Please visit our website, evangelicalassociation.org to view all current employment openings.

(Current listings can be found under “network” and then “ministry opportunities”)



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EA Desk Calendar Now Available

The *Evangelical Association 2020-2021 Desk Calendar & Ministry Planner* is the official desk calendar of the Evangelical Association. The 17 month calendar (August 2020 through December 2021) 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)

You can order the EA Desk Calendar(s) by:

1. Visiting the store on our website at the [EA Online Store](#). 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.
2. 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!

