

SUMMER ~ 2015

networker

.....WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



Having the Courage to Forgive

A Message from The Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister

On Wednesday night, June 17, 2015, Dylann Storm Roof was welcomed into the prayer meeting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. After receiving the hospitality of those gathered there for a full hour, Roof proceeded to open fire on the unarmed believers, killing nine while shouting racist remarks.

Less than two days later, while confronting the accused killer in court, relatives of the nine Christians who had been gunned down overwhelmingly took the opportunity to offer love and forgiveness to the man who had inflicted such violence on their families. "I forgive you, my family forgives you," said Anthony Thompson, whose relative Myra Thompson was killed. "We would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Do that, and you'll be better off than you are right now." Alana Simmons, who lost her grandfather, the Rev. Daniel Simmons stated, "Although my grandfather and the other victims died at the hands of hate, this is proof - everyone's plea for your soul is proof they lived in love and their legacies will live in love, so hate won't win." (STL Post-Dispatch, 6/20/15)

How much courage and conviction does it take to forgive a man who has viciously murdered someone you love?

continued on page 2

Welcome to the Association!

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

Paul's Chapel Evangelical
& Reformed
Lexington, North Carolina

Rev. L. Kenneth Hash
Kirkwood, Pennsylvania

Rev. Billy E. Williams, Sr.
Franklinton, North Carolina

Radical Faith Fellowship
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Rev. Derrick W. Hicks, Sr.
Knightdale, North Carolina

Rev. Jason H. Ford
Cibolo, Texas

Rev. Richard L. Myers
Salisbury, North Carolina

Rev. Aaron Erastus Long
Lexington, North Carolina

Living Hope Christian Church
Youngsville, North Carolina

Rev. Christopher A. Kruchkow
Berne, Indiana

Diane Maxam
Rye, New Hampshire



Networker

SUMMER 2015
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

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 openings.

Having the Courage to Forgive *continued from page 1*

On the morning of October 2, 2006, Charles Roberts entered the West Nickel Mines one room Amish schoolhouse in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He proceeded to take several of the children hostage and eventually began executing the girls with gunshots to the backs of their heads. Five young girls, ages 7-13, died in the massacre. Five others survived, many with long term injuries. The killer committed suicide at the scene before being captured.

Almost immediately after the violence, the Amish community reached out to the killer's family with love and forgiveness and even attended the funeral of the man who had murdered their children. The father of one of the victims stated, "I look at the whole event as something that Satan planned, and Charlie (the killer) was his tool. Because of his mental illness, the devil was able to use him as a tool." The willingness of the Amish community to respond in grace to the killer's widow, parents and other relatives attracted international media attention. (Lancaster Online, 10/2/11)

This year the theme of our annual Evangelical Association Convocation is **"Be Strong and Courageous"** and the keynote speaker on Friday night is Terri Roberts, mother of the man who murdered the children in the Nickel Mines massacre. Now when most of us think of what it means to be strong and courageous, we generally picture a warrior in full battle gear, armed and ready to charge into battle to destroy his enemies - but Jesus show us another image of strength and courage.

On the day of the Lord's death, Luke records, *"And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.'"* (Luke 22:33-34, NKJV) With those words, followers of Christ have, for centuries, borne witness to a form of strength and courage that the world simply cannot understand.

In South Carolina, the Christians whose families were victimized in the prayer meeting murders did not lash out or seek vengeance. Instead, they forgave, and bore witness to the love of Christ in the face of an act of unspeakable evil. In Pennsylvania, the Amish whose families were victimized in the school shooting did not seek retribution against the family of the man who had perpetrated the crime, instead, they embraced even those who were closest to their enemy, **and as we will hear at convocation this year**, God used the evil act of Charles Roberts to bear witness to the power of mercy and forgiveness.

The truth is, Jesus' command to forgive is often a difficult one to obey. Our natural tendency is to attack and seek to inflict pain on those who have caused us harm. It takes a measure of spiritual strength that only the Holy Spirit can provide for us to respond to our enemies with grace and mercy.

Continued on page 3

Having the Courage to Forgive *continued from page 2*

As a young Christian, I remember reading the testimony of Corrie ten Boom, a woman who had survived her imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp. Although she had every reason to hate the guards and soldiers who had held her captive and been responsible for the deaths of many people she loved, she recounts how the Lord gave her the ability to forgive even one of these men when she met him after the war - she says, "Even as the angry vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him....Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness....And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives along with the command, the love itself." (Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*)

May God give us the grace to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Spring Regionals Offer Fellowship Opportunities

Local gatherings of the Evangelical Association happened throughout the months of April and May with a variety of themes and speakers. On Saturday, April 18 the North Carolina regional event was held at Pleasant Ridge Christian Church in Greensboro. In Bernville, Pennsylvania, our national minister shared his "New Life for Old Churches" seminar with those gathered at St. Thomas Church on April 25. On May 9 members of the EA from the Upper Midwest gathered in Berne, Indiana at Cross Community Church.



Pastor Craig Yoder leads worship at Upper Midwest Regional



Pastor Doreen Gibbon leads a workshop on women impacting the Kingdom at the NC gathering



Rev. Dr. Zawdie Abiade delivers the keynote address at Upper Midwest Regional



Pleasant Ridge Christian Church in Greensboro hosts NC Regional

**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

Desk and Digital Calendars Now Available

The Evangelical Association 2015-2016 Desk Calendar is the official desk calendar of the Evangelical Association. The 16 month calendar (September 2015 through December 2016) 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!

Evangelical Association
2015-2016 Desk Calendar

