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Every Pastor Is an Interim

Is Your Church Ready for Transition?

A Message from the Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister

When I was 29 years old, I was called to become the new pastor of an old German Evangelical church where the previous pastor had served for 39 years. Before accepting the call, a number of my advisors warned me with these words, “If you replace a guy who was there for his entire career, you’ll just be the ‘interim’ to prepare the way for the next pastor.” As a young minister, I admitted that my advisors might be right, but I was also planning to prove them wrong. I ended up serving that church for 21 years until I departed a few years ago to become the full-time National Minister of the EA.

Now in that situation, being an “interim” minister was an idea that I rejected. Yet if you stop and think about it, every minister is ultimately an “interim.” Whether the pastor stays with a congregation for a year or a decade or even four decades (as in the case of my predecessor), every pastor will eventually leave, retire or be called home to glory. The question is: will the congregation be prepared when this pastoral transition happens?

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Forgiveness and Fearless Faith Encouraged at Convocation

Lancaster County Pennsylvania is known for its country roads, Amish buggies and “shoo fly pie.” It is also the home of Swamp Christian Fellowship, a German Reformed church that traces its beginnings back to the early 1700's, before the founding of the nation. On the third weekend of September, nearly 175 believers gathered for the 17th Annual Convocation of the Evangelical Association at Swamp Church. The theme for the weekend was “Be Strong and Courageous” and participants were challenged to find strength in Christ, not only to stand up and be counted in an increasingly post-Christian culture, but also to forgive and show mercy to our enemies in ways that can only happen when a person is guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

On Friday night, convocation participants gathered in the historic Swamp Church sanctuary to hear the testimony of Terri Roberts. As the mother of Charlie Roberts, the man who perpetrated the infamous Nickel Mines Amish School massacre in 2006 during which he executed five little girls and maimed several others, Terri explained how God has worked

Terri Roberts, whose son perpetrated a mass murder in 2006, speaks to the power of forgiveness



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In my work with churches in the Evangelical Association, one of the harsh realities I am seeing is that moments of pastoral transition can be among the most dangerous times in the life of a congregation. Although the good news is that the church is the Bride of Christ and He is ultimately the chief pastor of His people, the bad news is that when the earthly pastor of a congregation leaves, it often provides a prime opportunity for the wolves to attack.

These attacks are ultimately the work of the Devil from a spiritual perspective, but they are often carried out by people both inside and sometimes outside of the church. When a pastor leaves a congregation, it frequently creates a leadership vacuum in which church members start to form factions, with each faction believing it is doing "what is best for the church." In addition to allowing divisive behavior to go unchallenged during a time of pastoral transition, some congregations make the further mistake of calling in new leadership too quickly without properly researching the beliefs and experience of the new pastor and end up bringing in a leader who is not the right "fit" for the congregation. This mistake often leads to further division in the church or even a church split in extreme situations.

In response to the challenges I see so many congregations facing during times of pastoral transition, I want EA churches to know that I am available to meet with you when you are facing these transitional times in the life of your church. I have both written materials and a presentation I can share with your leaders to help as you navigate your way through what can be treacherous waters.

Someone gave me a book recently called "Next: Pastoral Succession That Works" by William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird. I would recommend this as a valuable read for pastors and church leaders who want the next pastoral succession in their church to be a positive experience.

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 in the Winter.

Welcome to the Association!

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

Rev. Scott Leone
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Rev. H. Joseph (Joe) Kler
Zephyrhills, Florida

Rev. John Crawford
Elkton, Virginia

Rev. Chad Kyler
Concord, North Carolina

in their community by giving His followers the courage and strength to forgive even those who have inflicted evil.

She gave a stirring account of how the members of the Amish community whose daughters had been shot by her son, actually showed up at her son's funeral to offer love and comfort to her entire family. Rather than harbor hate in their hearts, the Amish community immediately offered forgiveness to the man who had killed their children and mercy to all of his family members.

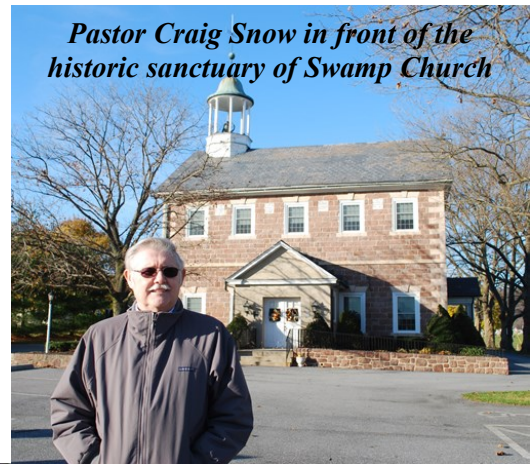
This theme of forgiveness continued on Saturday morning as the keynote speakers were Steve and Jacob Lapp, brothers raised in the Amish community who have found their calling to minister around the world by helping people understand the Christian mandate to forgive and reconcile with those who have caused harm. In addition to explaining some of the history of the Amish community in both Europe and America, the Lapp brothers shared how God is working globally through trips they had taken to the Middle East where they had been invited by Muslims to come and speak about the power of forgiveness.

Throughout the weekend event, other speakers challenged believers to fearlessly bring their faith into the public square. Recognizing that the freedom of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment is being increasingly questioned in our society, Rick Sancorum and Sam Rohrer encouraged Christians to courageously speak truth to power and boldly share their convictions even in secular settings.

Convocation concluded with worship on Sunday morning as the Lord was praised and EA national minister Jim Barnes spoke about the Lord's mercy on His followers even when courage fails them. John Richter, the pastor of St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church led a prayer as he invited everyone to attend the gathering in 2016 which will be held in Cullman, Alabama.



Worship in an integral part of an EA Convocation



Pastor Craig Snow in front of the historic sanctuary of Swamp Church



Gathered for worship in the multipurpose room at Swamp Church

2015 EA CONVOCATION



Steve and Jacob Lapp speak about the power of prayer and the work of God in bringing reconciliation in war torn countries of the Middle East



Sam Rohrer, Pennsylvania State Representative and head of the Pennsylvania Pastor's Network challenges participants to practice courageous faith



Dr. Rick Saccone, retired from the Air Force and an expert in international politics, business and culture, challenges participants to fearlessly speak truth in the public square



Praising the Lord in the historic Swamp Church sanctuary on Friday night



Pennsylvania pretzels and ice cream were on the snack menu for Convocation 2015



Pastor John Richter leads a group prayer at the altar

Religious Freedom at Risk: Attorneys Recommend Policy Review

At a recent gathering of the Common Ground Christian Network in Nashville, several Christian attorneys spoke to a group of evangelical church leaders on the topic of religious freedom. Several of the speakers addressed the potential changes that can be expected in the legal landscape of the country in light of the recent decision of the Supreme Court redefining marriage. “The troubling issue we face is that religious liberty is viewed by many today as a special privilege rather than as a fundamental human and constitutional right,” stated attorney Scott Ward.

One of the consistent themes raised by several of the speakers was the need for biblically orthodox churches to review their documents and policies regarding the definition of “marriage” as well as the wedding services that are offered by their pastor(s). This includes not only the congregation’s understanding of the nature of marriage, but also policies regarding facilities usage that could be impacted by changing laws in many communities regarding “public accommodations.” Congregations were also urged to look at their employment policies that can be impacted by various laws against discrimination. Attorney Eric Kniffen said, “It is important that religious organizations consider how their organization could come under attack, consider the religious liberty protections available to them and audit their organization to see where problems might come up.”

Several of the attorneys spoke of the importance of emphasizing, with scriptural support, the underlying “religious” reasons for virtually all of the policies held by the church. Should congregations ever find themselves in litigation over these issues, the more effectively a church can show that their policies are based on their “sincerely held religious beliefs,” the more likely they are to prevail under the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom. Eric Kniffen put it this way, “Congregations must be able to articulate their religious convictions and identity and then be able to show how these convictions relate to their activities as well as to the expectations they have of their members and employees.”

The overarching theme of the gathering was that the times are changing and where orthodox Christian teaching was once the foundation of the shared public understanding of morality in the United States, this is no longer the case. As traditional Christian beliefs continue to be less accepted by society in general, Christians who hold to those beliefs will increasingly come under attack for their positions on many issues.



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!!

Charitable Giving Sustains This Ministry

Local churches and ministries like the Evangelical Association rely on the generosity of donors in order to carry on their work. **As your church is planning its budget for 2016**, please consider putting the Evangelical Association in as a line item. Contributions can be made either to the General Fund or to the National Minister Support Fund.

In addition, while most people know that giving to a church or qualified 501c3 organization like the EA is tax deductible, **many older people no longer itemize their deductions** when filing their tax return and thus do not benefit from the charitable deduction.

There is a **solution allowed by the IRS** for older people called an “IRA Direct Rollover.” Since many IRA owners must take a minimum distribution each year, they can meet this requirement by having all or part of their required minimum distribution (up to a certain defined limit) go straight to a qualified charity. That way **the distribution is not counted as taxable income to the IRA owner**. This is a particularly useful way to give for those who own a traditional IRA because much of the money in these accounts is eventually taxable.

If you would like to make this type of contribution to the Evangelical Association or any other charitable group, contact your financial advisor to learn more. **Contributions to the EA can be sent directly to the national office** or made via our website at 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.

Ministry and Employment Opportunities

AFRICA – Chingola, Zambia. Mature Christians who are called as missionaries are needed to work as **Secondary School Teachers, Primary School Teachers, Dorm Parents and support staff**. Willing to raise financial and prayer support to serve at Amano Christian School in Chingola, Zambia. Seeking one or two-year commitment to 140 student Grade 1-12 Christian school in Central Africa. Please visit our [website www.amanocs.org](http://www.amanocs.org) or write: frank.wittmann@amanocs.org

HONDURAS – International Christian Fellowship, an English speaking church in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, is looking for a **Pastor** to begin as soon as possible. The application deadline is October 30, 2015. Church link: <http://icfsanpedro.org/>. Pastoral search link: <http://icfsanpedro.org/pastoral-search.html>. The church will provide a housing stipend, the successful applicant must raise his own support. To apply, write to: pastorsearch.sanpedrosula@gmail.com The current interim pastor of the church is the Rev. Ken McHarg who is an EA pastor and retired missionary.

Ministry and Employment Opportunities *continued*

CONNECTICUT – Middlebury Congregational Church of Middlebury, CT (www.middleburyucc.org) is seeking a **full time Pastor** to provide spiritual leadership for a community-based congregation. The church is affiliated with the UCC, but they are very “independent” and are looking for a more conservative pastor than is typically found in their denomination. The ideal candidate would be an effective preacher with caring pastoral skills. This person must be able to encourage people to relate their faith to their daily lives and challenge them to grow spiritually. Additional leadership expectations include local mission activities and a strong commitment to the educational ministry of the church, including our youth. The successful candidate must have the demonstrated skills of fostering a sense of fellowship among all our members. Our congregation has committed members, vibrant worship, excellent music, Christian education for all ages, dynamic youth programs, a long history of mission outreach, and a large preschool. We are hoping our next minister will be able to inspire us with their sermons and be an effective communicator with consensus building skills who can grow a congregation with diverse faith backgrounds. For more information please contact: Curtis V. Titus, Tinley, Renehan&Dost, LLP 60 North Main Street, 2nd Floor Waterbury, CT 06702 Tel: (203) 596-9030, Cell: (203) 206-0007 E-Mail: ctitus@tmrdlaw.com

KENTUCKY – St. James Church (www.stjameslou.net), a congregation rooted in the Evangelical and Reformed tradition, is seeking a **worship leader/minister** to guide and facilitate its music and worship ministry. The ideal candidate will possess the following skills and abilities: Proven ability to organize and direct the congregation and various choirs in worship through music Proficient in both organ and piano Ability to direct and develop vocal choirs and ensembles of various ages, voices and skill levels Ability to direct and develop handbell choirs and ensembles of various ages and skill levels Ability to develop and encourage members to use their musical gifts in worship. Every person desiring to be considered for a ministry position with St. James Church must declare him or herself in agreement with the congregation’s statement of beliefs and affirm these beliefs in his or her ministry. While the above skills and abilities represent the ideal candidate the congregation recognizes that all the skills and abilities listed may not be present in a single candidate. In such cases where certain skills or abilities are not present the congregation may consider filling that requirement with either additional ministry staff or volunteers from the congregation. Please contact Pastor Jeff McCarty at rev.mccarty@stjameslou.net for a complete job description and further information.

NORTH CAROLINA – Associate & Youth Pastor (Full-time) for Shiloh Reformed Church of Faith, 100 South Main Street, Faith, NC 28041. Qualifications: Seminary or Bible College Ministry Degree preferred. Description: The Associate & Youth Pastor shall be a full-time member of the Shiloh staff who will work at the direction of the Senior Pastor to fulfill Shiloh’s mission of sharing the love of Jesus Christ with people everywhere placing an emphasis on Shiloh’s Youth Ministries. Performing other duties as assigned Shiloh Reformed Church is located north of Charlotte, NC, just outside of Salisbury. It was founded over 143 years ago in the German Reformed faith. We are conservative in our theology, innovative in our ministries and genuine in our concern for others as we seek to share the love of our Lord with everybody everywhere. Our worship services are mostly traditional mixed with some occasional contemporary elements. Total membership is currently over 600. Sunday Morning Worship Services average between 225-250 people attending. Our Wednesday Family Night averages just under 140 adults, youth & children. Love for Christ and the church family as well as communication and cooperation among the many members and ministries are highly valued. For additional, more specific information on our many ministries and missions, please visit our church website, Website URL: www.shilohreformedchurch.com Please send resumes to the above mailing address or to pastor@shilohreformedchurch.com.

NORTH CAROLINA – St. John’s Reformed Church, Kannapolis, North Carolina is seeking a **full-time Pastor** who is a person of faith with a direct sense of calling. St. John’s has an average attendance of 65-70 persons, the majority who have been members for 25-45+ years. The staff includes a part-time secretary and music director. The candidate should have a four year degree from an accredited college, additional post graduate education in religion, preferably an accredited theological seminary. For more information visit our website at www.ourstjohns.org, and follow our application process. The application information may be e-mailed to ourstjohns@gmail.com or mailed to St. John’s Reformed Church, 901 North Main Street, Kannapolis, NC 28081.

NORTH CAROLINA - St. Paul's Reformed Church, Newton, North Carolina (www.stpaulsreformedchurch.com) is seeking a full-time Pastor who is a person of faith with a direct sense of calling. St. Paul's has an average attendance of 65-80 persons, the majority who have been members for 10-45+ years. The staff includes a full time secretary, music director, musician (pianist/organist), and part time musician (pianist/organist). The candidate should have a four year undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university, as well as three-year seminary training at an accredited seminary or at least three years of pulpit experience with the willingness to continue his training. The candidate should be credentialed and ordained or willing to be credentialed and ordained with recognition through the Evangelical Association or any other affiliated body of which the church is associated. Please send a resume, a sermon sample and/or link to be emailed to stpaulsresearch@gmail.com or mailed to St. Paul's Reformed Church's Pastoral Search Committee, Mrs. Martha H. Headrick, 2315 Foster Street, Newton, North Carolina 28658.

PENNSYLVANIA - Two churches, Trinity UCC in New Bloomfield and **Christ Evangelical & Reformed UCC** in Duncannon (approximately 9 miles apart) are looking for a full-time pastor. Attendance at Trinity varies from 50-80 while attendance at Christ is from 25-35. Both churches are bedroom communities and a short distance from Harrisburg (the state capitol). We tend to be theologically conservative and are searching for a biblical preacher who will help us relate the Scripture to our daily lives. Total compensation will be in the \$70,000 range. For a detailed description of the position and a copy of the Statement of Faith that has been adopted by both churches, see the attachments to this email. Inquiries should be made to Fred Rissinger at 717-834-4845 or fdriissinger@embarqmail.com

PENNSYLVANIA–Mount Bethel Church (member of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference), PO Box 136, 16 East Specht Street, McClure, PA 17841-0136 is seeking an **interim pastor** to serve our congregation. Our pastor of 20 years is retiring. We come from an Evangelical and Reformed tradition. We are a rural community, geographically located between Lewistown and Selinsgrove, PA. There are 70 active members. We have a fully furnished parsonage. Initial contact can be made to Gerald Botdorf; PO Box 151; 32 Zeller Street; McClure, PA 17841; home number: 570-658-6372; e-mail: botdorfgerald@yahoo.com.

Evangelical Association

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
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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!

If you wish to pay with a credit/debit card, we invite you to visit the new "online store" found on our website evangelicalassociation.org. There you can place your order making a secure payment through PayPal and we will then send the calendar(s) to you and/or you will receive the required link to download your digital copy.

Evangelical Association
2015-2016 Desk Calendar

