

...WORKING THE NETS FOR KINGDOM ADVANCEMENT



# **Church Infighting Hinders Kingdom Advancement**

A Message From The Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister

There's an old hymn that isn't sung nearly as often as it once was called "Onward Christian Soldiers." In that song, the church of Jesus Christ is compared to a mighty army moving forward in unity, advancing the Lord's Kingdom of love, grace and justice. I'm not sure why we don't sing that hymn as much as we once did, but perhaps it's because many congregations have lost any sense that they are troops serving in God's army.

As congregations, instead of referring to ourselves as an "army," we're much more likely these days to describe ourselves using terms like "family" or "fellowship" or "community." Now while those terms are all useful in talking about the Christian church, I still think there's value in viewing ourselves as an army because of the unique perspective the term gives us.

You see, when we consider ourselves soldiers in God's army, it reminds us that much of what happens in a successful military organization must also happen in the church - for example: if a military unit is going to function properly and achieve its goals, there must not be disunity and dissension in the ranks. Instead, a successful military group will be made up of people who band together for a common purpose, set their differences aside in order to achieve the goals of the mission, and, who are willing to die for each other in order to meet their objective.

What's stopping many churches from playing an effective role in advancing the Kingdom of the Lord is that they're failing in one or more of these areas.

A plague in many local churches these days is "infighting" as the soldiers in God's army turn on each other. The weapons of choice in these internal battles are generally verbal assaults as God's people begin accusing, backbiting and slandering one another over things that really don't matter much in the grand scheme of things - for example: a while back someone told me about a church fight pitting "old timers" versus the "newer folks" during which someone stood up at a congregational meeting and invited almost everyone else in the church to leave because they hadn't been members of the church from childhood. In another church fight I learned about, members were arguing with each other to the point of division over what style of music was appropriate in a worship service. And in yet another internal congregational squabble, church members were distancing



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#### Only You Can Make the Network Work

Those who belong to the Evangelical Association often ask how they can communicate with others in the network. There are ways, but they require that people take the initiative to make it happen.

The website of the Evangelical Association serves as both a place where new people can learn about the EA and as a hub where current affiliates of the association can share resources. If you or your church is affiliated with the Evangelical Association, please visit <a href="evangelicalassociation.org">evangelicalassociation.org</a>, click on the "Resource Center" and apply for a username and password. Once you are able to access this private part of our website, you will be able to interact and share resources online with others across the country who are part of the network.

If you use Facebook, please search for the Evangelical Association and request membership in the EA Facebook "group." Once approved, you can begin communicating with more than a hundred other friends in the EA from across the country.

Finally, if you are looking to reach out to others in the EA, visit our website, click on "Find a Church" and open up the interactive map to find the names and contact information for others in the association. There is also an online directory of both churches and pastors to help you build important connections.

#### Desk and Digital Calendars Now Available

The Evangelical Association 2014-2015 Desk Calendar is the official desk calendar of the Evangelical Association. The 16 month calendar (September 2014 through December 2015) 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 Calennatmin@ send email dar, an to evangelical association, org or phone 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!

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.



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### **Church Infighting Hinders Kingdom Advancement**

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themselves from one another over whether or not church funds should be spent on repairing an older building or used to support mission work.

The truth is, what's causing so many churches to become impotent these days is that **Christians have forgotten that their real enemy is not their fellow church members.** Too many congregations spend too much time arguing and infighting over silly things, all the while failing to notice that the real enemies of secularism, materialism and even outright paganism are rapidly closing in, **killing congregations** and **claiming individual victims** in our families, communities and all throughout the world. As Peter warns us, our "enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

In a literal war, you rarely hear of soldiers fighting with each other when they are being pinned down by enemy fire. When the bombs are falling and the bullets are flying, that's when soldiers pull together, put their petty differences behind them and start focusing on saving each other, defeating the enemy and moving forward to conquer the territory before them.

As it becomes more challenging to be a Christian in the increasingly "post Christian" culture in which we live, individual congregations must focus less on divisions, disputes and internal arguments and more on how believers can come together to fight against the forces of darkness that would seek to draw people away from the Lord and His truth. It's time we Christians follow the advice given to us in Jude 20-23a where the Scripture says, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them..."

Truly the church can be "like a mighty army," and as soldiers for Christ, we must heed the words of our commander as He prepares us for battle:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." (Ephesians 6: 10-18)

#### **Ministry Opportunities**

Due to the space constraints of this edition, we were unable to include the Ministry Opportunities. Please visit our website, evangelical association.org to view all current openings.

## 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 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@evangelicalassociati on.org or 877-424-1472.

#### BULK COPIES OF THE NETWORKER ARE NOW AVAILABLE

If you would like a bulk shipment of ten copies of each edition of the Networker to make available to the members of your church, just contact the national office at~

natmin@ evangelicalassociation.org or toll free at 877-424-1472

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## **Please Donate During the Summer Slump**

The required annual dues paid by member churches, pastors and individuals currently account for approximately **one third of the total cost** to operate the Evangelical Association. That means that **two thirds of the funds needed** to run the association and support the National Minister (who is our only staff person) must come through generous "extra mile" giving from churches and individuals who support the work of the EA and the National Minister Fund through their tax deductible gifts.

Please contribute to the ongoing work of the association by joining our support team. You can use the enclosed envelope to mail a check or you can make a contribution using a credit/debit card (one time or an automatic recurring gift) by going to our website and clicking "donate."

As with most non-profit organizations, donations tend to come in more slowly during the summer months. Your willingness to give is what allows this ministry to continue.