

# networker

winter 2009

...working the nets for kingdom advancement

## Message from the National Minister

The Rev. Jim Barnes, National Minister



When I first signed on to serve as the new half-time national minister of the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches, I was reminded by a member of the national board of directors that the position does require a "willingness to travel" to carry on the work of the ministry. Having started in the position on October 15, I have logged over 7,000 miles as I have journeyed to North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Florida and Connecticut in order to further the ministry of the EARCCC!

While the traveling responsibilities of the national minister have slowed a bit during the holiday season, I continue to be encouraged by the enthusiastic attitude so many within our association have for the networking and fellowship that are such a significant part of our purpose as an organization. The collegial relationships forged among members of the Evangelical Association can only be the work of the Holy Spirit who binds us together as believers in unity with one another!

At a meeting with several EARCCC pastors who gather monthly in North Carolina, we spent some time discussing the need for fellowship expressed by clergy and congregations in parts of the country where proximity does not allow for regular gatherings of the association. One of the ideas that came out of the meeting included the possibility of encouraging strong, organized clergy groups (like the one in North Carolina) to "adopt" an EA pastor from a different region who is perhaps located too far away from any other EARCCC congregations to participate in a regular gathering. My hope is to begin helping pastors in more remote locations establish these connections with clergy groups in other areas.

Beyond all of the travel, serving as national minister has involved a fair amount of "administrative" readjustment as we have been moving the national office from its previous location in Pennsylvania to the St. Louis area. Working with new computer software, transferring existing files and readjusting our publicity materials to reflect the new address and contact information for the EARCCC are just a few of the things that have been accomplished in November and early December.

Please be reminded that renewal season is almost upon us. One of the strengths of the EARCCC is that it is an association which requires its members to renew their membership annually. I believe this keeps our group fresh, relevant and filled with committed, rather than "inactive" members. On the downside, since renewals are annual, many of us tend to forget that we need to renew our membership shortly after the first of each year!

In order to help everyone remember, my hope is that we will have renewal notices mailed to all of our members in the early part of January. If you are a member of the EARCCC and do not receive a renewal notice, please contact the national office at 877-424-1472. Given the transition of leadership that the association has undergone during 2009, there is always the possibility that paperwork or computer changes were not completed. I hope to catch any of these "glitches" and have them corrected in 2010. Thanks for your patience and God bless you!

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## PRINT DEADLINES FOR THE NETWORKER

Spring 2010 Edition:

March 1, 2010

Summer 2010 Edition:

June 1, 2010

Fall 2010 Edition:

September 1, 2010

Winter 2010 Edition:

December 1, 2010

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EA PRESIDENT

*The Rev. Bill Miller, President of the Board of Directors*



Greetings from the EA! This is a wonderful and busy time of the year! On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Your Board will be meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas on February 1 & 2 and I ask for your prayers for guidance as planning takes place for the new year.

Of great importance is the fact that Rich Dubbs, Secretary of the Board, and Gary Bowman, former National Minister, were in a very serious car accident. They were traveling back home from a hunting lodge in south central Pennsylvania when an on coming vehicle pulled in front of them and a major collision occurred. They were both flown to the Altoona Regional Hospital where Gary was treated for a fractured hip and released a few days later. Rich however was then flown to the Penn State Hershey Medical Center where he had surgery for a badly broken right hip and an equally badly broken left leg. As of this writing, Rich is still in the hospital awaiting placement at a rehabilitation facility. Rich's injuries will require months of rehab and thus putting him out of commission at his Church and for us. Rich's wife and son are doing well, but the whole family needs our prayers as do Gary & Carol Bowman.

Feel free to call me at 610-488-6702 (church) or 610-678-7022 (home) for updated information about Rich's condition or any other matter pertaining to the EA.

BLESSINGS TO ALL IN 2010!

## LOOKING FOR A YEAR END DEDUCTION?

It has been a tough year financially for the Evangelical Association as it has been for many other ministries across the country throughout 2009. If the Lord has blessed you with the ability to give, please consider a special, tax deductible gift to the ministry of the EARCCC. Donations to either the *General Fund* or the *National Minister Support Fund* are always deeply appreciated. Contributions can be mailed to:

**Evangelical Association  
9051 Watson Road #241  
St. Louis, MO 63126**

A receipt will be sent to you as all funds donated are fully deductible.

## 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](mailto:office@bethelstpaul.org)**

You will begin receiving your *Networker* via e-mail with the next edition this spring. Thank you for your support!

## “THE POWER OF A SIMPLE GIFT”

by Rev. Lin Smalec

Salem Church, Waynesboro, PA

I'm standing at my station in the busy, noisy warehouse, looking down at a gaily-wrapped shoebox filled with goodies: toys, school supplies, candy, and - oops, a bottle of shampoo that has to come out. Then I fill the box with a few extra things from the supplies at my station, hand the box on to be taped shut and put in a carton, and start the process all over again.

I am one of thousands of volunteers at the Charlotte, North Carolina processing center for Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse. Each year in mid-November, gift-filled shoeboxes make their way from individuals and churches to local collection centers and ultimately, to a regional processing center like this one. (Other regional centers are in Atlanta, Denver, Minneapolis, Hawaii, Orange County, California, and Boone, North Carolina.) Here at the processing center, during the last week of November and first few weeks of December, volunteers inspect each and every shoebox to insure the items it contains are appropriate for overseas shipping. They are then sent around the world for distribution in cities and villages in over 100 countries. Once they reach their destination, they are paired with a gospel booklet in the local language, and given to kids who, in many cases, have never before received a gift. This year we hope to process and send over 8 million shoeboxes.

This is my fourth year working at the Charlotte processing center. I must admit that I'm rather a wimp when it comes to mission work. I'm not one of those people who revels in roughing it! So this is the perfect kind of work for me. I live in south-central Pennsylvania, and the Charlotte center is the closest to me. I usually come down on a Sunday and work Monday through Thursday for 6-8 hours each day, returning home on Friday. There are a number of hotels in the area that offer discounts to the shoebox volunteers. Volunteers come here from all over the country; each day there is a roll call of states and it is fascinating to see how far some have come. Many locals also come out to work for a day or two. We have volunteers of all ages, from teenagers to senior citizens. It is a busy but satisfying week.

There are a number of different jobs volunteers can do. At the inspection stations, there are: presort, where we open the boxes and look for the shipping money inside (hopefully right on top where we can find it easily!); inspection, where we inspect the contents, pull out those things that can't go\*, and fill the box with additional items if necessary; taping, where the boxes are sealed for shipment; and packing, where the boxes are packed in cartons for shipment. For those who can't stand for long periods, there are stations in the warehouse for packing candy or preparing filler items for the shoeboxes. Thousands of volunteers each day manage to process hundreds of thousands of boxes at each center.

If you would like to experience a satisfying short-term mission experience, contact Operation Christmas Child at [www.samaritanspurse.org/occ](http://www.samaritanspurse.org/occ) or 1-800-353-5949 to volunteer at a regional processing center. In giving your time, you'll experience even more deeply the "Power of a Simple Gift".

\*A question many ask is what happens to the items that we have to pull out of the boxes. Each processing center distributes those to local agencies such as homeless shelters and orphanages. Please rest assured that nothing is wasted or misused, and all the items go to folks in need.



## 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.

## KEEPING FAITH RELEVANT IS THEME IN NORTH CAROLINA



*Emanuel Reformed Church*

Helping people grow deeper in discipleship, the necessity of church discipline in the modern church and the importance of prayer were just a few of the topics considered at the annual gathering of the North Carolina Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches in October. The six hour meeting was held at Emanuel Reformed Church in Thomasville and featured both contemporary and traditional worship, dynamic speakers and relevant workshops.

While designed to be uplifting, the event was surrounded by some sad and challenging circumstances. The day before the meeting, one of the scheduled speakers, the Rev. Derrick Hicks of Eagle Rock Christian Church was hit by a car while directing traffic at a local high school. Just a few days before that, the Rev. C.E. Holt of Green Level Christian Church was diagnosed with some serious medical problems that prevented him from attending. Perhaps the most painful report received at the gathering had to do with a young man who had planned to participate who took his own life a week earlier.

In spite of these difficulties, the mood of the meeting was upbeat and worshipful. EA pastor Alan Tyndall led a workshop encouraging pastors and laity to make certain that their congregations are committed to the power of prayer in both good times and bad. Michael Euliss



*Pastor Alan Tyndall's workshop*

gave a workshop encouraging churches to provide opportunities for people to grow deeper in their faith, and the Reverend Lee Evans tackled the challenging topic of church discipline in the twenty-first century. Pastor Steve Disher spoke

on the importance of being open to God's leading when He gives insight into circumstances that can only come from Him.



*Rev. Lee Evan's workshop*

Participants were thoroughly blessed by the hospitality of Pastor Rickey Payne and the members of the congregation at Emanuel Church. Following the gathering, several members of the "Cracker Barrel Gang" (a group of EA pastors in North Carolina who drive hundreds of miles to meet with each other at a centrally located restaurant), had a short meeting with the Rev. Jim Barnes, the new national minister of the EARCCC to discuss matters relating to the association. Pastor Jim encouraged the pastors to help the Evangelical Association continue to operate as the network it is designed to be by passing ministry ideas on to him so that they can be disseminated throughout the association.



*Rickey Payne—Host Pastor*



*The  
"Cracker  
Barrel  
Gang"*



## *A Child Changes Everything*

*Sleepless nights and tired days.*

*"It's your turn to get up with her."*

*Unexpected expenses and drained bank accounts.*

*"We needed what?!"*

*Screaming fits and an anticipated evening of  
peaceful respite lost.*

*"She's ready to eat again?"*

*A growing pile of laundry and wearied bodies.*

*"But we just changed her diaper!"*

*The birth of a child changes everything.*

*Priorities change. Routines change.*

*Outlooks on life change.*

*But these changes aren't bad.*

*Bright-eyed stares.*

*"She loves the lights."*

*A noisy house.*

*"She loves to talk."*

*Time to play.*

*"She loves to play!"*

*A wonderful sense of serenity.*

*"She loves to be held."*

*Wonder abounds. Hope is restored.*

*Life's possibilities seem endless again.*

## **SENIOR PASTOR SEARCH**

First Congregational Church

Traverse City, Michigan

First Congregational, a non-denominational church located on Old Mission Peninsula in beautiful Traverse City Michigan, is searching for a Senior Pastor who is theologically evangelical, homiletically superior; a committed spiritual leader and a visionary with a servant's heart. First Congregational is a 600 active member church that offers four weekly worship services on Saturday and Sunday with a distinctive style of worship at each of them. Our next pastor will succeed our present senior pastor of 25 years. We are looking for a pastoral leader who will build on our past and present and inspire us to a dynamic ministry in the future. Our web-site is [www.fctc.org](http://www.fctc.org). Documents containing our church profile, our expectations and the job description for this position, as well as the application process may be requested by e-mailing [fccapplications@gmail.com](mailto:fccapplications@gmail.com) or by making a request at First Congregational Church, Att: Search Committee, 6105 Center Rd, Traverse City MI 49686.

## **PASTOR NEEDED**

St. Paul's Evangelical and Moniteau Evangelical Advent are two churches about ten minutes apart from each other and located in rural Central Missouri. St. Paul's is in Jamestown, a town of about 380, located on the Missouri River Route 179 about 24 miles from Jefferson City, the capitol of Missouri, and 30 miles from Columbia, home of the University of Missouri. Moniteau Advent is in the country overlooking the Moniteau Creek bottom.

We are searching for a full-time pastor to take care of both congregations. If interested in applying for the position or receiving additional information, please email~

***[jamestown.moniteau@gmail.com](mailto:jamestown.moniteau@gmail.com)***

Contact person is Joyce Rohrbach and the church telephone number is (660) 849-2255.

## “GIVE ME A BREAK!”

*Pastor Jeff Siems, Vice-President of the Board of Directors*



It is a proven fact that sometimes we get walloped with the messiness of life when we least expect it. Take what happened in Tainan, Taiwan. On January 17, 2004, a 66-ton sperm whale died and was beached on the southwestern coast of that island. Two weeks later, on

January 29, authorities decided to truck the dead whale to a laboratory where they could do an autopsy. So they loaded this 56-foot behemoth on a flatbed truck and were hauling it through the streets of Tainan, when the whale exploded. Yes, I said “exploded”. It had been decomposing, of course, and all those internal gasses reached a breaking point. As the truck was making its way down a busy street, all of a sudden the whale exploded, showering nearby cars and shops with blood and organs and stopping traffic for hours. [“Thar She Blows!” AOL News (1-29-04)] No, I am not kidding—this really happened! What a mess!

Isn't that just like life sometimes? You're going about your business, and then all of a sudden, out of nowhere, a whale explodes! Maybe it's your job, or your marriage, or your financial situation, or your health, or maybe it's all of the above and then some. And when things move from bad to worse, we throw our hands heavenward—not in surrender but in complaint, and we declare: “God, give me a break!” When you feel like life is putting you to the test, does Christmas have a message for you?

But the good news is, whatever your problems may be, it is possible to face adversity with confidence and boldness. If you look at the story of Christ's birth with a set of fresh eyes, you quickly see that from Mary and Joseph's perspective, absolutely nothing went right that first Christmas. There was a series of divinely appointed detours, interruptions, and changing of plans that would make the most spiritual among us cry out, “God, give me a break!” If Mary and Joseph didn't say that, I almost have to believe that they at least felt it. They learned, as we must, that Christmas has a message for us when life gets muddled.

I have every reason to believe that Mary and Joseph were ready to give birth in Nazareth—the wrong place according to prophecy. Then came the edict: time to pay taxes—go to the city of your ancestry. For Joseph, that place was Bethlehem—the right place. God used the government to position Mary and Joseph to give birth in the right place—further evidence that God was giving the direction and prophecy was being fulfilled. You have to wonder, though, why weren't they ready to make that move in advance? I believe that when it comes to God we operate on a “need to know” basis. We are given the facts we need to know for now but not always the whole picture. I believe that is how God was operating in the life of Mary and Joseph. He was in control of those events and they were not.

Let's be honest, shall we? We don't like being “out of control”, even if it means being “God-controlled.” When life starts going awry, the temptation is to snatch “the reins”—never a good idea, yet we do it anyway. In order to avoid the temptation of attempting to grab the controls, we need to change our perspective. There are a few things even the worst problems can't do. They can't separate you from God's love, they can't separate you from God's family, and they can't separate you from God's protection. God is bigger than any problem you will ever face. God has the ability to turn any problem into an “either way I win” situation. Think about the problems you are facing right now. What is it that you are focusing on? Do you keep reminding yourself about all the damage this problem can cause? Do you catch yourself saying, “This will be the end of me, I'll be ruined, I'll never be able to bounce back”? Try this: Instead of focusing on all that you think a problem can do, focus on all that a problem can't do. It can't defeat you. Either way, you win. That realization should encourage you to keep your hands off the controls.

Not only was the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem tough from a control standpoint, it was also difficult from a comfort standpoint. There is no mention of where they stayed along the way. Were there inns or homes or did they just have to camp-out? If you thought that riding a donkey while

pregnant was tough, what about sleeping on the ground! And then when they finally reach their destination, there is no room in the local inn because the village is packed with the descendants of David. Mary is doubled over in pain as labor has begun. The only “room” available is a barn. Again, wouldn’t you have said, “God, give me a break!”?

Have you ever wondered why the birth had to be in a barn? It wasn’t necessary to fulfill prophecy. What if it had occurred in the inn? What if it had occurred in someone’s private residence? I believe that the birth in a barn communicates first and foremost the humble nature of God entering our world. But I believe that the second reason had to be availability. Had the birth occurred anywhere else, visitors would have been bounced at the door. Visit a barn and everyone is welcome—regardless of who you are or how you are dressed. Message? Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it best:

*“We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans... sending us people with claims and petitions.... It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so*

*important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this, but actually they are disdainful of God’s ‘crooked yet straight path.’” (The Martyred Christian)*

There are always opportunities that God is unfolding if we have the eyes to see them—if we can follow God’s “crooked yet straight path”. In the vast majority of cases, it involves helping someone else. Instead of allowing our problems to make us be self-centered we should force ourselves to be other-centered. When we search for the opportunities, the problems become powerless.

There is another interesting aspect of this story that we frequently overlook. I think it is very interesting that the account includes that Mary dressed the child in cloths and placed him in a manger—a feed trough. Why are we supposed to know that? Why aren’t we told that the birth occurred in a barn and leave everything else to our imagination without throwing in the fact that Mary used a feed trough for a crib? In my thinking, it revealed still another curve—another deviation from the plan—something else that didn’t go well. What did Joseph do by trade? A carpenter. What would a carpenter build for his infant son? A cradle. You

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### **TRANSFER OF NATIONAL OFFICE AS RENEWAL TIME DRAWS NEAR**

With the calling of the Rev. Jim Barnes as the new national minister of the EARCCC, a process of transferring administrative functions of the association from Lebanon, Pennsylvania to St. Louis, Missouri has begun. Given the injuries recently sustained by our board secretary, Rich Dubbs, this process may be slowed while he is recovering from an auto accident. All correspondence with the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches should now be directed to our new address which is: **9051 Watson Road #241, St. Louis, MO 63126**. It will be particularly important that this information is circulated among our member pastors, churches and lay people as renewal time draws closer. Annual renewal notices for EARCCC membership should begin arriving in mailboxes around the first of January. It will be important that church administrators, treasurers and others who handle such matters have the updated contact information for the association.

### **FORMER NATIONAL MINISTER AND BOARD SECRETARY INVOLVED IN CAR ACCIDENT**

The Rev. Gary Bowman, former national minister and the Rev. Rich Dubbs, board secretary of the Evangelical Association were involved in a serious car accident on November 30 while returning from a trip. Both Gary and Rich were airlifted to hospitals in Pennsylvania for treatment. Please pray for both of them as they recover from their injuries.

# Evangelical Association

Contact Information:  
National Minister

**Evangelical Association**  
of the Reformed and Congregational  
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don't think that the carpenter had built a cradle for the baby? I do. And I also believe that Mary was thinking of that cradle as she laid her son in the manger. First the journey, then the barn, and now a feed trough. One more part of the plan that didn't happen as Mary and Joseph planned. Were they upset and torn apart? I don't think so. Why? Because they walked with God. John Maxwell reminds us that mature believers have the ability of seeing God "not only in the pleasures and palaces, but also in the barnyards and stables of life." (John Maxwell, "When You Follow A Star and Find A Stable" in **The Heart of Christmas**, pages 13-14) Mary was a perfect example of this. She was told she was to be the mother of the Messiah. Wonderful! But how does that end up? She ends up homeless, giving birth to God's Son in a barn, and using a feed trough as a cradle! If anyone had the right to scream, "God, give me a break!", it was Mary, but there is no indication that she did.

Philip Yancey tells of a letter he received from a friend whose daughter, Peggie, was terminally ill.

The mother wrote:

*The weekend before she went into the hospital for the last time, Peggie came home all excited about a quotation from William Barclay that her minister had used. She was so taken with it that she had copied it down on a 3 x 5 card for me: "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." She said her minister must have had a hard week, because after he read it he banged the pulpit and then turned his back to them and cried. [Philip Yancey, **Disappointment with God** (Zondervan, 1997), p. 157]*

"Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." Is there an "exploding whale" in your life right now? Please remember that our problems are not punishment, they are opportunities to demonstrate the power of God. Mary and Joseph were able to make it happen. So must you and I.