

E. C. Leader

February, 2009

Our Vision

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a dynamic movement of God that is led by pastors and laity who have a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them. Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities. Interdependence will be the distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church as local churches network with one another and ministries beyond the E.C. family to proclaim the Gospel to the world.



First at the Feeder

I never imagined I'd enjoy "feeding the birds", but Deb and I find it relaxing to befriend the "little flock" in our backyard. One thing I've noticed is that as hungry as they are, no bird is overly eager to get to the feeder first or be there all alone. It has something to do with a deeply instinctual aversion to becoming hawk food!

Instead we see them slowly come out from hiding in the foliage on the trees that edge our property. Together they assemble on branches, all looking at the feeders, watching and waiting until some brave flier takes the plunge. Then in seconds they all come swarming at once. Feeders that stood abandoned now have every perch occupied – until something startles them and the ritual repeats.

That pattern got me thinking about people. How many of us sit back and hesitate with the flock? Who is willing to lead the way? We could use more "first at the feeder" types. They have a way of coaxing everybody to let go of the perch and try out the wings God gave them.

It's common for the smallest birds to be the boldest in getting to our deck. The big woodpeckers hang back, while the Juncos and Finches lead the charge. In this season of cultural change and economic uncertainty it's tempting to shelter in the branches. But it's just the time for people like us to seize the opportunity, even one at a time.

Churches are reaching out to those who are laid off and downsized. They are teaching desperately needed biblical principles on wealth and handling finances. They are helping people discover how to live debt free. Some ministries make their buildings available for people to use an "office" to search for employment or to network with job counselors. Others form co-ops to increase purchasing power or share possessions. Many are inviting people to come in simply to pray.

The lord turns every difficulty inside out in such a way that it can become a blessing. Whenever someone dares us to "give them some good news for a change," they are in fact asking us to "give them Jesus," the best news of all. All it takes is a few disciples willing to show the way to the "feeder." Once there, others will follow. Take off toward the ministry dream Christ has given you.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

- March 14, 2009 – **Multiply**, an event for leaders of churches interested in planting churches with resource person Phil Alessi. To be held at Mohn’s Hill, 9:00am to 3:00 pm. Registration deadline is March 1. Cost \$10.00 per person. Send registrations to Brenda at Church Center.
- March 13-14 – **2009 Youth Leaders Summit** – Refreshing Mountain Camp, Stevens, PA
www.pachristianendeavor.org
- April 20-23 – **Exponential – New Church Conference**, Orlando, FL. The largest gathering of church planting leaders in North America. www.exponentialconference.com
- May 2, 2009 – Join us for **Disciple 2009 – Sustaining The Turnaround** by making disciplemaking missional. Designed as follow up training to the “Discipling Others Seminar” this event will feature Mildred Minatrea, author of “Shaped by God’s Heart” as the plenary session speaker. Several additional leaders from EC Churches and the Navigators involved in the Life2life disciplemaking process will serve as workshop presenters. Trinity EC in Harrisburg, PA will be hosting this great commission oriented gathering.



FROM THE BISHOP’S PRAYER LIST

- Give thanks for an excellent Pastoral Assessment Center. God is raising up leaders for the future.
- Pray for God’s direction in the Stationing Process -- now underway. Ask that all of our assignments would result in “fit and flourish” ministry.
- Pray for God’s wisdom as the Director of Global Ministries and I seek to provide counsel in sometimes complex issues of cross cultural and international ministry.
- For effectiveness in the Evangelism & Discipleship course I teach at ETS.
- For the release of the Governance Manual and its use by the local churches.
- For our church to find many ways to turn challenges into opportunities.

BISHOP’S TRAVELS:

February	22	Countryside, Clarks Mills
March	1	AM Trinity, Harrisburg
	8	AM Buenas Nuevas, West Hazleton
	15	AM New Bethany Allentown; Arabic Living, Bethlehem
	22	AM First, Easton
		PM Conestoga District Hymn Sing, Mohn’s Hill
	29	AM Kinderhook



There are dates open periodically through the remainder of the year.
Email jeahart@eccenter.com to inquire about availability.



E-MAIL CHANGES:

- David & Barbara Myers – 6770BD@att.net
- Rev. Abram Rhoads – aerhoads@dejazzd.com

LEADERSHIP NOTES:

- **Pastor Angel Rosado** has relocated to Orlando, FL. He hopes to plant a church there, but continues to work with Fountain of Life Church in Bethlehem. We are in the process of redefining the informal partnership our Church Planting Commission has enjoyed with this ministry.
- **Rev. Michael Soltis**, pastor of Wedgewood Park, Youngstown, OH has resigned, effective March 1. He and his wife, Brenda, will assume the pastorate of the Zion United Brethren Church, Wayne, OH. Retired pastor, **Rev. James Hansen**, will assume the pastoral duties until a replacement is found.
- Effective December 31, 2008, **Dr. James L. Schwenk** has resigned from his position as Professor of Church History and Dean of Dech Chapel at Evangelical Theological Seminary. While no longer a permanent member of the faculty, he will continue teaching church history as an adjunct professor during the spring semester and in the coming years as his schedule allows.
- **Mark Pettis**, youth pastor at Trinity EC, Boyertown, submitted his letter of resignation to the Ministry Council on January 9, 2009.

STATIONING:

- **Martindale:** On March 1 Kirk Wolfe will be concluding his ministry there due to scheduling changes in his bi-vocational employment. Keith Mong will be appointed to serve as lead pastor.

The **Red Rose District** is planning its fourth annual trip to Pass Christian, Miss. to help with the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. The date is the week of March 23, 2009. There is a need for people with carpentry skills to do trim work, install cabinets, counter tops, flooring (vinyl, ceramic, laminate) also painters and drywall work. People interested in additional information can contact Dean Baker at 717-872-4560.



REMINDER that reports for the National Conference must be submitted by March 20, 2009. Send your reports to Jodi at jeahart@eccenter.com.

Church Treasurer Training Event

Akron Grace Church will host a training event for church treasurers and other finance officers. Scheduled for Saturday, March 21 (9:00 am until Noon), the presentation will guide treasurers and others through the paperwork jungle associated with church and pastoral finances. Stop guessing and hoping the forms are filled out correctly. Come! Pick up a few new skills to make "treasuring" a little bit more pleasant.

Pastors will also find this a helpful time.

RSVP to Les Cool (revcool@ptd.net) by Sunday, March 15. He needs a headcount for handouts and donuts.



NEWS FROM THE BENEFITS CORPORATION AND THE COMPENSATION COMMITTEE

ALLONE HAS LAUNCHED!! On January 21st, our participants were able to go online at www.myallonehealth.com and complete their Health Risk Assessment (HRA). Those who have completed their HRA have received calls from their health coaches within a few days. You also received a form to take to your primary care physician. If you have trouble getting onto the website, you lost your doctor's form, or have any other questions, call the ALLOne Customer Service Department at 1-866-430-2551.



If you haven't taken the time to go online, may we encourage you to do so! Remember, the Benefits Corporation will award a \$25 gift card to those participants (not dependents) who complete the HRA by June 30, 2009

and another \$75 gift card when you take the ALLOne form to your doctor, complete an annual health evaluation and your doctor returns the ALLOne form and you, as the participant, takes 2 calls from your health coach by December 31, 2009. The first of these cards will be awarded at National Conference in May.

Please read the testimonial below from one of our participants from Evangelical Theological Seminary, Thomas Maiello, Dean of Admissions. We couldn't say it any better than the email below that was sent to ETS and Church Center staff. Our thanks to Tom Maiello for granting us permission to use it.

Dear Colleagues,

9 February 2009

I am writing regarding the All One Health Assessment program that the ECC Board of Pensions has enrolled us in. I recently participated in the All One Health Assessment. I completed the assessment on line and found it relatively easy and respectful of my confidentiality. As a result, I had my first health coaching telephone call with someone from All One Health. I have to tell you that the experience was truly excellent. The woman I spoke with was very knowledgeable, friendly and completely respectful of my health concerns and confidentiality. We spoke for about 45 minutes and had an enjoyable conversation. She had some excellent suggestions and her focus was on taking small steps to improve your health. Oftentimes when we think of making positive changes, we think in terms of massive changes in diet and behavior, but that is not often necessary or conducive to lasting change. Suggestions such as drinking more water each day, cutting out that can of soda or one cup of coffee per day, taking the stairs rather than the elevator or taking a lunch time walk are good ways to get started. Hey it may be a great idea to park our cars further from the entry door rather than closer. I am writing of my own accord to encourage you to

start or to complete your health assessment. If each of us made one or two positive changes now and perhaps one or two more in a few months it would have a great affect on our physical and mental health, make our lives better in so many ways; and also save money on health care expenses. Please do it.



Also I would like to encourage any of you who are interested; I would like to start a lunch time walk group. When the weather is nice, perhaps we can use some of the walking time to pray and improve our spiritual health as well. All suggestions are welcome.

Thanks to those of you who got this project going! And to those of who have not begun the process, let this serve as a gentle and friendly nudge. With fond affection for those people I work with,
Tom Maiello

PENSION ACCOUNT BENEFICIARIES: Do you know who your beneficiaries are on your retirement account? In other words, who would inherit your account if you died today? Retirement accounts are beneficiary-designated accounts, meaning that your beneficiary designation, if such exist, overrides your will and other legal documents, such as a divorce decree. Therefore, it is extremely important that you are aware of who is currently listed as your beneficiaries. Further, it is important that the pension administrators, the E.C. Benefits Corporation and Prudential/Wachovia Securities, in our case, have a current beneficiary designation form on file with the current addresses of your beneficiaries. If you experience life-changing events, then your beneficiary designation form should immediately be updated. In a unanimous decision on January 26, 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the company and pension plan were bound by "what a worker puts down on forms designating who is to receive retirement and other benefits after death" of the participant, regardless of what any previous divorce decree or any other document may state. If you need to update your Beneficiary form or if you aren't sure, the form is available on the EC Church website under Benefits Corporation, then click Pension plan, and then click forms. Complete it, sign it, and return it to Ken Wiest, Benefits-Compensation Administrator at E.C. Church Center, 100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067.

CANNOT DEDUCT LOSSES IN A RETIREMENT ACCOUNT: Under certain situations investment losses may be deducted on an individual's tax return. However, those rules do not apply to losses

within a retirement account such as our 403(b) Pension Plan with Wachovia.

Why the difference? In a regular investment account, your earnings are taxable each year. On the other hand, in a retirement account your earnings are tax-deferred until they are withdrawn. So if the Internal Revenue Service can not tax your earnings annually in a tax-deferred account, such as our 403(b) Pension/Retirement Plan, they are not going to allow you to claim losses that you suffer within that tax deferred account. So while your stock accounts may have lost money in 2008, if those losses occurred with a tax-deferred account, the losses can not be claimed as a deduction on your tax return.

ARE YOUR FORMS and/or PAYMENTS SUBMITTED and Up-to-Date??? Please check the list below and make sure that you and your church have complied and submitted the required reporting:

- 2009 Pastoral Compensation Forms - were due Jan 15 to Ken Wiest
- 2009 Parsonage Review Forms (for churches with parsonages) - were due Jan 15 to your Conference Minister
- 2008 Annual Statistical Report - was due Jan 25 to Rev. Ken Wiest, NC Statistician
- 2008 Ministry Fund Reports - due 15th of each month to the NC Finance office
- 2009 Annual Disability Fund payment - due Jan 15 to the Benefits Corporation
- 2009 Worker's Compensation Audit Report - due Feb 13 to Benefits Corporation

NEWS FROM TWIN PINES CAMP:

SUMMER CAMP

Now is the time to register for summer camp at Twin Pines. There are camps for kids and adults of all ages. If you like the outdoors you may want to try the "On the Edge" program or the "Green Scene" program. For fathers and sons there is "Dads 'n' Lads" camp and for moms and daughters there is "Moms 'n' Gals" camp. Both programs are only half a week and provide a great opportunity for parents to connect with their kids. For the whole family Twin Pines offers "Family Frolic", with activities for every member of the family. Another opportunity for adults is "Adult Camp", a special week for spiritual renewal, fun, fellowship, and interaction with other adults and the Twin Pines' summer staff. Twin Pines also offers a wide variety of programs for kids of all ages. If you are unsure of what camp you would like to attend, take a look at the summer camp schedule on the Twin Pines website, www.twinpines.org.



SUMMER STAFF

Twin Pines is currently in search of young people interested in Christian service. There are opportunities for summer staff available. If you or someone you know may be interested in serving on summer staff in 2009 please contact Shawn Fetterhoff at shawn@twinpines.org. Applications are also available at www.twinpines.org on the resource page. If you are looking for a life changing service experience, don't hesitate and apply today!

SUMMER VOLUNTEERS

Are you looking for an opportunity to volunteer this summer? Are you 21 or older and willing to help in the kitchen or on maintenance? If you answered yes to these questions you may be interested in signing up to volunteer for a week at Twin Pines this summer. If interested in volunteering please contact the Volunteer Coordinator Jim Shields at jim@twinpines.org.

RETIREMENT DINNER ANNOUNCED

Rev. James Shields will retire after National Conference this year. Twin Pines and the Twin Pines Board of Directors would like to invite you to an evening of celebration of Jim's many years of Christian service as a pastor and Executive Director of Twin Pines. On Monday, May 11, 2009, there will be a banquet in his honor at Good n Plenty Restaurant in Smoketown, PA. Reservations are required and are limited to 400 people. The price is \$30.00 per person and the deadline for reservations is April 15th. The price of the dinner includes a donation to a retirement gift. Additional donations can be made. All reservations are being accepted at Twin Pines and checks should be made payable to Twin Pines. Payment is required to hold your reservation. For any questions please contact Shawn at shawn@twinpines.org or 570-629-2411.



RETIREMENT

THE NOT SO SUBTLE TRAP OF HOLINESS: PLEASING GOD

I heard a little about holiness yesterday as I listened to one of our preachers. He preached from Hebrews 10 and his first point was that we have to live in holiness. To that I say, "AMEN!"

My question is what does that mean? What is it to live in holiness? Our usual comments seem to talk about staying away from sin and doing things to please God. Sometimes it sounds like we are talking about the things that we have to do, as if pleasing God is some sort of good work.

May I suggest that holiness is the work that God does in us rather than something that we do. He changes us from the inside out as we yield our lives to Him, one piece at a time.

It seems to me that our talk about living in holiness can work against allowing God to make us holy (or whole.) God cannot make me whole (holy) unless I admit that I am not yet whole (holy).

Does it sound like a paradox to say that in order to live in holiness I first have to admit that I can't do it? (Galatians 2:11-21)

Bruce Wagner
For the Church Health Commission



2009 MISSION-MINDED KIDS RALLY

"The Nations as our Neighbors"
focusing on Ethnic Church Planting.

Saturday, March 7, 2009
10:00 am to 2:30 pm

Evangelical Theological Seminary, Myerstown, PA



The cost is \$3.00 per person (children and adults), which includes registration, lunch and a Spend-A-Day slip. The curio table will be available during lunch, so encourage the children to bring a few dollars along to purchase an item on the curio table.

Please call Shirley Long at Church Center, 1-800-866-7581, to register your group.
Call before March 2nd.

There will be a collection of non-perishable food items to be donated to a local food bank.

Check out the Global Ministries website at www.eccenter.com for MMK information and updates.

Set Aside this Date

On Wednesday evening, April 29, Michael W. Sigman will be installed as the next president of Evangelical Theological Seminary. More information will follow.



NEWS FROM THE GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMISSION

1. The **Self Denial for Global Giving offering** is March 29, 2009. You should receive bulletin inserts and envelopes. Please inform your church that this is one of only two offerings we receive annually to fund the half million dollars needed for our international churches and ministry initiatives. Contact the Global Ministries Office if you need further information or help.
2. **World Out-Reach Day (WORD)** is scheduled for Saturday, April 25th from 8:30 am - 12:00 noon at:
 - Winnebago EC
 - Cottage Grove EC, Akron, OH
 - Seneca EC
 - Community EC, Sinking Spring
 - Emmanuel EC, Bethlehem
 - Faith EC, Lancaster
 - Zion EC, Myerstown
 - Bethesda EC, Reedsville
 - Zion EC, Clarks Valley



WORD is also scheduled for Sunday, April 26th from 2:00 - 5:00 pm at:

- Trinity EC, Royersford
- ❖ Our theme is “Planting Glocal Churches”
- ❖ Choose the location you plan to attend and RSVP to the Global Ministries Office (by phone or email) no later than April 15, 2009.
- ❖ Registration fee of \$3.00 per person (not to exceed \$10.00 per family) will be collected at the location you attend.
- ❖ Highlights of the gathering include:
 - Launch Liberia update (footage from Liberia, interviews, etc.)
 - Special offering for Launch Liberia
 - Missionary speakers
 - Spend-A-Day sign up
 - Church Planting Commission presentation
 - Refreshments and fellowship



3. **Randy’s speaking schedule:**

March 1	10:30 am	St. Paul’s EC, Pine Grove
7	9:30 am	MMK Rally, ETS Myerstown
8	10:15 am	Grace EC, Akron, PA
8	6:00 pm	St. David’s EC, Weigelstown
9-13		GMC Strategic Planning Retreat at Twin Pines
14	6:00 pm	Grace EC, Kutztown Mission Conference
22	9:00 & 10:15am	Faith EC, Temple
22-25	7:00 pm	Zion EC, Clarks Valley Spiritual Life Services
29	10:15 am	Bethel EC, Conestoga
31-4/1		Grace EC, Knox Mission Conference

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY:

Registrations are now being accepted for Wesley Forum 2009, *The Priority of Grace: Spiritual Formation in the Wesleyan tradition*, on Thursday, March 26 at Evangelical Theological Seminary. Featured speakers include Rev. Tom Albin, Dean of The Upper Room Chapel and Team Leader for the Program Unit of the Upper room Ministries in Nashville, TN, and Dr. Paul W. Chilcote, Professor of Historical Theology & Wesleyan Studies and Director of the Center for Applied Wesleyan Studies at Ashland Theological seminary in Ohio. Registration begins at 8:15 am, and the day is expected to end around 3:30 pm. Brochures and additional information are available at www.evangelical.edu, or by calling 717-866-5775.