

E. C. Leader

DECEMBER, 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.



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“Never Go Alone”

It seemed out of place at first in the list of the qualities of a missional leader – “never go alone.” Reading it again it made sense. As often as possible, do ministry together with someone else. Take a potential leader in the making along with you to observe and participate in the work. Leaders who raise up the next generation of leaders look for ways to enlist others in the cause. Multipliers aren't loners.

I wish I'd have absorbed that concept sooner. It's too easy to subscribe to the “if you want it done right do it yourself” myth. Why complicate the task by including a partner? It's less convenient to coordinate efforts, so keep it solo. The trouble with doing it all by yourself is that when all is said and done, you alone can only do so much. And it's much less than God would be able to do if you'd grown the team with Him.

Co-workers in the kingdom, I want to challenge you to look for someone to take along with you when you serve. Don't hoard the treasure of ministry; give it away every chance you get. Find ways to do this individually and between congregations. Many of our churches are situated in fairly close proximity to one another. When's the last time you thought about coming together to church your community or region, rather than just build your own program?

As a rookie pastor I eagerly suggested that the two churches I shepherded on a dual charge combine efforts for a joint event. I watched the idea crash and burn in the awkward silence of a board meeting. “Preacher”, one man finally ventured, “we really don't like each other all that much.”

It's not the only story I've heard of churches just a few miles apart that have as much interest in joining hands for the good news, as two cats relish the notion of being tied together by the tail. Brothers it ought not to be so. The Terrell Owens theory of “team me” has no place among Christ followers.

Let's recalibrate the culture. Start praying and dreaming together. Stop caring about who gets the credit or whose building we use. As generals in a spiritual warfare we can't afford to be more concerned with looking like victors than aiding the victory. If we win the wrong battles we can still lose the campaign.

Who can you take with you? What could you do together for God's sake instead of on your own? Keep asking if others decline the invitation. Keep inviting until someone says, “yes”.

In the strong name of Jesus,
Bishop Kevin

ANNOUNCEMENTS ...

- **Stationing Changes:** Several unique circumstances have created the opportunity for mid-conference year appointments.
 - **Rev. David Dennis**
To: Wedgewood Park, Youngstown, OH (Part-time as of January 1, 2010)
From: Lakeside, Transfer
 - **Rev. James Hansen (Interim)**
From: Wedgewood Park, Youngstown, OH returning to “retirement”
 - **Rev. Mark Ralph**
To: Lakeside, Transfer (Effective January 1, 2010)
(The GLR Conference Relations Committee has approved Mark’s request to transfer credentials from the United Brethren Church at National Conference

BISHOP'S TRAVELS...

JANUARY 2010

- 3 Vacation
- 15-16 Strategic Planning Meetings
- 18-19 Stationing Retreat

(Sunday schedule will be used to visit churches as a worshiper/observer)



Bishop Kevin looks forward to the opportunity to visit and preach in all of our churches. If you would like to schedule a 2010 date for him to share with your congregation email blong@eccenter.com

BISHOP'S PRAYER LIST...

- † For the Strategic Planning Process – may the Lord direct us with clarity so that we will follow Him with courage.
- † For the development of the agenda for National Conference 2010.
- † For the Stationing Retreat that launches the process of pastoral assignments for this coming year. Pray for “fit and flourish” appointments!
- † For the NC Finance Committee as they prepare the 2011 budget.
- † For churches to be intentional in disciple making and leading people to Christ.
- † For several churches that are moving closer to birthing a daughter congregation a reality. Intercede for church planting.
- † For our international churches as they make the transition towards greater financial self sufficiency. Direct monetary support through our GMC is being stepped back.
- † For Conference Minister elect, Gordon Lewis, as he prepares for his mid-year transition into office. For outgoing Susquehanna CM, Fred Moury, as he makes himself available for his next season of ministry.



An old argument in the “culture wars” that go in many of our churches seems to me to be rooted in this idea: Shouldn’t we do/bring/give/wear our best for God? It seems to me that there is a simple answer to this question, but I fear that many of you will not agree with my answer! So, let me begin with a story Jesus told.

We read in Luke 18:9-14 of a Pharisee and a tax collector in the Temple. One is well dressed, well behaved, bringing his full tithe, and telling God how good he is. Jesus says that God rejects this guy. The second guy is, by his own estimation, a sinner. He pleads with God for mercy, and he receives mercy. He goes home justified, at true peace with God.

Holiness is all about trusting God. It is not about what we wear to worship. It is not about the style by which we worship. It is not even about how much money we put in the offering plate! It is about the relationship that we have with God as we trust Him for EVERYTHING, ESPECIALLY OUR STANDING IN HIS PRESENCE!

Maybe we ought to be more concerned with our own shortcomings that we are with the shortcomings of others! Maybe we ought to view God standing next to each person ready to work with that person on their shortcomings. May we should remember that God is standing next to each one of US desiring to see US confess that WE aren’t quite there yet. Maybe we ought to forget about trying to impress God (or the people around us) with how good we are!

Everything that we do should be grounded in trusting God. Will it really impress God if we do/bring/give/wear our best for Him; or would He rather see each one of us come to Him like a little child? Maybe we ought to just be ourselves, and be like a family, and let the Father lead us.



NEWS FROM BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION...



2010 IRS Standard Mileage Rate

was announced by the IRS on December 3, 2009, effective January 1, 2010. The 2010 rate will be 50

cents/business mile. This is a reduction from the 2009 rate of 55 cents/mile. Please make this notation on your 2010 Pastoral Compensation Forms.

Available on the EC Church website under FORMS:

- 2010 Treasurer's Guide
- 2010 Monthly Ministry Fund Forms
- 2009 Annual Report form info



2010 Health Insurance Rates are available online on the EC Church website, under the Benefits Corporation. The first payment at the 2010 rate is due to the Benefits Corporation by December 15.

2010 Church Pension contribution is \$150 full-time pastor; \$75 part-time pastor. This is due the 15th of each month to the Benefits Corporation.

2010 Disability premium of \$100 for every assigned pastor is due by January 15 to the Benefits

Corporation. Failure to pay this amount will result in the pastor & church not being covered under the EC Disability Plan.

2010 Pastoral Salary Compensation Forms are due to Ken Wiest by January 15.

Tips from the IRS for Deducting Charitable Contributions



The Internal Revenue Service, along with Christianity Today magazine, has recently released a list of helpful tips when it comes to claiming a charitable contribution as a tax deduction. The following are a few of those tips:

1. To be deductible, a contribution must be made to a “qualified” tax exempt organization, which would include churches. Contributions made to a specific individual, political organization, or political candidate, even though such was given for a charitable cause, cannot be claimed as a charitable contribution deduction.
2. A person cannot claim a charitable deduction based upon the value of their time or personal services performed. Therefore, a lawyer who

- donates her time to do legal work for a church can't claim the value of that service as a charitable donation to the church.
3. If you get something from the charity in return for your donation, you can deduct only the amount that exceeds the fair market value of the benefit you received. For example, if you give \$100 to a television ministry and receive a \$25 Bible in return for the donation, you can only claim a \$75 charitable contribution deduction.
 4. If you donate stock or other property, the value of the donation is determined at the time of the gift, regardless of what you paid for the stock or property. Assume that you paid \$10,000 for a piece of property and it is now worth \$50,000. If you sold the property yourself, you would owe taxes on the \$40,000 gain. However, if you donated that property to the church, you get to claim a charitable contribution deduction for the entire \$50,000, not just the \$10,000 cost basis that you have in the property.
 5. Clothing and household items can be claimed as charitable donations but only if they are "in good used condition". These items must be itemized to be deductible. Just saying "bag of used clothes - \$50" is not sufficient.
 6. For all contributions, you can only claim a charitable organization that contains the name of the organization, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution.
 7. In addition, if the contribution is \$250 or more, you must obtain a written acknowledgment from the charitable organization showing the amount of the contribution, the date of the contribution, and whether the charitable organization provided any goods or services in exchange for the gift. Simply having bank records is not sufficient for gifts over \$250.
 8. If you give more than \$500 in non-cash gifts to any charity, you must attach IRS Form 8283 (Noncash Charitable Contributions) to your tax return. If you give more than \$5,000 in non-cash gifts, an appraisal must also be attached to the IRS Form 8283.
 9. Churches should voluntarily provide tax receipts to donors at least once a year. (From "In the Know Newsletter", Art Rhodes, editor, Nov. 2, 2009)



NEWS FROM THE GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMISSION...

1. Thank you to all who responded so generously to the critical support needs of our missionaries Dave & Conce Roof and Ed & Val Schubert! We are close to meeting our goal of keeping them on the field.
 2. Please remember former Director John & Shirley Ragsdale in prayer as they prepare for medical procedures in January.
 3. We thank God for the life and work of Donna Byers, a long time local mission leader from our Knox Grace Church who passed away on Thanksgiving Day.
 4. Information for the 2010 Alaska work teams is now on the website: www.ecglobal.org
 5. Don't forget to take advantage of the GMC Spring Training opportunity. (Below)
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Global Ministries “Spring Training” Opportunity

Dear Partners of Global Ministries,

The district oriented World Out-Reach Day (WORD) which has been held on the last Saturday of April for the past several years is being replaced with a more flexible “Spring Training” opportunity. Simply put, you and a few other churches of your choice can plan a time for informative and practical missions training when it best fits your schedules. Please review the 2010 GMC Spring Training syllabus below and contact Randy Sizemore with any questions or to schedule your own Spring Training opportunity.

SEMINAR #1



Building Missions Into Your Congregation’s DNA:

This seminar will explore creative ways to overcome the current attitudes, perceptions and real-life reasons that keep the people in your church from being excited, interested and involved in missions.

Teaching material based on the workbook, “How To Get Your Congregation Involved In Missions” by David Mays. Copies will be available for purchase. (approx. 4 hours with registration & breaks)

SEMINAR #2



Money, Missionaries & Missions:

This seminar explores how congregations gather, raise and distribute support funds for missionaries and mission projects. Topics include:

- Where does our mission money come from?
- Who is responsible for our mission budget?
- How do we determine which missionaries/ministries to support?
- How do we decide how much support we give each missionary or ministry?

(approx. 4 hours including registration and breaks)

Suggested format for both blocks: 8:30 am – 4:00 p.m. (including registration, breaks and lunch)



How to Host a GMC Spring Training Event:

For maximum impact network with other area EC Churches.

1. Form a task force or committee to plan and execute the training event.
2. Determine the location, time frame, and several tentative dates.
3. Contact Director Randy Sizemore to confirm date, location, time, etc.
4. Begin promotion and planning of training event.

Cell phone number
change for **Rev. Keith
Mong** – 717-799-8632

Email address change for
**Chaplain Noel
Blancaflor** –
blancaflor@comcast.net
or
blancaflor@gimail.af.mil

Check out the new
website for the
**Palmerton, Living
Hope Lighthouse** at
www.lhlchurch.com

The pastor is Rev.
Nathan Fry

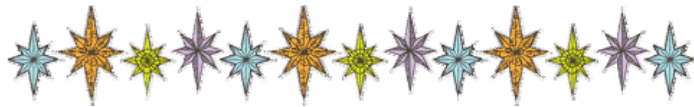
CREATIVE EVANGELISM IDEAS

from Lancaster Faith EC and Pastor Joel Kime

1. Refugee Outreach through Church World Service – We sponsor one family from Nepal/Bhutan living near us (rent support, driving them to appointments, language acquisition, visiting them, etc.)
2. Adopt-a-Highway: We clean a 2 mile section of road that our church building is located on. Initial commitment is 4 clean-ups per year for two years.
3. Community Clothing Sale: We collect clothes from our congregation and sell it (\$1/bag) to our community. We do this once/year.
4. School District Dental Program: We support our local school district's dental program for needy families.



Please share your stories of how your church is becoming more missional and what God is doing to transform lives!



1. **PLEASE** send the results of the **lay delegate & alternate delegate election** to Church Center. We need to know their name, address, email address, phone number and occupation. This information can be emailed to Brenda at blong@eccenter.com
2. **Transforming Church Boards** – Do the following words describe your church board meetings? Energizing...focused...vision-oriented...strategic...spiritually invigorating.
We invite you to a one-day event designed to help your church leadership team be a catalyst for moving ahead effectively as a church. Sessions include:
Top Ten “Musts” for a Church Board
Getting Beyond Stuck
Individualized session for church boards and for pastors
Saturday, January 23, 2010; 9:00 am – 3:30 pm
Hosted by Hempfield UMC, Lancaster
Cost: \$250 per church board, including lunch
Registration and additional information available at www.center4li.org
3. The **Navigator's** will be hosting an event on March 6, 2010 at Knox, Grace featuring Hugh Halter, author of “The Tangible Kingdom.” This event is designed to help churches develop more missional ministry. An invitation will be extended to the EC Church family to attend.
4. **Coach Training** - April 8-9, 2010 - Seneca EC
A two-day baseline training featuring Tim Roehl and using his book “Transfomissional Coaching”. Further details will be coming.