

# E. C. Leader

January, 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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Evangelical  
Congregational  
Church

## Tighten Belts and Open Hearts

"The data suggests that decreasing giving is not the first thing church members do in tough economic times," said Sylvia Ronsvalle, Executive Vice-President of Empty Tomb Ministries. I confess to being surprised, when I read several statements verifying that historically Christians tend to increase their sharing in hard times. But I shouldn't be amazed. Jesus followers have different values. We remain generous because we serve a greater cause.

God's faithfulness and the dedication of His people is extraordinary. The design of our Ministry Funds means that our denomination and local congregations weather the economic clouds and sunshine together. Everyone rides the same waves of upturn and downturn. Overall National Conference income declined in 2008 compared to the year before. But by managing and reducing expenses the period ended with the budget essentially balanced. Thanks be to God!

All of our agencies are committed to shepherding our financial resources as wisely as possible. Cost containment is on everyone's mind, and one of the blessings of a recession is how it requires a refocusing on essentials along with a creative envisioning of new opportunities.

As you respond to the current challenges personally and congregationally allow your faith to grow bolder. Live within your means. Spend less than you take in. Cut costs yet without cutting giving wherever possible. Let's put God's essentials before our own extras. As long as there are lost people in this world the ministry of evangelism and discipleship is not a luxury but a necessity.

Please remember the needs of our ministries that rely primarily on special offerings to fund their outreach. Global Ministries, Church Planting, our camps, the seminary, and the benevolent work of our retirement community all depend on your deliberate decision to bless them through your ongoing support.

If your church is struggling be sure to invite us into the conversation. The staff at Church Center is here to serve you. Allow us to work as a team to find God's solution.

As we tighten our belts, let's keep our hearts as open as possible. Open to the Lord's leading, and to the needs of others. When it comes down to it our God isn't limited by this world's economy. Perhaps we're privileged to live out again the "Macedonian Miracle." "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave us much as they were able, and even beyond their ability." 2 Cor. 8:2-3 Let the "wonders" being!

Bishop Kevin

## Special Events

- **Pastors' In-Service Days** (9:00 am to 2:00 pm):
  - February 2 – Living Hope Lighthouse, Palmerton
  - February 9 – St. David's, Weigelstown
  - February 12 – Bethany, Ashland
  - February 16 – Bethel, Dixon, IL
  - February 19 – Trinity, Manheim
  - February 23 – Lakeside, Transfer
  - February 26 – Zion, Mohnnton
- 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.
- March 13-14 – **2009 Youth Leaders Summit** – Refreshing Mountain Camp, Stevens, PA  
[www.pachristianendeavor.org](http://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](http://www.exponentialconference.com)
- May 2, 2009 – Join us for **Disciple 2009 – Sustaining The Turnaround** by making discipling 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 discipling 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

- God's guidance in the ongoing process of credentialing and stationing pastors.
- For the Finance Committee as they begin work on the 2010 National Conference Budget.
- For the Pastoral In-Service events.
- For the preparation of the report from the Health Care Task Force.
- For the opportunity I have to teach a course on Evangelism & Discipleship at Evangelical Theological Seminary.
- As that the Lord will identify church planting opportunities and church planters for us to deploy.
- Seek the Lord for a spirit of continuing generosity and faithfulness to fill all of our hearts as we serve God with confidence in challenging times.
- Cry out for the salvation of the lost and sanctification of the found!

*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.*