



Evangelical Congregational Church E.C. National News

Winter, 2019

100 W. Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067

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Pastor at Grace Church on Carpenter traces 175-year history

A few months ago (October 2018), Grace Evangelical Congregational Church of Lancaster (now East Petersburg) celebrated its 175th year as a local expression of a project started 2,000 years ago by the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ. During that month, we highlighted the history of the life and ministry of two congregations, Lancaster Grace and East Petersburg Grace, whose paths have crossed, whose callings have been united, and whose heritage is now a closely shared history.

Our common ancestry, denominationally, begins in 1802 when the evangelist, Jacob Albright, began preaching among the Germans of Lancaster County. In 1804, when he preached in Manheim, the gospel seed took root, and a new gathering of believers was established. That congregation would one day plant a church in East Petersburg.

In a few short years of Albright's travels, many were saved, and classes, or small groups, were formed to nurture the new believers. Albright's disciples became known as "converted people," evangelicals! They called themselves the Evangelical Association.

In 1812, the Lancaster Circuit of the Evangelical Association was formed, served by itinerant preachers, riding on horseback from one group of believers to another. There was a saying in those days that in especially bad weather, the only living things seen outside were

crows and Methodist ministers on their way to preach and pray. You could add the EA men to that maxim.

In 1843, a mission class which was to become Grace Church, was born. In 1846, it became a local church with its own pastor. In 1849, plans were made to build at 134 North Water Street. That building was dedicated as Salem Church of the Evangelical Association and was the congregation's home base for the next 50 years. It is now used as a Moose Lodge.

Until around 1870, the congregation was German, and preaching was in German. The younger generation was speaking English, and wanted preaching in English, as well. Their request was denied, and they left to form a new congregation.

In 1878, in nearby East Petersburg, a group of men from Manheim, began prayer and Bible study on Lot Number 11, Carpenter Street. They met in a small building known as "The Chapel." It was built with hemlock weatherboards, which worked just as well for benches on the inside. In 1889, revival services were held, resulting in 22 conversions.

The congregation was outgrowing The Chapel, and in 1890 a new church was built on the original lot, now 6067 Carpenter and home to Grace Church. For the next 21 years, Grace was part of the Manheim Charge.



In 1891, during a split in the denomination, the Lancaster Water Street folks lost their property to the denomination and had to move, renting a Methodist Chapel on East King Street, near Plum. In 1895, they changed their name to Grace United Evangelical, now part of the newly separated group, The United Evangelical Church.

Three years later, Grace purchased a parcel of land at the corner of Shippen and Locust Streets. With an average attendance of 43, they built a chapel, and the congregation began to grow. They "did business with the Lord" on that corner for the next 119 years (until September of 2018).

As growth continued, more land was purchased, and more building took place. Lancaster Grace became one of the largest churches in the city, and for a time, the largest in the denomination, with membership topping around 1500. In 1974, the last time Grace built on to their "castle," a totally renovated sanctuary was dedicated. Morning attendance averaged 400, just 45 years ago.

But churches, like families have life cycles. Children grow up and move on, the elderly die and go to heaven, and entire families move. Things happen, and at Grace Church, things happened. In the 1990's a split emptied much of the house on Shippen and Locust. Yet, God is faithful. Members who left formed a new EC Church in Willow Street, presently the fastest growing church in the denomination.

However, it's not the numbers, the dates, or the places that count so much as the hearts and souls of those who have called Grace Church home. The impact of one person can only be counted by heaven, and the impact of Grace Church on our city, our country—and even our world—is remarkable.

Multiplied thousands have been touched by the witness of Grace members. People have been led to the Lord in shoe stores and living rooms. Churches have been planted (as recently as six years ago). Missionaries have traversed the globe. The Sight and Sound Theater started in a restaurant owned by a Grace family.

The beautiful art deco J.P. McCaskey High School was constructed by a Grace businessman. The Dutch Wonderland Amusement Park sits on property purchased with the help of a Grace banker. Kids who grew up at Grace produce movies in Hollywood, play keyboards for Michael W. Smith, and host the nation's most popular Southern Gospel radio show. Others still worship God on Carpenter Street each week, growing in Jesus together.

To learn more about what the Lord of the Church is doing with this little group, cut out this ticket and come join us some Sunday morning. Or, go to www.gracesunday.com. And pray for us, as we pray for you.

By Rev. Mark Ammerman

Who We Are

The Seventeenth National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church will convene at Messiah College, Grantham, PA Wednesday through Friday, May 29 to 31. The theme this year is "Who We Are". More information and registration forms will be available soon.



Luncheon will honor retiring missionaries

Retiring missionaries, *John and Carolyn Miller and Jim and Joan Farr* will be honored at a luncheon at noon on Saturday, March 23 in The Commons of Evangelical Seminary for their many years of service with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. The Millers served in Southeast Asia, and the Farris in Papua New Guinea.

To make reservations, e-mail ecglobal@eccenter.com, or call 1-717-866-7584. Cost is \$10 per person. Checks should be payable to "EC Church", with "Farr-Miller luncheon" on the memo line. Advance payment may be sent to Church Center, 100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067.



ECCO FUNraiser planned

A mystery dinner theater play, "The Church Caper," will be presented at Cottage Grove Church, Akron, OH on Saturday, March 23. The "FUNraiser" will raise money for a retaining wall at Camp ECCO's new pavilion.

Cost of the meal is \$5.00 and doors open at 5:00 pm. If planning to attend, contact Julie Beltz at jimb54@icloud.com or call 330-904-4322.

"Like a good neighbor..."

The workshop, "The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with your local communities," will be held on Saturday, March 16, 8:30 to 3:30 pm at the Akron, PA Mennonite Church, 1311 Diamond Street. The event is sponsored by Barnabas Initiatives and the Anabaptist Center at Evangelical Seminary. Pastors and church leaders are invited.

Attendees will "explore how to identify points of intersection between the DNA of the church and that of surrounding communities." Rev. Les Cool, presenter and Kingdom Extension Associate comments, "Why? So you can love them to Jesus in ways that make sense to them."

The cost of \$35 includes lunch. For more information, contact Les at 1-717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net. Register at www.evangelical.edu/neighboring.



Small-town pastors' Conference announced

The Rural Home Mission Association is announcing its annual Small-town Pastors' Conference Monday through Wednesday, April 8 to 10 at Grace Church in Morton, Illinois. "Somewhere: it's not nowhere, because people God loves are there" is the theme. Plenary sessions, men's and women's meetings, a choice of workshops, and optional activities are included.

Cost is \$110 per individual and \$150 per couple, plus lodging. Reduced rates are available to students. Costs are higher after March 25. To register, go to www.rhma.org/conferences. For more information, call 1-866-263-2350.



Women invited to Castle

“Gifts from Ladies for Ladies” will be the focus of the Allegheny-Buckeye Women’s Retreat Friday through Sunday, March 29 to 31. Location is Life Ministries (The Castle) near Franklin, PA. Sandy Phillips, lead pastor at Oak River Church, Solon, OH, is returning for her fourth year as speaker.

Cost is \$110. Registrations should be sent to Karen Howell, 4143-B Greenville-Sandy Lake Road, Clarks Mills, PA 16114 by March 21. Questions may be directed to Karen at 1-724-253-2483.



Chaplain Leshner has new position

Chaplain Juliana Leshner, an ordained EC Deaconess, was recently selected as the National Director of Veteran Affairs Chaplaincy. The swearing-in ceremony took place in Washington, DC on January 22. Her term is for two years, with a possible second term. Juliana says of her new role, “I lead 1,000 Veteran Affairs Chaplains of various faith traditions nation-wide.”

Prior to being selected, Juliana was Chief of Chaplain Services for the South Texas Veterans Healthcare Service, working out of San Antonio. In addition, she was a chaplain in healthcare and prison settings in Pennsylvania, California, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and North Dakota. She has received several awards for excellence.

Juliana has moved from Texas to Virginia. Her contact information is: 74-B Spanish Trail, Hampton, VA 23669, julianapray@gmail.com.



Twin Pines offers retreats

Twin Pines Camp and Conference Center, Stroudsburg, PA is offering a full schedule of retreats during the spring months...

March 29-31—Men’s retreat with speaker Jim Ehrman from Evangelical Seminary.

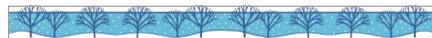
April 4-7—Craft retreat with fellowship and Bible studies.

April 26-28—“A Twin Pines Royal Weekend” for children in grades three to six.

May 7-9—Spring Spruce-Up

May 14-17—“For Ladies Only,” with speaker and musician Sue Duffield.

For more information, go to www.twinpines.org or call 1-570-236-2737.



Project on Rural Ministries launched

Dr. Charles Cotherman, pastor of the Oil City, PA Vineyard and an “alumnus” of Grace EC Church in Ninevah (Knox), is one of several directors of the Project on Rural Ministry. The project is initiated by Grove City College. Charlie’s title is Administrative Director.

The project is based on “the insight that Christian colleges are uniquely positioned to amplify the voices, strengthen the network, and facilitate the ongoing learning of pastors and ministry leaders.” A goal is to strengthen the partnership among colleges, churches, and communities.

Focus will be on churches in western Pennsylvania, northern West Virginia, and eastern Ohio, which are within a 150-mile radius of Grove City. Thirty churches and three groups of ten pastors will participate. A team of faculty members will visit each church to address economic, social, and ministry challenges.

The following timeline will be observed:

Mid-February to mid-April, 2019—Interested pastors apply through the web site (currently under construction).

June, 2019—Cohort groups are formed.

August, 2019—Pastors and lay leaders attend an opening conference.

Fall, 2019 to Spring, 2023—Pastors and spouses attend a closing conference.

For more information, contact Charlie at cotthermance@gcc.edu.

Source: Project on Rural Ministry information sheet, Grove City College



Camp ECCO plans 60th anniversary

Camp ECCO, Carrollton, OH will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary Friday and Saturday, May 24 and 25. A Friday night campfire will be the first event. Those who wish may spend the night.

Saturday will include breakfast, a picnic lunch, games and activities, and supper for those staying into the evening. Meals are \$5.00 each.

For more information, contact Julie Beltz at julieb51@sssn.net or 1-330-904-6192. She will receive registrations at 7750 Galena Avenue, Massillon, OH 44646 until May 1.



Join a conversation

The Kingdom Extension Community is offering a series of conversations on being missional. These may be joined on Zoom, with participants receiving a link. The following topics will be explored:

“Food on Mission” - February 26, 7:00 to 8:00 pm

“Evangelism Starts with a Conversation” - March 1, 1:00 to 2:00 pm and March 5, 3:00 to 4:00 pm

“Rescheduling Your Schedule” - March 9, 10:00 to 11:00 am

“Love in Action” - April 6, 10:00 to 11:00 am

To join any of the sessions, RSVP Les Cool at revcool@ptd.net five days ahead. Questions may be directed to Les at 1-717-951-8433.



Remember loved ones...

Dr. William Kautz, 89, a Lay Delegate from Wyndamere Heights EC Church, Lewisberry, PA, passed away on January 28. The church began in the home of Bill and his wife, Gladys. He was a member of the National Guard, then joined the Air Force, serving in the Korean War. He was a public school teacher and a professor at Penn State University. He held several positions with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Bill's denominational work included serving on the Board of Trustees of Evangelical Seminary and the Benefits Corporation. He is survived by wife, Gladys, and sons, Thomas, Frank, and Tobias.

Lena Heisler, 91, of Lemoyne, PA passed away on January 5. She was the wife of the late Rev. Curtis Heisler. She was a member of Trinity EC Church in Harrisburg. Lena is survived by two sisters, Doris Pyle and Norma Jean Phillippi.

Hilda Yeager, 95, a resident of StoneRidge in Myerstown, passed away on January 14. She lived and worked most of her life around Tamaqua, PA. She was an active member of Bethesda EC Church, Reedsville. Hilda was preceded in death by her husband, Lloyd. Survivors include son, Rev. Lloyd Yeager, a retired pastor and missionary, and a grandson, Rev. Samuel Yeager, who works at Twin Pines Camp and Conference Center.

Charles Schell, 100, of Hershey, PA passed away on December 18. His entire career was with Hershey Chocolate Corporation. He was a veteran of World War II, serving in the Army Air Corps as a medic in Spokane, Washington. He was an active member of First EC Church, Palmyra. He also helped with community sports. Charles was preceded in death by wife, Nancy. He is survived by daughters, Connie (wife of Rev. Ralph Owens) and Jody; and sons, Rev. Jeffrey Schell and Andrew.

Ann Brown, Editor,
gary1780@juno.com

