

E.C. Leader

Committing to Pray

I write this article prior to Christmas 2012 with the understanding that it will be published in January issue of the EC LEADER; the first issue for 2013! I think the tradition for New Year articles in magazines and newsletters is to talk about the things that will be happening over the course of the year. I don't know about you, but I've never been very good at predicting the future. Fortunately, for all of us, the future isn't in my hands. As followers of Jesus, we have the certain hope that the future is in his hands and there is no better place for our future to be.

Because I firmly believe the future is in God's hands I am beginning the New Year with a renewed call for the Evangelical Congregational Church family to lift up our local churches and denomination in prayer. We serve a God who hears and answers prayer. That is a truth of the Bible and a truth we have experienced in our own lives. And yet how often do we set out on our own course, with our own plans and ideas, and never ask the Lord what he wants? I am convinced that the blessings experienced by Community Evangelical Church while I was Lead Pastor were the direct result of that congregation's commitment to a vital prayer ministry. I have discovered that not only does prayer change things; prayer changes *me*. For many years the EC Church has published a calendar, the *Planbook*. With the growing use of digital calendars on smart phones and computers, I'm not sure how many of us actually still use it. If you don't use it, one of the things you might be missing is the little reminder that the first Friday of every month is to be a Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church. (The first Sunday of each month is to be a Day of Prayer for Church Planting.)



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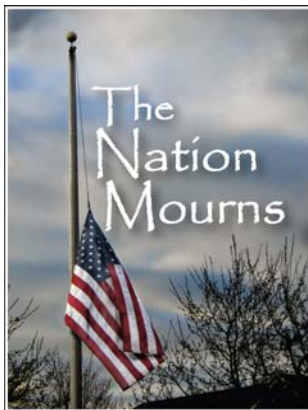
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I am calling everyone who reads this article to join me in committing to pray for the Evangelical Congregational Church with a renewed passion throughout 2013; and not just on the first Friday of the month. Over the years various leaders have challenged us to be a “movement of God” or a “family” or a “community”. Those are all good terms which reveal various aspects of our denomination. And the truth is that we have experienced each with varying degrees of success. We may use different words to describe the dynamics of the church, but the most important thing for us is to be who God wants us to be. The best way to discern that is to ask him! So join me in prayer for our denomination every day; that God would clearly show us what his desire for us is and that he, through his Holy Spirit, would lead us to be the church he want us to be.

In Christ’s service,



Rev. Bruce D. Hill
Bishop



The horrific attack on the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut results in a prayer list all its own. We cannot fully comprehend the pain of those who are left behind and the impact these events have on their hearts and minds as well as on our schools, communities and nation. Please join me in prayer today and in the weeks and months ahead:

- Pray for the families of those who have lost their children and loved ones.
- Pray for the pastors and churches in the Newtown area as they minister to those in need.
- Remember to pray for the first responders who valiantly rushed to the scene.
- The students, teachers, administrators and parents as they resume the school year.

- Pray for the families in our churches and communities who struggle with this unthinkable act.

Who knows if or when we will ever fully understand what would lead someone to commit such an act against the most vulnerable among us? Yet, even in those most difficult and challenging times, we look to the Lord for comfort and hope. When we are weak, he is strong. When we are lost, hurt and confused and turn to him, he gathers us in his arms and restores our soul. *“Pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)

Bishop Bruce

The Bishop's TOP TEN Prayer & Praise Items

1. Join me in praying for the Lord's clear leading in our congregations and denomination in 2013.
2. Begin to pray now for my trip in late January to visit EC churches in Liberia, Africa. I will be traveling with Randy Sizemore, Director of Global Ministries and Rev. Josh Reinders from Seneca, PA. Pray for safety in traveling, effective ministry in Africa, and protection from spiritual warfare.
3. Pray for wisdom as I work on the agenda for the 2013 National Conference which will be held May 29-31.
4. Pray for safety as I travel around the Conference to preach during the winter months.
5. Pray for three important events in the life of our denomination: the continuing work of the Futures Initiative Team (strategic planning); the beginning of our stationing emphasis; the annual Pastoral Assessment Center. (I'm not sure if that's one prayer request or three!)
6. Praise the Lord our son Matthew has completed his seminary education and will graduate from Evangelical Theological Seminary in May.
7. Thank God for the opportunities to gather with family and friends during the recent Christmas season.
8. Praise God that Gloria and I have/will be (depending on when you read this) celebrating our 37th wedding anniversary on January 3. (And I agree that she doesn't look like she could be married for that long.)
9. Praise God that the Mayans didn't know what they were talking about. It ain't over until He says it is!
10. Praise the Lord for all the people who came to your church's special Christmas services and celebrations—and for the opportunity to follow-up with them in the New Year.



We have set the dates for a number of Pre-Conference meetings to be held in various regions of the EC Church. Agenda items and more location information will be announced as we move closer to the dates, but for now we'd like you to note the date that works best for you, put it on your calendar and then participate in one of these important pre-conference meetings.

- Thursday, April 4 @ 7:00 pm in the Delaware Region
- Sunday, April 7 @ 6:00 pm at Lakeside EC Church, Transfer
- Tuesday, April 9 @ 7:00 pm in the Susquehanna Region
- Thursday, April 11 @ 7:00 pm in the Delaware Region
- Tuesday, April 16 @ 7:00 pm in the Susquehanna Region
- Wednesday, May 1 @ 7:00 pm at Bethel EC Church, Dixon, IL

Don't forget that our 2013 National Conference will meet at Messiah College on May 29, 30, 31, 2013. Please plan on being present for the entire National Conference!



ALASKA WORK TEAM OPPORTUNITIES

Once again Global Ministries is sponsoring two summer work teams to Camp LIWA in Fairbanks, Alaska. The dates are July 20-August 3, and August 3-17. Applications are available on the GMC website under the Short Term Opportunities tab.

Deadline to apply to be part of the trip is January 31st.



News from Global Ministries

1. Please pray for the 2013 Liberia Trip

Bishop Hill, Pastor Josh Reinders, GMC Director Randy Sizemore and EC Church of Nepal Director Rev. Janga are planning to travel to Liberia January 31-February 9, 2013 to visit their Annual Conference and new strategic ministries. Please pray for spiritual and physical strength and protection for the arduous journey.

2. Missionary Updates:

1. **Dan Dixon** has returned to Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. Please pray for his adjustment back into his ministry duties and the new school term.
2. **Chris and Deb Bowers** are relocating from PNG to Moody Aviation School in Spokane, Washington where Chris will be serving as a missionary pilot flight instructor and Deb will be mentoring new mission candidates while she applies for United States citizenship. Please keep Chris, Deb and new baby Katelyn in prayer. The Bowers will need to raise more support for this transition and their next 2 year assignment.

3. India Work Team Focus Expands!

The work team to Evangelical School of Theology in North East India in August 2013 is expanding! Not only will we be sending individuals to help construct a security wall around the campus, we will also be ministering in some other ways:

1. Dr. Ken Miller will be teaching a class at the seminary.
2. Kathy Friedlund will be teaching some classes for the women.
3. John Price will be teaching basic computer skills to students and pastors.

***We are collecting gently used laptops in working condition that we can update and take along for the seminary students.**

Please help us get the word out to your congregations. Laptops or monetary donations can be dropped off at Church Center.


Any questions can be directed to Randy Sizemore at rsizemore@eccenter.com





4. Randy is now scheduling speaking engagements for 2013. To schedule Randy for Sunday school, worship, Sunday evening, week day/night or any time that fits your church's schedule, contact him at rsizemore@eccenter.com or call the GMC office at 717-866-7584.


News from Evangelical




 The fall semester officially ends December 17, and the seminary will be closed for Christmas from December 24 through January 1, 2013. However, to assist those wishing to make year-end donations, the Advancement Office will be open from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm on Thursday, December 27; Friday, December 28; and Monday, December 31. Voice mail messages for VP of Advancement Ann Steel (717-866-5771, ext. 2143) will be checked daily and responded to in a timely manner. As of December 14, we will need \$88,000 to reach the end-of-year goal for Annual Fund for Transformational Leadership.

 Winterim classes begin January 2, 2013, and run through January 22. A complete course schedule for that term and Spring Semester (beginning January 24) is available on the website at www.evangelical.edu. See if there's something for you!

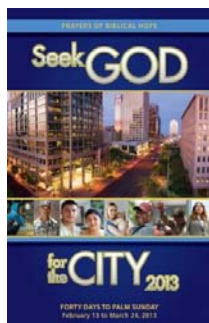
 The first cohort for Master of Arts in Christian Leadership gets underway January 8. There are still last-minute openings for this dynamic new program. Contact Admissions Director Tom Maiello at tmaiello@evangelical.edu for information.

 Evangelical will host the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce in a "Behind the Scenes" networking program on January 10, from 7:30-9:00 am. The event allows LVCC members to get to know the seminary through brief presentations, informal conversations, and a tour of Christ Hall and the Pense Archaeological Museum.

 Looking for a last-minute Christmas gift? Treat someone special (or yourself!) to an evening at Sight and Sound Theatres, Strasburg, PA, on Thursday, March 14, 2013. The \$100 package includes a 4:15 pm performance of "Noah", a served dinner at a nearby restaurant, and an opportunity to support Evangelical as well. Guests do not have to be connected with the seminary, but reservations must be made through Marsha Conley at 717-866-5775, ext. 2130, or mconley@evangelical.edu.

SEEKING GOD FOR THE CITY

It's not too early to begin thinking about Lent which, this year, begins on Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013. WayMakers has published **Seek God for the City** which will help you to mobilize many to pray with united, sustained vision for people of your community. The prayers in this prayer guide are biblically grounded and easy to pray. The forty days to Palm Sunday makes an ideal time to venture into a season of sustained, hope-filled prayer. In 2013, the prayers have been revised and sharpened, making this year's edition even more practical as a way to stimulate your congregation to pray with confidence and clarity.



Pastors, mission leaders and positioned prayer leaders can call for a complimentary review copy. Call WayMakers at 800-264-5214. You can also get information at www.waymakers.org and clicking on the "Pray Great Things" link.

Some helpful features of Seek God for the City 2013:

- **Strengthens what you are already doing.** No complicated program to organize or meeting to schedule.
- **Unites prayer throughout your church.** An attractive, easy-to-use tool that can help unite prayers between many churches throughout an entire community.
- **Lifts prayer from private or trivial matters.** Helps your people learn to pray for what matters most by directing attention toward what God is doing in the lives of people throughout your community.
- **Builds the confidence of everyday believers** to help them pray with clarity, authority and relevance as they learn to pray in keeping with scripture. Involves everyone in your church family, not just a "prayerful elite".
- **Opens a great way to pray toward Easter.** It augments the Lenten season with a marvelous blend of repentance and intercessory hope.

News from the Evangelism & Discipleship Commission

We know that one of the most important aspects of discipleship is getting people into the Word of God. The challenges to that are many: "I don't have enough time", "Where do I start?", "It takes too long." You've heard them all. The Evangelism & Discipleship Commission would like to encourage you to get your congregation into the Word in 2013. Here are two of the resources available to you:

Tyndale House Publishers has a new resource they are offering to local congregations and one of the best things about it is that it is completely FREE! That's right: no money; just download and use what you want in your congregation. This new resource is **REFLECT PS119**. REFLECT is designed to guide readers through the entire Bible in just 15 minutes a day. Tyndale has said their goal in developing this resource is that it be practical and effective, multi-generational, and flexible. This is one resource available for you to consider sharing with your congregation to help them get into their Bibles in 2013. You can download PDF resources from www.reflectps119.com. There you will be able to get reproducible Weekly Reading Guides, Weekly Discussion Guides, Posters, and a Leader's Guide all with excerpts from One Year Study Bibles.

The Essential 100 Challenge (The E100) is an effective Bible reading program built around 100 carefully selected short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. It enables people in your church to get the big picture of God's Word and in the process develop a daily Bible reading habit. The E100 Challenge is simple, achievable and creates a contagious enthusiasm for reading the Bible. The E100 Bible passages are usually one to two chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The E100 Challenge takes a reader through all of the major types of biblical writing including Historical books, Poetry and Wisdom literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The E100 Challenge even has sermon outlines for the E100 passages available on a FREE CD enclosed with your first order from the E100 store. Check it out at www.e100challenge.com.



News from Benefits & Compensation



1. How quickly a new year is upon us. As of the writing of this report, our legislatures in Washington, DC are still discussing the extension of the payroll tax holiday included with the fiscal cliff negotiations. Please refer to Publication 15, Circular E, Employer's Tax Guide at www.irs.gov before issuing your first paychecks in 2013 for the approved employee Social Security tax rate.

2. Reimbursement for business miles increased \$.01 to \$.565/mile on January 1, 2013.

3. The January 2013 health insurance payment remained constant from 2012. Please see www.eccenter.com for the current rates.

4. Church contributions to the 403(b) pension plan increased on January 1 to \$180 for full-time pastors and \$90 for part-time pastors.

5. W-2s and 1099-MISC forms are due to the recipients by January 31, 2013 and the respective Federal, State or Local taxing authorities by February 28 or April 1. Please refer to the specific taxing authority regulations for due dates.

All full-time and part-time pastors should receive a W-2 from their church.



6. Due Dates: Disability Payment—\$100.00 due Jan. 15
 Annual Statistical Reports—due Jan. 25
 Workers Compensation Insurance Information—due 30 days after receipt



7. Please see the 2013 Treasurer's Guide located on www.eccenter.com, for additional due dates, current amounts due and ministry fund & camp funding percentages.

8. As always please contact David King, Benefits Administrator, dking@eccenter.com or myself khenry@eccenter.com with any questions, 1-800-866-7581.

Kevin Henry
Controller

David King
Benefits Administrator

