



Engage

“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”

JOHN 20:21 (NLTSE)

I suppose it would seem pretty obvious that at this time of the year much of the work of the Bishop is focused on the upcoming National Conference. Once again this year, pastors and lay delegates will travel to Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania for three days of Conference. When I was a pastor the highlight of National Conference was the ability to reconnect with friends I hadn't seen since last year. That's still the case as Bishop, but I now pay more attention to the business of Conference too.

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This year we will consider the Futures Initiative recommendation to adjust the structure of our denomination in response to stewardship and missional forces.

Our experience and forecasted trends show a continued decline in Ministry Funds received while our denominational operating expenses continue to rise. This position is not unique to the EC Church; most denominations are working to restructure and reorganize given the financial realities of our economy. While the denomination is not in financial crisis today, our current situation is unsustainable in the long term. The Futures Initiative Core Group believes it would be best to begin reducing our operational expenses and therefore the Ministry Funds required from local churches before we reach a critical point and have no choice.

We do not believe local congregations exist to support the denomination; rather the denomination exists to help resource and encour-

age congregations to fulfill the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. Support, which the Conference Ministers currently give to pastors and churches, may be better delivered through peer relationships on a more local level. Our Futures Initiative is presenting a concept to accomplish these things through "clusters" similar to our districts, but with more local leadership and authority. Relationships like this already exist and are a positive experience for those churches and pastors. Our research also shows that "local" authority structures seem to be the effective way of the future for networking churches and creating learning communities.

What this really comes down to is an open conversation on how we see our relationship with the denomination. What does it mean to have relational supervision and accountability with each

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The Bishop's TOP TEN Prayer & Praise Items



1. Praise the Lord for the His leading of the Stationing Committee, pastors and congregations as appointments are being made. Pray for those yet to be assigned.
2. Pray for the men and women who will be graduating from Evangelical Theological Seminary on May 10; ask the Lord to continue to bless and guide them.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to make His presence known during our National Conference. May we know He is leading as we worship, conduct business, and discuss the future of our denomination.
4. Pray for the Lord's clear leading in the discussions of the Futures Initiative recommendations.
5. Pray for all our E.C. congregations who are now planning summer outreach events like community picnics, barbecues, vacation Bible school, and other outdoor events.
6. Praise God for the safety He has given Randy Sizemore, Director of Global Ministries, as he has traveled around the world participating in our international churches' conferences. (The US National Conference will be his third conference so far this year!)
7. Praise the Lord for the opportunity Rev. Mathew Gueh, Field Superintendent of the E.C. Church, Liberia, Africa recently had to talk about the church in Liberia with Liberian President Ellen Johnson -Sirleaf when she attended a funeral at St. Paul's E.C. Church, Monrovia.
8. Praise the Lord for opportunities to engage our neighbors in conversation as we emerge from our winter hibernation indoors to get outside for work in the yard, take neighborhood walks, and other recreational activities.
9. Praise God for the amazing reports we're receiving from our international E.C. churches as they reach the least and the lost and make disciples of Jesus!
10. Don't forget Mother's Day—thank the Lord for the women who gave us birth and who have impacted our lives in so many ways.

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other as pastors, leaders and the community of God? During a series of pre-conference meetings a lot of questions have been asked and opinions shared about this "cluster" concept. As we move toward National Conference I am calling on all our Evangelical Congregational family members and friends to spend extra time in prayer in this matter of denominational structure. Please join me in asking for the Lord's clear leading as we meet, discover the course the Lord is leading us on, and then faithfully follow him.

In Christ's service,

Rev. Bruce D. Hill,
Bishop



News from Evangelical

Evangelical's 58th Annual Commencement is set for Friday, May 10.

Bishop Bruce Hill is the speaker, and 30 students will receive degrees and graduate certificates. Please pray for these new alumni as they go forth for transformational ministry



to a broken and complex world.

The Center for Life-

long Learning is holding a recognition service on

May 14

for those who have met the educational requirements for local preacher or certified lay preacher. The 7:00 p.m. service in Dech Chapel will be followed by a reception in Zinn Commons. Gerald Klopp, Rick Sergi, and Robert Valentine have completed the 16 class local preacher course, while Robert Fritz, Dale Reber, and Kerry Watkins have finished the eight classes for certified lay preacher. Originally known as the Local Preacher Course of Study in the EC Church, this program is now administered by Evangelical's CLL as the Institute for Church Leadership. It is open to all interested lay people and currently includes students from several denominations.

Tee off at Evangelical's annual Golf Tournament on May 23.

Held at Lebanon's Fairview Golf Course, this 28th annual event pro-



vides great golf, good fellowship, special prizes, and a delicious buffet dinner. All proceeds benefit the seminary's Annual Fund. Go to www.evangelical.edu for complete details and online registration, or call Marsha Conley at 717-866-5775, ext. 2130 to reserve your place.

A new record! More people than ever before—52—audited classes at Evangelical this year. The standard auditing fee is \$300, but senior citizens (65+), pastors, and alumni may audit any course for only \$50. Many laymen have chosen to benefit from our rich classes in Biblical studies, theology, worship, and Church history, so consider drinking in the blessings of learning without facing the rigors of exams and papers. Course schedules for summer, fall, and winter are posted on the website... click on "current students" and go to "schedules."

A new event! June 12 is the date for Evangelical's first Women in Ministry Forum. Open to both men and

women, the day's seminars and workshops will focus on the many ways and venues in which women serve the Church and community. Check the website for more information as it becomes available.

THANK YOU for connecting with us!

The phone calling stage of the 2013 Connect-A-Thon is over, but contributions are still coming in for this important part of our Annual Fund for Transformational Leadership. As of April 15, Connect-A-Thon had raised \$58,722 of its \$74,000 goal. We are very grateful for every gift and each person who supports God's work here at Evangelical!



Congratulations
to all the
graduates!!



News from Global Ministries

Missionaries need vehicles:

Brian & Missy Wagner will be returning from RVA for home assignment August 2013-July 2014 and will need to secure a SUV/van for transportation while they are here at the least possible cost. If you know of anyone who can help with this need, please contact Pat Strain (pstrain@eccenter.com) or 1-800-866-7584) in the GMC office.



Books For Evangelical College of Theology, North East India:

To maintain their accreditation status, ECT must increase the number of volumes they have in their library. God has provided approximately 500 books through a generous donor. We are in the process of researching how to get these books to the library at ECT. If you have any suggestions, ideas, contacts, funds, etc., to ship these much needed volumes to our seminary in India or if you would want to help with this project in any way please contact Randy at the GMC office.

Randy is now scheduling speaking engagements for 2013-14.

To schedule Randy for Sunday school, worship, Sunday evening, weekday/night or anytime that fits your church's schedule, contact him at rsizemore@eccenter.com or call the GMC office at 717-866-7584.



VBS Lessons are posted on website:

The 2013 VBS lessons on Japan are now available on the website (www.eccenter.com). If you have any questions or need further information please contact Carla Sizemore (csizemore@eccenter.com)



News from Benefits Corporation



As the calendar advances toward January 2014 activity surrounding the implementation of portions of the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** will increase and the EC Church will not be immune to the forthcoming changes. At the **EC Benefits Corporation annual meeting at National Conference on Thursday evening, May 30**, the upcoming requirements of the ACA will be discussed. Also, at the annual meeting there will be election of trustees and proposed by-law changes. Pastors and lay delegates are voting members of the EC Benefits Corporation and are strongly encouraged to attend.

received invoices will be issued to the churches as soon as possible.

Churches not included in the denominational workers compensation group policy (Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky), your individual state mandates workers compensation coverage. Please confirm that all employees of the church are covered by workers compensation insurance. Per EC Benefits Corporation policy H.3.b, churches not covered by the denomination group workers compensation policy shall submit proof of workers compensation coverage by July 1 of each year. Please submit proof of your workers compensation coverage to:

Retirement: As in years past Jennifer Buehler, Wells Fargo Advisors, had the most visitors during National Conference, but please remember she is available for retirement planning assistance year round. Jennifer may be reached at 1-855-603-8146. We hope all our pastors are actively planning for their retirement; make consistent contributions to your 403(b) or Roth account (in addition to your church's contributions) and at a minimum spend an hour or two annually with a financial professional reviewing your investments. Please don't delay in becoming personally involved in your retirement planning.

EC Benefits
 100 West Park Avenue
 Myerstown, PA 17067
 Or fax 717-866-7583 or email
dking@eccenter.com

It has taken longer than normal to receive the annual **Workers Compensation** audit report which has delayed the issuing of the workers compensation invoices to the local church. When the audit report is



Please contact **Dave King** (dking@eccenter.com), Benefits Administrator or **Kevin Henry** (khenry@eccenter.com), Controller with any questions.



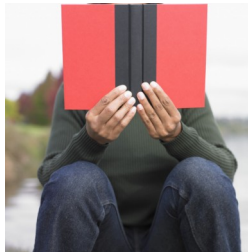
On Thursday, May 2, 2013 citizens of the United States will exercise their freedom to gather, worship, and pray. Millions will answer the call to pray in observance of the 62nd annual National Day of Prayer. Organized events will be held in thousands of public venues where intercession will be made for America and its leadership.

This year's theme, "Pray for America", is based on Matthew 12:21 which reminds us that "In His name the nations will put their hope." National Day of Prayer (NDP) Task Force Chairperson Shirley Dobson, wife of Focus on the Family founder Dr. James Dobson, has said that, "The American people continue to be plagued with challenges that defy simple answers, and our hope lies in humbly seeking the Almighty's guidance, protection, and blessing—not only on the National Day of Prayer, but throughout the year." You can choose to participate in an event in your area or perhaps open your church to all those who would want to stop in and pray some time during the day.

The National Day of Prayer tradition predates the founding of the United States of America, evidenced by the Continental Congress' proclamation in 1775 setting aside a day of prayer. In 1952, a joint resolution by Congress, signed by the President, declared an annual, national day of prayer. In 1988, the law was amended permanently setting the day as the first Thursday of every May. Join with believers all around our country in fervent prayer for our leaders and our country this year on the National Day of Prayer, May 2.

Read a great book lately?

We realize that we have pastors and lay leaders who are voracious readers as well as pastors and lay leaders who are more restricted in the time they invest in reading. But we all understand that books can greatly enhance our lives and ministries. It was recently reported that approximately 3,000,000 books were published in the U.S. in 2011. Google estimates that as of August 2010, there were 129,864,880 books in existence! So which ones are the ones we should not miss? That's your challenge.



We'd like to develop a list of the most important books you've read recently. Obviously, the Bible is number one on the list, so don't send us that particular title. But there are other good books; not inspired, but still good. Perhaps it was a great help in preparing sermons, or in a particular area of ministry like discipleship. Maybe it just helped to sharpen your focus, your daily life for Jesus. What we'd like you to do is give us your top three books you've recently read with a short description of how it impacted your life and/or ministry so we can develop a "Recommended Great Book List" we can then publicize in future issues of the EC LEADER. These books will not be endorsed by the denomination, but will simply be recommended by fellow EC followers of Jesus. Face it, there's just too many out there to find them all by yourself; so share a couple of your most recent discoveries with your EC family. Send your selections and descriptions to blong@eccenter.com. Thank you!

A Real Servant "Leader" Passes On To Glory

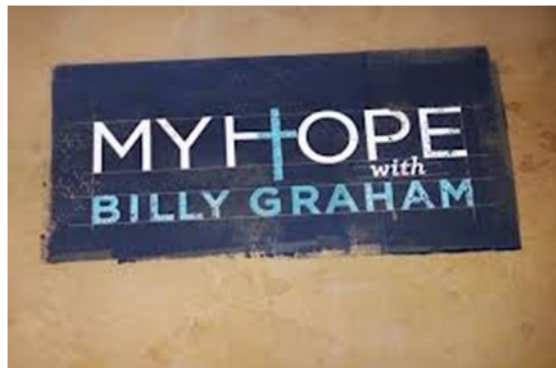
Miss Reba Leader (yes that is really her name) served her Lord as a true servant from the time she arrived as a missionary on a bus at Canyon Falls, Kentucky in 1957, to the day He called her home April 7, 2013.

She had planned to bake rolls for a birthday party at Church, had them rising on the stove, when she died during the night. She was a teacher at the mission school 1957-1967, after which she served another twenty years as a teacher in the public school system. She was an unsung hero of the faith to generations. In the end, she is buried in the soil of her adopted home, Beattyville, Kentucky.

May we learn from her example of selfless life-long service.



The Evangelism & Discipleship Commission recommends for your consideration a nation-wide evangelistic opportunity your church may want to incorporate into your fall ministries: My Hope With Billy Graham. Last year over 100 evangelical leaders from the United States and Canada gathered at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association offices in Charlotte, North Carolina, to discuss an evangelistic project that could reach North America. The meeting and the evangelistic project, come at the request of Billy Graham, who in spite of his 93 years, is deeply concerned about the spiritual state of our country, and still feels a burden to reach more people for Christ. Franklin Graham is leading the effort for pastors and local churches to join this massive outreach.



November 2013 is the key date for this nationwide evangelistic effort, which focuses on local mobilization of Christians across North America. The goal of this campaign is to reach people through friendly, relationship evangelism. My Hope with Billy Graham will use wide media saturation (television, streaming internet, DVDs, downloadable programs, and mobile platforms). If you'd like more information and to receive updates about this fall evangelistic effort, please go to www.MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org. A schedule of training seminars to be held in May in Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania can be found at the website. In addition, you can find fresh news, sermon material on prayer and evangelism, and other resources for pastors who want to encourage their congregations in effective relationship evangelism.



The Spanish edition of the Evangelical Congregational Church WELCOME brochure is now available. They can be ordered by contacting Pat at the Church Center (pwolfe@eccenter.com) or 1-800-866-7581). The cost is \$.30 each or if ordering 10 or more the cost is \$.25 each.

