



central conference of the evangelical covenant church

APRIL 2016

From the Superintendent: RESURRECTION



All that the Christian church knows, believes, and preaches depends on faith in the resurrection. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." When Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians, it was obvious that there were some who were questioning the validity of the resurrection. And sadly, we have even some professing to be Christians today who are denying or questioning the reality of the resurrection.

The Bible also tells us that the bodily resurrection of Christ is the center of the Christian faith. Because Christ rose from the dead, as he promised, we know that what he said is true and that he is God. The Resurrection affirms the truthfulness of Jesus' life and words. The Resurrection confirms Jesus' unique authority to say, "I am the resurrection and the life. Because he rose, we have certainly that our sins are forgiven. Because he rose, he lives and represents us before God. Because he rose and defeated death, we know we also will be raised. Christ's resurrection guaranteed both his promise to us and his authority to make that promise. We must take him at his word and believe.

The resurrection should challenge us to be diligent. We should be willing to work diligently for the Lord. Some of us work diligently for other nonessential causes, but God should have first claim on us. The resurrection guarantees that our labor for the Lord is never wasted. The resurrection should challenge us to be confident in our walk with Christ. The resurrection should challenge us to be faithful. It should cause us to remain loyal to Jesus regardless of our circumstances. The difference between an empty life and a fulfilled one is serving the Lord in the certainty of the resurrection.

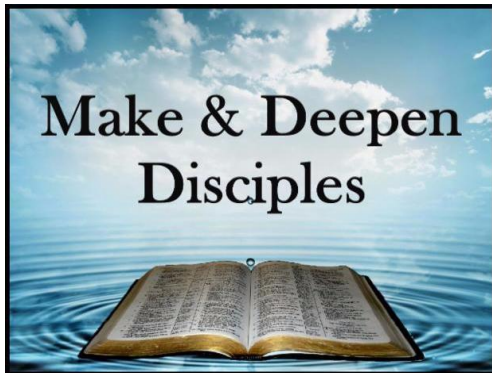
The Resurrection reveals the truth and presence of a loving, personal God who has created all there is. It reveals that despite our cowardice, waywardness, and rebellion, this God has chosen to come and share our lives. Through his life, teaching, death, and resurrection, Jesus has shown in human life the face and character of the living God. In Jesus, God has revealed himself to be personal, loving, merciful, and holy. Through the Resurrection of Jesus, God has declared that grace rather than law and goodness rather than evil will have the final word. The meaning of the Resurrection is that humanity can meet in actual history the presence of the Risen Christ.---John Shouse.

By: Rev. Jerome Nelson



130th Annual Meeting of the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church

April 29-30, 2016



The Central Conference Annual Meeting is going to be held at [First Covenant Church in Iron Mountain, MI](#). Join us as a delegate or a general attendee to gather with other Covenanters, discuss/listen to the business of the church, be updated with current information and learn about new ministry opportunities. Let's celebrate what God is doing throughout the Central Conference.

Visit www.centralconf.org/annual-meeting/ to obtain detailed information in regards to Annual Meeting's registration, schedule, breakout sessions, materials and hotels around the area.

We encourage you to register on or before April 18th to avoid a \$15 late fee.

All delegates are asked to:

- Download, complete the registration form and select breakout session. If you're not attending a session mark NA in that section.
- Follow up with your church chair to sign your registration form and mail it to the Central Conference, 4055 W. Peterson Ave., Suite 106, Chicago, IL . If you registered online, write "Pd online" on the form.

Join us at the Friday evening worship service. Bring your prayer cards ["Ask the Lord of the Harvest"](#) to pray for salvation of those who are in need of Jesus. Prayer cards and brochures are free to our churches. Visit <http://covbooks.com/products/ask-brochure> to order them. You can either bring them to our Annual Meeting or bring them to the conference office. We will gather all of the prayer cards and pray over them on Friday evening at the worship service at the Annual Meeting. Please join us afterwards for fellowship and dessert, complimentary from Harbor Point Ministries.

Please contact the Central Conference office at (773) 267-3060 if you have any questions.



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Part 5: We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Shaun Marshall is the Senior Pastor of Community Covenant Church in Calumet Park, IL.



I remember growing up that there were many things that confused me about Church: “Why do I have to go to school on Sunday?” “Why do I have to dress up like I’m going to a funeral every time we go?” “Why do we stop in the middle of service to have a snack with grape juice and crackers?”

And it is very often the case that when we don’t fully understand things, that we disengage ourselves from them. I remember being in Church one day as a small child, and seeing a woman become excited and moved so much until she started dancing and crying with joy.

I turned around to a friend who was seated next to me and asked, “What’s wrong with that lady?” “Oh,” she replied, with a weird calm, “She caught the Holy Ghost.” I didn’t say another word, but I kept thinking to myself, Ghosts are bad! How did she catch it? Is it contagious??? I don’t want the Holy Ghost!!!

As I grew older, I came to understand the Holy Spirit as a person of the Trinity to be known, and not a “thing” to be caught. I learned that the Holy Spirit is not present with us to create passive religious experiences, but rather to foster an active spiritual life demonstrating itself not only in exuberant praise, but also life-changing works of service. I realized that I not only wanted the Holy Spirit, but I desperately needed Him to be the person God created me to be in Christ.

The Evangelical Covenant Church affirms not only the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, but the importance of a conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit...and there are several important reasons why.

First, the Holy Spirit enables our connection to God. Once the Holy Spirit enters the life of the believer upon conversion, His work causes a new life, helping us to know that we are children of God (Romans 8:16), and confirming our adoption into the family of God (Galatians 4:4-7). It is our connection to God that allows us to experience the love, freedom, grace, joy, and hope that prepares us for a new life in Christ.

Second, the Holy Spirit equips us to conform to His image. As we grow into our new family, we transformed from the inside out, and we gradually take on the character of Jesus. The Holy Spirit gloriously performs that work in us (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Holy Spirit is our teacher, teaching and reminding us about the word and the way of Jesus (John 14:26). In John 16, Jesus also refers to the Spirit as a “Counselor” who will guide us in our everyday lives. This is important, because this means that because of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer limited to our sinful nature when making decisions. As we depend on the Spirit, and surrender to the work of the Spirit in us, we become more like Him.

Third, the Holy Spirit empowers us to continue His mission. When we rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit, He helps us to see how God is moving (Isaiah 43:19), joins us in where God is working (Acts 1:8), and releases gifts to the body for us to do what God is doing (1 Corinthians 12:1-7). The Holy Spirit does this beautifully by not only giving individual believers unique abilities and gifts, but by connecting us as one body so that we operate in those gifts interdependently. When we consciously depend upon the Holy Spirit, He helps us to connect with one another across differences and divisions so that we can function as one body, with a diversity of operations, skills, and abilities to serve one God in shared mission.

It is our conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit that transforms us, prepares us and releases us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the earth.

Bible Study

Acts 1:1-8

Think for a moment about how the disciples of Jesus must have felt when He was crucified. They spent three years with this incredible figure, watching in amazement as He healed the sick, raised the dead, restored sight to the blind, preached with authenticity, simplicity and authority, and restored hope to a nation waiting for a King and a Savior. Their hopes for Jesus were mainly that He would overthrow the Roman Government and restore the Kingdom of Israel, becoming a King more like David and Solomon.

Now, imagine their excitement and hope when they learned that He was resurrected from the dead just as He said He would...YES! Jesus is back and more victorious than ever...they can't even kill Him...it's time to take over!

But then, imagine how the disciples must have felt when Jesus announced He was going away. WHAT??? They had a tough time following Jesus when He was standing right next to them, how much more of a challenge would it be for them to serve Him when He wasn't around!!!

When we really process what was happening, and think about how they must have felt, we can certainly understand the disciples' fear and frustration. If you go away, Jesus, what will we do?

Of course, we know that Jesus was not necessarily interested in ascending to an earthly, political throne, but He instead wanted to rule in their hearts. Jesus knew that in order to build His Church in the earth that He had to go, but He had other plans in mind for the disciples. He planned to send the Holy Spirit that they might be transformed and through this transformation, the disciples would receive power to be witnesses for Jesus locally and globally. All they had to do was wait until they had become aware of the Holy Spirit's presence among them. As these people, all with different experiences and personalities waited together, they developed faithfulness in prayer, compassion toward one another, and a commitment to life together. Little did they know that in a matter of days, the Holy Spirit would radically transform them to be able to communicate beyond language barriers, share the life-changing truth of the Gospel, and lead thousands upon thousands to Christ.

Questions:

1. What thoughts, emotions or impressions are you left with after reading this text? When you think about how the disciples may have been processing everything that was happening, was there anything that stood out to you in particular that had special significance?
2. The disciples were waiting for Jesus to continue doing great things, but Jesus' plan was for the disciples to be transformed so that the Holy Spirit could do great things through *them*. What great things do you sense that the Holy Spirit could do in your life if you consciously depended upon Him?
3. The disciples went back to the Upper Room where they waited for the Promise of the Father in the person of the Holy Spirit. We see in Acts 2 that their awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence among them radically transformed and empowered them to serve the Mission of God in the earth. Think about some practical ways that you might deepen your awareness of the Holy Spirit in your life on a daily basis.
4. The Holy Spirit equipped the disciples to connect with people beyond language and cultural barriers. Is there anyone in your world that you have rejected because their background, culture or style of worship is different? What do you think the Holy Spirit might work in your life to help you embrace them?
5. How do you think you will experience God's promise of Holy Spirit-powered change in your life?



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2016 CMJ Ministry Grant Applications

The Central Conference's ***Commission on Compassion, Mercy and Justice*** is offering a limited number of grants of up to \$2,000.00 for outreach-oriented ministries. Please press Ctrl and click [here for guidelines](#) and [here for the application](#).

The deadline for the 2016 CMJ Ministry Grant Application is May 30, 2016.

By: Rev. Debbie Griffith Samuels

Covenant Children's Ministry



The Covenant Children's Ministry Board, formerly the Covenant Children's Home and Family Services, is receiving applications from post high school college or trade school students who qualify. Guideline and application forms can be downloaded from the Covenant Children's Ministry website... www.ccmprinceton.org.

Deadline for receipt of applications in our Princeton, IL office is June 10th.

By: Paul Bengtson