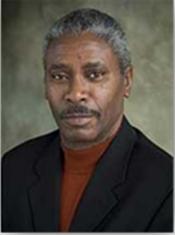




central conference of the evangelical covenant church

August 2015

From the Superintendent: CONSECRATION



According to the Bible, consecration is devoting, or setting apart of anything to the worship or service of God. The race of Abraham and the tribe of Levi were consecrated. (Ex. 13:2, 12, 15; Num. 3:12) The Hebrews devoted their fields and cattle, and sometimes the spoils of war to the Lord (Lev. 27:28, 29). According to the Mosaic Law the firstborn both of man and beast were consecrated to God. Jesus prayed the prayer of consecration in the garden of Gethsemane just before He went to the cross. In that prayer, He prayed for the will of God to be done in His life (Matt. 26: 36-46). He was consecrating Himself to do the will of God, regardless of His personal feelings or desires. If Jesus needed to consecrate Himself to do the

will of God, how much more do we need to consecrate ourselves. In Romans 12:1-2, we are told that God is pleading with us to give our bodies to him as living sacrifices, daily laying aside our own desires to follow him, putting all our energy and resources at his disposal and trusting Him to guide us. And we do this out of gratitude that our sins have been forgiven.

I believe that one of the things that is wrong with our modern views of Christianity is what I call "Instant Salvation." For example, we tell people that all they have to do to be saved is to just repeat a prayer; or it's not really necessary to repent or to change your lifestyle. Just believe that God loves everyone; or that it's not necessary to share the Gospel with the unsaved, that just being their friend will by some process of osmosis lead them to Christ. In addition, most believers do not question the truth of the "will of God," but many regard it as such an obscure mystical reality that they despair of knowing it with any certainty or of doing it with any deep sense of assurance. For many the will of God is a confusing mystery. But Paul would disagree and insist that the will of God is to be discovered and done with such zeal that it will be proved to be good, acceptable, and perfect. As Christians we should be grateful that we have the unique privilege and tension-filled opportunity to live in this present "evil age" as members of the "new age" which is to come.

Since we have been justified by faith in Christ and have been restored to a position of love and trust as adopted children of God, we ought to lead a life of purity and holiness that befits our new status. Paul makes it plain in his writings that the doctrine of righteousness by faith and salvation by grace does not encourage or permit disobedience or a careless disregard of God's commandments. On the contrary, we believers who have been justified and are being sanctified become ever more willing to obey as "the righteousness of the law" is being fulfilled in us. (Romans 8:4)

Consecration involves complete, voluntary surrender to the Lord. When we consecrate our lives, we turn our backs on our fleshly desires, worldly values, carnal thinking, undisciplined living, bad habits, and on everything else that does not agree with God's Word. We intentionally put distance between ourselves and ungodly things so that we are prepared and available for God to use us. It says to God, "Here I am God, I give myself to You. Unto You, O Lord, I bring my entire life. I lay it on Your altar. Do what You want to do with me. Speak through me. Use me to touch who You want touched. Place me in positions to meet all divine appointment You have for me. Make a difference in the world through me. You have everything about me available to You to utilize according to Your plans and purposes."

By: Rev. Jerome Nelson



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Develop a Deborah

"**Develop a Deborah**" is an ongoing initiative that the Evangelical Covenant Church has championed for many years. It asks the question, "Are there women in your ministries who have leadership gifts? If so, **Disciple**....Teach them to walk with God and in God's ways (2Tim 1:5-12), **Demonstrate**.....Entrust godly women to lead. (Romans 15:1-7) and **Direct**.....help them to discover their gifts. (Ephesians 4:16) The Central Conference will be pursuing this initiative by requesting that our churches be intentional in supporting "Develop a Deborah."



On Sunday, July 26th Minister Prajakta David who serves as Ministry Services Coordinator at Covenant Office's "Serving Globally" department and a Nursing Learning Resource Coordinator in the School of Nursing at North Park University, blessed the members of **Fellowship Christian Church of Oak Park** with a Sermon entitled ***The "Embodiment of Following Jesus"*** from John 15:5-17. What a gift it was to hear Prajakta preach that "As people of God we are called to embody Christ's character and image of love. Love for one another is fulfillment of God's love in us and for us." She closed with a beautiful prayer from St. Francis of Assisi.

Fellowship Christian Church of Oak Park will also welcome Rev. Karen Brewer Senior Pastor of Atonement Covenant Church on Sunday, August 23rd to share the Word of God. If your church would like to join this effort of "**Develop a Deborah**" to **Disciple, Demonstrate and Direct the giftedness of Women**, contact Rev. Debbie Griffith Samuels at the Central Conference for more information on how you too can Develop a Deborah!

By: Rev. Debbie Griffith Samuels



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Musing On the Acts Musing On the Acts

Over the next several months I would like to look at the stresses the church felt in the Acts of the Apostles. I'm wondering if there are models which can be gleaned from the initial journey which can help us navigate stresses the church faces in this day.

Nothing I write will be particularly profound. I can't envision a new discovery which 2000 years of study and critique have somehow been overlooked. I thought I might start with identifying ways in which the story finds a context both similar and distinct from our day. We can acknowledge those things and find a way to see how God works to further the reconciling nature of His Kingdom.

I've wondered at times about the disorientation the first followers of Christ must have felt. It's easy to assume that because of the resurrection the cloud was lifted about the true mission of Jesus. But the first few verses in Acts seem to indicate that the disciples were just as mystified as they were most of the time they spent with him.

"Is now the time that you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" No matter how often this question had gone unanswered prior to Calvary and Jesus' resurrection; the disciples are banging the same old drum.

The answer was again as evasive as before. "Stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit. You'll know it when it happens."

It's easy in historical congregations to be befuddled by our own perceived specialness, the sense of our own uniqueness. Before I get too critical of the disciples, I recognize that, just like all of us, they are subject to their own need for collective significance. It's a trap which hearken us back to the glory days, the sense that if we can just capture what we had, we would be justified, vital again.

So, for those of us in a key time of transition, can we stay where we are? Just wait and allow the Holy Spirit to come? We are never quite sure what that will look like. But we'll know it when we see it.

By: Rev. Peter Sjoblom

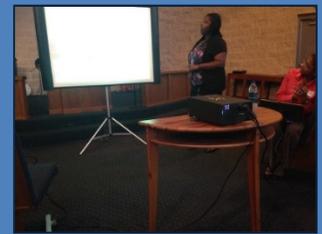


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Thrive Covenant Church & The Thrive Leadership Academy

Thrive Covenant Church, which serves Chicago's Near West Side, is seeking missionary support on a 3 month, 6 month, or 12 month basis. We seek missionaries to help build our youth ministry, technology ministry, communications, and/or our worship team. I ask that Chicagoland pastors and parishioners prayerfully consider supporting us in this way. It has been tough making lasting connections in our area but we are starting to build great momentum. Thanks be to God.



Teens presented business ideas as the culmination of the TLA youth pillar (June 2015).

The Thrive Leadership Academy currently has a focus upon the Near West Side of Chicago. To date, 7 entrepreneurs have gone through our program and we will be working over the summer to secure mentoring for them and help them to wisely use their seed funding (ranging from \$250-\$5,000) for successful launch of their enterprises.

Thrive Leadership Academy also, and more importantly, is about nurturing the growth of leaders! In addition to the entrepreneurs who have endured our enterprise incubation, we have 4 fellows who are undergoing 1-1 coaching for personal development. This developmental phase is now a pre-requisite for all participants. Our desire is to focus more on the person and secondarily on the profit generating product.

This summer's goals are to secure funding for the 2015-2016 academic year, nurture the growth of indigenous coaches to multiply our efforts, shore up the launch team and advisory committee, and continue our work of building collaborations.

Thrive Covenant Church is excited that as we build the leadership academy, the community is taking interest in the church. The Near West Side of Chicago is starting to view us as a community that cares for them beyond Sunday mornings. We truly desire to love the whole person and The Evangelical Covenant Church continues to be a great blessing for our church plant. Thank you.



By: Pastor Damien Howard



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What's Happening in Champaign?

As most may or may not know, I currently wear two hats, I serve as the Executive Director of East Central Illinois Youth For Christ as well as Pastor of Berean Covenant Church.

Well between the two we've been able to accomplish a lot to the point where we've grabbed the attention of both print and news media of which I will send.

Midnight Basketball

Updated: Thursday, July 9 2015, 09:58 AM CDT By: Kim Shine, Reporter

Local Program Offers Safe, Fun Friday Nights for Students:

A new program is keeping local kids out of trouble on Friday nights. It's bringing them in using something they love to do -- play basketball. "Midnight Basketball" brings teens in Champaign-Urbana area together at Stratton Elementary to see who's got game. Read more: www.foxillinois.com/news/features/featured/stories/local-program-offers-safe-fun-friday-nights-students-1120.shtml



Better Late Than Never | Sun, 06/28/2015 - 7:00am | Paul Wood

Photo by: Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

Bryson Cowper does pushups as a punishment as teammate Jamonte Williams watches during the midnight basketball league. Read more: <http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2015-06-28/better-late-never.html>



Getting Personal: Willie G. Comer Jr.

Sun, 10/12/2014 - 7:00am | Paul Wood/The News-Gazette

Getting Personal is a Q&A with a local personality. Here, Champaign resident Willie G. Comer Jr., the full-time executive director of Youth For Christ and a part-time pastor of Berean Covenant Church, chats with The News-Gazette's Paul Wood. Read more: <http://www.news-gazette.com/living/2014-10-12/getting-personal-willie-g-comer-jr.html>



God is using Berean Covenant to change a city! Thank you ECC for investing in the vision.

"Don't be all you can be; be all God called you to be in Jesus' name" By: Pastor Willie G. Comer Jr.