

The Empire Connection



Volume I, Issue I

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Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We hope this Congress Conference Newsletter, called the **“Empire Connection”**, finds you well, and that you and your congregation are experiencing the renewing power of our Sovereign Lord.

“Christian education is particularly important as we consider the modern American scene: seven to ten hours of television being watched each day, the baby boomers, groups with special needs, family fragmentation, high mobility, the declining popularity of Christianity, increased secularization, indifference to moral absolutes, entertain-

ment saturation, Bible illiteracy, the explosion of technology to name but a few things. These cultural influences can easily affect the local church adversely. It cannot afford to have its educational ministry characterized by sporadic attendance, unfulfilled assignments, sloppy instruction, boring classes, and limited methods. The church of Jesus Christ must stand tall over against the world-and-life view of a pagan society.” ([Christian Education in the Local Church](#) by Calvin R. Malcor)

This “Empire Connection”



Rev. Dr. James R. Banks, II
Congress President

Newsletter will be a great opportunity for us to inculcate you and your Church on the importance of our Congress of Christian Education Conference.

As we begin this “Empire Connection” informational Newsletter, we pray that you will receive, with renewed enthusiasm, and rediscover the importance of Christian Education.

Always the Word, Because Truth Matters,

President James R Banks II

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Congress Leadership Selects 2020 Theme: Building Healthy Churches

The 2020 theme for the Annual Retreat and Congress Session have been selected. The theme will be “Building Healthy Churches”.

Healthy churches will make disciples and develop leaders who will be

empowered to impact culture and communities for Christ. Healthy churches will empower individuals, save marriages, and strengthen families to meet the myriad of challenges they face in the world today. Healthy

churches will be agents of change sharing the love of Christ and advancing the kingdom of God in the world. This issue of the Empire Connection will feature selected articles with perspectives on Healthy Churches.



We may not have it all together, but together, we have it all.

Healthy Churches Assemble Together by Rev. Sara Streeter McRae

In our churches, we have come to a standstill or plateau in our growth due to the decline in attendance from all five generations in our churches.

We are getting older, health challenges plague us, millennials have stopped coming and television preachers, live streaming, and

YouTube have captured the attention of those too tired and too busy to come weekly... making "Bedside Baptist" more convenient.

The Bible reminds us in Hebrews 10:25, "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..."

To neglect meeting to-

gether is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We come together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord. Facing daily struggles and difficulties should not take us away from church but should draw us closer to God and to each other.

Rev. Dr. Vernon

Shelton

Christian

Education

&

Healthy

Churches

"A Healthy Church

Grows Spiritually

and Develops

Disciples "

One of the challenges many churches face in this present day is "spiritual stagnation" with some of its members. New converts give their lives to Christ, they get baptized and become active members of the church, but they become weekly seat fillers instead of fruit-bearing disciples! This

is a dangerous place for the church because we are not called to make seat fillers; according to Matthew 28:19-20. We are called to make disciples.

However, many believers are content with just being members and never grow to become disciples. Therefore, as leaders we have to strategically find ways to help

new believers transition from membership to discipleship. This will help facilitate not only numerical growth, but spiritual growth as well. In order for spiritual growth to take place in our churches we have to get members to do more than just come to church on Sunday mornings, join ministries and celebrate anniversaries.

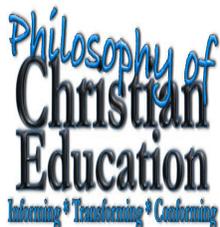
In fact, we have to find ways to help them foster an authentic relationship with God, not just learn the rituals and religion of God. This is important because church attendance by itself does not guarantee spiritual growth. Growth takes place when believers make a commitment to learn God's word, and do what James said in his Epistle, "be doers of the

word, not just hearers of the word" (James 1:22.)

Christian Education Ministries are important to the church. Without sound biblical teaching you can have church, but your members will not grow and learn what it takes to be the church. Neither will it be a healthy church.

It is to this end that our Congress of

Christian Education is working hard to develop a conference this year that will promote and foster "Healthy Churches" that are growing spiritually and making disciples.



Updating Christian Education by Rev. Shanell Turpin

It is no secret that Christian Education is a staple to the Church of Jesus Christ. Christians should not only believe, but have a working knowledge of what they believe. The educational knowledge to accompany one's faith will allow for both articulation and action. When a person knows what he/she believes, that person is empowered to explain and exercise their beliefs. This will yield confident and committed Christians to withstand worldly trials. For this reason, maintain-

ing a strong Christian Education ministry in the church is imperative.

However, just as much as the Christian Education ministry must be maintained, its model must also be updated. To maintain the status quo of Christian Education while trying to grow the ministry is as counterproductive as using a 1970s paper map of New York to guide you on a trip in 2019. It will not take you where you want to go. You will get lost.

There's new roads, new highways, new bridges, and new exits. You'll be lost and

the people following will be frustrated because you can't use an old map to get to new places.

If Christian Education within the churches is going to be maintained and updated it must offer something that people cannot get from "Google." It must offer experience and opportunity. When it comes to the church and Christian Education, people are seeking transformation more than information. This is especially true for millennials.

Reclaiming
The Future of
Christian Education



Updating Christian Education Cont.

Regrettably, many churches stubbornly hold onto the Sunday School and Bible Study models that push out information this generation is no longer seeking.

Many of the people who come are come seeking an experience. These individuals desire to be a part of EVERY aspect of church. What some people affectionately refer to as "worshippers" are people who desire experiential knowledge. They need to be

engaged in the learning. These persons are not satisfied sitting in a lecture setting for Sunday School. They need interactive lessons or group chats to engage them in Christian Education.

In addition to an experience, there are those who come seeking opportunity. These individuals desire specified teaching. They don't just want to be taught; they want to be taught to teach. Millennials

want to be empowered to teach others. The church primarily offers the same classes, taught by the same teachers. There are persons who come to the church desiring specific training, but cannot receive it because the model has not been updated. This generation comes seeking training and teaching on sexual assault, mental illness, grief and loss, addiction, weight loss, single parenting, and LGBT. They want to receive the training so they will be empowered to "Go, make disciples, and teach all nations."

"When it comes to the church and Christian Education, people are seeking transformation more than information."

Beyond The Autopsy by Dean Williamson

Many people and church groups have read *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* by Thom S. Rainer. Rainer states, "Autopsies are performed on humans to find out why they died. The discoveries might give surviving family members information they need to avoid the same path as their loved one."

Estimates are that 85-95% of churches in the U. S. are in a state of plateau or decline. An astounding number of churches

are dying, closing their doors on an annual basis.

We must learn from the efforts of Rainer and others in order to address church health in the 21st century. We must move beyond the autopsy.

Many churches are sick and in need of assistance to return to a state of healthiness. Attend our Congress Retreat and Building Healthy Churches Conference/

Congress Session to gain insights on how to become a healthy church. By the time an individual sees signs of poor health, disease has often already taken over the body. Churches must move from a maintenance or survival mentality to a growth oriented mentality. Churches must return to ideals of evangelism, mission, outreach, and discipleship. Churches must renew their mind and be revitalized by the power of the Holy Spirit. Study to show yourself approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed. Learn from others. Become lifetime learners, so that you can be a healthy church and live.



How can the Congress help you? The Congress is the teaching and training arm of the convention. The 2020 Congress Retreat (2/17/20) and Building Healthy Churches Conference/Congress Session (4/13/20-4/16/20) will feature relevant classes and workshops to assist your church in becoming a healthy church. Christian education is that ministry of the church that undergirds and supports all other ministries and ministry functions of the church. Attend sessions and learn about emotional and mental health for leaders and church members, learn about trends impacting the church, and learn about how to effectively address the challenge of being the church in the 21st Century, a post-modern, post-Christian, post-civil rights, post everything age.

To be effective in a new era, the church must evolve. Evolution and revolution is necessary to serve this present age. Allow pastors, leaders, and teachers to equip you and your church to serve this present age. The church must put it's own oxygen mask on first to save individuals, families, the community and the world. Make sure your church is a healthy church. Put on your oxygen mask. Join with us as we build healthy churches across our state. We're all in this together!

Dean Williamson

How You Can Help Your Church Grow by Rev. James Hassell

Attend regularly the momentum of the ministry is hindered when the members do not show up regularly. The average church member goes to church less than twice a month. Give the Lord your Sundays.

Arrive On time if you want to help your church grow you should practice showing up on time to events. Walking in late, not registering early, and coming at the end of service really hurts the church.

Give regularly, God intends for us to give proportionately in accordance to how he has blessed us through tithes and offerings. Periodic gifts are appreciated but consistent gifts are very useful to the body.

Study together with other believers there's a Jewish



proverb that says that there is no learning without debate. We learn better as we bounce our thoughts off of one another.

Serve with your gifts it is a great thing to serve God. The body is designed to be supported by your gifts. Offer what you do well to the kingdom of God. Be a team player and volunteer consistently.

Support events, your presence encourages others when they work so hard to prepare for an event. Support your church.

Pray for your pastor if you want your church to grow, keep your pastor in your

prayers. Your prayers for your pastor's family, health, and finances can only boost them.

If you want your church to grow, talk well about your Lord, the pastor, and your church family.

Invite friends to worship God with you. Bring your family to church. Grow in your personal faith and love for others.