



# Outreach Newsletter

A Publication of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Board of Outreach North America



*Evangelistic zeal is part of our past;  
How can we reclaim it for our present and our future?*

**Winter 2011**

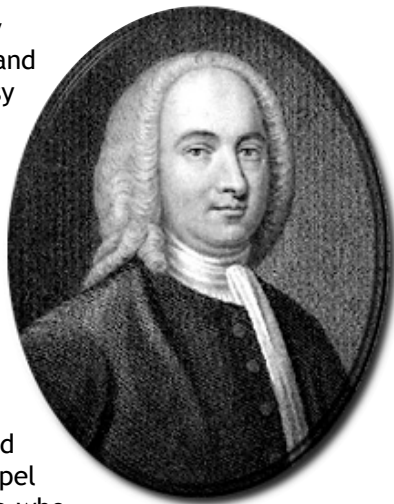
## Evangelistic Zeal is a Unique Part of ARP History

By Dr. Stephen Myers, Pressly Memorial ARP, Statesville, NC

**“We need to improve our evangelism!”** How many times has this been heard in your congregation? (Or how many times should it have been heard?!) For the Christian, evangelism is a sacred duty, a joyful task, and a frightening charge all rolled into one. For the ARP Church, it also is a unique part of denominational history. In 18th century Scotland, the first founders of what would become the ARP were renowned as the most zealous and most gifted evangelists in the country. Evangelistic zeal is part of our past; how can we reclaim it for our present and our future?

Two particularly helpful suggestions can be found in the theology of Ebenezer Erskine, a founder of the Associate Church, one of the forerunners of the ARP.

First of all, in Erskine’s day (Erskine was born in 1680 and died in 1754), controversy raged over what was referred to as “the gospel offer.” Essentially, the issue was this—to whom can you sincerely say, “if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved?” Some influential men in the Scottish Church argued that a man had to show repentance and belief before he could be sincerely offered salvation in Christ. The gospel could be offered only to those who



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## From the Director Mobilizing People to Fish

Dr. Alan J. Avera, Executive Director

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, and then James and John, he called them out of the fishing trade into a new vocation. Now they would be fishers of men (see Mark 1:16-20 and Luke 5:1-11). According to Dr. Bruce Finn, coordinator of the Metro Philadelphia Church Planting Partnership, fishing in the New Testament was not an individual pursuit. Whole families gathered together in fishing teams. There was a place for everyone in the family, whether as part of the support crew back on shore, or as part of the boat crew casting nets. Boat crews went out on fishing expeditions repeatedly. The boats were not expected to remain tied safely along the shore.

In calling men from a background in the fishing trade to now fish for men, Jesus seems to regard outreach, evangelism, and disciple-making as an activity for the whole Christian community. He also conceives it to be a regularly repeated endeavor, not just something we do occasionally.

Michael Green, in *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, observed, “the biggest reason why church people are reluctant to evangelize is that they do not think it is their business to do so.” He also stated, “Evangelism is not an optional extra for those who like that sort of thing.”

If Jesus calls the whole church to be involved in fishing for people, then our churches need to find ways to get all kinds of people occupied in that task; which includes training them, equipping them, and assigning them ways to be involved.

You can find help in doing this at my blog at the bottom of the ONA home page [www.ona-arp.org](http://www.ona-arp.org) and through the Evangelism Tool Kit at [www.ona-arp.org/evangelism-tool-kit/](http://www.ona-arp.org/evangelism-tool-kit/).

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864.232.8297 x229 or [ona@arpsynod.org](mailto:ona@arpsynod.org)

## A Broken Heart for the Lost Next Door: Greenville ARP Church Focuses on Home Missions



By Rev. Matt Miller, Greenville ARP Church, Greenville, SC

As I write this, the Greenville ARP Church is nearing the end of its 2nd Annual Missions Conference. For years, we have had an annual Fellowship Retreat every spring at Bonclarken, a time where we enjoy the fellowship of our church family and have a speaker who focuses on some aspect of spiritual formation.

The purpose of our annual Missions Conference, held in the fall, is to turn our eyes outward and help us to become a congregation that is equipped to share the gospel locally at home, as well as become a missionary-cultivating congregation that will eventually send some of our own out into the fields of harvest (that is why our Missions Conference looks for creative ways to involve our youth, since that is the likely group from which future missionaries would come).

Our first conference focused on foreign missions, with a speaker who had been a Wycliffe Bible translator in Papua New Guinea and shared incredible stories of the power of God's Word, and

challenged us to open our eyes to see what God can do when we offer ourselves unreservedly to Him. It was, for many, the highlight of 2009. As we met to plan our second conference, we felt led to have a home missions emphasis, with the idea that we would rotate between foreign and home emphases every year going forward (also allowing us to highlight World Witness one year, and then Outreach North America the next).

So we invited Dr. Steve Childers to come from Orlando to Greenville ARP as our guest speaker to deliver challenging addresses on "evangelism." And it was glorious!

Dr. Childers spoke three times on Sunday, and concluded Monday evening, winsomely (and effectively!) deconstructing our fears and anxieties about sharing the gospel, and then showing us that evangelism is not so much about methodology, as it is about heart.



Steve Childers



First, quoting John Piper, Dr. Childers repeated time and again, "You cannot commend what you do not cherish." If we do not cherish Jesus Christ, it is because in our hearts we actually cherish an idol instead (possessions, leisure, a relationship, etc.). Evangelism becomes 'easy' when you cherish Jesus Christ, in the same way that grandparents, who cherish their grandchildren, cannot help but talk about them. Second, Dr. Childers emphasized that evangelism springs from a heart that is truly broken for the lost. He said, "If you wonder how to reach a certain person or group of people, start by praying for God to give you a broken heart for them,



## Testimony of God's Grace and Mercy

By Greg Duke, Riverside Presbyterian, Prattville, Alabama

This fall, we witnessed a beautiful picture of God's grace and mercy as Ben and Amy Phillips renewed their marriage vows before their family and the Lord. No, the ceremony was not tied to a celebration of twenty-five or fifty years of marriage; Ben and Amy had only been married for 8 years. Allow me to explain.

One of our members introduced me to Ben earlier in the spring. Days later we met at Cracker Barrel, and after a few moments of small talk, Ben confessed, "Greg, I've been intimately involved with another woman for several months, and I don't know what to do." Even though he knew it would be wrong, he was planning to divorce his wife Amy and leave his two children

to move in with the other woman. A few diagnostic questions, and other comments he had made, helped me see that Ben was probably not a Christian. I asked him not to make any hasty decisions and to prayerfully meditate on a couple of Scriptures that I would give him. I told him that though he might not have much hope for his marriage, I did, and we could rightfully ask the Lord to be glorified in this situation. We agreed to meet again in one week.

For the next several weeks, Ben and I met over breakfast to look at various Scriptures together. We examined his sin problem, and discussed his covenant responsibilities as a husband and father. The Lord graciously used this time to draw Ben to Himself. He repented of his sins, and with great joy confessed Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior. Although he



Fellowship at Riverside

had completely cut off all contact with the other woman, he knew that he had to confess his marital infidelity to his wife, and he asked that I go with him. As you can imagine, Amy was utterly devastated as Ben tearfully disclosed his sin. He humbly offered to move out of the house for a season, and agreed to do whatever

## ... ARP History

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were properly "qualified" for it.

Erskine, on the other hand, insisted that the gospel was for sinners. Wherever the Christian found a sinner, he found a man who was "qualified" to be offered salvation in Christ. In some, God would work to make them receptive to this offer; in others, there would be no such Divine work. But, all that was incumbent upon the Christian was to offer salvation in Christ to all sinners and to each sinner. That was the Scriptural pattern! Both Jesus Himself (John 6:32) and the apostles (Acts 2:39) offered salvation to everyone who could hear their voices. As Erskine himself put it: "It is true, indeed, the eternal destination, the purchase and application of redemption is particular only to the elect; but the revelation, gift, and offer, is common to all the hearers of the gospel... Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound: and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name." The gospel was to be offered to everyone.

Secondly, Erskine was insistent that this sinner-directed evangelism must be accompanied by what we today would call discipleship within the local church. In Erskine's latter years, a wave of evangelistic revivals broke out in Scotland in which travelling ministers would come into an area, lead a multi-day revival, and then leave. While Erskine was zealous for whatever evangelistic assistance the young Associate Presbyterians could find, he insisted that evangelistic effort must come under the auspices of the Associate Church, thereby drawing any converts into that church. Erskine's concern was that if evangelistic efforts took place in any other way, those who ostensibly were converted would be apostate, false churches. The end result, then, would be to leave these men and women more hardened to the true gospel than they had been before the revival had come to town. A man was not to be reached with the gospel and then left on his own; he was to be reached with the gospel and then given a home in a sound local church.

So, over the course of his ministry, Erskine insisted that the gospel should go out to all sinners and that it should aim to draw them in to church-based dis-

cipleship.

All of this sounds pretty obvious. For one thing, I presume no ARP would say that a man had to be "qualified" in order to be offered salvation. But do our actions say otherwise? If we only preach the gospel and talk about Jesus to those who come to a church service or to our congregation's "traditional outreach activity" (Bible School, fall festivals, etc.), are we not making attendance at church events the new "qualification" that one must have in order to be offered the gospel? Should we not take the gospel to all sinners? Should we not go to the poor and the elderly who feel unable to come to church events? Should we not approach the self-content who see no need to come to church events at all? Rather than waiting for others to "qualify" themselves by being "approachable," we must actively and creatively seek out the lost, taking the gospel to every sinner and to every place where sinners are found.

Furthermore, I presume no ARP would say that once a man is converted, we should simply leave him to his own devices. But, again, do our actions say otherwise? Once someone has joined our congregation, do we expand our old circle of friends to include new brothers and sisters? Do our spiritually mature women take younger women under their wings (Titus 2:1-5)? Do our spiritually mature men disciple younger men (Titus 2:6-8)? In an age in which questionable teaching is readily available in print and on the internet; and in which a distinction between what is sound and what is not is seldom made; our churches have an increasing responsibility to shepherd the sheep that Christ has brought to us. Not leaving newborn Christians to false teachers, we must care for them diligently within the church.

Ebenezer Erskine's understanding of evangelism was simple. You take the gospel to sinners- wherever they may be- and if God uses that gospel to bring a man new life, you give him the devoted attention that a child of God deserves. Simple. Yet we so easily fall into precisely the sorts of errors that Erskine tried to combat. As ARPs, we are bound foremost by Christ our Lord, but also by our heritage, to take the gospel to all sinners and to give diligent congregational care to those whom God saves. May God be pleased to bring an evangelistic fervor to all of us and to grow His Church in this world not for our glory, but for His!

because the truth of the matter is that when you truly have a broken heart for them, any methodology will do."

The interest on the part of the congregation was amazing. Dr. Childers really connected with the people, and by the conclusion of his last message, there was a palpable earnestness in the room about becoming instruments through whom the lost people that are in our daily paths might come to know Jesus Christ and enter into fellowship with His Church.

Our conference was directed by our Missions Committee, involved the Men's and Women's Ministries and the youth (Men's Ministry provided the meal Sunday night, Women's Ministries provided the meal Monday night, and the youth voted on which meal was better, which motivated them to come each night). We kicked it off on Sunday morning, when attendance is highest, so that the maximum number of people would be exposed to the guest speaker from the outset, and hopefully choose to come back that evening and the next. It was a tremendous time for us, and something we look forward to doing for years to come.

We hope that one day we will be inviting someone who grew up in our own church to come back as our guest speaker.

she asked of him.

Amy had been a Christian for years, and knew that she had grounds for a biblical divorce. However, I explained that she also had a tremendous opportunity to express undeserved mercy to Ben and to work towards reconciliation. Amy chose to be merciful, and after much prayer, and months of counseling, Ben and Amy Phillips renewed their vows on September 12, 2010. We are so glad to have them as a testimony of God's grace at Riverside Church.





Lake Placid ARP has been doing Christianity Explored (CE) for a few years. They have just completed their 6th and largest CE Course! Each new term a small group takes turns hosting the 10 week course.

Here are the statistics:

- 7 Small Groups hosted meals and served as table discussion leaders
- 180 people attended (about 1/3 unchurched)
- Many changed lives

Who came? People who were invited by members, people who had visited the church once or twice, and people who had been served by the church's benevolence ministry. One of the biggest tangible impacts on the church has been in the small groups. Members are now more comfortable sharing their faith and inviting friends to church.

CE is a ten-week course that covers the Gospel of Mark. It helps people answer three questions:

- 1) Who is Jesus? (His identity)
- 2) Why did He come? (His mission)
- 3) What does He demand of those who want to follow Him? (His call)

Participants do not need to know anything about the Bible. They are not asked to read aloud, pray or sing and they can ask any question they want.

The ONA office has CE materials that churches can borrow. Contact us if you are interested in Christianity Explored.

## News and Notes from the Field

**Hope Chapel in Greensboro, NC** sent their first member overseas for a mission to Uganda in September. Worship director Michael Van Patter is doing a hymn "retune" each week and posting the recording and chord chart (<http://hymns-of-the-week.wordpress.com/>). He also made a compilation of hymns based on the Apostle's Creed, called Hymns of Faith (<http://cardiphonia.bandcamp.com/album/hymns-of-faith>).



**SonLife Church in Jacksonville, FL** is moving in February to another hotel (Holiday Inn) that in addition to a room that will seat 120, will also provide a large (banquet sized) room for our children's ministries.

**Freedom Bridge Mission in Wagram, NC** had their seminary extension graduation celebration December 29. We give thanks to all who have supported the seminary program; four students received their degrees in Biblical studies.

**Christ Coastal in Southport, NC** had a pre-Christmas dinner and was able to minister to a widow, a single mom and her two kids.

**Connections Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, AL** organized on December 5.

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