

# ECCF Sketch



(say “etch’a”)

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Sep-Oct 2014 *The Evangelical Covenant Church of Elgin: A Church of Disciples who Make Disciples*

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## Note(s) from the Pastor

### The Order of Revival

One way to describe the faith tradition that shapes the Evangelical Covenant is that while we appreciate “Theology,” we do not allow “Theology” to trump what the Bible *actually describes*. “Theology” states that God has the power to bring awakening and revival wherever God chooses. We believe that is true. We join that “Theology” to what the Bible *actually describes*, which is that God *will not* validate sin, disobedience, or complacent inaction by sending on it the seal of the Spirit’s power. So while “Theology” tells us God has the power to overcome sin and disobedience, the scriptures also teach us that God will not be mocked. Unless we are living into God’s revealed priorities for our lives and our church, revival will never become the true desire of our hearts – it will remain only pious wishing.

In the Bible I see this order of events that prepare the way for revival. This article focuses on the example of the Apostle Peter.

*Steps 1 and 2, Conviction of Sin/Learning of God:* These two steps occur in either order and build on each other. Before he became his full-time disciple, Peter had encountered Jesus and declared, “depart from me, for I am a sinner” (Luke 5). As Peter learned of God in his walk with Jesus, he was brought to new places of conviction, even on the Mount of Transfiguration itself. After the revival of Acts 2 Peter still had to be confronted in areas of his bigotry (Galatians 2). If some time has elapsed since you have last felt convicted of your own unworthiness compared to Christ, perhaps you should evaluate your walk. Rule of thumb: The closer you are following Jesus, the less pride you will have about your own righteousness. Martin Luther put it this way in his First of 95 Theses: *Repentance is the whole life of the Christian.*

### *Step 3, Heart for the Lost:*

Peter loved Jesus so much he did violence, cutting off the ear of the slave to the high priest. Again, he was convicted. In our time it is tempting to desire violence against the enemies of Christians, to support with weapons the Christian ethnic groups and factions currently persecuted in the Middle East. It is human to feel indignation at the injustice and to want to strike back. Perhaps like James and John we want God to send fire and brimstone from heaven on our enemies in the region.

Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, and to forgive the one who wrongs us 70 times 7 times. When he was on the cross he never summoned fire or brimstone or the twelve legions of angels. Instead he prayed, “Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do.”

As we walk with Christ and learn we will begin to see our enemies and all the lost in our world as those loved by Jesus Christ. We will learn from His Spirit that these are people for whom Christ died, who do not know what they are doing. This urgent desire to save people from ruin and God’s wrath on sin, comes from Jesus Christ. Our desire moves us beyond the sin of violence and into the joyful expectation that followed his resurrection and his promise of the Holy Spirit.

### *Step 4, Praying in Joyful Expectation:*

In Acts 1, the disciples had been purged of their expectations that the Kingdom of Heaven would come among them by violence. Instead they understood that their mission was to bring the gospel of faith in God through Jesus Christ to all the nations of the world, including the worst of the worst. They looked forward to that, and having been commanded to wait for the anointing power of God, they devoted themselves to praying for that promise to be fulfilled. We cannot come to Step Four by skipping over steps 1-2 and 3.

*Step 5, Tongues of Fire:*



The Holy Spirit came from heaven and empowered the disciples to share the gospel in their generation in the languages of their hearers. The language of worship which calls the sinner to repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord is the language of the seeker, for this is the language where God can meet them. If we do not care to learn the languages that reach the heart of our generation, it is because we do not yet have hearts for the lost.

As a church we have plenty of steps 1-2. Where we need a steep growth in faith is step 3, hearts for the lost. We need to learn to forgive as God has forgiven us. We need to learn to see the lost as God sees them. Then we will *want* the Spirit to anoint us in revival for the power of the gospel. Until then, it is only a pious wish.

### **Updates on our Last Newsletter**

#### *1. Anniversary Committee*

The committee for planning our 125<sup>th</sup> year of celebrations at Elgin Covenant is up and running, with a number of task forces in place to begin planning our publications, events and speakers. A fund has been opened by the Council to begin receiving donations. If you would like to make a designated gift, make the check to Evangelical Covenant Church of Elgin and mark in the memo: Anniversary Fund.

#### *2. Parking Lot Thank You*

Thank you so much to our rotation of parking lot volunteers who got things in shape when school started in August: Craig Johnson, Don Lottes, Jerre Schultz, and Les Thomas helped the pastors by distributing parking application forms to students, answering questions, and guiding them and their parents in our lot's direction of traffic flow.

#### *3. Men's Ministry*

Thirteen men came to the first session of Men's Life on September 6. An offer has been made by one of our participants to cook breakfast. Our next meeting is scheduled for October 4 at 7:30. Men, this is an "open circle." Invite your friends.

*"We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God..."* Colossians 1:9b-10.

As part of our church's Men's Ministry we are seeking to start a fellowship and Bible study group for men. This is what we believe the Lord would have each of us do in keeping Colossians 1:10. We are confident that God's blessings will be seen in and through such a group of men meeting to seek Him and his glory. Won't you join with us?

### **October Meetings**

Thursday 2, Dorcas, 1 PM, CPA  
Sunday 5, Cathy Campobello preaching  
Early October, Pastoral Relations, TBA  
Tuesday 7, Flannel Shirt Men, Big Skillet  
Tuesday 14, Women Ministries, 6 PM eat  
Friday 17, Wayside Banquet  
Sunday 19, Congregational Meeting  
Monday 20, Council

**Keep up to date at [elgincovenantchurch.org](http://elgincovenantchurch.org).**