



## GREETINGS FROM THE GROVE

FEBRUARY 2020

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN FEBRUARY?

The Youth are looking at Winter Jam as their February event. Winter Jam is an all Christian music concert featuring a host of popular artists. It will be at the Greensboro Coliseum on Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> and the concert begins at 6.



Tickets are first come first serve and only available day of, so we really need to know how many Grovers are interested in going to the concert. If you are, please contact Ashby Gentry, Chrystal Payne, or Steve Coleman.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### **Annual Meeting of the ECC Southeast Conference**

Every year I do my best to go to our conference's annual meeting. Like the greater Evangelical Covenant Church our conference is governed by the churches that make it up. We have an executive board that makes fiscal decisions and advises on rules and regulations and they present all business to the member churches for decision through voting at the annual meeting. It is a bigger version of our Church Council and Quarterly Conference at Kallam Grove. The annual meeting also provides a place for the ministerium to credential new pastors and encourage one another.

For many years now it has been difficult for any of you to attend with me because the meetings have been so far away – Florida, Georgia, and last year in Alabama. But this year things are different; the meeting is to be held at Trinity Evangelical Covenant in Greensboro on March 19-21!

This gives you an incredible opportunity to get an idea of what is happening in our denomination in our part of the country. Like most denominations, we are in a time of great instability right now and it is good to know what is happening in the covenant. Specifically in this conference we are in a time of new birth and regeneration. We have a new superintendent – Dr. Catherine Guilliard – who is trying hard (and doing a great job in my opinion) to reorganize and reconnect our conference.

I know there have been frustrations in the past, but a new day has already dawned in the southeast conference. This is an incredible opportunity for you to learn about it first hand. We have three available seats for voting representatives. If you would be interested please contact Megan or anyone on the nominating committee.



## HEALING

When one part of our body gets hurt, the whole body suffers. A bumped head, a broken leg, a burned hand all affect the larger whole. Healing takes time and can leave the greater body in one of two conditions. 1) it can leave the body broken and twisted – a pale reflection of what it used to be. 2) if one undergoes the proper physical therapy it can actually leave the body stronger and more purposeful than before.

Our church is now a broken body. It isn't broken because of internal strife, but because of trauma that our members have experienced. Last year was a year of sickness and death. It was hard for the people who were sick and hard for those who were giving care. We had families leave the church. This year is already proving to be very difficult for some of our members for totally different reasons. While most all

of this has to do with our lives outside of church, it all comes into our life together at church. The brokenness we are experiencing at Kallam Grove is very real and very legitimate.

As a church we have two choices. We can avoid treatment and refuse deal with our brokenness or we can meet it head on and apply ourselves to recovery. In the short term it is easier and more comfortable to avoid the issues, but in the end it only makes the problem worse. How well does it ever work out to ignore a cavity, for example? The best long-term way to deal with it is to acknowledge what we are experiencing and begin to seek recovery.

Anyone who has had to do physical therapy after an injury or after surgery knows how unpleasant it begins. But anyone who has applied themselves to it also knows the freedom that comes when strength has been regained and confidence and the joy of life and movement return. I can't tell you how many people I've heard say, "I'm stronger now than I was before I got hurt – I wish I'd done therapy sooner!"

At the beginning of last year I sensed it was a time of needed rest. I said all this publicly. We were tired and needed time off at church. This year I sense we are deeply in need of healing. We have lost all focus and energy at church because we have been broken. Healing begins with naming. Sometimes things in our personal lives hurt too bad to talk about. Shame, distrust, and fear are incredibly powerful feelings. They do protect us from further pain, but if we are not careful they can also isolate us from one another and hinder the work of grief and healing. What feels good t first can stunt growth for us in our personal lives and in the life of our church in the long term.

I want to offer you all an invitation for this year. We are in desperate need of direction and energy at church. I think we are in danger of just laying down and dying. Anyone who has had to truly grieve knows this feeling – some times you want the struggle to be over. In order to get through it we need to begin talking together. We need to find healing for the hurt and confusion that has overtaken us this past year. And then we need to look for the new day. The end of brokenness is not predetermined – the patient has a choice. I want to begin this year by talking about everything that has happened to us and then deciding what we want to do about it. Kallam Grove is a good church (and believe me I have had plenty of experiences with churches, I am qualified to make this judgement), let's not let go of it. We can never forget that the god of the Bible is the creator. "I am making all things new!" These are some of the last words of Jesus in the book of Revelation. Resurrection is built into our god's plan for his people. Jesus said a seed cannot grow until it dies in the ground. We are close to being in the ground after the past 14 months, but this is precisely the place that new growth begins. Let's be concerned but not discouraged and, in faith, see what Jesus can do with us.

## **MIDWINTER UPDATE**

Most all of you know that I went to Midwinter Meeting the last week in January 2020. Each year the Evangelical Covenant Church has two national meetings. Each summer the ECC collects its ministerium and delegates from as many churches as want to send them to vote on ECC rules and policies. The ministerium is the name of the group of ECC pastors to which all ECC pastors are accountable. The ministerium is the group that gives credentials, ordains, and disciplines pastors. In addition to ECC business, ministers who have walked through the process of ordination are ordained and commissioned at these summer meetings. The annual summer meeting is the national church's business meeting.

The second meeting is Midwinter. Unlike the summer meeting, Midwinter is only for the ministerium. It is a time of continuing education, with classes and seminars. In order for me, and every other ECC ordained pastor, to keep my credentials (which allow me to do things like legally marry people) it is required that I do yearly continuing education. Midwinter is also gathered worship. Each morning and night of the meeting there is preaching and music. Finally, and most of all, it is a time to be with other pastors. Sometimes that means encouraging one another through difficulty, sometimes it means rejoicing

together in times of celebration. It is always a call back to determination to serve God wherever He has called us.

This year was no different – We met in Chicago, which is the home of our denomination. There was preaching and singing. There were plenty of classes. But most importantly there were my sisters and brothers in ministry; we are in a hard place at Kallam Grove. But we are not alone. Many of my colleagues from around the country are in similar positions. The church as a whole is dying in the US. But thanks be to God that there are many, many sisters and brothers that are faithfully serving and hoping just as we are. Kallam Grove, please know in whatever you are dealing with that you are not alone. You have faithful sisters and brothers all over the country. Let us resolve ourselves to work all the harder knowing that we are not alone!

## **I HEAR YOU**

I thank all of you who have participated in the surveys I've passed out on Sunday mornings throughout January. It has been encouraging and exciting to read through all of your responses. I am keeping the Spiritual Formation suggestions for myself. I will be passing the Mission suggestions on to the Missions Board. The Fellowship suggestions I will be sharing with anyone who will listen to see if we can't get some events on the books.

One reason I have been encouraged by your responses is that in many cases we are already doing what you have requested. For example, it was suggested we do a fundraiser to support more groups like Rockingham Council of Bible Education. A good suggestion, but we already did it! Our Mission Board's donations were not widely published last year, but they were many: we made more than \$6,000 of donations to at least twelve local organizations including RCBE.

Another reason it is encouraging is that there seems to be a good deal of consensus on some areas. There was lots of interest expressed in a Women's Ministry. Of course we will not be able to follow through on every single suggestion, but when one thing comes up over and over again we can 1) be confident that there is a widespread desire and 2) be sure to focus our energies on meeting it. I am not a woman and I am not exactly sure what y'all's vision is for the group (e.g. a fellowship group, a study group, a service group) but I want to find out more so I can help in whatever way possible to get a women's ministry begun here at Kallam Grove. I will be seeking more feedback on this area in the very ear future.

Again, over the last year we've lost a lot of focus and energy here. It is understandable given the things many of us experienced in our personal lives. I am excited though to see what new things are born out of our struggles. We have a chance to restart from a close to blank slate; let's make the most of it!