

PARTNERS WITH THE PRESIDENT
SELF-CARE IN CRISIS
WITH JIMMY AND SUZI KALLAM



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Self-Care in a Crisis

Partners with the President with Jimmy and Suzi Kallam

Kevin Kompelien (/blog/authors/kevin-kompelien) | April 23, 2020



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Every month, EFCA President Kevin Kompelien highlights stories, vision and leadership from around the EFCA in his monthly e-newsletter, "*Partners with the President*" (<http://efca.org/partners-president>). This month, Kevin met (virtually) with Jimmy and Suzi Kallam, co-founders of *Tandem Spirituality* (<https://www.tandemspirituality.com/>), to discuss how leaders can practice self-care amid COVID-19.

It's been more than a month since Becky and I have "sheltered in place" in our home in California, and my response has been two-fold.

As our world fights an invisible virus, I find myself fighting my own internal battles.

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First, like all of you, I'm concerned for those I love—for my wife, my mother-in-law who's living with us, my four kids and their spouses, and my seven grandkids. I'm concerned for the EFCA staff at the national office, our pastors and our missionaries around the globe. With each new day, I find myself worried for different family members, friends and colleagues.

In my role as EFCA president and as a leader in our movement, however, things go a level deeper. Beyond that concern for the people I love, I've come face-to-face with the fact that I'm dealing with something over which I have very limited, if any, control. And, for me in particular, that's not easy. As our world fights an invisible virus, I find myself fighting my own internal battles.

Now, for the pastors, leaders and those dealing with additional responsibility during COVID-19—whether it's ministry, parenting, school or all of the above—I know we're in this together. We're tired. Not only are we living in a time of physical, mental, emotional and financial uncertainty, but I know many of you feel you're near the end of your rope.

In talking with pastors recently, I've heard everything from "This is getting long," and, "How long is this going to go?" to "How do I really shepherd people when I can't be with them?" This unique time, on top of questions and concerns about loved ones and friends, has brought up new questions like: *How can we conduct funerals amid "shelter in place"? How can we be there for people in the hospital when we're not allowed to visit?*

Earlier this month, I joined a video call with two EFCA pastors, Manuel Abarca Sáez (a church planter with **Encuentro** (<https://encuentrosa.org/>) in San Antonio) and Jeff Foote (senior pastor at **Grace Church** (<https://www.gracelongmont.org/>) in Longmont, Colorado), about how they're addressing and responding to these questions and unique circumstances as well as how prayer is impacting their congregations. You can watch our conversation in the **video below** (<https://vimeo.com/409912812/8edccf3058>).

08:13 |



As many of us, like Manuel and Jeff, deal with extra burdens and anxieties in the wake of COVID-19—trying to make life and ministry “work” in these unprecedented circumstances—an issue that rises to the surface of importance is self-care. In other words, with everything else that’s demanding my attention, how can I continue to stay healthy?

If we’re not taking care of ourselves, we won’t be able to effectively shepherd our congregations.

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In my own life and pastoral ministry, when I think about the particularly uncertain seasons, two things come to mind that have helped me take care of myself: self-leadership and community.

Self-leadership

Many of you, especially pastors and ministry staff, have had your foot on the gas pedal 24/7 for the past month. Between financial stresses, relationship pressures, preparing Easter services and parenting kids who are at home all day, this time has been characterized by not only uncertainty, but also exhaustion. Some of you need to make some hard decisions to put boundaries around your time. You can't do everything. You need to sleep and rest and recover. As much as you've given, you need time and space to be filled, which is something I'm working on myself during these days.

Look at the example of Jesus in Mark 1:

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:32)

In the middle of His ministry—healing, preaching, exorcising demons, constantly giving—what does Jesus do? He goes off by Himself to a quiet place, and He rests in the presence of His Father. He returns to the One who gives life. And while the disciples are worried about where Jesus is and managing others' expectations of Jesus, Jesus returns to them with a new agenda from the Father:

“Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’” (Mark 1:38)

Amid the busyness of ministry, Jesus sought the Father. And He returned not only with His soul refreshed, but also with a God-given plan.

Community

What we do comes out of who we are. If we want to invest in the lives of others, we must first invest in our own lives. If we're not taking care of ourselves, we won't be able to effectively shepherd our congregations. This becomes even more important as we navigate life during this crisis.

Dear friends of mine, Jimmy and Suzi Kallam, recently started a ministry called **Tandem Spirituality** (<https://www.tandemspirituality.com/>), which is all about this topic of investing in and strengthening leaders. Jimmy and Suzi served an EFCA church in Charlotte (now **New City Church** (<https://newcity.us/>)) for more than 40 years, and they both have an incredible passion for building up leaders. In light of that, I called Jimmy and Suzi to talk through what leaders are dealing with and ask them the question, "How can we practice self-care in this time of uncertainty?"

In this conversation, which **you can watch below** (<https://vimeo.com/410702482/9e1cad4d2a>), Suzi and Jimmy provide some incredible insight and application for how pastors and leaders can practice self-care during this unique time. I encourage you to listen to our full conversation and share it with your colleagues and congregations.

In a time of “quarantine” and “shelter in place,” there’s a temptation to give into isolation. Although we can’t meet together physically, we need to fight this temptation. No one is an island. We all need people around us—to talk with us, to pray with us, to understand what we’re going through.

In the wake of COVID-19, our eyes are on the Lord.

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For those of you who live alone, that may mean more phone or video calls. For those who live with spouses or families, that means actually *being* with the people around you. And you might say, “Wait a minute, I’m with my spouse and my kids all the time.” But there’s a difference between being with people and *being* with people. You can be physically “with” someone without being open and engaging them.

Yes, we need to quarantine, but that doesn’t mean complete social isolation. Reach out to the people around you. Engage with them. Cultivate friendships. We can’t do this alone. We’re better together.

As we all manage life and ministry during this crisis, let’s take heart in the word of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles:

“For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chronicles 20:12)

In the wake of COVID-19, our eyes are on the Lord. We may be at the end of our rope, with nothing left to give, but we can turn to Jesus. He is all we need. Even today, He provides hope in times of uncertainty, and despite our circumstances, He is the One who “will meet all [our] needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”

How has God has been at work in and through your community amid COVID-19? We want to hear your stories of creativity, outreach, encouragement and God's faithfulness during this time of uncertainty. Let us know how your community has continued to connect. You

can share your stories, blogs, social media posts, photos and/or videos with us on our website ([//www.efca.org/submit-covid-19-ministry-story](http://www.efca.org/submit-covid-19-ministry-story)).

This content and video conversation appeared in the April 2020 edition of Partners with the President. To receive future updates, you can subscribe [here](http://efca.org/partners-president) (<http://efca.org/partners-president>).



Kevin Kompelien (</blog/authors/kevin-kompelien>)

President, EFCA

Kevin Kompelien is president of the Evangelical Free Church of America, serving in this role since June 2015. He previously served more than 20 years as a local pastor in the EFCA and then nine years as international leader of the **Africa division** ([//www.efca.org/ministries/where-we-serve/africa](http://www.efca.org/ministries/where-we-serve/africa)) with **EFCA ReachGlobal** ([//www.efca.org/ministries/reachglobal](http://www.efca.org/ministries/reachglobal)). He and his wife, Becky, are members of **Hillside EFC** (<http://hillside-efc.com/>) in San Jose, California.

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