

**Church Health Community**

**Global Ministries Community**

**Kingdom Extension Community**

**Ministerial Development Community**

**Missional Alignment Community**

# COMMUNITIES

## COMMUNITIES

### CHURCH HEALTH

Greetings in the precious name of Jesus! The Church Health Community (CHC) is alive and well, focusing on our mission “to raise up healthy churches proclaiming Christ to a hurting world.” The following are CHC members: Gary Kuehner, Ralph Owens, Jim Price, Ken Ogden, Wayne Houck, Gordy Lewis, Mike Sigman, Steve Holubec, and Scott Carr. The CHC met twice since the 2016 National Conference.

The CHC offers help to EC churches/pastors in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, refocus, revitalization, and church health assessment. The following five resources/helps are provided free of charge to EC churches:

- **EVANGELISM** (A Story Worth Telling: How God Uses Your Story to Tell his Story). This training event, focusing on the importance of your story (how you came to know Jesus and how he has impacted your life), equips people to share their faith in a natural, non-threatening way.
- **DISCIPLESHIP** (4TD – Four Tier Discipleship). This template, based on Christ’s teaching contexts, encourages people to engage in four tiers or levels of discipleship: the crowd (congregational), the twelve (small groups), the inner circle (triads/quads), and the beloved disciple (one-on-one).
- **REFOCUS** (How to Be a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century). This training event, based on Acts 2:42-47, is designed to help people focus/refocus on the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-39) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20).
- **REVITALIZATION** (Turnaround Church Affinity Group). This group is for pastors who want to see their churches revitalized. Group members read “Leading Turnaround Churches” by Gene Wood and discuss how assigned reading material relates to their life and ministry. Frequency of meetings is determined by the group.
- **CHURCH HEALTH ASSESSMENT** (Natural Church Development). Natural Church Development (NCD) is a process that measures eight quality characteristics that are essential to local church health: empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate spirituality, effective structures, inspiring worship services, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. The NCD survey is used to measure each quality characteristic. Follow up coaching with a credentialed NCD coach is provided to assist in analyzing survey results.

If your local church is interested in any of the above mentioned resources/helps, please contact Gary Kuehner, Church Health Associate, for more information.

At present, six of our CHC members are certified NCD coaches: Gary Kuehner, Gordy Lewis, Ralph Owens, Scott Carr, Jim Price, and Ken Ogden. Six of our local churches have engaged in the NCD process since the 2016 National Conference.

The CHC continues to work with the Christian Education Committee/Youth Network Leadership Team (led by Steve Holubec) and the EC Men’s Ministry (led by Wayne Houck). A FAT (Friday After Thanksgiving) Lock-In for youth took place at Ozzy’s in Leesport, PA November 25-26, 2016. Over 200 were in attendance. An EC Men’s Ministry gathering took place at Twin Pines April 21-22, 2017.

Future Plans: The CHC plans to have a link on the EEC website in the near future. This should be up and running by the time of the 2017 National Conference. Also, the CHC plans to develop an assessment tool and a team of coaches for church revitalization.

***Dr. Gary Kuehner***

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## GLOBAL MINISTRIES

### FACILITATING MISSION WORKERS

With the addition of Beth Grimm, the retirement of John & Carolyn Miller and the transition of Jim Ehrman from our credentialed roster of missionaries, we currently have 24 active missionary units (couples or singles) serving in eight (8) different countries working in partnership with 14 different agencies with two candidates developing support partners and pursuing commissioning. Even though our missionaries are “out of sight and out of mind” for many attending our churches, we are mindful and thankful for the contributions these men and women give daily to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!

### EMPOWERING INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES

#### Japan:

The Good News of Jesus Christ is shared, received, planted, nurtured, understood and applied in the context of community. The EC Church of Japan understands this and has been creatively creating opportunities where Japanese men, women, boys and girls can encounter Jesus within community. Our two youngest congregations, Fuchinobe Community Church and Grace Garden Church are using English classes, cell groups, international gatherings, organizational seminars, child care and family festivals to introduce people to Jesus and his Good News. Since our last report, there have been at least three individuals who have been baptized as a public declaration of their faith in Jesus Christ and their commitment to follow him.

The GMC is thankful that we can continue to financially support these two young works at their current level for the next two years. We are intentionally facilitating relationships between our Japan Conference and local congregations here in the USA such as Grace Community of Willow Street and Community Evangelical in Sinking Spring, PA. These two congregations are committed not only to supporting the work financially but they also maintain regular contact with our Japanese pastors and visit the work in Japan on a regular basis.

God is moving in Japan! The Japan Congress on Evangelism was held in September 2016 with about 2000 people attending, including our EC pastors. Yoriyoshi shares that even though the Franklin Graham Festival in Tokyo has ended, local churches continue to work together for the evangelism of children and youth. On November 3, 2016 they hosted a Children & Youth Festival at an amusement park in Tokyo with more than 2,000 children, youth and parents attending.

#### India:

*“Many of those attending learned for the first time the necessity of the five “solos”: Scripture alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Jesus Christ alone and for the glory of God alone. Their eyes were opened to the essentials of the Evangelical doctrine. Most of them received new insights, new visions and a new understanding of the missionary life and were encouraged to accomplish the Lord’s purpose for their lives.”* This is how General Director Kaitinkap Vaiphei described the most recent ECCI Missionary Training held December 15-18, 2016 in Arunachal Pradesh, North East India. The GMC partners with the EC Church of India to offer regional training opportunities like these for their missionaries and pastors. This particular training event had 37 participants and was offered in the Assamese, Hindi, Nepali and English languages. Along with plenary sessions, the workshop topics included:

- A Missionary In The Field
- The Life & Commitment Of A Missionary
- Conflict Management
- Personal Evangelism
- Missional Church
- Foundations Of Evangelical Doctrines

Along with these regional training venues, the GMC also helps the EC Church of India support their Evangelical College of Theology which trains men and women for pastoral and mission ministry. Recently they held a one day Youth Music Festival with choirs and groups from several local congregations attending. Rev. Lalrosiem Songate has completed his doctoral studies at Concordia

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Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was officially installed as the principal of Evangelical College of Theology in North East India on April 3, 2017. Once again, by partnering with local EC congregations here in the USA, we were also able to secure the funding of a lap top computer and projector for a missionary in the remote area of Assam to show the Jesus Film and other media during VBS and community programs.

## **Nepal:**

The country of Nepal continues on the front line of the struggle between the light of the Gospel and the darkness of disbelief. The persecution has seemed to settle down somewhat in the last few months but it can always flare up again. We praise God for what great things He is doing through our brothers and sisters in Nepal. It has been a busy quarter which included a VBS program of 4 local churches reaching 75 children with 10 professions of faith! ECCN also continues to train the leadership of this young conference. Their most recent Leadership Seminar included Old & New Testament survey courses, classes on local church administration and workshops on performing child dedications, funerals and Holy Communion.

The October Youth Conference attracted over 200 youth, many of whom responded to the challenge of reading the Bible 30 minutes each day and a commitment not to marry outside of the Christian Faith. There is a growing problem with Christians marrying Hindus. Two new congregations have been established and in 2016 ECCN recorded 189 new converts and 194 baptisms! The major construction work on the Mercy Home/ECCN Office building is completed. They recently painted the exterior and will continue to finish the interior as funding becomes available. The GMC will host an international delegation to Nepal's Annual Conference November 8-12, 2017 where we will dedicate this new building to God's service.

## **Mexico:**

As I have been reporting for the last year, the EC Church of Mexico is on mission to become a National Conference. Becoming a National Conference (being self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating) is not an end in itself, it is actually a beginning - a commencement if you will. Now that the local congregations have organized, strategized and identified their unique role in the global Church of Jesus Christ, they can begin to reach their communities, cities, states, country and world together! In their application/documentation submitted to the GMC for National Conference status, they list their primary purpose as fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ both inside and outside of their beloved country of Mexico. In my last report I noted the various ways they are reaching into their communities with the Good News of Jesus including youth camps, marriage ministries, men and women's ministries, small groups and of course the IGLEKids program that was the recipient of our GMC VBS project offering in 2016.

Along with these local programs, the EC Church of Mexico once again sent a mission team to Veracruz in southern Mexico to minister to the marginal indigenous population there. Taking food, clothing and shoe boxes full of items for the children, they have open doors to share the gospel in both word and deed to many forgotten people.

Our plan is to have a delegation from the EC Church of Mexico at our 2017 National Conference sessions to officially grant them National Conference status and then the GMC will host a small delegation to Mexico July 27-31, 2017 to celebrate this achievement with them at a gathering of their conference members.

## **El Retiro Children's Home:**

We continue to help El Retiro Children's Home transition as our official partnership with them will come to an end in January 2018. The children utilizing ERJ have been relocated to other service providers. We have encouraged directors Carlos & Martha to take a short sabbatical following the relocation of the children while the Board of Directors of ERJ continues working on future ministry options for the facility.

## **Liberia:**

Since his election and installation, Rev. Abraham Powell, the newly elected Bishop of the EC Church of Liberia (ECCOL) continues to connect and interact with the four districts comprising the

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ECCOL to prioritize their extensive needs. In the mean time, local and district wide ministry continues. Their annual Youth Camp in August was attended by 114 youth from three of the four districts. The Gospel is being shared in word and also in various other hands-on ways. If you are a Facebook friend of Abraham, you have seen the photos of him taking food and clothing to needy villages in the name of Jesus. Below is an excerpt from his post edited by me.

*Liberia is getting more challenging economically then ever before. You will not believe that children in the rural and semi urban areas don't even have clothes to wear. Their parents will struggle and purchase one suit for them and that will be kept for only occasion like church service or visit of an important guest to the town. We traveled to Gbii District, Nimba County which is approximately 200 miles away from Monrovia. There are over 300 children here in Tiah Town with no opportunity to go to school, no clothes to wear and no access to any sort of health care. The EC Church of Liberia has 8 local churches in this district alone. We cannot preach the Gospel of Jesus without addressing some of these needs.*

The GMC is committed to helping ECCOL share the Good News of Jesus Christ in both word and deed. We continue to discuss ways to help ECCOL meet needs and develop ministries that can be as sustainable, successful and as self-sufficient as possible. Last July we found out that Henry Dennis, one of the ECCOL leaders was in the U.S. on a short visit and we were able to quickly secure donations of laptops, a projector and a few other items to send back with him for ECCOL. Thank you EC Church for your rapid response and generosity! We praise God that we were able to send funds in 2016 that enabled them to purchase motorcycles for the more remote district pastors who are often forced to walk many hours in order to minister to their congregations. We have also selected the Biblical literacy program as the VBS project for 2017 with a goal of raising \$10,000 to help Liberians learn to read their Basa translation Bibles. Pastor Rick Sergi, chair of the GMC Liberia Committee is helping me recruit some other people to join us on the committee to help steward the work in Liberia.

## **ENGAGING THE CHURCH IN THE GREAT COMMISSION**

The GMC invites the EC Church to be actively engaged in the global aspects of the Great Commission. We continue to educate and communicate the world of EC missions to our members through publications like the monthly *Global Prayer Guide* and the semi-annual *Window On The World* magazine. In October we hosted a Pastors' lunch and Mission brunches in Pennsylvania and Ohio and one in Illinois in November. Through these venues we were able to connect with almost 100 people representing 30 churches. Carla Sizemore continues to facilitate the Missionary Prayer Partner program for our local churches and Kathy Friedlund oversees the Mission Minded Kids program. Tim King is available to help churches with short-term mission trips and of course Pat Strain and I are always available to assist local churches and mission committees in any way we can. We are doing our best to give local congregations multiple opportunities to be involved in the great things God is doing in the global EC Church.

The Chaplaincy Committee, under the leadership of Rev. Robert Brown is now a part of the Global Ministries Community. Below is their report.

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE**

Robert Brown, E.C. Chaplain Endorser, Chairman

### **Full-time Chaplains:**

**Army MAJ Josh Metz** is finishing a year of advanced schooling in ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC. In September of this year Josh, Andrea and daughters Katelynn and Adara will be assigned to the Aviation Center of Excellence at Ft. Rucker, AL.

**Air Force MAJ Karl Noel Blancaflor** has finished his tour of duty at Barksdale Air Force Base in LA, and has completed Air Command and Staff College by distance learning, and is being assigned to the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language School in Monterey, CA with Julie and children Kate, Megan and DJ.

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**Juliana Leshner** continues to serve as Chief of Chaplain Services at South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio, TX. She has been very busy serving the greater VA community along with her duties in San Antonio. She was a presenter for a convocation for all VA Chiefs of Chaplains and received a national award from the Under Secretary of Health for Excellence in Chaplain Leadership and Management.

**Joel Copeland** completes five (5) years of service as Chief of Chaplain Service at the Lebanon VA Health Center this month to retire after a total of 20 years as a chaplain with the Veterans Administration, having previously served at Coatesville, PA VA Center. Joel and his wife Brenda will continue to reside in Myerstown.

**Dana Logan** is the chaplain at StoneRidge Retirement Center in Myerstown where he has served for 17 years. He also provides leadership to two part-time chaplains at StoneRidge Town Centre and one full-time chaplain at the Church of God Home in Carlisle. He and his wife Maureen live in Myerstown.

**The Mission Statement of the Chaplaincy Committee of the E.C. Church** was revised February 7, 2017 by action of the Chaplaincy Committee to broaden the purview of the Committee to include part-time chaplains as well as full-time chaplains in ministry. Our desire is to have annual reports from all E.C. Chaplains. It is the desire of the Committee to include some part-time chaplains on the Chaplaincy Committee this coming year.

## **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE OF THE EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (Revised February 7, 2017)**

*Chaplains are called by Christ to extend the ministry of the church to persons in institutional and specialized settings such as the military, Veterans Administration, prisons, health care, police and fire departments. The Chaplaincy Committee coordinates that ministry for the Evangelical Congregational Church. The mission of the Evangelical Congregational Chaplaincy Committee includes the following:*

- *promote and develop chaplaincy ministry in our churches*
- *help individuals assess their potential for chaplaincy*
- *endorse chaplains for ministry*
- *provide professional support and development*
- *provide pastoral support and supervision*
- *represent the denomination on professional chaplaincy boards and organizations*

*Chaplains don't build or plant churches, but they make Christ's presence real in the lives of people in institutions. Our denomination is blessed to have chaplains in leadership positions in institutions and professional chaplain organizations.*

**The Chaplaincy Manual of the E.C. Church** is completed thanks to our Endorser and the Chaplaincy Committee and various military recruiters and veteran chaplains who contributed to the handbook. It is a comprehensive manual addressing the various types of chaplaincy, full and part-time, the requirements for those forms of chaplaincy, training that is available and the duties that are expected for each. This manual will serve the Chaplaincy Committee and the Endorser, denominational leaders, and those interested in becoming chaplains.

## **THE GMC GOING FORWARD**

The GMC is using 2016-2017 to evaluate the changes in our structure that will be needed to allow us to best serve the National Conference of the EC Church, now and for the next decade or so. A task force, chaired by Rev. Ted Rathman, is studying the future role, responsibilities and staffing of the Global Ministries Community. Areas the task force was asked to study and bring recommendations on at the March 2017 meeting include:

1. The role of the GMC in missionary recruitment, credentialing and missionary care,
2. The role of the GMC in administrating and empowering international conferences,
3. The role of the GMC in engaging the local church in the Great Commission.

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We count it a privilege to serve the global EC Church and covet your prayers as we seek God's continued direction for this new chapter in the life of the EC Church and the GMC. I want to make sure to express my appreciation to my wife Carla, Dixon Bethel EC Church, Deputy Director Pat Strain and the staff at Church Center for their ongoing support and encouragement.

**Rev. Randy Sizemore**

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## KINGDOM EXTENSION

"I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Philippians 3:13 – 14 NLT).

**Kingdom Extension Community Members: Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate & Chair; Bishop Bruce Hill; Rev. Ron Anderson; Mr. Andrew Brubaker; Rev. David Dick; Rev. Al Giles; Rev. Matt Hill; Rev. Carlos Kelly; Mrs. Lynda Miller; Rev. Adam Roberts; Mrs. Michelle Roberts; Rev. Tim Seiger; Rev. Mike Snedeker; Rev. BJ Whitaker; Rev. Todd Wolfe.**

Paul invites us to live forward, leaning into the life God makes possible. This life is here and now, and then and there. This life is what we have known, what we are currently experiencing, and more than we might imagine. That the life of the Church, and of our churches, should be wrapped up in such a package defines what we are about – God – his presence, his will, and his Kingdom. We are to be about becoming all Jesus died and rose to make possible.

God's mission "to create a people to enjoy and be enjoyed by" is the mission for which the Church and our churches exist. We are on mission, fulfilling Christ's high calling upon our lives, when we "go and make disciples." And we are most effective when we serve as Jesus' hands and feet and voice to/for/with our neighbors.

The Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) has been launched to serve these life-defining ideals by resourcing the pastors, leaders and churches of the Evangelical Congregational Church. We exist to point forward (reminders of the task), walk beside (as fellow travelers), celebrate (telling our stories), and provide resources (assist your serve).

The KEC has been and continues to serve the greater EC community by fulfilling five identified purpose statements . . .

1. To communicate and encourage a Kingdom mindset and strategy for extending the kingdom.
2. To assess local church potential for extending the Kingdom within their contexts.
3. To deliver up-to-date resources and workshops that will provide creative solutions for extending the Kingdom.
4. To assist local churches in adopting concepts that will ultimately extend the Kingdom within their contexts.
5. To facilitate discussions among pastors and church leaders in district cohorts about Kingdom extension within our cultural settings.

## CHARTING THE COURSE

Tasked to identify and communicate a way of life that serves the Kingdom of God and initiate conversations that might shift an entire denomination's thinking and doing is daunting, if not downright intimidating. Gathering a team of practitioners to lead these conversations was the first step and has

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produced a team of men and women who represent the EC Church. As we approach our first anniversary together, we have progress to report . . .

- Recognizing a bit of communication confusion, we began to develop a brief glossary of terms (e.g. Church/church, Kingdom, discipleship, missional, etc.) necessary for clearer communication. The first draft of this glossary has been passed along to the Bishop for further development.
- Identifying a need to celebrate our successes, we shifted the focus of the Partners Newsletter to reporting our ministry stories. The natural response to these stories is celebration: “Look at what God has done among us!”
- Observing a tendency among our churches to do what we have always done with the same results (while wanting other results), we have begun to identify ministry resources and inviting conversation around new ministry ideas and models.
- Recognizing the need for exposure to new ideas, we have identified and begun to promote various learning experiences designed to help pastors, church leaders and congregations engage in conversations about Kingdom thinking and ministries. A few of these include . . .
  - Fresh Expressions Vision Days (local gatherings to discuss new models for doing church and for church planting)
  - NAVS Community & Discipleship Trainings (one of many Navigator trainings designed to retool the local church for more effective discipleship)
  - Exponential 2017 and Regional Gatherings (church planting, though any pastor would benefit from this kind of event)
  - Missio Alliance National Gathering (conversations focused on Kingdom and missional ministries)

## NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES

Seeking to encourage a lifestyle that goes against certain human habits, as well as against certain traditional church behaviors, quickly exposes one to the challenge of the task. Early research and conversations revealed truths (obstacles) that would need to be navigated.

- We recognized in our conversations with pastors, church leaders and others that the task of shifting thinking from “my/our church” to “His Kingdom” is no simple task. There will be no silver bullet.
- We identified the need for a significant shift in church education from “learning about God” to “creating disciples” as we anticipate more effective Kingdom ministry. Learning about God is content focused; discipleship is life-change focused.
- We observed natural barriers that keep people, even pastors, from attending “good for you” conversations and training events. More of each and at various times and locations will need to be provided to include more of our EC family in the ongoing conversation.
- We acknowledge that our community overlaps the other EC communities, as well as many resource agencies outside our faith family. We must become masters of referring pastors, church leadership teams and churches when appropriate.

## IMAGINING SO MUCH MORE

KINGDOM is bigger than Church and much, much bigger than my church. For some of us, we cannot imagine that big. That is why we need to come together! At least once-in-a-while. When we're together – to learn, to serve, to worship – we immediately see bigger. Seeing bigger helps us to imagine even bigger. And we need to imagine bigger to venture beyond what we know, what we recognize as safe. Kingdom ministry is not always safe, but it is always exactly where God is already at work.

- God is at work in our neighbors lives. We just need to get close enough to see what he's doing. This begins when we say, “hello,” and continues as we deepen relationships.
- God is at work where we work, study or play. We just need to slow down enough to engage those around us in new ways.
- God is at work everywhere we might go. We just need to learn to “see people” as God sees people. Not projects, but people just like you and me.

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When we begin to add these behaviors to our daily lives, suddenly we become aware of how big God's influence is, as well as recognize the length and width and height of the KINGDOM and its influence on our world. The KEC is eager to walk with you as you imagine more. We are equipped to help you discover your ministry context.

## DOING NEW THINGS

The Kingdom Extension Community is not just about conversation and new ways of thinking. We are also all about doing new things, launching new ministries. Conversations lead to thinking. Thinking leads to imagining. Imagining leads to planning and doing. We are prepared to walk beside you through each of these phases of Kingdom engagement.

- We will listen. And ask questions. Everyone, even a church leadership team, needs someone to listen and ask good questions.
- We will help you process ministry models (there are many), identify opportunities and obstacles, and develop your first step or next steps.
- We will walk with you as you identify potential partners for the journey. Some ministry opportunities are best attempted with others. Learning and serving cohorts might travel together toward new ministry opportunities.
- We will help you assess and plan for financial needs for new missional ministries. New ministries cost more than a paycheck. Sometimes, a paycheck is the last expense added.

## CHURCH PLANTING INITIATIVES

While our youngest church planting initiatives are nearly two years old (Christ House, Lancaster – Tim King; Next Step, York – Tim King & Carlos Kelly; LAUNCH, Sinking Spring – Matt Hill), we continue to monitor the health of all our planters, their families and ongoing ministries. Longevity in ministry is more likely with good pastoral care, which is being provided by our KEA and District Field Directors.

Tentative conversations have begun between the KEA and several pastors and/or leadership teams regarding potential new works – outreaches, possible plants and mergers. Please pray with us as we consider new works, entertain potential partnerships, and think through alternate ministry models. Pray with us as we encourage pastors and churches to rethink the discipleship process for their congregations as they seek to establish community connections, missional engagement and new ministries.

For the privilege and opportunity to serve our Lord, our churches, and our planters, we thank you. May you experience the power of His presence in your daily life.

*Rev. Les Cool*

## CURRENT KINGDOM PROJECTS

(CAPS SIGNIFY SOME FORM OF CURRENT BUDGET/FINANCIAL SUPPORT)

- **5 Planters and 6 Plants**
  - Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abe Montanez)
  - LANCASTER, PA . . . CHRIST HOUSE CHURCH (TIM KING)
  - Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Bud Daneker)
  - Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Rick Christman)
  - York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)
  - YORK PA . . . THE NEXT STEP (CARLOS KELLY & TIM KING)
- **2 Restarts / Revitalizations**
  - Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
  - TALLMADGE, OH . . . NEW DIRECTION (TIM REAM)
- **2 Informal Partnerships\* / 5 Missional Works / 0 Potential Adoptions**
  - Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
  - Millersville, PA . . . The Gathering (Juan Carlos Morales)

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- Palmerton, PA . . . Gaming Grotto (Chris Bronico)
- Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeff Byerly)
- Sinking Spring & Mohn's Hill, PA . . . Two Lifetree Cafés (Jerry Artz, Mohn's Hill & Mike Snedeker, Sinking Spring)
  - "Red Plate" and "Canal Street"
- SINKING SPRING, PA . . . FRESH EXPRESSION LAUNCHES (MATT HILL – PASTOR OF MISSIONAL MINISTRIES)

\*An "informal partnership" is a loosely defined relationship between an "established church" and another "church or church plant or church planter" that is transitional or less precise than an adoption, plant or "out of that church" ministry. Some informal partnerships are based on the ministry of one of our men, the use of building space, or overlapping ministry events or conversations regarding future partnerships. These partnerships may become more formal or will dissolve when appropriate.

## PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

The KEC continues to embrace the following three biblically-based principles adapted by the CPC as helpful guidelines for launching ministries designed to obey the Great Commission.

- **The Church is the people called by God to his mission.** As the church we are a people redeemed through Jesus Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit to live in community as witness to God's love and intention for humanity and the whole created order. The church's work is accomplished as we receive God's blessing and bless the world around us in the name of Jesus and in the power of his Holy Spirit. (from "The Church" adopted by the 2014 National Conference)
- **Church planting is the intentional, relational and redemptive work** of the people of the church in identified communities or to identified people groups to the end that a new church (gathering of God's people for church related ministries) is the fruit. (CPC working definition for church planting)
- **A Fresh Expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church.**
  - Fresh expressions are missional (serving those not currently served by any church); incarnational (listening to people and entering their culture); discipling (helping people enter more fully into the life of Christ); and ecclesial (forming church). Fresh Expressions work towards establishing a new community or congregation especially for those who have never been involved in church (un-churched) or people who once were part of a church, but left for whatever reason (de-churched). While a fresh expression of church might look different from the structure of a more established church, they are best conceived and orchestrated in partnership with established churches. (from the Fresh Expressions website)

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## MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the Bishop, the National Ministry Team, and National Conference for their confidence in appointing me to the position of Ministerial Development Associate. I have enjoyed working this past year with Les Cool, Kevin Henry, Gary Kuehner, Randy Sizemore, and the District Field Directors. I have also enjoyed the challenge of designing, implementing, and integrating the various segments within the Ministerial Development Community (MDC). This new structure is designed to help carry applicants along the process from beginning to end and into healthy, lifelong ministry. As a result, I have met some enthusiastic emerging leaders during this process. I have

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been inspired by their humble, passionate, and thoughtful response to God’s calling. These are truly exciting times for the Evangelical Congregational Church.

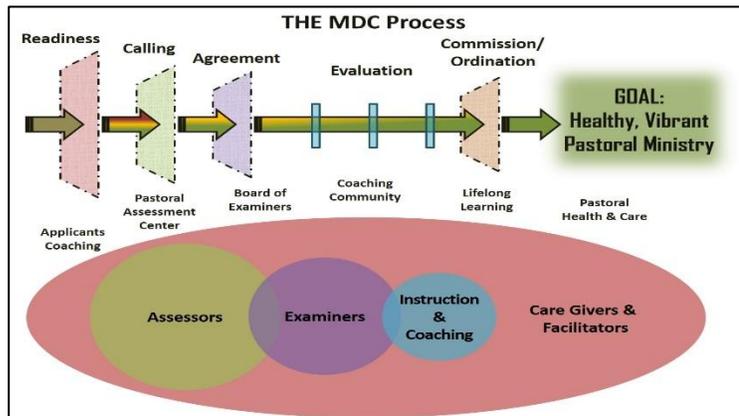
As we consider the main tasks of the MDC, our chief aim is to foster vibrant, healthy pastoral ministry. As Ephesians 4:11-16 highlights, the leadership roles for the church are vital in helping the body be more and more like Christ and to be fit together perfectly in him. The MDC has been creating an integrated process that brings together pastoral readiness and calling, theological agreement, and spiritual formation to produce commissioned and ordained ministry in the EC Church.

In order to accomplish these tasks, we have considered more seriously how to engage this process as a community. As I have personally considered this newly defined role, I see the value in empowering several subgroups of leaders, who can help men and women fulfill their ministry callings – this is not a solo act. As I have enlisted people for the MDC Executive Team, I have considered those who were already qualified and experienced in the various areas critical to the community, and who were able to populate the many subgroups of the MDC – please refer to the diagram here.

The goal is to involve large numbers of pastors and leaders as assessors, examiners, instructors, coaches, and facilitators. In so doing, applicants for ministry are guided toward the completion of their credentials in a way that helps to embed a disciple-making DNA into each candidate’s approach to ministry.

When pastors, deacons, deaconesses, and preachers are commissioned or ordained, our hope is that they will be able to stand before the members of the National Conference and state: “I am a contributor to God’s mission through the Evangelical Congregational Church, because I have felt the loving, supportive, accountable touch throughout the MDC process – shaping me into one prepared to minister with my EC brothers and sisters for God’s kingdom in our generation and the ones to follow.” It is a “community thing” with a disciple-making approach!

Please let me further describe this approach and the individuals involved.



## Objective

As simple as it may sound, the MDC has been tasked with the development of ministerial personnel in order for them to effectively lead our churches to fulfill God’s mission within their local contexts. Ultimately, we must answer an important question: What kind of pastors do we wish to develop? In his book, *Resident Aliens*, Stanley Hauerwas answers this question with a broader challenge: “The greatest challenge facing the church in any age is the creation of a living, breathing, witnessing colony of truth, and because of this, we must have pastors and leaders with training and gifts to help form a community.” This is primarily the very thing that we as a denomination have been working to resolve among ourselves.

Over the past few decades, we have been emphasizing mission and disciple-making. But most times we speak about these things without any clear-cut models that help us understand these terms any better. So why not begin with a process focused on these critical elements regarding our future? Below is a simple explanation that defines the process toward healthy, vibrant pastoral ministry.

## Orientation to the Process

Over my many years in ministry, I have had the privilege to meet many young men and women seeking credentials in the EC Church. Because this path toward completion of one’s credential has been evolving, we must do a better job of clarifying those next steps for our applicants. One of my primary roles is to meet with individuals before they begin the process, so that I can explain the most appropriate course of study and training to assist them in accomplishing their particular callings.

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When a person senses a ministry calling, it is critical that the lead pastor contacts me to assist in helping his disciple to become a candidate for ministry. It is at this juncture (before Bible school or seminary) that a lead pastor should invite me to meet with the applicant. At this point, I will be able to guide him or her toward the various options for ministry, the approved educational paths, and some clearly defined next steps toward credentials.

Pastors, please do not leave these decisions to your ministry candidate to discern for themselves. We can help them in the process – and the earlier the better. For example, I am finding candidates for ministry enrolling in seminaries that are not approved by the EC Church. These unadvised decisions by the candidates make their paths more difficult and costly for them to correct. The bottom line is that I can assist them much better in the earliest stages of their calling before lots of time, energy, and money are invested in a less-than-acceptable approach.

## **Applicants' Coaching**

Once a candidate commits to an approach, they enter preparation for the assessment process. Al Giles has developed a simple disciple-making process that will help each applicant for ministry be better prepared for their Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC) experience. Al helped to coach nine men to enter PAC this past January. He also worked with their lead pastors to help them understand the expectations being communicated to their applicants, and to extend these concepts for disciple-making into every part of their churches.

As a result of this disciple-making experience, the applicants reported a supportive connection with the others entering PAC with them, and that the guidance that Al offered was extremely helpful. We are hoping to repeat this process again for the 2018 PAC with a similar number of individuals already seeking credentials. We will also be providing opportunities to better help the spouses to connect prior to the PAC.

## **Pastoral Assessment Center**

Kirk Marks has effectively guided the PAC process for over a decade now. He does a fabulous job of not only directing the process for the applicants through PAC, but also in building an effective team of assessors by outlining their expectations and goals. This year Kirk expanded his list of assessors – composed of pastors and pastors' wives. Each year, Kirk gathers feedback to continue shaping the assessment process.

After numerous years of doing PAC, we are still learning new lessons. Kirk Marks points to three objectives that the PAC process fulfills: 1) Evaluation, which assesses the applicants' calling, gifts, graces, and alignment with the EC Church, 2) inculcation, which plants within the applicants an understanding of our approaches, attitudes, and resources for effective ministry, and 3) enculturation, which provides applicants the opportunity to experience the culture of the EC Church, and how her leaders live out the wonderful blessings of community within the body life of the denomination.

## **Board of Examiners**

Pat Teaford has served on the Susquehanna and National Conference Relations Committees for several years. Therefore, he was a great prospect to lead the new Board of Examiners, which continues the work of interviewing applicants for ministry. As we discussed the benefits of having one combined Board of Examiners, we realized the difficult load this would cause for just one group to undertake. Therefore, we established two levels of examiners – one focused on ordained pastoral ministry and itinerancy, and the other for local and specialized ministry. We are excited to announce the following members for the Itinerancy Board of Examiners – Kirby Keller, Kirk Marks, Bob Mavis, Ken Miller, and Tim Seiger, and the following members for the Local & Specialized Board of Examiners – Dan Blank, Margie Miller, Dick Reigle, Adam Roberts, and Mike Sigman.

The Board of Examiners have also put together a document that helps to define our expected outcomes for EC pastoral ministry – please refer to the Pastoral Profile document following this report. Likewise, this group is beginning to create internal working documents to better define what educational “equivalency” means, and to clarify the way forward for many candidates and pastors previously caught without clear and direct guidance over the years. This group has improved the organization and layout of the applications used in our interviewing processes. The Board of Examiner teams were scheduled to conduct 15 interviews this spring.

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## **Coaching Community**

Charles Walker serves as the chairman for our part of the community that oversees the long-term coaching process for all our candidates and pastors. After forming a list of possible coaches, Charles contacted them, and currently, we have about 25 coaches enlisted for coach training, of which about 15 were trained on September 15 by Tim Roehl. Our hope is to provide a coach for every new applicant to ministry starting with those completing PAC with green or yellow lights, and for everyone entering Evangelical Seminary. As I write this report, Charles and I will be helping this last piece of the MDC airplane to lift from the ground and take flight before National Conference.

## **Lifelong Learning**

With the appointment of Jim Ehrman as the interim Academic Dean of Evangelical Seminary, I realized he was the natural fit for helping the MDC to foster better learning opportunities. Some initial discussions have led to the formation of a Center for EC Studies under the Pense Center at the seminary. This development will be critical for helping the Board of Examiners to advance, teach, and recommend courses for applicants and transfers for ministry. These same offerings can be used for lifelong education opportunities that are relevant and less expensive for our current pastors as well.

Due to the promotion of the Center, we were able to rejuvenate the Institute for Church Leadership program at Evangelical with two new courses: 1) *The History of Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, which has replaced *EC Polity & History*, and 2) *Spiritual Disciplines*, which has replaced the course on *Prayer*. As we provide this new venue for EC-specific education, we relocated the course for *EC Polity & History* under the Center. Additionally, we are looking to provide new offerings, such as *Exegesis, Worldview, Mission, Christian Posture, Cultural Studies, The Gospel, Arminian Theology, Evangelicalism, Ecclesiology, Covenant Theology, and Eschatology* that are taught from an EC perspective.

## **Pastoral Care, Health, and Restoration Team**

Gary Brown is currently building a team of compassionate individuals who are focused on the importance of pastoral care, health, and restoration. Once this team is formed, they will communicate opportunities for pastors and their families – related to health, retreats, respite care, counseling, congregational relations, restoration, and other topics.

The members of this team are busy clarifying the definitions and objectives for preventative and crisis care in order to promote resiliency in pastoral ministry. The team is also looking at ways to “provide space” to allow pastors to become lifelong learners and strengthen healthy collegial relationships. Ultimately, we are learning that there is a tricky balance between organizational and organic care.

Additionally, due to some needs in crisis care, the Bishop and I have realized the value of the Committee of Concern from the former regional Conference Relations Committee. Within our newly formed structure, we had not fully or properly considered the strategy for how to provide restoration to pastors under accountability, discipline, or suspension. As we thought through this process more clearly, we are recommending the specific ministry of restoration be added to the MDC under Pastoral Care, Health (and now) Restoration – please refer to the recommended changes to the rules. With the addition of restoration to this section of the MDC, we feel that this team is best equipped to provide direction to the important ministry of healing and restoration of pastors and their families.

That completes my initial tour of the MDC. All in all, over 50 people are involved in some capacity of ministry within the MDC. It's definitely a community thing! Now allow me to describe some things to keep watch for in the coming year.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We are looking to broaden our communication and your ability to learn about answers to commonly asked questions by expanding the MDC section of the website. We hope to provide answers that pertain to pursuing a pastoral calling, understanding our credentialing system, PAC enrollment, coaching and learning community opportunities, and pastoral care and health resources. Our goal is that each team above will provide answers and resources on their own individual pages.

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## **ALIGNMENT**

We have a small number of pastors who have become stuck in our pipeline. Perhaps they have gotten in over their heads in the educational process, with financial debt, or some other matter. This coming year, I will be connecting with these individuals to better understand their situations and develop a renewed timeframe, develop a proactive plan to move past their obstacles, or perhaps take another available route with acceptable goals. Likewise, I will be communicating the expectations and outcomes more clearly for pastoral ministry in the EC Church.

## **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Our theological framework is mining new depths that are surrounded by some resurging biblical concepts – discipleship, missionality, gospel, kingdom, ecclesiology, etc. These terms carry definitions that are helpful to providing ministry in our present circumstances, and they are not going away. Our whole system from denominational leadership to pastor to congregation is working through a significant learning curve. Some might be inclined to tune out the dissonance caused by the arrival of these terms and their developing understandings. Some have wondered what is so significant about these concepts. Others may have wondered if there will ever be a place to explore these and move in the same direction that the EC Church is going. As the MDC works with Evangelical Seminary to create a Center for EC Studies, we will be providing offerings to help anyone seeking to understand, catch up, or refine his or her understandings about our EC culture and language.

## **FINANICAL RELIEF**

One of the greatest challenges for our candidates and pastors involved in theological studies is to support their families, while managing large levels of debt. None of us wants to see the challenge of money become an obstacle for these students. However, the cost of education has swamped many of our students into an endless bog of financial debt. Recently, one EC Church has stepped forward to commit a sizable contribution to help with this issue. With this seed funding, we will be seeking to redesign the student aid approach to education and working to provide financial assistance from some additional streams. In addition, I will be challenging your churches, districts, business leaders, and yourselves to consider your commitment to invest in the future ministry of EC leadership.

This has been a challenging and exciting time for me as I have worked with the Bishop and those above to develop a very meaningful disciple-making track for our applicants to ministry. Pray for me as I juggle these community responsibilities with my local church ministry. Pray for our continued progress and ongoing solutions.

Lastly, I wish to thank Bethesda Church for being a “healing community” and making this transition very easy. Bethesda has great leadership and support staff. When I announced this opportunity for appointment, the leadership embraced it and considered me as their missionary sent to cultivate pastoral and local leadership in the EC Church. Pastors Mark Brooks and Stewart MacDonald have excelled during our transition, and continue to provide ministry that surpasses my expectations. It is their passion, skill, and investment that has helped the Bethesda congregation to experience a seamless transition.

As I continue to say, “It’s a community thing!”

*Rev. Jeffrey Byerly*

## **PROFILE OF AN EC PASTOR**

Pastors in the EC Church must understand their own identity in Christ, as well as their calling and gifts in relation to the body of believers so that the church is engaged for the work of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. **They must know** how to interpret their cultural setting and properly communicate kingdom values and instructions from God’s Word in order to form and lead a healthy community of believers.

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They must **be** shaped by a character that reflects God's love in their lives through authenticity, patience, compassion, integrity, and spiritual fervor. They must participate in a disciplined lifelong pursuit that reveals teachability, hospitality, forgiveness, and most of all how to disciple others into these same Christ-like character traits.

They must be able to effectively communicate the faith—what it looks like and how it works—within and beyond their community of believers, while also recognizing and discerning false claims to the Gospel. They must demonstrate a disciple's life through their own ways of living the faith—serving, directing, giving, listening, and laughing with others in order to cultivate and empower flourishing among the community of believers and make an impact on the greater community.

They must see God at work around them, enabling others to grasp hold of God's intentional love for them, and each person's own individual potential for ministry. They must not neglect the opportunities and threats in their midst, but rather reveal how God's kingdom intersects with the life of the church and their surrounding community.

## CREDENTIALING REPORT

### Open Session

1. The following individuals will answer the Questions for Applicants: **Gary Bosler, Andrew Brubaker, Robert Dunbar, Stewart MacDonald, Robert Santucci, Paul VanOsten, and William White.**

### Executive Session

2. We recommend that **Andrew Carr** be ordained as an Itinerant Elder.
3. We recommend that **Wayne Houck** be ordained as an Itinerant Elder.
4. We recommend that **Jeffrey Stansbury** be ordained as an Itinerant Elder.
5. We recommend that **Gene Stevenson** be ordained as an itinerant Elder.
6. We recommend the transfer of **Robert Santucci** from the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware to be received as an Ordained Elder.
7. We recommend that **Gary Bosler** be received as a Licensed Candidate.
8. We recommend that **Stewart MacDonald** be received as a Licensed Candidate.
9. We recommend that **Cameron Smith** be received as a Licensed Pastor.

### Open Session

10. We recommend that **David Julian** be ordained as a Deacon.
11. We recommend that **L. Donald Knier** be transferred to a Local Elder.
12. We recommend that **Andrew Brubaker** be received as a Local Candidate.
13. We recommend that **Robert Dunbar** be received as a Local Pastor.
14. We recommend that **Todd Wolfe** be transferred from a Licensed Pastor to a Local Pastor at his request.
15. We recommend that **Paul VanOsten** be received as a Certified Lay Preacher.
16. We recommend that **Joel Copeland** and **Layman Kennedy** be transferred to the Superannuated classification.
17. We recommend that **John Tornfelt** be classified as Retired – Not in the Itinerancy.
18. We recommend that **Jeffrey Martin** and **Gregory Stefan** be transferred to the Supernumerary classification at each of their requests.
19. We inform the conference that **William White** was granted Approved Pastor status.
20. We have granted annual renewals for the following credentialed individuals:
  - a. Deacon/Deaconess – **Ronald Bachman, John Baker, Lisa Custer, John Haub, Marisel Miseses, Timothy Reigle, and Leroy Walbert**

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- b. Licensed Candidate – **Philip Bartelt, Michael Coulson, James Danielson, and Joshua Nemeth**
  - c. Local Candidate – None
  - d. Approved Candidate – None
  - e. Lay Preacher Certification – **Robert Fritz, Jeffrey Miller, Donald Romberger, Andrew Sekellick, Kerry Watson, Ronald West.**
21. **Rolando Diaz, Richard Graham, Mark Meister, and Joshua Reinders** have been removed from our ministerial rolls at each of their requests.
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## MISSIONAL ALIGNMENT

The Missional Alignment Community is to:

1. Discuss the latest missional alignment concepts—stirring the team’s thinking through reading books and exploring web-related resources together.
2. Discuss opportunities and solutions for missional alignment in our cultural setting.
3. Discuss issues derived from district cohorts concerning missional alignment.
4. Explore together missional alignment for congregations in our cultural setting.
5. Focus a segment of the National Conference gathering to missional alignment—providing a district or national level speaker as requested.

The Community is to be made up of six (6) committees:

- **Amendments**

The committee receives and prepares amendment proposals which will be presented to the National Ministry Team for consideration according to the amendment process set forth in the *Discipline*. The bulk of its *Discipline* work was completed with the final adoption of the Amendments to the *Discipline* during the 2016 National Conference. The new 2016 edition of the *Discipline* has now been published and is available for purchase. The revised *Discipline* is also posted on the EC Center website.

- **Faith & Doctrine Committee**

The committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Ken Miller, is to provide clear, concise and contemporary doctrinal statements that accurately reflect the Articles of Faith. It is also available to review, restate, and through recommendation to the National Conference (NC), expand the spiritual, moral and social standards. The committee shall be vigilant and develop for recommendation to the NC position papers that respond to pressing contemporary moral and social concerns.

The committee continues to study a number of items as they relate to our orthodox faith but does not have any action items or position papers to present or submit to the National Conference at the present time. Of course the committee is available to respond to expressed needs from the members of Conference.

- **Heritage Committee**

The purpose of the committee is to gather, preserve and organize historical data, records, books, literature, artifacts and other property related to the origin and development of the Evangelical Congregational Church and to stimulate and encourage historical research and appreciation.

The committee, which has its roots in the Historical Society, has undergone a significant change under the leadership of its new chairman, Rev. Jonathan Brown. In addition to a large turnover in members, Mrs. Julie Miller has resigned her role as archivist due to increased work schedule at Evangelical Seminary. Therefore the Committee is currently in the process of identifying candidates for this volunteer position. The EC Archives themselves are undergoing change as they were relocated

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from Evangelical Seminary to the third floor of the Church Center building. A permanent home is now being designed for the archives in the lower level of the building. The design will make the archives easier to access while providing more space for research.

The committee is also working on a script for a new denominational video which can be used in conjunction with or in place of the “Streams of Influence” video.

- **Nexus**

This committee serves to help us all live out the fifth core value of the E.C. Church: “United in the Body of Christ as demonstrated by the networking of churches and the Evangelical Congregational Church and the larger Kingdom of God.” Gene Stevenson is the chairman of this committee.

They continue to look for opportunities to promote the visible unity of the Body of Christ at both the local and denominational levels. Once again this year they hosted their annual Clergy Fellowship Gathering in the Church Center conference room in October. This year the committee also sent out announcements encouraging our congregations to observe the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January.

In the coming year Nexus will be looking at what role it might play in fostering unity and understanding within our own ranks. This seems to be a necessary step to take if we are to be successful in extending fellowship to brothers and sisters in non-E.C. traditions.

- **Prayer Mobilization Team (PMT)**

The Prayer Mobilization Team develops the corporate prayer life of the Evangelical Congregational Church by: emphasizing worldwide, denominational and local church prayer movements, coordinating prayer initiatives and events, and providing prayer training and resources.

Rev. Mike Campbell is now serving as the chairman of the PMT. The PMT has developed a schedule of district meetings so the PMT members can spend time in prayer for the districts while they are meeting. In addition, they are investigating opportunities to provide resources and workshops on prayer for districts and individual congregations when practical. One of the more unique ministries they can supply in the PMT SWAT Team (Spiritual Warfare Advance Team). They are available to respond to prayer needs should such a need be expressed by any of our congregations. They have already shared this intercessory prayer ministry in a few local congregations to focus on specific congregation-wide prayer concerns. Please contact Mike Campbell or another member of the PMT.

During the coming year the PMT will be trying to identify how they can help mobilize pastors to a deeper prayer life. In addition, they hope to encourage lay delegates in prayer support for their pastor, perhaps through using a book like “Pastors at Greater Risk” by H.B. London.

- **Social Response and Action Committee**

This committee is to resource pastors and lay leaders to recognize and respond to “cultural crises” with Christ-like concern, grace, and action and will network our denomination with para-church ministries that are effectively responding to and addressing these cultural issues.

This year there will be a time of intentional emphasis in populating this committee so they can take an active role in developing resources for our pastors and congregations.

***Bishop Bruce D. Hill***