

Conference Network

Conference Support

TEAMS

TEAMS

CONFERENCE NETWORK

The purpose of the Conference Network Team is to provide counsel and encouragement to Evangelical Congregational leaders and to assure that our church's ministries are working together in unity to realize our denominational vision. It develops denominational initiatives, provides guidance in matters of accountability for EC credentialed personnel, and can make formal recommendations to denominational bodies. Its membership includes the Bishop (chair), NC Secretary, Associates (4), and District Field Directors (13). The Executive Director is an advisory member.

The Conference Network Team of the Evangelical Congregational Church met for its first official meeting on August 3, 2016. The two major items on the agenda were to hold a number of elections as specified in the Rules of Conference and to plan a schedule of meetings. The following individuals were elected to serve:

- Vice-Chairman of National Conference: Rev. Gary Brown
- Stationing Elders: Rev. Gary Kuehner (Delaware Region), Rev. Gary Brown (Great Lakes Region), Rev. Sterling Trimmer (Susquehanna Region)
- Advisory Members to the National Ministry Team: Rev. James Price (Delaware Region), Rev. Chuck Campbell (Great Lakes Region), Rev. Jeff Schell (Susquehanna Region).

We also agreed on a rather interesting four-level meeting schedule for various denominational leaders:

1. The Bishop and Executive Director will hold a **Daily Check-In**; a five minute "stand-up meeting" to share daily schedules, priorities, and activities.
2. All the members of the CNT will participate in a 45 minute **Bi-Weekly (Fortnight) Tactical** meeting. Through the use of an emailed "lightening round" agenda this conference call meeting, generally held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month to review daily activities, address immediate problems, update short-term projects, identify tactical obstacles and issues, and other issues that require immediate attention. Each Tactical meeting begins and ends in times of prayer for our pastors and churches.

Items discussed at Tactical meetings have included:

- Ideas for district pastors' gatherings
 - The Value of District-wide Events
 - Integrating and Assimilating New Pastors into the district and denomination
 - Providing feedback to our Associates as they prepare documents for use in their community ministries
 - Bi-vocational Pastors
 - Questions regarding educating pastors who want to know more about possibly opting out of the ECC health insurance.
 - The DFD's role in pastoral compensation and the local church chain of command.
3. A **Monthly BEDAS Group** meeting is held involving the Bishop, Executive Director, and Associates. The National Conference Secretary serves as an advisory member. This two-hour meeting is held on the third Monday of each month and focuses on critical concerns affecting fundamental issues and long-term ministry success.

This group is discussing things like:

- An effort by the Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) to have a glossary of terms to help clarify the kingdom discussion on a denominational level. They are also planning a Vision Day

TEAMS

- in January 2017 as well as a number of “round-table” events for training and encouragement in kingdom extension
- What the Natural Church Development (NCD) church health assessment can and cannot accomplish and what tools might be available for declining churches
 - How to identify and connect with gifted laypeople who could serve on denominational communities and committees as well as our need of professional service provider resources such as IT support, attorneys, graphic artists, etc.
 - Opportunities for the Bishop to connect and encourage DFDs
 - Consulting with the Bishop on the agenda for the upcoming National Conference, including planning the “Kingdom & Community Experience” for National Conference 2017.
4. Lastly, all CNT members will participate in a day-long **Strategic Meeting** three times a year for a review of strategy, direction, and team development, training, and resourcing. This meeting will be held in conjunction with other denominational meetings so that members can be physically present in the same location.

The agenda for the Quarterly Review meeting has included:

- Revisions to the District Handbook
- Clarifying the role of the DFD and developing a consensus of the DFD relationship to and involvement with both pastors and congregations under their care
 - As a connecting link for resources
 - The flow of information from churches to the DFD to denominational leaders and back again
 - Relationship with applicants / candidates for ministry
 - Relationship to the stationing process
 - DFD Responsibility to Retired Pastors and Other Credentialed People in Their District
 - DFD’s Role with Church Planters
- Preliminary ideas regarding the need for a denominational Master Calendar
- How to improve denominational publicity
- Opportunities for CNT members to receive life coaching.

As we look to the future work of the Conference Network we see a number of areas for further discussion including:

- Identifying and helping local churches who seem to be dealing with significant issues such as finances, effectiveness, community involvement, and sustainability
- What we measure as congregations and a denominations: how do we “change the scorecard” to better assess our ministry impact?
- The impact of renting church facilities to other churches / groups
- How the understanding of part-time and bi-vocational impacts congregations’ view of pastoral ministry.

Bishop Bruce D. Hill

TEAMS

CONFERENCE SUPPORT

At the time of the May 2017 National Conference we will be eleven months working in the new denominational structure that created the Conference Support Team (CST). This is the first National Conference report from the Executive Director who is the Chair of the CST. The CST is defined in Rule of Conference 504.1, “The Conference Support Team will support the mission and serve the church by supervising our operations – stewarding assets and providing the necessary services to accomplish the mission across the network”. Operating within the CST are five groups; Audit Committee, Church Center Operations Team, Conference Services Committee, Property Committee and Publishing Committee. Each of these groups has defined duties that are in section 504 of the Rules of Conference. I am very thankful for each of the National Conference staff members and volunteers on each of these committees and the work they accomplish.

The National Conference Finance Committee also has a large and a very important role in stewarding the assets of the National Conference. The Finance Committee is not a member of the CST and for accountability and oversight it should not be a member of the CST, as it is the Finance Committee that “looks over my shoulder” and holds me accountable on my financial duties. The finance committee is led by our Conference Treasurer Debra Patterson and I serve as an advisory member on the Finance Committee. With the new denominational structure the Pastoral Compensation Committee duties have been absorbed by the Finance Committee. The members of the Finance Committee are dutiful servants led by the unflappable Debra Patterson. Please thank them for their excellent service to the EC Church.

The second part of the charge to the CST is “providing the necessary services to accomplish the mission across the network”. This statement clearly defines a support role for the CST. Please be forthcoming for what services are needed to accomplish the mission of the local EC Church. We will not promise that the CST will be all things to all people. That is not practical or a wise use of resources. We will listen, evaluate the need and respond. The leadership of the CST is also willing to attend local church meetings or district meetings.

Having the CST in a supporting role does not inhibit enhancements of CST provided services. I foresee the CST making incremental changes or improvements to current denominational activities not a complete overhaul or redesign of an activity, unless required to satisfy a broader denominational objective. I admit that an incremental change to me may seem like a massive overhaul to others. I like change and I encourage the members of the National Conference to ask questions about the work of the CST and suggest areas of improvement.

REPORTS OF CST COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

Audit Committee:

The year-end financial statements of affiliated institutions are being collected and reviewed. The affiliate financial statements to be reviewed with fiscal year end dates:

National Conference	12/31/2016
EC Benefits Corporation	12/31/2015
Evangelical Theological Seminary	06/30/2016
New Dawn Christian Community Service	12/31/2016
Twin Pines Camp	12/31/2016
Camp ECCO	12/31/2016
Rock River Bible Camp	12/31/2016

Church Center Operations Team:

After forty-three (43) years of dedicated and humble service to the EC Church Brenda Long will be retiring from full-time employment on September 30, 2017. She will stay on in a part-time role after September 30. We cannot thank Brenda enough for all that she has done. Some of the workplace changes she experienced: typewriters to personal computers and multi-function photocopier, sending letters to sending faxes to sending emails to instant messaging, renovations at the EC Church Center, multiple

TEAMS

office moves, seven (7) Bishops, one (1) National Conference Chair, seven (7) GMC Directors, website development, Eastern and Western Conference merger and the implementation of Shelby Church Management Software. These were all monumental changes that she handled with style and grace. We pray a blessing on Brenda, Donald and their family. The staff at the Church Center will miss Brenda.

Plans are being developed on how to best complete the duties to be vacated by Brenda. No decisions have been made if a new hire is necessary or if the remaining staff can assume those duties.

Conference Services Committee

Thanks to Keith Miller, Brenda Long, Pat Wolfe, Jodi Earhart, Shirley Long, Abigail Bomgardner and the other members of the Red Shirt Team for all their hard work planning and assisting with National Conference 2017. Also thanks to the recording secretaries and tellers for their work keeping the business sessions orderly and productive. Praise the LORD for the praise team and pastors that are bookending the sessions of National Conference this year. It feels right to begin and end the day in worship.

Property Committee

The former Grace EC in Millersville, PA was transferred to Grace Community EC in Willow Street, PA during 2016. No new properties were added to the responsibilities of the Property Committee.

A small independent congregation began renting the former Grace EC in Muir, PA in the fall of 2016. This church is covering all of the costs of the building either through direct payment of utilities or rental income. Negotiations are ongoing with the congregation to purchase the building.

Properties Owned by the National Conference

EC Church Center, 100 W Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067
Community at New Direction, 226 Southeast Ave., Tallmadge, OH 44278
Community at New Direction Parsonage, 206 Southeast Ave., Tallmadge, OH 44278
Salem EC, 401 East Center St., Mahanoy City, PA 17948
Grace EC Church, 107 West Wiconisco St., Muir, PA 17957

Jonathan Brown, Heritage Committee Chair, and I are planning a move of the EC archives from the third floor of the Church Center to a space in the ground floor vacated by Religious and Theological Abstracts (RTA). RTA had rented this space until their move to Evangelical Seminary late 2016. The third floor location for the EC archives was temporary required by the creation of the David A Dorsey Museum of Biblical Archeology in the lower level of the Pense Learning Center. The vacated space will be renovated allowing the EC archives to be better organized, more accessible and have space available for research and growth.

Two major repairs are needed at the Church Center. The lower half of the parking lot is deteriorating significantly and quickly. Also the railing on the outside of the front stairs is causing the stair tread to crack and separate. The parking lot is scheduled to be fixed during 2017. The railing on the front stairs is currently securely fastened and its condition is being monitored. However, if the railing becomes a safety hazard a repair or replacement timetable will be accelerated.

Publishing Committee

The 2016 edition of the Discipline of the Evangelical Congregational Church is available for purchase. Contact Pat Wolfe at the EC Church Center to order a hard copy. The Discipline is available in three formats; red hard cover ring binder (7x9) - \$23.00, loose pages or inserts only to fit the 7x9 ring binder - \$13.00, 8 1/2x11 red spiral binder notebook - \$10.00 and 4x7 abridged version - \$3.25 ea. Disciplines may be picked up at the EC Church Center or mailed for an additional shipping charge. Copies will be available to purchase at the May 2017 National Conference or pre-order and pick up at National Conference. The Discipline is also available to download from <http://www.eccenter.com/Left/Resources/Publications/2016-Discipline.aspx>

The work of the CST relies heavily on volunteers, lay and pastor. There remain multiple lay volunteer positions available on the Finance Committee, Loan & Investment Committee, EC Benefits

TEAMS

Corporation and Property Committee. Members from a variety of occupations, educational levels, ages, genders and churches form a better balanced committee. Please search your local congregations for possible members. Some key traits that every volunteer should have is a willingness to work, a team player, teachability, the capacity to listen and the right temperament. A strong plea is being made toward the Great Lakes Region churches to participate in finding volunteers. Committee members may attend meetings electronically (telephone or web) and committees are flexible with evening or weekend meeting dates. If you know of individuals that might volunteer please inquire of their willingness and forward to me their contact information at khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171. I will follow up with a short interview/discussion before inviting them to join a committee.

Thank-you for allowing me to serve the EC Church as the Executive Director and Chair of the Conference Support Team and please contact me with any questions, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171.

Kevin Henry