

[Episcopal Address](#)
[National Conference Secretary](#)
[National Conference Treasurer](#)
[Memorial Secretary](#)
Statistician

OFFICERS

EPISCOPAL ADDRESS

I greet you today in the wonderful name of Jesus. I'm sure you have other places you could be and other things you could be doing during these three days at the end of May. I, on the other hand, didn't really have anything else to do so here I am. You're here, I'm here, but the most important person required is our God's Holy Spirit. I am thankful to know that many of you have joined with me over the past month to ask God's Spirit to show up in a special way during these days of National Conference. As you have heard me say in the pre-conference meetings, we have a lot to accomplish during our time for denominational business. But did you realize that we only spend about 6 ½ hours in business and approximately 7 hours in worship? Is doing business necessary? Yes. Is it important? (We better not put that question to a vote.) Worship, on the other hand, is both necessary and important. We must worship the One who created us, who redeemed us, saved us from the power of sin and death, who sustains and guides us. Worshipers, is WHO WE ARE. Praise God for the presence of his Holy Spirit with us throughout this time of National Conference because if he wouldn't be here, there would be no need for us to be here either. But he is here and for that I am deeply grateful. I pray that as we begin this afternoon and every moment of this National Conference and as long as the Lord gives us breath, we will rejoice in the presence of his Holy Spirit.

You've probably heard me say it before: it doesn't take much time reading or watching the news to see that our world is a mess. We've all heard that we are living in a post-modern, post-Christian, post-Christendom world. We live in a culture that sees Christianity as, at best, irrelevant, and at worst dangerous. Some have speculated that Christians today have much in common with the Hebrew people of the Old Testament or the church seen in the book of Acts; we are people living in exile, disbursed to live in a foreign land. There is validity in those expressions of our current experience. But one thing we cannot do is forget WHO WE ARE; and that's the theme of this year's National Conference.

There is no room in following Jesus for "identity amnesia." Daniel was carried off to a foreign land, but he clearly knew who he was and more importantly who he served. So Daniel lived out that relationship as one of God's chosen people even when threatened by the authorities. The early church was scattered across the Roman Empire and beyond, yet they did not retreat from who they were or what they believed. They lived out their vital and intimate relationship with Jesus in every situation. The apostle Peter experienced misunderstanding and persecution first hand. The disciple who once denied Jesus was reinstated and would never turn back or lose confidence in his Savior and Lord. Peter reminds us, as we live out our faith, of WHO WE ARE – *"...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light"* [1 Peter 2:9]. We are a people with a purpose; called out of this culture to serve the King of kings so that we "can show others the goodness of God." We need to reclaim what it means to be bound with Jesus – he is our identity. We need to live out the "goodness of God" in real and practical terms. A member of a local E.C. congregation said to me that we seem to have become a culture that is addicted to anger. Find a topic, inside the church or outside the church and it won't take long to find someone who's angry about it. We are not defined by what we're angry about. We are not defined by our economic status. We are not defined by our political affiliation. If our culture doesn't see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in us, if they don't see "the goodness of God" and instead, see a political party or a "cause," we have missed the point of the Kingdom.

We must understand WHO WE ARE not because of who we are, but because of whose we are. Paul was making a specific point about individual sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6; but there is also wider application when he says, *"You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price."*

OFFICERS

We have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We are his. Our speakers during National Conference will help us to understand both WHO WE ARE and whose we are. In order to grasp a clear understanding of our identity in Christ we must also know what we believe. I get concerned that we can become overwhelmed by our post-modern, post-Christian, culture to the point that we can lose track of orthodox faith and theology. We have National Conference Rules, and yes, we take some time to work on them during one of our business sessions. We have a Discipline, and we'll take time to talk about beginning the process of amending the Discipline. But understand this statement from the Evangelical Congregational Church Discipline, found in the questions asked in the Reception of Members: *"The Bible itself, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit, is our standard of Christian life and practice."* Theology, good theology, biblical theology is vital in knowing WHO WE ARE in a world that has lost its way and yet tries to squeeze us into its likeness. Biblical theology is vital, but it is also lived out in relationship. That too is WHO WE ARE. The statement in the Reception of Members is followed by *"Are you willing to seek to live by the teachings of the Bible as the Spirit guides you, and will you seek to contribute to the harmony of the local church by following the rules of the Discipline?"* There clearly is a relational aspect to WHO WE ARE. The second chapter of Acts describes the church as community. Every aspect of our theme verse of 1 Peter 2:9 is a community statement: "people," "priests," "nation," "possession." Salvation is found in personal faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Every individual must make that personal decision. We pray for it, preach for it, and witness to that reality. But after that "Jesus and me" moment comes a lifetime of "Jesus and we;" a life of discipleship, of wholehearted devotion to obeying our Lord's will and way. That is WHO WE ARE.

In our effort to provide practical resources to you as our congregational leaders, tomorrow afternoon we'll participate in another style of Educational Experience. When you registered, you had the opportunity to choose three different workshops out of a list of thirteen. The Evangelical Congregational Church consists of many congregations and ministries and each one has unique concerns and needs. I believe many of these workshops can be helpful to your ministry setting. We have gathered a number of presenters from across the denomination, and a few from outside the EC Church, who will be facilitating interesting conversation and sharing information that should be of help to you. It is our hope you will be encouraged and your imagination stirred as we discover ways to raise up healthy churches proclaiming Christ to a hurting world.

WHO WE ARE does not change: we are the body of Christ; that is clearly stated in the Bible. But how we are organized is pretty much left to us. Karl Vaters in a blog post wrote, *"There are only two forms of the church that ultimately matter. The universal church and the local church. Everything else is an add-on, including buildings, furniture, styles of music, types of preaching, curriculum, and denominations. Denominations that support and enhance the biblical mission of the local church will thrive. Those that don't will continue to decline."* In 2015 the members of National Conference overwhelmingly voted to make a change in how the Evangelical Congregational Church "does denomination." Five years ago I wrote *"We're 'Congregational,' because that's where the action is."* We intentionally empower congregations to use their unique gifts and graces in their local setting to reach their communities with the Gospel. We are on the right track, but we need to keep moving. When we made the structural adjustments to fulfill the commitments we made in our denominational Covenant, in keeping with our church *Discipline*, we gave ourselves permission to set aside the structural elements described in the *Discipline* in order to move from a more traditional, hierarchical structure to a much flatter structure. That change officially went into effect on July 1, 2016. Our National Ministry Team began a process of evaluation during its October 2018 meeting. Since then, many individuals and groups have shared their opinions and observation of our current operational structure. A separate Strategic Evaluation Report was provided in your report packet and will be considered later today. I am pleased to tell you now that the vast majority of responses have been positive. The plan is not perfect, I didn't expect it would be; but we are on the right track and we are making progress. The National Ministry Team unanimously adopted a motion to recommend to the National Conference that we instruct the Amendments Committee to prepare amendments to the EC *Discipline* such that the *Discipline* can be amended to formalize and approve this structure that is currently in place. The NMT further recommends that these amendments be presented to National Conference at its 2020 session for first reading so that

OFFICERS

they can be considered for final approval and *Discipline* change at the 2021 session of the National Conference.

We all understand that change is the one constant in our lives. We experienced the first “wave” of baby-boomer retirements in 2016 when the National Conference granted Superannuated status to ten pastors. This year’s wave is not quite as large; we have seven requests for Superannuation and one for Supernumerary status. These changes will bring significant change to the Allegheny District. That district, made up of eight churches, will see three of their pastors retire from active pastoral ministry. One of those pastors, Gary Brown will end his ministry as a full-time pastor, as well as his service as the Allegheny District Field Director and Stationing Elder. Obviously, this has made the work of the Stationing Committee even more challenging this year.

I’ve written before about the challenges to stationing. I’ll try not to take too much time recounting those issues now; it has not gotten easier. The change we are experiencing is that stationing is becoming more and more of a year-round effort. While our historical experience of pastors and churches changing on one day, July 1, continues to be the majority; more and more stationing is being done throughout the year. Some of this is the result of the amount of time stationing can take as the right pastor/church assignment is identified. We’re also seeing a trend in churches and pastors seeking to make changes away from our traditional July 1 starting date. We need to be aware of a few concerns that come with these changes. We are experiencing a growing trend in gaps in pastoral service in a congregation. We do not always have a replacement pastor standing in line when a congregation or pastor feels it’s time for different pastoral leadership. I am thankful to report to you that when these situations have occurred, retired pastors living in the area have often stepped up to help fill pulpits. In addition, pastors in the district have volunteered to provide pastoral care coverage as needed. I appreciate the willingness of the members of the body to step in and help where they can. While extremely helpful in providing care to the congregation, the work of stationing is the responsibility of the Stationing Committee members. I am very thankful for the Stationing Committee members and the churches they serve for sharing so much time and energy in accomplishing the work of stationing. When most of these men were elected to serve, the “stationing season” ran from mid-January through April. This past year we had Stationing Elders actively involved in the work of stationing in all but two months. I am thankful they have willingly served above and beyond the call of duty. Our polity calls for the Bishop to be the chairman of the Stationing Committee. I still believe that is valuable. If we are, as a National Conference, going to “raise up healthy churches proclaiming Christ to a hurting world” we must work with pastors and congregations to discover pastoral assignments where both pastor and congregation can fit and flourish. My concern is that the creep toward year-round stationing, combined with the vital importance of stationing, can take much time, attention, and energy away for the other responsibilities of serving as bishop. I have shared this concern with the Episcopacy Committee and, together, we will monitor this evolving concern. Interestingly, we are not the only group experiencing this. I have talked with other denominational leaders from similar traditions and we are all struggling to grapple with the evolution of stationing in our denominations. Obviously, it becomes a matter for significant prayer for all involved.

We are also experiencing change in our churches. The Community at New Direction in Tallmadge, Ohio officially closed on December 31, 2018. This congregation never reached the critical mass to become a chartered congregation but was able to impact the Tallmadge, Ohio community for a number of years. They voted to close when their bi-vocational Pastor Tim Ream announced that he was relocating due to the requirements of his wife’s full-time job. This closure will not require an action of Conference since it was not a chartered church. But we will be asked to adopt a resolution concerning the ownership of the Tallmadge property in order for the National Conference to sell the property to another church. The Winnebago Evangelical Fellowship in Winnebago, Illinois has been on a long and interesting journey of faith. Pastor Dennis Buss resigned in September 2017. Since that time the small congregation has provided their own pulpit supply as they waited and planned on receiving another pastor. During this time an Evangelical Free congregation located about 40 minutes away planted a church in a community center just outside of Winnebago. There are strengths and weakness to renting space as a church, so an Associate Pastor in the Evangelical Free Church, who at one time had EC credentials, reached out to the

OFFICERS

Winnebago EC leaders about the possibility of sharing their facilities with the church plant. (After many conversations and emails and a trip to Illinois to meet with the leadership of all three congregations, the founding Evangelical Free Church, the church plant, and our Winnebago congregation to investigate the possibility of the two congregations merging to form a new Evangelical Free Church.) While I really don't want to lose the Winnebago congregation, when I see a group of 10 E.C. senior citizens and a group of about 30 Evangelical Free younger families talking about how, together, they can build the Kingdom, I am encouraged. So we will be asked to adopt a resolution of disaffiliation so the Winnebago church can merge and form a new congregation in the Winnebago Evangelical Fellowship building. I endorse this Kingdom action.

I am pleased to tell you that we are making significant strides in providing more online learning opportunities for our pastors. This results in a significant savings, not only in travel costs; but in the time pastors need to be away from home. This past year Kevin Henry, our Executive Director, and I conducted the First Time Appointment workshop for newly appointed pastors. This three-hour workshop was held on a Monday evening. I was the only participant present in Church Center. Everyone else was in their office or home from Pennsylvania or Ohio; yet we all could see and hear each other clearly. We have also offered the EC History & Polity course online and our newly minted course on doctrine, EC Ethos, is also offered online. Kevin Henry worked in cooperation with the Church Health Community to purchase more video equipment, which will only increase our ability to use video, whether live, online or pre-recorded, in innovative ways as we continue to provide resources to our pastors and congregations.

This coming year, Kevin Henry will lead the launch of a new initiative, "Financial Health, Solutions for Pastors & Churches." This is a joint effort between the EC Church, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Lilly Endowment. I encourage our pastors and wives, as well as, local congregational leaders, to participate in this unique program. You will hear more about this exciting opportunity as we approach the fall of 2019. I also encourage our Lay Delegates to read through the "Bless Your Pastor, Over 50 Creative Ways to Show God's Love for Your Pastor" brochure which can be found on the Church Center table. There's also a "40 Day Generous Life Devotional" available on the table. The brochure and devotional are free and if we give away all the copies we have, we will get more. Being a pastor has always been a challenging vocation. But the changing face of our culture, the congregational finances, growing government and media oversight, and the increasing expectations and demands placed on pastors by others and ourselves makes being a pastor at this time in history even more challenging. As Bishop of the Evangelical Congregational Church I want to thank our pastors for their faithful service and I want to encourage you as Lay Delegates to lead your congregation in appreciating and blessing your pastor and his family.

Our disciple-making resource communities are fulfilling their calling to help connect pastors and local lay leaders to the resources available to help them in their ministries. I trust you have read each of their reports. We have a lot of resources available and almost all of them are provided by the community or associate free of charge to the local church. As members of the National Conference every one of us are connecting links between the available resources and local congregations who can use them. Each one of us talks with other pastors and lay leaders (or at least we should) and we have opportunity to tell them about the resources we want to bring to their situation. I trust you are doing that. Thank you, too, to each of our District Field Directors. They are vital in the connectional life in the district and in our denomination. If your District Field Director stops in on a Sunday morning, I encourage you to take a moment to recognize him and his contribution to the work of the district. Again, this helps people in your congregation make the connection with being part of a network of congregations.

There are lots of good things going on within the Evangelical Congregational Church we can talk about. Perhaps you noted in the Treasurer's Report that the ministry fund receipts are down slightly in the second half of 2018. Now that may not sound like good news until you read on and see that one of the reasons is the "record number of churches with a recorded exemption for a sizeable building project [or] Kingdom Extension project." Praise the Lord for the desire to make room for new ministry opportunities! I have been asked to pray for a congregation who needs to identify larger facilities to replace their existing building. In a clear answer to prayer (and lots of hard work) I had the privilege of leading in the

OFFICERS

dedication of the new facilities for Bushkill Community Church. It's not too often that a former bar gets converted into a church, but it works! More churches are reaching out to the Church Health Community to ask about Natural Church Development or one of the other resources. The Kingdom Extension Community has hosted a number of online conversations via Zoom at times that are more convenient for pastors and lay people to participate. As you may know, I actually do read the quarterly reports that are submitted to Church Center. I pay attention to the numbers, but I spend more time reading and praying for the comments that are shared by the pastor. They are reporting that people are responding to the call for new leaders. Churches, large and small, tell me they are seeing new people visiting on Sunday mornings. I am thankful to be able to report that a number of our churches are experiencing growth both in the number of individuals attending worship services and in the number of people involved in some type of discipleship ministry. One church reported "some of the highest average attendance in years." A pastor praised the Lord for "...congregational life and vibrancy which is contagious and attractive." One reported he has observed people in his congregation "get beyond their comfort zones and be excited about ministry." Another said "people are coming to faith in Jesus." Friends that's what it's all about – "go and make disciples." Join me in praying for all our congregations to be actively and intentionally leading people to Jesus and for their subsequent growth in the faith into wholehearted followers of Jesus. Congregations are reporting financial stability and growth. Listen to this sentence from an email update from a pastor: "We have started making ministry fund payments, and I'm really excited about that. I have no idea how long [we] haven't been contributing. But now we are!" There are always challenges in reaching a lost and hurting world with the Gospel; but there are also great opportunities for which we must praise the Lord.

Our national and world-wide impact is expanding. Dr. Juliana Leshner, an Ordained Deaconess, recently was promoted National Director of the Veterans Administration Chaplaincy at Department of Veterans Affairs. That means she oversees all the chaplains in the VA system. Our international churches continue to expand the boundaries of their ministries. Tomoyuki and Jessica Abe are beginning a new ministry to Japanese people living in France. The EC Church – Nepal continues to expand, planting two new churches this year, even in the face of active persecution. The EC Church – India, Mexico, and Liberia are each following God-sized vision for the expansion of their ministries.

Personally, I had the opportunity to continue to travel throughout the conference and preach in many of our churches. It is always a joy to meet the members of the EC Church and spend time sharing with them in God's Word. This past year I have also had the opportunity to meet with several local ministry councils in a day-long leadership workshop. I have not made a big deal or announcement about this opportunity, but the word-of-mouth response to the workshop has been positive. Additionally, I was invited to participate in an Operation Christmas Child shoe box distribution in Lima, Peru. Operation Christmas Child is most well known for collecting gifts for children in orphanages and other at-risk areas. But shoeboxes are not an end to themselves – they are a tool, an illustration of the Good News and great joy for all people.

When people ask about my schedule, I often reply that I don't sit around bored very often. You may know that Gloria works full time as the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools for the Eastern Lebanon County School District, as well as, the district's Human Resources Coordinator. When they worked on designing her most recent business card they couldn't fit all of that on one small card. While our schedules are full, sometimes to overflowing, we are blessed. The Episcopacy Committee, which directly reports to the National Conference, is bringing a recommendation that I receive a sabbatical this summer. I must tell you that this process has been very challenging to me personally. I am not good at taking vacation and have never taken all the vacation time available to me. I honestly enjoy what I do. (At least most days.) The thought of being out of the office for over 60 consecutive days is foreign to me. Gloria seriously questions if I will actually take a sabbatical. I know that it is good and important. I understand all the beneficial aspects of a sabbatical. I encourage pastors to do it. I've written letters encouraging congregations to give their pastor a sabbatical. But me? We'll see, particularly when the work of stationing will stretch well into the summer season and work on amendments to the

OFFICERS

Discipline must begin as well. I guess we'll all discover together how that works out in real life if this National Conference endorses the Episcopacy Committee's recommendation.

Every year I say something like this, but it's absolutely true – I must express my sincere appreciation for the gifted and gracious people I have the privilege to work with. Kevin Henry, our Executive Director, our four Associates, Jeff Byerly, Les Cool, Gary Kuehner, and Ted Rathman, along with Kirk Marks, the Secretary of Conference, we have a strong and capable team that is able to enjoy each other as we work together. Shirley Long, Abi Bomgardner, and Dave King in the Finance Office are always helpful and willing to “go the extra mile” to help those who are “numbers challenged.” I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Brenda Long and Pat Wolfe who keep the administrative work moving smoothly. Thanks, too, to Pat Strain, the GMC presence at Church Center. Jodi Earhart, my Assistant, is a joy to work with, even as she keeps me on task, on schedule, and moving forward. Lastly, I must tell you how thankful I am for Gloria's support and love. As I've already mentioned she works full time, twelve months a year, for the Eastern Lebanon County School District. More importantly she is “gamma” to nine grandchildren. And she's still willing to travel with me on weekends, puts up with my schedule and my moods with mercy, grace, and love. We all know how important spousal cooperation is. If you don't have it, it's a knockout in our Pastoral Assessment Center. I love her deeply and I know she loves me each and every day, even after 43 years of marriage. Thank you, too, for your prayers and support. You are not only members of the National Conference, but also members in the EC family; it's WHO WE ARE.

Operation Christmas Child describes their shoebox ministry this way: “*The amazing journey of a shoebox gift begins with you and results in evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication.*” I trust that will be a good description of our continued ministry as the Evangelical Congregational Church – an amazing journey of evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication. It's happening. In some places it's happening quickly; almost exponentially. In other locations it's slow and steady, but there is progress. Let us give thanks for the times and the places we can clearly see God at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us. To him be the glory now and forever!

Rev. Bruce D. Hill

NATIONAL CONFERENCE SECRETARY

The National Conference Secretary's Report to this May 2019 session of National Conference includes the minutes of the two National Ministry Team meetings (omitting the documents listed as attached to the minutes) that took place this conference year and a summary of the National Executive Committee's work in this past conference year. The full minutes of all National Executive Committee and National Ministry Team meetings, including all of the supporting documents, are kept in the official National Conference Secretary files, currently housed at Leesport, Bethany EC Church.

Summary of National Executive Committee Work

In accordance with responsibilities assigned to it by the *Discipline* and the National Conference Rules, the Executive Committee of the National Conference continues to meet to monitor situations between Conference and National Ministry Team sessions and take action on emergency situations. The National Executive Committee is made up of the Bishop, the Vice-Chair of Conference, the National Conference Secretary, and the National Conference Treasurer. The Executive Director often attends these meetings as a non-voting member.

Over the last conference year, the National Executive Committee dealt with the following matters:

- Worked with the Episcopacy Committee on matters relating to the Bishop's sabbatical.

OFFICERS

- Oversaw and approved changes in the National Conference banking relationships and internal regulations.
- Monitored ongoing legal situations involving the National Conference.
- Assisted the Bishop in working with churches that are struggling with their ability to continue in ministry.
- Accepted the 2017 audit report.
- Approved the 2018 National Conference Minutes in compliance with “standing rule O” of the National Conference.
- Worked with the Bishop in handling special circumstances that developed with Stationing Elders for the 2018 stationing year.
- Worked with the Bishop in planning the structural evaluation of the denominational structure on preparation for the amendment of the *Discipline*.

Summary of National Ministry Team Actions

The National Ministry Team met for its regular fall meeting on October 18, 2018 (minutes attached). In summary, at that session of the NMT:

- The Kingdom Extension and Global Ministries Community budgets were approved.
- The NMT participated in the structural evaluation of the denomination.
- The NMT approved and recommended to National Conference a series of rule changes recommended by the Ministerial Development Community.

The National Ministry met for its regular spring meeting March 21, 2019 (minutes attached). In summary, at that session of the NMT:

- The NMT witnessed Dr. Timothy Valentino affirmatively answer the disciplinary questions in preparation for credentialing at National Conference.
- The NMT reviewed proposed changes to the Twin Pines Articles of Incorporation which will be presented to National Conference.
- The NMT reviewed proposed changes to the rules of National Conference which will be presented to National Conference for final action.
- The NMT passed along to National Conference the results of the evaluation of the denominational structure and made recommendations for the amendment of the *Discipline*.

Minutes of the National Ministry Team Meeting

Zinn Commons of Evangelical Theological Seminary

Thursday, October 18, 2018

9:00 AM

Opening	The National Ministry Team met in regular session on the above date. Bishop Bruce D. Hill opened the meeting by welcoming the delegates.
Word & Prayer	Rev. J. “Ted” Rathman, newly installed Global Ministries Associate, presented a message from Genesis 12 about being on mission with God. He also offered the opening prayer.
Attendance	Each member of the NMT present introduced him or herself to the group and the secretary recorded the attendance (attached).
Minutes	Rev. Kirk R. Marks, National Conference Secretary, presented the minutes

OFFICERS

from the March 15, 2018 NMT meeting (attached). **On motion**, the minutes were adopted.

Bishop's Report

Bishop Hill vacated the chair. Rev. Gary Brown, National Conference Vice-Chairman, assumed the chair of the meeting. Bishop Hill presented his report. A written copy of this report was distributed (attached). **On motion**, the report was adopted. Bishop Hill reassumed the chair.

Secretary's Report

Rev. Kirk R. Marks, National Conference Secretary, presented his report on the work of the National Executive Committee (attached). **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Debra Patterson, National Conference Treasurer, presented the treasurer's report (attached) and highlighted some items from the report. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Housing Allowances

Mrs. Debra Patterson, National Conference Treasurer, presented the 2019 Housing Allowances for National Conference employees:

Rick Christman	Church Planter	\$15,000
Bruce Hill	Bishop	\$21,000
Timothy King	Church Planter	\$ 8,400
Gary Kuehner	Associate & DFD	\$15,600
Gordy Lewis	DFD	\$10,000
Dana Logan	Chaplain – StoneRidge	\$ 8,000
Keith Miller	DFD	\$10,000
Patricia Strain	Deputy Director GMC	\$10,000
Ralph Owens	DFD	\$ 8,000
Sterling Trimmer	DFD	\$ 7,000

On motion, the housing allowances were approved.

Strategic Evaluation

Following up on items introduced in his report, Bishop Hill described the process that has been developed to evaluate our current denominational structure. He began with the four "Covenant" statements that set us on the course of restructuring the denomination. He described what has already been done in this evaluation process and outlined for the NMT their part in evaluating various parts of the structure.

The Team was divided into four discussion groups and associates facilitated a guided discussion evaluating the Community, Conference Network Team, and Conference Support Team structures of the denomination.

On motion, the National Ministry Team stood at recess for lunch.

OFFICERS

Thursday, October 18, 2018

1:00 PM

- Twin Pines** Mr. Shawn Fetterhoff, Executive Director of Twin Pines Camp and Conference Center, presented a verbal report on the ministry, facility and growing partnerships of Twin Pines. PowerPoint slides to help churches publicize each event coming up at Twin Pines will soon be available to all our churches. A tentative schedule for summer camp and a calendar of events for 2019 is available, and on-line summer camp registration will become available in January.
- ETS** Dr. Tony Blair, president of Evangelical Theological Seminary, brought greetings and an update from the seminary. Enrollment for this academic year is up significantly, thanks in large part to the addition of the new Doctor of Theology program, and the Master's degree enrollment is also up. The final accreditation approval for completely online programs has now come through. Seminary business office services are now being outsourced with Lancaster Bible College, and the seminary has entered into several other resource sharing consortiums. Giving to the seminary, both from EC Churches and other sources is up from previous years.
- CNT** Bishop Hill presented the report of the Conference Network Team (attached). **On motion**, the CNT report was adopted.
- Conference Support Team** Mr. Kevin Henry, Executive Director of the National Conference, presented the Conference Support Team's report (attached). **On motion**, the CNT report was adopted.
- L & I Committee** Mr. Kevin Henry presented the report of the Loan and Investment Committee (attached). **On motion**, the report was adopted.
- Church Health Community** Rev. Dr. Gary Kuehner, Church Health Associate, presented the Church Health Community's report (attached). He emphasized the resources made available at no cost by the CHC and the willingness of resource leaders to come to any church no matter the distance from Myerstown. He also described the help the CHC can bring in moving churches from Official Boards to Ministry Councils.
- Global Ministries Community** Rev. Ted Rathman, Global Ministries Associate, presented this report (attached). He also shared a verbal/PowerPoint presentation on the future of the GMC as it restructures in response to the recommendations of their task force that reported last year. Ted invited churches and districts to be in contact with him to volunteer individuals with a heart to serve in one of the areas within the GMC. **On motion**, the report was adopted.
- GMC Budget** Mr. Kevin Henry presented the GMC budget as recommended by the GMC (attached). Kevin provided some narrative to explain the significant changes from the 2018 budget to the 2019 budget. **On motion**, the budget was adopted.
- Kingdom Extension Community** Rev. Les Cool, Kingdom Extension Associate, presented the Kingdom Extension Community's report (attached). He highlighted the "plant versus church" conversations noted in his report. He also amended his report to reflect (1) that the Palmerton "Fire Escape" work is no longer operating and (2) Tim King will no longer be financially funded through KEC because he no longer needs that funding. KEC will pay his coaching costs. **On motion**, the

OFFICERS

report as amended was adopted.

KEC Budget

Mr. Kevin Henry distributed the KEC budget recommendation (attached). **On motion**, the KEC budget was adopted.

Ministerial Development Community

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly, Ministerial Development Associate, presented his community's report (attached). Jeff described the various ways that the MDC has sought to fulfill its mandate from the restructuring. He reported that evaluation of the MDC as a new structure has already begun within this group. **On motion**, the narrative portion of this report was adopted.

Rule Changes

Jeff then drew attention to the MDC proposed rule changes included with his report. **On motion**, the "Recommended Changes to the Rules of Conference" section of this report was recommended to National Conference for adoption.

Missional Alignment Community

Bishop Hill presented the Missional Alignment Community's report (attached) which outlines the constituent groups of this community and each group's work. Bishop Hill recognized and expressed his appreciation for Rev. Dr. Ken Miller, who has led the Faith and Doctrine Committee for some time. Dr. Miller has resigned from that committee and Rev. Kirk R. Marks has been appointed to chair the Faith and Doctrine Committee. He also highlighted the Heritage Committee's work and progress on renovating the ground level of Church Center. The EC Archives will be moved there soon. He also highlighted the increasing mobile work of the Prayer Mobilization Team and the work of the Spiritual Warfare Advance Team (SWAT). **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Benefits Corporation

Mr. Kevin Henry, Executive Director of the EC Church, gave a verbal report from the Benefits Corporation and highlighted the need for both lay and ministerial trustees for the Benefits Corporation board. Changes in the fund availability within the 403b retirement plan are coming in January. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

District News

Bishop Hill invited district representatives to share news, events, ideas, or prayer requests from their districts and a number of items were shared.

Thanks

Bishop Hill expressed his thanks to the NMT members for participating in the structural evaluation in this meeting. He reminded the Team that we will be making a recommendation to National Conference for *Discipline* amendments on our structure at our next meeting.

Adjournment

Rev. Charles Campbell closed the National Ministry Team meeting with a word of prayer. **On motion**, the meeting was adjourned.

Upcoming Meetings

The 2019 meetings of the National Ministry Team are scheduled for March 21, 2019 and October 10, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kirk R. Marks, Secretary

OFFICERS

Minutes of the National Ministry Team Meeting Zinn Commons of Evangelical Theological Seminary

Thursday, March 21, 2019

9:00 AM

- Opening** The National Ministry Team met in regular session on the above date. Bishop Bruce D. Hill opened the meeting by welcoming the delegates and describing the business of the day.
- Word & Prayer** Rev. Timothy King, pastor of Christ House Church in Ephrata, PA, opened the session in prayer and presented a message from Psalm 88. A season of prayer followed.
- Attendance** Each member of the NMT present introduced him or herself to the group and the Secretary recorded the attendance (attached). The Secretary reported that all members of the NMT were present for this session, along with four advisory members.
- Minutes** Rev. Kirk R. Marks, National Conference Secretary, presented the minutes from the October 18, 2018 NMT meeting (attached). **On motion**, the minutes were adopted.
- Bishop's Report** Bishop Hill vacated the chair. Rev. Gary Brown, National Conference Vice-Chairman, assumed the chair. Bishop Hill presented his report. A written copy of this report was distributed (attached). **On motion**, the report was adopted. Bishop Hill reassumed the chair.
- Secretary's Report** Rev. Kirk R. Marks, National Conference Secretary, presented the minutes of the March 15, 2019 National Executive Committee (attached). NEC members answered questions related to NEC business items. **On motion**, the report was adopted.
- Treasurer's Report** Mrs. Debra Patterson, National Conference Treasurer, presented the treasurer's report (attached) and also reported that the Finance Committee met last week and developed a budget for the 2020 fiscal year, which will be presented for adoption at Conference. **On motion**, the report was adopted.
- CNT** Bishop Hill presented the report of the Conference Network Team (attached). **On motion** the CNT report was adopted.
- Conference Support Team** Mr. Kevin Henry, Executive Director of the National Conference, presented the Conference Support Team's report (attached). Kevin gave verbal highlights and answered questions on the report. **On motion**, this report was adopted.
- L & I Committee** Mr. Kevin Henry, Executive Director of the National Conference, presented the report of the Loan and Investment Committee (attached). **On motion**, the report was adopted.

The National Ministry Team stood at recess for 15 minutes

OFFICERS

Thursday, March, 21, 2019

11:00 AM

Global Ministries Community

Rev. John “Ted” Rathman, Global Ministries Associate, presented this report (attached) and gave some highlights and updates. The GMC is working on developing criteria for the formation of missionary care teams. Identifying people with the right gifts and skills, and some training will be needed. Ted described the ministry partnership GMC is developing with TEAM missions through Barry Winchell, who is a member at Grace Community at Willow Street. TEAM has resources to help us with mobilizing those called to missions onto the field and missionary coaching. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Church Health Community

Rev. Dr. Gary Kuehner, Church Health Associate, presented the Church Health Community’s report (attached). Gary gave an update on his travel to and experiences at the Exponential 2019 event. September 21, 2019 is the finalized date for the one-day Men’s Ministry event at Royersford. The EC YouthNet has established a Facebook page for EC youth leaders to interact. Gary will be travelling to Illinois, Western PA and Ohio to present CHC resourcing for those churches this September. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Kingdom Extension Community

Rev. Les Cool, Kingdom Extension Associate, presented the Kingdom Extension Community’s report (attached). He highlighted some items from the report. “Zoom” meetings/conversations have been held on various discussion topics. Les posed some thought-provoking questions about how we help our pastors and local church identify and equip new leaders. Les answered questions on his report and gave some further details on plans for discipleship training. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Ministerial Development Community

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly, Ministerial Development Associate, presented his community’s report (attached). Jeff described the process and the progress in moving individuals through the ordination process. He described the importance of the “guiding document” of the “Profile of an EC Pastor.” The credential of “Certified Lay Preacher” is being suspended as it is not being used. Those holding that credential will be continued. The MDC is restructuring a bit under the areas of restorative pastor health to better provide for this area. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Missional Alignment Committee

Bishop Hill presented the Missional Alignment Community report (attached) and highlighted items from the Faith and Doctrine Committee, the Heritage Committee, and the Prayer Mobilization Team. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Disciplinary Questions

Rev. Timothy Valentino appeared before the NMT and answered the disciplinary questions to transfer credentials into the EC ministry.

On motion, the National Ministry Team stood at recess for lunch.

ETS

Dr. Anthony Blair, President of Evangelical Theological Seminary, brought greetings and an update from the seminary. Rev. Jeff Byerly led the NMT in prayer for Dr. Blair in the passing of his mother this week. Dr. Blair gave an update on the progression of the ThD program and digital marketing and program delivery.

Dr. Blair reported on the growing institutional partnerships Evangelical is working in and exploring going forward. Many conversations and options are

OFFICERS

on the table. The Team gave some feedback about various aspects of partnerships for the seminary. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Twin Pines

Mr. Shawn Fetterhoff, Executive Director of Twin Pines Camp and Conference Center, gave a verbal report on the work of the Camp. He reported on the “Spring Fling” retreat program for elementary school children and the “Winter Thaw” retreat program for teens. He shared some needs for the summer program and the changing camping picture in the Poconos.

Mr. Fetterhoff presented the proposed changes to the Twin Pines Articles of Incorporation (attached). These changes would enable the Camp to operate more independently and better structure its board. These changes were part of the report and received for information; they will be voted on at National Conference. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Episcopacy Committee

Rev. Marlin Lafferty, chair of the Episcopacy Committee, presented this report (attached). The report describes and proposes to National Conference a sixty-day sabbatical for Bishop Hill, July 1, 2019 through September 2, 2019. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Benefits Corporation

Mr. Kevin Henry, Executive Director of the EC Church, gave a verbal report from the Benefits Corporation. The most immediate need for the Benefits Corporation is for lay leaders to fill positions on the Corporation’s Board of Trustees. **On motion**, the report was adopted.

Rule Changes

Bishop Hill presented a list of changes to the Rules of Conference (attached) that will be presented to National Conference. No action was taken on any of these items; they were simply reviewed and discussed as recommended to National Conference.

Strategic Evaluation

Bishop Hill presented the document entitled “The Strategic Evaluation of the EC Denominational Structure” (attached). The Team discussed the summarized results and conclusion of the evaluation.

On motion, the National Ministry Team recommends that this report of the evaluation of the denominational structure be presented to National Conference with the National Ministry Team’s further recommendation that the National Conference instruct the Amendments Committee to prepare amendments to the EC *Discipline* such that the *Discipline* can be amended to formalize and approve this structure that is currently in place as an experiment under section 409.11. We further recommend that these amendments be presented to National Conference at its 2020 session for first reading so that they can be considered for final approval and *Discipline* change at the 2021 session of the National Conference.

District News

A number of district representatives gave reports on various district level ministries and activities, prayer requests and celebrations.

Adjournment

Rev. Dennis Snyder closed the National Ministry Team meeting with a word of prayer. **On motion**, the meeting was adjourned.

Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the National Ministry Team is scheduled for October 10, 2019.

Rev. Kirk R. Marks, Secretary

OFFICERS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE TREASURER

For the twelve months ending December 31, 2018 the National Conference recorded a \$118,000 increase to net assets mostly from savings on budgeted expenses, a onetime donation for Student Aid Offering, a donation for the Heritage Committee offset by negative investment income. Fiscal year 2018 had very different activity than 2017 and 2018 and could be categorized as boring. Ministry funds were above budget by less than 2% and the expense savings were from lower activity in moving expenses, church health expenses, retiree health insurance, savings on extended financial services provided to Evangelical Seminary and no appropriations disbursed during 2018.

Cash and investments decreased by \$12,000 from December 31, 2017. Considering the \$27,000 in investment losses for the year and \$80,000 for the renovation to the basement of the Church Center to accommodate the EC Archives, it was not a bad year for cash. Ministry funds tailed off the second half of the year although they still exceeded budget at the end of the year resulting in 2018 comparable ministry funds, the lowest from the last three years; 2018, 2017 & 2016. The decrease is not significant, around 2.2%. Please remember as mentioned above, ministry exceeded the budget by around 1.5%. The discouraging news is that there are thirteen churches that have not paid ministry funds in 2018 which is an increase of six from 2017. Contributing to the reduction in ministry funds is a record number of churches with a recorded exemption for a sizeable building project (under the current ministry fund system) and two churches with an approved exemption for a Kingdom Extension project. The denomination is pleased to partner with churches that are building and remodeling their facilities and reaching their communities.

A church with a \$100,000 budget would have paid \$8,000 in ministry funds in 2016 and for 2019 that church will pay \$6,050 in ministry funds, a \$1,950 reduction or an average savings of \$650/year. Although it is relatively small annual savings, the savings will accumulate over time. Without the restructuring, there could have easily been a \$650/year or more increase in a church's ministry funds. The covenant implementation financial projections predicted ministry funds at 6.10% in 2019 and 5.50% in 2020. Actual ministry funds for 2019 are 6.05% and the submitted proposed 2020 budget has ministry funds at 5.60%.

Thanks to all of the churches that with integrity, faithfully remit their ministry funds. And thanks to the Finance Committee for their work and oversight.

Debra Patterson

**National Conference of the Evangelical
Congregational Church
Balance Sheet
Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2018 (unaudited)**

	Unaudited <u>12/31/2018</u>	Audited <u>12/31/2017</u>
Assets		
Cash and Investments	798,319	810,517
Accounts Receivable	211,434	146,451

OFFICERS

Prepaid Expenses	28,217	26,135
Inventory	4,871	4,871
Property Held for Resale	20,000	20,000
Property, Plant & Equipment, net	<u>365,551</u>	<u>301,914</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>1,428,392</u></u>	<u><u>1,309,888</u></u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	18,485	30,441
Salary Related Payables	16,657	5,686
District Liabilities	8,578	5,325
Pension Liability	<u>370,874</u>	<u>422,734</u>
Total Liabilities	414,594	464,186
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	1,013,798	845,702
Temporarily Restricted	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	1,013,798	745,702
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>1,428,392</u></u>	<u><u>1,309,888</u></u>

**National Conference of the Evangelical
Congregational Church
Statement of Activities
Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2018 (unaudited)**

	<u>Actual</u>	12/31/2018 <u>Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>	Audited <u>12/31/2017</u>
Revenues				
Ministry Funds National Conference	1,077,830	1,062,510	15,320	1,199,340
Registrations	40,271	-	40,271	43,956
Student Aid Offering	42,015	-	42,015	15,836
Sales of Ministry Aides	2,787	3,600		3,507

OFFICERS

			(813)	
	Copier/Postage	25,253	16,000	9,253
				27,650
	Income from Church Closure	300	-	300
	Gain/(Loss) Disposal of			
	Asset	-	-	-
	Donated Property	-	-	-
	All Other	<u>53,138</u>	<u>98,763</u>	<u>(45,625)</u>
				<u>164,753</u>
	Total Revenues	1,241,594	1,180,873	60,721
				1,457,231
Expenses	Ministry Development			
	Community	58,116	43,068	(15,048)
				49,514
	Church Health	27,237	46,528	19,291
				31,574
	Missional Alignment			
	Community	303,311	353,726	50,415
				320,739
	Conference Support Team	473,852	453,110	(20,742)
				471,606
	Agencies & Institutions	<u>260,632</u>	<u>284,441</u>	<u>23,809</u>
				<u>376,829</u>
		1,123,148	1,180,873	57,725
				1,250,262
	Revenues Over/(Under)			
	Expenses	<u>118,446</u>	=	<u>118,446</u>
				<u>206,969</u>

**National Conference of the Evangelical
Congregational Church
Statement of Activities
Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2018 (unaudited)**

	<u>Actual</u>	12/31/2018 <u>Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>	Audited <u>12/31/2017</u>
Revenues				
Ministry Funds	1,077,830	1,062,510	15,320	1,199,340
National Conference				
Registrations	40,271	-	40,271	43,956
Student Aid Offering	42,015	-	42,015	15,836
Sales of Ministry Aides	2,787	3,600	(813)	3,507
Copier/Postage	25,253	16,000	9,253	27,650
Income from Church Closure	300	-	300	2,189
Gain/(Loss) Disposal of				
Asset	-	-	-	-
Donated Property	-	-	-	-

OFFICERS

	All Other	<u>53,138</u>	<u>98,763</u>	<u>(45,625)</u>	<u>164,753</u>
	Total Revenues	1,241,594	1,180,873	60,721	1,457,231
Expenses					
	Ministry Development Community	58,116	43,068	(15,048)	49,514
	Church Health	27,237	46,528	19,291	31,574
	Missional Alignment Community	303,311	353,726	50,415	320,739
	Conference Support Team	473,852	453,110	(20,742)	471,606
	Agencies & Institutions	<u>260,632</u>	<u>284,441</u>	<u>23,809</u>	<u>376,829</u>
		1,123,148	1,180,873	57,725	1,250,262
	Revenues Over/(Under) Expenses	<u>118,446</u>	=	<u>118,446</u>	<u>206,969</u>

MEMORIAL SECRETARY

PASTORS:

Rev. Herbert P. Hartman passed away on September 24, 2018. He served the following churches: Northampton; Philadelphia, Kemble Park; Allentown, Trinity; Egypt; and Allentown, Zion. His wife, the former Jean Sailer, preceded him in death. He is survived by a daughter.

Rev. John "Jack" C. Ward passed away on February 27, 2019. He served the following churches: Myerstown, PA; Youngstown, OH (twice); Seneca, PA; Akron, OH; and Cedarville, IL. He also served eight years as Conference Superintendent of the Evangelical Congregational Church. He was also involved, at various times, in the ministries of Twin Pines, Camp ECCO and Rock River Bible Camp, while also initiating the YouLead program, investing in the next generation. He is survived by his wife Carolyn, a son, a daughter, and four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a son, Jack.

PASTORS' WIVES/WIDOWS:

Elsie Guistwite, widow of Rev. Richard Guistwite, passed away on September 25, 2018. Together with her husband, they served the following churches: Dauphin; East Weissport; Lavelle; Frackville; Plymouth Meeting; Reading, First; and Annville. She is survived by a daughter, two sons, seven grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.

Mary Romig, wife of Rev. Robert Romig, passed away on November 18, 2018. Together, they served the Williams Township, Christ congregation. In addition to her husband, she is survived by two sons, two daughters, and six grandchildren.

OFFICERS

Lena Heisler, widow of Rev. Curtis Heisler, passed away January 5, 2019. Together, they served the Fishing Creek, Trinity congregation before her husband's retirement.

Betty Seiger, widow of Rev. Larry Seiger, passed away May 12, 2019. Together, they served the following churches: Hamburg; Mahanoy City; Columbia; Hazleton; East Petersburg; Jim Thorpe; Creswell; Shamokin; Harrisburg, Grace; and Kinderhook. She is survived by two sons, including Rev. Timothy Seiger, a member of this Conference as well as a foster daughter, five grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

LAY DELEGATES:

Jean Berger-Wiegand passed away on June 3, 2018. She was a long-time lay delegate for the Plymouth Meeting and the former Jarrettsville, Christ congregations and was active in other areas of denominational life.

Dr. William Kautz passed away on January 28, 2019. He served lay delegate at Wyndamere Heights, where he was a founding member. He also served on the EC Board of Pensions and served Board of Trustees for Evangelical Seminary, in addition to many other places of service in the life of the Evangelical Congregational church.

Annie "Dolly" Keister passed away on February 27, 2019. She was a lay delegate at Wiconisco, Faith.

HONORABLE MENTION:

Mary Grose, mother of Rev. Don H. Wert, passed away on June 16, 2018.

Nancy Schell, the mother of Rev. Jeffrey Schell and Connie Owens, wife of Rev. Ralph Owens, passed away on July 22, 2018.

Elizabeth Swift, mother of Rev. David Swift, passed away on August 3, 2018.

John "Bob" Hartz, father of Rev. Robert Shuey, passed away on August 12, 2018.

Jack Long, father of Kim Blank, wife of Rev. Dan Blank, passed away on October 21, 2018.

Charles Schell, father of Rev. Jeffrey Schell and Connie Owens, wife of Rev. Ralph Owens, passed away on December 18, 2018.

Carl Sellers, father of Rev. Bruce Sellers, passed away on January 26, 2019.

Hilda Yeager, mother of Rev. Lloyd Yeager and grandmother of Rev. Sam Yeager passed away on January 14, 2019.

Llewellyn "Lou" Gower, father of Heather Wolfe, wife of Rev. Todd Wolfe, passed away on May 6, 2019.

Revelation 14:13 ~ *"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*

Rev. Adam Roberts

OFFICERS

STATISTICIAN

Has someone ever walked up to you when you weren't expecting it and asked, "Who in the world are you?" They thought they recognized you and knew you, but they couldn't quite remember you. This question deserves an answer from every born-again child of God. When it comes to the Word of God in this world I believe many Christians live in one of two extremes. The first is extreme isolation. They don't want others to have any influence on them and they don't want to place influence on someone else. The second extreme is infiltration. This is when Christians want to act like the world, go where the world goes and do other things that the world does.

Over the years of our denominational existence, we have seen various responses to the programs and requests of our conference leadership. The leadership of the E.C. Denomination has an obligation to provide services and pastors to the member churches, however this requires financial assistance through developing a budget which is challenging if the information needed to do the work is not provided. Again this year the number of churches not sending the required Annual Report has been 15.8% (19).

When we think of *WHO WE ARE*, we should refer to God's Holy Word where He tells us that our purpose is to have been saved out of the world (John 3:16). When we got saved, we trusted Christ as our personal Savior. When we got saved, things should not be as they used to be. As a denomination we are to work fervently *TOGETHER* to produce others for Christ. We can accomplish the correct actions if we challenge ourselves to abide by the actions required by our leaders, such as sending in Annual Reports on the correct papers.

Even though the preceding statement is true, we are still in the world (John 17:15). God has us in this world for a godly purpose! *WHO ARE WE?* If we are born-again Christians, God left us in this world for a purpose, and as long as we are in the world there is not a problem; but there is a problem when the world comes inside us because we are not to be of this world!

WHO ARE WE? God sent us into the world as His representatives, His ambassadors, His witnesses to tell people that there is hope, there is peace, there is life, there is forgiveness, there is joy; and it's all found in Jesus. He gave us leaders to help us go forth and carry out the Great Commission so we can win others to a saving knowledge of Christ. However, without the proper tools the mission cannot be accomplished to complete satisfaction. The question then becomes, "Do we want to displease God?"

How aggressive are we in fulfilling the purposes of God and of our denomination? May this year be the year that 100% of all our churches endeavor to fulfill the obligation of an Annual Report. After all that is *WHO WE ARE!*

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Wiest