

# **PART FOUR THE CONFERENCES AND DISTRICTS**

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## **400 CHAPTER I – NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

There shall be a National Conference that shall meet once a year to give direction to the total program of the denomination.

### **401 MEMBERSHIP**

#### **401.1 Ministerial**

The ministerial membership of the National Conference shall consist of elders who are in the itinerancy. Voting privileges shall be granted to local preachers and licentiates who complete three years of continuous service and thereafter whenever they are assigned to a charge. Only itinerant ministers shall have the right of voting on all matters pertaining to the itinerancy, which include the election of the members of the Trial Court and the Triers of Appeals and the licensing, reception, ordination, locating, suspension, and expulsion of ministers.

#### **401.2 Lay**

The lay membership of a National Conference shall consist of one lay delegate from each congregation in the conference, who shall be elected by the Local Conference in the manner prescribed in 334.6 of the *Discipline*. The sending of an alternate lay delegate is optional with the Local Conference that shall in all cases provide for the expenses of the delegate. Lay delegates shall have all the privileges and rights of ministers in the conference excepting those matters relating to the itinerancy. A delegate instructed by his/her congregation or charge is required to carry out such instructions in voting on the question(s) to which they relate. Failure to do so disqualifies him/her to vote on the pending question, and the vote of the congregation or charge said delegate represents shall be recorded according to the instructions received.

### **402 MEETINGS**

The National Conference shall provide for the time and place of its sessions upon recommendation by the National Ministry Team. If it becomes necessary to change the time or place fixed by the conference, the National Ministry Team shall designate the time and place and make the announcement at least ten (10) days prior to the time of such meetings.

### **403 ORGANIZATION**

#### **403.1 Presiding Officer**

At the National Conference a Bishop shall preside as chairman. If a Bishop is under charges for unchristian conduct or official misconduct, or under sentence of suspension, he shall be considered disqualified to preside. Whenever a conference is apprised of this fact, or when no Bishop is present, or when no presiding officer is available under 406.1.1.3, the conference shall elect a presiding officer from among the itinerant elders.

#### **403.2 Vice Chairman**

The senior Conference Minister shall serve as vice chairman.

#### **403.3 Secretary**

A secretary shall be elected from a ballot provided by the Nominating Committee. The secretary may, if necessary, choose assistants to accurately record all transactions of the conference. Only Itinerant members of the conference may be nominated.

#### **403.4 Treasurer**

A treasurer shall be elected from a ballot provided by the Nominating Committee, and shall function as the conference may determine to handle funds of the National Conference.

#### **403.5 Vacancies**

The National Ministry Team shall fill vacancies in the offices of vice chairman, secretary, or treasurer until the next session of the National Conference, when a new officer shall be elected.

#### **403.6 National Executive Committee**

The National Executive Committee shall consist of the chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

#### **403.7 Teleconferencing**

Any conference body (i.e., the National Conference, the National Ministry Team, Commissions and affiliates, and standing and special committees) may at its discretion allow one or more persons to participate in a meeting via conference telephone or similar communications equipment so that all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this paragraph shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.

#### **404 OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION**

The National Ministry Team shall be the Board of Directors of the Corporate National Conference. The executive officers of the National Conference shall be the officers of the Corporation.

##### **404.1 Title of Property**

Title to all property of the National Conference shall be held by the Board of Directors in the name of the Corporation, for the use of the National Conference.

##### **404.2 Duties**

The duties of the Board of Directors of the National Conference shall consist of the following:

**404.2.1** To manage, maintain, repair, and protect the properties of the National Conference through a Property Committee.

**404.2.2** To purchase, mortgage, sell, lease, or otherwise acquire or dispose of real estate in accordance with the directions of the National Conference; to borrow money on behalf of the National Conference; and to execute for the National Conference such deeds, mortgages, leases, assignments, bills of sale, or other documents as may be necessary or appropriate to carry into effect the will of the National Conference.

**404.2.3** To protect the properties of the National Conference with sufficient insurance coverage.

**404.2.4** To perform such financial duties as may be delegated to it from time to time by the National Conference.

**404.2.5** To prepare and submit to the National Conference an annual report, setting forth the transactions of the Board during the year and the condition of the properties belonging to the National Conference.

##### **404.2.6 Board of Directors**

Between conference sessions, approval for unforeseen financial obligations can be given by the Board of Directors only after consultation with and approval by the National Conference Executive Committee, the Conference Ministers, and the Board of Directors meeting in joint session.

##### **404.3 Indemnification of Officers**

The Corporate Directors of the National Conference shall not be personally liable for monetary damages as a result of any action taken, or failure to act, unless such action or inaction constitutes both:

(a) breach of or failure to perform his duties in compliance with the standards of fiduciary care described in the Director's Liability Act (i.e. in good faith, in a manner he/she reasonably believes to be in the best interest of the Corporation, and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, skill, and diligence, as a person of ordinary prudence would use under similar circumstances) and

(b) self-dealing, willful misconduct, or recklessness, subject to exceptions provided by said Act for his responsibility or liability under any criminal statute and his/her liability for payment of taxes.

Every director and every officer of the Corporation shall be indemnified by the Corporation against all expenses and liability, including counsel fees, reasonably incurred by or imposed upon him/her in connection with a proceeding to which he/she may be made a party, or in which he/she becomes involved, by reason of his/her being or having been a director or officer of the Corporation, or any settlement thereof, whether or not he/she is a director or officer at the time that such expenses are incurred, except in such cases wherein the director or officer is adjudged by a court guilty of willful misconduct or recklessness in the performance of his/her duties, provided however, that such indemnification shall be given in any case wherein the act or failure to act was authorized or later approved by the Board of Directors. In the event of a settlement, the indemnification herein shall apply only when the Board of Directors approves such settlement and reimbursement is deemed for the best interest of the Corporation.

In the event that a director or officer is adjudged guilty of willful misconduct or recklessness, the Board of Directors may, in specific cases, apply the foregoing indemnification.

In a proceeding brought as derivative action on behalf of the Corporation, the above indemnification shall apply only to expenses and counsel fees, unless specifically authorized by the Board of Directors.

The foregoing right of indemnification shall be in addition to and nonexclusive of all other rights to which such director or officer may be entitled.

The Corporation may on an individual basis, in specific cases, apply the above indemnification to an employee of the Corporation.

#### **405 SPECIAL SESSION**

If it should become necessary to call a special session of the National Conference, the National Ministry Team shall name the time and place, and make due announcement thereof at least fourteen (14) days prior to the time of the meeting. The Local Conference in either a regular or special session may fill vacancies among the lay delegates. The purpose of the special session shall be clearly set forth in the call, and no business shall be transacted at said session except that which is set forth in the call.

## **406 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL**

### **406.1 Elections**

#### **406.1.1 Bishop**

The National Conference shall elect a Bishop from among the itinerant elders by a majority of the whole number of votes cast, for a term of five years, or until his successor takes office. The election of the Bishop shall proceed in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference. If he proves to be a faithful shepherd, lives according to the Word of God, and the Rules of the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church, in true godliness, and if no other impediment renders it impractical, he may be reelected but shall not be continued in office for more than three (3) consecutive terms.

##### **406.1.1.1 Items Related to the Transition**

Items related to the transition, such as: the date the Bishop-elect shall assume office, provision for interim Episcopal leadership, if needed, and items related to the retiring Bishop, shall be cared for by the National Ministry Team at a meeting held as soon as possible after the election.

##### **406.1.1.2 Vacancy**

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Bishop or Bishop-elect caused by death, resignation, or suspension or by declaration of the National Ministry Team under 426.1.1.3, the vice chairman shall assume the responsibilities of the office until the next meeting of the National Conference at which time a successor shall be elected. In the event the vice chairman is unable to assume the responsibility, then the National Ministry Team shall be called into session by the remaining members of the Executive Committee to select someone to serve in this interim period and make such decisions as may be necessary for carrying on the functions of the office of Bishop.

##### **406.1.1.3 Incapacity to Perform Office**

In the event that a Bishop or Bishop-elect, by reason of illness or injury, shall be incapable of performing the duties of his office, the remaining members of the Executive Committee of the National Conference shall delegate the responsibilities of the office until the recovery of the Bishop or Bishop-elect, if such action is deemed advisable. If his condition should indicate the possibility of a prolonged and indefinite incapacity, or if the Bishop or Bishop-elect should be considered incapacitated, the National Ministry Team shall be called into session by the Executive Committee. This meeting shall be held at the earliest possible time to determine the means by which the duties of the office shall be handled during the incapacity. The National Ministry Team shall have the power to declare the office of Bishop vacant by reason of incapacity of the Bishop or Bishop-elect.

##### **406.1.1.4 Responsibilities of Bishop**

It shall be the responsibility of the Bishop to oversee the spiritual interests of the church, carefully guarding them so that everything is done according to the Word of God and the standards of our church; to serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the denomination; to chair the Evangelism and Discipleship Commission, the Leadership Commission, and the Church Planting Commission; to represent the church in national networks and coalitions; and to assume other tasks that may be assigned by the National Conference.

#### **406.1.2 Conference Ministers**

The pastors and lay delegates of the respective regions of the Evangelical Congregational Church will elect their Conference Minister from among the itinerant elders at a designated meeting during the sessions of the National Conference in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference. The Conference Minister may serve for a maximum of three five-year terms.

##### **406.1.2.1 Responsibilities of Conference Minister**

It shall be the responsibility of the Conference Minister to give oversight to the congregations within the districts assigned to his supervision, to provide spiritual care for the active pastors within these districts and their immediate families, to serve on commissions and committees as directed by the National Conference, and to assume other tasks that may be assigned by the National Conference.

#### **406.1.3 Stationing Elders**

The pastors and lay delegates of the respective districts shall elect two Stationing Elders for a term of five years from among the itinerant elders of the districts served by a Conference Minister at a designated meeting during the sessions of the National Conference in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference. There shall be no limit to the number of terms the Stationing Elder can serve as long as he remains in a district served by his Conference Minister. The Stationing Elder shall serve as a member of the Stationing Committee and assume those responsibilities specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference.

#### **406.1.4 Vacancies**

When a vacancy occurs in the office of Conference Minister or Stationing Elder because of death, resignation, retirement, suspension, or, in the case of the Stationing Elder, when he no longer resides in the districts served by his Conference Minister, the Executive Committee of the National Conference will appoint a person or persons to assume the responsibilities of the office until the next meeting of the conference, at which time a successor shall be elected.

### **407 NATIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEES**

#### **407.1 Standing and Special Committees**

Standing and special committees shall be appointed at the direction of the National Conference and report directly to the National Conference. Standing committees, appointed annually, have a continuing existence and give more attention to a task than is possible in the National Conference sessions. Special committees are assigned special tasks that do not fall within the assigned function of a standing committee. A special committee ceases to exist when its task is completed.

##### **407.1.1 Committee For Stationing Pastors**

A Stationing Committee composed of the Bishop, who serves as chairman, the Conference Ministers, plus two Stationing Elders selected from each region assigned to the Conference Minister, shall assign pastors to their respective fields of labor according to the procedure set forth in the *Rules* of the National Conference.

### **408 UNSTATIONABLE PASTORS**

An itinerant pastor who is considered unstationable or unacceptable for active service due to physical or other limitations shall be transferred to the superannuated classification, if qualified, or to the supernumerary classification. Such action must be recommended by the Conference Relations Committee and approved by a two-thirds vote of the itinerant elders present at the National Conference.

### **409 POWERS OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The National Conference is possessed of all powers, legislative, judicial, and administrative, that it has not reserved to the congregation. On the legality of its own organization and its legal identity, the vote of the majority of its membership is final. It shall have power:

**409.1** To plan and promote the work of the denomination through the cooperation of the National Ministry Team and its commissions and affiliates. It is responsible for the establishment and guardianship of the denomination's standards and policies.

**409.2** To delegate to the Bishop and the National Ministry Team operational responsibility of the Evangelical Congregational Church, reserving for itself its vested right of veto.

**409.3** To amend the *Discipline* to the procedures and within the restrictions outlined in Chapter 8.

**409.4** To vote on recommendations for amendments to *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church only every five years.

**409.5** To, as a court of law, decide judicially all questions arising between any incorporated general society of the church and its officers, and all questions for which an appeal to this conference is provided in the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

**409.6** To arrange the boundaries of the districts within the National Conference in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference.

**409.7** To examine the ministers and lay delegates as to their moral and official conduct.

**409.8** To refer to the membership of the congregations the question of merger with another church body. The National Conference may approve and proceed with a merger only when two-thirds of the congregations have given approval by a two-thirds vote of the members present at each properly called congregational meeting. In the event that a merger is approved by this procedure, disapproving congregations may withdraw from the newly merged denomination without being obligated to repay outstanding appropriations. Congregations that choose to withdraw shall cease using Evangelical Congregational in their names and in their operations.

**409.9** To provide funds for the overall ministry of the Evangelical Congregational Church, including:

**409.9.1** The necessary expenses of operating the National Conference sessions.

**409.9.2** The functioning of its committees.

**409.9.3** The expenses of the National Ministry Team, its commissions and affiliates.

**409.9.4** The salaries and approved expense items of persons elected by the National Conference and the National Ministry Team.

**409.10** To authorize and approve methods of raising funds for the operation of Evangelical Congregational boards and commissions that must secure this approval from the National Conference or, in the interim, from the National Ministry Team.

**409.11** To permit the National Conference to have trial periods to experiment with proposed amendments to certain parts of the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church before voting for adoption. The National Conference with the prior approval of the National Ministry Team may implement such experiments with reference to Parts Three (except 324), Four, Five and Six of this *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church for periods of time set by the National Ministry Team not to exceed five years, at which time the National Ministry Team may extend the time.

#### **410 SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS**

In order that proper spiritual emphasis be made at the sessions of the National Conference, the following provisions should be included in arrangements for these services:

**410.1** All deliberations and transactions shall be conducted as immediately under the inspection and in the presence of God. He who has occasion to speak, let him speak the sentiments of his heart freely; the chief concern of all being to set God before our eyes.

**410.2** The intervals between the daily sessions shall be spent, as much as possible, by every one individually in religious devotion, particularly in praying for one another and imploring God's blessing on all our transactions.

**410.3** Every session shall be opened with devotions including singing, praying, and reading from the Holy Scriptures and the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The paragraphs of the *Discipline* to be read shall be selected by the presiding officer prior to the session. Each session shall be closed with prayer.

**410.4** There shall be preaching every day during the session, unless otherwise ordered.

## **420 CHAPTER II – NATIONAL MINISTRY TEAM OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

A National Ministry Team shall be constituted and empowered to act on behalf of the members of the National Conference between the sessions of the National Conference and shall be the legal Corporate Board of Directors.

### **421 MEMBERSHIP**

**421.1** The membership of the National Ministry Team shall consist of the executive officers of the National Conference and one active pastor and one lay representative from each district. The pastors and lay representatives shall be elected by their respective districts in a manner specified by the *Rules* of the National Conference for a term of five years and a maximum of two consecutive terms.

**421.2** Advisory members shall include the Director of Global Ministries, Conference Ministers, and Bishops Emeriti. Additional advisory members may be added at the recommendation of the Bishop and the consent of the National Ministry Team.

**421.3** The incumbent Bishop shall serve on the National Ministry Team until the Bishop-elect takes office. His membership then terminates and the Bishop-elect replaces him as an active member. A Bishop-elect is an advisory member until he takes office.

### **422 ORGANIZATION**

The executive officers of the National Conference shall serve in the same capacity within the National Ministry Team and have the power to make administrative decisions within the framework of the policy and budget established by the National Ministry Team.

### **423 ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL OF THE NATIONAL MINISTRY TEAM**

#### **423.1 Election of Director of Global Ministries**

The National Ministry Team shall elect a Director of Global Ministries in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference, to assist in the administrative work of the denomination. He/she may serve for a maximum of three consecutive five-year terms.

##### **423.1.1 Responsibilities of the Director of Global Ministries**

It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Global Ministries to oversee the organization and development of missionary conferences, to chair the Global Ministries Commission, to provide support for the missionaries commissioned by the Evangelical Congregational Church, to provide liaison with the cooperating mission boards, to interpret to the local congregations the policy of the Global Ministries Commission and to assume other tasks that may be assigned by the National Conference.

##### **423.1.2 Evaluation**

The National Ministry Team shall evaluate the performance of the Bishop and Director of Global Ministries every three years in a manner specified in the *Rules* of the National Conference.

##### **423.1.3 Vacancies**

When a vacancy in the office of Director of Global Ministries is declared or is anticipated, the National Executive Committee shall appoint a person or persons to assume the responsibilities of the office, and the Bishop, in consultation with the National Ministry Team, shall appoint a Nominating Committee to prepare a ballot for the consideration of the National Ministry Team.

##### **423.1.4 Incapacity to Perform Office**

In the event that the Director of Global Ministries, by reason of illness or injury, shall be incapable of performing the duties of the office, the Executive Committee of the National Ministry Team shall delegate the responsibilities of the office until the Director recovers, if such action is deemed advisable. If the condition indicates the possibility of a prolonged or indefinite incapacity, or if, in the judgment of the National Ministry Team, there is some question as to whether the officer should be considered incapacitated, the National Ministry Team shall be asked to determine the means by which the duties of the office shall be handled during such incapacity. The National Ministry Team shall have the power to declare the office vacant by reason of incapacity in which event the procedure in 406.1.1.3 would apply.

### **424 COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL MINISTRY TEAM**

The Bishop and the chairpersons shall appoint the members who are to serve on the respective Commissions as called for in Part Seven (The National Conference and Affiliates) of the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

424.1 The supervision of the commissions of the National Conference is to be the responsibility of the following:

**424.1.1 Church Health Commission**—a Conference Minister appointed by the Bishop

**424.1.2 Church Planting Commission**—the Bishop

**424.1.3 Evangelism and Discipleship Commission**—the Bishop

**424.1.4 Global Ministries Commission**—the Director of Global Ministries

**424.1.5 Leadership Commission**—the Bishop

#### **424.2 Membership of Commissions and Committees**

The Bishop and the chairpersons shall appoint the members who are to serve on the respective commissions as called for in Part Seven (The National Conference and Affiliates) of the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

**424.3 Committees** Special and standing committees shall be appointed at the direction of the National Ministry Team and shall report directly to the Team as instructed by the National Conference.

##### **424.3.1 Loan and Investment Fund**

The National Conference may establish and operate a loan/investment fund through which money will be borrowed in exchange for the issuance of certificates of indebtedness, the terms of which shall be fixed by the Loan and Investment Fund Committee appointed by the National Ministry Team. The money borrowed shall be used to make loans to churches and agencies related to the National Conference for the purchase, construction, renovation and expansion of physical facilities including parsonages on terms to be fixed by the Loan and Investment Fund Committee appointed by the National Ministry Team. Certificates of indebtedness shall be general obligations of the National Conference and shall be signed on its behalf by the Bishop and the Controller or the Secretary or an Assistant Secretary of the National Conference.

The National Ministry Team may appoint a loan/investment fund committee of at least five (5) members to operate the fund under its supervision. The Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Controller shall serve on the Loan and Investment Committee as ex officio members in addition to the appointed members. The finances of the fund shall be accounted for separately, which account, however, shall be included as such in the financial statement of the National Conference.

## **425 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL MINISTRY TEAM**

### **425.1 Policy**

It shall be the responsibility of the National Ministry Team to establish policy for those matters affecting the denomination in accordance with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Congregational Church.

### **425.2 Coordination and Implementation**

The National Ministry Team shall be responsible for the coordination and implementation of the total denominational program as adopted by the National Conference respecting actions, activities, and goals prescribed by the National Conference, and shall be expected to initiate and implement additional programs and goals.

### **425.3 Coordination of Interdenominational Partnerships**

The National Ministry Team shall receive an annual report from the Bishop explaining the involvement of the Evangelical Congregational Church in various interdenominational partnerships approved by the National Ministry Team or the National Conference.

### **425.4 Amendments**

The National Ministry Team shall receive from the Amendments Committee of the National Conference proposed amendments to the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The Team shall debate the merits of each proposed amendment and decide by majority vote whether it should be recommended to the National Conference. The National Ministry Team shall submit to the National Conference amendments being recommended, along with those that were considered but are not being recommended.

## **426 MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL MINISTRY TEAM**

The National Ministry Team shall meet semiannually, and at such other times as the Executive Committee shall decide, or upon the written request of five members of the National Ministry Team. Three-fifths of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

## **430 CHAPTER III - MISSION CONFERENCE**

### **431.1 Establishment**

The Global Ministries Commission has the authority to create a mission conference. A mission conference is a conference located in a mission territory served by the Evangelical Congregational Church, which conference, because of its limited resources, membership, ministry, and financial strength, requires close supervision and appreciable financial aid from the Global Ministries Commission and/or other sources.

### **431.2 Administration**

A mission conference shall be administered by the Global Ministries Commission, which shall at its discretion, name a field director or directors; oversee the formation and operation of a field council to administer the work locally and, in general, have oversight of the work and personnel of the conference.

### **431.3 Becoming a National Conference**

When and if the growth, development, constituency, and general conditions on the field are considered such that a self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing conference shall be organized, it shall be the prerogative of the Global Ministries Commission recommend to the National Conference USA to grant the creation of a National Conference for the field. Such National Conference shall elect a leader or leaders, and adopt a culturally appropriate structure to advance the mission of the Evangelical Congregational Church in that country or culture. The National Conference USA will continue to provide project and relief funds to assist such National Conferences, but will not provide funds for the governance of such a National Conference. Until that time, the Global Ministries Commission may give limited right and prerogatives to a mission conference, with the prior approval of the National Ministry Team.

### **431.4 Licensing and Ordaining Ministers**

A mission conference has the authority to license, ordain, admit to its own itinerancy, or superannuate its ministers, as well as perform such other functions in dealing with its ministers as is the prerogative of a National Conference. A mission conference must develop a procedure for licensing and ordaining ministers that examines their Christian lives, call to ministry, and doctrinal position. The procedure must further describe the steps required for a candidate to be licensed, ordained, and admitted to its itinerancy. Such procedure must have the approval of the Global Ministries Commission for each mission conference. The ordination of ministers should be conducted by the Director of Global Ministries, the Bishop of the National Conference USA of the Evangelical Congregational Church, a Surrogate Bishop charged with the supervision of the mission conference, or someone designated by the Global Ministries Commission. Admission to the itinerancy of a mission conference does not qualify such a person for a pension unless it is provided by the Mission/National Conference.

## **440 CHAPTER IV–TEACH International**

### **440.1 Purpose**

The Evangelical Alliance of Churches, International (T.E.A.C.H. International) shall be an organization of mission and national conferences for the purpose of:

- Establishing the procedures and criteria for developing strong autonomous churches in every area of the world,
- Identifying areas for church planting and the extension of the church,
- Developing an international partnership for the support and direction of missionaries to carry out the Great Commission.

### **440.2 Representation**

The members shall be from the U.S.A.: the Bishop, the Director of Global Ministries, the Assistant to the Director, the Conference Ministers, the chairpersons of the regional missions committees; from other nations: two representatives of each conference, and one representative of each affiliated mission organization with more than five E.C. missionaries under their direction.

### **440.3 Meetings**

There shall be an international convention and conference to be held in the United States of America every five years.

## **450 CHAPTER V -- DISTRICTS**

Within the Evangelical Congregational denomination there are churches strategically located in geographic areas. These congregations are committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a hurting world. To advantageously fulfill the Lord's Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) effectively, efficiently and expeditiously, the words "partnership" and "teamwork" describe their mission. These congregations, then, seeking to build God's kingdom on earth, complement and strengthen the regional networks already in place through districting.

A district is formed with up to twenty-five (25) congregations in a variety of geographic areas which are organized to accomplish the Lord's Commission. These churches believe that God wants to change the people and the communities within these districts. It is the mandate of the Evangelical Congregational Church to effect that change. District teamwork is required so that partnering with congregations in a specific geographic area may assist the process of extending God's kingdom. The biblical "Districting Model" can be used to bring the denomination to complete unity "to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23

Following is the procedure, through regional networks of churches that cross denominational lines already established, to enhance, but not compete with nor replace these networks. Our task is one of complementing and strengthening the ongoing work of kingdom building through Evangelical Congregational Districts.

### **450.1 District Boundaries**

The National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church shall be organized into thirteen (13) geographic districts. Assignment of a congregation to a district shall be recommended by the Supervisory Committee and approved by the National Conference. These assignments shall be reviewed every five (5) years by the Supervisory Committee. Requests from churches for changes regarding district placement shall be submitted to the Supervisory Committee during the first six (6) months of the fiscal year. Recommendations for changes shall be submitted to the congregations affected by the change as well as the National Ministry Team and the National Conference. Assignments of districts to the Conference Ministers shall be recommended to the National Conference by the Supervisory Committee for review and approval.

### **450.2 District Leadership Team**

Districts shall be accountable to the Conference Minister who will work through a District Leadership Team to serve district needs. The District Leadership Team shall consist of a facilitator, an assistant facilitator, a secretary, and the pastoral and lay representative to the National Ministry Team. The facilitators and assistant facilitators shall be appointed by the Conference Minister in consultation with the District Leadership Team. The secretary shall be appointed by the facilitator. The representatives to the National Ministry Team shall be elected by the District Ministry Team. In the event that a facilitator or assistant facilitator is not available in a district, the district may be placed under the care of the Conference Minister.

### **450.3 District Ministry Team**

The District Ministry Team shall be composed of the credentialed active and retired pastors of the Evangelical Congregational Church and two (2) lay leaders from each of the congregations in the district. The lay leaders must possess a passion for Christ, and a compassion for the lost, and be recognized leaders in their congregation. One (1) of the lay leaders shall be the lay delegate to the National Conference from the congregation, selected in accord with the congregation's by-laws and the *Discipline* of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The second lay leader shall be appointed by the pastor in consultation with the governing body of the local congregation. The second lay leader shall be an advisory member of the governing body of the congregation.

Advisory members may be added to the District Ministry Team with the consent of team members. The commissions and institutions of the denomination may appoint district representatives who shall be advisory members of the District Ministry Team.

### **450.4 District/Denomination Connection**

The Conference Minister to whom a district is assigned shall serve as an advisory member of the District Ministry Team, although his schedule may prevent his attendance at district meetings. He shall receive minutes of team meetings and have regular contact with the district facilitator. Each district shall have representatives on the National Ministry Team. Districts shall elect one (1) pastor and one (1) lay delegate to serve on the National Ministry Team which shall meet between the sessions of the National Conference. The terms of the National Ministry Team members from districts shall be five (5) years with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Each district shall have authority to elect one (1) alternate pastoral and one (1) alternate lay delegate to the National Ministry Team.

Written reports of district work shall be submitted annually by the district secretary to the National Conference. These reports shall be printed in the *Yearbook* of the Evangelical Congregational Church. Districts may submit resolutions to the National Conference for consideration.

#### **450.5 District Meetings**

Districts shall decide the frequency and location of meetings and inform the Conference Minister of such meetings. It is expected that a district shall meet at least annually. The *Standing Business Rules* of the National Conference shall apply to the business portion of the district meetings.

#### **450.6 District Agenda**

Districts shall be responsible to:

- Nurture a passion for God, a compassion for the lost, and a genuine concern for health and unity of the congregations and the Evangelical Congregational Church;
- Initiate a prayer strategy focused on the above mentioned areas;
- Develop those ministries which meet needs of the respective geographic areas as revealed by the Holy Spirit;
- Plan the Global Ministries initiatives and events for the district.

#### **450.7 District Finances**

Districts shall receive and disburse funds to implement the initiatives of the district (e.g. evangelistic campaigns, social action work, and teacher training events). District accounts shall be established and maintained by the denominational bookkeeper. (The district may choose to designate a local church treasury for this purpose.) Monthly financial statements shall be provided to the District Leadership Team by the district secretary, who shall maintain district financial records.

Districts shall be apprised of genuine financial needs of a congregation within the district. Chronic financial problems shall be referred to the Conference Minister, who may recommend that appropriations be paid from the denomination's treasury. The Conference Minister may make such needs known to churches within adjoining districts.

#### **450.8 District Facilitator**

- a. A District Facilitator shall be appointed by the Conference Minister in consultation with the District Leadership Team.
- b. Pastors and laity who are members in good standing of the Evangelical Congregational Church are eligible to serve in this office.
- c. Term of office is five (5) years with a limit of three (3) consecutive terms.
- d. There shall be no remuneration for this office.
- e. Responsibilities include:
  1. to convene and lead meetings of the district,
  2. to plan and facilitate the prayer strategy with district leaders,
  3. to appoint, empower and network the ministry teams needed to accomplish district goals,
  4. to ensure that the district stays focused on its mission.

#### **450.9 District Assistant Facilitator**

- a. A District Assistant Facilitator shall be appointed by the Conference Minister in consultation with the District Leadership Team.
- b. Pastors and laity who are members in good standing of the Evangelical Congregational Church are eligible to serve in this office.
- c. Term of office is five (5) years with a limit of three (3) consecutive terms.
- d. There is no remuneration for this office.
- e. Responsibilities include:
  1. To assist the district facilitator upon request and perform the duties of the facilitator when the facilitator is unable to do so, and
  2. To ensure that basic spiritual care is provided to pastoral families under the direction of the Conference Minister.

#### **450.10 District Secretary**

- a. Appointed by the district facilitator.
- b. Pastors and laity who are members in good standing of the Evangelical Congregational Church are eligible to serve in this office.
- c. Term of office is five (5) years with a limit of three (3) consecutive terms.
- d. There is no remuneration for this office.
- e. Responsibilities include:
  1. To record the minutes of district meetings and distribute them to district leadership/members,
  2. To prepare an annual report of district activities to be submitted to the National Conference, and
  3. To maintain the financial records of the district.