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# EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

## EC NATIONAL NEWS

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SPRING 2020

### **A Message from Our Bishop**



I don't think there is any aspect of our lives and ministries that has not been impacted by this pandemic. It truly is a historic time in our lives.

Our National Conference was scheduled to meet at Messiah College this May. That was the plan until March 30 when I received an email informing me that, because of the pandemic, Messiah College would not be able to host Conference. Our National Ministry Team (NMT), met on April 16 to talk about "Plan B." After a good conversation, the Team unanimously voted to cancel National Conference for 2020. So, what happens now?

First, most of the business that was scheduled to take place during National Conference 2020 will wait until National Conference 2021; including the election of the next Bishop of our denomination, the amendments to our Discipline, as well as, the normal items of business.

In May, the members of National Conference, that is pastors and lay delegates, will receive a packet of reports which would have been part of the normal report packet. In that packet you will find the proposed 2021 budget. Please be aware this is the proposed budget and may be changed by the NMT in October. We will be sure to share the final adopted budget, the plan for the transition in the office of Bishop and all other decisions made during the NMT meeting in October.

I am not sure when we will return to "normal." However, in some ways I pray we never do! We are living in a historic time, perhaps what some would call a "hinge point" when we change direction toward a "new normal." I cannot tell you exactly what that "new normal" will look like. But I do know, and I can assure you, that our wonderful Savior and Lord Jesus will lead us. May the Lord continue to bless his people, his church, the Evangelical Congregational Church, as we faithfully follow him and minister in his name.

In Christ's Service,



## Cottage Grove gets a makeover



On April 28, 2019, Cottage Grove E.C. Church of Akron, Ohio held a “Renovation Sunday” to celebrate recent improvements to their building. In the fall of 2018, proposed changes were presented in a congregational meeting. Plans were approved, and the work began in December with window replacement.

In February of 2019, the church had a “Demo Day” to remove pews and tear up carpet. This was followed by the painting crew, who put a dark varnish on ceiling arches, painted the chandeliers a matching brown, and stained the kneeling rails, pulpit, and other furniture to match. The sanctuary, nursery, foyer, men’s restroom, and pastor’s office all got a fresh coat of paint.

New carpet was then installed in the sanctuary, nursery, and pastor and secretary’s offices. The well-worn pews were replaced with chairs.

The sound system was upgraded. More energy-efficient lighting was installed in the fellowship area and classrooms. LED bulbs were placed in the Sanctuary lights.

The special service was followed by a lunch. Sherri Sitz is Head Trustee and says she was “kind of the project manager.” Pastor is Bill White, and Andrew Carr was recently appointed to the pastoral staff.



## Camp ECCO celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary

On Saturday, May 25, 2019, a crowd gathered at Camp ECCO, Carrollton, Ohio to celebrate the camp’s sixtieth anniversary. The event commemorated the camp’s dedication, which took place on May 30, 1959.

Some came the preceding evening for a campfire, activities, and overnight stay. The day included a picnic lunch in the recently built pavilion. Following the meal, Charles Orf of Emlenton, PA, New Zion was baptized in the lake by pastor Gary Brown.

The oldest person present was Helen Dunn, age 97, of Akron, Ohio First Church. Coming in second was Rev. George Ralph, age 96, of Jupiter, Florida. He led in prayer before the meal. The youngest present was eleven-day-old Jack Elwood Fusselman, son of Weston and Alexa Fusselman of Knox, PA.

The gathering moved to the chapel, where Camp Board Chairman, Mark Reigle, described the camp’s history. Bishop Bruce Hill led a service of rededication. Some of the attendees stayed into the evening.



Camp ECCO (Evangelical Congregational Camp Organization) grew out of the vision of several pastors in the early 1940’s. By 1946, camps were being held on the rented grounds of Beulah Beach on western Lake Erie in Ohio. Camps were also held at Camp Otyokwah near Hocking Hills, Ohio. Leaders prayed for an E.C. camp, where they could have more freedom in scheduling and rent to other groups.

In 1958, Gene Suci of Canton, Ohio, First Church heard that a farm was for sale near Carrollton, Ohio. The 110-acre property had lakes, wooded areas, open fields, and several small buildings. An original barn is still the center of much activity. The Western Conference purchased the land in 1959, and the first camps were held in 1961.

Bishop Harold Scanlin led the service of consecration. The first camp committee, who were to oversee maintenance and development, were elected by the Western Conference. They were pastors Paul Dunn, Bill Ring, Richard Osberg, Sr., Fred Cunningham, and Ronald Long. Laymen were Bill Carr, Roy Sipe, and Gene Suci.

*Special thanks to Mark Reigle.*



## Churches unite for mutual benefit

During the last few years, Winnebago Evangelical Fellowship in Winnebago, Illinois, dwindled to a few faithful worshippers, most in their sixties. When their last pastor, Dennis Buss retired, a replacement was not immediately available. The board appointed Lay Delegate, Vivian Gaines, to schedule pulpit supplies. These included pastors, musicians, and the church’s own elders.

Meanwhile, Park Hills Evangelical Free Church of Freeport, about 25 miles away, had started a church in the nearby Westlake Village subdivision. The congregation consisted mostly of young families. Their pastor, Graham Boll of Dixon, grew up

near Rock River Bible Camp and accepted Christ through that ministry. Chris Stuckenberg, one of the pastors at Park Hills, lived in Westlake Village and invested time in the new church.

The young congregation was meeting in a community building, where they had to set up and tear down each week. Also, there were no spaces for children's ministries. They desired a more suitable and permanent facility. Mark Balmer, lead pastor at Park Hills, drove through Winnebago, hoping to find a possible site. He spotted the Fellowship building and wondered if a rental agreement could be worked out. Mark shared his find with fellow staff member, Rich Graham, a former E.C.'er, who was well-acquainted with Winnebago. He had worked there as an intern with Pastor Ken Schmoyer.



At the same time, a former Winnebago pastor, Gary Brown, who was at Emlenton, PA, New Zion was contemplating retirement. Gary and Rich had a casual conversation in March of 2018, when Rich came to sit with the Browns in a LaGrange hospital, where their son, Chris, was critically ill. Rich asked Gary what he wanted to do in retirement, and Gary shared his dream of returning to Winnebago. Rich described the Westlake work, and the two thought it possible the churches could benefit each other.

Gary met with Bishop Bruce Hill the following August, saying he would like to go to Winnebago to help. Bruce gave District Field Director, Dave Carr the go-ahead to speak with the Fellowship's

board about Gary's interest. Dave met with them on September 4.

The following day, Rich contacted Mike Reinders, a leader in the Fellowship. The two met for lunch on September 7. As they talked about possible arrangements between the two churches, the conversation quickly turned to merger. That afternoon, Mike spoke with another leader, Paul Elsen, about the merger possibility. He then shared with the adult Sunday School class most of whom are on the board

Next, he spoke with Bishop Hill about next steps. Mike comments, "All this was with a Kingdom-building thought process."

By fall, Park Hills staff and both congregations were moving toward merger, rather than shared space. Gary met with the staff and was offered a part-time position in Winnebago, serving with Graham Boll, who would be campus pastor. Gary planned to arrive in July.

On November 25, the two congregations came together for a morning service in Winnebago, with pulpit supply by Park Hills. They joined for worship again on December 30 and shared a pot-luck meal.

By January of 2019, the two groups were meeting regularly in Winnebago. Gary helped the Fellowship with the process of closing. On Palm Sunday, April 14, a dinner and service honored those who had founded Winnebago Evangelical Fellowship 40 years before, and celebrated the new work. At the end of the month, the vote to merge made it official, and Park Hills Evangelical Free Church was launched.

*Thanks to Mike Reinders and Gary Brown for supplying details.*

## Bushkill church occupies new building

On March 17, 2019, the congregation of Bushkill Community Church began meeting in its first permanent location.

Since its founding in 2001, the church had met in a school cafeteria, a fire station, and other locations.

Then, they purchased the former Log Cabin Bar and Restaurant at 5504 Bushkill Falls Road, near the entrance to the Bushkill Falls tourist area. The purchase was made possible with a denominational loan and contributions from churches and individuals. With the direction of contractor, Julian Lenhart, demolition and remodeling spanned about two years.



A service of dedication was held on May 5, 2019, and neighbors were invited to a series of campfires during the summer.

Bushkill Community is the only church building in the township currently operating as a place of worship. Their worship and fellowship area accommodates around 50.

Pastor Paul Miller, who is assisted by wife, Lynda, comments, "Hope, Heal, and Help is what we're all about."

## Ministry continues in Tallmadge, Ohio

In 2007, Pastor Tim and Pam Ream came from Pennsylvania to Tallmadge, Ohio to take on the restart ministry of the former Akron United E.C. Church, the merger of the Airport Chapel and Tallmadge Avenue Churches. After nearly 20 years of ministry, the congregation was struggling to continue.

While both worked at full-time jobs, Tim and Pam led the new

work, which was re-named The Community at New Direction. They were joined by Pam's parents, Skip and Judy Reinheimer, who contributed practical help. All four had worked with The Salvation Army. Committed lay people also took part.

The congregation never became large, but significant ministries were seen. Tim recalls a healing service, where individuals found needed closure. He also observed great personal growth. Pam adds, "We did a lot for the community. We were God's hands and feet. That included assisting the staff of a clinic for uninsured patients, contributing to their health with a community garden.

In late 2018, Pam's employer, Aesculap, a distributor of surgical instruments, notified her that instead of working from home, as she had been doing, she would need to move east and work in an office. She and Tim prepared to move, knowing it would mean the conclusion of New Direction.

Though much saddened, they prayed that a new ministry would take over the site. The Reams, along with Skip and Judy, moved to Center Valley, PA in December.



At the same time, a young congregation, New Hope, was praying for a facility. Led by Pastor Todd Tacket, they started as a small group, meeting on a friend's deck. They moved to a YMCA, then a cultural center.

They learned that the Tallmadge property, which includes the church, a parsonage, and grounds, was for sale. Within a few months, the congregation completed the purchase, becoming

New Hope Tallmadge. Several New Direction families continue to attend.

They soon did an interior makeover and offered the community an addiction recovery program. Luke Miller is Assistant Pastor.

On July 14, 2019, the Reams began a new ministry at Bethany E.C. Church in Lehighton, PA.

*Thank you to the Reams.*

## Family News

### Welcome, Baby

**Pastor Yoriyoshi and Emiko Abe** of the Ebina City Grace Garden Church in Japan have new daughter, **Wakana**, born on February 21. She has a big sister, Kanac.



### Citizenship

Missionary, **Bettina Schaeffer**, a native of Germany, became a United States citizen on August 8, 2019. She serves with husband, Robert, in LIFE Ministries in New York City, as well as the United Presbyterian Church in St. Clair, PA

### Weddings

**Rev. Jonathan Brown**, pastor of the Pequea (Gap, PA) and Mt. Culmen (East Earl, PA), E.C. Churches, married **Rebekah Moss** on May 4, 2019. The wedding took place at Grace E.C. Church, Akron, PA, with Bishop Bruce Hill officiating.



**Amy Wells**, stepdaughter and daughter of Pastor Charles and Annette Campbell of the Delightful, E.C. Church, Ohio

married **Jonah Walp** May 12, 2019. The wedding took place at Wedgewood Park E.C. Church, Youngstown, Ohio, with Rev. James Hansen, grandfather of the bride officiating.

### Degrees

**Rev. Michael Garrison**, of First E.C. Church, Canton, Ohio was awarded the Master of Divinity in Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies Degree by Wesley Seminary of Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana on April 27, 2019.



While pastor at New Zion E.C.

Church, Emlenton, PA, **Rev. Gary Brown** completed the Doctor of Ministry Degree from Northeastern Seminary of Roberts Wesleyan University, Rochester, New York on May 17, 2019.

### Ordinations

**Rev. Yoriyoshi Abe**, pastor of Ebina City Grace Garden Church in Japan, was ordained on November 9, 2019, at Sagamihara Grace Chapel. Wife is Emiko. Rev. Nobuo Abe, Chairman of the E.C. Church of Japan, conducted the service. Message was by Rev. Michael Sigman, pastor at Grace Community Church, Willow Street, PA.



**Rev. Michael Knapp**, pastor at Clark's Valley Zion E.C. Church, was ordained in his church on October 13, 2019. Wife is Ruth. Message was by Rev. Wilmer Martin, Associate Pastor at Willow Street Grace Community Church. Bishop Bruce Hill and Bishop Emeritus, Michael Sigman conducted the service of ordination. Other

participants were Rev. Bruce and Linda Sellers, Rev. Timothy Seiger, Rev. Gordon Lewis, Rev. Kenneth Ogden, Edith Kuntz, and Joshua Kobel.

**Marisel Mieses** of Buenas Nuevas E.C. Church, West Hazelton, PA, was ordained a Deaconess on November 3, 2019 during the church's regular worship service. Participants included Bishop Bruce Hill, Rev. Jeffrey Byerly, Ministerial Development Associate, and Rev. James Price, Schuylkill District Field Director. Marisel and husband, Edwin, share ministry at Buenas Nuevas.

## Retirements

At National Conference, 2019, the following pastoral couples were recognized for retirement:

**Sterling and Jolie Trimmer** from Red Lion, PA Arlington

**David and Dana Swift** from Myerstown, PA Zion

**Richard and Debbie Osberg** from Knox, PA Grace

**Robert and Beth Mavis** from Transfer, PA Lakeside

**David and Christie Dennis**, other employment

**Charles and Annette Campbell**, continuing to serve at Southington, Ohio Delightful

**Gary and Ann Brown** from Emlenton, PA New Zion.

## Remembering loved ones...

**Rev. John C. "Jack" Ward**, 78, of Ninevah (Knox), PA passed away on February 27, 2019. He was member of Grace E.C. Church. He served in the United States Air Force and taught school before entering the ministry. Jack pastored churches in PA, Ohio, and Illinois and was Western Conference Superintendent for eight years. In retirement, he

worked with Child Evangelism Fellowship and taught in the Clarion County Home School Association. He is survived by wife, Carolyn; daughter, Christina; and son, Stephen. He was preceded in death by son, James.

**Ruth L. Parr**, 97, of Canton, Ohio passed away on April 8, 2019. She was the wife of the late, Arthur Parr, a Lay Delegate for First E.C. Church. She was a Sunday School teacher and musician. Ruth was a worker at Camp ECCO during its early days. She is also remembered for her homemade apple pies and crocheted gifts. She is survived by daughters, Nancy and Miriam, and sons, Richard, Mark, and Timothy.

**Llewellyn C. Gower**, 76, of Leighton, PA passed away on May 6, 2019. He was an alternate Lay Delegate for the former St. Peter's E.C. Church of Weissport. He was recently a member of Bethany church in Leighton. "Lou" was a Viet Nam war veteran, having served in the Navy. He was a firefighter and a Little League baseball coach. He is survived by wife, Darlene; daughter, Heather, wife of Rev. Todd Wolfe; and son, Travis. He was preceded in death by son, Justin.

**Norma Aston**, passed away on July 12, 2019. She served as lay delegate of Conestoga, Bethel church as well as on the Board of Trustees of the Evangelical School of Theology, Myerstown

**Helen Hart**, passed away on August 12, 2019. She served as lay delegate of Leesport, Bethany church. She and her late husband Bill were well known throughout the EC church and the area for

their "Harty Puppets" ministry and their deep commitment to short-term missions.

**Catherine Appleby**, passed away on September 4, 2019. She served as lay delegate at Akron, First (OH) church.

**Peggy Heck**, 85, of Southington, Ohio passed away on September 17, 2019. She served several years as Lay Delegate for Delightful E.C. Church and was a Western Conference trustee. She was active in Sunday School, missions, and the Camp ECCO board. She is survived by her husband, Richard; daughter, Belinda Jane, a retired missionary; and son, Jerry. She was preceded in death by a grandson.

**Evelyn H. Zetterberg**, 88, of Loveland, Ohio passed away on November 19, 2019. She was the wife of the late Rev. Robert Zetterberg, assisting him in ministries in Ohio and Illinois. "Ev" was born in

Chicago and taught school in Canyon Falls, Kentucky. Burial was in Dixon, Illinois. She is survived by sons, Robert and Bill, and daughters, Sandra and Kari. She was preceded in death by grandchildren, Joshua and Kristin. Rev. Glenn Hansen is a brother.

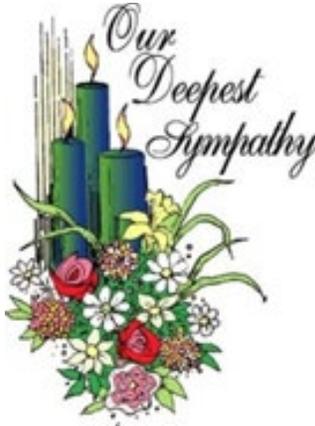
**Rev. Kenneth L. Zaebst**, 67, of Jefferson, Ohio passed away on November 20, 2019. He attended the Kingsville First Baptist Church. Ken served the E.C. Church as an interim in Tallmadge, Ohio and Hooppole, Illinois. He enjoyed writing poetry, astronomy, reading and bicycling. He is remembered for "hanging out" at McDonald's, where he ministered to employees and fellow patrons. He is survived by his mother, Joyce; brother, Steven; and sisters, Sue and Linda.



**Rev. Paul F. Koelln**, 66 of DeLeon, Texas passed away on November 30, 2019. He grew up in New Hampshire and began ministry in South Dakota and Nebraska. He served E.C. churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania from 1980 to 2002. He was forced to retire when a fall left him significantly disabled. He was gifted both in music and in preaching. He is survived by wife, Marcia; sons, Gregory and Timothy; and daughter, Jamie.

**Dr. John E. Moyer**, 87, of Myerstown, PA passed away on December 4, 2019. While attending college and seminary, he pastored churches in PA. He had both honorary and earned doctorates. He was Superintendent of the Western District of the Eastern Conference and Bishop of the denomination. He taught at Evangelical Seminary. John co-authored the book, *Evangelical from the Beginning*, a history of the E.C. Church. He is survived by wife, Dorothy, and sons, John, David, and Timothy.

**Ruth Hynson**, 90, of Center Point, Iowa, passed away on February 20, 2020. She was the wife of the late Rev. Leon Hynson, a pastor and seminary president. Ruth lived in seven different states. She had a Master of Library Science Degree from the University of Iowa. She is survived by sons, Leon, Jonathan, and David. She is remembered for working alongside them in construction.



**Helen J. Dunn**, 98, of Jackson Township in Ohio passed away on March 9, 2020. She grew up in Cedarville, Illinois, where she met her husband, the late Dr. Paul Dunn, who was in his first pastorate there. She assisted him

in ministries in Ohio and in his work as Western Conference Superintendent. Helen was a long-time member of First E.C. Church in Akron. She was a counselor at Camp ECCO during its early days. She is survived by son, Joseph, and daughter, Julie.

**Rev. H. Robert Samuels** of Myerstown, PA passed away April 23, 2020. Bob was licensed out of St. Paul's Evangelical Congregational Church, Rothsville, PA in 1953 and was a member of the first graduating class of Evangelical Seminary. During his long life of service to the Lord and the EC Church, Bob served thirteen different congregations both as an Assistant Pastor and Senior Pastor. He retired in 1996. Rev. Samuels was predeceased by his wife, Esther. He is survived by daughters Jan (Forsyth), Luanne (Vesho), sons Randy, Jon Mark, Scott and a brother Joel, brother-in-law to retired pastor Ed Vondran.

**Cheryl Robinson**, passed away April 5, 2020. She served as lay delegate at Lancaster, Faith church.

## P.S.

It has been a little over a year since I have written an E.C. National News. I hope my move from Pennsylvania to Illinois is an acceptable excuse.

In doing some catch-up, I have reported events of a year ago, hoping that some of the content still has some newness. The list of departed loved ones has grown long. As I gathered items, the overriding theme of church change became apparent. I tried to be concise, but articles got long as I described God's working in ways we could not imagine.

I hope this newsletter serves as a connection in our E.C. world during this difficult season.

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