

CONFERENCE NETWORK

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

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

The following individuals were elected to serve:

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

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

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

Items discussed at Tactical meetings have included:

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

This group is discussing things like:

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

The agenda for the Quarterly Review meeting has included:

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

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

Bishop Bruce D, Hill
For the Conference Network Team