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CHURCH HEALTH

Greetings in the precious name of Jesus! And greetings from the CHC! What a joy it is to be on a team of servant leaders who are committed to raising up healthy churches. The CHC team members include Revs. Gary Kuehner, Ralph Owens, James Price, Kenneth Ogden, Wayne Houck, Gordon Lewis, Michael Sigman, Robert Valentine, and Scott Carr. The CHC met twice (March 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018) since the 2017 National Conference.

The CHC continues to offer help to EC churches/pastors in five specific areas: evangelism, discipleship, refocus, revitalization, and church health assessment. These resources are offered free of charge to our EC churches. The following are brief descriptions/explanations of these five resources.

- **EVANGELISM** (A Story Worth Telling: How God Uses Your Story to Tell His Story). This training event, focusing on the importance of your story (how you came to know Jesus and how he has impacted your life), equips people to share their faith in a natural, non-threatening way.
- **DISCIPLESHIP** (4TD – Four Tier Discipleship). This template or model, based on the teaching approach of Jesus, encourages people to engage in four tiers or levels of discipleship: the crowd (congregational); the twelve (small groups); the inner circle (triads/quads); and the beloved disciple (one-on-one).
- **REFOCUS** (How to Be a 1st Century Church in the 21st Century). This training event, based on Acts 2:42-47, is designed to help churches focus/refocus on the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-39) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20). Six topics are considered: discipleship, fellowship, prayer, ministry, worship, and evangelism.
- **REVITALIZATION** (The 7 Re's of Revitalization). This training event offers realistic help and hope that can move your church from survival to revival. Using biblical principles and life experiences, this training event considers seven topics: restoring hope; refocusing on the mission; re-educating your people; restructuring to accomplish the mission; rejoicing in your success; reflecting on what you've done; and resolving to stay on course.

Since our 2017 National Conference, I have encouraged District Field Directors to start/lead revitalization groups in their respective districts. I am pleased to report that at least five such groups are meeting, using various resources (books) to stimulate discussion. If you are interested in starting a revitalization group and would like some guidance, please contact Gary Kuehner (610-914-2983 or gkuehner@eccenter.com).

- **CHURCH HEALTH ASSESSMENT** (Natural Church Development). Natural Church Development (NCD) is a process that measures (using a survey) eight quality characteristics that are essential to local church health: empowering leadership; gift-based ministry; passionate spirituality; effective structures; inspiring worship services; holistic small groups; need-oriented evangelism; and loving relationships. Follow up coaching with a credentialed NCD coach is provided to assist in analyzing survey results.

The CHC has six certified NCD coaches. At this point in time, six EC churches are at various stages in the NCD process, working with four of our coaches.

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The CHC oversees the work of the Christian Education/Youth Network Leadership Team. We are pleased to announce that Robert Valentine is now leading this work. One of Rob's goals is to develop district and denominational teams of youth workers. Once again, a Friday after Thanksgiving lock-in for youth is planned for Ozzy's in Leesport, PA on November 23-24, 2018. A special thanks for Denise Kalisz who served as the registrar for the 2017 lock-in.

The CHC also oversees the EC Men's Ministry led by Wayne Houck. A men's event is planned for Saturday, September 22, 2018. This one day event will be held at Trinity Lighthouse Church in Royersford, PA. The theme will be "Rock Solid Men."

Future meetings of the CHC are scheduled for September 26, 2018, February 27, 2019, and September 25, 2019.

Check out the CHC link on the ECC website. Thank you, Brenda Long, for getting this up and running. More and more churches are utilizing CHC resources. Praise the Lord! Our prayer is that God will continue to bless the work of the CHC as we continue our pursuit "to raise up healthy churches proclaiming Christ to a hurting world."

Dr. Gary Kuehner

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

FACILITATING MISSION WORKERS:

The Evangelical Congregational Church USA has 25 missionary units (couples & singles), which have been credentialed by our conference and seconded to work with 15 different agencies in eight countries. Our newest commissioned missionary is Cassie Wells. Cassie is working with Disciple Makers in campus ministry. Deputy Director Pat Strain gives leadership to our missionary care and facilitation, using field visits and various forms of communications and reporting mechanisms to shepherd and support our missionaries and their families. We continue discussions about how we can increase the levels of missionary care and support for our missionaries. To help us better serve our missionaries, we have asked them to submit a more comprehensive self-evaluation report this year. The costs and complexities of keeping missionaries on the field continue to increase so the levels of spiritual, emotional, physical and financial support we can offer must also increase.

EMPOWERING INTERNATIONALA CHURCHES:

Japan:

1. Grace Garden Church

Church planters, Yoriyoshi & Emiko celebrated the birth of their first child, Kanae Abe on December 26, 2017. Her Japanese name means "to praise God's name". They also report having a new Christian couple attending their church. This couple had moved into the area and was looking for a church to connect with. The husband is a sixth generation Christian which is very unusual in Japan. Yoriyoshi, Emiko and Kanae plan to visit during our National Conference sessions in May. They are also working with a team from our Royersford church which is planning a trip to Japan in the summer to help with an English camp. As mentioned in my last report, Yoriyoshi and Nobuo joined the GMC delegation that traveled to visit the EC Church of Nepal in November 2017. Their presence was a great encouragement to the Nepalese EC'ers! Below are some of Yoriyoshi's observations and impression of his trip to Nepal.

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Thank you for giving us the opportunity! I was truly inspired and ignited by the trip. God refreshed my vision and even expanded it for His greater Kingdom. Here is my observation and impression of the trip.

- *I felt that Nepalese people in general were calm and moderate, like Japanese.*
- *Nepalese and Japanese are very similar in terms of appearance. They said that I resembled the Rai people, one of their tribes.*
- *Nepalese religious viewpoint is similar to Japanese one:*
 - *They believe Hindu and there are many gods; and Japanese believe Shintoism, an animistic belief, and there are many gods.*
 - *I walked around Kathmandu and found many idols and shrines along the street. We also have those idols and shrines in Japan.*
 - *They go to Shamans when they get sick, even medical doctors go to see Shamans when they couldn't find the cause of sickness for their patients. We have still Shamans in some areas of Japan, such as Okinawa or North East Japan. There are many fortune tellers in Tokyo!*
- *In that kind of environment, I learned that people came to Christ through miracles, such as healing or casting out demons. (Of course, not everyone experiences it) My eyes were opened to those kind of spiritual environment.*
- *It seems that their belief is more Pentecostal rather than bible-based Evangelical.*
- *So, I felt the balance between biblical education and mystical experience would be needed.*
- *I liked their energetic worship style.*
- *I was glad to see many youth.*
- *Through this trip, we are also connected with EC India through their leader, Kap. We started conversations about their visit to Japan 2019. I hope we can encourage each other as ECC Asia.*
- *Personally, not officially, I'm interested in planning to bring a team from Japan to Nepal in 2021.*
(Wow! Our cross-pollination efforts are taking root!)

2. Fuchinobe Community Church

Tomoyuki and Jessica are rejoicing in the two individuals who were baptized this summer and in the fact that they now have two small groups up and running. They are currently training a worship leader and have begun a children's ministry. In January they began the first of three sessions of the Alpha course. They recently hosted an interest event as a way to meet and develop relationships with non-Christians. Their event was a "Katazuke Seminar". This organizational seminar was led by Ms. Ida who regularly appears on TV as an organizational expert and happens to belong to the EC Church. As she is sharing tips on home organization, she also tells her audience how she found deep and lasting peace through relying on God.

Rev. Nobuo Abe, Chairman of the Japan Conference has requested that I travel to Japan in April to meet with his conference leadership team and pastors to help them with some issues. He has asked me to lead a seminar on Biblical leadership principles for his conference leadership as well as speak in the churches.

India:

Along with representatives from our Japan conference, I also invited Rev. Dr. Kaitinkap Vaiphei, the General Director (Bishop) of the EC Church of India to join the GMC delegation on our visit to the EC Church of Nepal. You may remember that the EC Church of Nepal was birthed out of the EC Church of India so I am trying hard to build a good relationship between the two conferences. This was

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the first time Kap had visited the EC work in Nepal. According to his comments below, he learned much from his trip.

Thank you so much for your concern and invitation which enabled me to attend the Nepal EC Church conference where I have learned so many things from the Lord and from other people which is beyond my expectation. The Nepal EC Church Conference was helpful for me to learn many things. I appreciated their openness to the gospel and their willingness to learn new things and praise the Lord in their own way. I really appreciated the USA Drama team for the efforts they have given for such task. The people of Nepal really appreciated and learn good and new things from them.

While in Nepal with Kap, Nathan Kennedy, Chair of the GMC India/Nepal Committee and I had the opportunity to speak with him concerning their conference's progress of the covenant they had approved under the previous administration of Angam where they promised to work together, to be more self-sustaining and to invest in the work of their own Evangelical College of Theology. Following our face to face conversation, Kap sent me a follow up email with the statement below:

"...we will have Board of Trustees' meeting on Wednesday. I will bring up the covenant we have already made at the consultation sponsored by GMC and were approved in ECCI Annual Conference 2016. We will see any means and ways of how to comply with the covenant we have made."

The GMC has designated the 2018 VBS project to help with the development of the library of Evangelical College of Theology. Principal, Lalrosiem Songate explains that they are introducing a new M.Th (missiology) degree and will need to have a certain quantity and quality of books in their library. We are happy to help them and have set a goal of raising \$10,000 for this project through our VBS offerings. I am excited to report that Lalrosiem has gone one step further in developing their library and is working with other institutions. See his explanation below.

"There are several theological institutions in Churachandpur and our common weakness is in the area of library. Recently, we had a meeting of Principals and Librarians of theological institutions of our town and decided to form a body called Association of Theological Libraries in Churachandpur with a purpose of sharing our library resources with one another. We are hopeful that this initial step will come a long way in helping the education of our theological student community."

Since Lalrosiem has taken over the role of Principal of ECT, he has brought all of his wisdom, experience and creativity to help strengthen and transform ECT into an attractive, effective and efficient training institution for those called to mission and ministry. His development of the ECT Prayer Letter keeps both local and global partners informed and engaged in the mission of ECT.

Nepal:

The EC Church of Nepal continues to grow and mature as a mission conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church. From November 6-14, 2017 a delegation from India, Japan and the USA traveled to Nepal to interact with our brothers and sisters there. The purpose of this trip to the EC Church of Nepal was to participate in the Annual Conference of ECCN which included a first-ever "Youth Gospel Olympics". This new youth component included:

- An ECCN singing and dancing competition with 50 participants

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- A “mini-football (soccer) tournament” with 20 teams participating
- Christian drama team training by our own U.S. Drama Team

The Conference was held at the new ECCN compound in Dharan. There were 250 registered for conference and about 350 attending daily.

Another purpose of our trip was to officially dedicate the new structure called Mercy Home which serves as the official headquarters of ECCN, an orphanage for boys and the “parsonage” for Janga’s family. Bethel Church is also located on the compound. Once again I invited other international EC leaders to join our team to continue the cross-pollination of our conferences. The international delegates included:

- Rev. Dr. Kaitikap Vaiphei, General Director of the EC Church of India
- Rev. Nobuo Abe, Chairman of the EC Church of Japan
- Rev. Yoriyoshi Abe, church planter in EC Japan
- Rev. Bruce Hill, Bishop of the EC Church, USA

Because Janga had asked me to bring youth, I also invited Tim King, GMC member and Director of Ministries for *Drama Ministry*, to consider bringing some of his Drama Team members with him. I am so thankful he was willing and that Alex, Becca, Emily, Joseph, John and Scott were able to join us! Rev. Nathan Kennedy, chair of the GMC India/Nepal committee, Moti, Nobuo’s Japanese/Nepalese translator, Carla Sizemore and I completed our GMC delegation. This is the largest international delegation to travel with me to date – 15 in total!

During the conference we were able to deepen and lengthen our relationship and partnership in the Gospel not only with Nepal but with Japan and India. We had the privilege of dedicating the official EC Church Center of Nepal which not only serves as the headquarters of the conference but also houses, the Mercy Home orphanage for boys and the parsonage for Janga, Mercy and their family. We participated in the baptism of new believers and the ordination of Pastors, Elders and Deacons. Tim King and his Drama Team taught the Nepalese youth how to use drama to present the Good News of Jesus and the Nepalese youth taught them a few things as well.

In June of 2003, Dr. John Ragsdale officially inaugurated the EC Church of Nepal with three small churches. Today there are 23 churches and fellowships with approximately 2,500 members, a home for orphan boys and the Evangelical Leadership Training Academy which has 15-20 pastoral and lay students enrolled. In 2017, through these local congregations there were 209 conversions, 187 baptisms and 2 new congregations established! Rev. Janga has even developed the, “*Voice from the Himalayas*”, the official newsletter of the EC Church of Nepal! (*One more example of cross-pollination: Janga’s newsletter idea came from Lalrosiem’s in India*)

One of our new concerns is the new, strictly enforced, “anti-conversion” law in Nepal. Will this law prevent the spread of the Good News? Not according to Rev. Janga. He concludes the first issue of his newsletter with this bold statement:

Despite of the threat for preaching gospel in public as it is strictly prohibited inviting trouble either in the form of penalty for Rs. 50,000 or imprisonment up to 5 years, every church has great willingness and commitment to stand for Christ as Paul said in Phil 1: 29-30, “not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for the sake of Christ”. Your prayer and encouragement is our strength!

Mexico:

In May of 2017, the Evangelical Congregational Church of Latin America became the third international mission conference to achieve National Conference status. The leaders of the EC Church of Latin America invited a delegation from the U.S. EC Church to join them in their special session of

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Conference in July 2017, to inaugurate their new National Conference, to express their appreciation for our years of partnership and to join them in the installation of their first Superintendent (Bishop) of the National Conference, Rev. Juan Zuniga. During the months following his installation, Rev. Zuniga has been busy! He has divided his conference up into three districts and has appointed a District Coordinator for each one. Each district will develop its own plan for evangelism and missions. They will meet monthly and report to Juan. In order to keep them on mission, Juan will meet with each district on a regular basis. (By the way, this is just one more example of why we need to continue to cross-pollinate our international leaders. Juan was inspired to try this idea of districting because he spent face to face time with Bishop Hill, exchanging ideas and learning from our own conference organization). Juan and his leadership team have also established a retirement fund for their pastors and a mission fund. They have installed two new pastoral couples and on November 4, 2017 they began their Bible Institute for pastors and lay leaders' training.

El Retiro Children's Home:

We have officially discontinued our partnership with El Retiro. All the children have been placed with families or other facilities. Former directors Carlos and Martha Reyes have removed themselves from the EC Church of Mexico and are now developing their own church and ministry on the property.

Liberia:

January 18-29, 2018 Rev. Rick Sergi, chair of GMC Liberia Committee and I traveled to Liberia to participate in the 49th Annual Conference of the EC Church of Liberia, (ECCOL). Our objectives were to evaluate newly elected Bishop Abraham Powell and his leadership team. We also wanted to follow up on several GMC/ECCOL joint projects including the Bassa Literacy VBS project, a Leadership Training project and School System project. The Literacy project involves teaching people who can speak the Bassa language to read and write it as well so that they can read the Bassa translation of the Bible and be involved in discipleship. Rick and I met with representatives of this project and were encouraged by the progress being made so far.

As the old saying goes, "everything rises and falls on leadership", so in order for ECCOL to grow in effectiveness in their mission, Abraham has instituted training for pastors and lay leaders. Rick is helping Abraham with this project by researching and sharing teaching resources and by helping Abraham come up with a two year schedule of classes and subjects. Over the past years, a few of the local congregations of ECCOL were trying their best to operate Christian grade schools. Abraham has appointed a Principal and is working to connect these schools in a conference wide school system that will be accredited by Liberia's education ministry. The progress they have made in each of these projects in the past two years with the limited resources available to them is very encouraging.

I was concerned that Abraham was trying to tackle too many projects at once but he seems to be thriving and achieving success. The success of his leadership team includes the construction and/or renovation of several church buildings, the award of 30 scholarships to ECCOL youth to attend academic school, the purchase of musical equipment and furniture for local congregations, the implementation of a new financial accountability structure for the conference, providing motorcycles for rural pastors and involving all of the national council members in the decision making process of the conference.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT ECCOL:

Following the very intense election of Abraham Powell as Bishop in 2016, I really did not know what to expect during my visit to Liberia. Praise God, I was pleasantly surprised by what I saw and heard! Abraham is leading the conference in love in both his words and his actions. He has accomplished a great deal during his first two years of service. The greatest achievement is the obvious change of the "climate"

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and spirit of ECCOL. I witnessed more love and gratitude being shared and expressed, more freedom for members of the conference to share their views and more genuine fellowship than I have in my previous four visits.

I am so thankful for Rev. Rick Sergi's willingness to chair the Liberia Committee and his tireless efforts to help us steward, resource and direct the work in Liberia. He is currently working on putting together a tri-fold brochure which will explain the work in Liberia and how the GMC is partnering with them. He is also helping Abraham with the Leadership Training and the development of a school system for ECCOL.

I am also encouraged by Abraham's understanding that ECCOL needs to be as self-sustaining as possible. He mentioned this to his conference and leadership at least twice while we were there. There is much to be done in Liberia but I believe the GMC should focus on helping ECCOL with the following initiatives/projects:

1. Establish an evaluation process for the office of Bishop to temporarily replace elections.
2. Continue to encourage the work needed for ECCOL to become a National Conference.
3. Continue partnering on the Leadership Training of pastors & lay leaders.
4. Continue partnering with the Bassa Literacy project.
5. Do what we can to encourage the development of the school system within ECCOL.

ENGAGING THE CHURCH IN THE GREAT COMMISSION:

The GMC invites the EC Church to be actively engaged in the global aspects of the Great Commission. We continue to educate and communicate the world of EC missions to our members through publications like the monthly *Global Prayer Guide* and the semi-annual *Window on the World* magazine. We regularly host Pastors' lunches and Mission brunches in Pennsylvania and Ohio. We also schedule times for the Illinois district to interact with missionaries and our international conferences. Through these venues we are able to connect with pastors and mission-minded lay leaders of our local churches. We are doing our best to give local congregations multiple opportunities to be involved in the great things God is doing in the global EC Church. A quick read of the numerous local churches reporting short-term mission trips in the "Short Stops" section of each issue of *Window on the World*, or a quick tally of the generous financial giving to special projects over and above regular missionary and GMC support, demonstrates that our local EC congregations are indeed engaged in the Great Commission!

CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE:

1. Report from Endorser
 - a. The Chaplain Manual is available at Church Center and on the E.C. Church website under Chaplaincy. It describes Chaplaincy ministry, tells how Chaplaincy differs from Pastoral ministry in a church, lists the various types of chaplaincy, and explains the requirements for each one.
 - b. This year I decided to write a document that explains the key principles and practices behind effective Chaplain ministry, to be distributed to all E.C. Chaplains.
 - c. Because there is no really comprehensive guide for Chaplain Endorsers, I decided to research and write an Endorser's Guide for the E.C. Church.
 - d. Shortly after National Conference 2017, Joel Kime approached me about becoming a National Guard Chaplain. I guided him on the process, encouraged him to get his church's permission, helped them write a Mobilization Agreement that would provide pastoral leadership for the congregation and guarantee his right to return after mobilization. I wrote his Endorsement form and counseled him on issues he faced seeking commissioning.
 - e. In early December 2017, Terry Jacobs contacted me asking for an endorsement to the Civil Air Patrol. I sent him an application and guided him in the process.
 - f. I attended the Marine Corps Ball in November sponsored by the Marine Corps League.

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- g. I have joined the Marine Corps League in Gillette and belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
- h. I am a member of a small group at our local church, comprised of military veterans and family members. In addition to discussing recent sermons, we share resources, and talk freely about our experiences.
- i. I plan to visit Noel Blancaflor in Monterey, CA in March.

2. Updates on Full-time Chaplains.

MAJ Noel Blancaflor, moved from Group Chaplain at Barksdale B-52H Bomber Base at Bossier, LA to serve as Group Chaplain at Defense Language Institute at the Presidio in Monterey, CA. It is the Department of Defense's premier school for culturally-based foreign language training. Military members of all branches attend the school. On average, a student will spend seven hour/day, five days a week for 18 months learning a foreign language. They have 2-3 hours of homework every night. He and his wife, Julie, have run many races, including 4 half marathons. Kate (16) is preparing for her senior year. Megan (13) is venturing into new sports. DJ (11) has found a passion in playing drums. Noel's home address is 144 Luzon Road Seaside, CA 93955

MAJ Josh Metz spent a year studying Ethics and now has been assigned to teach ethics at the US Army Chemical School in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He also serves as Regimental Chaplain. His new address is 17010 Lensman Rd, St. Robert, MO 65584.

Juliana Leshner continues to serve as Chief of Chaplain Service at South Texas Veterans Health Care System, located in San Antonio, TX. She and her chaplains were very involved in ministering to the victims and survivors of Hurricane Harvey in Houston and the Sutherland Springs, TX Church shooting victims. In her Christmas card she noted that she had moved from her home, purchased in 2014 to an apartment close to her work. Her new address is 5114 Medical Drive, Apt. 1101, San Antonio, TX 78229.

Dana Logan continues to serve as Chaplain at Poplar Run at Stone Ridge Retirement. He also leads three part-time Chaplains serving at Towne Centre Community. He is an active member of the Myerstown Pastors' Group.

Bob Brown

GOING FORWARD:

This will be my last report to you as the Global Ministries Associate. Rather than chronicle all the changes, success and failures we have experienced over the past ten years, let me list what I think are the encouraging realities facing us as a Global Church.

1. We are cross-pollinating! Our international conferences, missionaries and local churches know more about one another, connect more with one another and are working more with one another for the sake of the Great Commission.
2. We are committed! Our international conferences and missionaries are committed to the Kingdom and to working together as the EC Church family. The one reoccurring conversation I have had with leaders and missionaries over the past ten years is the one where they tell me that God has brought them to work with the EC Church and even though it may be financially or professionally beneficial for them to work with another group or ministry, they're staying put until God tells them to move.
3. We are contributors! Whether we measure it in money given, materials provided or personnel placed, the EC Church family is a GENEROUS group of people who are contributing far and above expectations for the cause of Christ.

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4. We are compelled! The Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the opportunity for every person to be born-again by the Holy Spirit of God compels us to pray, give and go-making disciples of every nation. Although spiritual, cultural and other forces are trying their best to stop us, we won't quit until Jesus returns!

Carla and I have counted it a privilege to serve the global EC Church, our National Conference and the GMC. God has allowed us to work together with, to love, laugh, cry, rejoice, worship and walk with so many different people all over this world. We have repeatedly found that Jesus is the One who brings and keeps us together and that the EC family is a great place to call home! Please remember that this was and will continue to be a group project. We share our successes, struggles and failures together. Thank you so much for your personal support and various expressions of partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ over these past 10 years! We covet your prayers as we transition from the global arena to focus on Dixon Bethel EC Church, and northern Illinois. I want to make sure to express my sincere appreciation to Pat Strain who has given thirty years of her life and love to the mission efforts of the EC Church and the greater Kingdom of God! She is well loved and appreciated by our national and international EC family. I also want to publically express my appreciation to Bishop Bruce Hill for his personal and pastoral support and for his willingness and readiness to travel to and engage with our global Church. Last, but not least, I want to express deep appreciation to the staff at Church Center for their willingness to do whatever needed to be done in order to support and further the mission!

Randy Sizemore

KINGDOM EXTENSION

The following words were the header to my March 2018 NMT report:

Church Planting. Kingdom Extension. The same? Yes. No. Sort of. Confused yet? Don't feel bad if you are; we are too. As we floated out of our first year of settling into our new role as the Kingdom Extension Community – missional ministry resource – we were suddenly exposed to new ideas and ministries that are stretching our capacity to keep up.

Dinner Church. Is it a church? Or simply an outreach? If an outreach, at what point does it become a church? If a church, what are the marks of a church? If it might become a church, then does that make this kind of outreach a missional work? Please pray with us as we journey with our ministry peers as they journey with Jesus.

Since I penned those words, we have also discussed a similar collection of questions regarding a “virtual” church. Is it a church if there is no street address? What does “gathering as the Body” really mean? How far can we stretch that idea? What might this mean for the future of the Church, of the EC Church, of our local congregations?

In the end, I think we might find the future of the local congregation wandering away from the church grandma attended. Why? People have changed. The world around us has changed. And yet, the same mission stands before you and me as Christ followers . . . “go and make disciples.”

Let's talk! You and me. You and your leadership team. You and anyone more concerned with “go and make disciples” than they are with “must keep what we have no matter what.” The latter doesn't seem to be working for most of us. The former is downright scary. Maybe together, as we talk and pray and

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imagine something other than what we currently are struggling to keep afloat, we will find and embrace something new, something we've not done before. Maybe we will once again embrace God's redemptive mission for his creation . . . somehow wrapped up in reclaiming and re-envisioning the Great Commission for our current contexts.

KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY MEMBERS

(We are all listed in the National Conference Journal. Drop us an email or text, give us a call. As time allows – we all have day jobs – we will chat with you, brainstorm with you. Together, we can learn from each other, and then go and make disciples.)

Rev. Leslie Cool, Associate & Chair; Bishop Rev. Bruce Hill; Rev. Ronald Anderson, Mr. Andrew Brubaker; Rev. L. Allen Giles; Rev. Matthew Hill; Rev. Carlos Kelly; Mrs. Linda Miller; Rev. Adam Roberts; Mrs. Michelle Roberts; Rev. Timothy Seiger; Rev. Michael Snedeker; Rev. Byron Whitaker; Rev. Todd Wolfe.

Before you read the next section...keep in mind that some of our “church plants” continue to be listed as such for a variety of reasons. Some remain small/smaller yet continue to minister the gospel in their communities. We have refused to press them to charter before they have mastered the art of being a chartered church (e.g. submitting all the reports, adequate leadership, financial stability, etc.). Others are in transition – refocusing, considering mergers, relocating, or deciding how they fit in the EC world. The restarts will probably become something other over the next few months (may even have changed by the time you read these words). The several informal partnerships and missional works are either too new to relabel, still sorting out who they are, or pondering their next steps. Please continue to pray as we walk with pastors, leadership teams, and congregations eager to become what they need to be to effectively “go and make disciples” in their communities.

CURRENT KINGDOM PROJECTS

(CAPS SIGNIFY SOME FORM OF CURRENT BUDGET/FINANCIAL SUPPORT)

Currently . . . we are supporting and/or encouraging . . .

- **5 Planters and 6 Plants**
 - Ephrata, PA . . . House of Blessings (Abimael Montanez)
 - LANCASTER, PA . . . CHRIST HOUSE CHURCH (TIMOTHY KING)
 - Lehigh Valley, PA . . . Horizon (Robert Daneker, Jr.)
 - Pottstown area, PA . . . Journey53 (Richard Christman II)
 - York, PA . . . Iglesia Cristiana (Carlos Kelly)
 - YORK PA . . . THE NEXT STEP (Carlos Kelly & TIMOTHY KING)
- **2 Restarts / Revitalizations**
 - Slatington, PA . . . Trinity (Brian Kern)
 - TALLMADGE, OH . . . NEW DIRECTION (TIMOTHY REAM)
- **2 Informal Partnerships* / 5 Missional Works / 0 Potential Adoptions**
 - Lancaster, PA . . . Iglesia De Dios Ven A El (Luis Ramirez)
 - Millersville, PA . . . The Gathering (Juan Carlos Morales)
 - MOHNTON, PA . . . DINNER CHURCH (ROBERT SHUEY)
 - Palmerton, PA . . . Gaming Grotto (Christopher Bronico)
 - Reedsville, PA . . . LifeTree Café (Jeffrey Byerly)
 - Sinking Spring, PA . . . Fresh Expression Launches (Matthew Hill – Pastor of Missional Ministries)

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- SLATINGTON, PA . . . DINNER CHURCH (BRIAN KERN)
- WILLOW STREET, PA . . . VIRTUAL CHURCH (ADDISON ROBERTS)

*An “informal partnership” is just that, a loosely defined relationship between an established church and another church or church plant or church planter that is transitional or less precise than an adoption, plant or “out of that church” ministry. Some informal partnerships are based on use of space in a building; others involve overlapping ministry events. In the end, these partnerships may become more formal or will dissolve when the dust finally settles.

CHURCH PLANT/PLANTING UPDATES

Church Planting and Kingdom Extension conversations continue to shift as we walk with our missionally focused congregations. Instead of beginning by identifying location and planter, we’re often more concerned about mission, community needs and target audiences, AND options for new or fresh expressions of church. The location and planter concerns follow.

These pondering conversations have moved from “where can we start a new work?” to “how can we enhance what we are currently doing?” and/or “how can we better connect with our neighbors?” There is a subtle, or not so subtle, fear (is that the right word?) that if we’re not bigger or better or blossoming then we can’t plant churches. It’s the same fear that young couples face *until suddenly*, they’re pregnant. And then they usually manage to do just fine! What if your church is pregnant and you just don’t know? Maybe your first concern ought to be mission focus and discipleship rather than location, building and planter. Let’s talk!

We – DFDs and KEC – continue to keep in touch with our longer-in-the-field planters. Pray with us as we encourage these exciting ministries. Pray for them as they continue to touch lives.

KEC TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES (SPONSORED OR PROMOTED)

- **Fresh Expressions National Gathering 2018 and Exponential’s Live Stream Event**

Fresh Expression’s “From the Steeple to Street: Leadership in a New Mission Era” theme for this year’s gathering (3/16 – 3/17) was in Reston, VA. We were represented by leaders from Community EC, Sinking Spring.

Exponential’s 2018 theme was “Hero Maker,” focusing on the five essential practices of moving from hero (standing on the platform) to hero maker (building a platform for others). We held a local gathering (2/27) at Community EC. We discussed multiplication thinking, permission giving, disciple multiplying, gift activating and kingdom building.

One walkaway from these experiences is the need to create time and space for soul and ministry stretching conversations about pastoral, leadership, and church health as we look to consider next steps for our ministries.
- **Rooting for the Underdog: churches striving against the odds**

Barnabas Initiatives is a multid denominational group of church leaders (many members are denominational executives) looking to connect with and walk beside pastors of smaller churches. As a function of my KEA role, I have partnered with them to help make possible local (near clusters of smaller churches) gatherings for encouragement, resourcing, and healthy conversations. I have been part of two such events. Both were powerful. You will hear more from us about future events, as well as about other agencies providing similar support for the pastor of the smaller church.

Other KEC sponsored or promoted training and ministry conversations and events will be posted as they are developed. We desire to respond to our pastors and churches regarding their interests, needs, and opportunities, as well as stretch us toward more intentional Kingdom-focused endeavors. You can help us by letting us know what you need, or what you hear others discussing or asking about. Contact Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net).

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KEC COMMUNITY RESOURCING

Last year I spoke of the need to deepen and widen the discipleship network wherein we partner to journey together toward personal and corporate health and strength for serving our King. The idea of moving beyond a free-standing training event to life transformation teaching-learning experiences and conversations is still on our radar. We are discovering just how hard it is to make these kinds of events and connections happen. Pray with us as we continue the conversation that will lead us there.

EC PARTNERS NEWSLETTER

Issues of our Partners Newsletter continue to be developed and distributed. Focused on stories of missional ministries that are making a difference, we hope to inspire others to “try something new.” In addition to the stories, we provide resource suggestions (for discipleship, church health, and outreach/planting ministries) and suggestions on how to pray for our church planting initiatives.

We would love to hear your missional, Kingdom ministry story. Please pass your story or the contact info for an interview to Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net), KEC Associate. Les will make sure people hear your story!

KEA ON THE ROAD

Les continues to entertain conversations regarding Kingdom ministry ideas and models. One current focal point is sharing tools for recognizing your church’s gifts, skills, and strengths, as well as the needs of the community. The next steps involve imagining and developing bridges from the church to the community. This process enables a congregation to fulfill the Great Commission by obeying the Great Commandment.

Les continues to promote pastoral self-care and soul-care. Balancing life and ministry is not always easy, but is essential for long-term, effective ministry. Though we cannot “fix” leaders, we can and do seek to encourage our pastors and leaders to be proactive with their health.

KEC CONVERSATIONS

KEC members are currently discussing various ways the KEC can effectively support EC churches looking to engage new people groups, unreached people groups, in gospel conversations. Once again, we are finding ourselves stretched as we stare into the headlights of foreign (read: strange) ministry models. Most recently, we have watched the launch of two “dinner churches” hosted by our Mohnton and Slatington congregations. Rev. Shuey is building on a longstanding food pantry, while Rev. Kern is seeking a new connecting point with unchurched neighbors. We are also in the very early stages of walking with a virtual church being launched by Grace Community Church in Willow Street.

As your Kingdom Extension Community presses forward, know that our goal is to keep an eye on the mission – go and make disciples – while we seek to encourage and equip congregations to “love one another” and “love others.” These loving relationships are bridges into the lives of others, bridges across which the message of God’s love and grace and mercy might pass. Isn’t that what we are to be about?

We serve with an awareness of our need for your prayers for our ministry team, as well as for your faithful prayers and support for our church planting and missional initiatives. We are grateful for your support – hands and feet, skills and abilities, and faithful financial gifts. It is together that we will realize greater Kingdom impact.

For the privilege and opportunity we have to serve Christ’s Kingdom, our churches, and our planters, we thank you.

Rev. Leslie Cool

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MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

What a blessing to work with so many gifted people within the Ministerial Development Community. This community involves around 70 leaders, who are helping to walk with credentialed individuals in their development toward healthy ministry. Many of us realize the importance of such leadership when we consider the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:11-16. We read: *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service ...”*

But there is more! So much more! *“... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

When we consider this passage, we should ask the question: *Who doesn't want that for the church?* But there is another question we need to ask: *Why don't we see this more readily in the life of the church?*

At the 2017 National Conference, we passed the following profile for pastoral ministry in the EC Church:

Pastors in the EC Church must understand their own identity in Christ, as well as their calling and gifts in relation to the greater body of believers so that the church is engaged for the work of ministry in the 21st century. They must know how to interpret their cultural setting and properly communicate kingdom values and instructions from God's Word in order to form and lead healthy communities of believers.

They must be shaped by a character that reflects God's love in their lives through authenticity, patience, compassion, integrity, and spiritual fervor. They must participate in a disciplined life that reveals teachability, hospitality, forgiveness, and most of all how to disciple others into these same Christ-like character traits.

They must be able to effectively communicate the faith — what it looks like and how it works — within and beyond their community of believers, while also recognizing and discerning false claims to the Gospel. They must demonstrate a disciple's life through their own ways of living the faith — serving, directing, giving, listening, and laughing with others in order to cultivate and empower flourishing among the community of believers and make an impact on the greater community.

They must see God at work around them, enabling others to grasp hold of God's intentional love for them, and each person's own individual potential for ministry. They must not neglect the opportunities and threats in their midst, but rather reveal how God's kingdom intersects with the life of the church and their surrounding community.

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This new profile raises the bar on pastoral ministry. The process toward ordination should no longer be viewed as simply jumping through hoops—completing a degree and continuing three years in a church. We are taking the words stated in this profile with regard to knowledge, character, skill, and vision seriously. In other words, we are going to do as much as we can to provide our ministry applicants, candidates, pastors, deacons, and preachers with helpful training, constructive collaboration, and collegial support in order for them to strive for and reach their greatest potential in ministry. Ultimately, we will help them to meet the expectations found within this profile so that they can be ALL IN.

As the MDC and each of its component committees meet together, this profile will help to guide our thoughts and discussions around an agenda. We will do our best to hold to previous standards, while reaching upward toward the ideals generated from the profile. In order to accomplish these goals, we may face challenging and difficult decisions about our future in regard to some applicants' former expectations. But we will be gracious, yet firm in our allegiance to God's kingdom and his principles for ministry. We are ultimately doing this for the sake of our churches and for the kingdom of God.

Every time I meet with new applicants for ministry, I am excited to hear the stories of how God has been moving in their hearts and fashioning their thoughts. As I listen to their stories, I realize that I can only see the tip of the iceberg. I can't help but to think that there's lots of potential that has yet to be realized. I think of a tank that is ready for ministry, but still needs fuel. As the applicants apply themselves to the process as empty vessels, looking to be filled, their pursuit of ministry begins with proper preparation, investment, training, and connection in community. Each phase of the MDC process helps to fulfill the applicants' potential for ministry.



We are wrapping up our second season of the MDC, and we have good things to report. Here are some updates:

Applicants Coaching and PAC:

Al Giles continues to hold disciple-oriented online huddles with applicants for ministry as they prepare for the Pastoral Assessment Center experience. This past year, Al worked with nine men to prepare them for the 2018 PAC. Al utilized Cameron Smith from last year's PAC to help with this year's huddles in an effort to multiply the discipleship process. Additionally, we provided an introductory experience for the applicant couples.

As Al prepares individuals for PAC, he provides a background profile to the assessment teams that describes each applicant. Meanwhile, Kirk Marks enlisted about 20 assessors with vast experience in healthy pastoral ministry, including, but not limited to, men and women who are trained counselors, administrators, and leaders who oversee and participate in healthy pastoral restoration teams, to participate in the overall process. It is a well-seasoned team, whose core has worked well together for nearly two decades.

We make every effort for spouses to be present, because pastoral ministry does not possess normal boundaries that can be compartmentalized from our personal, family, and social relationships. Therefore, our view of pastoral ministry must examine the whole person (calling, character, and competency), in addition to such things as one's relationships, use of time, activities, trust, expectations, responsibilities, credibility, relational intelligence, and other criteria.

This year, we were faced with a new challenge due to the language barrier of the spouse of a Latino applicant. We provided an interpreter specifically for their interviews and evening program. We are pleased to report that this was a very helpful adjustment. Lastly, we are working to resolve issues surrounding a wife's absence due to work restrictions by using technology to include them in interviews and other important experiences at PAC. Although, this may help, there is no substitute for the applicant couple both being present and functioning together throughout the PAC process.

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Board of Examiners:

The Board of Examiners continues the work of interviewing applicants for ministry. We have held discussions around critical areas of Spanish-speaking applicants, candidates, and pastors, looking at educational discrepancies in order to solve them, clarifying our positions in terms of Gospel and Mission for our applications, and reviewing credentialing issues such as rules surrounding weddings, the process of restoration for surrendered credentials, and pastors serving non-EC churches.

We recently reviewed the anticipated applicants for ministerial credentials in early February, before interviewing them in April. We were able to segue information from the PAC process directly to all board of examiner personnel. We also reviewed some of the most recent disciplinary situations that involved the bishop and my intermediary actions.

As a result of some experiences this year, we are recommending changes in regard to privileges of assignment, applying for credentials following successful completion of the PAC process, and clarification to the sequence of the disciplinary and restorative sections in the Rules of Conference. Please take some time to review them.

Learning Community/Life Long Learning:

We hope to provide some traction this year in our development of a Center for EC Studies at Evangelical Seminary. Our whole church and her leaders are experiencing a large learning curve with the theological and practical implications of missional ministry. Each of our own pastors and applicants transferring credentials find themselves at differing points along that learning curve. It is in our best interest to educate and create dialogue about the importance of these concepts within our churches.

In light of this importance and due to some constraints that limit me personally to accomplish this goal, we have added a Learning Community Director, Rev. Joel Kime, to help launch and then oversee our courses within the Center for EC Studies. Joel will help to create and provide educational and training opportunities for new (and transferring) pastors. These courses would be developed to integrate pastors into our EC context regarding posture, ministry, and theological perspective. In other words, we would be helping to get our pastors onto the same page with us and moving them through the learning curve to do effective ministry in the 21st century. Joel will coordinate new class offerings with Evangelical Seminary personnel, select and resource EC instructors, and provide information to the greater EC world about these special offerings.

Coaching Community:

We are in the process of assigning coaches to all newly credentialed candidates and pastors. We are hoping to provide regular prompts to our coaches to promote frequency and flexibility in our coaching community. We are also realizing some oversights from previous years, where coaching assignments were not made. We hope to follow up with many of these individuals who may need coaching.

After this year's PAC experience, Rev. Charles Walker resigned as the Coaching Assistant. We want to thank Charles for his assistance in helping to provide training with Dr. Tim Roehl in 2016, to work as a Grip-Birkman coach during PAC, and to make coaching assignments over the past year-and-a-half. I am presently contemplating the assignment of a new Coaching Assistant in the near future as the Bishop and I prayerfully consider this long-term assignment.

We plan to provide another coaching training exercise this coming Fall with Dr. Tim Roehl. We are always looking for coaches to be trained and to walk with our newly credentialed individuals. If this is a ministry that you would consider, please contact me. I would love to hear your heart for helping in this area.

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Pastoral Health, Care & Restoration:

The work of health, care and restoration is critical within the overall culture for pastoral ministry in the EC Church. We are pleased to continue the conversation about these elements for helping our pastors experience rest, refreshment, and vitality in ministry. Rev. Gary Brown and I will be developing a regular schedule for meetings, which will help establish guidelines and create opportunities for education and training in restoration ministries so that we are seeing those requiring restoration finding help in their times of need.

CRITICAL ITEMS:

1. **EDUCATION:** I am continuing to bring conformity to the educational requirements. The challenge is helping individuals to understand that conversations are better to hold earlier in their credentialing process rather than after financially-impacting decisions are made. The greatest frustration is having individuals make unilateral decisions without seeking counsel to understand the available resources, and thus experience the poor consequences of their decisions. More education and awareness needs to occur for pastors, DFDs, and other church leaders to understand the overall process.
2. **COMMUNICATION:** Our goal is to provide several answers to burning questions within the credentialing process—such as pursuing a pastoral calling, understanding our credentialing system, PAC enrollment, coaching and learning community opportunities, and pastoral care resources.
3. **DIVERSITY IN CALLINGS:** We are beginning to hold discussions about the diversity of callings for ministry. When we look at the five-fold ministry of APEST (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers), we see a diversity of gifts that are not easily categorized into our current pastoral structure. As we observe how God is working in the midst of our churches and fields of ministry, we may need to consider how to expand our view of ministry and categories for ministerial credentials.



I look forward to the fruit that God's Spirit is bearing in our midst. God continues to call men and women for ministry in the EC Church. What a privilege to assist in the callings of these individuals as they produce their full potential for ministry in our midst in the decades to follow. As a denominational leader, I am ALL IN on helping everyone entrusted to my care to be ALL IN too!

On a personal note, I appreciate the support of the Bishop, the Associates, District Field Directors, and those on the MDC, as we implement changes for the improvement of ministerial credentialing. I also continue to ask for your support as leaders of the EC Church. May we see God's blessings in the days ahead for the faithful work we encounter now.

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly

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MISSIONAL ALIGNMENT

The Missional Alignment Community is to:

1. Discuss the latest missional alignment concepts—stirring the team’s thinking through reading books and exploring web-related resources together.
2. Discuss opportunities and solutions for missional alignment in our cultural setting.
3. Discuss issues derived from district cohorts concerning missional alignment.
4. Explore together missional alignment for congregations in our cultural setting.
5. Focus a segment of the National Conference gathering to missional alignment—providing a district or national level speaker as requested.

The Community is made up of four active committees:

Faith & Doctrine Committee

The committee has been asked to study a number of important subjects and consider preparing statements which would be of help to congregations and some of our other Communities and Committees.

These include:

- A statement concerning public discourse/protest; or to put it more positively, a statement on civility in discourse, both public and private.
- A position paper on what is meant when we say “the Gospel” to be used by the Board of Examiners when talking with candidates seeking credentials, if needed.
- A position paper on what is meant when we say “the Mission of God” to be used by the Board of Examiners when talking with candidates seeking credentials, if needed.

Heritage Committee

Progress is being made toward the planned renovation of the Church Center basement and the relocation of the Archives of the EC Church. Two stages of work are planned: the first stage, in which the basement will be renovated and the archives will be relocated as-is; and a second stage in which current shelving will be replaced by moveable shelving with larger capacity. Funding sources for the latter phase have tentatively been identified.

A task force is being organized to draft scripts for one or more series of videos to replace the old *Streams of Influence* video. These new videos will be able to be used in membership classes and other contexts.

Preparations for the publication of an English translation of Karl Heinz Vogt's book *Jakob Albrecht: Ein Ziegelbrenner Wird Bischoff* are underway. The most recent draft of the translation will be secured and reviewed by a native German speaker, after which sources familiar with relevant publishers will be consulted.

A process is to be formulated, after review of current professional standards, for collecting, processing, and preserving the official correspondence of denominational leaders (electronic and otherwise).

Nexus

Nexus continues to pursue opportunities to activate the E.C. Church's fifth core value of being united in the Body of Christ. In October, we hosted our fourth annual Clergy Fellowship Gathering, a time of refreshment, conversation, and prayer (and eating) to which we invite non-E.C. clergy and leaders. There have been repeated requests from our guests to increase the frequency of these gatherings. As Nexus exists not only to reach out to other Christian traditions but to promote unity within our own denomination, we have begun to discuss ways of intentionally fostering unity among our E.C. brothers and sisters. Nexus members continue to interact with local ministeriums and multi-denominational

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service organizations, and we encourage all E.C. pastors and lay leaders in their similar ventures. Those who are interested in joining Nexus should contact Gene Stevenson.

Prayer Mobilization Team

During the past eight to nine months the PMT has been working on a new strategy to mobilize prayer throughout the three regions of our conference. We have implemented what we call SWAT teams, which stands for Spiritual Warfare Advance Teams. A SWAT team consists of volunteer pastors and lay people who are willing to go to a church that is dealing with spiritual warfare issues to pray for them and with them.

So far, we have conducted SWAT gatherings at the Rosedale Church, the Union Salem Church, the Zion Church in Annville, and the Williams Valley Church. Each SWAT gathering is designed to meet the specific needs of the church as requested by the pastor. The gathering at the Williams Valley church included pastors from other churches in the Anthracite District.

We are currently working with the Allegheny District to set up a district-wide SWAT gathering and we have had some discussion about setting up a satellite PMT team for the purpose of planning future SWAT gatherings in the district; encouraging more congregational prayer, and using PMT resources [or other commercially available resources] to develop the overall prayer life of the churches in that district.

We are also in the process of planning SWAT gatherings in the Susquehanna District at the East Berlin Church, the Mt. Joy Church, and the Rosedale Church. We will be encouraging the District pastors and their prayer warriors to come to each of these SWAT gatherings.

We are continually looking for more pastors and lay prayer warriors to join the PMT to help us in this effort to mobilize prayer throughout our National Conference. We hope to be able to do more SWAT gatherings in the Great Lakes Region as those opportunities present themselves and to set up new satellite PMT teams if a particular district or region would find it helpful to do so. Finally, this process is not perfected; we are learning as we go.

Bishop Bruce D. Hill