

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 8 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 International 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.

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

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. Kaitinkap 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 3 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 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" 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 4 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.
 - 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.
 - a. 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
 - b. 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.

- c. Juliana Leshar 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.
- d. 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
Chaplain Endorser for the EC Church

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.
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 ten 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!

Submitted by,

Randy Sizemore
Global Ministries Associate