



## Evangelical Congregational Church

The CIT News is published by the CIT Team of the Evangelical Congregational Church so the members of National Conference can know about our progress in discovering the Lord's leading.

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### Intentions and Assumptions

As the Covenant Implementation Team (CIT) began to meet last fall, our first thoughts were turned toward the desire to serve God's Kingdom, our denomination, our churches, pastors and people well. After a season of prayer, we launched a discussion that materialized our beliefs and hopes for the outcomes during our ongoing team deliberations.

Here is a list of these assumed beliefs and hopes:

1) God will speak, 2) our goal is for the local church to be blessed and find fulfillment, 3) some things are worth keeping and some worth removing, 4) some things are nice and some things necessary, 5) personnel is critically important to structure, 6) structures need to move toward flexibility, and 7) pastors and churches will need to better understand and embrace their responsibilities and sacrifices.

Whether you agree or disagree with any or all of our stated beliefs and hopes, our prayer is that you will seriously under-

stand the difficult decisions we as a team have been facing. As a result, many of our conclusions on matters were not simple decisions; they have stretched us to imagine something new, as they will you. But we firmly believe, in light of our assumptions, they were decisions that are for the improvement of our churches, pastors and people and ultimately for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom. Therefore, we continually urge you to offer prayers for our benefit as we come together at National Conference. Thank you.

### The Puzzle Pieces & Implementation Dates

There are basically three pieces to the CIT plan puzzle:

- 1. Structural Changes**— We are looking to July 1, 2016 for the implement of the structural elements.
- 2. Affiliate Funding**— It is planned that the

- phase out of direct affiliate funding would begin with the 2016 National Conference budget which takes effect January 1, 2016.
- 3. Benefits Corporation**—If the members of the Benefits Corporation vote for the proposed changes



they too would go into effect on January 1, 2016.

## The Path To Transformation

Did you ever wonder how our denomination makes decisions, determines rules, amendments, and processes?

Currently, we have some groups that report to the National Ministry Team (NMT) and others that skip right over the NMT and report directly to National Conference. The main coordination between these groups falls to denominational leadership.

Over the years we have attempted to coordinate these various committees, commissions, and affiliated ministries so that the members of the National Ministry Team are

aware of what is coming to National Conference. During the NMT meetings, ideas and motions are shaped and prepared, then are discussed at Pre-Conference meetings and finally make it to a National Conference business session. This system has demonstrated an efficiency that can be observed at National Conference with less floor debate than in previous years.

It may seem that this recent system has served us well; yet there still remains some inefficiency and loss of innovation concerning ministry ideas among our churches. It is here that we'd like to consider the question: Is there a better path toward the transformation of our denomination into a movement of God? What if we could adjust our structure to open a better flow of communication

between districts, churches, and local leaders?

To better understand the move toward this structural recommendation, we must view several streams that will flow within the system. The disciple-making resource communities will be teams of pastors and lay leaders engaging with each other and sharing ideas and strategies with our districts and churches. This connection will provide the communities with topics for engagement, opportunities to sort through existing resources, and to understand the challenges on the field. They will also report their findings and initiatives through regular reports to the National Ministry Team.

The District Field Directors (DFD) will be working with their district teams, where they will be learning from one another and sharing joys and challenges along the way. The DFDs will bring these same discussions into the Conference Network Team, where 19 leaders are gathered.

The bottom line is not isolation and disconnection, but rather an increased sense of connection at various times and points throughout the structure—when we consider multiple touches, numerous contacts, and opportunities for many more people to speak into the work of our denomination, we are increasing the flow of communication from pastors and leaders within the decision-making process.

We then see National Conference an opportunity to enrich and encourage our local

churches by bringing our leaders together to engage with practitioners, theologians, and missiologists who can shape our thinking and empower our actions toward God's mission. Conference delegates are no longer going home knowing that we've dotted every "i" and crossed every "t", but instead leaving with practical ways to engage their world with the Gospel. As these thoughts and ideas are carried back to our churches, we trust the districts will also be stimulated to consider application and implementation of new and vibrant concepts. The local churches engaged within the district are supported and prayed for when new ministries flourish. As District Field Directors interact in the Conference Network Team, ministry is cross-pollinated into other districts. Associates also hear the reports and lead their teams to engage in this discussion, sending facilitators to promote the advancement of these concepts across the regions.

All these new ministries then flow back into the stream of the National Ministry Team for definition and clarification and if adjustments to rules are required they are brought to National Conference for adoption.

Our vision is to see a more fluid denominational structure that is more nimble, more efficient, and better equipped for the ministry in the 21st Century; where our churches, our pastors, lay leaders, and all the disciples of Jesus are better connected and prepared for serving the Lord.

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