



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.

***“We are poised now to embrace the calling to be the church for our generation and generations to follow!”***

# Covenant Implementation Team

# News

Volume 1 Issue 2

January 9, 2015

## It Starts With The Church

Just as psychology is the study of the mind and theology is the study of God, ecclesiology simply stated is the study of the church. Interestingly, the term used for church is the Greek word, *ecclesia*, which literally translates to mean *those who are called out*. These are the faithful followers of Jesus Christ who by their lives give allegiance to him (Ephesians 3:14-19), while pursuing and applying his teachings to their lives in order to live as citizens of his kingdom (Matthew 7:24).

As we view this backdrop for the church, some very clear concepts of identity and purpose emerge—we begin to understand who we are and what we do. We understand that we have been called out from darkness in order to live and breathe as a part of a body—to live as connected participants revealing God's glory together (1 Peter 2:4-10). In addition to this identity as

God's people, our lives are called into action for his purposes—we are called into a mission that reflects his glory to the world (2 Corinthians 3:18). This mission of God does not exist for the church as something to do; it exists as the natural outflow of our identity as God's people.

This is not some cleverly invented 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of the church for our day; it is rooted in the clear teachings of Paul's and Peter's understanding of the church. The Evangelical Congregational Church traces her heritage through movements that represented and manifested these distinguishing marks! We are poised now to embrace this same calling to be the church for our generation and generations to follow. To accomplish this, we need to see a clearer picture of church, address our weaknesses, and



adopt changes that will help us to engage our culture for Jesus Christ!

Although our recent financial conditions revealed the need to address our leadership roles and structure, we are convinced that the changes on the horizon are not solely defined by our limitations (especially in the financial area). Instead, we believe that God will use this time to reshape us as a denomination of churches for vibrant ministry to our communities—that we have opportunity now to re-evaluate what it means to be “called out people.” And we believe that the Evangelical Congregational Church can bond together in new ways to reveal God's glory to the world.

## What If National Conference Accomplished Something Better?

Some time in our history our forefathers thought it was a good thing to gather as conferences. At least for Albright's brethren, the purpose of such gatherings was important to advance the Gospel message into new territories. The Evangelical Association emerged onto the pages of history with a vibrant passion for lost souls and a powerful message to proclaim to the world. Some may look at our conference today and question, "Where is this passion?"

A better solution can be derived by asking two questions: How did we get here? And how can we get there—to passion—again?



How did we get here? The reality is that every organization goes through life cycles—birth with great passion and lots of chaos, followed by the need to organize the work, followed by a point of plateau, and then ultimately decline—reduction in resources, time, and energy until the organization goes out of existence. At some point, we as a denomination shifted from passion and celebration to organization and routine; we spent more time thinking about organizational rules and reports and less time thinking about our identity and God's

mission.

How do we get there? Did you ever wonder how it would feel for everyone to leave conference and sense that you're ready to engage your community with fresh and passionate opportunities to live the Gospel? What if most of our time was invested in hearing stories, receiving resources, gathering our folks together, and celebrating who we are and what God is doing? Ultimately, what if we could do National Conference better?



## The Covenant

**The mission of the Covenant Implementation Team is to discover how, together, we can make the four points of the Covenant adopted by the 2014 National Conference a reality in the daily life of the denomination.**

1. We will move to a regional shared ministry and leadership model without losing the ability to provide the essential functions of the Conference Minister office.

2. We will reevaluate our denominational relationships with affiliate ministries, particularly our direct financial support.

3. We will substantially reduce denominational operating expenses; the cost of providing essential administration, connectional ministry and support, and our current resource structure.

4. We will significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches over the next few years in response to the concerns of our churches, those struggling to pay their ministry funds and those paying increasingly larger amounts as they grow.

