

Evangelical Congregational Church

E.C. National News

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SUMMER/FALL, 2015

Bishop addresses Thirteenth National Conference



Bishop Bruce Hill delivered his annual Episcopal Address during the opening session of the Thirteenth National Conference of the E.C. Church at Messiah College, Grantham, PA on Wednesday, May 27. He spoke on the theme, “Community.”



The Bishop began by emphasizing the importance of “keeping our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:1). He added from I Peter 2:9 that Jesus has called us “a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, and God’s very own possession.” He continued, “We gather today not as a crowd, not a gathering of individuals, or a bunch of people, but a community of faith.”

Bruce commented that we live in a fragmented, frenzied world with too much to do and too many choices. We turn to technology for help, and if that doesn’t work, we can just “unfriend you.” The church, however, is counter-cultural. Community, “living in relationship with Him and each other,” is a core aspect, even when it would be easier to unfriend. He stated, “As chosen people, we can show the goodness of God lived out in real life.” He pointed out that in the near future, some will experience their faith through the internet, but a virtual

community won’t meet the needs of the human heart.

Bruce then asked, “What if we focused more on building relationships than numbers? What would the church be like if we became known as a people transformed by Jesus, a community who loved Jesus, love each other, and loved all those we came in contact with, as we lived out that transformed life?”

The Bishop challenged our traditional views of church membership, commenting that the word can focus on privilege rather than responsibility: “We need to participate in the one another, giving more thought to Jesus and us than Jesus and me.” He gave the example of exploding church growth in Africa and Asia, wondering if it comes from their “deep relational aspect.”

Bruce expressed his gratitude that “many of our churches are serving and living out community.” He observed that this is especially evident in Liberia, Mexico, Nepal, Japan, and India. He also cited several churches that have ceased to exist, but have channeled resources into new ministries.

Continuing, the Bishop compared our culture to that of Corinth. “The people are intelligent, successful, comfortable, and morally corrupt. That’s where we live.” In anticipation of the upcoming Supreme Court’s ruling on same-sex marriage, Bruce had signed the “Brief of Major Religious Organizations,” which upheld traditional marriage and expressed concern for the endangering of religious liberties. The document was submitted to the Supreme Court. He added that a positive result of the issue is that, as a church, we will more clearly define who we are. “Cultural Christians” are giving way to “Convictional Christians.”

Bruce reminded the Conference that they would be considering the four recommendations of the Covenant Implementation Team: move to a regional shared ministry and leadership model, re-

evaluate our denominational relationships with affiliate ministries, substantially reduce denominational operating expenses, and significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches. He recognized the challenges of moving forward and expressed gratitude for the hard work of the team.

The Bishop addressed the meaning of belonging to a denomination. During our early formative years, it was stated that the denomination should be organized as "a voluntary association of like-minded believers." He added that during the General Conference of 1928, a committee was appointed to assure there would be both "congregational independence and connectional interests." He stressed the importance of commitment to the connectional, particularly in contributing ministry funds.

Bishop Hill concluded: "I clearly believe local congregations are at the forefront of the Kingdom. We are community; His community. Think about how God refers to Israel or the Church in scripture. They aren't a bunch of people - they aren't a crowd. Over and Over again, God calls them 'My people.'"

Following the address, Rev. Robert Mavis, chairman of the Episcopacy Nominating Committee, presented Rev. Bruce Hill for re-election. The Conference elected him to a second term.

Bike tour raises funds for Liberia

On June 3, Ralph Owens, pastor at Royersford, PA Trinity, and his friend, Steve Lockhoff, set out on a 2,700 mile "Help Liberia Bike Tour." Seattle was the starting point, and St. Louis was to be the final destination.



Goal of the journey was to raise \$20,000 to purchase a heavy-duty, four-wheel drive truck to transport supplies and a response team to the interior of

Liberia to help combat the Ebola virus. Although new cases are not being found in

urban and coastal areas, more remote regions are still being affected.

Unfortunately, while in Montana and Colorado, Steve suffered from altitude sickness, and the journey had to be called to a halt in early July. The pair had intended to ride throughout the month.

Funds continue to come in, and as of July 16, had reached \$3,909.00. Contributions may be sent to the Global Ministries Commission. For more information, call 1-800-866-7584.

Urbana conference announced

Urbana 15, "one of the largest missions conferences in the world," will take place December 27-31 in St. Louis, Missouri. The conference is a function of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and is open to any interested persons. For more information, go to www.urbana.org.

Discipleship event slated

A "Missional, Disciple-making, Intensive Experience" will take place September 24-26 in Columbia, MD. For more information, contact Pastor Al Giles at 610-389-5857 or pastoral@ptd.net

Camps announce fall retreats

"Make a Joyful Noise," complete with homemade instruments, is the theme for Camp ECCO's **women's retreat**, Friday through Sunday, September 18 to 20. Cost is \$60. Registrations should be sent to Nettie Campbell, 458 Seventh Street, Struthers, OH 44471.

Seventh grade through college-age youth are invited to a **youth retreat** at Camp ECCO Friday through Sunday, October 16-18. "How do you Measure Deep?" is the theme. Cost is \$25. Contact Bob McGinnis at bmcginnis@huntertrucksales.com or 724-791-2519.

A **men's retreat**, also at Camp ECCO, will take place Friday through Sunday, October 2-4. The men will view and discuss the "Authentic Manhood" video series. They will also participate in a golf scramble and "Tin Man Contact" and enjoy Chuck Campbell's famous grilled steaks. Registrations should be sent with \$55 to Jim Beltz, c/o First E.C. Church, 360 Woodsdale

Avenue, Akron, OH 44301 by September 20.
Jim's email is jimb54@me.com.

FALL RETREATS

Camp ECCO is located near Carrollton, OH. The boy's dorm was recently enlarged and air-conditioned.

Rock River Bible Camp's sixth annual **Chick Fest** will be held Friday through Sunday, October 16-18. Women ages 18 and up are welcome. Registrations with \$40 should be sent to Wendy Dietmeir, 507 Ridge Road, Orangeville, IL 61060 by October 9. For more information, call Wendy at 815-789-4740 or Rhonda Giedd at 815-563-4933.

High school freshmen through college freshmen are invited to **BOND (Build on New Determination)** weekend at Rock River Bible Camp Friday through Sunday, October 23-25. Cost is \$40. To register go to www.rockriverbiblecamp.org. For details contact Rich Graham at asa100f8@comcast.net or 815-291-1440.

RRBC is located near Dixon, IL.

Twin Pines Camp, Stroudsburg, PA is offering a variety of retreats throughout the fall. The camp's annual Celebration Banquet will take place at the Good 'N' Plenty Restaurant in Smoketown on Tuesday, October 20. For more about Twin Pines call 570-629-2411 or go to www.twinpines.org

Pray for the Persecuted

Sunday, November 1 has been designated International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Free downloadable video and other resources from Voice of Martyrs are available at www.persecution.com. Phone is 1-800-747-0085.



Family News

Weddings



Megan Amberman, daughter of missionaries, Randy and Chrisanne Amberman, married **Terry Claus** on August 2. The wedding took place at First Baptist Church, Kirtland, NM, with Pastor Brett Puckett officiating.

Andrew Friedlund, son of Pastor John and Kathy Friedlund, Boyertown PA Trinity, married **Jenna Stutzman** on August 8. The wedding took place on the Stutzman family farm, with the father of the groom officiating.

Retirement

During National Conference, **Rev. Alfred Miller** and wife, Linda, were recognized for retirement. Rev. Miller had been serving First E.C. Church, Lebanon, PA.

Graduations

Pamela Walck, daughter of Pastor Phil and Ellen Walck of Ephrata, PA Grace, recently earned a PhD in journalism from the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University, Athens. Her dissertation was "Reporting America's Colour Problem." She recently began teaching at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

Matthew Friedlund, son of Pastor John and Kathy Friedlund, Boyertown, PA Trinity, graduated from Yale Divinity School on May 18. His degree is Master of Arts and Religion in Ethics and Business.

Amber Owens, daughter of Pastor Ralph and Connie Owens, Royersford, PA Trinity, graduated from The Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School at the Forum in Harrisburg.



Ordination

Rev. Michael Campbell, pastor of Faith E.C. Church, Bair, PA, was ordained in his own church on August 23. Speaker was Dr. Kenneth Miller of Evangelical Seminary.

Bishop Bruce Hill, assisted by Conference Ministers, Gordon Lewis and Gary Kuehner, conducted the ordination ceremony. Michael's wife is Darby Jo.

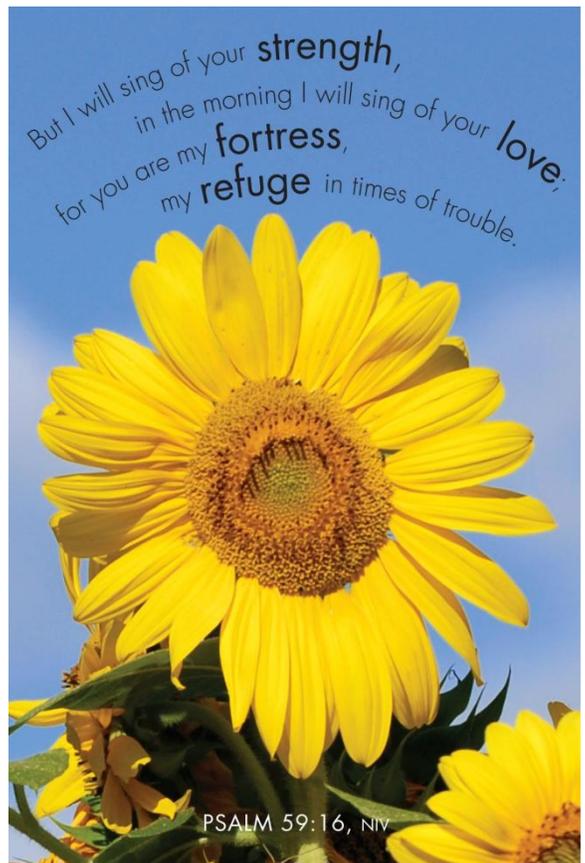
Remembering loved ones...



John Rittle, 91, a former Lay Delegate from Annville, PA Zion, passed away on April 26. He was employed as an office manager at Ladd-Hanford, Inc. He is survived by wife, Charlotte, and son, Timothy, Zion's current Lay Delegate. He was preceded in death by son, John, a former pastor at Zion. (We apologize that this was omitted in the last edition.)

Rev. J. Richard Weidman, Sr., 75, pastor at Pleasantville, PA Bethany, passed away on June 22. "Pastor Rich" also taught at Reading Bible Institute, worked as customer service representative for the Manning Company and drove a school bus. His home was in Douglassville. He is survived by wife, Jane; son, Rev. John Richard Weidman, Jr.; and daughter, Connie Dee.

Rev. Melvin Stehr, 92, Pastor Emeritus of Pequea, PA E.C. Church, passed away on July 14. He served several other E.C. Churches, as well as New Holland United Church of Christ. He was also chaplain of the New Holland's Lions Club and several hospitals and nursing homes. He was a member of the Columbia Watch and Clock Association. Rev. Stehr is survived by wife, Sadie; daughter, Carol; and twin daughters, Lois and Linda.



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