

Evangelical Congregational Church E.C. National News

100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067
1-800-866-7581 www.eccenter.com

SUMMER 2017

BISHOP ADDRESSES FIFTEENTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Bishop Bruce Hill delivered his annual Episcopal Address during the opening session of the Fifteenth National Conference of the EC Church at Messiah College, Grantham, PA on Wednesday, May 24. He focused on the Conference theme, “**Press On**,” based on Philippians 3:13 and 14: “*I focus on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead. I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus is calling us.*” The Bishop stated, “*God is still on a mission to redeem His creation, and He calls us to join Him.*”



Bruce reviewed his question of last year, “What if National Conference accomplished something better?” He explained that to our forefathers, “conference” was more a verb than an institution, as they gathered for the purpose of resourcing the advancing of the Good News.

The Bishop described changes that would be evident this year. A more relaxed schedule would be followed. Thursday afternoon would feature a “Kingdom and Community Experience” to interactively discover the resources available to our churches through denominational Communities. Times of worship and celebration would be expanded.

He announced that the Wednesday evening service would be a celebration of our churches in Mexico becoming a National Conference, the Evangelical Congregational Church of Latin America.

Bruce continued, “Over the past years, we have rightly spent a lot of time looking at our denomination’s structure, but that’s finished! Now we direct our focus and energy at the mission...while it looked good on paper, the theory was sound. I find great encouragement in seeing it lived out...”

The Bishop expressed gratitude to those who work with him. These included Brenda Long, who was present at her last Conference as a full-time Administrative Assistant, as well as Assistant, Jodi Earhart. He also recognized the Community Associates, the District Field Directors, and all the Church Center staff. He made special mention of his wife, Gloria, commenting, “She continually amazes me.”

Bruce stated that he is concerned for pastors, who “are often under spiritual attack,” emphasizing that districts must focus on pastoral health. Detriments to that health are the thinking, “I can do it all,” and “never unplugging.”

In regard to stationing, Bruce reported that the work has continued long past the tradition “season.” After many conversations, Shawn Morgan began service at Fern Trinity in PA, and Bill White became pastor at Akron Cottage Grove in Ohio. Bruce added that stationing bi-vocational pastors is complicated, adding that they are much needed and are not part-time. Several small churches remained in need of pastors.

He pointed out, “Whether congregations are large or small, none of us can simply continue as we have in past generations...all our churches will need to be open to alternate opportunities, which may come through merger, partnerships, other connections, and cooperative district ministries. “...Never forget that what we do in our local churches has consequences that have a wide and eternal impact...”

The Bishop shared his excitement about the recent Pastoral Assessment Center as “one of the best I have ever been a part of...if that is the quality of pastors and



wives the Lord is bringing us, we have a good future in becoming the movement of God so many of us have longed and prayed for.” He urged the support of our camps and seminary as they impact future ministers.

Bruce challenged the Conference, “If the church is going to impact our neighborhoods with the Good News about Jesus, we must stop playing defense. It’s time to play offense—to ‘press on.’ Stop worrying, and get to work.” He added that statistics about the unreached indicate that we have pushed the “pause” button instead of the “on” button.

He recalled that the E.C. Church was “founded on a missional distinctive—to reach the unreached; and at that time, there were lots of German-speaking people that no one was reaching nor serving. The context was not institutional, but relational.”

“Our goal is not to teach people about Jesus,” he stressed. “The mission is focused on being something, a devoted disciple of Jesus. Disciple-making is about following, implementing, and actively living out the will of God in every aspect of our lives.”

The Bishop concluded, “In order to become a disciple-making movement of God, we must take the long view. I would love to give you the easy fix, but it doesn’t exist. But there’s no greater calling than the one Jesus gives us—to go and make disciples.”

“Therefore, ‘I focus on this one thing...’”

Vice-chair, Rev. Gary Brown called for a motion to adopt Bishop Hill’s address as “a word of exhortation and encouragement with a little rebuke.” Conference Secretary, Kirk Marks, made the motion. The Conference received it with applause.



SEMINARY HOUSES NEW CHURCH

The Concordia Lutheran Mission, a new Missouri Synod congregation has been meeting in Christ Hall of Evangelical Seminary, Myerstown since January of 2016. Pastor Adam Koontz of Lititz explains that there were few Missouri Synod churches in that part of the state, one in Lancaster County and one in Mechanicsburg. Both had a few members in Lebanon County who had expressed the need for a church closer to their homes.

At first, services were held once a month. The congregation now meets at 4:00 p.m. every Sunday, with fellowship hour after the service. Koontz describes the church as evangelistic, conservative, and traditional in worship. The core group is small, but is working at making

their ministry known in the community.

Rev. Koontz also serves Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Lititz. His wife is Jen, and the couple has four children.

(Source: Myerstown Area Merchandiser, November 30, 2016)



CHURCHES OF MEXICO BECOME NATIONAL CONFERENCE

A highlight of National Conference was the Wednesday evening action of granting our 11 churches in Mexico National Conference status.

The Mexican churches have adopted the title, the Evangelical Congregational Church of Latin America, indicating their desire to reach beyond their borders.

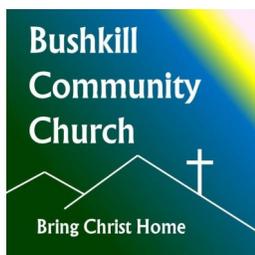
The new Conference was represented by Field Leader, Rev. Elias Martinez and wife, Myrna, and Rev. Juan Zuniga and wife, Rosalba (Rosie).

Our Conference acknowledged this important step with a standing ovation. Rev. Martinez brought the evening message on the theme, “Press On.”

A Global Ministries delegation will visit Mexico from July 28 to 31 to celebrate the churches’ new status. They will also install Rev. Zuniga to be the new Superintendent as Rev. Martinez steps down. The group consists of Bishop Bruce Hill; Director, Randy Sizemore and wife, Carla; Rev. Carlos Kelly, translator; Jerry Virtue, chairman of the Great Lakes Work Team; and Mike Reinders, chairman of the Latin America Committee.



BUSHKILL CHURCH FINDS A HOME



Since 2001, Bushkill Community Church of Pike County, PA has reached out to its community through worship, children's ministries, and community events without a building of its own. The congregation of about 20 families recently purchased a foreclosed restaurant

for \$70,000.

Pastor Paul Miller comments, "We are confident that we will grow once we convert the building into a church facility. God had already removed several obstacles, and we are very energized about finally having a place to call home."

The church's giving covers the mortgage, utilities, and ministry expenses. A loan from the EC Loan and Investment Fund is covering studies, approval, permits, and the start of renovations.

These include creating a classroom and office; installing new entry doors, flooring, and lighting; and painting. An expanded worship area will seat around 75. The roof and foundation are sound, and the building's systems are in good condition.

The building is in a strategic location on Bushkill Falls Road, across from the Post Office and in view of those driving to and from the North Campus of the East Stroudsburg School District. Bushkill Falls, "The Niagara Falls of Pennsylvania," is a nearby tourist attraction.

Those wishing to join the effort may contact Rev. Miller at revpjmill@outlook.com; www.facebook.com/BushkillCommunityChurch, 570-242-7499, or PO Box 1205, Bushkill, PA 18324. He adds, "Your gift will bless many lives as we continue to share the love of Jesus in a community that needs Him so much."



DELIGHTFUL CHURCH IS 165

Delightful EC Church, Southington, Ohio celebrated its 165th anniversary on Saturday, May 20. The community was known as Pleasant Hill from the 1850's until 1880. When Rev. James A. Garfield stopped at the spot to rest while on a preaching tour, he commented, "What a delightful place." When Garfield was elected President, the community adopted the name.

The Church began as The Evangelical Association at Bowmansville in 1852. Dr. J.C. Bowman and his wife were the first members, with meetings held in their home and a schoolhouse. The first church was built in 1854, followed by a second building named Calvary Evangelical Church, in 1872.

The current building was erected in 1895, with the name, Grace United Evangelical. In 1922, the congregation joined the E.C. Church and became Delightful Evangelical Congregational Church. This year also marks the 95th anniversary of the E.C. affiliation. Over the years, several phases of improvement and expansion have been completed.

The church is known for being mission-minded, with retired missionary, Jane Heck, coming from its rank. The Ladies' Aid Society is the oldest organized group, with a 120-year history.

The celebration included a display of many photos, lunch, and an afternoon service. Bishop Bruce Hill brought the Sunday morning message. Rev. Charles Campbell is current pastor. He is assisted by wife, Annette.



RIVERHILL CHURCH RECOVERING FROM FLOOD DAMAGE

When flash floods hit western Pennsylvania in mid-June, the Riverhill Church in Shippensburg sustained \$15,000 in damage to its lower level and parking lot. Five-thousand dollars from insurance helped with some of the repairs, and the congregation saved money by doing much of the work themselves.

In addition, sister churches in the Allegheny District and beyond sent love offerings, totaling \$1,200. The church is now \$2,000 away from covering expenses in full. Pastor Terry Jacobs states, "We are so touched by those who worked, prayed, and gave."



FAMILY NEWS

Anniversaries

Bishop Emeritus, Rev. Richard Kohl and wife, Mary, celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on June 15. They were married in 1957 in Olivet E.C. Church, Bethlehem, PA. Their children are Rick, Debbie, and Mary Beth. They reside in Ladson, South Carolina.



Retired pastor and Conference Superintendent, Rev. John Ward and wife, Carolyn, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 17. They were married on June 10, 1967 at Knox Grace E.C. Church. Their children are Stephan, Christy, and the late Jim. They live in the Knox-Ninevah Community.

Birthday

David Roland, who served as our Conference Attorney for many years, celebrated his 90th birthday on May 7. He lives in Oley, PA.

Omission

In reporting Stephen Holubec's 100th birthday in the last edition, we failed to mention that he is a member of Trinity EC Church, Royersford, PA.

Retirements

Pastoral couples honored for retirement during National Conference are...

Chaplain Joel

Copeland and wife, Brenda.

Joel was Chief of Chaplaincy Service at the VA Medical Center in Lebanon, PA.

Rev. Layman Kennedy and wife, Cindy, from Faith EC Church, Harrisburg, PA.

In addition, **Rev. John Tornfelt** retired from Grace Community, Willow Street, PA where he was assistant pastor. Wife is **Deborah**.

Recognition

Pastors receiving special recognition at Conference were...

Rev. Wil Martin and Rev. Gary Luckenbill (retired), fifty years of holding EC credentials.

Rev. Robert Dunbar, St. James EC Church, Dixon, IL; **Rev. Cameron Smith**, Plymouth Meeting EC Church, Plymouth Meeting, PA; and **Rev. William White**, Cottage Grove EC Church, Akron, OH; receiving first-time credentials.

Retirement Note

Mark Micklos, retired pastor in Knox, PA has been leading a men's Bible study in a barn since March. Around seven attend regularly. Mark reports "good participation and openness to the Word and prayer." One of the men recently honored Mark by giving him a knife with his nickname, "Padre," engraved on the blade.

Remembering loved ones...



Martha Jane Wolcott, 91, wife of retired pastor, Rev. Robert Wolcott, passed away on March 31. Her home was in New Ringgold, PA. She was a member of Bethany EC Church, Tamaqua, PA. Martha taught Good News Clubs and Sunday School, played the piano, and supported mission work. In addition to her husband, she is survived by sons, Timothy (retired pastor), Joel and Matthew; and daughters, Priscilla, Rebecca, Esther and Elizabeth.

Linda M. Miller, 67, wife of retired pastor, Rev. Alfred Miller, passed away on June 10. She lived in Lebanon, PA and was a member of Zion EC Church in Annville, PA. She worked for the US Postal Service. Linda was known as a storyteller and taught Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Good News Club. She also sang in choirs and at special events. In addition to her husband, she is survived by daughters, Leona and Angela; and sons, Paul and Jeffrey.



Ann Brown, Editor
402 Walnut Street, Emlenton, PA 16373
Gary1780@juno.com
724-750-0010
