

2026-2027 DISTRICT HANDBOOK



Evangelical
Congregational Church



The Evangelical Congregational Church

Purpose:

The purpose of the Evangelical Congregational Church is to know Christ and to make Him known.

Mission of EC Districting:

Congregations partnering with congregations to build God's Kingdom by bringing the lost to Christ.

Core Values:

1. **PASSION FOR CHRIST** as demonstrated by our commitment to the authority of the Bible, the centrality of prayer and the pursuit of holiness.
2. **COMPASSION FOR THE LOST** as demonstrated by evangelism and acts of mercy on a local, national and global scale.
3. **SERVANT LEADERSHIP** as demonstrated by the training and development of men and women for mission and ministry.
4. **HEALTHY MINISTRIES** as demonstrated by changed lives through culturally sensitive churches and denominational institutions.
5. **UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST** as demonstrated by the networking of churches with the Evangelical Congregational Church and the larger Kingdom of God.

Vision:

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a dynamic movement of God that is led by pastors and laity who have a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost.

We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them.

Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities. Interdependence will be the distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church as local churches network with one another and ministries beyond the E.C. family to proclaim the Gospel to the world.

Defining the District

We have defined a denomination as a group of congregations that share the conviction that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is best fulfilled through partnership. The Evangelical Congregational Church is a partnership of congregations, committed to proclaiming Christ to a hurting world.

The question is: “How do we organize different local congregations to effectively, efficiently, and expeditiously fulfill the Great Commission?” The answer arrived at is “DISTRICTING”.

A DISTRICT is formed when congregations in a particular geographic area are organized to fulfill the Great Commission. The rationale for ‘DISTRICTING’ is as follows:

1. God has strategically placed Evangelical Congregational Church congregations in a variety of geographical districts.
2. God wants to change the people and the communities of these districts and He wants to use the E.C. Church to effect that change.
3. Fulfilling God’s will for a district requires teamwork. District teamwork is defined as congregations partnering with congregations to build God’s Kingdom in a particular geographic area.
4. The “Districting model” is a Biblical model that can be used by God to bring the Evangelical Congregational Church to complete unity “to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:23)
5. God is already at work through regional networks of churches that cross denominational lines in the interest of making Christ known to every household in a particular geographic area (e.g. city, township, county, etc.). Evangelical Congregational districting does not compete with nor replace these regional networks. Evangelical Congregational districting will complement and strengthen the work of regional networks.

To summarize:

The most important word in a district’s vocabulary is “lost”. The district has been raised up by God to reach lost people (or pre-Christian people) in a particular geographic area. The district must not become a “mini-conference” where denominational politics are debated. It must not become a tradition bound institution that focused on serving the saved. It must be a local movement of God that prays for, cares or, and shares Christ with men, women, youth and children who do not know Christ.

We believe that “districting” is a Biblical model* that God will bless and use to enable the Evangelical Congregational Church to be mission driven and realize her vision of becoming a movement of God. Our congregations have been intentionally organized into districts with respect to geographic boundaries and in consultation with congregational leaders. The assignment of congregations to districts will be recommended by the Conference Network Team of the National Conference and approved by the National Conference. The name of a district will be selected by the pastors and lay leaders of that district.

District boundaries will be reviewed every five years by the Conference Network Team. The next review will take place in 2021. Recommendations for changes will be submitted to the congregations affected by the change, as well as to the National Ministry Team, and the National Conference. Requests by churches for changes in district assignment may be submitted by the District Field Director to the Conference Network Team during the first six months of that year.

* the church of Antioch was not one Congregation, but a “district” just as the Church in Judea

District Leadership Team

The districts will be accountable to the Conference Network Team who will work through a District Leadership Team to serve district needs. The District Leadership Team will consist of a District Field Director and a secretary, and the pastoral and lay representatives to the National Ministry Team. The District Field Director will be appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the pastors of the district. The secretary will be appointed by the District Field Director. The National Ministry Team representatives will be elected by the District Ministry Team.

In the event that a District Field Director is not available, the district may be placed under the care of an interim District Field Director. An effective and active District Leadership Team is essential for providing each district with vision, direction, motivation, and momentum. The Leadership Team is intended to take the initiative and be proactive in its approach.

DISTRICT FIELD DIRECTOR

Ministry Objective: To assist pastors and churches in reaching their potential in carrying out the Great Commission in cooperation with the Bishop's agenda/direction for the EC Church.

Desired Abilities:

- Must be a credentialed elder
- Relational
- Spiritual
- Leader
- Team Player
- Able to lead a team
- Able to resolve issues
- Communicates well

Essential Functions:

1. Educate:
 - a. Communicate denominational vision.
 - b. Communicate the various resources and opportunities available to pastors and churches.
2. Encourage:
 - a. Build relationships with pastors and churches.
 - b. Give basic pastoral care to pastors and facilitate more advanced care.
 - c. Facilitate communication/interaction between the pastors & churches in the region to foster a team/family mentality.
3. Equip:
 - a. Facilitate resources available to pastors and churches.
 - b. Facilitate opportunities for evangelism, discipleship, church health, etc.
4. Evaluate:
 - a. Personnel
 - i. Provide accountability for credentialed personnel within the district.
 - ii. Shall communicate with the Bishop, Conference Network Team, district personnel, and district churches concerning accountability issues as necessary.
5. Churches
 - a. Responsible for basic church health assessment for churches in the district.

Time Commitment: 10-15 hours per week depending upon the number of churches served

Accountability Relationship:

- Bishop
- Conference Network Team

Election / Selection / Evaluation: Vacancies in District Field Director will be filled by appointment of the Bishop in consultation with the pastors of the district and subject to National Ministry Team approval. No term or limit. Reviewed bi-annual by the Bishop. Serves at the discretion of the Bishop.

DISTRICT SECRETARY

1. Appointed by the District Field Director.
2. Pastors and laity who are members in good standing of the Evangelical Congregational Church are eligible to serve.
3. Term is five (5) years with a limit of three consecutive terms.
4. No remuneration.
5. Responsibilities:
 - To record the minutes of district meetings and distribute them to district leaders/members.
 - To prepare an annual report of district activities that will be submitted to the Conference Network Team.
 - To maintain the financial records of the district.

District Ministry Team

The District Field Director will lead the meetings of the District Ministry Team composed of the active and retired pastors of the district who are credentialed by the Evangelical Congregational Church and two lay leaders from each of the district congregations. One of the lay leaders shall be the lay delegate of the congregation. The lay delegate will be selected in accord with the congregation's by-laws and the *Discipline*. The second lay leader will be appointed by the pastor in consultation with the governing body of the congregation. The second lay leader will serve as an advisory member of the governing body of his/her congregation. The lay leaders must possess a passion for Christ, and a compassion for the lost, and be recognized leaders in their congregation.

Advisory members may be added to the District Ministry Team with the consent of team members. Evangelical Congregational Church communities or institutions may appoint district representatives who will serve as advisory members of the team.

Connecting the District and the Denomination

Conference Network Team

Purpose: The Conference Network Team is an organizational unit within the denominational framework that is designed to provide counsel and encouragement to Evangelical Congregational leaders and to assure that our church's ministries are working together in unity to realize our denominational vision. It develops denominational initiatives, provides guidance in matters of accountability for EC credentialed personnel, and can make formal recommendations to denominational bodies.

Chair: Bishop

Members:

- Bishop
- Church Health Associate
- Global Ministries Associate
- Kingdom Extension Associate
- Ministerial Development Associate
- District Field Directors
- Executive Director (advisory)

National Ministry Team

Every district will be represented on the National Ministry Team. Districts will select one pastor and one lay delegate to serve on the National Ministry Team which will meet between the sessions of the National Conference. The terms of National Ministry Team members from districts will be five years with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Each district has the authority to elect one alternate pastoral delegate and one alternate lay delegate to the National Ministry Team. The alternate delegates will attend only when the regular delegates are unable to do so.

How to nominate and elect National Ministry Team representatives:

1. The District Leadership Team (DLT) shall appoint a nominating committee to secure nominations for the pastoral and lay representative positions. The DLT may choose to serve as the nominating committee rather than appointing a separate committee.
2. The nominating committee shall recruit nominees from among the voting members of the National Conference. The potential pool of nominees shall include all active National and Local Itinerant Elders, as well as those holding Local Pastor, Local Elder, or Licensed Pastor credentials and are assigned by the Stationing Committee to a charge, and lay delegates.
3. The number of nominees is not designated nor is it restricted. Nominations may be made from the floor provided that the nominee is present and consents to the nomination.
4. The members of the District Ministry Team (DMT) shall elect the representatives from a ballot supplied by the nominating committee. The DMT is defined as all licensed and ordained pastors (active and otherwise) of the district as well as the lay delegates and second lay leaders representing the churches of the district.

5. A simple majority of the number of members present and voting shall be needed to elect representatives.
6. The results of the election shall be reported to the Bishop within one week so that the membership of the National Ministry Team can be determined.
7. In the event that a representative resigns from the position and an alternate has not been elected, a temporary representative may be appointed by the DLT until the next regular meeting of the DMT when a slate of nominees shall be presented (following the above procedures) and a new representative is elected to fill the unexpired term.
8. Alternate members may also be elected following the procedures set forth in #1-6.

Responsibilities of a National Ministry Team Member

1. To attend the National Conference (NC) meeting in late May and the National Ministry Team (NMT) meetings as scheduled. Teleconferencing may be available for special NMT meetings only. If the member cannot attend, he or she should notify the alternate member and assist the alternate member in making arrangements to attend.
2. To prepare for the meetings of the NMT by reading the reports provided by the various communities, committees, and institutions of the E.C. Church. The NMT will also evaluate the implementation of NC actions and carry out NC decisions as directed to do so by the NC.
3. A significant focus of the NMT will be an ongoing evaluation and implementation of the purpose, mission, values and vision of the denomination among its member congregations and districts.

Annual Reports

District secretaries will submit annual written reports of the district's work. These reports will be submitted to the Conference Network Team by the District Field Director.

Resolutions

Districts may bring resolutions to the National Conference for consideration and adoption. The procedure for resolutions resulting in amendments to the rules of the denomination can be found in the National Conference rules, Par. 316, and is as follows:

Resolutions. Congregations wishing to propose a change to the denominational program or polity must present the proposal to their district. If a majority of the District Ministry Team agrees with the proposal, the district may bring a resolution to the National Conference for consideration and adoption.

*Resolutions which would result in changes to the **Discipline** will be processed as amendments and must be submitted to the Amendments Committee which will present the resolution to the National Ministry Team. The NMT will debate the merit of the amendment and decide by majority vote whether it should be recommended to the National Conference.*

Resolutions which could result in changes to the Standing or Special Rules of Conference, or resolutions which could influence the work of the denomination without impacting the rules would be presented by the district directly to the National Conference and require a majority vote for approval. These resolutions must be submitted to the Church Center two months prior to the Conference sessions.

National Ministry Team Members by District

Allegheny District

Ministerial—Rev. Janor Bestwick (2030E), Transfer, Lakeside

Lay—Mr. Jon Snyder, (2029E), Transfer, Lakeside

Anthracite District

Ministerial—Rev. Joshua Notestine (2030N), Sunbury, Bethany/Trevorton, Emmanuel

Lay— **To be determined**

Berks District

Ministerial—Rev. Rick Reilly (2031E), Kutztown, Grace/Shillington, New Life

Lay—Robert Reese (2027N), Shillington, New Life

Buckeye District

Ministerial—Rev. Charles Campbell (2030N), Youngstown, Wedgewood Park

Lay—Rick Glauthier (2030E), Akron, Cottage Grove

Capital / Lebanon District

Ministerial—Rev. Jeffrey Stansbury (2029E), Palmyra, First

Lay—Robert Klaczak (2027N), Palmyra, First

Conestoga District

Ministerial—Rev. Neal Martin (2030N), Terre Hill, Trinity

Lay—Bonnie Rathman (2027N), Reamstown, St. Paul's

Lehigh Valley District

Ministerial— Rev. Robert Klersy (2029E), Hosensack, Grace/Vera Cruz

Lay—Kathy Canfield (2031E), Emmaus, St. Matthew's

Midwest District

Ministerial—Rev. Robert Dunbar (2027N), Dixon, Bethel

Lay— Scott Kullerstrand (2027E), Dixon, Bethel

North East District

Ministerial—Rev. Keith House (2030E), Palmerton, Living Hope Lighthouse

Lay—Julius Lenhart (2028N), Slatington, Trinity

Penn Jersey District

Ministerial—Rev. Paul Barber (2028E), Whiting, NJ, Christ

Lay—Shawn McGlinchey (2031N), Boyertown, Trinity

Red Rose District

Ministerial— Rev. Kevin Kumher (2030E), Willow Street, Grace Community

Lay—Ron Seiger (2027E), Lancaster, Faith

Schuylkill District

Ministerial—Rev. Dennis Snyder (2027E), Cressona, Bethany Christian Fellowship /Ashland, Bethany

Lay—Cathy Nagle (2027N), Rock, Manbeck's

Susquehanna District

Ministerial—Rev. Daniel Blank (2030N), Reich's

Lay—David Boose (2028N), York, St. Paul's

When a District Meets

Districts will decide the frequency and location of their meetings. It is expected that a district will meet at least annually.

The Standing Business Rules of the National Conference will apply to the business portion of district meetings.

A district will be expected to nurture a passion for God, a compassion for the lost, and a genuine concern for health and unity among the congregations of the district. A district will be expected to initiate a prayer strategy focused on these areas. Apart from a prayer strategy, a district is free to develop those ministries which meet the needs of that geographic area as revealed by the Holy Spirit. These ministries may include, but are not limited to: evangelistic endeavors, congregational mentoring, church planting, social concern and action, leadership training, global ministries resourcing, children/youth ministries, and pastoral collegiality.

Districts are encouraged to develop the kind of ministry that is uniquely suited to their context. “Success” in the strategy may look different from district to district. In areas where churches are geographically distant or culturally diverse it will not be as practical to build a sense of cohesion around special events or joint programs. Attendance at meetings is only one criterion for measuring results. Instead of sense of unity and partnership may develop around the concept of networking for things like prayer, resource sharing, and support for church planting or student scholarships. Remember that Districting is a verb as well as a noun, referring to an attitude of relationship building as well as an organizational structure.

District Finances

To free district leaders for focus on mission and vision, district accounts may be established and maintained by the denomination’s finance office. These accounts can be used to receive and disburse funds needed to implement district initiatives (e.g. social action work, evangelistic campaigns, student aid, teacher training events). Districts may also choose to designate a local church treasury for this purpose. In all cases, monthly financial statements of active accounts should be provided to the District Leadership Team by the district secretary who will maintain district financial records.

If a district partners to plant a church, the Kingdom Extension Community may partner with the district to provide the financial structures and services needed to support a church planter and the daughter church.

When a congregation has a genuine financial problem, the congregation’s district will be the first to respond with assistance. Chronic financial problems need to be referred to the Conference Network Team who may recommend appropriations to be paid from the denominational treasury. (NC Rule 706)

District Field Directors

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Susquehanna

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The Districts of the Delaware Region

BERKS

Tim Sanger – DFD

ADAMSTOWN, Immanuel
KUTZTOWN, Grace
LEESPORT, Bethany
LENHARTSVILLE, Salem
MOHNTON, Zion
PLEASANTVILLE, Bethany
SHILLINGTON, New Life
SINKING SPRING, Community
TEMPLE, Faith

LEHIGH VALLEY

Rick Sergi– DFD

ALLENTOWN, Christ
ALLENTOWN, New Bethany
ALLENTOWN, St. John's
ALLENTOWN, Zion
BANGOR, First United
BETHLEHEM, Arabic Living
BETHLEHEM, Emmanuel
EMMAUS, St. Matthew's
FOGELSVILLE, Hope Community
HOSENSACK, Grace
VERA CRUZ
LEHIGH VALLEY, Horizon

NORTH EAST

Kevin Roberts - DFD

BARTONSVILLE, St. John's
BERLINSVILLE, Trinity
BUSHKILL, Community
EAST WEISSPORT, People's
JIM THORPE, Ebenezer
KUNKLETOWN, St. Matthew's
LEHIGHTON, Bethany
PALMERTON, Living Hope Lighthouse
SLATINGTON, Trinity
TAMAQUA, Bethany

PENN JERSEY

Robert Santucci – DFD

BOYERTOWN, Trinity
CLAYTON, Bethany
PLYMOUTH MEETING
POTTSTOWN AREA, Journey 53
ROYERSFORD, Trinity
HATFIELD, Trinity Lighthouse
WHITING, NJ, Christ
ZIEGLERVILLE, Christ

SCHUYLKILL

John Smith – DFD

ASHLAND, Bethany
CRESSONA, Bethany Fellowship
DREHERSVILLE, Immanuel
FRACKVILLE, Trinity
HAZLETON, Buenas Nuevas
LAVELLE, Christ
REEDSVILLE, Bethesda
ROCK, Manbeck's Zion
SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, Grace

The Districts of the Great Lakes Region

ALLEGHENY

Lewie Bennett – DFD

CLARION, Riverhill
CROSSROADS, Bethany

EMLENTON, New Zion

FERN, Trinity

KNOX, Grace

SENECA

TRANSFER, Lakeside

BUCKEYE***Charles Campbell – DFD***

AKRON, Cottage Grove
 AKRON, First
 CANTON, First
 CANYON FALLS, KY
 YOUNGSTOWN, Wedgewood Park

MIDWEST***Robert Dunbar – DFD***

AFOLKEY, Grace
 DIXON, Bethel
 HOOPPOLE, Calvary

The Districts of the Susquehanna Region**ANTHRACITE*****Todd Wolfe – DFD***

GRATZ
 HERNDON, New Life
 PITMAN, St. Paul's
 PITMAN, Zion
 SUNBURY, Bethany
 TREVORTON, Emmanuel
 WILLIAMS VALLEY, Faith

CAPITAL/LEBANON***Mike Knapp – DFD***

ANNVILLE, Zion
 BUNKER HILL
 CLARKS VALLEY, Zion
 FISHING CREEK, Trinity
 HARRISBURG, Faith
 HARRISBURG, Trinity
 LAWN
 LEBANON COUNTY, Christ Community
 PALMYRA, First
 REXMONT
 STEELSTOWN, St. John's

CONESTOGA***Keith Miller – DFD***

AKRON, Grace
 BRIDGEVILLE, Zion
 EPHRATA, Christ House
 EPHRATA, Grace

MOHN'S HILL, Mohn's Memorial
 MORGANTOWN, California
 MOUNT AIRY
 MOUNT CULMEN
 PEQUEA
 REAMSTOWN, St. Paul's
 ROTHSVILLE, St. Paul's
 TERRE HILL, Trinity

RED ROSE***Jeff Schell – DFD***

BROWNSTOWN, Ebenezer
 CONESTOGA, Bethel
 CRESWELL, Bethany
 EAST PETERSBURG, Grace
 LANCASTER, Faith
 LANCASTER, Trinity
 LITITZ, Trinity
 MANHEIM, Trinity
 WILLOW STREET, Grace Community
 QUARRYVILLE, Grace Community

SUSQUEHANNA***Ralph Owens – DFD***

BAIR, Faith
 COLUMBIA, Grace
 KINDERHOOK
 RED LION, Arlington
 REICHS
 WEIGELSTOWN, St. David's
 YORK, Iglesia Cristiana
 YORK, St. Paul (Next Step)

Denominational Leadership

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Communities

Church Health Community

Purpose:

- To communicate and encourage a health mindset and strategy for advocating healthier church ministries
- To assess local church health-related needs and potential within their contexts (based on eight essential qualities)
- To deliver up-to-date resources and workshops that provide creative church health solutions
- To assist churches in adopting concepts that will ultimately produce health within their contexts

The Community will:

- Discuss the latest church health concepts—stirring the team’s thinking through reading books and exploring web-related resources together.
- Discuss opportunities and solutions for church health concepts in our cultural setting.
- Discuss issues derived from district cohorts concerning church health concepts.
- Explore together church health concepts for congregations in our cultural setting.
- Focus a segment of the National Conference gathering to church health—providing a district or national level speaker as requested.

The Scope of the Community’s Agenda:

- Empowering leadership
- Gift-oriented ministry
- Passionate spirituality
- Functional structures
- Inspiring worship
- Holistic small groups
- Need-oriented evangelism
- Loving relationships

Global Ministries Community

Purpose:

- To serve the local church by providing resources for fulfilling the Great Commission to the ends of the earth.
- To assist in identifying those whom God is calling to this specialized form of ministry.
- To help to develop a prayer support network.
- Partner with and assist in the development of national (self-governing, self-directing, self-supporting, and self-propagating) churches.
- To cooperate with inter-denominational mission boards, so as to develop channels, through the provision of personnel and resources, toward the effective communication of the gospel, without necessarily exporting the name of the Evangelical Congregational Church, nor its form of government.

The Scope of the Community's Agenda:

Field Committees:

- Japan
- India/Nepal
- Latin America
- Liberia

Function Committees:

- Executive Committee
- Finance Committee
- Member Care Team

Kingdom Extension Community

Purpose:

- To communicate and encourage a kingdom mindset and strategy for extending the kingdom
- To assess local church potential for extending the kingdom within their contexts
- To deliver up-to-date resources and workshops that provide creative solutions for extending the kingdom
- To assist local churches in adopting concepts that will ultimately extend the kingdom within their contexts
- To facilitate discussions among pastors and church leaders in district cohorts about kingdom extension within our cultural setting

The Community will:

- Discuss the latest kingdom extension concepts—stirring the team's thinking through reading books and exploring web-related resources together.
- Discuss opportunities and solutions for kingdom extension in our cultural setting.
- Discuss issues derived from district cohorts concerning kingdom extension.
- Explore together kingdom extension for congregations in our cultural setting.
- Focus a segment of the National Conference gathering to kingdom extension—providing a district or national level speaker as requested.

The Scope of the Community's Agenda:

- Apostolic Training (recruitment, assessment, & coaching)
- Local Church/Context Facilitation
- Publicity & Partnering

Ministerial Development Community

Purpose:

- To serve and support the denomination's mission for ministerial leadership
- To oversee and maintain an integrated process for credentialing
- To deliver up-to-date resources and workshops that provide lifelong learning opportunities for our ministerial leadership
- To oversee the administration of the credentialing process when needed

The Community will:

- Resource local churches and pastors for proper sponsoring of candidates
- Direct the Pastoral Assessment Center
- Identify, recruit, train, and support Itinerants for the work of interviewing and screening candidates
- Maintain the relationship between the denomination and the seminary programs
- Coordinate the field training and coaching of candidates
- Help to provide lifelong learning opportunities for active pastors
- Provide resources for those involved with transitional ministry situations

The Scope of the Community's Agenda:

- Pastoral Assessment Center
- Board of Examiners
- Chaplaincy
- Pastoral Coaching & Personal Health
- Lifelong Learning
- Seminary Relations (Church Partnership/Student Aid)

Missional Alignment Community**Purpose:**

- To assist the Bishop to cast the vision for the denomination in keeping with God's mission for his church
- To assess local church needs and potential for missional alignment within our current culture setting
- To deliver up-to-date theological approaches in order to provide missional alignment for our churches
- To assist churches in staying the course that will ultimately translate missional alignment to our current culture setting
- To facilitate discussions among pastors and church leaders in district cohorts about missional alignment within our cultural setting

The Community will:

- Discuss the latest missional alignment concepts—stirring the team's thinking through reading books and exploring web-related resources together.
- Discuss opportunities and solutions for missional alignment in our cultural setting.
- Discuss issues derived from district cohorts concerning missional alignment.
- Explore together missional alignment for congregations in our cultural setting.
- Focus a segment of the National Conference gathering to missional alignment—providing a district or national level speaker as requested.

The Scope of the Community's Agenda:

- Faith & Doctrine
- Denominational Heritage
- Changes to the Rules of Conference