

National Conference Digest 2024

Wednesday

National Conference commenced at 1:30pm in the Eisenhower Campus Center with singing, prayer and a message. The message was given by Kingdom Extension Associate, Rev. Michael Snedeker, who encouraged the conference to pursue Christlike community by living out the fruit of the Spirit, not the deeds of the flesh. Bishop Randy Sizemore led the entire Conference in Holy Communion.

Following the service of Holy Communion, the National Conference began the business session and covered the necessary introductory items.

Officers' reports were shared, beginning with Rev. Brad Hatter giving the National Conference Secretary's report. Then, the National Conference Treasurer's report was presented by Mr. Carl Butler, Jr., who shared that investments are up, and ministry fund income has increased.

The Episcopacy Committee's report was given by the chairman, Rev. Keith Blank, who shared that the committee seeks to provide confidential support to the bishop and believes that Bishop Sizemore is doing a great job serving the denomination. Then, Bishop Randy Sizemore gave the Conference Network Team's report with thanksgiving, asking District Field Directors and Associates to stand as the Conference expressed appreciation with applause. Kevin Henry presented the Conference Support Team's report, thanking EC Center staff for their hard work.

The National Conference continued with the Ministerial Development report by Ministerial Development Associate, Rev. Matt Hill, who continues to work with credentialing. He encouraged pastors to have adequate rest and suggested opportunities for pastors to enjoy a pastors' retreat. He asked Rev. Cam Smith to share about the Pastoral Assessment Center. Rev. Cam Smith told us about the impact the Pastoral Assessment has had over the years and how important it is to not only have healthy churches but also to have healthy pastors. Rev. Hill then asked Rev. Adam Roberts to share about ICL, and he told us that the mission has remained the same and continues to offer education to our churches, regardless of educational background, while also informing us of some changes that have come to ICL.

Rev. Matt Hill continued with the credentialing report.

The questions for applicants were charged to Evan Clelan, Chezaire Dominique, Jacob Farnham, Keith House, William Lockhart, Devin Miller, Nelson Shertzer and Douglas Shuey.

In closed session, the following statuses were approved:

National Itinerant Elder: Jesse Bills, Vincent Jones; **Local Itinerant Elder:** James "Janor" Bestwick, Jeffrey Merwine, Richard Sergi; **National Ordained Elder as Transfer:** William Lockhart; **Certified Lay Preacher:** Timothy Bivins; **Licensed Candidate Status:** Chezaire Dominique, Evan Clelan, Jacob Farnham, Douglas Shuey; **Approved Pastor:** Keith House, Nelson Shertzer; **Approved Candidate Status:** Devin Miller; **Superannuation Status:** Keith Blank, Richard Sergi, Kenneth Wiest and Kirk Wolfe.

The annual renewals of credentials, notifications of transfer and notifications of removal were granted.

The Finance Committee report was given by Mr. Carl Butler and Executive Director, Kevin Henry. They made corrections and amended the budget. All motions presented were adopted. The ministry fund rate will remain at 5.65%. The COLA is encouraged for pastoral compensation increases. The Conference Report had individual items that were adopted by the National Conference.

Stationing Elder ballots were cast. Rev. Brad Hatter was elected as a Stationing Elder for the Susquehanna Region, and Rev. Robert Shuey for the Delaware Region.

Following dinner, worship was led by Rev. Bruce Sellers. Then, Bishop Randy Sizemore gave the Episcopal Address. He emphasized the importance of being a movement of God in our culture today while remembering our evangelical roots. He highlighted how our churches are living that movement out now while also calling on churches to continue the movement into the future. This passion comes with a plan to multiply our evangelism efforts, multiplying disciples and planting churches as pioneers to change the world. To be a dynamic movement will continue to take hard work and sacrifice as we change the world with Jesus in faith.

The evening concluded with a closing hymn and fellowship among the conference.

Thursday

Following worship through song led by Chris Lehigh, Rev. J. Ted Rathman gave the Global Ministry Community's presentation, welcoming missionaries who were able to attend conference. He asked anyone who had been on a domestic and/or international mission trip to stand. More than half of the conference stood up. The Global Ministries Community desires to help the local church join God in what He is doing around the world through mission trip opportunities that will ignite a passion which infects the local church to be on fire for His mission, bringing about transformation. Val Schubert shared about the work that she and her husband do in Honduras which came from a seed that was planted in their hearts through short-term missions. Rev. Rathman concluded his report by sharing some updates about our international churches.

The morning business session continued with the EC Benefits Corporation report given by Rev. Frank Schock. There were nominations for board members which were approved.

The Missional Alignment Community report was given by Rev. Tim Valentino. He proposed the approval of the document of the role of women in ministry, fulfilling what was asked of the Faith and Doctrine Committee; this report also included a summary statement which captured our historic and current rule and practice of ordination of elders/pastors. There was discussion on the conference floor about the ordination of women. The documents and report were approved.

Lester Zimmerman gave a presentation entitled "Understanding Homosexuality and Transgenderism." His compassionate yet bold presentation encouraged the listener to have a biblical understanding of these issues and shared how the church can respond in our culture today.

After a missions-themed luncheon held by the GMC where Val Schubert spoke about her ministry in Honduras, there was an equipping experience where the conference was challenged to be a dynamic movement of God in the area of evangelism. This was led by Church Health Associate, Rev. Wayne Houck, who shared his report and led us in the equipping experience. During his presentation, he highlighted the importance of discipling youth and encouraged a partnership with Christian Endeavor. He shared with us four main concerns many churches share. First, we do not have many young people. Second, the community has changed. Third, we do not

have enough money or volunteers. And lastly, our people do not want to change. Rev. Houck will continue to be a resource to help churches navigate these concerns.

During the equipping experience, the conference was split into small groups meeting in different locations to allow for discussion of what evangelism looks like.

The afternoon session continued with an Operation Christmas Child presentation. Rev. Dan Blank told us about the number of shoeboxes that have been donated as well as churches who participated. The special speaker was Izabella McMillion who shared how the gift of a simple shoebox helped to transform her life.

In the evening, worship through music was led by Rev. Bruce Sellers with a message provided by Rev. Matthew Hill for the ordination service of James "Janor" Bestwick, Jeffrey Merwine and Richard "Rick" Sergi. Concluding our evening was sweet fellowship with an ice cream and cookie reception.

Friday

National Conference started the day with inspiring worship by Rev. Bruce Sellers.

The Kingdom Extension Associate, Rev. Michael Snedeker, gave his report. He shared in his report about the new church plants and how he is trying to help equip churches and church leaders for multiplication. He also encouraged churches to utilize the resource MissionInsite that helps churches learn the demographics and needs of their communities.

There were two resolutions made that were presented by Executive Director Kevin Henry: the closure of East Berlin Countryside Fellowship and the disaffiliation of Trinity, Womelsdorf, were approved.

The Conference continued with the Memorial Report and recognition of retirees. The retirees recognized were Keith Blank, Richard "Rick" Sergi, William Stoffel, Ken Wiest and Kirk Wolfe.

Bishop Sizemore gave a closing message to the conference.

The 2024 National Conference adjourned by singing together *Wonderful Grace of Jesus*, followed by prayer.