



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

January 2021

We have finally arrived in 2021! I know that many are relieved to put 2020 behind them because it was a challenging year. We pray for 2021. We want more of God and his presence. We pray for his leading in our conference and every Covenant church in the five states that make up the Central Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

In Jeremiah 29:11., we read, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” The people of Israel were suffering and being taken to a foreign land in captivity. In the last year, we have also known pain and discomfort. Yet the Lord remains the same and challenges us to commit to doing well where we are today. Why? Because despite the circumstances, he has plans for us. Plans to give us hope and a future. We are called to be obedient and simply be still and know he is God.

In 2020, the Central Conference LEAD (Lay Leaders’ Equipping and Developing) initiative was able to adapt to the challenges created by the pandemic. The online “Lunch and Learn” training events for church leaders were developed and offered throughout the fall of 2020. These gatherings were recorded and posted on the Central Conference YouTube channel. They can be accessed via the conference website at www.centralconf.org. The LEAD initiative also expanded the resources found on the website in the “Lead Initiative” section. You can find out more by visiting our website.

Also in 2020, local Covenant churches continued to partner with church plants in our region. We praise God for the commitment these established churches have, to continue proclaiming the gospel in new locations in our conference. These church plants are facing unprecedented circumstances to gather people and train lay leaders, but God is good and he is faithful! We are seeing growth in the core church plant groups, even with a pandemic. In 2021, the Central Conference hopes to begin two new church plants - one in Batavia, IL, and the other at a location that is being determined. Please pray for church plant sponsors (established Covenant churches) to financially come alongside these new church plants as they begin ministry in these new areas.

This past year, COVID-19 had a profound impact on members of local Covenant churches. Many lost jobs and there were medical expenses related to the pandemic for many brothers and sisters. Thanks to the generosity of Covenanters throughout the Central Conference, we were able to make COVID-19 relief funds available through the conference office. To date, we have been able to assist over 500 people in the Central Conference. This assistance has included: purchasing groceries, paying medical bills and medications, covering housing, and even funeral expenses. The conference has only been able to do this because of the overwhelming generosity of churches and individuals. Thank you for your kindness and contributions.

We praise God that ministry in the Central Conference continues in 2021! This year, in the midst of the pandemic, the Central Conference is committed to holding the conference annual gathering, Celebration 2021, in a virtual format. **Please save the date: Saturday, April 24, 2021, for this important event.** We will gather to do Central Conference business and to move the mission forward. More details will be sent to your church shortly. At this gathering, we are committed to sharing the good news coming from local Covenant churches in our conference. God continues to move in this season, despite the challenges. Local churches have been challenged to go beyond their comfort zones and to adapt to the current realities of ministry. Great ministry is happening all around the Central Conference!

Finally, I want to give a special word of thanks to local Covenant churches in the Central Conference that have faithfully continued to contribute to Central Conference ministries. It has been noticed and it has been appreciated. We could not continue to plant, strengthen, and connect churches without your prayers and financial support. Now, more than ever, we are counting on your partnership to continue conference ministries. You can find more information on donating to the Central Conference at our website.

Please know that the Central Conference staff prays and walks with your church. We hope to be able to meet in person again very soon.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danny', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Danny Martinez
Superintendent of the Central Conference of the ECC