



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

January 2022

We are in 2022! After a couple of difficult years, we still have uncertainty regarding this new year. Please know that we are entering this year asking God for his mercy and grace for the 111 churches, over 300 ministers, and the many ministries of the Central Conference. We are starting the year asking God to heal our land, to heal our people, and to have his kingdom come.

The Lord is calling us back to himself. We have trusted so many other things to him and it is time that we seek him and make him our number one priority. The Church is called to seek the lost, to empower the weak, to care for the sick, to disciple the believer, and to challenge the status quo.

How do we lead in this time of ambiguity? He loves us and has given us hope amid trouble and this pandemic. Jesus stated to his disciples in John 14: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.”* This was not because they had nothing to worry about but because his presence is always with us. Jesus also stated that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the father but through him. A statement of his love and care for us.

God has been faithful through his people in the Central Conference. We have seen the hand of God working in and through local Covenant churches loving their communities and church members, especially the most vulnerable. For example, in 2021, the Central Conference office continued to coordinate our joint efforts to assist those left most vulnerable by COVID-19. Over \$18,000 were distributed to people in our conference and local Covenant churches in this year alone.

Churches are continuing the ministry of loving and shaping people. More online ministry has resulted in consistent and broader connection, even with those who have been absent. People are seeking God.

The Central Conference staff is also continuing to walk with pastors through this significant time of pandemic. No one was prepared for this period of ministry in our region, denomination, or the world. Yet, during all this, care is being provided for our pastors.

The Central Conference church plants have naturally been impacted by the ongoing pandemic and the concerns around gathering in-person. The broadcasting of worship services has been a great tool to continue relationships, but not as good in creating new ones. We ask that you pray for and consider partnering financially with one of our four ongoing church plants. They include two Latino churches (one in Campton Hills and the other in Rockford); one multicultural church in Chicago; and one Nepalese church in Batavia. There is also the possibility of an African American church on the South Side of Chicago.

We praise God that ministry continues in the Central Conference in 2022! This year, the Central Conference is committed to holding the conference annual gathering, Celebration 2022, as an in-person event, until we are told otherwise. **Please save the date: Thursday, April 21 – Saturday, April 23, 2022, at Lakeview Covenant Church in Northbrook, IL.** We hope local Covenant church members can make it to this very special 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 Celebration 2022 we are committed to sharing the good news coming from local Covenant churches in our conference. Great ministry is happening all around the Central Conference!

Please know that we cannot do ministry without your prayers and financial partnership. Now more than ever, with so much need around us, we must be united in joining the mission of God. We cannot continue to plant, strengthen, and connect churches without your support. You may find more information on donating to the Central Conference at our website: www.centralconf.org (click on the “Contribute” option).

Finally, we thank the local Covenant churches that are giving to the Central Conference from their church budgets at 3.5% of their local church giving. We invite you to become a financial partner with the ministries of the Central Conference if you have been unable to do so before.

You are loved and appreciated. Happy New Year, dear ones!

Kyrie Eleison!

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