



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

January 2023

Happy New Year 2023! We are grateful to the Lord as we enter this new year for each of the pastors, congregations, and many ministries of the Central Conference. Please know that we are praying to God for his mercy and grace for the 111 churches, over 300 ministers, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Central Conference. We are gearing up to move forward in ministry in 2023.

How do we do this? 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. We continue to do this while we strive to plant new churches, help strengthen current churches, walk with pastors and chaplains, and continue to provide guidance to our conference.

The Apostle Paul instructed us to be content, in times of abundance and in times of scarcity, and to know that we can do all things in Christ who gives us strength. Philippians 4:11-13

We can testify that God has been faithful to and through his people in the Central Conference. We have seen the hand of God working in and through local Covenant congregations, whose members continue loving their communities, especially the most vulnerable. The church continues to show up and be counted as faithful, even when surrounded by fear and anxiety.

Church plants in our conference are also moving forward in mission after the pandemic. Most of us were affected by the pandemic in some manner. Now imagine how new church plants were impacted! Amid uncertainty, we saw God protecting vulnerable new church plant members and ministries. We are so grateful to our Lord for his care.

Things we accomplished together in 2022:

- In 2022, the Central Conference staff helped over 50 local Covenant pastors obtain their Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) credentials.
- We also walked alongside seven Covenant ministers as they went through the ECC ordination process. These local ministers were ordained at the Covenant Annual Meeting (Gather).
- We continue to walk with churches in the Central Conference that are seeking interim / transition pastors and we offer coaching to these pastors as they step into these roles.
- The conference staff assisted 10 churches in 2022 with finding interim and transitional pastors. The staff is currently assisting four other churches with finding interim and transitional pastors.
- Currently there are 13 Central Conference churches seeking lead pastors. The conference staff is walking alongside these churches' pastoral search committees. Three churches completed their search process in 2022 and have called new lead pastors.
- We continue to walk alongside five existing church plants in our conference with the possibility of adding two other church plants in the Central Conference in 2023. Recently, Bethany Covenant Church in St. Charles, IL opened its doors as the newest church plant in our conference.

- We are checking in with our Covenant ministers on a regular basis. In 2022, the conference staff did 50 care check-ins with local Covenant ministers.
- We assist local churches as they look for information and resources that develop their ministries. This includes the pHCheckup, which is a church assessment tool, as well as, Vitality workshops, Sacred Space conversations, Leadership Team discernment, and Living Legacy coaching. The conference staff is available to answer any questions you have about resources for your local church.
- Steve Dawson is helping Central Conference churches file Employee Retention Credit forms. Almost every church benefits from this. If you have not yet heard from Steve, feel free to email him at steve.dawson.1952@gmail.com for details.
- The Central Conference staff is just an email or phone call away. Feel free to contact the Central Conference office at info@centralconf.org or at 773-267-3060.

This year, the Central Conference is holding the conference annual gathering, Celebration 2023, as an in-person event, until we are told otherwise. **Please save the date: Thursday, April 27 – Saturday, April 29, 2023, at Gladstone Covenant Church, in Gladstone, MI.** We hope Covenant church members can make it to this very special event. We will gather to do Central Conference business, moving the mission forward. More details will be sent to your church shortly, but you may also visit our website at www.centralconf.org/celebration for updates. At Celebration 2023 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. We are empowered by the local Covenant churches in our conference to move mission forward. However, 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 you, the local Covenant churches that are giving to the Central Conference from church budgets at 3.5% of the local church giving. If you have been unable to do so before, we invite you to become a financial partner with the ministries of the Central Conference now. We also invite you to consider giving additional funds, as the Spirit leads you.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:20

Grateful to be in the family of God.



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