

EC NATIONAL NEWS

EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Ann Brown, Editor

Celebrating 125 Years of Ministry

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Photo: Bruce Hill

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF MINISTRY

FERN TRINITY EC CHURCH, KOSSUTH, PA

The congregation of Fern Trinity EC Church of Kossuth, Pennsylvania celebrated their 125th anniversary the weekend of September 25 and 26. The milestone actually passed a year ago, but could not be observed because of the pandemic.

As early as 1830, class meetings and worship services were held in the area, with gatherings in groves during warm months and in homes during the winter. In 1834, the congregation moved into the Wise School on Camp Coffman Road. They continued to worship there for about 39 years.

In 1872, oil was struck in the village of Fern. The following year, an Evangelical Association church was established and a building erected in nearby Ashland. The future Fern Trinity congregation was part of that church for a number of years.

In 1885, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported that, in July, Fern consisted of a schoolhouse, a hardware store and a tent. The report continued that by August, Fern was “a thriving community, with a weekly newspaper and other evidences of civilization.”

However, the “boomtown” brought social ills. The Oil City Derrick described the “fighting, lawlessness, and general debauchery” of Fern City. Possibly, in response to these problems, the first preaching there took place on October 4, 1885. The Fern City Weekly Illuminator reported that Rev. J.H. Keely came from Edenburg (now Knox) to deliver his sermon.

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CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF MINISTRY - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FERN TRINITY EC CHURCH, KOSSUTH, PA

In 1891, a denominational dispute split the Evangelical Association. The group that was to become Trinity left Ashland, joining the newly formed United Evangelicals and meeting in the Fern Macabee Hall.

To meet the need of a new location, Mr. and Mrs. William L. Hess donated an acre of land. The builders, Oliver Sanders and Son, began construction. A new church was completed at a cost of \$1,500.00. It was debt free when it was dedicated in 1895 by Rev. J.J. Carmany. Rev. W.W. Elrick was pastor from 1895 to 1898.



The building committee consisted of Conrad Kenemuth, John Kenemuth, and Christian Stumpner. Trustees were Alexander Shreffler, John Cotherman, Conrad Kenemuth, John Stumpner, and R.R. Carpenter.

In 1922, an effort was made to reunite the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelicals. Trinity did not join the merger and became part of the new Evangelical Congregational denomination.

Over the years, many changes to the church and surrounding property have taken place. One of the most significant was a two-story addition, begun in 1971. This included an expanded Christian education space and a lower level with a kitchen and fellowship area. Indoor plumbing became a necessity, and water came from a newly-drilled well. All of this took place in the middle of a twenty-year period of Fern's being on a charge with nearby Grace EC Church.

Attendance increased, and in 1981, the church began functioning on its own. In 1984, they purchased a parsonage. However, from 1992 to 1995, Trinity was again part of a two-church charge, this time with Seneca EC Church. Momentum was restored, and Trinity returned to solo status. At that time, a new parsonage was built.

Historian, Charlie Cotherman writes, "The year 2000 saw the congregation at Fern on the threshold of new opportunities. In the next years, her outreach would spread into hunting camps, high schools, and all corners of the community, as members held forth the love and hope of Jesus Christ."

The anniversary event included a Saturday evening hymn sing; a Sunday morning service, with message by Bishop Bruce Hill; and a Sunday noon dinner. The "grand finale" was an afternoon celebration, with an additional message by Bishop Hill. Other participants were former pastors, Rev. John Friedlund and Rev. Mark Micklos; Allegheny District Field Director, Rev. Lewie Bennett; and former District Field Director, Rev. Gary Brown. The program also included choir music, and slide show, and sharing from the congregation.

Current pastor is Rev. Shawn Morgan, who has served Trinity since 2016. Along with Shawn, wife Jennifer, and sons, Austin and Noah, have contributed much in worship music. Zane is an additional son.

Sources: The 125th Anniversary Fern Trinity history booklet; A Brief History of the Venango Charge, 1825 to 2000 by Charles E. Cotherman; The Clarion News.



SEMINARY ANNOUNCES BANQUET

"The Soul Felt Its Worth" is the theme for Evangelical Seminary's annual Friends of Evangelical banquet, slated for December 2. Location is Eden Resort in Lancaster. Fellowship begins at 5:45, with dinner at 6:30.

Featured speaker will be author and counselor, Curt Thompson. His specialty is neurobiology, which helps people know themselves, resulting in healthy relationships.

Register at www.evangelical.edu/banquet. Questions may be directed to Sonya Valentino at sonyavalentino@evangelical.edu or 717-628-2129.

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE UPDATE

Bishop Hill "Passes the Torch"

National Conference, held at Messiah University in Grantham, PA May 26 to 28 included a "passing of the torch" from Bishop Bruce Hill to the next Bishop. After serving for two terms, Bruce was beginning his final year in the office. He will have served for eleven years.

His Episcopal Address focused on the Conference theme, "Know Him Better, Love Him More." He commended pastors, churches, and the denomination for rising above the challenges of the pandemic.

Bruce commented, *"The state of the Evangelical Congregational Church is good. We continue to make progress and reach out into our communities."* He also pointed out the need to, "Be still and know that I am God."

The Bishop concluded by expressing gratitude to his wife, Gloria, and to the Church Center staff.

Election of the next Bishop followed the message. Votes were cast in favor of Rev. Randy Sizemore. Randy is currently pastor at Bethel EC Church in Dixon, Illinois. He served three churches in Pennsylvania and was Global Ministries Director. Wife is Carla.

Randy will take office at National Conference on May 25, 2022.



EC FAMILY NEWS

LONG TIME CREDENTIALS

At National Conference, seven pastors were recognized for 50 years of service with EC credentials. They are:

Jim (Bonnie) Bound
Robert Gockley
Richard (Doreen) Magness
Charles (Kathleen) Markley
Fred (Miriam) Moury
Barry (Flo) Rebert
Dick (Becky) Reigle

Rev. Robert Kramer was recognized for 75 years of service with EC credentials. He lives in Wernersville, PA with wife, Evelyn.

Thank you all for your faithful service!

WELCOME BABIES

Pastor Brian and Janice Dever, Annville, PA, report the arrival of twin granddaughters, Clara Yvonne and Olivia Ruth, on June 18. Parents are Lindsey and Sam Palumbo. The family lives in West Chester.



ANNIVERSARY

Pastor Gary and Ann Brown of Winnebago, Illinois celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on Sunday, September 5. The two were married on September 5, 1971 at First United Methodist Church in Rockford, Ohio, Rev. Merl Young, officiating. Gary is currently Associate Pastor at Park Hills Winnebago Church. The couple's children are Christopher, Nathan, and Rachel.



A MESSAGE FROM CANYON FALLS

Greetings from the hills of Eastern Kentucky, Canyon Falls EC Church. We, like many churches, have suffered loss in numbers due to the COVID pandemic. However, the Lord is still working mightily in the hearts of our people. We are in the process of getting our youth started back on Wednesday nights. We had around 30 before the pandemic, and we are hopeful about getting a lot of them back. The kids are looking forward to our meetings. Now, if COVID will just let us be, we will be fine.

We have a twelve-step recovery outreach ministry on Monday nights. We are having around 20, me, and a few ladies at these meetings. We are seeing men and women being saved and set free.

We are also involved in the jail ministry. It has recently opened back up and the inmates are hungry for the Word. Praise the Lord. We have had at least 10 make decisions to accept Christ in the last three months.

The recovery from the pandemic has been a slow and careful process, but Canyon Falls EC Church will continue to go forward. We put our faith in God Almighty, and we are seeing improvements. God is good. Please continue to lift us up in your prayers, and we will lift you up in our prayers. God bless you all.

Pastor Buddy (Paul) and Tina Johnson

Editor's note: Buddy and Tina participated in Beattyville's recent Woolly Worm Festival by entering contestants in the woolly worm races. They won two races, but fell behind in the finals. Tina comments, "We will get them next year!"

AWARD PRESENTED

Charles Cotherman, an alumnus of Grace EC Church, Ninevah, PA, has been presented with the Fred McFeely Rogers Creative Ministry award from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Charlie is a 2012 graduate of the school.

He is church planter and pastor of the Oil City Vineyard. He is also administrative director of The Project on Rural Ministry. The program facilitates rural pastors working together and connects them with resources of area colleges. Charlie is assisted by wife Aimee, who is also a graduate of PTS.

DEGREES

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly, pastor at Bethesda EC Church, Reedsville, PA, was awarded a Doctor of Theology Degree from Evangelical Seminary in Myerstown on May 14. His dissertation is entitled *The Spirit at the Threshold: A Pneumatological Approach for Missional Advancement*.

Glenda Dunbar of Dixon, Illinois, has completed studies through Evangelical Seminary to become a Graduate Spiritual Director. Her accomplishment was announced at Annual Commencement, and work was completed in June. Glenda serves with husband, Robert, in the ministry of St. James EC Church.

ORDINATIONS

Rev. Michael Garrison was ordained on June 20 at First EC Church, Canton, Ohio. Wife is Crystal. Rev. Gary Brown of Winnebago, Illinois, brought the message. Bishop Bruce Hill; Buckeye District Field Director, Rev. Charles Campbell; and Rev. Gary Brown did the laying on of hands. Music was provided by Canton First's praise team, which included the Garrisons' children, Terelin and Ethan. Praise team members from Mike's former congregation in Delightful, Ohio also contributed to the music. The Garrisons have retired and moved to Youngstown, Ohio.

Rev. Jonathan Brown was ordained at Mt. Culmen EC Church, East Earl, PA, on September 12. Wife is Rebekah. Rev. Kirk Marks of Bethany EC Church, Leesport brought the message. Bishop Bruce Hill; former Bishop, Michael Sigman; and Rev. Jeffrey Byerly, Ministerial Development Associate, participated in the laying on of hands. Pianist Mark Dimick provided accompaniment for hymns.

Rev. Stewart MacDonald, Associate Pastor at Bethesda EC Church, Reedsville, PA, was ordained there on October 3. Wife is Joelle. Message was by Rev. Ted Rathman, Global Ministries Associate and Pastor at Grace EC Church, Schuylkill Haven. Bishop Bruce Hill and Pastor Jeff Byerly, Lead Pastor and Ministerial Development Associate, did the laying on of hands. Music was led by the Bethesda worship team.

Rev. David Mennig, was ordained at Bridgeville EC Church, Narvon, PA, on October 10. Wife is Amber. Rev. Al Giles of Gilbertsville brought the message. Bishop Bruce Hill; Conestoga District Field Director, Rev. Keith Miller; and Bishop Emeritus, Rev. Michael Sigman did the laying on of hands. David is pastor at California EC Church, Morgantown, PA.

RETIREMENTS

During National Conference, the following pastors and their wives were recognized for retirement:

Donald & Donna Both, Columbus, MS

George & Lisa Custer, Conestoga, PA

Gregory & Patti DeLong, Walnut Creek, OH

David & Celia Dick, Greenwood, IN

Al & Cheryle Giles, Gilbertsville, PA

Donald & Karen Kerns, Boyertown, PA

Richard & Elaine Kuhn, Selinsgrove, PA

Scott & Donna Shay, New Tripoli, PA

Frank & Eileen Schock, Lititz, PA

William & Sheryl White, Akron, OH



REMEMBERING LOVED ONES...

Shirley Carr, 86, a Lay Delegate from First EC Church, Akron, Ohio, passed away on April 21. She was a lifelong resident of the Akron area and one of the first women to be a branch manager for First National Bank.

Service to her church included teaching and singing in the choir. She enjoyed crafts, especially ceramics. Shirley is survived by husband, Kenneth, and sons, Rev. Scott Carr of Akron First and Rev. David Carr of Afolkey, Illinois Grace. Grandson, Andrew, is pastor at Akron Cottage Grove.

Rev. Barry E. Rebert, 79, of Talmage, PA, passed away on June 3. His first career was in forestry. He then served as a Company Commander in the US Army Corps of Engineer in Post-War Korea.

He was pastor at Allentown Bethany for six years and at Mohn's Hill for 36 years.

He was a trustee at Evangelical Seminary and an advocate for widows and single parents.

Barry is survived by wife, Flora, and daughters, Elisabeth, Rebecca, Rachel, and Kay.

Rev. Michael E. Campbell, 69, of York, PA, passed away on June 13. Prior to entering the ministry, he was employed by United Technologies.

He served Faith EC Church in Bair from 2005 to 2021.

Mike wrote the devotional book, Be Still, and was active in prayer efforts.

He is survived by wife, Darby Jo; daughter, Jennifer; and son, Aaron.

Joyce E. Lee, 86, of Dixon, Illinois passed away on September 22. She was the wife of the late John Lee, who served for many years as Dixon Bethel's Lay Delegate.

Joyce was active in choir and children's ministries and gave practical help to Rock River Bible Camp.

Employment included her own daycare and beauty supply and jewelry companies.

She is survived by daughters, Vicky, Julie, Patty, and Natalie.

Rev. Alfred W. Miller, 80, of Lebanon, PA, passed away on October 31. He served four churches in eastern PA and was a member of Annville First EC Church.

Fred's love of music was expressed in singing in church choirs and playing his guitar in bluegrass bands. He also enjoyed outdoor activities.

He was preceded in death by wife, Linda. He is survived by daughters, Leona and Angela, and sons, Paul and Jeffrey.



DIXON BETHEL GETS A MAKEOVER

The congregation of Bethel EC Church, Dixon, Illinois, is enjoying the benefits of recent building improvements. Congestion in the entry area was eliminated with a 30 by 50-foot addition and an enlarged outdoor canopy.

Old restrooms near the front door were replaced with larger, more accessible ones. In the space from the former restrooms, a kitchenette and storage room were installed to serve the fellowship area. This was enlarged by taking out a wall, making more room for special events and the Bethel Connection gathering time. The nursery was also improved.

The basement was made more accessible with the installation of a new lift, and restrooms were improved.

Mark Slagter served as chair of the Vision 2020 Building Committee. Other members were Dave Bowers, Jan West, and Mike DiGrazia. Rev. Randy Sizemore is lead pastor. The original building was erected in 1970.

