

BFC Conference Proceedings – 2018

First meeting

Monday, April 23, 2018, 6:30 P.M.

The 135th BFC Conference was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Conference Moderator, Randall A. Grossman, who welcomed pastors, delegates, and guests to Pinebrook Bible Conference's Fellowship Hall.

The Conference Moderator introduced this year's theme of "Onward and Outward," which focuses on the 70th anniversary of Church Extension Ministries. He noted that all of this year's addresses will be presented by our men, all of whom are directly involved in the work of Church Extension.

Citing Psalm 127:1 ("Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain"), the Moderator led Conference in a prayer asking God for strength and guidance for the proceedings to follow.

Resolved, that the tables with the green tablecloths constitute the Conference Bar for the 135th BFC Conference.

The roll of the 135th BFC Conference was established as follows:

Allentown, PA (Cedar Crest)	Clifford B. Boone, Glenn R. Felty, Jonathan H. King, Benjamin J. Triestman*, John Colabroy, William J. Walters, Rick D. Whitmire
Bethlehem, PA	Timothy D. Gibson, Richard F. Bickings, Jr., Scott G. Holwick, Philip G. Norris
Blandon, PA	Daniel L. Williams, R. Jerry Brush, James Fisher
Camden, DE	Daniel R. Wagner, Albert F. Biddle, Jr.
Carmel, NY	(Vacant), Hans R. Waldvogel
Clinton Corners, NY	(Vacant), Wayne M. Chadwell
Coopersburg, PA	David J. Peters, Richard T. Paashaus, Timothy S. Hogan, Michael J. Zettlemoyer, David Guttman
Dauphin, PA	Mark E. Barninger, Dennis L. Souder
Denville, NJ	Richard D. Harris, John H. Crouch
Emmaus, PA	David A. Smith, David N. Schoen, David K. Schlonecker, Gary Karch
Ephrata, PA	Jason L. Hoy, Daniel Krall (Probationer), Michael P. Rebman
Exeter, PA	Stan P. Lauterback, David Rhoads
Finesville, NJ	Byron Widger, Bert R. Roling
Graterford, PA	Mark R. Orton, Robert L. Gaugler
Harleysville, PA	Andrew T. Crossgrove, Michael W. Walker, Jim Diamond
Harrisburg, PA	Joshua P. Miller, Steven J. DelDuco, Bryan Strahan
Hatfield, PA	Howard N. Wells, Joel B. Klase, Harold Schoonover
Hellertown, PA	Keith A. Strunk, Mark Edwards

Howell, NJ	L. Marc Sweet, Alan Heinlein
Kutztown, PA	Ezekiel R. Mack*, Nickolas T. Tempe
LaGrangeville, NY	Dennis W. Spinney, Thomas L. Ward
Lancaster, PA	David A. Thomann, Keith M. Long, Gregory A. Uhrich, Robert L. Yinger, John Kilby
Las Cruces, NM	(Vacant), Dan Dunwell
Lebanon, PA	Calvin T. Reed, David E. Brandt, Jarrod J. Cruise, Jack S. Herb, Jr.
Lehighton, PA	Robert A. Johnson II, Richard Gross
Long Neck, DE	Andrew W. Barnes, Ken Wohltmann
Maple Glen, PA	Louis Pronnicki, Mark W. Sanders
Merida, MEXICO	Marcos G. Ramirez, Freddy A. Chi, Edgar Navarro
Mt. Carmel, PA	(Vacant), Donald Dyer
Mt. Pocono, PA	W. Scott Kappes, Ronald E. Miller
Nazareth, PA	Carl J. Fischer, Jr., John B. Wilson
Newark, DE	William G. Schlonecker, Richard C. Dodson, Stephen J. Morton, Daniel W. King, Robert C. Kaatz, Ronald L. Bove
Newark, NJ	Ronnie Burgess*, Thomas J. Boose, Jr.
Oley, PA	Jason W. Blair, Todd Heath
Paradise, PA	(Vacant), Mark L. Morrison, Amos Kinert
Philadelphia, PA	Ralph E. Ritter, Joseph P. Specht, Jr.
Piscataway, NJ	Dennis M. Cahill, Richard B. Ravis, J. Richard Vroman
Quakertown, PA	Ronald L. Kohl, Timothy S. Radcliff, Mark S. Matson
Reading, PA	Randall A. Grossman, Ronald W. Reed, Glenn D. Rouss
Reading, PA (La Roca)**	Carlos G. Rodriguez, William Lopez
Red Hill, PA	James Arcieri, William E. Blair
Royersford, PA	Ronald C. Erb, Tony Zook
Shamokin, PA	Ferdie R. Madara, Russell Burd
Sinking Spring, PA	S. Wayne Rissmiller*, Gregory W. Carder*, Sean Fox (probationer), Donald McKinney, John Yoder, Eric McNutt
Spring City, PA	(Vacant), Sean McNamara
Steelton, PA	(Vacant), Jayonn Folks
Stroudsburg, PA	Beau E. Coffman, Matthew Brown
Sunbury, PA	Joshua P. Gibson, Jules J. Hull, Douglas A. Gaugler
Terre Hill, PA	Kevin W. Kirkpatrick, Andrew S. Littlejohn
Townsend, DE	Ronald B. Smith, Troy A. Geiger
Wallingford, PA	Aaron J. Susek, Mark A. Bickel, Timothy S. Cowen, Scott B. Simmons
Walnutport, PA (Northern Lehigh)**	Aaron D. Smith, Jason P. Musselman
Whitehall, PA (Bethany)	Timothy J. Schmoyer, Mark Hargrove
Whitehall, PA (Fell. Comm.)	Philip E. Yerrington, Robert Zentz
Woodbury Heights, NJ	Timothy R. Nessler, John Maricle
York, PA	Timothy J. Bertolet, Matthew Fuhman
Zionsville, PA	Bryan C. McNally, James Pruitt

Ordained Ministers Serving Bible Fellowship Ministries:

David T. Allen, BFC Executive Director; Raymond R. Bertolet, Church Extension; Brad Boyer*, Church Extension; Stephen A. Diaz, Church Extension; Joshua A. Dupiche, Church Extension; Jason A. Filbert (probationer), Church Extension; David E. Gundrum, Church Extension; Donald E. Kuntzman, Board of Missions; Ralph M. Soper, Conference Pastor; Duane E. Moyer, Board of Missions; Elliot H. Ramos, Church Extension; James D. Reff, (probationer) Church Extension; R. Scott Wright, Church Extension; Timothy M. Zuck, Church Extension; John J. Hanner (probationer), Church Extension

Ordained Missionaries:

Daniel P. Allen, Scott B. Evans, Larry Davies, James D. Head, Walter M. Johnston, John R. LoRusso, Philip E. Morrison, Jerry L. Moyer, Thomas A. Pollock, David W. Riddell, John C. Studenroth, Colby A. Weinhofer

Ordained Ministers Working in the Chaplaincy Under the Sponsorship of the BFC:

Kenneth J. Hurst, Richard A. Moyer, Jeffrey L. Ruhl, Jacob J. Susek, Jr.

Ordained Ministers Working in Other Christian Ministries:

Clyde D. Bomgardner Jr., Willis I. Dowling, Jordan K. Eyster, Dennis J. Lawrence, Michael J. Tannous

Ordained Ministers in Retirement:

William C. Aukamp, Delbert R. Baker, James R. Batchler, Jr., T. James Bigley, Jr., Terris L. Byrd, Leonard E. Buck, Carl C. Cassel, G. Wayne Clapier, Charles E. Cole, Hugh C. Coulbourn Jr., Raymond R. Dotts, Bruce A. Ellingson, Richard J. Gehman, LeRoy S. Heller, Frank L. Herb Jr., George E. Herb, John H. Herb, Roy A. Hertzog, Ronald W. Hoyle, David H. Jones, Ronald C. Mahurin, David L. Manney, Philip G. Norris, Keith E. Plows, Roger L. Reitz, Austin G. Shelly, Thomas P. Shorb, Robert A. Sloan, Gene W. Smith, Carl K. Spackman, Dean A. Stortz, Richard E. Taylor, John C. Vandegriff, Jr., David R. Way, Harold C. Weaber, Dana E. Weller, Daniel G. Ziegler, Paul G. Zimmerman

Ordained Ministers Between Calls:

Joshua D. Edwards, Frank E. Lenahan, Carl T. Martin, Thomas H. Morrison, Eric R. North

Additional Lay Members of BFC Executive Board:

Robert T. Evans, Jay H. Fasnacht, Stephen J. Kauffman, Charles Lavigna, L. James Roberts

* *Pending approval of ordination.*

***Pending reception as a Particular Church*

Report of the Committee on Agenda and Arrangements: (see page)

Resolved, that the agenda for the 135th BFC Conference be accepted and that it serve as the guide for our deliberations.

Whereas, the date for the beginning of BFC Conference has been, by precedent, on the Monday after the fourth Sunday of April, and

Whereas, the date for Easter in 2019 is April 21, and it is not preferable to begin BFC Conference on the day after Easter, therefore be it

Resolved, that the 136th BFC Conference be held at Pinebrook Bible Conference, April 29-May 1, 2019.

Resolved, that committee reports for the 136th BFC Conference be sent in digital format to the BFC Conference Secretary by February 15, 2019 at <sportspastor@juno.com>

Musical worship was led by Mark E. Barninger with assistance from James Arcieri, Elliot H. Ramos, Richard B. Ravis, and Aaron J. Susek. Conference sang, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” and “I Will Rise.”

Keynote speaker William G. Schlonecker addressed the subject of “Expanding the Church by Church Planting,” with Elliot H. Ramos serving as translator for Spanish-speaking attendees and those viewing Conference via live stream.

“This conference is one of both celebration and commemoration,” Schlonecker said, noting that the reception of two new Particular Churches testifies to the multi-ethnic nature of growth in the Bible Fellowship Church.

He noted that Conference will hear six different “little stories” throughout the three days of BFC Conference from six different speakers. Taken together, they highlight the many different ways that church planting has taken place within the BFC. But Schlonecker noted that while each individual story boasts a different context, the focus needs to be on the “same bigger story” of God’s faithfulness and guidance that has produced 70 years of Church Extension work.

Acts 9:31, this year’s “theme text,” provides a fitting framework for discussing the “Onward and Outward” nature of church planting. “So *the church* throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being *built up*. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it *multiplied*.”

The work of both planting churches and being churches that honor God is difficult because of growing opposition. Resistance to the growth of the church, Schlonecker said, comes from both outside and inside the church. Increasing secularism is a constant challenge from outside while apathy, Schlonecker noted, is one of the primary challenges from inside the church as we settle for being “nice churches.”

“I’m tired of being a ‘nice’ church. I’m tired of preaching ‘nice’ sermons,” Schlonecker said. “Because God doesn’t call us to be nice. He calls us to engage our world with a radical Jesus.”

The keynote speaker pointed to analogies from farming: from cultivating seeds and providing nourishment and sustenance as plants grow. “We need to cultivate and create an environment in which church planting can grow and thrive,” he said. That begins with cultivating an image of a big God.

Schlonecker, making frequent references to the story of the early church as told in Acts, cited several individuals from a variety of communities; in each case, they had been appointed by

the Holy Spirit to eternal life. Each name he mentioned represented sheep that Jesus said He must bring. “Because Jesus must bring them also, it follows that we must go. We must be faithful in expanding our gospel to reaching new communities and territories,” he said.

So why don’t we go? What reasons are frequently given for our refusal to participate in the work of the gospel? Schlonecker noted a few: cynicism, unbelief, jaded attitudes. We need, he said, a view of a big God who is still in the ministries of soul-saving and church-establishing.

How big a God do we need to embrace in order to accomplish this gigantic mission? “A God big enough to attract a searching and skeptical world,” Schlonecker described. “A God big enough to satisfy those who are desperately seeking something to quench their thirsty souls. Big enough to heal those whom the world has broken and caused to be disillusioned. Big enough to hold up to the skeptical scrutiny of those who grow up in what we call an LGBT world... A big God who stands up to the scrutiny that this generation, a young generation, brings to it.”

We must also cultivate a desperate dependence on the Holy Spirit. Such a dependence, Schlonecker said, results in “endurance in the face of weariness, commitment in the face of opposition, and passion in the face of complacency.”

“We need the comfort of the Holy Spirit to enable us in the hard work of both church planting and pastoring,” Schlonecker said. He urged those in attendance to not fall prey to the “success snare” of nearby works that enjoy the hallmarks of what we normally call success while our ministries, by comparison, seem to be struggling. “I know it sounds like a cliché, but we need to stop looking around at everyone else and fix our eyes on Jesus,” he stressed, adding that God alone determines growth and there will be many “success stories” in eternity of faithful pastors who spent their entire ministries serving in numerically small churches.

Finally, Schlonecker emphasized the paramount importance of prayer. “Leverage God’s promises through prayer. Don’t just talk about prayer; pray! Have your people pray. Lead your people in prayer. Pray with your people.”

He concluded by thanking God for the work of church planting over the past 70 years, and then challenging Conference to a “renewed vision, renewed courage, and faith in a big God.”

Following the keynote address, David E. Gundrum, Director of Church Extension Ministries, introduced recommendations to receive La Roca de Reading and Northern Lehigh as new particular churches of the BFC. Gundrum also noted that, after several years of working to help re-energize a struggling work in Long Neck, DE, that church has been released from Church Extension and is now standing vibrantly on its own, having grown from 12 members back to a congregation of over 80. “We believed that with God, nothing is impossible,” Gundrum said. “We praise God that we can come here tonight and say that God is faithful.”

Northern Lehigh, he noted, was the result of a vision that came from Whitehall to a church that had closed but was restarted, rebuilt, and now stands ready to graduate. La Roca de Reading, he explained, has grown from one Hispanic family of four – the Carlos G. Rodriguez family of Guadalajara, Mexico – who knew no one in Reading when they started but ministered to the city of Reading one person and one family at a time until the church was built over the course of 14 years.

Whereas, the Board of Church Extension has assessed the elder candidates and committed participants, and has reviewed the financial reports of La Roca de Reading and Northern Lehigh Bible Fellowship Mission Churches, and

Whereas, Church Extension affirms that both La Roca de Reading and Northern Lehigh Bible Fellowship Mission Churches each have sufficient men qualified to be elders, and a sufficient committed participant group who will sign as charter members of each church, and

Whereas, the financial reports of La Roca de Reading and Northern Lehigh Bible Fellowship Mission Churches have been reviewed, therefore be it

Resolved, that La Roca de Reading Mission Church and Northern Lehigh Mission Church be received into the BFC Conference, and be recognized as Particular Churches.

The motions to receive La Roca de Reading and Northern Lehigh BFC as new particular churches passed unanimously, and with enthusiasm. “We’ve got two new churches!” the Conference Moderator exclaimed.

Both churches are, in a sense, daughter churches: Northern Lehigh from Whitehall, and La Roca de Reading from the churches of the Berks Region.

Aaron D. Smith, Pastor of Northern Lehigh BFC, asked the question many young parents have asked over untold generations: “When should we have a baby?” Smith applied this to Whitehall’s decision to undertake replanting a church in Northern Lehigh.

“To do such an action as this requires faith. It requires sacrifice. It requires trials and difficulties,” Smith said, noting that his family had to say goodbye to friends when the decision was made for Whitehall to undertake such a project and Smith was tabbed to be the church-planting pastor. The decision was made to close the existing church in Walnutport; the nucleus for the new church plant would come from the surviving members of the Walnutport church and a group that would make the move from Whitehall to Northern Lehigh.

After a summer VBS in 2013, a grand launch was held that October. At present, weekly attendance is around 70, and God has provided a former restaurant as the church’s new home. The church’s mission statement is one it still shares with Whitehall BFC: “Introducing ordinary people to extraordinary, every-growing life in Jesus our Savior.”

Smith introduced Anthony Kutzler, whose former life of drug and alcohol addiction has been transformed through the gospel as presented by the ministry of Northern Lehigh BFC. “Thanks to grace, thanks to Jesus, I don’t have to live in that sin anymore,” he said. “That’s pretty much what the church plant and God have done for me.” Also addressing Conference was Northern Lehigh’s delegate, Jason P. Musselman, a sixth generation BFC member whose roots date back to Bethel- Allentown and Cedar Crest.

Several representatives from the Northern Lehigh church family came forward and posed for a photograph as Conference applauded.

Pastor Carlos G. Rodriguez, with translating assistance from his son Diego Rodriguez, introduced the ministry at La Roca de Reading via verbal testimony and a multi-media presentation. “We are here to celebrate that, by the grace of God, La Roca de Reading is the first Spanish-speaking particular church in the U.S.,” he said.

“Thank God that He put it in the heart of the BFC to start Spanish-speaking churches. There is a lot of work to do,” Pastor Rodriguez said, noting that census statistics suggest that by 2050, one out of every three residents of the United States could be Hispanic. He thanked many members of his family, praising God for the encouragement he has received. “Thank you for so much love and support all these years, even though you are very far away.”

Many others, including several BFC pastors, received thanks for their help in leading to La Roca de Reading’s reception as a particular church. Special thanks were given to Grace Bible Fellowship Church in Reading, which houses the La Roca congregation.

“Thank God for this beautiful family of the BFC,” Pastor Rodriguez said. “And to finish, thank God for the church of La Roca de Reading. We have seen God’s redeeming grace in many lives and families... We can all say that God is our rock.”

William Lopez, a U.S. Navy veteran of two terms of service in Iraq who is one of La Roca’s elders, testified to God’s work in his life. He came to saving faith in 2004 as he came to know Pastor Rodriguez. “From then it’s been a journey of picking up my cross and following Him.”

Lopez praised God for ethnic church planting in the BFC. “I pray that one day there will be a Bible Fellowship Church in my hometown in Puerto Rico.”

A worship team from La Roca de Reading led Conference in singing “At the Cross,” first with traditional English musical stylings and then as a rousing number sung in Spanish and blended with “God is so Good.” “I Will Call Upon the Lord” also received a peppy treatment in both Spanish and English.

Most of the La Roca congregation made the trip from Reading to Pinebrook to share in the celebration, making wide-angle photography necessary.

Richard E. Taylor, Chairman of the Department of Church Extension Ministries, closed the meeting in prayer at 9:05 p.m. after introducing longtime Church Extension Ministries director Daniel G. Ziegler (who is now a member of the Northern Lehigh congregation). Following adjournment, a reception in honor of the two new particular churches was held in Pinebrook’s dining hall.