



## July 2023

### ReGen 2023 Attendees Explore Transformation in Jesus Christ.

ReGen 2023, Evana Network’s biennial national church convention, was held June 26-30 at Taylor University in Upland, IN. Over 430 participants spent the week exploring the theme of “Be Transformed,” from Romans 12:2. Children, youth, and adults alike attended the event to learn about and experience the transformation that comes with being fully renewed in Christ Jesus. Throughout the week, attendees experienced transformation firsthand with many decisions to follow Jesus, rededications, baptisms, and healing prayer moments. “ReGen represents our founding commitment to see lives transformed by Jesus Christ,” shared Tyler Hartford, Director of Church Leadership. “This gathering is a powerful opportunity for churches and individuals to experience the joy and freedom of being Jesus-centered, Word-focused, and Spirit-led.”

Matt Hamsher, Executive Director of Evana Network, opened the event on Monday evening by calling attendees to go “all in” right off the bat. He introduced the event’s theme of transformation with Romans 12:1-2, asking listeners to consider worship as more than only music on Sunday mornings. Our spiritual act of worship, he said, extends to our everyday life as a living sacrifice in how we respond to all situations.



The remaining evening sessions included keynote speaker Olivia Williamson’s reflections on what it means to be transformed in Christ Jesus. Speaker and musician Williamson founded Enlightened Students and currently serves as the director of

Claim Your Campus (CYC). Enlightened Students walks alongside high school students to spread the Gospel and lead worship events in their schools. Similarly, CYC is a ministry that empowers middle and high school students to pray for change on their school campus.

Williamson challenged the wide range of attendees to actively pursue the renewal of their minds in Christ Jesus, noting that despite the cost—perhaps a relationship, social status, being vulnerable, etc.—it is “worth it” to give up conformity to the world in pursuit

of God’s perfect and pleasing will. She emphasized the importance of having a solid identity rooted in Christ; we are made in the image of the sovereign Lord, chosen by the King, and set apart for holiness. “Olivia had a



way of speaking that connected with a range of attendees,” Madi Keim (Charm, OH), summer intern at Evana Network, observed. “I had the privilege of watching her behind the scenes; she had such an attentiveness to the Spirit in her preparations to be a vessel of the Lord onstage in her sharing.”

Pastor Gil Michel of That Church Downtown drew from Moses’ story to illustrate how not only is God’s will

difficult to discern, but after discerning God’s will, one must also allow Him to carry it out in His way while laying aside their own will. Evana Network’s Director of Church Development, Wes Furlong, spoke similarly on the story of Jacob, urging listeners to accept God’s call on their lives while remembering God’s promise to be with them. Wendell Nofziger, Executive Director of VidaNet, shared openly about some personal struggles *(continued other other side)*

### Get Ready for Flourish 2024!

Mark February 15-19, 2024 on your calendars for Evana’s Pastor/Spouse Retreat. Pastors and lay leaders alike will join us in sunny Bradenton, FL for a time of rest and renewal. Tickets will be available shortly, so be sure to keep your schedule open!



*(cont. from front page)*

and the weight of shame. There is great pressure to conform to the world and its ways, but Nofzinger challenged attendees to surrender themselves to God, allowing Him to have His way with their lives. "The speakers at Regen were relevant, relatable, and Spirit-filled," Pastor Matt Yoder of Locust Grove Church (Sturgis, MI) shared. "They all built on the previous speaker and prepared for the next; as each one invited people to faith and to transformation through the power of God."

Director of Church Leadership Tyler Hartford closed the convention on Friday morning alongside his three oldest children, who shared their own testimonies of transformation. Cadence Hartford, the oldest, used her testimony to explain the sacrifices that often come with transformation. Kyrie and Brayson Hartford each shared their recent experiences in being called to worship and student ministry in their local church through moments of vulnerability and surrender. Each of them then challenged participants to step out in faith, however small or big that step might be.

Representatives from multiple mission agencies, schools, and other organizations including VidaNet, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Virginia Mennonite Missions, Global Disciples, Rosedale Missions, gave attendees the opportunity to attend seminars every afternoon. Seminar topics ranged from prayer or spiritual disciplines to apologetics or international missions and issues. Several of the organizations were joined at exhibition tables by Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Central Committee, Everence and others to network and provide information about other resources and programs available to individuals and congregations.



ReGen's worship services were led by Sing Love, an Indianapolis-based worship collective of teen musicians. Though the worship was led by youth and geared toward a younger generation, delegates also reported being particularly moved by the worship, noting how personal it was. Not only did attendees feel connections with the Holy Spirit, but also with the community of Christ-followers around them. On many occasions, Sing Love worship leader Becca Totty took the band off script to lead attendees in acapella worship with songs like I Surrender All and Great Is Thy Faithfulness. "I was transported back to my first years as a young believer and remembered how much I loved the music of my generation and how it spoke to me," Kathy Keafer of Kaufman Church, Johnstown, PA shared. "That opened my heart to think more deeply about the words being sung at ReGen."

The Holy Spirit's movement was not limited to an auditorium. By the end of the week, youth began initiating activities like foot-washing and baptism in Taylor University's lake in the early hours of the morning. Another group prayed over the President of Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) Desalegn Abebe and Principal of MKC's College Gishu Jebecha during their visit. Attendees prayed over one another without hesitation throughout the week during Bible studies, in seminars, and over free time. Jason Ramer of Olive Mennonite Church (Elkhart, IN) shared, "Simply being part of this event and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, being alive, active

and moving among our congregations is a testimony I am bringing back to our church."

Delegates met on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings after worship. They affirmed three new board members—Sebastiano Rosa (Goshen, IN), Nehemiah Chigoji (Upland, CA), and Tonya Dean (Davidsville, PA)—and affirmed the continuing board members—Terry Diener (Goshen, IN), Sarah Schlegel (Shickley, NE), and Marketo Michel (South Bend, IN).

Delegates also considered and affirmed three changes to Evana's personal and congregational covenants. Two commitments were reworded for greater clarity and a new commitment to "implement church policies to protect against abuse and also develop processes on how to care for those who have experienced abuse" was unanimously affirmed by delegates.

"What a privilege it has been to gather together at ReGen again," reflected Hamsher. "God is truly able to change hearts and lives in ways that are not possible without the transformative presence and power of the Holy Spirit."

## **Welcome Middlecreek Church!**

We extend a warm welcome to our latest member, Middlecreek Church (Rockwood, PA). Located south of Johnstown, PA and just outside of Somerset, PA, Middlecreek Church comes to us from the Church of the Brethren.

A resident of West Virginia, Pastor John Knoll commutes a short distance to minister within the community. Middlecreek joins other Evana churches in the region, Thomas Mennonite (Holsopple, PA) and Kaufman Church (Davidsville, PA). We're excited about what God has in store for Middlecreek and Pastor John, as they minister in their rural Somerset County community.