

FECConnections

Earl Cecil's FEC career marked by commitment, passion for unreached

Director of International Ministries retiring after 43 years of ministry.

By Kristi Reimer, *FECConnections* Editor

Earl Cecil is calling this his “year of jubilee.” Fifty years ago, when he was 15 years old, God called him to full-time ministry during a youth conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Since then he’s remained faithful to that call, serving as pastor of several FEC churches and most recently as director of International Ministries. And now FEC is saying goodbye as Earl and his wife, Cheryl, embark on the next phase of life.

“Earl has been a mentor, a friend, and a good boss,” says Steve Nelson, International Ministries’ Africa and Albania regional director. “His commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission has been a driving force in Earl’s life, and it shows in the record of his efforts. He is an encourager, and that has rubbed off on many who have known him over the years.”

The early years

Earl grew up in Fort Wayne in Wesleyan and Missionary churches and attended Fort Wayne Bible College, living at home and working at Borden’s ice cream factory to put himself through school. One day Cheryl Roth, a fellow student, asked him to go hear her brother speak at an evening service at Brookside Church.

That was Earl’s introduction to FEC—and the start of another relationship as well. A year later that brother, Don Roth, performed Earl and Cheryl’s wedding ceremony. “I accuse Cheryl of asking me out on the first date,” Earl says.

As Earl and Cheryl neared the completion of their college studies, the government was drafting young men to fight in Vietnam. Earl needed documentation showing affiliation with a specific church



Earl and Cheryl Cecil in Albania, April 2007.

What others have to say about Earl Cecil

Hal Lehman

What a privilege to have been Earl Cecil’s assistant these past nine years. I have found Earl to be a student of missions and life as a missionary, and there are three vivid qualities that to me have characterized Earl as the FEC International Ministries director.

First, he had an ongoing burden for the lost, especially those who had little opportunity to hear the good news, and a burning passion to see it accomplished. Second, he truly cared about each international worker who was under his direction and care. Third, he was willing to look outside the box on normal missionary work for methods that could best expand God’s visible kingdom in a given culture.

My life has been tremendously enriched both personally and in ministry as I reflect on the example Earl has been to me. He has been my mentor, encourager, confidant, friend and so much more. I have greatly enjoyed working with him and now wish God’s richest blessing in this new phase of ministry for him and Cheryl.

Fall 2011

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What others have to say about Earl Cecil

Doug Witzig

Earl became one of my life's mentors even before the term "mentor" was as popular as it is today. He is a master of equipping Christian workers by providing opportunities for personal experience of one's gifts and abilities.

Earl became the associate pastor of missions and pastoral care at Grace Church as I was beginning my college years. He was a great encouragement to me as I listened for God's missionary call on my life. Earl and Cheryl helped shape my marriage with Jen as they did our premarital counseling and served as supervisors during our church internship at Grace. From the early days of support-raising, to our commissioning service, to our ups and downs on the field in Hong Kong and southern China, Earl and Cheryl have been two of our biggest advocates.

During their shepherding visits to China to encourage our family and mission team, I always took good care of Earl and Cheryl ... except for the one time I put them in a Chinese taxi without clarifying the directions with the driver. Jen and I are thankful that Earl and Cheryl's advice and counsel have always guided us in the right direction.

In recent years as the FEC International Ministries Director, Earl provided the support we needed to transition into Business as Mission strategies, first on the field and now as FEC IM/TEAM's BAM coordinator. Our family sends our blessings to Earl and Cheryl as they make their next transition into retirement. We know they will continue to faithfully serve Christ and His Kingdom as the Lord gives them opportunities.

to obtain a ministerial deferment. Cheryl, having grown up in Salem Church, had deep roots in FEC, and the couple had spent time at Brookside Church as well as visiting Miracle Camp in Lawton, Michigan, after they were married. So Earl applied for credentialing within FEC, and the Board of Elders approved his request.

"Here I was a 21-year-old college student, and they didn't know me from Adam," Earl says. "But they knew Cheryl. That's how my career with FEC started."



Earl with the Szogedi family in Hungary, 2011.

Pastoring and family

In 1968, the Cecils went to Kettering, Ohio, to check out the FEC church there. The building was brand new and the community seemed pleasant enough, but they didn't feel right about the position. So their next visit was to Lafayette, Indiana. "The church was in an older building built in 1940s, with a parsonage attached," Earl says. "It was not as attractive, but we had peace about it and were invited to come. So we graduated, packed up what we had, and started out, as green as can be."

The following years took the Cecils to various other churches and ministries within FEC. From Lafayette they went to Flanagan, Illinois, serving as house parents at Salem Children's Home, assistant pastor at Salem Church, and interim senior pastor at Salem Church. In 1977 the need for a pastor in Woodburn, Indiana, led them to the church there, where they served for nine years and Earl was able to pursue more formal education, eventually earning a master's degree from Huntington College.

In 1986 the Cecils found themselves in Morton, Illinois, and Grace Church when Earl accepted a position as associate pastor of pastoral care and missions. They stayed at Grace until Earl was asked to direct the International Ministries program at the FEC Resource Center in 2001. "Every pastoral work has challenges, but I don't know of a better group I could have been part of," Earl says. "I could go back to any of the churches where I've pastored. I never left on bad terms, never felt like we had a bad experience."

During these years the Cecils welcomed four children into their family: Angie, Aric, Andrew, and April. Cheryl, in addition to staying home to raise the children, led Bible studies, taught children, and led quiz teams. "She has been a true partner in ministry," Earl says. "I haven't sung her praises enough. Our kids saw the flaws in the church and me and everybody else, but today all of them are walking closely with the Lord. I attribute a lot of that to Cheryl. I've known families where that doesn't happen."

IM leadership

When Earl took over the directorship of International Ministries in 2001, he felt the pastoral call to care for missionaries keenly, but he was also a little overwhelmed. "I really had to ask the Lord to help me," he says. "I felt like I was back to a single pastorate. Fortunately Hal Lehman joined a year later."

During his IM tenure Earl traveled all over the world, visiting countries in Africa, East Asia, Central and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East. Alone, with Cheryl, or as part of a team, he would help support missionaries in the field and explore new opportunities for ministry. He also worked with people in the U.S. who received a call to the mission field, working with them to find the right situation and make the transition to living overseas on missions support.

"One of my highlights has been seeing young people approach their pastors for help finding a place to serve in missions, and having those pastors direct them to International Ministries," Earl says. "I love it when a pastor recognizes the value and opportunity of what we're doing here."

Earl Cecil *(continued from page 2)*

In fact, Earl has watched many people grow up in FEC and then step up to the challenge of going overseas. “With some of these people, I was their pastor and then I was their director,” he says.

Earl credits his IM co-workers, Hal Lehman and Steve Nelson, with the strong efforts under way to reach unreached people in Spain and West Africa. “Ten years ago if you’d have told me I’d have two guys doing these ministries full-time, I’d have said you’ve got to be kidding,” Earl says. “They’ve been such a blessing. I haven’t been a missionary, but both these guys have. So I could go to Hal and say, ‘I don’t understand. How should we respond in this situation?’ He’s been a good help in that way. And Steve asks tough questions. He’s a thinker.”

Of course there have been challenges and opposition along the way as well as highlights, but Earl says God always brought people into his life who helped him work through those situations and provide grounding and support. What’s more, he’s seen certain overseas ministries close down completely, but he acknowledges God’s hand in this as well. “It’s all part of the process of growth,” he says. “We work out of mature areas into new opportunities. It’s easy to go where there’s already a work in place, but our vision in FEC is to take the gospel to unreached people.”

What’s next?

Earl and Cheryl don’t know exactly what their next steps will be, but Earl says they’re relying on God’s faithfulness and direction. “From my vantage point I’m excited because I have no clue,” he says. “Cheryl wants to get a book published, and I’d like to find a place that would inspire her to write. Beyond that, we’re waiting on the Lord. We’re

What others have to say about Earl Cecil

Neal Hauser

The following are some of my connections to Earl:

- I fulfilled three years of Christian service assignments under Earl’s tutelage at Westwood Fellowship when I was a student at Fort Wayne Bible College. This included co-teaching a junior high Sunday school class with Cheryl, co-leading children’s church with my future wife, Rhonda, and working with the youth group and teaching the senior citizens Sunday school class during my final year of college.
- Rhonda and I were married by Earl on May 23, 1981, at Westwood Fellowship.
- I participated in FEC’s internship program under Earl’s supervision at Westwood Fellowship from September of 1985 through September of 1986.
- Earl dedicated two of our children (Bradley, 1989, and Allison, 2008) and officiated at the funeral for one of our children (Anne, 1988).

When Earl was my supervising pastor during my FEC internship at Westwood Fellowship, I recall talking about spiritual gifts one day. I asked Earl the obvious question: “What is your spiritual gift?”

obedient to what He wants. I’m not willing to curl up in a corner—though if He puts me in a corner I’ll be there.

“The thing that’s given me the most peace is the Scripture that says God will never leave us or forsake us,” Earl continues. “He is redirecting us at this point in life. We have much to be thankful for, and He’s provided it all.”

As Earl has been thinking about this era of transition, he’s decided that what he wants most is to be FAT: faithful, available and teachable. He says he was deeply touched during FEC’s annual Convention in August by the number of people who spoke warmly about his and Cheryl’s ministry. “I was humbled at the number of people who stood up,” he says. “All we were doing was being obedient. I think we’re at our best when we don’t know we’re impacting people but being obedient to the Lord. That’s the joy of serving, knowing that it’s God we serve. I don’t regret it one bit.” ■



Baptism in the Dominican Republic, 2006.

Earl thought for just a moment and responded, “Encouragement.”

As I look back over the years of our association I can affirm his assessment without reservation. The relationship I have enjoyed with Earl helps me to appreciate the role that Barnabas played in John Mark’s life and ministry. Earl saw potential for ministry in me that was not readily apparent to others, including myself. Were it not for his ability to see what others did not and his willingness to invest himself in me, my life would likely have looked far different.

My ministry wings were tested and strengthened under Earl’s watchful eye, loving heart, and guiding hand. His encouragement was not limited to professional preparation but was also experienced in personal relationship. Earl and Cheryl’s encouragement and counsel strengthened Rhonda and me when seminary studies left strains on our home, and they helped us discern God’s voice upon graduation.

Through the years Earl and Cheryl’s Christ-honoring, self-giving presence in our lives has served to not only build God’s kingdom but to bless our home. Speaking for Rhonda as well as for myself, we are very grateful for the blessings of God that have accrued to us through the encouraging presence of Earl and Cheryl over these many years.

Convention 2011

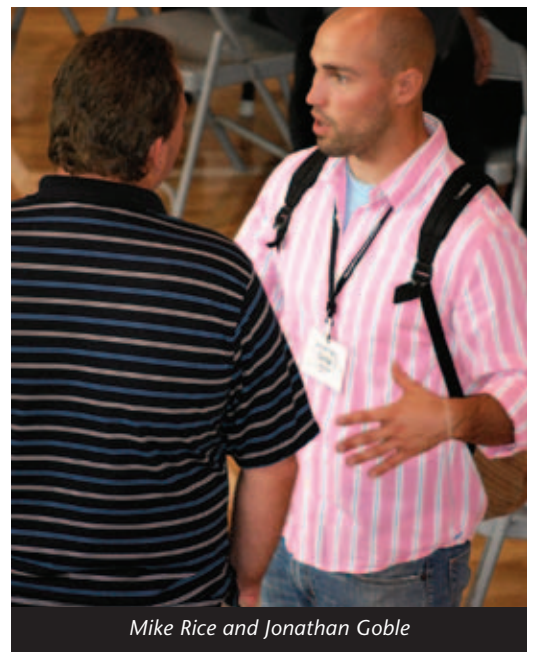
The faces and activities of FEC's 2011 Convention, held August 4–6 at Brookside Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Abby Hyde



Cindy Heiniger and Maureen Roth



Mike Rice and Jonathan Goble



Jason Rains



Stuart and Kristi Rex and family



Chloe Hazelett, Olivia Colon, and Jayda Hazelett



Strider Preston

Christian Service Foundation Update

By Al Rupp, CSF President

The summer has been a busy time as CSF has completed its yearly audit and revised the annual offering circular. The new offering circulars were mailed to investors at the end of September. CSF thanks Dave Lersch and Jim Greer for completing nine years on the Board of Directors.



Other changes and accomplishments include:

- With the recent updates to the offering circular and with additional state registrations filed, we expect to be able to accept investments from 27 states now, up from 16 last year and seven two years ago.
- CSF received record income in fiscal year 2011 of \$363,800.
- The CSF fund balance increased to \$2,493,817, up from \$2,130,017 last year.
- CSF and FEC are working together to create an internship program, and more than \$50,000 has been committed to fund it.
- IRA accounts are now available through CSF.
- \$24,000 was paid in Christian college scholarships in 2011.
- \$4,000 was paid in summer camp scholarships for 2011.
- A CSF dinner is scheduled for 6 p.m. October 22 at Crossview Church in Grabill, Indiana. All are invited. Please call (260) 423-3649 to make a reservation.

Did you know?

- CSF can now accept IRA accounts.
- CSF can arrange deferred gift agreements, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts and various other estate gifts.

How will you leave your legacy?

How can we help?

Why invest in CSF?

- Earn good interest on your investment.
- Provide cash for loans to FEC churches.
- Have the satisfaction of knowing that your investments are used in ministry.
- Share in supporting kingdom work.

To inquire about investing with CSF or for more information about any of these items or about the Christian Service Foundation in general, call Erin Smith, CSF Assistant, or Al Rupp, President, at (260) 423-3649 or e-mail csf@fecministries.org.

Convention 2011 quizzing results

Top ten junior high quizzers

1. Colleen Williamson, Brookside
2. Tim Williamson, Brookside
3. Jenna Metcalfe, Eureka
4. Tyler Webster, Highland Bethel
5. Emily Armstrong, Eureka
6. Elizabeth Powers, Pine Hills
7. Brett Holder, Upland (tie)
7. John MaGee, Upland (tie)
9. Natalie Schisler, Grace
10. Rebecca Lorentz, Grace

Top junior high quizzer from each church

Berne: Chloe Zurcher
Brookside: Colleen Williamson
Eureka: Jenna Metcalfe
Grace: Natalie Schisler
Highland Bethel: Tyler Webster
Pine Hills: Elizabeth Powers
Upland: Brett Holder and John MaGee (tie)

Top three junior high teams

1. Eureka: Emily Armstrong, Jenna Metcalfe, Megan Armstrong, Jessica Metcalfe, Karl Maurer
2. Brookside: Tim Williamson, Colleen Williamson, Amelia Colen, Paige Hazelett, Brandon Rigdon
3. Highland Bethel 1: Tyler Webster, Jackson Odle, Micah Gerber, Kelsey Hunsberger

Top ten senior high quizzers

1. Lydia Klassen, Grace
2. Caleb Andrews, Archbold
3. Kelly Hirschy, Berne
4. Whitney Webster, Highland Bethel
5. Rebekah Coon, Eureka
6. Carissa Diller, Archbold
7. Dan Hauser, Dewey
8. Grace Lawler, Grace
9. Marty Litwiller, Dewey
10. Ashley Steffen, Eureka

Top senior high quizzer from each church

Archbold: Caleb Andrews
Berne: Kelly Hirschy
Brookside: Isaac Madison
Calvary: Judah Sistrunk
Dewey: Marty Litwiller
Eureka: Ashley Steffen
Grace: Lydia Klassen
Highland Bethel: Whitney Webster
Pine Hills: Amanda Hughes
Upland: Gabby Trudeau

Top three senior high teams

1. Grace 1: Lydia Klassen, Sarah Roberts, Zach Witzig, Luke Riffle
2. Archbold: Caleb Andrews, Grace Diller, Carissa Diller
3. Upland 2: Erick Holder, Gabby Trudeau, Maddy Trudeau, David Rodman

Albania missionaries facing change, transition

With dropping enrollment, Albania Bible Institute brings its residential program to a close.

By Steve Nelson, Africa and Albania Regional Director

In the last few years, the Albania Bible Institute (ABI) has seen its enrollment dwindle, an indication that the church in Albania is feeling less of a need for a full residential formal Bible school training program. As a result, ABI has recently decided to transition from a residential program to a night class program that students commute to. This basically completes the need for FEC to have full-time missionaries at the school for teaching and administration.

This change has left several FEC missionaries in the field without full-time ministries. Over this last month of discussions and meetings in the field and here at home, International Ministries has decided that, for the present, Adam and Allison Roseboom should close out their current position in Albania and return to North America for an extended North American Assignment (NAA) while we continue to investigate ministry possibilities in Albania and other places. They will need our continued prayer and financial support at least through April 1, 2012, and hopefully longer.

Jerry and Sandy Lugbill are due to begin their NAA in late October and will continue as planned. They will close out their ministry and housing obligations in Durres for the time being. They too will need our continued support as we consider further ministry in Albania or elsewhere. Kent and Angie Morton will stay on in Durres to complete their term, which extends through this school year, and plan to come home by the end of May 2012 to begin their NAA. Kent and Angie have agreed during these next months to take on a new assignment of investigating ministry in Albania. They will interview other evangelical mission groups working in Albania to find out what they're doing presently, what ministries have been tried and what degree of success or failure they've experienced, and what needs these groups currently have.

Kent and Angie will investigate established national churches in the same way, to find out what's working and what's not, where the needs are and what's missing, and the degree of autonomy or potential for autonomy these organizations have established. They will not focus just on Durres but on all of Albania. They will be gathering useful information as we continue to explore the possibility of open doors for effective ministry. Our goal continues to be establishing reproducing communities of Christ-followers in Albania, a country that is still less than 1 percent evangelical. Even though it is rock-hard ground, we must continue to pray for and consider the great spiritual need in Albania.

Ruth Keller and Alyssa Ricca will remain in Albania to continue assisting in the education of the Mortons' school-age children and the children of some other missionaries in the area.

Please continue your support of these missionaries with your prayers and finances as God leads us through this time of transition. We will let you know as plans progress and change. Thank you for your partnership in this and all of our international ministries. ■

2010-2011 quiz year results

Top five junior high quizzers

1. Carissa Diller, Archbold
2. Colleen Williamson, Brookside
3. Tim Williamson, Brookside
4. Jenna Metcalfe, Eureka
5. Brett Holder, Upland

Top junior high quizzer from each church

Archbold: Carissa Diller
Berne: Chloe Zurcher
Brookside: Colleen Williamson
Eureka: Jenna Metcalfe
Grace: Zach Bohnam
Highland Bethel: Tyler Webster
Pine Hills: Elizabeth Powers
Upland: Brett Holder

Top five senior high quizzers

1. Caleb Andrews, Archbold
2. Lydia Klassen, Grace
3. Kelly Hirschy, Berne
4. Whitney Webster, Highland Bethel
5. Ashley Steffen, Eureka

Top senior high quizzer from each church

Archbold: Caleb Andrews
Berne: Kelly Hirschy
Brookside: Isaac Madison
Calvary: Judah Sistrunk
Dewey: Marty Litwiller
Eureka: Ashley Steffen
Grace: Lydia Klassen
Pine Hills: Kayla Too
Highland Bethel: Whitney Webster
Upland: Erick Holder



Brookside Quiz Team



President's Corner

Rocky Rocholl

Honoring Earl Cecil's dash

Whenever we recognize milestone achievements in someone's life, we use a dash (–), a “punctuation mark used in writing or printing to designate a passing or continuum of time,” according to the American Heritage Dictionary. I'm sure all of us have been challenged at some point to think about what our dash will represent, beyond just designating the years we live on this earth.

I was recently thinking about the impact Earl Cecil has made on FEC when I looked up the word “dash” in the dictionary. To my surprise, it listed 18 different uses for the word. Let me relate Earl's life and ministry to some of those other definitions.

- **n. a small amount added.** Although we could say that this is how Earl often describes himself, we all recognize that his “small amount” represents an abundance of little pieces, like a mosaic, that combine to form a significant and meaningful whole. Forty-three years of faithful small steps have made a huge impact on individuals, churches, and the larger FEC family.

- **n. a foot race.** Hebrews 12:1 tells us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” What an appropriate description of the way Earl has diligently approached ministry. Whether serving as a house parent at Salem Children's Home, an associate pastor, a senior pastor, or the director of International Ministries, Earl has always diligently prepared and doggedly persevered.

- **v. to add an enlivening or altering element to.** From laughter in a meeting and around the office to willingly taking on any challenge assigned to him, Earl has always made it a priority to make a positive difference. He was the cheerleader for each of our missionaries, and at the convention this year many stood in testimony to the positive impact that Earl has had on their lives.

So what about that dash? “Earl Cecil: faithful service to Jesus Christ and FEC, 1968–2011.” May we all one day be able to be as thankful and fulfilled by what our dash represents.

Rocky Rocholl, FEC President

What others have to say about Earl Cecil

Don Roth

Earl is my brother-in-law, married to my youngest sister Cheryl. I performed their wedding and was involved in the weddings of each of their four children. I would characterize Earl's ministry in FEC by the following:

- **Commitment.** Earl committed himself to his wife, to his children and grandchildren, to his parents and siblings, to FEC, to his congregations, to his missionaries, and, most of all, to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Faithfulness.** Earl always gave his best and most to the particular ministry for which he was responsible.
- **Encouragement.** Earl was usually upbeat and positive about his circumstances and commitments. He encouraged his congregations, his fellow staff members, and his missionaries.
- **Loyalty.** Earl was very loyal to and supportive of FEC. He did not grow up in it, as did I, but he was first, last and always an ardent fan of his adopted fellowship.

