

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Bruce Hill



I took this picture during our most recent Pastoral Assessment Center. The assessees were working together on a project of what it would look like to envision a new start for a struggling church. At the time of this picture, they were looking at all the ideas they had written on the whiteboard for the new church they were calling "Hopetown Community Church."

If I were naming this picture, I might refer to Isaiah 52:7;

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!"

That is certainly true.

FROM THE DESK

continued...



What I really think about this picture is that ministry is hard work. The assesses had spent a lot of time working, strategizing, and envisioning how to revive a struggling congregation. They had started the process standing up, moving around, writing all kinds of ideas on the board. Now they were weary from it all; they sat together and tried to decide what to do next. Ministry is hard work. Spiritual warfare is real.

Ministry is hard work; it's often dirty work. There is no magic in ministry; ministry is simply service. In Greek, the word for ministry is "diakonia." The root word is "konis" which means "dust" or "grit." In other words, ministry is dirty work; it rolls up its sleeves and does things that many times look unimportant to the world. Our English word for "ministry" comes from the Latin root for "small things," as in the word "miniscule."



Ministry means I am to be involved in little acts, small gestures, and everyday service: giving a cup of cold water to the thirsty, preaching the whole Gospel, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, caring for those with special needs, or as Jesus illustrated, washing others' feet.

We think and plan. We come up with great strategic plans. And then, like a bad "chance" card in Monopoly, in one moment everything changes. But ministry continues. The good news of this picture is that we are not ministering alone; we are part of a team. And the church, no matter what its name, is God's church. He is leading us. Be encouraged - we are not alone, and the Lord will bless our faithful service.

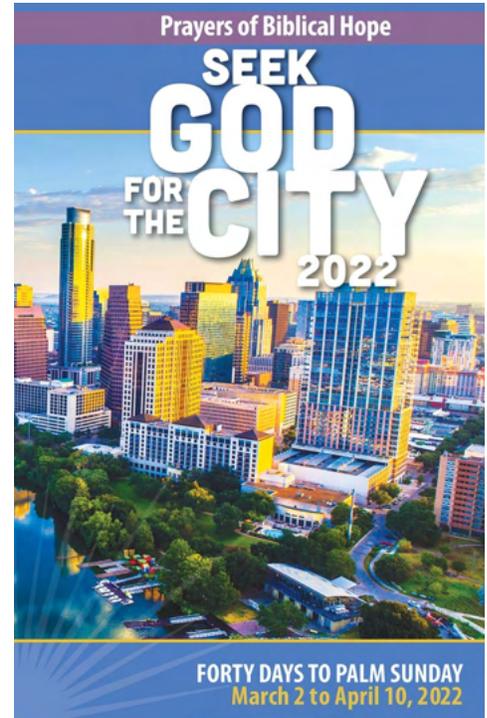
In Christ's service,



Praise & Prayer

1. Pray for the work of the Stationing Committee as we talk with pastors and churches about opportunities to “fit and flourish” in ministry.
2. Join me in praying for pastors, families, and congregations who continue to deal with COVID and its impact on life and ministries.
3. Pray that I may finish my term as Bishop well, and ask the Lord to clearly show how I can serve him after June 30, 2022.
4. Pray for Bishop-elect Randy Sizemore as he plans for our upcoming National Conference in May.
5. Ask the Lord to guide our camping ministries in PA, OH, and IL as they prepare for their summer camping seasons.
6. Praise the Lord for our small-but-mighty Church Center staff who work so well together.
7. Praise the Lord for the committed missionary work being done by our EC missionaries all around the world. *(And remember we are all commissioned to “go make disciples.”)*
8. Praise God for His blessing of our denomination with another successful Pastoral Assessment Center. *(And pray for the Lord’s blessing of those serving Him in various ways.)*
9. Praise the Lord for the many opportunities to share His love in meaningful ways during this Valentine month.
10. Since we’re celebrating Valentine’s Day, join me in praising God for my wife, Gloria; a great source of encouragement and love, even as she works full-time and deals with my crazy schedule.

GROW YOUR HOPE IN GOD'S GREAT PROMISES!



The 2022 edition of Seek God for the City is designed to re-ignite desires for Christ that may have gone dormant, so that our hope in Christ and His kingdom will rise again. The forty days from March 2 to Palm Sunday, April 10, makes an ideal time to venture into a season of sustained, hope-filled prayer. www.waymakers.com





"Overflowing Hope"

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13

Hope, in the New Testament, is defined as, "favorable and confident expectation." It has much to do with the unseen and the future. In Romans 15:13, God is spoken of as the, "God of hope," declaring that He is the author of hope, not the subject. Hope is the result of our salvation and finds its expression and endurance as we join in God's mission movement, actively "waiting" for the coming of Christ. Our hope is not based on the present conditions of our country, our circumstances, or even our church. Our hope is based on who we are! We are the Church of Jesus Christ! As our one-hundred-year-old heritage proves, we are **Evangelical**; that is, we are the bearers of the Good News of God's saving grace to our world. We are **Congregational**; strategically gathered and connected locally for direct engagement and impact with our culture.

*We are a movement of the people of God, positioned together with Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, **overflowing with hope** for the sake of a hopeless world to know Christ and to make Him known.*

I am so excited to gather with you at our National Conference sessions this year to share the hope and direction God has given me for the Evangelical Congregational Church; to thank and appreciate all you do as the pastors and lay delegates of our congregations; and to celebrate the excellent leadership of Bishop Bruce Hill over these last eleven years. Pray with me that God's Holy Spirit overflows our entire experience with His hopeful presence!

Randy Sizemore, Bishop-elect



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

Past Due Dates

*please remit as soon as possible
if not already done so*

- +Disability Payment - \$100
- +Pastors Compensation Forms
- +Annual Statistical Reports
- +Workers Compensation Insurance Information -
due 30 days after receipt of request for payroll information

As always, please email:

David King
Benefits Administrator
dking@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717-866-7581

- + Please begin using the 2022 Ministry Fund forms for January offerings. One ministry fund form will be used for all EC churches in all regions and all districts. Offerings collected in December 2021 should be remitted on the 2021 Ministry Fund forms.
- + The 2021 Business Mileage Reimbursement increased by \$.025/mile to \$.585/mile on January 1, 2022.
- + Pastors Compensation forms were due by January 15, 2022. If you have not done so, please return your compensation forms to Dave King as soon as possible. We will be contacting churches in early February that have not submitted 2022 compensation forms and requesting compliance.
- + The deadline to submit HRA reimbursements for the July 21 – December 2021 plan year is March 31, 2022. This is a federally mandated deadline that cannot be changed.
- + The 2021 Annual Reports and 4th Quarter Ministerial Update forms were both due by January 25, 2022. Reports should be emailed to office@eccenter.com or mailed to EC Church Center, 100 W Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067 as soon as possible. Please also remit to your District Field Director.
- + Please remember that the EC Benefits administrative fee of \$125 is due from churches on April 15, 2022; **retirees are not subject to this fee**. The 2022 disability premiums were due January 15, 2022. Please remit them as soon as possible. *The due dates for the administrative fee and disability premium are listed in the Treasurer's Guide available on the EC Center website.*



Dear Pension Plan Participant,

Prudential has notified employer pension plan sponsors of Prudential's decision to sell their pension plan business to Empower Retirement, effective the first quarter (January to March) of 2022, pending regulatory approvals. The EC Pension Plan and Housing Equity account are included in the sale transaction. In the next few months, you will begin to see the Empower Retirement name and logo on your retirement statements, and when you log in to your online account. Employer groups have been told that there will be NO CHANGES to investment options, fees charged, or a change in the guaranteed interest account earnings rate, as well as no changes to established distribution.

continued on page 6...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued from page 5...



Employer groups will remain on the Prudential account platform for about eight to ten months after the sale transaction is finalized. After this eight-to-ten-month period, accounts will begin to migrate to the Empower Retirement platform. When accounts are migrated to the Empower Retirement platform, we will see formatting changes to our quarterly statements and the online system will be different.

Some of you have questions that cannot be answered at this time. Employers have only been told what is noted above. Very little information has been released. After the sale transaction has received the necessary regulatory approvals, representatives from Empower Retirement will begin to contact employers to plan the migration of the accounts from Prudential to Empower Retirement. We will not see changes in pension plan accounts until late 2022. However, let us repeat that Empower Retirement has stated that they will accept all current Prudential accounts with the current investment options (including guaranteed interest earnings rate), fee levels, and distribution schedules.

The EC Benefits Trustees are actively discussing and planning what are the next steps. Along with thoroughly reviewing the information that will be provided from Empower Retirement, other retirement plan providers will be contacted to submit a proposal to assume the administrative responsibilities of our retirement plan. Early analysis indicates that Empower Retirement is a good and a very large retirement plan administrator. However, no decision has been made to migrate to Empower Retirement or change providers. We will do our best to investigate all provider options fully.

Please ask any questions and we will provide information as it becomes available.

Frank Schock
President
EC Benefits Corp

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David King
Benefits Administrator
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dking@eccenter.com





Click [HERE](#) for a special video message from Rev. Abraham Powell, Bishop, ECCL.



Construction of the EC School in Liberia.

FROM THE DESK

Rev. J. Ted Rathman, Global Ministries Associate

EC CHURCH LIBERIA - *continued from last month*

Plagued by 14 years of civil war, the Republic of Liberia, regarded by the original settlers as the "promised land," currently stands as one of the world's most impoverished nations. Located on the western coast of Africa, the country, whose name literally means, "Land of the Free," was established in 1822 (with the support of the American government) as a colony for free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans. From its inception, though, ethnic issues divided the population of Liberia and fueled hostility between people groups. This picture of tragedy need not be, however, a perpetual state for Liberia. A new governmental leadership team was elected in 2005, and the awareness, efforts, and prayers of people around the world have brought hope for recovery in Liberia.

The EC Church is directly involved with such restoration efforts. In fact, the Global Ministries Community has had works in Liberia since the 1950's. Thirty-six EC churches have remained resolute, despite the destruction of the war-torn years. There are currently more than 9,000 members in the EC Church of Liberia, and the numbers are growing every day. Thank you for continuing to pray for Bishop Powell, and our ECCL brothers and sisters.

To know how your church can partner directly with an International EC Church, call the GMC office at 717-866-7581 or email ecglobal@eccenter.com.

Ted Rathman



Ministerial Development Community News

The Pipeline Is Flowing!

The Ministerial Development Community (MDC) performs the vital role of supporting the mission of the Evangelical Congregational Church by helping to raise up leaders and discipling them toward productive ministry within the church and throughout our surrounding communities.

As we continue to go through this new year, we have already conducted the Pastoral Assessment Center this past month in January. New pastoral leaders are being called into ministry and being made available for service. In the coming months, the Board of Examiners will interview a variety of qualified people for credentials. The pipeline is flowing!

As we approach National Conference 2022, not only do we look forward to the healthy transition of new leadership within the EC Church, but we present the names of men and women called to fulfill various roles in the church—as pastors, elders, deacons, and deaconesses. Some are just receiving their credentials, while others are completing the rigorous process of learning and serving in preparation for ordination.

With all that said, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the process for receiving credentials within the Evangelical Congregational Church. We are excited to help you in areas of preparation, calling and assessment, theological conformity and education, as well as coaching.

As the MDC serves in this vital role for the denomination, we still need local pastors and leaders to speak into the lives and prepare the hearts of new candidates for ministry. All in all, we follow the life of the Spirit, as he continues to enthuse the church.

Dr. Jeffrey Byerly
Ministerial Development Associate



Helping Leaders to Fit & Flourish



Kingdom Extension Community News

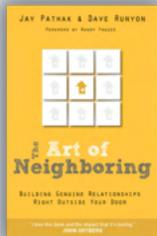
Pastors and Team Leaders . . . contact Les Cool at 717-951-8433 or revlescool@gmail.com to arrange for a training event.

The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities

This hands-on workshop is designed to help you explore how to identify points of intersection between the DNA of your church and that of the surrounding community. With these insights, participants will examine ways to build missional “bridges” between church and community. The aim of the interactive sessions will be for each church represented to generate action steps to build relationships and ministries with your neighbors.

Three teaching sessions (Who are we? Who are they? What bridges can be created between us?) are followed by hands-on workshops (church teams actually processing the material that was shared). The final session is designed to leave each church team with solid plans and action steps toward missional connections with their communities.

If not a workshop, read a good book together!



The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door

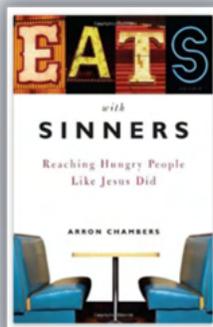
By Pathak & Runyan

We used to KNOW our neighbors. Now we “might” know their names. Today, we live radically different lives. So – how do we connect? This read is a smart journey toward a helpful plan.

Eats with Sinners: Reaching Hungry People Like Jesus Did

By Arron Chambers

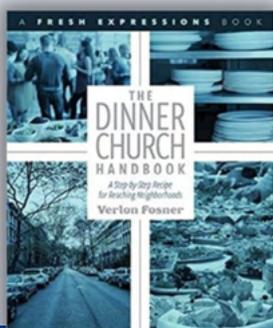
Chambers notes that Jesus ate with real people and discusses the power of eating together. He offers recipes. And challenges why we do what we do.



Dinner Church: Building Bridges by Breaking Bread / The Dinner Church Handbook

By Verlon Fosner

People love to gather over/around food. Fosner weaves church into and around a meal. Dinner church. This is for people who might not do church. Or church buildings.

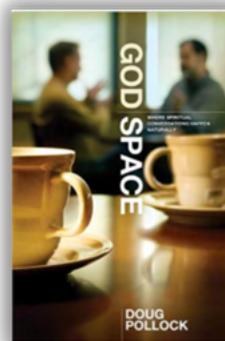


Small Talk and Witness

Small talk! When was the last time small talk led to a more significant conversation? With a stranger? Smooth? Awkward? When was the last time a conversation included Jesus?

As Christians, we get to talk about Jesus. Sharing Jesus usually starts with a conversation and a relationship and trust. Consider developing new conversational skills.

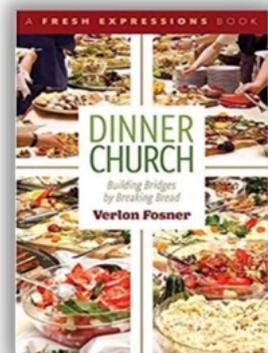
This 2- or 3-hour workshop is a conversation about conversations. There is an art to making space for conversations. Discover resources, develop ideas, and practice the art of moving from “hello” to something deeper, even gospel focused. Deciding to be prepared usually guarantees that will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations.



God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally

By Doug Pollock

Pollock helps us think through how we speak with the unsaved. He discusses how to make these conversations take place. Pollock also offers great illustrations to consider. And is humorous.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT



Winter Thaw 2022 Individual

Teens are welcome to attend Winter Thaw the weekend of February 11-13, 2022, even if they don't have a youth group with whom they regularly meet. Teens will experience Winter Thaw 2022 just like any other teenager. And Twin Pines will provide staff to supervise those attending without a youth group.

Register by January 2, 2022, and save \$30.00, plus receive a free Winter Thaw t-shirt. More information and the registration form is available at bit.ly/WT2022.



Craft Retreat – March 17-20, 2022

Enjoy a laid-back weekend of fellowship and Bible study while working on your crafts. There will also be a particular craft for all to learn.

Registration information to come.



Adult Retreat – April 1-3, 2022

Get away to the mountains for a weekend and enjoy a time away from the usual daily interruptions. More details in the coming months. Reserve the dates now to attend.



Spring Fling Children's Retreat – April 22-24, 2022

A weekend retreat focused on those currently in grades 3-5. Enjoy Twin Pines in the spring and get ready for the summer. Participating groups must provide chaperones for the weekend.



Click [HERE](#) for a special video about being on Summer Staff at Twin Pines!

Summer Staff Openings



More information about being on Summer Staff 2022 at bit.ly/2022tpcapp.

FEBRUARY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Green					Twin Pines Winter Thaw-C	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Church Planting Offering Green	VALENTINE'S DAY	Benefits Corporation Mtg. Health Insurance Due				
Twin Pines Winter Thaw-C						
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
EC Leader deadline Green	PRESIDENTS' DAY		Church Health Community Mtg.			
					Twin Pines Winter Thaw-D	
27	28	Church Planting Offering to: E. C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate-Church Planting Offering)				
White	Twin Pines Winter Thaw-D					

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Violet					Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT Self-Denial Offering Daylight Savings Begins Violet		GMC Board Mtg. Loan & Investment Committee Mtg. Health Insurance Due	ASH WEDNESDAY	Conference Network Team Mtg.	National Ministry Team Mtg.	Camp ECCO Fundraising Event @ Wedgewood Park
					EC History & Polity	
					Twin Pines Craft Retreat	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT EC Leader deadline Violet						
Twin Pines Craft Retreat					Allegheny/Buckeye Women's Retreat @ the Castle, Franklin, PA	
27	28	29	30	31	Self-Denial Offering: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Avenue Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate-Self-Denial Offering)	
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT Violet	Allegheny/Buckeye Women's Retreat @ the Castle, Franklin, PA					

MARCH 2022



Know Him Better Love Him More

"We can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments...Those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him."
1 John 2:3,5

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100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581
office@eccenter.com / www.eccenter.com
Office Hours: Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



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