

EC LEADER

A PUBLICATION OF EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2017

From the Bishop:

I recently thought about how we are almost 18 months into our new denominational structure. It's also the month we set aside extra time to focus on the need to be thankful. So let me share some of the things I'm thankful for as I look at the work of our denomination; a few quick examples of Kingdom collaboration:

- ◆ We are seeing a greater number of pastors and congregations participating in the life of their district.
- ◆ Congregations are sending work teams to other churches in their district to help with facility projects.
- ◆ Some pastors are meeting together regularly for prayer and study around the topic of church revitalization.
- ◆ The Anthracite District came together on Sunday morning for the opening of Herndon Campmeeting. I believe all of us in attendance were thrilled by almost 300 people filling the tabernacle in praise, worship, and sharing in the Lord's Supper.
- ◆ Congregations are cooperating to make a difference in their district

as they participate in "The Church Has Left the Building" projects.

- ◆ Congregations across the conference have responded with financial gifts in response to the flooding at the Riverhill EC Church, Clarion, PA, and to the Bushkill Community Church, Bushkill, PA, to move into their own facilities.
- ◆ Another person commented to me that our denomination's connec-tional polity is being applied in tangible ways: pastors are communicating more with each other and with their District Field Director, accountability is being practiced, and people are working together and helping each other.

My friends, these are all things to be celebrated and to be thankful for. And the good news is, they aren't the only good stories to be told; there are more, lots more. Praise the Lord for a growing view of Kingdom ministry within the Evangelical Congregational Church!

In Christ's service,



- **Bishop's Prayer & Praise**
- **Global Ministries Community**
- **StoneRidge Retirement**
- **What's Happening at Twin Pines**
- **Ministerial Development Associate**
- **News from the Executive Director**
- **Pastoral Compensation**



Happy Thanksgiving



As you may know, Rev. Randy Sizemore announced at National Conference 2017 that effective June 30, 2018 he will not longer serve as our Global Ministries Associate (GMA). Following that announcement the Global Ministries Community (GMC) formed a Task Force to study the future role, responsibilities, and staffing of the GMC. The Task Force's recommendation, adopted by the National Ministry Team, "to best serve the National Conference of the EC Church, our international churches, and missionaries the GMA position, within the "Community" model, should remain a shared-ministry role."

POSITION AVAILABLE



The Global Ministries Associate is a vital leader in our denomination in the work of educating, equipping, and engaging our local and global congregations in the cooperative participation of fulfilling the Great Commission.

If the Lord is speaking to you about applying for this position please pray and then contact Jodi Earhart, my Administrative Assistant, at jeahart@eccenter.com. If you request it, she will send you an application packet. All completed applications must be returned to her no later than December 5, 2017.

Please ask the Lord clear leading as we identify the next Global Ministries Associate to lead us in the years to come for the building of God's Kingdom.



Thankful
FOR YOUR KINDNESS

The words "Thank you" seem so inadequate to express the gratitude and appreciation I have for the EC Church family and your outpouring of love in the recent death of my mom. The expressions of sympathy and condolence through your prayers, cards, notes, emails, conversations, and attendance at the viewing and funeral service continue to bring comfort to me, and my entire family. We know without a doubt, that mom is in heaven and has seen Jesus face to face.

*In Christ's Love,
Shirley Long*



I want to express, to you the EC Church, my overwhelming feeling of thankfulness to all the people who have sent cards, gifts, and well wishes on my semi-retirement. I am so blessed to have met and become friends with some of the most exceptional Christian people over my 43 years of working for the Evangelical Congregational Church. Thank you all for being a part of my life. I look forward to spending time with my husband and family, but also glad that I'll be in the office for two days a week to continue working for you, the EC Church, my "other" family.

With love,
Brenda Long

Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise List

1. Please pray for the team (me, Randy & Carla Sizemore, Nathan Kennedy, Tim King, and a group of teens) going to the Annual Conference of the EC Church of Nepal, November 6-14.
2. Join me in asking for the Lord's clear leading as we begin the process of identifying the next Global Ministries Associate who will begin to serve on July 1, 2018.
3. November means another election day—pray for our local, state, and national leaders.
4. Pray that I am able to get my office responsibilities completed during a month when I'm spending a lot of time traveling and not in the office very much.
5. As the holiday season begins, thank the Lord for opportunities to gather with family and friends to celebrate what God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives.
6. Praise the Lord for a great team at EC Church Center who will continue to do great work in helping local congregations even when I'm out of the office.
7. Thank the Lord for opportunities I have to network with other national denominational leaders through membership in the National Association of Evangelicals.
8. Praise God for the wonderful season of ordination services we had since National Conference. We've celebrated what the Lord is doing in the lives of four of our credentialed leaders with one more to go in January!
9. Praise the Lord for the men who are responding to the Lord's call on their life and have registered for the Pastoral Assessment Center which will be held in January 2018. God is at work!
10. Praise the Lord for the reports of good things happening in our churches; for growth and health.

Global Ministries Community

November 19th is Thankoffering Sunday.

This is a voluntary offering that Global Ministries uses to aid our international churches. They can't send representatives over to the USA to share about their work and needs, so our international churches depend on Global Ministries to share their stories. If you want offering envelopes for Thankoffering, just contact the GMC office (1-800-866-7584) and we will be happy to provide them for you.



CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR MISSIONARIES:

This is the annual reminder for individuals or churches who wish to give monetary Christmas gifts to our EC missionaries. If the

missionary serves overseas, it is better to give the monetary gift through either the GMC office or the mission agency with which the missionary serves. Cashing checks overseas always costs the recipient a lot in fees, plus it may open your check to being altered and cashed for a much higher amount than you intended.

DO NOT SEND CARDS TO THE GMC OFFICE TO BE FORWARDED TO MISSIONARIES.

If the missionary is in the USA, either permanently or on furlough, then mail the card, check and/or gift directly to them. If you need current mailing addresses, contact Pat at the GMC office for that information. Thanks!

We give praise that none of our active or retired missionaries in Florida were seriously affected by Hurricane Irma in September. The **Mourys** and the **Jamie Farris** lost electricity and had some roof damage; **Gloria Smethers** said the AIM Retirement Center had a number of trees down on the property. **Wes & Mary Reimer** in northern Florida had flooding in their garage, but had moved their van to higher ground to



protect it. **Jim & Joan Farr** were on their way from CA with a truckload of belongings to be transported to their future retirement home in FL., but had to pull over at the JAARS Center in NC for a week until it was safe to continue. In this month of Thanksgiving, we give thanks that all of our people are safe from the devastating hurricanes that hit the USA recently.

Shortly after Hurricane Irma hit Florida, **Dan Moury** had to leave for two weeks in Ghana, videotaping for Wycliffe. Thankfully, his parents, Rev. Fred & Miriam Moury, were able to travel to FL to stay with Melinda and the children while she dealt with the cleanup after the storm. Dan returned home in early October.



An international team of EC'ers will be visiting Nepal this month from the 6th-14th for that field's annual conference and dedica-

tion of the Mercy Home complex. The team includes **Rev. Randy Sizemore and his wife, Carla; Bishop Bruce Hill; Rev. Nobuo Abe, Chairman of EC-Japan; his nephew Yoriyoshi Abe, church planter; Rev. Kaitinkap Vaiphei, General Director of ECCI; Rev. Nathan Kennedy, India/Nepal Committee Chair; and Rev. Tim King, church planter in York, PA** along with several members of his drama team.

Short-Term Training Opportunity:

Culture Link is running a seminar to train youth/church leaders to run a short term missions trip. It's being held in York, PA, so might be accessible to many of our churches. Dates are November 10-11, and they can get more info at culturelink-inc.org/events. This group has a good track record, so it might be helpful if some of our churches sent representatives.





(Pictured from left is Annie Payen, Melissa Furman (LCCTC practical nursing instructor), Aleena Branch, Pennie Kleinfelter, Evelyn Colon, Sarah Finogle, Tracey Rice, Miranda Brady, Gabriella Antunes, Candice Lewin, Elias Rosario and Dakota Major.)

Practical Nursing Students Entertain Residents

On their last day of this clinical rotation at StoneRidge* Towne Centre in Myerstown, this group of 11 students from the Practical Nursing Program of the Lebanon County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC) decided to go out in style by putting on a show for the residents for whom they have been caring. The residents were treated to a program that featured flute and violin music, the chicken dance, singing and lots of fun. Student nurse Elias Rosario closed the show with a beautiful rendition of the classic hymn, Amazing Grace. The audience was very moved by all the performances and showed their appreciation with several rounds of applause. StoneRidge Towne Centre and Poplar Run, both in Myerstown, proudly serve as sites for practical nursing students to perform their clinical rotations throughout the year. StoneRidge also presents several academic awards each year for graduates of this program.

*StoneRidge Retirement Living Communities is comprised of four retirement communities in South Central Pennsylvania. Locations include StoneRidge Poplar Run and StoneRidge Towne Centre both in Myerstown and Church of God Home in Carlisle and Schoolyard Square in Pine Grove. For more information about options available for you or a loved one, visit us online at www.StoneRidgeRetirement.com or call us at 717-866-3553. StoneRidge Retirement Living is all about just that—living!

What's Happening at Twin Pines this November and December 2017 ??



Jr./Sr. High Fall Retreat—Nov 3-5

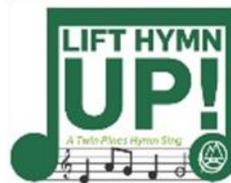
This past summer teens had fun at camp. Now, they can come & enjoy it AGAIN! They will join friends & summer staff for a weekend of games, campfires, & growing in their relationship with Christ. The 2017 Leadership Team are the retreat directors. It is open to 6-12 graders.



Shope the Poconos Retreat—December 1-3

Theme: Shop 'Till You Drop

Experience all that the Poconos has in shopping! There are stores for every taste and style of shopping. Come and shop by day, fellowship with others by night, and enjoy a devotional as you fulfill your Christmas shopping list. Special discounts and door prizes from various local retailers are an added bonus!



Lift Hymn Up! Christmas Hymn Sing—December 3

The host church for the next Lift Hymn Up! hymn sing is Salem E.C. Church, Lenhartsville, PA. Join us at 3:00 p.m. to sing Christmas hymns of the church.

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Learn more about all of these at www.twinpines.org



News from the Ministerial Development Associate

PASTORAL EDUCATION

At a recent Board of Examiners meeting, Evangelical Seminary was reconfirmed as the preferred seminary for EC pastoral students. We continue to endorse the Master of Divinity program for our licensed pastoral students and the Institute for Church Leadership for our local pastoral students. Because we realize that some of our students may not be able to participate at Evangelical due to distance, we have also worked this past year to clarify what equivalency means and how one must seek to achieve it. Additionally, the Board of Examiners has developed better categorical criteria for what we require in our educational requirements.



Although we strongly desire that students receive an education within the Wesleyan-Arminian theological tradition, we also recognize that some institutions have great programs worth considering. Therefore, we are less concerned with the overall issue of theological indoctrination, per se, if the Board of Examiners can evaluate the variance of a program's theological leanings from our own framework. Our greater concern resides with the level of a program's rigorous and challenging theological treatment, especially in terms of developing a suitable hermeneutical (interpretive) method for using God's Word. We believe that weaknesses here would severely limit student pastors in their exploration and communication of the Gospel in today's challenging world. For us, deficiencies here would not help pastors to develop an appropriate posture toward our cultural settings, or effectively communicate from the Bible's compositional uniqueness. For these reasons, we endorse Evangelical Seminary and require that those seeking credentials in the EC Church strongly consider where they receive their education before enrolling elsewhere.

Therefore, we recommend that any student involved in or beginning education toward ministry contact the Ministerial Development Associate, Rev. Jeff Byerly to determine the acceptability of their educational choices and the institution(s) involved. To not do so will frustrate everyone (especially the applicant), when working toward the goal of credentialing, ordination, and itinerancy. Our hope is to provide positive correction as soon as possible and work with each student in the credentialing process.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

Last month, Bishop Hill sent a letter of clarification explaining the change from mandatory to voluntary offerings toward Evangelical Seminary (and other affiliates). In light of this communication, I would additionally recommend that churches consider, if possible, placing Evangelical Seminary into their church's budgets for the coming years. As your church's Ministry Funds decrease each year, please calculate the difference from this reduction, and then provide a portion of that amount as a suitable financial gift to Evangelical Seminary. If this is not possible, I certainly understand, for it *IS* a voluntary offering.



Blessings,

Jeffrey Byerly, Ministerial Development Associate

E-mail Address Change

With Brenda Long retiring from full time service to part time on September 30, we have created a new GENERAL email address for the EC Church Center to reach Brenda and Pat Wolfe. Emails sent to the NEW address will be monitored daily and will be available to Brenda and Pat at the same time.

Please respect Brenda's reduction in working hours and discontinue using blong@eccenter.com for general office emails and announcements. Brenda will continue to receive and respond to blong@eccenter.com however a response might take a few days to a week.

Our new E-mail address is:

office@eccenter.com

Please use this address when notifying the EC Church Center with general questions, material orders, prayer requests, address changes, report forms, announcements and urgent matters.



News from the Executive Director

The EC Benefits Trustees have renewed the [active pastor's health insurance](#) with Capital Blue Cross (CBC) effective October 1, 2017. The rates to the local church have increased 2%, the new rates are listed on the EC Church Center website. There were no changes in benefits with the plan renewal. The annual maximum out of pocket for covered medical expenses, excluding co-pays, remains at \$500 with the HRA paying costs above \$500. The maximum out of pocket for prescriptions and outpatient therapy services (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, respiratory therapy and manipulative therapy) also remain at \$1,800 annually.

The limited dental plan, Value Plan 75, was also renewed. The plan will pay 75% of the cost of most dental services. The limitation of the plan is the number of participating providers. Please see <https://www.capbluecross.com> to confirm your dentist's participation.

If you have incurred medical expenses above \$500 or prescription or outpatient therapy costs above \$1,800 you may be eligible for reimbursement of your out of pocket costs from the HRA. The HRA plan year ends on September 30, 2017 and all requests for reimbursement for the October 2016-September 2017 plan year must be received by PrimePay, our HRA administrator, by December 29, 2017, ninety days after the end of the plan year. If you need assistance with PrimePay please contact Dave King or me at the EC Church Center and we will walk you through the process.

The EC Benefits Trustees are very aware of the tension caused by the cost of health insurance and they are committed to serving the pastors and the local EC church. The US health insurance market is constantly in flux. The circumstances surrounding the annual plan renewal are different every year. However, the trend to push responsibility for healthcare and lifestyle decision onto the individual is continuing with your pocketbook feeling the most pain. Planning for your long term health is just as important as planning your retirement. Accidents and illnesses are going to happen but many healthcare conditions are preventable and manageable with healthy lifestyle choices.

Highmark Freedom Blue

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing by \$8/mon to \$224 per person per month, effective January 1, 2018, with no minor changes in coverage levels.

As approved by the members of the EC Benefits Corporation at the May 2015 EC Benefits Annual Corporation Meeting, beginning in 2016 and annually through 2019, the EC Church contribution to the cost of the Medicare Supplemental premium will be reduced by 20% until, in 2020, the entire contribution by the EC Church has been eliminated.

The retiree is responsible for the remaining portion of the premium not paid by the EC Church.

Cost Sharing Amounts for 2018 (single policy)

<u>Year of Medicare Eligibility</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>1/1/18</u>
2005 or before	\$ 86.40	\$134.40
2006	\$118.80	\$156.80
2007	\$151.20	\$179.20
2008	\$183.60	\$201.60
2009 and after	\$216.00	\$224.00

For a husband and wife on Freedom Blue double the amounts above.

The open enrollment period for the Highmark Freedom Blue plan is from October 15, 2017 through December 7, 2017. Retirees enrolled in another Medicare supplemental plan or not in any Medicare supplemental plan may join the Freedom Blue plan only during the open enrollment period. The open enrollment period does not affect pastors that plan on retiring after December 7, 2017. Medicare eligible pastors may join Freedom Blue at the time they superannuate from pastoral service.

It is very important that the retiree does not fall behind on payments to Highmark Freedom Blue. If a retiree is having difficulty paying the monthly premium the Manna Fund is available for financial assistance. Please contact David King in the EC Benefits office for a Manna Fund application.

There are many Medicare Advantage plans available even some at no cost to the participant. However, each plan will have positives and negatives in terms of participating providers and benefits provided. Please thoroughly investigate any Medicare Advantage plan before switching plans. If a retiree does not have the financial means to assume a larger portion of the Freedom Blue plan the Manna Fund is available to financially assist the retiree.

Manna Fund

The Manna Fund was established to assist our retired clergy and surviving spouses with financial needs. The income limits to qualify for Manna Fund distribution were recently changed to 200% of the federal poverty level as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services, the current Manna Fund income limits are \$24,120 for a single and \$32,480 for a couple. If you are aware of any of our retired clergy or surviving spouses that could benefit from a Manna Fund distribution please encourage them to complete an application for assistance. Manna Fund applications are mailed to retired clergy and surviving spouses in April and an application can also be received from the Benefits Administrator at the EC Church Center.

Due dates for year-end reporting:

Due to EC Church Center—Compensation & Benefit Administrator

Pastor Salary Forms January 15, 2018 (copy to Benefits Administrator, Dave King)

Annual Reports January 25, 2018

Please note the earlier filing deadlines of W-2s and 1099-MISC forms:

Form W-2 (pastor and church employees) January 31, 2018
Filed with Social Security—January 31, 2018 (paper and electronic forms)

Form 1099-MISC (independent contractors) January 31, 2018

Filed with IRS—January 31, 2018 (paper and electronic forms)

Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive a W-2 with federal, state and local taxes withheld from every paycheck.

Please contact Kevin Henry, khenry@eccenter.com or Dave King, dking@eccenter.com, at the EC Church Center with any questions.



Pastoral Compensation

Per the approved Pastoral Compensation report the annual Social Security Administration Cost of Living Adjustment (SSA COLA) will be used as the 2018 annual recommended pastoral salary increase. The Social Security Administration released their 2018 COLA increase at 2.0% (.02).

Churches unable to give at least a 2.0% salary increase must notify their District Field Director prior to any official action taken to set the pastor's salary for 2018.

Churches that are financially able are encouraged to give either a larger percentage increase or to consider an additional increase as a merit raise in salary for each pastor. This merit raise would be in addition to the approved percentage salary increase.

Most, if not all, denominations are struggling with pastor salaries. There are many reasons (controllable and uncontrollable) why this has occurred and pointing fingers and affixing blame is not the solution. The credentialed men and women of the EC Church are good people and the lay leadership in the local EC Church are men and women of integrity. Both groups are encouraged to prayerfully work

together with open honest dialogue on pastoral compensation. The answer may not be financial. Maybe the church can offer an extra week of vacation (also encourage the pastor to take the extra week of vacation) or ease the pastor's workload by the congregation assuming a time consuming duty. Be careful with cash gifts or bonuses, any cash payments to a pastor is taxable income. Please treat your pastoral staff with the appreciation and admiration they deserve.

Clergy Housing Allowance

The clergy housing allowance is once again in the news. A federal judge in Wisconsin found the clergy housing allowance to be unconstitutional, however at this time there are no changes in the legality of the housing allowance. Churches should approve the pastoral housing allowance for 2018. An appeal will be filed with the appellate court in Chicago and most likely this case will be heard before the U.S. Supreme Court. A final decision on the clergy housing allowance is multiple years in the future. As information becomes available it will be passed along. Please ask any questions.

Evangelical Congregational Church

100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581
www.eccenter.com



FAT Lock-In @ Ozzy's November 24-25, 2017 12am-6am



Cost: \$25 per person for preregistered groups (by Monday November 20), \$30 at the door.

Payment: Checks for preregistered groups must be handed in by Noon on November 20th, payable to "Ozzy's". Cash only at the door.

Registration: To register, email your total numbers to Steve at Akron Grace E. C. Church.

akgec@dejazzd.com or call at 717-859-2700.

Adult Leaders: All adult leaders participating in the Ozzy's Lock-In, youth pastors or otherwise, must have a current PA background check and child abuse clearance on file. In addition, the overseeing pastor or lead pastor must bring the signed Adult Screening Verification Form to the event. Leaders who are not listed on the verification form will not be allowed to attend the Lock-In.

(Adult Screening Verification Forms will be sent to groups when they register.)

Arrival: Groups can arrive at Ozzy's beginning at 11:45pm on Friday November 24th.

Food: The snack shop will be opened for you to purchase food throughout the night. Groups can also bring in unopened Coke products and unopened bags of chips and other snacks. No homemade or non-purchased food items are allowed.

(Note: There will be no GoKarts, as this attraction will be closed for the season.)

November 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3 <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	4
5 <i>Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension</i>	6	7 ELECTION DAY	8	9 Finance Committee Mtg.	10	11 VETERAN'S DAY
12	13 Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	14 StoneRidge Board Mtg.	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Due	16	17	18
19 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY <i>Thanksgiving (voluntary)</i>	20 Info for DECEMBER EC Leader Due	21	22	23 THANKSGIVING Church Center Closed	24 Church Center Closed	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Ministry Funds to:
EC Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Thanksgiving Offering to:
Global Ministries Community
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designated—Thanksgiving)

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

December 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT	4	5	6	7	1 <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	2
10 SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT <i>Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension</i>	11	12	13	14	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Due	16
17 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT <i>Christmas Missions Offering</i>	18 Info for JANUARY EC Leader Due	19	20	21	22	23
24 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT CHRISTMAS EVE	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Church Center Closed	26 Church Center Closed	27	28	29 Church Center Closed	30
31 NEW YEAR'S EVE						

Ministry Funds to:
EC Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Christmas Missions Offering to:
Global Ministries Community
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designated—Christmas Missions Offering)

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067