

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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Habakkuk 2:2

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore



Click [HERE](#) for Bishop's November video message.

Click [HERE](#) for highlights transcript.



EC National Conference News

Job Opportunities at EC Center!



EC Church Center has the following open positions:

Communications Coordinator – part time averaging 25 hours/wk, Communications Coordinator Job in Myerstown, PA at National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church (ziprecruiter.com)

- Improve, optimize, and maintain the denominational website and social media platforms to assure that visitors have a positive experience and receive up-to-date information
- Work with National Conference leadership in developing and facilitating a strategy for social media, coinciding with the denomination's message, brand and culture

Receptionist – part time Monday – Thursday, averaging 28 hours/wk

- Provide administrative support to the Bishop and Bishop's office, Executive Director, and Associates as requested
- Working understanding of computer software and hardware. e.g., Microsoft Office Suite of software, Adobe
- Experience with bulk mailing and mail permit regulations

If interested in either position, please contact Kevin Henry, Executive Director, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171, with any questions or forward a resume to apply.

Kevin Henry, Executive Director

Are you online?

It seems like a given that every church should have a web page or social media account. After all, isn't that what all the "good" churches are doing?

We are led to believe every church should have a Facebook page and should be streaming their services and have witty twitter posts at least three times a week!



I don't know about you, but my head starts to spin when I think about all that I "should" be doing, and all of those things that I am not doing or just don't understand how to do. We want to help!

If you have ever felt overwhelmed by the digital world or perhaps you just want to maximize the efforts you are currently giving, we can help you, and at no cost to you.

If you would like to learn how you can improve your efforts, reach out to me at msnedeker@eccenter.com or Addison Roberts at aroberts@eccenter.com. We would love chat about practical ways your church can increase the effectiveness of your digital space efforts.

Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

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

+ The **2023 Social Security COLA** adjustment was released at 8.7%. The Pastoral Compensation Committee recommends pastors receive the annual Social Security COLA increase as approved at the May 2022 National Conference.

+ **Health insurance** rates are not increasing for 2023. The active pastor's health insurance plan with Guidestone and the Freedom Blue plan with Highmark BlueShield Church have held the 2023 rates steady from 2022 with no change in benefits.

+ **Pension contributions** will increase next year at the normal amounts, \$20/mon to \$360/mon for full-time pastors, and \$10/mon to \$180/mon for part-time pastors. The discussion to move the 403(b) plan from Prudential/Empower Retirement to another provider are ongoing. Expect a final decision to be released soon.

+ Participants in the **active pastor's health insurance** plan will be receiving new ID cards for 2023. The HRA benefit remains at the same levels, 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 remains at \$1,800 annually.

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 December 31, 2022 and all requests for reimbursement for the January 2022 - December 2022 plan year must be received by Benecon, our HRA administrator, by March 31, 2023, ninety days after the end of the plan year. If you need assistance with Benecon please contact Dave King or me at EC Church Center and we will walk you through the process.

+ **Highmark Freedom Blue**

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is not increasing for 2023; the premium will remain \$255 per person, per month, effective January 1, 2023, with no changes in coverage levels.

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, 2022 through December 7, 2022. Retirees enrolled in another Medicare supplemental plan, or not in a 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, 2022. Medicare eligible pastors may join Freedom Blue at the time they superannuate from pastoral service.

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 a 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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...

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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.

+ Manna Fund

The Manna Fund was established to assist our retired clergy and surviving spouses with financial needs. The income limits to qualify for a 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 2022 Manna Fund income limits are \$27,180 for a single and \$36,620 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 EC Church Center.

+ We are quickly approaching the **end of the calendar year** and we are encouraging all the local church pastors, treasurers or administrators to begin planning for the required year-end reporting. Required reporting includes year-end tax forms, giving statements, denomination annual reports and pastor compensation forms. A small amount of preparation and planning early in the process will save time and frustration later.

Due dates for year- end reporting:

Due to EC Church Center – Compensation and Benefit Administrator:

Pastor Salary Forms	January 16, 2023 (to Benefits Administrator, Dave King)
Annual Reports	January 25, 2023

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

Form W-2 (pastors and church employees)	January 31, 2023
Filed with Social Security – January 31, 2023 (paper and electronic forms)	

Form 1099-NEC/MISC (independent contractors)	January 31, 2023
Filed with IRS - January 31, 2023 (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 or Dave King at EC Church Center with any questions.

GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



Reminder NATIONAL COLLECTION WEEK

November 14-21

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

FROM THE DESK

Rev. J. Ted Rathman

Giving Thanks + Nurturing a Global Vision

Greetings in the matchless name of Jesus,

As we have quickly moved (at least it feels "quickly" to me) into the time of year where we prepare for the upcoming holidays, I just want to thank you for your faithful and generous prayers and your church's sacrificial giving to the work of the GMC. Whether you support an EC missionary, one of the International Churches, or the GMC in general, every little bit makes a difference as we pray for and rely upon God to meet all of our needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. We could not do this important work without you.

The GMC's ability to support this work is a direct result of your faithful prayers and generosity. At a recent speaking engagement, I shared three ways you can make a big difference for the GMC going forward into the new year. Here are the three action items your church could take:

- *Build into your church's yearly budget a category for the International Churches so that every year - whether monthly, quarterly or annually - your church is involved in the mission of God around the globe.*
- *Make your member care for the missionaries you support more than just writing a check. Let them know you're praying for them - send them an encouraging note or card, or maybe even a care package (check international rules that may apply.)*
- *Once a month in your worship service on a Sunday morning pray for missions, whether our international churches, our missionaries, or something of your choosing. The goal is to help your local church nurture a global vision.*

Your faithfulness to the work of the GMC through prayer and giving means a great deal to me and I appreciate your continued support. May God bless your obedience to His Kingdom work.

Ted Rathman

**Global Ministries Community
Associate**



To know how your church can partner directly with Operation Christmas Child, an EC missionary, or an International EC Church, call the GMC office at 717-866-7581 x 1109; or email ecglobal@eccenter.com.



Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate



How Well Do You Know Your Community?

(continued from October edition...)

Very few churches would claim that the responsibility to reach their community with the Gospel is not theirs. We know that the Great Commission compels us to GO and make disciples. Our struggle as churches is not with knowing *what* we should be doing, but in knowing *how* to do it.

Last month in the EC Leader, we talked about the importance of trying to understand the felt needs in your community. The best way to know what your community needs is to ask. Even when we think we already know, asking the community shows that we care about the people in it, and what they think and feel. This month, we will discuss a simple practice that your church can utilize that will help you to get to know your community and its needs. This is known as **missional prayer walking**. When we hear the term "prayer walking," most of us think of walking and praying for our community. While walking and praying are obviously critical parts of prayer walking, it is the *where, why, and how* that makes this practice transformative in our ability to know and connect with our community.

Why to Prayer Walk

There is one major reason we prayer walk that has two great implications. We prayer walk to surrender our plans and submit to God's plans. Prayer walking is a specific and strategic practice that causes me to recognize my need to let go of my wisdom, plans, and perspective, and actively seek God's. In missional prayer walking I am listening more than I am talking. Firstly, this is an act of surrender, and I am actively seeking God's heart for my community. I am asking him to show me what He is already doing in my community and where I can partner with Him in that. While listening carefully to the voice of God in my prayer walk, I also want to be hearing the heart of my community. Secondly, prayer walking is all about listening to people. What are the needs, joys, concerns, hurts, frustrations, and opportunities that the people living here see in the community?

In missional prayer walking, I surrender my thoughts and I try to gain God's vision and the community's perspective.

Often, these two will align and give me great clues as to where the church should be headed in its outreach activities to impact our community.

Where to Prayer Walk

Most church leaders have spent time praying throughout their buildings or even walking the church property or the neighborhood the church is located in. These are vital places to prayer walk. But what if we expanded our vision of where to prayer walk? One of the most important aspects of missional prayer walking is talking to people. Look for opportunities to meet people who might have an opinion or perspective on the community in which you live. Beyond the neighborhood, this could include local shopping places, parks, or governmental offices.

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

continued...

How to Prayer Walk

We have already touched on some aspects of how to do a missional prayer walk. You obviously need to be out of your building and in your community. Prayer walking is great in teams of two or three. Ideally you can go out with a few teams from the church on one day, to different locations in the community. As you go, you should be looking for people to interact with, asking God to give you favor and opportunity to have a conversation. Look for people who are out mowing their grass, walking their dogs, or even just relaxing in their yard.

During this time, you may have the opportunity to share the gospel, but remember, that is not your primary purpose in this moment. You are here to listen and learn. Go, armed with some good questions, and be prepared to ask probing follow-up questions. Ask questions such as, 'In your opinion, what is your favorite thing about living in this community?'; 'In your opinion, what is the biggest problem this community is facing?'; or, 'In your opinion, what is missing from this community?' Make mental notes of the feedback. You can jot down your thoughts after the conversation, but remember, you are there to get to know your community, you are not there to write an article.

After the walk is done, take some time to debrief together. What stood out? What were the repeated themes you heard? Where did the Spirit of God excite your hearts or well them up with compassion? These are the areas to focus in on as you consider impacting your community.

When to Prayer Walk

NOW! Don't wait! God has placed your church in your community for such a time as this. Now is the perfect opportunity to start asking God (and your community) why He has placed your congregation right where it is for this time in history. Next month we will start to talk about what to do with the information gathered in the prayer walk.



JOIN IN PRAYER!

Please pray this month for the following new church planting opportunities that God is raising up:

Manuel and Luz Arias in Lexington, South Carolina – The Arias family is starting a new EC Church. They have been meeting in another church building and are already seeing growth and people coming to Christ.

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church in the Virtual Space – Mike is leading a team that is exploring a Virtual Reality Church. Their church name is Echo and is impacting people around the country and around the world. In the coming months we will hear more about what this looks like and how we can pray for this adventure.

New Church Planters – We have four other individuals/couples that are exploring their potential call to become church planters with the EC Church. Please pray for wisdom.



Mike



Ministerial Development Community News



Introducing our new Ministry Development Associate

Rev. Matthew Hill

Rev. Matthew Hill currently serves as Lead Pastor of St. Paul's EC Church in Reamstown, PA. Matt graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in education from The Pennsylvania State University in 2004.

Before responding to the Lord's call, Matt taught sixth grade social studies at the Milton Hershey School from 2004-2007. In 2007, Matt transitioned into full-time ministry at

Community Evangelical Church, Sinking Spring, PA where he served on staff until 2018. While serving at Community, Matt received his Master of Divinity degree from Evangelical Seminary in 2013.

Matt has been married to his wife Emily for 17 years. Currently, Matt and Emily reside in Reinholds, PA with their three children, Addison (14), Aaron (12), and Aubree (9).

In his free time, Matt enjoys spending time with his family on their small farm in Reinholds, as well as time outdoors hunting and fishing.

EC Class rescheduled for 2023!

The **EC Ethos** class that is normally offered in the fall has been rescheduled to the fall of 2023. Those who are required to take this class will be notified when the dates and times have been secured.

Please note, the **EC History & Polity Class** is scheduled for March 17-18, 2023.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS FALL AT...



Twin Pines has many things scheduled for the fall and winter. Mark your calendar now and check the website for updates.

F.Y.R.E. – November 4-6, 2022



A weekend of experiences for youth groups and individuals to grow in their faith and enjoy a fall retreat at beautiful Twin Pines Camp. This year's theme is *Tackling Anxiety*. For more information and to register, go to bit.ly/TP-FYRE.

Winter Thaw 2023 Youth Retreat



Plan soon and submit your paperwork for which weekend your youth will attend Winter Thaw 2023. Reserve your space before there is no room available since space is limited for each weekend.

- WT-A: January 13-15
- WT-B: January 27-29
- WT-C: February 17-19*
- WT-D: February 24-26

More information located at bit.ly/WT-2023

*Winter Thaw-C is open to individual teenagers who do not have a youth group to attend the Winter Thaw retreat. Twin Pines provides supervision and counselors for those with out a youth group.

A vertical rectangular graphic with a light blue top section and a photograph of a forest landscape below. The text "2023" is in large black font at the top. Below it, "Summer Staff Application" is written in a white, handwritten-style font. At the bottom, "Available now at bit.ly/tp-summer-staff" is written in white text.

Start to Plan Your Spring Retreat Now

Men's Group
Sunday School Class
Youth Ministry

Women's Group
Leadership Team
Children's Ministry

Contact the Twin Pines office and speak with the Guest Services Coordinator to book your retreat, before the dates are taken by another group.
retreats@twinpines.org | 570-629-2411

NOVEMBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	1	2	3	4	5
					Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	Twin Pines Fall Youth Retreat
6 Daylight Savings Ends Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Green Twin Pines Fall Youth Retreat	7	8 ELECTION DAY	9	10	11 VETERANS DAY	12
13 Green	14	15 Health Insurance Due	16	17	18	19
20 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY Thankoffering (voluntary) EC Leader deadline White	21	22	23	24 THANKSGIVING Church Center Closed	25 Church Center Closed	26
						
27 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT Violet	28	29	30	Thankoffering (voluntary) to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate Thankoffering)		

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Christmas Missionary Offering to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate Christmas Missionary Offering)		1	2	3
					Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	
4 SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Violet	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 Violet	12	13	14	15 Health Insurance Due	16	17
18 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT Christmas Missionary Offering Violet	19	20 Loan & Investment Committee Mtg. EC Leader deadline	21	22	23 Church Center Closed	24 CHRISTMAS EVE
25 CHRISTMAS DAY Merry Christmas	26 Church Center Closed	27 Church Center Closed	28	29	30 Church Center Closed	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE Happy New Year

DECEMBER 2022



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

Evangelical Congregational Church Center
100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581

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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



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