# EC LEADER



A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



### FROM THE DESK

**Bishop Randy Sizemore** 

# Changing the World with Jesus: A National Conference Recap

We prepared, we prayed, we traveled, and we gathered as the 21st National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church. Since our gathering in May, several pastors and lay delegates have reached out to me to express their thanksgiving to God for His Holy Spirit's presence and their appreciation to all who made our gathering an inspirational and educational



### **Speaking Schedule for 2024**

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2024 preaching schedule.

If you would like to schedule him at your church, please contact Bishop Randy directly at rsizemore@eccenter.com.



### FROM THE DESK

**BISHOP RANDY SIZEMORE** 

continued..

## Changing the World with Jesus: A National Conference Recap

continued...

experience. It seems like such a small thing to say but, THANK YOU to all who prayed, prepared, presented and participated in our conference. The National Conference Digest gives a great thumbnail sketch of all the happenings of our time together. I encourage you to access it on our website and read it if you have not already done so.

As I stated in my episcopal address, we are not content waiting for the world to change; we are committed to changing the world with Jesus as a dynamic movement of God! Through prayer and fasting we continually seek a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. Our National Conference Communities and committees are developing and executing plans to multiply our evangelism, discipleship and church-planting efforts. As Evangelicals we are the people of the Good News, and we are challenged to multiply our evangelism and discipleship efforts as we hold out the Word of Life, shining like stars in this crooked and depraved generation (Philippians 2:12-16). We are celebrating our spiritual pioneering heritage and asking God to raise up more pioneering pastors and people in our churches who can see a way through this complicated landscape, blazing a trail for others to follow.

I praise God and thank you for the overarching spirit of unity within our conference as the Faith and Doctrine Committee fulfilled its assignment of presenting documentation of the opposing theological positions regarding the ordination of women to the office of elder, along with a summary statement of our current ordination practice for both men and women. These documents will be accessible in the 2024 National Conference Journal when it is published in late summer/early fall.

### FROM THE DESK

**BISHOP RANDY SIZEMORE** 

continued..

### **Changing the World with Jesus:**

### **A National Conference Recap**

continued...

Finally, I would like to personally thank all the pastors and lay delegates who attended our National Conference session. As a pastor, and now as bishop, I look forward to our times together to worship and fellowship for a few short hours each year. One distinguishing factor of a dynamic movement is that its people enjoy being together! I realize that the demands of life may prevent some from attending the National Conference gathering in person, but I would encourage all to make whatever adjustments necessary to be present and involved in this dynamic movement of God we lovingly call the Evangelical Congregational Church!

I want to leave you with two more sentences from my episcopal address:

While this world seems to be in the grip of all the demons in Hell and Satan himself, we resolutely believe Jesus when he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me". And we eagerly accept His commission to change the world with Him by "making disciples of all nations." We gratefully acknowledge that regardless of our successes and failures, He is with us always, to the very end!

Thanks for all you do!



### **Semi-Annual Reports**



Semi-annual reports are due July 25th. This year, we are offering two options for submitting this information to the denomination:

- A fillable pdf that may either be printed and completed manually or completed online, saved as a new pdf and emailed to <u>office@eccenter.com</u> as well as to your DFD
- An online form which the EC Center will receive notification about upon completion (You will still need to forward the confirmation of submission email that you receive to your DFD.)

Both options are available in the Member Portal of the website under <u>Forms and Resources</u> >> Local Church Forms >> 2024 Charter Churches Semi-Annual Report.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



The 2024 Workers' Compensation invoices were recently mailed to churches. The invoices were delayed due to implementing a new online payment system. We are seeking churches willing to test the online payment system for us. If you would like to pay your church's workers' compensation invoice online, please reach out to Bethany White, <a href="mailto:bwhite@eccenter.com">bwhite@eccenter.com</a>, for login credentials and instructions. Currently only credit card payments are accepted. We hope to have an ACH option available soon. There is no requirement to pay invoices electronically, although it is encouraged. All future benefit invoices will have an online payment option. The disability and benefit corporation service fee will have an online payment option available in early 2025. Health insurance invoices will have a later implementation date.

A few churches are paying their health insurance premiums via an ACH transfer. That ACH transfer for health insurance will continue. If your church would like to pay its monthly health insurance premium via an ACH transfer, please reach out to Kevin Henry, <a href="mailto:khenry@eccenter.com">khenry@eccenter.com</a>, for information.

Payments for the Disability and Benefit Corp Services fees were due January 15 and April 15, respectively; both fees are listed on the 2024 Treasurer's Guide available on <a href="https://www.members.eccenter.com">www.members.eccenter.com</a>.

An email was distributed on Wednesday, June 19, 2024, explaining the impact on EC Churches of the new minimum salary requirement to be exempted from overtime wages. If you missed the email, here is a link to the document, https://eccenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/New-Overtime-Regulations-July-2024.pdf.

Please contact me, Kevin Henry, <u>khenry@eccenter.com</u>, or Bethany White, <u>bwhite@eccenter.com</u>, or at 717-866-7581 with any guestions or problems.

Kevin Henry Bethany White Executive Director Benefits Specialist



### Got a church van to spare?

Buenas Nuevas (Good News) EC Church in Hazleton, PA, is in need of a church van. If your church has a van to sell or donate, please contact Niwlkis Pepen Cuevas, treasurer of Buenas Nuevas at pepencuevas@msn.com.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



## Free Money Is Going Fast -

### \$<del>10,000</del> \$<del>8,000</del> \$<del>6,000</del> \$<del>5,500</del> \$4,000

We have once again partnered with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) to offer Pastoral Financial Health and Church Generosity training. To encourage participation in the financial health training, a grant of \$10,000 was originally gifted with \$6,000 awarded to thirteen EC pastors, leaving \$4,000 available for additional grants. The training is open to all paid pastoral or ministerial individuals employed by an EC Church. The pastor/minister may be full time or part time (no minimum hours); serve as the lead, senior, associate, assistant or youth pastor; in outreach or in a music ministry. All of these positions are eligible to participate in the training and receive a cash gift. If you have completed the financial health training previously (2019 - 2021), you are not eligible to receive a second cash gift. The offer of a cash gift expires on December 31, 2024. The cash gifts are made available by the generosity, vision, and ministry of the Lilly Endowment in partnership with the NAE.

To receive a \$250 cash gift, a pastor must complete one of the Pastoral Financial Health modules at <a href="https://naefinancialhealth.online/">https://naefinancialhealth.online/</a>. Scroll down the page and select "Create Account." On the next page, enter your information and from the drop-down box of participating denominations, select us, Evangelical Congregational Church. On the next page, select one module from the six session Personal Finances Course. Once the module is completed, I will receive an email that the class was completed and send the registered participant the financial gift.

A second \$250 grant will be awarded for the completion of a second module in the Personal Financial Health course. A maximum of \$500 in grants will be awarded per participant. Each training can be completed in 60 to 90 minutes, and these grants are tax-free.

The \$250 grant is also available to a pastor that completes the Church Generosity training with their church leadership. The pastor and church leadership are required to complete the Church Generosity class together.

The grant for completing the training is only available for the pastor and will be paid to the pastor. The maximum cash award is \$500 per pastor, and a combination of completed training between the personal financial course and the Church Generosity training is allowed.

Please contact Kevin Henry, Executive Director, with any questions at (717) 628-2171 or <a href="mailto:khenry@eccenter.com">khenry@eccenter.com</a>.





### **Healthy Pastors Help Build Healthy Churches**

You may be familiar with surveys suggesting that up to 42% of pastors have considered quitting full-time ministry during the prior year. The research, published April 27, 2022 by <u>Barna.com</u>, reveals that "over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56%), say 'the immense stress of the job' has factored into their thoughts on leaving. Beyond these general stressors, two in five pastors (43%) say, 'I feel lonely and isolated,' while 38 percent name 'current political divisions' as reasons they have considered stepping away." It seems unlikely that landscape will improve in 2024.

Even pastors and church leaders who have not seriously contemplated quitting recently can bear the scars of ministry. As Barna states, "stress, isolation and division are impacting these church leaders' ability to lead." The effort and emotional investment required to faithfully lead a church can bring about exhaustion and discouragement as well as stress on pastors' marriages and families. Thankfully, there are helpful resources available. The Church Health Community is excited to recommend ServingLeaders Ministries as a trusted resource for pastoral counseling and health.

The purpose of ServingLeaders is to "revive, restore and resource ministry leaders and their families, enabling them to pursue health and excellence in their call to ministry." (<u>ServingLeaders.org</u>)

As the ServingLeaders website explains, "Ministry leaders play a very strategic role in the life, health and growth of the local and worldwide church. They exercise tremendous responsibility, exert powerful influence in their communities, and can have a profound impact on culture. The health of a ministry or congregation is directly affected by the health of its leaders. But who cares for ministry leaders and their families? There are precious few safe places to address problems confidentially without criticism or judgment." Services they provide include: individual, marriage and family counseling; seminars; ministry coaching and consulting; conflict resolution and free or low-cost retreats. Most services, including counseling, are available via Zoom so it is not necessary to travel to their offices in West Chester and Willow Grove, PA.

"Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory." Proverbs 11:14 (NASB95)

It is very encouraging that we have made a growing number of referrals for counseling. Pastors in the Evangelical Congregational Church are eligible for up to six paid-for counseling visits. Contact your District Field Director for details. You are welcome to visit any local trusted, Christian counselor or to contact ServingLeaders Ministries at 484-254-6559 or at <a href="https://www.servingleaders.org">www.servingleaders.org</a>.





# GMC



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



The EC Church of Nepal is excited to continue to see its vision for the construction of a leadership training center come to fruition.

Would your church prayerfully consider helping our brothers and sisters there complete the project?

A local EC USA church has graciously and generously offered to match up to \$15,000 in donations! What a gift!

This leadership training center will help encourage, train, and equip pastors and leaders to passionately and effectively lead their churches and share the life-saving message of Jesus Christ.

Donations can be mailed to EC Center and marked "ELTC Nepal."







#### Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church

At this past National Conference, we all had the privilege of hearing Izabella McMillon, a child who received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox, tell her story. We were all moved to tears as she shared the powerful story of how her life was dramatically changed for Christ through the power of a simple shoebox gift.

Since then, many of you asked us how Izabella ended up in the United States, so we contacted her and asked her to share the rest of her story with us. The story that follows is the rest of her story in her own words.



Izabella grew up during the communistic regime in Romania when no church was allowed to share the salvation message. Even going to church could have resulted in death. Having found a hidden Bible in the floor board of their home, Izabella and her brother were filled with curiosity. They secretly attended a church on Saturday nights and eventually trusted that the Bible was in fact, God's Word. However, Izabella describes her faith at that time as having vague head knowledge of Christ but no heart understanding. When she was 13 years old, Izabella received a shoebox gift in the streets of Romania. When she opened it, she couldn't believe her eyes. She had a very specific answer to a very specific prayer. For Izabella, the shoebox was life changing, because it allowed her to experience for the first time God's unconditional love and His existence. She finally understood that this God that she was reading about in the Bible was a truly personal God who cares about each and every person. That day, God made His way from Izabella's intellectual understanding of who He is, to her heart.

Izabella came to the United States in 2002, after finishing college in Romania. She had the privilege to attend Seminary in post-communist Romania and had a strong passion to share Jesus with others while in pursuit of learning the English language. She arrived on US soil in August of 2002, and two years later learned about the ministry of Operation Christmas Child through a small Christian School in NC where she was teaching. She was excited to learn the name of the ministry that played a major role in her understanding God's true character. In 2004 Izabella introduced the project at Gorman Christian Academy in Durham, NC, where she taught for 10 years. This small Christian school of 100 students packed over 1800 shoeboxes in 2013, and still continues to pack today. In June 2014 Izabella came completely full circle within the ministry, as she started serving full time with Operation Christmas Child, leading the Speakers Bureau. Today, packing shoeboxes is a yearly family tradition for Izabella, her husband Joel and her children Kaleb and Naomi Joy. Izabella also takes every opportunity to tell others about the life changing potential each shoebox has and encourages audiences all across the US to get involved in what God is doing around the world with Operation Christmas Child.

We pray that all of us will be challenged to pack more shoeboxes this year and reach more children for Christ after hearing Izabella's story.

Izabella's story that she shared at National Conference is posted on our denominational YouTube channel (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDnvEtGWxzl">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDnvEtGWxzl</a>). We encourage you to show it to your congregation or your missions' group and pray that it will greatly inspire and encourage them to pack more boxes. Each box represents one more child who will hear about Jesus and have an opportunity to have their lives changed by Christ. Join with us in a dynamic movement of God as we reach the lost with passion through a simple shoebox gift.

Joyfully serving the lord with you,

Pastor Dan and Kim Blank pastordblank@gmail.com



### **Discipleship Multiplication Cohorts**

During the Kingdom Extension Community report at last month's National Conference, I talked about discipleship multiplication cohorts that would begin this fall. This article will explain the purpose, function and details of those cohorts so you can make an informed decision for you and your church.

Who should consider a Discipleship Cohort? Any pastor or church who is frustrated with the attractional model of ministry; any pastor or church who wants to clarify the process of disciple-making; any pastor or church who would like to work with a team of like-minded church leaders to help churches fulfill the Great Commission; or any pastor or church who wants to connect with an accountability circle to follow through with discipleship multiplication should consider a discipleship cohort.

Why Cohorts? Most of us have been to conferences, retreats or presentations that struck a chord in our hearts. What was being presented rung true inside, resonating with us that we needed to go that direction. Then when we walked away from the event, and nothing really changes. The idea of a cohort is to both learn the concept of a discipleship pathway and then walk with a group to develop a plan, holding each other accountable to application and follow-through. The cohort will help put feet to the plan.

What is a Pathway? Every pastor and most followers of Christ could recognize and defend the importance of making disciples, even making disciples who make disciples. The difficulty most churches run into is having a solid plan to follow that can be easily replicated in each consecutive generation of Jesus followers. At a cohort, we will develop a discipleship pathway unique to your context that can help individuals walk through being a disciple that has the tools to make disciples who make disciples.

What is involved in a Cohort? Cohorts will begin with a two-hour training Zoom call in September followed by monthly check-ins with your cohort. Each Zoom call will involve next steps in the Pathway development process and implementation, as well as reporting in and accountability on past action steps. The end goal is to become churches who are actually reproducing disciples.

### **Kingdom Extension Community News**

### FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate continued...

### **Discipleship Multiplication Cohorts**

continued...

How do I learn more or get connected to a Cohort? Cohorts will begin in September 2024. They will be made up of four to eight pastors or church leaders. The exact scheduling will be dependent on interests and schedules of the participants. To learn more and to sign up for a cohort, please email me at <a href="msnedeker@eccenter.com">msnedeker@eccenter.com</a>.





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

**Cheziare and Laurel Dominique** – The Dominiques have been meeting with a leadership team to pray and seek God's vision for a Haitian church. God has provided a great ministry partner out of Grace Community Church, Willow Street, named Martial, who is also Haitian and is passionate about helping with this church plant. El Shaddai Community has begun to meet at Faith EC Church in Lancaster, PA on Saturday evenings, starting with a Bible study and seeking to build a solid base that will become the foundation of this church plant. Please pray as God continues to gather the planting team that He gives them a specific vision for the future and energizes them for this task.

**Manuel and Luz Arias** – In Lexington, South Carolina, the Arias family is starting a new EC Church. Manuel and Luz are developing a team for ministry, as well as strategizing ways to share the Gospel in tangible ways. Please pray that God would provide a location for this church to use for worship gatherings. Pray also for wisdom, strength and renewed energy for this couple.

**Tim and Pam Ream** – The Reams moved to Thorn Hill, Tennessee. They are pursuing the opportunity to engage in planting an EC Church in their new community. Pray that God would begin preparing that community to be receptive to His glorious presence. Pray also for the Reams as they begin building relationships and engaging in discipleship relationships through inviting people into their homes and engaging individuals in their community.

**Mike Coulson and People's EC Church** – Echo, the name of this church that is meeting in the Virtual Space, is reaching people with the Gospel and making disciples. Pray that the team will continue to develop and grow. People's is also beginning a micro church that will meet at Confessions Bar in Nesquehoning. Pray for this open door to be a Gospel presence where people who need Jesus hang out!

**Zach and Kelsey Van Dyke** – Zack and Kelsey have begun planting a network of house churches in and around Davenport, lowa. They are currently meeting with a group in their own home weekly and seeking God's plan for their future. They are developing a vision for raising up house church shepherds and developing a discipleship and multiplication strategy. Please pray for Zach and Kelsey that God would give them wisdom as they follow him while providing part time shepherding to the Hooppole, Illinois EC Church.

### **Ministerial Development Community News**

### CHAPLAINCY CORNER

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., Chaplaincy Committee Chair

### **Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains**

For our prayer focus in July, we want to look to one of our newest pastors who was just licensed at our last National Conference. We praise the Lord for raising up workers!

Evan Clelan was credentialed as a licensed candidate. Although not currently pastoring a church, he is presently appointed by the Lebanon VA Medical Center as a clinical pastoral education resident. As such, he has a number of duties in the chaplaincy department, including visiting and counseling with patients and staff, attending the treatment team meetings as chaplaincy staff member, writing reflections on his patient visits, doing spiritual assessments on new admissions, conducting Sunday services along with various other groups, conducting funerals if necessary and ministering in any way possible to the patients while sharing hope and Christ with them as they walk through their illnesses.

Evan's goal is to complete the CPE residency program this summer and then enter the military after that as a chaplain. Evan has previously served in the Marines and feels a call to go back into the military to minister to those who are serving their country. He currently is working with the US Navy Chaplain Recruiter to meet the Navy requirements, as well as working with



the EC Church's Chaplaincy Committee and the EC Church's Ministerial Development Committee to complete all requirements for ordination and service in the US Navy. Evan is married to Megan, an ex-Marine, and also has five children: Abiageal, Grace, Elias, Emmit and Joshua.

#### Let's pray for:

- 1. Evan as he completes the requirements of the denomination and the military for appointment.
- 2. Evan and his wife as they pilot their family in this endeavor.
- **3.** Evan as he ministers each day at the Lebanon VAMC, that the Lord would use him to give spiritual comfort, support and the message of salvation to our veterans being treated in Lebanon.
- **4.** All who are serving as chaplains in our VA hospitals and the military, that God would use them as they minister in unique situations.
- **5.** The Navy recruiter, the Chaplaincy Committee and the Ministerial Development Committee as they work with Evan and guide him toward achieving his goal of serving as a Navy chaplain.

### **Ministerial Development Community News**

### CHAPLAINCY CORNER

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., Chaplaincy Committee Chair

### **Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains**

Most people seek to distance themselves from funeral homes as much as possible, but not our featured Chaplain for the month of August.

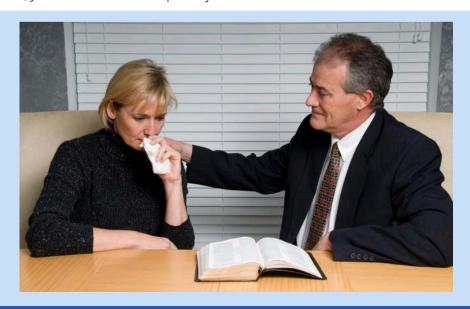
A few years ago, Rev. David Swift, a superannuated elder who last pastored at Myerstown Zion, decided to retire from Pastoral ministry. Since then, he has been working as an After Care Specialist at a local funeral home in Myerstown. Besides, helping with follow up of bereaved families, he conducts a funeral on occasion. He is now fully retired and will seek to do some travelling with his wife.

#### **Suggested prayer requests:**

- 1. Pray for Rev. Swift as he continues to recover from a stroke suffered earlier this year, and pray for him as he is planning a different direction due to his health.
- 2. Pray for those EC pastors as well as the non-EC pastors who may be working in funeral homes, ministering to grieving families, that they will have divine insights to bring peace, hope and the Good News of salvation to families going through loss.
- **3.** Praise the Lord who gives opportunities to all His servants to be His instruments at times of loss and suffering.
- **4.** Pray for those contemplating serving the Lord in some chaplaincy position, asking the Lord to guide them into the area where they can best serve Him.



Thank you for lifting the E.C. Chaplains in your prayers, Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr. Endorser and Chaplaincy Committee Chair



EC LEADER JULY/AUGUST 2024 PAGE 12





### There is still time to Register for Summer Camp!

With 8 weeks of fun there is a camp for everyone! Learn more and sign-up today while there is still time.

Go to our website <u>www.TwinPines.org</u> or call the office: 570-629-2411



### We want to work with You!

Would you like us to come present at your church?
Would you like materials to include in your Sunday
bulletins or in your church newsletter? Reach out to
us and let us know!

Email: <u>Shawn@twinpines.org</u> or call the office 570-629-2411

### **CALENDAR**

### **JULY 2024**

#### Wednesday, July 3

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

#### Thursday, July 4

Independence Day EC Church Center Closed

#### Sunday, July 7

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, July 14

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, July 21

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Thursday, July 25

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, July 28

Liturgical Color - Green

### **AUGUST 2024**

#### Sunday, August 4

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Liturgical Color - Green

#### Wednesday, August 7

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

#### Sunday, August 11

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, August 18

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, August 25

Liturgical Color - Green

### **SEPTEMBER 2024**

#### Sunday, September 1

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Liturgical Color - Green

#### Monday, September 2

Labor Day
EC Church Center Closed

#### Wednesday, September 4

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

#### Sunday, September 8

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, September 15

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Tuesday, September 17

Loan and Investment Committee Meeting

#### **Sunday, September 22**

Liturgical Color - Green

#### Sunday, September 29

Liturgical Color - Green

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits
Mail to:
EC Church Center
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067







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

office@eccenter.com / www.eccenter.com
Office Hours: Monday - Thursday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

EC LEADER

#### **Contributors**

Bishop Randy Sizemore Kevin Henry Rev. Wayne Houck Rev. J. Ted Rathman Rev. Dan Blank Rev. Mike Snedeker Rev. Matt Hill Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr. Jonah Adamcik

Wendy Beard
July/August 2024 Edition - Editor/Art Design

#### **STAFF**

Rev. Randy Sizemore - Bishop rsizemore@eccenter.com

Jodi Earhart - Assistant to the Bishop jearhart@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry - Executive Director khenry@eccenter.com

Shirley Long - Business Office Specialist slong@eccenter.com

Bethany White - NC Administrative Assistant / Business Office and Benefits Corp Specialist <a href="mailto:bwhite@eccenter.com">bwhite@eccenter.com</a>

Wendy Beard - NC Communications Coordinator wbeard@eccenter.com

Denise Jaramillo - GMC Deputy Director <u>ecglobal@eccenter.com</u>

#### **ASSOCIATES**

Rev. Wayne Houck - Church Health waynehouck@gmail.com

Rev. J. Ted Rathman - Global Ministries <u>pastorted@graceecchurch.org</u>

Rev. Mike Snedeker - Kingdom Extension msnedeker@eccenter.com

Rev. Matthew Hill - Ministerial Development <u>matt@stpaulsreamstown.com</u>