

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

What is an Evangelical?

"But for all our strength in numbers and diversity, evangelicals are a misunderstood group."

(Henriksen, D. (2021, Feb 10). 3 Things People Get Wrong About Evangelicals | Opinion. Newsweek.com)

 Click [HERE](#) for the Bishop's February video message



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.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

Update from the Prayer Mobilization Team

Bishop Randy Sizemore

The Prayer Mobilization Team thanks you for your participation in prayer for the EC Church as we seek to be a dynamic movement of God. Many of you have shared with us the frequent and creative ways you are engaging in prayer. This year we have established the first Wednesday of each month as the "EC Day of Prayer & Fasting" and are asking every EC'er to join us on that day in prayer and fasting as your schedule and circumstances allow. Of course, prayer can be offered any day, but there is something special about having as many people as possible praying for God's presence among us on the same day! Below are two resources which we offer to you as you build prayer and fasting into your life rhythm.

1. Prayer & Fasting tutorial video by pastor Dale Kramer (Chair of the Prayer Mobilization Team). You can access this video here: https://youtu.be/054ndVN_BqE?si=eYWmlVnmkg742GEo
2. 21-Day Prayer Guide for praying through our Vision Statement arranged by pastor Kyle Roth. You can access the guide here: https://eccenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/21DayPrayer-ECVision_brochure.pdf

May God continue to call more and more of us to times of prayer on behalf of our vision to be His dynamic movement of people with a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost!

The next day for Prayer & Fasting for the EC Church is Wednesday, February 7, 2024

**PRAYER FOCUS #6
NEW GATHERINGS**

Prayer Points:

- Day 15: Pray for our leaders as they develop discipleship plans and spiritual growth programs.
- Day 16: Pray for us to shift from just receiving biblical content in sermons & lessons to reading and applying the Bible to our everyday lives.
- Day 17: Pray that as our members become more hungry for God's Word, our lives will be undergo visible transformation.
- Day 18: Pray for growing disciples to be equipped to become disciple-makers themselves; for people to respond as God raises up teachers.

OUR E.C. VISION

planting new congregations → burning passion for God → missionary zeal for the lost → healthy congregations → making disciples of Jesus → planting new congregations

our vision: a dynamic movement of God

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be: a dynamic movement of God led by pastors and laity who have a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost.

We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them.

Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities. Interdependence will be the distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church as local churches network with one another and ministries beyond the E.C. family to proclaim the Gospel to the world.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



For church treasurers and professional accountants, the most wonderful time of the year is behind us, and year-end tax filing season has begun. I wish there was a good reason to not complete year end tax and report filing, but I cannot think of one. If you have a good reason that does not include wearing an orange jumpsuit, please contact me. Friendly reminders on due dates are listed below.

We can take the task of check writing off your to do list and reduce your postage expense with multiple electronic payment options to the EC Church Center and EC Benefits. The incidents of bank account fraud are on the rise and more often the issuance or theft of a paper check is the weak link. If you are interested in electronic payment options, please contact me, khenry@eccenter.com. Churches are strongly encouraged to investigate and implement your bank account's security features and processes.

The deadline to distribute W-2s to employees, including pastors, is **January 31, 2024**, with the employer filing deadline also as **January 31, 2024** if filed electronically or on paper. Social Security Administration's Business

Services Online (BSO), www.ssa.gov/bso, is an easy convenient method for producing the employee and employer copies of the W-2 on white paper, no forms, and for filing the W-2s electronically with SSA. We encourage all church treasurers that produce their W-2s in-house to use the SSA BSO services. The SSA BSO website changed their login procedures, making it more difficult to login (of course they did); do not delay updating your SSA BSO login credentials.

Due Dates: Disability Payment \$100.00 was due **January 15**
Annual Statistical Reports due **January 25**
Workers Compensation Insurance Information due 30 days after receipt of the request for payroll information. Be on the lookout for an email to request the Workers Compensation payroll information soon.

Please remember that the EC Benefits administrative fee of \$125 is due from churches on **April 15, 2024**; **retirees are not subject to the fee**. The 2024 disability premiums were due **January 15, 2024**. 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.

Pastoral Compensation forms were due on **January 15, 2024**. If you have not done so, please return your compensation forms to Bethany White as soon as possible. In early February, we will be contacting churches that have not submitted 2024 compensation forms and requesting compliance.

Please begin using the 2024 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 2023 should be remitted on the 2023 Ministry Fund forms.

The Annual Reports and fourth quarter Ministerial Update forms are both due by January 25, 2024. Reports can be emailed to office@eccenter.com or mailed to the EC Church Center, 100 W Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

continued...

As always, please email:

Bethany White
NC Administrative
Assistant / Business
Office and Benefits Corp
Specialist
bwhite@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

**with any questions
or call
717-866-7581**

The 2024 Business Mileage Reimbursement increased by \$.015/mile to \$.67/mile on January 1, 2024.

Year end giving statements to donors must include a phrase similar to or contain the words "no goods or services were exchanged for these contributions or consisted entirely of a religious nature". The IRS has resources available, www.irs.gov, to assist with charitable contributions; Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations and Publication 526 Charitable Contributions.

Please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White with any questions.

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...



Free Money Is Going Fast! ~~\$10,000~~ \$8,000

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~~ \$8,000 is available for cash gifts upon completion of a training module; 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) and serve as the lead, senior, associate, assistant, youth or outreach pastor or in a music ministry. These positions are all eligible to take 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, <https://naefinancialhealth.online/>. 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 min, 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 (717) 628-2171 or khenry@eccenter.com.

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171



Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

Comeback Churches Look Out for the Lost

One of the functions of the Church Health Community is to help equip churches and pastors for revitalization. With so many resources available, we will try to provide some recommendations for reliable books, podcasts, newsletters, courses and websites which may be useful as we participate in the “dynamic movement of God” of the E.C. Church. By all means, please let me know if you have trusted resources you would like to bring to our attention as there is always room for more and better opportunities.

One of the books which was required reading during my seminary coursework was Ed Stetzer’s *Comeback Churches* (B&H, 2007). Stetzer, along with co-author Mike Dodson, conducted extensive surveys among 324 “comeback churches” with the help of the North American Missions Board. A “comeback church” was defined as a congregation which had been in decline and then made necessary changes leading to an increase, not just of attendance, but of baptism rates and conversion growth. These churches had experienced at least five years of plateaued or declining attendance, and their comeback was defined as a reduced membership to conversion ratio of 35:1 or lower and a ten percent increase in attendance each year over the course of five years. Interestingly, there were no main-line denominations included in the survey, but the focus was on evangelical churches “where Scripture is an assumed priority.”

Stetzer and his research team discovered that one of the primary factors in the turnaround was a change from an inward focus to an outward one. As he writes,

“Today, millions of Christians attend churches that demonstrate little concern for the lost around them.”

There are dozens of ways churches become “stuck,” but Stetzer describes two main reasons they stay there. He says, “First, most churches will not admit how bad it is. Second, most churches will not make the needed changes.” The Church Health Community is here to help you assess your current situation and to help discern changes that may lead to a comeback in your context.

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate
continued...

Comeback Churches Look out for the Lost

continued...

Comeback Churches details numerous ways real churches have been able to bring new vitality to their fellowship. Each chapter provides suggested titles for further reading and real-world examples of evangelical churches that have seen the new energy that many of us are praying about for our own community. They gained a “new sense of purpose” which enabled them to overcome the inevitable obstacles.

Comeback Churches is currently available on Amazon and elsewhere. It represents just one resource which may be useful to you, and we will be sharing more of the principles from this book in the future. Please remember that the Church Health Community is here to help your church make a comeback, too. Let us know how we can help, and we will get started together.

Wayne



NOT SURE WHERE TO START IN DETERMINING HOW THE CHURCH HEALTH COMMUNITY MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU?

Check out the “Church Health Checkup” available on the EC Center website on the Church Health Community page, <https://eccenter.com/about-us/structure/church-health-community/>.

CHURCH HEALTH CHECKUP



BASED ON
THE GREAT PLAN OF ACTS 2:42-47

DEVELOPED BY: THE CHURCH HEALTH COMMUNITY OF THE EVANGELICAL
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH FOR THE 2023 NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



Important Update from the Global Ministries Community

Beginning January 2024, the Global Ministries Community discontinued printed publications. In an effort to bring more timely updates, information and prayer requests to the GMC family, we instead are focusing our energies on using digital platforms and formats more frequently this year. If you were receiving printed copies of GMC prayer guides and other GMC communications and would like to be added to our email distribution list to receive digital communications, send your request to ecglobal@eccenter.com.

You may also connect with the Global Ministries Community on the following digital platforms:

Website: gmc.eccenter.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GMC.ECChurch>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ecglobalministries/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@ECGlobalMissions>



To Donate to one of our Missionaries:

Online through our website: gmc.eccenter.com

Click on **Partners** tab.

Sending a check, mail to:

EC Global Ministries Community

EC Church Center

100 W. Park Ave.

Myerstown, PA 17067

(Be sure to indicate the intended recipient in the memo line of the check.)



Rev. J. Ted Rathman
Executive Director



Denise Lauer Jaramillo
Deputy Director

Contact us at:

EC Global Ministries Community

EC Church Center

100 W. Park Avenue

Myerstown, PA 17067

717.866.7581 / 800.866.7581 / ecglobal@eccenter.com

Vision / Mission of the GMC:

Nurturing a Global Vision in the EC Church! Supporting the work of the Kingdom around the world by: Engaging the Local Church, Facilitating Mission Workers, and Empowering National Churches.

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate



Top Three Reasons To Support Church Planting

Here are the top three reasons you should consider giving generously to the Kingdom Extension Offering this month!

ONE - PEOPLE NEED JESUS

Study after study shows that the number one evangelistic strategy to see people come to meet Jesus as their Savior is through new church plants. Church planting is exciting and church planters see the urgency to share Jesus with new communities. Church planters are driven by a "missionary zeal to reach the lost." That is one of the statements at the heart of the vision of the Evangelical Congregational Church. When you give generously to the the February special offering, that money will help accelerate our church planting efforts.

TWO - DYNAMIC MOVEMENT

A second key statement of the EC vision statement is a desire to become "a dynamic movement of God." A dynamic movement has never been described as same ol' thing. For many of our churches, we have struggled to create and embrace momentum for the future. A dynamic movement is accelerated by new opportunities and new churches.

Partnering with our church planters and new church plants can help to build momentum within many of our existing congregations.

THREE - WE ARE FAMILY

A third significant line in our collective vision statement is, "Interdependence will be the distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church as local churches network with one another and ministries beyond the E.C. family to proclaim the Gospel to the world." The truth is, starting new churches costs money. No church planter can carry this cost themselves. Most churches cannot carry the cost alone either; we need each other. Our church planters and new churches need our existing churches along with the members and regular attenders to help share the burden they carry for all of us and for the kingdom. We, like Aaron and Hur, have an opportunity

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

Top Three Reasons To Support KEC

continued...

through prayer and financial support to help hold up the ministry arms of our brothers and sisters who are boldly stepping out to reach people with the Gospel.

Please consider generously supporting KEC's Church Planting special offering on February 11. If you have any questions, please contact me at msnedeker@eccenter.com.

Mike



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

Haitian Church Plant – Chezaire and Laurel Dominique have begun meeting with a leadership team to pray and seek God's vision for a Haitian church. Please pray as God continues to gather the planting team, He gives them a specific vision for the future and energizes them for this task. The team has a lead on a church building; pray that God works out the details for this possibility to become a reality.

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.

The Reams – Tim and Pam Ream have 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 home and engaging individuals in their community.

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church in the Virtual Space – 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.

Zach and Kelsey Van Dyke – Zach and Kelsey have begun planting a network of house churches in and around Davenport, Iowa. 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.

Greater Impact – Please pray for churches across our denomination as they look to expand and even multiply their impact in their communities. Pray for wisdom for our pastors and leaders. Pray for eyes to see the needs of their communities, and pray for creativity as they step into the opportunities to meet those needs with the love of Christ.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate

Go Back to the Future with the ICL!!!

The Institute for Church Leadership is going back to the future! No, we are not driving a DeLorean or wearing an orange puffy vest, but we are going back to what works. With all our innovation and desire to make learning more accessible, sometimes it is easier to simplify and return to the old ways, to go back to the future.

Beginning this spring, enrollment in and payment for ICL classes will all be completed through the EC Center website.

The ICL courses descriptions and links for registration and payment will all be located on the ICL website at <https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/>. ICL courses will no longer require a subscription but will be on a “pay as you learn” system. ICL students and auditors will pay a one-time fee per class. ICL assignments and requirements will be distributed through email and instruction will be conducted via Zoom.

We are going back to the future! So where is God pushing you to grow? Might you consider joining us at the Institute of Church Leadership, as together we lean into the Word of Truth and learn to lead. Whether you are a pastoral candidate, a credentialed EC pastor or a member of a local EC congregation, we invite you to take an ICL course and grow with us in 2024.

For more information about the Institute for Church Leadership visit www.eccenter.com/mdc/ or contact Adam Roberts at aproberts563@gmail.com.

Matt





Twin Pines Update:

Winter Thaw 2024!

The first weekend of Winter Thaw 2024 was a huge success!

See pictures above!

Is your church registered for Winter Thaw? We still have two Winter Thaw weekends left, and there are still spots available! Email: Jonah@twinpines.org to learn more about Winter Thaw and to get your youth group registered.

- WT-C: Feb 16th - 18th (opportunity to attend without a youth group)
- WT-D: Feb. 23rd - 25th

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: Shawn@twinpines.org or call the office 570-629-2411



www.twinpines.org

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Stroudsburg, PA 18360

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Handcraft Director	Web Assistant
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Twin Pines Camp - 3000 Twin Pines Camp Rd - Stroudsburg, PA 18360

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday, February 4

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, February 7

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, February 11

Church Planting Offering*
Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, February 14

Ash Wednesday

Thursday, February 15

Health Insurance Due

Sunday, February 18

First Sunday of Lent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Monday, February 19

Presidents' Day

Sunday, February 25

Second Sunday of Lent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Ministry Funds, *Church Planting Offering, Self Denial Offering and Insurance & Benefits:

Mail to:

**EC Church Center
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067**

(*Church Planting Offering and Self Denial Offering - designate in memo line)

MARCH 2024

Sunday, March 3

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Third Sunday of Lent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Wednesday, March 6

Day of Prayer for the EC Church
GMC Board Meeting

Sunday, March 10

Fourth Sunday of Lent
Daylight Saving Time Begins
Self-Denial Offering*
Liturgical Color - Purple

Friday, March 15

EC Benefits Services Fee Due
History and Polity Class

Sunday, March 17

Passion Sunday
Liturgical Color - Purple

Sunday, March 24

Palm Sunday
Liturgical Color - Purple

Thursday, March 28

Maundy Thursday

Friday, March 29

Good Friday
EC Church Center Closed

Sunday, March 31

Easter Sunday
Liturgical Color - White





A Dynamic Movement of God

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a **dynamic movement** of God led by pastors and laity who have a **burning passion** for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them. Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities.

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.



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Wendy Beard

February 2024 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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