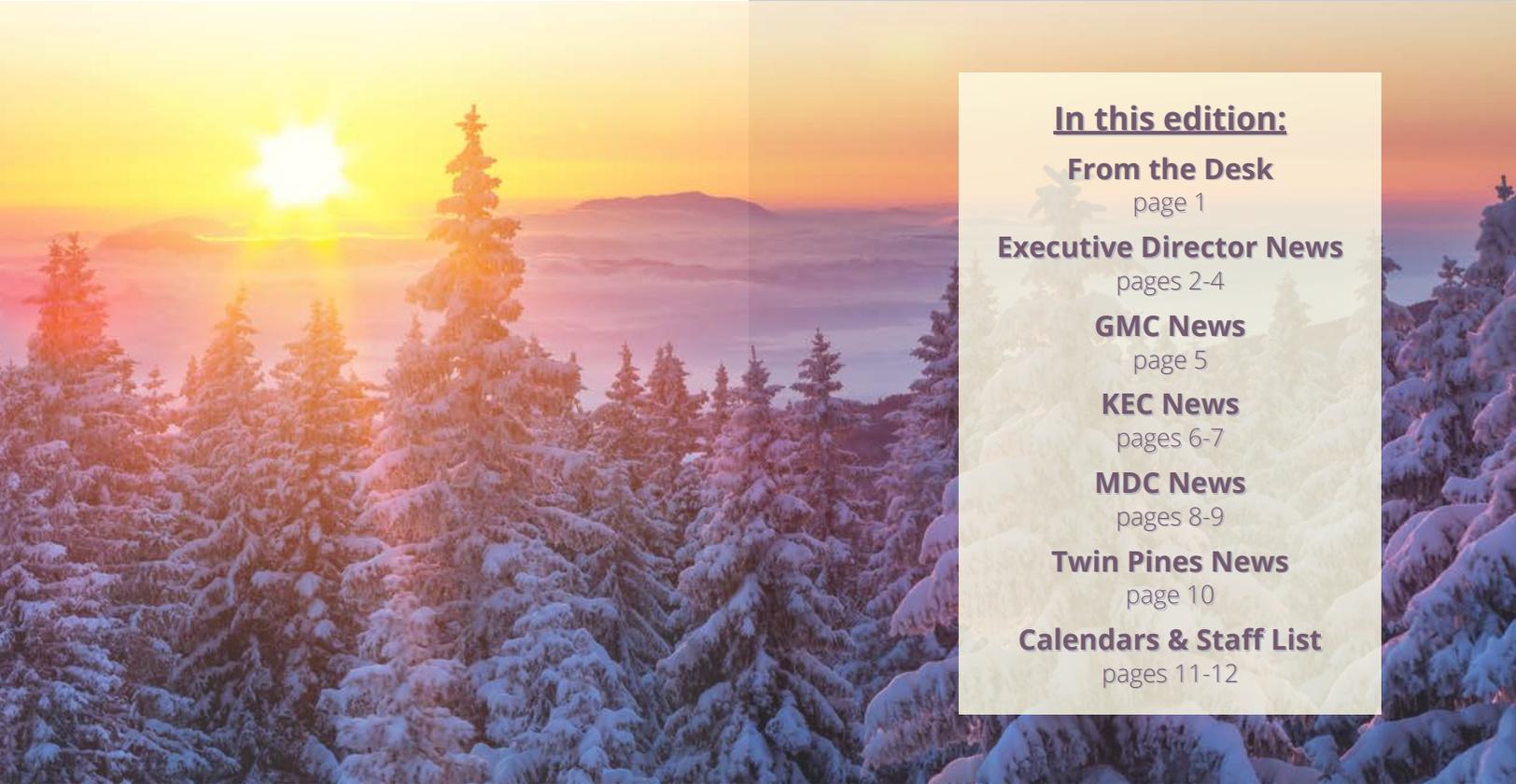


EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



In this edition:

From the Desk

page 1

Executive Director News

pages 2-4

GMC News

page 5

KEC News

pages 6-7

MDC News

pages 8-9

Twin Pines News

page 10

Calendars & Staff List

pages 11-12

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

Something New for the New Year

"Prayer and Fasting is not new, but imagine if the 7,000-10,000 of us who gather together in EC Churches on a Sunday morning would all be praying together on the same day for God to move in and through us as individuals, as families, as congregations and as a denomination. Wow! What power! What synergy! What could happen?"

Click **HERE** for the Bishop's January 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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

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 IRS mileage reimbursement rate will increase to \$.67 per mile up from \$.655 per mile in 2023.

Active pastor health insurance premiums will increase 15% from the 2023 rates.

Single	\$1,000
Couple	\$2,121
Employee & Child(ren)	\$2,002
Family	\$2,642

The first payment of the new year is due **December 15, 2023**. Please see www.eccenter.com for the current rates.

The deadline to submit HRA reimbursements for the July 23 – December 2023 plan year is **March 31, 2024**. This is a federally mandated deadline that cannot be changed.

Church contributions to the 403(b) pension plan will increase on January 1 to \$380 for full-time pastors and \$190 for part-time pastors. If you need

help changing the rates on the Nationwide system, please contact Bethany or Kevin, and we can walk you through the change.

EC Benefits Corp services fee is \$125 and is payable on **April 15, 2024**.

W-2s and 1099-NEC (Non Employee Compensation) forms are due to the recipient's by **January 31, 2024**, and to the respective Federal, State or Local taxing authorities by **January 31, 2024**. Please refer to the specific taxing authority regulations for due dates. **All full-time and part-time Pastors should receive a W-2 from their church.** The 1099-NEC is a new form which replaces the 1099-MISC in most instances for churches; payments made during 2023 are to be filed by **January 31, 2024**.

Due Dates: Disability Payment \$100.00: January 15
Pastoral Compensation Forms: January 15
Annual Statistical Reports: January 25
Workers Compensation Insurance Information due 30 days after receipt

The workers compensation audit is going to have a compressed deadline this year and ever year after due to changing legislative regulations. **Lay leaders – please keep watch on your email for important information.** Also, be prepared for a sizable increase in workers compensation insurance premiums in 2024. All segments of the insurance market are instituting premium increases.

Please see the 2024 Treasurer's Guide located on www.eccenter.com, for additional due dates, current amounts due and ministry fund percentage.

Remember to add the following phrase (or something close to it) to all tax deductible giving receipts issued by a church or ministry: "No goods or services were exchanged for these contributions or they consisted of an

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...

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intangible religious benefit." All year-end contributions to a church must be received at the church on December 31 or have a postmark of December 31 or earlier.

Electronic giving adds a layer of complexity to the year-end giving deadlines. There are extra entities involved e.g., credit card processors, banks and internet gateways, in the processing of an electronic charitable contribution that churches and donors cannot control. The amount of time from the donor making a contribution until the church receives the funds can be a couple of days to a week or more. Church treasurers should carefully review the processing statements received to note what day a contribution was processed. IRS Guidance states that contributions made by credit card in 2023 are considered 2023 contributions, regardless if the donor does not make a payment on the credit card until 2024 or with normal credit card processing times, the church does not receive the funds until 2024. The same is true for donations made via an ACH transfer. A donor that initiates an ACH transaction in 2023 with the funds debited from the donor's bank

account should be counted as a 2023 donation, even though the church will not receive the funds until 2024 with normal bank processing times.

As always please contact Bethany White, Benefits Corp Specialist, bwhite@eccenter.com, or Kevin Henry, khenry@eccenter.com, with any questions, 717-866-7581.

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



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...

As always, please email:

Bethany White
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Free Money Is Back!

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 is available for cash gifts upon completion of a training module and 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, youth, outreach 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 Finances 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.

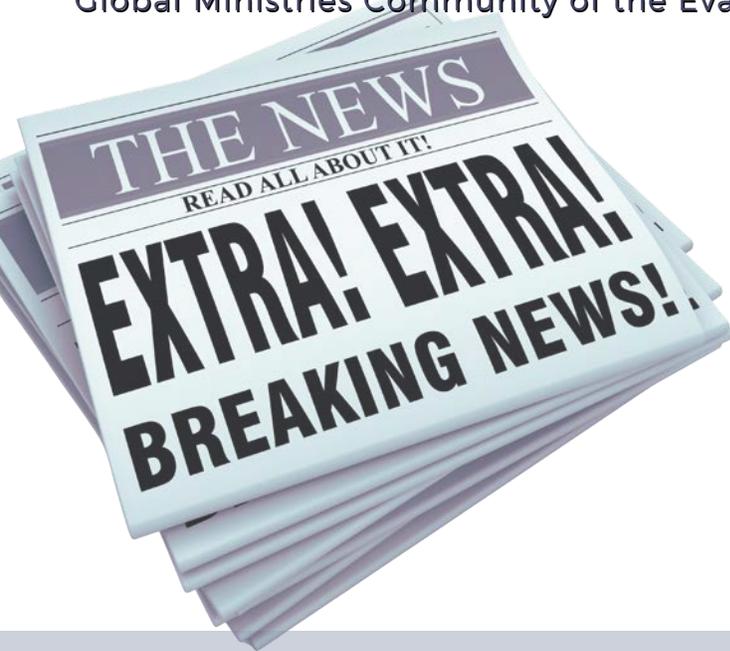
The \$250 grant is also available to a pastor that completes the Church Generosity training with their church leadership. The pastor and church leadership are required to complete the Church Generosity class together. The grant for completing the training is only available for the pastor and will be paid to the pastor. The maximum cash award is \$500 per pastor, and a combination of completed training between the Personal Finances course and the Church Generosity training is allowed.

Please contact Kevin Henry, Executive Director, with any questions at (717) 628-2171 or khenry@eccenter.com.

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

GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



Important Update from the Global Ministries Community

Beginning January 2024, the Global Ministries Community will discontinue printed publications. In an effort to bring more timely updates, information and prayer requests to the GMC family, we will instead be focusing our energies on using digital platforms and formats more frequently in the new 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

Can't Find "Sinners!?"

Have you ever heard someone talking about their opportunity to share Christ with people and have thought, "That's awesome for them, but I wouldn't know where or how to find a person who is not a follower of Jesus to share Jesus with!" We could find ourselves shamed by this reality. It ought to drive us to find places where we can meet, interact with and develop friendships with people who need Jesus. But there are more options. Let me share with you an opportunity that Addison Roberts of Grace Community Church in Willow Street shared with me.

It is an online platform called "The Gloop." The Gloop platform operates through a number of online ministries where people connect seeking answers to their faith questions. They then help make a connection to local churches and pastors who can begin to journey with them. Here is what Addison had to say about "The Gloop:"

"The Gloop platform has been a fascinating eye-opener for me. Gloop runs ads in a variety of ways and connects you to Explorers. These are people who are looking for a church even if they don't realize it. So, they connect with you on issues like broken relationships or feeling hopeless and they give their information to talk to a Pastor. You follow up with them and make an effort to help in any way you can. I have had a conversation with two different men (in person) who are far away from being Christians but are willing to sit down and talk. This experience has grown me as a leader because I have been reminded that we are called to share the hope within us. It can be easy to allow yourself to become insular and only hang out with Christians, but there are people in our communities that need what our church has to offer. Gloop connects you with (at most) 3 explorers per week. It is completely manageable and helps to keep your eyes and mind on the mission of reaching lost people for Christ. I don't know what will come of these two conversations I have had but I am excited to find out."

If you would like to explore more about The Gloop opportunities, you can check them out at <https://www.churchgrowthworkshops.com/100>. Once you connect with them, you will receive training on how to follow up with the "leads" you are given and how to use the platform. It is a great way to infuse opportunities to bring people to Christ in your church. We'll close with a story from Addison on the impact of connecting with people and sharing the gospel through digital connections:

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

Can't Find "Sinners!?"

continued...

"In our online ministry, we have had two really cool connects. One of them is Tammy. Tammy is close friends with two of our members but had never come to church. She started attending online and ultimately came to church last Christmas. I enthusiastically greeted her, and she made it clear that I shouldn't expect to see her in person at church. This was a special occurrence. (lol). Over the course of months, she started coming to our bimonthly online church meet ups. This ultimately led to her coming to church and even doing our membership class. She now calls ECC "her church." Online ministry helped Tammy move from not connected to connected. I am thankful for this and encouraged."



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

Haitian Church Plant – Chezair 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 that 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

Spiritual Training

"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:8 NLT)

A few months ago, the BEDAS team traveled to Nashville, Tennessee to attend an Exponential cohort on multiplication. Much of the gathering focused on what we might expect, discipleship and evangelism. Church planters, lead pastors and denominational leaders took time to present their experiences and tools for growing healthier, more productive followers of Jesus. The two-day trip has my gears spinning, ideas for future discipleship ventures fill my head. But greater than future plans, are three simple words.

Place, Plan, Time.

Without fail, each presenter continually came back to the need for spiritual training. Many of us struggle with a regular devotional life. The idea captured in three simple words was the ease of setting a place, having a plan and setting a time. It's that easy. Place, plan, time.

Each year as the end of December approaches, a three-word phrase seems to ring in our heads: new year resolutions. While there are many possible resolutions, the vast majority of people set goals around health: goals to lose weight, to exercise more, to eat better. Maybe like me, you have set some of these goals in previous years, or maybe you are considering one of them for 2024. Might I encourage you to consider finding a place, deciding on a plan and setting a time for your daily devotions in 2024.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate
continued...

Spiritual Training

continued...

If daily devotions are not something you need to work on, maybe consider taking part in the multiple offerings of the Ministerial Development Community designed to help you grow.

- 1. E.C. Care Fund:** Life and ministry can be stressful. The *Pastoral Care & Restoration Team* would love to help you connect with a counselor to process that stress. The E.C. Care Fund is set up to help offset the financial burden on pastors and families. Contact MDA, Matt Hill, at matt@stpaulsreamstown.com for more information on the E.C. Care Fund.
- 2. Institute for Church Leadership:** Looking to push yourself deeper in your knowledge and understanding of the Word or church leadership? Consider signing up for our Spring ICL courses. Contact our ICL director, Adam Roberts, at aproberts563@gmail.com.
- 3. Coaching Relationship:** Dave Long would love to help you connect with a ministry coach in 2024. Whether you are a seasoned pastor or fresh in ministry, we would love to help you find someone to walk with you as we seek to honor the Lord. Contact Dave Long at pastdave@hotmail.com.

Matt



Institute for Church Leadership

Rev. Adam Roberts

Great things are happening in the EC Church's ICL! The ICL offers non-credit courses that are open to adults of all ages without any educational prerequisites. Our ICL courses aren't just for educating pastors; they are a valuable resource for church leaders, small group leaders, Sunday School teachers, ministry volunteers and for anyone who has a desire to learn and grow. Courses are generally 6-8 weeks in length and meet in an online format. They are led by experienced practitioners who are both knowledgeable and skilled in their area of content.

This Spring we are pleased to share two course offerings with the EC church family: Preaching and Theology I. Specifics about the Spring 2024 courses will be offered soon, so please check back at <https://eccenter.com/about-us/structure/ministerial-development-community/institute-for-church-leadership/> or future issues of the EC Leader for up-to-date information about how you can connect with the ICL. In the meantime, I am happy to talk to anyone who has further interest in the ICL. Please feel free to contact me at aproberts563@gmail.com.



Twin Pines Update:



As the year 2023 comes to a close, we want to thank all of you, your churches, and your various ministry operations for your support of Twin Pines. Your giving allows us to continue to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with thousands of people every year. If you find it in your heart to make a year end gift to Twin Pines, we would be very grateful.

You can give online, by mail, or by phone (570-629-2411)

Learn more about giving here: <https://www.twinpines.org/resources/ways-to-donate.html>



This year, your congregation has 3 weekends to choose from for Winter Thaw:

- Winter Thaw A: Jan. 12th-14th
- Winter Thaw C: Feb. 16th-18th (opportunity to attend without a youth group)
- Winter Thaw D: Feb. 23rd-25th

Winter Thaw is the perfect opportunity for your church's youth group to attend an exciting and engaging Winter Retreat experience without all of the headaches that can come with retreat logistics and planning. That's why Winter Thaw exists at Twin Pines; we do the planning, and you get to spend time with your students and help them grow in their relationship with Jesus.

Email: Jonah@twinpines.org to sign up for Winter Thaw A-C or call the office for more information: 570-629-2411



CALENDAR

JANUARY 2024

Monday, January 1

Deadline to Submit Written Requests for Pastoral Changes
New Year's Day
EC Center Closed

Tuesday, January 2

EC Center Closed

Wednesday, January 3

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Saturday, January 6

Epiphany

Sunday, January 7

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - White

Tuesday - Thursday, January 9 - 11

Pastoral Assessment Center

Sunday, January 14

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 15

Stationing Retreat
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Pastoral Compensation Forms Due
Disability Fee Due
Health Insurance Due

Tuesday, January 16

Stationing Retreat

Sunday, January 21

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, January 25

2023 Annual Statistical Report Due

Friday, January 26

Episcopacy Meeting

Sunday, January 28

Liturgical Color - Green

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 and Insurance & Benefits:

Mail to:

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

(*Church Planting Offering - designate in memo line)

***** Reminder - Pastoral Changes *****

January 1, 2024 is the deadline for both churches and pastors to submit written requests to the Bishop for a change in stationing assignment. This also includes those pastors who are requesting or superannuation (retirement).





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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January 2024 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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