

# EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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## FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

### Becoming a Dynamic Movement of God Begins with Disciples who Make Disciples



**Click [HERE](#) for the Bishop's  
Interview with Rev. Mike  
Coulson.**



#### Speaking Schedule for 2023

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2023 preaching schedule.

If you would like to schedule him at your church, please contact Bishop Randy directly at [rsizemore@eccenter.com](mailto:rsizemore@eccenter.com).

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

## *The Question of the Ordination of Women as Pastors at National Conference*

**Bishop Randy Sizemore**

At our National Conference gathering, the question of why we do not ordain women to the office of elder (we commonly call this person “pastor”) came to the floor, and a motion was made to refer this question to the Faith and Doctrine Committee with the task of reporting back at our 2024 National Conference gathering with both support for our current practice of ordaining only men to the office of elder and the opposing view of allowing the ordination of women to the office of elder. Understanding that motions made at the National Conference can be confusing and that it will be an entire year before the report from the Faith and Doctrine Committee is presented, some context, history and explanation will be helpful.

### **Context: our current rule/polity/practice**

We in the EC Church are governed primarily by two documents that reflect our view of Scripture as divinely inspired, inherent and the final authority in faith and practice. These two documents, *The Discipline of The EC Church*, and The Rules of Conference both speak to ordination, pastoral ministry and ministry roles other than local pastoral ministry, which we describe as a *Specialized Ministry classification*. Rules of Conference 804.1.5 and 804.1.6 reflect that only male applicants will be considered for pastoral ministry, and both male and female applicants will be considered within the specialized classification as deacons and deaconesses.

### **History: we have thoroughly examined this question on multiple occasions**

Contrary to the idea that we tend to avoid the discussion of this issue, history documents that over the past century and more recently the past forty years or so, both the Western and Eastern Conferences of the Evangelical Congregational Church (we have since joined these two conferences to become one National Conference) have challenged, examined, debated and studied the question of ordaining women as elders or local church pastors. The Bishop’s office contains voluminous files, which reflect the history of special committees assigned to study the issue, position papers covering both sides of the issue and even some arguing for a middle way. There have been discussions, debates and serious evaluations of our polity to only ordain men as pastors. In the summer of 2022 after taking office as Bishop, I charged the Faith and Doctrine Committee to begin studying this issue, and the committee has been seriously engaged in researching the various views and aspects of the ordination of women to the pastoral role. If you were at the National Conference gathering, you heard Rev. Jim Price, the chair of the Faith and Doctrine Committee, verify their work.

Please remember, we do support women in ministry. The EC Church has encouraged women to use their gifts and abilities to minister and hold various offices within the church, offering licenses and ordination to those called and qualified women who wish to serve in the Specialized Ministry tract. The question at hand is specifically the licensing and ordination of women to the office of elder or local church pastor.

Historically, we have acknowledged that there are exceptional evangelical scholars who hold high views of Scripture, who love Jesus and His Church on both sides of this issue. Each side supports their position with Scripture, and the debate continues with rebuttals of rebuttals. Throughout our years as the Evangelical Congregational Church, the members of former conferences have wisely concluded that our current practice of ordaining only men to the office of elder is robustly supported by Scripture and that we can confidently

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

## *The Question of the Ordination of Women as Pastors at National Conference*

**Bishop Randy Sizemore**

*continued...*

continue in our practice and polity, preserving the unity of our conference while focusing on our mission to proclaim the gospel.

### **Explanation: what happens now?**

The Faith and Doctrine Committee has been charged with developing a report that includes support for our current practice of ordaining only men to the office of elder and that includes support for the opposing view of ordaining women to the office of elder. Please understand that because of the sheer volume of books and materials produced on this topic, this report will have to generalize each position. This generalized report will be brought back to the 2024 National Conference to be received.

Please pray along with me for the unity of our conference as we discuss this issue. I do not have to tell you that this issue is emotionally charged and very personal to many. We are currently reading and watching the news of other denominations being divided and distracted from their mission by this very issue. We seek to be a dynamic movement of God, a united people with a burning passion for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. As the people of God broke camp in Joshua chapter three to cross the Jordan, they were instructed to keep their focus on God and His mission for them. May God help us to do the same!

*Randy*

Bishop Randy Sizemore



## *Heritage Committee seeks mission motivated members*

Heritage Committee seeks mission motivated members.

The Heritage Committee of the EC Church exists not only to steward our history and heritage but to connect that heritage with our vision of being a dynamic movement of God. We are currently seeking additional members to serve our movement through this important committee. Pastors or lay persons interested or wanting more information should contact Rev. Jonathan Brown at [rev.jonathan.brown2021@gmail.com](mailto:rev.jonathan.brown2021@gmail.com).

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



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**[khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com)**

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

## *403(b) Pension Plan Transition*

The EC Benefits Trustees would like to thank the church treasurers and pastors for working through the Nationwide 403(b) Pension Plan transition. There are still a few problems that are popping up. Please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White with any questions. We will help you if we can or get you in touch with the appropriate staff member at Nationwide. The transition has been difficult for some but once the process is learned and completed a few times it does become easier.

To date only 47% of participants have completed their online enrollment and only 23% of participants have beneficiaries designated on their account. Please do your family a favor by adding beneficiaries to your pension account. Beneficiaries can be added online. On the right side of the main participant account screen is a list of "Quick Links." The third link from the top is "Manage Beneficiaries." Each account should have at least one Primary Beneficiary and can have as many contingent beneficiaries as necessary. A

hard copy of a beneficiary form is available; please contact Kevin Henry for a copy. As always, please consult financial or legal representatives as you plan for your retirement and final estate settlement planning.

Pension plan transition resources for pastors and church treasurers are available at <https://retirement.eccenter.com/>.

Jennifer Buehler and her team at Wells Fargo Advisors are available to assist with retirement financial planning (717-761-7344). Jennifer and Tresha Anderson were valuable assets providing guidance, expertise and support during the Nationwide transition process.

Thank you to all that have paid the worker's compensation invoices in a timely manner. Payment for the Disability Income Fund and Benefit Corp Services fee were due January 15 and April 15, respectively; both fees are listed on the 2023 Treasurer's Guide which is available on [www.members.eccenter.com](http://www.members.eccenter.com).

Please contact me, Kevin Henry, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com), or Bethany White, [bwhite@eccenter.com](mailto:bwhite@eccenter.com), or 717-866-7581 with any questions or problems.

Kevin Henry  
Executive Director  
[khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com) or 717-628-2171.

## CONFERENCE SUPPORT TEAM UPDATES

Currently, there are ten (10) churches that are remitting their monthly ministry fund report and paying ministry funds electronically. There are also a few churches that are remitting their regular Global Ministries support donations, loan payments and EC Benefit payments electronically as well. We understand not every church will be willing or able to process payments electronically, and electronic payments are not required. But we strongly encourage churches to save money on paper checks and postage with electronic payments.

Please contact Kevin Henry, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com), or 717-628-2171, to request electronic payments. I can review our procedures in more detail at that time.



## Church Health Community News

### *Should I Stay, or Should I Go?*

**A Look at How Personal Stress Can be Managed Through Self-Care**  
Rev. Dr. Ken Schira

When I came to Trinity EC Berlinsville, it was with the initial understanding that there would be a two-church charge. When the sister church decided to try and remain a single charge, Trinity was faced with a challenge. They told me with sadness concerning their dilemma, "If you don't want to come back, we understand." I had just bought a new home; Carolyn and I were beginning a new chapter in life and ministry; and I believed this was where the Lord wanted me. I was faced with the concerns of caring for my family and fulfilling my calling before the Lord.

Carolyn looked at me as if to silently ask, "What are you (we) going to do now?" I didn't know what to say. It was my first day the church, Father's Day, and we had had a beautiful service. The Lord was glorified, dads were honored, the church was welcoming and I felt the genuine presence of the Holy Spirit. And here, the church was facing the prospect of having no pastor, and I faced being without any ministry or income, the prospect of losing my new home and my wife being broken-hearted, This was not the time to make any decisions, and yet the moment required one. I asked myself the question, "Should I stay, or should I go?"

I didn't realize at the time just how much trouble I was in on that Father's Day of 2006, but I do now. Stress, depression, deepening anxiety, spiritual feelings of emptiness and abandonment all crept into my emotions. For most, this is simply a matter of changing their lifestyle. But the pastor is called to both a singular and increasingly diversified mission: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a broken and fragmented world. And this situation was definitely broken and fragmented.

My pride in my position as a man of God held me back from showing and acknowledging how hurt I was. I also didn't want Carolyn to worry so I gave the impression of calmness. Yet I still had to function as a pastor in the midst of my personal brokenness and fragmentation. So what did I do? I said to the church's official board, as though it were no big deal, and I knew what I was doing, "You go home and pray about it, and I'll go home and pray about it. I'll see you next week, and let's see what God can do." And we did. I escaped the immediacy of the moment and gave us all time to think, and went home and did what all good pastors do: I prayed, and I worried.

# Church Health Community News

## *Should I Stay, or Should I Go?*

### **A Look at How Personal Stress Can be Managed Through Self-Care**

**Rev. Dr. Ken Schira**

*continued...*

That was in 2006, and here it is 2023, and I'm still at Trinity EC, Berlinsville as of this writing some seventeen years later.

The entire body of the church, alongside many others (pastors and chaplains, friends and mentors) helped me along the road to self-care. Some things were intentional; others were less deliberate things done simply out of love for their pastor, colleague and friend. I believe that Trinity ECC would have done this for any pastor; I'm so glad it was me.

Here are some of the things I learned along the way of what I've come to think of as the Trinity Trail

- Self-care does not mean solitary care. One of the things pastors tend to do is segregate themselves for fear of being exposed and vulnerable. Jesus addressed this when He said, "whatever is in the heart of a person will eventually find an outlet of expression." Pastors need to risk being vulnerable before their ministry council or official board, to trust the leadership in their church to let them practice what was preached! If you have led your church Biblically in Christ, you can trust the love of God to be there. Let your church love you through your crisis, and let the outcomes belong to God.
- Do something other than work. I knew a pastor some years ago who shared the difficulty he had going out to relax. He loved to golf, and he would load his clubs in his car at three in the morning so he could go far enough away from his church that no one would recognize him. When I asked him why, he said that one member on his board reprimanded him for taking a day off. Rather than addressing this with the leadership, he left that church, leaving a potentially vital work because of the misperceptions of the role of the pastor.
- Take time to be with the Lord. Spiritual renewal is a real thing that occurs in real time. Reconciling with situations in ministry means that we may also need to reconcile our desires, designs and directions along the way. Solitude with God in Christ will help you to discern the way to proceed for both yourself and your congregation.
- Practicing a devotional lifestyle is practical and serves as a self-balancing agent to keep me Christ-centered. By a devotional lifestyle, I mean that every godly person should take the time to consider how their faith and their actions impact others. Friends, we are ambassadors for Jesus Christ; you do not only represent your church.

Our prayers and our thoughts do not need to be overtly critical of what people do or of how we perceive ourselves. Our prayer-filled expressions mutually build hope in the hearer and in ourselves as we express them. Defer your difficulties to the Lord and trust Him for the results. This is the best prescription for self-care.

Health and Blessings,

*Rev. Dr. Ken Schira*

# GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



## Engaging the Local Church

You, the local church, are the hub upon which rests the mobilization, coordination, implementation and evaluation of the total global outreach of your congregation. It is yours not only to embrace local, area, and wider United States outreach, ***but to go beyond our borders and to circle the globe in obedience to the Biblical mandate.***

It is a momentous undertaking, but one which you do not shape or carry alone. You received "power" when the Holy Spirit came upon you...

***power to be witnesses, and power to take the Good News  
to the ends of the earth.*** (Acts 1:8)

In doing so, we are partners in the work being done in, and through, the EC Churches around the world.

The Global Ministries Community (GMC) continues to seek to enable our international churches to be self-governing, self-sustaining and self-propagating through the leadership we provide and the support of the local EC Church in the United States. This mission demands a strong connected relationship between the EC Church USA and our international EC brothers and sisters in churches spanning throughout the countries of India, Nepal, Japan, Liberia and Mexico.

We believe a healthy church places a high priority on proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ to a hurting world beyond its immediate neighborhood. This outward focus compels the church to cross cultures and borders in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

Will you join the GMC and dedicate yourselves to serve as senders - those who propel the vision of the Global Ministries Community of EC Church, and together be on mission with Christ to reach His world and be a dynamic movement of God?

If so, CONTACT US - we'd love the opportunity to help the local church build this into their DNA!

*Ted Rathman*



At the EC National Conference in May, we were able to hear from the leaders from Mexico, Liberia, Japan and Nepal.  
(Please continue to pray for our India EC Church family.)

**You can view these greetings on the GMC YouTube Channel [HERE!](#)**

To know how your church can partner directly with an EC missionary or an International EC Church, call the GMC office at 717-866-7581 x 1109; or email [ecglobal@eccenter.com](mailto:ecglobal@eccenter.com).



Connect with us on Facebook: Global Ministries Community





## Kingdom Extension Community News

### FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

#### *How To Tie Your Shoes*

At National Conference, we talked about multiplying IMPACT, DISCIPLES and CHURCHES. I firmly believe that if the EC Church is going to become the dynamic movement of God we believe God is calling us to be, we must adopt a multiplication mindset as well as a mindset that releases disciples to make disciples.

One of the hardest things about parenting my children was to shift my mindset from wanting to raise perfect kids (I think deep down we all have that desire for our kids to be amazing) to recognizing that my responsibility in parenting was to equip my kids to be released and thrive on their own. In hindsight, the shift I had to make in my own mind was from raising children for my hopes and dreams to raising them to fulfill their God-given purpose. My wife, Beth, was actually very good at always seeing and believing in the bigger plan and purpose for our kids. I, on the other hand, loved to have them dependent on me. I loved to provide for them. From the smallest things to the greatest, I loved that they needed me, and I loved having them as an integral part of my world. While my role as father was to provide while they needed me, my greater role was to teach them to not be dependent on me.

Mike Coulson, in his recent book, Becoming Jesus' Apprentice, describes this concept using the illustration of tying shoes. As little children, we are dependent on adults to tie our shoes. The goal is to learn to tie our shoes and be released from that dependence on another to do it for us. There are many other illustrations in our human development that are similar to this one such as picking out our clothes and dressing ourselves, bathing and cleaning ourselves, reading books and more, but the point is the same - moving from dependence to independence.

*Unfortunately as churches, and especially as churches leaders, we never truly adopt this same mindset.*

*We create discipleship processes that keep us at the center of the discipleship journey.*

*We proliferate the idea that we, pastors and church leaders, are necessary for following Jesus.*

*We never equip people to thrive on their own and even better to equip others who will equip others who will equip others!*

Don't get me wrong; I do think there is a role for pastors and church leaders. Even though my kids are grown and on their own, they still need me. My role in their life, though, has changed drastically, and what a joy it is to see

# Kingdom Extension Community News

## FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

*continued...*

*How To Tie Your Shoes*

*continued...*

them thrive on their own. Becoming a dynamic movement will require this same type of mental shift for us as church leaders that I had to embrace as a father. We can no longer lead and equip disciples in such a way that they are constantly dependent on us. True discipleship is all about teaching people to thrive so that they can teach others to thrive as well.

*Mike*



## PRAYER NEEDED

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

**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. Also, pray that a recent funding grant they applied for will be approved.

**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. Pray for wisdom, strength, and renewed energy for this couple.

**Haitian Church Plant** – One of our couples who recently went through our Pastoral Assessment Center is feeling called to plant a church in Reading, PA or Lancaster, PA specifically targeting the Haitian community! Pray as God gathers the planting team, He gives them a specific vision for the future and energizes them for this task.

**The Reams** – Tim and Pam Ream have announced they are moving to Tennessee. They are pursuing the opportunity to engage in planting an EC Church once they have settled into their new community. Pray that God would begin preparing that community even before they move to be receptive to His glorious presence.

**New Church Planters** – We have three other individuals/couples that are exploring their potential call to become church planters with the EC Church. Please pray for clear vision for these couples. Also pray for courage as they consider taking a difficult step in an uncertain ministry realm.

**Greater Impact** – Please pray for churches across our denomination as they look to expand and even multiply their impact on 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

*"The Sabbath was Made for Man"*

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently completed a study on the sleeping habits of Americans. In a culture that glorifies busyness and defines success by running ourselves into the ground, it won't surprise us that 1 in 3 Americans reported not getting enough sleep each day. Forty percent of Americans report falling asleep at work without meaning to at least once a month. We are a people who are tired.

Pastors find themselves in the same position. Let's face it, being a pastor isn't always the easiest job. An article in 2009 declared pastors to be in the top nine toughest jobs in America. The research group Barna completed a study between October 2021 and March 2022 examining the relationship between pastoral health and stress. In their research, the Barna group found that only fifteen percent of pastors strongly agree for the need to prioritize self-care. The overwhelming group, forty percent, said that they "somewhat agree" with the need to prioritize self-care.

Mark records for us in his Gospel a conversation between Jesus and some Pharisees. As a part of the conversation, Jesus reveals his desire to care for the needs of men when he says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." God knows our need for rest. He understands our need for self-care. He provides for us through rest, that we might let down from the stresses of ministry to fill our souls and re-energize our bodies.

So where do you fall? Are you part of the 1 in 3 Americans who report not sleeping enough? Are you a pastor that "somewhat agrees" with self-care? My prayer for our pastors is that we might care for our souls so that we might overflow with the joy of the Lord and pour into others.

Take time to rest today; you'll thank yourself!

*Matt*



# Ministerial Development Community News

...continued

## Institute for Church Leadership

*Rev. Dr. Joel Kime*

The Institute for Church Leadership fall 2023 classes are designed with your church's leadership team members and teachers in mind. Pastors, even if you completed the ICL or MDiv years ago, these courses are an excellent opportunity for continuing study and growth. You or a small group leader could host an ICL watch party in your home or at your church building. Audit fees are only \$50/class/person. Please invite your church family to participate in the ICL fall courses which are:

**Personal Spiritual Formation, September 5 – October 17, 6:30-9:15 p.m.**

**Instructor:** Glenda Dunbar

**New Testament Survey, October 31 – December 12, 6:30-9:15 p.m.**

**Instructor:** Tim Valentino

The \$50 auditor fee can be made payable to the EC Church with a note indicating which course the student is registering for. Students can register up to the first week of class. Once we receive payment, we send them the Zoom link so they can participate in sessions.

I would be happy to talk further about ideas or questions you might have.

Joel Kime

Director, ICL

[Joel.faithchurch@gmail.com](mailto:Joel.faithchurch@gmail.com)



# WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS SUMMER AT...

*Twin Pines summer camp schedule is available, and registration is open on their website.*



**Summer Camp Schedule and Registration are available at [bit.ly/2023SummerSchedule](http://bit.ly/2023SummerSchedule)**

Twin Pines is inspected and licensed by the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Agriculture.

Twin Pines welcomes campers without regard to race, color, or national origin.



**CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER**

3000 Twin Pines Camp Road, Stroudsburg, PA 18360  
570.629.2411 • 570.620.0664 (fax) • [www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org)



# CALENDAR

## JULY/AUGUST 2023

### Sunday, July 2

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Monday, July 3

EC Church Center Closed

### Tuesday, July 4

Independence Day  
EC Church Center Closed

### Friday, July 7

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

### Sunday, July 9

Liturgical Color - Green

### Saturday, July 15

Health Insurance Due

### Sunday, July 16

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, July 23

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, July 30

Liturgical Color - Green

### Friday, August 4

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

### Sunday, August 6

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, August 13

Liturgical Color - Green

### Tuesday, August 15

Health Insurance Due

### Sunday, August 20

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, August 27

Liturgical Color - Green

## **Ministry Funds and Insurance & Benefits:**

**Mail to:**

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

## SEPTEMBER 2023

### Friday, September 1

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

### Sunday, September 3

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Monday, September 4

Labor Day  
EC Church Center Closed

### Sunday, September 10

Liturgical Color - Green

### Friday, September 15

Health Insurance Due

### Sunday, September 17

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, September 24

Liturgical Color - Green



## PLEASE NOTE:

From July 31 through August 14, EC Center will be short-staffed. Please be patient when calling into the Center; the processing of checks and receipts may also be delayed. If a check or receipt is not received by August 25th, please contact us.



## 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

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



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July/August 2023 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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