

From the desk of Bishop Bruce Hill

The month of May is when we meet for our National Conference. It's an important aspect of how we "do denomination." Yes, there is important business to handle; but there's much more to it than that. It is a time when we come together as God's people from six states and across three regions.

I suppose it's natural to relate the word denomination with being connectional; but the Evangelical Congregational Church puts a little different spin on it. Yes, local congregations are connected to the denomination; that's the normal way we think of being connectional. Our Discipline says... we join together in love, we embrace our common purpose - to know Christ and make Him known, we pray together, fellowship together, develop leaders together, evangelize together, plant churches together, perform acts of mercy together, pursue justice together, and celebrate God together.

But we also understand that local congregations are connected to each other in districts - when congregations in a particular geographic area cooperate with each other to fulfill the Great Commission, "to go and make disciples." The words, *partnership* and *teamwork*, describe each district's mission. My hope is that districts will become learning communities and ministry communities impacting one another, as well as the surrounding community.

Pastors are connected to each other as we form what is essentially a "band of brothers;" a self-disciplining body of pastors who accept the priority of the cause of Christ in service to the Lord, and who are committed to service under the authority of the EC Church.

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From the desk....

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The relationships between pastors and local congregations are what make National Conference and our connectional denomination so important to each of us. We need interaction with fellow believers to grow and mature and to be disciplined. A congregation benefits from being part of something larger than their own local fellowship. These relationships make for healthier people and churches to help us serve more effectively. The inter-connectedness of a denomination provides for opportunities to interact and serve with people who may be very different from a homogeneous local church. ECers do not all look alike, we do not agree on everything, we have different gifts and graces, we may even speak different languages, and yet, we are the family of God and there is no stronger relationship.

Through a connected denomination, pastors, lay leaders, and whole congregations move beyond simply supporting relationships to expanding relationships as we pray, fellowship, develop leaders, evangelize, plant churches, perform acts of mercy, pursue justice, and celebrate God together.

This is the Evangelical Congregational Church, and for that, I am grateful.

In Christ's Service,

Bruce D. Hill
Bishop



We are the family of God, and there is no stronger relationship.

- Bruce Hill



National Conference 2021 Information



Pre-Conference Meeting Dates and Locations

Susquehanna Region

Tuesday, May 4, 2021: 7:00 p.m. - Reich's EC, 338 Stackstown Rd., Marietta, PA 17547

Tuesday, May 11, 2021: 7:00 p.m. - Mohn's Memorial EC, 708 Mohns Hill Rd., Reading, PA 19608

Delaware Region

Saturday, May 8, 2021: 9:00 a.m. - Christ EC, 2135 W Tilghman St., Allentown, PA 18104

Thursday, May 13, 2021: 7:00 p.m. - Grace EC, 151 Earl Stoyer Dr., Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972

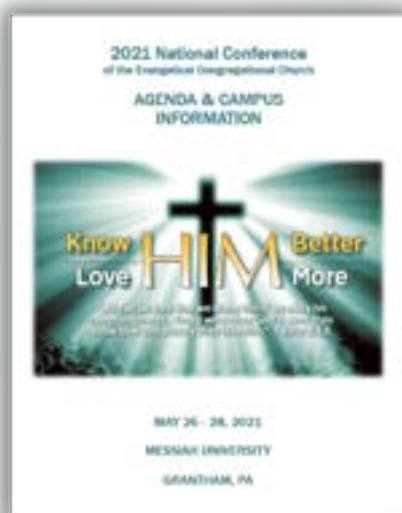
Great Lakes Region

Saturday, May 15, 2021: 9:00 a.m. CST - Bethel EC, 131 N Court St., Dixon, IL 61021

Saturday, May 15, 2021: 10:00 a.m. EST - Lakeside EC, 3203 N Hermitage Rd., Transfer, PA 16154



Pre-Conference
Meeting Dates also listed on
May calendar, page 14.



Conference Report Packets

Requested printed packets have been mailed. Digital copies are now available at eccenter.com - Member Login section.



The Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

- 1 ASK THE LORD TO CLEARLY LEAD US AS WE ELECT THE NEXT BISHOP OF THE EC CHURCH.
- 2 PRAY FOR ME AS I PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE AGENDA AND ALL THE ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE.
- 3 PRAY FOR SAFE TRAVEL AND FOR MY VOICE TO LAST AS I LEAD FIVE PRE-CONFERENCE MEETINGS IN TEN DAYS.
- 4 ASK THE LORD TO BLESS OUR CAMPS (ECCO, ROCK RIVER, AND TWIN PINES) AS THEY FINALIZE THEIR STAFF AND PROGRAMS.
- 5 PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE GRADUATING FROM EVANGELICAL SEMINARY AND MOVING ON TO THE NEXT CHAPTER OF MINISTRY.
- 6 PRAISE THE LORD FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATIVE SUMMER PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITIES.
- 7 THANK GOD FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT CHURCH CENTER WHO FAITHFULLY SERVE OUR DENOMINATION AND THE KINGDOM.
- 8 PRAISE THE LORD FOR TECHNOLOGY THAT ALLOWS TED RATHMAN, GLOBAL MINISTRIES ASSOCIATE, AND I TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LEADERS CONFERENCE OF THE EC CHURCH INDIA, EVEN WHEN TRAVEL IS RESTRICTED.
- 9 PRAISE THE LORD FOR THE MEN WHO ARE SIGNED UP TO ATTEND OUR PASTORAL ASSESSMENT CENTER IN JANUARY.
- 10 THANK GOD FOR OUR CREDENTIALLED MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE SERVING AS CHAPLAINS TO THE MILITARY AND VETERANS.

Praise the Lord!



2021 National Day of Prayer - May 6, 2021



“Lord, Pour Out Your Love, Life, and Liberty” is the theme for National Day of Prayer to be observed on Thursday, May 6. The theme is based on 2 Corinthians 3:17, “*Now the Lord is the spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*” One purpose of the day is “to mobilize the Christian community to intercede for America’s leaders and its families.”

The United States has a long history of national days of prayer. Our modern observance came about in 1952 when a Joint Resolution of Congress, establishing a annual observance was signed into law by President Harry S. Truman.

In 1988, the law was amended to permanently set the first Thursday in May as National Day of Prayer. The document was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. Since then, a proclamation has been signed each year by the President.

Information and resources are available at nationaldayofprayer.org.

EC NATIONAL NEWS

in Memoriam



Carolyn D. Schira

Carolyn D. Schira, 68, of New Ringgold, PA, passed away on December 6, 2020. She was the wife of Rev. Kenneth Schira, pastor at Trinity E.C. Church in Berlinsville. Carol was born in Reading and was a lifelong member of E.C. Churches. She enjoyed drawing and playing the guitar. In addition to her husband, she is survived by daughter, Caroline.

Patricia A. Griel

Patricia A Griel, 77, of Willow Street, PA, passed away on December 27, 2020. She was the wife of retired pastor, Rev. James Griel, assisting him in three churches. She had been employed as a retail sales clerk and worked at Twin Pines Camp. In addition to her husband, she is survived by daughters, Lynda, wife of Rev. Paul Miller of Bushkill Community Church; Tracy; and Deborah.

We apologize for omitting these deaths in the EC National News winter edition.

News from Executive Director

Due Dates

April 15

Benefit Corporation Administrative Fee

*If you have not already done so,
please mail to EC Center.*

Kevin Henry

Executive Director

khenry@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

David King

Benefits Administrator

dking@eccenter.com

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Health Insurance

With the switch to CIGNA and Missio Benefits, our health insurance year has changed to July 1 to June 30 from October 1 to September 30, thus we are quickly approaching a new health insurance year. We are not moving the health insurance from CIGNA or Missio Benefits on July 1 and Bennecon will continue to be the HRA plan administrator. There will be some minimal changes for participants in the new plan year and no change for churches for the remainder of calendar year 2021. For participants, the most notable change, albeit with minimal financial impact, is an increase in the plan deductibles by \$250 to \$1,250 for single coverage and \$500 increase to \$2,500 for couple and family coverage. In comparison, the deductibles for the United Healthcare HMO plan were \$3,500 for single coverage and \$7,000 for couple and family coverage. **The HRA out of pocket limit of \$500 per year, for covered medical expenses excluding co-pays, is not changing.** However, all deductibles, co-insurance and HRA reimbursements are resetting on July 1 with the new plan year. Additional information will be released to the health plan participants shortly.

A change in the plan year also changes the open enrollment period. Any pastor wishing to join the EC health insurance plan must do so between June 1 and June 11. There are a few exceptions for joining a health insurance plan outside of open enrollment such as the birth of a child or loss of a job. If there are any anticipated changes to your health care enrollment, please contact Dave King or Kevin Henry to discuss your anticipated changes to avoid unnecessary disruptions to your health care coverage.

The rates charged to the churches are fixed for calendar year 2021. Any rate increase for 2022 will be reviewed and decided upon at the September 2021 EC Benefits Trustee meeting, and will be effective on January 1, 2022.

Workers Compensation

Invoices have been mailed to churches, and thanks to the many that have already submitted their payment. If you have not received your annual workers compensation invoice please contact Dave King.

Churches not included in the denominational workers compensation group policy - Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky - your individual state mandates workers compensation coverage. Please confirm that all employees of the church are covered by workers compensation insurance. Per EC Benefits Corporation policy H.3.b: churches not covered by the denomination group workers compensation policy shall submit proof of workers compensation coverage by July 1 of each year. Please submit proof of your workers compensation coverage to:

EC Benefits, 100 W Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067
or fax 717-866-7583 or email dking@eccenter.com.

News from Executive Director

Retirement

As in years past, Jennifer Buehler, Wells Fargo Advisors, had the most visitors during National Conference, but please remember she is available for retirement planning assistance year-round. Jennifer may be reached at 1-855-603-8146.

We hope all our pastors are actively planning for their retirement:

- make consistent contributions to your 403(b) or Roth account (in addition to your church's contributions) and,
- at a minimum spend an hour or two annually with a financial professional reviewing your investments and rate of savings.

Please do not delay in becoming personally involved in your retirement planning!

Open Trustee Positions

EC Benefits Corporation has three open lay trustee positions and one open ministerial trustee position.

Trustees represent the members of the Benefits Corporation who are the EC National Conference churches and pastors. Trustees provide insight and direction to the benefit plans offered to EC active and retired pastors.

The benefit plans include: health insurance, pension, workers compensation, short term disability and the Manna Fund.

Trustees are expected to attend three Board of Trustee meetings per year, with the slight possibility of additional meetings if an unexpected situation arises that requires trustee action. A commitment of about 10 - 15 hours per year would be required.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in becoming an EC Benefits Trustee, please contact Jodi Earhart at EC Church Center to request a trustee application.

jeahart@eccenter.com

717-866-7581



Kevin Henry

Executive Director

khenry@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

David King

Benefits Administrator

dking@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

Jodi Earhart

(Trustee Applications)

jeahart@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

Kingdom Extension Community News



Fresh Expressions is an international movement of missionary disciples cultivating new kinds of church alongside existing congregations to more effectively engage our growing post-Christian society.

A Fresh Expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church. Fresh expressions are contextual Christian churches formed among those who are not yet members of any church. They are not steppingstones to church. They're not church lite. They are church.

Check out Fresh Expressions by visiting their website: freshexpressionsus.org. The site is filled with ideas, stories, and resources.

Currently, they are promoting a new book (a free download), **How to Start a New Kind of Church**, by Luke Edwards.

Read about the book . . . "Church doesn't work the way it used to. There was a time where the central role of the Church in American life could be taken for granted. But those forms of church are quickly losing traction in our culture. It's time for something fresh. In this totally free e-book, Luke Edwards will introduce you to Fresh Expressions: a method for starting, growing and multiplying new forms of Church."

Small Talk and Witness!

Small talk! When was the last time small talk led to a more significant conversation? With a stranger? Smooth? Awkward? When was the last time a conversation included Jesus?

As Christians, we get to talk about Jesus. Sharing Jesus usually starts with a conversation and a relationship and trust. Consider developing new conversational skills. This 2- or 3-hour workshop is a conversation about conversations.

There is an art to making space for conversations. Discover resources, develop ideas, and practice the art of moving from "hello" to something deeper; even gospel focused. Deciding to be prepared usually guarantees that will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations



The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities

This hands-on workshop is designed to help you explore how to identify points of intersection between the DNA of your church and that of the surrounding community. With these insights, participants will examine ways to build missional "bridges" between church and community.

The aim of the interactive sessions will be for each church represented to generate action steps to build relationships and ministries with your neighbors.

Three teaching sessions (Who are we? Who are they? What bridges can be created between us?) are followed by hands-on workshops (church teams actually processing the material that was shared).

The final session is designed to leave each church team with solid plans and action steps toward missional connections with their communities.



Let's talk about how one of these workshops might fit the needs of your church family and when a workshop would fit your schedule. Rev. Les Cool; 717-951-8433 or revlescool@gmail.com.

Kingdom Extension Community News

Coaching Toward a New Tomorrow

Great ideas sometimes need coaching support in order for you to hit the target. Coaching keeps you on task, enables you to play at the top of your game. Coaching enables you to achieve more. Let's talk!

The Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) would like to partner with you (pastor) or your leadership team or congregation to make sure your next great idea becomes your next ministry success.

The KEC would like to help pay for up to six months of coaching attached to training and a new ministry that is missional or Kingdom focused.

That is, we would like to pay for coaching designed to help you make use of new learning that moves you and your church family out of the building to develop a ministry not attached to what happens in your sanctuary.

What might that look like? A church plant. A dinner church. A fresh expression of church. This is about creating a ministry that didn't exist for people previously not reached. Interested?



Preparing New Leaders and Developing Your Team

Most days, you just need somebody to do that thing or to serve in that role. Why? The job must get done. Or at least, that's the theory. But the reality is that the right person in the right role for the right reason will not only get the job done; they will also thrive. That means they will continue to serve long after the job is done.

How do you know who is best for which role?

You start with helping your leaders, potential and existing, identify their spiritual gifts and personality. Add gift development, and they are ready to deploy into long-term ministry roles.

A Leadership Grip or Grip-Birkman workshop would provide insights on building a better church leadership team, as well as help you equip your congregation for powerful ministries. And maybe save someone from burnout!

Let's talk about how one of these workshops might fit the needs of your church family and when a workshop would fit your schedule. Rev. Les Cool; 717-951-8433 or revlescool@gmail.com.



Serving as Senders

**Member Care Team...
Partners in the Gospel!**



As a child of God, you are interested in His world and what He is doing today. Yet you do not sense His call to go to the ends of the earth. You may ask, "how can I get involved in the great commission of world evangelism?"

You can join a growing force of believers who are serving as senders - today! Paul, the apostle, called his support team in Phillippi, "*partners in the Gospel!*"

***"Every missionary today needs an as-enthusiastic-as-he-is team of people
who see themselves as his partners in the Gospel."***

- Neal Pirolo

Those who go and those who serve as senders are like two units on the same cross-cultural outreach team. Both are equally important. Both are vitally involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Both are dynamically integrated and moving toward the same goal. And both are assured success, for those in God's work are on the winning team!

When a person senses God's call it is not something that he or she pursues alone, but an invitation for the church to become involved in what God is doing in their lives, and ultimately in what God is doing in this world. The Apostle Paul had a network of supporters that provided him the ability to do the necessary missionary work he was called to, and while this group of people did not travel to the far-reaching places Paul did, they were equally necessary to ensure the gospel went to the ends of the earth.

The newly formed GMC Member Care Team seeks to provide outstanding care to our missionaries as we come alongside their sending agency in their support, but also hopes to provide resources, material, and training to those in our local churches serving as support units. If you'd like more information on "serving as a sender," and resources to establish a Member Care Team at your church, reach out to the GMC office at EC Center - ecglobal@eccenter.com or 717-866-7581; and be sure to...

...check out our new website: gmc.eccenter.com.

-excerpts from *Serving as Senders*; Neal Pirolo; Emmaus Road International; 1991



Global Ministries Community Our Missionary Family News



Hearts of Gratitude:

"Thank you, always and always, for being there to help me go forward in this Ukrainian adventure of ministry for Christ. In February it was 26 years since I landed in Kiev for the first time. So much life, so many changes, such Kingdom triumphs and advances I've been allowed to witness, and be some part of, these 26 years. The Covid storm is nothing compared to the tsunami of God's Spirit overwhelming a human heart with grace and everlasting life rushing in." - Ken Sears, Ukraine (ECM)

"Thank you for your love, prayers, support & encouragement this past 5-year term. We are a bit anxious and excited as we trust the Lord to help us complete the printing of this new Binandere Scripture book. But we are also rejoicing and excited about our upcoming year of home assignment and a chance to connect again with our family, churches & friends." - Kathy and Jonathan Wilson, Papua New Guinea (Wycliffe)



"We've completed the work to our video studio at Wycliffe USA Headquarters. We were able to build several sets of light-weight, interchangeable wall sections to form a corner set. We want to thank those who had a part in making this possible. We've already filmed several videos in the studio, and look forward to using it as much as possible in the future. Thanks again for all your support!" - Dan and Melinda Moury, Orlando, FL (Wycliffe)



Changed Hearts & Changed Lives:

"One of the men that I have known the longest in Camden is Charlie. When we first met, he was homeless and addicted to heroin. My friends and I shared the gospel with Charlie countless times...Charlie disappeared for a while when he got locked up for prior offenses. When he came out of prison he said to me, 'I just came to understand that my drug problem is a sin problem.' From this point on, he has been growing in his faith. It is amazing to see the change in his life physically, emotionally and spiritually. It has been a seven year journey for him. Truly, our labors in the Lord are not in vain." - Joe Toy, Philadelphia area (OAM)



*Facilitating Mission Workers
Empowering National Churches
Engaging the Local Church*

Rev. Ted Rathman
GMC Associate

Denise Jaramillo
GMC Administrative Assistant

ecglobal@eccenter.com
717-866-7581



Ministerial Development Community News

The Ministerial Development Community (MDC) is tasked with providing simple and efficient ways for pastors to receive the training and support they need for healthy pastoral ministry. In this way, the MDC continues to serve the Evangelical Congregational Church by supplying and training our ministerial ranks through a concerted effort. This process continues to provide opportunities for healthy ministry to be cultivated within the EC Church. As we finish out one conference year, we must prepare now to begin another. Therefore, we are starting now to receive registrations for the 2022 Pastoral Assessment Center.

If you are sensing a call to pastoral ministry, it is essential that you first discuss this matter with the lead pastor at your church and talk to other leaders who are able to observe your gifts and abilities in action. If they provide you with positive (and constructive) feedback, your next step would be to contact me at jgbyerly@eccenter.com or call me at 570-294-3467.

The deadline for registering for the 2022 Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC) is June 1, 2021. The date and location for the PAC is January 12 - 15, 2022 at the campus of Evangelical Seminary. There is no cost to those who are seeking credentials in the EC Church.

Because pastoral ministry intermingles congregational life with one's family life, a pastor and his wife must understand how the unique dynamics of their positions are different than other typical vocations. For this reason, the wife of each applicant is required to attend. Please work out arrangements in adequate time for both of your attendance to participate.

Blessings,
Rev. Jeffrey Byerly
Ministerial Development Associate

Rev. Jeff Byerly, MDC Associate
jgbyerly@eccenter.com

Calling
Credentials
Coaching
Education
Healthy Pastor

mdc.eccenter.com



TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE
& RETREAT CENTER

www.twinpines.org

Spring Spruce Up - May 4-6

Volunteer during a mid-week to help the ministry "spruce-up" camp and prepare for summer ministry! Projects include both indoor and outdoor sprucing-up. There are always tasks for volunteers of any skill level!



For Ladies Only Retreat - May 11-13

An exciting mid-week retreat "for ladies only." Come enjoy fellowship, worship, and in-depth Bible learning as the retreat looks at what it means to be a woman of God.



For more information, call Executive Director Shawn Fetterhoff at 570-629-2411, e-mail info@twinpines.org, or check out twinpines.org.



Rock River BIBLE CAMP

Rock River Bible Camp, Dixon, Illinois

announces the following camps:

- Primary, for children who have completed first and second grade, July 7 to 9.
- Senior, for teens who have completed grades nine through twelve, July 11 to 17.
- Junior, for children who have completed grades three through five, July 18 to 24.
- Intermediate, for those who have completed grades six through eight, July 25 to 31.

For more information and registration contact Laura Gerber at registrar@rockriverbiblecamp.org, go to rockriverbiblecamp.org, or call Katie Royer at 815-652-3457. All registrations must be received by June 1.

June

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Ministry Fund for E.C. Church 100 W. Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067	Student Aid Offering for E.C. Church 100 W. Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate: Student Aid Offering)	1 Registration Deadline for PAC 2022	2	3	4 <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	5
6 <i>Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension</i> Green	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13 <i>Student Aid Offering</i> Green	14	15 Health Insurance Due Loan & Investment Committee Mtg.	16	17	18	19	
20 FATHER'S DAY EC Leader deadline	21	22	23	24	25	26	
Camp ECCO Senior Camp							
Green							
27 Green	28	29	30				

EC Center Staff and Associates

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- Rev. Jeffrey Byerly - Ministerial Development: jgbyerly@bethesdaec.org
- Rev. Leslie Cool - Kingdom Extension: revlescool@gmail.com



Know Him Better Love Him More

"We can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments...Those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him." 1 John 2:3,5



Contributors

- Bishop Bruce Hill
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- Rev. Les Cool
- Rev. Jeff Byerly
- Rev. Ted Rathman
- Rev. Dr. Sam Yeager
- Ann Brown, EC National News Editor
- Denise Jaramillo
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