

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

Empowered Movement

*"Don't be discouraged by where you live,
by what is going on around you...
Friends, we have what we need to be a
dynamic movement."*



Click [HERE](#) for the Bishop's
May/June 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.

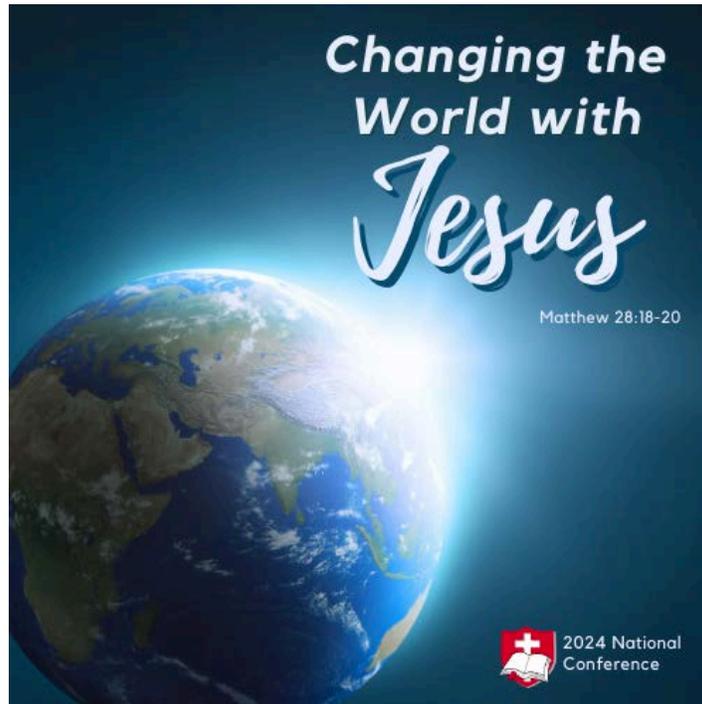
NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2024

May 22 through May 24 at Messiah University

Deadline to register is May 1!

Report packets are available on the eccenter.com website at [2024 National Conference Report Packet](#).



Please see the invitation on page 6 from our Global Ministries Community for a special event during lunchtime on Thursday at National Conference.

Pre-Conference Meeting Schedule

Allegheny District

Sunday, April 28. 3:00PM at New Zion EC, Emlenton

Buckeye District

Monday, April 29. 6:30PM at Akron First E 29. 6:30PM at Akron First EC, Ohio

Midwest (formerly Illinois) District

Thursday, May 2. 5:00PM at Dixon Bethel EC, Illinois

Susquehanna Region

Thursday, May 9. 7:00PM at Reich's EC

Monday, May 13. 7:00PM at Mohn's Hill EC

Delaware Region

Saturday, May 11. 9:00AM at Allentown Christ EC

Thursday, May 16. 7:00PM at Pitman Zion EC

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

Invoices to churches on our group Workers' Compensation policy will be mailed shortly. The billed amounts will be about the same as last year. That is not the same information I shared last month. Last month I reported a significant increase, but since the completion of our wage audit we received an adjusted invoice that was about 20% lower than the preliminary invoice.

One new enhancement this year will be online bill payment. Included on the workers' compensation invoices, that will be emailed to treasurers, will be a link for the option to pay by credit card or ACH transfer. Each church or customer will have an online account or portal. Included in each online account will be the complete billing and payment history for each church from January 1, 2024, forward. The history will include payments and invoices for electronic invoices and payments and paper invoices and payments. Churches may also print copies of invoices and receipts as needed. When the workers' compensation invoices are prepared, instructions will be included on how to establish an online account. The account set up process is very similar to the set-up process with other websites and applications.

Churches not included in the denominational Workers' Compensation group policy, Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky churches, 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 717-866-7553 or email khenry@eccenter.com.

Please contact Bethany White or Kevin Henry with any questions.

Kevin Henry
Executive Director

Bethany White
Benefits Specialist





Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

Planting Small Groups

One area churches can find themselves struggling with is getting a small group ministry started. We recall how Jesus invested in the twelve and understand how important it can be but have a hard time gaining momentum. There are numerous methods and resources to get things going, but I would like to share one which has worked in our context.

You and your leadership team can serve as small group planters. Many years ago my family rented a 36 foot houseboat on Rainy Lake in Voyageurs National Park at the northern tip of Minnesota. A young man of probably fifteen years of age accompanied us as we left the dock. His responsibility was to make sure we knew how to navigate the enormous lake in the northern wilderness, that we knew how the systems of the boat worked and that we would be okay for our four-day trip. We had been equipped with binoculars and laminated charts of the lake. When he was satisfied with our competence, he radioed his friend (probably his brother) in a small boat who sped alongside us. Our young mentor said goodbye, jumped into the small boat and disappeared. We could tell that he had done the same thing numerous times and was headed back to the dock to assist the next amateur captain.

In a similar way we have been able to plant small groups by inviting people from the church to get together and mentoring them in facilitating group discussions and making sure they are ready to continue independently. When the time is right, we jump off and start the process again.

The model we have been following for our small group discussions came from a book titled Sticky Church by Larry Osborne (Zondervan, 2008). Osborne's objective is to encourage people new to the church to stay by implementing sermon-based discussion groups. The small group discussion topics serve multiple purposes. When people know they will be discussing the sermon during their group meeting, they pay more attention and take more notes. The pastor can also ask groups to explore topics and passages of Scripture which he did not have time to address thoroughly on Sunday morning. An added perk for our group leaders is that there is virtually no preparation required other than being there for the worship service; there is no need to read books, watch videos or prepare questions. We provide four open-ended "discussion starters" for every week.

Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate
continued...

Planting Small Groups

continued...

Osborne describes “sticky” churches as those where people are naturally assimilated into small groups. He argues effectively that sticky churches are healthier churches. People are more likely to stay because they grow as disciples and together in fellowship. He states that, “The ultimate goal of a sermon-based small group is simply to Velcro people to the two things they need the most when faced with a need-to-know or need-to-grow situation: the Bible and other Christians.” Osborne says that when a church reaches forty to sixty percent participation in small groups that the “ministry begins to impact the ethos, DNA and spiritual health of nearly everything and everyone.”

Feel free to reach out at waynehouck@gmail.com if you would like to talk about how to get small groups started at your church. In the meantime, I would encourage you to consider sharing copies of Sticky Church with your leadership team. A discussion guide in the book may be helpful in getting you started with inviting a group to get together to talk through some follow-up questions from the current week’s sermon. Once this initial group is ready to continue on safely without you, get ready to go back to the dock and start another.

We are here for you as you make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

Wayne





Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



National Conference

Join the Global Ministries Community on
Thursday, May 23, 2024 during National Conference

for
GMC 2.0

Helping the Local Church Be Dynamic

Where is God stirring you to go?



Ted Rathman
Global Ministries
Executive Director



Dee Jaramillo
Global Ministries
Deputy Director



Valerie Schubert
EC Missionary -
Keynote Speaker



**Dave & Conce
Roof**



Scott Brady
TEAM



**Brian & Missy
Wagner**

Join the GMC on Thursday at National Conference!
Valerie, Dave & Conce, Brian & Missy, Scott, Ted and Dee
will be on campus all day and available to
chat all things Global Ministries!
You're invited to a special gathering during lunchtime.*

**No special meal ticket required, simply make your way through the normal cafeteria
line with your pre-purchased conference meal ticket, and join us in the
Martin room - adjacent to Lottie Nelson Dining Hall.*



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



We received this recent email from one of our smaller churches that we would like to share:

Dear Pastor Dan and Kim,

My name is Darole Pertz. I am the board president at Seneca EC and recently read the EC April newsletter in which you had an article on OCC participation. Both I and Pastor Terry Jacobs failed to see that we were to report our activity. We have an average attendance of 30 people, which is quite small, but our shoebox mission is HUGE. Gary and Darla Babb have been our church's coordinators for several years challenging us to pack an increasing number of boxes. God has blessed our congregation and we have risen to the challenge each time. Last year our church was asked to be the Central Drop location in our area by Tim and Betsy Krueel, OCC Regional coordinators of Western PA. We were excited to host circle speaker Elizabeth Groff of Texas in April of 2023. She received a shoebox at an orphanage in Ukraine when she was a child and now shares what a life changing event receiving the gospel through a shoebox provides! This was well attended by churches of many different denominations from our tri-county area.

On November 11, 2023 we had 100 people at our packing party, thanks to family, friends and some from other churches who wanted to be a part of what we think is the year's highlight for our church. We are thrilled to tell you that we packed 1,086 boxes. (In 2022 we packed 750 boxes). Including our own, we collected 3,050. Four other drop location churches in our area delivered to us, for a total of 7,295 boxes trucked from our little 'church on the hill'.

Last year was the introduction of Darla's pledge board. Members of the congregation chose items with attached dollar amounts they asked God to help them fulfill. As each pledge was completed the bar graph was filled in on the board and it was exciting to see God blessing. All pledges were satisfied and over \$18,000 was brought in to cover the cost of items. There are also a few generous people, some who do not even attend our church, who shop throughout the year and refuse to be reimbursed.

This may be the time to say that our church paid the full amount of 'shipping' for our 1,086 boxes (\$10,860). I put 'shipping' in quotes because we all know that would not cover the cost of shipping, let alone the discipleship material and training.

Our church has been so blessed and seen miracles time and again through God's goodness. From the exact amount of money being provided in years past for shipping to unexpectedly finding a box with the precise number of items necessary to complete an age group category. To think each box reaches an average of 9 people is another miracle! We praise God these OCC shoeboxes are taking the Gospel all over the world with love from our little church in Seneca, PA.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I'm sorry I did not see that we were to report on our OCC mission project. I'm so glad it has been added as part of the EC Global missions.

Thank you,
Darole Pertz, Bd Pres.
Seneca EC

We hope you find this letter as encouraging as we did... that no matter how small your church may be, it is still possible to have a great IMPACT for God's Kingdom!

Blessings,

Pastor Dan and Kim Blank

pastordblank@gmail.com





Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Raising Up New Leaders

For as long as I can remember, we have struggled as a denomination with stationing. Who will fill open pulpits? And every year we get to the end of the “stationing season,” and with an exhausted sigh from our Stationing Elders, thank the Lord that everything worked out and God provided. We praise God for His faithfulness! But...

Is this how God intends His church to function year after year? Jesus said, “I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” While Jesus was not promising to build your church or my church, nor was He promising to build the EC Church, His promise and His heart is to build HIS church. We do believe, however, that the EC Church is part of the Church of Jesus Christ. His plans and purposes, should we faithfully follow, is to build His Church here in the EC corner of His global Church.

So why do we struggle? Where are we falling short? Why do we not have new pastoral candidates and new church planters seeking to step into these roles? I believe a big part of the problem is our lack of intentional discipleship. This applies to discipleship in general; but more to the point here, we are not discipling people to step into their God-ordained role in His Kingdom. We have adopted a Sunday morning centric model of doing church. We are focusing so much of our time and effort on sermons, music and other traditional programs of the church. Even the terminology we use - “filling pulpits” - espouses this model.

In this model when we begin to experience decline, our default is to get more people through the front door and hope and pray people will step up into leadership. This is not at all how Jesus did ministry. Look at the 12 disciples, for instance. Most of them were called by Jesus to their roles as apostles. Jesus went to them and called them. He knew their heart, their gifting and their skills. He went to them and said, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Jesus intentionally called them into leadership and ministry and then spent time investing in them to prepare them for that calling.

If we can shift our strategy to raising up disciples who make disciples, we start to get to know hearts, giftings and skills of individuals. We then have the ability to have “I see in you” conversations in which we can help those whom God is calling to recognize what God is doing in their lives, and we can walk with them toward seeing that calling become a reality.

I do believe God wants to build his church in our midst. He has and is calling and equipping leaders for his church.

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

continued...

Raising Up New Leaders

continued...

Instead of maintaining our status quo of Sunday morning centric ministry, waiting for leaders (pastors, missionaries and church planters) to stumble upon God's call on their lives, we must be spending time with people, helping them to recognize God's plan for them.

Begin to pray daily that God would raise up someone in your life (maybe not even in your church yet) who you could intentionally spend time with. I believe if every one of the pastors in the EC Church would begin to intentionally disciple one or two individuals God puts into their lives, we would have an overabundance of those who are being raised up to be leaders in his church.



Mike

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

Cheziare and Laurel Dominique – The Dominiques have been meeting with a leadership team to pray and seek God's vision for a Haitian church. God has provided a great ministry partner out of Grace Community Church, Willow Street named Martial who is also Haitian and is passionate about helping with this church plant. We are currently identifying a location in Lancaster, PA to begin a Saturday evening Bible study that will be the next step in this church planting adventure. 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.

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

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

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church 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.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate

Take Care!

Calling all pastoral candidates! Although it may seem far off, PAC 2025 begins now. We are actively praying for the Lord to bring candidates forward as we seek to be a dynamic movement of God. If you know someone who is looking to clarify a calling to pastoral ministry, we would invite them to apply for consideration in the PAC class of 2025. Individuals seeking acceptance into PAC are required to turn in a PAC registration form and letter of reference from their pastor on or before **June 1, 2024**.

For the PAC registration form, or for more information about the pastoral assessment center, please visit www.mdc.eccenter.com. Or contact the Rev. Cam Smith at pastorcam.pmecc@outlook.com.

Matt



CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

For the month of May, we would like to focus our prayers on chaplains who serve in an area with which we all are familiar – that of fire chaplains. Yes, fire departments, even volunteer ones, have chaplains. Below, Rev. Charles Walker, Pastor at Bethany E. C. in Leesport, DFD for the Berks District and currently, Chaplain at the Union Fire Company in Leesport, introduces a little of what a fire chaplain does.

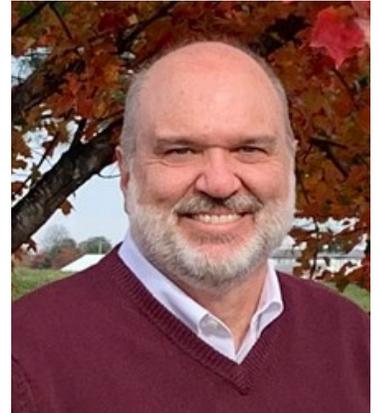
Do you remember the TV show, Emergency? It was one of my favorites growing up. I either wanted to be a paramedic or firefighter. I never thought I would get a chance until I moved to Wayne, PA. While I worked at the First United Methodist Church in Wayne, I became a volunteer firefighter for the Radnor Fire Company. I was a firefighter for three years, even earning a commendation for service.

I enjoyed being a firefighter. I even thought of doing it full time. However, I suffered a back injury and needed surgery. My firefighting days were over. I missed the fire service. I thought I would never get a chance to be a firefighter again.

It just so happened, I met with the president of the Palmyra Fire Company while serving as the Lead Pastor at First EC Church. They didn't have a chaplain for the company and wondered if I would be interested. I jumped at the chance. I was back in the fire service. It was a great six years.

Instead of running into burning buildings or cutting people out of cars, I was now able to be with those who were going through some type of loss. At times I would pray or listen to those who were hurting. Other times I would give emergency grief counseling which is a part of every chaplain's work. Chaplains demonstrate the love and grace of God when people are at their lowest. Both victims and firefighters go through it.

I am now serving as the chaplain at the Union Fire Company in Leesport, PA while I pastor at Bethany EC Church. My time as a firefighter and a chaplain taught me to keep looking at ways to serve God. If one door closes, wait for God to open another one. However, I do keep an axe in my office just in case.



MAY PRAYER SUGGESTIONS FOR CHAPLAINS

1. Praise the Lord for our EC pastors willing to volunteer in this area of ministry.
2. Pray for the safety of all those serving as fire chaplains and also that the Lord will use them to minister as they perform their duties.
3. Remember Rev. Walker specifically as he ministers to and through Union Fire Company.
4. Pray for those who are wrestling with the decision of whether to serve as a chaplain or the decision of where to serve.

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

Camp News

TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER



Twin Pines Update:



60th Anniversary Open House!

June 1st 2024

Join us for a 60th Anniversary Open House! If you were ever a camper, summer staff, fulltime staff, retreat guest, or just want a fun filled day at Twin Pines be sure to visit on June 1st!

Activities begin at 10 am. and run through 4 pm.

Overnight accommodations are available both Friday night and Saturday night with a continental breakfast. \$45.00 per room.(limit 6 people per room)

For more information or to book a room:

call: 570-629-2411 or email OpenHouse@twinpines.org

It's Time to Register for Summer Camp!

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

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

www.twinpines.org

Join our Summer Staff
A Summer of Impact

APPLY

Scan Here

Twin Pines Camp
3000 Twin Pines Camp Rd
Stroudsburg, PA 18360

HOW CAMPING IS CHANGING MATTERS

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



Senior Camp (finished 9-12): **June 23 -29th**

Intermediate Camp (finished 6-8): **July 7-13**

Junior Camp (finished 2-5): **July 14-20**

PeeWee Camp (K-1, parents welcome): **August 2-4**



Camp registration forms and Staff applications are available on our website: www.campecco.org

Avoid late registration and submit by June 1st!

Questions: Campeccocontact@gmail.com.

CALENDAR

MAY 2024

Wednesday, May 1

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Thursday, May 2

National Day of Prayer

Pre-Conference Meeting - Midwest (formerly Illinois) District

Sunday, May 5

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension

Liturgical Color - White

Thursday, May 9

Ascension Day

Pre-Conference Meeting - Susquehanna Region

Saturday, May 11

Pre-Conference Meeting - Delaware Region

Sunday, May 12

Mother's Day

Mother's Day Offering *

Liturgical Color - White

Monday, May 13

Pre-Conference Meeting - Susquehanna Region

Thursday, May 16

Pre-Conference Meeting - Delaware Region

Sunday, May 19

Pentecost

Liturgical Color - Red

Wednesday - Friday, May 22 - 24

2024 National Conference

Sunday, May 26

Liturgical Color - White

Monday, May 27

Memorial Day

EC Church Center Closed

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits and Student Aid Offering:

Mail to:

EC Church Center

100 W. Park Ave.

Myerstown, PA 17067

Mother's Day Offering:

Mail to:

StoneRidge Retirement Living

440 E. Lincoln Avenue

Myerstown, PA 17067

*(*Mother's Day Offering - designate in memo line)*

JUNE 2024

Saturday, June 1

Registration Deadline for PAC 2025

Sunday, June 2

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension

Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, June 5

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, June 9

Student Aid Offering *

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, June 16

Father's Day

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, June 23

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, June 30

Liturgical Color - Green

JULY 2024

Wednesday, July 3

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Thursday, July 4

Independence Day

EC Church Center Closed

Sunday, July 7

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, July 14

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, July 21

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, July 25

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, July 28

Liturgical Color - Green



Changing the World with Jesus

“Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

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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Rev. Dan Blank

Rev. Mike Snedeker

Rev. Matt Hill

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr.

Jonah Adamcik

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