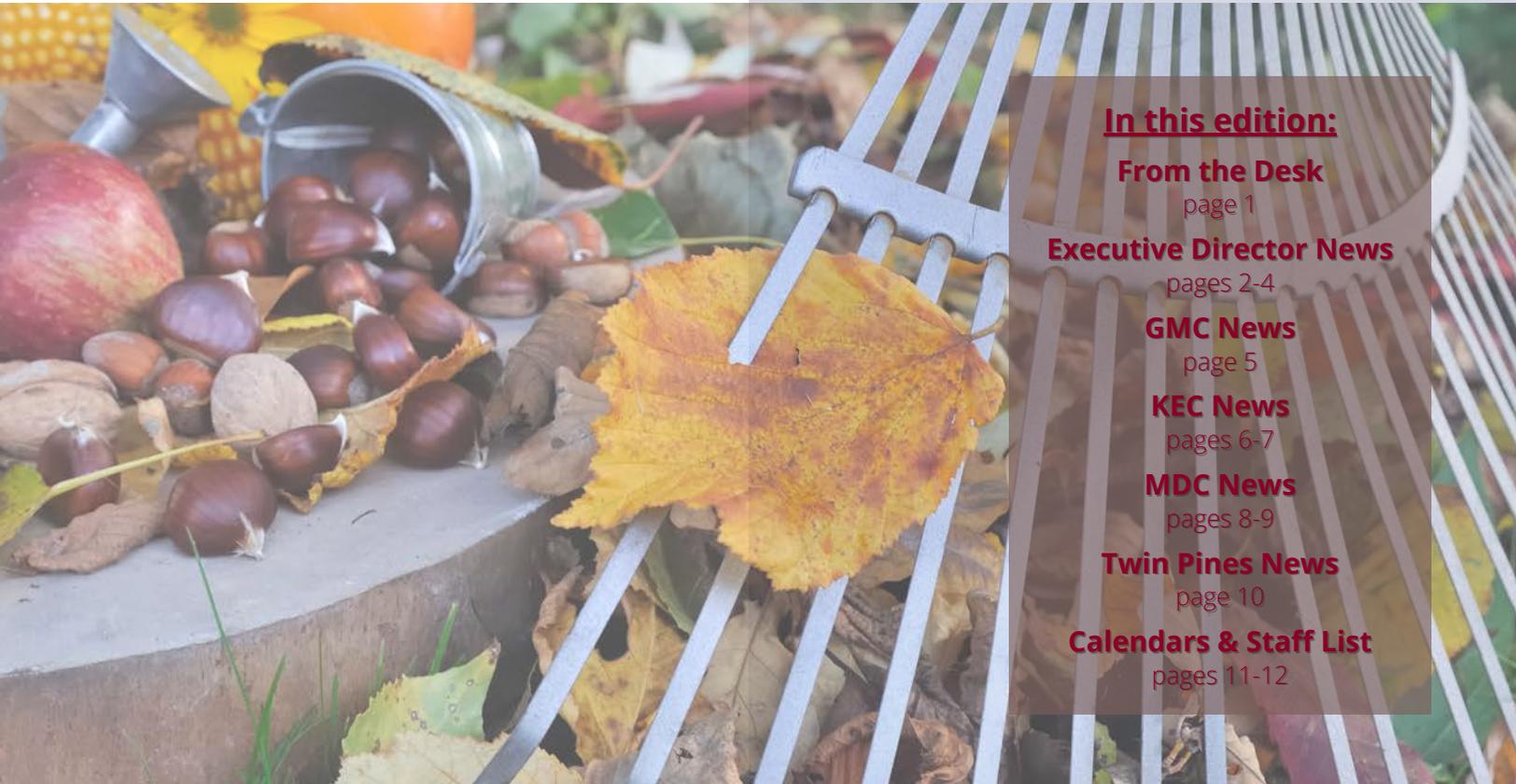


# EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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## FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

### Praying Through Our Vision Statement

*“Can there be too much of a good thing? Well, maybe, but not when it comes to prayer.”*



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

[Vision Statement Prayer Guide](#)



### Speaking Schedule for 2023 and 2024

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2023 and 2024 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).

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



## EC Benefits Update

Early indications, not final as of the publishing of the October 2023 *EC Leader*, are that the active pastor's health insurance plan with Guidestone could see a price increase as much as 15% for 2024. A price increase is not unexpected as rates have not increased since January 1, 2022, with a 3% increase from 2021. With the increase in consumer prices we have all experienced, a rate increase is not a big surprise, but the amount of the increase is a shock. The EC Benefits Trustees will be meeting in mid-October to approve the 2024 health insurance plan renewals. There is a possibility that the plan design may change slightly, e.g., higher deductible, to minimize the cost increase. The health insurance renewal decisions of the trustees will be released shortly after the meeting. As reported in the September *EC Leader*, the Highmark Freedom Blue Medicare supplemental plan rates are NOT increasing for 2024. The premium will remain at \$255/person per month pending EC Benefits Trustee approval.

The open enrollment period for the active pastor's health insurance plan with Guidestone begins on November 1. If you would like to or need to join the Guidestone health insurance plan, please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White prior to December 1 for enrollment information. The plan is open to stationed pastors working at least 30 hours per week and under Medicare eligibility age.

The pastoral compensation committee recommends using the Social Security COLA for the 2024 annual pastor salary increase. If the internet prognosticators are correct, the 2024 Social Security COLA will be around 3.2%. When I researched the 2024 SSA COLA in August, the estimates were less than 3%, so the final increase might be a little higher when it is released. We are all experiencing the same increases in consumer prices, and lay leaders may have received wage and salary increases from their employer to offset the increase in consumer prices. Please prayerfully consider an annual salary increase for your pastor in 2024.

The 2024 Pastoral Compensation Forms will be available on the Church Center website in a few weeks or so. Expect the Social Security Administration to release the 2024 COLA in late October 2023, if we are lucky.

Please contact me, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com), 717-628-2171, or Bethany White, [bwhite@eccenter.com](mailto:bwhite@eccenter.com), 717-866-7581, with any questions or problems.

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



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...



## Savings Certificate Interest Rates

The purpose of the Loan and Investment Fund (“the Fund”) per section 416.4 of the *EC Discipline*, 2022 edition, is, “The money borrowed shall be used to make loans to churches and agencies related to the National Conference for the purchase, construction, renovation, and expansion of physical facilities including parsonages on terms to be fixed by the Loan and Investment Fund Committee. . .” The “money borrowed” are the savings certificates issued by the Loan and Investment Fund Committee. The National Conference borrowed money from individuals, churches and organizations and then loaned those funds to EC Churches and related organizations. In return for loaning funds to the National Conference, the holders of saving certificates receive a semi-annual interest payment. The current interest rate paid on the EC saving certificates is 1.75% compared to most banks and other financial institutions’ rate of around 5%. The question most often received on The Fund is when will the savings certificate rate be increased? The Loan and Investment Fund Committee has agreed that it is unlikely that the savings certificate rate will be increased.

### Why?

- Currently the Fund is slightly out of balance. The amount of interest collected on loans is slightly more than the amount of interest paid to certificate holders.
- The purpose of the Fund, per the *EC Discipline*, is to make loans to churches and related organizations. It is not a bank. Commercial banks have multiple revenue streams to fund higher saving interest rates. The Fund has one source of revenue, interest charged on loans. Currently the amount of outstanding saving certificates, \$2.9M, is about twice the amount of outstanding loans, approximately \$1.5M. If the savings certificate interest rate was raised by 1%, a 2% increase in the loan rate would be required.
- To raise loan interest rates to compete with bank saving rates is taking more money from EC Churches and is counterintuitive to one of the goals of the Covenant Implementation, i.e., more funds for local ministry.

The rate of saving certificate redemptions in 2023 is projected to be higher than average. Certificate holders are not required to give a reason for redeeming their certificates, but many have told us they are withdrawing their funds from the Fund to reinvest at higher interest rates elsewhere. We are sorry to lose capital from the Fund but understand the decision.

The Fund committee members believe that the Fund is not going to close or go bankrupt or default on any commitments or not be able to offer new loans. The fund will adjust to meet the future EC Church. We appreciate the certificate holders who continue to partner with us as together we are investing in the growth of the Kingdom.

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

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

continued...



Evangelical  
Congregational  
Church

*Bless  
your  
Pastor  
and  
Staff*

Over 50  
Creative Ways to  
Show and Share  
God's Love  
for Your Pastor and  
Church Staff



As we shared last month, the Evangelical Congregational Church is partnering with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) for their national Bless your Pastor, <https://blessyourpastor.org>, campaign. The information, graphics and resources on this web page are free for EC Church lay leadership to use. Download and share these materials that may best fit the people of your church to use to encourage your congregations to celebrate the work your pastor does. As a reminder, a special gift for pastors of participating churches is available for churches that register between August 1, 2023, and January 15, 2024.

October is Pastor Appreciation month, but the National Conference is encouraging churches to find a fall 2023 or winter 2024 weekend to honor their pastor(s) and staff. The Bless your Pastor initiative is more than just an event to be held on a single Sunday morning; it is designed to develop a year-round culture of everyone in your church blessing your pastor(s). One of the resources available on the NAE page is "50 Creative Ways to Bless your Pastor" (<https://blessyourpastor.org/50creativeways/>) which offers ideas for most everyone in your congregations to use to bless your pastor(s) and staff.

Thank you for undertaking this very worthwhile initiative, and please contact me with any questions at 717-628-2171 or [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com).

## Visit the Holy Land

Pastor Tim Sanger at Community Evangelical Church in Sinking Spring, PA, has organized a trip to Israel from May 18 to June 2, 2024. He still has a few spots left. If interested, please contact Pastor Tim at [tim@communityec.org](mailto:tim@communityec.org).

**ISRAEL**  
JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE BIBLE  
May 18, 2024—June 2, 2024

Contact Pastor Tim Sanger at [tim@communityec.org](mailto:tim@communityec.org) for information and costs associated with this trip.

# GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



## Good News! Great Joy!

In the past, many of you and your churches have been involved in the ministry of Operation Christmas Child. Through your partnership, thousands of children and their families have been reached with the Gospel all around the world through the distribution of shoe box gifts and the teaching of *The Greatest Journey*. We thank you for your involvement in this ministry.

You may not have been aware that our denomination is, and has been, a recognized National Partner with Operation Christmas Child from Samaritan's Purse. In order to strengthen this partnership, the Global Ministries Community has made Operation Christmas Child a part of its responsibility and oversight. The GMC has officially endorsed OCC as a part of the mission and disciple-making work of the EC Church. The GMC is recommending OCC as one way that your church can be involved in reaching children with the Gospel in even the most remote locations in our world.

Pastor Dan Blank and his wife, Kim, have been involved with the ministry of Operation Christmas Child in the past and serve on the GMC Board as our denominational link and connection to the ministry. If you have any questions about OCC and how you and/or your church can become involved, or if you need any materials or ideas, feel free to contact them at the GMC office at [ecglobal@eccenter.com](mailto:ecglobal@eccenter.com).



Pastor Dan & Kim Blank

For more specific information about Operation Christmas Child, or to order free resources visit [www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org) or contact the GMC office.



**National Collection Week**  
**November 13-20**



*Ted Rathman*



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

### Meet Our Church Planters

For months now you have been reading about new EC Churches and those who are being called to lead these opportunities. For the next couple of months, you will be introduced to these individuals and their families. They will share with you a bit of their story and about their families; give a glimpse of their vision for the future along with some things you can pray about for them. We will start with Manuel and Luz Arias in Lexington, SC.

#### **Give us a quick glimpse into who you are and introduce us to your family:**

Pastors Manuel W. Arias and Luz Arias were born in the Dominican Republic and married in July 2002. Manuel gave his life to the Lord at the age of 15 after receiving an invitation from a friend in high school. Luz was born into a Christian home, where she learned to honor God from an early age.

Manuel and Luz have three children. Obed is 14 and likes coding, science videos and teaching the kids in church. Mical, age 13, likes drawing, painting and art in general. Magdiel, age 11, likes making bracelets, playing video games like Roblox and is also learning Violin.

When they were married for two years, Manuel and Luz moved to the city of Hazleton, PA, where they remained for around 19 years. There they served the Lord at Iglesia Buenas Nuevas, pastored by Edwin and Marisel Mieses. In this congregation, they confirmed the pastoral calling while serving in the different ministries of the church. This call was later confirmed at the Pastoral Assessment Center of the EC Church.

On August 8, 2021, they moved to the city of Lexington, SC, for the purpose of planting a Hispanic church. Currently, they are meeting with a small group of people who are qualified to serve in the future congregation.

#### **Tell us about your church planting vision:**

IGLESIA CRISTIANA "CASA DE AMOR" or CHRISTIAN CHURCH "HOUSE OF LOVE" is a new congregation in the city of Lexington of South Carolina. Our three beautiful children help us in ministry. We also have a small group of people who love God and who have joined our vision so that together we can achieve this work. On September 11, 2023, we celebrated one year since we began to take the first steps to start the new congregation. During this first year, several families have joined our ministry with the desire to continue growing and collaborating in the kingdom of God.



IGLESIA CRISTIANA  
**Casa de Amor**

# Kingdom Extension Community News

## FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate  
*continued...*

## Meet Our Church Planters *continued...*

### How can we pray for you?

- For our marriage.
- For our children so that the Lord may protect them.
- For the new congregation that is rising.
- For the city of Lexington, so that God touches hearts.
- For a new meeting place with more space.
- For collaborators who help us in the congregation.
- For the resources necessary to sustain the ministry.

If you would like to be added to Manuel and Luz's monthly prayer partners email or if you have any other questions, please reach out to Manuel at [wilfredo50@hotmail.com](mailto:wilfredo50@hotmail.com).



Manuel & Luz Arias and their family



Mike

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.

**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 moved 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 prepare their community to be receptive to His glorious presence.

**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 weekly with a group in their own home 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.

**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

### *Celebrating What God Is Doing*

A few years ago, I celebrated a milestone birthday, one that ends in a zero. I am not much for big celebrations, so when my friend asked me to go hunting for the day to celebrate, I took him up on the invitation. Little did I know, he was just the ruse to a bigger celebration. When we arrived back home, my wife and numerous close friends waited in the driveway to surprise me. While I don't like big celebrations, it was a great night!

As churches, I think we often forget to celebrate. Churches frequently overlook the power of celebration, of gathering a group of people to reminisce and to recount what God has done. Last October, Bishop Randy and I spoke of his vision to see new men hear the call, in service to God through our denomination. We spoke of God's calling to be a "dynamic movement of God," and how new pastoral candidates are vital to becoming that movement.

Well, it is time to celebrate and praise God! While we have not yet fully accomplished the mission He has given, we can say that He is providing in amazing ways. Currently, Cam Smith and our Pastoral Assessment team are preparing to assess five new pastoral candidates for our January 2024 PAC. Over the last two months, the Board of Examiners has been busy interviewing and considering numerous men for credentials. I have personally spoken with multiple candidates about enrollment in Kairos University and the Institute for Church Leadership. God is hearing our prayer and providing!

The Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians, "Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20 NLT) God is accomplishing so much through His church! We are excited to celebrate what He is doing, but we can't stop praying while we praise. Pray with us as we continue to educate, train-up, evaluate, and credential new men in this dynamic movement we call the Evangelical Congregational Church.

#### **Items for Prayer in the MDC:**

1. Pastoral Assessment Center
  - a. Director Cam Smith
  - b. Assessors/Assesseees to hear God's will clearly
2. Board of Examiners
  - a. Wisdom as they examine candidates
3. ICL
  - a. Clarity for our instructors

*Matt*



# Ministerial Development Community News

...continued

## Institute for Church Leadership

The Institute for Church Leadership offers courses every fall and spring for anyone who would like to go deeper in their relationship with God, the study of His Word and service to His Kingdom. The schedule for the courses is listed below, and currently we are in the Fall 2 in this schedule.

Term	Formative Course	Academic Course
Fall 1	Intro to Ministry	Hermeneutics
Spring 1	Pastoral Leadership	OT Survey
Fall 2	Personal Spiritual Formation	NT Survey
Spring 2	Preaching	Theology 1
Fall 3	Healthy Worship & Ministry	Theology 2
Spring 3	Developing a Contextual Missional Mindset	Church History

The fall course currently open for enrollment is:

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

**Instructor:** Tim Valentino

In this course the student will explore the central meaning and message of the New Testament, showing how Jesus fulfills Old Testament expectations. Attention will be given to the background, setting structure and major themes of the New Testament as a whole. The course will serve as a general introduction to this part of Scripture and provide a list of suggested resources for further study as the course unfolds.

**About the Instructor:** Tim Valentino has been a professor at Evangelical Seminary since 2007, teaching a variety of Bible, theology, pastoral ministry and student writing courses. He presently teaches in the Doctor of Theology and Master of Divinity programs at Kairos University. Tim received his MDiv from Evangelical Seminary and his D.Min. from Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. He is now finishing his Th.D. degree at Evangelical Seminary. Tim has served in pastoral ministry since 1992 and currently serves as Pastor of Christ Community Church in Myerstown, PA. Tim and his wife, Sonya, reside in Myerstown as well. They have two children and two grandchildren. He blogs at <https://timandsonya.net>.

To audit a course, the fee is \$50. Register online on the [MDC](#) page or send a check made payable to the EC Church (see the last page of this publication for the address) with a note indicating the course the payment is for.

Registration is open up to the first week of class. Once payment is received, a Zoom link will be sent so that the auditor may participate in the sessions.

To enroll in an ICL course through Kairos, do so through their Pathwright system at <https://kairos.pathwright.com>.

If you have any questions or would like to speak with someone about the series of courses offered through the ICL, please complete the online form at <https://mdc.eccenter.com/icl-contact-form/> or email EC Center at [office@eccenter.com](mailto:office@eccenter.com).



# Twin Pines Update:

## **Winter Thaw Dates Announced for 2024!**

This year, your congregation has 4 weekends to choose from for Winter Thaw:

- Winter Thaw A: Jan. 12th-14th
- Winter Thaw B: Jan. 26th-28th
- Winter Thaw C: Feb. 16th-18th (opportunity to come without a youth group)
- Winter Thaw D: Feb. 23rd-25th

More information to be announced soon!

Email: [Jonah@twinpines.org](mailto:Jonah@twinpines.org) for more information, or to sign your youth group up today!

## **Women's Weekend 2023!**

Our annual Fall Women's Weekend will take place October 6-8th.

Email: [Jonah@twinpines.org](mailto:Jonah@twinpines.org) or go to [TwinPines.org](http://TwinPines.org) and look under the special events tab for more information!

## **Fall Fix-Up 2023!**

We've got several work projects at camp and we need your help! Oct. 3rd - 5th.

Email: [Jonah@twinpines.org](mailto:Jonah@twinpines.org) or go to [TwinPines.org](http://TwinPines.org) and look under the special events tab for more information!

## **Annual Celebration Banquet**

We're having our annual celebration banquet on Oct. 17th at Weavers Banquet Facility, 2610 Reading Rd. Denver PA- 17517

Email: [Jonah@twinpines.org](mailto:Jonah@twinpines.org) or call: 570-629-2411 to register.



**TWIN  
PINES**  
CAMP, CONFERENCE  
& RETREAT CENTER  
[www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org)

# CALENDAR

## OCTOBER 2023

### Sunday, October 1

Worldwide Communion  
Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community  
Kingdom Extension Offering  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Friday, October 6

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

### Sunday, October 8

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, October 15

Liturgical Color - Green  
Health Insurance Due

### Thursday, October 19

National Ministry Team Meeting

### Sunday, October 22

Liturgical Color - Green

### Friday and Saturday, October 27 - 28

EC Ethos Class

### Sunday, October 29

Liturgical Color - Green

### **Ministry Funds, Kingdom Extension Offering and Insurance & Benefits:**

Mail to:

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

## NOVEMBER 2023

### Friday, November 3

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

### Saturday, November 4

PAC Training

### Sunday, November 5

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community  
Daylight Savings Time Ends  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Tuesday, November 7

Election Day

### Sunday, November 11

Veterans Day

### Sunday, November 12

Liturgical Color - Green

### Wednesday, November 15

Health Insurance Due

### Friday and Saturday, November 17 - 18

EC Ethos Class

### Sunday, November 19

Thanksgiving Sunday  
Thankoffering (voluntary)  
Liturgical Color - Green

### Thursday, November 23

Thanksgiving  
EC Center Closed

### Thursday, November 24

EC Center Closed

### Sunday, November 26

Liturgical Color - Green





## 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](mailto:office@eccenter.com) / [www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com)

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



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**Kevin Henry**  
**Rev. J. Ted Rathman**  
**Rev. Mike Snedeker**  
**Rev. Matthew Hill**  
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**Wendy Beard**

October 2023 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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