

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

Our Call to Action is a Call to Prayer

*"Things happen when we
pray that otherwise would not
happen if we didn't."*



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



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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

As always, please email:

Bethany White
NC Administrative
Assistant / Business
Office and Benefits Corp
Specialist
bwhite@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717-866-7581

The projections for the 2024 Social Security COLA are in the 2% to 3% range. Compared to the 2023 increase of 8.7%, the more modest 2024 increase has not been newsworthy. The official release of the Social Security COLA is normally in October but also seems to be released later and later every year. The Pastoral Compensation Committee annual report approved at the May 2023 National Conference continued the recommendation of awarding pastoral salary increases at the Social Security COLA increase. Most likely there will also be a moderate increase in health insurance premiums effective January 2024. We will not have the 2024 renewal documents until early September.

The Highmark Freedom Blue 2024 renewal will most likely be approved by the EC Benefits Trustees at the October meeting with a rate increase of \$0/month. Premiums for the Highmark Freedom Blue plan **are not increasing for 2024**. The monthly premium will remain at \$255 per month. Participation in the Highmark Freedom Blue plan is voluntary for retirees. Retirees are encouraged to investigate other MC Supplemental plans and choose a plan best for their healthcare needs and cost.

There are several churches that have not remitted the \$100/yr disability insurance premium and the \$125/yr benefit services fee. If the disability premium is not received for the year, the pastor is not covered. The disability premium is listed in the treasurer's guide on the EC website and is due by January 15 of every year. The \$125/yr benefit services fee is due April 15 every year and is due from every church with an assigned pastor.

Please contact Kevin Henry, khenry@eccenter.com, or Bethany White, bwhite@eccenter.com, with any questions or problems.

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



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

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Evangelical
Congregational
Church

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The Evangelical Congregational Church is partnering with the National Association of Evangelicals for their national Bless your Pastor,

<https://blessyourpastor.org> campaign. EC Church lay leadership is encouraged to follow the link above to download the materials for churches and celebrate all the work your pastor does. All of the information, graphics and resources on this page are free. You may use some of the material or you may use none of it. Please use whatever material would best fit your church. Please take special note, a special gift for pastors of participating churches is only available for churches that register between August 1, 2023, and January 15, 2024.

October is traditionally Pastor Appreciation month, however, the Bless your Pastor initiative is not restricted to one day or one month. The National Conference is encouraging churches to find a fall 2023 weekend in their church's calendar to honor their pastor(s) and staff. If fall 2023 does not work, then winter 2024 is good, too. The Bless your Pastor initiative is more

than a Sunday morning event; it is designed to develop a year-round culture of blessing your pastor(s) by everyone in the church. One of the free resources is a list of "50 Creative Ways to Bless your Pastor" (<https://blessyourpastor.org/50creativeways/>). I am fairly certain that just about every person in the church is capable of using one of those 50 ways to bless their pastor.

Thanks for undertaking this very worthwhile initiative, and please contact me with any questions at 717-628-2171 or khenry@eccenter.com.



*Bless
your
Pastor*

Bless Your Pastor is an initiative of NAE Financial Health, a project of the [National Association of Evangelicals](https://naefinancialhealth.org) designed to connect and resource denominations, churches and pastors in the area of pastor finances. Visit [NAEfinancialhealth.org](https://naefinancialhealth.org) to learn more and to access self-assessment surveys, resources and online training for your pastor and church to grow together in greater financial health.

GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church

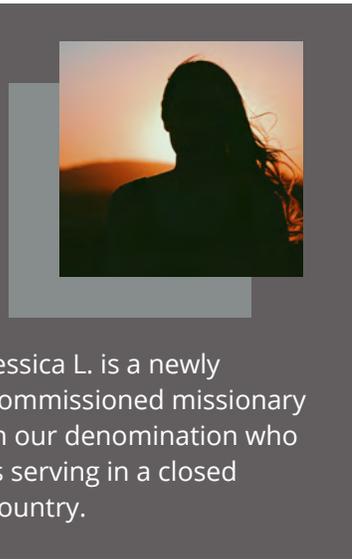


Celebrating Growth

This past July I celebrated five years as the Executive Director of the Global Ministries Community and took a few minutes to reflect back through those years. I remember early on thinking and praying a lot about where God wanted to lead the GMC going forward. One area that kept coming to mind pertained to our missionaries and a focus on how we care for them.

In January of 2021 we launched our Member Care Team (MCT) in order to ensure we would be doing our best for them as a sending denomination and sending churches in regard to their spiritual, emotional, physical and financial care.

We additionally developed a few new avenues to be involved in their lives as a denomination and churches, as well as seeking to connect our missionaries to one another. Just this past month we celebrated yet another Missionary Zoom Prayer Call where our missionaries can log on and not only connect with myself and the GMC office but with each other. We are grateful for the technology available to meet all together from the far corners of the world. I am grateful to the Lord for how He has also brought gifted and caring people to serve on the MCT and how our missionaries have responded to these initiatives these past two years.



I am excited to share that this past month the GMC commissioned a new missionary that has been serving on the field for the past five years in a nation that is typically closed to accepting the Good News of Jesus.

Jessica L.* has a strong faith and trust in the Lord, and I firmly believe that our partnership in the ministry Jesus has called her to will yield testimony after testimony of men and women, boys and girls, giving their hearts to Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior!

We also have two more candidates in the process of pursuing commissioning with the EC Global Ministries Community. God is growing our GMC family! He is faithful!

**As a matter of reference, when a missionary serves in a closed access nation we work very hard to maintain his/her safety by purposely refraining from sharing and posting images and information that would hinder ministry and gaining access to people groups that might not normally be accepting of Christianity and Christ-followers. If you would like more information on Jessica and how you might partner with her in prayer and through financial support, please reach out to the GMC office at ecglobal@eccenter.com*



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.



Connect with us on Facebook: Global Ministries Community





Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Reaching Out is NOT New

We talk a lot about reaching out to the communities around our churches to win them to Jesus. (Actually, I think we are often more driven by growing / saving our churches than winning lost souls to Jesus, but that is a different article for a different time.) We strategize and plan, read books and articles and seek advice of people who have been "successful." But the idea that the people of God would shine out His glory and presence to the communities around them is not new.

Seth Porch recently wrote an article that was published on the *Desiring God* website. In that article, Seth writes:

Moses delivered his final sermons to Israel as the people prepared to enter the long-awaited Promised Land. The western banks of the river meant, for Israel, the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (see Genesis 13:16-17; Deuteronomy 1:8). With God's help, they would conquer the land, wipe out its idolatry, and become a blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:3). Israel was called to be a holy people whose way of life reflected the righteousness of their God. Their obedience was meant to be a light to other nations.

Keep [these statutes and rules] and do them, for *that* will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (Deuteronomy 4:6) God's law, his gift of grace to the Israelites, was designed to lead them in love toward him and toward one another (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14). God desired their flourishing as a nation, as they walked with him in the righteousness for which he created them (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; 5:33). The people of Israel, centered on the worship of God (first at the tabernacle and then the temple), were never intended to be a reclusive nation tucked into that narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. They were meant to shine forth to the surrounding nations as an expression of the goodness of God.

As the surrounding nations watched this strange people, they would see the remarkable fruit of Israel's two great loves and recognize them as a nation full of wisdom and understanding."

Sometimes we start in our efforts to reach the world with the gospel in the wrong place. Before we spend too much time working in reaching people, we need to stop and look at who we are. Notice in the passages listed above that God gave his commands to his people to set them apart from the nations around them. His commands were designed to make them different. Jesus said the fulfillment of all of these commands was love. "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40) Later in John 13:35, He told us that the world around us

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

Reaching Out is NOT New
continued...

would know we are His by the way we love each other - not by our outreach strategies, not by our belief systems, not by our building, programs, worship services or even by our church marquee. He said they would know us by our love chiefly for each other.

Most, if not all, of our churches would do well to start the process of reaching our communities by praying that the Spirit of God would do a supernatural work in our churches to help us know and live the kind of love that would be noticed by the world around us. This kind of love caused people in the Roman world to pursue Christ despite the mass persecution and murder of Jesus' followers. Is the love in my church and your church so extraordinary that people would risk their lives to be a part of it? If it was, we would not need outreach strategies.

To become a dynamic movement of God, we need to PRAY that God would infuse our churches with this kind of supernatural love that only his Spirit can produce.

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.

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 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 that community 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

Growing as a Follower of Jesus

Where my family lives, our house is surrounded by agricultural fields. Each spring, we watch as the neighboring farmer uses his equipment to plant fields full of soybeans and corn. Throughout the months that follow, it always amazes me to watch the crops germinate and grow. Starting as small green sprouts, they finish as tall stalks that produce fruit to feed animals. While it appears to “just” happen, there is a lot of work that goes into growing healthy crops: soil is turned over, seeds are planted, weeds are sprayed and let us not forget about the much-needed rain. Growing crops is hard work.

As a pastor I am often asked the question of what to do to grow as a follower of Jesus. I am grateful that the people of my congregation understand that growth is a requirement in following Jesus. But many wonder how to grow effectively. Like a farmer, we as disciples of Jesus must use the tools around us to help nurture and grow our faith so that we would be mature and complete, needing nothing.

The Ministerial Development Community through the Institute for Church Leadership (ICL) is excited to offer courses for everyday followers of Jesus to help grow their faith. Every Fall and Spring, the ICL offers courses for pastoral candidates and lay people on subjects such as theology and Bible surveys. If you are looking for a way to deepen your knowledge about the Bible and grow as a follower of Jesus, we invite you to consider auditing a course in the ICL. Auditing students can register for an ICL class for just \$50. For more information about ICL courses this fall, see the information listed on page 8 or visit the Ministerial Development Community website at www.mdc.eccenter.com.

Matt



Ministerial Development Community News

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Institute for Church Leadership

Rev. Dr. Joel Kime

The Institute for Church Leadership fall 2023 courses are designed with your church's leadership team members and teachers in mind. Anyone can benefit from these opportunities for spiritual enrichment and leadership development. Please invite your church family to participate in the fall ICL courses which are:

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

Instructor: Glenda Dunbar

Spiritual formation is the process of opening ourselves to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ. It is purposely living our lives in a way that deepens our relationship with God. Together we will look at this beautiful joy-filled journey we have been called to. We will find out how a rule of life (rhythms) can be a framework that keeps us ever growing into what God has created us to be. We will also be discussing spiritual practices that can breathe new life into our relationship with the Father and sustain us when times are difficult.

Hear the invitation: "... Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11:28-30 MSG

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.

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.

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.

You may now register to audit ICL courses on our website!!!

Go to <https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/icl-course-audit-registration-and-payment/> to register and pay for the course you plan to audit.

If you would like to enroll in the ICL through Kairos, you will still need to do so through their Pathwright system at <https://kairos.pathwright.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
- Winter Thaw D: Feb. 23rd-25th

More information to be announced soon!

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

Women's Weekend 2023!

Our annual Women's Weekend will take place on October 6-8th. More details to be announced soon!

Email: Jonah@twinpines.org for more information on Women's Weekend!

Late Fall, Winter, & Spring Retreat Dates are still available!

Do you want to spend a weekend getting to know God and each other here at Twin Pines?

Email: Jonah@twinpines.org to get your retreat on the books for 2023-24!



Denomination Wide Prayer Summits

Saturday, Sept 9th, 2023
9am to 3pm



Saturday, Sept 16th, 2023
9am to 3pm

Saturday, Sept 16th, 2023
9am to 3pm



CALENDAR

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

Saturday, September 9

Prayer Summit - Rock River Bible Camp (IL)

Sunday, September 10

Liturgical Color - Green

Friday, September 15

Health Insurance Due

Saturday, September 16

Prayer Summit - Camp ECCO (OH)
Prayer Summit - Twin Pines Camp (PA)

Sunday, September 17

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, September 24

Liturgical Color - Green

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

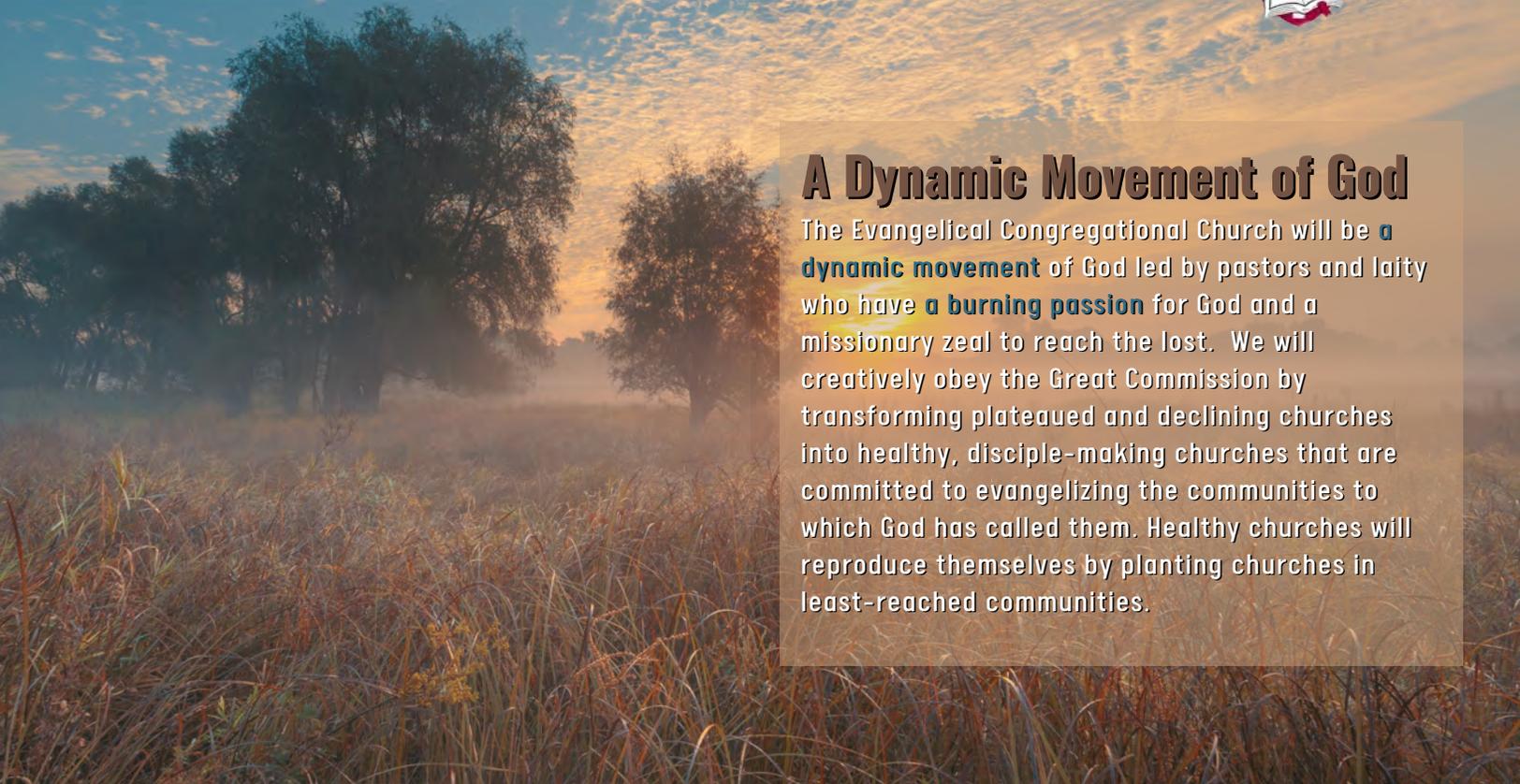
Sunday, October 29

Liturgical Color - Green

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

Mail to:

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



A Dynamic Movement of God

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a **dynamic movement** of God led by pastors and laity who have a **burning passion** for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them. Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities.

Evangelical Congregational Church Center
100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581

office@eccenter.com / www.eccenter.com

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



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Wendy Beard

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