NOVEMBER 2020

EC LEADER

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From the Bishop

How do you celebrate anniversaries? Many married couples will plan a special dinner, a weekend getaway, or maybe even a vacation. Perhaps you're more of a card or small gift person. Whatever you do, hopefully you remember it, and don't miss the special day.

A lot of our congregations have been celebrating the 125th anniversary of their buildings this year. In 1894 our denomination experienced a split and many of our local churches had to construct new buildings. Many of those construction projects were completed in 1895. While the pandemic has impacted planned celebrations, it is important for us to be aware of our heritage of faith. We may go all the way back to 1798 when our founder, Jacob Albright, formed the first "classes," or a more recent date; the truth is that we, as the Evangelical Congregational Church, should recognize and celebrate those who have paved the way for us today.

The writer of Hebrews called those who have gone before us a "great cloud" or "huge crowd" of witnesses. Who are these witnesses? In its context, this passage follows a long list of great examples of faithful individuals. We may not think about it too often, but we are where we are today, not only because of what we have done,

Who We Are

"...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light".

1 Peter 2:9



but also because of what those individuals, who are now history, have accomplished. We can look back over the totality of their lives and say these were men and women of faith; they are part of the great heritage that led us here today. Hebrews reminds us it's as if we are running a leg in a grand relay race. Some have said we entered 2020 thinking it was a marathon only to discover it was a triathlon; we had to ride a bike and swim as well. So too, this life of faith, especially this year, requires endurance. The good news is Hebrews gives us the key to endurance: "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus." [Hebrews 12:2] The verb translated "keeping" really means 'to look away from all other things to look at one' - to focus. I need to keep my eyes on Jesus, because my faith depends on him from start to finish. There are days and nights when each one of us wants to just give up, stop running, quit; that's normal, natural. Instead of quitting let us remember those who have gone before us, generations or individuals who have sacrificed and worked so we can be here. So, let us fix our eyes on Jesus as we faithfully serve him even in the middle of the triathlon of life and ministry. In Christ's Service, Rev. Bruce D. Hill Bishop **HAPPY THANKS** GIVING

Bishop's Top 10 Prayer & Praise

- 1. Pray for our country and our leaders as we hold our Presidential election.
- 2. Ask the Lord to clearly lead as I begin to work on the theme and schedule for National Conference 2021. And pray we can actually have it!
- 3. Ask the Lord to clearly show us how to effectively continue to minister to our communities as we discover the "new normal."
- 4. Pray for our camps, retirement communities, and the seminary as they too continue to deal with the impact of the pandemic.
- 5. Pray for the Lord's leading in the lives of pastoral candidates who have already begun the process of preparing for the Pastoral Assessment Center.
- 6. Praise the Lord for the testimonies I have been hearing of churches who have shown their appreciation for their pastor(s) during the month of October. And it's still not too late if you forgot!
- 7. Praise the Lord that even though we've had to adjust, we can hold inperson worship services!
- 8. Thank the Lord for opportunities I have to network with other national denominational leaders through membership in the National Association of Evangelicals.
- 9. As many local churches celebrate their 125th anniversary, praise God for the wonderful legacy of faithfulness.
- 10. Thank the Lord for the opportunity to gather with family over Thanksgiving.



News from the Executive Director

The EC Benefits Trustees have renewed the active pastor's health insurance with CIGNA Healthcare effective October 1, 2020. The health insurance premiums paid by the local church did not change from 2019. The annual maximum out of pocket for covered medical expenses, excluding co-pays, remains at \$500 with the HRA paying costs above \$500. The maximum out of pocket for prescriptions and outpatient therapy services (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, respiratory therapy and manipulative therapy) also remains at \$1,800 annually.

If you have incurred medical expenses above \$500 or prescription or outpatient therapy costs above \$1,800 you may be eligible for reimbursement of your out of pocket costs from the HRA. The HRA plan year ends on September 30, 2020 and all requests for reimbursement for the October 2019 - September 2020 plan year must be received by PrimePay, our HRA administrator, by December 29, 2020, ninety days after the end of the plan year. If you need assistance with PrimePay please contact Dave King or me at the EC Church Center and we will walk you through the process.

Effective on October 1, 2020 the HRA administrator will be changing to Benecon. Same out of pocket limits will apply. Submit any qualifying healthcare expenses occurring on or after October 1, 2020 to Benecon. Benecon only accepts requests for HRA reimbursement through their electronic portal. Instructions for submitting an electronic claim were distributed to health plan participants in late September. If those instructions are needed please contact Dave or me.

The EC Benefits Trustees are very aware of the tension caused by the cost of health insurance and they are committed to serving the pastors and the local EC church. The US health insurance market is constantly in flux. The circumstances surrounding the annual plan renewal are different every year. However, the trend to push responsibility for healthcare and lifestyle decision onto the individual is continuing with your pocketbook feeling the most pain. Planning for your long term health is just as important as planning for your retirement. Accidents and illnesses are going to happen but many healthcare conditions are preventable and manageable with healthy lifestyle choices.

Highmark Freedom Blue

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing by \$4/mon to \$249 per person per month, effective January 1, 2021, with no changes in coverage levels.

Cost Sharing Amounts for 2020 (single policy)

Year of Medicare Eligibility	Current	January 1, 2020
2005 or before	\$245.00	\$249.00
2006	\$245.00	\$249.00
2007	\$245.00	\$249.00
2008	\$245.00	\$249.00
2009 and after	\$245.00	\$249.00

For a husband and wife on Freedom Blue double the amounts above.

The open enrollment period for the Highmark Freedom Blue plan is from October 15, 2020 through December 7, 2020. Retirees enrolled in another Medicare supplemental plan or not in a Medicare supplemental plan may join the Freedom Blue plan only during the open enrollment period. The open enrollment period does not affect pastors that plan on retiring after December 7, 2020. Medicare eligible pastors may join Freedom Blue at the time they superannuate from pastoral service.

It is very important that the retiree does not fall behind on payments to Highmark Freedom Blue. If a retiree is having difficulty paying the monthly premium the Manna Fund is available for financial assistance. Please contact David Kind in the EC Benefits office for a Manna Fund application.

There are many Medicare Advantage plans available even some at no cost to the participant. However each plan will have positives and negatives in terms of participating providers and benefits provided. Please thoroughly investigate a Medicare Advantage plan before switching plans. If a retiree does not have the financial means to assume a larger portion of the Freedom Blue plan the Manna Fund is available to financially assist the retiree.

Manna Fund

The Manna Fund was established to assist our retired clergy and surviving spouses with financial needs. The income limits to qualify for a Manna Fund distribution were recently changed to 200% of the federal poverty level as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services, the 2021 Manna Fund income limits are \$25,520 for a single and \$34,480 for a couple. If you are aware of any of our retired clergy or surviving spouses that could benefit from a Manna Fund distribution please encourage them to complete an application for assistance. Manna Fund applications are mailed to retired clergy and surviving spouses in April and an application can also be received from the Benefits Administrator at the EC Church Center.

We are quickly approaching the end of the calendar year and we are encouraging all the local church pastors, treasurers or administrators to begin planning for the required year end reporting. Required reporting includes yearend tax forms, giving statements, denomination annual reports and pastor compensation forms. A small amount of preparation and planning early in the process will save time and frustration later. Due dates for year- end reporting:

Due to EC Church Center – Compensation and Benefit Administrator

Pastor Salary Forms January 13, 2021 (copy to Benefits Administrator, Dave King)

Annual Reports January 25, 2021

Please note the earlier filing deadlines of W-2s and 1099 - MISC forms:

Form W-2 (pastors and church employees) February 1, 2021 Filed with Social Security - February 1, 2021 (paper and electronic forms)

Form 1099-MISC (independent contractors) February 1, 2021 Filed with IRS - February 1, 2021 (paper and electronic forms)

Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive a W-2 with federal, state and local taxes withheld from every paycheck.

Global Ministries Community



- > Rev. David Dick has announced that he will be retiring as an EC missionary at the end of this year. Dave and Celia have faithfully served the Lord and the EC Church for almost 40 years under OMS. A retrospect of their ministry is in the fall/winter issue of the *Window on the World*. The Dicks will remain in Indiana as Dave plans to continue his work with the Duewel Literature Trust. We encourage you to share your thanks with Dave and Celia for their many years of service. Their mailing address is 2484 Blue Ridge Dr., Greenwood, IN 46143. Their home email is ddick9366@yahoo.com.
- > The Covid virus has impacted the churches of **EC Church Latin America** quite hard. Rev. Juan Zuñiga, the Superintendent, had Covid-19. He has since recovered, but several pastors and/or their families have struggled with the disease. In addition, the Mexican government has closed churches to help prevent more spread, so the pastors have no income; they were paid out of the offerings from their churches. Many have had to resort to selling family belongings to be able to buy food for their children.
- > Retired but still active missionaries **Art & Mary Ellen Davis** were finally able to get back to Kenya in early October. They booked their flights but didn't get the results from their Covid tests in time to fly out of country. So, they got as far as Philly to Chicago, then stayed a couple of days with friends before boarding a British Airways flight back home to Kenya. Made it with some time to spare before celebrating Mary Ellen's birthday! **(2)**
- > Rev. Abraham Powell, bishop of the EC Church of Liberia, gives praise for the wonderful 'gift' that he finally received from Global Ministries and contributions from EC churches and individuals. In February, a box containing solar powered digital units, a high-end microphone, and a supply of sd cards was sent to allow our Liberian church leadership to record and distribute teaching materials to all 36 churches. This will include readings of the Bible in Bassa, the language of most of our EC church members, some of whom are illiterate and/or don't read or speak English. The shipment got as far as Germany when Covid broke out; it was stuck there in quarantine for several months. It finally shipped to Liberia and sat there for some time as well. Eventually it was delivered with all contents intact. Praise the Lord! Rev. Powell sent a short video sharing his presenting of all the materials to his leaders.
- > Unfortunately, Spain is having some spikes in Covid cases, so they reinstituted regional lockdowns. These include the Madrid area, where Ron and Brenda Anderson live and minister. So far over 53,000 people have lost their lives to Covid in Spain. Please keep the Andersons and the Whitakers in prayer for health and safety as they strive to minister to their communities.



Evangelical Congregational Church

Dear EC Family,

As you know, we were to elect the next Bishop of the Evangelical Congregational Church during National Conference 2020, but due to the pandemic, that election has been postponed until National Conference 2021. According to the Discipline and the Rules of Conference "Items related to the transition, such as: the date the Bishop-elect shall assume office... shall be cared for by the National Ministry Team."

During its regular fall meeting today, our National Ministry Team set July 1, 2022 as the date the next Bishop will assume the office of Bishop of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The next Bishop will be elected during National Conference in May 2021.

In accordance with past practice, the Episcopacy Committee will now begin to work on additional detailed logistical recommendations regarding the transition. Those recommendations will be brought to the National Ministry Team for adoption in March 2021 and then to the National Conference in May 2021.

Please join me in praying for the Lord's clear leading in this entire process.

In Christ's Service,











What did you miss?

The Evangelical Congregational Church is a connectional church. Many times, it is referred to as a family. Well, you know what happens when you miss the family reunion – you miss some important news and connections. Not having National Conference and the reality of an extended stationing season means you may have missed some of the comings and goings within our pastoral ranks. Here are some of recent things, but not everything, you may have missed:

- Walter "Les" Alpaugh was given Stationed Interim status and assigned to Christ EC Church, Williams Township, Easton, PA.
- Greg DeLong has been transferred to Retired status at his request.
- **Jim Heckman**, Ordained Deacon, is no longer serving as one of Grace Community Church of Willow Street's pastors and has surrendered his credential due to personal circumstances requiring his full attention.
- **Don Julian** has been assigned to serve as Stationed Interim Pastor of Pequea EC Church, Gap, PA.
- Paul Mannino resigned his EC credential to pursue ministry with another denomination.
- Ron Rivers was granted a Local Pastor credential and is serving as pastor of Rosedale Community EC Church, Baltimore, MD.
- Richard Weagraff was granted an Approved Elder credential and assigned to The River EC Church, Clarion, PA.
- **Richard Weaver** was granted an Approved Pastor credential and assigned as the pastor of Bethany Crossroads EC Church, Emlenton, PA.

Please note: The Ministerial Credentialing report in the 2020 National Conference Journal (Section 6 – Pages 14-15) has the list of other new credentials and statuses approved by the National Ministry Team pending affirmation by National Conference 2021.

Pastoral Compensation

Per the approved Pastoral Compensation report the annual Social Security Administration Cost of Living Adjustment (SSA COLA) will be used as the 2021 annual recommended pastoral salary increase. The Social Security Administration released their 2021 COLA increase at 1.3% (.013).

Churches unable to give at least a 1.3% salary increase must notify their District Field Director prior to any official action taken to set the pastor's salary for 2021.

Churches that are financially able are encouraged to give either a larger percentage increase or to consider an additional increase as a merit raise in salary for each pastor. This merit raise would be in addition to the approved percentage salary increase.

Most if not all denominations are struggling with pastor salaries. There are many reasons (controllable and uncontrollable) why this has occurred and pointing fingers and affixing blame is not the solution. The credentialed men and women of the EC Church are good people and the lay leadership in the local EC Church are men and women of integrity. Both groups are encouraged to prayerfully work together with open honest dialogue on pastoral compensation. The answer may not be financial. Maybe the church can offer an extra week of vacation (also encourage the pastor to take the extra week of vacation) or ease the pastor's workload by the congregation assuming a time consuming duty. Be careful with cash gifts or bonuses, any cash payments to a pastor is taxable income. Please treat your pastoral staff with the appreciation and admiration they deserve. The National Association of Evangelicals "Bless Your Pastor", www.blessyourpastor.org, has some great suggestions to increase your pastor's compensation without breaking the church budget.

Please remember to use the new pastor salary forms available on the EC website.

Retiree Housing Allowance



2021 Housing allowance

Housing allowance for retirees in the Defined Benefits plan:

The Benefits Corporation of the Evangelical Congregational Church, for calendar year 2021, up to 100% of the pension, death and disability benefits payable to ordained retired or disabled ministers or commissioned lay pastors meeting the requirements of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code, shall constitute a housing allowance, provided, however, that such housing allowance is not to exceed the actual expenditures for housing, utilities, maintenance, repairs and other expenses related to providing a house and the annual fair rental value of the house (furnished, including utilities). IRS Revenue Rulings 71-280 and 75-22.

Motion was made and seconded to approve the housing allowance stated above. Motion Passed.

Housing allowance for retirees in Defined Contribution plan:

The Benefits Corporation of the Evangelical Congregational Church, for calendar year 2021, up to 100% of the pension, death and disability benefits payable to ordained retired or disabled ministers or commissioned lay pastors meeting the requirements of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code, shall constitute a housing allowance, provided, however, that such housing allowance is not to exceed the actual expenditures for housing, utilities, maintenance, repairs and other -expenses related to providing a house and the annual fair rental value of the house (furnished, including utilities). IRS Revenue Rulings 71-280 and 75-22

Motion was made and seconded to approve the housing allowance stated above. Motion Passed.





Vote Election Day

This November issue of the EC LEADER is prepared near the end of October. If you read it as soon as it arrives in your in-box, our national election day has not yet taken place, but it's dominating all the commercial time and the reports on the news. It has been a long time since our nation has been so politicized and polarized.

During these days prior to and following the election may we all follow the advice John Wesley wrote in his journal on October 6, 1774:

"I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them:

- 1. To vote ... for the person they judged most worthy,
- 2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against, and
- 3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side."

Remember the words of Paul to the Ephesian church: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." [Ephesians 4:1-6]

Kingdom Extension Community

WANTED

The Kingdom Extension Community is looking for Covid-related items to be included in the next Partners Newsletters. How have you leveraged the pandemic for the Kingdom extension? Your story might be an incentive for other congregations to go and do the same. If you have a story that fits this ministry niche, please forward your ideas and/or resources to Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net). Or send Les the name and contact information for the person he should speak with.



The Art of Conversation



Conversation! When was the last time you started a 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-hour workshop (Live or Zoom) 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 they will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations.

Let's talk about how this workshop might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.

Powerful Leadership and Prepared Members

It's a great feeling to know that your leadership positions are all filled. It is equally satisfying to know your people want to make a difference. It's a different reality, however, knowing the right person is in the right role for the right reason.

God empowers his Church through spiritual gifts, holy enablements given to each believer. Identifying and developing our spiritual gifts are steps toward impactful ministry. We can do the best we can do or we can thrive as we effectively serve out of our gifting.

A Leadership Grip workshop (Live or Zoom) 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 this workshop might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.

The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities



This hands-on workshop (Live or Zoom) 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 this workshop might fit the needs

of your church family (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.

These training sessions can be provided now, Live or Zoom (or we can schedule an event for the fall / winter). Plan now to launch new and exciting connectional ministries as you slide into your new normal. Contact Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net) for more information or to schedule an event for your church, district, or community (share! invite other local congregations to join you).

What's happening at Twin Pines Camp Fall 2020 - Winter 2021?

Jr/Sr High Fall Retreat - November 6-8



This weekend for youth in grades 6-12 is like a mini week of summer camp. Campers get to participate in many of their favorite camp activities, and reunite with camp friends! They will explore their faith in Jesus Christ through group discussion and Bible study. Twin Pines provides staff for this retreat. bit.ly/Jr-SrFallRetreat

Men's Weekend - November 13-15



Men will appreciate the weekend together with other men as they focus on strengthening their relationship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. bit.ly/2020MenWknd

(rescheduled from the Spring)

Winter Thaw 2021



Youth Retreat planned by Twin Pines for church youth groups and individuals. Youth Groups can come and Twin Pines takes care of all the retreat programing. Individuals can come Winter Thaw-C and Twin Pines will supply cabin counselors. For more information about these retreat weekends, go to bit.ly/2021WT.

Winter Thaw-A: January 15-17 Speaker: Rev. Steve Holubec Winter Thaw-B: January 29-31

Speaker: Eli Tyler

Winter Thaw-C: February 12-14 Speaker: Rev. Matt Stoltzfus Winter Thaw-D: February 26-28

Speaker: Rev. Rob Valentine

Theme for 2021



Teenagers can get bogged down with their current situation in life, that it is all they focus upon, every minute of the day. However, God has a different view of teenagers and their situation because He knows the whole picture. It takes Faith Over Fear to look to the future, and make decisions now, which will impact your future, hopefully for the best.

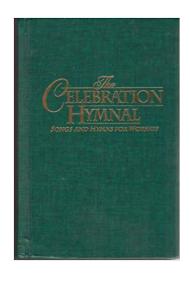




Mt. Gretna Camp Meeting is looking for copies of the "Celebration Hymnal"



LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES If your church has copies of the Celebration Hymnal that are not being used please contact Bob Kettering at 717-330-6774. The Camp Meeting is in need of over 300 hymnals, any quantity will be accepted."



2020 National Conference Journal



Evangelical Congregational Church

The National Conference Journal is now available for purchase.

We will no longer making it on CD, but it can be accessed at www.eccenter.com under the log-in section, 2020 National Conference Journal, for you to download. In that section you will find a link to order your Journal(s) and prepay with a credit card or you can print the order form to fill in, include your check and mail it.

All orders must be prepaid.

If you have questions, call us at 1-800-866-7581 or email office@eccenter.com.





Evangelical Congregational Church

100 West Park Avenue Myerstown, PA 17067 717-866-7581 www.eccenter.com



Who We Are

"...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light".

1 Peter 2:9



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December 2020

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	MONDAY	Insurance Payments to: Benefits Corp. 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	7	14	Info. for the November E.C. Leader Is Due	28
	SUNDAY	Ministry Funds to: E. C. Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT	13 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT	Christmas Missionary Offering FOURHT SUNDAY IN ADVENT	27
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