ECLEADER A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK Bishop Randy Sizemore

Authority for Mission

"Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'" Mark 9:7





Speaking Schedule for 2025

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2025 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 2025 May 21 through 23 at Messiah University

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you even as your soul is getting along well." (3 John 1:2)

In his greeting to Gaius, a church leader in the provinces of Asia facing controversy and challenges in ministry, John highlights the importance of spiritual, physical and emotional health in the lives of church leaders. Like Gaius and all who come after him, church leaders must be mindful, that is intentionally aware of their physical, spiritual and emotional health and how that health impacts their ability to lead. We are beginning to understand more and more as church leaders how important *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* is, as Peter Scazzero says repeatedly in books with that name:

- You cannot give what you do not have
- You can only give what you possess
- The state you are in is the state you give others
- Who you are is more important than what you do

A dynamic movement of God built on healthy, disciple-making churches requires healthy, mindful leaders! During our time together at National Conference 2025, the messages and equipping experiences will help us intentionally focus on how we can enjoy good health in our physical, emotional and spiritual selves, so that we can practice mindful leadership in our walk with Jesus, our relationships and in our ministries.



Pre-Conference Meetings

Thursday, April 24 at 7 PM Saturday, April 26 at 9 AM Monday, April 28 at 7 PM

All meetings will be held via Zoom and are open to pastors and delegates from any district. The Zoom link will be sent via email at a later date.

Registration for conference will open in mid-March.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

As always, please email:

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

Kevin Henry Executive Director <u>khenry@eccenter.com</u>

with any questions or call 717.866.7581 Thanks to everyone who has returned the Worker's Compensation audit forms in a timely manner. The worker's compensation wage audit was submitted with fourteen churches not responding. Unreturned wage audit forms require estimated wages to be used in the audit and may cause a higher worker's compensation premium cost which can negatively impact all of our churches. As such, the EC Benefits Trustees have recommended a \$100 penalty for wage audit forms not returned in a timely fashion. The penalty will be voted on by the members of the Benefits Corporation during the annual corporation meeting at the 2025 National Conference. Some other by-law changes will also be proposed at the annual corporation meeting. If you are a pastor or a lay delegate, please review the EC Benefits by-law changes which will be included in the National Conference report packet.

The annual disability premium of \$100 was due January 15, and the Benefits Corporation administrative fee of \$125 is due by April 15, 2025; **retirees are not subject to the administrative fee**. Both fees are listed in the Treasurer's Guide available on the EC website. Many have remitted

the disability fee in a timely manner, and a few have submitted the administrative fee early. We thank you for your diligence and hard work. Electronic payment options are available. Please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White at Church Center for details on electronic payments.

Treasurers, please begin using the 2025 Ministry Fund forms for January offerings. Offerings collected in December 2024 should be remitted on the 2024 Ministry Fund forms. Thirty-one churches are utilizing the electronic payment option for ministry funds. Please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White for more information on remitting your ministry fund payments electronically.

Pastoral Compensation Forms

A record number of pastoral compensation forms were returned in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the amount received is much less than 100%. Returned pastoral compensation forms allow the Church Center staff to provide salary information to the stationing elders and churches to set fair pastoral compensation during a pastoral transition or the hiring of a new pastor. Returned pastoral compensation forms help all EC pastors and churches.

Pastors and churches are permitted to obtain health insurance outside of the denominational sponsored plans. If you have obtained health insurance outside of the denominational plans, please be aware of the possible tax consequences and be diligent in the compliance requirements.

As always, please contact Kevin Henry, Executive Director, or Bethany White, Benefits Specialist, with any questions or problems, <u>khenry@eccenter.com</u> or <u>bwhite@eccenter.com</u> or by phone at 717-866-7581.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...

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Kevin Henry Executive Director khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions or call 717.866.7581

Two Items for Pennsylvania Churches

1) The application for the PA Sales Tax exemption has been submitted and accepted by the PA Department of Revenue. I expect to have the renewed sales tax exemption licenses by mid-March 2025. We will email and mail a hard copy of the renewed license to each church. To make purchases of sales tax-exempt supplies and some services, a form PA REV-1220 (PA REV-1220) should be completed and given to the vendor. The license is not sufficient for sales tax-exempt purchases because there is no signed attestation on that document. Form PA REV-1220 requires a signature stating that the sales tax-exempt license is valid. Vendors are supposed to ask for and receive a signed PA REV-1220 for sales tax-exempt purchases. If you need assistance completing the PA REV-1220, please contact me.

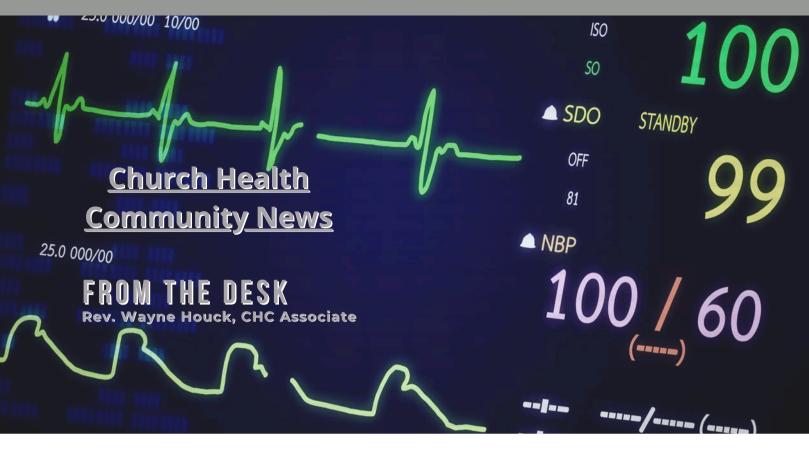
2) Beginning in 2025, most business entities registered in Pennsylvania, including churches, must complete and file an Annual Report. The filing deadline is June 30 and may be completed at no cost for non-profits. Most PA EC churches should be incorporated in PA and are required to complete the Annual Report. The report is not overly burdensome; I completed the

filing for the National Conference in about 10 minutes. However, please follow the instructions provided on the website, How to File an Annual Report. These instructions are thorough and helpful. The application must be completed online, and, in filing online, the application is automatically accepted. There are no financial penalties for not completing the annual report, however, your church's incorporation status could be cancelled if the annual report is not filed.

Please contact me with any questions or problems, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171.

Kevin Henry Executive Director Bethany White **Benefits Specialist**





Revitalize Your Church

I recently rediscovered a small book on my shelf, called *Revitalize Your Church Through Gospel Recovery* by Alvin L. Reid (Gospel Advance Books). In it, Reid describes his experience working with a Physical Therapist for treatment of spinal stenosis. He recognized that he had been in physical decline for a period of years and needed to be physically revitalized. He writes,

"Most churches have many people who really love Jesus. But too many do not see the reason for the malaise in their lives and in their church; like a person aware for some physical ailment they know something is awry but either will not or do not know how to change."

This is the reason the Church Health Community encourages all of our churches to utilize the Church Health Checkup as a diagnostic tool. Until the test results come back, it is hard to prescribe an appropriate course of action.

Reid's book is broken down into chapters corresponding to the acronym VITAL: **V**ision, **I**ngestion, **T**raction, **A**lignment and **L**everage.

- Vital: How can our churches become more vital? As Reid says, "A church must move from preferences, even
 preferences that have been good and successful in the past, to practices that are both biblical and effective.
 So, one of the most important roles of a leader of revitalization is to help people see the difference between
 the mission of God in Scripture which does not change and the forms we use which can and often must
 change."
- Ingestion: A nourishing "spiritual diet" consists of a culture of prayer, a common mission and reliance on the Word of God for the local church. Reid compares the health of the church to the health of our bodies. Too many empty, non-nutritious calories can leave us bloated, unhealthy and sluggish. And he says, "You will never get to the place in ministry where you are successful, gifted, wise, or intelligent enough to lead without a deep, earnest prayer life."

EC LEADER MARCH 2025

Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate continued...

Revitalize Your Church

continued...

- Traction: Reid's definition for traction is exercising your faith by living the mission daily. "When the pain of the status quo is greater than the cost of change, you are ready to get after it," he writes. The Harvard School of Business coined a term years ago BHAG which stands for Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal. Church Revitalization depends on small "wins" for encouragement and momentum, but it is important to cast a vision big enough, enticing enough, to help get people on board with the process. In our upcoming Revitalization Cohorts, we will work together to cast big visions and define small wins.
- Alignment: What are the marks of a Gospel focus in the church? They can be hard to define, but asking questions such as, "Are lives being transformed in our communities by the power of the Gospel?" and, "How are we making an impact in our community and showing the love of Jesus?" can be helpful. Reid restates an important question: "If your church suddenly vanished from the community, who would notice?" A portion of the Vision Statement of the Evangelical Congregational Church reads, "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." As we have seen many churches complete the "Church Health Checkup," they often find their areas of most need are evangelism and discipleship. We are grateful to be part of a denomination, albeit a small one, which provides resources for equipping in these and other areas of ministry.
- Leverage: We can leverage our current relationships for greater kingdom impact. Reid states that, "You may think that the way to revitalize a church is to convince a large number or to have a service where the altar is filled. But it may be that one or two (people) you mentor begin to catch the visions and then they may influence others. Great awakenings did not happen because of the crowds but the committed few." The 2 Timothy 2:2 principle is one of the most effective ways to reach the lost, to fulfill the Great Commission and to increase the ministry impact of a church. We are blessed to hear of churches getting involved in disciple-making in greater numbers.

Alvin Reid's book is an easy, short read which may be a helpful resource in your ministry. And to get started on your church revitalization, I would encourage each church to use the <u>Church Health Checkup</u>, found on the EC Church Center website, as a diagnostic tool. Let the Church Health Community know how we can help you understand your results and how to respond. Statistically, only about half of all patients who are prescribed a follow-up plan by their physician actually take it seriously. Our hope is to help EC churches understand areas which can be improved and to develop an actionable plan to gain vitality and improved health. Please email or call

to discuss being part of one of our Revitalization Cohorts. It is a sixteen-month commitment which we hope will bear significant fruit in your ministry. Reach out anytime at <u>waynehouck@gmail.com</u> or 610-716-5603 (call or text).

Wayne

Be blessed today, Wayne Houck



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



Nurturing a Global vision in the EC Church by ...

Engaging the Local Church

Facilitating Missions Workers Empowering National Churches

The Global Ministries Community uses digital platforms and formats to maintain financial stewardship and to bring you more timely updates, information and prayer requests. If you would like to be added to our email distribution list to receive digital communications, send your request to ecglobal@eccenter.com.

You may also connect with the Global Ministries Community on the following digital platforms:

Website: gmc.eccenter.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/GMC.ECChurch Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ecglobalministries/ YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@ECGlobalMissions

> Contact us at: EC Global Ministries Community EC Church Center 100 W. Park Avenue Myerstown, PA 17067 717.866.7581 / 800.866.7581 / ecglobal@eccenter.com

<u>Kingdom Extension</u> <u>Community News</u>

FROM THE DESK Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Live - Learn - Work - Play

These are four words that I use repeatedly in my church. I do not think my congregation is sick of them. I pray that just the opposite is true, that they are beginning to embrace them as the descriptors of the mission field that each one of us has been called to. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (NLT)

That word, "masterpiece," carries incredible weight. It is the Greek word "Poiēma." The only other place in the New Testament that word is used is in Romans 1:20 where Paul uses it in relation to all of God's creation - His handiwork! Paul refers to the majestic beauty of God's creation as His poiēma! That includes the rivers and mountain ranges; the beaches and fields of flowers; the sunsets and the sunrises; the starry skies and vast galaxies of the universe! The word to describe the entirety of God's creation is the same word that is used of each and every follower of Christ saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Further, each of those individual Christ-followers has been created uniquely for a very specific purpose planned for us long ago (Eph. 2:10). When the members of our churches recognize that they have been created and called to a masterpiece mission, we cannot help but see our purpose as church leaders to train and equip them to fulfill that missionary calling (Eph. 4). God has placed each and every believer into a specific family and neighborhood (live), school (learn), occupation and workplace (work) and with a set of interests and hobbies leading them to participate in community groups and organizations (play). He places them there as part of His masterpiece calling on their lives!

If the church and its leaders can adopt a vision that believes we do not exist to run programs, provide services that attract people to our campuses and keep our flocks fed and happy; if we can see that vision's purpose is not so that we can

continue to exist into the future, keep our doors open or meet our budgets; if we can shift our vision to instead see our purpose as an equipping outpost to release Jesus' followers into their masterpiece mission where they live, learn, work and play - the EC Church and the Church Universal would truly become the dynamic movement of God He has called us to be.





Kingdom Extension Community News

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

El Shaddai – The Dominiques and Martial Pierre are well into actively planting a Haitian church in Lancaster, PA. El Shaddai Community has been meeting on Sunday evenings for worship service at Trinity EC Church in Lancaster, PA. They are seeing new families every week and witnessing people come to know Christ and follow Him. Please pray especially for Martial and his family. His wife and children remain in Haiti and are seeking to gain asylum to the US.

Manuel and Luz Arias – In Lexington, South Carolina, the Arias family is starting a new EC Church. Manuel and Luz continue to develop a team for ministry, as well as to strategize sharing the Gospel in tangible ways. They are currently developing men's and women's ministries at the church. 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. Manuel and Luz have especially asked for prayer for their family. They are considering potential changes that would allow them to devote more time to the church. Pray for wisdom for them and their family.

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 home and engaging individuals in their community.

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church – 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. People's is also beginning a micro church that will meet at Confessions Bar in Nesquehoning. Pray for this open door to be a Gospel presence where people who need Jesus hang out!

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 as they transition away from shared ministry to fully focus on TACO (The Axios Community Outpost). Also pray for wisdom as they develop discipleship pathways and vision and mission statements. <u>Ministerial Development</u> <u>Community News</u>

FROM THE DESK Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate

PAC Update

"The Evangelical Congregational Church will work side-by-side with one who believes he is called into the ministry from the time he indicates his belief of his call until he is ordained or no longer seeks to be ordained in the Evangelical Congregational Church."

- 504.1 Discipline of the ECC Denomination

One of the greatest joys in the work of the Ministerial Development Community is to help affirm the divine call to ministry. In an effort to walk side-by-side, every year we provide a Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC) where applicants and their spouses are provided direction, resources and insight about their callings to ministry. Our assessment teams provide applicants the special attention that helps them evaluate their personal strengths and weaknesses for potential pastoral leadership.

While PAC 2025 wraps up, we celebrate the Lord's faithfulness in the lives of our seven candidates, our assessment teams and our PAC director. I want to personally thank our assessment teams for their tireless efforts in walking hand-in-hand with our candidates in clarifying the call. In addition, I want to thank our PAC director, Rev. Cam Smith, for his leadership, without which we could not have succeeded!

We now look forward to PAC 2026. Although it may seem far off, PAC 2026 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 2026. Individuals seeking acceptance

into PAC are required to turn in a PAC registration form and letter of reference from their pastor before being considered for the Pastoral Assessment Center.



<u>Ministerial</u> <u>Development</u> <u>Community News</u>

ICL UPDATE Rev. Adam Roberts., ICL Director

Our next ICL course is perfect for church boards and church leaders looking to better reach our communities with the Gospel and make disciples in our churches! In "Developing a Contextual Missional Mindset," a team of instructors will guide you through topics and conversations centering on disciple-making practices and processes, simple evangelism tools and the use of technology to advance the Gospel. This six-week course may be taken for just \$50 per class if you wish to audit it or for \$250 if you are working towards credentials. It will be offered on Tuesday evenings from March 25 through May 6, 2025, and will be taught by a dynamic team including Rev. Tanner Cosgrave, Rev. Cam Smith and his wife, Jessica Smith, and Rev. Mike Snedeker. To register, simply go to: https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/.

The ICL (Institute for Church Leadership) offers a series of courses in Bible, theology, spiritual formation, the mission of the Kingdom, church history and more. Anyone can benefit from these opportunities for spiritual enrichment and leadership development. Courses do not have any educational prerequisites and do not earn seminary credit.

If you are interested in learning more about the ICL and what opportunities might be available for you and your church, or to register for a course, go to <u>https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/</u>. And if you have interest in or questions about our ICL, I would love to talk with you! Reach out to me at <u>aproberts563@gmail.com</u>.



Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

We want to congratulate the Rev Evan Clelan on his employment as a Clinical Staff Chaplain at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. Rev. Clelan had originally expressed an interest in serving as a Chaplain in the Marines and had the opportunity to do so but decided to accept an opportunity from the VA Medical Center, feeling the Lord calling him to serve there. We ask for your prayers to be with him, and we trust that the Lord will use him as he ministers at Lebanon. He has been assigned to the Dom (Domiciliary) Unit where he will be working with addiction and longer-term patients and those with moral injury. He will conduct groups and do counseling with these veterans and also do occasional Sunday services as well as some national holiday services.

On another subject, from January 13th through the 16th, as the Endorser for the EC Church, I had the opportunity and privilege of attending the conference sponsored by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) in Arlington, VA. This is an annual conference sponsored by this organization of which the EC Church has been a supporting member for many years. The organization is composed of over 90 religious denominations who are represented at the conference by their military endorsers. One of the main goals of the group is to furnish a combined voice to the military to protect the religious freedom of those serving in the military and also that of the chaplains who serve them. The group works closely with the various branches of the military and seeks to develop relationships with the top military officials to more effectively meet the religious needs of all who serve.

The subject of the conference this year, "The Heart of a Chaplain," was very pertinent to anyone serving as a military chaplain. The sessions dealt with the subject from both the heart of a chaplain for



his own needs and his family, but also from the viewpoint of his heart for those to whom he ministers.

The conference started with the annual session of the Endorser's Conference on Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy followed by a session of the Endorser's Conference on Bureau of Prisons Chaplaincy. It was also mentioned that the government is in the process of adding Chaplains to the Secret Service.

One of the highlights of the conference was a session with three law firms that specialize in freedom of religion. They presented several current cases they are handling, or recently handled, and the implications for religious freedom especially as it relates to the military. In another session, the endorsers heard presentations from the Chief of Chaplains for the Army, as well as the Chief of Chaplains for the Air Force and the Navy. This gave the endorsers a chance to interact with the leaders of our military chaplains. Endorsers were also given a number of resources that are available. Following the annual business meeting, the closing session of the conference was with the Flag and General Officer.

Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

continued...

We want to also express our appreciation to all of the chaplains who have submitted their annual chaplain service reports and remind any who have not done so, to do so. And as always, the Chaplaincy Committee and myself stand ready to support those serving in both the military and civilian chaplaincy. Please remember our Chaplains in prayer and if able, send a note of encouragement.

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., D.Min. EC Church Endorser and Chaplaincy Committee Chair

National Conference Appointed Chaplains in the EC Church

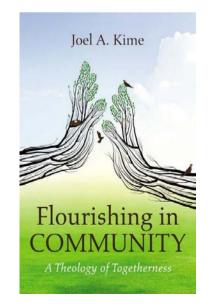
Lt. Col. Karl Blancaflor – US Air Force Lt. Col. Joshua Metz – US Army Rev. Evan Clelan – VA Medical Center Rev. Dana Logan – StoneRidge Retirement Community Rev. Glenn Lambert – Community Hospice

There are also many volunteer civilian chaplains serving in various capacities in their communities.

Announcing a publication by one of our Pastors

Rev. Joel Kime has recently released a book titled, *Flourishing in Community: A Theology of Togetherness*, which is available for purchase at <u>https://wipfandstock.com/9798385222322/flourishing-in-community/</u>. Below is a brief summary of the book.

"When observing culture, the word 'together' frequently occurs. The normal usage of the word 'together' seems to assume that if people just get together, they will heal the division in their culture. Unfortunately, Christians have too often behaved poorly together, sometimes causing further division, while unfaithfully representing the Gospel. What kind of togetherness, then, brings human flourishing? *Flourishing in Community* will guide the reader in a study of the Scriptures through the lens of theology to learn how the church can together learn and live according to God's heart, which leads to human flourishing. The American church especially needs to learn this togetherness in these divisive times."



CALENDAR



<u>Sunday, March 2</u> Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, March 5 Ash Wednesday Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

> Sunday, March 9 First Sunday of Lent Daylight Savings Time Begins Self-Denial Offering Liturgical Color - Purple

Wednesday, March 12 Faith & Doctrine Committee

<u>Friday, March 14</u> EC History & Polity Class

Sunday, March 16 Second Sunday of Lent Liturgical Color - Purple

Wednesday, March 19 Conference Network Team Strategic Meeting

> Thursday, March 20 National Ministry Team Meeting

> > **Sunday, March 23** Third Sunday of Lent Liturgical Color - Purple

> > **Sunday, March 30** Fourth Sunday of Lent Liturgical Color - Purple



Wednesday, April 2 Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

Sunday, April 6 Passion Sunday Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Liturgical Color - Purple

> Sunday, April 13 Palm Sunday Liturgical Color - Purple

Tuesday, April 15 EC Benefits Services Fee Due

> Thursday, April 17 Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 18 Good Friday EC Church Center Closed

Sunday, April 20 Easter Sunday Liturgical Color - White

Monday, April 21 EC Church Center Closed

Wednesday, April 23 Administrative Professionals Day

Friday, April 25 Episcopacy Committee Meeting

> **Sunday, April 27** Liturgical Color - White



Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits and Self-Denial Offering

Mail to: EC Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067

MARCH 2025

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]

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Wendy Beard March 2025 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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