

# EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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## FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

### A Movement That Will Last *Part 1*

“How do we build a dynamic movement of God that will stand the test of time, that will weather the storms of life?”



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



## Speaking Schedule for 2026

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2026 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

As always, please email:

**Bethany White**  
NC Administrative  
Assistant / Business  
Office and Benefits Corp  
Specialist  
[bwhite@eccenter.com](mailto:bwhite@eccenter.com)

**Kevin Henry**  
Executive Director  
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with any questions  
or call  
**717.866.7581**

The 2026 Social Security COLA was released on Friday, October 24; it is 2.8%. The Pastoral Compensation Committee recommends pastors receive the annual Social Security COLA increase as approved at the May 2025 National Conference. Using the Social Security COLA for annual salary increases is a recommendation, not a mandate. As the date to approve 2026 budgets quickly approaches, churches are encouraged to decide on a salary increase and be generous with their pastor's salary. Next year, pension contributions will go up by \$20 a month for full-time pastors (to \$420/month) and \$10 for part-time pastors (to \$210/month). The Disability premium and Benefit Corporation Service Fee will remain the same at \$100 and \$125, respectively, per pastor per year.

The EC Benefits Corporation trustees approved the offering of the same two health insurance plans for 2026, Health Choice 4000 with an HRA and Health Saver 5000 with an HSA. For the second consecutive year, our plan experienced greater than average utilization and claims paid. For the period of July 2024 to June 2025, Guidestone paid out \$2.25 for every \$1.00 we paid in premiums. Our total paid claims, medical and prescriptions,

exceeded \$1.1M, and we paid \$489,000 in premiums during that period. Our 2026 renewal rates reflect the increased utilization and paid claims history of our plan. The EC Benefits Corporation Trustees recognize the financial challenges that health insurance premiums can present to churches. Accordingly, health insurance rates billed to participating churches will be limited to a 25% increase, instead of the 35% increase assessed by Guidestone.

## Plan 1 - Health Choice 4000

| <b>Rates</b>          | <u>2025</u> | <u>2026</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Single                | \$1,250     | \$1,562     |
| Couple                | \$2,651     | \$3,314     |
| Family                | \$3,303     | \$4,129     |
| Employee & Child(ren) | \$2,503     | \$3,129     |

## Plan 2 - Health Saver 5000

| <b>Rates</b>          | <u>2025</u> | <u>2026</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Single                | \$1,135     | \$1,418     |
| Couple                | \$2,128     | \$2,660     |
| Family                | \$2,941     | \$3,676     |
| Employee & Child(ren) | \$1,948     | \$2,435     |

## Highmark Freedom Blue

The premium for the retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing. For 2026, the premium will increase \$28 per person per month to \$305/month effective January 1, 2026, with no changes in coverage levels. For a husband and wife on Freedom Blue, double the amount above.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

*continued...*

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**or call**  
**717.866.7581**

The open enrollment period for the Highmark Freedom Blue plan is from October 15, 2025, through December 7, 2025. 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, 2025. Medicare-eligible pastors may join Freedom Blue at the time they superannuate or retire 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 Kevin Henry or Bethany White 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.

## 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 2025 Manna Fund income limits are \$31,300 for a single individual and \$42,300 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 the fall and an application may also be requested from the Benefits Administrator at EC Church Center.

## Manna Fund

This fund supports retired E.C. pastors and pastors' widows who are receiving benefits through the E.C. Benefits Corporation. When the income level of a pastor, his widow or them as a couple does not exceed two times the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), he/she/they shall be eligible to apply for financial assistance through the Manna Fund. The 2025 FPL for a single person is \$15,650, so eligibility for the Manna Fund is **\$31,300** for a single person. The 2025 FPL for a couple is \$21,150, so eligibility for the Manna Fund is **\$42,300** for a couple. Each year when the Federal Poverty Level is modified, the eligibility level to apply for Manna Fund assistance will increase proportionally. Application may be made by indicating your desire to be considered for the benefit when completing the annual Financial Disclosure Form. The names of Manna Fund recipients are kept confidential. The application form can be found on the [eccenter.com](http://eccenter.com) website in the Benefits information.

Evangelical Congregational Church

## PASTORAL CARE



Conference Year 2025-2026

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

*continued...*

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**or call**  
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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 year-end 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 are as follows:

Due to EC Church Center – forms may be emailed to [office@eccenter.com](mailto:office@eccenter.com)

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Pastor Salary Forms | December 31, 2025 |
| Annual Reports      | January 25, 2026  |

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

|                                                                            |                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Form W-2 (pastors and church employees)                                    | February 2, 2026 |
| Filed with Social Security - February 2, 2026 (paper and electronic forms) |                  |

|                                                                |                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Form 1099-NEC/MISC (independent contractors)                   | February 2, 2026 |
| Filed with IRS - February 2, 2026 (paper and electronic forms) |                  |

Thank you for your interest in the Treasurer's workshops. I am humbled by the number of responses received to the survey. Four workshops are scheduled: two in-person workshops and two online workshops.

**In-Person Workshops**, each from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Saturday, November 1, 2025, at Christ Community Church, 121 S College St, Myerstown, PA 17067

Saturday, November 15, 2025, at Faith EC Church, 400 North Temple Boulevard, Temple, PA 19560

**Online Workshops**

Saturday, November 8, 2025, from 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Thursday, November 13, 2025, from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

All workshops are scheduled to last for two hours. However, participants are encouraged to bring their questions, and sessions may be extended if necessary. The agenda will focus on two primary topics: church financial reporting and pastoral compensation. Each topic will be divided into key foundational concepts, procedures and ideas to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the overarching subjects. Additional information on the workshops will be released as the workshop dates approach.

Please contact Kevin Henry, [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.

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## Church Health Community News

### FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

## Transformation: Bringing Our Vision To Life

**“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 all know, the words above come from the Vision Statement of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The denomination also resources and equips us to live that vision out in our local congregations. The need has become even clearer as the recent National Ministry Team and Conference Network Teams reviewed data from the 2022 to 2024 statistical reports submitted by our churches. The good news is that attendance at EC churches in the United States grew from 5,853 to 7,037 during that time period. Distributed over the 106 chartered congregations in this country, that suggests a net increase of about 11 attendees per church. In reality, only 13 of our congregations realized an increase in attendance over that timeframe, meaning that 93 (86%) of our congregations saw plateaued or declining attendance. Without adjusting for the decrease in attendance at many churches, we see that those which grew gained approximately 91 attendees on average. That’s almost the average size of a U.S. Evangelical Congregational church. So it seems that the saying, “the rich getting richer,” also applies to churches.

But there has also been significant interest in the Christian faith over the same timeframe. A recent story from Turning Point USA stated that Bible sales have increased by 41.6% since 2022. Downloads of religion-based apps have increased by 79.5% since 2019, and Spotify reports a 50% increase in Christian music streaming over the same period. Clearly, God is doing something significant in our country, and the Church Health Community is here to help all of our churches, big or small, be part of it.

While there is no one-size-fits-all, magic solution, any church can make a comeback. We are here to coach you through the changes you can make to better connect with your community, more effectively engage in disciple-making and make more of a difference through your ministry. But changes will be necessary, and this is where we often get stuck. People in churches tend to like things the way they are. But what if you had to change things in order to reach the younger, less-churched and ethnically diverse people who live around the church? Paul said

# Church Health Community News

## FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate  
*continued...*

## Transformation: Bringing Our Vision To Life

*continued...*

that he had “become all things to all men” so that he could share the good news of Jesus with as many as possible (1 Corinthians 9:22). If we want things in our churches to change, we have to be willing to change things in our church. That word “transform” in the Vision Statement is defined as to “make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance or character of” something ([dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)). So, if we apply the vision to the church, things will be different.

Let us know how we can help you take steps toward a transformation.  
Just email me at [waynehouck@gmail.com](mailto:waynehouck@gmail.com), and we will be in contact with you to get started.

Wayne





**Good News!  
Great Joy!**

*Pack a box. Impact a life.*

## **National Collection Week November 17-24!**

Operation Christmas Child delivers great joy and the Good News of Jesus Christ to children in need around the world through gift-filled shoeboxes.

Each box packed full of quality toys, school supplies, and personal care items becomes a tangible expression of God's immense love for the child. For many, it is their first gift ever! Delivered by our local church partners, shoebox gifts provide an opportunity to present the Gospel to boys and girls in a clear, child-friendly way.

**➡ [CLICK HERE](#) ⬅**

For all the information on how your church can be on mission with Christ in reaching His world one shoebox at a time!



# 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 evening for worship service at Trinity EC Church in Lancaster, PA. They are seeing new families every week and seeing people come to know Christ and follow Him. Please pray for our Haitian brothers and sisters. Despite having legal status, there is much fear in the Haitian communities at this time with the increasing deportation measures being taken. This has impacted church attendance and participation. Pray for peace in their hearts and the ability to keep their eyes on and hope in Jesus. 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** – Praise the Lord!!! God has provided a church to partner with Casa de Amor to host them on Sunday afternoons and a couple of nights throughout the week. Manuel and Luz have had numerous disappointments as location opportunities have fallen through. This is a major answer to prayer. They began utilizing this new facility on August 10. The Casa de Amor leadership team is working on plans for an official launch date and service. 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 are 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. Zach and Kelsey are actively discipling people through a discipleship multiplication pathway. Pray for them as they are facing some discouragement as their numbers have dropped.



# Ministerial Development Community News

## CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

### Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

Several years ago, I was talking to a military chaplain from another denomination. He was telling me about his last Sunday in the pastorate before he went into the military chaplaincy. After the service that Sunday, as the members shook his hand, several of them said to him, "I'm sorry you will be leaving the ministry, but I will be praying for you." Going into the chaplaincy is not leaving the ministry but rather going into a different type of ministry, just as missionaries do not leave the ministry but serve as Christ's ministers in a foreign location.

As a former VA medical center chaplain, I had the opportunity to minister to individuals I never would have been able to in a church. Part of my assignment before I became chief usually included hospice. I remember one Vietnam veteran in the hospice that I had the privilege of ministering to as he faced the end of his life. One of his real passions was being part of a motorcycle gang. His family told me he was turned off by the church because he was rejected by the church when he first came home from Vietnam. Whether the church shut him out because it made an assumption about all Vietnam veterans or whether he had sought counseling from the pastor and revealed something about his service, I never found out, but the church informed him that it did not want "baby killers" in the congregation.

Over the time he was in hospice, he was open to ministry, and his wife was receptive as well. She even made a cross out of clothes pins that I still have. When he died, I was asked to conduct his funeral. Arriving at the funeral home, I expected to find a small gathering. Imagine my surprise when I could barely get into the parking lot for bikers! Inside the funeral home was full as well. There were bikers everywhere. I found out later that other clubs would attend a ride for a biker's funeral for a fee. Think of the privilege of ministering to a funeral home full of bikers who probably would not have attended a religious service otherwise.

The trip to the cemetery was also an experience. It consisted of a procession of all the bikers from the funeral. Even the hearse was basically a fancy cart with a glass enclosure on the bed of it and pulled by bikes. Needless to say, it did get everyone's attention as we passed!



# Ministerial Development Community News

## CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

*continued...*

## Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

*continued...*

I have related this as just one of the many experiences I have had to remind you that chaplaincy comes with many opportunities and privileges not found in a church setting. Let us support each of our chaplains with our prayers and with words of encouragement when possible. As the Apostle Paul would say, "treat them highly for their labors and work's sake." Our current National Conference Appointed Chaplains are Col. Karl (Noel) Blancaflor, Lt. Col. Joshua Metz, VA Staff Chaplain Evan Clelan and hospice chaplain Rev. Glenn Lambert. We also have many who are serving in community organizations not under National Conference appointment. Please also pray that God will raise up the next generation of chaplains for our military.

Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., D.Min.

Chaplaincy Endorser and Chair, Chaplaincy Committee

[ecparson@hotmail.com](mailto:ecparson@hotmail.com)

717-507-2174

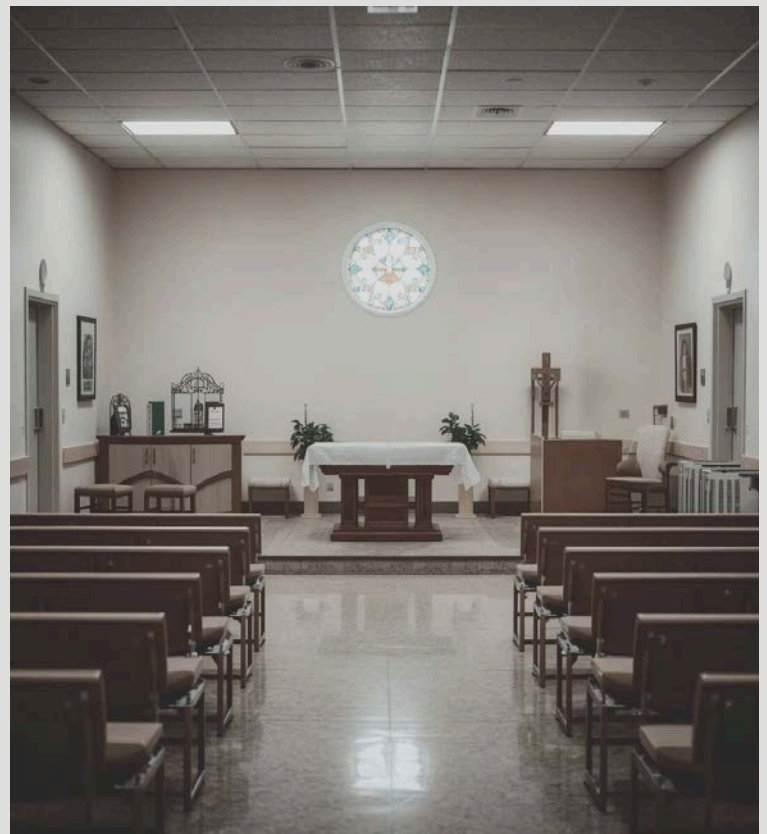
## Chaplaincy Opportunities

The Chaplaincy Committee has a couple of opportunities that we would love to share with you.

**First**, there are new chaplaincy positions with the CIA. Congress has approved and funded a small number of chaplains, and these will primarily be based at Langley.

**Second**, there will be CPE internships at the Lebanon VAMC for the summer of 2026 (May 26 - August 6). The schedule will run Monday through Friday, with a possible weekend rotation but no on-call.

If either of these opportunities sounds interesting, and you would like more information, please reach out to me, Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr. I will be glad to share what I know and point you in the right direction for next steps.







# TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

## What's happening at Twin Pines?

If you've ever spent time at Twin Pines Camp, you know it's a special place where people meet God in the beauty of His creation. This fall, that mission continues in meaningful ways!

### What's happening at Twin Pines this fall?

This season, Twin Pines is hosting a variety of retreats for churches and groups who are looking for a time of refreshment, connection, and spiritual renewal. It's always exciting to see guests take time away from their busy lives to rest and draw closer to God.

Behind the scenes, our staff and board of directors have also been prayerfully refocusing on where Twin Pines thrives most and setting a fresh vision for the future of this ministry. We're excited about what God is doing and where He's leading!

### Why is Twin Pines here?

Over and over again, we're reminded of the deep, generational love that people have for Twin Pines. Every member of our board can share a personal story of how this place has shaped their faith—and for many, that connection goes back to their parents or even grandparents.

More than sixty years ago, God blessed the Evangelical Congregational Church with the opportunity to purchase Twin Pines, and the fruit of that decision is still evident today. Countless lives have been touched, and we're grateful to continue building on that legacy of faith.

### How does Twin Pines carry out its ministry throughout the year?

Twin Pines serves both as a beautiful retreat space and as an active partner in ministry. Throughout the year, we welcome churches, faith-based organizations, and individual believers who are seeking to grow in their relationship with God; many join us for retreats and conferences.

It's a joy to see campers and guests of all ages encounter God's love here—whether it's through worship around the campfire, quiet moments on the trails, or laughter shared over meals. Summer camp has been a long-standing staple of our ministry as well. This summer, our very first week of camp included participants ranging from 4 months to 80 years old! What a blessing to see God's family represented in every generation.

### What's next for Twin Pines?

As we look ahead, we're filled with gratitude for the ongoing support and prayers from the EC Church and friends of Twin Pines. Together, we're continuing a ministry that has helped thousands experience God's presence in creation.

We invite you to keep Twin Pines in your prayers this fall—that God would keep using this ministry to renew hearts, strengthen faith, and draw people closer to Him.



**TWIN PINES**  
CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

[www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org)  
3000 Twin Pines Camp Road,  
Stroudsburg, PA 18360  
(570)-629-2411



# CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER 2025

### Sunday, November 2

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

### Tuesday, November 4

Election Day

### Wednesday, November 5

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

### Sunday, November 9

Liturgical Color - Green

### Tuesday, November 11

Veterans Day

### Sunday, November 16

Liturgical Color - Green

### Sunday, November 23

EC Thanksgiving Sunday  
**Thankoffering (voluntary)**  
Liturgical Color - White

### Thursday, November 27

Thanksgiving  
EC Center Closed

### Friday, November 28

EC Center Closed

### Sunday, November 30

First Sunday of Advent  
Liturgical Color - Purple

## DECEMBER 2025

### Wednesday, December 3

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

### Sunday, December 7

Second Sunday of Advent  
Day of Prayer and Fasting for Kingdom Extension  
Liturgical Color - Purple

### Sunday, December 14

Third Sunday of Advent  
Liturgical Color - Purple

### Sunday, December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent  
**GMC Christmas Missions Offering**  
Liturgical Color - Purple

### Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve  
EC Center Closed

### Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day  
EC Center Closed

### Sunday, December 28

Liturgical Color - White

### Monday, December 29

EC Center Closed

### Wednesday, December 31

New Year's Eve



The deadline to submit written  
pastoral changes is  
January 1, 2026.

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits,  
**Thankoffering** and  
**GMC Christmas Missions Offering**

Mail to:

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



## Mindful Leadership

"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

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



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Rev. J. Ted Rathman  
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Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr.  
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Wendy Beard

November 2025 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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