

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 2*

“A movement that lasts
is a movement that is
empowered by the
Holy Spirit of God.”



Click [HERE](#) for the Bishop's
January 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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

As always, please email:

Bethany White
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Assistant / Business
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Specialist
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Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717.866.7581

The annual Treasurer's Guide and the 2026 Ministry Fund forms are now available within the Members' Section of the EC website. Additionally, the updated Pastoral Compensation forms may be accessed online. All forms are located in the designated Members' Section for your convenience.

A couple of end of the year reminders:

- Pastoral Compensation Forms should be returned to the EC Church Center by **December 31, 2025**.
- The Annual Statistical Report is due to the EC Church Center, 100 W Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067 by **January 25, 2026**. An Electronic Reporting option is available.
- W-2 forms for employees, including pastors, and 1099-NEC forms for independent contractors are due by **January 31, 2026**, to the recipient and to the respective government agency. The 1099-NEC is a newer form which replaces the 1099-MISC in most instances for churches; payments made during 2025 are to be filed by **February 2, 2026**. Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive a W-2 with federal, state and local taxes withheld from every paycheck.

Kevin Henry
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Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

Breaking Inertia: Energy for Change

An object at rest tends to stay at rest. This is Newton's first law of motion, or the law of inertia, and it applies to churches as well. In churches where nothing significant has changed in decades, there tends to be greater resistance to change, therefore, inertia. Fortunately, as Newton also reminds us, an object in motion tends to stay in motion. In churches where change is normal, things tend to continually be updated and adapted. The building, practices and priorities are regularly evaluated and brought into alignment with the mission.

"We've never done it that way before," is a common point of resistance to change in the church. We hear that from churches and their leadership, even as the church is preparing to close its doors. We update things in other areas of life (technology, styles, automobiles, etc.) but refuse to do so in church. One thing we do not see is churches closing their doors forever because they were too innovative, too ready to adapt to the community or too involved in the Great Commission.

Inertia can be overcome but it takes a lot of energy. An example is the Saturn V rocket used during the Apollo missions to the moon. Fully loaded, the rocket weighed around 6.2 million pounds. In order to get it moving, the first stage of the rocket burned about 5 tons of fuel per second. The second stage burned 1.2 tons/second, and the third 0.2 tons/second. Each successive stage required less energy to keep the mission moving upward but getting the whole thing moving was a serious undertaking. In revitalizing a church, you may feel it would just take too much energy. You have tried some changes and they were met with complaints or did not seem to bear fruit. But when you get things moving, updating things along the way, you may notice that the momentum you have gained seems to make the next stage a little bit easier. The average American weighs about 181 pounds. If you have 65 people in your church, that is a total of 5.9 tons of people, only a small fraction of a Saturn V. It will take a lot of energy to get them moving in the same direction, but the Church Health Community is here to help. Give us a call, and we will work with you to get things going.

Wayne





Happy New Year

"May he give you the desire of your heart
and make all your plans succeed."

Psalm 20:4

Wishing you all the richest
blessings in Christ Jesus
this New Year. We are
looking forward to all we
will do together to share
the message of Christ all
around the world!

Pastor Ted Rathman

&

Dee Jaramillo





Kingdom Extension Community News

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

The “Next Great Program”

I think we can all admit that sometimes leading a church can be really hard. There are so many demands on your time. People are hurting and need to be cared for. People can be messy, and dealing with the struggles in the lives of people we care for can be a strain. On top of that, you carry the burden of making sure everything is right, week after week after week - sermons, music, Sunday School classes. You make sure all of the volunteers have everything they need and pray they will all show up. Then there is the worry about how everything will go! What about visitors? Will they enjoy the service? Will the music be enough to draw them back next week? Will the sermon be engaging enough, just the right mix of humor and content and depth? Then you add on Sunday night programs, mid-week programs, special events, outreaches, holidays and all of the other opportunities to grow your church.

But the truth is, churches are not growing, most of them at least. Eighty percent of churches in America are plateaued or declining. In all likelihood, most everyone reading this is in one of those churches! We work tirelessly to change the tide, and we continue to fail. We have tried all of the next great programs. We have bought the books, gone to the seminars, heard the challenging pitches at conference. Yet, churches are still in decline.

I think most of us are done with “the next great program.” We have tried them; we have recast vision and sold so many ideas to our leadership teams. We are discouraged and frustrated. We firmly believe Jesus when he said he would build his church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Yet, from our perspective, it sure does feel like the gates of hell are winning right now.

Maybe the problem is the program? I am not suggesting that we just need to find the right program; a new worship leader, a new band, new lights or fog machines are not the answer to the next great program. In fact, I want to encourage you to stop looking for the next program and start looking at who and what God has given you. That is enough! God has called YOU as the pastor or leader in your church to simply equip your church, not to get enough people to run programs that will attract more people, but simply to equip your people to reach and disciple the people whom God has put in their lives. They, in turn, will be equipped and empowered to reach and disciple the people God has put in their lives. This is the church. This is the multiplication God planned for his church.

Ephesians 4 tells us, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” You have been given to the church to equip the church, not to run your programs and fill roles and slots to keep the machine running, but to reach and disciple those God has brought into their lives.

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

The “Next Great Program”

continued...

See, Jesus never promised to build your church, or my church or the EC Church. He promised to build HIS church. And he has given you and me the people he wants us to equip so that they can reach their world! That is how Jesus builds his church. That is how the kingdom extends beyond our buildings to changing lives, families, communities and the world!

Mike



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. The Casa de Amor leadership team is working on plans for an official launch date and service. Pray 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. They have a growing list of individuals they are making regular contact with and are praying for daily.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate



Hearing and Heeding the Call

"Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." – 2 Timothy 2:1-2

When I was a child, it felt as though the school year would never end. One hundred eighty days of school with assignments and extracurricular activities felt more like an eternity than nine months. I can remember "more seasoned" individuals telling me that time flies as you get older. And boy, were they right! Twenty-twenty-five has come and gone, feeling more like a blip on the map or a quick nap than an entire calendar year.

With the New Year celebration comes wonderful opportunities - time for new memories and goals to be accomplished and relationships developed. The Ministerial Development Community is excited for this new year as we participate in the Pastoral Assessment Center, January 6-8, 2026. Our assessors are thrilled to listen, evaluate and walk alongside new candidates as together we lean into the voice of the Spirit and help affirm the call of God on the lives of His people.

As PAC prepares to gather, we ask you to pray for our team. Pray specifically for the PAC candidates that their hearts would be stirred and emboldened as they participate in PAC. Pray for our director, Rev. Dr. Cam Smith, as he leads our team of assessors. Pray for the assessors to have a clear picture of what God is doing in the lives of our candidates. Pray that God's Kingdom would be grown and lives would be transformed through the ministry of the EC denomination.

God is accomplishing great things through the EC denomination and the Ministerial Development Community! In addition to PAC, over the last few months, I have met with several individuals as they seek the will of God on their lives. Through a process of discipleship, God is calling new men into pastoral ministry in our EC churches. Stories of second career pastors and young men hearing the call are circulating throughout the MDC. It is exciting to see what God is accomplishing through the EC church as we petition for new pastors.

So, would you join me in prayer for the Pastoral Assessment Center? Will you pray for wisdom and discernment in processing the call? Will you pray for new pastors and leaders to be raised up in our EC churches? And would you consider, like Paul, challenging the "Timothys" of your congregation to answer the call that God has placed on their lives?

P.S. When was the last time you encouraged a man to heed the call of God on his life?

Matt





Ministerial Development Community News

ICL UPDATE

Rev. Adam Roberts., ICL Director

We are looking forward to our Spring 2026 courses at the EC Church's ICL!

Our first course of the semester will be "Pastoral Leadership" which will equip pastors with the tools needed to face the unique leadership challenges found within ministry. Attention will be given to both the character and skills necessary to shepherd God's people well, leading to a purposeful, effective and fulfilling pastoral ministry. Our instructor is Rev. James Price; classes will be held via Zoom on Tuesdays from January 6, 2026, through February 10, 2026, from 6:30 to 9:00 PM.

Our second course of the semester will be "Old Testament Survey" in which students will look at Old Testament literature, history, geography, culture, theology and structure to understand and communicate what the Old Testament reveals about God. This course is a great opportunity for both church leaders and lay people. Our instructor is Rev. Dr. Timothy Valentino, and classes will meet on Tuesdays beginning March 3, 2026, through April 14, 2026, from 6:30 to 9:00 PM on Zoom (with the exception of Holy Week).

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. Classes are affordable as students and auditors will pay a one-time fee per class of \$250 and \$50, respectively.

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

Adam



CHAPLAINCY CORNER

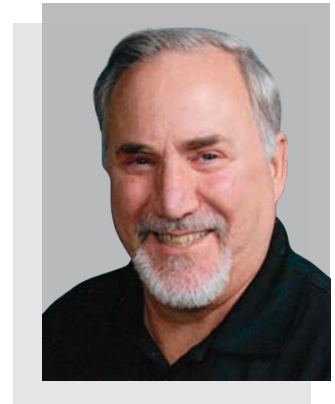
Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., Chaplaincy Committee Chair

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

Have you ever met a state police chaplain? If you know the Rev. Dr. Gordon Lewis, you have.

Pastor Lewis, or Gordy, as he is known, is our pastor at Faith EC in Harrisburg where he has served since his appointment in 2018. He is married to Donna, and they have two children.

Gordy, who is licensed out of Christ EC Church in Jarrettown, started pastoring as Assistant at Grace EC in Allentown in 1974 which is the year he was licensed. Since then, he has served Bair (1975), Zion in Pitman (1983), Royersford (1984), Harrisburg Trinity (1990), Conference Minister / District Field Director of the Susquehanna Region (2010). In 2014, Fishing Creek was added part-time to his duties. He was superannuated in 2016, but he continued at Fishing Creek part-time. Harrisburg Faith was added to his responsibilities in 2018. In 2023, he continued only at Harrisburg Faith part-time .



Along with his pastoral service and his Conference service as Conference Minister, he served the Pennsylvania State Police as a chaplain for 15 years, and before that, he was a policeman in Philadelphia. Although he no longer serves in this capacity, he still remembers the service he rendered.

When asked how he became involved in police chaplaincy, he said:

My interest in Police Chaplaincy began many years ago when I was a policeman in the city of Philadelphia. When I entered pastoral ministry and began my pastoral duties at Faith EC Church in Bair, PA, I had an appointment with Rev. Harold Easter, who was then the Commissioner of the West Manchester Police Department. Through his urging, I was privileged to become the chaplain for the department for a number of years.

Much later, when serving at Harrisburg Trinity in Rutherford Heights, I was talking to Rev. Allen Kline who informed me of an opportunity to become a chaplain for the Pennsylvania State Police. Following the necessary interviews and background checks, I was honored to serve as a State Police Chaplain for 15 years.

As he reflects on those years of service and what he accomplished, he said:

It afforded me many opportunities to encourage and share the love of Jesus Christ with those men and women who protected us throughout the state. Some of those opportunities included personal relationships and sharing encouragement; counseling; weddings and funerals. In addition, I was able to participate in a number of ceremonies such as new cadet classes, dedication of a new State Police barracks and even producing a video regarding the opportunities that a chaplain can offer to the State Police. The need for a chaplain really became real and authentic when having to assist in informing people of the death of loved ones (especially youth), ministering to officers who had been injured or shot in the line of duty or even dealing with spiritual issues that the officers were searching for.

Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

continued...

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

continued...

Looking back on those years of service, he says:

My years of service in the chaplaincy ended when I felt it necessary to spend more time with the individuals of my local pastorates. However, my heart continues to reach out to those who serve us so willingly. I would encourage every pastor to look for opportunities to serve in chaplaincy positions, whether it be in hospitals, nursing homes, fire or police departments or any other venue. It certainly blessed me much more than it was a blessing to anyone else by serving my Lord and Savior in this manner.

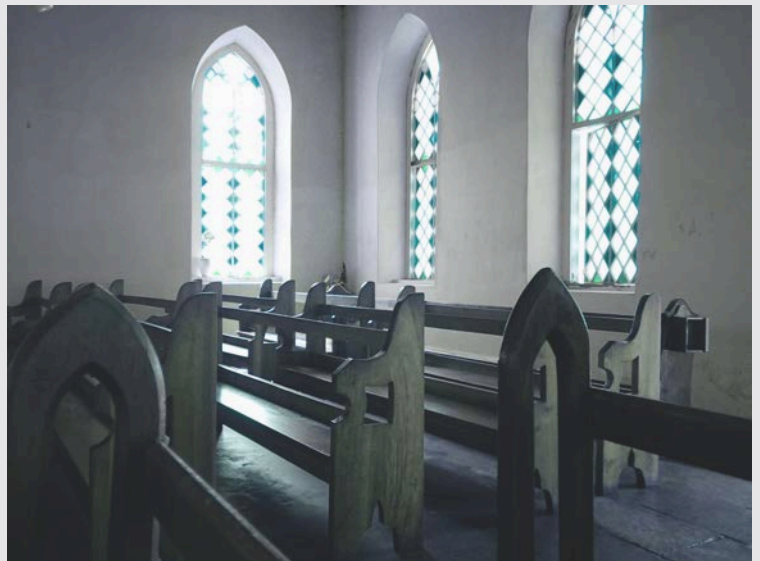
*Sincerely in Christ's service,
Rev. Dr. Gordon R. Lewis*

Thank you, Rev. Dr. Lewis, for your years of service. The EC Church expresses its thanks for your willingness to be used of the Lord in this way, and we are sure that many of the individuals you ministered to appreciate your willingness to be used of the Lord in this way as well. This is another area of ministry to consider for those interested in chaplaincy. We trust that all EC'ers will continue to remember all of our chaplains in prayer.

Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., D.Min.
Chaplaincy Endorser and Chair, Chaplaincy Committee
ecparson@hotmail.com
717-507-2174

Chaplaincy Opportunities

The Lebanon VA Medical Center has opportunities for CPE Residents. The stipend is \$36,000+ plus benefits. A seminary degree is required, and a unit of CPE is preferred. If you are interested, contact Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr. at ecparson@hotmail.com or 717-507-2174





TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER



We thought you may enjoy the opportunity to get to know Tony, the new CEO of Twin Pines better. We felt some thoughtful Q&A could be a great way to share. If you have more questions for Tony, reach out at tony@twinpines.org.

1. What is your philosophy and mission for Twin Pines?

At Twin Pines, we provide an opportunity for children, youth and adults to grow as followers of Jesus in a safe, joyful, adventurous and Christ-centered community. We know camp is a powerful place where kids learn about God, build confidence, and form healthy Christian relationships. Everything we do—from activities to worship to mealtimes—is designed to **equip young people to know, love, and follow Christ** long after they leave camp (and change the world).

2. What do you think makes / will make Twin Pines as a camp stand apart?

Twin Pines is more than a camp, it's a **sacred place** where people experience God's presence in the beauty of creation and through the caring, faithful people who serve here.

From talking to former campers, staff and Camp Directors, what I have found is that what sets us apart is our commitment to nurturing **the campers to be disciples** through the mentorship by **missionaries on fire for God**, (that is, the camp staff and counselors). These young men and women love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength; and they love every camper with that same Christ-like devotion. They have an energy that is contagious and the campers will want to be like them.

The friendships formed here, the mentors who walk alongside the campers, and the feeling of belonging to a Christian community, **these are gifts that last a lifetime**. They are the greatest gift your child can receive.

And even though we're not a big camp, we live by the truth that **you do not have to be big to be great**. What matters most is the impact on your child's heart and faith.

3. How do you build a strong, welcoming community for children?

I believe a good community is built on **kindness, faith, and shared experiences**. Every camper is invited into a warm and inviting environment where they will be known, encouraged, and valued.

It is through the love of the Christ-centered and child-focused "**on fire for God**" **young missionaries and camp leadership** that the campers become part of the Twin Pines community.

We are also intentional in creating opportunities for children to bond and learn about Jesus. This happens through shared meals, cabin life, worship, and group activities, so they feel connected and supported. We honor the Twin Pines' traditions of the past while making sure every camper feels at home, whether it's their first year or their fifth.

Your child becomes part of a community that extends far beyond the Poconos—made up of people whose lives from all near and far have been touched by this ministry for generations.

4. What are our goals for your child's development beyond just activities?

While kids love the games, paddling, hiking, fishing, crafts, bible studies and worship, those activities are tools for something much more important. Our goals for your child include:

- Growing in their relationship with Jesus
- Becoming confident, compassionate young Christian leaders
- Learning how to live, play and work with others in Christian community
- Developing character, resilience, and responsibility
- Discovering their God-given gifts and purpose

Everything we do points back to our calling: **helping each camper discover who God created them to be and equipping them to bless the world**.

Ultimately, we want your child to return home not only filled with great memories, but also **stronger in faith, deeper in friendships, and more aware of God's love for them**.

More to come on what we are offering next summer at Twin Pines!



TWIN PINES
CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

www.twinpines.org
3000 Twin Pines Camp Road,
Stroudsburg, PA 18360
(570)-629-2411

CALENDAR

JANUARY 2026

Thursday, January 1

Deadline to Submit Written Requests for Pastoral Changes
New Year's Day
EC Church Center Closed

Sunday, January 4

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - White

Monday, January 5

EC Church Center Closed

Tuesday - Thursday, January 6 - 8

Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC)

Tuesday, January 6

Epiphany

Wednesday, January 7

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

Sunday, January 11

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, January 15

Disability Fee Due

Sunday, January 18

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 19

Martin Luther King Day

Friday, January 23

Episcopacy Committee Meeting

Sunday, January 25

2025 Annual Reports Due
Liturgical Color - Green

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits and Church Planting Offering*

Mail to:

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

FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday, February 1

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, February 4

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

Sunday, February 8

Church Planting Offering*

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, February 15

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, February 16

Presidents' Day

Tuesday, February 17

EC Benefits Corporation Meeting

Wednesday, February 18

Ash Wednesday

Sunday, February 22

First Sunday of Lent
Liturgical Color - Purple



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

2 0 2 6

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026 WILL BE
HELD AT MESSIAH UNIVERSITY FROM
MAY 20 - 22, 2026.**



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

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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Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr.

Kaitlin Logan

Wendy Beard

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