

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

Thanking God for Summer Success

“... we were praying that
God would move among us
through our summer
ministries... He has, and we
are praising Him for that!”



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

NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

Often, as we meet for our weekly staff meeting, there has been mention of, “We should post that to our EC Center Facebook page,” to which the response was, “But we don’t have a Facebook page.”

Surprise! The EC Center actually has had a Facebook page for some time. But as we strive to do in all things, we wanted to be sure we were stewarding our time and efforts most effectively. And, although the page existed, we had no formal plan for it.

There are questions to ask when venturing into the world of social media. Do we try to drive the algorithm in our favor by posting random things such as daily questions, polls, etc.? These things do have a place, but they are typically for pages that want to be attractional to those outside of the normal scope of and interest in the page. We decided that instead, we wanted to offer information relating to the denomination and celebrate the good that is happening in the EC world.

What will you see on the page and why

follow it? There will be reminders of things on the EC calendar such as prayer and fasting days, special offerings and the big one – all things concerning our annual National Conference gathering – when it’s happening, when registration opens and what happens when we are there. But we are also looking to celebrate what is happening on the local congregational level: Did you recently have a believer’s baptism service? Did you host an outreach where you met and started to have conversations with people in your community? Have you started a new ministry at your church that is particularly exciting or meets a very specific need? If so, let us know! Pictures are always helpful to understand the scope of what words are sometimes insufficient to fully describe, so please include some pictures (or point us to where we might find some) so we can get a view into how God is working in and through your church and celebrate with you!

Go check out (and FOLLOW!) the [EC Center’s \(actual!\) Facebook page](#) NOW! We look forward to hearing news from you and sharing about how God is moving in and through your local congregations.

LOOKING FOR THE DATES FOR OUR 2027 NATIONAL CONFERENCE GATHERING?

Look no further! Watch this video on our Facebook page or [YouTube channel](#)!



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

As always, please email:

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

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717.866.7581

Current projections place the 2026 Social Security COLA in the 3% to 4% range, about 1% higher than the 2025 COLA of 2.8%. The official COLA is typically released in October, though the announcement seems to come later each year. The Pastoral Compensation Committee's annual report, approved at the May 2026 National Conference, continues to recommend pastoral salary increases based on the Social Security COLA. Health insurance premiums will likely increase in January 2027 as well, and we do not expect the rate change to be modest. The 2027 health insurance rates should be available in early October.

The EC Loan and Investment Fund offers loans to churches for building improvements, with two pools at 3.75% or 4.0% interest and repayment terms up to 20 years. Contact Shirley Long at slong@eccenter.com or 717-866-7581 for an application.

Churches must complete the Group Exemption Compliance questionnaire by Sept 30, 2026. The questionnaire may be found on the members only section of the website,

<https://members.eccenter.com/group-exemption-compliance-questionnaire-options/>. For optimal results, please log into the member section prior to following the provided link. Additionally, three educational sessions were held, all via Zoom, to explain the process required of churches and the National Conference to fulfill the requirements of IRS Revenue Procedure 2026-08. One of the educational sessions was recorded and may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfzeBEhI9Y>.

Redesigned EC baptism, membership and child dedication certificates are available on the EC website for free download or purchase. Purchased certificates are printed on higher quality paper, and names of participants and/or the church name may be added to the certificate. Please contact Bethany White for the customization options.

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

Kevin Henry
Executive Director

Bethany White
Benefits Corp Specialist



Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

**Rev. Wayne Houck,
CHC Associate**



How Is Your Church Really Doing?

How is your church really doing? Gut feelings about the health of our churches only go so far, but you can now get a detailed, custom report of your church's overall health for free. It normally costs \$99, but we have partnered with the Malphurs Group to bring you The Church Ministry Analysis (CMA) at no cost to EC churches. The CMA is a comprehensive tool which helps you track trends and measure the fundamentals of mission, values, discipleship, vision, strategy and leadership.

All you have to do is email me at waynehouck@gmail.com and request that I set you up in the system. I will email you a link. You have 90 days of free access and can forward the link to your entire church. I will then be able to put together a detailed, specific report that, together, we can use to determine the path toward a healthier church, better prepared to meet the challenges of modern ministry.

As always, the Church Health Community is here to be helpful. Just reach out and we can talk about what may work in your ministry context.

Be blessed today,
Wayne Houck

Wayne



Kingdom Extension Community News

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Journey 53

I am often asked what is happening with Rick Christman and Journey 53. The simple answer, "They are seeing people come to Jesus and lives changed for God's glory!" I must admit, the model is different... but effective. Let me share some stories as Rick shared them with me.

In July:

- Had breakfast on Saturday with a young man who is going to begin his studies to become a minister. It has been a joy to be part of this man's journey.
- The mother of one of our female member's friends just passed away. The member happened to be working with me at school when her friend called and needed to talk. In the moment of need, we were able to provide a place for them to get together and offer a listening ear.
- One of our female member's life-to-life group had a neighbor join them for a recent session. After the meeting, the neighbor thanked them for letting her be a part of the group and said she was thankful for the connection.
- On a recent Sunday, one of our male members who, because of work, missed the last three life-to-life meetings, said to me that he needed to reconnect because he missed the Bible study and accountability.
- One of our newer female members was frustrated because she sees the amazing change in her husband due to his life-to-life group and wanted to know when she could become part of one.

In August:

- We held a baptism in the local river on August 16, 2026. Praise God for the lives that He is changing all around us!
- A 'thank you' lunch was provided for two school custodial teams and the Boyertown summer paint crew.
- A 'thank you' lunch was also provided for a local business and the team that finishes gym floors.
- We helped prepare meals for the family of a mother who needs surgery for breast cancer.
- One of our new believers started Bible college this fall as he begins his journey in the ministry.

Praise the Lord for the lives that are being impacted! I would love to see more EC churches and EC pastors venture outside of how we normally do ministry and into real relationships with those who need Jesus! Who has God placed in your world whom He is inviting into a closer relationship with you and giving you the opportunity to love to Jesus?

Mike



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 seeing people come to know Christ and follow Him. Please pray for our Haitian brothers and sisters at this time. Despite having legal status, there is much fear in the Haitian communities 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 also for wisdom, strength and renewed energy for this couple. Manuel and Luz have especially asked for prayer for their family. Manuel is beginning the transition from full-time employment on top of church planting to part-time employment and part-time paid church planting ministry.

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 homes 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 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. Please pray especially for Kelsey who has some ongoing health issues.

Ministerial Development Community News

ICL Update

The Institute for Church Leadership (ICL) fall semester opens with New Testament Survey, beginning on September 1, which will then be followed by Personal Spiritual Formation which starts October 20. Both courses meet online on Tuesday evenings.

While these courses comprise the required training for those seeking a Local Elder license or Lay Preacher certification in the EC denomination (and may be applicable toward pastoral credentials in other denominations as well), they are open to all, without any educational prerequisites.

Lay leaders, including Sunday school teachers and small group facilitators, may benefit from the courses, and current pastors may be refreshed by participating in or auditing the classes. ICL students and auditors will pay a one-time fee per course of \$250 and \$50, respectively.

Still not sure the ICL is for you? Watch this [video testimonial](#) featuring two individuals who have taken advantage of all the ICL has to offer!

For more information on these courses, or to register for the fall semester, please visit <https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership>.

A banner for the Institute for Church Leadership Fall 2026. The background is a dark blue gradient with a white text overlay. On the left, there is a partial image of an open book with the words 'NEW TESTAMENT' and 'OF OUR LORD JESUS' visible. The text on the right reads 'Institute for Church Leadership' in large white font, followed by 'Fall 2026' in a smaller white font. Below this, there are three white boxes with dark blue text: 'Enriching', 'Accessible', and 'Economical'.

**Institute
for
Church
Leadership**

Fall 2026

Enriching
ICL Classes develop a deep relationship with Jesus while growing a passion for life-long learning.

Accessible
ICL Classes are held via zoom once a week for 6 weeks. Everyone is welcome!

Economical
ICL Classes are pay per course and only \$50 per course for auditors!

New Testament Survey

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Timothy Valentino

In this course the student will explore the central meaning and message of the New Testament, showing how Jesus fulfills Old Testament patterns and expectations. Attention will be given to the background, setting, structure, and major themes of the New Testament as a whole.

**Tuesdays 6:30pm to 9:00pm
September 1 - October 6**

Spiritual Formation

Instructor: Glenda Dunbar

Spiritual formation is the process of opening ourselves to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ. It is purposely living our lives in a way that deepens our relationship with God. Together we will look at this beautiful journey we have been called to.

**Tuesdays 6:00pm to 9:00pm
October 20 - November 24**



REGISTER NOW

mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership

Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Chaplain Focus

In most of our columns, we have focused on the active EC Chaplains, but today we want to focus on one of our superannuated chaplains who was appointed by the former Eastern Conference to Related Service/Chaplaincy to serve in a retirement home. The Rev. Layman Kennedy was appointed to serve at Country Meadows in 2002. I will let him give his reflections on that service.

"I was approved to serve in the EC Church in 1992. That year I was stationed as the full-time pastor at the Harrisburg Grace EC Church. I served at Harrisburg Grace Church for ten years, from 1992 – 2002. At the 2002 Annual Conference, I moved my full-time status to a supernumerary category. In late summer of 2002, I accepted a position as head chaplain at Country Meadows of Hershey. I served in that position until I was stationed as the full-time pastor at Harrisburg Faith EC Church in 2004.

"There are a number of different types of chaplaincy ministries. Most notably are the military chaplains. But there are other chaplaincy ministries such as those at hospitals, independent living / assisted living centers, dementia / Alzheimer's units, police departments and fire companies. These ministries are provided by those groups who understand the importance of meeting the spiritual needs of their residents or members and are willing to provide these services. The chaplaincy ministries are not created equal and one size does not fit all. Whereas pastoral ministry is a very general category providing many types of ministries, the chaplaincy ministry is more of a specialized field in one particular type of ministry to the elderly or to those in a particular field of service or occupation. Both pastoral and chaplaincy ministry provide many of the same functions, and they need to work together to meet the needs of residents and church members.

"Former governor George Leader started the Leader Nursing Homes. Then the Leader Nursing Homes became Manor Care Health Services, taking the Leader family out of the nursing home business. However, they then started the Country Meadows Living Facilities and the Providence Place Facilities. These facilities provide Independent Living, Assisted Living and Alzheimer's Units. When a resident's physical condition gets to a certain level beyond their ability to care for them, they need to be moved to a skilled care facility. While I was the head chaplain at the Country Meadows of Hershey branch office, I had many responsibilities. I attended the staff meetings at the beginning of each day; I scheduled and led the Sunday afternoon and evening services for the Independent Living and Alzheimer's Unit groups; and I also scheduled and led the worship service on Monday for the Assisted Living group, in addition to leading a weekly Bible study to the Independent and Skilled Living groups. Communion was observed on a monthly basis. I worked with an assistant chaplain, and we planned and scheduled our weekly activities at the beginning of each week. Visitation to the sick residents was expected as well as hospital visitation; visitation to the other residents was done as needed. I worked with the Activities Director



Rev. Layman and Cindy Kennedy

Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Chaplain Focus

continued...

and helped with and participated in some of the activities when needed. At one point, there was a need and a desire to have a bridge club, and so I started a weekly bridge game time which was well attended. There was a chapel at the Country Meadows of Hershey, and we held a weekly hymn sing there. A local volunteer led the hymns, some of which were planned, but most of them were called out by the residents. I held many funeral services both at the resident chapel and at some local churches. There was also an occasional pulpit exchange with the Hershey churches and Country Meadows of Hershey. This was helpful in having a good working relationship with the community. I believe that the Chaplaincy Ministries are very needed and rewarding and a blessing to participate in."

As we conclude, I would like to remind you to pray for our chaplains and also to ask the Lord to raise up the next generation of chaplains. Again, if you have any questions or comments regarding chaplaincy or the Chaplaincy Committee, my contact information is below.

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., D.Min., Ecclesiastical Endorser
717-507-2174
ecparson@hotmail.com





TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER



More than a Summer – Summer 2026 Recap

As I look back on our 2026 summer season at Twin Pines, one phrase keeps coming to mind: **God is Stronger.**

There were plenty of reasons this summer could have felt uncertain. We were navigating a new season of leadership (including me), new staff and volunteers learning the rhythms of Twin Pines, changes to our summer schedule, and more than a few moments when we had to simply trust God and keep moving forward.

And yet, as the summer came to a close, I am incredibly grateful that God provided.

God was faithful.

This summer was not simply about how many campers came through our gates or how many programs we were able to offer. It was about creating space for children, youth, adults, volunteers, and staff to encounter Jesus Christ in a place where faith can grow.

I have heard back from our Twin Pines and ECC community that this happened.

Lives Were Changed

During the summer, at least **15 campers and one volunteer made first-time professions of faith**, while another **16 campers rededicated their lives to Christ**. One camper heard the call to ministry.

Those numbers are worth celebrating—but each number represents a person.

A child who heard the Gospel in a new way. A teenager who realized that following Jesus is more than something their family does. An adult who was reminded that God is still working. A volunteer who discovered that serving others can also deepen their own faith.

This is why Twin Pines exists. Our greatest hope is that people leave Twin Pines knowing Jesus more deeply than when they arrived.

This summer, we saw evidence of that hope becoming reality.

The Little Things Mattered

One of the things I have appreciated most this summer is how often the ministry happened in the ordinary moments.

It happened around a dining table. It happened in a cabin conversation. It happened when someone sat beside a camper who needed a listening ear. It happened when volunteers stepped into the kitchen, wiped down tables, helped with check-in, encouraged a staff member, or quietly took care of something that needed to be done.

Some of those moments will never make a newsletter. But they matter.

In fact, I suspect that many of the most important things that happened at Twin Pines this summer were things that only God saw. And perhaps that is exactly the way camping ministry is supposed to be.



TWIN PINES
CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

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



TWIN PINES

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A Community Came Together

This was also a summer of people coming together.

Our staff carried significant responsibility. Volunteers stepped forward. Churches and families supported the ministry. People gave financially. Others gave their time, energy, skills, prayers, and encouragement.

Some came to Twin Pines for a week. Others have been connected for decades. Some were experiencing Twin Pines for the first time. Together, they became part of the same story.

That is one of the things that makes this ministry so special. You don't have to be big to be great. You simply have to be willing to be faithful with what God has placed in your hands. This summer, I watched people do exactly that.

Looking Ahead With Gratitude and Hope

As my first full summer leading Twin Pines comes to a close, and I am approaching my one-year anniversary, I find myself more grateful for what God allowed us to be part of.

We still have work to do.

There are still the tax challenges to address - and we are working diligently to overcome this. There are facilities that need attention. There are systems to strengthen and plans to develop. There are opportunities in front of us that will require wisdom, prayer, generosity, and faith.

But after this summer, I am even more convinced than ever that **Twin Pines has a future worth investing in.**

There is still ministry to do here. There are still children who need to hear about Jesus. There are still families looking for Christian community. There are still churches that need a partner.

There are still generations of campers, volunteers, alumni, and friends who can be part of what God is doing in this place.

So, as we close the book on Summer 2026, I simply want to say **thank you!**

Thank you for praying. Thank you for giving. Thank you for serving. Thank you for encouraging our staff. Thank you for believing in Twin Pines. And thank you for helping make room for God to work.

The summer may be ending, but the ministry continues.

With Gratitude and Hope,

Tony Lea

CEO

Twin Pines Camp, Conference & Retreat Center

Double the Impact

Donate Today

We are so thankful to all who have donated already! Contributions up to \$5,000 will be matched to double the impact on helping us pay down our tax burden. We're more than 60% there, but you can still help!



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CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2026

Wednesday, September 2

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

Sunday, September 6

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community
Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, September 7

Labor Day
EC Church Center Closed

Thursday, September 10

First Appointment Orientation

Sunday, September 13

Liturgical Color - Green

Tuesday, September 15

Loan & Investment Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 16

Finance Committee Meeting

Sunday, September 20

Liturgical Color - Green

Friday, September 25

Episcopacy Committee Meeting

Sunday, September 27

Liturgical Color - Green

OCTOBER 2026

Sunday, October 4

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community
Church Planting Offering*
Worldwide Communion
Liturgical Color - Green

Tuesday, October 6

EC Benefits Meeting

Wednesday, October 7

Day of Prayer and Fasting for the EC Church

Sunday, October 11

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, October 15

National Ministry Team Meeting

Friday & Saturday, October 16 & 17

EC Ethos Class

Sunday, October 18

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, October 25

Liturgical Color - Green

Ministry Funds and Insurance & Benefits and Church Planting Offering*

Mail to:

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





Built to Move

"For in him we live
and move and have
our being."
- Acts 17:28

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