

MAY 2020

EC LEADER

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Who We Are

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

1 Peter 2:9

From the Bishop

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “normal” as “conforming to a type, standard, or regular pattern.” I am sure you've heard people talk about a “new normal.” As I sit in my office in the middle of a pandemic and write this article for the May issue of the EC LEADER, I'm not sure how I would define “normal.” I'm not even sure what “normal” will look like in a few weeks or months. Do you think it's possible that “normal” will happen and we won't recognize it?

In one of the sessions in the church leaders workshops I have led, I talk about the difference between “change” and “transition.” Change comes to us from the outside. Transition is how we deal with the change in our hearts and minds. Our current situation is a perfect storm of change being forced upon us. We don't like it; we'd rather not deal with it; but here it is.

Bishop Todd Fetters, a friend of mine and the Bishop of the United Brethren in Christ Church, has said our current situation is “unforecastable.” Life and ministry are changing rapidly and in ways we cannot predict. And yet, I am thankful to report that the Evangelical Congregational

Church, our pastors and members, are doing the hard work of making the transitions necessary to deal with the ever-changing “normal.” I thank the Lord for the hard work and long hours our pastors have put in to learn how to stream services, Bible studies, and meetings. Ministries are not only continuing; in many cases they are expanding. Praise the Lord! Each of us are being challenged every day, but we are rising to meet the challenge of a new “normal” and to find new ways to impact lives with the truth of the Gospel. Thank you!

I pray we all will remember that as change swirls around us and “normal” is hard to define, one thing does not change – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” [Hebrews 13:8] May God’s grace give us the encouragement and strength we need to serve him effectively each and every day.

In Christ’s Service,



Rev. Bruce D. Hill
Bishop



Bishop's Top 10 Prayer & Praise

It seems like most of the items in this list are pandemic related...

1. Pray for those in our churches and communities who have the COVID-19 virus and need our Lord's healing touch.
2. Ask the Lord to bless and expand the ministry of Evangelical Seminary as they move closer in their connection with Sioux Falls Seminary and the Kairos platform.
3. Pray for our pastors who are busier than ever livestreaming services and coordinating ministries from a distance.
4. Pray for our camping ministries (Rock River, Camp ECCO, Twin Pines) as they plan for a very uncertain summer season.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to lead our congregations into new avenues of impacting our communities with the Gospel.
6. Praise the Lord for the faithful financial stewardship of God's people in supporting their local church!
7. Thank the Lord for the technology that allows us to connect with family members and friends.
8. Praise the Lord for our District Field Directors who keep encouraging communication flowing between churches in our districts.
9. Praise God for the people who are hearing the Gospel through one of our many online worship services and ministries.
10. Thank God that even though National Conference won't be held this year, the work of all our denomination's communities, teams, and committees continues.



News from the Executive Director

Conference Support Team

Financial Relief for Churches

On April 11 an email was sent to all pastors, lay delegates and treasurers with three offers of financial assistance from the NC Finance Committee, Loan & Investment Committee and the EC Benefits Trustees. In summary, churches can defer payments on ministry funds for three months, defer all loan payments for three months or pay only loan interest for six months, and defer medical insurance payments for two months. Each of these offers for financial assistance are payment deferrals not payment forgiveness. Deferred payments will need to be paid by the end of the calendar year. Please see the April 11 email for details.

Churches are eligible for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. The PPP loans were created from the passage of the CARES act in late March. However, it has been reported that all the funds allocated to the PPP loans has been disbursed, I guess \$349B does not go as far as it used to. There is talk in Washington of allocating additional funds to the program but as of the writing of this report that has not occurred. Churches may contact their bank and submit a PPP loan application as soon as possible. Submit your PPP loan application now to be ready if/when the loan program is replenished. Please see the Small Business Administration website, [SBA.gov](https://www.sba.gov) for details on a PPP loan.

Please continue to send in your payments for the national conference, Global Ministries and EC Benefits. The Church Center staff is working limited hours and staggering their shifts during the Pennsylvania wide stay at home order, as such it may take a few extra days for us to process your payment(s). If you need to contact us, email is best. I appreciate and thank Pat, Jodi, Shirley, Abi, Pat S. and Dave for their hard work during these unusual circumstances.

Please take comfort in what has been said many times before, “none of this is surprising to God.” Be well and be safe.

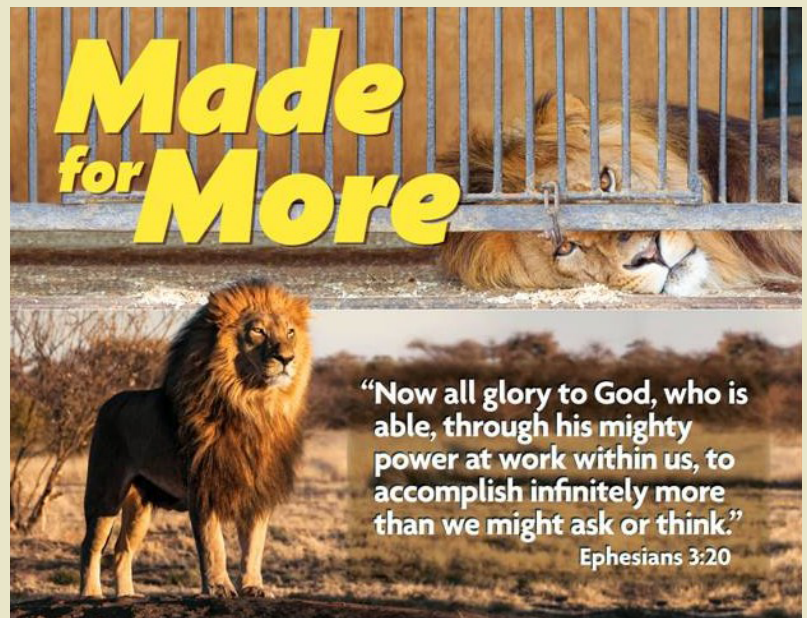
Kevin Henry
Executive Director



What happened to National Conference?!

The May issue of the EC LEADER is usually filled with information about the upcoming National Conference. That is until we all were impacted with the pandemic thing. In late March, Bishop Hill was informed by Messiah College that they would not be able to host our regular National Conference in May. On Thursday, April 16, the National Ministry Team made the decision to cancel National Conference 2020 and withhold all actions and elections until the National Conference scheduled for May 26-28, 2021.

Copies of most of the annual reports usually distributed prior to Conference will be available for the members of Conference in May for information. A video by our Bishop with a fuller explanation is posted on the EC Center website. Hopefully we will all be able to gather together next year and celebrate all that God is doing in and through the Evangelical Congregational Church!



Global Ministries Community

- > **Obviously**, the coronavirus has changed most of our plans from mid-March for the foreseeable future. While we need to be vigilant, we also need to be the Body of Christ, especially to a world that is fearful and unsure of the future. Please take opportunities to offer service as needed to neighbors and/or family. We are to be His hands and feet to a hurting and troubled world.
- > **Brian & Missy Wagner** are interested in purchasing a home in Lancaster County, PA for an investment and to provide a home for their children, all of whom are now living in the USA. If you know of anyone who is selling, perhaps you could give their information to the Wagners. Their email is bwagner@rva.org, and Brian's phone is (717)842-0284. Brian and Missy are returning to serve at Rift Valley Academy in Kenya in July, so there is a time element involved.
- > A **number of our missionaries** continue to be under-supported. If you or your church would be willing to take on more regular support, or even a one-time gift, please contact the GMC office for a list of names. Thank you!
- > The trip to India scheduled for last month by **Bishop Bruce Hill** and **Rev. Ted Rathman** was cancelled. India stopped issuing visas in early March in an attempt to stem the spread of the virus. At this time, we don't know if ECCI was able to hold elections for a new General Director in late April, but most likely they were not.
- > **Dan Moury's** trip to the Philippines in late April was also cancelled. However, if things are resolved regarding the virus in time, he is hoping to make the trip in late June.
- > **John & Carolyn Miller** have informed us that they have a new email address. Wycliffe is saving the 'sil.org' emails for those serving outside the USA. The Millers' new email, effective immediately, is Carolyn_Miller@wycliffe.org. Please change your records.
- > **The Delaware Region Missions Brunch**, like so many other events in late March, had to be cancelled due to concerns about the spread of the coronavirus. At this time there are no plans to reschedule it for this year. We are hoping that the Susquehanna Region Missions Brunch can be held in fall, and everyone who is interested and available will be invited to attend.

- > Hopefully by the time May begins, we will be through the worst of this pandemic. The GMC office has been keeping in contact with our missionaries throughout this difficult time. Those working at MK schools around the world have ‘sheltered in place’; most schools closed and sent their students home as possible. Even in this chaos, our EC missionaries have been faithful to serve in whatever capacity they were allowed. Both **Ron Anderson** and **BJ Whitaker** in Spain shared from their homes with neighbors. Ron put a portable PA system in the windows in his attic and shared messages of hope with neighbors when they opened windows for the nightly salute to health care workers. BJ sang praise songs from his balcony. **Ed & Val Schubert** packed hundreds of food bags for the poorest of the families they serve at their day care/training facility in the capital city. As of this writing, as far as I know, all of our missionaries serving overseas have chosen to remain on their respective fields of service to continue to minister as opportunity allows. Please keep them in prayer; thank you.



EC Benefits

Thanks to everyone who has returned the Worker's Compensation audit forms in a timely manner. The return rate this year is very good. It is important that we receive all the salary information to obtain an accurate worker's compensation billing. Missing information will be estimated and most likely estimated higher than actual, resulting in a higher bill. Please help yourself and other EC Churches by returning the Worker's Compensation audit forms.

The annual disability premium, \$100, was due January 15 and the Benefit Corporation administrative fee, \$125, is due by April 15, 2020, **retirees are not subject to the administrative fee**. Both of these 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 and we thank you for your diligence and hard work.

Treasurer's please begin using the 2020 Ministry Fund forms for January offerings. Offerings collected in December 2019 should be remitted on the 2019 Ministry Fund forms.

Pastoral Compensation Forms

To date only about 50% of pastoral compensation forms have been returned. We will be reminding non-compliant churches to complete and submit their pastoral compensation forms. Please save Dave King some work by submitting your pastoral compensation forms as soon as possible.

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

As always please contact Dave King, Benefits Administrator, or Kevin Henry, Executive Director, with any questions or problems, dking@eccenter.com, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-866-7581.

The Ministerial Development Community

The Ministerial Development Community (MDC) is tasked with providing simple and efficient ways for pastors to receive the training and support they need for healthy pastoral ministry. In this way, the MDC continues to serve the Evangelical Congregational Church by supplying and training our ministerial ranks through a concerted effort. This process continues to provide opportunities for healthy ministry to be cultivated within the EC Church.

As we finish out one conference year, we must prepare now to begin another. Therefore, we are starting now to receive registrations for the 2021 Pastoral Assessment Center.

If you are sensing a call to pastoral ministry, it is essential that you first discuss this matter with the lead pastor at your church and talk to other leaders who are able to observe your gifts and abilities in action. If they provide you with positive (and constructive) feedback, your next step would be to contact me at jgbyerly@eccenter.com or call me at 570-294-3467.

The deadline for registering for the 2021 Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC) is June 1, 2020. The date and location for the PAC are January 13-16, 2021 at the campus of Evangelical Seminary. There is no cost to those who are seeking credentials in the EC Church. Because pastoral ministry intermingles congregational life with one's family life, a pastor and his wife must understand how the unique dynamics of their positions are different than other typical vocations. For this reason, the wife of each applicant is required to attend. Please work out arrangements in adequate time for both of your attendance to participate.

Blessings,

Rev. Jeffrey Byerly,
Ministerial Development Associate



Kingdom Extension Community Resources

Pastors...

It's Not Too Early or Too Late to Plan to Thrive!

Our current normal, unlike our former normal, will not be our new normal.

Use today to prepare yourself, your leadership team, and your congregation for an anticipated new normal that includes healthy leaders, productive leadership teams, and intentional ministries. The following development resources will help you intentionally prepare for what might be next for you and your congregation. Each can be accessed by Zoom today.

Evangelism Starts with a Conversation

Conversation! When was the last time you started a conversation? With a stranger? Sharing Jesus usually starts with a conversation and a relationship and trust. Consider developing new conversational skills.

This Zoom workshop (or we can schedule an event for this summer or early fall) is a conversation is about conversations. There is an art to making space for conversations. Discover resources, develop ideas, and practice the art of moving from “hello” to something deeper, even gospel-focused. Missional conversations might just happen. Deciding to be prepared usually guarantees they will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations.



Powerful Leadership and Prepared Members

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

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

A Leadership Grip Zoom workshop (or we can schedule an event for this summer or early fall) would provide insights on building a better church leadership team, as well as help you equip your congregation, for powerful ministries. And maybe save someone from burnout!

The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities

This hands-on workshop (Zoom or live) is designed to help you explore how to identify points of intersection between the DNA of your church and that of the surrounding community. With these insights, participants will examine ways to build missional "bridges" between church and community. The aim of the interactive sessions will be for each church represented to generate action steps to build relationships and ministries with your neighbors.

Three teaching sessions (Who are we? Who are they? What bridges can be created between us?) are followed by hands-on workshops (church teams actually processing the material that was shared). The final session is designed to leave each church team with solid plans and action steps toward missional connections with their communities.

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

Leslie Cool, pastor

Akron Grace EC Church
717-951-8433

Making the most of the moments received.



Evangelical Congregational Church

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Who We Are

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May 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Ministry Funds to: EC Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payments to: Benefits Corp. 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067		1 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	2
3 Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extensions	4	5	6 TWIN PINES Spruce-Up TO BE RESCHEDULED	7 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER Pre-Conf. CANCELLED Finance Committee Mtg.	8	9 Pre-Conf. CANCELLED All Saints, Christ
10 MOTHER'S DAY Mother's Day Offering	11 Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	12 Pre-Conf. CANCELLED	13	14 Pre-Conf. CANCELLED SC Heaven TWIN PINES For Ladies Only Retreat	15 Health Insurance Due Evangelical Seminary Commencement	16 Pre-Conf. CANCELLED Trä Bethel
17	18	19	20	21 Evangelical Seminary Golf Tournament ASCENSION DAY	22	23
24	25 MEMORIAL DAY CHURCH CENTER CLOSED	26	27	28	29	30
31 PENTECOST	NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN COLLEGE					

June 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Registration Deadline for PAC 2021	2	3	4	5 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	6
7 Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension	8	9	10	11	12 Evangelical Seminary Commencement	13
14 Student Aid Offering	15 Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg. Health Insurance Due	16 Loan & Investment Mtg.	17	18	19 Info for the July/August EC Leader is Due	20
21 FATHER'S DAY	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	Ministry Funds to: EC Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067 Insurance Payments to: Benefits Corp. 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067 Student Aid Offering to: EC Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067			