



Community

NOVEMBER

2015

Evangelical Congregational Church



EC Leader

From the Bishop

You've no doubt received your copy of the 2015 National Conference Journal. Since that wonderful day it arrived in the mail in a beautiful new notebook or on a compact disk you've hardly been able to take your eyes off it, you've used it for your daily devotions; or maybe not!

You may have noticed that this year's National Conference Journal has a new section, an Appendix. The Appendix contains a number of documents that I believe can be a helpful resource to local pastors and congregational leaders. Here's a brief overview:

- **The Covenant**—The National Conference adopted this four-point Covenant in 2014 in order to guide us in the current restructuring of our denomination.
- **Enduring Covenant between the de-**

nomination and Evangelical Seminar—Adopted in 2012, this document sets out in general terms the relationship between the Evangelical Congregational Church and Evangelical Seminary.

- **Enduring Covenant between the denomination and New Dawn Community Services**—Adopted in 2015 this document sets out in general terms the relationship between the Evangelical Congregational Church and New Dawn which operates three retirement communities.
- **Leadership in The E.C. Church**—The National Conference adopted this statement on denominational and congregational leadership including, but not limited to, what has traditionally been called the pastoral role.

This statement draws our attention to three core graces and five categories of leadership in the church.

- **The Church**—This is our statement on who we are as the church, “a people called by God to his mission...” It provides a scriptural foundation for who we are and what we do as the Evangelical Congregational denomination as well as local congregations.
- **Theology of Marriage**—We live in a time when terms, definitions, and traditionally accepted understanding are being challenged and redefined. This statement, adopted by National Conference in 2015, clearly presents our denomination's position on marriage based on the Word of God.

(continued on page 3)

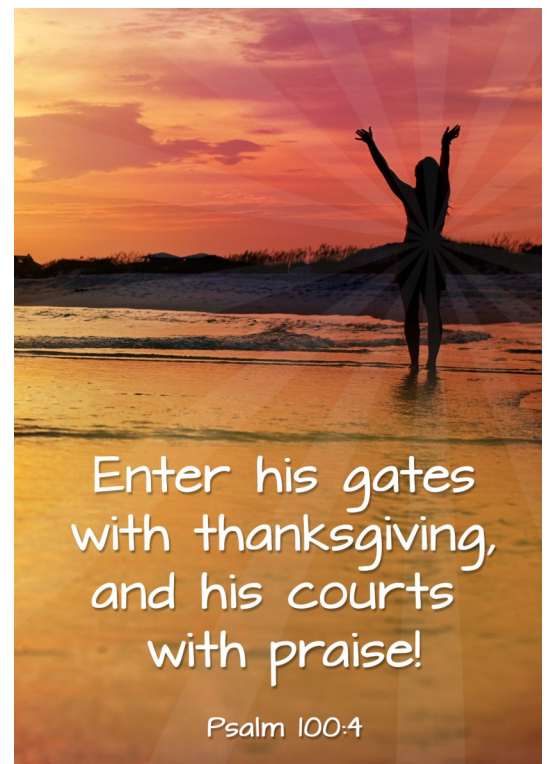
Inside this issue:

Bishop's Prayer &	2
News from Global Ministries	4
News from Twin Pines	5
News from Benefits	6



Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

1. Pray for the newly named Executive Director and disciple-making resource community Associates who were recently named by the National Ministry Team. May they be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading as they look to the beginning of new ministry opportunities.
2. Pray for me as I begin to meet with these new denominational leaders; that I may provide clear direction, God's vision, and that we begin to form a team spirit which will lead the church forward.
3. Pray for Evangelical Seminary and Twin Pines Camp as they finalize their 2016 budgets and begin to deal with the reality of the Conference adopted drawn of mandated support. And please consider what you and your church can do to support their important ministries.
4. Ask the Lord to clearly lead as I begin to work on the theme and schedule for National Conference 2016 as this will be the final conference under our current structure and, as usual, there will be lots of important business.
5. Pray for our Conference Ministers: Gordy Lewis, Gary Kuehner, and Chuck Campbell, as they seek the Lord's will for their future ministries as we phase out the Conference Minister positions in our denomination.
6. Have you read the fall 2015 edition of our Global Ministries magazine Window on the World? Praise God for the wonderful and inspirational stories of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are sharing in the spiritual harvest of souls for Christ!
7. Praise the Lord for the new ministries our Church Planting Commission has been able to invest in and partner with thanks to the wise stewardship of many individuals and churches. (You too can become a church planting partner just ask Les Cool or me.)
8. Join me in praising the Lord for his daily blessings; we really are a blessed people and we need to say "thank you" to the Lord more often and especially during this Thanksgiving month.
9. Praise the Lord for the men who are responding to the Lord's call on their life and have registered for the Pastoral Assessment Center which will be held in January 2016. God is at work!
10. I love the outdoors and the fall is my favorite time of the year. Join me in praising God for the beauty around us. As the hymn writer put it "This is my Father's world: Why should my heart be sad? The Lord is King: let the heavens ring! God reigns: let earth be glad!"





From the Bishop (continued from page 1)

- **Essential Qualities For A Pastor in the E.C. Church**—A list of thirteen qualities are presented not as spiritual gifts or graces, but essential qualities that must be evidenced in the life of our pastors in order to serve effectively in the context of the E.C. Church.
- **Abbreviated Statement of Faith**—Shorter than the Apostles’ Creed or Nicene Creed this short statement, prepared by the National Conference’s Faith & Doctrine Committee in 2005, presents the basics of what we believe.

In Christ’s service,



Rev. Gordon Lewis will be selling (at unbelievable discounts) or giving away many of his books. Anyone who may be interested please contact him at (717) 503-3291 or (717)866-7581 to arrange a time for discovery.

A seminar sponsored by the **Church Health Commission**, entitled **“Leaving a Legacy in My Leadership”**, will be held on Saturday, November 21st. Dr. James Ayers, who is a Professor at Large and former chair of Church and Ministry Leadership at Lancaster Bible College will be the presenter. The seminar will be held at Hope Community Church in Fogelsville from 8:30 am to Noon. Cost: \$10 Contact Rev. Kevin Roberts at revkevo1@gmail.com




The Bishop is planning his preaching/speaking calendar for 2016. if you are interested in having Bishop Hill speak at your church, especially if you have not yet had him preach at your church, now is the best time to contact Church Center. No church is too big nor too small for him to schedule a Sunday but it is first-come-first-served and he prefers to be invited rather than having to invite himself. So as you plan your congregation’s 2016 church service schedule see when it would be good to have the Bishop come preach. He enjoys meeting new friends, is a pretty good preacher, and is even willing to wear socks and a tie if necessary. If you’d like to schedule a date please email your requested date(s) to his Administrative Assistant, yearhart@eccenter.com, and she will work with him in developing his schedule for 2016. He hopes to see you soon!



News from Global Ministries



Our EC Church—Japan is preparing for the Franklin Graham Tokyo Crusade, November 20-22.

Yoriyoshi Abe will be acting as translator and has been going for training to help with the crusade.



Joe Toy is once again looking for folks to make and fill Christmas stockings for him to distribute to needy inner city children.

You can find details on how to make the stockings and what to put in them on Joe's website: www.oamphilly.org. Joe needs the filled stockings by December 1st.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR MISSIONARIES: This is the annual reminder for individuals and churches who wish to give monetary Christmas gifts to our EC



missionaries. If the missionary serves overseas, it is better to give the monetary gift through either the GMC office or the mission agency with which the missionary serves. Cashing checks overseas always costs the recipient a lot in fees, plus your check may be altered and cashed for a much higher amount than you intended. That's if the missionary even receives the check! If the missionary is in the USA, either permanently or on furlough, then feel free to mail the card, check or gift directly to them. If you need current mailing addresses, contact Pat at the GMC office for that information. Thank you!



Thankoffering is not a required offering, but any funds collected go to help our international churches. Would your church consider taking a voluntary Thankoff-

fering during November? Envelopes are available from the Global Ministries office.



We are in need of housing for two of our missionary families next year. Roy & Sue

Haglund will be coming to central/eastern PA for April 2-18. They are in need of a one bedroom apartment for that time. BJ & Rachel Whitaker are also coming to PA next summer, June-August. They need a 2 or (preferable) 3-bedroom house or apartment and would like to stay in the Lebanon/Lancaster County area (Southern Lebanon to northern Lancaster would be ideal). If you know of any available housing for these folks, please contact Pat in the GMC office. The phone number is: 717-866-7584 or 1-800-866-7584. Email to: ecglobal@eccenter.com. Thank you!



Operation Christmas Child's National Collection Week is November 16-23! Prepare to pack your Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes by [ordering free resources](#). We'll provide everything you need to get started this shoebox season—labels, posters, flyers, packing party guides, inspirational videos, and more. In the hands of local churches, every box is a powerful tool for evangelism and discipleship—transforming the lives of children and their families through the Good News of Jesus Christ.



News from Twin Pines

Twin Pines' Junior & Senior High Retreat

November 6-8, 2015

People love summer camp so much, they wish they could do it all year! While that is not possible, this weekend retreat for campers in grades 6-12 helps to hold on to the summer camp feeling. It is just like a summer camp program. Campers get to participate in many of their favorite camp activities, reunite with camp friends, and hang out with past summer staff! Most importantly, they will get to explore their faith and walk with Jesus Christ through in-depth group discussion and Bible study. Twin Pines provides staff for this retreat. Register online at www.tpjrshigh.eventbrite.com or download the brochure with registration form from our Facebook page or website (www.twinpines.org).

For more information, contact Andy at Twin Pines (Phone: 570-629-2411 or e-mail at andy@twinpines.org).



Shoppe the Poconos Retreat

December 4-6, 2015

Experience all that the Poconos has in shopping! There is something for every taste in shopping including, boutiques, craft stores, antique shops, bargain outlets, and malls! During this retreat, you will have the opportunity to shop by day and fellowship with others by night through devotions and Christmas-themed crafts. You will receive discounts and coupons to area stores. You might win door prizes too! Do not miss this thrilling retreat!

To register for this retreat, register online at www.shoppethepoconos.eventbrite.com or download a brochure from our website at www.twinpines.org. For more information, contact the Twin Pines office at (570) 629-2411 or e-mail retreats@twinpines.org.



Winter Thaw Youth Retreat

February 19-21, 2016

Just as winter thaws and gives way to spring, a winter retreat for youth groups is offered to challenge your youth to remain strong in their faith and continue to turn to Jesus Christ for direction and comfort in the middle of the school year. An awesome speaker (Rev. Jeff Berger) and terrific worship band will help make this weekend spectacular. Participating youth groups must provide chaperones for this retreat. Register by December 31, 2015 to receive free t-shirts for your entire group! After this date, t-shirts may be ordered at an additional cost. The rate for the retreat is \$110.00 per person.

For more information, please contact Andy at (570) 629-2411 or email winterthaw@twinpines.org. You may also download a registration form from our website at www.twinpines.org.



Church Changing Culture Summit

March 4-5, 2015

The church should influence culture, not the other way around. Each year this summit will take a look at relevant issues and provide practical ways the local church can influence their community's culture. In 2016, the topic will be human trafficking, an issue that is present in your area; seen and unseen. It will focus on the supply and demand as well as ideas of what can be done about human trafficking in your community.

Register online at <https://tpc3.eventbrite.com> or download a brochure from our website at www.twinpines.org. For more information, contact Twin Pines office at (570)629-2411 or e-mail retreats@twinpines.org.

News from Benefits Corporation

The EC Benefits Trustees have approved a switch in the active pastor's health insurance plan to Capital Blue Cross (CBC) from Highmark effective October 1, 2015. The decision was mainly driven by cost. Capital Blue Cross offered a plan with a sub 3% rate increase and Highmark offered a 16% increase over the prior year's rates. The CBC plan is almost identical to the Highmark plan. Office visit co-pays are a little higher but prescription co-pays are a little lower with the CBC plan. The CBC plan does have higher deductibles, however the annual maximum out of pocket for covered medical expenses, excluding co-pays, remains at \$500 with the HRA paying costs above \$500. The maximum out of pocket for prescriptions also remains at \$1,800 annually.

Two New Benefits on October 1.

- 1) a \$1,800 cap on out of pocket costs for outpatient therapy services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, respiratory therapy, and manipulative therapy. The covered pastor will only incur a maximum in \$1,800 for covered outpatient therapy in either therapy visit co-pays or therapy visit costs. The HRA will reimburse the pastor for any out of pocket costs above \$1,800.
- 2) A limited dental plan has been added at no additional cost for health plan participants. The plan is the Value Plan 75. The plan will pay 75% of the cost of most dental services. The limitation of the plan is the number of participating providers. Please see <https://www.capbluecross.com> to confirm your dentist's participation.

If you have incurred medical expenses above \$500 or prescription costs above \$1,800 you may be eligible for reimbursement of your out of pocket costs from the HRA. The HRA plan year ended on September 30, 2015 and all requests for reimbursement for the October 2014-September 2015 plan year must be received by PrimePay, our HRA administrator, by December 29, 2015, ninety days after the end of the plan year. If you need assistance with PrimePay please contact David King or me at the EC Church Center and we will walk you through the process.

The cost to the churches is not increasing. The HRA cushion is high enough to absorb the premium cost increase

and the new benefits. It is unlikely that the rates will remain unchanged in future years. The EC Benefits Trustees are very aware of the tension caused by the cost of health insurance and they are committed to serving the pastors and the local EC Church. The US health insurance market is constantly in flux. The circumstances surrounding the annual plan renewal are different every year. However, the trend to push responsibility for healthcare and lifestyle decision on the individual is continuing with your pocket-book feeling the most pain. Planning for your long term health is just as important as planning for your retirement. Accidents and illnesses are going to happen but many healthcare conditions are preventable and manageable with healthy lifestyle choices.



Highmark Freedom Blue

As approved by the members of the EC Benefits Corporation at the May 2015 EC Benefits Annual Corporation Meeting, beginning in 2016 and annually through 2019, each of the above EC Church contributions to the premium will be reduced by 20% until, in 2020, the entire contribution by the EC Church has been eliminated. The retiree is responsible for the remaining portion of the premium not paid by the EC Church. Beginning in December 2015, for the January 2016 premium, participants on the Highmark Freedom Blue plan will be receiving an invoice from Highmark for their portion of the premium. A retiree's portion of the Highmark Freedom Blue premium will be based on their Medicare eligibility date with a 20% per year increase in the amount the retiree will pay. For example, a retiree eligible for Medicare in 2006 received 75% of the Freedom Blue premium paid for by the National Conference and the retiree paid 25% of the premium. Starting with the January 2016 Freedom Blue premium retirees eligible for Medicare in 2006 will pay 25% of the premium plus 20% of the portion the denomination is paying or around 40% of the total premium. Each year the amount the denomination is paying will decrease by 20% and that portion will be transferred to the retiree until 2020 when the retiree will be responsible for the entire Freedom Blue premium.

In early November a letter will be received by each retiree explaining the change in detail.

There are many Medicare Advantage plans available even some at no cost to participants. However, each plan will have positives and negatives in terms of participating providers and benefits provided. Please thoroughly investigate any Medicare Advantage plan before switching plans. If a retiree does not have the financial means to assume a larger portion of the Freedom Blue plan the Manna Fund is available to financially assist the retiree.



Manna Fund

The Manna Fund was established to assist our retired clergy and surviving spouses with financial needs. The income limits to qualify for 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 current Manna Fund income limits are \$23,540 for a single and \$31,960 for a couple. If you are aware of any of our retired clergy or surviving spouse 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 April and an application can also be received from the Benefits Administrator at the EC Church Center.



End of Year Reporting

We are quickly approaching the end of the calendar year and we are encouraging all the local church pastors, treasurers and 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:

Due to EC Church Center—Compensation & Benefit Administrator

- Pastor Salary Forms
January 15, 2016 (copy to Conference Minister)
- Annual Reports
January 25, 2016

Form W-2 (pastors and church employees)

February 1, 2016
Filed with Social Security
February 29, 2016 (paper forms) or
March 31, 2016 (electronically)

Form 1099-MISC (independent contractors)

February 1, 2016
Filed with IRS
February 29, 2016 (paper forms) or
March 31, 2016 (electronically)

Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive a W-2 with federal, state and local taxes withheld from every paycheck.

Please contact Dave King, dking@eccenter.com or Kevin Henry, khenry@eccenter.com or 1-800-866-7581 with any questions or problems.

Kevin Henry
Controller

Dave King
Benefits Administrator



CODE OF ETHICS FOR CONGREGATIONS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP



A few years ago the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), of which the Evangelical Congregational Church is a member, published a “Code of Ethics for Pastors”. Our Leadership Commission distributed that document to all our pastors and leaders. At the time Leith Anderson, NAE President stated “Most pastors are highly ethical, but few have signed a written code of ethics. This is every pastor’s opportunity to know, commit and tell others about a personal and professional standard of biblical pastoral ethics.” At that time our Leadership Commission encouraged pastors and local leaders to put that code of ethics on the agenda for an upcoming Board/Council/Pastoral Relations Committee meeting to discuss, adopt, and live.

Now the NAE has published a companion piece, a “Code of Ethics for Congregations and Their Leadership”. Church boards and leadership teams face many decisions as they serve their congregations. Those choices have consequences for the health and ministry of the local church and the denomination. The National Association of Evangelicals developed the NAE Code of Ethics for Congregations and Their Leadership Teams to equip church leaders to make wise decisions.

Among the gifts Jesus provides the Church are pastors to teach congregations, lead them, and care for their spiritual well-being. In return, the lay leaders of our congregations are responsible to provide for the clergy and to facilitate their work. They also have responsibilities to the congregation at large, to the family of churches to which they belong, and to the communities in which they live and worship.

The Leadership Commission of our denomination will soon be emailing copies of the Code of Ethics for Pastors and the new Code of Ethics for Congregations and Their Leadership to all of our pastors and leaders. Please watch your “in box” for their arrival, read them and use them with our leaders in your congregation. They are good resources we all can use.

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and
hands and voices, Who wondrous things has
done, in Whom this world rejoices*

-Martin Rinkart



Evangelical Congregational Church

E.C. Church Center
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Phone: 717-866-7581
Web: www.eccenter.com
Email: eccenter@eccenter.com



FAT Lock-In @ Ozzy's

November 27-28, 2015

12 am—6 am

Cost: \$25 per person for pre-registered groups (by Monday, 11/23)
\$30 at the door

Payment: Checks for pre-registered groups must be handed in by November 16th, payable to "EC Youth Network".
Cash only at the door.

Registration: To register email your total numbers to
Mitch at Akron Grace E.C. Church
ak-gec@dejazzd.com or call 717-859-2700.

All pre-registrations due by November 16th.

(When registering please include your Church Name, Leader Name, Email, & Phone Number, & Total # Attending)

Adult Leaders: All adult leaders participating in the Ozzy's Lock-In, youth pastors or otherwise, must have a current (2012 or newer) PA background check and child abuse clearance on file. In addition, the overseeing pastor or lead pastor must bring the signed Adult Screening Verification Form to the event. Leaders who are not listed on the verification form will not be allowed to attend the lock-in.

(Adult Screening Verification Form will be sent to groups when they register.)

Arrival: Groups can arrive at Ozzy's beginning at 11:45 pm on Friday night November 27.

Food: The snack Shop will be opened for you to purchase food throughout the night. Groups can also bring in unopened Coke products and unopened bags of chips and other snacks. No homemade or non-purchased food items are allowed.

November 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	2	3	4	5 Finance Comm. Mtg.	6 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	7
8	9	10	11 VETERAN'S DAY Church Health Commission Mtg.	12 Friends of Evangelical Banquet Faith & Doctrine Comm. Mtg.	13 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Berks District Retreat</div>	14
15	16 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Premium Due	17 StoneRidge Board Mtg.	18	19	20	21 Church Health Seminar
22 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY Thank Offering (optional)	23	24	25	26 THANKSGIVING DAY Church Center Closed	27 Church Center closed <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">FAT Lock-In</div>	28
29 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT	30					

Ministry Funds to:
E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corporation
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Thank Offering to:
E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate—Thank Offering)

December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	5
6 Second Sunday in Advent Day of Prayer for Church	7	8 Church Planting Comm. Mtg.	9	10	11	12
13 Third Sunday in Advent	14	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Premium Due	16	17	18	19
20 Fourth Sunday in Advent Christmas Missionary Offering	21	22	23 Church Center closed	24 Christmas Eve Church Center closed	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Church Center closed	26
27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve Church Center closed		

Ministry Funds to:
E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corporation
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Christmas Missionary Offering to: E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate—Christmas Missionary Offering)