

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church

APRIL 2022



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"HE IS NOT HERE -
FOR HE IS RISEN"

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Bruce Hill



Did you ever ask the Lord for a sign? You were facing a difficult choice and you just wished the Lord would give you a sign. At the time of Jesus many of the religious leaders believed only God could give signs from heaven. One day some Pharisees and Sadducees confronted Jesus in order to test him. They demanded Jesus perform some great "miraculous sign from heaven" to prove His authority; to prove He was the Messiah.

Sometimes I wonder why Jesus didn't just do it and shut them up, but it wasn't the Father's time yet. Instead, Jesus called their attention to a common saying about the weather,

"Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; red sky in the morning means foul weather all day." (Matthew 16:2-3a)

Jesus was saying the religious leaders could read the skies for weather, but they couldn't figure out the "signs of the times" all around them.

FROM THE DESK

continued...



When we look at this conversation in context, we discover it occurred soon after Jesus miraculously fed over 5,000 people with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Then disciples saw Him walk on water and when they arrived on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the crowds gathered around Him and Matthew tells us, "all who touched Him were healed." (Matthew 14:36) Jesus healed a girl who had a demon, He healed many more, and then fed over 4,000 more people. Yet these leaders confronted Jesus and demanded a "miraculous sign from heaven to prove His authority." (Matthew 15:1)

Jesus responds saying in effect, you want a sign proving that I am the Messiah, the anointed one of God? The sign "I will give is the sign of the prophet Jonah." (Matthew 16:4) Yes, that's the Jonah from the Jonah and the whale story. So, what's the sign of Jonah? Go back into your childhood Sunday School memories; how long was Jonah inside the big fish? [Three days.] In a similar passage Jesus said,

"...so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:40)

Jesus says, "you want a sign? Then, you just wait. I'll give you a sign you can't miss - my resurrection."

Jesus gives us all a sign of who He is - a suffering Savior who gave Himself to die on a cross, buried in the earth for three days, and then, like Jonah, miraculously come back to life. The resurrection of Jesus, His victory over sin, death and the grave, is the miraculous sign, the proof, that Jesus is who He said He is; the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God.

Christianity is not based on blind faith; it is to believe based on evidence. My response to the truth of the resurrection is to trust in Jesus, to follow Him in discipleship, and to serve Him with my whole life.

Jesus is alive!



In Christ's service,



Praise & Prayer

1. Join me in praying for Bishop-elect Randy Sizemore & Carla as they settle into their new home in Lebanon, PA.
2. Ask for the Lord's clear leading as we make final preparations for National Conference 2022.
3. Pray for Ted Rathman, Global Ministries Associate, and me as we plan for a trip to the EC Church in Northeast India after Easter.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of those who will be attending special Holy Week services.
5. Pray for our camping ministries as they hire staff, receive camper registrations, and prepare for the summer camping season.
6. Thank God for the gift of His Son who took our sins to the cross so we could be forgiven.
7. Praise the Lord for the opportunities to celebrate and worship a risen Savior!
8. Thank God for His faithfulness seen in the changing seasons. Spring is officially here; warm weather is on the way!
9. Praise the Lord for His leading during our recent spring National Ministry Team meeting.
10. Praise the Lord for the many people who continue to remind me they are praying for Gloria and me on a regular basis. (And don't stop now!)

Thank you!



National Conference Officers: (Left to Right)

Rev. Gary Brown, National Conference Vice Chairman
Mrs. Debra Patterson, National Conference Treasurer
Rev. Kirk Marks, National Conference Secretary

At the recent National Ministry Team meeting, Rev. Gary Brown, Mrs. Debra Patterson, and Rev. Kirk Marks were celebrated for their terms of service as National Conference Officers.

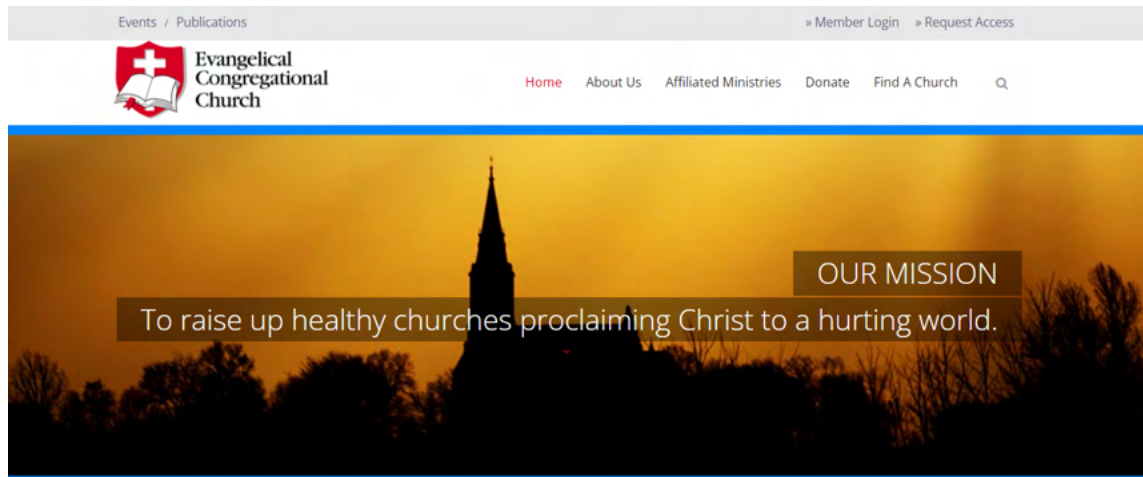
They will complete their faithful service at this year's National Conference.

Thank you to each for a job well done!



***Bishop-elect Randy & Carla Sizemore
Bishop Bruce & Gloria Hill***

NEW EC CENTER WEBSITE LAUNCH



The new EC Center website officially launched on March 25th.

www.eccenter.com

The new site will continue to be updated with new content and events!

LET US KNOW!

Keeping information updated and correct on the new EC Center website, the database, and the National Conference Journal is an ongoing project. Please reach out to the conference support team at office@eccenter.com with information that may need to be updated for yourself or your church; or be sure to see Dee or Abigail at registration during conference!

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022

MAY 25-27, 2022

MESSIAH UNIVERSITY, GRANTHAM, PA



"Overflowing Hope"

Hope, in the New Testament is defined as, "favorable and confident expectation." It has much to do with the unseen and the future. In Romans 15:13 God is spoken of as, the "God of hope," declaring that He is the author of hope, not the subject.

Hope is the result of our salvation and finds its expression and endurance as we join in God's mission movement, actively "waiting" for the coming of Christ. Our hope is not based on the present conditions of our country, our circumstances or even our church. Our hope is based on who we are!

We are the Church of Jesus Christ!

As our one-hundred-year-old heritage proves, we are **Evangelical**; that is, we are the bearers of the Good News of God's saving grace to our world. We are **Congregational**; strategically gathered and connected locally for direct engagement and impact with our culture. We are a movement of the people of God; positioned together with Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, overflowing with hope for the sake of a hopeless world, **to know Christ and to make Him known.**

Pre-conference Meetings Schedule

Tuesday, May 3

Susquehanna Region at Reich's Church
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 7

Delaware Region at Allentown Christ Church
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, May 10

Susquehanna Region at Mohn's Hill
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 12

Delaware region at Pitman Zion
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 14

Great Lakes Region at Lakeside w/ Dixon Bethel via video
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (EST)



"Lament... the Song of Hope" is a new video series produced by the National Conference. During the month of April a new video will be released every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday on our YouTube channel; [Evangelical Congregational Church Center.](#)

From Bishop Bruce Hill:

I continue to be deeply concerned for our pastors, lay leaders, and churches. As David Brooks, a conservative political and cultural commentator for the New York Times has put it, for the past two years and counting we have felt, "disoriented, disturbed, unmoored...in a yawning chasm of mutual incomprehension. The atmosphere within many Christian organizations has grown more tense and bitter. Pastors are exhausted – partly because of Covid but partly because every word they use is scrutinized to see if it passes this or that theological litmus test." And it all happened with startling speed.

It is in response to this burden and concern that one of my last projects as bishop is this series of videos in which I, along with Steve Brubaker, Counseling Pastor at Grace Community Church of Willow Street, and Dr. Ken Miller, retired Professor of Theology, will address how we deal with the hurts and woundedness so many of us are dealing with today. I believe we all can identify in some way with the prophet Jeremiah when he wrote,

"I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss." Yet Jeremiah would say with the next breath, "Yet I still dare to hope." (Lamentations 3:20-21)

I pray this series of 8-minute videos will be helpful in moving us toward healing hurts, binding wounds, and preparing us all to move forward with overflowing hope at National Conference 2022.

REGISTRATION IS open!

<https://eccenter.com/event/2022-national-conference-overflowing-hope/>

Past Due Dates

*please remit as soon as possible
if not already done so*

- +Disability Payment - \$100
- +Pastors Compensation Forms
- +Annual Statistical Reports
- +Workers Compensation Insurance Information

As always, please email:

David King
Benefits Administrator
dking@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717-866-7581

+ Thanks to everyone for completing the Workers Compensation forms on a timely basis. The audit is currently in process, and we hope to have a final bill soon from Church Mutual. We get questions from time to time on completing a workers compensation claim. The process is not complicated, but it is confusing since claims are not filed often. Each church is responsible for filing their own claims at the time of the incident or shortly thereafter. The easiest method is to use Church Mutual's online claim reporting portal, **[File a Claim | Church Mutual](#)**. Fill out the claim form with the best information available; the employer is the local EC church, each EC church is listed on the policy, and the policy number is 07-174436. Please call with any questions.

+ Since we are on the topic of the annual Workers Compensation audit, be prepared next year, 2023, for an earlier deadline in late January 2023, as more information will be requested. The Commonwealth of PA and other states have increased the complexity of Workers Compensation audits which will require the EC denomination to provide more information sooner. The new audit rules do not fit the unique structure of church denominations and group workers compensation policies. It will be almost impossible for us, and most other church denominations, to comply with the new audit rules. Our insurer, Church Mutual, understands the dilemma faced by church groups, but the Commonwealth of PA does not understand. Currently, exactly what information we will be required to provide is not known. Church Mutual is hoping churches will receive some regulatory relief.

+ Churches not included in the denominational Workers Compensation Group policy; Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky - your individual state mandates Workers Compensation coverage. Please confirm that all employees of the church are covered by Workers Compensation Insurance. Per EC Benefits Corporation policy H.3.b., churches not covered by the denomination group Workers Compensation policy shall submit proof of Workers Compensation coverage by July 1 of each year. Please submit proof of your workers compensation coverage to: EC Benefits, 100 W Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067; or fax 717-866-7553 or email dking@eccenter.com.

+ The annual disability premium was due January 15, and the Benefit Corporation administrative fee is due by April 15, 2022 (retirees are not subject to the administrative fee.) Both of these fees are listed in the Treasurer's Guide available on the [EC Center website](#). Many have remitted the disability fee timely, and a few have already submitted the administrative fee and we thank you for your diligence and hard work.

+ Treasurers, please confirm that you are remitting your ministry fund payments on the correct monthly form. In 2022 the ministry fund percentage is 5.65%.

+ To date, about 80% of pastoral compensation forms have been returned. Thanks to all the churches that have responded. 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.



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church

Empowering National Churches

The EC Global Ministries Community (GMC) continues to seek to enable our international churches to be self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating through the leadership we provide, and the support of the local EC Church in the United States. This mission demands a strong connected relationship between the EC Church USA and our international partners.

This month we highlight the ministries of our EC churches in Japan.



Current ECCJ Chairman, Rev. Nobuo Abe, pastors Sagamihara Grace Chapel. (His son, Tomoyuki and daughter-in-law Jessica, are EC missionaries currently serving in France.) Yoriyoshi Abe, nephew of Nobuo, completed a M.Div. degree at Evangelical Seminary in Myerstown, and he and wife Emiko returned to Japan after graduation to continue church planting throughout the Tokyo region. But Japan is still a very difficult country to evangelize, with only about 1% claiming to know Jesus as Savior. Our churches have been reaching out through various ministries: daycare, English classes, training for young mothers, etc. to reach the needs of the Japanese people. Please continue to uphold our pastors and church members in prayer as they reach out in love to their family, friends and neighbors in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Nobuo & Keiko Abe



Yoriyoshi & Emiko Abe

FROM THE DESK

Rev. J. Ted Rathman, Global Ministries Associate

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

We believe a healthy church places a high priority on proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ to a hurting world beyond its immediate neighborhood. This outward focus compels the church to cross cultures and to cross borders in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission to the ends of the earth.

If you want to help local EC churches build this into their DNA then [CONTACT US](#) about being part of the team we call the GMC.

To know how your church can partner directly with an International EC Church, call the GMC office at 717-866-7581 or email ecglobal@eccenter.com.

Ted Rathman



Kingdom Extension Community News

The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities

This hands-on workshop 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.



The Art of Conversation Conversation!

When was the last time you started a conversation? With a stranger? Smooth? Awkward? When was the last time a conversation included Jesus?

As Christians, we get to talk about Jesus. Sharing Jesus usually starts with a conversation and a relationship and trust.

Consider developing new conversational skills. This 3-hour workshop is a conversation 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. Deciding to be prepared usually guarantees they will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations.



Let's talk about how any of these workshops might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or revlescool@gmail.com); and when a workshop would fit your schedule.

Powerful Leadership & 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 workshop 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!



Cash for Missional Coaching

Remember the last training event you attended? No? That is not unusual. That probably also means the training did not stick long enough to become new ministry adventure. That is also not unusual. Perhaps you are now hesitant to attend another workshop or teaching-learning experience. Don't be!

The Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) would like to partner with you (pastor) or your leadership team or congregation to make sure your next learning experience becomes ministry. The KEC would like to help pay for up to six months of coaching attached to training and ministry that is missional or Kingdom-focused. That is, we would like to pay for coaching designed to help you make use of new learning that moves you and your church family out of the building to develop a ministry not attached to what happens in your sanctuary.

What might that look like? A church plant? A dinner church? A fresh expression of church? This is about creating a ministry where one wasn't before to people who were not ministered to before.

Ministerial Development Community News

Callings: Every Christian receives a variety of spiritual gifts useful for God's kingdom. Some individuals sense some deeper understanding of these gifts and are drawn toward leading congregational life in churches as pastors. These callings often begin with greater passion and participation in the life of a local church body or an extension of the church in the community or parachurch organization. Many individuals hunger and thirst for ways to be available and utilized in God's greater kingdom. If you or someone you know is experiencing these qualities, you might want to have a conversation with your lead pastor.

Pastors: Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the process for someone to answer their calling and move forward toward receiving credentials within the Evangelical Congregational Church. We are excited to help them in areas of preparation, calling, assessment, theological hospitality, and education, as well as coaching. As the Ministerial Development Community serves in this vital role, we still need you to speak into the lives and prepare the hearts of new candidates for ministry.

PAC Update: This year, we have regretfully accepted the resignation of Rev. Kirk Marks as the director of our Pastoral Assessment Center. As we say goodbye to Kirk, we are grateful for everything that he has done with this intensive week in so many EC pastoral couples' lives. I wish I could provide an accurate number, but I do know that over 100 applicants have moved through PAC during Kirk's tenure. The influence and direction provided by our Pastoral Assessment Center process is something that other denominations only wish that they can achieve. Today, the EC Church stands on much healthier ground because pastors have been effectively provided with support early in their calling as they launch out into their assigned ministries. We gratefully acknowledge the many contributions that Kirk has made in not only conducting PAC, but also through improving the process over the years. We say, *"Take a bow, Maestro!"*

Pastoral Health: We are gaining some momentum in providing a vision for pastoral health initiatives. We hope to provide some initiatives that will assist our pastors in finding a healthier way to conduct ministry in our current cultural context. Here are some of the concepts from initial discussions from the pastoral care team:

The goal of the pastoral health arm of the Ministerial Development Community is to develop and implement member care strategies which equip EC pastors toward caring for themselves spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

The term "member care" is borrowed from the world of global missions. The following definition, although broader in scope, expresses the values of member-care by the National Conference of the EC church for its pastors. The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) definition of member-care is "the ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, churches and other mission organizations for the nurture and development of missionary personnel." Seeing as the itinerancy is defined by the Evangelical Congregational Church as a "self-disciplining body of ordained elders" (2016 EC Discipline; paragraph 514), we see pastors (such as DFDs) helping local pastors to help themselves. Member-care encourages self-care. District Field Directors can be effective in this way by developing strategies that deliver member care services. The outcome of producing a culture of pastors, healthy enough and supported enough to care for themselves in their ministries, is a connectional biproduct of member/self-care.



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Byerly
Ministerial Development Associate
jgbyerly@eccenter.com / 570.294.3467

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT

Spring Fling Children's Retreat

April 22-24, 2022

A weekend retreat focused on those currently in grades 3-5.

Enjoy Twin Pines in the spring and get ready for the summer. Participating groups must provide chaperones for the weekend. All program elements are planned so adults can focus on ministry to the children. For more information and to register your group go to

bit.ly/2022TPSF.



Spring Spruce Up

May 3-5, 2022

Volunteer during a mid-week to help the ministry "spruce-up" camp and prepare for summer ministry! Projects include both indoor and outdoor sprucing-up. There are always tasks for volunteers of any skill level! You may choose to participate for all or part of the time.

To register: please call the office- 570.629.2411.

For Ladies Only Retreat

May 10-12, 2022

An exciting mid-week retreat "for ladies only."

Enjoy fellowship, worship, and in-depth Bible learning as the retreat looks at what it means to be a woman of God. And back by resounding demand is Sue Duffield; singer, writer, comedian, and speaker. Registration and more information is available at bit.ly/2022LadiesOnly.





Summer Staff




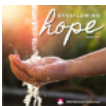
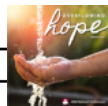
Be a smiley face this summer on the Twin Pines Camp Ministry Team! More information about being on Summer Staff 2022 is available at bit.ly/2022tpcapp.



APRIL 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067				1 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	2 Twin Pines Adult Weekend
3 PASSION SUNDAY Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Violet Twin Pines Adult Weekend	4	5	6	7	8	9
10  PALM SUNDAY Violet	11	12	13	14 MAUNDY THURSDAY	15 GOOD FRIDAY Church Center Closed Health Insurance Due	16
17  EASTER SUNDAY White	18 Church Center Closed	19	20 EC Leader Deadline (May/June Edition)	21	22 Twin Pines Spring Fling: Children's Retreat	23
24 White Twin Pines Spring Fling: Children's Retreat	25	26 Benefits Corporation Meeting	27 Administrative Professionals Day	28	29	30

MAY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church Center 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Mother's Day Offering to: StoneRidge Retirement Living 440 East Lincoln Ave Myerstown, PA 17067				
1 Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension White	2	3 *	4	5 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER	6 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	7 *
8  MOTHER'S DAY Mother's Day Offering White	9	10 *	11	12 *	13 Health Insurance Due Evangelical Seminary Commencement	14 *
15 White	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 White	23	24	25	26 ASCENSION DAY	27	28
29 White	30 MEMORIAL DAY Church Center Closed	31		NATIONAL CONFERENCE 		

* Pre-Conference Meetings
 See page 5



Know Him Better Love Him More

"We can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments...Those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him."

1 John 2:3,5

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717-866-7581

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