

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

An Old New Thing

*"See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and
streams in the wasteland."
(Isaiah 43:19)*

(continued on page 2)



Speaking Schedule for 2023

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2023 preaching schedule. If you would like to schedule him at your church, please contact Bishop Randy directly at rsizemore@eccenter.com.

FROM THE DESK continued...

As we turn the page to a New Year, we are reminded that our God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is as old as eternity and as new as tomorrow! What I love about our God is He cares more for the people of each generation, culture, tribe, ethnicity than He does about preserving a certain heritage or tradition. He is Emmanuel, God with us, and He continues to make a way for each culture and subculture to relate to His eternal love, forgiveness, and salvation. With God it is always an old, new thing!

The question needs to be asked,

"if we are God's children, God's people, should we not also be more concerned about reaching the people of our time and space with His eternal message of salvation than we are with preserving our favored traditions?"

The landscape of the American church is changing rapidly. Churches are growing smaller. In our National Conference over 80% of our congregations average less than 100 in attendance and the majority of those are averaging under 50 on Sunday morning. This means more pastors and staff are co-vocational, partially, or fully supporting themselves with employment outside the local church. Ministry and theological training for pastors is changing rapidly to equip and deploy the new breed of pastors needed for these challenging, yet exciting days of opportunity! Churches are getting creative in networking, adoption, mergers, and other non-traditional ways to continue the mission of **knowing Christ and making Him known** to their communities.

Of course, there are some that will not be moved! They insist on preserving their comfort and their traditions above reaching their neighbors with the Good News. What if God said,

"I'm only coming to people the way I came the first time, as a Jewish baby in a manger in Bethlehem. If people want to know Me then they will have to make the journey to meet Me where I am."

I am so glad God comes to us in our space, our time, and our culture to meet us where we are with His Good News! My prayer for all of us in the EC Church is that this new year will encourage us to release our old ways and to share the old, old story of Jesus and His love in new ways that allow our neighbors to meet our Savior where they are!

Happy New year!

Bishop Randy Sizemore

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



+ The **2023 IRS Mileage Reimbursement** rate has not been released as of the writing of this article.

+ Active pastor **Health Insurance** premiums will increase 3% from the 2022 rates.

Single	\$ 870
Couple	\$1,844
Employer & Child(ren)	\$1,741
Family	\$2,297

The first payment of the new year was due December 15, 2022. Please see www.eccenter.com for the 2023 rates.

The deadline to submit **HRA reimbursements** for the July 22 – December 2022 plan year is March 31, 2023. This is a federally mandated deadline that cannot be changed.

+ Church contributions to the **403(b) pension** plan will increase on January 1 to \$360 for full-time pastors and \$180 for part-time pastors. Please continue to submit pension contributions to EC Benefits Corporation, 100 W. Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067 until a change is announced.

+ **EC Benefits Corp services fee** is \$125 payable on April 15, 2023.

+ **W-2s and 1099-NEC** (Non-Employee Compensation) forms are due to the recipients by January 31, 2023 and the respective Federal, State or Local taxing authorities by January 31, 2023. Please refer to the specific taxing authority regulations for due dates. All full-time and part-time pastors should receive a W-2 from their church. The 1099-NEC is a new form, replacing the 1099-MISC; in most instances for churches for payments made during 2022, to be filled by January 31, 2023.

+ **Due Dates:** Disability Payment is \$100.00 due January 15
Annual Statistical Reports are due January 25
Workers Compensation Insurance Information is due 30 days after receipt
Pastors Compensation Forms are due January 15

+ The **workers compensation audit** is going to have a compressed deadline this year and every year after due to changing legislative regulations. Lay leaders – please keep watch on your email for important information.

+ Please see the **2023 Treasurer's Guide** located on www.eccenter.com, for additional due dates, current amounts due and ministry fund percentage.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS

KEVIN HENRY

continued...

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

+ **Remember to add the following phrase** (or something close to it) to all tax deductible giving receipts issued by a church or ministry:

“No goods or services were exchanged for these contributions, or they consisted of an intangible religious benefit.”

All year-end contributions to a church must be received at the church on December 31 or have a postmark of December 31 or earlier. **Electronic giving** adds a layer of complexity to the year-end giving deadlines. There are extra entities involved, e.g., credit card processors, banks and internet gateways, in the processing of an electronic charitable contributions that churches and donors cannot control. The amount of time from the donor making a contribution until the church receives the funds can be a couple of days to a week or more. Church treasurers should carefully review the processing statements received to note what day a contribution was processed.

IRS Guidance states that **contributions made by credit card** in 2022 are considered 2022 contributions, regardless if the donor does not make a payment on the credit card until 2023 or with normal credit card processing times the church does not receive the funds until 2023. The same is true for donations made via an ACH transfer. A donor that initiates an ACH transaction in 2022 with the funds debited from the donor's bank account should be counted as a 2022 donation, even though the church will not receive the funds until 2023 with normal bank processing times.

As always please contact David King, Benefits Administrator, dking@eccenter.com or myself, khenry@eccenter.com with any questions, 717-866-7581.

Kevin Henry

Executive Director





Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



FROM THE DESK Rev. J. Ted Rathman

Grateful & Excited!

Greetings in the matchless name of Jesus,

Happy New Year! I want to once again thank you for your generosity and sacrificial giving to the work of the Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church in 2022. On behalf of myself, Dee Jaramillo, the GMC Board, and our GMC Member Care Team – THANK YOU! We know we could not do this important and rewarding work without YOU!

Whether you support an EC missionary, one of the international churches, Operation Christmas Child, or the GMC in general, every little bit makes a difference as we pray for and rely upon God to meet all of our needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. We are so grateful for the Lord’s faithfulness through your giving. Despite a global pandemic and all the challenges so many faced since March 2020, we saw continued generous and consistent giving. What a testimony to God’s faithfulness through the hearts and minds of folks like you!

Your generous giving meant 2022 was a busy year for the GMC. There were international visits to our brothers and sisters in Liberia, India and Nepal. Several of our EC missionaries were home on furlough and able to meet with Dee and me here in Myerstown for lunch and a visit. We hosted 7 Missionary Prayer Zoom calls over the course of the year where our missionaries were able to “see” each other as they shared updates on their ministries and were able to pray for each other. New properties available for missionary housing were dedicated. Dee and I were able to visit three different churches, share a meal together, and make a presentation about Global Ministries. Our headquarters office in Myerstown, PA moved into a new space at EC Center, providing a shared office for Dee and me to collaborate and meet, and a dedicated space to host lunches and smaller meetings. And all this only touches the surface of our 2022!

We look forward with anticipation to 2023 and all that the Lord will do in and through the Global Ministries Community. The Lord has given us big dreams and goals to be on mission with Him to reach His world and those desperately in need of a Savior. Your continued partnership in this ministry is vital and so very important. You are a valued and integral part of the Global Ministries family!

(continued on next page is an update on Operation Christmas Child...)

Ted Rathman



To know how your church can partner directly with an EC missionary, or an International EC Church, call the GMC office at 717-866-7581 x 1109; or email ecglobal@eccenter.com.



Connect with us on Facebook: Global Ministries Community





Thank You!



On behalf of Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse, and the GMC, we would like to thank all the churches that participated in the Operation Christmas Child ministry this year. We received reports from 30 churches in the Conference who shared with us the number of shoeboxes that they collected. The total amount of shoeboxes collected from these churches that reported in this year was **2,683**. We praise God for each of these "Gospel Opportunities." The lives of children all around the world will be touched with the Love of Christ and the Gospel because of your faithful partnership. In addition to this, 2 of our churches Community Evangelical in Sinking Springs, PA, and Weigelstown St. David's in Dover, PA, served as drop-off centers for Operation Christmas Child and processed over **12,000** additional boxes each from other churches that dropped them off at their locations.

As many of you are probably aware, after the shoeboxes are distributed at a local church, the children are then invited to attend a 12-week Discipleship Class called *The Greatest Journey*. At the end of that class on the final week, the children are challenged to write down the names of 9 others that they will share the Gospel with. So, each shoebox has the potential of reaching 10 people with the Good News of Jesus. If we multiply 2,683 by 10 that gives us a number of **26,830**. That is the potential of how many people could be reached with the Gospel just from our EC churches alone.

Most all the churches mentioned that on the Sunday when they collected the shoeboxes, that they had a special prayer of dedication over the shoeboxes. However, some of the churches shared with us some special things that they did to promote Operation Christmas Child in their church. Lititz Trinity purchased 125 pairs of "shoes that grow" for their boxes. Tamaqua collected over \$4,000 to cover the shipping of their boxes. Bridgeville collected items all year and then had a packing party. They also had a chicken BBQ in October to raise money for the shipping and made \$1,500. Instead of packing shoeboxes this year, Conestoga Bethel sent in money to Samaritan's Purse as a donation for the shipping of boxes. Herndon New Life also had a packing party and collected school supplies for the boxes as a part of their VBS. Annville Zion dedicated their boxes on the Sunday of the 51st Anniversary of their building and Bishop Randy Sizemore gave the dedicatory prayer. Bangor First church packed 25 boxes in memory of Janet Becker who started and led the Operation Christmas Child ministry in their church since 2002. They also packed an additional 55 boxes as well.

One of the beautiful things about Operation Christmas Child is that every church can do it no matter what the size. You can notice from the stories shared above that they are from all different sizes of churches. It is a fun and easy way for your church to get involved in missions and to reach out beyond yourself.

Once again, we want to say thank you for your partnership in the Gospel through your involvement with Operation Christmas Child. We encourage you to keep praying because many of the distributions have not yet occurred. Please pray that the Lord will direct each box into the hands of the child that He intends it to go to. Also, please continue to pray for favor with customs so that the boxes will arrive safety. And most importantly, pray for the child who receives the box that he or she will come to know the Lord personally and be touched by His Love.

If you have any further questions about Operation Christmas Child or you need new ideas on how to promote OCC in your church, please feel free to contact us. We will be glad to help you in any way that we can.

God bless you all,

Pastor Dan & Kim Blank

GMC Board Members / OCC Liaisons



Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Check My Math?



I was a weird one, I'm sure, because I always loved math class. I don't even know why I loved it so much, and to this day I honestly think I am TERRIBLE at math. One thing I do know, is that most of the time, multiplication is better than addition. Especially when it comes to growth. While two plus two is the same as two times two, four plus four doesn't come near four times four and so on. For most of us, this simple math concept becomes foreign when it comes to our ministry context.

Living in a post-Christendom world has forced most of our churches to embrace a survival mindset and the reality of subtraction in most of our churches has caused us to adopt a posture of simply trying whatever we can to keep our doors from closing. Unfortunately, when we can only muster believing God to keep our numbers steady, our behaviors start causing us to become so inward focused that addition is unlikely, let alone multiplication.

The early church exploded on the scene with a multiplication mindset. They made disciples who made disciples.

Paul challenges Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1 to make disciples who make disciples.

The mission of the church is to make disciples who make disciples.

When our pool of people to disciple is exhausted, where do we turn?

Do we see endless opportunities in our neighborhood, workplaces, and schools?

Do we pray regularly and passionately for people to disciple?

When we disciple, are we equipping others to make disciples who make disciples?

Part of our problem is that we have created an addition scorecard. We ask ourselves and each other, "how many people have you added or lost to your church this year?" As a matter of fact, most of us as pastors run this score card through our heads every week. Was my attendance higher this week than last week? If so, we feel like we are doing ok, we are winning. If not, we see anxiety creep in and we think we are losing.

What if we changed the score card? What if we created a metric that looked at how our generations of disciples are active in our churches? How many of your disciples are discipling someone else? How many disciples have multiplied themselves into someone who is multiplying themselves?

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

continued...

I do believe that multiplication has to become the culture of our churches if we are going to become the movement of God we believe he is calling us to be. Do you believe God, who spoke the world into existence, is able to help you and your church to be a church that is multiplying disciples for the sake of the kingdom?

If you would like to learn more about how you and your church can be part of a multiplication movement, please reach out to me. I would love to start a journey together that I believe will transform your church and the kingdom of God. Mike Snedeker; msnedeker@eccenter.com



Please continue to pray this month for the following new church planting opportunities that God is raising up:

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church in the Virtual Space – Mike is leading a team that is exploring a Virtual Reality Church. Their church name is Echo and is impacting people around the country and around the world. Pray for Echo and its team as they are constantly needing to flex to the rapidly changing virtual world and they are needing to be stretched to meet people where they are and begin to multiply disciples in this new realm.

Manuel and Luz Arias in Lexington, South Carolina – The Arias family is starting a new EC Church. Les and Carol Cool and I had a chance to spend a few days with Manuel and Luz and their family in early December. They are learning the culture and meeting new families, as well as strategizing ways to share the gospel in tangible ways. Pray for wisdom, strength, and renewed energy for this couple.

New Church Planters – We have four other individuals/couples that are exploring their potential call to become church planters with the EC Church. Please pray for clear vision for these couples. Also pray for courage as they consider taking a difficult step in an uncertain ministry realm.

Greater Impact – Please pray for churches across our denomination as they look to expand and even multiply their impact on their communities. Pray for wisdom for our pastors and leaders. Pray for eyes to see the needs of their communities and pray for creativity as they step into the opportunities to meet those needs with the love of Christ.



FROM THE DESK Rev. Matthew Hill, MDC Associate



Coaching

A few weeks ago, I was driving my wife's car. While it's not unusual for me to drive Emily's vehicle, it does operate differently, and has larger blind spots. One of those blind spots almost caused me to pull out in front of someone. Fortunately, my reaction time is still good, and I avoided an accident.

In his book **Transformational Coaching**, Dr. Tim Roehl states, *"Even the most effective leader has blind spots."*

Do you have blind spots in your ministry? I know I do! In the rush to minister and complete the job, there are times I am unable to see my blind spot. Fortunately for me, just like I was able to avoid the accident in my wife's car, I have friends that help me avoid my "ministry blind spot."

Dr. Roehl goes on to say,

"A coach has the unique vantage point of being 'outside' and 'inside' the leader's environment at the same time."

We all need someone that will help point out our blind spots; an advocate who will gently walk with us in ministry so that we might not cause accidents. Who is your guide?

The MDC would love to help you connect with a coach so that you might avoid your blind spots. For more information about coaching, please contact Matt Hill at mhill@eccenter.com.



Ministerial Development Community News

...continued

Institute for Church Leadership

Rev. Dr. Joel Kime

The Institute for Church Leadership has a wonderful opportunity for your churches. This spring we are offering two classes that could significantly help the people in your church family engage with God's word. You heard that right: ICL classes are for everyone! We are wondering if you can please encourage your people to consider taking the classes. Perhaps your church would even subsidize the cost of the classes for those who complete them? Take a look at the summary of our spring 2023 courses, and I think you'll see how meaningful they will be to your people.

Institute for Church Leadership Spring 2023 classes:

Hermeneutics, Tuesdays, February 7 – March 21, 6:30-9:15 p.m.

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the interpretation of the Biblical text. The course will cover some of the basic skills of biblical interpretation, as well as exploring issues surrounding questions concerning what the Bible is and how it "works." The course will help equip the student to interpret, teach, and preach the Biblical text in a pastoral setting with an emphasis on moving from interpretation to appropriate application. Instructor: Tim Seiger

OT Survey, Tuesdays, May 2 – June 13, 6:30-9:15 p.m.

Course Description: In this course the student surveys Old Testament literature, history, geography, culture, theology, and structure to understand and communicate what the Old Testament reveals about God. Additional issues addressed include: Who are the important people and nations? What are the significant events, and where do they happen? How is the Old Testament put together? How does the Old Testament apply to us today? What resources are available to understand, teach, and preach the Old Testament? Instructor: Tim Valentino

We also want to let our EC family know that we have updated the ICL curriculum. Each term, starting Fall 2023, we will offer one formative course and one informative course. Formative courses are designed to help students grow in their discipleship to Jesus and in their ministry practice. Informative courses are designed to help students learn about the Bible, theology and history, which of course will help form them as disciples of Jesus. Take a look at our new course schedule. Fall 2023 will be Fall 2 on the schedule below.


Term	Formative Course	Informative Course
Fall 1	Intro to Ministry	Hermeneutics
Spring 1	Pastoral Leadership	OT Survey
Fall 2	Personal Spiritual Formation	NT Survey
Spring 2	Preaching	Theology 1
Fall 3	Healthy Worship & Ministry	Theology 2
Spring 3	Developing a Contextual Missional Mindset	Church History

All that to say, ICL needs you, our pastors and church leaders, to let the people in your congregation know about upcoming courses. They are all by Zoom, so very accessible. Certainly, we realize that some in your congregation might find Zoom inaccessible, and therefore we ask how your church might help people connect with ICL. Perhaps you could set up a Zoom station at your church and invite anyone to come to class at your church. Students can audit classes for a reduced rate if they would prefer not to do assignments and get ICL credit towards an ICL certificate. I would be happy to talk further about ways to get your people connected to the wonderful formation and information available from our excellent ICL instructors. Just contact me at joel.kime@evangelical.edu.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS WINTER AT...




Twin Pines has many things scheduled for the winter and coming up in the spring. Mark your calendar now and check the website for updates.



WT-A: Jan 13-15


FULL

Speaker: Rev. Greg Hench




WT-B: Jan 27-29

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Brett Jenkins



WT-C: Feb 17-19*


Speaker: Jay Trainer



WT-D: Feb 24-26

FULL

Speaker: Rev. Rob Valentine



Two weeks are already full, so submit a reservation form and a deposit for your group to attend soon! To register your youth group to attend one of these life-challenging retreat weekends, go to bit.ly/WT-2023. Weekends are filling up. So, register your group soon. Check the website for how to register your youth group.

*This weekend is open to individuals to attend if there is no group from the church attending; Twin Pines provides cabin staff as supervision for these teenagers.

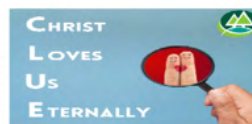


Spring Fling Children's Retreat April 21-23, 2023



Save the date of April 22-24, 2023, for the next Spring Fling Children's Retreat. A great weekend to introduce Twin Pines Camp to the children of your church, have fun outdoors (weather permitting), sing songs of worship, and learn more about Jesus with active lessons.

The website will be ready soon with more information!



****EC National Conference Calendar Alert - Stationing!****

DEADLINE FOR STATIONING REQUESTS:

JANUARY 1ST IS THE DEADLINE FOR BOTH CHURCHES AND PASTORS TO SUBMIT WRITTEN REQUESTS TO THE BISHOP FOR A CHANGE IN STATIONING ASSIGNMENT.

THIS ALSO INCLUDES THOSE PASTORS WHO ARE REQUESTING SUPERANNUATION (RETIREMENT).

JANUARY 2023

Sunday, January 1

New Year's Day

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community

Stationing Request Deadline

Liturgical Color - White

Monday, January 2

EC Church Center Closed

Friday, January 6

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Epiphany

Sunday, January 8

Epiphany Sunday

Liturgical Color - White

Monday, January 9

Stationing Retreat

Tuesday, January 10

Stationing Retreat

Pastoral Assessment Center Training

Wednesday, January 11-Saturday, January 14

Pastoral Assessment Center

Sunday, January 15

Disability Fee Due

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 16

MLK, Jr. Day

EC Church Center Closed

Health Insurance & Pastoral Compensation Forms Due

Friday, January 20

EC Leader Submissions Deadline

Sunday, January 22

Liturgical Color - Green

Wednesday, January 25

2022 Annual Statistical Reports Due

Sunday, January 29

Liturgical Color - Green

FEBRUARY 2023

Friday, February 3

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, February 5

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, February 12

Church Planting Offering

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, February 19

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, February 20

President's Day

EC Church Center Closed

EC Leader Submissions Deadline

Wednesday, February 22

Ash Wednesday

Sunday, February 29

First Sunday of Lent

Liturgical Color - Purple

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits

***Church Planting Offering**

Mail to:

EC Church Center

100 W. Park Ave.

Myerstown, PSA 17067

*(*Church Planting Offering - designate in memo line)*



Overflowing Hope

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may OVERFLOW with HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit."
Romans 15:13

Evangelical Congregational Church Center
100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581

office@eccenter.com / www.eccenter.com

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



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