

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



In this edition:

From the Desk

pages 1-3

National Conference News

pages 4-6

Executive Director News

pages 7-8

GMC News

page 9

KEC News

pages 10-11

MDC News

pages 12

Twin Pines News

page 13

Calendars & Staff List

pages 14-15

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

A Dynamic [Connectional] Movement of God

I love the connectional identity we embrace as the Evangelical Congregational Church. Our Discipline describes us like this:

With the understanding that the local church cannot carry out the Great Commission alone, we surrender self-sufficiency and autonomy to join together in love. Embracing our common Discipline and our common purpose - to know Christ and make Him known - EC Churches will pray together, fellowship together, develop leaders together, evangelize together, plant churches together, pursue acts of mercy together, pursue justice together, and celebrate God together (303.1).

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

continued...

A Dynamic [Connectional] Movement of God

continued...

To this end our EC churches are intentionally grouped into 13 geographical districts to foster connection, cooperation, and collaboration. Each one of these districts is shepherded by an EC Pastor who serves the district as the District Field Director or DFD.

Our DFD's serve as the vital connecting point between the National Conference and the pastors and laity of the churches in their district. Without this strong and trustworthy connection, the best vision, plans, and dreams for our movement would go unrealized. The job description for DFD's simply says they are to educate, encourage, and equip the pastors, lay leaders and congregations in their districts. However, because each pastor, congregation and district are unique, the breadth and scope of the ministry our DFDs carry out is extensive. I thank God for these men who are taking the time and care to learn the context of their districts in order to minister to them in the most effective way possible. I praise God for the positive direction we are experiencing in the morale, vision, ministries, attendance, finances, and effectiveness of our churches as a result of the careful work of our DFDs and districts.

From time-to-time District Field Directors change because of retirements, relocations and other factors of life. At the October National Ministry Team meeting we approved the following DFD appointments.

1. Rev. Charles Walker, Berks District (immediately)
2. Rev. Robert Santucci, Penn Jersey District (January 1, 2024)
3. Rev. Rick Sergi, Lehigh Valley District (January 1, 2024)

Meet Our Newest DFDs



Rev. Charles Walker
Berks District



Rev. Robert Santucci
Penn Jersey District



Rev. Rick Sergi
Lehigh Valley District

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

continued...

A Dynamic [Connectional] Movement of God

continued...

Here is a complete listing of all our districts and their District Field Directors by region. I encourage you to take the time to pray for these men and their districts, thanking them for their service to this movement we lovingly call the EC Church!

Delaware Region

Berks: Rev. Charles Walker
Lehigh Valley: Rev. Rick Sergi
North East: Rev. Paul Miller
Penn Jersey: Rev. Robert Santucci
Schuylkill: Rev. John Smith

Great Lakes Region

Allegheny: Rev. Lewie Bennett
Buckeye: Rev. Charles Campbell
Illinois: Rev. Robert Dunbar

Susquehanna Region

Anthracite: Rev. Brad Hatter
Capital/Lebanon: Rev. Mike Knapp
Conestoga: Rev. Keith Miller
Red Rose: Rev. Michael Sigman
Susquehanna: Rev. Sterling Trimmer



Speaking Schedule for 2024

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2024 preaching schedule.

If you would like to schedule him at your church, please contact Bishop Randy directly at rsizemore@eccenter.com.

Pastoral Changes

January 1, 2024 is the deadline for both churches and pastors to submit written requests for a change or superannuation (retirement) to the Bishop.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

Introducing our New Church Health Associate: Wayne Houck



Rev. Wayne Houck

It has been a blessing to have been part of the Church Health Community for many years. I am grateful for Gary Kuehner's leadership and encouragement, and I consider it an honor to become the new Church Health Associate. Many of you know who I am, but for those who do not know me, my wife, Tina, and I have been married for over thirty-two years and have two married adult children. Pastoral ministry was not my first career; it was after almost three decades of doing pharmaceutical research that I was installed as Pastor at Trinity Lighthouse Church in Royersford, PA in May 2015.

This is an exciting time to be part of the Evangelical Congregational Church. We see some really inspiring things happening in many of our churches and creative ways of reaching the lost being implemented as we become a "dynamic movement of God." I don't think there's a more engaging and needed area of ministry than church revitalization.

What is church health? I prefer to think of church health in terms of "church vitality." Webster defines vital as "full of life and vigor." As we age, our working definition of health can shift. Our experience in caring for elderly family members reveals things which can limit our vitality. One is that fewer things seem familiar. The world gets smaller, and our expectations are lowered. Freedom from significant pain or incapacity becomes a measuring stick for health. Aging churches can follow a similar path. Change becomes scarier, and we reminisce about the past more and more. We become less ambitious and more focused on avoiding discomfort, contemplating how long we might survive more than what we might still accomplish.

The Church Health Community is here to help churches fall more in love with their future than they are with their past. We want to see churches move beyond a faint hope of survival, to be re-energized and equipped to reach the lost with the good news of Jesus. A congregation that is "full of life and vigor" is one that is making disciples and growing. Working with the other Communities of the E.C. Church, our focus will be on providing encouragement,



NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

continued...

Introducing our New Church Health Associate: Wayne Houck *continued...*

resources, training and connections designed to bring vitality to our local churches. I love this denomination and look forward to getting to know our pastors and church leaders better in the months and years to come. Early in 2024 I'll be reaching out to all of our District Field Directors and compiling a list of priority projects in which to invest our time and resources. Below is a brief summary of my thoughts in relation to the vision statement of a "Dynamic Movement of God."

- "A missionary zeal to reach the lost" – Many of our missionaries learn to speak local languages in order to communicate with the people they're called to reach. I love the evangelical focus of the E.C. Church, but we sometimes don't speak the same language that our community does. Maybe the neighborhood, like ours, has experienced an influx of immigrants, and they don't know how to reach the new neighbors. Maybe trends in technology and culture have moved on, and we feel left in the dust. Let's put our heads together and think of ways to share Jesus with a new generation.
- "Transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches" - The definition of "critical mass" is "the minimum size or amount of something required to start or maintain a venture." I think we need to de-stigmatize the discussion of attendance numbers. Realistically every church would like there to be more people attending and being saved, baptized, discipled and serving. Our churches are spread across a wide-range of communities, some in urban centers and many in rural settings. We'll strategize effective ways to engage more people and to generate critical mass where it's needed.
- "Evangelizing the communities to which God has called us" – An "outside the walls of the church" focus will require us to know who we're trying to reach. We can help you develop a demographic profile for the people God has moved into the area around your churches so we can understand how to begin the conversation. The fulfilling of the Great Commission begins with making new disciples so equipping and training in personal and corporate evangelism will be mission-critical as we move forward.
- "Interdependence will be a distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church." – I think we have too great a separation between the "haves" and the "have nots" in our churches. Sharing resources between churches fits with the heart of the first-century church, and we've seen some wonderful examples of this in E.C. churches recently. I believe that every E.C. church represents an important kingdom influence in their community, and we should cooperate to reduce the number of congregations struggling and closing. The Church Health Community will work with the District Field Directors and the other Communities of our denomination to creatively assist struggling congregations which are ready to work toward revitalization.

God is doing something exciting in the E.C. Church, and it's a great time to be here. Please let me know if there's anything you'd like to discuss or in any way the Church Health Community can be of help. We would also love to hear from you if you would like to participate in the Church Health Community as we grow our team. You can reach me at waynehouck@gmail.com or 610-716-5603 (voice/text). And please join our Facebook page, the [Church Health Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church](#).

Jesus bless you,

Wayne Houck

NATIONAL CONFERENCE NEWS

continued...

Introducing St. Matthew's in Kunkletown, PA



St. Matthew's
102 Church St.
Kunkletown, PA 18058

When I was growing up, it was always exciting when someone new would move into the area, and I would have a new friend to get to know. Well, let me introduce you to my new friend (or should I say friends since they average about 75 people each Sunday), St. Matthew's of Kunkletown, PA!

St. Matthew's is one of the oldest churches in Monroe County with its start being when the Moravian Church began a Christian mission to the Native Americans living in the area. The first white settlers arrived in the area in 1768. By 1770, worship services were being conducted in barns and private homes. In 1779, dedicated German Lutheran and Reformed Christians built a log cabin church building on land donated by Abraham Schmidt. The church was dedicated on October 27, 1779.

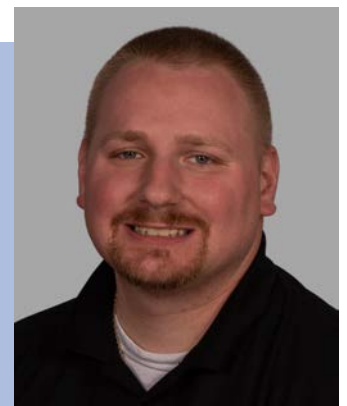
As the area grew in population, the church membership also grew. In 1846 a stone building was

built to replace the log cabin. Then in 1900, the current church structure was erected. In 2015, to position the church for future growth and add more capability for ministry, they added a new addition to their building that contains an elevator, handicapped bathrooms, new offices and classrooms.

St. Matthew's was a Union Church for most of its early history, housing both Lutheran and Reformed congregations. In 1975 the two churches joined together and affiliated with the United Church of Christ. As of this fall, they have made the decision to part ways with old affiliations and join the EC Church as part of a one- to two-year trial period.

In my short time getting to know the congregation and leadership, I can tell you they have an amazing heart for the Lord and a strong and sincere desire to make sure that Biblical preaching and teaching is the center point of the church now and for the generations to come. St. Matthew's is incredibly active in their community and will be a great addition to the Northeast District, filling a gap in the eastern Carbon/western Monroe County area.

Mike



Rev. Mike Coulson
EC Preacher-In-Charge

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

As always, please email:

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

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenny@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717-866-7581

The annual treasurer's guide and 2024 ministry fund forms are available on the member login section of the EC website. Please remember the \$100/yr disability fee is due by January 15, 2024, and the EC Benefits service fee of \$125/yr is due by March 15, 2024. The service fee offsets the cost of the annual financial audit, Directors & Officers Insurance and other operating costs of EC Benefits Corporation that more and more often includes professional fees as employee benefits become more complex. The pastoral compensation forms are updated and posted on the website.

The online forms for reporting workers' compensation wages worked very well last year, and the same system will be used again. Although, be prepared for an accelerated timeline this year. If your church has multiple staff and completing the online form is too cumbersome, you are welcome to email an Excel download from your payroll system. Please contact me to discuss the information we need and the capabilities of your payroll system.

A couple of end of the year reminders:

Pastoral Compensation Forms should be returned to the EC Church Center by **January 15, 2024**.

Annual Statistical Report is due to the EC Church Center, 100 W Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067, by **January 25, 2024**. An electronic reporting option will be available.

W-2 forms for employees (including pastors) and 1099-NEC forms for independent contractors are due by **January 31, 2024**, to the recipient and to the respective government agency. The 1099-NEC form replaces the 1099-MISC in most instances for churches for payments made during 2023 and is to be filled by **January 31, 2024**.

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

The rates for the active pastor health insurance plan will increase by 15% on January 1, 2024 (premium due Dec. 15, 2023). The health insurance rates are:

Family	\$2,642
Employee w/child(ren)	2,002
Couple	2,121
Single	1,000

Please see the website, [Evangelical Congregational Church – Member Login \(eccenter.com\)](http://www.eccenter.com) for additional information.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...

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with any questions
or call
717-866-7581

We have begun the process of scanning and preserving electronically the conference journals of the United Evangelical Church, Eastern Conference of the United Evangelical Church, Western (Ohio) Conference of the United Evangelical Church and from the Evangelical Congregational General Conference, Eastern Conference, Western Conference and National Conference with the goal to make the electronic copies available for research. To that end, we are missing some journals. If you or your church has any of the journals listed below, we would like to have the journals. Making an electronic copy of a journal requires the destruction of the journal, thus the journal(s) will not be returned to you, and we will not purchase the journal but will reimburse any postage costs to mail the journal(s) to the EC Church Center.

General Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church – 1990

East Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church/Eastern Conference of the United Evangelical Church – 1923 to 1927

Ohio (Western) Conference of the United Evangelical Church – pre-1931, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1946.

If you have any of the journals listed, please contact me, Kevin Henry, Executive Director, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171.

Also, please note, we will first need to work through some access and security issues before we post the journals online.

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171.



GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



The Great Redemption Mission

Greetings in the matchless name of Jesus,

This month, we indeed celebrate our God and that we should,

Go tell it on the mountains that Jesus Christ is born!

This year our primary focus for our Prayer Guides has been emphasizing the GMC's mission of nurturing a global vision in the EC Church and supporting the work of the Kingdom around the globe by resourcing and engaging the local church we call the EC Church USA. We've highlighted the ministries of our international EC churches, our missionaries, trips we've taken, places we've spoken, camps and rallies we've been a part of; celebrated the addition of new missionaries to our team; are expectant of a great number of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes to be sent around the world and look forward with anticipation to 2024 of all the Lord will do in and through the Global Ministries Community to be on mission with Christ to reach His world.

If you attended National Conference this past year, or have had Bishop Randy at your church, you have heard his vision of seeing the EC Church become a movement of God. The Evangelical Congregational Church has as its beginning a move of God in the heart of a simple and broken German tiler as he sought comfort and hope in a time of need. As a result of the Spirit of God moving in his heart, God expanded a small German-speaking group of churches to a movement that now spans the globe and speaks many languages. When we think about becoming a "movement of God" today, we are simply seeking to recapture what enlivened the EC Church USA through Jacob Albright, and what remains the driving force of many of our EC churches globally.

Every year more churches are being planted in Nepal, India, and Liberia, and missionaries are being sent to Ghana, to Myanmar, to Bhutan, Bangladesh, and all over the vast country of India. It is our hope that the EC Church USA captures the same missionary spirit that courses through the veins of our international churches who continue to baptize new believers, build churches, ordain pastors and expand the Kingdom through their sacrificial obedience to sharing the story of redemption in their cities, towns, villages and beyond, as well as the passion for God and the zeal of our EC missionaries who daily walk alongside of and minister to those who desperately need the loving embrace of their Creator Redeemer.



Ted Rathman

To learn 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:
[@GMC.ECChurch](https://www.facebook.com/GMC.ECChurch)





Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Holiday Incarnation

One of my favorite Christmas passages is John 1:14 (NLT),

“So the Word became human and made His home among us.”

As we celebrate the Advent and Christmas seasons this year, it is likely these words will be spoken in your church building, probably multiple times. Our faith hinges on this great reality, that God so loved the world that He took action. He stepped into the world He created and made His very home among us.

He could have authored salvation any way He wanted because He wrote the rules. He could have simply written His message in the sky like some kind of cosmic billboard or displayed an amazing angelic choir singing the greatest Christmas cantata (just like that first Christmas) every year or maybe He could have run His own ad campaign during major sporting events with a catchy slogan like, “I Get You!”

Instead, as the Message version states, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” He knew the only way we would understand and know His love was for Him to come to us and display it; He had to sacrifice His one and only Son to purchase our redemption.

No doubt, at some point this Advent season, you will be moved by this reality. As pastors, we will work at helping others be moved by this reality. We will hope that during our cantatas, children’s programs or candlelight services someone might be moved by this reality and open their lives to make Jesus Lord and allow His Spirit to make their lives His home. I pray this is true in your church and mine!

Can I push us a little further though? As churches and church leaders, we must recognize that we no longer live in a culture where it is normal for people to seek these opportunities during the holidays. Some of us are bothered about that word, “holidays,” wanting to make sure the Christ of Christmas is not lost and forgotten. (I still say “Merry Christmas,” by the way.) In a world that does not know the Christ of Christmas, and knows less and less about Him, the darkness is creeping in and taking over, just like the world 2,000 years ago.

It was dark, dark world. John tells us that God’s response was not to rent a billboard, write a cantata, or run an ad campaign. He came to the darkness and was light shining in the darkness. As churches and church leaders, the

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

Holiday Incarnation *continued...*

responsibility to be the light has been passed to us by Jesus. If we are going to reach our communities with the message of the Gospel, we must go further. The things we do to celebrate Jesus' incarnation are not bad, but like Jesus, we must "move into the neighborhood." We must find ways to go to the darkness of the world around us, let the love of Jesus shine out and the message of the Good News be proclaimed.



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 – Echo, the name of this church that is meeting in the Virtual Space, is reaching people with the Gospel and making disciples. Pray that the team will continue to develop and grow.

Manuel and Luz Arias in Lexington, South Carolina – The Arias family is starting a new EC Church. Manuel and Luz are developing a team for ministry, as well as strategizing ways to share the Gospel in tangible ways. Please pray that God would provide a location for this church to use for worship gatherings. Pray also for wisdom, strength and renewed energy for this couple.

Haitian Church Plant – Chezaire and Laurel Dominique have begun meeting with a leadership team to pray and seek God's vision for a Haitian church. Please pray as God continues to gather the planting team that He gives them a specific vision for the future and energizes them for this task. The team has a lead on a church building; pray that God works out the details for this possibility to become a reality.

The Reams – Tim and Pam Ream have moved to Thorn Hill, Tennessee. They are pursuing the opportunity to engage in planting an EC Church in their new community. Pray that God would begin preparing that community to be receptive to His glorious presence. Pray also for the Reams as they begin building relationships and engaging in discipleship relationships through inviting people into their home and engaging individuals in their community.

Zach and Kelsey Van Dyke – Zach and Kelsey have begun planting a network of house churches in and around Davenport, Iowa. They are currently meeting with a group in their own home weekly and seeking God's plan for their future. They are developing a vision for raising up house church shepherds and developing a discipleship and multiplication strategy. Please pray for Zach and Kelsey that God would give them wisdom as they follow Him while providing part-time shepherding to the Hooppole, Illinois EC Church.

Greater Impact – Please pray for churches across our denomination as they look to expand and even multiply their impact in 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.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate

A New Year Brings Changes to PAC

While most of us are thinking about lights, packages and celebrating with family this month, we in the Ministerial Development Community (MDC) are preparing for the Pastoral Assessment Center (PAC). Each year, the MDC gathers a group of seasoned assessors and pastoral candidates to lean in together to listen for the Lord's call on the lives of individuals and families.

This year, the PAC has gone through considerable change. After prayerful consideration and group debriefing sessions, PAC director Cam Smith has developed a three-day assessment center, helping to condense the process and refine the work of the Pastoral Assessment Center.

For many of our assessees, this process is a pivotal moment, a time when they hear clearly from the Lord, establishing the foundation for ministry as a vocational pastor or committing to lead as a lay member. But this can also be a time of great anxiety as their lives are open to examination. The assessors also have a task ahead of them as well. The job of listening and hearing the call is not an easy one and comes with much weight.

As a denomination, I invite each of you to gather around the PAC in prayer. To help you focus your prayer time with specific requests, I have provided a list below. As January approaches and the Pastoral Assessment Center gathers, join us in prayer as together we long to become a dynamic movement of God.

PAC Prayer List:

1. Pray for clarity in hearing the call of the Lord.
2. Pray for PAC director Cam Smith as he leads this valuable endeavor.
3. Pray that the pastoral candidates will feel comfortable and at ease.
4. Pray that our assessors would be filled with godly wisdom and discernment.

Matt



Twin Pines Update:



This year, your congregation has 4 weekends to choose from for Winter Thaw:

- Winter Thaw A: Jan. 12th-14th
- Winter Thaw B: Jan. 26th-28th
- Winter Thaw C: Feb. 16th-18th (opportunity to attend without a youth group)
- Winter Thaw D: Feb. 23rd-25th

Winter Thaw is the perfect opportunity for your church's youth group to attend an exciting and engaging Winter Retreat experience without all of the headaches that can come with retreat logistics and planning. That's why Winter Thaw exists at Twin Pines, we do the planning and you get to spend time with your students, and help them grow in their relationship with Jesus.

There are fewer barriers to entry than you think! All you need to do is bring your youth group and a few chaperones and we do the rest! Reach out to us and get your Youth Group signed up while there is still space! Pricing is cost-effective and is as low as \$130.00 per-person if registering early!

-Also-

Does your church have a few youth, but not enough for a full group? Consider sending them to Winter Thaw C where we provide all of the staffing and supervision; and they're free to make friends and grow deeper in their faith!

Email: Jonah@twinpines.org to sign up for Winter Thaw A-C or call the office for more information: 570-629-2411



CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2023

Friday, December 1

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, December 3

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension Community
First Sunday of Advent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Friday, December 15

Health Insurance Due

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent
Christmas Missions Offering
Liturgical Color - Purple

Friday, December 22

EC Center Closed

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve
Liturgical Color - Purple

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day
EC Center Closed

Tuesday, December 26

EC Center Closed

Friday, December 29

EC Center Closed

Sunday, December 31

New Year's Eve Day
Liturgical Color - White

JANUARY 2024

Monday, January 1

Deadline to Submit Written Requests for Pastoral Changes
New Year's Day
EC Center Closed

Tuesday, January 2

EC Center Closed

Friday, January 5

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Saturday, January 6

Epiphany

Sunday, January 7

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - White

Tuesday - Thursday, January 9 - 11

Pastoral Assessment Center

Sunday, January 14

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 15

Stationing Retreat
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Pastoral Compensation Forms Due
Disability Fee Due
Health Insurance Due

Tuesday, January 16

Stationing Retreat

Sunday, January 21

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, January 25

2023 Annual Statistical Report Due

Friday, January 26

Episcopacy Meeting

Sunday, January 28

Liturgical Color - Green

Ministry Funds, Christmas Missions
Offering and Insurance & Benefits:

Mail to:

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





A Dynamic Movement of God

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a **dynamic movement** of God led by pastors and laity who have a **burning passion** for God and a missionary zeal to reach the lost. We will creatively obey the Great Commission by transforming plateaued and declining churches into healthy, disciple-making churches that are committed to evangelizing the communities to which God has called them. Healthy churches will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities.

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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