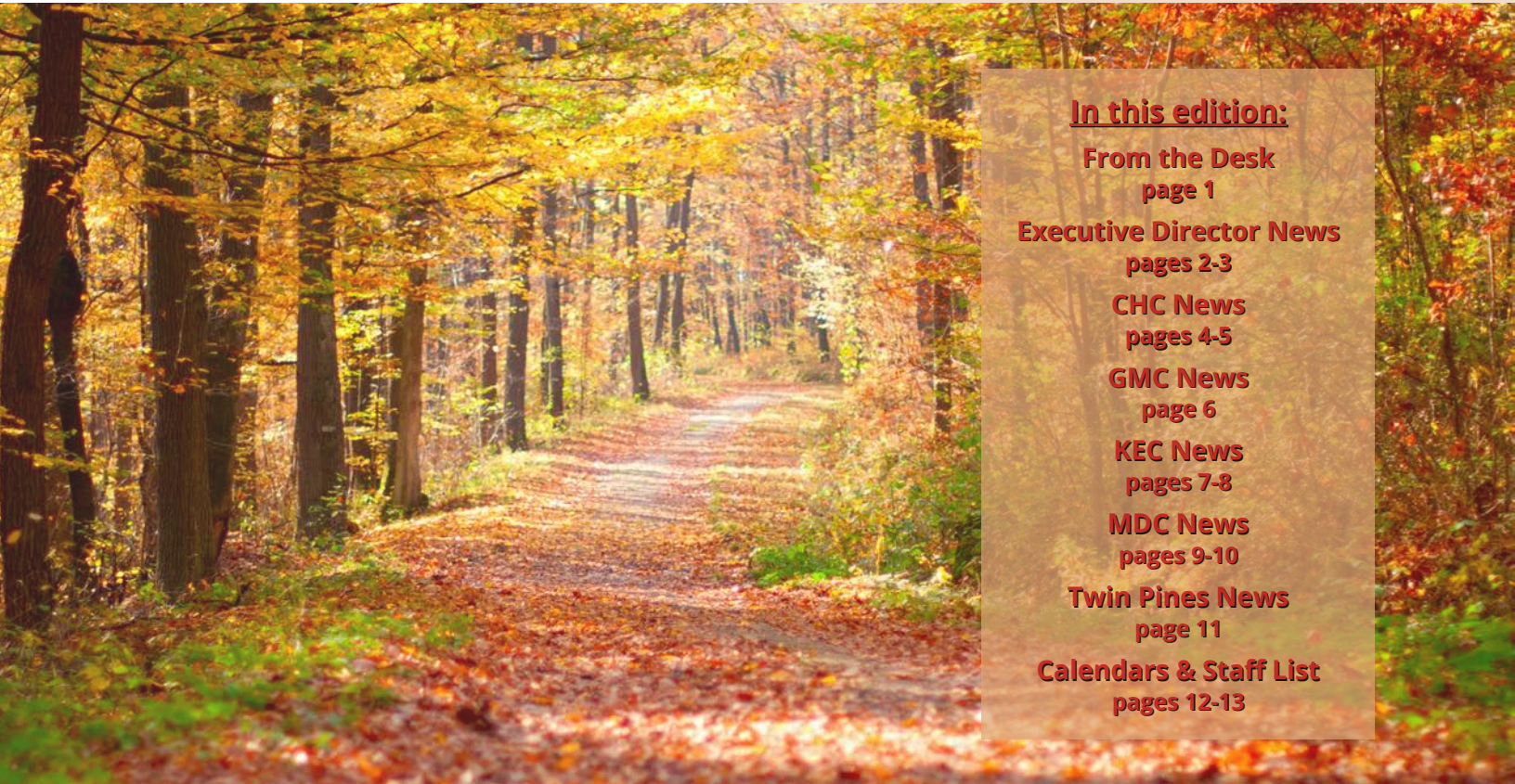


EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



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FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

Discipleship Pathways

"This is the Commission Jesus gave us before He went to the Father, 'go make disciples...'"



Click [HERE](#) for the Bishop's October video message



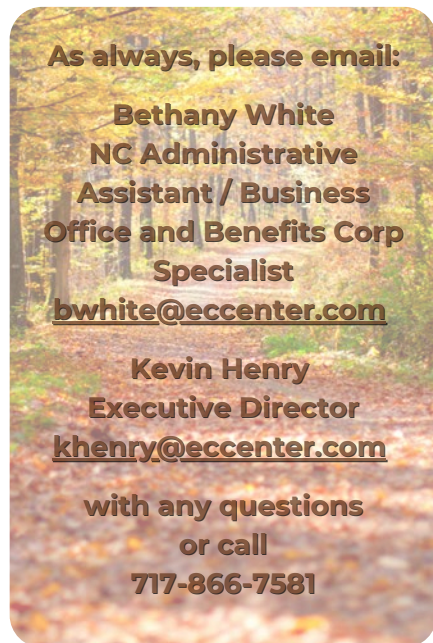
Speaking Schedule for 2024

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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



I know churches are beginning to prepare their 2025 budgets, but there are a few questions we cannot answer yet. Early internet chatter is for the 2025 Social Security COLA to be less than the 2024 COLA which was 3.2%. Expect the official release of the SSA COLA in mid to late October.

We will also not have the active pastor's health insurance renewal until, hopefully, early October. I have no idea how much of a premium increase we could receive. The EC Benefits Trustees will be meeting in mid-October to approve the 2024 health insurance plan renewals. There is a possibility that the plan design may change slightly, e.g., higher deductible, to minimize the cost increase. The health insurance renewal decisions of the trustees will be released shortly after the meeting. The Highmark Freedom Blue Medicare supplemental plan rates are increasing for 2025 to \$277/month, an increase of \$22/month per member. The increase of \$22/month will be a federally mandated increase to the pharmacy benefit. The previous Medicare Part D, "donut hole" will be eliminated in 2025, replaced with a \$2,000 out-of-pocket prescription maximum. In other words, in most instances, participants on Highmark Freedom Blue will only

have to pay up to \$2,000 out-of-pocket for prescription drugs. With this increase in the pharmacy comes an increase in the premium. Medicare participants are encouraged to research, with the help of a Medicare Supplemental plan consultant, all available Medicare Supplemental plans. Based on ongoing healthcare needs, there may be a plan available that will provide better benefits. Medicare open enrollment begins on October 15, 2024.

The open enrollment period for the active pastor's health insurance plan with Guidestone begins on November 1. If you would like to or need to join the Guidestone health insurance plan, please contact Kevin Henry or Bethany White prior to December 1 for enrollment information. The plan is open to stationed pastors working at least 30 hours per week and under Medicare eligibility age.

The pastoral compensation committee recommends using the Social Security COLA for the 2025 annual pastoral salary increase. If the internet prognosticators are correct, the 2025 Social Security COLA will be around 2.5%. It might be a little higher once the final increase is released. We are all experiencing the same increases in consumer prices and lay leaders may have received wage and salary increases from their employer to offset the increase in consumer prices. Please prayerfully consider an annual salary increase for your pastor in 2025.

The 2025 Pastoral Compensation Forms will be available on the Church Center website in a few weeks or so. Expect the Social Security Administration to release the 2025 COLA in late October 2024, if we are lucky.

Please contact me, khenry@eccenter.com or 717-628-2171 or Bethany White, bwhite@eccenter.com or 717-866-7581, with any questions or problems.

Kevin Henry
Executive Director

Bethany White
Benefits Specialist

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY



Free Money Is Going Fast -

~~\$10,000~~ ~~\$8,000~~ ~~\$6,000~~ ~~\$5,500~~ ~~\$3,000~~

Did you know that financial stress is one of the leading causes of workplace distraction and decreased productivity? It's true. When employees are worried about money, it can impact their focus, job performance and overall well-being. That is why we are excited to offer you the opportunity to improve your financial health and earn some extra cash at the same time. Our online financial health training program is designed to equip you with the knowledge and tools you need to make informed financial decisions. From budgeting and saving to investing and retirement planning, you will learn practical strategies to help you reach your financial goals.

To encourage you to prioritize your financial well-being, we are offering a \$250 cash gift to all pastors who complete the online financial health training by **December 31, 2024**. That's right – you can get paid to learn how to manage your money better. We have once again partnered with the

National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) to offer Pastoral Financial Health and Church Generosity training. The EC Church was awarded a grant of \$10,000 with \$7,000 previously awarded to fifteen EC pastors, leaving \$3,000 available for additional grants. The training is open to all paid pastoral or ministerial individuals employed by an EC Church. The pastor/minister may be full-time or part-time (no minimum hours); serve as the lead, senior, associate, assistant, youth or outreach pastor or in a music ministry. If you have completed the financial health training previously (2019 – 2021), you are not eligible to receive a second cash gift. The cash gifts are made available by the generosity, vision and ministry of the Lilly Endowment in partnership with the NAE.

To receive a \$250 cash gift a pastor must complete one of the Pastoral Financial Health modules at <https://naefinancialhealth.online/>. Scroll down the page and select "Create Account". On the next page, enter your information and from the drop-down box of participating denominations select us, Evangelical Congregational Church. On the next page select one module from the six session Personal Finances Course. Once the module is completed, I will receive an email that the class was completed and send the registered participant the financial gift.

A second \$250 grant will be awarded for the completion of a second module in the Personal Financial Health course. A maximum of \$500 in grants will be awarded per participant. Each training can be completed in 60 to 90 min and these grants are tax free.

This is a fantastic opportunity to enhance your financial literacy and boost your bank account.

So, what are you waiting for? Enroll in the financial health training today and start your journey to financial freedom.

Please contact Kevin Henry, Executive Director, with any questions at (717) 628-2171 or khenry@eccenter.com.

Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

The Internet: Connecting with the Unchurched and the Lost

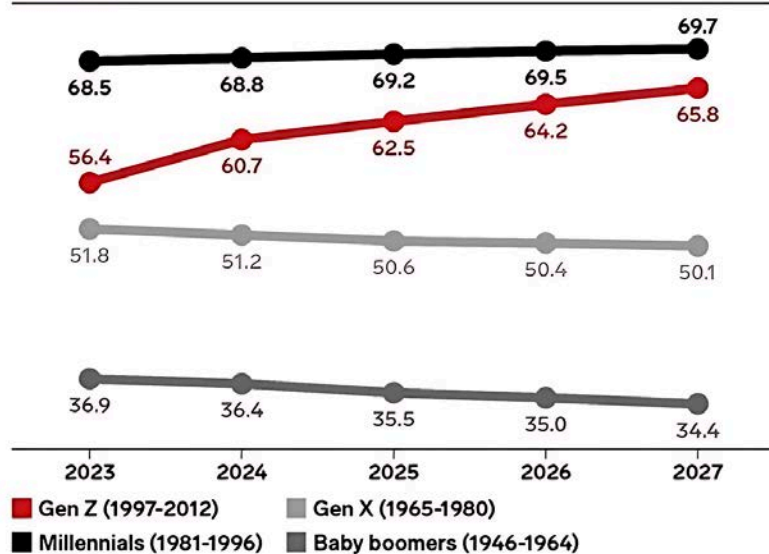
Whether or not your church chooses to use social media as a form of communicating with the community can be a decision fraught with anxiety. Some pastors and lay leaders say they do not know anything about technology so they steer clear of using “the computer.” Other churches have robust outreaches using social media, websites and e-commerce to reach the lost. There are some interesting statistics that we might consider when formulating an online strategy. Grey Matter Research estimates that:

- More than 17 million non-attenders check out church websites every year.
- More than 80% of first-time church attenders have visited the church’s website before setting foot inside the door.
- Churches that accept tithing online see a 32% increase in overall donations. (Nonprofits Source)
- There are more than 3.065 billion users on Facebook, with the largest number being between 25-34 years old. They’re 56% male and spend over a half hour a day on the Facebook app. (sprout social)

Although pastors have said that no one in their older congregation is on Facebook, they have been mistaken. We should be aware, however, that younger people are more likely to use social media and to be regular users of social networks. If we want to reach a younger demographic, we might consider making our message available in the virtual space where they are already present.

US Social Network Users, by Generation, 2023-2027

millions



Note: Internet users who use a social network via any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, May 2023

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Insider Intelligence | eMarketer

Church Health Community News

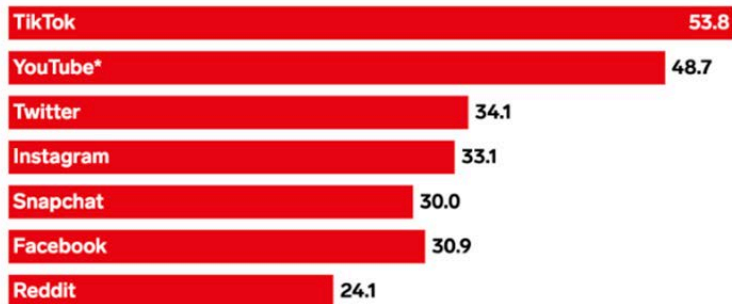
FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate
continued...

The Internet: Connecting with the Unchurched and the Lost continued...

People spend dramatically more time on social media platforms than they likely do in church. Don't you wish your church spent as much time in their Bible as they do on social media as shown below?

Average Time Spent per Day by US Adult Users on Select Social Media Platforms, 2023 minutes



Note: ages 18+; internet users who use each social network via any device at least once per month; includes all time spent on social network platforms; includes usage via any device; *YouTube includes all time spent watching video on YouTube via any device; includes YouTube TV
Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer, June 2023

If we ignore electronic communication (websites, social media, text messaging etc.), we miss a great opportunity to reach the lost with the message of Jesus. The same may be true of a half-hearted effort. It is not unusual to look up a church online and find outdated pictures and announcements from two Christmases ago. Researchers say that 46% report a website's design is their number one criterion for determining the credibility of an organization (Source: Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab). That suggests that the same bias can be true for our church. Just having a free website or an untended Facebook page may not be creating the impression you are trying to make. Using stock photos of families who are not part of your church can be considered misleading by those who decide to visit.

One can only wonder how many people might drive past our building during the week, search for us online and be discouraged from visiting by what they find (or do not find).

We sometimes find it helpful to remind people that the internet is morally neutral. There is certainly a lot of objectionable material on the web and social media. But like our money, we can choose to use that resource for Kingdom purposes rather than supporting evil. I believe the modern church has an opportunity to redeem social media for good, and we would love to help you.

The Church Health Community can help your church develop a productive strategy for reaching your community and beyond. We can help point you in the right direction to get started. When people in your area are looking for a church and can easily find engaging, informative content, they are more likely to visit on Sunday morning. Feel free to reach out to me at waynehouck@gmail.com if you'd like to discuss more.

Be blessed today,

Wayne



GMC

Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



THE GMC IS HEADED TO HONDURAS. WILL YOU JOIN US?

The Global Ministries Community will be taking two teams to Honduras in 2025 to partner with Casa de Luz and Ed and Val Schubert - one in February and one in July.

Would you prayerfully consider if the Lord would be calling you to step onto the mission field for a short-term trip?

A great adventure begins with one step of obedience.

To have a packet sent to you with information and an application contact Dee at the GMC office at 717-866-7581 or ecglobal@eccenter.com.



February trip application deadline is November 1st!





Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Church Planting and Evangelism

In January 2002, Tim Keller wrote this, "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for (1) the numerical growth of the body of Christ in a city and (2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else - not crusades, outreach programs, parachurch ministries, growing megachurches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes - will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow-raising statement, but to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial."

In the same article he states, "Only a person who is being evangelized in the context of an ongoing worshiping and shepherding community can be sure of finally coming home into vital, saving faith. This is why a leading missiologist like C. Peter Wagner can say, 'Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.'"

I am so excited to see what God is accomplishing through our current church planting efforts. In just one example, our Haitian church planters in Lancaster (Chezaire Dominique and Martial Pierre David) have reported that in just over one month of worship services they have seen two people accept Christ as their Savior and are already seeing as many as 27 people in worship attendance.

Would you begin to ask God how you and your congregation could begin to engage in church planting? Perhaps it is as simple as being committed prayer partners with our current church planters. Maybe you could partner with them in regular financial support. Or possibly your district could work together to assemble a team to plant a church in your district in a least-reached area of your community?

Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate
continued...

Church Planting and Evangelism

continued...

I believe church planting is at the heart of the Great Commission, and it is the responsibility of all our churches to actively engage, to some degree, in planting new churches for the sake of the Kingdom. If you would like to talk specifically about how your church might step into this exciting Kingdom work, feel free to contact me. I would love to help you explore the opportunities that are available.



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

Cheziare and Laurel Dominique – The Dominiques have been meeting with a leadership team to pray and seek God's vision for a Haitian church. God has provided a great ministry partner out of Grace Community Church, Willow Street named Martial who is also Haitian and is passionate about helping with this church plant. El Shaddai Community has begun a Sunday Evening worship service at Trinity EC Church in Lancaster, PA. They are seeing new families every week and seeing people come to know Christ and follow Him.

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. Manuel and Luz have especially asked for prayer for their family. They are considering potential changes that would allow them to devote more time to the church. Pray for wisdom for them and their family.

Tim and Pam Ream – The Reams 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 homes and engaging individuals in their community.

Mike Coulson and People's EC Church – 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. People's is also beginning a micro church that will meet at Confessions Bar in Nesquehoning. Pray for this open door to be a Gospel presence where people who need Jesus hang out!

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 their time shepherding the Hoopole, Illinois EC Church comes to an end. Also pray for wisdom as they work on developing their 2025 church budget.

Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK
Rev. Adam Roberts, ICL Director

ICL Update

The Fall semester of the EC Church's Institute for Church Leadership is off to a great start! Revs. Dan Blank and Tanner Cosgrave are leading Theology 2 where students are being equipped to understand and practice the doctrines of our faith by presenting a Gospel-centered theology that is robust, accessible and grounded. In this course, students are engaging with key doctrines of evangelical faith including the EC Articles of Faith. This course concludes on October 15th.

Starting on October 22nd, Bishop Emeritus Bruce Hill will be teaching our Healthy Worship & Ministry course on Tuesday evenings. This course will equip students with a practical understanding of an approach to pastoral functions that promote health in the local church. Topics include congregational worship, crafting inspiring worship services and transitioning worship services to be more contemporary as well as the functions and practices of communion, baptism, infant presentation, weddings, funerals and church membership classes. It is not only a great course for our new pastors, but it is a great refresher for seasoned pastors as well as lay people!

As always, our non-credit courses continue to be open to all, without any educational prerequisites. If you are interested in registering for our upcoming Healthy Worship & Ministry course or in learning more about what the ICL has to offer you and your church, please go to: <https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/>. If you have any interest in or questions about our ICL, I would love to talk to you! Reach out to me at aproberts563@gmail.com.

Adam



Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., Chaplaincy Committee Chair

Prayer Focus on our Heroes - Our Chaplains

Before we introduce our chaplain for the month, we want to share some news with you regarding the promotion of one of our military chaplains. Chaplain Karl Noel Blancaflor was promoted by the U.S. Air Force to a full Colonel. Congratulations, Colonel Blancaflor! He will be the focus of our column next month, and at that time, you will be able to get a little more information on him, his family and his ministry.

This month we want to introduce the Rev. Dr. Timothy Seiger who is the pastor at Lewisberry. Tim is the son of the late Rev. Larry Seiger and is married to Kim. They are parents to three adult children. In addition to his pastoral duties, and after completing a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, he is also began serving as an on-call hospital chaplain at Hershey Medical Center (HMC). Tim wrote the following about his work at Hershey:



"HMC has integrated the chaplain role deeply into the life of the institution. The on-call chaplain's role is as a member of several 'teams' in the hospital, including the trauma team, the brain attack team, and also being paged to code calls on the floors. The work, in addition to spiritual care for patients, family and staff, includes advocacy and being a liaison between family and medical staff. I have found this work to be some of the most significant and meaningful work of my 30+ years of pastoral ministry and am grateful for the opportunity to sense the kingdom of God in this setting"

On its web site Hershey Medical Center says that its chaplains provide:

- Spiritual, emotional, and sacramental support
- Pastoral care and counseling
- Empathic listening
- Consultations on difficult decisions

In the month of October, we want to pray for the Seigers in addition to our other chaplains, our Chaplaincy Committee and for individuals who are interested in or considering some form of chaplaincy.



TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

Twin Pines Update:

Saturday, November 16, 2024

Twin Pines 60th Anniversary Gala

Doors open at 6:00 pm
Dinner at 6:30 pm

R.S.V.P. by November 4 2024
570-629-2411 or banquet@twinpines.org
Suggested \$30 per person donation



An evening of celebration for
60 years of ministry
at Twin Pines.

Weaver's Banquet Facility
2610 N. Reading Road
Denver, PA

Winter Thaw!

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.



#THAW25

- WT-A, JAN. 17TH - 19TH
- WT-B, JAN. 31ST - FEB. 2ND
- WT-C, FEB. 14TH - 16TH
- WT-D, FEB. 21ST - 23RD

BUILDING
MOMENTUM



We want to work with You!

Would you like us to come present at your church? Would you like materials to include in your Sunday bulletins or in your church newsletter? Reach out to us and let us know!

Email: Shawn@twinpines.org or call the office 570-629-2411

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2024

Wednesday, October 2

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, October 6

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension

Kingdom Extension Offering*

World Communion Sunday

Liturgical Color - Green

Friday and Saturday, October 11-12

EC Ethos Class

Sunday, October 13

Liturgical Color - Green

Thursday, October 17

National Ministry Team Meeting

Sunday, October 20

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, October 27

Liturgical Color - Green

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits, *Kingdom Extension Offering and Thankoffering (voluntary)*

Mail to:

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

NOVEMBER 2024

Sunday, November 3

Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension

Daylight Savings Time Ends

Liturgical Color - Green

Tuesday, November 5

Election Day

Wednesday, November 6

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, November 10

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, November 11

Veterans Day

Sunday, November 17

Liturgical Color - Green

Sunday, November 24

Thanksgiving Sunday

Thankoffering (voluntary)*

Liturgical Color - White

Thursday, November 28

Thanksgiving

EC Center Closed

Friday, November 29

EC Center Closed



october

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



Changing the World with Jesus

“Jesus came and told his disciples, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

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717-866-7581

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



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Rev. Mike Snedeker

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Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr.

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Wendy Beard

October 2024 Edition - Editor/Art Design

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