

EC LEADER

A publication of the Evangelical Congregational Church



In this edition:

From the Desk
page 1

Executive Director News
pages 2-3

CHC News
pages 4-5

GMC News
page 6

KEC News
page 7-8

MDC News
page 9-12

Twin Pines News
page 13

Calendars & Staff List
pages 14-15

FROM THE DESK

Bishop Randy Sizemore

The Christmas Story

“For those of us who have experienced ‘The Christmas Story’... there is no way a little generic description is going to be able to capture what it really means to us.”



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



Speaking Schedule for 2025

Bishop Randy is now scheduling his 2025 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

As always, please email:

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

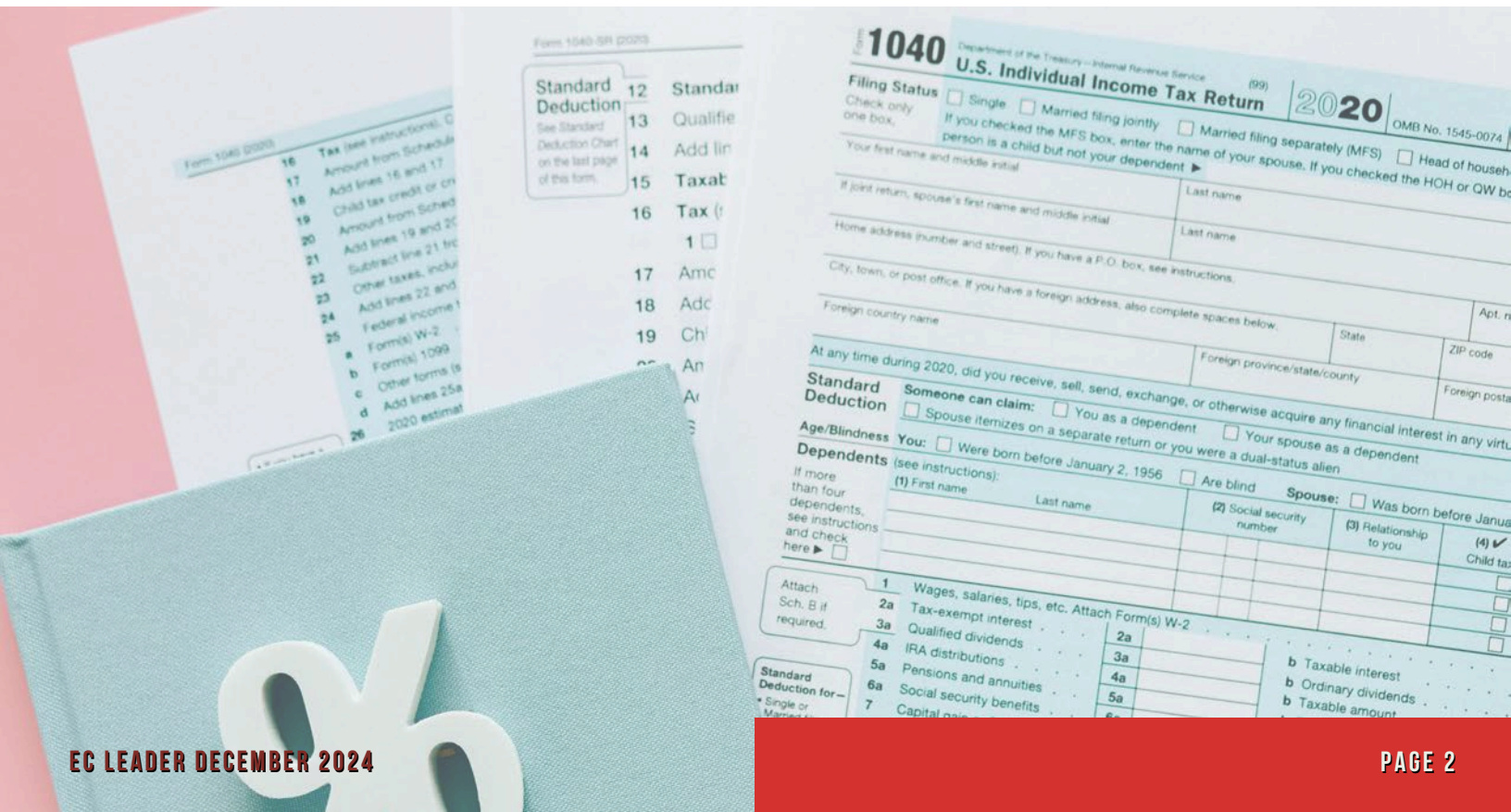
Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717.866.7581

The annual treasurer's guide and 2025 ministry fund forms are now accessible in the members' section of the EC website. Please note that the \$100 disability fee is due by **January 15, 2025**, and the EC Benefits service fee of \$125 is due by **March 15, 2025**. The service fee helps cover the costs of the annual financial audit, Directors & Officers Insurance and other operational expenses of EC Benefits Corporation, which increasingly include professional fees as employee benefits become more intricate. The pastoral compensation forms have been updated and are available on the website.

To streamline the workload for church treasurers and minimize postage costs, the National Conference and EC Benefits offer convenient online payment options. Currently, 37 EC Churches have embraced the efficiency of electronic monthly ministry fund payments. To initiate ACH transfers for your ministry fund contributions, please reach out to Kevin Henry at khenry@eccenter.com or 717.628.2171.

We are implementing a new online system to streamline the reporting of wages for the annual workers' compensation audit. Detailed instructions will be provided once the forms are accessible online. This new system is designed to simplify the process compared to the previous year. We strongly encourage all treasurers to submit their wage reports electronically. If your church employs multiple staff members and the online form proves too complex, please email an Excel export directly from your payroll system. We anticipate the online reporting tool will be available by late December.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS KEVIN HENRY

continued...



As always, please email:

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

Kevin Henry
Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

with any questions
or call
717.866.7581

A couple of end of the year reminders:

- Pastoral Compensation Forms should be returned to the EC Church Center by **January 16, 2025**.
- The Annual Statistical Report is due to the EC Church Center 100 W Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067 by **January 25, 2025**. 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, 2025**, to the recipient and to the respective government agency. The 1099-NEC replaced the 1099-MISC in most instances for churches; payments made during 2024 are to be filed by **January 31, 2025**.
- 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 effective on **January 1, 2025** are below.

	<u>Health Choice</u> 4000/HRA	<u>Health Saver</u> 5000/HSA
Family	\$3,303	\$2,941
Employee & Child(ren)	\$2,503	\$1,948
Couple	\$2,651	\$2,128
Single	\$1,250	\$1,135

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

The HRA plan year ends on December 31, 2024 and all requests for reimbursement for the January 2024 - December 2024 plan year must be received by Benecon, our HRA administrator, by March 31, 2025, ninety days after the end of the plan year. This is an HRA rule regardless of the insurance carrier. Reimbursements received after March 31 will not be paid. No exceptions.

Highmark Freedom Blue Retiree Plan

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, increased by \$22 per month to \$277 per person per month, effective January 1, 2025, with minor changes in coverage levels.

For a husband and wife on Freedom Blue, double the amounts above.

Numerous Medicare Advantage plans are available, some of which may not incur any cost to the participant. However, it is important to note that each plan has its own set of advantages and disadvantages, including participating providers and benefits offered. Therefore, we strongly advise retirees to carefully research any Medicare Advantage plan before making a switch. If a retiree lacks the financial resources to cover a larger portion of the Freedom Blue plan, the Manna Fund is available to provide financial assistance.

May you have a blessed holiday season celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Kevin Henry
Executive Director

Bethany White
Benefits Specialist



Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate

From Decline to Revival: A Path for Church Transformation

Turning around a church that has been in decline for decades is a daunting task. Leadership, including pastors, are often discouraged and unsure of the best path toward new life. The oft-repeated statistic is that 80-85% of churches in the United States are plateaued or in decline, and the churches of our denomination are no exception. We are blessed that the Evangelical Congregational Church genuinely desires our churches to grow healthy and effective, seeing greater vitality and excitement in their ministry.

In his book, *Comeback Churches; How 300 Churches Turned Around and How Yours Can Too* (2007, B&H), Ed Stetzer speaks very directly to pastors and church leaders. He says,

"If pastors are going to lead their churches through church revitalization, a change of focus will be required. Far too many churches focus on maintenance and not vision. That means a change in calendar, strategy and plans is needed."

One of the most encouraging things that the Church Health team has seen in 2024 is that churches in our denomination are experiencing clear signs of revitalization. It is happening in small churches with aging congregations, and it is happening in both rural and urban settings. In some cases, leadership has been a bit skeptical of the possibilities, but God has been working to encourage pastors and congregations, and they have started seeing new life in their church. Congregations have begun to embrace the culture-shift that goes with intentionally making disciples and fulfilling the Great Commission, finding creative ways to reach a community which has grown increasingly distant.

The Church Health Community would genuinely appreciate the opportunity to work with your church by helping you to assess your situation and put together an actionable plan to move forward and grow. We can make resource recommendations and meet with your team. None of our pastors should feel alone. We are excited to be part of a denomination that provides help, resources and an encouraging community, so please reach out today.

Church Health Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Wayne Houck, CHC Associate
continued...

From Decline to Revival: A Path for Church Transformation

continued...

As Stetzer concludes, "Leading a comeback church is hard work – but it's God's work. God wants His churches filled with life again. That often involves a future that looks different from the past, but it can happen. So come on, jump in! Don't settle for stagnation and decline – there are few things more exciting as new believers coming into the life of a once declining church. It will be difficult to make a comeback. That we can promise. But, if you have the heart for it, God can work in ways that you cannot imagine."

The Church Health Community is here to help, and we will soon be launching the Church Revitalization Cohort. This will be a community meeting to help equip pastors and lay leadership of our churches with the tools to turn churches around. We will meet online as a group and offer 1:1 coaching. If you would like to participate, please reach out to me by email (waynehouck@gmail.com) or voice/text at 610.716.5603.

Wayne





Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church



Merry Christmas

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:21

**Prayers for a blessed
Christmas Day
as you celebrate
the incredible gift
of Jesus!**

*Pastor Ted Rathman
&
Dee Jaramillo*



Global Ministries Community of the Evangelical Congregational Church
100 W. Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067
ecglobal@eccenter.com / 717-866-7581 x1109 / gmc.eccenter.com



Kingdom Extension Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Mike Snedeker, KEC Associate

Church Planting Partnerships

Most pastors have preached sermon series on the “one another” statements in the New Testament. Depending on translation and interpretation, we know there are at least 59 “one another” phrases and, in some counts, over 100. We were never intended to walk this journey alone. As our church has walked through the book of Ephesians this fall, I was again struck with the unity God intends for his church. We are in this together.

Bishop Randy Sizemore has done such a great job reminding us of our denomination’s vision statement. For most of us, the phrase “dynamic movement of God” just rolls off our tongues at this point. Further on in that statement, we are reminded that we seek to have “Healthy churches [that] will reproduce themselves by planting churches in least-reached communities. Interdependence will be the distinguishing mark of the Evangelical Congregational Church as local churches network with one another and ministries beyond the E.C. family to proclaim the Gospel to the world.”

That interdependence is so vital to who we are and what God is calling us to. I love how the Red Rose District, under the leadership of Rev. Mike Sigman (Red Rose DFD), has taken this vision to heart. At a recent district meeting, the district churches agreed to collectively get behind our El Shaddai Haitian church plant in Lancaster city. Most of the churches have already agreed to contribute to the financial support of the church and are stepping up to commit themselves as regular prayer partners. Many of the churches look forward to opportunities to come along side of El Shaddai in other ways moving forward as well.

This church plant is moving forward, seeing hearts and lives changed, people coming to Christ and disciples being made. They could never accomplish this on their own, nor can any of our church planting efforts. They need you! They need EC Districts to come together to support and pray for them; they need individual churches who will connect with and covenant together as partners with our planters in helping these new churches.

If you would be interested in connecting with one of our church planting teams, please contact me to discuss how you can partner with them.

Mike



Kingdom Extension Community News

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

El Shaddai – The Dominiques and Martial Pierre are well into actively planting a Haitian church in Lancaster, PA. El Shaddai Community has been meeting on Sunday evenings for worship service at Trinity EC Church in Lancaster, PA. They are seeing new families every week and witnessing people come to know Christ and follow Him. Please pray especially for Martial and his family. His wife and children remain in Haiti, unable to gain asylum to the US.

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. They are currently developing Men's and Women's ministries within the church. 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 home 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 EC 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 as they transition away from shared ministry to full focus on TACO (The Axios Community Outpost). Also pray for wisdom as they are develop discipleship pathways and vision and mission statements.





Ministerial Development Community News

FROM THE DESK

Rev. Matt Hill, MDC Associate

A Call to Prayer for the 2025 Pastoral Assessment Center

As we look toward the end of 2024, we at the Ministerial Development Community are gearing up for January 2025 and the Pastoral Assessment Center. Under the leadership of director Cam Smith, the Pastoral Assessment Center seeks to walk with candidates as they contemplate a call into ministry. Once again, this year is lining up to be an exciting week of diving deep with our candidates as we listen for the voice of God.

Helping to affirm a call into ministry is a weighty task. James 1:5 states,

"If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."

Our assessors need the wisdom of God to discern the call in the lives of our candidates. 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've 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



Ministerial Development Community News

ICL UPDATE

Rev. Adam Roberts., ICL Director

We are looking forward to our Spring 2025 courses at the EC Church's ICL!

Our first course of the semester will be "The History of Evangelicalism" in which we will chart the course of evangelicalism as we know it, beginning with the Reformation and concluding with the 21st century. In this course we will look at the individuals, events and organizations that shaped the movement as well as the historical and theological developments that shape who we are today. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings from February 4 through March 11, 2025.

Our second course of the semester will be "Developing a Contextual Missional Mindset" in which a team of instructors will guide learners toward what it looks like to make disciples in our changing world. Disciple-making processes, evangelism tools and technology will be prominent features of this practical a course. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings from March 25 through May 6, 2025.

The ICL (Institute for Church Leadership) offers a series of courses in Bible, theology, spiritual formation, the mission of the Kingdom, church history and more. Anyone can benefit from these opportunities for spiritual enrichment and leadership development. Courses do not have any educational prerequisites and do not earn seminary credit. Classes are affordable as students and auditors will pay a one-time fee per class of \$250 and \$50, respectively.

If you' are interested in learning more about what the ICL has to offer you and your church, or to register for a course, go to: <https://mdc.eccenter.com/institute-for-church-leadership/>. Spring classes will open for registration by mid-December.) 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.

Celebrate with us as we congratulate our newest graduates of the ICL!

Chuck Moore is a member of Bethany EC Church in Creswell, PA, and he is actively involved in motorcycle ministry which gives him many opportunities to share the Gospel. He shares that the ICL prepared him for hard conversations and questions that he gets asked while sharing the good news among the many people he interacts with.



Janet Watt is the Faith Community Nurse at Trinity Lighthouse Church, Royersford, PA. She is pursuing ordination as a Deaconess. She says the following about her time in the ICL: "I liked the classes required for ordination. It gave me a better understanding of our ECC denominational beliefs. The pastor presenters did a great job. I would recommend any lay person to take ICL classes by auditing."

Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

Conference Chaplaincy Committee

What is the Chaplaincy Committee and why does it exist? In this closing article for the year 2024, we would like to honor the members of the Chaplaincy Committee and briefly explain its purpose. We appreciate their willingness to serve and the input they give to the chaplains and chaplaincy program of the EC Church along with their availability to counsel and advise our chaplains and those considering chaplain service.

This chaplaincy committee seeks to:

- Promote and develop chaplaincy within the EC Church
- Help individuals assess their potential and call to chaplaincy
- Endorse qualified chaplains, as required
- Provide support, supervision and development to the EC military and community chaplains
- Represent the denomination on professional boards and organizations
- Provide or recommend training opportunities where possible

The members of this committee have a heart for the chaplaincy and have either served in a chaplaincy position or are currently serving. We appreciate their willingness to serve and say a hearty, "Thank you!" to them. Fulfilling this task are six individuals. These are:

- Rev. Mark Brooks is a former chaplain at Stone Ridge Retirement Community and is currently pastoring at Bethesda, Reedsville EC Church.
- Rev. Harold Easter is chaplain of Khe Sanh Veteran's Organization and pastor at Bunker Hill EC.
- Rev. Robert Shuey is chaplain with Christian Chaplains & Coaching and pastor at Zion EC, Mohnton.
- Rev. Dr. William Stoffel served as chaplain of the Masonic Lodge and the local volunteer fire company and retired at this year's conference.
- Rev. Charles Walker is a chaplain with a local volunteer fire department, pastor of Bethany EC, Leesport and Berks District Field Director.
- Rev. Dr. W. Joel Copeland, Jr., Chair and EC Endorser, is a retired VA Medical Center chief chaplain as well as a retired EC Pastor.



Ministerial Development Community News

CHAPLAINCY CORNER

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

continued...

Conference Chaplaincy Committee

continued...

Please pray for this committee as we try to help our chaplains find answers and get the resources they need. Also pray that the Lord will call additional chaplains into His service.

Last month we announced that the NAE was offering a board certification to chaplains who desire to go a different route than that the major chaplain certifying bodies. Certification is not required for military chaplains, but the Department of Veterans Affairs, many institutions and law enforcement agencies require it. The fee will be considerably less under NAE (\$200) than the other accrediting agencies. The NAE does require you to adhere to the Code of Ethics of the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) and respond to the 34 NAE competencies, 29 of which are those of the APC.

Additional information may be secured from: <https://evangelicalchaplains.org/ebcc> or from jlesher@NAE.org, PO Box 23269, Washington, DC 20026, Phone # 210.519.9055.

Our final item is regarding the annual report for chaplains, particularly for those pastors who are appointed as a "chaplain" under the National Conference. All such appointed personnel are expected to file an annual Chaplain's Service Report by January 20 of each year. As Jodi Earhart wrote: "We revised the form and added it to the eccenter.com website. You can find it under the Member Login, under the Forms and Resources/Board of Examiners/Annual Chaplaincy Report. It is available as a PDF or online."

For some of you who are appointed as chaplains, this may be new to you. Others have had previous experience in filing this report. Non-military chaplains need only fill out Part I while military chaplains need to fill out Parts I and II. If you have any questions, contact me or a member of the Chaplaincy Committee.

Until next month, please remember the Chaplaincy Committee and the chaplains in your prayers, especially our military chaplains as they change their commander in chief in January.





TWIN PINES

CAMP, CONFERENCE & RETREAT CENTER

Twin Pines Update:



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.

New for 2025, weeks will have enhanced themeing, fun activities, our annual video competition and so much more.

Learn more about the keynote speakers for each weekend at TwinPines.org and go to the Events, then Winter Thaw page.

Reach out to Jonah@twinpines.org for more info on Thaw!

Year End Giving

As we approach the end of the year, we want to acknowledge the generosity that all of the members of our community have extended to us throughout the year and over these past 60 years of ministry. With your help we will continue to share the redemptive power of the Gospel with Campers, Retreat Guests, and members of the community.

Questions? Email: Shawn@twinpines.org or call 570-629-2411



CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2024

Sunday, December 1

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

Wednesday, December 4

Day of Prayer for the EC Church

Sunday, December 8

Second Sunday of Advent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Sunday, December 15

Third Sunday of Advent
Liturgical Color - Purple

Tuesday, December 17

Loan & Investment Committee Meeting

Sunday, December 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent
GMC Christmas Missionary Offering*
Liturgical Color - Purple

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve
EC Center Closed

Wednesday, December 25

Christmas Day
EC Center Closed

Thursday, December 26

EC Center Closed

Sunday, December 29

Liturgical Color - White

Tuesday, December 31

New Year's Eve
EC Center Closed

JANUARY 2025

Wednesday, January 1

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

Sunday, January 5

Day of Prayer for the Kingdom Extension
Liturgical Color - White

Monday, January 6

Epiphany

Tuesday, January 7 through Thursday, January 9

Pastoral Assessment Center

Sunday, January 12

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 13 through Tuesday, January 14

Stationing Retreat

Wednesday, January 15

Disability Fee Due

Thursday, January 16

Pastoral Compensation Forms Due

Sunday, January 19

Liturgical Color - Green

Monday, January 20

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Friday, January 24

Episcopacy Committee Meeting

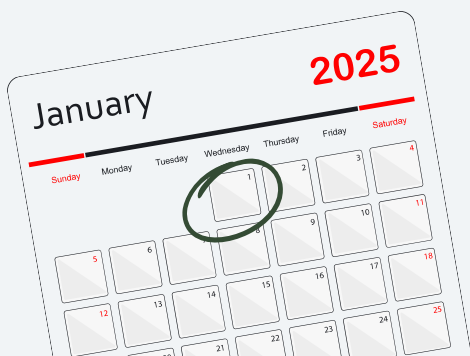
Saturday, January 25

2024 Annual Reports Due

Sunday, January 26

Liturgical Color - Green

PASTORAL CHANGES



January 1, 2025 is the deadline for both churches and pastors to submit written requests for a change or superannuation (retirement) to the Bishop.

Ministry Funds, Insurance & Benefits, GMC Christmas Missionary Offering*

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



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)

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.



Contributors

Bishop Randy Sizemore
Kevin Henry
Rev. Wayne Houck
Rev. J. Ted Rathman
Rev. Mike Snedeker
Rev. Matthew Hill
Rev. Adam Roberts
Rev. W. Joel Copeland, Jr.
Jonah Adamcik

Wendy Beard

December 2024 Edition - Editor/Art Design

STAFF

Rev. Randy Sizemore - Bishop
rsizemore@eccenter.com

Jodi Earhart - Assistant to the Bishop
jearthart@eccenter.com

Kevin Henry - Executive Director
khenry@eccenter.com

Shirley Long - Business Office Specialist
slong@eccenter.com

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

Wendy Beard - NC Communications Coordinator
wbeard@eccenter.com

Denise Jaramillo - GMC Deputy Director
ecglobal@eccenter.com

ASSOCIATES

Rev. Wayne Houck - Church Health
waynehouck@gmail.com

Rev. J. Ted Rathman - Global Ministries
pastorted@graceecchurch.org

Rev. Mike Snedeker - Kingdom Extension
msnedeker@eccenter.com

Rev. Matthew Hill - Ministerial Development
matt@stpaulsreamstown.com