

E.C. Leader



Evangelical Congregational Church

OUR VISION

The Evangelical Congregational Church will be a dynamic movement of God that is 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. 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.

From the Bishop Elect

Rev. Kevin S. Leibensperger

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service."

1 Timothy 1:12 (NIV)

These words of Paul came to mind a few hours after the Episcopal election. I had shared that verse in my testimony when I was ordained as a Deacon more than twenty years ago. I'm as overwhelmed and amazed now, as I was then by the grace and love of our Heavenly Father. He chooses and uses us despite of what we are and aren't. He is so good!

I am honored to be selected to serve as the next Bishop of the E.C. Church. Our denomination is just a small part of Christ's Kingdom, but it is the church that I've known & loved all my life. I will embrace the opportunity and responsibility that you have entrusted to me, seriously and wholeheartedly. The E.C. Church is headed in an exciting direction. We are a movement of God again multiplying disciples and churches.

When I accepted the nomination to this office and agreed to interview to be on the ballot it was with the desire to discover God's will for my life. He has provided through the vote of the National Conference, the direction that He promises to share with His children. I am deeply appreciative for the encouragement and prayers that have been offered to me by the Lay and Pastoral Delegates to those sessions. If all your "intercessory" commitments are kept I have nothing to fear. Jesus will be our sufficiency!



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I want to honor Rev. Kirk Marks and Rev. David Dennis, the other two candidates. We were able to support and befriend each other through this process as partners rather than competitors. We share a unique kinship now through our mutual experience.

I am grateful to Bishop Sigman and the current leaders of our church. We have already begun the work of orientation and transitioning on an informal basis. It is clear that they are committed to enabling me to take up this task next June as well and trained as I can be.

Of the people of Boyertown Trinity I can't say enough. Their readiness to seek the Lord through all this has been extraordinary. Their grace and faith permits them to rejoice for me even as we sense the sorrow of an impending farewell. Pray for us, nonetheless. We have a challenging year of change ahead.

And last because they are not least in my life I need to thank my family; my wife—Deborah, and children—Sarah, Peter, John, James, and my parents. They were ready and willing to accept God's decision in this matter and have sustained me with their love and counsel. Remember our household in your prayers. I look forward to the journey we'll be starting in 2008 as we follow the Lord together.

Love and peace,
Kevin Leibensperger

Leadership Notes

Mrs. Mercedes Mendez has been appointed to the Editing and Publishing of the Discipline Committee with responsibility for the Spanish translation.

You Can Help

Shirley Ragsdale, wife of Rev. John Ragsdale, as you may already know, must have frequent blood transfusions because of aplastic anemia. This has caused a expense for the Ragsdale's and a depletion of packed blood cells for the Reading Hospital. **You can help** by giving blood at your local blood bank, designating your donation to go to the Reading Hospital blood transfusion unit earmarked for Shirley Ragsdale.



Church Plant Update

Vida Nueva Church, Lancaster, bid farewell to Luis & Yenory Gomez on Sunday, June 24, as they concluded ministry in Lancaster and prepared for their new ministry in church planting with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Rhode Island.

On July 1, Ramon Mendez will assume the pastoral leadership role in the Lancaster congregation. As pastor of the Vida Nueva & First congregations in Reading, Ramon will minister and provide leadership in Lancaster while the search process for a new pastor takes place. The Sunday worship time at Vida Nueva, Lancaster will be moved to 5:30 P.M.

Bishop's Travels June–July–August

June 3 Pequea
 7 Evangelism & Discipleship Commission
 10 am Womelsdorf Trinity
 pm East Weissport People's
 13 Church Planting Commission
 17 am & pm Ocean Grove (NJ) Camp Meeting
 24 Willow Street Grace Community communion
 July 27-28 Rosedale Camp Meeting
 29 am Herndon Camp Meeting communion
 pm Rawlinsville Camp Meeting
 July 31-Aug 5 Bible teacher at Rawlinsville Camp Meeting



News from the Compensation Committee & the Benefits Corporation

News from Benefits Corporation:

Action approved at the recent Benefits Corporation Annual Meeting held on May 31 as part of National Conference:

- All eligible pension 403(b) participants may roll-over any amount from a previously held tax-qualified retirement plan or funds previously transferred from a plan investment with another employer into their 403(b) account with Wachovia/Prudential.
- Full-time staff employed by a local church who have ministry related positions, such as a youth pastor, children's coordinator, etc. may participate in the denomination's health insurance plan.
- The Benefits Corporation will pay \$5000 to the surviving wife and/or dependent children upon the death of a full-time pastor who was assigned by appointment at the time of his death.

Manna Fund

The Benefits Corporation wants to thank those individuals and churches who responded to our recent appeal for the Manna Fund. As of this newsletter, we have received over \$8,100. We estimate that we will need about \$12,000 to meet the needs of those retired pastors, wives and widows whose income falls below the government's poverty level incomes of \$13,000 for a single and \$18,000 for a couple. Gifts and offerings may still be sent to the Benefits Corporation, attn. Rev. Ken Wiest, and marked for the Manna Fund.

Correction: Employee Benefit Call Center for our AETNA health insurance participants—the correct phone number is 1-877-236-8477 (Monday-Friday 8:30 am—8:00 pm). There was an inadvertent error on the flyer distributed by Corporate Synergies at National Conference. Calls to this call center are handled by Jennifer Hui, Benefits VIP representative for Corporate Synergies, our health insurance broker.

News from the Compensation Committee & the Benefits Corporation

(Continued from page 3)

FAQ of the Benefits Corporation—The May question was— *Who are the members of the Board of Trustees of the Benefits Corporation?*

The Board of Trustees of the Corporation is elected by the members of the Corporation. The members of the Corporation are the most recently elected regular ministerial and lay delegates to the National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church. The elections are part of the annual corporation meeting held in conjunction with the annual session of National Conference. The Board of Trustees is made up of 15 trustees: six are ministers and 9 are lay persons, all must be members of the Evangelical Congregational Church. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to administer the pension plans, health insurance plans, Disability Fund, Manna Fund, Worker's Compensation, and any related funds for active and retired pastors and career missionaries of the Evangelical Congregational Church and any other persons as classified by our By-Laws.

The following were elected to the Board of Trustees at our recent Annual Meeting. The date indicates the year when they began their service as a Trustee and in parenthesis the date their term of office expires.

Mrs. Rebecca Reigle, President—2002 (2012)	
Mr. Steven Reiter, Vice-President—2000 (2012)	Dr. William Kautz—1990 (2010)
Rev. Donald Metz, Secretary—2002 (2012)	Rev. Gary Kuehner—2002 (2009)
Rev. Gerald Baum—1986 (2011)	Mr. Stanley Miller—1985 (2010)
Mr. Martin Brown—2006 (2009)	Mr. Edward Peifer—1994 (2011)
Mrs. Shirley Carr—2006 (2011)	Rev. Jeffrey Schell—2006 (2012)
Mr. Jeff Gehman—2006 (2009)	Rev. Ryan Taylor—2007 (2010)

The Board of Trustees has two vacancies that will be filled by appointment to a one year term at the July 10th Board meeting.

For questions on this month's FAQ or any question that you would like answered in future issues, please contact Becky Reigle at reigle4@usa.net (NEW EMAIL) or 610-776-1535 (NEW PHONE).

As was announced at National Conference: ALL monies sent to the E.C. Benefits Corporation may be placed on only one check as long as there is a breakdown of the various amounts on the check or on a separate paper. This action will save churches money in postage, printed checks and envelopes. REMEMBER! The eligible monies for this action are the \$125 pension contribution of the church—the dollar value of the medical cost of the church pastor—the dollar value of the pastor's share of pension funds—workmen compensation (when billed) - disability (due January of each year).

Churches may also place any monies for the E.C. Church (ministry funds, mission money, etc.) payable to the E.C. Church in the same envelope in order to save postage. These funds MUST be on a separate check or checks.

For answers to questions about this article please contact Rev. Ken Wiest at 717-866-7581 or kwiest@eccenter.com

News from the Finance Committee

By actions of the National Conference held recently at Messiah College the TWIN PINES offering that was previously listed as a required offering (Rule of Conference 705.1.5) is NO LONGER required but is, as of July 1, 2007, a requested offering instead. This means that churches are no longer obligated to send an offering in August as had previously been a mandate. The churches are now asked to give consideration in their budget or collections for an offering for Twin Pines (Rule of Conference 705.2).

A Special Opportunity for Giving from an IRA in 2007!

By John P. Ragsdale, Planned Giving Officer

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 created a brief opportunity for making donations directly from an I.R.A. without having to report that amount as a distribution. ONLY IF YOU ARE 70 AND A HALF YEARS OLD OR OLDER, you may avoid the taxes on such I.R.A. contributions. In this way, you also do not have a limit on such contributions as a certain percentage of your income. There is however a limit of \$100,000 per year, whatever your income may be. The contribution must be to qualified charities, thus the agencies and churches of the E.C. denomination qualify. We distributed a special brochure at the National Conference this year and have more copies available for use by churches. If you have a senior citizen organization in your church, you may want to get copies for them. Contact Brenda Long or Jodi Earhart at Church Center for a bulk mailing. As the Planned Giving Officer for the E.C. Church, I will be happy to answer questions you may have at jragsdale@verizon.net or at 610-678-5495. Due to my responsibilities as pastor at the Reading First E.C. Church, I am not free to travel and conduct seminars. Also, as you are aware, Shirley has had serious health concerns and I cannot leave home for a time. The brochure gives the basic information you would need to deal with your I.R.A. administrator. Let us use this opportunity to enhance the work of the Lord through our giving.



Congratulations!!

These retirees were honored at the recent National Conference (left to right):

Rev. Nelson & Beverly Reppert, Rev. Wayne & Sue Yarnall, Rev. Dr. Kirby & Carol Keller, Rev. Marlin & MaryAnn Lafferty, Rev. Norman & Arti Dixon

A Resource We Can't Afford To Overlook

Pastors and Lay Leaders are busy people, but we want to remind our Pennsylvania pastors and lay leaders that when it comes to moral and social value issues we have an ally and an unparalleled resource in the Pennsylvania Family Institute. Embracing a mission to protect the family and preserve the future, PFI influences legislators, impacts legislation and informs citizens in the commonwealth by:

- Promoting the institution of marriage, and working to prevent its redefinition by activist judges.
- Promoting a sanctity of life ethic, because abortion and euthanasia make a society devalue life across the board.
- Being a voice for decency, opposing child pornography, “sex oriented business”, and on-line sexual predators.
- Supporting parental choice in the arena of children's schooling decisions.
- Suggesting and promoting policies that enable families to serve children in need in the most effective ways including the promotion of foster care and adoption.

Most recently, the Pennsylvania Family Institute has alerted legislators of the challenges to parental choice and the threats to religious liberty inherent in Gov. Ed Rendell's initiative “Pre-K Counts.” For more information on this issue and a complete listing of available resources, contact Pennsylvania Family Institute at 23 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101; (717)545-0600; or at mail@pafamily.org or www.pafamily.org



PLEASE NOTE — We are updating our E.C. Leader mailing list. The “Leader” is available (a) on the website [www.eccenter.com], (b) email to you, or (3) regular “snail” mail. If you would prefer another way of receiving the “Leader” other than the way you received this current issue—please contact Brenda at the E.C. Church Center (blong@eccenter.com or 1-800-866-7581).