

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.

“Forever Grateful”

When Henry Smith wrote the lyrics to the chorus Give Thanks, we don't know if he had our national holiday of Thanksgiving in mind or not. However, he captures the essence of our hearts for this special day. Smith writes, “Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One, give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.”

As we sit down to feast on turkey and all the trimmings with family and friends on Thanksgiving Day, many Americans will express their gratefulness in terms of physical, material, and family relationship blessings. While significant, these foci don't hold a candle to the gratefulness that we have because of Jesus Christ our Lord. His atoning work on the cross and victory over Sin and death through His powerful resurrection have transformed our lives. Because of Jesus, our sins are forgiven, we're part of the family of God, we've received new life and possess the promise of eternal life through Him. It doesn't get any better than that! You see, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Our world faces ongoing challenges such as war, political unrest, disease, starvation, and poverty this Thanksgiving. But Christians possess the hope that the world needs. Because of what the Lord has done, even the weak can say, “I am strong” and the poor can say, “I am rich,” as they by faith place their trust in Him. So this Thanksgiving, give thanks with a grateful heart. We will say it again, Give Thanks!

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Leadership Notes

- The Board of Evangelical Theological Seminary has elected **Mrs. Debbie Thompson** to a three year term as a trustee. Mrs. Thompson is a member of Community Church, Sinking Spring.
- **Rev. Stephen Holubec** (Grace EC Akron) and **Terri Renfrew** (Grace EC Knox) have agreed to be members of the Christian Education Committee.

New Location

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Vida Nueva, Lancaster congregation is happy to inform you that we are moving to a new location. We are buying a former church building of a Church of God in Manheim. The settlement day has been scheduled for November 21 and the first service is going to be on Sunday, November 25th.

If everything goes well according to our plans, Sunday, November 18th will be our last day using Faith's facility in Lancaster. We have been very blessed and honored for the last couple of years through their ministry and their willingness to help us.

New Worship Time

The St. Peter's, Weissport Church has switched their services times. Sunday School is now being held at 9:15 with worship service at 10:30 under the direction of Rev. Kenneth Schira.

Do You Have....

Rev. Robert Brown at Plymouth Meeting EC would like to use Dr. Bruce Wilkinson's Teaching With Style for a teacher training course. Do any of our churches have the accompanying video in their church library? Please contact Rev. Bob Brown at 610-828-6650 or pastorbob.brown@gmail.com if you have this resource.



You Can Learn A Lot About Your Zip

This is a great resource for new church planting venues, church planters, as well as established churches. Check out this website: <http://zipskinny.com>

College Students

This idea came from one of our pastors:

Is there any way that all our churches can communicate with one another each year regarding our college students? For example, I know that one of the first things on my mind is to get my church's college students connected to an on-campus ministry and a local church. If they are at a college near an EC Church, I certainly want them to consider that EC Church as their college church. I also want that EC Church to know they are at the college and have that church reach out to them. Likewise from the other side, I would like to know if we have any students at the college in our area.

SOOOO....we are setting up a database of our EC college students that can be shared with local EC Churches. Please send the students' names, address, college, proposed graduation year and phone number to Brenda (blong@eccenter.com) at the EC Church Center. We will then distribute these names to the appropriate

Bishop's Travels December

- 1 Wesleyan Leaders Summit, Indianapolis
- 2 Findlay, OH
- 3 Church Center In-Service
- 6 Church Planting Commission
- 9 Katie's 16th Birthday!!
- 11 Evangelism and Discipleship Commission
- 13-14 Supervisory Retreat
- 16 Bethel, Conestoga
- 17-31 Vacation



News from the Benefits Corporation & Compensation Committee . . .

Pastor's Salary/Compensation Forms—

Copies of all the forms are due by January 15 or sooner to Rev. Ken Wiest, Benefits—Compensation Administrator. Please remember that once approved, these forms become official, legal documents that the Benefits Corporation must have to be in compliance with federal regulation.

Health Insurance Rates for 2008 —

The January premium at the new 2008 rate is due to the Benefits Corporation by December 15. The 2008 Insurance rate chart is available at the EC Church Website under Benefits Corporation—Forms or by calling the Benefits Corporation office.

If your church is assigned a retired pastor, you are to pay 50% of his and his spouse's health insurance premium if the retired pastor is part-time and 100% if the retired pastor is full-time.

403(b) Pension Plan Contribution Limits for 2008 —

The IRS has announced the revised pension plan limits for 2008.

- The salary reduction limit for 2008 will remain the same at \$15,500. This limit is available to all participants regardless of age.
- The catch-up contribution for individuals aged 50 or over remains unchanged at \$5,000 per year.
- The "church plan" catch-up, for participants who have been in the ministry or worked for a church organization longer than 15 years, remains unchanged at \$3,000 per year with a maximum lifetime limit of \$15,000.
- The overall contribution limit for 2008, not taking into consideration the age 50 or over catch-up contribution provision, will be increased from \$45,000 to \$46,000.
- If a participant is 50 years of age or older, his or her maximum limit is \$51,000 in 2008 after combining the regular limit with the catch-up limits. This is an increase of \$1,000 over the maximum limit for 2007.

The old 20% of salary limits are not longer applicable. The limits are strictly dollar limits as listed above.

News from the Benefits Corporation and Compensation Committee (continued from page 3)

IRS Mileage Rate for 2008 — has NOT been released yet. We will make this known as soon as we receive the information. It is late. It is usually released around November 1.

Parsonage Review Forms — Churches that provide a parsonage for their pastor are to complete the annual Parsonage Review Form as part of setting the pastor's compensation package for the new year which includes an annual walk-thru of the parsonage. The forms to be completed can be found on the EC website under Compensation. Once completed, copies of the Parsonage Review Form go to the Conference Minister, to the pastor and placed in the official minutes of the church.

Preparing for Retirement — We hope to provide some information for consideration as you prepare for retirement. In the next 10 years, by 2018, we will have approximately 40 of our pastors reaching Social Security eligibility age, the age at which they can receive full Social Security retirement income.

Planning Your Retirement Home—Where do you see yourself living when you retire? Orlando, Phoenix, or Myerstown? As you think about your retirement home, maybe these questions will help.

- Do you and your spouse share the same dreams regarding retirement living? Travel, Stay-at-home, visit Family and Friends? A husband and wife should have many conversations about what they each look forward to doing in retirement in an effort to build a consensus as to how to proceed with your plans.
- Do you and your spouse share the same dream about where you want to live in retirement? He may want the mountains for fishing and hunting; she may want the ocean and a warm climate. It is recommended a minimum of 6 weeks of vacation time be spent in any new area where you are considering relocating to for retirement before making your move.
- Do you really want to move away from your friends and your church family after retirement? Will being closer to your children or family be a blessing or a curse? Too often people have unrealistic expectations of how they will spend their free-time in retirement. Consider all the pros and cons.
- Is the cost of living going to be higher or lower at the place you are looking to move to after retirement? Compare your current utility bills, insurance costs, housing costs, even food with where you live now with where you are considering moving to.
- Do you buy your retirement home now or wait until you are ready to retire? There is no simple, one-size-fits all answer to this question. But it is a question that needs to be discussed at length in preparation for retirement.

Taken from "IN THE KNOW NEWSLETTER" - 11/5/07

For questions regarding the Benefits Corporation or Compensation, please contact the Benefit-Compensation Administrator, Rev. Ken Wiest, at 1-800-866-7581.



News from the Benefits Corporation and Compensation Committee (continued from page 4)

Attention Church Leaders and Treasurers — 2007 DONOR TAX DEDUCTIONS

In the January, 2007 EC Leader you were advised of the Charitable Giving changes that went into effect for 2007. (The January, 2007 EC Leader is available on the EC Church website.) The changes were:

- To deduct any charitable donation, a taxpayer must receive written communication from the charity showing the name, date and amount of the donation (Personal diaries of giving are no longer acceptable as proof of giving.)
- Recording Stewards, treasurers and finance committee members, whoever keeps the church's giving records, need to document all giving by type of transaction, date and amount
- At the end of the year, a full, complete listing of all gifts would need to be provided to each donor

We are now to the end of the year. Please advise your congregations of the following:

1. All donations must be either postmarked or actually received by the church before January 1 in order to be eligible for a 2007 income tax deduction. Pre-dating a check and then delivering it in January is not acceptable for a 2007 income tax deduction.
2. Post-dated checks are not payable until the date on the check. The check is recorded as a contribution as per the year that the date on the check indicates.
3. To avoid jeopardizing the tax deductibility of their charitable contributions, please advise your congregations that they are not to file their 2007 income taxes until they have received a written acknowledgement of their contributions from your church.

For Church treasurers, stewards, finance committee members:

1. By IRS rule, the written receipts are to be received by the donors by January 31st, but should be made available as soon after December 31st as possible. These written receipts need to include the following: the donor's name; any single amounts over \$250 or the combination of all amounts over \$250. Each contribution is to be listed separately by type of donation, date and amount.
2. If good or services were provided by the church in exchange for the contribution, then a good faith estimate of the value of the goods and services is to be included in the written receipt. If no goods or services were provided, then a statement to that effect must be included on the written receipt.

This information taken from: Richard Hammar, Church Law and Clergy Tax Guide

For questions: contact Rev. Ken Wiest (1-800-866-7581)



News from Twin Pines

Staff Openings!

Twin Pines will soon be starting the hiring process for 2008 Summer Staff. If you know any mature Christian young men or women you think would make good staff members, please encourage them to complete an application and send it to us. The application can be found on our website: www.twinpines.org under the Resources page. This is always a lengthy process that starts in December and hopefully is completed by February or March.

Please be in prayer for us as we seek to hire people with servant hearts who are eager to share Christ with the campers who come next summer.

Get Away to a Quiet Place—FREE!

Twin Pines recognizes the need for those who are in full-time Christian service to get away for rest and rejuvenation. Pine Lodge has been set aside as a **PERSONAL RENEWAL RETREAT** facility for full-time pastors and their wives, or for full-time missionaries who need a few days of peace and quiet to pray, plan, refocus and listen for God's still small voice.

Detailed information about this facility is available on our website: www.twinpines.org. The word is starting to get out and a few people have taken us up on this wonderful offer, but we would love to see more of your use this facility. All you have to do is give us a call or email to Pam@twinpines.org to be put on the schedule. There is **NO COST for the lodging**... where else can you get a "**FREE RETREAT**"? So, come on up to Twin Pines for a few days. As Jim says, "Come apart before you come a part!"

Leadership Contact Connecting Church Leaders to the Future

Spring 2008

Tuesday Evenings—January 29 thru May 6
Evangelical Theological Seminary Campus

Theology II: Seeing God at Work

6:30-7:45 pm

Rev. Kirk Marks, Instructor

Preaching II

8:00—9:15 pm

Rev. Dr. John Moyer, Instructor

Cost: \$175.00 per course Make checks payable to: "E.C. Church" and
mark it "Leadership Contact."

Local Preachers applying for denominational aid should contact Shirley Long
at 1-800-866-7581 or slong@eccenter.com.

Registrations should be sent to: E.C. Church Center, Attn: Jodi Earhart,
100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067

A Letter from Findlay EC

Greetings in Christ Jesus,

“I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul, c.A.D. 61 (Phil. 1.3-6, TNIV)

As many of you know, the community of Findlay, Ohio continues to recover from a devastating flood earlier this year; yet the God we serve is the God that turns sorrow into joys and makes strong the weak. We here at Findlay EC Church have witnessed firsthand just how God has done this through our EC partners, so before I give you a few details let me commend you for your enormous contributions and thank you on behalf of the community and the local church.



Here are a few stats that may interest you:

- To date we received \$46,022.25 in cash from our local church and EC partners
- We have received \$580.00 in Wal-Mart gift cards.
- We have received \$70.00 in Lowe's gift cards.
- We have received several trailer loads full of clothes, food, toiletries, and cleaning supplies.
- We have distributed \$32,258.61 in cash.
- We have distributed \$325.00 in Wal-Mart gift cards.
- We have assisted 26 families with 4 families pending at \$1,000.00 each and I am currently in contact with more families that may need assistance.
- We have distributed all the clothes, food, toiletries and cleaning supplies.

In addition to the financial assistance, we have had many partners offer assistance through work teams and various other talents. While we were not in need of all the assistance offered (thank you for all your offers!), we are planning to partner with the Pennsylvania Christian Endeavor next summer to bring in work teams of 150 youth for 2 weeks to further assist the community in the recovery process. These teams will help move people to new homes, rebuild structures, continue clean-up and assist the community in many other ways.

If I were to express to you what your efforts have meant to this community, there would be no adequate words to express our thoughts nor our emotions. You have helped to impact the lives of so many individuals and families, including those who have had the rare privilege to give away so much money. One of the ways we have personally benefited from your assistance as a church is that we have encouraged as many members as possible to participate in the distribution of funds. It feels like the commissioning of the disciples, all of them come back with such miraculous stories. We have experienced a spiritual growth as a church because of your love and ministry.

In closing, while we will continue to accept funds, I know that there are other great needs in the world aside from Findlay, Ohio. Therefore, I would like to encourage you to direct future funds to other needs globally. Findlay has benefited from the rousing of a “sleeping giant,” Christ’s church...our church. If only all our ministries would benefit from God’s church in this way. While so many of the needs and ministries our churches assist may not be on CNN as Findlay was, every effort for the Kingdom deserves our whole heart. Shall we wake the “sleeping giant” so the whole world might know Him as King of kings and Lord of lords?

For His Kingdom, Brad Kittle