



I Bring You Good News!

Did you ever think “if it weren’t for bad news, we wouldn’t have news at all”? Bad news is everywhere. Watch any news program, it doesn’t matter if in a network or FOX-news or CNN, the reports get more depressing by the hour: the economy is down, government is the definition of dysfunction, people are unemployed or under-employed, there are wars and rumors of wars. There used to be a time when it seemed like you could get away from all the bad news by turning on ESPN and watching a game, but the Penn State mess is in moment-by-moment coverage as I write this so that doesn’t even work today. (Be sure to read a special reminder related to that on page 5.) And in all of it the church seems irrelevant to most people.

Life is not easy, but I’m not sure life has ever been easy. Think about the people living in Israel at the time of the opening verses of the gospels: the Jews were living in their own land, but always under the eye and threat of the occupying Roman Empire. One word from the Roman governor and their society would be shut down. Their leaders, the members of the Sanhedrin, didn’t seem to be able to figure out if they were po-

litical or religious leaders, and the Pharisees and Sadducees couldn’t get along with each other. For too many people, religion wasn’t much more than going to the Temple to observe a special service or holiday. Sounds familiar doesn’t it?

Into this world an angel appeared to announce “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!” Luke 2:10-11 (NLTse) How often do we think about the



truth that the Gospel is Good News? As followers of Jesus do we interact with each other and with our neighbors in such a way that the message that we carry in our hearts brings great joy! I’m afraid that too many of us get caught up in all the doom and gloom of this world. We look and act like everyone living around us. I’m not suggesting that we ignore the

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

troubles all around us, but I am saying that we keep our eyes on Jesus, the Savior who was born in Bethlehem and gave His life for us. Because of Him we have hope, in Him we have great joy!

This world needs news, good news! Our culture needs good news. And we have the Good News. My prayer is that as we interact with our neighbors this month, as visitors stop in at church for their annual holiday celebration, they will see something different in us. That even as we are surrounded by bad news there is a joy that cannot be hid-

den. My hope is that people will be touched by the Good News and great joy of Jesus this Advent and Christmas season. There is Good News: the Savior has been born; the Savior has come and given His life for us; the Savior lives and reigns today!

In Christ's service,



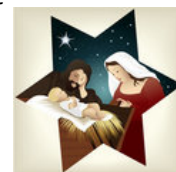
The Bishop's TOP TEN Prayer & Praise Items

1. Continue to pray for our pastoral families who have recently suffered the death of loved ones: Cindy Brooks & family, Keith Mong & family.
2. Pray for our international churches and missionaries who are also suffering from the effects of our global economic problems.
3. In response to all the questions from last month—pray for our son, Tim, and his wife Stephanie who are expecting their first child in April 2012.
4. Pray for all the churches who will be impacting their com-



- munities in practical ways this Christmas. I'm hearing more and more good reports of missional outreach! (That's a praise item too.)
5. Pray for all our Commissions as they develop plans for 2012 as well as work on new budgets.
6. Praise the Lord that I made it through my first National Ministry Team meeting successfully! Now on to leading National Conference 2012!
7. Praise God for the opportunities we all will have to share the real meaning of Christmas this month.

8. Praise the Lord for the wonderful "meet the Bishop" event hosted by Emmanuel EC Church in Cedarville, Illinois.
9. Praise the Lord for the warm welcomes and assurances of prayer support Gloria and I have received as we've traveled to different churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. (And please keep praying.)
10. Praise God for the wonderful gift he has given us in his One and only Son Jesus, our Savior!



CORRECTION: Brian Betsworth became the pastor at Trinity EC, Shamokin and Bethany, EC Sunbury as of October 1, 2011.

Pastors & Lay Delegates — if the missions leader or chairman for your church has changed within the last year or moved in the last year, please contact the Global Ministries office and give the updated information. We have found that some of our records are outdated because we aren't being told about the changes. Email ecglobal@eccenter.com or call 1-800-866-7584. Thanks for your help!

News from Global Ministries

1. Christmas Gifts for Missionaries:

If you are mailing a Christmas card and gift to U.S.-based missionaries, mail items directly to them. If the missionary is serving overseas, send the card directly to them, but send the check to Global Ministries for processing. The check should be payable to "E.C. Church" with a notation or letter stating who the gift is for and how much for each person., if more than one missionary is receiving monies. If you need a current address for any missionary, call the Global Ministries office at 1-800-866-7584.



2. Christmas Missionary Offering

You will be receiving bulletin inserts for the GMC Christmas offering in time for Sunday, December 18, 2011. Please help us communicate that this offering is used to help fund the operation of the GMC's home office and the international EC Churches. Thank you so much for helping us get the word out! If you have any questions about this offering please contact the GMC office.



3. Short Term Mission Trips are going "Glocal"



GMC's Short Term Mission Committee is experimenting with a strategy that will help us create more global-minded Christians in our churches and also help our churches build or strengthen their local relationships between each other... a true "global" opportunity! We are asking those churches that routinely plan short term mission trips for their youth and adults to consider reserving one to two "spots" on their roster for a young person from another EC Church that is not able to sponsor short term mission trips. So far the youth leaders and pastors we have contacted have been very open to trying this "global" strategy! If you are interested in reserving some spots or filling some spots, contact Rev. Mike Snedeker at mike@communityec.org

4. GMC Trip to Nepal's Annual Conference

Please be in prayer for the GMC Field Visit to Nepal for their Annual Conference November 28-December 6. This will be another opportunity to connect and partner our international EC Churches!

Our teams includes:

Rev. Nobuo Abe (Director, EC Japan)

Mr. Mati Maharjana (Japanese translator for Rev. Abe)

Rev. Lalrosiem Songate
(General Director/Bishop, EC Church India)

Rev. Paul Barber (Pastor, Kinderhook EC)

Dr. David Brock (Community EC, Sinking Spring)

Rev. Randy & Carla Sizemore
(Global Ministries Commission)



Randy will be officiating the conference sessions, meeting with the leadership to strategize for the future ministry of ECCN, conducting ordinations and baptisms and speaking during the Conference. Carla Sizemore has been invited by Rev. Janga to address the Conference on the "Role of Women in Church Growth". Rev. Abe, Pastor Barber and Dr. Brock will also be speaking throughout the Conference sessions.

5. Help Wanted to Research & Write a Concise History of the EC Church of Mexico

The EC Church of Mexico is in the process of writing their proposal to be granted National Conference status. They would love to include a concise history of their beginning and subsequent years of the ministry. The GMC has various reports, articles and documents containing information about the EC Church of Mexico and a variety of people who have a history of working with the Mexican Church, but we are looking for someone to gather this information and write a concise history of the work. This would make a great high school graduation project or college paper. If you are interested please contact Randy Sizemore at rsizemore@eccenter.com or 717-866-7584.

News from Benefits & Compensation

A couple of end of the year reminders:



Pastor Compensation Forms should be returned to David King, Benefits Administrator, along with a copy to the Conference Minister by January 15, 2012.



Annual Statistical Report due to Rev. Ken Wiest, Statistician, EC Church Center, 100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067 by January 25, 2012.



W-2 forms for employees (incl. pastors) and 1099-MISC forms for independent contractors are due by January 31 to the recipient and February 28 to the respective government agency or March 31 if filed electronically.

The reporting of the cost of employer provided health insurance is not mandatory for 2011 Form W-2's issued in January 2012, relief was granted in IRS Notice 2010-69. You may voluntarily report the cost of employer provided health insurance in Box 12 with code DD. **The cost of employer provided health insurance is not taxable income.**



On January 1, 2011 a 2% reduction in the employee portion of the Social Security tax went into effect until December 31, 2011. I have heard brief news reports that the reduction may be continued for a second year and possibly include a reduction in the employer portion as well but no announcement has been made. Please remember to increase the employee portion of social security back to the 6.2% on January 1, 2012. Verification of any rate change can be found in Publication 15, Circular E, Employer's Tax Guide at www.irs.gov.



The rates for the active pastor health insurance plan change on January 1, 2012 with the January payment that is due December 15, 2011. The new health insurance rates are available on the website, www.eccenter.com



There will be some minor fund changes to the EC Retirement Plan effective January 1, 2012. Under performing investment will be replaced with funds that have had a better past performance. If you are an investor in any of the funds to be replaced you will begin to receive documentation from Prudential detailing those changes. Please contact Jennifer Buehler, Wells Fargo Investment Advisors 1-800-468-8685, if you have any questions. You also have the alternative investment options within the EC Retirement Plan.

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

Kevin Henry
Controller

Dave King
Benefits Administrator



EVANGELICAL EXCITEMENT!

We praise God for the 20 prospective students who participated in our Fall Open House on November 10 and for good response to the Fall Forum with Walt Mueller (“Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture”) and the Ritter-Moyer Lecture with Michael Quicke (“Preaching for Today...and Tomorrow”). It was encouraging to see many ECer’s among the attendees.



Winterim and Spring schedules are out... and there are lots of great courses on the horizon! The Winterim includes two Friday-Saturday modular

courses: Vision, Change and Conflict (Tornfelt/Pletcher), and Culture, Context and Mission (Ehrman). Spring courses not requiring prerequisites include Prophets (Dorsey), Biblical Hermeneutics (Buckwalter), Evangelism and Discipleship (Valentino), God and Suffering (Miller), Epistles (Buckwalter), Historical and Poetic Books (Dorsey), Spiritual Warfare (Buckwalter), Church History II (Blair/Kunz), and Survey of Christian Theology (Miller). Check www.evangelical.edu for complete details. Remember that EC pastors, Evangelical alumni, and senior citizens (65+) may audit any class for only \$50.



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I’ve watched the news and sports reports of the alleged sexual abuse at Penn State and, I’m sure like you, my heart breaks. My heart breaks for the children and families that have been harmed in unspeakable ways. We sit in front of our televisions and watch as so many people are caught in a web of destruction. It’s hard to believe how much everything can change in a week.

There will be many lessons to be learned as this case moves forward, and one lesson we must not miss is that the protection of our children must be a priority in our churches and ministries. Starting in 2008 our National Conference’s Christian Education Committee made child protection/child abuse prevention a major focus of their work. They produced excellent material; sample policies and procedures for our con-

gregations to implement in their own setting. (Check them out on the EC website www.eccenter.com.) The goal was to have every EC Church either have or be developing a child protection policy by the end of 2009.

My question now is what have you done with that? For too many of us a policy is a well written statement that gets filed in a notebook, put on a shelf and forgotten about. One of the lessons to be learned is that our child protection policies must be kept up to date and all our new and long-time volunteers must be regularly reminded of them to ensure that the policies and procedures your church has in place are being followed. If you never did develop those policies and would like some resources please contact Church Center or your Conference Minister.

All the way back in the 1700’s Ed-

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“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Time has not changed the truth of that statement. As The Evangelical Congregational Church we must protect our children. And if or when we have concerns we must contact the authorities. The lives and the futures of our children are too important to do anything less.





"I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow."

Jeremiah 31:13

A special invitation for you:

Blue Christmas...

A Service of Comfort and Hope

Sunday, December 4th, 2011

4:00 PM

(Snow Date - Friday, December 9 ~ 7 PM)

Community Evangelical Church

51 Green Valley Road, Sinking Spring, PA

610-670-1942

The holidays are a difficult time for many people, especially those who have experienced loss or significant change. It may be that you are grieving the loss of a loved one, a job, your health, or a marriage. Maybe you will be separated by distance from loved ones this holiday season. Perhaps you may even be angry with God or feel alone and just can't deal with Christmas and all the reminders of holidays spent with those people and things which are now gone from your life. Or perhaps you feel pressured and overwhelmed by holiday preparations and just need to experience some time of reflection to experience the peace and calmness of Christmas.

Please don't despair. You are not alone. There are others who feel just like you do...empty, sad and wondering where God is in their suffering and aloneness. This may seem like a very dark time in your life, but even in the midst of our sorrow - there is hope. Sometimes it is found in the most unlikely places.

You are invited to join us for a special Blue Christmas Service where your loss and feelings will be recognized and validated and where you will receive God's comfort, healing and peace, through prayer, Scripture, meditation and music. You will have the opportunity to light a candle to represent a loved one you have lost or a situation that has brought you sadness. Rev. Gregory Dimick, Pastor of Pequea E.C. Church will bring a special meditation of comfort and hope.

Please feel free to invite your family, a friend, or just come yourself. We will be waiting to welcome you and help you find the comfort and hope that God offers during these dark times. Light refreshments will be served after the service.