



FEBRUARY 2015



connect

"We loved you so much that we shared with you
not only God's Good News but our own lives, too."
- 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Inside this issue:

- Bishop's Prayer & Praise 2
- News from Global Ministries 3
- News from Christian Education Committee 4
- News from Benefits 5
- Child Abuse/Criminal Check News 6

From the Bishop

I bought a new watch last night. That's not really big news, but it reminded me that I seem to have a "thing" for watches. I think I own over a dozen different watches. I received two for Christmas gifts. Watches are a fashion statement, a colorful accessory, and sometimes actually used for telling the time. I know people who say they feel naked if they don't have a watch on. (Gloria is one of those.) She will sometimes notice that I'm not wearing a watch and ask me about it. I usually say "It doesn't matter what time it is when I'm with you." (I think that sound romantic, but it doesn't impress her too much!) I know people who never wear a watch; they just use their phone to tell what time it is.



Calendars are like watches only a different view of time. Some still use paper calendars, while others have it on their computer, smart phone, or out there on the cloud. Many of you know that I had one of those "end of life as we know it" moments when my cloud-based calendar magically disappeared; it was all gone in the blink of an eye. Fortunately, I was able to rebuild it fairly easily because I had printed it out and I share my calendar with Jodi, my Administrative Assistant, and she had most of my appointments on her paper calendar. (Thank you very much.)

Our American culture generally lives and dies by time; whether it's the clock or the calendar. We're always looking at where we're supposed to be now and what comes next; what meeting, event, or program will demand my attention. Every evening I

look at tomorrow and the rest of the week on my calendar to make sure I know what I'm doing as I run from responsibility to responsibility. We all have responsibilities; demands are made on our time, our calendars "runneth over", our watches run too fast. Occasionally in the middle of all that I think of David's perspective in Psalm 39:6, "...all our busy rushing ends in nothing." (NLT)



I suppose we all feel that way at times, but I don't think that has to be the case. I believe we can make a difference; actually scripture instructs us that God has planned good things for us to do. Later on in the same letter to the Ephesians Paul challenges us to "make the most of every opportunity". God wants his people to make a difference in the world and sometimes in order to do that we need to take our eyes off our watches and calendars to look at him and the people he brings in to our lives; divine interruptions. So as you think about the next thing you need to do join me in taking time to see what it is that God wants to accomplish in this new opportunity.

In Christ's Service,



Bishop's Top Ten Prayer Praise

1. Join with me in prayer for the work of the Stationing Committee as we seek appointments where both pastors and local congregations can "fit and flourish" in ministry.
2. Pray for me as I begin to develop the agenda for what could be a very busy National Conference 2015.
3. Continue to pray for the Lord's clear leading of the Covenant Implementation Team as they work on how to implement the four points of the Covenant adopted by our National Conference into the life and structure of the denomination.
4. Pray for the students and administration, faculty and staff of Evangelical Seminary as they begin a new semester. Pray especially for those students who are working toward graduation this spring; that they finish well.
5. Ask the Lord to continue to bless and encourage our church plants and planters as well as our existing congregations who are investigating ways to plan even more churches. (If you like to help in more tangible ways, call EC Church Center and ask about becoming a Church Planting Partner! \$100 a year will help. You never saw that commercial coming, did you?)
6. Praise God for the wonderful reports we're getting from our international conferences: outreach efforts in Mexico, progress in the Ebola response through the Liberian Church, missionaries reaching out from north-east India, church planting work in Japan, and many coming to faith in Nepal.
7. Thank you and thank the Lord with me for the many people who remind me that they are praying for me as Bishop and for Gloria and I as we travel around the conference on Sundays.
8. Praise the Lord for another opportunity to recognize our special Valentine once again this year and ways to share the love of Jesus with all those we meet every day.
9. Praise God for the many churches who are even now planning short term mission experiences for both young people and adults this spring and summer.
10. Praise the Lord for the gift of good and faithful friends he brings into our lives.

**HAVE YOU
TALKED
TO GOD
TODAY?**



We know this will be a busy National Conference as we deal with amendments to the *DISCIPLINE*, receive a report from the Covenant Implementation Team, and elect a bishop, in addition to our normal times of prayer and worship (and that's what we know about now!). Therefore we are planning on a series of **pre-conference meetings** this spring. Here are the dates and times; locations will be announced later:

- April 18 @ 9:00 AM—
Susquehanna Region
- April 23 @ 7:00 PM—
Susquehanna Region
- April 25 @ 10:00 AM
(eastern)/9:00 AM (central)
- Great Lakes Region (video
conference)
- April 30 @ 7:00 PM—
Delaware Region
- May 2 @ 9:00 AM—
Delaware Region

News from Global Ministries

1. Mission Minded Kids Rally: March 7th

The GMC's Mission Minded Kid's Rally will take place on Saturday, March 7, 2015 at Evangelical Seminary, Myerstown, PA. Registration begins at 9:30am.



2. Delaware Mission Leaders' Brunch: March 14th

Local Church Mission leaders, pastors and anyone interested in the mission endeavors of the EC Church are invited to the Delaware Region Mission Leaders' Brunch on Saturday, March 14, 2015 at Hope Community Church, Fogelsville, PA. The brunch will begin promptly at 10:00am. Randy Sizemore and Pat Strain will share the latest information, updates and news from our EC missionaries and international churches. There will either be an offering or a minimal charge to cover the costs of the food. RSVP to GMC office.

3. Buckeye Mission Leaders' Brunch: March 16th

Local Church Mission leaders, pastors and anyone interested in the mission endeavors of the EC Church are invited to the Buckeye Region Mission Leaders' Brunch on Monday, March 16, 2015 at Wedgewood Park EC Church, Youngstown, Ohio. The brunch begins promptly at 10:00am. Randy Sizemore will share the latest information, updates and news from our EC missionaries and international churches. There will either be an offering or a minimal charge to cover the cost of the food. RSVP to GMC office.

4. Available Speaking date: March 15th

Randy Sizemore will be in Myerstown, PA the week of March 9th for GMC and denominational meet-

ings. He is available to share the work of the GMC on Sunday morning, March 15th in Sunday school, worship or both. Please contact Randy at

rsizemore@eccenter.com to schedule him.

5. Alaska Work Team: August 1-15, 2015

The GMC is sponsoring a work team to Camp LIWA in Fairbanks, Alaska from August 1-15, 2015.

Applications can be downloaded from the Global Ministries page on the EC website:

www.eccenter.com under

short term mission opportunities. Deadline for applications is February 27, 2015. For more information contact the GMC office.



6. Liberia Updates:

Rev. Abraham Powell, General Secretary of the EC Church of Liberia has returned safely to Liberia and is engaged in the Ebola response efforts being carried out by the EC Church of Liberia. Because of our generous donations to the World Emergency Fund, we were able to send \$10,000 at the beginning of January to assist in the Ebola crisis response. Rev.

Matthew Gueh has asked me to extend his deep appreciation to all who are partnering with the EC Church of Liberia in prayer and financial support. The global EC Church is also responding to the crisis in Liberia. The EC Church of Japan has communicated their desire to help Liberia

and I have recently received an email from Rev. Janga of the EC Church of Nepal stating that they have designated their church's Christmas offering to go to help the EC Church of Liberia.



2nd Annual Four Chaplains Scholarship Run: 4 Mile Run/Walk 1 1/2 Mile Fun Run/Walk

February 7, 2015; 10:00 a.m.
Hosted by: Evangelical Seminary

Pre-Registration Deadline: January 23

\$25 for 4 Mile Run/Walk (incl. long-sleeve T-shirt)

\$10 for 1 1/2 Mile Fun Run/Walk (shirt not included)

Online Registration is available at: www.evangelical.edu www.pretzelcitysports.com

Same Day Registration begins at 9:00 am at Evangelical Seminary

\$30 for 4 Mile Run/Walk (T-shirts while they last)

\$15 for 1 1/2 Mile Fun Run/Walk (no T-shirt)

Questions: contact Kevin Henry at khenry@eccenter.com or 717-866-7581

News from the Christian Education Committee

Since taking over the chair of the Christian Education in 2010, the committee has been searching for the best way to serve the denomination and the Kingdom. We tried, with moderate success, seminars on topics we felt would provide value to Christian Education at your church. We are still open to running seminars, if you have a topic you would like to see covered please contact me.

Eventually though we felt that promoting discipleship, intentional discipleship, was the best way we could serve you. While we are still open to suggestions as to how we can best do that, we are going to start by using the **EC Leader** to introduce you to how some of our EC churches are successfully discipling.

Our first snapshot comes to you from Grace EC in Kutztown and Pastor Adam Roberts who will be sharing with you their journey with the “Orange Curriculum”.

If you have something you would like to share or have any questions or concerns regarding Christian Education please contact me.

For the Christian Ed Committee,
Rev. Stephen L. Holubec
Steve.holubec@gmail.com

Last year Grace Church began a multi-month-long evaluation of our children’s and youth ministries where we began asking questions like: What exactly is our disciple making strategy at Grace Church producing? Are we producing the sold-out followers of Jesus as they leave our ministry and enter the world? In other words: Are we producing the kind of disciples we’re hoping to produce? Those were hard questions to ask and to answer as they forced us to come to terms with reality. We were not producing what we were hoping to produce often enough. We came to the realization that we needed a new vision and strategy and soon our new strategy was born as we discovered a book, “*Think Orange.*”

What is “orange”? Essentially, “orange” is the combining of the light of the church (yellow) and the love of the family (red)...to create the brilliance of another, orange. More specifically, orange is a strategy of combing critical influences in life to fuel faith in the next generation and by combining those critical influences, the orange strategy synchronizes efforts and shows a generation who God is. This is done far more effectively than either “red” or “yellow” could do alone.

When the church and the family partner *together*...that is, when we as the Church equip our parents with resources and prayer and when our families turn around and support the church in ministry and prayer, *together* we can raise up kids who will love Jesus Christ more than anything else in this world...and CHANGE their world for Jesus. We also believe that as long as churches (and parents) do only what they are doing, they will get only results they are presently getting. That’s why we needed a more cohesive plan.

The orange curriculum is a high energy, unapologetically Bible-focused, curriculum for nursery through high school. It’s engaging and multi-media and activity centered. It’s also centered around small groups which aligns very well with our church’s disciple-making vision.

Our “orange” strategy makes it very easy for us to partner with families in equipping



them with the tools they need for nurturing their child (ren)’s faith at home. Each week parents are provide with a Parent Cue Card that summarizes the Bible story, memory verse, and questions to spark a conversation about the week’s lesson. We also want to encourage kids to begin developing personal times with God, and frequently, we know this begins with parents reading with them. We send home weekly God Times Cards to provide kids and parents with four days of engaging devotions that include reading Scripture, doing a short activity to promote thought and application, and prayer.

Though this process has been a long transition with some hiccups along the way, we are very thankful for where God has taken us and we’re excited about where He’ll lead us next. If you’d like more information about Grace Church’s orange transition or the orange strategy, I’d love to talk with you.

Rev. Adam Roberts
pastor@graceecc.org

News from Benefits Corporation

- The deadline to distribute W-2s to employees, including pastors, is February 2, 2015 with the employer filing deadline of March 2 if filed on paper or March 31 if filed electronically. Social Security Administration's Business Services Online (BSO), www.ssa.gov/bso, is an easy convenient method for producing the employee and employer copies of the W-2 on white paper, no forms, and for filing the W-2s electronically with SSA. We encourage all church treasurers that produce their W-2s in-house to use the SSA BSO services.

Reporting the cost of employer sponsored health insurance plans is not required on 2014 W-2s filed in 2015. **It has been determined that the EC Church is a small employer, thus removing the requirement to report the cost of health insurance.**

- Please remember that the EC Benefits administrative fee is due from churches on April 15, 2015, retirees are not subject to the fee.
- Please begin using the 2015 Ministry Fund forms for January offerings. Offerings collected in December 2014 should be remitted on the 2014 Ministry Fund forms.
- The 2014 Business Mileage Reimbursement increased to \$.575/mile on January 1, 2015.
- Year end giving statements to donors must include a phrase similar to or contain words "no goods or services were exchanged for these contributions." The IRS has resources available, www.irs.gov, to assist with charitable contributions; Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations and Publication 526 Charitable Contributions.
- It is a violation of federal law to reimburse a non-superannuated/non-retired pastor for the cost of healthcare expenses outside of the denominational benefit plans. The denomination benefit plans consist of the Highmark Health Insurance, FSA and the HRA. Any direct reimbursement by the employer to the employee for health insurance premiums, medical claims, medical supplies or equipment or prescriptions is against the law. Fines of up to \$100/day per employee are possible.

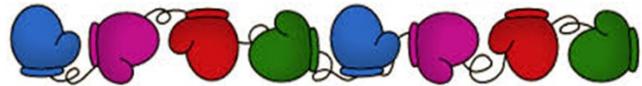
Superannuated or retired pastors receiving the

benefit of their church paying for the cost of their Highmark Freedom Blue Medicare supplemental plan was not covered in the guidance released by the IRS. We are operating under the assumption that the non-taxable reimbursement of the Highmark Freedom Blue premiums to the employee or payment to EC Benefits can continue because Medicare supplemental plans are not included in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The guidance issued by the IRS was intended to assist employers to comply with the ACA and since Medicare supplemental plans are not included in the ACA, compliance is not possible. However, this assumption can change if additional information is released.

Please contact Dave King (dking@eccenter.com) or Kevin Henry (khenry@eccenter.com) with any questions; 717-866-7581.

Kevin Henry
Controller

David King
Benefits Administrator



Find out what a health care procedure will cost before you schedule it!

Highmark is making it easier for members to make important health care decisions by providing a means to know what a procedure will cost prior to scheduling it. It allows members to get a reliable estimate of anticipated health care costs by using its large database of procedural costs. The Care Cost Estimator then calculates the out-of-pocket expenses, based on the member's health insurance plan for deductibles and coinsurance. As of January 1, 2015, the Care Cost Estimator is now available for both our Highmark Smart Blue PPO health insurance plan and our retiree Highmark Freedom Blue Medicare Advantage plan. Highmark member participants can access the Care Cost Estimator by logging in on their Highmark website account at www.highmark.com. Members can also use the Rx link on the website to get prescription drug costs, as well.

New Child Abuse/Criminal Check Laws

Several new laws came into effect in Pennsylvania with the start of the new year and several more in June of 2015. They all affect how we deal with child abuse in our churches and other community organizations. Every local congregation is being impacted by these new laws if you provide any kind of children or youth ministry including nursery, Sunday school, and Vacation Bible School.



Below are bullet points that you should know. We encourage you to look for a training in your area, the discussion alone will help you think through things much more thoroughly than just reading these few points. You can even use a simple Google search for "free mandated reporter training in PA" to discover all kinds of information.

The ECC Christian Education Committee is trying to set up regional training events to be able to give you a more complete picture of how these new laws impact staff and volunteers who help in any way with children and youth ministries. Please watch for announcements to arrive via email and the EC LEADER.

Main Themes:

- Anyone working with children is now considered a mandated reporter, not just pastors.
- Most churches most likely use a system where if abuse is suspected the teacher or nursery worker reports it to the pastor who would then call child-line. Now the volunteer will be required to call IMMEDIATELY. Failure to do so could result in misdemeanor charges against the individual.
- You now need to call if you have reasonable suspicion, you do not need to see physical signs of abuse.
- Criminal background and sexual abuse history checks are required for anyone working with children and all will need to be updated every three years. Third party groups, such as Protect my Ministry, will no longer be valid. If a volunteer has been living in Pennsylvania for less than 10 years an FBI fingerprint check will also be needed.



For Christian Education Committee,
Steve Holubec

E.C. Church Center
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Phone: 717-866-7581

E-mail:

eccenter@eccenter.com

We're on the Web
www.eccenter.com

We've attached calendars for February and March and will attach subsequent calendars in the future issues so you can keep up-to-date with what is happening in the EC denomination. These calendars are also available on the EC website www.eccenter.com. If there is an event you would like to have included on the calendar please contact Brenda at blong@eccenter.com or call 717-866-7581.



February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	2	3 StoneRidge Retirement Living Board Mtg.	4	5 Evangelical Seminary Board Mtg.	6 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	7 4 Chaplains Run/Walk
8 Church Planting Offering	9	10 Church Planting Commission Mtg.	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day
15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium	16 President's Day	17	18 Ash Wednesday	19	20	21
22 First Sunday in Lent	23	24 Benefits Corp. Mtg.	25	26 Finance Committee Mtg.	27	28

Ministry Funds to:
E.C. Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corporation
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Church Planters' Offering to:
E.C. Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate—Church Planters' Offering)

March 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Day of Prayer for Church Planting Second Sunday in Lent	2	3	4	5	6 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	7 MMK Rally
8 Self-Denial Offering Third Sunday in Lent	9 Nexus Com Mtg. National CRC Mtg.	10 Global Ministries Commission Mtg.	11	12 National Ministry Team Mtg.	13	14
15 Fourth Sunday in Lent	16 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance	17	18 Church Health Commission Mtg.	19	20	21 ECCO's Got Talent
22 Passion Sunday	23	24 NC Report Deadline	25	26	27	28
29 Palm Sunday	30	31				

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Self-Denial Offering to:
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100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate—Self-Denial Offering)