



Community

## Evangelical Congregational Church



DECEMBER

# EC Leader

2015

## From the Bishop

**E**very family has Christmas traditions: we watch “White Christmas” on Christmas Eve and read Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus on Christmas morning. “White Christmas” is one of Gloria’s favorite movies. I think many people who don’t like snow secretly hope that there’s at least a little snow on Christmas morning. The world changes under a layer of snow; everything looks so clean, so pure.

Purity is a difficult concept for us; God’s purity. His holiness is hard to understand because nothing in this world is truly pure. A new layer of snow looks pure but if you really study it, if you melt that snow, you discover that it carries many impurities. Hospital operating rooms and the “clean rooms” where computer components are made are certainly more pure than the outside

world, but there is no way they can be made complete pure. A.W. Tozer wrote, “We cannot grasp the true meaning of divine holiness. [Man] may fear God’s power and admire his wisdom, but his holiness, he can never even imagine.” Hannah exclaimed in prayer, “No one is holy like the Lord!” (1 Samuel 2:2)

Some try to describe the holiness of God as an “otherness”. God is set apart from us; He is in a class all by Himself. When God spoke to His people through the prophet Hosea He said, “I am the Holy One living among you.” (Hosea 11:9) God is holy, pure and perfect; that is His character and it says everything about Him. His love is perfect, His grace is perfect, His peace is perfect; everything about God is perfect. His actions are perfect even when we don’t understand them.

Christmas reminds us of



the difficulty understanding the work of a holy God. The prophecies had been given; the anointed one of Israel would come to set the people free. But over the years the people lost hope because they could not understand the action, or lack of it, by a holy God. Then, at the right time, God sent His One and only son Jesus. The world was confounded by the actions of the perfect God. They were not looking for a poor little baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. They

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## *Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise*



1. Join me in praying for the people of the world and our own country to open their hearts to Jesus this Christmas season. There are so many needs, so many hurts; He alone can change hearts and minds and bring glory to His Father.
2. Pray for safety for the many people who will be traveling to visit family and friends over this extended holiday season.
3. Join me in praying that the people who come to church for one of the special Christmas programs will truly be touched by God's Holy Spirit and be committed followers of Jesus.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to give a special anointing to all of our pastors as they preach the Word of life and to be present in a special way when we gather together for worship and praise to our King Jesus.
5. Pray for the leaders of our affiliate ministries as they plan and prepare to begin the first year of our denomination's draw-down of mandated support and move to a voluntary support model.
6. Praise God for all the individuals, families and churches who have financially supported EC ministries during the year (Camp ECCO, Evangelical Seminary, Global Ministries, Rock River Bible Camp, and Twin Pines). And we all still have time to show some love with an end-of-the-year gift! (You didn't see that coming did you?)
7. Praise God for the wonderful gift of love and life that He offers us and all who would believe in Jesus, the Savior born in Bethlehem, laid in a manger, and living today!
8. Thank and praise the Lord for the team he is bringing together to serve the EC Church: the Executive Director and the four Associates. I am looking forward to how the Lord will lead us in the New Year.
9. Praise God for all his blessing during the past year. He is faithful in good times and challenging times. His will is perfect!
10. Join me in praising the Lord that on January 3 Gloria and I will celebrate 40 years of marriage! Yes, she has put up with me that long and I am VERY grateful!

### *From the Bishop (continued from page 1)*

weren't prepared for a carpenter to become a teacher/preacher/miracle worker. They couldn't understand a Savior who had to die. But it was all God's perfect plan and will.

So what does God's holiness mean to you and me today? There will be times in our lives when we don't know what God is doing and wonder if He is doing anything. The temptation is always there, then, to play God and come up with a solution and tell God how to put it in practice. But our solutions don't come close to God's holy and perfect will. The advent of Jesus and the holiness of God remind us that God knows what he's doing; He is holy. May His holiness give us confidence in what He is doing in our lives at Christmas and throughout the coming New Year! Merry Christmas!

In Christ's service,



## News from Evangelical Seminary



Dear Friends of Evangelical...

Praise God for  
the Gift of Jesus  
who was...  
and is...  
and is to come!

Have a  
Wonderful Christmas  
And a Blessed New Year

Lord, there is no one like you.  
You are great, and Your name is great and powerful.  
Jeremiah 10:6 NCV

From the Administration, Faculty, and Staff  
of  
Evangelical Seminary



### Fresh Hope for the Poor: Moving Beyond Charity

Many of us grapple with the best ways to empower those living in extreme poverty. Theories and attitudes abound, but we are partnering with some established entrepreneurs to take a deep and practical look at real world solutions. Join us for a one day seminar as Peter Greer of Hope International, Michelle Kime of ImagineGoods, TJ Foltz of HumanKind Water, and Jo Ann Spidle of Ten Thousand Villages share their stories, practical insights and inspiration to build relationships across the lines of poverty.

Date: February 10, 2016  
Time: 9 am—4:30 pm

Place: Dixon University Center, Harrisburg, PA  
Register at [www.evangelical.edu/poverty](http://www.evangelical.edu/poverty)

**PLEASE NOTE:** Any pastor, elder, or deacon/ness who decides to retire effective National Conference 2016, must make his/her intention known by written notification to the appropriate regional Conference Minister by January 1, 2016. January 1 is also the deadline for churches and pastor to submit written requests for a stationing change to the appropriate Conference Minister. This is a slight but important change to our traditional deadlines. **Please help us by adhering to a January 1 deadline for all written requests for transfers to the Superannuated or Supernumerary status and for stationing changes.** It appears that National Conference 2016 could set a record for the number of men retiring, so please help us by clearly communicating your desires for status change or stationing in writing by January 1. Thank you!

### Coaching for EC Pastors

will hold a webinar on  
Tuesday, February 16,  
from 9 AM to 12 pm ET.

The cost is \$50.00

More information to

follow. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Charles Walker at

[revcawalker12@gmail.com](mailto:revcawalker12@gmail.com).





# News from Global Ministries



**CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR MISSIONARIES:** This is the annual reminder for individuals and churches who wish to give monetary Christmas gifts to our EC missionaries. If the missionary serves overseas, it is better to give the monetary gift through either the GMC office or the mission agency with which the missionary serves. Cashing checks overseas always costs the recipient a lot in fees, plus your check may be altered and cashed for a much higher amount than you intended. That's if the missionary even receives the check! If the missionary is in the USA, either permanently or on furlough, then feel free to mail the card, check or gift directly to them. If you need current mailing addresses, contact Pat at the GMC office for that information. Thank you!



## GMC Postpones MMK Rally for 2016 to Re-group:

The GMC Mission Minded Kids planning committee has noticed that over the past few years the involvement of local churches and the number of children at the GMC sponsored MMK Rallies has declined. So, we are asking, "Is it time to do something different to help our local churches engage our local children in the Great Commission?" In order to re-group and evaluate the best way to help our local churches engage our children with the Great Commission, we

have decided to postpone the 2016 MMK Rally and use this year to evaluate and decide on a direction for the future.



## Important Update on El Retiro Children's Home (Mexico)

Over the past two years I have been writing and reporting about the aggressive new government regulations being required for children's homes in Mexico and how these regulations have resulted in the closing of other children's homes and could mean the same for El Retiro. After working directly with the leadership of El Retiro to evaluate our ability to comply and sustain these regulations, it is apparent that doing so would require more staff, daily direction and funding than is reasonably sustainable. Therefore the Global Ministries Commission has decided that instead of continuing to financially support El Retiro at our current amount and "hope against hope" that somehow something would change, we will take the next two years to intentionally transition out of supporting the ministry of El Retiro. During the next two years we will reduce our funding by 50% each year while continuing to help the leadership conclude what has been a very successful ministry to children in Jesus' name and to discover what the next chapter may be for all those involved. Since El

Retiro is not an orphanage but a temporary boarding home for children and youth who have legal parents and/or guardians, we are comforted by the fact that there will be viable options for the children going forward. **Please note that if you are currently supporting El Retiro we would request you continue to do so for the next two years so that we can help them in this important transition.**



We are in **need of housing** for two of our missionary families next year. Roy & Sue Haglund will be coming to central/eastern PA for April 2-18. They are in need of a one bedroom apartment for that time. BJ & Rachel Whitaker are also coming to PA next summer, June-August. They need a 2 or (preferable) 3-bedroom house or apartment and would like to stay in the Lebanon/Lancaster County area (Southern Lebanon to northern Lancaster would be ideal). If you know of any available housing for these folks, please contact Pat in the GMC office. The phone number is: 717-866-7584 or 1-800-866-7584. Email to: [ecglobal@eccenter.com](mailto:ecglobal@eccenter.com). Thank you!



## News from Twin Pines



### Shoppe the Poconos Retreat

*December 4-6, 2015*

Experience all that the Poconos has in shopping! There is something for every taste in shopping including, boutiques, craft stores, antique shops, bargain outlets, and malls! During this retreat, you will have the opportunity to shop by day and fellowship with others by night through devotions and Christmas-themed crafts. You will receive discounts and coupons to area stores. You might win door prizes too! Do not miss this thrilling retreat!

To register for this retreat, register online at [www.shoppethepoconos.eventbrite.com](http://www.shoppethepoconos.eventbrite.com) or download a brochure from our website at [www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org). For more information, contact the Twin Pines office at (570) 629-2411 or e-mail [retreats@twinpines.org](mailto:retreats@twinpines.org).

### Winter Thaw Youth Retreat

*February 19-21, 2016*

As winter thaws and gives way to spring and new life, a relationship with Jesus Christ changes lives into new creations. This wintertime retreat for your youth group encourages people to consider Christ's transformative love and grace, through Bible Study, worship, fellowship, and fun!

Take part in this life-changing weekend in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. All you need to do is bring your youth group/small group. Twin Pines will take care of the rest! Rev. Jeff Berger will be the speaker for this retreat.

Marketing materials for your church are available to upload on our website ([www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org)). Register by December 31, 2015 to receive free t-shirts for your youth group. The registration form is also available on our website. Direct any questions to Andy Kuhns at 570-629-2411 or email [andy@twinpines.org](mailto:andy@twinpines.org)



### Church Changing Culture Summit

*March 4-5, 2016*

The church should influence culture, not the other way around. Each year this summit will take a look at relevant issues and provide practical ways the local church can influence their community's culture. In 2016, the topic will be human trafficking, an issue that is present in your area; seen and unseen. It will focus on the supply and demand as well as ideas of what can be done about human trafficking in your community.

Register online at <https://tpc3.eventbrite.com> or download a brochure from our website at [www.twinpines.org](http://www.twinpines.org). For more information, contact Twin Pines office at (570)629-2411 or e-mail [retreats@twinpines.org](mailto:retreats@twinpines.org).

### Craft Retreat

*April 8-10, 2016*

Crafty people unite! Enjoy a laid-back weekend of fellowship and Bible study while working on crafts. Bring your own project to work on.


For more information, contact the Twin Pines office at 570-629-2411 or email [retreats@twinpines.org](mailto:retreats@twinpines.org)





## News from Benefits Corporation




### A couple of year end reminders:

 Pastor Compensation Forms should be returned to David King, Benefits Administrator, along with a copy to the Conference Minister by January 15, 2016.

 Annual Statistical Report is due to Rev. Ken Wiest, Statistician, EC Church Center, 100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067 (or email to [blong@eccenter.com](mailto:blong@eccenter.com)) by January 22, 2015.

 W-2 forms for employees (incl. pastors) and 1099-MISC forms for independent contractors are due by February 1, 2016 to the recipient and February 29 to the respective government agency or March 31 if filed electronically.


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 will not increase on January 1, 2016.

The health insurance rates are:

Family	\$1,800
Employee w/child(ren)	\$1,160
Couple	\$1,390
Single	\$ 660

Please see the website, [www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com) for additional information.

 HRA reimbursements **under the active pastors Highmark Blue Shield plan** are due to PrimePay by December 29, 2015 for covered healthcare expenses incurred by September 30, 2015. This is an HRA rule regardless of the insurance carrier. Reimbursements received after December 29 will not be paid. No exceptions.

### Highmark Freedom Blue Retiree Plan

There will be a decrease in the cost of the retiree Medicare

supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, of \$14 per month to \$197 per month. There are no changes to benefits levels.

Please remember that effective with the January 2016 premium billing no payments are to be paid to the EC Church Center. All Highmark Freedom Blue premium payments are to be paid directly to Highmark. Each retiree will receive an invoice from Highmark with instructions on how to make the premium payment to Highmark.

Each retiree should have received a letter from the EC Benefits office on how much their denominational premium reimbursement is going to change on January 1. Please contact Dave King at the EC Church Center if you did not receive a letter or have any questions on the reimbursement.

The **Manna Fund** is available to help retired pastors and widows that are struggling financially or could start to struggle with the change in health insurance premium reimbursement. Please contact Dave King to request a Manna Fund application if you are in need of financial assistance. All Manna Fund applications returned are kept confidential and only a small number of EC Benefits Corporation Trustees are involved in reviewing the applications and allocating funds. The Manna Fund currently has sufficient funds to assist retired pastors and widows and multiple EC Churches have pledged additional support.

Contact Dave King, [dking@eccenter.com](mailto:dking@eccenter.com) or Kevin Henry, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com) or 1-800-866-7581 with any questions or problems.

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



Kevin Henry  
Controller



Dave King  
Benefits  
Administrator

# Evangelical Congregational Church



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

Phone: 717-866-7581  
Web: [www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com)  
Email: [eccenter@eccenter.com](mailto:eccenter@eccenter.com)

## Pray God's highest hopes for your city's deepest needs.

*Seek God for the City* helps you to mobilize many to pray with united, sustained vision for people of your community. The prayers in this prayer guide are biblically grounded and easy to pray. It is a great way to pray with solid, biblical truth towards seeing God's promises come forth in our cities and nation.

Consider inviting at least one or two other churches to pray through the Seek God for the City prayers with you.

Seek God for the City is designed to unite and focus prayer through the forty days leading to Palm Sunday, February 10 through March 20, 2016.

For 2016, the prayers have been revised and sharpened, making this year's edition even more practical as a way to stimulate your congregation to pray with confidence and clarity.

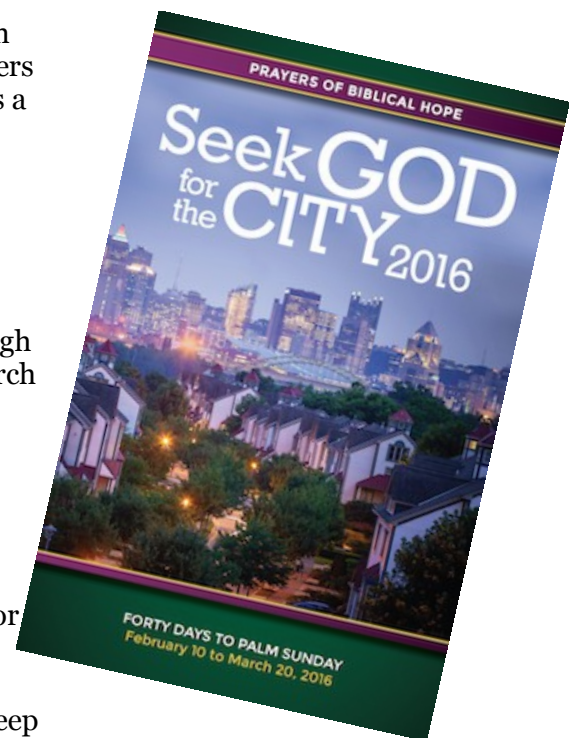
Pastors, mission leaders and positioned prayer leaders can call for a complimentary review copy. Call us now at (800) 264-5214.

Also available as an app that makes it possible to help many to keep their prayers rolling in the midst of busy lifestyles and schedules.

A Spanish translation is available at the same low bulk prices.

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Only \$3.00 each. Significant quantity discounts (up to 60%) make it easy to equip many throughout your city or church family.







# December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Day of Prayer for the EC Church	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> Second Sunday in Advent Day of Prayer for Church	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Church Planting Comm. Mtg.	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> Third Sunday in Advent	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Premium Due	<b>16</b> Church Center Christmas Party	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> Fourth Sunday in Advent Christmas Missionary Offering	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Church Center closed	<b>24</b> Christmas Eve Church Center closed	<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY Church Center closed	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> New Year's Eve Church Center closed		

**Ministry Funds to:**  
E.C. Church  
100 West Park Avenue  
Myerstown, PA 17067

**Insurance/Pension Payments to:**  
Benefits Corporation  
100 West Park Avenue  
Myerstown, PA 17067

**Christmas Missionary Offering to: E.C. Church**  
100 West Park Avenue  
Myerstown, PA 17067  
*(designate—Christmas Missionary Offering)*

# January 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>Special Note: DUE on January 15th</b> Estimate Tax Annual Disability Payment Church Pension Contribution			<b>1 NEW YEAR'S DAY</b> Day of Prayer for the EC Church Church Center Closed	<b>2</b>
<b>3 EPIPHANY</b> Day of Prayer for Church Planting	<b>4</b> 24 hour Retreat for New Associates	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Stationing Retreat	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Leadership Commission Mtg.	<b>19</b> Evangelism & Discipleship Commission Mtg.	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Health Insurance Task Force Mtg.	<b>27</b> Episcopacy Committee Mtg.	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>	<b>Ministry Funds to:</b> E. C. Church 100 West Park Avenue Myerstown, PA 17067	<b>Disability/Insurance/Pension Payments to:</b> Benefits Corporation 100 West Park Avenue Myerstown, PA 17067				