



DECEMBER 2014



**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

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## *From the Bishop*

**C**hristmas will soon be here! I'm not sure what your reaction is to that statement. Many of us who are involved in ministry look at our December calendars with mixed emotions: Christmas will be here too soon and we'll never be ready; while at the same time all the busyness of the Christmas celebration can't be over soon enough! Perhaps for you it's a mixture of the two, depending on the day and how you're feeling.

It is certainly true that most of our churches, pastors and families, have schedules jammed full with special Christmas celebrations. Between church, school, home, and community groups we fly from one thing to the next. When I was the Lead Pastor of Community Evangelical Church we would sit down and officially begin to plan Advent and Christmas sometime in the summer. That was always preceded with a day or two of Christmas music playing in my office to get me in the mood. Actually there were some years when our team was asking what next year's theme was going to be before the year's decorations came down! (I like to plan ahead, but there are limits.)

Maybe, as a pastor or lay leader, you have felt like me; there were times I didn't feel like I could really relax and celebrate Christmas until after that last Christmas Eve service was over. The problem with this is not only are we, who are in positions of congregational leadership, supposed to lead the special times or worship and celebration, I believe we are also to participate and enjoy them. We are to be worship leaders and worshippers! I will confess there were times when it came to Christmas that my mind

was focused more on endurance than my heart was on enjoyment. I don't think enduring Christmas was what God the Father had in mind when he sent his angels to announce the "good news that will bring great joy to all people."

Christmas certainly is special and we can find all kinds of opportunities to remember, celebrate, and worship the birth of the Savior; to both express and wonder at the miracle of "God in flesh appearing." My prayer for all of our pastors and church staff members who are so busy planning and leading services, for our lay leaders who have volunteered to be part of the team, and the Sunday School teachers who are trying to herd wiggly children onto the platform in front of a room full of anxious families and friends, is that in the middle of all of busyness the Holy Spirit would speak in that "still small voice" and lead us in worship. O come let us (all) adore him, Christ the Lord!

In Christ's Service,



[www.stevencol.com](http://www.stevencol.com)

## Bishop's Top Ten Prayer Praise

1. Here in the USA the hysteria of ebola has quieted down for the time being (PTL) but please continue to lift up our brothers and sisters in Liberia in prayer as they continue to live with the horror of this disease every day.
2. Ask the Lord to provide for spiritual rest and refreshment as I get a little break from a usually busy preaching schedule and am able to sit in the congregation for a couple of Sundays.
3. Pray that the Lord would use this special time of the year to open hearts and reach those who will be visiting churches for special Christmas services.
4. Continue to lift up the work of the Covenant Implementation Team as they investigate the changes that will be necessary in order to implement the Covenant adopted by the members of the National Conference this past May.
5. Pray for the Lord's leading as two nominating committees work to prepare ballots for two very important leadership positions which will be elected in 2015: Susquehanna Region Conference Minister and Bishop.
6. Join me in praising God for pastors and lay leaders who serve Christ and his church by volunteering their time, talents, and expertise to our commissions and committees.
7. Praise God for the times we all can gather together with family and friends to celebrate the miracle of Jesus' birth.
8. Praise the Lord for his leading and blessing in so many ways this past year. He is good and his timing is perfect!
9. Thank the Lord for the health, strength and safety he has given to me and other denominational and regional leaders given that 2014 has been a very busy travel year.
10. Praise God for his great gift of love expressed in his One and only Son Jesus who alone is "the way, the truth, and the life."



January 24, 2015—The pastors and lay delegates of the Susquehanna Region will gather at 10:00 AM for worship and prayer service followed by a **special meeting to elect the region's Conference Minister**. The location has not yet been confirmed, so please watch for that announcement soon.

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)/9:00AM (central) - Great Lakes Region (video conference)
- April 30 @ 7:00 PM—Delaware Region
- May 2 @ 9:00 AM—Delaware Region



The Church Center office will be closed  
on the following dates:

November 27 & 28  
December 24, 25, 26 & 31  
January 1 & 2



## News from StoneRidge Retirement Living



### Tribute to Those Who Served

Veteran's Day! A day to honor those who served in the military, both those living and those who paid the ultimate price.

StoneRidge Retirement Living honored forty veterans from the branches of the armed services in a special ceremony on November 11th. A color guard of residents presented the colors before an audience of fellow residents. The Activity Coordinator, Kristine Tobias, having served in the National Guard, served as the mistress of ceremonies. The special service brought media coverage from the local newspaper and television station.

Kristine gave tribute to the veterans and introduced each one giving his rank and years of service. An interview conducted by the WGAL TV reporter revealed that one of the veterans in attendance had served in the Battle of the Bulge seventy years ago.

It was a truly special afternoon celebrating patriotism and those who served our country.



*Kristine Tobias, StoneRidge Activity Coordinator with resident veterans, Robert Levin, Robert Richardson and Karl Yochum.*

### Video Conferencing Help

There is a need in the EC Church to begin video conferencing from the EC Church Center. Initially, we need a volunteer experienced with video conferencing to spend a couple of hours explaining what are the realistic expectations with video conferencing from the host and attendee perspectives, what equipment is needed and suggestions on service providers. If anyone can help the EC Church Center staff with the basics of video conferencing, please contact Kevin Henry, Controller, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com).

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.

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.

You are invited to join us for a special service, **Blue Christmas...A Service of Comfort and Hope**, 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. Kirk Marks, will bring a special meditation of comfort and hope.



## News from Global Ministries

**Christmas gifts for missionaries**—This is our annual reminder that monetary Christmas gifts for missionaries serving overseas **should NOT be sent to them directly** unless they have specifically instructed you to do so. Depositing overseas checks can cost up to \$35 in change fees, plus some have been stolen and altered to show a higher amount, causing problems for the sender. Either send the check through Global Ministries or the mission agency with which the missionary serves. If you send through GMC, please make your check payable to Global Ministries and send a note stating which missionary/missionaries are to receive funds and the amount. We will send these monies to the missionaries along with a detailed list of who gave and how much. If you have any questions, please contact Pat in the GMC office.

The Christmas Missionary offering bulletin inserts and envelopes will be sent out at the end of November. This offering helps to meet the needs of our international churches, as well as office/salary expenses. Please give generously!

**Liberia Update:** To date the GMC has been able to send \$45,000 to Liberia to assist them in their response to Ebola. They currently have three Ebola Response Teams that are actively traveling to the remote villages



and least reached areas of Liberia.

Following is an excerpt from an email update from Matthew Gueh:

*Indeed the virus is dealing deadly with us but thank God most of us are still alive. We have put in place an Ebola awareness and response team which is responsible to educate, trace, track and care for anyone found in towns and villages and surrounding to where we are located. You know what it means to get to these areas. With your prayer and support, we have been able to provide the most essential needs such as bleaches, soaps, bucket with faucet attached, hand sanitizers, and food to all of our ECers and those that are specifically tracked possibly showing sign of Ebola. This effort has helped us to a greater extent but there are yet many challenges.*



Rev. Abram Powell, an officer of the Liberian EC Church is currently in New Jersey so Bishop Hill and I have arranged a meeting with him on December 3 to continue strategic plans for the Ebola response and the continued work of the EC Church of Liberia.



## Bishop's Speaking Schedule

Bishop Hill is planning his preaching/speaking calendar for 2015. If you are interested in having him speak at your church, now is the time to contact Church Center.

No church is too big or too small for him to visit, but it is on a first come-first serve and you need to invite him. So as you plan your congregation's 2015 church service schedule see when it would be good to have the bishop come preach. He enjoys meeting new friends, is a pretty good preacher, and is even willing to wear socks and a tie if necessary.

If you'd like to schedule a date please email your requested date(s) to his Administrative Assistant Jodi Earhart ([jearhart@eccenter.com](mailto:jearhart@eccenter.com)) and she will work with him in developing his schedule for 2015.

***Seek God for the City*** is designed to unite and focus prayer through the 40 days (February 18 through March 29, 2015) leading to Palm Sunday. God does not need our prayers to act. But He does invite us to experience the joy of co-working with Him as we pray together on behalf of others.

Instead of using prayer as a quick-fix procedure that gets quick results, the prayers in ***Seek God for the City*** encourage us to pray in ways of collaborating with God. Many thousands of churches will be praying through these prayers during the 40-day season. While the topics and scriptures are different from last year's edition, the desire that Christ be glorified is foundational in all the prayers.

In addition to the basic prayer guide booklet are three special versions: a Children's Guide available online at no cost, a Spanish translation, and a companion app for smart phones and tablets. The cost is just \$3.00 per booklet. This makes it possible to equip many in your church to join in this prayer effort. Check out the details at [www.waymakers.org](http://www.waymakers.org).

## *News from the Covenant Implementation Team*

I don't know if you've ever tried to juggle. You've probably have seen people do it and through "that doesn't look too hard. I could do that!" That's usually soon followed by rubber balls bouncing all over the place. I'm reminded of the insurance commercial that shows a man who thinks the "name our own price too!" give him the power to juggle chainsaws. One chainsaw at a time is enough for me. I would quickly say "no thank you" to two or more. I must say, though that there are times I feel like I have been asked to juggle four running chainsaws only we don't call them chainsaws—we call them the four points of the Covenant adopted by the National Conference in May 2014. The Covenant Implementation Team has been meeting each month to study how best to put into action the four points. They are:

1. We will move to a regional shared ministry and leadership model.
2. We will re-evaluate our denominational relationships with affiliate ministries.
3. We will substantially reduce denominational operating expenses.
4. We will significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches.

While we understand the Covenant as being made up of these four points, it must be understood that the points cannot be separated; they are intimately related to each other.

This is most obvious when we look at points #3 and #4. We must "substantially reduce denominational operating expenses" in order to "significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches." Conversely, in order to "significantly reduce ministry fund asking from local churches" we must "substantially reduce denominational operating expenses." And in order to fulfill those two points we must "move to a regional share ministry and leadership model" and "re-evaluate our denominational relationships with affiliate ministries." Their implementation must occur concurrently.

The challenge for the Implementation Team and the National Conference is to now do what we've voted to do and discover how the Lord is leading us and to then put into practice the changes necessary to implement the Covenant into the daily life of the E.C. Church. So keep praying as, together, we learn how to juggle chainsaws!

In Christ's service,




## *Calling All Church Treasurers*

As previously announced, the Leadership Commission is sponsoring training for church treasurers in the spring of 2015. We need your help! First, please send suggestions for training topics to Kevin Henry, Controller, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com), or Debra Patterson, National Conference Treasurer, [pattersondl56@verizon.net](mailto:pattersondl56@verizon.net). Possible training topics can be, payroll processing and reporting, record retention, financial report preparation and issuance, fraud prevention, employee benefits provided by the EC Church, ministry fund calculation, charitable giving regulations, budget preparation and many more. Suggestions for training are welcome from pastors, lay delegates, official board members and of course, church treasurers!. Secondly, volunteers are needed to serve as advisors with Debra and Kevin to plan the church treasurer training. The advisory group will first meet sometime in early to mid-January 2015. Electronic meeting attendance is possible or depending on the volunteers responding, weekend or evening meetings could be held. Questions before the advisory group: when to have the training(s), where to have the training(s). Advisory group members can, if they want to, participate in the training either as instructors or share examples of how they handle certain situations in their church. It is anticipated that the advisory group will be in existence for about four to six months. Please contact Deb Patterson or Kevin Henry with training topic suggestions or to volunteer for the advisory group.

## News from Benefits Corporation

### 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, 2015.

**Annual Statistical Reports** are due to Rev. Ken Wiest, Statistician, EC Church Center, 100 West Park Avenue, Myerstown, PA 17067 by January 23, 2015.

**W-2 forms** for employees (incl. pastors) and **1099-MISC** forms for independent contractors are due by February 2, 2015 to the recipient and March 2 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, 2015. 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, 2014 for covered healthcare expenses incurred by September 30, 2014. this is an HRA rule regardless of the insurance carrier. Reimbursements received after December 29 will not be paid. No exceptions.

There will be an increase in the cost of the retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, of \$23 per month to \$211 per month. There are no changes to benefits levels. Your invoices for January 2015 will reflect an increase in premium cost.

The environment surrounding the providing of non-retiree employee group health insurance is constantly changing. Implementation of new sections of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and released guidance on the law to assist employers with complying with the ACA is keeping the employer group health insurance market in constant flux. The EC Benefits Corporation Trustees are wrestling with how best to provide the local pastor and the local church with a fair and equitable group health insurance plan. Please share your thoughts, ideas or opinions with any EC Benefits Trustee (section 2 of the Conference Journal has a listing of the EC Benefits Trustees) or Dave King or me.

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

Kevin Henry  
Controller

David King  
Benefits Coordinator



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

Phone: 717-866-7581  
E-mail:  
[eccenter@eccenter.com](mailto:eccenter@eccenter.com)

We're on the Web  
[www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com)

We've attached calendars for December and January 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](http://www.eccenter.com). If there is an event you would like to have included on the calendar please contact Brenda at [blong@eccenter.com](mailto:blong@eccenter.com) or call 717-866-7581.



# December 2014

| Sun   | Mon   | Tue  | Wed  | Thu  | Fri  | Sat       |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|-----------|
|   | <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>                                       | <b>3</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>5</b><br>Day of Prayer for<br>The EC Church | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>7</b> Second Sunday<br>in Advent<br>Day of Prayer for<br>Church Planting | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b><br>Church Planting<br>Commission Mtg. | <b>10</b>  | <b>11</b>  | <b>12</b><br>12-14 Supervisory<br>Retreat      | <b>13</b> |
| <b>14</b> Third Sunday<br>in Advent   | <b>15</b> Church Pension<br>Contribution due<br>Health Insurance<br>Premium due | <b>16</b> Loan & Invest-<br>ment Mtg.          | <b>17</b><br>Church Center<br>Christmas Party—<br>closed afternoon | <b>18</b>  | <b>19</b>                                      | <b>20</b> |
| <b>21</b> Fourth Sunday<br>in Advent<br>Christmas Missions<br>Offering      | <b>22</b>   | <b>23</b>                                      | <b>24</b> CHRISTMAS EVE<br>Church Center<br>Closed                 | <b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY<br>Church Center<br>closed | <b>26</b><br>Church Center<br>closed           | <b>27</b> |
| <b>28</b>   | <b>29</b>   | <b>30</b>                                      | <b>31</b> New Year's Eve<br>Church Center<br>closed                |  |  |           |

**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  
(designate Church—4th Quarter/Pastor)

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

# January 2015

| Sun  | Mon   | Tue   | Wed   | Thu  | Fri  | Sat  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Ministry Funds to:<br/>E.C. Church<br/>100 W. Park Ave.<br/>Myerstown, PA 17067</p> | <p>Insurance/Pension<br/>Payments to:<br/>Benefits Corporation<br/>100 W. Park Ave.<br/>Myerstown, PA 17067</p> | <p>Disability payment to:<br/>Benefits Corporation<br/>100 W. Park Ave.<br/>Myerstown, PA 17067</p> |   | <p><b>1</b> NEW YEAR'S DAY<br/>Church Center closed</p>  | <p><b>2</b><br/>Day of Prayer for<br/>the E.C. Church<br/>Church Center closed</p> | <p><b>3</b></p>  |
| <p><b>4</b><br/><i>Day of Prayer for<br/>Church Planting</i></p>                       | <p><b>5</b><br/><b>6</b></p>  | <p><b>7</b></p>   | <p><b>8</b></p>                                   | <p><b>9</b></p>  | <p><b>10</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>11</b></p>   | <p><b>12</b></p>  | <p><b>13</b></p>  | <p><sup>14</sup></p>                              | <p><b>15</b> Estimated Tax due<br/>Stationing Requests due<br/>Annual Disability Pmt. Due<br/>Church Pension Contribu-<br/>tion due<br/>Health Insurance Premium<br/>due</p> | <p><b>16</b></p>   | <p><b>17</b></p>   |
| <p><b>18</b></p>   | <p><b>19</b> Leadership<br/>Commission meeting</p>  | <p><b>20</b> Evangelism &amp;<br/>Discipleship Com-<br/>mission meeting</p>                         | <p><b>21</b><br/>Fresh Expressions "Taster"</p>   | <p><b>22</b></p>   | <p><b>23</b></p>   | <p><b>24</b> Susquehanna<br/>Region Conference<br/>Minister Election<br/>meeting</p> |
| <p><b>25</b></p>   | <p><b>26</b></p>  | <p><b>27</b></p>  | <p><b>28</b> Episcopacy<br/>Committee meeting</p> | <p><b>29</b></p>   | <p><b>30</b></p>   | <p><b>31</b></p>   |