

From the Bishop

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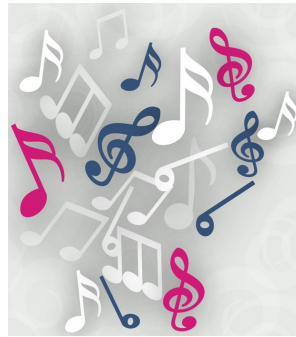
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I love Christmas songs. I sing them any time of the year. You can ask Gloria or the staff at EC Church Center. I can and do sing them, hum them, and whistle them. I was recently whistling “O Holy Night” when one phrase jumped out in my head—“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices.” It occurs to me that one of the obvious distinctions between Christians and our culture is expressed in that one important word—hope.

Paul wrote to the Roman Christians “I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13 NLT) God is the source of hope and that hope comes to us “as you trust in him.” That new life produces hope. It is in our



daily intimate relationship with God through faith that we find

hope, even in a hopeless world. The really cool thing is that God gives us even more than hope; he wants to “fill you completely with joy and peace.” When the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds he said it was “good news that will bring great joy.” (Luke 2:10 NLT) The shepherds were understandably scared to death by the heavenly visitors; but the angels reassured them with a message of “peace on earth.” (Luke 2:14 NLT)

Joy and peace come from knowing that Jesus is Emmanuel—“God with us” -

the source of hope.

Too often, particularly during the holiday season; we live a “distracted life.” Our heart is a battle ground. There are many who are haunted by the chances and the changes of life. We spend time playing “what if” games in our heads and hearts. Life can be hazardous to your health. The only way to live a joyous, peaceful and hopeful life is through faith in God who has promised “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.” (Hebrews 13:5 NLT) How do we know he will never leave us; he gave us his Holy Spirit to be our constant companion.

The Holy Spirit encouraged the hearts of the Old Testament prophets to look to the day when the Savior would be born; to watch confidently and (continued on page 2)



Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise



1. Join me in praying for all those who be attending special Christmas services in our local congregations—may the true meaning of Christmas touch hearts and minds.
2. Pray for the Lord's guidance as I begin to focus more on the task of planning National Conference 2017 which will be held at Messiah College, May 24-26.
3. Pray for wisdom and guidance for the many Evangelical Seminary staff and board members who are working on the partnership between Evangelical and Huntington University.
4. Pray for safety as Gloria and I continue to travel the winter roads to preach and visit local churches, and for all those who will be traveling.
5. Thank the Lord that we're off to a good strong start with our denominational restructuring; but please keep praying for our new leadership team including the Executive Director, Associates, and all the District Field Directors.
6. Praise the Lord for opportunities to be with family for the holidays but join me in praying for our many missionary families who are separated during the Christmas holiday season.
7. As we look to closing out another year, join me in thanking God for the pastors and lay leaders who serve Christ and his church by volunteering their time, talents, and expertise to our new communities and committees.
8. Praise the Lord for the good reports I'm hearing of individuals who are involved in one of the many disciple-making ministries in our local churches.
9. I praise and thank the Lord for the many individuals who continue to remind me they are regularly praying for Gloria and me. We count on that!
10. Praise the Lord with me for God's amazing gift of Jesus and life in him!

(continued from page 1)

expectantly for the coming of the Messiah. That same Spirit led the apostles to follow Jesus, the One born in Bethlehem, and to go share the good news of Jesus around the world. The Holy Spirit has encouraged and guided God's people throughout the history of the church empowering them to serve with joy, peace and overflowing confident hope.

As people who have a growing relationship with God, who have received the gift of his Holy Spirit, we are to "overflow with confident hope."

Do we practice overflowing hope for the great things from God? The disciple looks ahead with a contagious enthusiasm. We are called to share the message of "good news and great joy;" of confident hope because of Emmanuel—God is with us. May this be our song on Christmas and every day!

In Christ's service,



News from STONERIDGE POPLAR RUN

On Friday, December 16, the Youth Chorus of the Lebanon County Choral Society will perform at StoneRidge Poplar Run's* Theatre on Main. The Youth Chorus, which features 13 members ages 7 through 14, will fill the air with the sounds of Christmas. The program will include both religious and secular songs of the season, and will be under the direction of Karen Umberger. The chorus will also provide some harmonic accompaniment to their songs. This is the Youth Chorus' fifth year of performing. StoneRidge Poplar Run* is located at 440 East Lincoln Avenue, Myerstown. The concert begins at 7 p.m. and is free and open to the public. For more information, please call 717-866-3200.



**StoneRidge Poplar Run is one of four retirement communities comprising StoneRidge Retirement Living. Locations include StoneRidge Towne Centre and StoneRidge Poplar Run both in Myerstown, Church of God Home in Carlisle and Schoolyard Square in Pine Grove. For more information about options available for you or a loved one, please call 717-866-3553. StoneRidge Retirement Living is all about just that—Living!*

News from PASTORAL COMPENSATION

The Social Security Administration Cost of Living Adjustment (SSA COLA) was released at **.3% (.003)** not the .2% as previously reported. My apologies for the confusion.

Per the approved Pastoral Compensation report the annual Social Security Administration Cost of Living Adjustment (SSA COLA) will be used as the 2017 annual recommended pastoral salary increase. The Social Security Administration released their 2017 COLA increase at .3% (.003).

The 2017 minimum salaries:

Licensed Pastor:	\$33,054
Licensed Pastor II:	\$35,265
Elder:	\$35,713

(see Rules of Conference section 805 for definitions of Ministerial Credentials)

Churches unable to give at least a .3% salary increase must notify their District Field Director prior to any official action taken to set the pastor's salary for 2017.

Churches that are financially able are encouraged to give either a larger percentage increase or to consider an additional increase as a merit raise in salary for each pastor. This merit raise would be in addition to the approved percentage salary increase.

News from BENEFITS CORPORATION

A couple of end of year reminders:

- Pastor Compensation Forms should be returned to David King, Benefits Administrator, by January 1, 2017.
- Annual Statistical Report is due to Rev. Ken Wiest, Statistician, E.C. Church Center, 100 W. Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067 by January 25, 2017.
- W-2 forms for employees (incl. pastors) and 1099-MISC forms for independent contractors are due by January 31, 2017 to the recipient and to the respective government agency. Earlier deadline than in previous years.

Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive 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, 2017 (premium due December 15, 2016). The health insurance rates are:

Family	\$1,890
Employee w/child(ren)	1,220
Couple	1,460
Single	690

Please see the website, www.eccenter.com for additional information.

- HRA reimbursements **under the active pastors Highmark Blue Shield plan** are due to PrimePay by December 29, 2016 for covered healthcare expenses incurred by September 30, 2016. This is an HRA rule regardless of the insurance carrier. Reimbursements received after December 29 will not be paid. No exceptions.



Elimination of the Active Pastor Health Insurance Mandate

If you are thinking of leaving the EC Group Health Insurance plan on January 1, 2017 please consult with David King or Kevin Henry before making any decisions. There can be severe financial penalties for violations to the Affordable Care Act.



Highmark Freedom Blue Retiree Plan

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing by \$19/mon to \$216 per person per month, effective January 1, 2017, with no changes in coverage levels.

As approved by the members of the EC Benefits Corporation at the May 2015 EC Benefits Annual Corporation Meeting, beginning in 2016 and annually through 2019, the EC Church contribution to the cost of the Medicare

Supplemental premium will be reduced by 20% until, in 2020, the entire contribution by the EC Church has been eliminated. The retiree is responsible for the remaining portion of the premium not paid by the EC Church.

Cost Sharing Amounts for 2017 (single policy)

Year of Medicare Eligibility	Current	January 1, 2017
2005 or before	\$ 39.40	\$ 86.40
2006	\$ 78.80	\$ 118.80
2007	\$ 118.20	\$ 151.20
2008	\$ 157.60	\$ 183.60
2009 and after	\$ 197.00	\$ 216.00

For a husband and wife on Freedom Blue double the amounts above.

It is very important that the retiree does not fall behind on payments to Highmark Freedom Blue. If a retiree is having difficulty paying the monthly premium the Manna Fund is available for financial assistance. Please contact David King in the EC Benefits Office for a Manna Fund application.



There are many Medicare Advantage plans available even some at no cost to the participant. However each plan will have positives and negatives in terms of participating providers and benefits provided. Please thoroughly investigate any Medicare Advantage plan before switching plans. If a retiree does not have the financial means to assume a larger portion of the Freedom Blue plan the Manna Fund is available to financially assist the retiree.

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

Kevin Henry
Executive Director

David King
Benefits Administrator



News from TWIN PINES

BECOME A MINISTRY PARTNER

The Twin Pines Ministry Partners program is meant to support and help the ministry of Twin Pines provide a place where people experience God through prayer and financial means. Twin Pines benefits from the support of our partners and our partners benefit from the shared mission of presenting the Gospel as well as special discounts to use the facilities of Twin Pines. Any organizations can choose to be a ministry partner (such as churches, Sunday school classes, Bible studies, youth groups, and more). For more information about becoming a Ministry Partner, please contact Shawn Fetterhoff at shawn@twinpines.org or call (570)629-2411.



WINTER THAW: YOUTH WEEKENDS

February 10-12, 2017 or February 17-19, 2017

A retreat for youth groups which features a speaker and worship band to help make this weekend awesome! Youth leaders, you just need to focus on building relationships with

your group. Participating youth groups must provide chaperones for this retreat. Register by December 31, 2016 to receive a free t-shirt for each participant! Contact the camp office for more information at (570)629-2411 or email retreats@twinpines.org.

CHURCH CHANGING CULTURE SUMMIT

March 3-5, 2017

2017 Topic: Depression

Depression is an issue that affects many people, however, our culture and church supports hiding the personal struggle. The summit will delve into the biological, medical, and psychological aspects to change the church culture of depression. Contact the camp office for more information: 570-629-2411 or email retreats@twinpines.org.

CRAFT RETREAT

March 31-April 2, 2017

Enjoy a laid-back weekend of fellowship and Bible study while working on your own crafts. There will also be a special craft for all participants to learn. Contact the camp office for more information: 570-629-2411 or email retreats@twinpines.org.

News from GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMUNITY

Thank you!

As we approach the end of another calendar year and begin to reflect on what God has done in and through us, I want to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of the entire Global Ministries Community for all within the Global EC Church who faithfully “pray, give and go” in the name of Jesus Christ! God is accomplishing far more than we could think or imagine through His Spirit at work within us!

Liberia Motorcycle Goal Reached!

I am happy to report that our goal of raising enough funds to purchase two motorcycles for our sister churches in Liberia has been reached! Funds will be sent shortly and pastors who were walking many miles to shepherd their churches will have more time and energy to spend with their district churches.

Missionary Updates:

- *Jim Ehrman* will conclude his missionary service with the GMC at the end of this year in order to focus on his new responsibilities as Dean of Academic Programs and Interim Assistant Professor of Leadership & Culture at Evangelical Seminary.
- *John & Carolyn Miller* will retire from their missionary service with GMC at the end of this year after close to 50 years with Wycliff-SIL. They are currently residing in Houghton, NY. Contact the GMC Office for their address.
- *Dan Dixon* will be undergoing surgery on his knee in early December.

Christmas Missions Offering

The GMC Christmas Missions Offering is scheduled for December 18th. Please watch for bulletin inserts and envelopes. If you do not receive them or need more, please contact the GMC office. Thank you!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR MISSIONARIES:

This is the annual reminder for individuals or 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 it may open your check to being altered and cashed for a much higher amount than you intended. **PLEASE DO NOT SEND CHRISTMAS CARDS TO THE GMC OFFICE TO FORWARD TO MISSIONARIES.** Mail the card directly to the missionary, but send the check through us or their mission agency, as noted above.

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!

News from KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY

You are invited to join your peers in ministry for training and conversation around ministry models that are proving fruitful for the Kingdom. Fresh Expressions, NAVS Missional Team, and Exponential serve the local church for the adventure of engaging the world for Christ.

Fresh Expressions Vision Day



- Friday, January 6, 2017 ... 9:00 am to 3:30 pm (\$20/person; includes lunch)
- Camp Hill United Methodist Church
- Register at... <http://freshexpressionsus.org/event/vision-day-harrisburg-va/> (Be sure to click "Sponsor-ECC" for the \$15 discount)

Fresh Expressions is a movement cultivating new forms of church alongside existing congregations in order to reach a changing world. Begun in England 10 years ago, it has resulted in the birth of over 2,500 new communities in the UK alone. Fresh Expressions has spread to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and is now taking shape in the US. At its heart, Fresh Expressions is about empowering and equipping God's people to develop creative expressions of church that can reach the increasing diversity of our society.

Vision Days are a great way to discover more about what it means to be involved in starting fresh expressions of church. Over 1,700 people have participated in Vision Days in 30 different cities to date. A typical Vision Days lasts 6 hours and provides the perfect opportunity to discover what it means to be the Church in new and creative ways, hear from

Fresh Expressions practitioners, learn how to renew existing congregations through fresh expressions of church, and discern what this could mean for your region, community, or neighborhood. There is active discussion as well as opportunity to build networks and relationships among those in your area.

At the Vision Day you will discover:

- How fresh expressions of church are renewing the church around the world
- What it means for your church to be Mission-Shaped
- How to intentionally engage with the community beyond your church walls
- Tools for starting fresh expressions of church in your area

The NAVS MISSIONAL TEAM presents INTENSIVE #4



- Thurs.-Sat., March 9-11, 2017
- Bethany UMC, Ellicott City, MD
- Details Not Yet Available

LEADING COMMUNITIES on MISSION

You've been building a culture of disciple-making in your context. Huddles are growing and reproducing. You've begun to see God bless your context with gifted disciples and you're intentionally training them to become Missional Leaders. Some of your huddled disciples are displaying the ability and capacity to mobilize others to move on a Kingdom Mission.

What will they lead?

If they merely plug into your existing system of church, you will continue to do what you've been doing and seeing the same fruit. To travel in a different way, and reach people and networks you've not yet connected with, you'll need a vehicle that's small enough to care, but large enough to dare.

In this Intensive we'll begin equipping church leaders with resources, information and practices that will unleash communities on mission in your context.

Exponential 2017 Live Stream Event

EXPONENTIAL⁷

- Tuesday, April 25, 2017 ... 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(\$10/person; includes lunch)
- Community EC Church, Sinking Spring, PA
- Register by contacting Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revcool@ptd.net)

Exponential is a growing community of leaders committed to accelerating the multiplication of healthy, reproducing faith communities. They champion church multiplication and equip church multipliers as they seek to help move the needle on multiplication from less than 1% of churches actively reproducing to greater than 10%.

Exponential East 2017 is the next event, a gathering of thousands of church planting leaders in Orlando. But you don't have to go

to Orlando to experience some of the event, and enjoy serious conversation that just might change your life and the life of your church.

As we have in the past, we will gather more locally (Community EC in Sinking Spring and, hopefully, in other places) to watch live streamed sessions, as well as videos of past sessions, AND discuss what we might do next.

"Dream Big is the them for Exponential 2017, Jesus Challenged us with a big dream. If He had sketched out His big dream for His Church, we think it would be something like, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes up on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8). The dream that Jesus gave His followers was the dream of a movement. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth—that is a very big dream! We are here because of that dream. As Christ followers and leaders of His church, Jesus is asking us to also dream big." (by Exponential)

We invite you to join us as we join Exponential East 2017 and begin conversations that focus on "what it looks like to dream big for our churches—and the Kingdom."





**Evangelical Congregational
Church**

100 West Park Avenue

Myerstown, PA

717-866-7581

www.eccenter.com

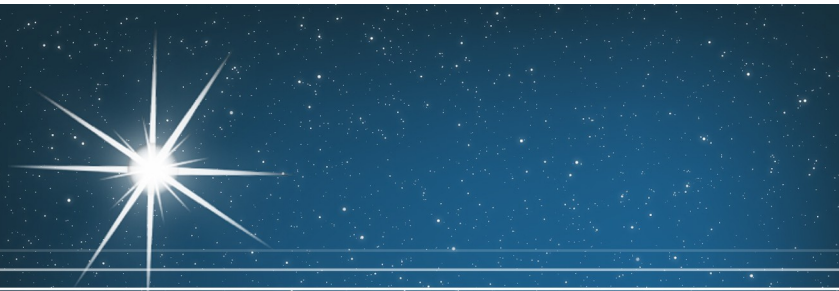
eccenter@eccenter.com

ONE
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"For there is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you have all been called to **one** glorious hope for the future.

There is **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, and **one** God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all."

EPHESIANS 4: 4-6



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7



Merry Christmas
from the ECC Church

Center Staff

DECEMBER 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	3
4 <i>Second Sunday in Advent</i> Day of Prayer for	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 <i>Third Sunday in Advent</i>	12	13	14	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Ins. Premium Due	16	17
18 <i>Fourth Sunday in Advent</i> Christmas Missionary Offering	19 Info for January 2017 EC Leader due	20	21	22 Church Center Christmas Party	23 Church Center Closed	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i>
25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 Church Center Closed	27 Church Center Closed	28	29	30 Church Center Closed	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>

Ministry Funds to:
E.C. Church
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)

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

January 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Day of Prayer for Church Planting	2 Church Center closed	3	4	5	6 Day of Prayer for the EC Church Fresh Express-	7
8 EPIPHANY	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 Est. Tax due Church Pension Contribution Due Annual Disability Payment due Health Ins. Premium Due	16 Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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

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