



From the Bishop

It seems traditional, in January, to write about how time flies. You know, “I just got used to 2015, can it really be 2016?” I’m going to take a slight deviation from that this first month of 2016.

You see, on January 3, Gloria and I will celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary. We got married in January for two reasons: my sister and brother were married on hot summer days, so mom said she wasn’t coming to another wedding

unless it was cold (I don’t think that was really true); the other was that we both promised our parents we wouldn’t get married until I finished college. So we picked a date a couple of weeks after my last semester; completing college in 3 1/2 years. (The things you do for love!) It doesn’t seem that long ago that, on a cold and snowy afternoon, we stood at the front of Zion E.C. Church, Allentown, PA, and exchanged our vows in front of our family and friends. Little did we know the adventure the Lord would take us on.

Eighteen months later, I was licensed as a pastor and stationed to Grace E.C. Church, Hosensack, PA. All three of our children, a daughter and twin boys, were born there. Then we moved to Bridgeville E.C. Church in Lancaster County. Thirteen years later, much to our surprise, the Lord led me to

the E.C.C. Retirement Village as Executive Director and then Chief Executive Officer. Eight years went by and He led us back into the pastorate as Lead Pastor of Community Evangelical Church, Sinking Spring, PA. Another eight years flew by and I was elected Bishop. Over that time our kids grew up, got married to wonderful spouses, and had children of their own: eight grandchildren! Through it all Gloria has worked full-time, excelling in her field and responsibilities, and still traveling with me as often as she can.

Throughout all those years Gloria has been a great source of strength and encouragement to me. She is my best friend; the love of my life. I am always grateful for her touch on my life. I would not be the man I am, were it not for her prayer support and wise counsel. Over the years, one of the questions she often heard is “How do you like being a pastor’s wife, or now, the Bishop’s wife?” I am proud when she says “I’m

Bruce’s wife.” So thank you, Gloria, for holding true to the promise you made to the Lord and to me 40 years ago. I was, am, and will always be deeply and completely in love with you.



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Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise



1. Join me in praying for safety and health for Randy Sizemore, Director of Global Ministries, his wife, Carla, and pastors Ralph Owens and Rick Sergi as they travel to Liberia, Africa to be a part of the Evangelical Congregational Church of Liberia's annual Conference.
2. Pray too for our Liberian brothers and sisters as they elect a new Field Superintendent replacing Rev. Matthew Gueh, whose term is expiring. Join me is asking God to clearly reveal His man for this vital position.
3. It appears that this year we will set a record for the number of men seeking superannuation (retirement). Please be in prayer for the Stationing Committee as we begin our work with a retreat on January 11-12.
4. Ask the Lord to clearly speak to the candidates and the assessors who will be involved in our Pastoral Assessment Center on January 12-16. May the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit be evident to all.
5. Pray for me as I lead a visioning retreat for newly appointed Executive Director and Associates. Ask the Lord to reveal his way forward for our restructured denomination.
6. Ask the Lord to bless and give strength to our many bi-vocational pastors as they lead churches and the ministries of our church planters.
7. Praise the Lord for the encouraging reports I have received of many people attending special Advent and Christmas services in our local churches. Pray for their continued connection with local ministries and growth in faith.
8. Praise the Lord of news that 1,200 people accepted Jesus as their Savior during the days of the Franklin Graham crusade in Japan. Pray now for the local congregations who will now begin to disciple these new followers of Jesus.
9. Join me in thanking the Lord for his blessing Gloria and I with 40 years of marriage (January 3), three children, and eight grandchildren. What a blessing to be married to my best friend for so long!
10. Praise God for the ability to celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends.!



I'm going to assume that you've read the "From the Bishop" article on the front page of this issue of the EC Leader. While I'm thinking about how special Gloria is to me and the impact she has had on my life, ministry and the congregations we've served, I want to express my sincere appreciation to each and every pastor's wife (sorry to call you that; Gloria would not be happy, but I didn't know how else to write it). The truth is that none of us would be able to do ministry without your encouragement and support. In fact, the lack of spousal cooperation to the call of ministry is a "knock-out" at our Pastoral Assessment Center. Pastor's wives are *that* important.

I know we celebrate Pastor's Appreciation month every October. That's a good thing. Perhaps, at least this year we can celebrate and thank our pastor's wife in January. They are vital to his spiritual, emotional, and physical health. The least we can do is day, "Thank you, we love you!" It may be something formal or as simple as a hug and a "thank you". However you do it, find an opportunity to celebrate your pastor's wife this month.

"Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life." Proverbs 31:10-11 NLT

In Christ's Service,



STATIONING

It's already in the Bishop's Prayer & Praise List but we'd like to draw special attention to the need for prayer for the Stationing Committee as they begin their work during a Stationing Retreat January 11-12. This will be an especially challenging year as we deal with the impact of record number of our men seeking "Superannuated" status. While not all of them will be stepping completely away from ministry, it will none the less have a significant impact on stationing. As you can imagine, we are looking for wisdom and ask you to pray that the committee would be sensitive to the leading of Holy Spirit. Our goal always is that the Holy Spirit will lead us to discover stationing assignments which allow both pastors and congregations to "fit and flourish."

Since we have such a large number of churches to deal with, the Stationing Committee will be focusing primarily on assigning Lead or Senior Pastors. There are also congregations looking at placing candidates into Associate Pastor and Youth Pastor positions. The Bishop and the Stationing Committee will provide oversight of those assigned positions but will give those congregations permission to take the lead in finding candidates that will fit and flourish in those particular congregational settings.

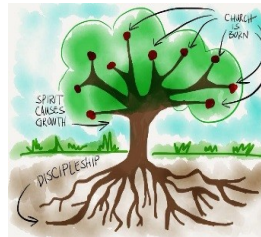
Please continue to be in prayer for our pastors, pastoral candidates, congregations and the Stationing Committee as we enter into a new and busy year of ministry.

We all *want* to fulfill the Great Commission.

But how?

Join a Community of Learning focused on

Growing a Discipling Culture



DISCIPLESHIP + MISSION

Learning Community

- Reproducing instead of recruiting
- Multiplying instead of adding
- Leading a movement instead of having a ministry.

In this Learning Community you will experience:

- Semi-annual immersion experiences for worship, training, practical teaching and coaching.
- Small group "huddles" where trusted individuals can discern God's voice with you.
- Mid-sized social space discussions where your team can contextualize what we are learning.
- Large group sessions for considering new perspectives in discipleship and mission.
- Ongoing regular coaching to help build on what you are learning.



Sponsored by Navs / Influenced by 3DM / March 3-5, 2016 /
Ellicott City MD

Questions? Contact Al Giles / pastoral@ptd.net /
610-389-5857

OR REGISTER HERE:

<https://www.regonline.com/disciplingculture>

News from Global Ministries

Liberia Trip: Please pray for all the visas and travel arrangements for the GMC Team members traveling to Liberia January 21—February 23 to attend the 47th Annual Conference of the ECCOL where Rev. Matthew Gueh's term as Field Superintendent will end after 17 years of faithful service and a new leader will be elected in accordance with the on going process of Liberia graduating from a Mission Conference to a National Conference! We will meet with the new leadership team, make plans for our future partnership, review the Ebola response work and we also hope to dedicate the truck that many of our EC Churches helped to purchase! GMC Team members traveling to Liberia are:

Rev. Randy & Carla Sizemore

Rev. Ralph Owens

Rev. Rick Sergi



Evangelism

February 2 – March 15, 2016 6:30 – 9:15 p.m.
Instructor: Lucas Ndarro, MDiv, MAR, ThM

This course will focus on the theory and practice of the Great Commission. The course will analyze the Trinitarian nature of the Great Commission, the akin nature of the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate, the incarnational significance of the Great Commission, the Church's tasks and methods of evangelism, the pastoral tasks and methods of nurturing discipleship, and the cultural and social challenges encountered in the process of accomplishing the Great Commission.

Lucas Ndarro currently serves as the Director of Adult Discipleship at Cornwall United Methodist Church. Prior to this assignment he served at Nassa Theological College and the Family Life Counseling Center in Mwanza, Tanzania. He received his MDiv and MAR from Evangelical Seminary, and his ThM from Westminster Seminary. Lucas and his wife Limi live in Cornwall, PA, and they have four children.

Evangelism: Online course registration deadline is January 25, 2016. On Campus course registration deadline January 27, 2016.

The Healthy Church

March 29 – May 10, 2016 6:30 – 9:15 p.m.
Instructor: Jeff Byerly, MDiv

In this course the student learns the many components that make up healthy congregational life. Because congregations are collectively unique from other organizations, it can be difficult to navigate the many-faceted system of congregational life in effective ways. From managing conflicts among volunteer workers to the decision-making processes of councils and boards, we are confronted with dynamics which are unique to the church. Healthy practices and solutions are essential for helping a congregation influence its internal and external environments. When a pastor can help his congregation to assess its own health or illness, changes can be made that will promote healthier interaction and life within the culture of the congregational setting.

Jeff Byerly is the pastor of Bethesda EC Church in Southern Schuylkill County. He received his MDiv from Evangelical Seminary in 2000 and is trained as a church health facilitator. He is chairman of the credentialing agency for the EC denomination and has served on their Church Health Commission. Jeff and his wife Tasha have two children. They reside near the church in Schuylkill Haven, PA.

The Healthy Church: Online course registration deadline is March 21, 2016. On Campus course registration deadline March 23, 2016.

REGISTER ONLINE AT: www.evangelical.edu

SPRING 2016

*Tuesday Evenings
6:30-9:15*

*February 2 through
May 10*

*Evangelical Seminary
Myerstown, PA*

News from Twin Pines



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). 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

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. For more information, contact Twin Pines office at (570)629-2411 or e-mail 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



News from Benefits Corporation

- The 2016 mileage reimbursement rate has not been released as of the writing of the EC Leader.
- The January 2016 health insurance premiums remained flat from the 2015 rates, with the first payment due December 15, 2015 at the new rates. Please see www.eccenter.com for the current rates.
- The deadline to submit HRA reimbursements for the October 2014-September 2015 plan year is December 29, 2015. This is a federally mandated deadline that cannot be changed.
- Church contributions to the 403(b) pension plan will increase on January 2 to \$220 for full time pastors and \$120 for part time pastors.
- W-2s and 1099-MISC forms are due to the recipient's by February 1, 2016 and the respective Federal, State or Local taxing authorities by February 29 or March 31. Please refer to the specific taxing authority regulations for due dates. **All full time and part time pastors should receive a W-2 from their church.**
- Under the Affordable Care Act the EC Church is considered a small employer and the reporting of the cost of health insurance on form W-2 for 2015 is not required.
- Due Dates: Disability Payment, \$100.00 due Jan. 15
Annual Statistical Reports due Jan. 25
Workers Compensation Insurance Information due 30 days after receipt
- **New Tax Form**
A new tax form, 1095-B Health Coverage, is required to be issued by health insurance providers and employers beginning with calendar year 2015 and issued to employees by Feb. 1, 2016. This new form and others like it are information reporting only. These forms are intended to substantiate that individuals are complying with the insurance mandate of the Affordable Care Act. Health insurers and employees are each filing a 1095-B with the IRS and a copy sent to the covered individual or employee. On each 1095-B is the name of the insured, covered dependent(s) on the health insurance plan and what months of the calendar year 2015 the recipient was covered by health insurance. In a perfect

world the 1095-B filed with the IRS by the health insurer and the 1095-B filed by the employer should have the same information. If the information on the forms matches, the covered individual has complied with the health insurance mandate. Differences in the information should trigger further review.

If you were on the EC Health Insurance Plan in 2015 you will receive three (3) 1095-B forms; Highmark, Capital Blue Cross and your employer. The 1095-B from Highmark will have coverage information from January 1 to September 30. Capital Blue Cross 1095-B will have coverage information from October 1 to December 31 and the employer 1095-B will have coverage information for all of calendar year 2015. Employees need to review the information on all 1095-B forms that are received and contact the health insurer or employer with any discrepancies. After all errors with the forms are corrected it is strongly advised that the employee retain all 1095-B forms received for future reference. No other action is required by the employee.

Most health insurance experts have little faith that the IRS will be able to process the millions of 1095-B forms (and similar forms) they will receive in a timely fashion, if at all. And while these forms are simple in theory they are very complex in their application to the real world. With December 31 quickly approaching there are many unanswered questions on the forms that will not be answered in time. Experts are giving the advice to employers to do the best they can. It might be two or three years after the forms have been issued that mistakes will be discovered. Hence, the advice for employees to save the 1095-B forms they receive and keep them in a safe place for future reference.

EC Benefits will be filing the employer 1095-B on behalf of the EC Church. This form is only for active pastors. Medicare beneficiaries should not receive a 1095-B from an employer or insurance company.

- Please see the 2016 Treasurer's Guide located on www.eccenter.com, for additional due dates, current amounts due and ministry fund and camp funding percentages.

(continued on page 7)

Evangelical Congregational Church



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

Phone: 717-866-7581
Web: www.eccenter.com
Email: eccenter@eccenter.com

- Remember to add the following phrase (or something close to it) to all tax deductible giving receipts issued by a church or ministry, "No goods or services were exchanged for these contributions or they consisted of an intangible religious benefit." All year end contributions to a church must be received at the church on December 31 or have a postmark of December 31 or earlier. Electronic giving adds a layer of complexity to the year end giving deadlines. There are extra entities involved e.g., credit card processors, banks and internet gateways, that are involved in the processing of an electronic charitable contribution that churches and donors cannot control. The amount of time from the donor making a contribution until the church receives the funds can be a couple of days to a week or more. Church treasurers should carefully review the processing statements received to note what day a contribution was processed.

IRS Guidance that has been released states that contributions made by credit card in 2015 are considered 2015 contributions, regardless if the donor does not make a payment on the credit card until 2016 or with normal credit card processing times the church does not receive the funds until 2016. The same is true for donations made via an ACH transfer. A donor that initiates an ACH transaction in 2015 with the funds debited from the donor's bank account should be counted as a 2015 donation. Even though, the church will not receive the funds until 2016 with normal bank processing times.

As always, please contact David King, Benefits Administrator, dking@eccenter.com or myself khenry@eccenter.com with any questions, 1-800-866-7581.

Kevin Henry
Controller

Dave King
Benefits Administrator



On November 20, 2015, the Susquehanna Chapter of The Military Chaplains' Association met at Lebanon, PA Veterans Hospital for their monthly meeting and a special training hosted and led by EC Chaplain Joel Copeland and other staff members.

The chaplains were given an excellent briefing on the role of the Veterans' Administration and some statistics to help us understand the scope of their work. Joel shared some history of the Lebanon Veterans Hospital and recent changes and plans. There were about a dozen chaplains in attendance including Rev. Bill McElroy (St. John's, Steelstown) and Rev. Bob Brown (Plymouth Meeting). Each one went home with a packet of information about veterans' benefits and resources.

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.



February 2016

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------|
| | 1 | 2 Church Planting Comm. Mtg. | 3 | 4 Evangelical Seminary Board Mtg. | 5 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church | 6 |
| 7 Day of Prayer for Church Planting | 8 | 9 StoneRidge Board Mtg. | 10 Ash Wednesday | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT Church Planting Offering | 15 President's Day Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due | 16 Coaching Training Webinar | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT | 22 Leader Articles Due for March | 23 Benefits Corp. Mtg. | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 Spiritual Retreat | | | | | |

Ministry Funds to:
E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue

Church Planter's Offering to:
E.C. Church
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate—Church Planter's Offering

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corporation
100 West Park Avenue

Supervisory Retreat