

EC LEADER

A PUBLICATION OF EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OCTOBER 2017

From the Bishop:

October is when we traditionally observe Pastor Appreciation Month. That's a good thing. The weakness is that, like lots of other "Hallmark holidays," it becomes just another thing somebody tells us we should do. Yet appreciating pastors should be so much more than that; it must be much more than that.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians reminds us "Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith." (Hebrews 13:7) As bishop, I want to use this space in the EC LEADER to say thank you to our pastors and their wives and families for their heartfelt service to the Lord and his church.

This is not an easy time in history to be a pastor. This is not a culture that appreciates Christians, let alone pastors. The book "For Ministers About to Start...or About to Give Up" by Travis Collins pro-



vides statistics which are consistent with previous studies:

- 28% of ministers have been "forcefully terminated"
- 33% say being in ministry is "an outright hazard" to their families
- 75% of ministers experience "severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear and alienation" during their careers

Doctors, attorneys, and now, ministers are among those with the highest rates of addiction and suicide. I don't quote those statistics in order to frighten you, though they are pretty scary. I share them to remind all of us of the realities of serving the Lord in vocational

continued on page 2

- **Bishop's Prayer & Praise**
- **Ordination Schedule**
- **Global Ministries Community**
- **StoneRidge Retirement**
- **What's Happening at Twin Pines**
- **500th Anniversary of the Reformation**
- **E-mail Address Change**
- **News from the Executive Director**



ministry in the 21st century. Pastors need our support, our prayers, and our appreciation.

Being a pastor has always been a challenging vocation. But the changing face of our culture, congregational finances, growing government and media oversight, and the increasing expectations and demands placed on pastors by others and ourselves makes being a pastor at this time in history even more challenging. Yet men continue to respond to God's call, step into the gap, and faithfully serve the Lord as pastors. Praise God! As I travel around our churches and talk with our pastors, I am always struck by how deeply each one loves the Lord and wants to serve him. It doesn't matter if they are serving full time or bi-vocationally; their desire is to

preach the word and build the Kingdom of God. I am thankful for them and for their faithful service and ask you to join with me in appreciating them during this Pastor Appreciation Month and throughout the year.

In Christ's service,



Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise List

1. Please be in prayer for the team (including Randy & Carla Sizemore and me) who is preparing to travel to visit and minister with our brothers and sisters of the EC Church of Nepal in November.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to move in the hearts and lives of the three men who will be ordained this month.
3. Pray for what I call "the week of day-long meetings" beginning October 16: Global Ministries Community, Conference Network Team Strategic meeting, and the National Ministry Team meeting.
4. Pray for safety as I continue to travel around to various EC congregations sharing denominational updates and spending time preaching the Word.
5. Ask the Lord to protect the missionaries and international leaders serving him in foreign countries at a time when there is growing hostility against Christians.
6. Praise the Lord for your pastor and commit to pray for him and his family as they faithfully serve the Lord.
7. Praise the Lord that hunting season is here and pray that I can make time to actually get outdoors.
8. Thank the Lord for Brenda Long who has given 43 years of faithful full-time service at Church Center. She'll still be working part-time so you can "thank you" to her in person too!
9. Praise God for the opportunities our congregations have to reach out to their neighbors as they restart fall ministries and special events.
10. I praise God for the many people who remind me that they are praying for me as their Bishop. I depend on those prayers!

Ordination Services



The ordination of **David M. Julian**
Grace Community Church
Willow Street, Pennsylvania
Sunday, October 8, 4:00 p.m.

The ordination of **Rev. Gene L. Stevenson**
Zion Evangelical Congregational Church
Myerstown, Pennsylvania
Sunday, October 15, 4:00 p.m.

The ordination of **Rev. Andrew D. Carr**
Wedgewood Park Evangelical
Congregational Church
Youngstown, Ohio
Sunday, October 22, 4:00 p.m.

The ordination of **Rev. Jeffrey S. Stansbury**
First Evangelical Congregational Church
Palmyra, Pennsylvania
Sunday, January 28, 4:00 p.m.



Global Ministries Community

Chaplain Committee News Update:

Noel Blancaflor has checked in as the Group Chaplain for the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at the Presidio in Monterey, California. It is the Department of Defense's premier school for culturally based foreign language education and training, with classroom education, mobile training teams, and on-line materials tailored for students of all levels of proficiency. Military members of all four branches attend the school. His primary task will be counseling the students. On the average, a student will spend seven hours a day, five days a week, for 18 months learning a foreign language. They typically have two to three hours of homework every night. Needless to say it's quite stressful.



Defense Language Institute

Noel notes: *I will say this is without question, the hardest transition for us. Words cannot describe the challenges of moving a Junior in high school who misses the comforts of the previous home. Pray for adjustment for the entire family.*



MAJ Josh Metz is now stationed at Fort Leonard Wood in the Missouri Ozarks. He will be the ethics instructor for the U.S. Army Chemical School and Regimental Chaplain. The Chemical School trains the U.S. Army Chemical Corps, whose mission is to protect the nation from weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats and hazards. Known as the Dragon Soldiers, they are America's Chemical/Biological counterforce.



Chemical School classroom

He writes: *Our move was perhaps the worst ever; we have a lot of missing and broken items. We are all here in one piece, however, so the Lord is good. Please pray for Josh, Andrea and their daughters as they make a new start in Missouri and that God will bless their ministry there, despite a rough move.*

For new addresses for Noel & Josh please contact the EC Church Center.

October GMC lunch & brunch

- Friday, October 20—Pastors & Wives lunch at Evangelical Seminary (11:30 am)
- Saturday, October 21—Mission Brunch at Country Fare, Myerstown (10:00 am)
- Monday, October 23—Mission Brunch at Wedgewood Park EC, Youngstown, Ohio (10:00 am)

** watch your mail to learn more about these events and how to participate

Liberia Literacy: VBS Project Update: Success!

Our VBS project this year is a project to help our EC Church of Liberia fund a literacy project that will focus on teaching our many illiterate members how to read the Basa translation of the Bible. This will greatly increase our ability to do discipleship, evangelism, and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our goal was set at \$10,000 and at this point we have \$10,523! Thank you for your partnership in this project!

Nepal Flooding Update:



On August 14, I received information from Janga that the flooding in Nepal had impacted at least 11 “EC’ers” houses and 2 of our EC

Churches. The GMC will send \$5,000 from the World Emergency Fund to help with immediate needs for these families and churches. Here’s the latest update:

- The two churches are waiting for the rainy season to stop because the road conditions will not allow them to transport building materials to the sites.
- Immediate relief in the form of food and money was personally distributed by the leadership of the EC Church of Nepal to impacted families.
- There will be ongoing need because the heavy rains have destroyed most of the rice crops needed to feed families in the next several months.



World Emergency Fund Needs Donations

The GMC’s ability to help with any more donations to Nepal or any other crisis is uncertain because the balance of the World Emergency Fund is in a deficit (-\$1,248). If you would like to contribute to the World Emergency Fund please make donations payable to GMC, clearly marked “World Emergency Fund”. Thank you!

Nepal Annual Conference, November 9-12, 2017

Plans are underway to visit with Janga and Mercy for the EC Church of Nepal’s Annual Conference in November. We will be dedicating the newly constructed Mercy Home and ECCN Church Center, participating in the ordination of pastors and the sessions of conference.

The GMC international team will include: Bishop Bruce Hill, Rev. Randy & Carla Sizemore, Rev. Nathan Kennedy (Chair of the India/Nepal Committee), Rev. Nobuo Abe (Chairman of EC Japan), Yoriyoshi Abe (Japan), Rev. Dr. Kaitinkap Vaiphei (General Director of EC India), and Pastor Tim King who will be bringing 6 members of his Drama ministry to help us inaugurate the first ever Youth Track during Nepal’s Annual Conference. Please join us in prayer for a smooth travel experience and a powerful conference.

NOTE: Janga is in need of iphones and ipads or tablets for his pastors to help with communication and training session. If anyone has a used unlocked iphone or ipad/tablet that you would be willing to donate to Nepal please contact Randy Sizemore directly: rsizemore@eccenter.com.





On June 16, the Practical Nursing Program of the Lebanon County Career and Technology Center held its 98th graduation ceremony for the members of the class of 2017. Thirty-four 34 graduates completed the intensive 1540-hour program, will take the state licensing examination and begin their professional careers in the high-demand field of nursing. At the ceremony, awards were given to deserving graduates. Among the awards bestowed were seven to graduates for their academic achievement, overall growth and for overcoming challenges in the execution of their program. The awards were given by StoneRidge Retirement Living Communities.* The awards were given to the top four in the class, which included Grace Wanyoike, Shai-lynn Teffera, Courtney Peiffer and Heather Alexander. The graduate who displayed the most growth, Ashley Carlson, and two graduates who overcame the most challenges while completing the program, Regina Gray and Kayla Vadovsky, were also given awards. Congratulations graduates!



Graduates receiving awards from StoneRidge Living Communities include, from left, Shai-lynn Teffera, Heather Alexander, Courtney Peiffer, Regina Gray, StoneRidge Retirement Living Communities Vice President Sharon Hoke, Kayla Vadovsky, Grace Wanyoike, and Ashley Carlson.

*StoneRidge Retirement Living Communities is comprised of four retirement communities in South Central Pennsylvania. Locations include StoneRidge Poplar Run and StoneRidge Towne Centre both in Myerstown and Church of God Home in Carlisle and Schoolyard Square in Pine Grove. For more information about options available for you or a loved one, visit us online at www.StoneRidgeRetirement.com or call us at 717-866-3553. StoneRidge Retirement Living is all about just that—living!

Bushkill Community Church Renovation update:

We are extremely grateful for the generous contributions from our EC family of churches toward our renovation project. Converting an old restaurant/bar into a church has become a bigger endeavor than we originally anticipated. None the less, we are confident that the Lord will continue to provide the means that will open the doors for us to begin ministry in this place. As of September 19, we have received a total of \$8617 from 16 EC churches. Thank you so much!



Our new home! Located on Bushkill Falls Road across the street from the post office, and in full view of thousands of residents who travel this road daily to the schools at the North Campus of East Stroudsburg School District.

We are slowly navigating an approval process with our local township and with PennDOT. We had hoped to be ready to begin the renovation work by now, but we can't do much until these approvals have been completed. That has been somewhat discouraging to us, but we trust in the Lord's timing.

Once the work is ready to begin we would welcome work teams to assist us in a variety of tasks. Among these jobs will be painting (interior and exterior), flooring installation, filling a dumpster with debris, demolition of an old storage shed, to name a few. For well-trained professional hands who would be willing to donate labor, we'll need help with constructing interior walls, kitchen cabinets, electrical wiring, kitchen and bathroom plumbing, worship area lighting, among others. Details for these opportunities will be provided as soon as the approvals are complete.

Churches or individuals who want to contribute monetarily can make checks out to "Bushkill Community Church", and write "renovation project" on the memo line. Our mailing address is: P.O. Box #1205, Bushkill, PA 18234.

Rev. Paul J. Miller
Pastor, Bushkill Community Church



The Bishop's preaching/speaking calendar is full for 2017 and a few dates have already been booked for 2018. If you are interested in having Bishop Hill speak at your church, now is the time to start thinking about it. No church is too big or too small for him to schedule a Sunday but it is first-come-first-served and you need to invite him. So as you plan your congregation's 2018 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, and she will work with him in developing his schedule for 2018. He hopes to see you soon!



What's Happening at Twin Pines this October and November??

Lift Hymn Up—Oct 8



The host church for the next Lift Hymn Up! hymn sing is Lancaster Faith Church. Join us at 3:00 p.m. to sing hymns of the church.

Family Getaway Weekend—Begin Oct 6



As a Family Getaway, spend time with your family during the busy fall season. Getaway for relaxation, relationship building, enjoying nature, and spend time with God. Housing, breakfast and spiritual guidance materials are provided in the rate. Choose from the basic weekend, a Weekend Extension (Columbus Day), or Home School Extension.

Married Couple Getaway Weekend—Oct 13-15



Take time to be together, alone, apart from your typical hectic life. Getaway for relaxation, relationship building, enjoying nature, and spend time with God. Housing, breakfast and spiritual guidance materials are provided in the weekend rate.

Celebration Banquet—Oct 17



Good 'n' Plenty Restaurant, Smoketown, PA
Doors open: 6:00 pm
Supper begins: 6:30 pm

Join us for a special evening as we celebrate how God has blessed and used the Ministry of Twin Pines the past year. The banquet is free; however, there is the collection of a free-will offering to support the ministry. Although the meal is free, reservations are required, in order to give a head count to the restaurant. Please register by calling the office at 570-629-2411 or send an email to Ms. Linda Foh, linda@twinpines.org.

Friends Getaway Weekend—Oct 20-22



Getaway for relaxation, relationship building, enjoying nature, and spend time with God. Housing, breakfast and spiritual guidance materials are provided in the weekend rate. Gather your friends together and enjoy a few days at camp.

Ministers' Retreat—Oct 24-26



A special mid-week retreat focusing on serving ministers. The event will focus on one's personal pastoral life. Based on Biblical principles, ministers will come away with practical concepts to encourage their own spiritual care. Retreat Theme: Why we are not Ourselves? based upon the gospel of John. Dr. Anthony Blair will be the presenter for this pastoral care retreat.

Jr./Sr. High Fall Retreat—Nov 3-5

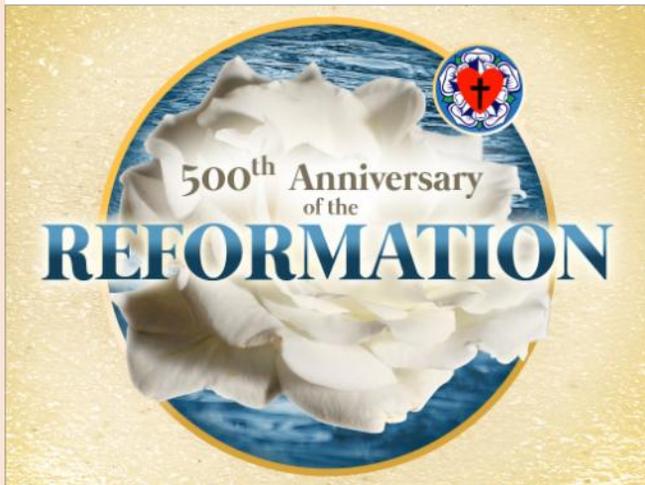


This past summer teens had fun at camp. Now, they can come & enjoy it AGAIN! They will join friends & summer staff for a weekend of games, campfires, & growing in their relationship with Christ. The 2017 Leadership Team are the retreat directors. It is open to 6-12 graders.

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Learn more about all of these at www.twinpines.org





This October is the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, when Martin Luther famously posted his “95 Thesis” to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. You would think we’ve come a long way from those days; but maybe not so much.

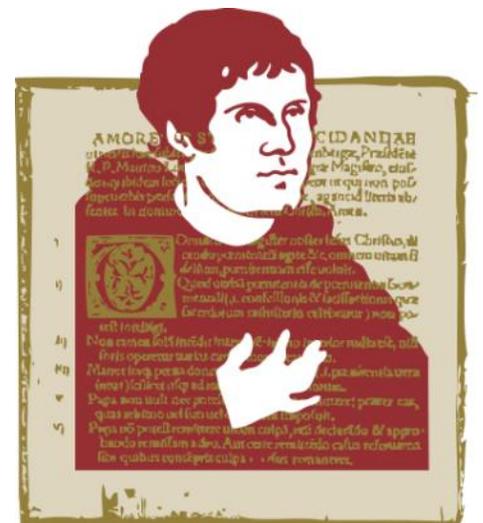
A recent article by Aaron Earls, online editor of *Facts & Trends* puts it this way, “Five hundred years after Martin Luther launched the Protestant Reformation, American Protestants aren’t quite sure about two of the movement’s foundational beliefs. In defiance of the Catholic

Church in his day, Luther proclaimed *sola fide*, that justification with God comes through faith alone, and *sola scriptura*, that only the Bible speaks infallibly and is judge over tradition and teachers.”

The article continues by quoting the findings of a new study by Pew Research:

- Today, only 3 in 10 self-identified U.S. Protestants say they believe both doctrines; that is justification with God comes through faith alone, and the infallibility of the Bible.
- Only 46 percent of American Protestants believe faith in God alone is needed for entry into heaven (how Pew defined *sola fide*). More than half (52 percent) say an individual needs both faith and good deeds.
- Similarly, only 46% of Protestants agree believe the Bible alone is all the religious guidance Christians need (how Pew defined *sola scriptura*).
- The survey reports that most Protestants aren’t even aware that *sola fide*, justification by grace through faith, is a historically Protestant doctrine.

So as we recognize our roots and the many sacrifices made by our spiritual forebearers let’s not forget the truth of God’s inspired Word, “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT) That is good news worth celebrating!



E-mail Address Change

With Brenda Long retiring from full time service to part time on September 30, we have created a new GENERAL email address for the EC Church Center to reach Brenda and Pat Wolfe. Emails sent to the NEW address will be monitored daily and will be available to Brenda and Pat at the same time.

Please respect Brenda's reduction in working hours and discontinue using blong@eccenter.com for general office emails and announcements. Brenda will continue to receive and respond to blong@eccenter.com however a response might take a few days to a week.

Our new E-mail address is:

office@eccenter.com

Please use this address when notifying the EC Church Center with general questions, material orders, prayer requests, address changes, report forms, announcements and urgent matters.



News from the Executive Director

Active Pastors Health Insurance

The current plan with Capital Blue Cross (CBC) was retained for the new plan year effective October 1, 2017. There are a few changes to benefits; office visit co-pay increased to \$35, specialist co-pay increased to \$70, urgent care co-pay increased to \$100 and emergency room co-pay increased to \$200. While the benefits were slightly reduced the plan cost increased by less than 4%. However due to the cushion in the HRA health insurances rates to the local church are only increasing by 2%. The HRA with Prime-Pay is still active and with the same benefit levels. The annual maximum out of pocket for covered medical expenses, excluding co-pays, remains at \$500 with the HRA paying costs above \$500. The maximum out of pocket for prescriptions and outpatient therapy services also remains at \$1,800 annually. The Blue Cross Dental plan was also renewed. CBC will issue new cards for the new plan year but the plan numbers will not change. Continue to use your current card until a new card is received.

Health Insurance rates (per month)

	<u>Current</u>	<u>January 1, 2018</u>
Single	\$ 690	\$ 704
Couple	\$1,460	\$1,489
Employer & Child(ren)	\$1,380	\$1,408
Family	\$1,890	\$1,928

(the new rates are posted on www.eccenter.com)

The EC Benefits Trustees are very aware of the tension caused by the cost of health insurance and they are committed to serving the pastors and the local EC church. The US health insurance market is constantly in flux. The circumstances surrounding the annual plan renewal are different every year. However, the trend to push responsibility for healthcare and lifestyle decision onto the individual is continuing with your pocketbook feeling the most pain. Planning for your long term health is just as important as planning for your retirement. Accidents and illnesses are going to happen but many healthcare conditions are preventable and manageable with healthy lifestyle choices.

If you are an **EC pastor below Medicare Eligibility age** and not on the EC group health insurance plan you must complete a Health Insurance Election Not to Enroll form that is available on the website, <http://www.eccenter.com/Left/Member-Login/Benefits-Information/Health-Insurance.aspx>. The form must be completed each year by December 15. Please return the completed form to Dave King. The form may be mailed, faxed 717-866-7583 or returned electronically, dking@eccenter.com. If you are returning the form electronically please do not include your social security number.

Highmark Senior Blue Renewal

The rates for the Highmark Freedom Blue plan are increasing by \$8/month to \$224/month per person with no change in benefits. The change will be effective on January 1, 2018 to be paid by December 15, 2017. Please remember retirees will be picking up an additional 20% of the premium cost. Highmark Senior Blue will continue with the direct billing to the retirees.

Cost Sharing Amounts for 2018 (single policy)

<u>Year of Medicare Eligibility</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>1/1/18</u>
2005 or before	\$ 86.40	\$134.40
2006	\$118.80	\$156.80
2007	\$151.20	\$179.20
2008	\$183.60	\$201.60
2009 and after	\$216.00	\$224.00

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.

The **2018 Pastoral Compensation Forms** will be available on the Church Center website no later than October 1, 2017. Expect the Social Security Administration to release the 2018 COLA in late October 2017. Early estimates from various internet bloggers is for a 2.2% COLA for 2018. However, we have all felt the price increases at the grocery store and in energy prices. Please be respectful and honoring of the job your pastor is offering and offer as much as an annual salary increase as is possible. In addition, the National Conference adopted the statement that "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."

Please contact Dave King, dking@eccenter.com or me, khenry@eccenter.com, 1-800-866-7581, with any questions or problems.

2018 Retiree Housing Allowance

Retirees in the Defined Benefits/Compensation Plan:

The Benefits Corporation of the EC Church, for calendar year 2018, up to 100% of the pension, death and disability benefits payable to ordained retired or disabled ministers or commissioned lay pastors meeting the requirements of section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code, shall constitute a housing allowance, provided, however, that such housing allowance is not to exceed the actual expenditures for housing, utilities, maintenance, repairs and other expenses related to providing a house and the annual fair rental value of the house (furnished, including utilities). IRS Revenue Rulings 71-280 and 75-22



Evangelical Congregational Church

100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
717-866-7581
www.eccenter.com



Kingdom Extension Invitation

DINNER CHURCH ENCOUNTER
Community Evangelical Church
51 Green Valley Road
Sinking Spring, PA 19608



October 28, 2017

*Leaders all across the country are rediscovering Jesus' dinner table theology that dominated the Apostolic Era. The present-day **Dinner Church movement** is giving leaders and churches a renewed ability to reach people who would never attend their Sunday morning gatherings.*

Join us for this special event to find out how the Dinner Church vision could impact your congregation's ministry and leave with practical insights that can enable you to being hosting a Dinner Church in your own community.

A \$35 registration fee includes light refreshments and lunch. The training will be from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.

(Do NOT let money be the ONLY thing that keeps you from attending. Talk with Les Cool about scholarship assistance—717-951-8433)

DINNER CHURCH EXPERIENCE: 5:00 pm–6:30 pm

(Dinner Church Experience is free to all of those who attended the training, but separate registration is required online.)

Register online at: <https://freshexpressionsus.org/event/dinner-church-encounter/>

OCTOBER 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 WORLD WIDE COMMUNION Kingdom Extension Offering Day of Prayer for Church Planting	2	3	4	5 Evangelical Seminary Board Mtg.	6 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	7
8 David Julian Ordination	9 COLUMBUS DAY Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	10 Ministerial Development Community Mtg. Episcopal Committee Mtg.	11	12	13	14
15 Church Pension Contri Due Health Insurance Premium Due Gene Stevenson Ordination	16	17 Global Ministries Community Mtg.	18 Conference Network Team Mtg.	19 National Ministry Team Mtg.	20 GMC Pastors' Appreciation Lunch	21 Susquehanna GMC Brunch
22 Andrew Carr Ordination	23 Info for NOVEMBER EC Leader due	24	25	26 Retired Pastors' Luncheon.	27 Pastors' Wives Retreat—Twin Pines	28 Dinner Church Encounter
29 REFORMATION SUNDAY	30	31		Pastors' Conference—Twin Pines		

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

Home Missions Offering to:
E.C. Church Center
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designated—Home Missions Offering)

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

NOVEMBER 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2.	3 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	4
5	6 .	7 ELECTION DAY	8	9 Finance Committee Mtg.	10	11 VETERANS' DAY
12	13 Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	14 StoneRidge Board Mtg.	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due	16	17	18
19 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY Thankoffering (voluntary)	20 Info for DECEMBER EC Leader due	21	22	23 THANKSGIVING Church Center Closed	24 Church Center Closed	25
26	27	28	29	30		

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

Thankoffering Offering to:
Global Ministries Community
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designated—Thankoffering)

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067