

ECLEASADER

A PUBLICATION OF EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

DECEMBER 2017

From the Bishop:

The wise men have become a traditional part of many manger scenes, even though we know they weren't present for the birth of Jesus. Matthew tells us the birth was by the appearance of a star. That first night, the Magi saw the star and decided they were going to find the newborn king. But why go to all that trouble and expense? The answer to that question is found in one word—worship.

We don't know very much about the Magi, many believe they were Gentiles who were trained in the science of astronomy. When Jesus was born the Magi saw a star, the sign of the birth of a king, and they decided to make arrangements to follow that star. A palace seems like an obvious place to look for a new king so they ended up in Jerusalem, and the palace of King Herod. They told him of their quest and asked where he was. Summoning the Hebrew priests and teachers, Herod discovered the Messiah-King was to be born in Bethlehem. So the Magi traveled another six miles and came to a house and, after entering, found the young child Jesus. It probably wasn't what they had expected; there were no outward signs of royalty, no servants, no guards, just a small home. They bowed down and worshipped Jesus pre-



sending him with valuable gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Our English word "worship" means to give honor, or respect or reverence. It's from the Hebrew word that literally means "to fall" or "to prostrate yourself;" to kneel with your forehead to the ground. Over the centuries of humanity's history all kinds of methods of worship have been invented; almost everything has been done to ensure the acceptance of worship: posture, special rites, ceremonies, pilgrimages, and sacrifice.

In the gospel according to John, Jesus was in a conversation with a woman about worship. She wanted to talk about the acceptable place of worship. Her people worshipped one place the Jews worshipped another, and they fought over who was

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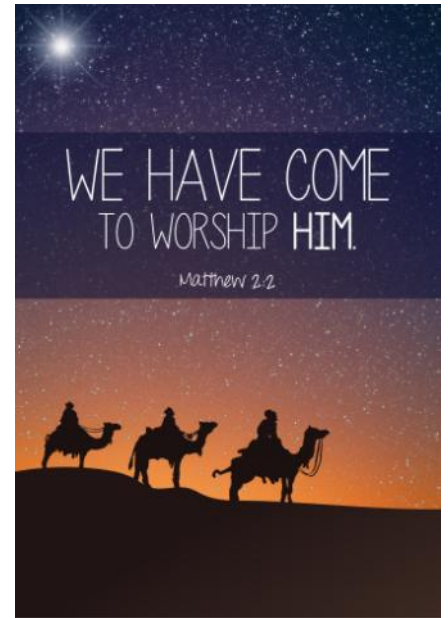
Christmas
Joy

right. Rather than being dragged into that controversy, Jesus said real worship is when we “worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) You can go through all kinds of acts and ceremonies, but if your heart or spirit is not in worship, it means nothing. True worship is more than our lips, more than bodies in a building, more than even giving an offering. True worship involves our whole life. I keep this sentence on my desk at all times: “God doesn’t desire more of our time sometimes; he desires more of our attention all the time.” I think that sentence describes real worship.

There’s a verse in the Bible that says, “My eyes are always on the Lord.” Reading those words makes you wonder if they were written by a monk who had nothing else to do but devote himself to God. Actually, they are the words of David, King of Israel, in Psalm 25:15. How did he manage to run a nation and keep his eyes on the Lord at all times? The only conclusion is that he did this while he did everything else. Worship is a continual awareness of God. Worship is about doing everything for God and seeing God at work in everything we do.

May true worship be your experience not just this Christmas but every day.

Merry Christmas!



Bishop’s Top Ten Prayer & Praise List

1. Join me in praying for our pastors and congregations who are making significant strategic decisions and stepping out in faith to be more effective in ministry.
2. Pray for our affiliate ministries as they depend on significant end of year giving from individuals, families, and churches in order to meet their budgets. And consider sending a gift yourself.
3. Ask the Lord to bless those who are experiencing their first Christmas without that family member or good friend who passed away this past year.
4. Pray for the special services of the Advent and Christmas season which will take place in our EC churches all around the world—may they lead people closer to Jesus!
5. It may be Christmas time, but pray for me as I have already begun to lead preparations for National Conference 2018.
6. Praise the Lord for a meaningful and safe trip to visit the Annual Conference of the EC Church of Nepal. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Nepal as they live and serve in a country that is growing increasingly hostile to Christians.
7. Praise the Lord for his leading and blessing in so many ways this past year. He is good and his timing is perfect!
8. Thank the Lord for the brotherhood leaders I was able to meet with as a participant in the denominational executives’ retreat organized by the National Association of Evangelicals.
9. Praise the Lord for opportunities to get together with family (especially grandkids) and friends to celebrate the birth of Jesus!
10. Join me in thanking the Lord for the opportunity for a little break in December from my usual busy traveling and preaching schedule and will being able to visit our home church and perhaps a few others.



Global Ministries Community

"Check Please"... EC Church, not GMC

Please note: When you are sending funds for support of E.C. missionaries or E.C. fields, the checks should be made payable to "**E.C. Church**", not E.C. Global Ministries. We have one bank account for EC monies, and the name Global Ministries does not appear on it anywhere. Our bank has been gracious in accepting checks still written to Global Ministries, but that could end at any time. **All monies sent to Global Ministries should be made payable to E.C. Church**, and you can mark the destination/designation in the memo section, or include a note. Thank you!



Congratulations to...

Yoriyoshi and Emiko Abe, who are expecting their first child, a baby girl, the day after Christmas. The Abes are church planters in Ebina City, near Tokyo, Japan.

Best Wishes!

Roy and Sue Haglund, are retiring at the end of this month. The Haglunds have served over 42 years with Mission Aviation Fellowship, both in the USA and abroad. Roy was a pilot for many years, and most recently both he and Sue worked at MAF headquarters, first in Redland, CA and now in Nampa, ID. The Haglunds will remain in Idaho for now, since they are strategically located between daughter Sarah and her family in Chicago, IL and daughter Bethany and her family in Washington state. If you would like to send a note of congratulations, their address is: 3126 S. Glacier Bay Way, Meridian, ID 83642. You can also reach them by email at rhaglund2@yahoo.com.

Nepal Trip Re-cap:

We are praising God for the success of the trip to join the EC Church of Nepal in their Annual Conference. With 15 total team members this was by far the largest delegation I have traveled with. Leaders and representatives from Japan, India, Nepal and the USA converged on Dharan, Nepal to participate in the following:

- ◆ The dedication of Mercy Home/ECCN Center

- ◆ The ordination of various ministerial candidates (Deacon, Elder, Local Pastor)
- ◆ The baptism of Nepalese believers
- ◆ The first-ever "Gospel Olympics" youth component to annual conference with
 - ◆ Bible competitions
 - ◆ Song & Dance competitions
 - ◆ Mini soccer tournament
- ◆ The first-ever USA Drama Team to perform during conference sessions and to teach the Nepalese youth how to begin a drama ministry of their own
- ◆ The continued cross-pollination of our international EC conferences

Thank you so much for your prayers before and during the trip. Please keep the EC Church of Nepal in prayer, along with increased persecution, Christians now have to live with a new "anti-conversion" law that threatens up to 5 years if prosecuted.





(From left, David Light, Tom Maiello, StoneRidge Executive Chef Nate Schumacher and Jo Ellen Litz.)

StoneRidge Receives Employer of the Year Award at Works With Me Annual Banquet

Thursday, October 19 was a time of celebration for StoneRidge Poplar Run* and for the many Lebanon County professionals who advocate for the dozens of employees with disabilities who are excelling at their work. The awards banquet honors these local employees as well as selected area employers who display impeccable support to all employees regardless of disability. StoneRidge Poplar Run was one of the recipients this year and received the Large Employer of the Year Award by Lebanon County Commissioner Jo Ellen Litz.

The annual banquet is sponsored and hosted by the Works With Me Committee, a coalition of government entities, MH/ID/EI, provider agencies like Developmental and Disability Services of Lebanon Valley (DDS) and school districts who believe that all people in Lebanon County should have the opportunity to work in a safe, accessible and supportive work environment that is free of bias. Jessica Penchard, vice president of development for DDS, stated, "Award recipients embody the spirit of advocacy as they devote their efforts to employ persons with disabilities and to making the challenge of working with a disability much easier. The nominees commit themselves to helping individuals strive for great accomplishment and professional distinction. Every success achieved by someone with a disability encourages others to overcome and succeed, promoting the values of commitment, hard work, and the desire to excel."

DDS Employment Specialist Bob Barry nominated StoneRidge to receive the Large Employer of the Year Award. The committee reported that Bob spoke very highly of the people he has associated with at StoneRidge with regard to David Light, a dietary worker, who has worked at StoneRidge for six years and is doing an excellent job. Tom Maiello, director of public relations and communications at StoneRidge, stated, "David is a wonderful man and does a good job for us. We are happy he is on our team." He went on to say, "We are thankful for this award, and we remain committed to providing employment opportunities to members of our community, including those with developmental delays and various disabilities, who are capable and are seeking a path towards independence. We salute the good work of DDS of Lebanon Valley and the Works With Me Committee."

*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!



PLEASE NOTE: Any pastor, elder, deacon or deaconess who decides to retire effective the end of the National Conference year (June 30, 2018) must make his/her intention known by written notification to the Bishop by January 1, 2018. January 1 is also the deadline for churches and pastors to submit written requests for a stationing change to the Stationing Committee in care of the Bishop. This slight but important deadline change went into effect a couple of years ago but is important enough to call to your attention now. Please help us by adhering to a January 1 deadline for all written requests for transfers to the Superannuated or Supernumerary status and for all stationing changes. Your cooperation will help us as we sincerely look for opportunities for both pastors and congregations to "fit and flourish." Thank you!

What's Happening at Twin Pines this December 2017 and January 2018 ??



2017 Holiday Craft Show & Flea Market December 1-3, 2017

Join us for the 1st Annual Holiday Craft Show and Flea Market sponsored by Twin Pines. There is something for everyone: hand-crafted items, repurposed, renewed, and reused items, holiday

items, and gifts for your friends and family. It will feature Pop Pop's Country BBQ and homemade baked goods, hot mulled apple cider, and other snacks and beverages will be available for purchase. Enjoy Olde Tyme Christmas music from local group, Mixed Nuts. Their string band consists of a Banjo, Fiddle, Mandolin, Guitar, and a Dulcimer.

VENDORS are needed. Contact Nicole Stuart to be a vendor at 484-269-6252 or nicole@twinpines.org.



Shoppe the Poconos Retreat December 1-3, 2017

Theme: Shop 'Till You Drop

Experience all that the Poconos has in shopping! There are

stores for every taste and style of shopping. Come and shop by day, fellowship with others by night, and enjoy a devotional as you fulfill your Christmas shopping list. Special discounts and door prizes from various local retailers are an added bonus!



Lift Hymn Up! Christmas Hymn Sing December 3

The host church for the next Lift Hymn Up! hymn sing is Salem E.C. Church, Lenhartsville, PA. Join us at 3:00 p.m. to sing Christmas hymns of the church.



Winter Thaw Youth Group Retreats Jan. 12-14, 2018 or Feb. 16-18, 2018

Theme: Transform—Romans 12:2

Winter Thaw 2018 will focus on transforming teens to become the best God has for them and their future. Join other teens facing these same challenges for a winter weekend youth retreat in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Come to experience camp fun, worship, friends, Bible study, and Christ's transforming love and grace.

Warning: teens will return different from when they arrive!

January speaker is Rev. Jim Ehrman.

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



Kingdom Extension Community

Pastoral Health & Ministry Resources

Stuck? Facing a new issue? Sure this can't be happening? Wondering if anyone else has been where you are? You could Google "this" or "that". Or you could check out this list of resources, categorized in various ways.

Do you have resources you have enjoyed that should be added to this list, forward them to Les Cool (revcool@ptd.net or 717-951-8433) and he will add them to the list for a future posting. We are in this together!

WEBSITES

These sites include books, articles, newsletters, training, experiences, web and podcasts, coaches and coaching, blogs, and much more.

• Self & Soul Care

- <http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/>
 - LTI will help you listen, equip you to discern, invite you to act, encourage you to pursue God's unique will for you, your team, and your ministry.
- <http://www.soulcare.com/>
 - Soul Care helps you live from a healthy soul and wisely lead others towards authentic transformation.
- <http://www.transformingcenter.org/>
 - Strengthening the souls of pastors, Christian leaders, and the congregations and organizations they serve.

• Small Church Support

- <http://newsmallchurch.com/>
 - This relatively new resource is designed for the pastor of the smaller church. I especially loved a recent article title which says it all, "Being A Small Church Pastor Isn't A Penalty, It's A Specialty."
- <http://www.rhma.org/>
 - Rural Home Missionary Association serves small town pastors and churches. They also run annual multi-day seminars with appropriate speakers and resources.
- <http://www.smallchurchpastor.com/home>
 - Dave Jacobs, with 30 years of pastoral experience in small churches, specializes in small churches and their pastors. He provides resourcing and coaching.

BOOKS

• Self & Soul Care

- The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life...
 - Peter Scazzero
- Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul
 - Lance Witt
- Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our lives for Spiritual Transformation
 - Ruth Haley Barton
- Simplify: Ten Practices to Unclutter Your Soul
 - Bill Hybels
- Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World
 - Craig Groeschel
- Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You
 - John Ortberg
- Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership
 - Ruth Haley Barton

• Pastoral & Leadership Development

- Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure
 - J.R. Briggs
- The Heart of a Great Pastor
 - H.B. London & Neil Wiseman
- Leading on Empty
 - Wayne Cordeiro
- Pastors at Greater Risk
 - H.B. London & Neil Wiseman
- The Sense of the Call
 - Marva J. Dawn
- The Shepherd's Covenant
 - H.B. London & Neil Wiseman

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

A couple of end of the year reminders:

- ✦ Pastor Compensation Forms should be returned to David King, Benefits Administrator by January 16, 2018.
- ✦ Annual Statistical Reports are due to Rev. Ken Wiest, Statistician, EC Church Center, 100 W. Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067 by January 25, 2018.

- ✦ W-2 forms for employees (incl. pastors) and 1099-MISC forms for independent contractors are due by January 31, 2018 to the recipient and to the respective government agency.

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, 2018 (premium due December 15, 2017). The health insurance rates are:

Family	\$1,928
Employee w/child(ren)	\$1,408
Couple	\$1,489
Single	\$ 704

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

- ✦ HRA reimbursements under the active pastors Capital Blue Cross plan are due to PrimePay by December 29, 2017 for covered healthcare expenses incurred by September 30, 2017. This is an HRA rule regardless of the insurance carrier. Reimbursements received after December 29 will not be paid. No exceptions.

Highmark Freedom Blue Retiree Plan

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing by \$8/month to \$224 per person per month, effective January 1, 2018, 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 2018 (single policy)

Year of Medicare Eligibility	Current	1/1/18
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.

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

Dave King
Benefits Administrator



Evangelical Congregational Church

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



Prayers that anchor your hope in God.

Seek God for the City is designed to mobilize many to pray with united, sustained vision for people of your community. The daily prayers are all new and different from last year's prayer guide. The scriptures and topics help God's people pray with passionate, full-hearted hope. This timely guide will help God's people in your congregation to pray beyond themselves with confidence and clarity.

We will Seek God in two simple ways: First we will seek God's face and then we will seek His kingdom. And as we come to God, seeking His face, then He comes to us bringing His kingdom. These are prayers you don't want to pray alone. Invite your whole congregation to pray along with you. Even better, think about joining your prayers with a few other churches in your community.

The forty days to Palm Sunday makes an ideal time to venture into a season of sustained, hope-filled prayer. Dated February 14 – March 25, 2018.

We are able to offer a complimentary review copy to leaders in recognized positions of pastoral or prayer leadership for a limited time. Call us now at 800-264-5214 or 512-419-7729.

Also available as an app that makes it possible to help many to keep their prayers rolling in the midst of busy lifestyles and schedules. **Available in January 2018.**

Order online now: <https://waymakers.org/product/seek-god/>

December 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT	4	5	6	7	1 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	2
10 SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT	11	12	13	14	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Due	16
Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension					8	9
17 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT	18 Info for JANUARY EC Leader Due	19	20	21	22 Church Center Closed	23
Christmas Missions Offering						
24 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Church Center Closed	26 Church Center Closed	27	28	29 Church Center Closed	30
CHRISTMAS EVE						
31 NEW YEAR'S EVE						

Ministry Funds to:
EC Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Christmas Missions Offering to:
EC Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designated—Christmas Missions Offering)

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

January 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Church Center Closed Stationing Request Deadline	2	3	4	5 <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	6 EPHIPHANY
7 <i>Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension</i>	8	9	10	11	12 Winter Thaw A, Twin Pines	13
14 Winter Thaw A, Twin Pines	15 Pastoral Comp. Forms Due Health Insurance Due Stationing Retreat	16	17	18 Pastoral Assessment Center	19	20
21	22 Info for FEBRUARY EC Leader Due	23	24	25 2017 Annual Reports Due	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Ministry Funds to:
EC Church
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067

Insurance/Pension Payments to:
Benefits Corp.
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067