

JANUARY 2021

# EC LEADER

## Inside this issue

> Bishop's Prayer & Praise .....	3
> News from the Executive Director ....	4
> Kingdom Extension Community .....	6
> Church Center Renovations.....	8
> Operation Christmas Child.....	9
> Global Ministries Community .....	10
> National Conference 2021 .....	11
> Changes at Church Center .....	12
> What's happening at Twin Pines Camp in 2021? .....	13

## Who We Are

“...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light”.

1 Peter 2:9

## From the Bishop

Most of us can't wait to change the calendar from one year to the next. Goodbye 2020. Welcome 2021! And yet what have we learned? What have we discovered as we've navigated the challenging year of 2020?

I am reminded of the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk was upset, frustrated, and he wanted to know just what in the world the Lord was doing. He cried out, “How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! ‘Violence is everywhere!’ I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery?” [Habakkuk 1:2-3a] Habakkuk was impatient and frustrated. Sound familiar? His question to God is; if God really cares, if God is holy, how can he allow all this to happen; where he is when the people need him?

God then answers him saying he knows how much of a mess there is and it is his perfect plan to discipline Israel; a neighboring nation will



invade and destroy them. But Habakkuk has a problem with that. First, he can't believe that God would destroy his own people. Secondly, he can't believe a holy God would use a sinful nation to execute judgment. God's response is that Habakkuk must be patient and trust a perfect, holy God.

I admit there are times when I find it challenging to understand the work of a holy God. And yet, the season of Christmas we've just celebrated reminds me to trust in God even when my faith is challenged. Israel was looking for the Messiah, but they were not looking for a poor little baby born in a stable and laid in a manger. They weren't prepared for a carpenter to become a teacher / preacher / miracle worker. They couldn't understand a Savior who had to die. Their definition of God's will and actions didn't allow God to do what God said he would do. But that was God's perfect will. That reminds me to be careful not to define God in such a way that I miss out on what God is doing in my life and in the world even when I can't clearly see it.

Habakkuk eventually saw the work of a holy God. The Babylonians did invade Israel in 597 B.C. as the Lord prepared his people for the coming of the Messiah. Almost 600 years later, when Jesus was born, a few people were still waiting and were open to the work of a holy God; shepherds, and an old man named Simeon, and a prophetess named Anna. They all saw, recognized, and worshipped the Christ child.

The advent of Jesus, the movement from one year to the next, reminds us that God has a perfect plan, that he knows what he's doing, that he is holy. May that give each of us confidence in what God is doing in our lives even, or especially, when it's hard to see.

In Christ's Service,



Rev. Bruce D. Hill  
Bishop

# Bishop's Top 10 Prayer & Praise

1. Please pray for the Stationing Committee as they begin their work for 2021 with a "retreat."
2. Join me in praying for all those participating in our annual Pastoral Assessment Center.
3. Keep praying for your pastor and lay leaders who continue to make difficult choices on how local churches respond to the ongoing pandemic.
4. Ask the Lord to be with healthcare workers and family members whose lives continue to be impacted by the pandemic.
5. Pray for our governmental leaders and our country as we experience a change in presidential leadership.
6. Praise God that we have been able to fill two part-time positions with one new full-time staff position at Church Center. Remember to pray for Pat Strain and Pat Wolfe as they transition into retirement.
7. Praise the Lord for our ability to celebrate the birth of Jesus even though it was probably different from other years.
8. Join me in praising God for having the assurance of his leading and watchful care as we enter a new year of service for him and his church.
9. Thank the Lord for the faithful stewardship of time, talent, and treasure so many have given to support the ministry of the Gospel during challenging times.
10. I praise the Lord for the love of my life - Gloria who continues to love me and understand my schedule. On January 3 we will celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary.



# News from the Executive Director

The 2021 IRS mileage reimbursement rate has not been released at the writing of this article.

Active pastor health insurance premiums will remain the same, no increase, from the 2020 rates.

Single	\$ 845
Couple	\$1,790
Employer & Child(ren)	\$1,690
Family	\$2,230

The first payment of the new year is due **December 15, 2020**. Please see [www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com) for the current rates.

The deadline to submit HRA reimbursements for the October 2019 – September 2020 plan year is **December 29, 2020**. This is a federally mandated deadline that cannot be changed.

Church contributions to the 403(b) pension plan will increase on **January 1** to \$320 for full time pastors and \$160 for part time pastors.

The EC Benefits Corp. services fee is \$125 payable on **April 15, 2021**.

W-2s and 1099-NEC (Non-Employee Compensation) forms are due to the recipients by **February 1, 2021** and the respective Federal, State or Local taxing authorities by **February 1, 2021**. 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.** The 1099-NEC is a new form replacing the 1099-MISC in most instances for churches payments made during 2020.

**Due Dates:** Disability Payment \$100.00 due **Jan. 15**  
Annual Statistical Reports due **Jan. 25**  
Workers Compensation Insurance Information due 30 days after receipt  
Pastors Compensation Forms due **Jan. 15**

Please see the **2021 Treasurer's Guide** located on [www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com), for additional due dates, current amounts due and ministry fund percentage.



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 yearend 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 2020 are considered 2020 contributions, regardless if the donor does not make a payment on the credit card until 2021 or with normal credit card processing times the church does not receive the funds until 2021. The same is true for donations made via an ACH transfer. A donor that initiates an ACH transaction in 2020 with the funds debited from the donor’s bank account should be counted as a 2020 donation. Even though, the church will not receive the funds until 2021 with normal bank processing times.

As always, please contact **David King**, Benefits Administrator, [dking@eccenter.com](mailto:dking@eccenter.com) or me, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com), 717-866-7581, with any questions.

**Kevin Henry**  
Executive Director

**Dave King**  
Benefits Administrator

# Kingdom Extension Community

## WANTED



The Kingdom Extension Community is looking for Covid-related items to be included in the next Partners Newsletters. How have you leveraged the pandemic for Kingdom advancement? What resources have you found helpful? Your story and ideas might be an incentive for other congregations to go and do the same. If you have a story that fits this ministry niche, please forward your ideas and/or resources to Les Cool (717-951-8433 or [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net)). Or send Les the name and contact information for the person he should speak with.

## The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with our Local Communities

This hands-on workshop is designed to help you explore how to identify points of intersection between the DNA of your church and that of the surrounding community. With these insights, participants will examine ways to build missional “bridges” between church and community. The aim of the interactive sessions will be for each church represented to generate action steps to build relationships and ministries with your neighbors.

Three teaching sessions (Who are we? Who are they? What bridges can be created between us?) are followed by hands-on workshops (church teams actually processing the material that was shared). The final session is designed to leave each church team with solid plans and action steps toward missional connections with their communities.



Let's talk about how this workshop might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net)). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.

## The Art of Conversation



Conversation! When was the last time you started a conversation? With a stranger? Smooth? Awkward? When was the last time a conversation included Jesus? As Christians, we get to talk about Jesus. Sharing Jesus usually starts with a conversation and a relationship and trust. Consider developing new conversational skills. This 2-hour workshop is a conversation about conversations. There is an art to making space for conversations. Discover resources, develop ideas, and practice the art of moving from

“hello” to something deeper, even gospel focused. Deciding to be prepared usually guarantees they will happen. Resources and ideas will address starting conversations, redirecting conversations, and leaving space for future conversations.

Let's talk about how this workshop might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net)). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.

## Powerful Leadership and Prepared Members

It's a great feeling to know that your leadership positions are all filled. It is equally satisfying to know your people want to make a difference. It's a different reality, however, knowing the right person is in the right role for the right reason.

God empowers his Church through spiritual gifts, holy enablements given to each believer. Identifying and developing our spiritual gifts are steps toward impactful ministry. We can do the best we can do, or we can thrive as we effectively serve out of our gifting.

A Leadership Grip workshop (Live or Zoom) would provide insights on building a better church leadership team, as well as help you equip your congregation, for powerful ministries. And maybe save someone from burnout!

Let's talk about how this workshop might fit the needs of your church family (717-951-8433 or [revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net)). And when a workshop would fit your schedule.





# Church Center Renovations

Due to the pandemic, we haven't had many visitors to our EC Church Center building, and all our meetings have been virtual. So, this announcement may not have a direct impact on too many, but we're beginning some much-needed renovations to our main entrance. The old circular steps were so deteriorated that they needed to be repaired or replaced. After talking with a few contractors, we discovered that the repairs would cost almost as much as a full replacement. Therefore, we have made the decision to replace the steps and the main entrance to the building. Not only will it look nice and be much safer, but it will also return some of the original look of the building when it was constructed 100 years ago.

This work began with demolition on December 3. Due to weather concerns, and the extended lead times on construction supplies in this COVID era, the front entrance to EC Church Center will probably be closed for about 3 months. Following the work on the main entrance, we are planning on doing some remodeling on the second floor to make our operations more efficient.

As per our current policy, please make an appointment if you do need to come to our denominational headquarters in Myerstown. Follow the signs directing you to the side entrance off the parking lot and use the intercom for building access.





# A Young Girl Comes to Faith and Family Follows

*A child in the Philippines places her faith in Jesus Christ after receiving an Operation Christmas Child shoebox and participating in The Greatest Journey.*

When Athena was 8 years old, she received a gift-filled shoebox through Operation Christmas Child. Living in an impoverished area of the Philippines, the young girl had never received such a present.

Athena began to learn about how much God loves her when she read *The Greatest Gift*, a Gospel story booklet Samaritan's Purse developed for shoebox recipients. She was so excited to learn more about God that she then participated in *The Greatest Journey*, a 12-lesson discipleship course the organization developed for shoebox recipients.

Not only did Athena become a Christian during *The Greatest Journey*, but some of her family members have also trusted in Jesus Christ. We praise God for how He's working and expanding His Kingdom!

More than 23 million children across the world have enrolled in *The Greatest Journey* since it began more than 10 years ago in Ecuador. Over 11 million boys and girls have made decisions for Christ. We've also trained more than 1 million volunteer teachers to lead *The Greatest Journey*.

As children come to faith, they are then sharing the Gospel with family and friends. We praise God that these evangelism efforts are resulting in the multiplication of believers as well as churches.

To learn more about *The Greatest Journey* visit <https://video.samaritanspurse.org/athenas-story-sharing-the-journey/>



# Global Ministries Community

- > **We give praise that**, while a number of our missionaries and international church leaders have contracted Covid 19, none have had serious symptoms or lasting side effects. Please continue to cover all of them in prayer, as for many, there are no decent medical facilities nearby to help them.
- > **Our VBS project** for this year is to raise funds for **Nepal** (see front page of January Global Prayer Guide.) The land where the denominational headquarters is built also houses the orphanage property and a church. If the land next door is sold to a private owner or a business, they would have the right to object to the services and training done at the headquarters. Since Christianity is barely tolerated in this Hindu kingdom, things could be made very difficult for our churches there. Our goal is to raise \$10,000 towards the estimated purchase price of \$30,000. Please pray about this and see if your church, youth group or MMK group would like to help. More information will be forthcoming in spring.
- > Congratulations to **Jonathan & Kathy Wilson**, who gained two new granddaughters just as they left for their village in mid-September. Son Justin and his wife welcomed Milly, and daughter Sarah and her husband welcomed Selah Dawn. We understand everyone is doing well. Unfortunately, Kathy & Jonathan won't be able to hold those precious little ones until they come back to the USA in 2022 for their year of furlough. Until then, there will be a lot of Zoom and online chats, I'm sure!
- > If you need to contact the **Global Ministries office** for information regarding missionaries available for speaking, to check addresses, etc., please use the **ecglobal@eccenter.com** email for the time being. Our new receptionist/GMC assistant started in late December, but as of this writing I don't know her email address. This way she will be able to access your emails until her email is published.
- > Also, since the two positions have been combined, the phone number originally assigned to the Global Ministries office will no longer be in service. Do not call 717-866-7584 or 1-800-866-7584 as of January. **Please use the Church Center general number, which is 717-866-7581.** Thank you! If there are any changes to this information, it will be sent out from Church Center.
- > **New 2021 Missions Directories** will be available soon. Please contact Church Center if you would like one emailed to you, either as a pdf or in Word format. If you need a print copy, it may take a little longer to mail to you. We do not put this on our website since some of our missionaries work in restricted access countries or assist those who do so. Thank you for your understanding.

# National Conference 2021

One of the questions the bishop has heard a lot recently is – “Are we going to be able to have a National Conference in 2021?” His answer has always been “Yes! We will have National Conference one way or another.”

As you know, our 2020 Conference was cancelled due to the significant restrictions caused by the pandemic; travel was curtailed, group sizes were limited, and eventually, Messiah College informed us they could not safely host us on their campus. Some of those realities have changed, some have not. Recently, Messiah informed us they were not yet able to offer us a contract for May 2021; but we both signed a non-binding letter of intent for 2021. We intend to hold National Conference on May 26,27,28, 2021 at what is now Messiah University and Messiah intends to host us. That is our desire and plan.

If the pandemic does not allow us to go to Messiah for National Conference, we are looking at holding a virtual National Conference in May. Obviously, this will require extra work and preparation, but we do need to hold National Conference. The National Ministry Team voted to extend Bishop Hill’s term another year until July 1, 2022; but it would not be fair to him or to the candidates to draw the election out any further. The election of the next bishop should take place in May 2021. In addition, there are votes on credentials that need to be held, as well as votes on amendments to the Discipline.

This past year has caused us all to be flexible, think outside the box, and learn new technologies. Please pray for Bishop Hill, the Church Center staff, and the members of the National Ministry Team as they work together to plan National Conference 2021 either in-person or online. Our hope and prayer is that we will be able to meet face-to-face and enjoy the fellowship that is part of conferencing and is so vital to the life of our connectional denomination.



# Changes at Church Center

The end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 means that we will be experiencing staff changes at EC Church Center in Myerstown.



**Pat Strain** is retiring from her position as Deputy Director of Missionary Care. Pat has faithfully served in our Global Ministries office for 32 years. Prior to working in Myerstown, Pat had served as a short-term missionary in Japan as part of the EC Church of Japan's outreach ministry of teaching conversational English and English Bible classes. She then began to work in the Global Ministries office in Myerstown. Over the years Pat earned a Master of Arts in Religion degree at Evangelical Seminary and was ordained as a Deaconess in the Evangelical Congregational Church. In her role as GMC Deputy Director, Pat is the primary liaison between local

EC congregations and our missionaries serving all around the world. Pat has served many missionaries, directors, and the local EC Church faithfully for over these last 32 years and her heart for the work and the people has clearly displayed her love and commitment to the Lord. Following her retirement Pat plans on volunteering with some community organizations and helping local EC congregations with their mission committees.






**Pat Wolfe** was planning on retiring in July, but graciously agreed to stay at the front desk until a new staff member could be identified. Little did we know that would take an additional six months! Pat has served on the Church Center staff for 16 years. She was hired as the Receptionist, but over the years has served the Lord and the EC Church in so many additional ways. While Pat doesn't see herself as having an "out front" role in our denomination, she was usually the first friendly face you see whether you were arriving at Church Center or at National Conference. Pat Wolfe truly has a servant's heart which could be seen in everything she did for the Lord at Church Center. Family is a big part of Pat's life so now she'll


spend more time with her husband, Jeff, who retired from DutchWay Market 18 months ago; and help her children and grandchild with projects in their homes and businesses.



**Denise Jaramillo** (if you don't speak Spanish, you'll have to ask her how to pronounce her name!) will now serve in a new role in our administrative staff for both Church Center and Global Ministries. "Dee," as she likes being called, has most recently worked as the Team Administrator and Transaction Coordinator for a real estate firm in York, PA. A US Army veteran, she has also served in administration and consulting in private Christian schools and local churches. She has one son who is currently on active duty with the US Marines. Dee lives in Ephrata and attends Community Evangelical Church, Sinking Spring where she is actively involved in the worship team. We welcome Dee to our staff at EC Church Center and look forward to experiencing how the Lord will use her gifts and graces for the next chapter of life and ministry in the Evangelical Congregational Church.

# What's happening at Twin Pines Camp in 2021?

Winter Thaw 2021	
	<p>Youth Retreat planned by Twin Pines for church youth groups and individuals. Youth Groups can come and Twin Pines takes care of all the retreat programming. Individuals can come Winter Thaw-C and Twin Pines will supply cabin counselors. For more information about these retreat weekends, go to <a href="https://bit.ly/2021WT">bit.ly/2021WT</a>.</p> <p><i>Winter Thaw-A:</i> January 15-17 Speaker: Rev. Steve Holubec</p> <p><del><i>Winter Thaw-B:</i> January 29-31</del> <b>POSTPONED</b></p> <p><i>Winter Thaw-C:</i> February 12-14 Speaker: Rev. Matt Stoltzfus</p> <p><i>Winter Thaw-D:</i> February 26-28 Speaker: Rev. Rob Valentine</p>
Spring Craft Retreat – March 18-21	
	<p>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 to learn.</p>
Men's Retreat Weekend – March 26-28	
	<p>A weekend for men to get together and focus on strengthening their relationship and discipleship with Jesus. Men will be challenged as they hear God's Word from the featured speaker.</p>

Spring Fling Children Retreat – April 23-25	
	<p>A weekend retreat focused for those currently in grades 3-5. Come enjoy Twin Pines in the spring and get ready for the summer. Participating groups must provide chaperones for the weekend.</p>
Spring Spruce-Up – May 4-6	
	<p>Volunteer for a mid-week event to help the ministry "spruce-up" camp and prepare for summer ministry!</p>
For Ladies Only Retreat – May 11-13	
	<p>An exciting mid-week retreat "for ladies only". Come enjoy fellowship, worship, and in-depth Bible learning as the retreat looks at what it means to be a woman of God.</p>



**Start now to plan a group retreat.**

- Men's Group
- Sunday School Class
- Women's Group
- Church Board or Council
- Youth Ministry
- Bible Study Group
- Children's Ministry

Contact Twin Pines Camp soon to schedule your retreat dates.



## Evangelical Congregational Church

100 West Park Avenue

Myerstown, PA 17067

717-866-7581

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

## Who We Are

"...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light".

1 Peter 2:9



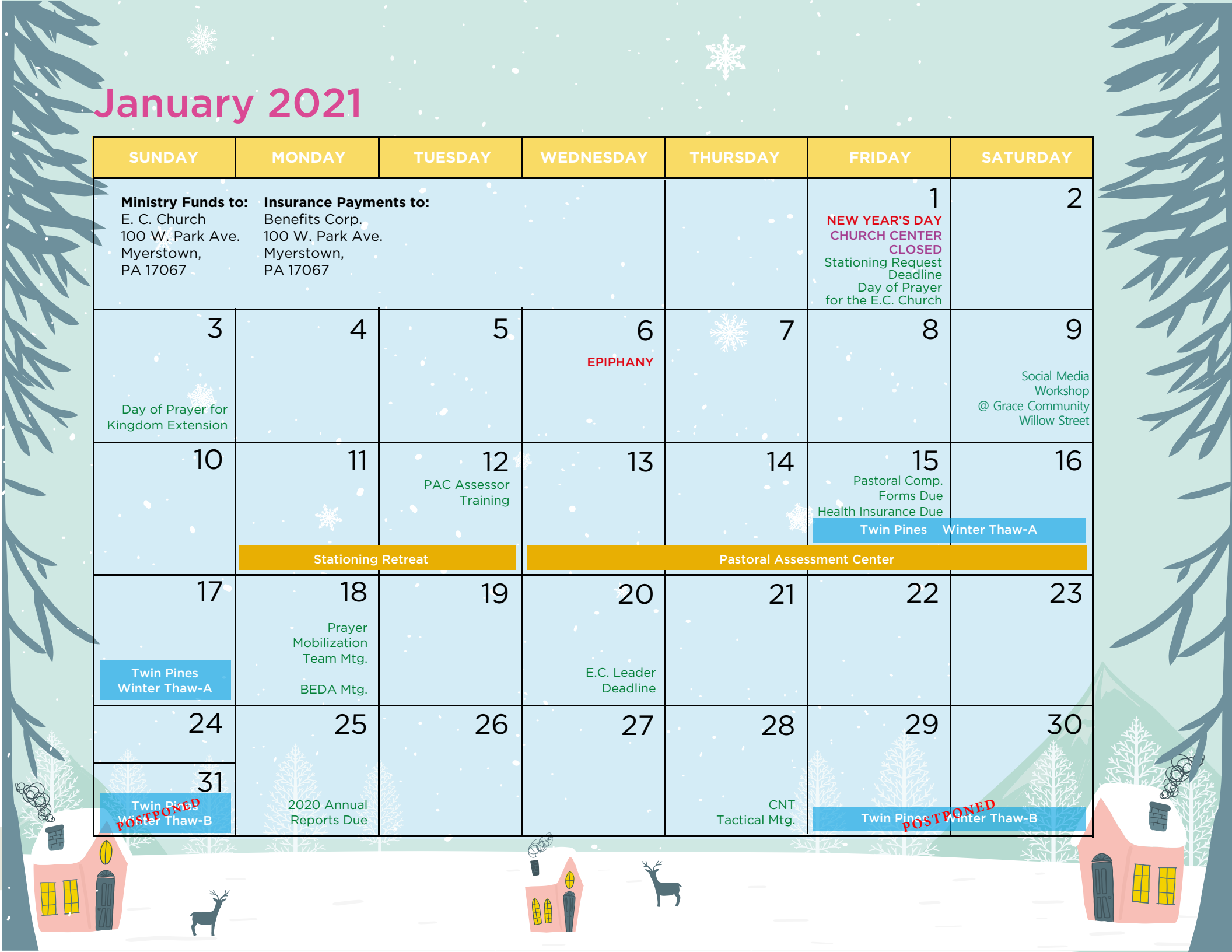
JODI EARHART • KEVIN HENRY • BISHOP BRUCE HILL •  
DENISE JARMILLO • DAVID KING • SHIRLEY LONG •  
REV. TED RATHMAN • PATRICIA STRAIN •  
PATRICIA WOLFE • ABIGAIL ZIMMERMAN





# January 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Ministry Funds to:</b> E. C. Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067		<b>Insurance Payments to:</b> Benefits Corp. 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067			1 <b>NEW YEAR'S DAY</b> <b>CHURCH CENTER</b> <b>CLOSED</b> Stationing Request Deadline Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	2
3  Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension	4	5	6  <b>EPIPHANY</b>	7	8	9  Social Media Workshop @ Grace Community Willow Street
10	11	12  PAC Assessor Training	13	14	15  Pastoral Comp. Forms Due Health Insurance Due  Twin Pines Winter Thaw-A	16
Stationing Retreat		Pastoral Assessment Center				
17  Twin Pines Winter Thaw-A	18  Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.  BEDA Mtg.	19	20  E.C. Leader Deadline	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31  Twin Pines Winter Thaw-B <b>POSTPONED</b>	2020 Annual Reports Due			CNT Tactical Mtg.	Twin Pines Winter Thaw-B <b>POSTPONED</b>	



# February 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	6
7 Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension	8	9 StoneRidge Board Mtg.	10	11 CNT Tactical Mtg. Episcopacy Mtg.	12 Twin Pines Winter Thaw-C	13
14 Valentine's Day Church Planting Offering Twin Pines Winter Thaw-C	15 PRESIDENT'S DAY Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg. Health Ins. Due	16 Benefit's Corp. Mtg.	17 ASH WEDNESDAY Church Health Community Mtg.	18	19 Finance Committee Mtg. E.C. Leader Deadline	20
21 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT	22	23	24	25 CNT Tactical Mtg.	26 Twin Pines Winter Thaw-D	27
28 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT Twin Pines Winter Thaw-D	<p><b>Ministry Funds to:</b> E. C. Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067</p> <p><b>Insurance Payments to:</b> Benefits Corp. 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067</p> <p><b>Church Planting Offering to:</b> E.C. Church 100 W. Park Ave Myerstown, PA 17067 (designate Church Planting Offering)</p>					