

## From the Bishop



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I was preparing to participate in our denomination's Pastoral Assessment Center, where we assess the men seeking credentials with our church, by reviewing the book *God Space, where spiritual conversations happen naturally*. It's a good book about "building deeper relationships...and talking about the things that matter most." One of the things that struck me was the chapter on listening. When we think about spiritual conversations we usually think about what we're supposed to say; but listening is vital to meaningful communication. That though reminded me of something I recently read in a business blog,

*FeedBlitz*. The author noted, the bestselling novel of 1961 was Allen Drury's *Advise and Consent*, a 690 page political novel. In 2016, the big sellers were coloring books.

Our culture is always in a hurry. It doesn't matter if you're driving, working, playing or talking. Just get it done and move on to the next thing. That is true not only of our culture; it's true for many of us and for the church. "Keep it short!" is our mantra. Did you ever grow impatient in the middle of a conversation and finally blurt out "Just get to the point!" How many of our conversations are people talking over one another? The result is that we don't

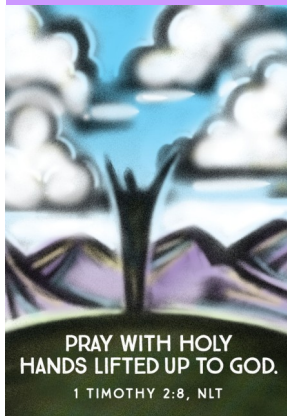
take the time to really listen; instead we generalize and assume. At times it seems like our culture runs on assumptions. We assume all kinds of things; we think we know what a person is like because of what they look like or where they're from, or some other piece of evidence we know about them. And that's the problem—it's just a piece of who they are—and we don't take the time to discover the real person, the whole person.

I had the opportunity to talk with a tattoo artist. Other than his face, he was covered in tattoos;

*(continued on page 2)*

## Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

1. Pray for the Lord's leading in the lives of those who have recently completed the Pastoral Assessment Center. The Lord is bringing outstanding couples into our denomination. PTL!
2. Ask the Lord to direct the thoughts and decisions of the Stationing Committee as they look to assign pastors and churches where both can fit and flourish.
3. Pray for our Father's continued blessing of our brothers and sisters in Mexico as they move toward becoming a National Conference during our time at NC 2017.
4. Please keep praying for me as I work on the details of the agenda for National Conference—it will be different—less business more time for worship, celebration, and resourcing.
5. Pray for our denomination's communities, committees, and personnel as they begin to write reports and updates which will be presented at the National Ministry Team meeting in March.
6. Join me in thanking the Lord for our Prayer Mobilization Team who support me and so many aspects of our denomination's ministries in intercessory prayer.
7. Praise God for the reports I continue to receive regarding growth in many of our congregations—spiritual growth through discipleship as well as numerical growth.
8. You may like snow, but the mild winter has been a great help to me as I travel around the conference. PTL!
9. Praise the Lord for the opportunity I had to connect with all but one of our pastors in Ohio during my trip there in January. (One was on vacation in Florida—maybe I should have visited him too!)
10. Since it's the month for Valentines, join me in praising God for my wife, Gloria. She is a great source of encouragement and love, even as she works full-time and deals with my crazy schedule.



*(continued from page 1)*

neck arms, hands, even his fingers; I could have, and maybe did, assume a lot of things about this man. But after an hour of conversation many of those stereotypes were shattered. I talked and listened. He was an interesting guy with an interesting life.

During his days on earth Jesus asked a lot of questions to the people he'd meet—and he listened to their responses, their needs. The author of *God Space* points out most of our spiritual conversations are really mono-

logues. “Nothing creates God Space father than Spirit-led listening. When we demonstrate that we are truly seeking to understand people—not simply change their points of view—we create a safe environment that allows them to open up at a deeper level.” That takes time and effort; personal investment. And it often takes us to a place where real friendship and ministry happens.

In Christ's service,



# News from STONERIDGE POPLAR RUN

## February “Lunch and Learn” Sessions at StoneRidge Poplar Run\*

Visit StoneRidge Poplar Run, enjoy lunch and learn from the experts about heart health and about downsizing and eliminating clutter from your life. Both sessions are free, open to the public and will be held in the Meier Room.

### February 9 at 11:00 a.m. Lunch and Learn: Heart Health

RSVP by February 6 by calling Stacia at 717-866-3553

Enjoy lunch and learn what to look for and what to do to keep your heart healthy. Presented by Stephanie Andreozzi, director of cardiovascular services at Wellspan Good Samaritan Hospital. Seating is limited. RSVP is required by February 6. The lunch menu includes Manhattan clam chowder; honey, orange glazed chicken; mashed potatoes; roasted asparagus and cherry tomatoes; and German chocolate cake.

### February 27 at 11:00 a.m. Lunch and Learn: Downsizing

Enjoy lunch and learn how to eliminate clutter and plan for a move to a smaller space. Presented by personalized moving consultants, the TLC Ladies. Seating is limited. RSVP is required by February 23. The lunch menu includes garden vegetable soup, apricot chicken thigh, parsley egg noodles, carrots and chocolate caramel mousse.



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

# News from GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMUNITY

## MISSIONARY UPDATES:

Please be in prayer for **Joe Toy's** upcoming outreach events:

- Super Bowl
- Daytona 500
- Mardi Gras

**David & Conce Roof** leave on February 21 to return to Brazil.

**Ken Sears** leaves on January 16 to return to Ukraine.

## SAVE THE DATE:

Delaware Region Mission Brunch will be held on Friday, March 17 at Hope Community EC, Fogelsville.



## News from BENEFITS CORPORATION

The deadline to distribute W-2s to employees, including pastors, is January 31, 2017 with the employer filing deadline also January 31, 2017 if filed electronically or on paper. Social Security Administration's Business Services Online (BSO), [www.ssa.gov/bso](http://www.ssa.gov/bso), is an easy convenient method for producing the employee and employer copies of the W-2 on white paper, no forms, and for filing the W-2s electronically with SSA. We encourage all church treasurers that produce their W-2s in-house to use the SSA BSO services.

**Due Dates:** Annual Statistical Reports due Jan. 25  
Workers Compensation Insurance information due 30 days after receipt

Please remember that the EC Benefits administrative fee is due from churches on April 15, 2017, retirees are not subject to the fee. The 2017 disability premiums are due January 15, 2017. Please remit them as soon as possible. The due dates for the administrative fee and disability premium are listed in the Treasurer's Guide available on the EC Church website ([www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com)).

Pastor's Compensation forms were due on January 15, 2017. If you have not done so please return your compensation forms to Dave King as soon as possible. We will be contacting churches in early February that have not submitted 2017 compensation forms and requesting compliance.

Please begin using the 2017 Ministry Fund forms for January offerings. Offerings collected in December 2016 should be remitted on the 2016 Ministry Fund forms.

The Annual Reports and fourth quarterly Ministerial Update forms are both due by January 25, 2017. Annual Reports get sent to the EC Church Center. The Quarterly Reports get sent one to EC Church Center and one to your District Field Director.

The 2017 Business Mileage Reimbursement decreased to \$.535/mile on January 1, 2017.

Year end giving statements to donors must include a phrase similar to or contain the words "no goods or services were exchanged for these contributions or consisted entirely of a religious nature". The IRS has resources available, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), to assist with charitable contributions; Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations and Publication 526 Charitable Contributions.

Please contact David King, Benefits Administrator, [dking@eccenter.com](mailto:dking@eccenter.com) or myself [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com) with any questions, 1-800-866-7581.

Kevin Henry  
Executive Director

David King  
Benefits Administrator



## Pastor's Housing Allowance

The information below was supplied by Art H. Rhodes, Church of God Benefits Board Inc., Cleveland, TN

*In an expected but unfortunate development, the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a new lawsuit on April 6, 2016, challenging the constitutionality of the ministerial housing allowance under section 107 of the Internal revenue Code. . . While the previous case only held that the ministerial housing allowance was unconstitutional, the new lawsuit requests that both the housing allowance and the tax-free use of parsonages be declared unconstitutional. Further, based upon the new filing and the court's previous decision, the Freedom From Religion Foundation also has requested immediate injunctive relief, as well as a declaratory judgment, that the housing and parsonage provisions, found in Section 107 of the Tax Code, are unconstitutional on their face.*



*In an unexpected twist to this case, in September 2016 the Justice Department lawyers, who are representing the Internal Revenue Service and supposedly working in support of the housing allowance, abruptly conceded that the plaintiffs had standing (or the legal right to bring the suit) against the ministerial housing allowance—but not against the parsonage allowance. On October 24, 2016, Judge Barbara Crabb agreed and granted the government's motion to dismiss the plaintiff's challenge to Section 107(1) of the Tax Code, which allows churches to provide ministers with tax-exempt "in kind" housing, i.e., a parsonage.*

*However, Judge Crabb allowed the challenge to Section 107(2) of the Tax Code, which permits churches to provide ministers with tax-exempt cash for housing, to proceed. The government did not seek dismissal of the plaintiff's challenge to Section 107(2), presumably because as noted above the government believes that the plaintiffs have standing to sue under that Code section . . . On November 17, 2016, Judge Crabb set a deadline of March 8, 2017 for all dispositive motions in the case to be filed.*

In summary, the tax-exempt salary received by a pastor designated as a "housing allowance" is being reviewed again by Judge Crabb of the U.S. District in the Western District of Wisconsin. Judge Crabb ruled in 2014 the clergy housing allowance was unconstitutional but that decision was overturned by an appeals court on a technicality. In 2017 Judge Crabb will again hear arguments by the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) that the clergy housing allowance is unconstitutional. However, this time the technicality that overturned the 2014 ruling was corrected by the FFRF and the U.S. Dept. of Justice and the IRS are not vigorously defending the clergy housing allowance. The continuation of the tax-exempt status of the clergy housing allowance is not promising. Please keep this matter in your prayers. I will pass along any updates as I receive them.

Kevin Henry  
Controller

# News from KINGDOM EXTENSION COMMUNITY

**The NAVS MISSIONAL TEAM  
presents  
INTENSIVE #4**



- **Thursday, March 9, 3:00 p.m. -  
Saturday, March 11, 12:30 p.m.**
- **Bethany UM, Ellicott City, MD**

**REGISTER** at:

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1904058>

**REGISTRATION PRICE:** \$175/person; group rate of \$140/person (four or more people). If you are in need of a scholarship, please contact Jeff at [jef-freyjuddspringer@gmail.com](mailto:jef-freyjuddspringer@gmail.com)

## **LEADING COMMUNITIES on MISSION**

Do you desire to make more effective personal connections with unchurched friends, neighbors and colleagues that develop into fruitful opportunities for introducing Jesus? If you do, keep reading.

To reach neighborhoods and networks of people who will likely never enter your church building, disciples must find a way to vitally connect with lost people who are culturally separated from “church as we’ve known it.” There’s project-oriented outreach, event-centered evangelism, and then there’s inviting seekers into a community

living the lifestyle of Jesus.

Missional living can be done alone.  
Or in small teams.  
But its best accomplished in community.

Communities on mission (sometimes called “Families on Mission”), led by disciples leaders living out the basic rhythms of Jesus in their homes and neighborhoods, are effectively bridging the gap between disciples of Jesus and the unchurched world. It was the genius of the Jesus movement in the first 3 centuries, and when re-captured, will be the key to kingdom advancement in the 21st century.

In this three-day training workshop (which we call an “Intensive”) we’ll begin equipping anyone interested in reaching friends for Christ with information, resources and practices that will unleash communities on mission in their context. We will assist these people in the transition toward living among friends without Christ.

The Leading Communities on Mission Intensive is part of an on-going Learning Community in which leaders have been learning to disciple others in missional contexts leading to the launching of communities on mission. We open this Learning Community Intensive to anyone desiring to become better equipped and more effective in the art of Living in a Community on Mission.

## **Questions?**

Contact Al Giles ([pastoral@ptd.net](mailto:pastoral@ptd.net)) or Les Cool ([revcool@ptd.net](mailto:revcool@ptd.net))

## Exponential 2017 Live Stream Event

# EXPONENTIAL<sup>7</sup>

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

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

Exponential East 2017 is the next event, a gathering of thousands of church planting leaders in Orlando. But you don't have to go to Orlando to experience some of the event, and enjoy serious conversation that just might change your life and the life of your church.

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

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

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

## Awakenings



- April 27-29, 2017
- Alfred Street Baptist Church, Alexandria, VA

### The Holy Spirit.

Promised by Jesus in the Gospel accounts, progressively demonstrated throughout the book of Acts, and at the very core of Paul's own message and ministry, **the Holy Spirit is the presence and power of God at work among us unto the redemption, reconciliation, and recreation of all things.** As those joined to Christ *by the Holy Spirit*, the Church lives as the community *of the Holy Spirit* and thus the means through which God is furthering his mission in the world *through the Holy Spirit*.

Unfortunately, over the last hundred years in Western Protestantism, the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit has either been relegated to obscurity or confined to a handful of streams of the Church. The result is that much of the Church operates without a practical theology of the Holy Spirit for the whole of life.

**However, in this new era of mission after Christendom, we observe that many are experiencing different kinds of “awakenings,” which call our attention back to the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God among us. It's not surprising that the predominant interaction of the early church with the Spirit was for mission. Ours should be the same.**

*Join us, at Missio Alliance's Third North American Gathering, as for a fresh engagement with the person and work of the Holy Spirit and explore how such an engagement might advance the mission of God among our congregations, through our ministries, and in our own lives.*

For more information and to register...

<http://www.awakenings.missioalliance.org>



**Evangelical Congregational  
Church**

100 West Park Avenue

Myerstown, PA

717-866-7581

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

[eccenter@eccenter.com](mailto:eccenter@eccenter.com)

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

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

EPHESIANS 4: 4-6



**Start the countdown clock—**

**National Conference 2017 is just over 100 days away!**



National Conference 2017 at Messiah College,  
May 24, 25, 26

Alright, you may not be that excited about NC2017 but plans are already underway for a very different style of National Conference for the Evangelical Congregational Church: less business; more fellowship, worship, celebration, and resourcing. We've spent quite a bit of time focusing on our organizational structure as a denomination. That was something we needed to do. But now we need to press on to the mission of God. To focus on what God is doing and where he is leading in our ministries.

Our hope is that when you leave National Conference you'll experience a renewed sense of passion, thankful for what God has done, and ready to follow where he leads.

Start praying, now, for our gathering and join us in the countdown to something new at National Conference 2017!





# FEBRUARY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Board of Examiners	2 ETS Board Mtg.	3 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	4 Four Chaplain Run
5 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	6	7 *StoneRidge Retirement Bd Mtg. *Chaplaincy Committee Mtg. *Ministerial Development Comm. Mtg.	8 Episcopacy Mtg.	9	10	11
12 Kingdom Extension Offering	13	14 Valentine's Day	15 *Church Pension Contribution due *Health Insurance Premium	16	17	18
19	20 President's Day Prayer Mobilization Team Mtg.	21 Benefits Corp. Mtg.	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

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

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

# March 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Ash Wednesday Church Health Community Mtg.	2	3 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	4
5 First Sunday in Lent Day of Prayer for Church Planting	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Second Sunday in Lent Self-Denial Offering	13 Prayer Mobi- lization Team Mtg.	14 Global Ministries Community Mtg.	15 *Church Pen- sion Contribution due *Health Insurance Premium due *Conference Net- work Team Mtg.	16 National Ministry Team Mtg.	17	18
19 Third Sunday in Lent	20 EC Leader Info Due	21	22	23	24	25
26 Fourth Sun- day in Lent Buckeye/Allegheny Women's Retreat	27	28	29	30	31	

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

**Self-Denial Offering to:**  
E.C. Church  
100 West Park Avenue  
Myerstown, PA 17067  
(designate Self-Denial Offering)

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