



connect

"We loved you so much that we shared with you
not only God's Good News but our own lives, too."
- 1 Thessalonians 2:8

MAY 2014

From the Bishop

This is the final article in a series on what I have called the "together" ministries of our denomination which are supported through ministry funds. It began with a general overview of ministry funds and continued with more specific articles covering the main areas of denominational work: Commissions & Committees, Church Center operations, Affiliate support, and now we wrap it up with a look at heritage care. I have to say this was the most difficult of the five for me to write without getting too technical. I hope you will read the entire article so you can understand the debt we owe to our retired EC pastors.

Pastors and their families are special people! God calls and

they respond; God has always worked through ordinary men and women who willingly and faithfully serve him. What happens when a pastor has served the Lord for many years and finally feels it's time to step aside, to retire from the active pastorate? How do they afford to live and receive health care? Those are questions we've wrestled with as a denomination. Paul wrote to Timothy "Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17 NLTse) This biblical admonition not only relates to active pastors but also to those who have served the Lord in this capacity and are now retired. As a church, we are committed to the wellbeing and care of our retired pastors. This finds its greatest expression in the way we handle their pension and health insurance costs.

Prior to the late 1970s we committed to pay retired pastors a set amount per years of service as a pension payment. This "Defined Benefit" type of plan was the way many busi-

nesses and organizations handled retirees for many years. In the late 1970s our denomination's leaders had the foresight to see that we could not sustain that type of plan. At that time National Conference decided that retired pastors who were born prior to 1935 would be allowed to continue in the "Defined Benefits" plan while the plan was stopped for younger men. Still later a change was made to our retiree health care plan. Retired pastors, spouses or widows who were of Medicare eligibility age by 2005 receive coverage in the denomination sponsored Medicare Advantage plan at no cost to the retiree. Retired pastors, spouses or widows who reached Medicare eligibility age between 2006 and 2008 receive a partial reduction in the denomination sponsored Medicare Advantage health insurance plan, funded by ministry funds. Retirees, spouses and widows that reach Medicare eligibility in 2009 and later do not receive a reduction in the cost of the denomination sponsored Medicare Advantage plan.

(continued on page 3)



Inside this issue:

- Bishop's Prayer & Praise 2
- Church Leadership 101 2
- News from Stone Ridge Retirement Living 3
- News Church Health Commission 4
- News from Benefits 5
- News from Evangelical Seminary 6
- News from Global Ministries 7

Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

1. Pray for our annual National Conference which will be held at Messiah College in Grantham, PA on May 28-30. Pray that the Lord's will would be done in every worship time and business session.
2. Pray for the safe and healthy delivery of our eighth grandchild due on May 21; a fourth son for our daughter Jen and husband Chuck Beck.
3. Pray for the safety of those traveling to National Conference from all over the EC world—including the delegation coming from Japan.
4. Ask the Lord to continue to guide the work of the Stationing Committee as they work at matching pastors and churches.
5. Pray for me as I finalize the agenda and write my annual Episcopal Address for the upcoming sessions of our National Conference.
6. Praise God for the many special services we all experienced this past Easter season. May their impact on our lives continue for weeks and months to come.
7. Thank the Lord for all the staff and volunteers who are even now preparing for our summer camping ministries at Camp ECCO, Twin Pines and Rock River.
8. Praise God for the seminary students who are completing their studies at Evangelical Seminary and graduating on May 9.
9. Now that spring has arrived and we're done hibernating and finally heading back outdoors, praise the Lord for the many more opportunities to establish relationships with our neighbors.
10. Praise God for the various denominational commissions and committees who work throughout the year to provide resources and tools (like the Leadership 101 "Healthy Pastoral Relations Committee" seminars) for our local congregational leaders.



Church Leadership 101— "The Healthy Pastoral Relations Committee"

According to the *Discipline* the purpose of the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) shall be to aid the pastor, and any additional members of the pastoral staff, to effectively serve the needs and programs of the local congregation. It shall be a conferring and counseling committee and shall be available for consultation with the pastor concerning conditions with the local congregation that pertains to various pastoral duties.

That's what the book says, but what about real life? That's the question we want to talk about in a special training event for the members of our local Pastoral Relations Committees. A special training event will be held at two locations in each region. You only attend one event, one day, at the time and location that best fits your schedule. This seminar for pastors, lay delegates, and lay members of the PRC will use a combination of live presentation, video, and group discussion. We strongly encourage local PRC members to attend

one of these events together so you can improve the health of your PRC. All seminars will be held on a Saturday morning beginning at 9:00 am and conclude by 12:00 noon.

April 26—Susquehanna Region at Trinity EC, Harrisburg, PA

May 3—Susquehanna Region at Mohn's Memorial EC, Mohn's Hill

May 3—Great Lakes Region at Winnebago Evangelical Fellowship, Winnebago, IL

May 10—Delaware Region at Bethesda EC, Reedsville, PA

May 10—Great Lakes Region at Lakeside EC, Transfer, PA

May 17—Delaware Region at Christ EC, Allentown, PA

News from StoneRidge Retirement Living



StoneRidge Retirement Living of Myerstown has completed the addition to their senior living community and now offers a wide variety of amenities on their campus. The Ribbon Cutting celebration on Friday, April 11, 2014 marks the completion of a two-year project addition to the existing campus on East Lincoln Avenue. Steve Reiter, President and CEO, addressed the assembled guests to extend thanks to the residents for their patience during the construction and renovation and to thank family, friends, and neighbors of the community for their support. The Main Street concept was developed to embrace a downtown area with shops, meeting places, nice places to eat and new living spaces. The addition features a General Store, Scoops Ice Cream Emporium, a gift shop, a large performance center—The Theatre on Main, a pool



Left to right: Rev. Charles Campbell, Donald Styer, Board President, Steve Reiter, President/CEO, Stanley Miller

with Jacuzzi, an aerobic exercise room and a fully equipped fitness center. A special feature included in the new Wellness Area is a golf simulator for the enthusiasts of that sport. Large common spaces with comfortable furniture and a feature water wall welcome guests and residents alike. Three new dining venues were added for casual and finer dining in spaces with various décor and atmosphere that can be used as meal and meeting spaces. The new Park Avenue Apartments are generously sized two bedroom apartments with beautifully designed kitchens and laundry facilities within the apartments. All these new spaces embrace the concept of a “main street” replete with shops and wonderful amenities along the way.

(continued from page 1)

This commitment to fund some of our “elder statesmen’s” pension and health care costs is a recognition of our heritage as the Evangelical Congregational Church. Every time a local congregation makes a Ministry Fund payment a percentage of that helps us to provide for those individuals who have done so much for us, and for the church. It is the church family taking care of family. On behalf of our older retirees, I would like to thank you for your concern and support of these senior saints through your Ministry Funds.

Special Note: today things are different. Today’s retiring pastors “pension” is the amount of money

that they and the churches they serve have set aside over the course of their career into an individual retirement account—such as a 403(b), Roth, or IRA. In addition they are fully responsible for the cost of their health care premiums.

In Christ’s service,



connect

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— 1 Thessalonians 2:8

2014 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

May 28-30
Messiah College,
Grantham, PA

Registration forms,
Reports and
Information are
available on the
EC website at

www.eccenter.com

Church Health Commission

The **Turnaround Church Affinity Group**, led by Gary Kuehner, is a subgroup of the Church Health Commission. The purpose of the group is to give encouragement and prayer support to its members and provide a forum to learn about and discuss church revitalization. The group, which first met in August of 2012, is reading and discussing *Leading Turnaround Churches* by Gene

Wood, but a good deal of the meeting time is spent talking about things that are happening in local churches, things that relate to what is said in the book. Since the book is written from a pastoral perspective and written for pastors, the group is limited to active/inactive EC pastors. Almost all of the current group members are located in the Delaware Region of the EC Church. The group meets every other month on a Tuesday from 10 a.m. to noon at Salem E.C. Church in Lenhartsville. Group members are then given the option of eating lunch at a nearby restaurant.



The following are testimonials from three of the group members.

“Why should a pastor take a complete morning every two months and devote it to gathering with other pastors to pray, study, and discuss a subject of mutual interest? Maybe that is not the right question. Perhaps we should ask why shouldn’t a pastor take a complete morning every two months and devote it

to gathering with other pastors to pray, study, and discuss a subject of mutual interest. The truth of the matter is that many of us graduated from seminary in a time which is far different from that in which we live today. If we do not keep current, if we do not engage in continuing education, our skills and competencies are going to decrease and so too, most likely, our effectiveness in ministry. I have found the group on Turnaround Churches to be helpful, informative, and motivating. Our book study has been a way to engage an expert in the field and the discussion, sharing of ideas, and fellowship has been a great benefit.

The small group fosters intimacy and a genuine sharing of needs, prayers, and concerns. It

helps us to stay in touch with each other. We haven’t quite figured out how to solve all of the church’s problems yet, but participation in our group has helped me to stay focused and to be learning, thinking, and praying about issues that are central to my church’s ministry. So, again I ask why shouldn’t a pastor take a complete morning every two months and devote it to gathering with other pastors to pray, study, and discuss a subject of mutual interest.”



“The EC Church’s most recent Governance Manual stresses the importance of strong pastoral leadership. The affinity group has been

very helpful for me as we have studied and discussed the book *Leading Turnaround Churches*. A central theme is for godly pastoral leadership. The future of the EC Church is directly related to the calling and the authority of the office of the Pastor. As I move toward retirement and a new phase of ministry I will apply the truths that I have learned. God wants pastors who are faithful and trustworthy.”



“The Turnaround Church Affinity Group provides an opportunity to discuss concepts and ideas involving

church health and growth with like-minded individuals. Our discussion provides a place to share our experiences and

learn from one another. Because it is so easy to be busy doing ministry while losing focus on the principles and ideas that drive a ministry forward, my participation in this group helps me to regain focus on the things that are most important for a healthy and growing ministry.”

If you as a pastor are interested in participating in the existing affinity group or you are interested in starting a group like this in the Susquehanna or Great Lakes region, please contact Gary Kuehner: 610-914-2983 or gkuehner@eccenter.com.



News from Benefits Corporation

Workers Compensation invoices have been mailed to the churches and the increase was higher than anticipated. The PA Workers Compensation Bureau increased the modification factor from 1.0 to 1.33 which resulted in a 41% increase in the premium charged to the local church. The modification factor is an amount that is added to the base workers compensation premium to adjust for claims experience. Modification factors above 1.0 signify above average claims experience. In the past twelve months there have been no new workers compensation claims however the modification factor is based on prior years experience. Two and three years ago there was an increase in workers compensation claims that are affecting the workers compensation rates in the current year. If we have a couple of years with no or minimal workers compensation claims then the modification factor should decrease and reduce the rates in a couple of years. This increase only affects churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland.

Churches not included in the denominational workers compensation group policy; Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky churches, your individual state mandates workers compensation coverage. Please confirm that all employees of the church are covered by workers compensation insurance. Per EC Benefits Corporation policy H.3.b, churches not covered by the denomination group workers compensation policy shall submit proof of workers compensation by July 1 of each year. Please submit proof of your workers compensation coverage to: E.C. Benefits

100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067
Or FAX 717-866-7553 or
Email dking@eccenter.com

Retirement: As in years past Jennifer Buehler, Wells Fargo Advisors, had the most visitors during National Conference but please remember she is available for retirement planning assistance year round. Jennifer may be reached at 1-855-603-8146. We hope all our pastors are actively planning for their retirement; make consistent contributions to your 403 (b) or Roth account (in addition to your church's contributions) and at a minimum spend an hour or two annually with a financial professional reviewing your investments. Please don't delay in becoming personally involved in your retirement planning.



EC Benefits Corporation will be sponsoring three **Employee Benefit Seminars**, one in each region, focusing on the active and retiree health insurance plans and the retirement savings plans, 403(b) and Roth accounts. The details of the seminars are not completed, but presenting will be Jennifer Buehler, Wells Fargo Investments, Mary Schell, Highmark Freedom Blue and Andrew Schreffler, PowerKunkle Benefit Consulting. The dates and locations of the three seminars:

Delaware Region

June 19, 2014
Salem EC, Lenhartsville
1:00-4:00 pm

Susquehanna Region

July 18, 2014
First EC, Palmyra
1:00-4:00 pm

Great Lakes Region

August 11, 2014
Lakeside EC, Transfer
1:00-4:00 pm

Jennifer will be speaking on preparing financially for retirement. Mary Schell will give an overview of the current Highmark Freedom Blue plan and what does the future hold for Medicare Supplemental plans. Anyone who is currently retired or planning to retire within ten years would benefit from the presentations of Jennifer Buehler and Mary Schell.

Andrew Schreffler will review the current active pastors health insurance plan with Highmark Blue Shield and the HRA with PrimePay. Andrew will also evaluate the future of employer group health insurance and the changes resulting from the Affordable Care Act.

The seminars are open to all active pastors and their spouses, retired pastors and their spouses, lay delegates and local church leadership (board members, treasurers, etc.). Anyone can attend whichever seminar is most convenient. There is no admission cost. Registration will be required for planning purposes. Electronic registration only on www.eccenter.com, beginning early May 2014.

More details to be released in early May 2014.

Please contact Dave King or Kevin Henry with any questions.

Kevin Henry, Controller
khenry@eccenter.com

Dave King, Benefits Administrator
dking@eccenter.com

News from Evangelical

We're rejoicing in the good response to the largest ever Wesley Forum on April 7. Acclaimed evangelical scholar Dr. Ben Witherington, III inspired and challenged the 165 in attendance with a powerful presentation on "The Image of God: Theology and Ethics in the Bible."

We're celebrating the successful completion of our "One Call Phone-a-thon." Thanks to all who helped us reach the \$60,000 goal, which then prompted one call to Board Chair Bill Worley and an extra \$10,000 from several trustees. We are blessed...and very grateful to all who support Evangelical. (If you made a pledge, please remember that all funds are due by June 30.)



We're praising God for the recent achievements of all three of our Marriage and Family Therapy professors. Department Chair **Dr. Joy Corby** has been appointed by Gov. Corbett to serve a four year term on the State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Professional Counselors. **Dr. Janet Stauffer** was invited to present two workshops at the International Family Therapy Conference in Panama in March, and **Dr. Robb Palmer** has published a book, *The Diamond of Adversity: A Theology of Suffering*.



We're congratulating the Class of 2014, which brings 29 new graduates into the alumni ranks on Friday, May 9. Of these, six are E.C.: **Yoriyoshi Abe, M.Div.**, who will return to his native Japan to work in church planting; **Alexis O. Diaz, M.A.M.F.T.**, who will be working as a multisystemic therapist in the Reading area; **Nathanael J. Kennedy, M.Div.**, pastor of Ebenezer E.C.



Church in Jim Thorpe; **Kenneth B. Ogden, M.Div.**, pastor of People's E.C. Church, East Weissport; **Jeffrey S. Stansbury, M.Div.**, assistant pastor at First E.C., Palmyra; and **William E. Stoffel, M.Div.**, pastor of Lawn E.C. Church.



We're eagerly anticipating our 29th Annual Golf Tournament on May 22 at Fairview Golf Course, Lebanon, PA. The first 144 who register will enjoy great golfing, wonderful fellowship on the links, op-

portunity to win special prizes, and a delicious buffet dinner afterward. Register online at www.evangelical.edu.

We're looking forward to the Evangelical Dinner at EC National Conference on Wednesday, May 28. If you're a pastor or lay delegate, please be sure to register for this special meal (at no extra cost), seminary update, and brief presentation by Dr. Robb Palmer.

At this season, we celebrate most of all our great salvation through Jesus Christ and the opportunity Evangelical has to develop servant leaders for transformational ministry in a broken and complex world. We are gratified and honored by your partnership in this vital mission!



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

Phone: 717-866-7581
E-mail:
eccenter@eccenter.com

We're on the Web
www.eccenter.com

We've attached calendars for May, June and July and will attach subsequent calendars in the future issues so you can keep up-to-date with what is happening in the EC denomination. These calendars are also available on the EC website

www.eccenter.com.

If there is an event you would like to have included on the calendar please contact Brenda at blong@eccenter.com or call 717-866-7581.



News from Global Ministries

The VBS project for 2014 will be to raise monies for the Youth Camping program in Liberia. The monies raised will go towards training equipment which will include: generators, computers, video, beds, mattresses and bedding, in addition to giving each child a Bible. The children are trained through quizzing, videos, games, and visual aids. 5-minute VBS lessons are now posted on our website (www.eccenter.com).



Kitty Miller is relocating from Thailand to the USA for her next assignment with Wycliffe. Kitty will be living in the Allentown, PA area as of May 1st, and her tentative plans are to serve as a recruiter or on home staff with Wycliffe.

Please pray for Rev. Nobuo Abe and the delegation traveling from Japan to the National Conference sessions held at Messiah College May 28-30. Yoriyoshi and Emiko Abe will be coordinating the activities of the delegation while they are here in the USA. Rev. Nobuo Abe will be speaking at the morning worship services at Trinity EC Church, Lititz on the Sunday following National Conference.



Congratulations to Yoriyoshi Abe who will be graduating from Evangelical Seminary on May 9, 2014! Yoriyoshi and his wife Emiko will be returning to Japan this summer to serve the EC Church of Japan in church planting.

memorial

 DAY


May 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 National Day of Prayer Spring Spruce-Up Twin Pines	2 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	3 Leadership 101— PRC—Mohn's Hill EC, Reading and Winnebago EC, IL
4 Day of prayer for Church Planting	5	6	7	8	9 ETS Commencement	10 Leadership 101—PRC— Bethesda EC, Reeds- ville and Lakeside EC, Transfer
11 MOTHER'S DAY	12	13 StoneRidge Retirement Living Board Mtg.	14	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due	16	17 Leadership 101—PRC—Christ EC, Allentown
				FOR LADIES ONLY—Twin Pines		
18	19	20	21	22 ETS Golf Tournament	23	24
25	26 MEMORIAL DAY Church Center closed	27	28	29 ASCENSION DAY	30	31
			NATIONAL CONFERENCE—Messiah College			

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

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

June 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	2	3	4	5	6 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	7 Summer Celebration/50th Anniversary Activities—Twin Pines
8 PENTECOST Student Aid Offering	9 Leadership Commission Mtg	10 Evangelism & Discipleship Commission Mtg. Church Planting Commission Mtg.	11	12	13	14
15 FATHER'S DAY	16 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due Estimated Tax due	17	18 Benefits Employee Seminar, Lenhartsville	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

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

Medical/Insurance/Pension Payments to:
 Benefits Corporation
 100 W. Park Ave.
 Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate Church—3rd Quarter/Pastor)

Student Aid Offering to:
 E.C. Church
 100 W. Park Ave.
 Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate Student Aid Offering)

July 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY Church Center closed	5
6 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	7	8	9 Church Health Commission Mtg.	10	11	12
			WALDHEIM CAMPMEEING			
13	14	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due Benefit Corp Mtg	16	17	18	19
					HERNDON CAMPMEEING	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			HERNDON CAMPMEEING			
27	28	29	30	31		
			ROSEDALE CAMPMEEING (through Aug 3)			

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

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

Manna Fund to:
Benefits Corporation
100 W. Park Ave.
Myerstown, PA 17067
(designate Manna Fund)