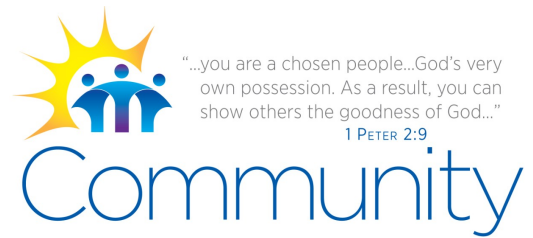


EC Leader



MAY 2015

From the Bishop

May is the month for National Conference! That means that my days are filled with overseeing the end of stationing, the finalization of all the reports, working on the agenda, and writing the Episcopal Address. This year, in addition to all the “normal” things we do at Conference, I’ve been spending large amounts of time on the amendments to the *Discipline*, the change recommended by the Benefits Corporation, and the Covenant Implementation Team proposal which is the result of the Covenant adopted during last year’s National Conference.

I could write about each of those business items here; but instead I’d like to focus on our Conference theme—COMMUNITY. That one word can be interpreted in a number of ways and will be during our days at National Conference.

The local church is a community of believers; it’s not just “Jesus and me” - it’s “Jesus and us.” The New Testament describes the local church as a community of believers who do life together. Somewhere along

the line too many American congregations have become a collection of individuals. I pray our congregations will be more heart-to-heart focused as we care, grow, and serve with one another.

I believe there is also to be community in the denomination. It is no accident that “unity” is a part of *community*. The EC *Discipline* states, we are a connectional system “...surrendering self-sufficiency and autonomy to join together in love. Embracing our common *Discipline* and our common purpose—to know Christ and make Him known.” May all of our districts experience a greater sense of brotherhood and new levels of cooperation.

A third aspect of community is being in community with the community around us. The Bible describes the community of believers as being incarnational. For too long the strategy of the church has been to get the people “out there” to come “in here”. History has proven that doesn’t work, and worse, it’s not biblical. We are to be the community of God out in our communities.

We are also a global

community. There is no doubt that there are differences in the various international conferences of the Evangelical Congregational Church, like cultural distinctions. But what we celebrate is not organizational unity—it is unity in Christ. We are partners in a global community endeavoring to make disciples of all nations. Let’s celebrate that!

As we come together to do some of the administrative and organizational work of the denomination and the days after; may we always remember our Savior’s prayer for community—“*I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.*” (John 17:21 NLT)

In Christ’s service,



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Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise



1. Be in prayer for the sessions of National Conference which will be held at the end of May. Please use the special Prayer Guide that was distributed in late April.
2. Pray for the Lord's clear leading as the members of Conference vote on amendments, and the proposals from the Benefits Corporation and the Covenant Implementation Team.
3. Ask for the Lord's blessing on the graduates from Evangelical Seminary as they move into areas of ministry all around the world.
4. Continue to ask the Lord to guide and protect Christian brothers and sisters all around the world who are undergoing persecution.
5. Pray for the leaders of our camping ministries as they finalize plans for the busy summer camping season.
6. Thank the Lord for mothers on Mother's Day! (May 10—Don't forget to get a card; flowers are nice too!)
7. Praise the Lord that we can publically gather with other followers of Jesus on the annual National Day of Prayer, May 7 to pray for our country; those in federal, state and local government as well as those serving in our courts.
8. Thank God for men and women who serve in our country's armed forces and pray for the families of those who are remembered on Memorial Day.
9. Join me in praising the Lord for the strength and safety he has provided me during a very busy spring season.
10. Praise God for the joy and blessing of grandchildren! They bring joy and laughter to our hearts and home.

Evangelical Theological Seminary

A Time of Celebration!

Commencement 2015

We *celebrate* on Friday evening, May 8, as 29 of our awesome students receive their degrees! After two or more years of research, reading, writing, and attending classes, they now move forward on the path God has laid out for them. Please keep each one of these new alums in your prayers.



Seminary Dinner at National Conference

On Wednesday, May 27, many pastors, lay delegates and guests will gather for a special dinner at National Conference to *celebrate* the ministry of Evangelical Seminary. This year we will have a

unique look at the David A. Dorsey Museum of Biblical Archaeology AND have the opportunity to meet the Seminary's newest faculty members: Philip and Sarah (Dorsey) Bollinger. Please join us for a delicious dinner and an interesting and informative program!

Golf, Anyone?

Evangelical Seminary's 30th Annual Golf Tournament is scheduled for Thursday, May 21. Because we are *celebrating* this special anniversary, there will be some new and exciting prizes! For a great day on the links, put May 21 on your calendar now!



Returning pastor revives stalled restoration effort



In January Rev. Mark Meister and three parishioners decided to take on the project of remodeling the Bethany EC Church in Sunbury. A core group of four-to-five people worked more than 500 hours since, 8 hours a day, five days a week. Materials had been purchased back in 2010, but no work had been done. They had to spend about \$200 on nails and hammers and other equipment. About \$300 of the materials we needed had already been bought in 2010, were collecting dust and, with the donation of carpeting and paint from other parishioners, the refurbished sanctuary was ready for Easter services.

One of the challenges they faced was doing repairs in a very cold church—there was no heating system. They had to use propane heaters. Rev. Meister hopes to start a fundraising campaign soon for about \$30,000 to buy an adequate heating system. To that, he'd like to add another \$10,000 to \$20,000 to make the church wheelchair accessible.

Rev. Meister served the Bethany Church from 2001 to 2007 when a personal family tragedy led to a seven-year sabbatical. When he left there were approximately 60 to 70 regular parishioners. That number fell to 12 when he started back again as pastor in January.

They now have 25. At one time they had a vibrant youth ministry of 20 to 30 kids. The plan is to contact those who used to hang out at the lighthouse café, which was located in this building.

Right now the church almost looks like the original church did. This church has been on this street corner since 1904.



/ MISSIO ALLIANCE
NORTH AMERICAN GATHERING

BEING TRULY HUMAN: RE-IMAGINING THE RESURRECTIONAL LIFE

The Cross is Not Enough. While obviously of profound significance, the cross seems to have usurped the resurrection as the unique centerpiece of Christian faith, practice, and even how we understand the nature of God's salvation. Yet, as Paul said, "If Christ had not been raised our faith is in vain." The resurrection is not only the true center of the Christian faith, but it signals God's initiative in the renewing of creation. The resurrection both embodies and empowers the destiny of God's people as divine image-bearers from now to forever.

Could it be that restoring the resurrection of the Son of God to its rightful place is exactly what the people of God need to give witness to the true gospel in the 21st century?

Could it be that pressing into the significance of the resurrection for the mission of God gives us new angles into understanding both our human identity and ecclesial witness amidst many of the questions and challenges of our day?

You are invited to join a wide array of church leaders for this gathering in the Alfred Street Church, Alexandria, Virginia, May 7-9, to imagine anew what it means to be "raised with Christ," for the sake of the gospel, and the sake of your own life.

For more information and to register go to their website www.missioalliance.org.

Building Up The Church, One Shoebox at a Time

More than 80,000 churches across the United States are involved in packing gifts for Operation Christmas Child. There are just as many churches worldwide handing them out. We rejoice to hear how God is using shoebox gifts and The Greatest Journey around the world to grow congregations, strengthen evangelistic outreach, and even plant new churches.



lia. On one island, 500 children gathered at a town church for The Greatest Journey lessons and then returned to their villages to share their faith. As a result, four new churches were established, drawing new believers from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. One church leader explained the evangelistic strategy: “Win one child, win the family, and then build a church.”

MOLDOVA is the poorest country in Europe and still influenced by Soviet communism. Even today, many families do not celebrate Christmas. Yet public schools welcome our church partners to hand out shoebox gifts, talk about Jesus, and teach The Greatest Journey. At one village school, Pastor Andrei Ciobanu said, “This is the beginning of a new church.”

Over 70 villages in southern Moldova don’t have Protestant churches. “Our goal is to get to these villages and share the Gospel,” Pastor Andrei said. “Operation Christmas Child provides a big opportunity.”

FIJI is an island nation in the South Pacific where Operation Christmas Child has delivered over 300,000 shoeboxes, many of them packed in Austra-

NEPAL is predominantly Hindu. Dhan Raj and his wife Sarmila are Christians who open their home daily to serve as a house church reaching out to children living on the streets of Hathmandu. They provide meals, showers, and literacy lessons, while teaching these children about Jesus. “Operation Christmas Child is our greatest tool,” said Dhan Raj. “When we take gifts, they accept us.” They have been able to minister to over 700 children who might never visit a church otherwise.

In one country in northern Africa we can’t name for security reasons, our partners have been able to plant 19 churches over the past three years through a strategic outreach that starts with shoebox gifts.

News from Global Ministries

Nepal EC Church Leaders visit USA:

Rev. Janga and his wife Mercy have been granted visas and will be visiting with us May 20 -31, 2015. Rev. Janga and Mercy will arrive in the USA in Chicago to interact with our Illinois congregations May 20-24 and then travel to Pennsylvania to meet with the GMC India/Nepal Committee and to participate in the National Conference sessions at Messiah College May 27-29. Janga will be the speaker for the GMC luncheon at National Conference on Thursday, May 28th. Following National Conference Janga and Mercy will present the work in Nepal at Grace EC, Schuylkill Haven on Sunday morning, May 31 and at St. John’s EC, Steelstown at 7:00 pm that evening.



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 1.33 to 1.49 which resulted in a 3% 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. Two and three years ago there was an increase in workers compensation claims that are affecting the workers compensation rates in the current year. When 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. We are hoping to see a decrease in the modification factor for next year. 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.

Please contact Dave King or Kevin Henry with any questions.

Kevin Henry, Controller
khenry@eccenter.com

Dave King, Benefits Administrator
dking@eccenter.com

UPDATE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE: Rev. Janga called Randy Sizemore on Sunday, April 26th. At that time he had contact with the pastors and found that our churches were okay. There was still great concern about the after shocks so many people, including Janga's family and the orphan boys of Mercy Home were living and sleeping outside. Please pray for all involved. Many will be effected directly and indirectly by this disaster. Please pray that Janga and Mercy will still be able to travel to the USA to visit with us May 20 - June 1.

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.



"...you are a chosen people...God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God..."

1 PETER 2:9

Community

REMINDER:

The 2015 National Conference Prayer Guide was distributed to each church.

Please use it and pray everyday for National Conference decisions and participants!



National Conference

Church Center Summer hours
starting July 3rd until
September 8th....

Open regular hours 8-4
Monday thru Thursday
CLOSED Fridays

May 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church	2 Delaware Region Pre -Conference Mtg. Reedsville
3 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	4	5	6	7 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER Finance Comm. Mtg.	8 ETS Commencement	9
10 MOTHER'S DAY	11	12 StoneRidge Retirement Liv- ing Board Mtg. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Women's Only Twin Pines Retreat</div>	13	14 Ascension Day Evangelical Semi- nary Board Mtg.	15 Church Pension Contribution Due Health Insurance Premium Due	16
17	18	19	20	21 ETS Golf Tournament	22	23
24 PENTECOST	25 MEMORIAL DAY Church Center closed	26	27	28	29	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 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 Church Planting Commission Mtg.	3	4	5 Day of Prayer for the EC Church	6 Summer Celebration Twin Pines
7 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Student Aid Offering	15 Church Pension <u>Contribution</u> <u>due</u> Health Insurance <u>Premium due</u> Estimated Tax due	16 Evangelism & Discipleship Commission Mtg.	17	18	19	20
21 FATHER'S DAY	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 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 Church Ctr. Closed Day of Prayer for the E C Church	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY
5 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	6	7	8 Church Health Commission Mtg.	9	10 Church Ctr. Closed	11
		WALDHEIM BIBLE STUDY				
12	13	14	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Due	16	17 Church Ctr. Closed	18 Berks District Mtg.
					HERNDON CAMPMEETING	
19	20	21 Benefits Corp. Mtg.	22	23	24 Church Ctr. Closed	25
			HERNDON CAMPMEETING			
26	27	28	29	30	31 Church Ctr. Closed	
	HERNDON CAMPMEETING		ROSEDALE CAMPMEETING (through Aug 2)			

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

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

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