



NOVEMBER 2014



**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

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## From the Bishop

**W**elcome to November! I'm not sure where the year has gone but the calendar leaves no doubt—we are officially near the end of another year. November has a lot of special dates: the end of archery season, bear season, Pennsylvania rifle season, my birthday, and, of course Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is traditionally the day our culture has set aside to express thanks for all the stuff we have, and we have a lot of "stuff". I recently drove into a friend's neighborhood and wondered why there were so many cars filling the driveways and parked in the street. It appeared that someone or multiple families were having a party. My friend commented that it always looks that way; the cars have been evicted from the garage because everyone uses the garage to store all their "stuff." That's not the worst of it; only in America do we have a "you-store-it" industry where we pay someone to provide space for all the "stuff" we never use but don't want to get rid of.

I have developed a strange relationship with "stuff" as I've gotten older. In many respects I have all the "stuff" I need. If I discover something I think I need badly enough, I am at the stage of life that I can go out and buy it. That is a source of frustration to Gloria and my children when it comes to my birthday and Christmas, but that's a whole other discussion. Another advantage of getting older (I seem to be looking for more of those every year) is the ability to allow one of the grandchildren to say a prayer before we eat a meal. During one

of these prayers it struck me that that child wasn't thanking God for any of their "stuff". Instead, they were thanking the Lord for all the people in their life. What an interesting and insightful commentary on life—one that we as adults can take note of. We all know it; but how often do we remember that life is not made up of our possessions, but rather the people, the relationships, that are important to us?

I'm not saying that we shouldn't be thankful to the Lord for all the "stuff" we have, but let's spend more time focusing on what's really important: the people he has brought into our life. I have been talking a lot about discipleship this year based on our National Conference theme CONNECT. Paul wrote, "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 NLT) Discipleship isn't a program; it doesn't happen in a vacuum, it occurs in relationships, in community. So this Thanksgiving season thank the Lord for those who have invested their lives in you. Thank the Lord for the people you have been able to get to know, those individuals you have helped to grow in faith. And while you're at it, share your appreciation with them personally.

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zoya".

## Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

1. Please continue to pray for the work of the Covenant Implementation Team as they study and prepare recommendations on how we can implement the Covenant into the daily life and work of our denomination.
2. Pray for the staff of Evangelical Seminary as they meet with potential students about the new Master of Arts in Ministry (MAM) degree program which will be launched in September 2015.
3. Join with me in praying for our dear brothers and sisters in the Evangelical Congregational Church of Liberia as they deal with the horrors of Ebola. Pray that they will be protected and the ministry of the Gospel would be able to continue.
4. Pray for the two nominating committees that are at work preparing for elections: Gordy Lewis is completing his first term as Susquehanna Region Conference Minister and I am approaching the end of my first term as Bishop. Both of us are eligible for re-election.
5. Ask the Lord to clearly lead as I begin to work on the theme and schedule for National Conference 2015. this will be an important conference as we work on amendments to the *Discipline*, receive a report from the Covenant Implementation Team, and hold the election of Bishop.
6. Thank God for safety in our travels to and from Japan. Randy & Carla Sizemore, Pat Strain, and Gloria and I had a great trip (always delayed but mostly smooth flights) and wonderful times of fellowship and ministry with out brothers and sisters in Japan.
7. Praise the Lord for the good reports and testimonies I have been hearing of churches who have show their appreciation for their pastor(s) during the month of October. And it's still not too late if you forgot!
8. Thank the Lord for the people he has brought into your life; both those who have impacted your life and the people you have been able to touch with the grace of God.
9. Praise God for the wonderful ordination services I participated in this fall: pastors Nathan Kennedy and Ken Ogden, and parish nurse Jackie Iatesta. God is at work calling people into his service and they are responding. PTL!
10. Thank God for his continued blessing and protection as I travel around the conference preaching and speaking. Thank the Lord too for Gloria's ability to travel with me most week-ends.



There will be a special meeting of the **Susquehanna Region pastors and lay delegates to elect a Conference Minister on Saturday, January 24, 2015** beginning promptly at 10:00 AM. We will hold the meeting in one of the Susquehanna Region churches and a detailed announcement will be made in December. Members of the National Conference from the Susquehanna Region must be present in order to cast a ballot. While only those members of Conference from the Susquehanna Region can cast a ballot, we call on the entire EC family to join in prayer for the Lord's leading as we approach this important day in the life of our church. Please be in prayer for the Nominating Committee, chaired by Rev. Sterling Trimmer, as they carry out their responsibility to seek candidates, conduct interviews and prepare the ballot.

**The 2015 Social Security COLA is 1.7%.**

## News from StoneRidge Retirement Living



### StoneRidge Retirement Living has Deficiency Free Survey

This is a big accomplishment for a retirement community. For those of you unfamiliar with this rating, here is some background. In 2008 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services derived a set of quality ratings for each nursing home that participates in Medicare or Medicaid. This is called the “star” rating system. This system helps residents and their families understand assessment of nursing home equality, making meaningful distinctions between high and low performing nursing homes.

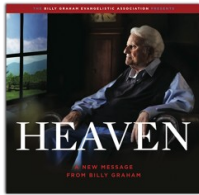
At the end of August, both locations of StoneRidge Retirement Living, having had their annual “full

health survey to determine if the facility meets the requirements to participate in the federal certification and licensure programs were awarded a 5 Star Rating. The result of the survey “revealed that no evidence of deficient practices was identified.” This is a very important finding for the StoneRidge communities and something that is recommendable for the staff.

Congratulations to the staff for being vigilant to make sure regulations are being followed. A celebration was awarded to the staff for their hard work in making this come about.

## My Hope 2014

Last year many of our congregations joined with Billy Graham in the *My Hope* campaign to reach our communities with the Gospel. This year Billy Graham is asking local churches to participate in another church-centered outreach.



God has put your church in a unique position of influence in your community and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association wants to serve our churches in the calling to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. This November the Association will release the film *Heaven*, a free new church resource. *My Hope* is a prayer-focused initiative—and a free resource—to help you reach out in love and take the Gospel to your community. This November you can show *Heaven* that combines powerful testimonies with a never-before-seen message from Billy Graham.

There are four simple steps you and your church can take:

1. Plan: Set a date to show *Heaven* on or around November 7.
2. Prepare: Write down the names of people you will commit to pray for daily and challenge others to do the same.
3. Watch: Show the film and bring the people you’ve been praying for. Invite them to put their faith in Jesus as Savior.
4. Disciple: Use your own materials or free BGEA resources to help new believer grow in faith.

Watch a how-to video and order your copy of *Heaven* along with other resources at [www.MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org](http://www.MyHopeWithBillyGraham.org)

## News from Evangelical

The theme for the 2014 Friends of Evangelical Banquet was *Affirming Our Roots., Expanding Our Shoots.* We began the evening mentioning some dear people who were strong and steady “roots” in the early days of the Seminary: the late Dr. David A. Dorsey, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament (1978-2013); Dr. Terry M. Heisey, Professor of Bibliography (1978-2014); and Dr. William S. Sailer, Professor of Systematic Theology (1963-1991). Dr. Kirby Keller, Professor of Pastoral Ministry (1976-2007) and President (1993-2004), gave the opening prayer. After hearing from two students share the impact the Seminary is having on their lives and ministries and listening to a thought-provoking message on “The Prodigal” from Dr. Kyle Strobel, Dr. Blair talked about challenges facing the Seminary, but also shared with excitement about the new program offerings that are in process. Through these new programs of study and through our students and graduates, Evangelical continues to grow new “shoots” with the hope that more and more people will deepen their own spiritual “roots” so that Christ will be glorified.

The 2015 Banquet will be held on October 16.  
Hold the date!

The Center for Lifelong Learning in collaboration with StoneRidge Retirement Community and Melivora Group will present a seminar, *Gifts of Aging:*



*Honoring the Legacy of Our Elders*” on November 6, 2014 at StoneRidge: Theatre on the Main at Poplar Run in Myerstown. For more information and to register, visit our website: [www.evangelical.edu/lifelonglearning](http://www.evangelical.edu/lifelonglearning).

On November 10, Chris Smith, author of *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*, will be speaking at Acorn Farms in Mount Joy. The event is co-sponsored by Evangelical Seminary and the Emerging Scholar’s Network of Intervarsity. There is no cost for alumni, but there is a \$15.00 charge for their guests. You may register online at [www.evangelical.edu/chris-smith](http://www.evangelical.edu/chris-smith) or contact Marsha at 717-866-5775.



Dr. Amos Yong, Professor of Theology and Mission at Fuller Seminary, will be the speaker for our Ritter-Moyer Lecture on November 11, 2014. He will speak on the subject “Renewing Evangelicalism: Contributions from the Pentecostal Movement.” More information is available on our website, [www.evangelical.edu/lifelonglearning](http://www.evangelical.edu/lifelonglearning).

You're Invited to

### “A CONVERSATION ABOUT PREACHING”

*How to Communicate in a Non-communicative Environment*

with Dr. Haddon Robinson  
& Dr. Torrey Robinson

Ensured to be a rich and challenging morning with Haddon and Torrey Robinson as they explore what it means to communicate God’s Word in today’s culture and church.

You will receive practical insights on how to be a more effective preacher, and you’ll be invited to engage in a question and answer session with one of America’s leading preachers.

**Monday, November 10th**

9:00 am—12:00 pm (lunch included)

At Grace Community Church

212 Peach Bottom Road, Willow Street, PA

Registration cost is \$25.00 for the workshop lunch; \$15.00 for the workshop only.

To register, please call or email Grace Community Church at 717-464-5333/[brandi@gccws.net](mailto:brandi@gccws.net)

This information is also available on-line at [www.gccws.net](http://www.gccws.net)  
Checks may be sent to Grace Community Church, 212 Peach Bottom Road, Willow Street, PA 17584.

## Bishop's Speaking Schedule

The Bishop is planning his preaching/speaking calendar for 2015. If you are interested in having Bishop Hill speak at your church, now is the best time to contact Church Center.

No church is too big or too small for him to schedule a Sunday but it is first come-first serve and you need to invite him. So as you plan your congregation's 2015 church service schedule see when it would be good to have the bishop come preach. He enjoys meeting new friends, is a pretty good preacher, and is even willing to wear socks and a tie if necessary.

If you'd like to schedule a date please email your requested date(s) to his Administrative Assistant Jodi Earhart ([jeahart@eccenter.com](mailto:jeahart@eccenter.com)) and she will work with him in developing his schedule for 2015. He hopes to see you soon!



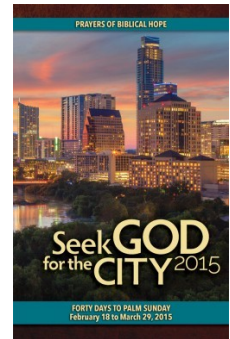

**blue  
Christmas**  
*a service of comfort and hope*

Sunday, December 7, 2014 - 4 pm  
Community Evangelical Church  
51 Green Valley Road, Sinking Spring, PA 19608

*Speaker: Rev. Kirk Marks*

Snow Date:  
Dec. 14 - 4 PM

*Seek God for the City* is designed to unite and focus prayer through the 40 days (February 18 through March 29, 2015) leading to Palm Sunday. God does not need our prayers to act. But He does invite us to experience the joy of co-working with Him as we pray together on behalf of others. *Seek God for the City 2015* invites God's people to pray along with what He is already doing and has promised He will do in our communities.



Instead of using prayer as a quick-fix procedure that gets quick results if performed correctly, the prayers in *Seek God for the City* encourages us to pray in ways of collaborating with God. Many thousands of churches will be praying through these prayers during the 40-day season. While the topics and scriptures are different from last year's edition, the desire that Christ be glorified is foundational in all the prayers.

In addition to the basic prayer guide booklet are three special versions: a Children's Guide available online at no cost, a Spanish translation, and a companion app for smart phones and tablets. The cost is just \$3.00 per booklet. This makes it possible to equip many in your church to join in this prayer effort. Check out the details at [www.waymakers.org](http://www.waymakers.org).

## Happy Thanksgiving



## News from Benefits Corporation

The rates charged to the churches for the active pastor's health insurance plan with Highmark will not be increasing effective January 1, 2015 and all benefit levels will remain the same. The premium from Highmark will increase by 7% or about \$63,000 for the year, however that increase will be absorbed by the excess funding in the HRA allowing premiums charged to churches to remain flat.

If you have incurred medical expenses above \$500 or prescriptions costs above \$1,800 you may be eligible for reimbursement of your out of pocket costs from the HRA. The HRA plan year ends on September 30, 2014 and all requests for reimbursements for the October 2013 -September 2014 plan year must be received by PrimePay, our HRA administrator, by December 29, 2014. If you need assistance with PrimePay please contact Dave King or me at the EC Church Center.

### Highmark Freedom Blue

The retiree Medicare supplemental plan, Highmark Freedom Blue, is increasing by \$23/month to \$211 per person per month, effective January 1, 2015, with no changes in coverage levels. The Medicare supplemental premium payment history of the EC retirees is a wonderful example of stewardship and legacy for the EC Church. Thank you to all the retirees for making the administration of the retiree health insurance plan much less burdensome than what it could be.

### Manna Fund

The Manna Fund was established to assist our retired clergy and surviving spouses with financial needs. The income limits to qualify for a Manna Fund distribution were recently changed to 150% of the federal poverty level as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The current Manna Fund income limits are \$17,505 for a single and \$22,595 for a couple. If you are aware of any of our retired clergy or surviving spouses that could benefit from a Manna Fund distribution please encourage them to complete an application for assistance. Manna Fund applications are mailed to retired clergy and surviving spouses in April and an application can also be received from the Benefits Administrator at the EC Church Center.

We are quickly approaching the end of the calendar year and we are encouraging all the local church pastors, treasurers or administrators to begin planning for the required year end reporting. Required reporting includes year end tax forms, giving statements, denomination annual reports and pastor compensation forms. A small amount of preparation and planning early in the process will save time and frustration late. **Due dates for year-end reporting:**

Due to EC Church Center—Compensation & Benefit Administrator

Pastor Salary Forms	1/15/2015 (copy to Conference Minister)
Annual Reports	1/26/2015

Form W-2 (pastors & church employees) 1/31/2015  
 Filed with Social Security 2/28/2015 (paper forms)  
 or 3/31/2015 (electronically)

Forms 1099-MISC (independent contractors) 1/31/2015  
 Filed with IRS 2/28/2015 (paper forms) or 3/31/2015 (electronically)

Pastors are employees of the local church and should receive a W-2 with federal, state and local taxes withheld from every paycheck.

Please contact Dave King, [dking@eccenter.com](mailto:dking@eccenter.com) or Kevin Henry, [khenry@eccenter.com](mailto:khenry@eccenter.com) with any questions or problems.

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 100 West Park Avenue  
 Myerstown, PA 17067

Phone: 717-866-7581

E-mail:

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

We're on the Web  
[www.eccenter.com](http://www.eccenter.com)

We've attached calendars for November and December 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](http://www.eccenter.com). If there is an event you would like to have included on the calendar please contact Brenda at [blong@eccenter.com](mailto:blong@eccenter.com) or call 717-866-7581.



# November 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 Day of Prayer for Church Planting	3	4	5	6	7 Day of Prayer for The EC Church	1 8
9	10 VETERAN'S DAY	11	12 Church Health Commission Mtg.	13	14 Berks District Mtg.—Mohnton	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due
16 HERITAGE SUNDAY	17	18 StoneRidge Retirement Village Bd. Mtg.	19	20	21	22
23 THANKSGIVING SUNDAY Thank Offering (Voluntary)	24	25	26	27 THANKSGIVING DAY Church Center closed	28 Church Center closed	29
30 FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT						

**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  
(designate Church—4th Quarter/Pastor)

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

# December 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Second Sunday in Advent Day of Prayer for Church Planting	8	9 Church Planting Commission Mtg.	10	11	12 12-14 Supervisory Retreat	13
14 Third Sunday in Advent	15 Church Pension Contribution due Health Insurance Premium due	16	17 Church Center Christmas Party— closed afternoon	18	19	20
21 Fourth Sunday in Advent Christmas Missions Offering	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE Church Center Closed	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Church Center closed	26 Church Center closed	27
28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve Church Center closed			

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