



From the desk of Bishop Bruce Hill

Do you ever think there are days when life just stinks? Maybe an entire year that stinks? Our kids used to say, "it goes from bad to worse to worser."

Job, in the Old Testament, understood those kinds of times all too well. In one day, Job lost just about everything. You know what it's like: it's a normal day until the phone rings or a text comes.

Job says, "How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble! We blossom like a flower and then wither. Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear." [Job 14:1-2] That statement is followed by a list of frustrations, observations, and questions. Job gets to the point in Job 14:14, when he asks a question that every human being struggles with when we wrestle with issues of life and death: "Can the dead live again?" This is a question that has haunted humanity throughout history.

So how do we answer Job's question? Some just say 'no;' this life is your one shot, enjoy it, do what you want. As Isaiah quotes them, "Let's feast and drink for tomorrow we die!" [Isaiah 22:13] Other religions say maybe you do live again: you come back as an animal or something. Most people just say, "that's an interesting question, I wonder..." so we get television shows about talking to dead people - maybe they have the answer.

Fast forward now to the first Easter morning - that is before anybody knew it was Easter. The gospel accounts tell us that a few faithful women went to the tomb to finish the embalming of Jesus' body. When the women got to the tomb, they discovered the guards were gone, the stone was moved, and the body was missing!

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From the desk....

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Luke tells us that, "two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes." [Luke 24:4] Then the men asked a searching question: "Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive." [Luke 24:5]

Suddenly, the question of death and life became an issue for these women. When we look at everything that happened on that first Easter Sunday morning from the angels' perspective, I'm sure what the women were doing seemed just kind of dumb. Think about the angels' question: why would you go to a tomb to see someone who is alive? You go to a tomb to visit a dead person, but not someone who's alive.

So how do we answer Job's question: "Can the dead live again?"

One word - Yes!

Jesus' resurrection is a statement that he is who he said he is. But Jesus' resurrection is more than just a display of his own power over death: it is the assurance that through faith in the living Savior, Jesus says, "you also will live." [John 14:19]

In Christ's Service,



*Why are you
looking among
the dead for
someone who is
ALIVE?*

Luke 24:5



National Conference 2021

The National Ministry Team (NMT) voted to hold a 3-day, in-person National Conference at Messiah University in Grantham, PA, May 26-28, 2021. This is a step in faith as we all continue to deal with the impact of the pandemic, but the NMT believed it was very important for us to meet together.

This National Conference will be different from our recent conferences for several reasons:

- We will elect the next Bishop to serve our denomination. His term will begin on July 1, 2022.
- We will vote on proposed amendments to our Discipline.
- Since we have not held Conference since 2019, we will need to catch up on many items of business.

If you are planning to attend NC2021, there are important changes you must be aware of before you register:

All registrations must be completed by May 1, 2021 - No Exceptions. We need an accurate count of attendees to select the correct room(s) to adhere to Messiah University's social distancing requirements and current indoor seating capacity as set by the PA Department of Health.

·Wearing a mask or face covering will be **mandatory** indoors. Masks will be required outdoors when 6ft. distancing cannot be maintained. Masks may be removed when eating or speaking on the floor of conference.

·Unregistered participants may not be seated. The chairs on the floor of the meeting room will be set by Messiah staff at the proper spacing requirements between people and are not to be moved. Exception - only same *household* family members may sit closer than 6ft. with chairs returned to set spacing following a session.

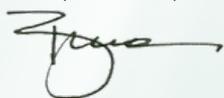
·All housing will be single occupancy, i.e., one person per dorm room or apartment, except for some *household* family members who may share a room. Bed linens, pillows and towels will **NOT** be provided by Messiah University.

·Dining seating will be restricted to a maximum of four people per table. Meals will be prepackaged or served by Messiah dining staff in "to go" containers. We understand the usual Messiah food selection and quality will be available at mealtimes.

This will also be a different National Conference this year with more than one area of inconvenience and inconsistencies in guidelines enforcement. Be aware that social distancing and masking rules will be inconsistently applied in different situations, i.e., multiple individuals can use the shared dorm bathrooms at one time, but we cannot share dorm rooms. While we recognize this may not make sense, they are the rules, and we'll all adhere to them regardless of inconsistencies. We are a guest on the campus of Messiah University, and we will follow their rules, thereby not causing conflict.

All Pastors and Lay Delegates should register for National Conference on our denomination's website: eccenter.com.

We hope to see you there!



Pre-Conference
Meeting Dates listed
on page 14.



The Bishop's Top Ten Prayer & Praise

- 1 JOIN ME IN PRAYING FOR THE LORD TO BLESS THE PLANNING OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE.
- 2 PRAY FOR THE CANDIDATES WHOSE NAMES ARE ON THE BALLOT FOR THE NEXT BISHOP OF THE EC CHURCH. PRAY, TOO, FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND CHURCH FAMILIES.
- 3 ASK THE LORD TO BLESS AND PROTECT ALL OUR CONGREGATIONS AS THEY CELEBRATE EASTER TOGETHER.
- 4 PRAY THAT THE LORD WOULD PROVIDE ENOUGH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR OUR CAMPING MINISTRIES THIS SUMMER.
- 5 ASK FOR THE LORD'S LEADING IN OUR INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES WHO CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC.
- 6 THANK THE LORD FOR SAFETY AS I TRAVELED TO ILLINOIS FOR TEN DAYS OF PREACHING AND VISITS IN MARCH.
- 7 PRAISE GOD THAT WE HAVE A RISEN SAVIOR WHO'S IN THE WORLD TODAY!
- 8 JOIN ME IN THANKING THE LORD FOR THE EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE WHO PROVIDES WISE COUNSEL AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO ME.
- 9 THANK GOD FOR THE GIFTED AND DEDICATED STAFF THAT SERVE OUR DENOMINATION: DISTRICT FIELD DIRECTORS, ASSOCIATES, AND CHURCH CENTER STAFF.
- 10 THANK THE LORD FOR ALL THE INDIVIDUALS WHO REMIND ME THAT THEY ARE PRAYING FOR ME. I DEPEND ON IT! (DON'T QUIT NOW.)

1 JOHN 2:3,5



Mark Your Calendars 2021 National Day of Prayer - May 6

Americans from all walks of life will gather on May 6th to lift up our country in prayer for the National Day of Prayer. Our nation has endured a year marked by tragedy and pain, but we know prayer has carried us through these days and the hand of God will move us into a brighter future. This year marks 70 years since Reverend Billy Graham stood on the capitol steps in February 1951 and called for congress and the president to establish a day of prayer. By April of that year, President Truman signed the legislation into public law. For seven decades, the efforts of the National Day of Prayer Task Force have mobilized Americans to observe the National Day of Prayer in all 50 states and in U.S. territories to pray for those who lead and those in need in our nation.

News from Executive Director

Due Dates

January 15

Annual Disability Premium

*If you have not already done so,
please mail to EC Center.*

April 15

Benefit Corporation Administrative Fee

Kevin Henry

Executive Director

khenry@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

David King

Benefits Administrator

dking@eccenter.com

717-866-7581

Worker's Compensation

Thanks to everyone for completing the Workers' Compensation forms in a timely fashion. The audit is currently in process and we hope to have a final bill soon from Church Mutual. We get questions from time to time on completing a Workers' Compensation claim. The process is not complicated, but it is confusing since claims are not filed often. Each church is responsible for filing their own claims at the time of the incident, or shortly thereafter. The easiest method is to use Church Mutual's online claim reporting portal: <https://www.churchmutual.com/72/Claims-Center>.

Fill out the claim form with the best information available. The employer is the local EC church. Each EC church is listed on the policy, and the policy number is 07-174436. Please call with any questions.

Churches not included in the denominational Workers' Compensation group policy are Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky churches; however, 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 coverage by July 1 of each year. Please submit proof of your Workers' Compensation coverage to:
EC Benefits, 100 W. Park Ave., Myerstown, PA 17067; or fax 717-866-7553 or email dking@eccenter.com.

Disability Premium / Benefit Corporation Administrative Fee

The annual disability premium was due January 15 and the Benefits Corporation Administrative Fee is due by April 15, 2020 (retirees are not subject to the administrative fee.) Both of these fees are listed in the Treasurer's Guide available on the EC website. Many have remitted the disability fee timely and a few have already submitted the administrative fee and we thank you for your diligence and hard work.

Ministry Funds Forms

Treasurers, please confirm that you are remitting your ministry fund payments on the correct monthly form. In 2021 the ministry fund percentage increased to 5.65%.

Pastoral Compensation Forms

To date, about 80% of Pastoral Compensation forms have been returned. Thanks to all the churches that have responded. We will be reminding non-compliant churches to complete and submit their Pastoral Compensation forms. Please save Dave King some work by submitting your pastoral compensation forms as soon as possible.

As always, feel free to reach out to Kevin Henry or Dave King at any time.

Treasurer's Update

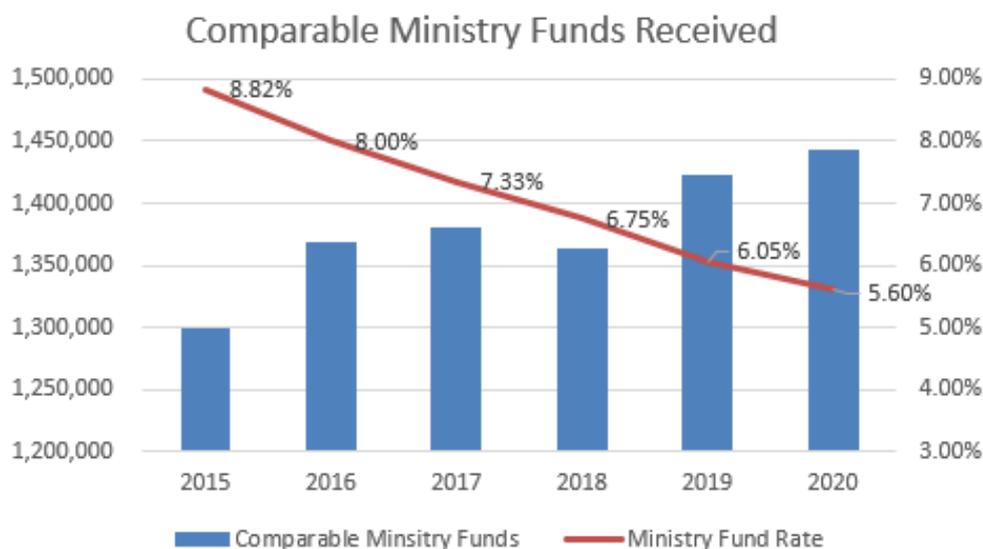
Calendar year 2020 was the last year of the five-year implementation of the Covenant and I would like to share some changes in collected ministry funds. In 2015 churches paid 8.82% of their income toward ministry funds that resulted in the denomination receiving slightly less than \$1,300,000. In 2020 churches paid 5.60% of their income in ministry funds and the denomination collected \$917,000 in ministry funds. From the reduction in ministry funds local EC churches have an additional \$383,000 each year to spend on ministry opportunities, pastor salaries and building improvements. A more amazing statistic is the calculated income growth experienced at local churches.

There are a lot of assumptions and details that can skew a close analysis of the results below, but generally church income growth was realized. Church income can be calculated by dividing the ministry fund rate by the amount of ministry funds collected; or, in other words, working backwards through the ministry fund payment calculation. In 2015 \$1,300,000 was paid in ministry funds with a ministry fund rate at 8.82% that calculates out to \$14,734,000 of church income used in the calculation of ministry funds. If the same calculation is performed using the 2020 5.60% ministry fund rate and \$917,000 collected, aggregate local church income would be \$16,369,000. Calculating local church income using collected ministry fund payments is not a precise analysis as there are many factors that can influence a local church's annual revenue, but a \$1,635,000 increase of local church income is noteworthy. A more amazing statistic is that this increase in local church income is from a net of seven (7) less churches that paid ministry funds in 2015 but not in 2020.

The graph below charts the increase in annual ministry funds compared to the decrease in the ministry fund rate. The left vertical axis is the comparable annual ministry funds collected. Comparable ministry funds equalizes the amount of ministry funds that would have been received in years 2016 to 2020 if the ministry fund rate did not change each year.

Not every church reported an increase in calculated revenues; some churches reported a larger increase than others and some churches were basically flat. The "why" this occurred is a much harder question to answer and most likely will have as many answers as there are EC churches. As we are celebrating God's faithfulness, we do not want to forget that the implementation of the Covenant caused financial pain on our retirees, our camping ministries, and Evangelical Seminary.

Please contact Kevin Henry, 717-628-2171, or khenry@eccenter.com, with any questions.



Kingdom Extension Community News

Coaching Toward a New Tomorrow

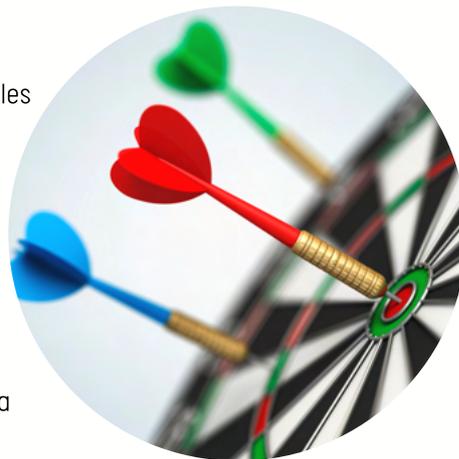
Great ideas sometimes need coaching support in order for you to hit the target. Coaching keeps you on task, enables you to play at the top of your game. Coaching enables you to achieve more. Let's talk!

The Kingdom Extension Community (KEC) would like to partner with you (pastor) or your leadership team or congregation to make sure your next great idea becomes your next ministry success.

The KEC would like to help pay for up to six months of coaching attached to training and a new ministry that is missional or Kingdom focused.

That is, we would like to pay for coaching designed to help you make use of new learning that moves you and your church family out of the building to develop a ministry not attached to what happens in your sanctuary.

What might that look like? A church plant. A dinner church. A fresh expression of church. This is about creating a ministry that didn't exist for people previously not reached. Interested? Let's talk. Contact Les Cool (717-951-8433 or revlescool@gmail.com).



Preparing New Leaders and Developing Your Team

Most days, you just need somebody to do that thing or to serve in that role. Why? The job must get done. Or at least, that's the theory. But the reality is that the right person in the right role for the right reason will not only get the job done; they will also thrive. That means they will continue to serve long after the job is done.

How do you know who is best for which role?

You start with helping your leaders, potential and existing, identify their spiritual gifts and personality. Add gift development, and they are ready to deploy into long-term ministry roles.

A Leadership Grip or Grip-Birkman workshop 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 one of these workshops might fit the needs of your church family, and when a workshop would fit your schedule.

KEC CONTACT

Rev. Les Cool / 717-951-8433 / revlescool@gmail.com



Kingdom Extension Community News

Small Talk and Witness!

Small talk! When was the last time small talk led to a more significant 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- or 3-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 that 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, and when a workshop would fit your schedule.



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 and when a workshop would fit your schedule.



KEC CONTACT

Rev. Les Cool / 717-951-8433 / revlescool@gmail.com

Global Ministries Community

Our Missionary Family News

- Missionary Speaking Engagements: With travel restrictions many plans for international missionaries to be on furlough in the states are tentative. But, many are very eager to share and speak - and are coming up with very creative ways to do so. Reach out directly to them or contact the GMC office for more information.

- College Campus Ministries: Many of our college campus ministries have encountered some decline in student engagement despite many campuses opening back up for in-person instruction this semester. Pray for encouragement for our EC missionaries serving college ministries and for fresh vision to encounter, engage, and disciple college students around the world despite current COVID-related restrictions and low student engagement.

"2020 was a strange year. I'm not sure if 2021 will be any different. But I am confident that God is the same today, yesterday, and forever. The Lord is not thwarted by a pandemic, elections, or social injustice. He never feels the uncertainty that we do. And He is more determined for the building of His Kingdom than we are. With that in mind would you pray with me for upcoming semesters?"

Cassie Wells, Disciple Makers, Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA.

-Continued prayer for travel:

"Currently, we just need this Covid-19 pandemic to find enough resolution to open up travel again. My video team is itching to move forward with several trips that were cancelled last year and a few others that were already in the planning phases before our travel was restricted." - Dan Moury, Wycliffe, Orlando, FL

-Staffing Needs:

"We do really need another nurse on staff as my co-worker will be retiring at the end of the year. We have 85 residents living here at AIM Retirement center. It would be ideal if the nurse has had overseas experience themselves." - Gloria Smethers, serving residents at the AIM Retirement Center, Minneola, FL

-Lausanne Church Planting Update & Praise Report:

Maasai chiefs saw God send them rain in response to their prayers.

Simba, a co-worker in the Lausanne Church planting network, was summoned by the Maasai tribal leaders to a meeting of the chiefs. He was then asked to start the meeting with prayer to his God. He had noticed the drought in the region and the effect it was having on cattle and farming. With a God-given boldness he asked all to stand and call out to the God of heaven for rain to fall that very day. Within hours God opened the skies and a torrential rain fell on the assembly. The chiefs, astounded by the power of Simba's God, responded by falling to their knees in the mud and rain.

God is showing his grace on the tribe of 2 million.

Pray that the whole tribe will come to Christ in what is known as a 'people's movement.'

-Ron Anderson, ECMI.



*Facilitating Mission Workers
Empowering National Churches
Engaging the Local Church*

Rev. Ted Rathman
GMC Associate

Dee Jaramillo
GMC Admin Assistant

ecglobal@eccenter.com
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Ministerial Development Community News



The Institute for Church Leadership (ICL)

Pastors, the ICL is a great way for the people in your congregation to deepen their faith. Plan for fall courses, Theology 1 and Theology 2!

More details coming soon. Also there is still time to register for the New Testament Survey course that begins on March 30, 2021. (see below)

Register and learn all about the Institute of Church Leadership at:
<https://evangelical.edu/institute-for-church-leadership/>

New Testament Survey

March 30 - May 11 on Tuesdays, 6:30 - 9:15 p.m.

This course will guide the student to explore the unifying message of the New Testament books, the central message of each book, and the underlying concerns of each New Testament author.

Attention will also be given to the background, setting, and major themes of the New Testament as a whole. The course will serve as a general introduction to this part of Scripture, and provide a list of suggested resources for further study.

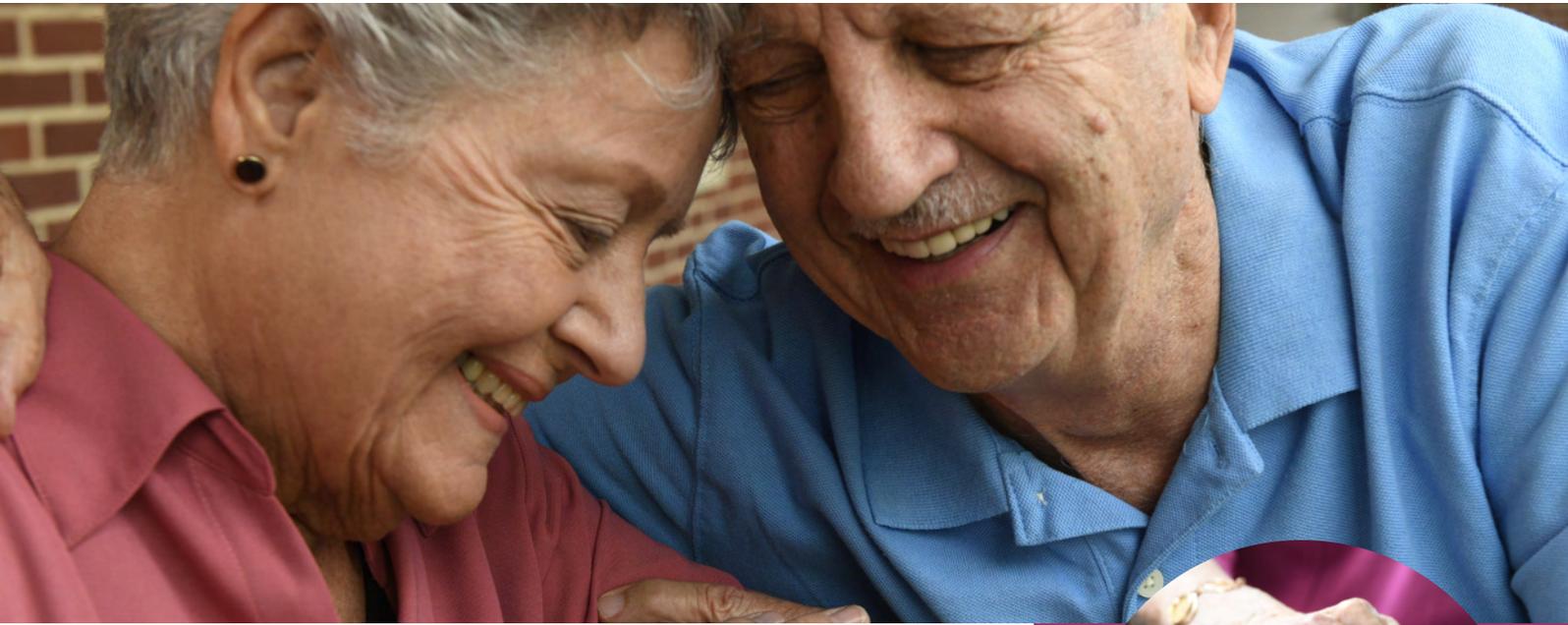
For more information on the Institute for Church Leadership contact:
Joel Kime / joel.kime@evangelical.edu

Rev. Jeff Byerly, MDC Associate
jgbyerly@eccenter.com

Calling
Credentials
Coaching
Education
Healthy Pastor

<https://mdc.eccenter.com>





*Thank you to the
members of the
Evangelical
Congregational Church
for your generous and
faithful gifts
to bless StoneRidge
residents.
Blessings
for 2021!*



STONERIDGE
RETIREMENT LIVING COMMUNITIES

CEO Steve Reiter and the leadership of StoneRidge Retirement Living Communities are grateful to Evangelical Congregational churches for their generous gifts for the Benevolent Care Fund and for the General Fund. In 2020, 68 churches made 77 gifts totaling, \$11,760.

The Benevolent Care Fund helps residents who have exhausted the means to pay in full for their care. In 2020, StoneRidge provided more than \$3.6 million dollars in Benevolent & Subsidized Care.

A nephew made a generous gift after his Aunt died. He shared, *"My aunt and uncle were wonderful people who helped my mother raise me and my siblings through some pretty difficult times. They never hesitated in sharing their home and resources. They were part of a great generation that put family and community first."*

The nephew continued, *"I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the staff at StoneRidge for taking such good care of my aunt and uncle for the years that they lived there. Nothing that I can contribute to your benevolent fund comes close to what my aunt and uncle gave to me."*

Thank you to the members of the Evangelical Congregational Church for your generous and faithful gifts to bless StoneRidge residents. Blessings for 2021!





Spring Happenings at Twin Pines Camp

Spring Fling.

Children's Retreat - April 23-25

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. Register by April 6 to receive a free t-shirt for each participant!



Spring Spruce Up - May 4-6

Volunteer during a mid-week to help the ministry "spruce-up" camp and prepare for summer ministry! Projects include both indoor and outdoor sprucing-up. There are always tasks for volunteers of any skill level!



For Ladies Only Retreat - May 11-13

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.



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

Plan a Retreat

As more and more areas of life are "opened," groups are starting to contact Twin Pines Camp to schedule retreats again. As such, dates which you might like to schedule a retreat for a group may be reserved already. Or, you had a retreat a certain weekend, and it could be reserved by another group soon.

If you want a retreat for select dates, please contact Twin Pines Camp soon to secure your dates. You may send an email to retreats@twinpines.org, or call 570-629-2411 and speak with Shawn to check on date availability.



**TWIN
PINES**

CAMP, CONFERENCE
& RETREAT CENTER

www.twinpines.org

APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church 100 W. Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave, Myerstown, PA 17067			1 MAUNDY THURSDAY	2 GOOD FRIDAY Church Center Closed <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	3
4 EASTER SUNDAY Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extensions White	5 Church Center Closed	6	7	8	9	10
11 White	12	13	14	15 Health Insurance Due	16	17 Camp ECCO OPEN UP Workday
18 White	19	20 StoneRidge Board Mtg. EC Leader deadline	21	22	23	24 Twin Pines Spring Fling: Children's Retreat
25 White Twin Pines Spring Fling: Children's Retreat	26	27	28	29	30	

MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Ministry Fund to: E.C. Church 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Insurance Payment to: Benefits Corporation 100 W. Park Ave. Myerstown, PA 17067	Mother's Day Offering to: StoneRidge Retirement Living 440 East Lincoln Ave Myerstown, PA 17067					1
2 <i>Day of Prayer for Kingdom Extension</i> White	3	4 Susquehanna Pre-Conference Mtg. @ Riech's	5	6 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER	7 <i>Day of Prayer for the E.C. Church</i>	8 Delaware Pre-Conference Mtg. @ Allentown, Christ	
9 MOTHER'S DAY <i>Mother's Day Offering</i> White	10	11 Susquehanna Pre-Conference Mtg. @ Mohn's Hill	12	13 ASCENSION DAY Delaware Pre-Conference Mtg. @ Sch. Haven	14 Health Insurance Due Evangelical Seminary Commencement	15 GLR. Pre-Conference Mtg. @ Lakeside/Dixon Bethel	
16 White	17	18	19	20 Evangelical Seminary Golf Tournament EC Leader deadline	21	22	
23 Red PENTECOST Day of Prayer for Episcopal Election	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30 White Camp ECCO Spring Retreat (Ages 18+)	31 MEMORIAL DAY Church Center Closed	NATIONAL CONFERENCE				Camp ECCO Spring Retreat (Ages 18+)	



Pre-Conference Meetings

Tuesday, May 4	Reich's EC Church, Marietta, PA	7:00 PM	
Saturday, May 8	Christ EC Church, Allentown, PA	9:00 AM	
Tuesday, May 11	Mohn's Hill EC Church, Reading, PA	7:00 PM	
Thursday, May 13	Grace EC Church, Schuylkill Haven, PA	7:00 PM	
Saturday, May 15	Bethel EC Church, Dixon, IL	9:00 AM (central)	
Saturday, May 15	Lakeside EC Church, Transfer, PA	10:00 AM (eastern)	

April 2021

EC LEADER

EC Center Staff and Associates

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Rev. Jeffrey Byerly - Ministerial Development: jgbyerly@bethesdaec.org
Rev. Leslie Cool - Kingdom Extension: revlescool@gmail.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



Contributors

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