

Stonemaker

Newsletter of Ebenezer Church

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IN OUR WILDEST DREAMS

Last January, Ebenezer began a process of self-reflection called appreciative inquiry. In the following months, the congregation was invited to sit down around tables and respond to a series of questions designed to elicit what is most impactful and meaningful at Ebenezer Church. Sixty such gatherings took place with 516 participants.

Based on the information we received from you, Pastor Mark and I have been working with a group of Ebenezer members to prayerfully discern where God is calling our congregation in the future. As you might imagine, it is both inspiring and humbling to dream about the amazing future of this congregation. Later this month, I'll share the results of these efforts with you in worship.

Part of the work of discerning where we will go, is understanding where we've been. The team I've been working with spent time learning about Ebenezer's past including traveling together to our old home place on Onville Road here in Stafford. As we prepare to share a vision for our future later this month, I wanted to journey a bit through Ebenezer's past.

Ebenezer Church began in 1856. A log structure housed the first worship services, and the congregation was often referred to as Woods Church. To begin the work of constructing a more permanent structure, the congregation hired an architect from Baltimore and even fired their own bricks in kilns erected near the building site. When the Civil War began in 1861, Ebenezer Church was pressed into service as well.

Serving at different times through the conflict as a field hospital and a shelter for soldiers and their horses, the building sustained great damage during the war. Soon after the war ended, a revival was held in Stafford. It united the community around repairing the shattered glass and bullet riddled walls Ebenezer sustained during the war.

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upcoming SERMON SERIES

SIMPLICITY

Many of us would claim our lives are so busy that joy is the furthest thing from our soul. God created us for more than this. Jesus said He came to give us abundant life. Most of us would settle for a quiet breath. We have often found ourselves slowed down by overcommitment to our jobs, anemic connections with our families, anxiety around everything and a lack of true communion with our Creator. Perhaps it is time to simplify our lives. This series will lead us toward the great work of returning to a simple life that has room for God, our families, and the growth of true joy found only in Christ.

CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE

Crazy Little Thing Called Love draws on the experience of thousands of real couples, powerful scriptures, and a God full of grace to strengthen and equip our deepest relationships. In this series, we'll examine relationships and marriage. It's a series for those who are married or were, for those who want to be married and those who don't, it's for the not yet married and those who could put on a clinic about love even now that their spouse has died. We'll be reminded that this covenant is missional as it grants the opportunity to love each other so profoundly that the world will believe God exists.



DREAMS *CONTINUED*

Late in the 19th and into the 20th Century, the work of this congregation continued. It is worth noting that this poor and rural congregation saw fit to give to those who suffered around the world. Over the last few years, Ebenezer has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to mission partners in Bo, Sierra Leone. But, our first connection with missionary work in Africa was through our young people. Beginning in 1915 our youth group, called the Epworth League, gave \$10.00 each year to a school in Africa.

In 1941, Ebenezer hosted its first Vacation Bible School in partnership with six other churches. By 1956 enrollment at VBS had grown to 75 students and 12 teachers. This legacy continues. Last year we welcomed over 500 students and worked with close to 200 volunteers to put on VBS.



Ebenezer existed at the Onville location for over 135 years. Then, in 1992, the congregation began to discern a call from God to move from their historic site to its current location at Embrey Mill. At the time the congregation made the move, the church averaged roughly 100 people in worship.

Just think about this for a moment. This historic church had witnessed the baptisms and funerals of saints for over a century. This is where people came to Christ. In that building people were married, received communion, and raised their children in the faith.

Yet, sensing God's call, they made the courageous decision to leave that place of familiarity and move into God's future. When Ebenezer came to Embrey Mill they arrived with 100 people. In 2018, we averaged over 1,100 adults in worship. It never ceases to amaze me how God works best when we step away from the comfortable and the familiar. This is part of our DNA at Ebenezer Church. Our story is one of faithful people, and an even more faithful God, who have worked together for over 150 years to build Christ's kingdom and transform lives both in Stafford and around the world.

As we share dreams later this month about the future of this congregation and community, I invite you to begin praying with me that God will continue to bless a people called Ebenezer. Pray that God will help us to live into our spiritual roots; like those who came before leaving us a legacy of uncomfortable, unsettled, fruitful faith, may God inspire us to be willing to do anything to reach the world for Christ.

- Rob Lough
Senior Pastor



EBENEZER CHURCH

Top: Ebenezer Lawn 2017, Bottom: Ebenezer Lawn 1981, Sunday School 1949, Sanctuary Visit 2018
Opposite Page: VBS 1941





HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Many of us will kick off 2019 with a New Year's resolution. The sad truth about resolutions is that according to Forbes, only 8% of us will achieve the goals we set. Obviously, we could use some help. If you are making a resolution to invest in your relationship with God, you may find these tips useful.

At times in our Christian walk, it may be difficult to know if we are walking with God or focusing on things of the world. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul guides us by providing a diagnostic tool for Christians to use to evaluate their lives. In Galatians 5:16-26, Paul compares "works of the flesh" and "fruits of the Spirit." When you are experiencing jealousy, hostility, strife, or envy, or dealing with issues of lust or anger, you may be more focused on things of the world and not God. When you are experiencing love, peace, joy, patience, and self-control, you are most likely aligned with the Spirit.

If you find yourself out of step with the Spirit, do not criticize yourself. Use this as an opportunity to identify an area of growth in your life. Engage in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, involvement in a Christian community (small group), or serving those in need. By doing this, you will take steps in growing into the person God created you to be, and make progress towards meeting your resolution.

- Keith Priest
Christian Counselor

SUPPORT GROUP SPOTLIGHT | DIVORCECARE

We had a chance to talk with Larry and Susan Anderson about the DivorceCare group they lead. Here's more about the group and why we're happy to offer this program at Ebenezer Church. A new session starts January 9. You can register at ebenezerumc.org/support-groups

TELL US ABOUT YOUR GROUP

DivorceCare is a 13-week, faith-based program for anyone going through or has gone through separation or divorce. The group meets on Wednesdays from 7:00 - 9:00 PM and is led by Larry and Susan Anderson. Each meeting includes a video seminar followed by support group discussion. Members also complete daily workbook assignments.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO JOIN YOUR GROUP?

If you've been through separation or divorce, it's like an emotional injury. We provide support, care and recovery. As Christians, we need to come alongside one another and provide support and love for people like Christ loved people in his time. We can't look down on anyone. We've been there ourselves. We're not there to judge. We provide love and support.

DESCRIBE YOUR GROUP'S PERSONALITY.

Each group takes on its own personality and becomes self-supporting. Some groups get together outside of class to go hiking or form walking groups. Others are less inclined to do that, but they're all cohesive and supportive.

HOW IS GOD WORKING IN YOUR GROUP?

You can see the change in people. At first, folks are nervous, anxious, and unsettled. A few short weeks later, they have peace and an idea of how to better deal with their situation.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO LEAD THIS GROUP?

Susan and I are both previously married, so we've experienced this ourselves. I'm also a DivorceCare graduate. I don't know how people who aren't in faith can get through something as devastating as divorce can be. A lot of people are very unsettled and don't know what to expect. We want to bring them to a place of peace and shine the light of Christ into the situation.

WHERE CAN I GO TO GET MORE INFORMATION?

The next session of DivorceCare begins January 9. Free child care is available. There is a \$15 fee for the workbook.

For details on the program, visit www.divorcecare.org To register, go to ebenezerumc.org/support-groups

- Jackie Brence
Volunteer Writer

MISSION POSSIBLE | 4TH SATURDAY MEALS

On the fourth Saturday of every month, a group of Ebenezer Church volunteers meet at Fredericksburg United Methodist Church to prepare and serve a meal to 100 guests. Ebenezer's 4th Saturday Meals, part of Micah Ministries' community meal program, ensures that individuals and families in Fredericksburg have a hot, healthy meal.

The program leaders provide everything for a delicious dinner. In November, the menu included Italian chicken, potatoes and green beans, and bread and desserts provided by Panera Bread. The first shift of volunteers set up the dining area to serve up to seventy-two at a time and prepare the food in the commercial style kitchen. Once the setup is complete, volunteers welcome diners from the Fredericksburg community. The second shift of Ebenezer volunteers serve the meal restaurant style, clean, and close up for the night.

While the meal is appreciated, it is the community of guests that really makes a difference. Program leader Paul Wade said that he has been able to get to know some of the 4th Saturday Meal clients. "Everyone has a story" he said. Paul pointed out that diners are from all across the community, including individuals, seniors, and families with young children – many are Micah's homeless clients.

While some focus on providing meals for our under-resourced neighbors during Thanksgiving and Christmas, 4th Saturday Meals provides the chance for volunteers to give the same service throughout the year. As can be imagined, serving the monthly meal for 100 people has a lot of moving pieces.

The team can always use volunteers, including individuals, families, and groups, who can spare a couple hours to set up, clean, or cook. No special skills are required, only a willingness to help those in our local area, and an openness to listen and share stories.

More information about the 4th Saturday Meals can be found on the Ebenezer website at ebenezerumc.org/volunteer-in-the-community

- Greg Bodge
Volunteer Writer

SOCK COLLECTION



Donate plain white crew socks to Micah Ministries for the area's chronically homeless.

DROP OFF DONATIONS IN THE GYM THROUGH JANUARY



January EVENTS

EVENT REGISTRATION

To learn more about our upcoming events or to register to attend, please visit ebenezerumc.org/events

GROUPS & CLASSES

Share life together and grow in your faith.

- Small groups
- Short-term Classes
- Recreation Groups
- Support Groups
- Special Interest Group
- Kids & Student Groups

Free Kid's Care is available for all groups who meet on campus.

Visit ebenezerumc.org/groups then click Groups/Classes to learn more.

FIND US ONLINE

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SOCK DRIVE ALL MONTH - DROP OFF IN GYM

6

GAME DAY

EMPTY NESTERS & OLDER ADULTS

START HERE BEGINS

9

DIVORCECARE BEGINS

15

LUNCH & LEARN

EMPTY NESTERS & OLDER ADULTS

WOMEN'S RETREAT REGISTRATION

20

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR LANCASTER

EMPTY NESTERS & OLDER ADULTS

21

MLK DAY OF SERVICE

SPIRIT DAY AT THE MANTLE

26

LEADER LIFTER

SMALL GROUP LEADER TRAINING

27

CONFIRMATION CLASSES BEGIN

WEEKLY & MONTHLY RECURRING EVENTS

4th Saturday Meals -

January 26, February 24
1:00PM & 3:15PM

Nar Anon Meetings -

Wednesdays 7:00PM

Grief Share Meetings -

Wednesdays 7:00PM

Evening Exercise Classes -

Mondays and Thursdays
5:00 - 6:00PM

Basketball -

Sundays 7:00PM

Community Meals -

January 6, February 3
9:00AM

Brain Builders -

Monday and Wednesdays
3:30PM

Gaming Club -

January 20, February 17
12:00PM

February EVENTS

SERVE FOOD DRIVE ALL MONTH - DROP OFF IN GYM

2 **BOUNCING FEBRUARY**
1920'S MYSTERY PARTY
EMPTY NEST AND OLDER ADULTS

8 **PRESCHOOL INFO DAY**

9 **DADDY DAUGHTER DANCE**
NOBLE WARRIORS EVENT REGISTRATION

11 **SPIRIT DAY AT BUFFALO WILD WINGS**

15 **AXIS WINTER REATREAT BEGINS**
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

19 **LUNCH & LEARN**
EMPTY NESTERS & OLDER ADULTS

23 **STEP FUNLAND TRIP**
4TH & 5TH GRADERS

MARCH SNEAK PEAK

2 **COMMUNION CLASS**

3 **TNT IGNITE**

6 **ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE**
PANCAKE SUPPER

SERVICE TIMES

Traditional | 8:15 AM

Contemporary | 9:45 AM, 11:15 AM,
6:00 PM

Live Online | 11:15

Watch at live.ebenezerumc.org

KIDZCARE

Available for infants and toddlers during Sunday Services and for infants, toddlers, and school age children during most events and studies.

*Check-in at the KidzRock Kiosk.
Please note, during the week, KidzCare is closed when Stafford County Schools are closed.*

KIDZROCK SUNDAY SCHOOL

Available during all Sunday Services for children age 3 through 5th Grade.

Check-in at the KidzRock Kiosk and classes in the Ministry Center.

TNT MIDDLE SCHOOL

Sundays | 9:45 -11:00 AM
Meet in Room B01

AXIS HIGH SCHOOL

Wednesday | 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Specific Studies
Sunday | 9:45 -11:00 AM
Meet in Room 216

EMPTY NEST AND OLDER ADULTS: IS IT FOR ME?

Recently some members of the Empty Nest and Older Adult group here, at Ebenezer Church, shared their thoughts on why this new group appeals to them. There is something that appeals to everyone.

ACTIVITIES

Before being an empty nester, you had to find activities that appealed to the whole family, and then getting everyone to agree on an outing could really tax your patience and negotiating skills. Empty nesters enjoy new freedom to sample different activities. This group at Ebenezer Church offers a real variety of activities.

Here's a sample of the things we've done in the past year:

- **The Arts** – Riverside dinner theater, Sight and Sound show "Jesus" in Lancaster, PA
- **Sports** – Washington Nationals and Washington Capitals games
- **Travel and Tourism** – The Biltmore in Asheville, NC
- **Local Interest** – Downtown Fredericksburg

- **Socializing** – Supper Club, Summer Luau, Christmas House Tour
- **Guest Speakers** - TRICARE Update, History of Stafford with Jane Conner, History of Chocolate with Joyce White
- **2019 Planned Activities** – The fun continues with an overnight trip to Lancaster, PA, a 1920's Mystery Party, and guest speakers on Forgetfulness, Suspense Writing, and even an Introduction to Aikido. Visit our website for more information, ebenezerumc.org/empty-nesters

The Empty Nest and Older Adult group provides a pool of potential new friends in the same stage of life with similar interests and availability. The group "model" allows you the flexibility to attend as few, or as many, as your time and interest dictate. At any given event, the group represents a mix of familiar and new faces. You can and will make new friends every time you come out.

If you think this group might be for you, it is. Contact Vicki Stones at vstones@ebenezerumc.org or call her at 540.659.1349 to get connected. We look forward to having you.

COMPANIONSHIP

With retirement, we often lose contact with work friends. Settling into retirement can also mean the loss of friends whose work transfers them away. Empty nesters new to the area lack a circle of friends. As the nest empties, we lose the close and daily contact we had with our children who have grown and moved.

FACEBOOK GROUP

Join the Empty Nesters & Older Adults Facebook Group to get updates and information about upcoming events. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/EmptyNestOlderAdults/

- Bill Huggins
Volunteer Writer



New to Ebenezer? New to
your faith? Want to connect?
Start here.

Three-week discussion series starting
JANUARY 6, 11:15 AM
Register at ebenezerumc.org/events

LOOKING FORWARD

Do you ever catch yourself looking forward and not living in the moment? So often we say things like, "I can't wait until my baby starts sleeping through the night" or a child says, "I can't wait to ride the big yellow bus and go to school!" A teen says, "I will soon be old enough to drive." The grown up says, "I can't wait until I get that new job or retire." I just can't wait until _____.

You get the idea. Although there is nothing wrong with planning and looking forward to things in our lives, we have a tendency of looking ahead and forgetting to live in the

moment we have right now. As I approach a new decade of life, I find myself wanting to savor now, more and more.

I still have plans for things I want to do in the future, but it is easier to just live in the moment and enjoy what is happening around me.

Maybe instead of always looking forward we should all try to live in the now just a little bit more. If your baby isn't sleeping through the night, just sit and hold them and look at their precious face. Pray for them, kiss them, and wish you had a million more nights like this (well, maybe just one or two!)

You can't stop your children from wanting to get older, but you can encourage them to enjoy the growing up process. Treasure watching them grow and try new things. Play games with them, draw with chalk on the driveway, or go down the slide at the park. Let them help you make cookies and don't mind the mess or wish they were older so they did a better job.

Go ahead and plan for your future, but in the meantime, take what you have right now and thank God for blessing you with today.

Happy New Year!

- Shari Parsons

Director, Children's Ministries



Renew

APRIL 6-7
WOMEN'S RETREAT

THE OLD IS GONE. THE NEW IS HERE.
CORINTHIANS 5:17

REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 15
EBENEZERUMC.ORG/EVENTS



I love this time of year, both for reflecting on the past year and looking forward to what's coming. And there is something coming that we are so excited to finally tell you about! We're announcing Renew 2019, a women's retreat at the gorgeous Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond April 6-7.

We often find ourselves rushing through life as our responsibilities dictate. It's a chance to slow down, be refreshed by God's word and Holy Spirit, and be in fellowship with one another. A dedicated committee of women have been planning this event since early last year; laying the groundwork and planting the seeds for what we hope and pray will be a transforming weekend for you. We hope you will join us!

- Aimee Zappa
Retreat Team Lead



CHILDREN AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Top: Live Nativity, Bottom: Preschool Christmas Party, Pastor Rob at Brain Builders, TNT Minute To Win It



Student MINISTRY

**YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT FOR MY PATH.
-PSALM 119:105**

An interesting part of this verse is that there were no flashlights back then - so when people heard the word "lamp," they knew the light only lit the small area that was immediately around them. In order for a lamp to light your path you have to step forward with the light to see the path.

This verse promises us that His word is THE light! Jesus is the word - Jesus is the light! We need to step forward with Jesus. Trusting that He is with us every step of the way. But we need to take the steps to stay with Him and look forward. In the coming months we have opportunities for students to take the next step on their path - we want to see students walking with the light!

CONFIRMATION

This class is designed for 7th and 8th graders to help them take steps to make their faith their own. It's our responsibility as parents to raise our children in faith, but at some point, our children need to think about what they believe, not just what we've taught them to believe.

Confirmation helps students wrestle with questions like; What does it mean to really live for Him? What does our church believe? Do I believe what they do? Students are paired with adult mentors, have a day retreat, a weekend retreat, and weekly classes. Classes kick off January 27. Register by going to ebenezerumc.org/events

HIGH SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT

Sometimes it takes stepping out of your normal routine to remember the path you need to be on. High School Students have a chance to get away and do just that by joining us on the Winter Retreat February 15 - 17. Sometimes the next step is getting out of your comfort zone to let Him grow you. Take that step and know Jesus is with you as you go on the Winter Retreat! Don't miss the early bird deadline for the discount. Register by going to ebenezerumc.org/axis

SPONSORS NEEDED: AXIS MISSION TRIP

It's that time of year again. We are getting ready for the summer mission trip and we need your help! Our students will be going to Birmingham, AL to work with children, homeless, elderly, and others in need and they need sponsors to help cover the cost of the trip.

Mission trip attendees are asking for a donation of \$25.00 (you can give more if you'd like) to offset costs. Your donation is tax deductible. After the mission trip, the students will host a celebration party to thank you for helping make this trip possible and to share what the Lord has done in their lives. If you are interested in sponsoring someone and haven't been contacted by a student, please contact Michelle Paquette at mpaquette@ebenezerumc.org.

**HIGH SCHOOL
WINTER RETREAT**
February 15 - 17

GET RECHARGED

EARLY BIRD \$90 | UNTIL JAN. 13
STANDARD \$110 | JAN. 13 - FEB. 1

REGISTER AT EBENEZERUMC.ORG/AXIS

CONFIRMATION FOR 7TH & 8TH GRADERS

*LEARN WITH US. GROW TOGETHER.
CONFIRM YOUR FAITH.*



**Classes Start January 27
Retreat March 22-24**

Visit ebenezerumc.org/events

All money raised supports our youth mission trip.
Additional sponsorship opportunities will be available.

**PANCAKE
SUPPER**

Wednesday, March 6
5:30-7:00 PM



161 Embrey Mill Road
Stafford, Virginia 22554

Change of address service requested

Non-Profit Organization
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SIMPLICITY.

NEW SERMON SERIES STARTING DECEMBER 30