



NAZARETH

Nov - Dec 2018

Stonemaker

Newsletter of Ebenezer Church

JERUSALEM
EIN KAREM
BETHLEHEM

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GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD: THE JOURNEY

She was from a weed of a town. That's what Nazareth means. He grew up playing a version of cops and robbers, but because he was from Bethlehem, David's city, the game was about a great military leader who would conquer all Israel's enemies. Perhaps instead of cops and robbers, they called it Messiahs and Romans.

He was born two miles outside of a major global metropolis; she lived close to a tiny lake, literally the backwaters of the Roman world. With God's help, they found one another, and the world was changed forever. Mary and Joseph are the most famous parents in history, and their child is the most important man to ever live.

We've all heard the tale before. She was frightened but faithful. He was angry but accepting. Many of us have heard the story over, and over, and over again. Sometimes, however, I wonder if we've missed one of the most important players in the tale: The Journey.

They could have taken one of two routes from Nazareth to Bethlehem. One was longer and avoided the loathed Samaritans. The other was shorter but created cultural complications as it led through an unclean land. Is the fact that Mary and Joseph walked through Samaria part of the reason their son felt comfortable making a Samaritan the hero in his most famous story? Is this why he called a Samaritan woman by Joseph's well to become one of the first evangelists?

As Mary and Joseph journeyed, they walked within sight of a town called Tel Megiddo. It was the crossroads of the ancient world; the place where the silk road from the east terminated into the Mediterranean. If you turned left, you went to Africa. Turn right and you end up in Europe. This was the most important intersection in the world. Therefore, it was much fought over. In fact, its name became synonymous with strife; prophecies predict it will be the place of the last battle in the war to end all wars. Tel Megiddo is known today as Armageddon. On this journey, Mary carried the Prince of Peace past terminus of war.

continued pg. 3

upcoming SERMON SERIES

ENOUGH

The American Dream, a concept written into the DNA of our collective psyche, teaches that we need more: more money, more land, more square footage in our homes, and more stuff to put there. As we find ourselves deeply rooted in the third millennia, many are beginning to rethink this dream; many are beginning to see that the American Dream is in fact a nightmare. In this series we'll talk about the value of generosity over greed. We'll learn new strategies for saying, "ENOUGH!"

THE JOURNEY

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem is among the most well-known pilgrimages in history. But, the journey wasn't simply about getting from point A to point B. As Mary and Joseph traveled, they bore witness to the past even as she was pregnant with hope for the future. This series will focus on Nazareth, Bethlehem, and the journey in between. The land will help to tell the story of the people and of God's greatest act of salvation, Jesus.



a note from Pastor Mark

Anticipation makes the heart grow fonder. When my wife Melissa and I first met she was living in Virginia and I was living in Corpus Christi, Texas. We spent hours talking on the phone getting to know each other. While it can be difficult to be in a long distance relationship, we discovered that having a date on the calendar of the next time we would see each other gave us something to prepare for and get excited about.

The word Advent means "to come." In the church it's the 4 weeks we dedicate preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. While our relationship with God can sometimes feel like a long distance relationship, even though it isn't because God is with us, the art of anticipation can help our heart grow fonder. One of the many things I love about this church is the family Advent activity. This take home activity will help prepare your family to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. I hope you'll join me and my family in this great opportunity that in the anticipation of what this day means for us, our hearts might grow in our love for our Savior.

FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY STARTING NOVEMBER 25

During Advent, Pastors Rob and Mark will take us on a Journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and Ebenezer Church has your passport. Stop in the Gym beginning November 25 to pick one up and participate in this year's family advent activity.

Each week of advent, you and your family will visit a person or a place relevant to Mary and Joseph's trip. Bring your passport to church each Sunday to collect stamps from each stop and receive the next week's activity. Fill your passport with all four stamps for advent and fill your heart with anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Journey wasn't simply about getting from point A to point B. As Mary and Joseph traveled, they bore witness to the past even as she was pregnant with hope for the future.

In the same way, our life journeys are not simply about getting from here to there, from school to retirement, from cradle to grave. Like Mary and Joseph, we bear witness to the blessing and bondage of

times gone by as we carry the light and hope of Jesus to the world.

I want to invite you to join with us this December as we discover the unknown character in the greatest story ever told: The Journey.

Together, we'll discover the richness and meaning hidden in the story of Jesus while uncovering the beauty and

possibility of our own journey.

Join us in December for our sermon series THE JOURNEY.

**- Rob Lough
Senior Pastor**

ANGEL TREE

On November 16, Ebenezer Church kicks off one of our most popular outreach ministries. Because of your generosity, we continue to increase the number of families we serve each year. Last year, you donated more than 900 gifts.

The Angel Tree is one of Ebenezer Church's longest standing ministries, but did you know...

- The Angel Tree program as it exists today grew out of a successful United Methodist Women's ministry
- Through our partnership with Social Services, we are one of a few organizations that requests wish lists for large families (five or more people)
- Angel Tree ministry provides gifts to children and senior citizens
- Each child on the list requests 4 gifts; two toys and two articles of clothing
- Each senior citizen requests 2 gifts
- Every family referred from Social Services and each senior on our Angel Tree list receives a box of food to feed their family for two weeks
- Small groups can adopt a family

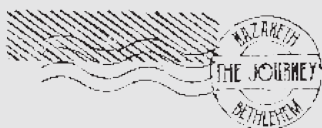
- We support families referred from Social Services, McKendree Manor senior apartments, local schools, and Hampton Oaks Brain Builder program. Additionally, we provide gifts for S.E.R.V.E.'s teen gift program.
- Gifts come in all shapes and sizes, we've received skateboards wrapped with the wheels exposed and a lacrosse stick wrapped, well..., in the shape of a lacrosse stick. It's fun to shop for the unique requests.

This year Angel Tree gift and food tags will be available on November 16 and all gifts must be returned by December 9. The process is simple; 1. Grab a gift or food tag from a tree in the Lobby, 2. Shop and wrap (gifts only), 3. Return all items (gifts and food) to the church on or before the 9th of December.

If you'd like to volunteer, we need folks who can help pack and load boxes of food. Interested? Send a message to Tina DeBoeser at tdeboeser@ebenezerumc.org

Thank you for helping make this a special Christmas for some of our neighbors.

**- Michelle Joyner
Communications Director**



counselor's INSIGHT



HOW DO I COPE DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON WHEN I DON'T FEEL LIKE CELEBRATING?

The weeks between Thanksgiving and the New Year can be challenging for many people. For some, this may be the first Christmas after the loss of a loved one. Some harbor bad memories that revisit them during this time of year. Others feel stressed because of the increased demands on their time.

How do we prevent, or limit, the effects of these emotions? Not surprisingly, as a Christian Counselor, I recommend spending time with God. Spend time in His Word reflecting on the amazing gift He has given us in Jesus.

Extra holiday activities can negatively impact the time we spend with God and on our health. That can lead to stress and negative thinking. Healthy eating, proper exercise, and sleep are especially important when you are stressed. Next, prioritize what functions or events are important to you and your family. We want to accept every invitation, but that can leave us physically and emotionally exhausted. It is okay to say "No."

If you are mourning a loss, give yourself grace. Each of us has a unique journey recovering from loss. Healing takes time. Don't isolate yourself thinking you may be a burden to those around you. This is counter to God's guidance for being invested in a community. Please spend time with your small group and others during this period. Allow them to help you through this time. It is through community that we grow and heal.

- Keith Priest
Christian Counselor

SMALL GROUP SPOTLIGHT | FUEL FOR MEN

TELL US ABOUT YOUR GROUP

Fuel for Men is a weekly Bible study for men ages 20-70 who meet most every Tuesday for a meal and fellowship at 7:00 pm, which is followed by an hour-long Bible (video) study, group discussion, and prayers. We meet on the 2nd floor of the Ministry Center and our average attendance is between 15 to 25 men.

WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING?

We just completed our last series on How to Read the Bible, which corresponded to the Bible 101 sermon series, and we started an 8-week study by Andy Stanley called Starting Point. This study examines how our faith journeys begin and how our faith as an adult compares to the faith we had as a child.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR GROUP?

We've developed a very brotherly bond and trust for one another. We always take time to pray for each other's needs and the needs of Ebenezer. We ask any new members to respect our only ground rule of protecting the privacy of all discussions. Whatever is said in the room, stays in the room.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO JOIN YOUR GROUP?

It's all about growing our relationships, both with the Lord and with each other. We're a great group for a man who wants to grow in his faith and develop friendships with other Ebenezer men.



A few of the men of Fuel for Men

WHAT ONE WORD DESCRIBES YOUR GROUP?

Enlightening. Our Bible studies always seem to uncover a truth or thought-provoking aspect of scripture we can apply to our lives. We don't always agree on the meaning of any particular story, passage, or question but the dialog is always respectful and spiritually inspired. Indeed, the Holy Spirit seems to be mysteriously engaged!

HOW IS GOD WORKING IN YOUR GROUP?

Like many others, several men in our group are dealing with very painful or tragic situations such as an accident, illness, or the death of a friend or family member. Others have struggled with strained relationships at home or difficult circumstances in the workplace. Our Bible studies have a way of placing these challenges into perspective. Group members always seem to step up for each other whether through prayer or just by being a confidant for someone who is suffering.

DESCRIBE YOUR GROUP'S PERSONALITY.

Fuel for Men is an amazing and diverse (intergenerational) group of Christians who love God and their neighbor and who have a desire to study the gospel, grow their faith, and glorify God. Anyone is welcome to join our group that literally and spiritually fuels men's souls!

MISSION POSSIBLE | MICAH MINISTRIES

In 2016, Ebenezer Church established the Cloe Ministry Fund from an estate gift of Francis and Mary Stuart Cloe, long-time members of our congregation. Out of this fund, Micah Ministries received a \$175k grant to build a commercial kitchen. The new space allowed Micah to open the Community Café, serving reasonably priced meals to anyone in the community and free meals to homeless clients.

The Café also function as a job training center for Micah's clients. Several times a year, a new class enters the training program to learn the hard skills of working in a kitchen and the soft skills of working in a structured environment with others. Our colleagues at Micah shared the following success story about one of their first graduates.

A young man showed up at Micah shortly after his mom passed away. He was a senior in high school and had been her primary caregiver. When she died he was left without a place to live and no support system. On the street, he quickly picked up life skills from others who had been homeless longer. He found a job and an apartment, but the unresolved grief from his mother's death kept sneaking up on him. His lack of coping skills often left him struggling to keep his job and pay his bills.

He was back on the street this year, but this time, Micah had a new opportunity for him. He could learn to work in a restaurant. He was part of the inaugural class at the new Community Café. He attended weekly empowerment classes, practiced his culinary skills, and earned a Servesafe certificate and a job reference. Under the supervision of the cafe manager, he sharpened his skills, but he also gained a friend and mentor. He was pushed to be better, and his mentor helped him believe in himself.

Today, he works full-time at a local restaurant and is looking for an apartment. Now, he volunteers in the cafe because it is his community. The Community Café remains a safe place where he belongs, people believe in him, he contributes, and he has meaningful relationships. He says he feels whole for the first time in a very long while.

Learn more at micahfredericksburg.org/community-cafe

- Tina DeBoeser
Director, Missions and Outreach



You can support the café by volunteering or simply enjoying lunch. The Café is open for lunch and operates on a 'pay what you can' system. Next time you are in downtown Fredericksburg, stop in and see Micah's progress in action.

**1016 CAROLINE STREET,
FREDERICKSBURG, VA 22401
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM**



November 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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1

GAME DAY

EMPTY NEST AND OLDER ADULTS

2

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

ONE NIGHT WOMEN'S EVENT

3

GLOW NIGHT

4TH AND 5TH GRADE

4

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PICNIC

START HERE DISCUSSION SERIES BEGINS

16

ANGEL TREE GIFT AND FOOD LIST AVAILABLE

25

FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY

WEEKLY & MONTHLY RECURRING EVENTS

4th Saturday Meals

November 23, December 28
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 -

November 2, December 1
9:00AM

Brain Builders -

Monday and Wednesdays
3:30PM

Gaming Club -

November 17, December 15
12:00PM

December EVENTS

2 FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY
TNT IGNITE - CHRISTMAS MINUTE TO WIN IT
LIVE NATIVITY

8 CHRISTMAS HOUSE TOUR
EMPTY NEST AND OLDER ADULTS

9 FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY
ANGEL TREE GIFTS AND FOOD DUE

11 UMW COOKIE EXCHANGE

13 CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN WILLIAMSBURG
EMPTY NEST AND OLDER ADULTS

15 STAFFORD CHRISTMAS PARADE

16 FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY

23 FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY

24 CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE
2:00 PM, 4:00 PM, 6:00 PM, 8:00 PM

30 SUNDAY SCHOOL PAJAMA DAY

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

Christmas

FAMILY TRADITIONS



One Night Women's Event The Struggle is Real

An incredible night of fun, laughter,
worship, and practical teaching.

Friday, November 2
6:00 - 9:30 PM

Tickets \$10

A Portion of the proceeds benefits Stafford Food Security

Register ebenezerumc.org/events



NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

The next meeting of the United Methodist Women takes place November 13 at 7:00 PM in Room 215. We will have a short meeting and election of new officers. You must be a registered member to vote. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

Christmas traditions form a mosaic of favorite music, places, people, and worship. For every widely-shared Christmas custom, we each have our own little detours from the Christmas mainstream. For example...

Christmas dinner: General Tsao's Chicken? With three small girls, the Huggins adopted the custom of dining out on Christmas day. The girls got to show off their new clothes and the Christmas day cooking chore thankfully fell on other shoulders. Unfortunately in France, where the Air Force had sent Bill in 1986, virtually everything shut down for the holiday...except the Chinese restaurants, so for two years, the Christmas table featured General Tsao's Chicken or beef and broccoli. Ever since, when Christmas found them in a new place and unfamiliar with local options, they found a Chinese restaurant and thanked God for General Tsao.

An Empty Nest Christmas? Well, It's Complicated. In the hope of big family Christmases, Vicki Stones asked her kids to come together at the same time for Christmas. Their now grown and married children come every other year in accordance with the Iron Law of the "In-law Trade-Off," and Vicki reports "... it's wonderful..." However, never having needed a Plan B before, the Stones first off-year Christmas came as a shock. A last-minute Christmas dinner invitation from sympathetic in-laws rescued them. Wiser now as they again face an in-law tradeoff year, their plan includes a few

days in Key West, then Christmas dinner with Vicki's mother.

Putting Christ in Christmas. When Sally Shaidhammer's two sons (21 & 22) were young, she would set up the creche each year but leave out the baby Jesus and the three wise men. Throughout Advent, the three wise men would "travel" around the house with Sally moving them to a new spot each day. It was the boys' job to find them. On Christmas day, the wise men would arrive at the manger and baby Jesus would be there, literally putting Christ in Christmas.

Christmas Compromise. For Lori Meyers and her family, Christmas features church, family, and food. By tradition, Christmas Eve always includes a candlelight service... and chili for dinner. A simple dinner conserves the cook's energy for Christmas morning and the grander meal to follow. The grown Meyers boys now look forward to candlelight and chili when they come home for the holiday.

Opening a sole present on Christmas Eve (to ease anticipation and help two little guys get to sleep), the church's Angel Tree (embodying both giving and receiving) and the warm San Diego sun on a winter holiday years ago all have offered the Meyers' the chance to keep Christmas through a little creative compromise.

- Vicki Stones

Director of Empty Nest & Older Adults
Ministry

HEALTH AND FITNESS FOR EMPTY NEST & OLDER ADULTS

MONDAY WALKS

Join us on Mondays at 9:30 AM at the church to walk. Send Vicki an email at vstones@ebenezerumc.org, if interested.

ACTIVE OLDER ADULTS (AOA) EXERCISE CLASS

Each month we offer a variety of classes in the basement of the Ministry Center (B01) on Tuesdays and Fridays, 10:30 - 11:30 AM. All exercises can be modified to do from a chair, so no excuses! No matter where you are with your health, you can do this! You can check out the schedule at facebook.com/groups/EmptyNestOlderAdults



CREATING CHRISTMAS MEMORIES WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Christmas is a very busy time of year filled with parties, decorating, baking, shopping, those famous family photos, and so much more! While we all want to participate in these fun activities, we also need time to stop and focus on what we want our children to remember about Christmas when they are grown and on their own.

Will they remember going to the soccer team party and eating cookies? Will they remember what gift they gave to whom? Or, will they look back on their holidays in your home and fondly remember something that you did with them each year that helped them focus on what Christmas is truly about – the birth of Jesus who came to earth to give us a relationship with God?

It's easy to choose something to do that gets everyone in the family to focus on Jesus. Perhaps it's setting out a nativity each year and letting your child add pieces to help tell the story of Christmas during the weeks that lead up to Christmas. You can let them place Baby

Jesus in the manger on Christmas day! You can light an advent candle each week and share a scripture to prepare your family for Jesus' birth. Another idea is to read the Christmas story from the Bible on Christmas Eve before they go to bed. And, one of every child's favorites is to bake a birthday cake for Jesus and sing "Happy Birthday" to him! If you are not sure where to start, take advantage of the Family Advent Activity Ebenezer offers every year.

When our sons were little, one tradition we had was to use an Advent Calendar to count down the days until Christmas and then on Christmas Eve, we read Luke 2: 1 – 20 and lit our German pyramid candles and watched the nativity characters spin around. Our sons still like to light the pyramid candles at Christmas if they are home!

Whatever you choose, make it your family's special memory and treasure it year after year!

- Shari Parsons

Director, Children's Ministries



A poster for a '2019 HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP Info Meeting'. The background is a map of the United States. The title '2019 HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP' is in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, 'Info Meeting' is written in a large, white, cursive font. The dates 'November 11 & 12' are in a large, white, cursive font. Below the dates, the times and locations are listed: '12:30 PM B01 (YOUTH ROOM)' and '7:00 PM B01 (YOUTH ROOM)'. To the right, the text 'Mandatory for anyone thinking about attending.' is written in white, sans-serif font. Below that, the contact information 'Contact Michelle, mpaquette@ebenezerumc.org, if you cannot attend.' is written in white, sans-serif font.



STUDENT MINISTRY OUTINGS

Top: AXIS Fall Retreat, Bottom: TNT Overnight Adventure Trip



Student GAMING CLUB

Welcome to the Gaming Club where noble warriors battle mighty dragons and powerful wizards explore long-forgotten tombs. Ebenezer Student Ministries has put a spin on Dungeons and Dragons, the popular game in which players take on the roles of heroes on a quest. This new group allows middle and high school students to learn and play the game in a safe environment with caring adults and get together with other young people in our community. We emphasize teamwork, creativity, group interaction, and most of all, fun!

If you are a player, you make all the decisions for your character, from what abilities your character has to the type of weapon she carries. Playing a character, however, is more than just following the rules in a book. You also decide your character's personality. Is he a noble knight, set on vanquishing a powerful evil, or is he a conniving rogue who cares more about gold than glory? The choice is up to you!

Your character joins a group to set out on dangerous adventures. Helping them tell this story is the Game Master (Youth Ministry adult) who decides what threats the characters face and what sorts of rewards they earn for succeeding at their quest. Think of it as a cooperative storytelling game, where the players play the protagonists and the Game Master acts as the narrator, controlling the rest of the world.

If your middle or high school student has expressed an interest in D&D or loves to read fantasy-based books

like the Harry Potter, Percy Jackson, or "Lord of the Rings" series, then this group is for them. We have gifted writers, story-tellers, and computer gamers in the group and a good mix of boys and girls from sixth grade to seniors. We will teach you the basics of the game and loan you what you need to play. Come join the party!

We also have adventure-based board games for the younger set. These games provide a sense of adventure and fun while teaching strategic thinking and resource management skills. If your teen enjoys gaming, here's your chance to bring the rest of the family and try this or other games out.

If you are an adult interested in being a Game Master for our group, let us know! We prefer to keep tables to four or five players. Having multiple leaders allows us to have several tables so everyone has a chance to participate.

Gaming Club meets the third Saturday of each month in Room 202 of the Ministry Center from 12:00 – 4:00 PM. No experience or special equipment is needed, just bring a pencil, paper, and your imagination.





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