

STONEMAKER

Newsletter of Ebenezer Church



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A NOTE FROM PASTOR EMILY

What a blessing to be at Ebenezer!

It has been a joy to meet you in worship. Pastor Jeff and I hope to meet more and more of you in person. I look forward to learning your names and hearing your stories. I am honored to share life and faith with you as your new lead pastor and sister in Christ. It will be a privilege to serve alongside Ebenezer's gifted staff and pastors. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work from the foundation of such respected and gifted pastors as Rob Lough, Mark Miller, Mark Montgomery, Chris Bennett, and all those who have served Ebenezer. We have new ministries before us now as Pastor Monica Reynolds builds the Northern Virginia Missional Hub in our neighborhoods and communities, while Pastor Jeff Harrison and I are building ministry here at the main campus and surrounding area.

I have been in full-time ministry for over thirty years, am married to Scott Diamond, and have one stepson at JMU. I am so thankful that God has brought us together here now at this time in this place. Our upcoming sermon series will explore how God invites us to dive deeper into faith, build relationships with our neighbors, and grow in faith through committing ourselves anew to making disciples through Jesus Christ as we connect, heal, and bring hope to the community and the world. I look forward to living out the gospel with you.

Grace and peace,


Pastor Emily



Upcoming Sermon Series

DIVING IN

During the last weeks of summer, we'll be DIVING IN to faith. Are you someone who loves to do a cannonball off the diving board? Or do you prefer to sit on the side of the pool, dangling your legs over the edge? Maybe you like to dip a toe into the water and then an ankle, gradually wading in more deeply as you adjust. I wonder what we're like when it comes to faith in Christ? In this series, we'll explore scripture stories of faith and what it means to live deeply in Christ as we dive in together.

NEIGHBORING

Jesus told us that loving God and loving our neighbors are the two most important things for Christians. What if we put some skin on that? What if we loved God so much that we let that love change and ground us? What if we loved our neighbors, our actual neighbors: the people who live beside us, the people we see at school, the people we see at ballgames, and the people we see at the grocery store? What would it look like to be there for our neighbors and neighborhoods in new and practical ways, in ways that meet them where they are? And what if we did this not only as individuals but also as a church? Let's see what scripture says about growing relationships right outside our door.

WE ARE FOR YOU

Watch for a new initiative coming in September with our Neighboring sermon series.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR JEFF

Greetings Beautiful Sisters and Brothers of Ebenezer!

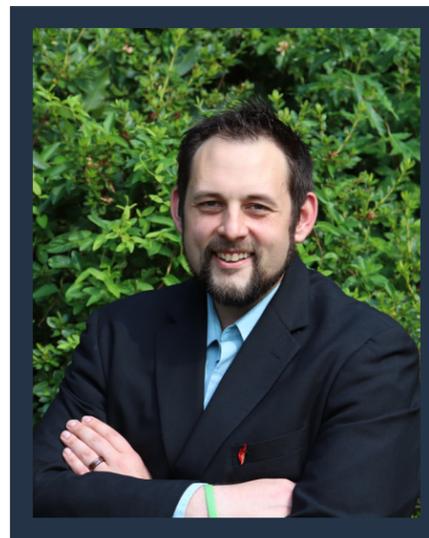
It has been such a joy and privilege getting to know many of you over the past couple of weeks. Thank you for the great welcome and great hospitality! I look forward to the many ways we as the Body of Christ will continue to reach out with an abundance of God's love, grace, and mercy to folks at Ebenezer and throughout the communities of Stafford, Virginia, Sierra Leone, and beyond. I cannot wait to see how God, in calling us together, will impact not only our lives, but the lives of so many in our neighborhoods and around the world.

I am eager to get to know even more of you, your families, your friends, your passions, and your stories. For the past couple of weeks, I have set aside some intentional time to drive around Stafford and the community every day. In doing so, I have found shortcuts, closed roads, different neighborhoods, parks, ponds, and many other things. At each stop sign, and at every turn, I have tried to stop and pray for those living in that neighborhood, and that we, as the people of Ebenezer, would incarnate for our neighbors a real, tangible, authentic Body, the Body of Christ, reaching and stretching out as we connect, heal, and bring hope to Ebenezer, the community, and the world.

Friends, I am so excited that we are called to do ministry together—to be the hands and feet of Christ. I look forward to the many ways, and even the new ways that we haven't yet fathomed, that God is going to call us as we serve Him and our neighbors in Stafford and beyond!

God Bless You!

Pastor Jeff



FAREWELL PASTOR ROB

In June, Ebenezer's Sewing Group presented Pastor Rob with a beautiful farewell gift: a quilt created with help from the entire congregation. The design, which features Ebenezer Church in the center surrounded by 160 tiny houses, was chosen because it exemplified Pastor Rob's love for the community and provided a way for everyone to participate. The Sewing Group assembled tiny house quilt block kits that members of our church family took home, stitched, and returned. The completed

houses were then sewn together to make up the finished quilt. Every house is different and many of the front doors have personal touches such as an Air Force emblem, Bugs Bunny saying "What's Up, Doc?", Jesus Loves Me, and more. The label on the back reads, "You are beautiful, beloved children of God. The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17) Thanks to the Sewing Group and to everyone who contributed to this very special send-off!



2021 Axis Summer Mission Trip, July 11-16

Axis teens and leaders had an amazing week of serving and growing in Wilmington, NC.

See page 11 for more Axis news.

2021 VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2021 Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference was held June 18-19. Allison Hickey attended as one of Ebenezer's lay representatives and shared her reflections on the experience:

The theme of the 2021 Conference was "United as One" as described in John 17:20-23. Despite the presence of some disagreements, we were reminded that we are One in the most important way: our love for God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Both days began with worship, singing, and a Bible study delivered by Dr. John Kinney, Dean of the School of Theology at Virginia Union University. Dr. Kinney's message centered on a primary concept:

"God creates with a sense of oneness and unity; Jesus exists and ministers to restore and to reconcile the fragmentations that have occurred. The very movement, the very character, the very design, the very intent of God in this unity is that we might be one...God's oneness is affirmed, celebrated and pursued when God is at the center."

Dr. Kinney closed with a single word, "Sawubona," a Zulu greeting that means "we see you, I see you." This is not just a polite hello, but rather an act of recognizing the worth and dignity of each person we encounter. Sawubona has become my new favorite word. During a time when we have been separated as a church family in ways we could never imagine, isn't this exactly what we need from each other – to see ourselves at the soul level?

Bishop Sharma Lewis's sermon called on us to do the same. She reminded us that we may stand on opposite sides of specific issues, but if we focus on our shared love of God manifest in Christ, we will find common ground even during this turmoil.

Recordings of conference sessions are available at <https://vaumc.org/ac2021/>



What is a Microchurch?

A microchurch is a smaller expression of church. All microchurches have at least three components: worship, discipleship, and commitment to service. Microchurches may exist in homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, cafes, gyms, and other natural gathering spaces outside of the traditional church building. The early church found in Acts provides our biblical basis.

What is a Fresh Expression?

A fresh expression is any regularly scheduled activity, event, or gathering that incorporates at least one element of discipleship, such as prayer or scripture reading, as well as an invitation to deeper relationship. Fresh expressions organize around a shared recreational activity such as frisbee or kickball or around work or community relationships. If you tell us what your "thing" is, we will help equip you to add a discipleship component to it.



A NOTE FROM PASTOR MONICA

EBENEZER'S SECOND CAMPUS: THE LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR NETWORK

A second campus? What does that mean? Where will it be located? How will this new campus be part of Ebenezer's vision and community? Is now really a good time to begin a second campus?

As we emerge from Covid restrictions and attempt to regain footing as disciples, I imagine you have many questions about how church and life as a follower of Jesus will look and feel in this new chapter. Covid altered our routines quite a bit. While this was challenging, it was also a gift. Less time on the road perhaps meant more time with family or neighbors. Less programming and busyness may have allowed us to focus more on our relationships with God and others.

Some of you cannot wait to get back inside a full church building on Sunday mornings. And yet, I know that some of you see God doing something new and different in this chapter. Many of you have developed new rhythms or perspectives and would like to pursue Jesus and church outside the walls of our building. In terms of timing, Covid gave us the opportunity to organize church online and in homes, neighborhoods, breweries, coffee shops, and other places. It accelerated change that was already in the works.

Our new campus will continue to build on the work God has done during Covid. Microchurches will meet weekly in homes and neighborhoods. Daily discipleship practices will be instilled. Learning and education will be key. We will pray and seek out a natural gathering space for monthly communal worship that will be welcoming to all. I invite you to pray with me for God to make connections that help light the path and to join me in this endeavor if you feel called.

The Spirit is moving, and my desire is nothing more than to be faithful to God's prompting. 1 John 4 reminds us that God is love, and that it is impossible to love a God we cannot see if we are unable to love our brothers and sisters whom we can see. It is the calling for our time and all times.

That is why our new campus will be centered around Jesus' call to Love Your Neighbor. Simple and bold. Biblical and practical.

Ebenezer's missional spirit, the same spirit that led our church to build a basketball court instead of sanctuary over 25 years ago, is guiding us once again, this time not toward a centralized building, but toward equipping a decentralized church to share the love of Jesus in spaces where people are already gathering and doing life.

My role in leading this campus will be to equip and empower those in our community who feel called to stand up or be part of a microchurch in their home, neighborhood, or elsewhere. I am completely sold on the idea that God is moving the church in a new direction during this season. We will honor the past and try to be faithful in the present. These are both/and times.

You are invited to join this endeavor in ways that you feel called. I would love to connect with you. Your prayers and support are very much appreciated.

Blessings,

Monica

Pastor Monica



Missions and Outreach

While much has changed in the last year and a half, Ebenezer's commitment to Missions and Outreach has been unwavering. The pandemic allowed us to find new ways to serve some old friends. Unable to gather for a community meal? We delivered! Capacity limits at the shelter? We helped fund temporary housing! Teachers feeling the stress and heat? We treated them to some morale-boosting ice cream!

We even found new ways to serve new friends: this summer we launched the Ebenezer Church Imagination Library. This early childhood literacy program, founded by Dolly Parton, will bless countless households in Stafford. We are also impacting lives in Ghana through our support of a new long-term missionary, Lora Bradford. This is all thanks to your continued generosity. Want to get involved? Check out all the serving opportunities at ebenezerumc.org/volunteer-in-the-community/

GO FOR BO – IN-PERSON OCTOBER 9; VIRTUAL OCTOBER 2-9

2021 marks the 11th year of this community event which supports the life-changing work of Helping Children Worldwide (HCW) in Bo, Sierra Leone. Through its Child Reintegration Centre, Mercy Hospital, and Village Partnership Initiative, HCW seeks to build strong families and enable children to reach their full potential. Funds raised through Go For Bo have helped bring clean water, education, health care, and more to our friends in Bo. Register today to sponsor, run, or volunteer at goforbo.org

4th SATURDAY MEALS

4th Saturday of the month, 2:30-5:30 PM, Fredericksburg UMC



Ebenezer Church Imagination Library



Read all about it! Ebenezer is partnering with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to provide free books to children age five and under in Stafford's 22405 zip code.

Founded in 1995 in Dolly's hometown of Sevier County, Tennessee, the Imagination Library is an international book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books every month to children from birth to age five, regardless of family income. To date, over 160 million books have been mailed to more than 1.8 million children.

The Imagination Library partners with local affiliates to cover the costs of purchasing and shipping the books. Ebenezer is honored to serve as the affiliate for the 22405 zip code in Stafford County, and we're asking our friends in the community to help us get the word out.

Visit ebenezerumc.org/events to find out more about registering children for the program or joining our volunteer team. We're excited to work together to put books in the hands of children in our community.

August Events

September Events

Event Registration

To learn more about our upcoming events or to register to attend, scan the QR code below or visit ebenezerumc.org/events



ebenezerumc.org/events

3 SUMMER AT THE PARK
9:00-11:00 AM, AUTUMN RIDGE PARK

5-6 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

10 EMPTY NEST IN-PERSON GAME DAY
1:00-3:00 PM

14 BRISBEN SHELTER MEAL
3:30 PM

14 EMPTY NEST FRED NATS GAME
6:00 PM

15 STUDENT MINISTRIES KICK-OFF: LASER TAG
4:00-6:30 PM

16 EMPTY NEST CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
1:00 PM

16 EMPTY NEST VIRTUAL GAME DAY
2:30 PM

24 EMPTY NEST IN-PERSON GAME DAY
1:00-3:00 PM

28 4TH SATURDAY MEAL
2:30 PM, FREDERICKSBURG UMC

14 EMPTY NEST IN-PERSON GAME DAY
1:00-3:00 PM

16 EMPTY NEST VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB
7:00 PM

18 ADVENTURERS' GUILD
12:00-4:00 PM

18 BRISBEN SHELTER MEAL
3:30 PM

20 EMPTY NEST CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
1:00 PM

20 EMPTY NEST VIRTUAL GAME DAY
2:30 PM

21 EMPTY NEST LUNCH & LEARN
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR DEMENTIA, 12:00 PM

24-26 AXIS HIGH SCHOOL FALL RETREAT
WATERMARKS CAMP

25 4TH SATURDAY MEAL
2:30 PM FREDERICKSBURG UMC

25 EMPTY NEST COMEDY SHOW & DINNER
6:30-9:30 PM

28 EMPTY NEST IN-PERSON GAME DAY
1:00-3:00 PM

Service Times

In Person | 9:45 AM & 11:15 AM

Online | 8:15 AM, 9:45 AM, 11:15 AM, 6:00 PM

Watch at live.ebenezerumc.org

Kidzcare

Available for ages 0-3 during Sunday Worship Services and for infants, toddlers, and school age children during on-campus group meetings.

Please note that on weekdays, KidzCare is closed when Stafford County Schools are closed.

Kidzrock Sunday School

Available during Sunday Worship Services for children age 3 through 5th grade.

Find Us Online

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@ebenezer.umc



@ebenezer.umc



www.ebenezerumc.org

Weekly Recurring Events

Men's Basketball
Sundays, 7:30-9:30 PM

TOPS
Mondays, 9:00-11:30 AM

Exercise Group
Mondays & Thursdays, 9:15-10:15 AM (Free Child Care)

Active Older Adult Exercise
Tuesdays & Fridays, 9:15-10:15 AM

Floor Hockey
Tuesdays, 7:00-9:00 PM

Nar-Anon
Wednesdays, 6:30 PM

Spirituality in Nature Group
Thursdays, 10:00 AM

Looking Ahead to October

2-9 GO FOR BO
5K, ONE-MILE FUN RUN & TOT DASH

5 EMPTY NEST HILLWOOD ESTATE DAY TRIP
8:00 AM-5:00 PM

TNT MIDDLE SCHOOL FALL RETREAT
DATE TBD

TNT Middle School Small Groups

Sundays, 5:00-6:30 PM, Room B01

AXIS High School Small Groups

Sundays, 7:00-8:30 PM, Room B01

Empty Nest...it's a stage, not an age!

Ebenezer's Empty Nest Ministry is three and a half years old. What an awesome adventure it has been so far! We have learned a lot, tried a lot of new things, and explored new places. In addition, we've made new friends and rekindled old relationships. This ministry has something for everyone! For more information on Empty Nest activities, visit ebenezerumc.org/events or contact Vicki at vstones@ebenezerumc.org



Get Connected

When we think about connecting, we typically think about finding a community to call our own, with people to surround us. Community is a place where people can know and be known, love and be loved, celebrate and be celebrated. How can you find community here at Ebenezer Church? This can be done in many ways.

Find your people, grow your faith, and be in community with other believers in a small group. Visit ebenezerumc.org/groups to see our complete list of small groups or email Chrissy at cleathers@ebenezerumc.org

Other ways to help people find their way to community may be through volunteer opportunities on Sunday mornings. Specific areas include parking lot attendants, ushers, greeters, church online hosts, and connection desk volunteers. Our First Impressions Teams are returning this fall, and we're looking for people who want to serve others and help them feel welcomed, seen, and at home at Ebenezer. To get involved, email Chrissy.



Join our First Impressions Team!

USHERS GREETERS CONNECTIONS DESK PARKING LOT

EBENEZERUMC.ORG/CONNECTIONS

LUNCH & LEARN

Communication Strategies for Dementia, September 21
12:00 PM, \$5

FITNESS

Active Older Adult Exercise Group:
Tuesdays & Fridays, 9:15 AM
Spirituality in Nature Group:
Thursdays, 10:00 AM

TRIPS

Hillwood Estate, Washington, D.C.,
October 5, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM, \$30

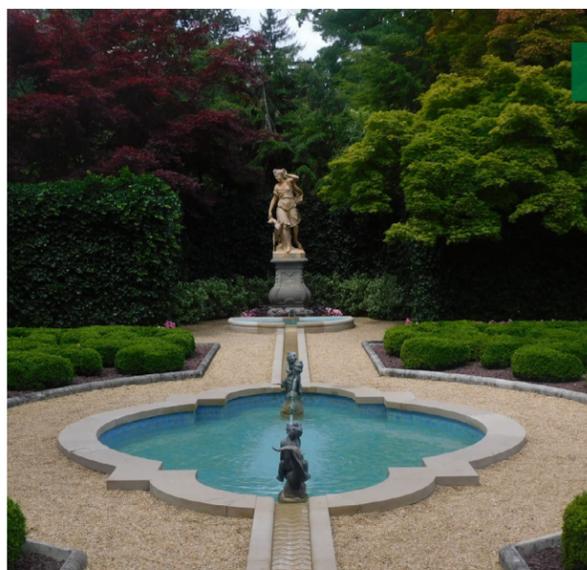
Empty Nesters

Hillwood Estate
Museum & Garden
Tour

October 5

Register by Oct 1 • \$30

ebenezerumc.org/events



SOCIALS

Game Day, In-Person: 2nd & 4th
Tuesday, 1:00 PM; Virtual: 3rd
Monday, 2:30 PM
X2 Comedy Dinner & Show,
September 25, 6:30-9:30 PM, \$22

SMALL GROUPS

Virtual Book Club
3rd Thursday, 7:00 PM
Caregiver Support Group
3rd Monday, 1:00 PM
Hobby Investors Group
4th Monday, 7:00-8:30 PM

EMPTY NESTER
SEPTEMBER
25
COMEDY
Show
GOOD CLEAN FUN

6:30 - 9:00 PM | \$22 ENTRY | DINNER INCLUDED

EBENEZERUMC.ORG/EVENTS

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Welcome to KidzRock, the Children's Ministries program at Ebenezer! We offer In-Person Sunday School for age 3 through 5th grade, as well as Virtual Sunday School lessons that your family can do at home. Our goal is to partner with parents to help raise children spiritually. It begins in preschool, where children learn that God made them and loves them, and continues all the way through elementary school, where they learn how to make wise choices, build strong relationships and deepen their faith.

Say Yes to Serving in KidzRock!

When you Say Yes to serving with KidzRock Sunday School, you make a difference in a child's life by helping them grow in their faith! We're looking for adults and teens to be the hands and feet of Jesus as Sunday School greeters, classroom helpers and supply team members. No experience is necessary - we provide the training and support you all the way. Flexible schedules are available. Contact Shari at sparsons@ebenezerumc.org for more information.



In-Person Sunday School

Sundays, 9:45 AM & 11:15 AM
Registration is no longer required, but we do ask all children to wear masks and observe safe social distancing.

Like on Facebook



@EUMCKidzRock

STUDENT MINISTRY

Hello 2021-2022! After last year, we know that no matter what this school year brings, we can do it with God's strength! If you or your student felt a little lost last year, start this year off committing to connect with God and others. We aren't meant to do this life alone. Our desire is to see students come alive in their faith while connecting with other students and adult leaders, and to encourage parents to live out their faith and be equipped to share their faith at home.

LASER TAG

Sunday, August 15, 4:00-6:30 PM
We're kicking off the school year with LASER TAG, right here on our property! This event is free, but please register by August 12 so we can accommodate everyone.

WEEKLY SMALL GROUPS

- Middle School (TNT), Sundays, 5:00-6:30 PM
- High School (Axis), Sundays, 7:00-8:30 PM

We have an incredible team of adults ready to do life with you and your student. Starting August 22, Student Ministries will meet on Sunday evenings for large group and - most importantly - small group teaching. Small groups grow together in the Word and are based on intentional relationships.

ADVENTURERS' GUILD

Third Saturday of every month, 12:00-4:00 PM

HIGH SCHOOL FALL RETREAT

September 24-26, Watermarks Camp, Scottsville, VA
Register by September 11. Cost: \$110/Early Bird: \$90 by August 28

MIDDLE SCHOOL FALL RETREAT

October, Adventure Links, Clifton, VA
More information coming soon

STUDENT MINISTRIES PRESENTS:

OUTDOOR LASER TAG

AUGUST 15 4:00-6:00 PM
LEARN MORE AT
EBENEZERUMC.ORG/EVENTS

Connect With Us:

To receive text updates about our ministries:

Parents of middle school students, text TNTParent to **84576**

Parents of high school students, text AxisParent to **84576**

High school students, text AXIS to **84576**



Virtual Sunday School

Updated lesson videos and parent guides are available on our website at ebenezerumc.org/kidzrock

Watch for upcoming special events and programs throughout the year at ebenezerumc.org/events.

AXIS

HIGH SCHOOL
MINISTRY

FALL RETREAT

September 24-26
Watermarks Camp,
Scottsville, VA

Register at ebenezerumc.org/events
by September 11

Early Bird Registration Until August 28

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 EBENEZER CHURCH

161 Embrey Mill Road
Stafford, Virginia 22554

Change of address service requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Stafford, VA
Permit #16



Go For Bo

5K • 1 Mile Fun Run • Tot Dash



OCT 9 • In Person
OCT 2-9 • Virtual

GoForBo.org