

Christmas Playlist

SIDE A

45 RPM

Winter 2023-2024

STONEMAKER

Newsletter of Ebenezer Church

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A NOTE FROM PASTOR EMILY

"Thank you." "You are welcome." This turn of phrase took on a new meaning after our mission trip to Sierra Leone with Helping Children Worldwide. We heard this in reverse: "You are welcome." "Thank you." The welcome came first; the welcome mattered. People stopped what they were doing to greet others. The people we met in Sierra Leone valued making room for us as strangers, sharing hospitality, inviting shared conversation, music, and more. They put aside agenda and appointments and were available to be fully present for others. We were moved by their warmth and love. Welcoming well was the agenda, and we learned much from them about making space in our homes and hearts for someone new.

This Christmas and in the New Year, may we practice what our brothers and sisters in West Africa do so well and make welcoming a priority in how we gather. Let us start with Jesus and welcome the birth of Christ into our hearts. Let us open ourselves fully to him, laying aside our agenda to stop the busyness and be fully present at the manger. Let us open more of ourselves to the love of Jesus Christ. Let us then welcome the community and strangers into church with open arms, saying with our whole hearts, "You are welcome."

In addition to inviting our neighbors, friends, and coworkers to worship, we

will also share Christ's love with strangers by providing gifts through the Angel Tree ministry and warm fellowship at Micah Ministries' Cold Weather Shelter. Let us make welcoming a priority when it comes to growing as disciples and as a church.

We cannot wait to celebrate Christmas with you and to ring in the New Year together. We'll be sharing the new Focus 2030 vision for the church and prioritizing worship, discipleship, mission, and the community.

You are welcome into the heart of Christ, the love of God, and the presence of the Spirit. You are welcome into my heart, too. You are welcome. Period. Let us welcome everyone as we celebrate a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year together.

Pastor Emily
pastoremlily@ebenezerumc.org



Upcoming
Sermon Series
Christmas Playlist
(December 3-31)

Christmas music is already in the air, and this year we're singing for all we're worth! We're focusing on the scripture and songs of this holy season as we celebrate the birth of Christ. We'll sing and explore songs like *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, O Come All Ye Faithful, Joy to the World, Silent Night*, and *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. We'll unpack scripture and the gospel message within each carol. Download the playlist and sing the birth of Jesus and the love of God as we gather with the shepherds, angels, and lambs around the manger.

All In
(January 7-28)

What are we about as disciples? What are we about as a church? Dig in and be part of a church that knows who and what it is called to be by God. Let's be ALL IN. Our mission is to transform lives through Jesus Christ as we connect, heal, and bring hope to the world. Let's be ALL IN going forward as one. We will share our new strategic vision called Focus 2030 in January and zero in on priorities of worship, discipleship, service, and community. Are you in? Let's be ALL IN! All in for Jesus and ALL IN for growing in faith together as we love God and love others right where we are.

Prayer
(February 4 & 11)

Prayer, at its heart, is all about relationship. It comes down to talking with and listening to God. We pray individually. We pray together. We pray when life hurts. We pray when life is at its best. We pray for others. We pray for ourselves. What is prayer? What is it not? Join us as we delve deeply into this core aspect of discipleship and grow in our relationship with Jesus. Start the 4-4-2 daily prayer practice. Pray for 4 people among your family and friends. Pray for 4 members of the church family you want to encourage. Pray for 2 people in the community who don't have a church home that you'd like to invite on a faith journey.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR JEFF

Beautiful and Beloved People of Ebenezer,

“And what do you want for Christmas?” That is often the question floating through the air starting a week before Thanksgiving. Growing up, I enjoyed being asked that question, because I would hopefully get all the things on my wish list. Now I realize that question has trained us to have unreasonably high expectations for this time of year.

Unfortunately, the holidays rarely deliver all the happiness and love that we've been led to expect. There are a multitude of advertising campaigns trying to sell a lot of merchandise with images of romantic couples and laughing families, but they often mock the heartache felt by so many people at this time of year – perhaps even by some of you.

So, what should we do? Shove our expectations deep down like cold hands in the pockets of a winter coat? Put our hopes on long-term layaway? Pretend we don't really care? Here's a suggestion: Instead of trying to downplay our expectations, why not let our highest desires be ignited by this Advent season? That soaring hope is echoed in one of Charles Wesley's great hymns: “*Come, Thou long-expected Jesus*” (UMH 196)

“Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.”

No holiday can deliver everything we long for, but we will find our deepest longings fulfilled in Christ Himself. When Simeon saw Jesus, he praised God saying: “*My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.*” (Luke 2:30-32) This Christmas, watch your expectations and see them wonderfully fulfilled in Jesus.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Pastor Jeff
pastorjeff@ebenezerumc.org



Thank You James Mills



This month, we're honoring James Mills, our Director of Technology, as he celebrates 20 years of service with Ebenezer. James started in 2003 as a part-time multimedia tech and grew into the role of Director of Technology, with responsibility for all audiovisual and technical resources at the church.

Each week, James leads a volunteer team that coordinates lighting, sound, and visuals for all worship services and special events. He also oversees the Ebenezer Online livestream worship broadcasts for our

growing online congregation and ensures that every electronic system on the church campus operates smoothly and securely.

In addition to his technical expertise, James also brings boundless creativity to every project. When faced with a challenge, his “hamster wheel” starts spinning, and the results include captivating videos that bring VBS and mission trips to life, multimedia installations that take worship experiences to the next level, and more.

James, you are an amazing blessing to this church. Thank you for sharing your talents so generously for the past 20 years. Here's to many more!

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH EBENEZER CHURCH

We're excited to celebrate the birth of Christ, and everyone is welcome! Be sure to invite your friends and neighbors to join us. For more information, visit ebenezerumc.org/christmas.

BLUE CHRISTMAS – DECEMBER 3, 7:00 PM, SANCTUARY

Blue Christmas is an opportunity for those who are grieving or facing a difficult season to find hope and healing from the Word and each other. This evening of quiet, contemplative worship will end with the opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one. Nursery available for children ages 0-3.

KIDZCHRISTMAS – DECEMBER 18, 6:30 PM, SANCTUARY AND PARKING LOT

Start Christmas week with a special event for the whole family. We'll begin in the Sanctuary with a program of Christmas music and scripture featuring the Ebenezer KidzChoir. Afterward, step outside to experience our Living Nativity. Meet Mary and Joseph, visit the barnyard animals, and enjoy hot cocoa.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES – DECEMBER 24, 10:00 AM, 4:00 PM & 7:00 PM
SANCTUARY, OVERFLOW IN ROOM 101, LIVESTREAM AT LIVE.EBENEZERUMC.ORG**

Gather with us in the Sanctuary as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, with Traditional Services at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM featuring the Ebenezer Choir and a Modern Service at 4:00 PM featuring the Ebenezer Band. All services will end with communion and singing Silent Night by candlelight. Nursery available for children ages 0-3. The 4:00 PM & 7:00 PM services will be livestreamed at live.ebenezerumc.org.



The Ebenezer Band leads worship at the 9:45 AM & 11:15 AM Modern Services. Auditions are open year-round for vocalists, bass and electric guitarists, drummers, and keyboardists. “We're always looking for musicians and vocalists who would like to share their talents in worship,” said Director of Worship Preston Hardage. For more information, contact Preston at phardage@ebenezerumc.org



Thinking about membership? Explore Ebenezer is designed for anyone who is seeking to learn more about the United Methodist Church and Ebenezer's values and mission. Join us February 11 at 11:15 AM to meet our pastors and get connected. For more information, please contact Crissy Sharon at csharon@ebenezerumc.org



Thank you for joining us in a year of intentional prayer for our community in 2023. We hope it has been as impactful for you as it has been for us. In December, we're praying for our ministry partners who are fighting hunger. Visit ebenezerumc.org/year-of-prayer to learn more.

Counselor's Corner



At this time of year, we may find ourselves overcommitted and overwhelmed. Work, social, school, and even spiritual commitments fill our calendars. If you find yourself here, I would like to offer two words that can transform your life: solitude and silence.

Solitude and silence appear counter to what we need at this time of year, but our heavenly Father calls us into these practices. Jesus exemplified this after his baptism. He was led by the Spirit to the wilderness where he spent 40 days in solitude preparing for the good work he was about to do. Jesus also instructed his disciples to seek solitude during the amazing ministry they were undertaking (Mark 6:31-32).

Solitude and silence help us identify what is imperative versus merely important. These practices help us experience God on His terms, and to feel His presence and guidance. As we lessen ourselves, He becomes greater within us. This is a true gift from God. Theologian Richard Foster states, “The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear. The Spirit speaks to us when our heart is still and silent before the Lord – not when we’re rushing about and doing our own thing in our own way.”

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers a helpful perspective: “We are silent at the beginning of the day because God should have the first word, and we are silent before going to sleep because the last word also belongs to God...Silence is nothing else but waiting for God’s Word.” If you are struggling to slow down or unable to feel the presence of God, please contact me.

Keith Priest, Christian Counselor
kpriest@ebenezerumc.org

A NOTE FROM PASTOR DONOVAN

Neighbors,

“Behold, I am making all things new.” Revelation 21:5

Are you ready for a new thing? We are entering a new season, and I am looking forward to it. During this time, there is a sense of expectation, joy, and the promise of something new. Advent is the season of anticipation, when we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus with joy. A brand-new year is also upon us, bringing the opportunity to begin something new. I don't know about you, but I'm ready for something new, joyful, and hopeful.

We are given hope beyond our wildest imaginations when God does a new thing. It helps us to wait, with expectation, for how God will inspire fresh relationships, friendships, missions, and opportunities to serve the Kingdom of God. We await the many ways God will be with us. That's exciting. We need God with us. The world cries, our community waits, our hearts burn to experience God at work, and as we prepare to remember the expected gift of Christ, we prepare for the new ways, spaces, and opportunities for God to do something great. I'm looking forward to it, and I hope you are too.

God is moving in the Love Your Neighbor Network. Here are some new things God is doing, and ways you can help in the next few months.

Biblical Storytellers
This exciting new community is one that brings the worlds of storytelling and scripture together to tell the story of God. Biblical storytelling is a powerful ministry tool. It has the power to enhance our knowledge of scripture while building our relationship with it. It is a fun and engaging way to become an expert storyteller and a dynamic witness and agent of God's love and words.

Everyday Influencers
We are looking to form a new community of adult Christians who are connected to youth and adolescents. Whether you are a coach, team parent, scout leader, community leader, volunteer, or parent, you have influence and the power and opportunity to share Christ. By participating in a quarterly gathering, leaders in and around Stafford County get connected, empowered, and equipped to help young people grow in their faith.

We're looking for people who'd like to learn more about and take part in these incredible ministry opportunities. I want to invite you to a Zoom interest meeting on December 13 at 7:00 PM where we will unpack this more. For more information and updates about Advent and happenings in the Love Your Neighbor Network, visit loveyourneighbornetwork.org.

Our Lord, who makes all things new,

Donovan

Pastor Donovan
pastordonovan@ebenezerumc.org



Winter Book Study

with Christian Counselor Keith Priest

Thursdays, 7:00 - 8:30 PM
January 11 - February 15

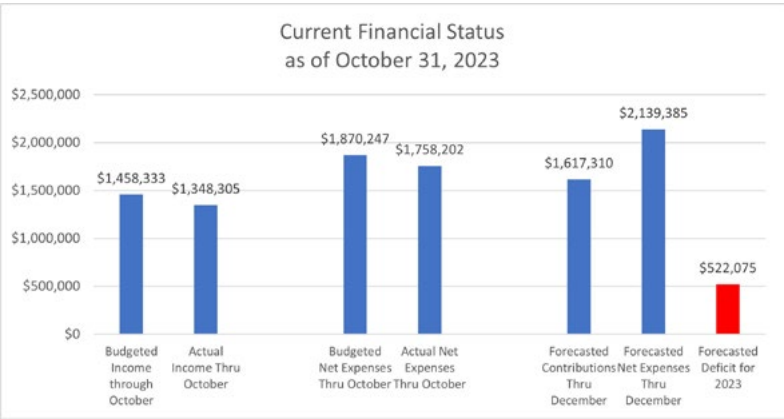


Discover what the Bible really says about forgiveness and how to find the peace that comes from embracing it. Join Christian Counselor Keith Priest for a six-week study based on *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* by Lysa TerKeurst. The class is open to all adults and will meet on Thursdays from 7:00-8:30 PM from January 11-February 15. For more information, contact Keith Priest at kpriest@ebenezerumc.org

DENOMINATION NEWS

As part of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church, we are the spirit-filled, resilient, connected, missional, faithful, diverse, deeply rooted, committed, disciple-making, Jesus-seeking, generous, justice-seeking, world-changing people of God called The United Methodist Church. After disaffiliations utilizing Paragraph 2553, the Virginia Conference now has 875 churches, 261,484 members, and 2,230 clergy. Domestic and international mission in the Virginia Conference reaches over 1,400,000 people. A total of 227 churches disaffiliated in Virginia; the combined membership of these churches was 31,299 people. This represents 10.58% of the total membership of the United Methodist churches in Virginia. For more information, please go to the conference website at vaumc.org.

We will continue to share updates as United Methodists worldwide prepare for the 2024 General Conference to be held April 23–May 3. We have tentatively scheduled an evening session for May 20 entitled “What Just Happened” to review and unpack the results of the General Conference. The Governing Board would love to hear from you, and you are invited to attend our monthly meetings. Check ebenezerumc.org/denomination-news for Frequently Asked Questions and Resources for more information. We are open to feedback and questions through ebenezerinfo@ebenezerumc.org.



FOCUS 2030

It's time to reveal Focus 2030! We look forward to sharing our new vision with you in January in worship and at our State of the Church gathering on February 10. Throughout 2023, the Strategic Planning Team worked hard to delve into our core values, dreams, demographics, statistics, and community context to prayerfully discern and draft this new vision together. Building on the work of Focus 2025 and adaptations from COVID, we will map our resources to guide our mission and ministry going forward. We cannot wait to share this new vision with you as we look toward focusing on all that God calls us to be.

STATE OF THE CHURCH
ANNUAL UPDATE · LEADER LIFTER

February 10 | 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Learn more at ebenezerumc.org/events

FINANCE UPDATE

Financial results through October and forecasts for the remainder of the year demonstrate that the church will end the year with a deficit of just over \$500,000. While expense management and investment income may reduce that somewhat, increased giving is also a way to impact that plan. The Governing Board is prayerfully discerning the alignment of projected resources to a new vision for the future.

In this season of gratitude, we encourage you to prayerfully consider your response to the distribution of Estimate of Giving cards for 2024. Making that commitment to giving, and living into that pledge each month, is a disciple's response to one of the many ways we ensure the growth of the Kingdom of God.

Blessings to you this holiday season,

Your Finance Committee



Nearly 400 runners and more than 40 volunteers helped make our 13th annual Go For Bo 5K, 1-Mile Fun Run and Tot Dash a great success! Thanks to our generous sponsors, we raised just over \$50,000 for the ministries of Helping Children Worldwide in Bo, Sierra Leone. We are grateful for everyone who participated!

Sunday Worship

In Person | 8:15 AM (Traditional)
9:45 AM & 11:15 AM (Modern)
Join us at The Bridge Café between
services in the Gym.

Livestream | 9:45 AM & 11:15 AM
or anytime at live.ebenezerumc.org

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

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www.ebenezerumc.org



[@ebenezerumc](https://twitter.com/ebenezerumc)

December Events

2

UMM FAMILY MANGER BUILD
9:00-11:00 AM
YOUNG ADULT PICKLEBALL, PIZZA & PASTORS
1:00-3:00 PM

2&9

COLD WEATHER SHELTER
5:30-8:00 PM

3

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
7:00 PM. SEE PAGE 3 FOR INFO.

6

GRIEFSHARE: SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS
7:00-9:00 PM

10

ANGEL TREE GIFTS DUE

15

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET
11:30 AM, RIVERSIDE CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

16

ADVENTURERS' GUILD MEETING & HOLIDAY PARTY
12:00-5:00 PM

16

BRISBEN SHELTER MEAL
4:00-7:00 PM

17

UWIF CHRISTMAS COOKIE EXCHANGE
4:00 PM

18

KIDZCHRISTMAS
6:30 PM. SEE PAGE 3 FOR INFO.

23

4TH SATURDAY MEAL
FREDERICKSBURG UMC, 2:30-5:30 PM

24

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
10:00 AM, 4:00 PM & 7:00 PM. SEE PAGE 3 FOR INFO.

January Events

6&13

COLD WEATHER SHELTER
5:30-8:00 PM

7

MINUTE TO WIN IT: PARENTS VS TEENS
6:00-8:00 PM

11

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY
9-WEEK CLASS BEGINS, 7:00-9:00 PM

11

FORGIVENESS BOOK STUDY
6-WEEK STUDY BEGINS, 7:00-8:30 PM

14

DISCIPLE FAST TRACK NEW TESTAMENT & DISCIPLE 2 FAST TRACK
12-WEEK CLASSES BEGIN, 3:00-5:00 PM

20&27

SYSTEMS OF SELF DEFENSE
9:00 AM-2:00 PM

20

ADVENTURERS' GUILD
12:00-4:00 PM

20

BRISBEN SHELTER MEAL
4:00-7:00 PM

21

KIDZROCK FAMILY BRICKFEST
2:30-4:00 PM

27

4TH SATURDAY MEAL
FREDERICKSBURG UMC, 2:30-5:30 PM

29

PRESCHOOL INFORMATION NIGHT
6:30 PM

February Events

3&10

COLD WEATHER SHELTER
5:30-8:00 PM

6

LUNCH AND LEARN: HEALTHY GENERATIONS
12:00 PM

10

STATE OF THE CHURCH: ANNUAL UPDATE & LEADER LIFTER
9:00 AM

11

EXPLORE EBENEZER
11:15 AM

14

ASH WEDNESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER
5:00-6:45 PM

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
7:00 PM

16-18

HIGH SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT

17

ADVENTURERS' GUILD
12:00-4:00 PM

BRISBEN SHELTER MEAL
4:00-7:00 PM

STEP PRETEEN GATHERING
6:00-7:30 PM

24

4TH SATURDAY MEAL
FREDERICKSBURG UMC, 2:30-5:30 PM

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)

Caregiver Support Group
3rd Monday, 1:00 PM

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

Pickleball

Tuesdays, 6:00-8:00 PM &
Thursdays, 2:00-5:00 PM

Love Your Neighbor
Network Webinar
2nd Wednesday, 7:00 PM

Nar-Anon
Every other Wednesday, 6:30 PM

Cancer Support Group
1st Wednesday, 7:00 PM

United Women In Faith
3rd Thursday, 7:00 PM

United Methodist Men
2nd Saturday, 9:00 AM

Kidzcare Nursery

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

Kidzrock Sunday School

Available during Sunday Worship
Services at 9:45 AM & 11:15 AM for
Preschool 3's through 5th grade.

No Sunday School Nov 26 & Dec 24

Find virtual Sunday School resources at
ebenezerumc.org/kidzrock

TNT Middle School
Weekly Gathering

Sundays, 5:00-6:30 PM, Room B01
No meetings Dec 24 & 31

AXIS High School
Weekly Gathering

Sundays 7:00-9:00 PM, Room B01
No meetings Dec 24 & 31

Connect With Us:

To receive text updates
about our ministries:

Parents of Preschool 3's-5th grade,
text KIDZROCK to **84576**

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

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ADULT MINISTRIES



United Women in Faith

United Women In Faith is made up of women who are driven by God’s love and united in sisterhood. In November, we assembled Thanksgiving food boxes for local families in need. On December 17 at 4:00 PM, we will host a Christmas Cookie Exchange with Regester Chapel UWIF. We invite all women to join us in 2024 for meetings on the third Thursday of each month from 7:00-8:30 PM in Room 101, with childcare provided. Mark your calendar for our Valentine Tea and flower arranging demonstration on February 15. For more information, please contact Dana Czzowitz at dczzowitz@ebenezerumc.org

**YOUNG ADULT
- PICKLEBALL -
PIZZA & PASTORS**



**Saturday
December 2
1:00 - 3:00 PM
in the Gym**


Please register at ebenezerumc.org/events

DISCIPLE CLASSES


Disciple Fast Track groups are ideal for busy people who want to fit an in-depth Bible study into their schedule. This winter, we will offer Disciple 1 Fast Track: New Testament and Disciple 2 Fast Track: Luke-Acts. Both classes will meet for 12 weeks, beginning January 14, from 3:00-5:00 PM. Participants read three to five chapters daily and meet weekly with a small, committed group led by an experienced facilitator. For more information, please contact Dana Czzowitz at dczzowitz@ebenezerumc.org

Systems of Self Defense

for women ages 12 and up



**January 20 & 27
9:00 AM-2:00 PM
Cost: \$25**



Register at ebenezerumc.org/events

**United Methodist Men
Family Manger Build**

December 2, 9:00-11:00 AM



ebenezerumc.org/events



As we move forward into a new year, Ebenezer United Methodist Men will continue to look for opportunities to provide activities, fellowship, and service events for men within Ebenezer Church. Already scheduled are the Manger Build on December 2 and outdoor Nativity Build on December 9 and a Chili Cook-Off in January or February. At our January meeting, our newly elected 2024 EUMM Officers will solicit ideas from attendees to fill out the 2024 schedule. Please join us at our monthly meetings on the second Saturday of each month at 9:00 AM in the Gym. We look forward to having you engage in fellowship and service with us. Christian Men Choose to Serve! For more information, please contact umm@ebenezerumc.org.

DEBT
is the
THIEF
of your
FUTURE

DR. RANDY'S
FINANCIAL *Peace*
UNIVERSITY

**January 11 -
March 7
7:00-9:00 PM**

\$79.99 per family

ebenezerumc.org/events

LUNCH AND LEARN: HEALTHY GENERATIONS

Healthy Generations, formerly the Rappahannock Area Agency on Aging, is a one-stop shop of services and resources for area seniors. If you or a loved one are seeking solutions for continued independence, safety, or health, please join agency representatives at Lunch and Learn: Healthy Generations on February 6 at 12:00 PM in Room B01 to learn more. Cost: \$10. For more information, contact Dana Czzowitz at dczzowitz@ebenezerumc.org.

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH
ANGEL TREE

Angel Tree is a beloved Christmas tradition at Ebenezer. Each year, our congregation brings joy to those in need by providing gifts and holiday treats for local children and seniors. Ebenezer works directly with Stafford County Social Services and Stafford County Public Schools to identify recipients. Each family or senior receives wrapped gifts and boxes of food staples for holiday meals. There are currently 170 children and 26 seniors on our list – can you help us share the love of Jesus and make wishes come true? Let us know how you would like to be part of Angel Tree this season:

DONATE A GIFT:
Select one or more Angels from our online SignUp Genius or pick up an Angel Tree card at the Connection Desk on Sunday mornings. Return your wrapped gifts to church no later than December 10.

SPONSOR A FOOD BOX:
Provide a family or senior with holiday staples for one week (\$30) or two weeks (\$60). We'll do the shopping for you!

VOLUNTEER
Help shop for food, assemble food boxes, receive gifts as they are brought to church, or distribute gifts and food boxes to representatives from local schools and social service agencies.

Sign up and find more information at ebenezerumc.org/angel-tree

COLD WEATHER SHELTER

As it gets colder outside, let's provide a warm welcome for our neighbors at Micah Ministries' Cold Weather Shelter. With help from local churches, the shelter is open nightly through mid-March based on weather guidelines. It offers a safe place for those who would otherwise be sleeping outside in freezing temperatures.

Clients are bused from Micah Ministries in Fredericksburg to the shelter, which is located at 750 Kings Highway in Stafford. The 3,000-square-foot facility offers separate dorms for men and women, a handicapped sleeping space, three bathrooms, a small kitchen, and a gathering/intake area.



That's where we come in! Beginning in December, Ebenezer will provide a small team of adult volunteers on the first two Saturdays of each month from 5:30-8:00 PM. Volunteers help everyone greet clients, set up cots, and provide light snacks and fellowship. It's a tangible way to serve those in need in our community at a critical time of year. Sign up and find more information at ebenezerumc.org/serve

Amy Miller
Director of Missions and Outreach
amiller@ebenezerumc.org

BO MISSION TRIP

On behalf of Helping Children Worldwide (HCW), eight Ebenezer missionaries traveled to Bo, Sierra Leone October 16-30. This was the first visit for most of us, but for two team members, it was a trip back to a place that had touched their hearts. Much has changed since the last Ebenezer team traveled to Bo almost five years ago. HCW continues to strengthen the bonds of community and family by transforming what was once an orphanage into a hub of trained counselors and family advocates serving impoverished families and children throughout the region. We immersed ourselves in the daily work of reaching out to vulnerable communities with compassion and hope as we listened to stories, celebrated births, taught basic hygiene and prenatal care practices, and prayed for their health and well-being. We were able to live into the harsh daily schedules of those who must travel many miles for food and basic necessities by coming alongside HCW to deliver assistance and a caring smile to many of the families in the Family Empowerment Advocacy program. We will continue to tell our stories during Sunday worship services, small group presentations, and during our annual efforts to support our international mission partners. The team is grateful for all the support our congregation has given us over the year to make this trip possible. We look forward to sharing our experiences and discovering how we can continue to make a difference in the lives of those in Sierra Leone.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

KIDZROCK
FAMILY BRICKFEST

January 21, 2:30-4:00 PM

Bring your own Legos!
ebenezerumc.org/events

ARE YOU READY? LEGO!

Bring the whole family to the KidzRock Family BrickFest on January 21 from 2:30–4:00 PM. Together, you'll participate in exciting Lego build challenges, play games, and enjoy snacks. We'll even build some family bonding time into the mix! This is a BYOL event, so be sure to bring your own Legos from home. For more information, please contact Chrissy Richardson at crichardson@ebenezerumc.org

WELCOME GAYLE THYRRING

We're so pleased to welcome Gayle Thyrring as Ebenezer Preschool Director. Gayle has been part of our preschool family since she began teaching the four-year-old Dogs class in 2019. Prior to that, she had a 28-year career as an elementary teacher and administrator, including 22 years in Stafford County.

"I happily failed at retirement," Gayle said, explaining her return to the classroom. "We started attending the church, and I knew I wanted to get involved. My granddaughter was coming into the preschool that year, and God had a plan. I was at the right place at the right time."

Gayle stepped up to become Interim Director in February 2023, and became Director later that year after the retirement of her friend and mentor Donna Kenkel. Her grandson is attending the preschool now, which only deepens her connection to the students, teachers, and parents of Ebenezer Preschool. "I love it," she said. "It's a wonderful community."



Preschool Information Night
January 29, 6:30 PM, Room 101
ebenezerumc.org/events

STEP

Ebenezer Preteens

4th & 5th Graders

February 17, 6:00-7:30 PM
ebenezerumc.org/events



2ND-5TH GRADERS

COMMUNION CLASS

SATURDAY, MARCH 2 9:30-10:30 AM

Registration Deadline: February 26

ebenezerumc.org/events

Communion is a special and holy time that reminds us of what Jesus did for us on the cross. To help our children learn why and how we receive communion, we invite 2nd-5th graders and their parents to a Communion Class on March 2 from 9:30-10:30 AM.

STUDENT MINISTRIES

CONFIRMATION BEGINS IN JANUARY!

Confirmation is a chance for 7th, 8th, and 9th graders to own their faith. Students learn all about the church and what it means to be a Christian and fully live for Jesus. Our confirmation experience includes weekly meetings on Wednesday evenings from January 17-March 20, a day retreat on January 20, and a weekend retreat March 22-24. Parents, if you missed the Info Meetings in November, please contact Pastor Jeff at pastorjeff@ebenezerumc.org to get all the details. The registration deadline is December 18.

CONFIRMATION MENTORS NEEDED

Adult mentors are needed to support, lead, and grow alongside students during the confirmation experience. Interested? Please contact Michelle Paquette at mpaquette@ebenezerumc.org

SUMMER MISSION TRIP SPONSORS

Summer Mission Trip Sponsors: WE NEED YOU!

We developed incredible relationships with several organizations in Wilmington, NC last summer and will return June 23-29 to forge more beautiful connections with Habitat for Humanity, First Fruit Ministries, and others. Mission trip sponsors can help students get there!

How does it work?

Starting in December, visit ebenezerumc.org/mtsponsor to make a tax-deductible donation to any student going on the mission trip. Sponsors don't have to know the students personally, and any amount helps greatly. In preparation for the trip, students commit to being in small groups and participating in various service opportunities. We would love your support not only financially but also in prayer as we prepare over the next few months. For more information, please contact Michelle Paquette at mpaquette@ebenezerumc.org

HIGH SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT
FEBRUARY 16-18
RHODES GROVE RETREAT CENTER
CHAMBERSBURG, PA

REGISTER BY JANUARY 29 - \$130
EARLY BIRD JANUARY 8 - \$110

REGISTER AT EBENEZERUMC.ORG/EVENTS

High school students, don't miss this incredible chance to get away and grow in your faith! Join us February 16-18 at Rhodes Grove Retreat Center in Chambersburg, PA for lessons, worship, and lots of fun. Register by January 8 for \$110 or January 29 for \$130.

STUDENT MINISTRIES
MINUTE
to WIN IT
PARENTS -VS- TEENS

SUNDAY, JAN 7
6:00-8:00 PM
EBENEZERUMC.ORG/EVENTS

The ultimate challenge returns... Parents vs. Teens: Minute-To-Win-It! Middle and high school students, bring your parents or guardians and join us in the Gym January 7 from 6:00-8:00 PM for some friendly competition and lots of laughs. Who will be the champions?



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



Do Something
Different for
Valentine's Day

February 14
5:00-6:45 PM

Proceeds go toward travel expenses for the youth mission trip. Students will also be seeking sponsors to reach their individual fundraising goals.

ebenezerumc.org/events

Ash Wednesday falls on February 14, so make plans to celebrate Valentine's Day at the Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper from 5:00-6:45 PM in the Gym – no reservations required! Our pancakes are made with love, and all proceeds help fund the High School Summer Mission Trip. You'll also have the opportunity to sponsor a student going on the trip. Adults: \$10. Kids: \$7. Max Family Price: \$30.



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