

The Fellowship

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Ebensburg Presbyterian Church
December 2023

**Ebensburg
Presbyterian Church
PO Box 327
200 N. Center Street
Ebensburg, PA 15931**

Mission Statement:

*"Ebensburg Presbyterians are
Christians giving help and hope to all
by sharing God's love."*

Church Office Hours
9:am-1: pm
Monday-Thursday
ebgpresby@gmail.com
814-472-6920

Worship Service
Sunday Worship 11:00 AM

Church Staff

Pastor
Rev. Owar Ojulu
ojh3o@yahoo.com

Church Treasurer
Kristine Segear

Clerk of Session
Jim Stratton

Custodian
Don Buterbaugh

Organist
Melissa Douglas

Web page:

www.ebgpresby.org

Facebook page:

www.ebgpresby.org

"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel..." Numbers 24:17

It's December already, and 2023 will soon be behind us and only remain in our memories. As my family and I voyage in the fifth year with Ebensburg church, we continue to count our blessings. As I stated four years ago, I still have a lot to say, but little space to fit this overflowing and heartfelt thank you to all of you and to God the Almighty.

My family have been touched by your love, kindness, acceptance and are grateful for your inspiring welcome since our first Sunday worshipping with Ebensburg Presbyterian church on November 3rd, 2019. We appreciated and still appreciate your gifts to our needs, love to our souls, your skills and time as you continued to support us in many ways to settle in Ebensburg.

I'm privileged and blessed to be your pastor and a friend in the service for the Lord. There is nothing a human being needs more in this world than to seek God's will and to be loved by their neighbors. You have been my neighbors and are my friends. A friend in the Anyuwaa language is "Nyaawat" with a deep meaning. It means someone who "peels," "skins away," or "remove" as in peeling a banana or removing hard shell or stains to make you whole, clean, and usable or someone eager to help ease pain or help you find your true self amid circumstance. So, you are my friends.

Through the four years you have helped me find myself, gain deeper experiences and grow in Christ. You are fellow ambassadors in Christ's kingdom, and you have stepped in to minister with me. You did not leave me to struggle alone. You helped me finish my DMin. program and write a book, my children fitted in and have been supported both in our church and in the school setting, only because of your support. Whether or not I make it to the fifth year with Ebensburg church, please know that I am grateful!

As many of you might have learned, Colver and Ebensburg will part ways and will no longer bound to the "shared agreement" due to financial constraints to support a fulltime pastor. Therefore, as we begin this new journey, I pray that both churches continue to serve God in their new context. I pray that the Lord continues to bring servants to the harvest as we seek His face for guidance (1 Cor. 3:9) for both churches. May the Lord guide us in discernment as we aspire for an inspiring future of our both churches despite current hardships.

This month four years ago, I went to my first and the last Presbytery meeting in Smock, Pa. As Jim Stratton drove us back from the meeting, I kept gazing at trees and the beautiful landscape in this area. I snapped some pictures along as I marveled at the wonders of God's creation. I remembered how green this place was in August 2019 when I first visited Ebensburg and Colver. As usual, trees have given up and changed to grayish color and/or no leaves at all. It's the season, but trees await another season. Everything in this world passes through seasons and awaits the fulness of glamour of life.

~continue to page 2~

Advent is here! Advent is when we anticipate “His Coming,” where we start lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love while awaiting Christ’s Birth on Christmas. From Advent through Christmas is my favorite time of the year and am sure many of you would agree with me. Despite the winter cold, snowy evenings and when we yearn for warmth, our eyes stare at the outdoor lights and sometimes we see glimpse of candle lights through windows in the neighborhood. It feels as if the Lord speaks into the “formless void” once again saying “let there be light,” and there we see lights! It’s a favorable time of the year because we are reminded of God’s mercy and faithfulness in renewing promises. We are also prompted to do the housing-keeping business of our lives.

As such, during this time of the year, as we look at trees dropping their leaves, we are reminded of God’s promising prophecy to Israel in the Book of Isaiah. The Jesse dynasty was long gone, laid bare and considered dead. Nonetheless, the Lord visited Jesse with favor. God promised a new stem shooting up from that lifeless trunk. That a “new Branch bearing fruit from the old root” will be born (Isaiah 11:1).

Like trees, our hearts longs for “Scepter arise” and shine in our darkness and light up the manger where Jesus is found. As the Lord renewed Israel’s hope and gave life to the spiritless experience of Jesse, the Lord shall visit us and remains in our hearts as we celebrate Christmas. The Lord will guide, shower us with mercy, and give us a renewing spirit. At Christmas, Christ finds space and he is born new in the Inns of our hearts, remains Emmanuel, and our friend— “*nyaamat.*”

Let us remember in our prayers our churches, the world, our nation, and our young generation that the light of Christ may shine in their world. May the Lord lead us into the year 2024, with renewed hope and aspiring spirit. Amen!

Merry Christmas
Pastor Owar



Advent Devotionals

Please Check the link below and there will be printed copies in the church. Please contact the church if you need a copy sent to you. Thank you

[advent_devotionals_2023_11292023.pdf \(pcusa.org\)](https://www.pcusa.org/advent-devotionals-2023-11292023.pdf)

The tradition surrounding an Ethiopian Christmas [Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church]

By Ann Kumpf

You might be wondering why Ethiopians celebrate Christmas on January 7 and not on December 25. While much of the world follows the Gregorian calendar, Ethiopia uses a 365-day calendar based on the Coptic calendar. Ethiopia, along with other Orthodox churches calculate the birth of Christ to be on January 7. Not only do they differ on the day, but they disagree on the year of Christ's birth. On the Ethiopian calendar, Christ's birth is seven years later, making it only 2012 in Ethiopia. That is a lot to wrap your mind around!

Christmas, or Genna (meaning imminent), as it is called in Ethiopia, is more closely tied to spiritual meaning and is not as commercial as it is in other countries.

Preparation for Genna begins 43 days prior with a period of fasting. The clergy and devout Orthodox Christians spend these 43 days, known as the Feast of the Prophets, preparing their body and soul for the day of the birth of Christ through fasting and prayer. During this time, only one vegan meal is eaten each day.

Christmas celebrations begin with special church services that begin very late in the evening on Christmas Eve and lasts well into the early morning on Christmas Day. Some celebrants attend services all night while others begin their services at 3:00 am!

Many Ethiopians don traditional white wraps called Shamma, made of thin white cotton with brightly colored stripes on the end. City dwellers may wear white Western clothes. Dressed in white, Ethiopian Christians travel through the streets, going from church to church to celebrate. Traditional services are marked by singing and chanting performed by priests and deacons wearing colorful robes with gold and silver accents.

As with many holidays around the world, Christmas (Genna) has traditional food associated with it. Many followers who have been fasting begin their days with a drink made from flaxseed to prepare their digestive tract to receive food once again. Following that, families gather to enjoy a feast of Doro Wat, a spicy chicken stew, and Injera, a flat sour bread.

Many bleary-eyed celebrants enjoy traditional Ethiopian coffee on Christmas, as well. One fun fact that ties Ethiopian coffee to the Christmas story is that legend holds that the three wise men, or Magi, who visited the Christ child came from Ethiopia. **To this day, when daily coffee is served, it is brewed three times using the same beans in memory of the three kings, Abol, Tona and Baraka.** Traditions says that the three kings drank coffee in an effort to stay awake during their long journey to see Jesus.

While church, food and family celebrations are also part of the Western Christmas festivities, Ethiopians additionally have a unique Christmas sport, also called Genna, that is part of the celebration. Much like hockey, this sport is played with wooden sticks and a wooden ball and is mostly played by young men. Ethiopian tradition holds that the game began with the shepherds of the Christmas story. When they heard of the birth of Jesus, they were so overwhelmed with joy that they playfully took their shepherd staffs and spontaneously began playing a game in the fields.

Gift giving does not play a prominent role in Ethiopian culture. Gifts given on Christmas are typically gifts of new clothes given to children or small gifts to friends and family.

We can all agree that Christmas looks very different in Ethiopia, but at the core of it all, one simple truth remains – Christmas is rooted in the celebration of the birth of Jesus and what that means for us today. Beyond the food, games and gifts, no matter where we live, the heart of Christmas is summed up in these three hopes for mankind: ***Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth and Good will towards man (Luke 2:14).***

In [*The tradition surrounding an Ethiopian Christmas - The Caribbean Camera*](#)

New Prayer List for 2024

We will be starting a new prayer list for 2024. If you have any names you would like added to the Prayer List, please call the church office at (814) 472-6920 or drop the names in the Offering Plate.

2024 Giving Envelopes

We will be preparing the 2024 giving envelopes.

If there are any corrections or additions from last year's information, please notify the church office.

Christmas Cards for Wounded or Ailing Veterans

When filling out your Christmas cards this year, take a few minutes to remember our veterans by sending a card to the following :

V.A. Medical Center
Volunteer Services Dept.
2907 Pleasant Valley Boulevard
Altoona, PA 16602

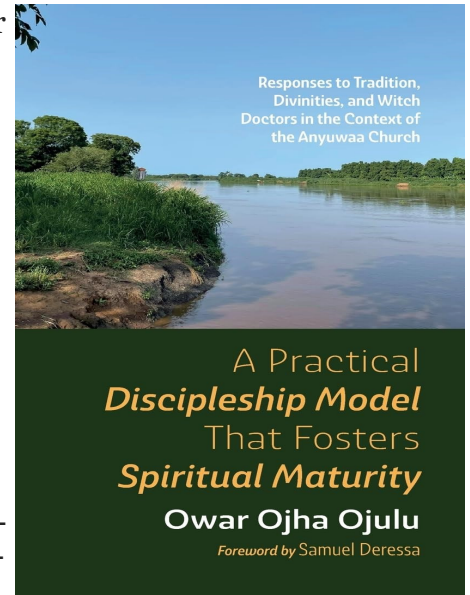
Hollidaysburg Veterans Home
Volunteer Service Dept.
500 Municipal Drive
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Mail the cards yourself or bring them to the church by December 10th and we will send them.

Owar has written a Book!

With your blessings and support pastor Owar was able to write a book. He been working on this book (turning my doctorate thesis to a book), and a publisher accepted his proposal in May 2023 and finally published it early November and became available on online platforms around the world.

Though the book responds to the Anyuwaa context (where Mr. Ojulu originally came from), this book is a resource for personal inspiration, faith growth, for a Bible study, self-discipline, and discipleship, as well as for group discussions. As Hunter Farrell insighted, this book can be used for "US Christian leaders seeking to help their churches become more faithful and relevant to the world" around them and beyond. He said, "Based on a lifetime of ministry in western Ethiopia and among the Anyuwaa diaspora in North America, Owar Ojulu proposes a culturally appropriate discipleship as a strategy to help the Anyuwaa church reclaim the gospel in their own context. This book can help the Anyuwaa church and US Christian leaders seeking to help their churches become more faithful and relevant to the world." --B. Hunter Farrell, director, World Mission Initiative, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary



As you can read from the book, lack of Biblical institution for theological studies in Gambella Ethiopia, has been a contributing factor to the lack of in-depth faith growth and Biblical understanding among the Anyuwaa Christians. Usually, church leaders are sent to Addis Ababa or other parts of Ethiopia, and many miss the opportunity due to lack of resources to afford sending leaders to Theological institutions in other parts of Ethiopia. Therefore, the proceeds from the book will solely support the establishment of a Bible school/Seminary in Gambella Ethiopia, as Owar said.

So, please help spread the news, encourage friends, church members, and colleagues and other local churches to order the book and support this cause. Mr. Ojulu depends on our help. Let us be voices for spreading this good news. Orders can be made through Amazon or from Wipf & stock publishing website and see below. Rev. Ojulu will sign copies on Sunday, December 17th during our church's Christmas dinner event after the Sunday service.

Links to both paper back, kindle version and hard cover of book can be found below:

Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Discipleship-Fosters-Spiritual-Maturity/dp/1666783765/ref=mp_s_a_1_1?crid=254MD5JMMYNLE&keywords=owar+ojulu&qid=1699978759&sprefix=owar+ojulu%2Caps%2C102&sr=8-1

Wipf and stock: [A Practical Discipleship Model That Fosters Spiritual Maturity- Wipf and Stock Publishers](#)

Merry Christmas from our Family to yours!

Help make Christmas merry for local students!

Mission and Family Life Committees are collecting the items listed below. If you would like to help, please bring new unwrapped items to the church by December 10, 2023.

Wish List

- Board Games
- Card Games
- Puzzles
- Art Kits
- Lego Sets
- Barbie
- Squishables
- Stuffed Animals
- Hot Wheels
- Walmart Gift Card
- Sheetz Gift Card
- Socks
- Hygiene Products
- Books
- Gym Shoes



**Youth Group:
Resumes in 2024**

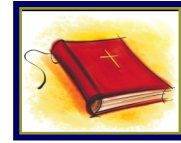


Paige Forberger	December 6
Sylvan Vietmeier	December 9
Roxanne Lamer	December 10
Holly Lyons	December 18
Martha O'Brien	December 18
Carol Vaughn	December 25

Happy Anniversary

Ed & Donna Huttenhower	December 18
Bennett & Carol Vaughn	December 31

Sunday Scripture Readings



December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

Tear open the heavens and come down; save us from our sin.
Restore us, O God; let your face shine, and save us.
God will strengthen you while you wait for Christ's coming.
In those days the stars will fall from heaven; keep awake.

December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

Comfort my people; a voice cries: prepare the way of the Lord!
God will speak peace; faithfulness and righteousness will meet.
God is patient with us, but the day of the Lord is coming.
In the wilderness, John baptizes and proclaims the one to come.

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
or Luke 1:46b-55
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

The spirit of the Lord is upon me; I will rejoice in my Savior.
When the Lord restored our fortunes, we shouted with joy.
My soul magnifies the Lord, who has done great things.
Rejoice, pray, give thanks; may God keep you until Christ's coming.
John came to testify to the light, so that all might believe.

December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55
or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

The Lord will build a house for David and his descendants.
My soul magnifies the Lord, who has done great things.
I will sing of God's steadfast love and faithfulness to David.
Glory to God for the mystery now revealed to all peoples!
The angel Gabriel appears to Mary; her child will be God's Son.

December 24, 2023

Nativity of the Lord / Christmas Eve

Colors: White and Gold

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Light shines on people in darkness; a child has been born for us.
Sing a new song to the Lord, all the earth; declare God's glory.
The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.
Jesus is born in Bethlehem; angels tell shepherds the good news.

December 25, 2023

Nativity of the Lord / Christmas Day (Dawn)

Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20

Salvation comes; Jerusalem is restored; the people are redeemed.
The Lord reigns over all the earth; light dawns for the righteous.
We are justified by the grace of Christ, reborn in the Holy Spirit.
To you is born this day a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord.

December 31, 2023

First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

The Lord will give you a new name; you will be a crown of beauty.
Praise the Lord, all creation! God is exalted in heaven and earth.
Through the Son and the Spirit, we may call God Abba, Father.
Jesus is presented in the temple; Simeon and Anna rejoice.

Presbytery of Redstone

Communicate the Word... Carry on the Work...

Change the World.....Together!

November Gathering Highlights

- Gathered together at Jeannette or online, the Presbytery, was treated to another “On the Road with Redstone” video (Redstone YouTube channel) focused on the ministry of that congregation. As moderator of her final meeting, Rev. Dawn Sherwood proclaimed the Word from Matthew 25.
- Ruling Elder Susan Keaney (Newlonsburg) was elected as Vice Moderator of the Presbytery for 2024. Others were elected to standing committees for the upcoming year.
- **The Committee on Ministry presented a revised Ethics policy that now includes language formalizing our practices on boundaries and training for those who serve in positions of religious leadership.**
- Hearing a report on the stabilization of ministry and the election of new elders, the request to dissolve the Administrative Commission for the Sewickley Presbyterian Church was approved. They serve as a shining testimony to the investment in a small congregation by colleagues in the Presbytery.
- **Rev. Marnie Abraham Russell was recognized in her retirement as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. She was honored for her faithful service among many of our congregations.**
- The Inter-Presbytery Leadership Formation program was highlighted. Opportunity for any other ruling elders who might be considering service to the larger church will be available in January. If interested, please reach out to the Presbytery.
- **Rev. Lee McDermott presented “Into the Light: Hope, Faith, and Recovery” from the Addictions Ministry Network. This latest resource provides additional background for the earlier curriculum and guidance for pastors/church leaders.**
- With gratitude for God’s redeeming grace, Executive Presbyter reminded all of us to be those who see the “bush afire” with God’s presence among us and give thanks to the Lord God.

If you need to contact Rev. Dr. Owar Ojulu for any pastoral needs below is his contact information:

Email: ojh3o@yahoo.com

Phone: 507-304-5958 (cell phone)

Ebensburg Presbyterian Church: 814-472-6920



EBENSBURG FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Year to Date as of November 5, 2023

Actual Operating Income: \$ 60,031.58

Actual Operating Expenses: \$ 68,559.22

Gain/Loss: (8,527.64)



2023 Per Capita

2023 Per Capita - Our Per Capita offering, which supports the work of the presbytery, synod and general assembly, has been set at **\$43.50**. We are a connectional church, and we encourage you to submit your per capita as soon as possible! Just mark your envelope or the memo line on your check. We are then responsible for sending this full amount to the Redstone Presbytery. Thank you!

Ebensburg Presbyterian Church

December 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 <i>First Sunday of Advent</i> Communion Worship 11 AM	3	5 <i>Point of Service NA</i> 6 PM	6 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Paige Forberger</i> <i>Bible Study 7 PM</i>	7	8	9 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Sylvan Vietmier</i>
10 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> <i>Worship 11 AM</i> <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Roxanne Lamer</i>	11 <i>Session Meeting</i> 7 PM	12 <i>Point of Service NA</i> 6 PM	13 <i>Bible Study 7 PM</i>	14	15	16 <i>NA Business Meeting 9:45 AM</i>
17 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> <i>Worship 11 AM</i> <i>Congregational Meeting and Christmas Dinner following worship</i>	18 <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Holly Lyons and Martha O'Brien</i> <i>Happy Anniversary Ed & Donna Huttenhower</i>	19 <i>Point of Service NA</i> 6 PM	20 <i>Bible Study 7 PM</i>	21	22	23
24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> <i>Worship 7:30 PM</i>	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i> <i>Happy Birthday</i> <i>Carol Vaughn</i>	26 <i>Point of Service NA</i> 6 PM	27 <i>Bible Study 7 PM</i>	28	29	30
31 <i>Worship 11 AM</i> <i>Happy Anniversary Bennet & Carol Vaughn</i> <i>New Year's Eve</i>						

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