

---

**The Pastor's Searchlight—January, 2025: "Hordos the Madman" (*The One Year Book of Amazing Stories*, R. Petterson)**



His subjects called him Hordos the Madman. Yet few kings have suffered the hatred that he endured dismissed him as a social climber. The political establishment resented him as an outsider. Patriots despised him as Rome's puppet king. Religious leaders condemned him as a heretic and a hedonist. Hordos desperately tried to win the hearts of his subjects. He almost bankrupted his treasury building them a spectacular temple. He pulled off an unparalleled engineering feat when he constructed the world's greatest seaport. He did the impossible by erecting a city atop towering cliffs in the desert. Hordos wore himself out building highways, aqueducts, and sports arenas for his people. His efforts earned him the coveted title "philokaisar"—"The One that Caesar Loves." His tiny country gained favored nation status and unprecedented prosperity. Yet all that mattered little to his ungrateful subjects. Almost daily the king uncovered assassination plots. A man can only try so long before his heart shrivels and dies. In the face of ingratitude, Hordos became resentful. Battered by political intrigue, he distrusted everyone. He married ten wives to shore up his political base. Yet his paranoia caused him to fear even his own family. He had his favorite wife executed on trumped-up charges, tortured his mother-in-law to testify against his daughter, and then killed her along with his brother-in-law. He even orchestrated the murder of three of his sons. Surely Hordos had descended into madness. People who looked at him the wrong way disappeared in the night. Holy men who preached against him were burned alive. In his last days, his mind was eaten away by syphilis and his body infested with worms. He obsessed that his passing would cause rejoicing. So he had three hundred leading citizens rounded up and ordered their slaughter at his death so that there would be weeping in the land. Hordos was his Hebrew name. But you know him as Herod the Great. Every Christmas he is remembered for a single act of savagery. To eliminate a potential rival, he ordered the butchery of every baby boy in the vicinity of Bethlehem. It is the one jarring note in a festive holiday season, the horror that mars the happiness of Christmas. But you would be mistaken to think that his attempt to kill the baby Jesus was the act of a madman. Herod understood that there can be only one king in a kingdom. Two people cannot occupy the same throne. It had to be either Jesus or him. One had to die if the other was to live. Isn't that exactly the message of King Jesus? "You have to die to self if I am going to live in you. You have to get off the throne if I am to reign in your life. Herod was sane enough to figure that out. Maybe we are the crazy ones when we divorce Christmas from the Cross. Herod grasped this much gospel truth:

***You must either crucify or crown Jesus, but you can't compromise with him.***

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

(Luke 1:51-52, NIV)

"Maybe we are the crazy ones when we divorce Christmas from the Cross." We love to dwell on the sentimentality of a baby in a manger...cooing over the "cuteness" of a scene with lambs laying around the infant. We so often don't engage in the reality that this infant would grow up to be our Savior, willingly surrendering himself to mockery, a kangaroo court, torturous lashing with a cat o' nine tails, carrying his own cross to Golgotha while battling blood loss and dehydration, enduring the absolutely brutal and heartless form of death known as crucifixion for over three hours, abandoned by most of his "loyal" following, as he died feeling abandoned by his heavenly Father as the result of carrying the sin of all humankind...past, present, and future...leaving our Father unable to look directly at his Son as he carried the sin of the world, and turned His back until Christ's mission was accomplished. The "ugliness" of this whole scene means the GIFT of eternal life and love for us, AND it was all planned that way by our God! How amazing and how astonishing is this plan that God was "born" to die FOR us! Christ's life and death was the epitome of self-sacrifice and servanthood...the exact opposite of our culture, our history, our current nation. Let us pray as we enter 2025, that we will follow in Jesus' footsteps and not those of our selfishness and blind ego! May the Holy Spirit guide and direct us!

**In Christ, Pastor Dave ([reved87@verizon.net](mailto:reved87@verizon.net))**

---

**All Are Welcome to Join Us for our Adult Study Group on the book of Acts!** We meet on Tuesdays (1/7 @ Bob Evans) 1/14, 21, 28 @ Grandview Manor Apartments in the Activity Room on the ground floor (Davison Avenue, near E. Grandview Ave.) @ 10:30am (refreshments & coffee are provided).



**We celebrate in-person worship services on Sundays, but we will also continue to live-stream** our Sunday morning worship experiences (9:30am @ "ErieEAPC" & 11am @ "belle.church" and the pastor's personal page "Dave Edmunds") and our Wednesday Live! devotional experiences (6:30pm) on the pastor's personal Facebook page: "Dave Edmunds" on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays. Know that we are all praying daily for you, for our ministries, our mission, those who have been especially hit hard by this crisis, our Ghanaian Mission Partnership, and our world!



**BVPC PRAYER CONCERNS:** Randy Swonger, Paulie Melquist, The Baker Family (passing of 3 yr. old son, Carson), PJ Palumbo, Nick Nasibyan, Lois Zollars, Strobel Family, Sam Romano, Rebecca Stallard, Kellogg Family, Courtney Tate, Cheryl Schultz, Noah Brower, Samantha Pendzich, Ken Bliss, Crystal Gardner, Harlan Magers, Denny Clemens, Becky DeMarte, Anna Anderson, Sarah Lepovsky, Walter Nunemaker Sr., Jerry Kennedy, Camille Jimerson, Joe Helsley, Jeanette Komorek, Dotty Hoover, Sandy McConahy, Tony Vacanti, Fred Marshall Jr., Dawn & Bob Trojanovich, Jolene Carner & family, Jane Clinger, Kim Wurzbach, Sandra Sauder, Leonie Degnan, Jack Larsen, Chelsie Belden, Linda Jarzynka, Janine Johnson, Jack Donovan, Char & Zach Napierkowski, Diana Marie, Bea & Dan Reese,

Becky Fuller, Dale Teribery, Missy Zimmer, Pam Crants, Sarah Richards, Tim Grant, Tyco Swick, Sullivan Bruder, Rachel Fabrizio, Patty Smolinsky's nephew (Adam), Andre Boorady, Jackie Roddy, Nohade Boorady. **BVPC Mission Efforts:** Girl Scouts, OLOMC Food Pantry, BVFD, BVES (including Angel Tree, backpack food prog. & teachers' supplies effort), 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant Sunday Suppers & The Upper Room Lunch efforts; Ukrainian & Middle Eastern warfare; Victims of the New Orleans ramming incident; Systemic racial injustice; Senseless gun violence; The southern border refugee crisis; Current military services personnel; the Ghana mission partnership (*We pray especially for the Chereponi District: 11 churches, 528 members, and District Pastor M. L. Agbovi*); Josh Heikkila (*our PCUSA W. Africa Liaison*); the Wapuli Health Clinic; The President, VP, Senate, House, Supreme Court—wisdom & justice; **Presbytery prayers:** Revs. Robin Cuneo, Rachel Johns, Jim Haas, Jim Rimmer, and Jim McCormack.

**BVPC January Birthdays:**

January 11<sup>th</sup> Charlene Napierkowski: 5149 Henderson Road, Lot 47, Erie, PA. 16509  
 14<sup>th</sup> Chris Tombaugh: 2258 Delphos Drive, Erie, PA. 16509  
 27<sup>th</sup> Steven Beebe: 4801 Conway Street, Erie, PA. 16509  
 28<sup>th</sup> Tim Edmunds: 8874 Ennis Drive, Erie, PA. 16509



**Please Minister to Members Challenged by Chronic Health Issues** (cards, calls, visits, and prayer): Dan & Diane Horton: 5 Little Pine Place, Franklin, PA, 16323 (814-657-2663); Harry Krahnke: 4210 Davison Ave., 16504 (#504, 814-315-8359); Paul (Doc) & Linda Wetzel: 10540 Sampson Rd., Waterford, PA. 16441 (814-825-2070); Ellie Logan: 819 W. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Apt. 211, Erie, PA 16502 (814-520-1190).

Please do your best to continue your regular giving, and for those able, please increase your giving to cover those who have been negatively impacted by this pandemic's financial hardships. **Financial Report YTD thru November, 2024: Operating Revenues YTD Received: \$112,141.25; Operating Expenses Paid Out: \$114,941.21; Leaving a shortfall of \$2,799.96.** Please reach out to **Albert Boorady** (treasurer, [bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:bvp16510treasurer@gmail.com), 814-218-2544) if you'd like to learn how to set up BVPC as a regular payee with your bank automatically! And **be aware that you can always donate online at BVPC's website as well** (though there will be a small fee charged by the online donation service—something your bank won't do if you use them to set up BVPC as a regular payee). *Please continue to pray for BVPC's ministries and your financial giving! The next few years will be a real test of our faith, our obedience to God, and our endurance during very thin financial conditions!*

**"Per Capita" Giving:** For those who are able to pay their Per Capita for 2025 (**\$35 per member**), use a pew offering envelope. Your "Per Capita" giving supports many significant mission efforts throughout our presbytery and the world-wide Presbyterian Church. Pray about your gift to our larger church mission efforts!

**2025 Slate of Officers:**

**Elders:** Chris Tombaugh, Stacey Simons, Sandy McConahy, Leslie Sickles, Doug Ebert, Mary Ann Rice (filling a one-year term for Dave Sickles); **Clerk:** Kim Ragen, **Treasurer:** Albert Boorady

**Deacons:** Kim Ragen, JoAnn Barber, Kathy Simons, Anne Campbell, Becky Cousins, Corey Rice

**Audit Committee:** Chris Tombaugh, Rita Postlewaite, Fred Ebert (3 yr. term)

**Memorial Committee:** Bonnie Marshall, Melody Lewis, Nancy Marzka (3 yr. term)

**At-Large Nominating Committee:** Dave Sickles, JoAnn Barber, Kim Ragen, Doug Ebert

**Schedule Your Children for Lead Screening Today!** Erie County has the 10<sup>th</sup> highest number of children poisoned by lead in all PA counties. And only 21% of Erie County children are screened for lead! Lead can cause damage to the brain/nervous system, slow growth/development, learning/behavioral problems, hearing/speech problems. Call your family doctor or the EC Dept. of Health (814-451-6549) to get more info or schedule a screening.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, Epiphany Sunday:** "Un-Hanging of the Greens" after worship.
- **Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, "Acts" Study Group,** 10:30am Returns
- **Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday Live!** 6:30pm Livestream Returns
- **Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>, Installation/Ordination of 2025 Officers** (during worship); Coffee Hr. after worship.  
**Joint Effort of BVPC & EPC to serve at 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant Sunday Suppers, 3pm**
- **Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 3pm, Bubble-Up Zoom mtg.**

- **Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>, Deadline for turning in annual committee reports**

**The Deacons** would like to be told if any of our members are turning 80 or older. Membership and Fellowship committee likes to honor these folks with a special coffee hour. Please let Kim know (814-392-5831). The Deacons would also like to thank everyone that donated to our Angel Tree. We had 38 gifts for the girls at Belle Valley Elementary and several for the Erie High School girls. I was told that the mom who received the gifts for her girls, was very blessed for them. If anyone needs services from the Deacons, please contact Kim at 814-392-5831.

**“Un-Hanging of the Greens” Jan. 5**, after worship! Plan to stick around and help us un-decorate the church after the Christmas season!

**Thanks to All Carolers** to our Senior Adults & those who baked cookies for our gifts of cookie containers! We had such a good group of carolers (Fred, Doug, & Sally Ebert; Kathy & Stacey Simons; Dave & Leslie Sickles, Pastor Dave). We appreciate all your help this past Christmas season!



**Help for Heating Costs!** LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) offers heating assistance grants from Nov. 4, 2025 through April 4, 2025. These grants range in amounts from \$200-\$1,000. Who qualifies?

**Household Size:** 1 w/annual income of \$22,590, 2 w/annual income of \$30,660, 3 w/annual income of \$38,730, 4 w/annual income of \$46,800, 5 w/annual income of \$54,870, 6 w/annual income of \$62,940 (each additional member, add \$8,070). How apply? Online @ [www.LIHEAPhelps.com](http://www.LIHEAPhelps.com), or call the LIHEAP hotline, 1-866-857-7095.

Our Stewardship campaign is wrapping up, so if you are still planning to return your estimate of giving card, please do so as soon as possible so that we can finalize the budget for 2025. Thank you all for your support of our church!



**Thanks to All!** My family and I truly appreciate the generous Christmas gift given to me at the Christmas Eve service! I so appreciate your thoughtfulness! –Pastor Dave