

Echoes from ECCO

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Visit us on the web at www.conferencecenter.org

Weddings at ECCO



For many years we've fielded a number of inquiries for weddings on our beautiful grounds, and we've had to refuse just about all of them. Until now. That's changed, just a bit.

We're now scheduling Christian weddings on a limited basis. If the date of your special day is flexible,

ECCO may be just the spot for you. Due to the nature of our conference-center business, wedding availability is usually limited to Sunday through Thursday. During December, however, more dates are often open.

Wedding settings include St Francis of Assisi Outdoor

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Our Mission

ECCO is a center of renewal and beauty, where education, growth, service and prayer come together for the glory of God.

Retreat Planning, Part 2— Communicate with ECCO

Last month we discussed the importance of defining the purposes and goals of your retreat. With that step under your belt, the next is to establish communication with ECCO's Guest Services Department.

Step 1: Define your needs

- How many do you attendees you expect?
- How do you want to house them (doubles, quads, singles, dorms)? This determines how many lodge rooms you'll need.

- When do you want to arrive and when do you want to leave?
- How many meals do you want? (i.e., from dinner Friday night through breakfast Sunday)
- How many meeting rooms do you require?
- Any other special needs you can identify (i.e., LCD projector, overhead projector, easels, etc.)

"Why do I have to know all of this NOW, when

my retreat isn't for nine months?"

We often accommodate more than one group at a time and must allocate our resources among all of you. Changes are sure to occur before retreat-time, but thinking about your setup well ahead makes coordination among groups simpler. For example, if you decide two days before your program that you need an LCD projector, we might not be able to

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Next month:

Securing a Super Support Staff



Retreat Planning . . .

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supply one if other groups have requested it already.

Step 2: Appoint a “Point Person” to be your ECCO contact

It’s vital for everyone’s sanity that your group select one person to communicate with ECCO. That person should be accessible throughout all stages of the planning, development and execution of the event, including arrival day. Questions raised by members of the retreat team should be channeled through the appointed person.

Step 3: Arrange an ECCO tour

If you haven’t conducted a retreat at ECCO before, it’s very helpful to plan a tour with our Guest Services Department. These must be scheduled in advance, so you can be sure ECCO staff is available and that all the

facilities you want to see are accessible. (Facilities in use by groups cannot be viewed.) You’ll have the opportunity to acquaint yourself with your lodging assignment, meeting rooms and the general layout of the facility, plus you’ll be able to ask the inevitable questions that come to mind as you discuss your needs with our staff.

Step 4: Meet all ECCO deadlines, per your contract

Our contract spells out certain deadlines groups must meet, including but not limited to:

- Deadline for payment of deposit and return of contract
- Submission of Certificate of Insurance
- Submission in writing of rooming assignments, meeting room needs

- Remittance of final payment
- Your retreat schedule (very important!), so we can resolve any questions or potential conflicts with other groups

Most of these are due no later than 14 days prior to the beginning of your retreat, but review your contract carefully and often to make sure you take all action required in a timely manner.

Effective communication with ECCO is probably one of the most crucial components of a successful program. Please don’t hesitate to call or email our [Guest Services Department](#) if you have any questions about any aspect of our collaboration with you.

It is our mission and our ministry to work with you to make your retreat the best it can possibly be.§

Weddings at ECCO

(Continued from Page 1)

Chapel and Sumner Walters Chapel with its spectacular Yosemite Firefall stained glass window. (See page 3 for more about the window.)

To begin the planning process, contact Melva at 559/683-8162 or email her at ecco@sti.net to discuss possible dates.

Weddings at ECCO must include both ceremony and reception.

A reception in Lyles Dining Hall, can accommodate up to 200 guests.

Our kitchen staff is happy to prepare menus ranging from casual appetizers to formal sit-down banquets. Prices vary according to the menu selected. Ask to see a current list of menu choices and prices.

An added bonus is the possibility of booking housing at ECCO for your out-of-town

attendees. Overnight and weekend packages, when available, can accommodate a variety of budgets.

To assist you in completing your wedding package, we are able to refer you to ministerial staff, music and photographers.

If ECCO’s beauty and tranquility appeal to you, let us see if we can help you make your day live up to your dreams.§



Photos by Donna Lalev

The Story (and the Man) Behind ECCO's Magnificent Stained-Glass Window

As so often happens at ECCO, one thing just naturally leads to another. As we were in the process of editing a brochure featuring the glorious stained-glass window in Sumner Walters Chapel, we got into a discussion about the meaning behind the window. Of course each of us had a different understanding of its origins . . . So we decided to go to its creator, Corky Normart.

Mr. Normart explained how the window, installed in 1997, evolved.

“It came about when I was at ECCO on a retreat with Father Bernie (Flynn) from St. Columba and saw the window covered up from the outside.” Normart wrote. “When I asked why, it was explained that the sunlight beaming directly into the room was so bright the window had to be boarded over.

“The design is based on the firefall at Yosemite. The dove was requested by the Bishop symbolizing the dove that descended onto Christ's shoulder at the River Jordan.

“I'm pleased that it has served both to add a spiritual feel to an otherwise quite featureless room and also to block the sun from the eyes of those in attendance.”

A. F. “Corky” Normart is a native Fresnan who attended local public schools, Fresno City College and Fresno State where he graduated in 1953 with a BA in Fine Arts. After graduation he worked as a newspaper and television artist in Fresno and Denver, Colorado, eventually starting his own advertising agency in Fresno. He has been active in many areas of fine art since his college days, including watercolor, stained glass and the design of sculpture.

In 1994, Normart was commissioned to design the Dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which he calls his

most meaningful project. The dome, over the site where Jesus Christ was entombed, was completed in 1997 .

The Jerusalem project and Normart's watercolors were featured in an exhibit at the Fresno Art Museum in 1997 and at the American Bible Society Gallery in New York in 1998.

He is now occupied full-time in creating faceted glass windows, sculpture, painting and designing contemporary furniture in metal and glass. He was named Artist of the Year by the Fresno Arts Council in 1997 and has received numerous awards locally and throughout the state for his watercolors.

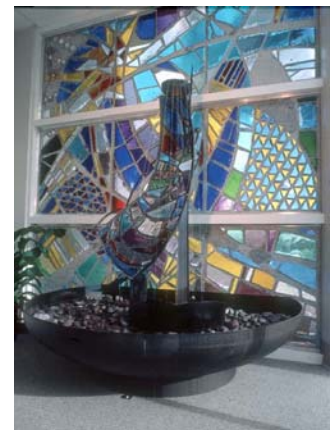
His faceted glass work includes the sanctuary for the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Fresno, the chapel design and the glass wall for Central California Children's Hospital, the eighteen side windows at St. Paul Newman Center at CSUF, the Evergreen Conference Center at Oakhurst, Christ the King Church in Riverbank, College Community Church and University Presbyterian Church in Fresno, St. Columba Church, St. Albans in Los Banos, St. Mary's Church in Fresno and the chapel of the California Armenian Home and various residential installations. He also completed, in 2006, a glass and aluminum mobile for the new wing of the St. Agnes Medical Center in Fresno and in 2007 installed a large stainless steel and glass sculpture at the Woodward Park Library.

He is currently working on a commission for a sculpture in the new wing of the Fresno County Juvenile Court building.

He is the father of two grown children and, with his wife, Janice, enjoys being with his two grandchildren when he is not creating art or trying to play golf. §



“Yosemite Firefall” stained-glass window at ECCO—photo by Donna Lalev



Fountain & Stained Glass window at Kaiser Permanente Chapel in Fresno—photo courtesy of Corky Normart

ECCO Commission Member's Son Helps Train Iraqi Air Force

The Iraq War hits close to home when we hear about those with ties to our community who are doing their part to try to bring about peace, stability and autonomy to that besieged land.

Lt Col Ted Meyer, US Air Force, the son of ECCO Commission Member R. John Meyer and wife Linda, is currently stationed in Baghdad, Iraq. Since July 2008 he's worked in the Green Zone (aka the International Zone) as Chief of Training, Coalition Air Force Training Team (CAFTT). He's forwarded the information below to let those of us back here know a bit about our country's efforts to help train Iraqi forces to become responsible for their own security.

CAFTT's mission, under the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) is to train the Iraqi Air Force (IqAF) and advise the Iraqis as they rebuild their airpower service. CAFTT generates and replenishes Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and improves the quality of ISF and their performance in the process. The training section led by Lt Col Meyer also manages and assists six subordinate training organizations within Iraq and advises the Iraqi Air Force Chief of Training, Brig Gen Aziz, on leading, improving and expanding IqAF training capacity.

Iraq's first joint-service and cross-ministerial Fire Station Manager's course, an entry-level technical training course within the Iraqi Air Force, graduated from the Iraq Joint National Fire Academy on 5 February 2009. According to the Iraq Fire Academy and MNSTC-I, this was an historic graduation and was preceded by the first joint-service, cross-ministerial Firefighter Apprentice course graduation one



Lt Col Ted Meyer, USAF, son of ECCO Commission Member John Meyer & his wife, Linda.

Photo courtesy of John Meyer.

Month earlier. Iraq achieved a major milestone in rebuilding their infrastructure with the successful conclusion of these two courses.

Iraq First Lieutenant Rad Badr, a member of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, is the lead trainer and manager of the Fire Academy. He stated, "The Iraqi Air Force was founded two and a half years ago and their firefighters are inexperienced, so with their training it's like starting from zero. Civil Defense Corps firefighters, as an organization, have been around longer and have more practical experience because they deal with fire emergencies more often. Training together is very helpful. The Civil Defense Corps firemen can help their brothers in the Air Force to better understand the process."

CAFTT's training division plays a significant role in providing trained Iraqi airmen to support ground and air counter-insurgency operations. Their efforts improve Iraqi Air Force capabilities needed to reduce Coalition involvement in Iraq while contributing to MNSTC-I's mission

to build and increase ISF capabilities and security institutions.

These efforts are reaping rewards and enabling the government of Iraq to assume greater responsibility for population protection and to secure its borders. §



**Sunday, April 12
6:30 a.m.**

**St Francis of Assisi
Outdoor Chapel**

Please join us . . .

for ECCO's Seventh Annual Easter Sunrise Service in our St Francis of Assisi Outdoor Chapel.

The service, led once again by the Rev. Gordon Kamai of Christ Church Anglican and assisted by Deacon Madeline Burton, begins at 6:30 a.m. There is no charge for the service. An optional breakfast follows, at a cost of \$11.00 per person. Reservations are required and can be made by calling Judi at 559/683-8162 or via our secure server at www.conferencecenter.org. §



Mariposa Lilies—
Photo by Donna Lalev

Big Cat Turns Out to Be Douglas Fur II

By Margaret (Maggie) Irwin

When the first snow came to The Grove last December, I had only had my two kittens, Tabitha and Mr. Tom Kitten, for about a month. I happened to see a big tabby cat out on the porch who looked so much like my kittens, it could have been mother or father to them. He was nothing like a feral cat, let me pet him and as it was so cold and snowing, I fed him kitten food although he was very sleek and well fed. I named him Big Cat as he was so much bigger than my little ones.

He stayed around, even helping when I was trying to dig out the snow and ice from my driveway. Friends said, "You have fed him, so now you have another cat." I made him a bed with a blanket in a box under a table on the covered porch.

It snowed again the night of Dec 22/23 and I was set to leave for Christmas in Fresno the next day. The weather wasn't as cold as before and this was a softer snow so I loaded up the kittens in a carrying case and away we went. I left Big Cat some food but I was not surprised when I got back on Dec 27 and he wasn't around.

He came back about a week later and now he comes and goes. I am always pleased to see him. The kittens are bigger now and more active. They look at him through the window and also with the mild weather, they watch him through the screen door and he watches them.

Fast forward to yesterday and I decided to read the January edition of *The San Joaquin Star*. I got to Douglas Fur's column and found out that my Big Cat is in fact ECCO's Douglas Fur II. I had thought I recognized him at first but didn't think he would travel that far and still is making the trip.

He will always be welcome at C-3 in The Grove.

He must have known I am an Anglican.§

Editor's Note: Maggie Irwin is a long-time resident of The Grove Senior Park, at the entrance to ECCO. We'd heard rumors that Douglas had moved in with someone down that way but couldn't confirm who his benefactress was until Maggie stopped by. She graciously offered to write the above article for *Echoes from ECCO*, and Dougie graciously agreed to give up his own column to accommodate hers.



Douglas Fur II back home at ECCO with his favorite blanket

Editor's Additional Note: It appears, as of mid-February, that Dougie has moved back to ECCO, at least temporarily. Maybe it's because his best friends from CalFire are here.



Katie Contreras

You're Invited!

Christ Church Card

Party April 14 at ECCO

With the theme of ***Burst into Spring!***, my good friends, the ladies of Christ Church, are sponsoring the **Annual Card & Game Party at ECCO, Tuesday, April 14th from 9:30am to 3pm.** I'm not allowed to attend but I'm told that it's a great, fun day. The donation of \$15 covers a delicious lunch provided by the ECCO staff, a day of games, door prizes, and surprises. People bring their preferred games and cards and spend a day having fun and enjoying each other. You're encouraged to bring your friends as well.

This is always an especially fun event but space is limited. **Reserve early.** Call Lori Hedvall at 642-3534 for tickets and/or information.§

Let the Games Begin!

The Director's Desk

It was nice to see responses from our "Free Lodging" offer in last month's Echoes from ECCO. The "Free Lodging" program is a blessing to all, and we appreciate the opportunity to *let our ministry help your ministry*.

The snows finally arrived in February, right at the time of our first Elderhostel of the season, a photography class taught by Christine White Loberg. Intrepid souls from Virginia, Tennessee, Indiana (and California) spent two of their five days with us attempting to capture the elusive natural firefall that happens only once a year at Horsetail Falls in Yosemite.

Depending on who you talk to, we had four good snowfalls that left about two feet of snow on the ground. This kept Terry Wardell, our Maintenance Manager, busy day and night. He has finally got caught up on some sleep.

The hard work by everyone at ECCO allowed all of our incoming and outgoing guests (and staff) to enjoy a winter wonderland. One of the groups we hosted, Mountainbrook, brought young people to Oakhurst from the Bay Area, and for many participants it was the first time they'd seen falling snow.

In February we bid goodbye to Guest Services Assistant Kristen Cook. At 28, it was only a matter of time before a special young man entered her life, in the person of Beau Hobbs. He proposed (and even asked Kristen's dad for his daughter's hand). Dad said "yes," Kristen said "yes," and she and Beau are relocating to Sisters, OR, where he's accepted a job. Kristen's parents

are thrilled since they live in Grants Pass, OR, and will get to see a lot more of their offspring. Although we miss her, we're also very happy for her.

Much of our work at ECCO surrounds the upkeep and renovation of our facilities. One project that is developing nicely is our new deck for Lyles Hall. The actual construction is complete; and as the winter goes on, we are finishing the underneath portion, running wiring that will allow expansion of our internet hookups and new lighting that will allow more summer activities. The porch area outside the recreation room will have fluorescent lights to where table tennis and other games can be played. That aspect of the project should be finished by late spring.

As always and with His blessing we at ECCO continue to do our Lord's work. We do this with joyous hearts and the knowledge that He is guiding us. Until we see you at ECCO . . .

Onward and Upward,
Bill Swan

By Bill Swan



William Wallace Swan VI at the World Ag Expo, checking out a new tractor for ECCO



Heather Swan along with ECCO Commission Members Dana Marble and John Meyer check out the exhibits at the annual World Ag Expo in Tulare.

Don't miss out! There's still space available and time to sign up.

Opera at Oakhurst 2009

***Verismo*: Operas that Thrill & Soar!**

April 16-20, 2009

For information, call Judi
559/683-8162 * ecco3@sti.net
www.conferencecenter.org

Splendor in the Sierra Nevada—Join us for our Spring Artists' Creative Weekend—May 8-10, 2009

A journey to ECCO for our second Artists' Creative Weekend—May 8-10, 2009—is a perfect gift for mothers (and daughters and spouses). Think of it. A whole weekend, from Friday dinner through a marvelous Sunday brunch, with time to yourself to pursue whatever activity you most prefer. Because the day ends after breakfast, you still have plenty of time to take mom out to dinner.

Bring your paints, your knitting, crocheting, beading, scrapbooking. Let your imagination run free! Read a book or nap, if you wish. Pick a spot to meditate. Just relax. The time is ALL YOURS.

ECCO provides the meals and the space. You provide the project. Enjoy the companionship of others as you work on your labor of love. Informal workshops may be offered as we get volunteers. Please let us know your area of interest (and your area of expertise if you'd be willing to lead a session).



Yosemite in Springtime—Dogwoods in Bloom

Artists' Creative Weekend—May 8-10, 2009

Price includes 2 nights' lodging and meals from Friday dinner through Sunday brunch. Register NOW. The registration deadline is April 24, 2009.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Lodging Choices: Double—\$126 • Quad (3 or 4 per room)—\$116 • Single—\$192 • Commuter (no lodging)—\$75 • RV (full hookups)—\$80 (prices are per-person and include 2 nights' lodging with meals from Friday dinner through Sunday brunch)

Lodging desired: _____ No. of persons: _____ Amount enclosed: _____

Paid by: Check No. _____

Credit Card: Master Card Visa Amex Discover Card No. _____

Name as shown on card: _____

Expiration Date: _____ Billing address zip code: _____

Make things easy on yourself. You can reserve most ECCO events online

Go to our website: www.conferencecenter.org. Just look for the reservations tab. Click on the event you're interested in and fill out the form. If it's an event with no fees due, you can still complete the form and leave the \$ field blank. If your event isn't listed, click on any reservation bar, write its name in and fill out your contact information. Again leave the \$ field blank. We'll get back to you with any information needed to complete the signup. As Deacon Francie Levy says: "Thank you so much. I will tell others how easy it is to register!!" And now you have, Francie.

Upcoming Events—Mark Your Calendar

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| March 23-25 | Clergy Conference |
| April 12 | Easter Sunrise Service at ECCO* |
| April 16-20 | Opera at Oakhurst 2009—Verismo: Operas that Thrill & Soar!* |
| April 27-29 | Pastors' Prayer Summit—Seeking God Together for the Transformation of our Valley |
| May 8-10 | Artists' Creative Weekend* |
| July 5-9 | "Secrets of Making Watercolor Easier than Breathing"—Watercolor Workshop with Joan Brumley* |
| September 11-12 | Deacons' Retreat |
| October 2-4 | Clergy Wives' Retreat |
| November 9-11 | Clergy Silent Retreat |
| November 25-27 | Thanksgiving Celebration at ECCO* |
| November 27-29 | Artists' Creative Weekend* |

Reserve your space at via our secure server at <https://secure1.giganetmall.com/secureforms/ECCO/reservations.html>. Check our website often, as new events are added regularly.

*As you may know, ECCO is normally available only to groups of 15 or more. On the occasions marked with * above, we welcome individual participation for these events. Please call Judi at 559/683-8162 or email her at ecco3@sti.net for further information.

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