

Church ...

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asked the Church Father to give the invocation ahead of the group’s presentation, during which several members noted that they represented one of the oldest Christian denominations in the world.

A brief overview of the sect’s origins can be found on the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church Wikipedia page including information sourced from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

“According to the Catholic Encyclopedia (1917 edition) article on the Henoticon: around 500 AD bishops within the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem refused to accept the ‘two natures’ doctrine decreed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, thus separating themselves from the rest of Christianity since that time.[10] This separate Christian communion came to be known as Oriental Orthodoxy.”

“The Oriental Orthodox Churches, which today include the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, are referred to as ‘Non-Chalcedonian.’”

The group’s primary spokesman, Yosef Asmerom, told the court that the diocese had identified for the monastic facility a local property, which the real estate team leader stated was the former wedding venue on Murphy Fork.

“This is a momentous time for us,” Asmerom said. “For the past two and a half years, we’ve been on a journey trying to locate a monastery within the United States. A few weeks ago, we came [to Morgan County] looking at a property, and met with [Judge Executive Jim Gazay] and his office staff. “That meeting really solidified for us what Morgan

County represented: We saw in the choices that we were making that you have a deep root in Christ – a community really deeply rooted in Christ and kindness, and a really deep history. And mountains and flowing [landscape] that connect you to nature. We are really excited and grateful that we have been able to identify a property within Morgan County.”

Asmerom gave a brief history of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church before elaborating on his diocese’s plans for the Morgan County monastery, which would be the organization’s first in the United States.

“Why a monastery in Morgan County?” Asmerom asked. “A monastic life is really focused on nothing more than Jesus Christ. John the Baptist and as well as Christ went into the wilderness ... The mountains and valleys, etc. represented a way of connecting to God for Christ. We have been on this journey for quite a while ... We have identified a property that we know will represent our deep roots and connect those dots with Morgan County.”

Additionally, Asmerom stated that the group hopes to grow in the community and be part of Morgan County.

“Our end goal is a prayer campus,” Asmerom said. “The monks will live in the monastery and really dedicate their lives to loving and serving Christ through discipleship and full time intercession for those who are in need ... It’s a place of solitude, and we take nature and incorporate that into it.”

Asmerom further noted that the focus of the monastic life is prayer and the healing of the soul, and allowing for people to come into the monastery for spiritual cleansing amid the pressures of daily life.

Church leaders also indicated that monastery residents would be farming and raising cattle at the Murphy Fork site.

Real Estate Team Leader Mussie Dawit Negesse concluded the presentation by reiterating the group’s desire to locate to Morgan County.

“The jewel of Eastern Kentucky is Morgan County,” Neg-

esse said. “That’s what I heard about. When I found this area I was so happy – the rolling hills, the trees, the flat land ... This is an amazing place and we just want to be part of that. I just wanted to tell you that. Thank you very much.”

Purchase Of Property And Opening Of Monastery

As previously noted in the Courier in October 2025, the Eritrean Oorthodox Tewahdo Church Diocese of the United States and Canada purchased the Murphy Fork property from CBK Farms LLC & Barker Family Farms, LLC for \$2,590,400.

Linda Bradley, an employee of the judge executive’s office, told the Courier last year that the wedding venue’s previous owners were Pike County natives who had relocated to Florida prior to church members’ June 2025 presentation to the fiscal court.

The church diocese hosted the official opening of the monastery in May 2026, with members from throughout the United States and Canada attending the service – as well as invited guests, including Judge Executive Jim Gazay and his wife, Lisa.

In a May 19 Facebook posting from the event – which surfaced on Facebook in recent weeks – church members were pictured in ceremonial robes and hats, with women also wearing traditional head coverings.

Church Beliefs

The following is the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church creed, as it appears on the denomination’s website:

We believe in one God, God the Father, the Pantocrator, creator of heaven and earth, and of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not created; of one essence with the Father by whom all things were made;

who for us men and for our salvation came down from

heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried;

and on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

Ascended into heaven, He sits at the right hand of His Father; and He is coming again in His glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who, with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess one Baptism, for the remission of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.

Amen.

Church members further affirm their beliefs in Christ’s resurrection, the Holy Trinity and the Bible in the Orthodox Church Statement of Faith, which can also be read in full on their website.

Additional Information

For additional information regarding the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church diocese of the United States and Canada, visit the website <https://english.eritreantewahdo.org>.

LVRECC ..

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on Wednesday, Aug. 12. Hours later on the same day, another rain and wind storm hit on an already wind-blown right of way that resulted in another 999 members without power. Many were the same members from the storm just hours before.

Again the lineman – tired, wet and missing their families – worked throughout the night on Wednesday, Aug. 12, to reduce those numbers to just 40 members the following morning. Those 40 were restored by end of day.

The storm that hit late on Sunday, Aug. 16, and into Monday, Aug. 17, caused another 2,000 members to be without power. Incredibly, the linemen had those numbers down to 188 members by 5:30 a.m. Monday morning.

Again, the linemen worked all night in numerous counties on numerous outages. They didn’t stop.

As of this statement at Monday at 3:30 p.m., our outages are down to 10 members with full intentions of only having one member outage by end of day on Monday.

I have said it a million times, but I will say it again: These linemen are resilient, dedicated and focused on what HAS to be done. There is no stop in these

guys until the last member is turned back on.

Don’t get me wrong – it takes all of us, but there is only a certain breed of people that can stay out for the extended hours these guys do:

Changing into dry clothes at 3 a.m. on the side of road.

Going without proper meals for days.

Living off whatever is in the dinner bucket at the time.

This is a tough job only a few can handle. And we have some of the best. Thank a lineman when you see one.

–Travis Stacy
Licking Valley RECC

Meals ..

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Delivered Meal participants until further notice. Individuals seeking Home Delivered Meal services will be placed on a wait list and will be contacted as funding becomes available and enrollment can resume.

The updated schedule for the Morgan County Senior Center is as follows:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 9:00 a.m. -3:00 p.m. Wednesday: Closed.

GADD will continue to evaluate funding availability and program needs as the fiscal year progresses.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There will be a second reading of proposed ordinance (BAFY202703) amending the Morgan County Fiscal Court budget for fiscal year 2027 to include revenues from road fund sources in the amount of \$534, 000.00 and increasing appropriations in the road fund CPPP funds resurface old 172 & Ivy Lane in the amount of \$534,000.00; during a meeting of the Morgan County Fiscal Court to be held on August 27, 2027 at 6:00 pm local time at the County Office Building at 450 Prestonsburg Street, West Liberty, KY. A copy of the full ordinance is available for public inspection in the office of the County Judge Executive.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There will be a second reading of proposed ordinance (BAFY202704) amending the Morgan County Fiscal Court budget for fiscal year 2027 to include revenues from road fund sources in the amount of \$296,082.81and increasing appropriations in the road fund Rd Dept. vehicle/equipment purchase in the amount of \$296,082.81; during a meeting of the Morgan County Fiscal Court to be held on August 27, 2027 at 6:00 pm local time at the County Office Building at 450 Prestonsburg Street, West Liberty,KY. A copy of the full ordinance is available for public inspection in the office of the County Judge Executive.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There will be a second reading of proposed ordinance (BAFY2702) amending the Morgan County Fiscal Court budget for fiscal year 2027 to include adjustments for cash carryover from general fund sources of \$819,975.42; to include adjustments for cash carryover from road fund sources of \$578,861.88; to include adjustments for cash carryover from jail fund sources of \$10,723.59; to include adjustments for cash carryover from LGEA fund sources of 94,102.41; to include adjustments for cash carryover from tiberland taxing fund sources of \$1,518.62; to include adjustments for cash carryover from special projects fund sources of \$223,545.80; to include adjustments for cash carryover from clerk doc fees fund sources of \$16,438.29; and increasing expenditures in the general fund reserve for transfers by \$468,961.89; and increasing expenditures in the general fund sheriffs allotment 27,367.20; and increasing expenditures in the general fund MCFC coroner vehicle/equip coal sev project \$45,000; and increasing expenditures in the general fund MCFC animal shelter vehicle coal sev project \$40,000; and increasing expenditures in the general fund opioid funds \$670.28; and increasing expenditures in the general fund Morgan Co canine search unit \$2,000; and increasing expenditures in the road fund emergency road aid expenditures \$37,900.00; and increasing expenditures in the road fund FEMA DR 4864 projects \$484,249.59; and increasing expenditures in the road fund FEMA DR 4860 Cindas Creek/Old 172 projects \$100.00; and increasing expenditures in the road fund reserve for transfers \$56,612.29; and increasing expenditures in the jail fund reserve for transfers by \$10, 723.59; and increasing expenditures in the LGEA fund volunteer fire dept insurance \$42,054.55; and increasing expenditures in the timberland taxing fund appropriations by \$1,518.62; and increasing expenditures in the special projects reserve for transfers \$23,341.91; and increasing expenditures in the COAG program admin fees by \$17,297.80; and increasing expenditures in the COAG program ag development grant program \$149,193.70; and increasing expenditures in the MC spay and neuter \$248.84; and increasing expenditures in the litter abatement program \$9,373.80; and increasing expenditures in the farmers conservation tire removal \$413.00; and increasing expenditures in the USDA environmental dead animal removal program by \$4,038.98; and increasing expenditures in the clerks doc fees by \$16,438.29; and increasing expenditures in the ABC funds \$19,637.77; during a meeting of the Morgan County Fiscal Court to be held on August 27, 2026, at 6:00 pm local time at the County Office Building at 450 Prestonsburg Street, West Liberty, KY. A copy of the full ordinance is available for public inspection in the office of the County Judge Executive.

Court ...

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Shannon Bowman. Magistrate Eric Pelfrey stated that he wished to speak prior to discussion of the agenda items.

“So, I asked these guys to give me a list of equipment,” Pelfrey said in reference to Foreman Ratliff and Assistant Foreman Bowman. “I’m 100 percent about getting people what they need to work with. But when you go on every road in my district and they’re awful – limbs hanging over the road, weeds so high that they’re falling over in the road – something’s got to be done. I told you all three weeks ago that the roads in my district were awful and we need to do something, but I never got a response back.

“So here’s the thing: I don’t care a bit ... My vote is to get you all whatever you want if we can afford it. But when it’s raining, these guys don’t need to sit up there [at the garage] all day. They can brush cut in the rain. They can mow roads in the rain. There ain’t a thing that says you can’t. Something’s got to be done.”

Assistant Foreman Bowman responded, “It’s not just your district. It’s all of the districts.” “But, here’s the thing,” Magistrate Pelfrey continued. “You guys were on May Branch and I asked you to stop back by and just do it on the way back. Instead of that, you drove all the way to White oak to May Branch. And I appreciate you doing that road. But there were roads I’d asked you to do before that, and you took the tractors and everything past those roads to get back to the county garage.

“Why? Why not leave them in one district and do all the roads in that district, and then move on to another district. Right now you’re skipping all over the county and nothing’s getting done. You’re getting a road here, a road there, when you could get all of [a district] at once. To be honest, you’ve about got to have it year around. There’s nothing that says you can’t brush cut in the winter.”

Foreman Ratliff addressed Magistrate Pelfrey.

“You’re right,” Ratliff said. “Except for us not having the equipment to do it.”

Magistrate Pelfrey cited the possibility of legal issues.

“I called you about Old Elam Road,” Pelfrey said. “People are telling me, ‘Hey, what’s going to happen if I come around this curve and hit somebody because I can’t see? Do I sue the county?’ What am I supposed to say? I told you guys... I said I’ll take my own equipment and do it. Just let me know if you can’t get to it. I never got a response back.”

Foreman Ratliff stated that the crew had mowed Old Elam Road as additional discussion ensued.

“This is just frustrating,” Magistrate Pelfrey said. “We put out a ton of taxpayer money ... You’ve got everything. We spent millions – I don’t know how much exactly – on equipment. What do we need? How many people do we need?”

“We went almost a year without a brush cutter,” Foreman Ratliff responded. “I got the brush cutter fixed and got them both going, and now one’s down again ... We can run two crews at most any day.”

Magistrate Pelfrey asked what the road department needs in regard to ditching.

“More people,” Foreman Ratliff responded. “... You can’t mow, ditch ... You can’t do all this.”

Magistrate Tommy Fannin opined on ditching and various other road department issues.

“I’ve said it before, but there’s a lot coming out of the road department up there that I feel like shouldn’t,” Fannin said. “The sheriff’s gas, and that office manager or whatever. She don’t need to be on there because it’s of no benefit. They do need help... There’s a lot more to be done.”

Magistrate Pelfrey asked Treasurer Easterling about how many more road department employees could be added to the budget.

“The road department payroll was budgeted for the current employees with a 3 percent raise,” Easterling responded as Foreman Ratliff noted that the department currently has eight employees.

Foreman Ratliff also indicated that the department previously had 14 employees when his tenure as roads chief began last year.

Magistrate Pelfrey further discussed magistrates’ authority as pertaining to road issues.

“People just don’t understand that as a magistrate, I can’t go up there and say, ‘Hey, you go there and do this,’” Pelfrey said.

frey said. “That’s not my job.”

Magistrate Fannin concurred.

“No, we just make suggestions,” Fannin said as Magistrate Pelfrey concluded his remarks.

“I can’t force anyone to do anything,” Pelfrey said. “I’ve said my piece.”

Judge Executive Jim Gazay asked if court members wished to ask any questions or make additional comments.

“I’m all about getting them what they need,” Magistrate Brandon Evans replied before inquiring about the costs of the salt truck and the brush cutter.

Treasurer Easterling stated that the total cost of both vehicles is \$296,082.81:

- **Salt Truck (2024 Ford F-550 Extended Cab** – \$128,009.48.

- **Brush Cutter** – \$168,073.33.

Additionally, Treasurer Easterling outlined multiple financing plans from the Kentucky Association of Counties (KACO):

- **Five Years** – Monthly payments of \$5,560.36 or annual payment of \$66,724.31. Interest rate of 4.8 percent.

- **Six Years** – Monthly payments of \$4,747.82 or annual payment of \$56,973.84. Interest rate of 4.85 percent.

- **Seven Years** – Monthly payments of \$4,710.91 or annual payment of \$50,050.91.

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Market ...

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sions, and the 4-H Teen Club will be hosting fun carnival games as well!

There are limited spots for vendors, so please get your applications in as soon as possible!

For additional information regarding this event, contact the Morgan County Extension Office at 743-3292.

Fair ...

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the stage at 8 p.m. Admission will be \$20 on this date.

This event is sponsored by West Liberty Tourism, Giovanni’s Pizza, Commercial Bank and Bank of the Mountains.

Bring your family and friends and enjoy all of the rides and entertainment!