

Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update

December 20, 2023



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advent: the season of the heart, part 4

luke 1 brought two extraordinary stories to us—that of jesus’ conception and of mary’s response to the angel gabriel’s visit. honestly, in all of the years of my ministry, i have never fully known how to process or understand the importance of jesus’ conception without human sexual intercourse. however, this year, i am still hearing echoes from the worship service back in august under the maple tree in the backwoods when we heard the apostle paul say to us (romans 8) that **we are not bodies**—but we are spirit!! i think paul is giving us a clue—that jesus, even though born human, was not his body. we also hear echoes of john 1: in the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with god and the Word was god. jesus christ was at the beginning of creation, in the Word, and luke 1 tell us the story of how he took form. he came into be-ing, to **incarnate** and **be** the love and light of god. the story of his conception invites us to remember that we are also not our bodies, as paul teaches us. our identity does not come from who we are in these lives as bodies, but rather because *we were with god, in the beginning....*

if that isn’t mind blowing enough, then we also have mary’s story—of an angel who meets her and tells her that the spirit of god will come over her and she will conceive and bear a child. i found my self wondering this year—had gabriel gone to other girls with this same message? had it been time for jesus to incarnate and they went to various people looking for someone to say, okay?? we’ll never know if others said “no, i am not willing”—because the story would have hit a dead end. what we get is the story of mary, who—even bewildered and possibly afraid— **allows** the possibility of conception, **accepts** this path, and **consents!!!** the world changed course with mary’s consent and her yes.

this is the 4th week of advent with this extraordinary journey, and we are in liminal time and space, my friends!! there are miraculous turns around every corner, things which are beyond possible. i invite you to hold these stories of jesus’ conception and mary’s consent in your heart and prayers this week. many bible translations use the wording “mary pondered these things in

her heart.” the fact that nothing is impossible for god, and “i am the lord’s servant. let it be with me just as you have said.” and, let us meet together at the manger side!

*Holy Spirit, in this holy moment, you be in charge, and we will follow you,
trusting that your direction will lead us to peace!!*

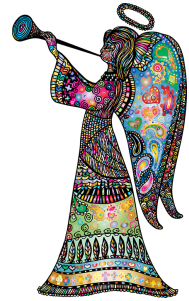
Christmas Eve Worship

On Sunday, December 24, we will not have worship at our usual 10am time but will instead gather at 4pm that afternoon for our candlelight Christmas Eve communion worship service. Everyone is welcome as we celebrate with joy the birth of Jesus and peace for all people.

Note #1: Special choir rehearsal on Thursday, December 21, at 7 pm.

Note #2: Pastor Luna & Phil will be gone from Dec. 25 through the end of the year, visiting Phil’s family in Michigan.

Note #3: There will be worship next week, Dec. 31. It will be a brunch potluck service with the theme of looking back at 2023 and ahead to 2024.



Free Norfolk Pine Trees available after Christmas Eve Worship

This year's Christmas Eve service decor will include some small (4 inch pot) Norfolk pine trees that are available to be adopted after the service. These trees will grow nicely as a house plant for years to come. See Rich or Liz after the service, if you are interested in taking one (or more) of these home with you.

Divine Love in My Words, a book authored by Grant Hammond

Our newly attending couple, Dani and Grant, have shared the information of the book that Grant has newly published. Entitled, Divine Love In My Words, it is a book of poetry and spiritual wisdom written from Grant’s heart! If you are interested in further exploring this book, it can be found [here](#). Congratulations, Grant! And, welcome Dani and Grant!!

New Art for ArtPlayce

We have new art in the sanctuary! Kiri Albrecht Riehle McKibbins, who is Liz’s sister, agreed to share her beautiful acrylic paintings with us, and we hung them on the walls yesterday. Kiri specializes in animals (She does pet portraits if you’re interested!) and landscape and flowers. Her husband Jay has a few of his paintings in the show also. There’s even a self portrait of the two of them included for you to see. Enjoy the new artwork! It’ll be up for a month or two.



INTERFAITH ACTION OF GREATER SAINT PAUL

December Mission: Project Home

December's mission is Project Home, a program of Interfaith Action of St. Paul.

Project Home provides emergency shelter and rapid exit case management services for area families facing homelessness.

In March 2021, Interfaith Action formed a partnership with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Ramsey County to move Project Home to the Provincial House on Randolph Avenue in Saint Paul (1.4 miles from EPC!). In this supportive environment, families have a safe place to live and assistance with finding employment and permanent, affordable housing.

Sara Leigl, of Project Home, visited EPC during last Sunday's service, December 3rd, to talk to us about her program. If you would like to get more involved in this important service work in our neighborhood, visit their website at <https://interfaithaction.org/what-we-do/projecthome/>. Their website also links to the opportunities that Ruth mentioned in worship last Sunday: the Holiday Dignity Shop and ways to provide winter gear.

2023 YearEnd Giving

Thank you for your generous giving to the work and ministry of Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church over the past year. A reminder that for donations to be counted for the 2023 tax year, they need to be received in the church office on or before December 31, 2023. Donations can also be made through the church website by clicking on the GIVE NOW button in the upper left.

December Session Report

Pastor Luna opened the session meeting with a devotion in which she asked session members to share a prayer request for session members to hold in prayer during the coming month.

When we get together for session meetings, we have an agenda. This agenda lists the work that we would like to accomplish. Before digging into this list, we pause to remind each other that we belong to each other, and we invite the Spirit into our work.

Pastor Phil and Elder Jay shared the results of their recent conversation with Dr. Fekadu, Rehoboth's Pastor. This was an encouraging meeting in which we agreed upon strategies to ensure the health of our relationship with the Rehoboth community as we continue to host the Rehoboth community within our building as part of our mission. During this conversation, Rehoboth agreed to pay a monthly building use fee, which they have since paid in advance for the coming six months.

Session members discussed some annual budget and calendar items. These included approving Pastoral housing allowances, electing a Treasurer, setting our communion calendar for the coming year, and voting on approving the congregational membership list. Session approved the salaries of our five employees (Pastor Luna, Pastor Phil, Sol, Jenya, and Krysta). Session members also approved Christmas bonuses for our five church employees. Ron Eggert was enthusiastically thanked for his continued willingness to work as our Treasurer in 2024.

During the portion of the meeting in which the Pastors' report about what is alive for them in their service to EPC, Pastor Phil noted that in January of 2024, EPC will celebrate 70 years in the community! He also reported that Jodie Houge from Humble Walk will be installed at Gloria Dei on February 11th. Session members discussed how our congregation may be involved in this momentous occasion in the life and calling of Pastor Jodi. We hold our Humble Walk brothers and sisters in our hearts as they move into this next chapter in the life of their congregation. Pastor Phil also informed us that he will attend an Enneagram Prison Project workshop in Copenhagen, Denmark, on January 11-16th. We celebrate the rich opportunities for growth and service that Pastor Phil's involvement with this life-affirming work has provided.

We closed the meeting, as we always do, with a prayer. This prayer always includes gratitude for and celebration of our beautiful EPC community. We belong to each other. We live together in the heart of god.

-Elder Jay