

## Mid-week UpDate—October 12, 2016

### Where Do You Hold Your Life?

In church last Sunday, we asked the question, Where do you hold your life? There is not a right or wrong answer, but it is worth paying attention to yourself throughout your day. When you get good news or bad news, do you tend to hold it in your head and analyze it, or do you bring the news to your guts and respond with quick and decisive action? When someone challenges you, do you take that information inside of you or do you hold it out at arm's length? Or maybe, do you turn around and run the other way?! These are all natural responses to the ups and downs of life. Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock." It is Jesus' invitation to open our hearts and lives completely to God in trust. That may sound religiously correct and a fine idea, but now think about how often you actually do it each day. How often during each day do you take a moment to open your heart in trust to God? Here are some examples what it might look like to live in trust:

- Taking a deep calming breath during a difficult moment.
- Noticing with wonder and awe the beauty and joy of being alive.
- Allowing yourself to feel the sadness and grief of a loss in your life.
- Giving thanks / Saying thanks – Gratitude is one of the quickest avenues to trust and openness.
- Acceptance. Say to yourself right now: Everything is exactly as it is supposed to be. Say it again, believing every word. How do you feel now?

Our text for Sunday, Oct. 16 is the parable of the persistent widow from Luke 18:1-8. How do we trust God with persistence and not become discouraged? Pastor Julie will be preaching, and I (Pastor Phil) will be at an all weekend conference on the Enneagram in Hopkins, which was recently offered to me at a price too good to refuse!

### Pastor Review Forum Last Sunday

From Faith Dietz: Good day EPC family, we had a good conversation during the pastor review forum on Sunday. Thank you for those that stayed to engage in conversation. Those that could not stay, please see a copy of the reflection notes (attached to this email) from each of the pastors.

Of particular note are these reflections and questions:

- > The surveys were completed in January 2016 and this process took longer than expected.
- > We are in a different place than we were since the surveys were completed. We have been changed through our distance from the sabbatical time, the Confirmation process, and the discussion around Crescent Cove and our property.
- > We, EPC, are in continual transition. Through the transitions, we ask: Where do we hold ourselves in our lives and in the borderlands (reference to the sermon on Sunday).
- > We have two pastors who are open to conversation, reflection, and new life into not only their roles; but also our roles as congregants.
- > How do we want to support the pastors? Also, how do we support each other within the congregation?

> How do we nurture and trust our relationship with God and bring that to our EPC community, our daily lives, and the larger community?

> How do we trust our relationship with God and live into that reality?

Thank you to everyone involved in going through this process with us. If you have further questions, please check in with Faith Dietz or Bryan Kingsriter.

### Bruce McCall Service

Bruce McCall's memorial service will be on this Saturday, October 15, at church—with visitation at 12:30pm and service at 1:30pm. Afterward, everyone is invited to O'Gara's at Snelling and Selby for a reception. If anyone can bring bars or veggies to share during the visitation, please bring to the church kitchen by 11am on Saturday morning. Thank you!

### Chili / Soup Gathering on Sunday, November 6

Some have been asking about gathering outside of worship. In that spirit of connecting as a community, we will gather after worship on November 6th over soup/chili. A sign up for soup, chili, bread, salad, dessert will be in the narthex. If you know what you want to bring or have questions, contact Faith Dietz. Bring a friend and let us break bread and gather together. Thank you! Faith

### Crescent Cove Task Force

Two big updates from the CC task force:

1. After searching all summer, the task force has (finally!) found a wonderful lawyer who has agreed to represent us pro bono. Laura Krenz is from the firm Lindquist and has a general focus in real estate law with particular experience in church property issues. Thanks be to God!
2. Possibly making the good news of #1 obsolete, we have also learned that Crescent Cove has put a bid on a hospice property for sale in Brooklyn Center. This former adult hospice is being sold for considerably cheaper than CC could build a new residence from scratch. At least one other entity is bidding on the Brooklyn Center property, so we will keep you informed of new developments.

### Confirmation Faith Statements

Confirmands – Session has set a date for the presentation of your faith statements to Session: Sunday, October 23, after worship. If anyone cannot make that date, please contact Pastor Julie or Pastor Phil right away. If you want more feedback about your faith statement, please talk to your mentor or Pastor Phil.

### Lectionary Bible Study with Pastor Phil

The launch date for this new study is now Monday, Oct. 24, at church at 6:30pm. Hope to see you!

### Pastor Julie Invitation to a Clothing Exchange

Plan now to have fun at a clothing swap hosted by Pastor Julie.

Saturday, October 22, 2016

1pm- 3pm

1462 Van Buren Ave., St Paul, 55104

(at the SW corner of Van Buren and Pascal in the midway neighborhood of St Paul)

- Tea and coffee served
- All sizes welcome! shirts, pants, shorts, skirts, dresses, jackets, shoes, purses, belts, scarves, jewelry, fabric, anything fun!!
- Practice letting go (if it doesn't bring you joy, get rid of it), abundance (you take home free stuff), and generosity (anything you don't take goes to Joseph's Coat). if you don't have anything to contribute, no problem---just come and receive!!!
- Please be aware--most items will be displayed in the attic on the 3rd floor, and it is not accessible other than by stairs.

Hosted by julie gebbengreen, in celebration of her upcoming 50th (!!!!!) birthday. your presence and playful spirit will be a present in itself!!

Please come and play!

Also, if you have a daughter or a mother you'd like to share this experience with –  
you can bring her

Breathing, pausing, noticing with wonder, feeling your feelings, giving thanks, accepting –these are the attributes of a trusting and faith-filled life. Use these gifts today. Peace to you, Pastor Phil

## **EPC Pastor Review Process - May 2016 Reflections and Goals from Phil GebbenGreen**

After reading the summaries of the congregational surveys, meeting twice with Bryan Kingsriter and Faith Dietz of the Personnel Team, and reflecting for several weeks, I would like to share the following update on what I am focused on for personal and professional growth at EPC. I am open to and appreciative of further and ongoing feedback about any of these areas of focus.

### **AREA OF FOCUS #1: ACKNOWLEDGE OTHERS' CONCERNS AND LOOK FOR PLACES TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES RAISED.**

*Here are some ideas and methods I am using to address this focus area:*

- A. I am working on paying attention to how I interact with others—taking some extra time to check in with folks, giving them my full attention while speaking with them, asking follow-up questions, sending follow-up e-mails where appropriate, watching for signs of distress or discomfort, concentrating on kindness and connection above efficiency and clarity.
- B. I am also attempting to hear specific issues or requests and integrate those requests into my work at EPC. Some recent examples:
  1. In sermons and meetings I am trying to talk about the issue of growth at EPC as a key issue to our spiritual and practical well-being, looking to encourage and inform this conversation with a spirit of urgency and calling and trust.

2. Hearing concerns about a change in preaching style and missing some biblical focus, I have sought to incorporate more biblical and linguistic background and insights into my preaching. More follow-up to this point will be in Area of Focus #3.
3. I am open to leading or participating in forums, conversations, or meetings around these or other topics.

## AREA OF FOCUS #2: ANALYZE AND COMMUNICATE USE OF TIME

*Here are some ideas and methods I am using to address this focus area:*

- A. I kept a weekly time log for one week in April (attached at end of this document) and have been paying attention to my time more closely since then. My initial reflections are that most weeks I have built in time in my schedule for worship preparation and leadership, meeting preparation and attendance, and office details. The focus that loses out most weeks is personal interaction (not counting e-mail) with congregation members.
- B. To address this personal interaction dynamic, I have been working to set up meeting times with EPC folk, either by myself or with Julie. Where that does not work, I try to make time each week for some phone or e-mail contact with several people from EPC.
- C. It is hard to predict how much the Crescent Cove conversation will impact my time, but I suspect it will be significant, at least at certain times.

## AREA OF FOCUS #3: ADDRESS CHANGES IN PREACHING STYLE SINCE RETURNING FROM SABBATICAL, SPECIFICALLY AROUND THE USE OF THE BIBLE

*Here are some ideas and methods I am using to address this focus area:*

- A. The first thing to say about this area is that I do indeed think there has been some changes to my preaching and worship leadership dating about to the time of the sabbatical. The main thrust of this change from my perspective has been a clear focus on my part (and in teamwork with Julie) on TRANSFORMATION rather than insightfulness.
- B. That being said, I can also hear and affirm the desire of folks for strong and insightful biblical teaching in this faith community. I share that desire. Here are two specific ways I am working to respond to this concern and request.
  1. As I mentioned under Focus #1, I am seeking to incorporate more biblical and linguistic background and insights into my preaching and worship leadership.
  2. I also wonder about exploring some concrete way or ways outside of worship where the congregation can interface more directly with the Bible. I could be directly involved in such a group or I could help facilitate some process or method. Such ideas could include:
    - i. A text study group before or after worship to look at the texts for that given Sunday.
    - ii. An on-going Bible group to study the lectionary, a book of the Bible, or some other method.
    - iii. Groups in the church that would meet for fellowship and Bible study on an on-going or occasional basis. The whole church could pick a unified topic, or groups could pick and lead their own studies.

- iv. Other ideas or options that could emerge from the congregation.

Those are the three areas that I am focusing on right now. Thank you to the congregation and to Bryan and Faith for their faithful and helpful coordination of this process to date. I want this to be a good process for myself and for the congregation, so please feel free to give me feedback or ideas about anything in this document. My one-week time log is below.

**Pastor's Time Log – PHIL GEBBENGREEN**  
**Edgcombe Presbyterian Church, April 11-17, 2016**

MONDAY, APRIL 11

12p-1:30p	Talk to Julie about eval. process and church	1.5 hrs
6p-7:30p	Personnel pastor evaluation mtg	1.5 hrs

TUESDAY, April 12

9a-10:30a	Crescent Cove mtg	1.5 hrs
10:30a-12p	Music plan with Deb C.	1.5 hrs
12p-3p	Office work	3 hrs
	Check e-mail and respond	
	Details with Lois (finances, mailing lists, memorials)	
	Bulletin prep / Session minutes prep	

WEDNESDAY, April 13

9a-10:30a	Pastors' Text Study	1.5 hrs
12:30p-4p	Office work	3.5 hrs
	E-mail / Wed Update	
	Sermon prep	
	Session minutes & agenda prep	

THURSDAY, April 14

8:30a-12p	Presbytery minutes review	3.5 hrs
12p-1:30p	Office-bulletin check, Session prep, e-mail	1.5 hrs
6p-10p	Session mtg	4 hrs

FRIDAY, April 15

1p-2:30p	Prospective member mtg	2 hrs
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SATURDAY, April 16

[9:30a-11:30a	Mtg with Storytellers]	
8-10pm	Sermon prep	2 hrs

SUNDAY, April 17

6-7:30a	Morning walk and sermon prep	1.5 hrs
9a-12p	Worship prep & leadership & fellowship	3.5 hrs

**TOTAL**

32 hrs\*

*\*Total does not include time spent checking and writing church e-mails from home, which happens most evenings. Nor am I including the work with storytellers on Saturday morning.*

## **2016 pastoral review reflections**

**julie gebbengreen**

one of the strongest take aways from the pastoral reviewal process comes simply from the lens of the the review: do people experience being cared for by their pastors? to use this view/lens tells a lot about a community...that the role of pastor is varied and complicated by various administrative dimensions, but ultimately what matters is care. to be cared for. to be loved. this seems like the very mandate that jesus keeps coming back to: love god with all of your heart, mind, body, and strength; and love your neighbor, and love yourself.

having this lens of the reviewal process re-invigorated my desire to care for all who come to edgumbe presbyterian church. it brings me joy to grow in faith and deepen in trust with god, and i am thrilled to be able to encourage, support and cheerlead this community toward those ends. i was also gladdened and humbled to learn that all respondents reported to experiencing significant levels of trust with me. trust belies a certain level of openness, and open-ness is at the heart of transformation. i believe that church can be an agent of transformation and healing—and i want to be a part of community that has those qualities as disciples of christ.

another area of feedback that the review gave me was that my preaching can be hard to follow at times. when i was given the results from the congregation, i mentioned to personnel that this was already something that i was suspecting and praying about. learning about my own autism has been helpful for me—knowing that there are times when i am less skilled in making connections. how i have responded to the feedback is in trying to simplify ideas, and sharpen/shorten the length of sermons as well.

the last idea that was shared in this process was my own hope/concern for the church that our children are needing more intentional care and support, which i have been working toward—such as hosting youth events and meeting with some of the older kids. i would appreciate a larger support network within the church intentionally tending to the younger persons.