

Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update – January 25, 2017

Who Are We?

In the New Member Exploration class two weeks ago, we asked participants (a combination of youth and adults): *What are the values that you experience at Edgcumbe Church?* Here is a summary of the answers we heard.

At EPC, we experience:

- **Love**
- **Faith**
- **Realness/Authenticity**
- **An invitation to Wake Up!**
- **Comfort/Safety/Family**
- **Acceptance/Being Heard**
- **A Balance between looking Outward and looking Inward**
- **Openness, as opposed to giving easy answers**
- **Thoughtfulness (in the sense of both kindness and depth)**
- **Personal Meaningfulness**
- **Balance of Head and Heart**
- **Trust in God**
- **Hunger with a desire for Seeking**
- **Participation of all Ages**
- **Friendliness**
- **Resting in Mystery**
- **Artiness**
- **Adaptability**

That is quite a list. Do you recognize EPC in those words? Those are the qualities of a church that seven youth and two adults want to join. We will gather to celebrate this church at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, and we will celebrate the professions of faith of our newest members during two worship services in February.

Annual Meeting – THIS Sunday, January 29

We will gather at 10am around tables in the fellowship hall for brunch, worship, and our meeting. If you are bringing food or can help set up, please come to church by 9:30am, so that we can be ready to go before 10am. We will have worship and reports combined together as we eat. Around 11am we will end the worship service (dismissing those who want to leave) and then have a short business meeting to discuss the 2017 budget, approve last year's minutes, and approve the pastors' terms of call.

A Few Thoughts from Pastor Phil on the Future

One of the things we will see in the Annual Report is that our active member list is now at 37 people. Here is question I have been asking myself recently: *Is it time to panic about the future of EPC?*

In the Yes-it-is-time-to-panic column is the recognition that it will be hard to sustain ongoing ministry at EPC if our numbers keep contracting. With two solid rental tenants we have a certain level of financial cushion. But we also need people to do the ministry of God in this place, and we need enough people that a shrinking group do not get become exhausted and burned out. Members of this community will continue to die or move away. Some change in momentum is needed.

In the No-it-is-not-time-to-panic column is a whole garden of delights. Such as:

1. The list above of the wonderful qualities of our church. EPC is a vibrant and inclusive community. New comers and youth find this an engaging and loving and nurturing community grounded in God's Spirit. When all nine join the church in February, our active membership list will expand by almost 25%!
2. The story of Gideon in Judges 6-8 reminds us that God is not limited by the size of the army or the congregation. As a matter of fact, in Gideon's case, God actually made the Israelite army ludicrously small before sending them to victory. EPC may be small, but we are big with faith and hope and love.
3. If you look at the 2017 budget numbers, our pledging is as high as it has ever been, which feels like a loaves and fishes miracle. The people of EPC are living with big trust and big generosity.

4. EPC is filled with interesting, vibrant, quirky, and faith-filled folk. When Pastor Julie opened the sermon time to insights from the congregation this past Sunday, the sharing time overflowed with wisdom and insight and beauty. God is clearly not done with us yet.

At the Annual Meeting, we will be asking several questions for reflection. *Where have you experienced God in the past year at EPC? What is God asking us to let go at EPC? Where do you see God leading EPC next?* We will use these questions to ask for guidance and listen to each other and the Spirit.

In my own listening and discernment, I'm hearing a few themes emerge about where we might be headed next. I share these reflections not as a pastoral dictum, but as the beginning of a conversation.

- A. I am hearing a growing conversation around community outreach, especially outreach to the residents in the Montreal Highrise. The membership growth team has put this on their list and several individuals have mentioned this as well. The possibilities for connection and ministry are almost endless if we are willing to reach out.
- B. Last year, through the Crescent Cove process, we became aware again of the beauty and value of our big back yard. Are there ways that we could share or gain income from this amazing resource?
- C. As the Confirmation process ends, it is time to start some intentional programming for the youth of our church—for discipleship building, for fun, for service and outreach. What do we need to do to make this happen? Change our Sunday morning schedule? Start a mid-week program? Let's start talking.
- D. We cannot do anything if we are not grounded in faith and connected by love to one another. What support do we need as a congregation to become radical and healthy disciples of Jesus in the midst of a changing world?

I look forward to being with you all on Sunday, and I ask you to join me and Julie as we pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit for our church.

People of God, let's remember that we are people who believe in miracles. Pastor Phil