

Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update – March 8, 2017

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE CHOCOLATE

Reading the story of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, we remembered that the most dangerous temptations are not the things outside of us (chocolate, sugar, alcohol, bothersome people, bad news, etc.). Our egos actually like it when we focus on these outside matters because they make wonderful distractions from our real problem. And our real problem is how we think. We think our affirmation comes from outside ourselves. We think our security comes from our hypervigilance and planning. We think we need to control our lives and relationships in order to avoid being hurt or betrayed. I said that in the sermon that my main ego struggle is with power and control, including at worship at EPC (see personal reflection below).

In the story in the wilderness, Jesus invites us not to focus on the outside temptations, but to remember who we are—Beloved Children of God. With the love of God planted deep in our being, then chocolate moves from temptation to a sweet reminder of the beauty of being alive. In love, our Lenten fast becomes a fast from doubt, a fast from unkindness, a fast from self-judgment. Remembering who we are, our hearts change from fearful vigilance to open generosity.

This coming Sunday, our text again reminds us to look to love and not judgment for our salvation in the blockbuster verses of John 3:1-17.

IT IS ABOUT SAYING YOU'RE SORRY

I (Pastor Phil) want to say a few words and notice regret about a moment in worship this past Sunday. During our Communion & Ashes ritual, I stopped Pastor Julie after she had introduced communion. I stopped her as she was starting with communion followed by the Ashes, while I had thought we were going to do it the other way around. We had a short, public conversation, changed the order, and then continued. This type of situation is not that unusual at EPC; we often change hymn stanzas or worship order or ask for clarification in the midst of our services. The difference here and the reason I am apologizing is because of the manner in which I made this interruption. If I remember correctly, what I said at the moment communion was starting was something like this: “Hold on. Could we argue about this first?” Reading that now, I can only hope that you are cringing along with me. The words were not well chosen nor gentle nor kind. At the very least it is a distracting way to begin a meaningful ritual and it did not provide Pastor Julie with very many gracious ways to move forward.

Ironically and embarrassingly, I had just preached about my own struggles with power and control, including around worship services. Apparently I fell asleep during that part of the sermon because I promptly asserted my control moments later. Because this event happened in public, I want to publically acknowledge my regret for speaking rashly and for choosing my own ego-fear over the power of trust in that moment. My desire in the future is to learn more and more to let the

mind of Christ shape my thinking and actions in worship and in life. Thank you for allowing me to share.

STORYTELLING IN THE COMMUNITY

We have three storytelling events coming up--two that are happening at Humble Walk community and one at the Hi-Rise.

- Storytelling workshop on the theme “Life-Death-Life, Repeat” at 3pm on Sunday afternoon, March 12. This event is led by Pastor Phil and is open to all ages with a \$10 participation fee. It will be at Art House North: 793 Armstrong Ave W, St Paul 55102.
- Storytelling workshop at the Montreal Hi-Rise at 6pm on Monday, March 27. Not only will this be super fun, but we could use some EPC treats and folks who are willing to participate for relationship building and support.
- Good Friday worship – a joint worship again with Humble Walk, this year on April 14 at Art House North, time to be determined. This year we will have music and hear congregational stories based on the “Life-Death-Life, Repeat” theme. If you have a story you might like to tell, please talk to Pastor Phil. We could also consider having a potluck at EPC first and then carpooling to Humble Walk.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME THIS WEEKEND

Remember to set your clocks FORWARD one hour this Saturday night—which means one hour less sleep, so sorry.

BELINDA CLARY CONQUERS THE WORLD

Or at least she won her amateur division of the Arnold Schwarzenegger Powerlifting Classic in Ohio last weekend! Great job, B! My favorite picture is included here. We'll call that Focus.

MARCH FOODSHARE CAMPAIGN

Food security is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” **Food insecurity** means that consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year. 1 in 10 Minnesotans, or more than 500,000 state residents, are food insecure on a regular basis. This is more people than attended Minnesota Vikings home games during the 2016 regular season. By donating food and cash to our March Food Drive, we can help alleviate some of those worries for people here in our neighborhood. Donations of non-perishable food can be placed on and around the food shelf in the Narthex, and cash donations can be made out to EPC with “food shelf” in the memo line.

OUTREACH & GROWTH TEAM

The O&G team had a fantastic meeting at the home of Todd Barnes this last Monday. Plans are afoot for outreach to those within and outside our building, for storytelling events in the community, for art workshops, and for prayer. The team endorses Todd's invitation for everyone in the congregation to continue to pray for God's blessing on our congregation and to ask God to send people to our church who could expand our hearts and who are hungry for the healing of the Gospel.

PEWS

Just so you aren't surprised, you should know that four more pews are gone from our sanctuary, donated to a new home church start up on the west side of Minneapolis. We still have pew seating for 70-80 people with a bit more space for the chairs that have been stored in our upstairs rooms and for community events that might include tables or creative seating.

PRAYERS

- For John and Linda Omps as they celebrate the life and mourn the death of John's son Skylar this Saturday at EPC at 2pm.
- For growth opportunities for our congregation. May God show us the people who need to experience the good news of God's grace in our church, and may God give us the courage to reach out to those people.

People of God, it is good and right to sit down in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the faith. Join us on Sunday for worship. Invite a neighbor or stranger to join you. Let go of judgment and embrace love and hope. Expect miracles every day! Pastor Phil