

Edgcombe Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update - August 15, 2018

THE CHOICE: GRATITUDE OR ANXIETY

Ephesians 5 (and a bunch of other biblical texts) says:

“Give thanks to God in everything.”

Nowhere in the Bible does it say:

“Be anxious in all things.”

Try out the comparison of gratitude versus anxiety for yourself right now. Think about your life: The good, the bad, and the ugly. First, hold every situation and relationship and decision with anxiety. Worry your life like a bone, gnawing at all the problems. How does that feel? For myself, I feel tense, my head is beginning to ache, my heart is clenching, and it seems like darkness is closing me off from all sides. I feel alone and powerless and trapped.

Now hold the exact same situations and relationships and decisions with gratitude. Give thanks to God for all the gifts and grace and blessing that surround you—even in the midst of the hard times. Breathe in gratitude for a moment. How does that feel? For me, when I spend even five seconds in a mindset of gratitude, the whole center of my body begins to relax and open, my mind is clearer, and I feel connected to myself and my heart and the possibility of support and change and courageous action. I feel both free and grounded in grace. It is an astonishing change of perspective.

Most of us have been taught the way of anxiety, and we cling to it as if our lives depend on it. God says: Give thanks in everything. God says: Trusting me leads to all wisdom. God says: the way to be free is to love one another. What do you say?

JENYA RETURNING THIS SUNDAY

Our pianist, Jenya Trubnikava, is returning from Belarus on Saturday and hopes to return to worship on this Sunday, Aug. 19. That is a quick turn-around, so we pray for travel blessings and rest and a gentle adjustment to a radically new time zone!

NEW MEMBER BONNIE LONBAKEN

Also in worship this Sunday, we will welcome new member Bonnie Lonbaken, who has already met with the Session and is excited to be a part of this community! Welcome, Bonnie!

BACKWOODS PLANNING

Anyone interested in the development of the backwoods is encouraged to come to a meeting to talk through next steps of implementing our grant from the Presbytery. The group will meet shortly after worship this Sunday, Aug. 19, in the church office. Pastor Julie has already been in conversation with folks at

Highland Park Sr. High, and the two staff social workers are hoping to use the backwoods with their mindfulness groups this fall!

SCHOOL TOOLS

Collections are being taken for School Tools through August 26.

CENTERING PRAYER ON TUESDAYS (& EVERY DAY!)

We have been practicing Centering Prayer in worship for several months now. Have you tried it at home yet? Is five minutes too much: try it for two minutes, one minute. Is five minutes way too little: bump up to ten, twenty. You don't need anything but your self and a moment's willingness to connect to God. Want some help? Anyone is welcome to join the Tuesday group at 3pm in the EPC sanctuary.

PRAYERS

1. For Linda and John Omps, who continue to deal with the results of son Leevon's death, including the care of Leevon's children. In this time of mourning and decisions and court appearances and care-taking, we pray for the energy and focus and comfort and peace and wisdom and rest that Linda and John are so hungry for.
2. For Kieran Kettelsen, who built our entry peace garden for his Boy Scout project last year as he prepares for his Eagle ceremony on Aug. 20 and leaving for college in Winnipeg shortly thereafter.

Please remember that if you respond to this email, your message will go to the Office Admin's inbox. If you want to write to Pastor Phil or Julie, please write them at:

- Phil = pastorphilgg@gmail.com
- Julie = pastorjuliegg@gmail.com

In just a few moments, I will be leaving the office to go play a handball match in the World Handball Championship, being held right now in Minneapolis. I will almost assuredly lose. If I focus on losing, then I start to get tight and anxious. But if instead, I focus on my real and deep gratitude for my health, for the joy and comradery of handball, for the gift of forced humility, and all the other blessings of my life--then I'm still pretty nervous, but I'm smiling. *[If you're interested, my partner and I are playing a double's match against two fellows from Tipperary County, Ireland, where they eat handball players like me for breakfast.]*

I hope to see you this Sunday as we welcome Jenya back from her time away and welcome Bonnie into membership, and we learn together to live in faith and not fear, in gratitude and not anxiety, in love instead of loneliness, trusting in the hope and grace of God that unites us all.

Pastor Phil