



Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church

*[Midweek] Update
June 10 [12], 2020*

In this issue: Updated Update, The Body of Christ, In-Person Gatherings Survey, New Contact Info, Zoom Mtgs, Session Report

The Late-Week Updated Update

On Wednesday afternoon Krysta sent out the Midweek Update, and apparently many of us didn't get it! Also, both my work and home computers became glitchy this week. Also, the whole world is re-evaluating how we are connected to each other.

Session met on Thursday evening and moved forward on several important conversations--check out the Session Report at the end of this Updated Update, including a planned outdoor worship service in the church backwoods on Sunday, July 5, with masks and social distancing and bring-your-own communion.

Gentle reminders: You are enough. You are loved. You are love.

The Choice between Tribalism and the Body of Christ

One of my favorite Enneagram teachers, Mario Sikora, recently wrote this line:

Humans are tribal creatures and at a deep, non-conscious level we often associate "different" or "other" with "bad."

Sikora goes on to point out that this ancient instinct has often helped us throughout human history. To our ancestors, a stranger was someone who usually meant danger, or at the least was competition for food, territory, mates, resources. With your own tribe you were safe; with everyone else, your life and survival could be at risk.

We have inherited these biological biases of our ancestors. While we may not fight over limited resources in quite the same way, the recent "perfect storm" of global

pandemic, uncertain economies, and the public death of George Floyd in neighboring Minneapolis with the following protests and riots has the potential to inflame our primal fears and instincts so that our current divisions and inequalities would turn into unbridgeable chasms.

Or, we can choose to make this time about healing, about learning new ways of thinking and behaving, about remaking our church and neighborhoods and cities into places of love and connection.

In the past two weeks of upheaval and anger and mourning in the Twin Cities, it took me some time for my instinctual adrenaline to come down and begin to see signs of hope and light--in the diversity of races and genders and ages walking in peaceful protests, in neighborhoods like my own organizing to clean up after nights of destruction, in the restraint of police officers faced with belligerent crowds, in new and more-honest conversations beginning to take root in and beyond the Twin Cities. It feels like minorities and people of color speaking about their experiences in ways that are being heard and understood in new ways.

The entire Bible can be read as the choice between our tribalistic instincts on the one hand and the expanding grace of God on the other. Over and over again, God invites us to give up our suspicions and cynicism and distrust-of ourselves, of each other, of the stranger--and to instead embrace our heartfelt kindness and even unity for all people. This theme is everywhere in scripture, but it is overt and obvious in Ruth (Ruth, the outsider, non-Israelite becomes part of God's people and the line of Jesus), the Good Samaritan (who cares for his supposed enemy), in Jesus' commands to love one another, and in Paul's oft-repeated images of the body of Christ, where every body part is blessed by the diversity of design and purpose of all the other parts. Most notably, when the Holy Spirit comes on Pentecost, any and every barrier to the spread of the good news of God's love simply disappears.

The Apostle Paul goes so far as to proclaim that, in Christ, there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female. In our communities right now, we can be driven by ancient fears that live inside of us and define some horrible and unjust structures in our world. Or, we can allow ourselves to live in the Spirit's world, where we remember that we not only need each other--our lives are actually made infinitely better with diversity and trust and love.

So my invitation to you today is this: Take a step toward this vision of hope and love. Do something concrete to follow the Holy Spirit today. Take Pastor Luna's suggestion and reach out to your neighbors--have you welcomed that new person to your floor or block yet? Write a card to someone, or make a call. Let someone, or a whole bunch of someones, know that you love them. Start a conversation with a stranger. Be brave, be honest, be the body of Christ. --Pastor Phil

Survey for Exploring In-Person Gatherings

Thank you to everyone who has filled out a survey. The quick summary is that 19% of respondents voted to resume in-person worship as soon as possible with 81% wanting to wait for more time, information, or medical developments. Another theme in the

surveys was the desire for some socially-distanced outdoor gatherings this summer. See the Session report below to see their decisions about worship this summer at EPC.

The Responsible Building Use team is looking at the responses right now and hopes to share a summary of the survey with you soon.

New Contact Information!

We have several updates about contact information for church staff. All of these changes are effective immediately.

- Office Manager Krysta Niznick is switching to a new church email address: epchurch2149@gmail.com
- Pastor Luna also has a new email: pastorlunagg@gmail.com
- Because we are rarely at the church building anymore, Pastor Luna and I are now going to publish our cell phone numbers. Email is still the best way to communicate with us about most church business, but in an emergency or for a quicker response, feel free to call or text these numbers. Pastor Phil = 651-983-5989. Pastor Luna = 651-983-5984 (**corrected from last week's typo**).
- Several of you have gotten emails pretending to be from Pastor Phil, even using his picture off our website. Please do not click on anything in these emails or respond to them. You can delete them and/or report them to your email company.

Zoom Update and Schedule!

We have four Zoom meetings scheduled for our congregation for each week. All of these meetings are open to you and to everyone. They are:

- Sunday morning Worship at 10am
- Sunday evening Bible Study at 6:30pm
- Tuesday Centering Prayer at 3pm
- Wednesday evening Gathering at 7pm

Updated links for each of these meetings are on the church website at <http://www.epchurch.org/>

Session Update-hot off the press

Elder Connie reporting on our June 11 Session Meeting

We began Session with a reflection and discussion on the Prayer of St Francis. Items for discussion and discernment were:

- Looking at the results of the In Person Worship Survey- 23 people responded to the survey and the majority of people feel safer waiting for in-person worship. There was great interest in socially distanced outdoor worship and it was decided that we would try that for the summer on the 1st Sundays of the month and celebrate communion together. The Session will reassess worshipping indoors in September. We also looked at a message from Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Please view the link

here: <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/6/9/stated-clerk-says-dont-rush-get-back-church-buildi/#.XuJ-aXWszQw.email>

- Highland AA has expressed interest in having their meetings inside, but also said that "Nobody's getting grumpy"! The Responsible Use Building Team talked about a Task Force to see if we could start that conversation with them. It would require no more than 10 people gathered in a room with social distancing and strict cleaning guidelines. We are working toward a July restart of 12-step meetings inside. Highland AA also expressed that they value us and our space and are concerned about our loss of rent income from them. So Much Love!
- Budget: We are looking good with pledges. We have spent the money that we were granted from the Presbytery on our technology needs. Rent from Montessori will be increasing as they get more kids coming back.
- At this time we are waiting on nominations for Elders and Deacons
- Our Biggest Discussion- Two weeks ago we woke to fires burning on Lake Street. It has been 2 1/2 weeks since George Floyd was killed. Now is the time to start having different conversations. How do we, as a church, want to move forward with opening conversations about race/racism/racial equity? Our thoughts were: How scary it is to think of the reality for our community's children of color. Can we look at our fear of those we perceive as 'other' and have conversations about that? What materials might be helpful for us to look at as a group and discuss? What are the conversations we HAVE TO HAVE? We have a sense of Potential for New Freedom by understanding the ways we are not free when others are not free. We can be courageous! How do we make things concretely different? **Action Ideas:** 21 Day Challenge with resources for the community, Create a Church Statement on Race, Group Discussions, Have a Mediator facilitate conversations on Zoom, Book Discussions (White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo was mentioned) , Watch Movies together and discuss, Have members of EPC work with a protocol called "**Courageous Conversations about Race**" (thank you Leslie Snow for this information and your beautiful call to action/offer of service). A Sub Group was formed to proceed with next steps. We want to go at this with Centeredness and Prayer and commit to an extended time of Reflection and Transformation. As Luna stated: "This is NOT just theoretical, this is a turning toward us as a body of people to untangle aspects of ourselves that we can't see." This is the Church Evolving.