

Edgcumbe

Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update

July 1, 2020

In this issue: What Zoom Worship Has Taught Me III, Outdoor Worship this week, Backwoods, Food Shelf Update, Zoom Mtgs, Todd Barnes reflection on race & EPC



What Zoom Worship Has Taught Me

Third in a series of reflections by pastor luna

now that we have had some time in this new chapter of our communal life--this "how to be community and socially distanced," it can be helpful to reflect upon our experiences together. we have a new learning about the nature of "church" being the living body of the risen christ whenever (and however) two or three are gathered in my name. and we have grown as a connected community through an unexpected format--worship on the internet where we can see one another and have immediacy with each part of worship experience. however, i am realizing that there might be even more profound learning through this covid-19 time for us.

pre-covid, it would have been easy for any of us to say that our worship times were central to who we were as a community. however, something i heard long ago is rising up for me in my prayers over these weeks:

jesus never said worship me. jesus did say follow me.

perhaps one of the learnings coming in this covid-19 chapter is that our worship gatherings are important and lovely, but they are not an end unto themselves. jesus never asked to be worshipped. he asked to be remembered. but if we train ourselves to "remember jesus" for a specific hour of our week, then we have already limited a limit-less god. jesus did say, repeatedly: **follow me**. worship has a place in our communal life, but it is not central to our identity. following the living christ in all hours of our lives is the central identity as a person of faith. we can see now that **a worship experience is in service to our following jesus**. this is a subtle, yet profound shift, to our communal identity.

perhaps, one way to try out this idea is to ask yourself a question: what comes to your mind as you think of edgcumbe church?? if your responses tend to bring up a worship experience, perhaps there is a deeper invitation now.... how can i enter worship so that this inspires and nurtures my **following of jesus**, not only individually, but communally, as well. worship is our resting, celebrating, joyful, caring community experience...and it sends each of us out to be an instrument of grace and god's justice.

so let's continue to talk to each other about worship and space and following jesus. our centeredness and identity comes through the eternal christ....and we put our trust in the loving christ who teaches us how to be a community of faith! 💜

Outdoor Worship This Sunday, Hopefully!

Weather permitting (and it looks questionable right now), we have outdoor worship in the backwoods at EPC this Sunday, July 5, at 10am. Here is the plan.

- Social distancing of at least 6' at all times except with members of your own household.
- Masks for all.
- Bring your own: chairs or blanket to sit on and communion elements to eat with your own household.

Jenya and the keyboard and speakers will be set up on the stage, with a microphone for Pastors Phil and Luna at least 10' from her. Set up your area in a place that upholds 6' of distance while also giving us a sense of being together.

CHECK YOUR EMAIL: On Sunday morning between 7-8am, we will decide if the weather is good enough to meet outside or if we will meet in our usual Zoom room. Pastor Phil will plan to send out an update email by around 8am.

Backwoods--immediate help needed this week

The nw corner of our backwoods property is being overrun by thistles!! Do you have an hour or two you'd be willing to help dig them up?? Please contact Pastor Luna (pastorlunagg@gmail.com)

Food shelf replenishing

At our worship gathering last Sunday we talked about replenishing our food shelf. However, since then we have learned most or perhaps all of the 12-step groups will not be meeting in the building quite yet. Stay tuned for an update in the future about when to start bringing food items.

Zoom 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/>

Personal Reflection

Below is a personal reflection from Todd Barnes that came out of a conversation with Pastors Luna and Phil.

My thoughts on Race and Edgcombe Presbyterian Church

Thank you for welcoming me into our Edgcombe Presbyterian Church (EPC) community in December 2010. I came to you as a broken, confused, damaged, active alcoholic and crackhead, adopted, son of a Presbyterian minister, mixed racial, gay, angry, and literally, 60 pounds heavier. I told you I would like to attend your church, but I preferred sitting in the back row and taking a backseat to any activity that might be going on. The two hippy pastors laughed at me and said, "Welcome, friend." Two days after my first visit at EPC, I received a welcome card in the U.S. mail from Pastor Luna. I remember being amazed at having received a welcome card so quickly.

In the ensuing months, you let me come to the front of the congregation during worship service and express my truth about my challenge with addiction, share my reality of being gay, and most of all, let me read the Scripture during worship from the pulpit and participate in the amazing EPC worship service. At the time of my arrival, we had a choir director and church organist named, Lynn, who was a masterful pipe organist and choir director. The music which flowed from the EPC pipe organ when Lynn played, at the sound that the choir made when they opened their mouths, was absolutely breathtaking, week after week, after week. I remember Lynn having me tryout for the EPC choir and complimenting me on my wide range of singing voice octaves.

When Lynn announced her retirement, I announced my retirement from EPC in my head and heart because I loved every single thing about how Lynn played the organ. There was a song called, *Bless the Lord, O My Soul*, in which the EPC congregation sang each week that was just the most pleasant communal experience. I remember being confused and sad when EPC moved on to other regular songs during the worship service - with the song I loved being phased out. For, I thought since the congregation had been singing the song each week since I got there, it was a sacred part of the worship service. Nope. At least not anymore. Wow, did I miss that song and I really missed Lynn.

As the lore goes at EPC, Deb Carlson, the music director at EPC following Lynn's retirement, allowed me to play the EPC pipe organ, encouraged me, loved me, loved me some more, and then loved me even more than that, if that much love is even possible, on earth. I have to say, if I received nothing else at EPC than just the honor and privilege of knowing and singing with and loving Deb Carlson, it would have been enough for me. I loved everything about Deb. Her talents. Her insecurity. Her brilliance. Her lavish, loving, holiday meals, of which she would send me photos of her dining room table at holidays, because she knew I was a gay queen who loved colorful entertaining. Deb and I had nicknames for each other and she was as playful, and giving, and fun, and genuine, and real, and raw, and vulnerable, and present, as a friend could ever be.

In the ensuing years, you've allowed me to lead worship service; act like I was at a U.S. senate hearing using slick parliamentary procedure moves at annual meetings; serve as a

deacon; host events in the parking lot; plan youth Sunday, and even eat brunch in the church Sanctuary.

In my deepest times of trouble, I ran to you, the members of Edgcumbe Presbyterian Church. I brought to you tricky, real life, cumbersome issues, and you never wavered in your outward support. In fact, you asked me to take on extra leadership duties during worship service during my darkest and most painful time on earth. You were there for me each time with open and loving arms. Not perfect arms. But, open and loving arms.

You have always invited me out of my abyss of guilt and shame and into the New Creation of Jesus Christ.

During the past decade, we at EPC have confirmed as a congregation, possibly as many children of color, as white children, due to modern-day families with diverse racial compositions attending EPC.

Of course, like many urban churches, we have more dreaming as a community to do in regard to developing even more creative, effective, and joyous community outreach methods which rise to the occasion of welcoming new individuals who reflect the rapidly changing demographics of our families, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and nation. And, there may be policies that we want to review as a Session to ascertain whether guidelines on our current books create welcoming and open spaces, or more closed, constricting spaces.

It is my hope in the coming months and years, our racial equity and equal justice work at EPC takes a more local approach. Instead of looking outside our church to impact racial justice, I hope we will open our hearts to further wrap our arms, resources, love, and even money, around the children of color whose parent(s) are currently members of our church – and for future members of all races and backgrounds in the many generations to come. I can think of several children of color who attend our church who would probably benefit from an EPC blossom fund, or college scholarship fund, or random love offering, when money may be needed for school clothes, school prom, or high school graduation. I can also think of single mothers, of all racial backgrounds, at EPC who might enjoy different kinds of support from our EPC community, from time to time.

I am not talking about making all people of color or single mothers at EPC charity cases.

On the contrary, I am talking about taking the opportunity to put our love to work, across color lines, with intention, love, and a deep recognition in our hearts, that when playing fields have been uneven, continued silence and inaction equals complicity.

Yes, I am talking about that age-old *hand up*, not *hand out*.

I am referring to *Love thy neighbor as thyself*.

I am speaking about exhibiting kindness.

Showing curiosity.

And then, entering into open and honest conversation about what is meaningful . . . not just meaningful to us, but meaningful to the actual people of color right here in our own congregation, in our own homes, and in our own streets, particularly the young people. This way, we are always prepared to welcome the stranger . . . people from other nations . . .

people of all shades and colors who are invited into our incredibly wonderful, beautiful, always evolving, and always loving, EPC community and space.

Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for seeing “the other” in me. Thank you for treating me just the same as anyone else has been treated. Thank you for allowing me and inviting me to grow into me. Thank you for providing a safe space in which to mess up and then be loved back up. Thank you for making mistakes and laughing – and watching me make mistakes and laughing. Thank you for being flexible. Thank you for your generous monetary gift. Thank you for the cards I’ve received in the U.S. mail regarding my music on Zoom during worship service. Thank you for always encouraging me. Thank you for sharing meals in my home and inviting me into your homes. Thank you for sharing the joys around your children and the sorrows around your aging parents. Thank you for moving me now, from three different homes. Thank you for inviting me over for holidays. Thank you for pulling me into the EPC recovery community when it was most needed in my life. Thank you for being right there by my side while I buried two of my parents within the same year. Thank you for being my extended family. Thank you for being there on Zoom when I’m present and not present. For, it feels so wonderful and safe just to know, you’re always there.

I am not perfect. You are not perfect. EPC is not perfect.

Of course, that is our beauty. That is our opportunity. And, that is our journey, this lifetime, together. That we may form a more perfect union with each other, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, and with Jehovah, in celebration of all that is different within us, and all that is the same among us, chiefly our deep desire to revere, worship, and serve The Lord. No matter the background, race, gender, and economic status of whatever stranger we are to each other this day.

Thank you for what you’ve done with me and for me, and the wonderful work we will do, together, to prepare for future EPC generations to come.

You are loved and appreciated.

And most importantly, you are known to me, because we simply break bread together, and share in a simple, yet very real, love, under the rainbow-colored, diverse, Olympic size umbrella, of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

--Todd Michael Barnes