

Edgcumbe

Presbyterian Church

December 30, 2025

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REFLECTION

Listen to the Audio Recording of this reflection:

■ **Audio Reading of Midweek Reflection | 2025_12_19 Midweek Reflection - Beloved Playm...**

My wife Chelsea has shared her mentor, Anne Murrée, with me. Anne is prone to saying most humans have forgotten how little they love themselves.

I've been exploring depth of relationship with myself quite intentionally for about 5 years now. We started with dates and love letters in the beginning, we advanced to camping trips, then eventually silent retreats. We, my heart and I, are on an ongoing journey of learning more about one another, taking walks, having deep conversations, listening intently. It's not a perfect relationship—sometimes we still don't see eye to eye, we argue, we tussle through disagreements. But we haven't given up.

There are times I still catch myself in a state of being fooled by myself, though. Times I have quite convincingly tricked myself into thinking I was operating from a place of real love, when it was actually self-critique, self-improvement coaching—even shame can sneak in under the guise of love. It's a tricky shift to catch, but it's true: I can unlovingly be intent on loving myself.

Five years of journeying into and with the heart is, after all, not a very long time. It's long enough to think I've figured it out, though. A friend's son announced on his 3rd birthday with great confidence, "Now I am three and I can cross the street BY MYSELF!" (referring to the busy 4-lane road in front of their home.)

Is the relationship with the heart like this, I wonder? Have I just whiffed the sweetness of the steam coming out of this mug and convinced myself I know the flavor of the liquid? Stopped with steam, confidently pronouncing I've experienced the full drink?

Here's where I often catch myself hiding from myself—even in efforts to love, to find love, to be love, I'm missing a crucial element: I am not doing so lovingly!

I've developed the skill of believing love exists, believing in God as Love. I've even developed the skill of believing I am inherently worthwhile. Those beliefs have, miraculously, taken root. But here's what I'm still learning: until I can lovingly see myself, I can't fully see either my own wholeness or God's. The inner observer in me—the one watching me—has to learn to look with tenderness. Lovingly seeing is different than simply believing Love exists. It's the difference between knowing there's liquid in the mug and actually tasting it. The skill I'm developing now is lovingly seeing me, lovingly seeking love for me, lovingly seeking love in me.

There is a razor's edge distinction here very difficult to articulate, but it shows up when we slow down enough to play very, very gently and attentively with our hearts—in these scoped down microseconds of precision, we can spot this sliver of difference between Love and lovingly-Love.

This is a season we make resolutions, turning our attention to ourselves with plans to change, improve, focus differently. But all resolutions be damned without lovingly-Love! Without this tender precision—without learning to lovingly see ourselves—we're just repackaging self-flagellation naming it progress.

Many of us spend our whole lives missing the choice in front of us—

I can choose to remain limited by telling myself, "I have done it! I have accessed the love of God! You see? I have admitted I am a sinner! Watch how well I spot and name all my mistakes, my wrongs, my less-thans! Now that I have self-flagellated: success! Eureka! I have come to KNOW the love of God!"

Or I can choose to expand beyond this limitation by admitting, lovingly so: I wonder if I'm missing something here? I wonder if there is a more loving way to lovingly see me seeing me? What if there is more to learn here—about Lovingly Love?

"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." — Song of Songs 6:3

Can I be loved right now? Can I be my own beloved right now?

Until or unless I can fall in love with right-now me and experience the divine love between beloveds— my heart and me— I might very well be missing out on the depth of the tenderness, the goodness of God's love.

If you're feeling open to exploring the more expansive choice, sitting with this song and letting it pour in might be a nice way to spend the next 5 minutes:

[Song: "Be.Loved" by Judah](#)

With great care,

James Witbrook

January Mission - EPP:



EPP is on a mission to understand why we do what we do, using the Enneagram to inspire transformation —on both sides of the bars— through self-awareness, self-regulation, and self compassion; We do the work together. If you would like support this life-changing work, please donate to this month's mission either online at www.epchurch.org or with a check or cash designed for "January Mission" or "EPP."

Year-end Giving

Thank you for your generous giving to the work and ministry of Edgumbe Church over the past year. Remember that for donations to be counted for the 2025 tax year, they need to be received in the church office by tomorrow, December 31, 2025. Donations can also be made through the church website (www.epchurch.org) by clicking on the GIVE NOW button in the upper left. Thank you!

Community Spiritual Discipline for January 2026: A Word from Elder Chelsea W.

30 Day Meditation Challenge- begins Jan 1st!

Hello Edgumbe family! This is Chelsea W. speaking.

I hope you join us for a transformative 30 days of deepening into self awareness, presence, and embodiment, starting Jan 1st. A couple things to note about this meditation series:

- 1) I created it for a wide and diverse audience, so there is not any specific "Christian language" used. However, this does not mean that this is a secular practice! The daily discipline of cultivating Presence within our bodies, hearts, and minds is inherently spiritual. It is another form of deep, experiential prayer. When we are Present, we come into contact with The Presence (of God), and we deepen that relationship, as a practice of building Trust through direct experience and contact. As summed up beautifully by G.I. Gurdjieff, "Unless we are present, we cannot pray. When we are present, we *must* pray."
- 2) These practices are not "woo woo," esoteric, or "far out." They are a practical, down-to-earth approach to building skills in re-training our minds (*metanoia*). Redirecting our Attention, learning to feel the body, and skillfully opening our hearts to give and receive are skills that can be learned with the right tools, guidance, and dedicated practice. *Anyone* can do this!

How to join? Bookmark or save [this link](#) to the meditation playlist on Youtube. A new meditation will be posted every day from Jan 1-30. Each one is about 20 minutes long. See you there!

From Pastors Luna and Phil: Hold this opportunity in your prayers as we close out 2025, and we look forward to being shaped into Who the Holy Spirit wants us to be in this time and in this place!!

January Birthday and Anniversaries

Happy Birthday:

Meredith Holt	1/14
Angelie Ryah	1/18
James Witbrook	1/19

Happy Anniversary:

Luna & Phil	1/31
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