

Edgcumbe

Presbyterian Church

May 14, 2025

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Election of Elders

On Sunday we elected three Elders to serve as leaders in our community!

- Ingrid Eggert (class of 2027)
- Jay McGregor (class of 2028)
- Chelsea Witbrook (class of 2028)

Congratulations to those three and to our congregation. Look for an announcement for a date when we will ordain Chelsea to this role and install all three. May God bless their hearts and minds as they lead us in God's ministry of love.



Rides for Shiloh?

EPC family: new member Shiloh has two Sundays available to be at EPC before his summer camp job begins, but he needs a ride to and from church from Woodbury. Several of the usual people who would do this are not available right now. If you could imagine helping out in this small way, please contact either Jane Tafel at tafeljane@gmail.com or Shiloh's mom Michelle Trebtsoske at michelletrebtsoske@gmail.com.

Forgiveness Reminds Us that We Need Each Other

Psalm 23 famously says, "You set a table for me, right in front of my enemies." Equally famously, Jesus says, "love your enemies and pray for those who harass you," in Matthew 5:42. This is the same passage where Jesus tells us: "you must not oppose those who want to hurt you. If people slap you on your right cheek, you must turn the left cheek to them as well."

In other words, Jesus so believes in our oneness with each other and with God, that he recommends we treat every person with only love and respect—even or especially those who are treating us badly or with whom we disagree. This gracious living is exactly how we live out forgiveness. Jesus does not say, "When someone slaps you or does something you really don't like, then forgive them." This approach of "granting" my forgiveness to another is actually a way that we increase the story of separation. I am the righteous one here; you are in the wrong; so I will be the bigger person and forgive you. Jesus and the Psalmist jump right over this

self-justifying forgiveness charade and instead invite us to see the full humanity of the person before us. Used in this way, forgiveness becomes a bridge to connection. It “sets a table” so that we might break bread together. It opens the door for us—and everyone—to experience the kingdom of God right now and right here.

I remember watching videos of young people in the Civil Right movement in the 1950s and 60s practicing this kind of gracious living before they would attempt to enter a segregated store or diner. These young people would sit in a chair while others would scream at them, call them horrible names, and spray condiments on them. Their only job was to respond with non-violence, to sit calmly, take any abuse, and hold only kindness inside of themselves. If I were sitting in one of those chairs, I can imagine how helpful it would be to have the mantra inside of myself, *God is the forgiveness in which I forgive*.

This radical way of being is the way of salvation for us all. It is the way of Jesus. This kind of world-changing forgiveness must be practiced, for the world cannot perceive its meaning. We will not learn it in the day’s headlines, and we cannot buy it at the store. Amazingly, the gift of forgiveness comes from the person who is slapping me, who is being unjust, who is saying something unthinkable. When I can see that very person as my brother or sister in Christ; when I can sit down at the table God has prepared with that very person; when I can imagine all of the Spirit’s blessings falling on their head...then I can open the door to grace and forgiveness and love for myself too. Then I and we and everyone can experience all the fullness of God’s love and healing and possibility.

I (this is Phil, the one who still uses capital letters) completely believe this to be true. At the same time, I am sick to my stomach reading that last paragraph that I myself wrote. My body itself is rebelling against this kind of forgiveness and love. My own separateness (and therefore my moral superiority) is so ingrained in my thinking that my very cells believe it too. Psalm 23 and Jesus are offering us a different way. It is the narrow path, not often chosen. Would you like to join me on this path? Let’s practice together.

holy spirit, in this holy moment, you be in charge, and we will follow you,
trusting that your direction leads to peace. ♥

May Mission: EPC Backwoods

We are incredibly blessed to have a 3-acre wooded area next to the church. It is a natural oasis in the middle of the city, and another way for us to connect to the divine. There are walking trails and meditation stations, and when the weather is nice we sometimes hold services under the trees.

We want to care for and maintain the beauty of one of EPC’s most unique features. Not only is this area an extension of our sacred space, but by making it accessible to the public we have made it into an offering to the larger community. Donations towards this month’s



May Mission:
Edgumbe Presbyterian Backwoods

mission will go toward material improvements to the back woods such as replenishing the wood chips covering the trails. It gives the trails a nice fresh look, is a pleasant soft surface to walk on, and keeps the weeds at bay.

As you can imagine, it will take quite a lot of wood chips to cover all our trails. Please consider a mission donation during May. You can indicate "Backwoods" or "May Mission" on the memo line with a check, or on the Give Now application on www.epchurch.org. Thanks for your support!

Workday Pics & New Opportunity

We had a fun and productive workday last Saturday—spreading 25 yards of wood chips on the meditation path. We almost completed the job but needed a few more chips. Eight yards have now been delivered to the backwoods. Several of us are gathering at 10am again this Saturday if anyone wants to join us to finish off the work.



