



Edinboro Presbyterian Church Newsletter Update

March 18-31, 2022

March 19 Planning Retreat: *Envisioning and enacting the future*

Members, officers and friends of FUPC will gather this Saturday for an all-church planning and discernment retreat. We will begin at 8:00 (with light breakfast treats and drinks available) and wrap up by 11:30. Everyone is invited to get together for this time of prayer, conversation and decision-making. This will include some time on “big picture” issues as well as some practical determination of how we can move beyond the recent Covid-triggered limitations and into a stronger 2022.

We will be shaking up the context in one visible way: our morning retreat will be off-site. The Edinboro United Methodist Church has invited us to use a couple of their meeting rooms that morning. Their building is at 113 High Street. (Use the “back” northeast entrance.) We plan to also make this conversation available live on Saturday morning via our FUPC Zoom meeting. You can call in or log in using meeting number 814 734 3511 (our church office phone number) and passcode 814 (our area code).

**Saturday
March 19**
starting 8:00 am
@ Edinboro Methodist

In preparation for these conversations – and even if you are not able to be with us that morning – the pastor has gathered several resources which can help churches to address uncertainty, sort out their priorities, and identify practical and fruitful steps to move forward beyond the so-called Covid Era. Brief summaries are below, but please look up one or more of the full documents from the internet links provided (or ask the church office to send you printed copies).

📄 110 Community conversations	📄 Comfort Zones can hinder us	📄 Leading & moving beyond Covid
<p>If we talked with neighbors, in scheduled conversations, what could we learn?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do people beyond the congregation know our location or anything about this church? • What are their biggest worries about life and living in this neighborhood? • If you had a chance to tell the church where they should direct their energies, what would you wish they would focus on? <p>Read what one pastor discovered in this process which went beyond “doorstep evangelism” and into attentive, directed, careful, caring listening.</p>	<p>Balance is the key to comfort zones. Is there anything wrong with a tired mama wanting to relax in her chair after a long day? Of course not.</p> <p>The thing about comfort zones is that they are confining. When we begin to use our comfort zones to avoid life, responsibilities and tasks set out by God that comfort zones begin to hinder us.</p> <p>We feel comfortable in this little corner because we are not attempting anything bigger. Too much time in comfort zones can be indicative of defensiveness, selfishness or an imbalanced practical or spiritual life.</p>	<p>Six months into the “Covid Era”, Outreach Magazine published an article, encouraging church leaders to prepare for the changes needed when things “reopened”. Ponder their perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can no longer lean on the past to help us navigate the future. • We’re anticipating, discerning, sometimes guessing...and praying a lot. • A spirit of optimism and hope is essential. • The more each person defines their own truth, the greater we experience division. We must emphasize Jesus.

*From the
Pastor*

Two years later, it's time for "new and improved"

It was exactly two years ago this week. News was coming out about this new, strange, scary virus. At our mid-March 2020 Session meeting, we determined that the congregation would be cautious, attentive, and seek to move forward with as much "normal" as we could. We would adapt our worship rituals to reduce the risk of a yet-to-be-understood health threat. That was a Thursday evening. By Friday lunchtime, basketball tournaments were being canceled, warnings were flying around, and schools and businesses – and churches – would be closing down. We would not be face-to-face for a long, long time. Facemasks were reserved for health care workers, but we stocked up on toilet paper.

By that Sunday morning, less than 40 hours later, I figured out how to record a modified worship service on my phone's camera, and we had our first **Worship Online**. It was rough – really rough – but we did it. (As it turned out, it would be months before I could get a haircut to "be on video"!) FUPC did what was necessary to "flatten the curve" and "avoid overwhelming our hospitals". We could be flexible and get through it. Two or three weeks became five weeks, and then stretched far beyond what any of us would have expected.

Now that we are two years beyond the unimagined, it is time to regroup. Restart what had been put on hold. Adapt to benefit from the discoveries and lessons we learned during the "Covid Era". One step in moving ahead will be our planning and discernment retreat this Saturday. That is just one event in a series of conversations we are having to not only "recapture the normal" but to move faithfully into a future which will not be all that familiar.

Ironically (or should I say "providentially"?) this realization of how the future will differ from the familiar and the comfortable was the subject of my March 2020 column in the (then-only-monthly) Presby Press newsletter. Obviously, those thoughts I wrote to you back then disappeared into the always-being-sanitized ether of that time frame. I do believe, though, that it may well be time to revisit what I was thinking and learning and praying about back before our world careened to its bizarre and unbalanced axis. Therefore, I am asking Sue Johnson to rerun that column from "the good ol' days". Maybe it – and all else we have discovered in these weird but opportune 24 months – might help us to explore more about what God wants us to do Now and Next. The "new and improved" may well have some roots in our pre-Covid patterns, and I look forward to even more relaunches of traditions. I do know, though, that 2022 and beyond will be – and needs to be – different and innovative and experimental.

The story of God is always about helping us to find rest and comfort – but that is always centered in how we bask in the Lord. The story of God (in Scripture and throughout history and in our own experiences) also calls for us to be transformed, to step out in trust and with faith, and to see that the Lord leads us to discover how things that were previously unfamiliar can end up feeling wonderful and rewarding. With prayer, and with diligence, we can and will see once again that God is able to do immeasurably more with us than we could have ever asked or imagined. (See [Ephesians 3:20-21](#).)

Wishing you Jesus' Peace, in anticipation of Easter's Resurrection Joy!

Greg

P.S... To move beyond the walls of the church and into the community has lately been a trend in my preaching, reading, praying, learning and teaching. Even as we are excited to get more of us back *inside* the building with our activities and church events, there always is a constant calling for faithful folks to connect with our neighbors and the larger community.

After approval by our elders and other church leaders, I have a new/renewed way to "practice what I preach." I already do have quite a number of interactions with those currently outside the church – wedding couples, friends seeking financial assistance, and others not with direct connections to FUPC. Still though, starting this month, I will be using my skills and experience from my first vocational path to reach out into the community through the news media. I've been a news writer and a radio announcer, and those God-given gifts provide an opportunity to extend outreach to the people whom we do not see on Sunday mornings and who do not receive our FUPC publications. You may see an occasional clergy column from me in the local newspaper (and its online counterparts) or hear me a time or two a week on Family Life Radio (at 98.7 and 89.9 FM locally).

This media outreach does not replace any of the other forms my ministry takes, but may well prove to be an extension of meeting people where they are. We may draw in a few new members. More importantly, my occasional media presence may draw a person or two closer to Christ.

From the Pastor (March 2020)

“Everything new is old again”

I continue to be astounded at the number of times one theme pops up in my awareness these days:

“The 21st-Century Church will become more and more like the 1st-Century Church.”

It makes sense. In the Western world we’ve lost the support of many of the cultural strongholds which boosted the church – government ‘endorsement’ of religion, Sundays were ‘church days’ and Wednesday was often ‘church night’, tax write-offs for charitable giving, Monday newspapers printing highlights of Sunday sermons (if not the entire word-for-word message), and so much more. The culture around us is less religious, more multi-cultural, and more interfaith. The rise of the “Nones” (the denominational preference of more people, of all ages, is “none of the above”) is a countable demographic shift in the US and elsewhere.

This new (or returning?) reality gives us some bonus freedom too. Followers of Jesus need not be reliant on social norms but can live out our faith in surprising and less-conventional ways. As the Institutional Churches fade, Discipleship can become our focus. Congregations with vitality are more and more often downplaying programs and enhancing relationships, inside and beyond the church.

I am eager for our Sunday morning conversations at our upcoming Lenten Bible Study. We will explore the world of the First-Century Church. Before buildings were built, before pastors were hired, before presbyteries and other councils were formed, the People of the Way – Jesus’ Way – were faithful and joy-filled and hopeful. (To be honest, they were also challenged and persecuted and argued among themselves.)

The Biblical book of Acts tells their stories. Many visionary scholars and storefront churches are reclaiming those Biblical patterns. Tall-steeple churches and midsized congregations (like Edinboro First) are seeing these opportunities as well.

I’ve been a fan of Dan Kimball for a long time. He was a young California pastor when I attended a workshop of his. He was an assistant pastor at a cutting-edge church which was using the contemporary styles of worship and ministry. They asked him to create an outreach to teens and young adults. What developed was called the Vintage Faith Church. They still used keyboards and guitars for their worship music, but they also reclaimed ancient practices of Christianity: incense, meditation, quiet, unstructured worship, anointing, and more. Young people flocked to Vintage Church, and so did some people from other generations.

Dan and his leadership team though didn’t emphasize the Sunday “Show”. When the people gathered, they carried out the patterns of the Christians described in Acts 2: gathering, teaching and learning, sharing, praying, eating together. Yet, the gatherings of the Vintage Church and the gatherings of 2,000 years ago were always for the purpose of how they live the rest of their week. Dan describes it as being “missional”:

Being "missional" simply means being others-focused, with the goal of expressing and sharing the love of Jesus with the world around us. Jesus told His followers not to remove themselves from the world and create an isolated Christian sub-culture, but engage with people in the world (John 17:15). For us today, this command is not exclusive to overseas missions alone (which we support wholeheartedly since global missions is extremely important) but is foremost to be lived out in our own communities, families, and day-to-day lives (Coloss. 4:5-6).

What we can perhaps learn about the mission of our people, by learning from what the first and second generations of the Church were like? As you and I face an uncertain future (in this world, anyway) there is assurance that everything old is new again, including the joys and struggles of being church. It *is* reassuring. Stuff you and I have yet to experience isn’t completely unheard of. Everything new is, in many ways, an old part of God’s timeless story.

I wish you Lenten Grace, in anticipation of Easter Joy,

Greg

Note: In 2022 we are not the “Acts” Bible Study described above, but this year there *is* a Lenten Bible Study on “Praying Like Jesus” Sunday mornings at 9:35.

Upcoming at FUPC for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter

SUNDAY SANCTUARY WORSHIP

Worship themes for the six weeks of Lent take us through some of the parables Jesus taught on his way toward his trial and crucifixion at Jerusalem. Join us starting at 11:00 a.m. for a meaningful time of meditation, prayers, congregational and choir music, and an interpretation and proclamation which brings the wisdom Jesus had for his original hearers into our modern-day lives. You may notice that the candelabra at the front of the sanctuary is symbolic of the transition toward the darkness which accompanies Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf.

With the helpfulness of our fellowship-time volunteers, there is a time after worship for coffee, refreshments and informal conversation.

WORSHIP ONLINE

Recorded videos are posted to www.EdinboroPresby.org/videos each week, with highlights of our Lenten worship services, plus special web-only content for those who worship with us virtually. Because these are not "broadcast live", there is no particular day or time you must be at your computer or on your device to participate in worship with our extended congregation. **Worship Online** is available anytime 24/7/365. The videos are also available in shorter segments, so you can watch and worship even if you don't have a full hour available at a given time.

PALM SUNDAY (APRIL 10)

Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter, begins with Palm Sunday. Each worshiper can receive a palm branch to tangibly connect with the celebration of Jesus' lordship described in Scripture. This sanctuary service also begins at 11:00, and there will be a parallel video posted on the FUPC website.

"MANDATE" THURSDAY (APRIL 14 at 7:00 PM)

Maundy Thursday gets its name from the Latin root word which translates to English as "mandate" or "command". At the holy meal in the Upper Room, as Jesus washed his disciples' feet we gave them the mandate to "love one another".

Our gathered worship service for the Thursday evening of Holy Week will begin at 7:00. It will include instrumental and vocal music appropriate to the Biblical story, a message from Scripture, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

GOOD FRIDAY (APRIL 15 ONLINE)

FUPC will not have a gathered Good Friday worship this year, but there will be worship videos to help you commemorate the passion of Jesus Christ. You may watch these daytime or nighttime on April 15 and beyond. (You may also find blessings by attending an in-person worship hosted by one of our partnered local congregations.)

EASTER MORNING (APRIL 17)

Resurrection Sunday will be celebrated with a traditional Easter worship service beginning at 11:00 a.m. Join us for this festive gathering. An online option will be posted on the website as well.

March Mission of the Month:

OUR GHANA MISSION PARTNERSHIP

Edinboro Presbyterian Church and our network of congregations in Lake Erie Presbytery have a hands-on partnership with churches in the western African nation of Ghana. Representatives from our region have traveled there to worship and learn from these Christian brothers and sisters, and a few years ago FUPC hosted some of the Ghanaian pastors who were on a tour of western Pennsylvania.

Our March “Mission of the Month” continues to strengthen our bond as we join with the churches there to provide ministry to the people of Ghana. In the past, these funds helped to buy motorcycles for some of their pastors and lay pastors. (Previously, some of them were bicycling to between six and ten churches each Sunday, due to the shortage of trained pastors.) We helped to buy computers to provide a learning lab and homework/study area at one of the church facilities. This became an outreach to help children and teens from throughout the community, not just those who already were connected with the congregation. We continue to fund supplies, equipment and training for the Wapuli Health Clinic which cares for underserved people from a huge region.

Your financial gifts this month will continue this partnership, as we and they together do good work for the people who are sick, pregnant, poor and faithful. Checks should be payable to FUPC, then mark “Ghana” on the memo line or the envelope.

FUPC Easter Offering:

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Our annual Easter Offering will be formally dedicated Easter morning, but you may contribute anytime this month or next. “One Great Hour of Sharing” started in a Presbyterian congregation and now stretches across multiple denominations.

Gifts given to OGHS are always used for mission purposes, and you help in this country and around the world. Of special note this year, the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance ministry is supported by our contributions. PDA is now at work using previous donations to provide immediate relief in Ukraine and Afghanistan. We work directly through established partnerships with Christian churches and organizations – be that in war zones or after a natural disaster. Your gifts now provide food and shelter and counseling and encouragement to people whose lives have been turned upside down.

Make your contribution payable to FUPC and mark it with “OGHS” or “Easter Offering”. This year, the Synod of the Trinity (our network of PCUSA churches in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and southeastern Ohio) has a grant to make matching gifts up to \$24,000 for our outreach to Ukrainian refugees and those who have stayed in-country.

Congregational meeting on March 27 to elect an additional elder

The FUPC elders have scheduled a brief business meeting for the beginning of the 11:00 sanctuary worship service on Sunday, March 27. We have a remaining vacancy on our nine-member Session (council of elders) and the Officer Nominating Committee has invited John Austin to be a candidate for this three-year term. Other nominations are also welcomed before or during the meeting.

All active members of the congregation are eligible to vote and to hold office in the church. If you would like to participate in the meeting via Zoom, that is now permitted under our corporate bylaws, but please make that request early in the week, so we can properly set up and test the technology.

July 11-15

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL returns this summer !

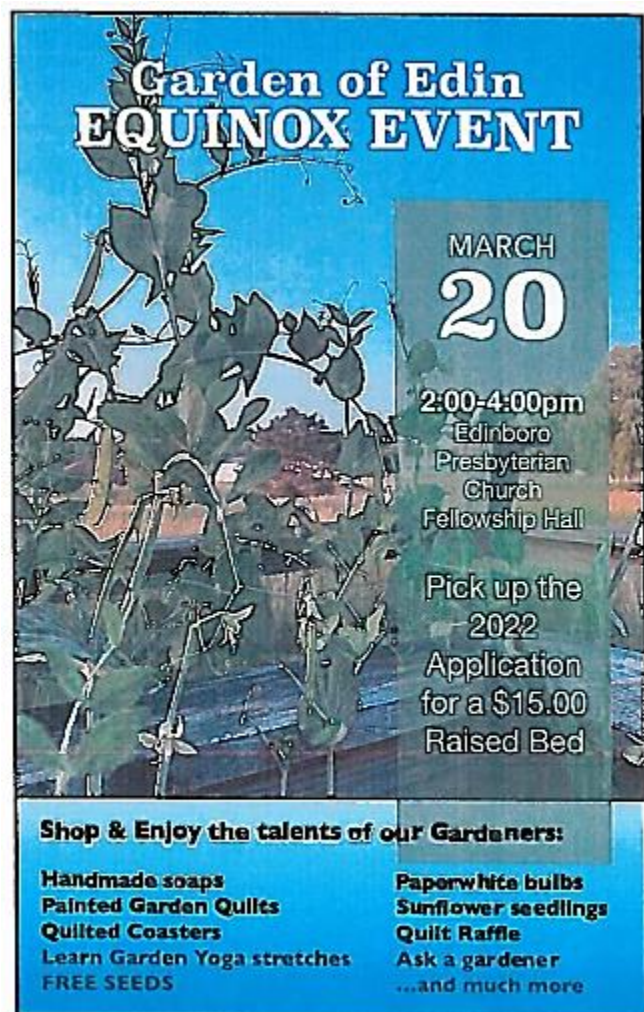
FUPC has been active in a partnership of local churches which worked together to create a big and powerful Vacation Bible School experience for the community. After a two-year interruption, our combined VBS will be back for the summer of 2022!

The time frame and the location will change, at least for this year. These activities for elementary, middle school and high school students will be weekday mornings, **July 11-15**. Registration will be online or through your own church office, starting in mid-April. It would be great to invite non-church families to bring their children too. This church and other congregations can assist with the registration fees if you need.

With the change from June to July (and with other changes in their livies) it may be possible that some of our "usual" volunteers may not be able to take part in VBS this year. That increases the need to recruit additional helpers for some or all of the mornings.

Planners are appreciative that Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church has offered their social hall as the venue for this year.

More details will be on the way soon, but for now you can also speak with Marcia Cooke or Marilee Wnek to find answers to any immediate questions or to offer your help. It will be great to have this outreach to young families return, and we continue to accomplish more when churches partner together.



**Garden of Edin
EQUINOX EVENT**

**MARCH
20**

2:00-4:00pm
Edinboro
Presbyterian
Church
Fellowship Hall

Pick up the
2022
Application
for a \$15.00
Raised Bed

Shop & Enjoy the talents of our Gardeners:

Handmade soaps	Paperwhite bulbs
Painted Garden Quilts	Sunflower seedlings
Quilted Coasters	Quilt Raffle
Learn Garden Yoga stretches	Ask a gardener
FREE SEEDS	...and much more

Please get any remaining Easter Lily orders to the church office before March 21. Remember, we will use some in the building and deliver some to special friends before Easter



Mailing: FUPC, P.O. Box 789,
Edinboro PA, 16412
Location: 4281 Route 6N
(Waterford Road)

Website & Online Worship: www.EdinboroPresby.org

Zoom meeting number 814 734 3511
Password (for Zoom and web videos) 814

Office@EdinboroPresby.org
(814) 734-3511 Mon-Wed-Thur 10am-2pm

Pastor Greg Gillispie
(814) 271-4027 Office hours Wed-Thur 10am-1pm
plus other times, and any time by appointment

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