



WINTER 2017

*THE ELK GROVE PRES PRESS*

VOLUME 2

### ***BLESSINGS FROM DEXTER***

“What’d get for Christmas?”

We can probably all remember when that was a question we asked. If we’ve had children, we can probably remember hearing them ask that question. If we’re around children come Christmas morning this year, that’s a question we’ll probably hear them asking. Because receiving presents is one of the things that makes Christmas such a special day. There’s a joy in seeing the excitement in children’s eyes. There’s a joy in seeing the caring in adult’s smiles.

Add to that the special meals, the warm gathering with family and friends, and the general sense of good will and happiness that comes with this season...and it’s hard not to feel that love and hope is in the air.

“What’d you get for Christmas?”

We can be thankful for presents. Most of all, though, we can be thankful for a presence...a presence in our lives and in this world of a gracious and benevolent God who became most real to us in a baby born in Bethlehem.

And this Christmas, it’s good to be reminded that amidst the joy of exchanging presents, the God who became most present to us through Christ wants us to be truly present to one another, sharing the Holy Presence of Emmanuel, God with us.

*EGPC reaches out to those who are “not yet followers” of Jesus as well as believers.  
We are an open and accepting congregation.  
ALL ARE WELCOME!*

## SMALL GROUP DINNER FUN

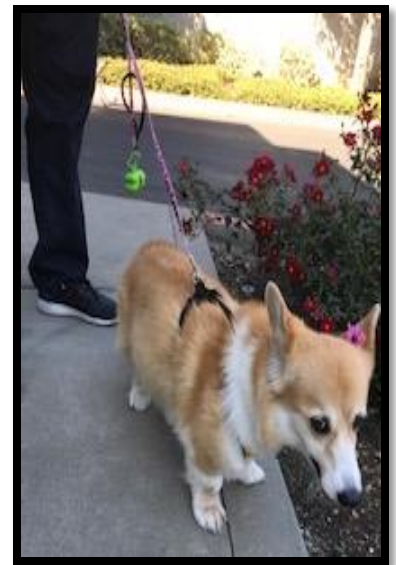




## BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

On Saturday, October 7, 2017, Pastor Dexter blessed 32 animals in the church parking lot. Canines attending included: 2 beagles, a bloodhound, a corgie, spanials, terriers and a variety of mixed breeds. Pastor Dexter also blessed a horse (via photo) and a cat (via photo). All received the blessing of St. Frances of Assisi who

believed that humans are only one of a myriad of God's creatures and all are blessed in the eyes of God. Dale Chilcoat did an amazing job providing animal-themed décor in our sanctuary. Mike VanDePol, Diane Lowe and Diane Sakakihara provided the outdoor organization. It was a fun, furry and lively day to honor our 4-legged family members.



## **A CHRONOLOGY OF ELK GROVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DID YOU KNOW?**

In 1876, a white-steepled church was erected on the corner of Elk Grove Blvd. and Gage Street. This was the Elk Grove Presbyterian Church. While this was a new building, it was not the beginning of the Presbyterian presence in Elk Grove. Since 1856, Presbyterians had previously been meeting in the schoolhouse on what is now Highway 99. (*Elk Grove Citizen 12/23/10—Elizabeth Pinkerton*).

Many years later, members of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, realized the need for united strength and decided to combine their congregations. In 1920, the Methodists and Presbyterians joined together to form the Federated Community Church of Elk Grove. A new church building was erected on the site where the Presbyterian Church had previously been. Construction costs were approximately \$18,400.

In 1951, after 31 years of worshipping together, the Methodists and Presbyterians voted to separate. The Elk Grove Community Methodist church was born and the Presbyterians moved to the Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church in Sacramento. (*History of Elk Grove United Methodist Church Website*).

**However, this is not the end of the story.** In 2012, we officially re-established Elk Grove Presbyterian Church roots in Elk Grove. Here is a brief chronology of our evolution and some of the important milestones we've reached along the way. (*Many thanks to Judy Tafoya and Leslie Konopinski for this chronology.*)

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### **2008:**

December: Rev. Dr. John Snyder was assigned to plant a new church in Elk Grove. It was called **New Hope Presbyterian Church**.

### **2009:**

January 8, 2009: First meeting and selection of a steering committee for New Hope Presbyterian. The start-up group included Eric and Susie Lapachet, Gaylene Hall, Michael and Kathy Wong. Sunday worship services were at the Holiday Inn on Laguna Blvd. Services were subsequently moved to the Elk Grove Senior Center on Sharkey Avenue.

### **2010:**

Another name change -- **Elk Grove Community Church**. Sunday worship services for Elk Grove Community Church started at McKee Elementary School in June and Rev. Dr. Richard "Hutch" Hutchison began as part-time Interim Pastor in November.

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**2012:**

We officially became **Elk Grove Presbyterian Church**. Our first worship service was on May 6 at Laguna Oaks Center, Suite 20.

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**2013:**

January 1: Rev. Dr. Randy Wilcher answered the call as full-time pastor. He preached his inaugural sermon on Jan. 6. On March 10, we celebrated first Baptisms -- Catherine Cheshire; Andrew Ghio; Angelo Ghio; Franco Ghio; Samantha Smith. May 19<sup>th</sup> the Founding Member signing board was presented. November 10<sup>th</sup> was our first commitment Sunday and the first congregational election of Elders and Deacons (Class of 2016). In December, EGPC members assisted with the EG WINS homeless project.

**2014:**

January 12 celebrated the first Installation of Elders and Deacons as a pseudo PCUSA congregation. Member signing board reflected 65 members. The first "small group dinner" was held on February 9<sup>th</sup> – 29 participants in 3 homes. Jazz music filled our sanctuary on March 2 when the Beth Duncan Jazz trio initiated the first Jazz Worship Service. November 9<sup>th</sup> was Pastor Randy's last sermon. We were blessed to have Rev. Dexter McNamara preach his first sermon as fill-in pastor on November 16<sup>th</sup>. April 1 was Rev. Dexter's official permanent starting date.

By the end of 2014, our goal was to re-establish the presence of the Elk Grove Presbyterian Church as a viable participant in and contribute to the life of the community; and, to become fully recognized as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA.

**2015:**

In April, EGPC participated in the Reading Word Project -- sending books to children in Uganda. In October, we moved to our current location—Laguna Oaks Center, Suite 50.

**2016:**

EGPC sent 7 participants on a mission trip to Honduras. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, Missionaries Jeff and Christi Boyd visited from the Congo. On Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the Baptism of Kevin Ledell Brisco, III.

**2017:**

In March, the "Sermon Shoot Around" began. On October 7, the first Blessing of the Animals. With God's grace and blessing, our congregational faith journey continues...Stay tuned!



## A VISIT FROM MARTIN LUTHER

This fall, Martin Luther (aka Judy Lewis), visited our sanctuary to teach us about the Reformation. Judy and her alter ego took us on a 6-week journey. We traveled back 500 years to the publication of the Ninety-Five Theses. This was a very informative time of learning. Well done Judy and Martin!



Fall dinner photos from October 28, 2017.



## *My Story – Peter Gaffney*



THIS IS GOING TO BE PART SOUL-BARING  
CONFESSIONAL AND PART LOVE LETTER.

I WAS RAISED ROMAN CATHOLIC. WHEN I WAS 15, OUR HIGH SCHOOL CLASS ATTENDED A CHURCH SERVICE DURING WHICH WE WERE EACH AWARDED A SCAPULAR. A SCAPULAR, SO CALLED BECAUSE IT SITS ON TOP OF THE SCAPULA (SHOULDER BLADES), LIKE A NECKLACE WITH A SMALL ICON ON BOTH FRONT AND BACK SIDES, IS AN OBJECT

OF POPULAR PIETY, USUALLY MADE OF WOOL, WORN TO SHOW THE WEARER'S COMMITMENT TO A CONFRATERNITY, A SAINT, OR A WAY OF LIFE, AS WELL AS REMINDING THE WEARER OF THAT PROMISE. WHEN I GOT OUT IN THE CHURCH PARKING LOT, I TORE IT OFF, BALLED IT UP, AND THREW IT AS FAR AS FAR AS I COULD. NO MORE CHURCH FOR ME...

NOW IT'S 1992 AND MY MARRIAGE HAS FALLEN APART. I'M LOST. I BEGIN ATTENDING SERVICES AT A LUTHERAN CHURCH NEAR WHERE I WAS LIVING IN WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA. I COUNSEL WITH THE PASTOR IN HIS OFFICE. HE TELLS ME: "MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, PETER; YOU DIDN'T JUST "DROP IN" HERE – GOD GRABBED YOU, HE SNATCHED YOU BACK TO HIMSELF. BUT HERE'S THE QUESTION YOU MUST ANSWER: THIS JESUS CHRIST CHARACTER – SOME SAY HE WAS THE SON OF GOD, OTHERS SAY HE'S HISTORY'S BIGGEST CHARLATAN. WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?"

WOW – THAT WAS THE GUT PUNCH I NEEDED – I REALIZED THEN AND THERE THAT FAITH WAS A DECISION FOLLOWED BY A COMMITMENT – THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TALKING TO YOU THIS MORNING.

I LEARNED THREE PROFOUND LIFE LESSONS DURING THIS TURBULENT CHAPTER OF MY LIFE. THE FIRST WAS THAT GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER. HERE'S THE INNER VOICE I HEARD: "PETER, PETER, PETER! I KNOW YOU SO MUCH BETTER THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF – OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS I WHO CREATED YOU? YOU KEEP ASKING ME TO RESTORE YOUR MARRIAGE. BUT MY CHILD, I DEAL WITH NEEDS, NOT WANTS. WHAT YOU NEED IS A WOMAN YOU CAN LOVE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AND WHO WILL LOVE YOU IN RETURN. AND NOW, SINCE YOU'VE FINALLY ADMITTED TO YOURSELF – AND MORE IMPORTANTLY TO ME – THAT THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY WORLD, I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO. BUT HERE'S A TIP: IF YOU'RE NOT CATCHING FISH OUT OF THAT SIDE OF YOUR BOAT, TRY CASTING YOUR NET ON THE OTHER SIDE. AND SO I DID – I RAN A PERSONAL AD, AND LO AND BEHOLD! I CAUGHT THIS PETITE BRUNETTE IN THE FRONT ROW. WE'RE IN OUR 24<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF MARRIAGE.

SECOND LESSON I LEARNED: DON'T TELL GOD HOW TO DO HIS JOB. ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT THIS GOD – THIS BEING WE CALL THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, THE ALPHA

AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END, THE ONE WHO CREATED TIME AND YET IS OUTSIDE OF TIME – ISN'T IT AMAZING THAT WHEN HE MOVES IN A LIFE HE CAN CHOOSE ANY MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE – EVEN SOMETHING AS NOVEL AS A PERSONAL AD? WOW!

THIRD LESSON I LEARNED: THE DAYS WHEN ANGELS WALKED THIS EARTH ARE NOT CONFINED TO THE SCRIPTURAL TIMES. NO, THEY WALK AMONG US TODAY AND I KNOW BECAUSE I MARRIED ONE. I KNOW SHE MUST BE AN ANGEL BECAUSE NO MERE MORTAL COULD PUT UP WITH ME!

NOW, I'M JUST ONE GRAIN OF SAND ON GOD'S INFINITE BEACH. BUT I REVEL IN MY IRRELEVANCE; I DELIGHT IN MY DISPENSABILITY, BECAUSE MATTHEW TELLS US IN HIS CHAPTER 10, VERSES 29 AND 31: "ARE NOT TWO SPARROWS SOLD FOR A PENNY? AND NOT ONE OF THEM WILL FALL TO THE GROUND WITHOUT YOUR FATHER'S WILL...FEAR NOT, THEREFORE; YOU ARE OF MORE VALUE THAN MANY SPARROWS."AND IF GOD KNOWS ABOUT EVERY SPARROW THAT FALLS TO EARTH, HE MUST SURELY BE WATCHING OVER ME. AND HOW HE HAS WATCHED OVER ME! LOOK AT THE TWO GREAT GIFTS HE HAS GIVEN ME!

THE FIRST GIFT IS THE PRECIOUS GIFT OF TIME. FOR 28 YEARS I WANDERED IN A SPIRITUAL DESERT. KING DAVID GIVES US THIS BEAUTIFUL SIMILE IN THE OPENING LINES OF HIS 42<sup>ND</sup> PSALM: "AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE FLOWING STREAM, SO MY SOUL LONGS FOR YOU, O LORD." BOY, DO I KNOW THAT THIRST – BUT I ALSO KNOW THE SWEET TASTE OF THAT COOL WATER. GOD GAVE ME THE 28 YEARS I NEEDED TO COME TO MY SENSES, TO EXPERIENCE THAT METANOIA, THAT TURNING OF THE HEART TO HIM. IT SCARES ME TO THINK THAT AT ANY TIME DURING THAT 28 YEARS I COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED IN A CROSSWALK OR DIED ANY OTHER WAY. THAT WOULD HAVE CONDEMNED ME, BECAUSE MY PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING OF HELL IS TO HAVE LIVED AND DIED WITHOUT EVER KNOWING GOD. YET, BECAUSE MY GOD IS INFINITELY LOVING, INFINITELY COMPASSIONATE, INFINITELY PATIENT – AND BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT I AM A SLOW LEARNER – HE GAVE ME THE TIME I NEEDED. AND THEN, WHEN I FINALLY CAME HOME, LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON, HE SAID: "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG? I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, PUT YOUR PARTY CLOTHES ON, BECAUSE THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO MEET..."

AND THAT WAS THE SECOND PRECIOUS GIFT. HE LED ME TO THIS REMARKABLE WOMAN, MY WIFE – A WOMAN WHO ENDURED A TROUBLED MARRIAGE IN WHICH SHE WAS LIED TO AND CHEATED ON – YET A WOMAN WHO CONTINUED TO SEEK GOODNESS IN OTHER PEOPLE, A WOMAN WHO NEVER LOST HER FAITH IN THE HEALING POWER OF LOVE. A WOMAN WHO, THE DAY I MET HER AT THE TOWER CAFÉ IN SACRAMENTO AT 16<sup>TH</sup> AND LAND PARK DRIVE AT 10 AM ON SATURDAY MARCH 13, 1993 – A WOMAN WHO I KNEW I HAD TO HAVE IN MY LIFE. A WOMAN WHO AGREED TO BECOME MY WIFE!

ST. AUGUSTINE, THAT GREAT FATHER OF THE EARLY CHURCH, WRITES TO US IN HIS **CONFESSIONS**: "YOU HAVE CREATED US FOR YOURSELVES, O LORD, AND OUR



HEARTS WILL NOT REST UNTIL THEY REST IN YOU.” FRIENDS, MY HEART IS FINALLY AT REST. THANKS FOR HEARING MY STORY.

## MINUTE FOR MISSION – TERRI BACON



*“Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.”*

The OTHER mother Teresa said that. *This* mother Teresa is often overwhelmed by all the small things that tug me this way and that. Maybe you feel that way, too. And yet, in the life of our church, the small things we do add up to our strength as a congregation.

We bring bags of food for the Elk Grove Food bank on the first Sunday of every month. Those bags have added up to an amazing 786 pounds so far this year.

Some of us helped fit school children with shoes last month as part of an ecumenical project in Elk Grove. 125 kids left the classroom with huge smiles and a new pair of shoes to call their very own.

We’ve started collecting and redeeming plastic water and soda bottles – good stewardship and good for the school children who will benefit from the funds we collect.

Just those three small things add up to one mighty little congregation, acting out the Good News of the Gospel. Families enjoy a meal, children wear warm shoes, and school kids benefit from the help we can provide with every nickel and dime from recycled bottles. We are EGPC Strong!

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## TREASURER’S REPORT – RICHARD BRISTOW



Through the first three (3) quarters of this fiscal year, the EGPC has received \$113,013 in general fund donations. This represents 89.7% of the total budgeted donations for the year. In addition, EGPC has received \$4,919 in special mission fund donations for a grand total of \$117,932. Pledges are coming in strong at 90.1% of the budgeted pledge income.

I want to thank everyone for their continued financial commitment to the Church. Through the same period, the EGPC has expended \$123,497, which is 78.2% of the budgeted expenditures for the year. The finance committee and session have done a good job keeping expenses to a minimum.

## **WOMEN'S MINISTRY**

Susie Lapachet hosted a "Gratitude Devotional" soup and salad dinner at her home on Thursday, October 12. After a great meal and fellowship, Susie provided handouts with numerous Biblical references on gratitude and each woman was asked to find the scripture verse that spoke to her heart. We shared these verses and talked about the blessings that are bestowed on each of us. The evening ended with a challenge to each of us to keep a daily gratitude journal. This was a powerful evening and the perfect inspiration to begin the Thanksgiving season.



## **MERRY CHRISTMAS**

Sue Bristow and Susan Morrison co-hosted Women's Ministry on November 14<sup>th</sup> with a focus on Keeping CHRIST in Christmas. We discussed purposeful ways to celebrate the Advent season and Christ's birth. It was heart-warming to hear the different traditions practiced within our church families – having a birthday cake for Jesus, placing a Jesus chair at the Christmas table, reading the Christmas story, alternative gift giving through the Heifer project, singing Christmas Carols and participating in Christmas plays. We all agreed that the best antidote to commercialism is to keep the true Christmas story alive through our sacred traditions and sharing those traditions with our loved ones. A simple greeting of "Merry Christmas" serves as a reminder of the spiritual significance of this wonderful event. Women's Ministry wishes each of you a very "Merry Christmas".

## CHRISTMAS IS COMING! – DIANE LOWE

The Advent season is here and anticipation abounds as Elk Grove Presbyterian Church joins Christians around the world in preparation for the birth of Jesus. The church year begins with the first Sunday in Advent and the liturgical color is purple.

Our congregation began preparing our hearts and minds for Advent with the lovely *Holden's Evening Prayer Service* on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The lyrics told us of an angel coming to Mary saying she is chosen to be the mother of the Savior. The beautiful voice of Cat Brisco led our worship.

The first Sunday in Advent, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, will offer Holy Communion. Each Sunday worship service in December is marked with the lighting of the traditional Advent Candle Wreath and reading of scripture.



Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, is on a Sunday this year with an engaging worship service at 10:00 AM and again at 7:00 PM. The evening worship is a candlelight service. The entire Advent Wreath with the Christ candle in the center will be lit. The congregation's singing of *Silent Night* as each worshipper lights a hand-held candle brings a special glow to this meaningful time. EGPC will have no service on Christmas Day, December 25.

Intentional participation in Advent and Christmas Eve worship services as we prepare for the birth of Jesus is a heartfelt blessing, indeed. All are welcome. Bring family and friends.

## CHRISTMAS PARTY – SHARON CHILCOAT

The EGPC Christmas party will be Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM at the home of Sharon and Dale Chilcoat, 9522 Clarke Farms Drive, Elk Grove, 916-896-0037. Come and enjoy fellowship, food, drink and in-house caroling. A special treat will be the wonderful vocals of Virginia Ayers. Many of you will remember her performances at our Vespers. We have it on the best authority that Santa will make an appearance, so don't miss out. Sign-up sheets can be found in the narthex at church.



## DICKENS PARADE

Elk Grove Presbyterian Church let its light shine at the Dickens Street Faire Parade of Lights on November 25th. Our **AWARD WINNING FIRST-PLACE** float joyfully proclaimed the coming of Christmas with the nativity, angels, trees and lights abundantly on display. Glory to the **NEWBORN KING!**



## ABOUT OUR CHURCH:

***Elk Grove Presbyterian Church is a faith community striving to follow Christ by:***

- ***Supporting each person on their own unique journey with God.***
- ***Joining together for joyful and meaningful worship, education and fellowship.***
- ***Working together to help build a better community and world.***

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Website: <http://elkgrovespresbyterian.com>  
email: elkgrovespres@gmail.com



## \*\*\*\*\*LEADERSHIP TEAM\*\*\*\*\*

### ELDERS:

Bob Huggett -- Property  
Leslie Konopinski --Administration  
Mike Van De Pol -- Outreach  
Terri Bacon—Mission and Evangelism  
Judy Lewis-- Education  
Sharon Chilcoat--Communication  
Phoebe Hsu--Nurture  
Diane Lowe--Worship  
Richard Bristow—Budget

### DEACONS:

Jim Konopinski--Yellow  
Frank Tafoya--Green  
Cheri Bowermaster--Red  
Larry Bowermaster--Blue  
Patty Huggett—Purple  
Kathy Wong-Orange