



SPRING 2018

THE ELK GROVE PRES PRESS

VOLUME 3

LENT 2018: Beware of FUNCTION replacing FOCUS

We're in the season of Lent ...that period that began with Ash Wednesday and will end on the Saturday before Easter.

Remembering the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness before He began His public ministry, Lent has been a period for Christians to reflect on Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Through the centuries, the Church has suggested that special acts of fasting, prayer and doing works of charity during this season can help Christians more closely identify with Christ's sacrifice. The intended purpose of such acts was to help Christians focus more on Christ's call to love and serve others rather than on society's call to focus on satisfying our own needs. Such acts were intended to take our eyes off how well we are doing and to look instead at what God has done for us, and, how God wants us to be concerned about how others are doing.

Such acts can help us become more conscious of God and others. But, there is always the danger of becoming so caught up with the FUNCTION of an act that we lose our FOCUS on God and others. How proud we may become of giving up chocolate or coffee...and how readily we may let others know that the headaches we're suffering are because of those great sacrifices we're making. We can sometimes want to shine a great spotlight on our humility.

Dear Lord, during this Season of Lent:

---Help us to keep our focus on you.

---Help us to love others.

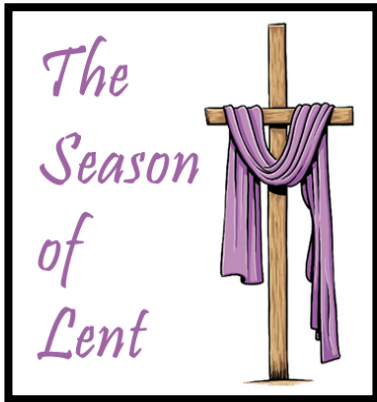
EGPC reaches out to those who are "not yet followers" of Jesus as well as believers.

We are an open and accepting congregation.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

FOCUS ON LENT AND HOLY WEEK – Diane Lowe

The meaningful imposition of Ashes at our Ash Wednesday evening worship service on February 14th began the church season of Lent for our congregation and Christians around the world. We started our journey to Holy Week with the serious reminder that we came from dust and shall return to dust.



Lent is a call to self-examination, prayer, works of love, and preparation for Holy Week. Palm Sunday morning worship on March 25th at 10:00 is also known as Passion Sunday. We recall the cheering crowds celebrating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, just days before he was crucified. Palm Sunday was "the beginning of the end" of Jesus' work on earth. The evening Tenebrae Service of Shadows on Good Friday, March 28th, depicts the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. The 7:00 portrayal of Jesus willingly suffering and dying as his ultimate sacrifice for our sins never fails to stir hearts. The dramatic scriptural readings and music recall the Seven Last Words of Christ.

Easter Sunday morning worship service at 10:00 on April 1st brings hope and love to the world. We join Christians everywhere in the joyous celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Good Friday and Easter Sunday compile what we Christians believe to be the most momentous weekend in the history of the world. SPREAD THE NEWS. Invite family and friends to worship with us.



THURSDAY EVENINGS – 7:00 PM AT THE CHURCH

The Book of Acts gives us the record of the spread of Christianity from the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to Paul's arrival in Rome to preach the gospel in the world's capital. In this regard, then, it is the record of the continuation of those things that Jesus began while on earth and that He continued as the risen Head of the Church and the One who sent the Holy Spirit. The book is sometimes called the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The 30 years covered by the book were important years of transition. The gospel was preached first only to Jews, and the early church was composed largely of Jewish believers. As more and more Gentiles were included, the church became distinct from Judaism. Doctrines that are later developed in the epistles appear in seed form in Acts. Come join us as we discuss and understand these important concepts and the roots of Christianity as given to us by the Lord and Savior. Please contact Judy Lewis with questions.

MY FAITH JOURNEY – George Allbritten

My journey, like most, did not travel along a straight path that was all sunshine and butterflies. There were many twists and turns, I will share a few highlights along the way. One of my earliest memories is of my mother at her bedside each night on her knees praying. I was baptized at age 12. At age 13, I began work in my father's café and for the next 12 years worked 7 days per week and was unable to attend church, but I always had a strong sense of right and wrong. Married in 1953 and after leaving home, I spent the next 20 plus years in a very conservative, legalistic denomination. This particular denomination believed that it was the chief repository of all truth and that salvation rested on one's adherence to those truths. It was clearly a works doctrine and Spiritually, very stifling. As I look back, it was more about being faithful to the church than to God. If I was anything, I was faithful to the church.

Then some time in the mid seventies, a young preacher came along teaching about the Holy Spirit. To be honest, I hardly knew there was a Holy Spirit as previous teaching was that the Spirit was confined to the written Word. For the better part of a year, my late wife and I spent most evenings studying the Scriptures. I believe God led us to a better understanding about the nature of worship, the role of women and the activity of the Holy Spirit that were contrary to the teachings of the church. As a result, we were no longer welcome there. At the time, I was an Elder and my wife was a Sunday School teacher. No matter, it was an ugly separation. But, through it all, our faith in God actually increased. Could we have done some things differently, yes. But, in that entire struggle, we were committed to doing what we believed in our hearts what God was calling us to do. Others will have to judge whether that was true, but for us, it was. We began to experience fresh inspiration, especially as it came to worship and a greater reality of God's Grace and Mercy. It was a very difficult time for our three children, but it was another step and path along our journey.

I share an experience that was one of the most Spiritually liberating moments of my life. It was sometime in the late seventies during a time when a significant movement of the Holy Spirit was taking place. I was in an afternoon worship service in a large public auditorium in San Jose during a time when all were standing and singing praises to God. I was more of an onlooker than a participant when my eye was drawn to a man standing across the room. While standing, he lowered his head and raised his arms in what for me was a beautiful expression of submission and faith. At that moment it was impossible for me to stand with my arms by my side and I raised them as I felt my own surrender and the release of God's Holy Spirit. I have not been the same since. I don't claim my experience as normative, but it is my experience and my journey.

Amy and I began a new journey together in 1994, when we were married in an African American Church in Modesto, where I had looked for spiritual comfort after the loss of my late wife 2 years earlier. Our journey has brought us to the Elk Grove Presbyterian Church where we have been for some 5 years. We chose this church after a long search for a number of reasons, chief among them being its size (small). We believe the Church to be a people who love God and love each other and where there is a certain freedom of worship. I am first and foremost a believer in Jesus Christ as my eternal savior and only Begotten Son and in the active participation of His Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in our individual lives. As I complete my journey, which can't be very far away, I do so in the firm conviction that Christ will be there to welcome me home, not because I am worthy, but because He loves me unconditionally.

A TIME OF VISIONING – SUNDAY MARCH 4

“Where are we?”

“Where are we going?”

These are good questions to ask – whether on a cross-country road trip or as a congregation. That’s what Rev. Rob Watkins, the Presbyterian for Sacramento Presbytery, will help us consider. We’ll start at 11:30 with lunch (sandwiches from Subway), then work until 1:00. Who should attend? Elders, Deacons and anyone else interested in this important time of “visioning”. We need to know how many will be there, so please sign up in the narthex.



UPDATE ON VESPERS – Judy Tafoya

Vespers is a celebration of faith expressed musically through jazz and blues. We are so blessed to have the Vespers tradition at Elk Grove Presbyterian Church. In its fourth year, Vespers will kick off on Sunday, March 4 at 4:00 PM in our sanctuary. The Jazz Artistry Quintet will be the opening headliner. The Jazz Artistry is a new group spearheaded by well-known Elk Grove musicians Ken Berger and Jay DeWald. This year, the Vespers’ series is being expanded from 6 events to each of the 1st Sundays through December (no concert Easter Sunday, April 1st). We are bringing new faces to the lineup as well as popular Vesper favorites. Most concert performers have been confirmed and will be announced soon.

As an added bonus, the March 4th concert date will appear in the official ARTSbeat calendar.

The ARTSbeat’s mission is to strengthen Elk Grove’s art’s industry and its civic identity and image. It’s an opening weekend event that gives EGPC great exposure and our EGPC logo will be on the ARTSbeat’s poster. As such, EGPC is recognized as a sponsor for providing meeting space for the planning and development of ARTSbeat.

Finally, our own Dale Chilcoat is the tablescape designer for THE ARTS ADVOCACY PROJECT’s entry at the Strauss Festival for Elk Grove’s Spring Tea on March 3. ARTSbeat is an initiative of The Arts Advocacy Project.

Vespers is a very old tradition in the Christian Church. It is a time for soulful, joyful, inspirational reflection. All are welcome.





We have gotten the year off to a great start for the Women's Ministry. Diane Lowe hosted an afternoon discussion regarding "Mary, Mother of Jesus" at her home in early February. We have numerous events planned through the remainder of the year. Please look at the schedule below and sign up for the activities as the date nears. I want to thank all the hostesses that have signed up for the calendar year.

– Sue Bristow

WOMEN'S MINISTRY UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 6 – 2:00 PM: PYSANKY EGG ACTIVITY – at the church

Ukrainian Easter Eggs (PYSANKY) are decorated using a batik method of applying beeswax and dyes. In the Ukrainian language, the Easter eggs are known as pysanky (pysanka for just one) which means "to write". Ukrainians have been decorating eggs even before accepting Christianity in the year 988. The symbols on pysanky are rich with both pagan and Christian meanings. Please sign up and join us to try your hand at this very old tradition that has become an important gift in sharing the gospel with others. Judy Lewis is the contact.

APRIL 10 -- EVENING: Cheri Bowermaster, **Bunco game** at her home.

MAY 5 -- NOON: Susan Morrison, **spring tea** at her home.

JULY 31--11:30: Pot Luck Lunch, Sue Bristow's Home

AUGUST – NO ACTIVITY

SEPT. 5 -- 11:00 AM: Cooking Demo and Lunch, Terri Bacon's Home

OCT. 5-7: Marie Galustian coordinating **"Zephyr Cove Presbyterian Conference Grounds Women's Retreat"**.

NOVEMBER 7—2:00 PM: Judy Lewis coordinating **trip to Columbia State Historic Park.** Enjoy lunch and see the play -- "Away In the Basement".

DECEMBER 2 –2:00 PM: Christmas Party and Secret Sister Reveal, Susie Lapachet's Home

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH FAMILY



MARCH 24 – (SATURDAY) 5:30: SMALL GROUP DINNERS.

Please sign up by March 17 on the church bulletin board in the narthex.

MAY 19 – (SATURDAY) 2:00-6:00 PM: MAY FESTIVAL!!!

Merrilee and Simon Engle are hosting a **May festival** at their property in Pine Grove, CA. Come enjoy a great meal, relax by the fire pit, experience the beautiful views, engage in fellowship and have a fabulous day in the foothills (located about 1 hour and 15 minutes from Elk Grove.) A special feature of this event will be live music presented by Virginia Ayers and her 'combo'. More details will be forthcoming but this is a definite "Save the Date Event!"

JUNE 23: (SATURDAY): ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

Gene and Judy Hironomus have graciously agreed to host again this year. Great food, swimming, fellowship and summer fun are hallmarks of this event.



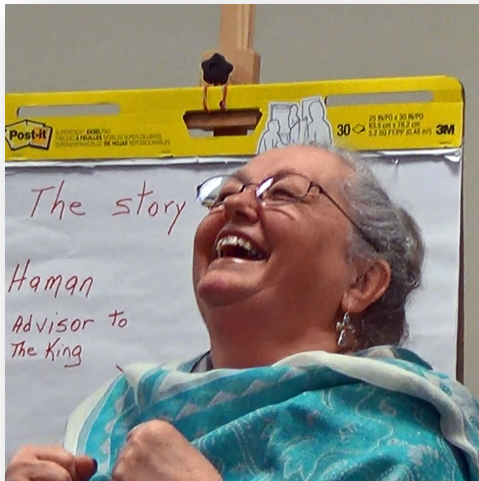
**PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES
LARGE PLASTIC JUICE BOTTLES
GLASS BEER BOTTLES**

IT'S GOOD FOR GOD'S EARTH. IT'S GOOD FOR EDUCATION

We're turning these recyclables into cash to support local education efforts. It's amounted to about \$50 so far, so let's keep going. If you can, remove the plastic caps; put the water bottles in bags of twenty-five and mark the bag with that count. Or, just bring them in and put the in the blue bin under the sink in the kitchen.

CELEBRATION OF PURIM

Judy Lewis led the congregation in a celebration of the jolly festival of Purim during the “Young At Heart” church lesson on Sunday, February 18th. Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia from Haman’s plot “to destroy, kill and annihilate all Jews”. The story is recorded in the Megillah (book of Esther).



Judy’s lesson was enhanced by a cast of volunteer characters from the congregation. Nancy Gaffney (Queen Esther), Peter Gaffney (Mordechai) and Mike VanDePol (Haman.) Noisemakers included children Ryan Torres and Lennon Morrison.

The celebration concluded with a hospitality table laden with traditional Purim cookies called Hamantaschens. These cookies are shaped like a three-cornered hat (representative of Haman’s hat). These delightful baked treats were filled with homemade jams and poppy seed fillings. The cookies were the work of three talented “master” bakers -- Doris Williams, Judy Lewis and Merrilee Engel. Thanks to all involved for bringing this festive story to life!



FINANCIAL CORNER – Richard Bristow

The year 2017 has come to an end with the posting of the final documents to the church books. Overall, we did a pretty good job. We were slightly over budget; however, we spent less of the grant dollars (bank account) than was anticipated. Our total general fund income for 2017 was \$151,409, a 20% increase over budgeted amounts (good job one and all)! Our 2017 expenditures totaled \$168,398, a 7% increase over the budget. As a result of the increased offerings, we only used \$16,989 of the grant dollars as compared to the \$31,928 planned by the budget. So as not to forget we also collected \$6,269 as Special Mission offerings during the year.

I would like to thank everyone for the outstanding efforts last year. However, we still have a way to go as we have projected expenditures in excess of \$165,000 for the 2018 financial year. I encourage each of you to review your financial commitment to EGPC and, if possible, increase your giving so that we can end this year with a balanced budget.

ATTENDANCE

In 2017, we had a total of 2,563 people attend services during the year. This averages out to 214 per month, or 49 per week. In 2016, we had a total of 2,314 people attend services during the year, averaging 193 per month, or 45 per week. In 2017, we saw an increase of 11% in attendance over 2016.

We are slowly growing!



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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*****LEADERSHIP TEAM*****

ELDERS:

Bob Huggett -- Property
Liz Irons --Admin/Clerk of Session
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:

Cheri Bowermaster
Larry Bowermaster
Patty Huggett
Kathy Wong
Marie Galustian
Marlene Laufer