



ELMHURST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

JANUARY 2020

Newsletter

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ELMHURST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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PASTOR'S + CORNER

REV. TRACI SMITH

Ten Thoughts About 2019



January is often a time of introspection as we examine the year that has past and think about the year to come. There's a lot I could say about 2019, but I've distilled it down to a top ten list. Don't read too much into what has been included or excluded here. These things are top of mind and not meant to be all-inclusive.

1. January was a very rough month for me personally as I was hospitalized for over a week after extreme insomnia and exhaustion. The way that the congregation and leadership responded to that crisis with unconditional love and support is something I will never, ever forget.
2. Our 2019 Leadership Retreat involved the leaders of the church looking at our building as if they were outsiders looking in. That exercise brought insight and wisdom that was referred to many times this year. The question remains: how are we a congregation that looks outside our walls?
3. We celebrated our first annual resurrection service in the memorial garden, a time to remember those who are buried in the garden and identify them by name. I hope this will become our regular practice.
4. We completed a project to fix up dedicated space on the first floor for our children and youth! The space looks fresh and refreshing.
5. We said goodbye to our office administrator of 10+ years, Karen Bircher, and said hello to Jasmyn Robinson, who is learning what it takes to keep EPC on track!
6. We hosted successful community forums on gun violence and immigration reform and thought about what God is calling us to say to our community.
7. We continued to respond to God's call to be faithful in doing our part to respond to homelessness through the PADS program.
8. We served a record number of people at Grace Cafe!
9. We had fun together at the church picnic, PRIDE Festival, Trunk or Treat, Art in the Park, and the Advent Potluck!
10. We put forth a balanced and ambitious budget with generous and faith-filled pledges leading the way.

Phew! It's been a wonderful year. I look forward to seeing what God will do in our midst in 2020!

Grace + Peace,
Pastor Traci

PREACHING NEWS

We'll start January off by celebrating the gifts of the Magi. I'll share my three guiding words for EPC in 2020, and we'll each get to pull out a star word to guide us for 2020! Then, for the remaining weeks in January, we'll focus on the theme of light. As the days get longer and brighter, we'll consider what it means to be light and live in the light of Christ!

January 5, 2020

STAR SUNDAY: Matthew 2:1-10

January 12, 2020

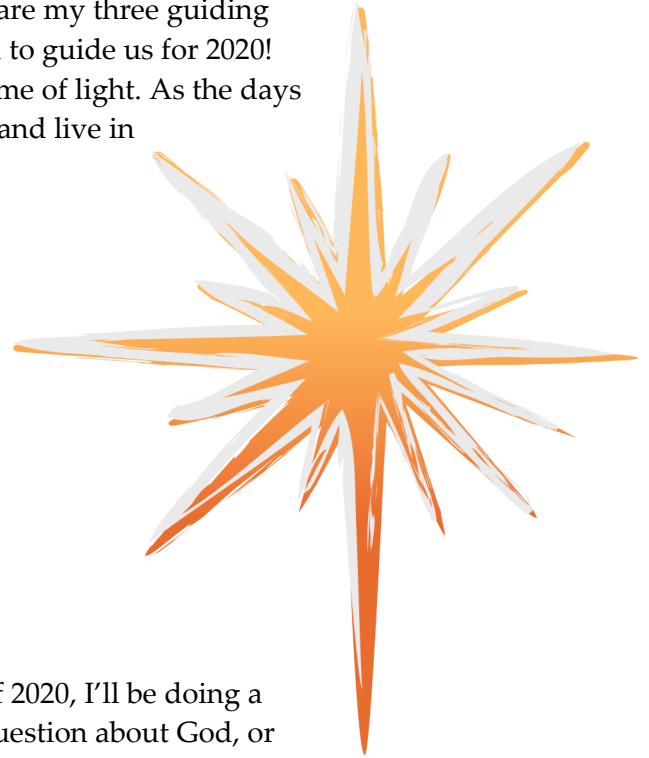
I AM THE LIGHT: John 1:1-18

January 19, 2020

YOU ARE THE LIGHT: Matthew 5:13-16

January 26, 2020

LIVING IN THE LIGHT: Ephesians 5:8-15



What do you wonder about?

What sorts of things make you say "I wonder...?" In February of 2020, I'll be doing a sermon series on the things you wonder about. Do you have a question about God, or faith? If so, put it in the Wonder Box in the Nelson-White Room, and I'll pick some of them for our sermon series!

NEWS SESSION

SESSION CLERK TRANSITION

In December, the session accepted Liz Johnson's resignation as Clerk to the Session. Liz did a phenomenal job in her tenure as clerk and helped to overhaul the session agenda, keep the session on track, and complete the myriad of clerk "to dos" while she served us. Liz brought a sense of history and organization to the session and we will miss her gifts! Thank you, Liz, for being a good and faithful servant!

In January, the session welcomes Tom Mason to the role of Clerk. Tom has been a member of EPC for 20 years and a Presbyterian for 40 years, and yet has never served in this capacity! The session is delighted to welcome Tom to the role and is excited for him to share his gifts with us as clerk.

Watch this space for future news from Session as we kick off 2020!

FAMILY MINISTRY

BY EMILY CULELLA, DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

COMPLETE: A RESOLUTION OF LOOSE ENDS

Last year, the star I picked for Star Sunday had the word “Complete.” I laughed about it then; it is truly the perfect word for someone like me who is always moving and seeking to change and do. The word is a lesson for me. Throughout my year, that star would pop up, on a bookshelf, under a post-it on my desk, in a drawer, in my purse even. It is a little reminder for me that the work is both never completed and always complete. That my best effort, sometimes, is to watch the unfolding of something that was set in motion long before me. It reminds me that Sabbath is holy, not because the work is finished and all tasks are done, but because the setting aside to watch and rest is holy in and of itself. This year, I hope some loose ends will ravel. I hope some ends will unravel. I’m excited to observe the completion of some things and the glorious loosening of others.

What
We're
Learning
Downstairs

This month, we’re back to our Deep Blue curriculum, and taking a tour through the bible. The kids learn a story from the bible through plays, crafts, games, and snacks. This past month, the kids learned how to be more generous with what we already have, how to make presents for our loved ones, and what meaningful gift-giving can look like for them! We also learned the bible verse, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21.



ADVENT
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JANUARY MUSIC

BY SUSAN SMENTEK

THE MUSIC OF EPIPHANY

JANUARY SONGS, WASSAILING, TWELFTH NIGHT

On the Twelfth Day of Christmas, January 5, which is Epiphany Eve, we can finally add the figures of the Three Kings to our manger scenes. Epiphany, also known as the Feast of the Three Kings, is a time of celebration, singing, parades, cakes and/or presents in many countries. In Prague, people take an icy swim in the Vltava River! At EPC, we will stay warm and dry by singing some of our favorite “Three Kings” carols including, *The First Noel*, *What Child Is This?* and, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*.

The seasonal musical themes of Epiphany traditionally encompass the visit of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus, the Miracle at Cana and Christ as the Light of the World. That’s right, it’s not just one day, it’s a season. We will have plenty to sing about as we bake king cakes and brew up wassail!



SPECIAL WORSHIP MUSIC

Do you play an instrument? Do you want to sing a song? Please contact Susan at sirensinger@comcast.net to talk about special worship music opportunities.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Early 2020, ahead of EPC's annual meeting, you'll have a chance to see in full how our church's budget, expenses, and other financials did during 2019 as well as a chance to look at and vote on our 2020 budget.

Here is a preview featuring some good things to know about your church's financial position.

» **EPC has no mortgage and no debt.** This means that any contributions you make support current and future programs rather than to pay for activities that took place years ago.

» Pledges for 2020 exceeded the goal your Trustees and Session had set. **Pledges for the coming year are up more than 12% over the amount pledged in 2019.** At many churches that trend line is going down instead of up. EPC is headed in the right direction, and everyone is grateful for your continued generosity!

» The Trustees made a detailed forecast for how 2019 would turn out, and they expect **EPC will be right on budget** ... despite a number of unexpected costs for maintaining our building and grounds. You can be sure that people at EPC are careful with every dollar and squeeze a penny 'til Lincoln hollers. Even more, volunteers saved money by investing their time and talents into a number of vital projects.

» Our goals and our mission lead to a budget that is bigger than our pledges alone support. In 2019 we used some of the money that EPC had put aside in prior years, and our 2020 budget calls for drawing out some of those funds as well. However, **during 2019, EPC's investments performed very well** — and this helped to replace much of the money that we drew out of our funds for operating expenses. Through November, **EPC's total assets (money in the bank plus investments) were down only 1.5%, despite our having drawn about \$58,000 from our existing funds.**

» **During 2020 we will be working on other ways to raise funds.** For example, our large, centrally located building is an important asset. We will continue to look for tenants who might want to rent ongoing space in our building. In addition, we will experiment with other options. For instance, in February we are hoping to host a conference of Christian educators that will offer an opportunity for one-time revenue.

» **Everything points to mission.** While mission is a vital line item in our annual budget, virtually all we do comes back to our mission to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and to share the grace that our Lord gives so generously to us. So, for example, while our utility bills don't really seem much like they are related to mission, consider what a warm space in our building and access to clean washrooms means to our PADS guests ... or what our sanctuary means to people who gather at a memorial service. Plus, **the mission line item doesn't capture all that we do**, whether it is Christmas gifts for children at Erie House or helping a refugee family to furnish their first apartment in America.

UPCOMING EVENTS



WHAT DO YOU WANT 2020 TO BE?

COME AND MAKE A VISION BOARD TO GUIDE THE YEAR TO COME.

A vision board is a visual guide of what you'd like the year to come to be. Come with some ideas of what you'd like 2020 to be, and we'll guide you through the process, step by step. There's a small ticket cost to cover the cost of supplies. Get your tickets at <http://elmhurstvisionboard.eventbrite.com/>

Tea, sparkling water, and coffee will also be provided. Come and do something nice for yourself as you start out the new year! Come alone or with friends!

The process will be guided by Pastor Traci

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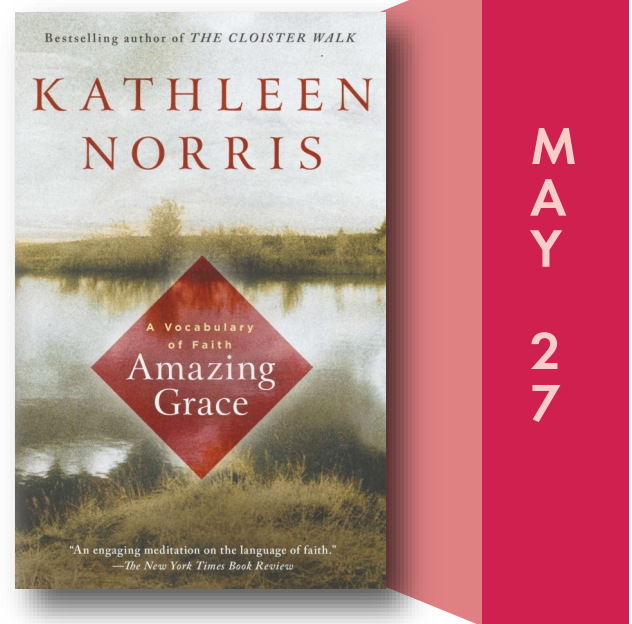
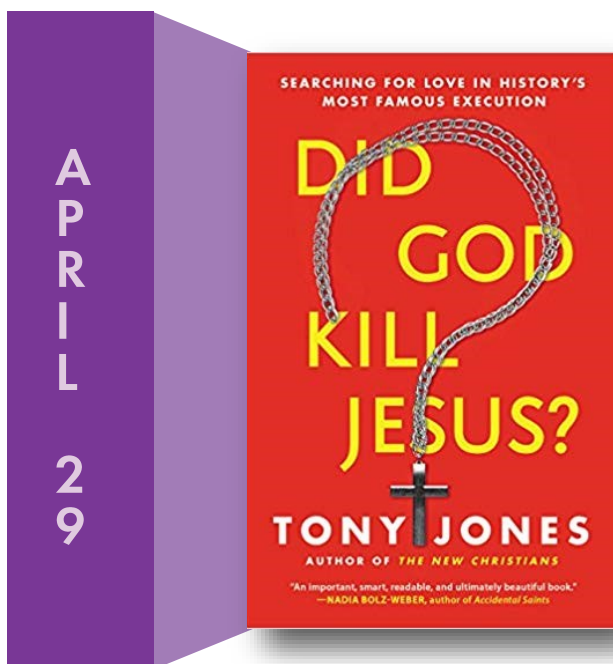
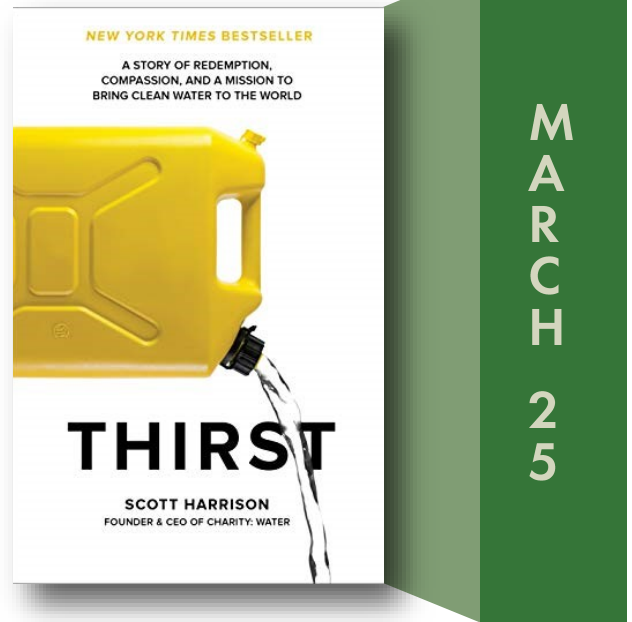
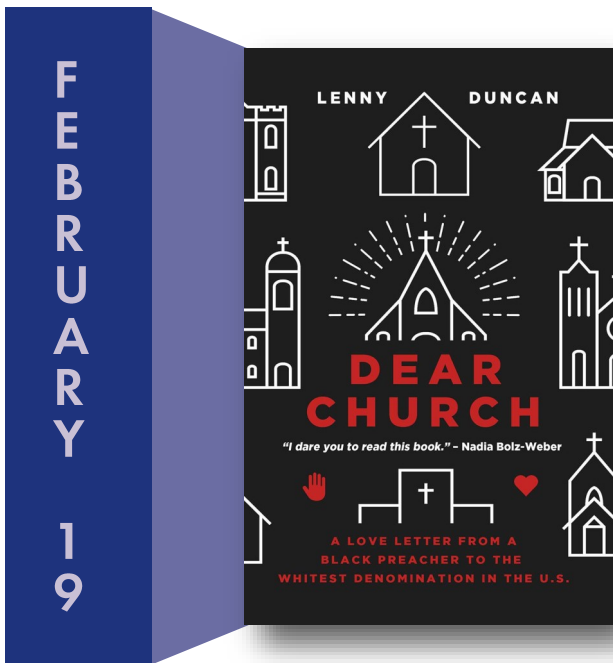
Old Magazines: Please bring in any old magazines from the last 3–5 years for our vision board activity.

A Grow Light: To help us with a garden activity for early spring.

Can you help? If so, please contact Pastor Traci .

WINTER + SPRING BOOK STUDIES

For the next couple of months, we'll be using a different format to study together. We will meet about each book, one time, monthly. The books we'll be studying tackle topics from racism to water supply, atonement theories to exploring solitude with God. Please join us for all or any of these book studies.





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PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

In November we had a Sunday morning giveaway of prayer/shawls, lap robes, and baby blankets. Much to our surprise, we are receiving "Thank you's" from Maine to California! Sharing God's love is AWESOME!

To date we have given away 10 lap robes, 9 baby blankets, and 445 comfort shawls.

If you need any of the above, please contact one of us after church or call the church office. If you would like to join us, we meet from 1-2:30 pm the first Wednesday of the month. Because of the holiday this month, we will meet January 8th.

Mary Mueller
Mary Ellen Hayes
Joy McGuire

Pat Kreibich
Dorothy Fisher



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