

"Help! My Beliefs Are Viewed As Intolerant"

Mike Kruger

I can still remember watching an interview years ago where Oprah Winfrey asked Tom Cruise about his controversial religion of Scientology. Cruise's faith had come under fire due to recent events, and Oprah was pressing him pretty hard about what he really believed.

After a few testy exchanges, Oprah finally got to the nub of the matter: "So Scientologists don't believe their way is the only way?" With this one solitary question—which was obviously *the* question—the tone of the interview shifted dramatically. Whatever other things Cruise might believe, surely he couldn't believe his religion was the only right one. Who could ever have the audacity to believe *that*?

Not surprisingly, Cruise alleviated Oprah's fears: "No. We're here to help. It's not like you've got to believe this . . . [that] you must believe what I believe." After a deep exhale, the interview then continued on with a more gentle, friendly tone.

As I watched this exchange play out, I pondered what might have happened if Oprah had asked that same question to a committed Christian. What if she had asked *me* that question? Would I have had the courage to say, "Yes, I believe Christ is the only way"?

Let's be honest. As our world continues to speak about inclusivity, diversity, and tolerance, it can seem like Christianity is embarrassingly behind the times. Indeed, we can feel a bit like the knuckledragging Neanderthals of the religious world—ignorant, unenlightened, and archaic in our beliefs.

To be sure, feeling like cultural pariahs has had an impact on the church. Some Christians have decided the easier route is just to focus on religious *deeds*. Why alienate non-Christians in debates over truth claims when we can cooperate with them to help make the world a better place? Instead of awkward religious conversations, we can work to stop homelessness, serve the poor, and fight for justice.

Now, to be sure, Christians ought to care about these important issues. Good deeds are the outworking of God's grace in our lives. But the point here is that the cultural stigma over Christianity's exclusivity has led some Christians to withdraw from important cultural conversations.

So, where do we go from here? Well, what is needed is perhaps some fresh thinking about how to engage the non-Christian world about the exclusive truth claims of Christianity. That cannot be solved in a single article, but here are a few thoughts for future conversations.

Sometimes I get the impression that people think the exclusivity of Christianity is something Christians came up with—as if Christians, at some point in church history, were so enamored with their own religion that they declared it must be the only right one.

¹ This article continues a series from Crossway, publisher of the ESV Bible, called "Help!" and addresses various issues in the Christian life. This article, and more in the series, can be accessed at www.crossway.org.

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It's as if Christianity is a sports team and the fans (Christians) are predictably cheering: "We're number one! We're number one!" Needless to say, on those terms, Christians come off as exceedingly arrogant.

There's just one little problem: the exclusivity of Christianity is not something Christians came up with. It doesn't come from Christians, it comes from Jesus: "No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6). Is it arrogant simply to believe what Jesus has said about himself? Not at all. It is his claim, not our claim. We are merely passing it along.

In most conversations about exclusivity, the non-Christian often remains entirely unaware of *why* Christianity must be exclusive. Is there any internal logic for why Christianity makes this claim?

At this point, we need to reassure our non-Christian friend that Jesus's claim about himself is not arbitrary nor is it merely self-aggrandizing. Rather, Jesus is making that claim because he, and he alone, is the only solution to the problem of sin.

And here's the point: Jesus is the only one who remotely qualifies as someone who can take away sins. Indeed, he is the only one who even *claims* to take away sins.

So, we can ask our non-Christian friends a simple question: "Do you have another savior from sins I don't know about?" If not, then Jesus is, by definition, the only option available to them.

One of the most common reasons that people reject the exclusive truth claims of Christianity is because they believe truth is *relative*. In other words, they argue that there is no objective truth. There is just truth *for you*, and truth *for me*.

While relativism may sound reasonable on the surface, it ends up collapsing under its own weight. Relativism only works if the statement "There is no objective truth" is objectively true. Thus, relativism only works if it exempts itself from its own rules.

It is the equivalent of saying something like "All sentences are false." But if *all* sentences are false, then that very sentence is also false. Thus, relativism is essentially like sawing off the branch you're sitting on.

Unfortunately, our current cultural context does not allow for the free exchange of ideas like prior generations. Now, if you say another religion is wrong, it is taken as an act of hostility or aggression. Disagreement is the same as disrespect in most people's eyes.

Thus, we need to work hard to make sure our non-Christian friends understand that we love and respect them, even if we disagree. We need to reassure them that Christians are not out to denigrate, demean, or despise adherents of other religions.

This will not be easy. It will require that we give more attention to our tone and attitude than we might normally do. But it's worth it if we are to reach our non-Christian world.

In the end, my hope is that these four considerations will help us in our conversations with non-Christians over the exclusive claims of Christ. Of course, even if we follow them, that doesn't guarantee smooth conversations. We should expect that we will endure some hostility and resistance as we speak about such things.

To do so will require courage. So, take heart from the words of <u>1 Peter 3:14–15</u>: "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."

ELDERS

Keith Wilson - Clerk **Jim Mueller** Kevin Oak Mic Penry Patrick Shovar

DEACONS

Beth Flickinger Cindy Cullen Scott Cullen Janet Dunlap Norman Dunlap Beth Easterla Don Easterla Cora Schafman **Peggy Shovar**

TRUSTEES

Mel Block - Chair Larry Pithan - Secretary Ken Benningfield Jeff Fuhr Phil Fuhr Scott Nelson Jeff Schmidt Chris Stark

MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Amy Nitzel (Schelker)
- 7 Beth Easterla
- 7 Peggy Weiss
- 9 Pam Johnson
- 9 Mic Penry
- 10 Cade Reimers
- 12 John Rursch
- 13 Jennifer Elliott
- 13 Colton Landi
- 14 Wyatt Fuhr
- 19 Jason Ruggles

- 19 Bob Stegmiller
- 19 Teresa Weber
- 22 Olivia Freyermuth
- 22 Phil Fuhr
- 24 Lee-Ann Druckmiller
- 24 Jonathan Gierlus
- 27 Renee Meredith
- 28 Roma Milner
- 30 Kyle Johnson
- 31 Darcy Krueger
- 31 Debbie Tomlin



ALL submissions for the June Newsletter must be in by **NO LATER** than Wednesday, May 19th. Items

received after that date may not make it into the newsletter. Thank you for your cooperation!

~ Lisa Bowman, Office Manager

GREETERS FOR MAY

Sunday, May 2nd - Ken & Sandy Benningfield Sunday, May 9th - Mel & Pat Block Sunday, May 16th - Nathan & Amy Oak Family Sunday, May 30th - Steven & Debra Wagamon MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBER AND HONOR



appy Anniversary!

- 6 Dewey & Shirley Flemming
- 12 Michael & Joyce O'Hare
- 13 Gene & Renee Meredith
- 18 Matthew & Elisabeth Tomlin
- 19 Augie & Mary Rose Kerres
- 24 Jason & Kelly Ruggles
- 25 Michael & Sharon Orr
- 27 Jason & Beth Flickinger
- 30 Korey & Tara Miller
- 30 Bob & Kathy Stegmiller





March 30, 2021, at 7pm

Location: Conference Room

Attendees Present: TE Zach Hopkins and RE's Jim Mueller, Kevin Oak, Mic Penry, and Patrick Shovar. Excused: RE Keith Wilson

A quorum is present.

Pastor Zach acted as moderator of the meeting. Zach opened the meeting with prayer. The meeting began with a reading and discussion of 1 Peter 2:13-17. The Elders resumed their study of the Westminster Confession of Faith with chapter 23 "Civil Authorities." Discussion centered around the topics prepared beforehand and on the individual sections of this chapter.

After some discussion about different needs and concerns, the Elders prayed for individual members of the congregation according to the various shepherding groups.

Approval/Amendment of Docket: M/S/C to approve the docket.

Approval of Minutes: M/S/C to approve the February 23rd, 2021 minutes.

Zach's Report: Reported on members with health concerns and prayer needs. He also shared some thoughts about how our shared ministry is handling moving toward a post-pandemic world.

Old Business:

- Review of 2021 VBS plans
- Review of plans for Easter Weekend

New Business:

- Zach discussed materials for Leadership Training and a plan to hold such a training in the late summer or early fall.
- M/S/C to approve the submitted church use request for a shower, which would serve as a second location in case of rain.

The next Stated Session meeting will be: April 27th, 2020 at 7:00pm.

M/S/C to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm.

Zach closed the meeting with prayer.

Do you know anyone that is not receiving the Edgington EPC Newsletter each month? If so, please contact the church office at 309-795-1713 or edgingtonepc@gmail.com and let me know



or edgingtonepc@gmail.com and let me know. I will be happy to make arrangements for it to be received by whatever means works best.

The newsletter is distributed via email and postal service. It is also posted to Facebook page each month and our website: <u>edgingtonepc.org</u>. Thank you so much for your help! ~ Lisa Bowman, Office Manager



March 23rd, 2021 at 7pm

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Attendees Present: Teaching Elder Zach Hopkins and Ruling Elders Jim Mueller, Kevin Oak, Mic Penry, Patrick Shovar, Keith Wilson

A quorum is present.

Pastor Zach will act as moderator of the meeting. Zach opened the meeting with prayer. The purpose of this meeting is to finalize plans for Easter Sunday service and to determine whether the church should apply for the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan.

Easter Sunday Planning

The Session discussed plans for Easter Sunday worship. The Session had decided at the February 23rd meeting that Sunday School and Worship would be conducted at the normal times of 9:00am for Sunday School and 10:00am for worship. The Session agreed that we would follow our normal social distancing guidelines. Patrick agreed to talk to the greeters for Easter Sunday and advise them to be prepared to give attendees direction and guidance for overflow attendance. Communion will be served.

PPP Loan

The discussion began with Keith giving an overview of the PPP and the application process and the impending deadline of March 31st for applications. A discussion followed with each elder having the opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns that they may have.

Ruling Elder Kevin Oak made a motion for the Edgington Evangelical Presbyterian Church to apply for the PPP loan, authorizing Ruling Elder Keith Wilson to carry out the application and have signature authority on the application, as well as any subsequent associated loan documents. The motion was seconded by Ruling Elder Patrick Shovar. After a brief discussion, the motion was voted by voice and carried by unanimous vote.

Teaching Elder Zach Hopkins closed the meeting with prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29pm.

Session is requesting that you pray for them to have wisdom and discernment moving forward in a search for someone to lead our music ministry. Honoring the Lord through music is such an important part of our worship and we want to continue to grow, share, and delight in making music together to the Lord.

Please pray for us!



2021 VBS PLANNING MEETING Sunday, May 16th at Noon



We continue to proceed with caution in hosting the 2021 VBS Program. It will look different than in past years - most likely

smaller numbers and some restrictions that we hope will ease up as summer approaches.

We still have some leadership holes to fill. If you are interested in helping and willing to abide by whatever guidelines are put into place, please contact Kathy Stegmiller at 309-791-1162.

The theme this year is: **Rocky Railways, Where Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through!** Thank you for your continued support of the community outreach! January 2021 Re-Opening Q&A



We are very glad to announce that we will worship in person again beginning January 17, 2021. We have missed being together, especially throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons, but we are thankful to have the chance to enjoy the fellowship of the church family again. As everyone likely anticipates, things will be different for now, as they were last summer and fall. The Session has reviewed the governor's guidelines, consulted with officials in the Rock Island County Health Department, and kept an eye on the metrics and data for both our state region and local community. With all this in mind, we want to make sure we are clearly communicating the plan for resuming our gatherings in our building. We've organized this information around some frequently asked questions, but if you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at the church office at 309-795-1713 or edgingtonepc@gmail.com.

Should I stay home?

That is a decision that we will not bind your conscience with. We want to assure anyone who, out of genuine health and safety concerns for themselves or their family, might feel safer staying home and worshipping via livestream that you should feel no guilt or shame in doing so.

Additionally, if you have any of the following symptoms, please do not attend: fever, chills, body aches, cough/congestion, recent loss of taste or smell, or if you are generally unwell. Based on current medical advice, we encourage those who are in categories of increased risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 due to underlying health issues, low immunity, or age, also to consider refraining from attending worship services right now.

What guidelines are in place?

- For those choosing to worship on site, the use of masks will be encouraged for entry and exit. Once you are seated in a pew, and appropriately distanced, the continued use of a mask will be up to the conscience of the individual worshipper. They will not be required during the service. If you would like a mask, one will be available to you while supplies last.
- We encourage you to maintain appropriate physical distance while on the church grounds. While we recognize a deep longing for fellowship, we encourage you to avoid shaking hands or other forms of physical contact for the present time.
- Seating will be available in various limited capacities (see map below):

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- Sanctuary seating will be available and appropriately spaced to allow for social distancing between family units. Those pews containing stacked Bibles and hymnals will be off-limits. Limit: 65 worshippers.
- Additional limited seating will be available in the balcony.
- Once the attendance limit has been met in the sanctuary (65), worshippers will be directed to the basement where the service will be live-streamed (audio & video).
- Pews will be dismissed from the back to the front after the postlude has concluded.
- Offering plates will be placed just outside the sanctuary doors to collect tithes and offerings. Online giving is also available and encouraged using <u>Tithely</u>. You may also mail your contributions directly to the church [Edgington EPC - 13228 140th Street West – Taylor Ridge, IL 61284].

What about Sunday School?

Sunday school classes will meet at 9am. Please enter through the main entrance and go directly to your classroom. Children's classes will meet in their normal rooms which allow for appropriate distance. The Adult Class will continue to meet in the sanctuary, in addition to providing a livestream of our Hebrews teaching series.

What if I have grown comfortable worshipping from home?

Notwithstanding the answer to the first question above, if you are healthy and well, we encourage you to heed the call to come and worship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. We have been worshipping from home out of necessity, not personal convenience. Come and enjoy the blessings of the Lord's Day as we worship together in our beautiful sanctuary and delight in the glories of Zion on this side of heaven. Furthermore, we have missed you – and we long to see you and your family again.

What if I have other questions or conscience objections to any of these plans?

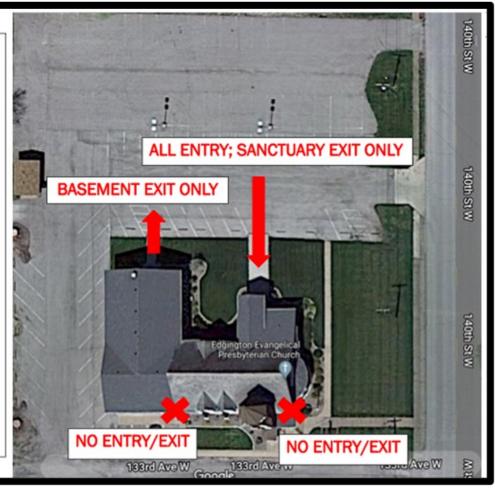
Please contact us. We would love to speak with you.

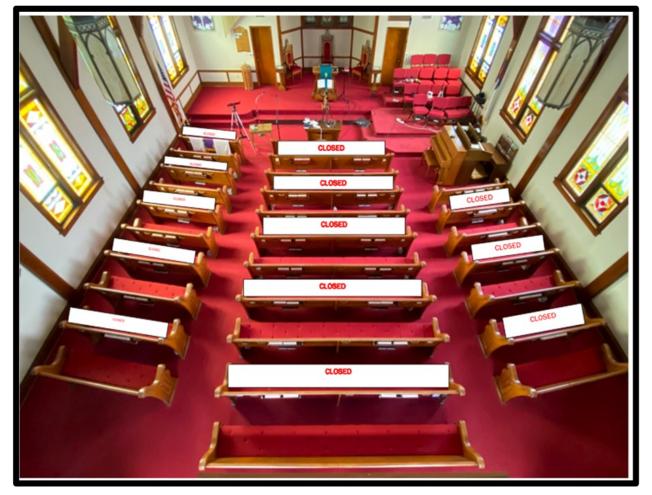
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In compliance with CDC guidelines, "one-way" routes will be established for entry and exit from the facility.

To promote the safe flow of entry and exit, please plan to visit in the parking lot before or after the service, rather than in the facility.

We appreciate your cooperation with these directions.







03/10/2021

Present: Ken Benningfield, Mel Block, Jeff Fuhr, Larry Pithan, Chris Stark, Treasurer Cindy Oak, and Session Representative Jim Mueller.

Mel opened the meeting with a prayer at 7:03pm.

Treasurer's report for February was reviewed and approved.

Secretary's minutes for February were reviewed and approved.

Old Business:

- Burned out light in front sign has been replaced. Further repairs will be completed this spring.
- Roofing proposal for the sanctuary roof has been signed. Contractor estimates work will take place late summer or fall.
- Heating pump for office area has been repaired.
- Repaired fascia trim on south side of building.

New Business:

- Mower setup. Mel indicated the lawn mower needs to be prepared for use this summer.
- Discussed storage of sidewalk snow melt. Most of the material was used this winter with only one bag remaining. Currently stored in the boiler room although this is potentially harmful for the boiler. Agreed to only purchase additional material as needed.
- One of the photocells for the parking lot lights has failed and the light is on continually. Trustees will install a new lighting controller at the storage garage to make repairs easier.
- Proposal for over seeding the new lawn and annual fertilizer program was reviewed. Agreed to hire Precision Lawn to do over seeding this spring. Mel indicated he is willing to continue taking care of lawn fertilization and spraying.
- Discussed lawn mowing for this summer. Trustees agreed to see if Eddie is still interested in doing the work.
- Set up a work day on March 20th at 9:00 am to do spring cleanup of the landscaping.
- Discussed the narrow grass area along the west side of the Sunday School building. This area is difficult to mow. Agreed to rework this area and cover with stone.
- Trustees will obtain a proposal for seal coating and striping the parking lot. Will review at next meeting.

Mel closed the meeting with a prayer at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Pithan





MISSION COMMITTEE

The Mission Committee did not meet in March. Watch for the April minutes in the June Newsletter.

NEED A HAND OR ENCOURAGEMENT? ASK A DEACON!



The Deacons' charge is to care for the church body. You may already know that we provide delicious treats to celebrate new members, collect coats for those in need, and organize blood drives. But did you now that we are ready to serve in other ways, too?

Here are some of the ways a Deacon can help out:

- Visit shut-ins (including those who are temporarily unable to make it to worship) to provide cheer and recordings of the sermon (during this time, they will make calls to visit over the phone)
- Deliver meals to those who are injured, ill, or have experienced a loss
- Visit widows(ers) to comfort and provide company (again, during this time, calls will be made)
- Send cards to recognize milestone birthdays and anniversaries, and express condolences
- Organize transportation to doctor's appointments (please give advance notice)

Please, if you or someone you know could benefit in one of these areas, please let a Deacon know right away. We try to anticipate needs, but we are only human, and need help with knowing needs! The 2020 Deacon team includes: Scott & Cindy Cullen, Norman & Janet Dunlap, Don & Beth Easterla, Beth Flickinger, Cora Shafman, & Peggy Shovar.









For many years now Edgington EPC has been a host site for Senior Meals. The doors are open here for meals on Monday, Thursday, and Friday.

Meals are available for a suggested donation of \$3 to anyone 60+ years or with a disability. If you are new to the program, you need to call 309-788-6335 the day before to request your meal.



Those who attend regularly come early to play cards and enjoy each other's company for a little longer than just meal time.

NOTE: All Meal Sites are cancelled until the restrictions concerning COVID-19 have been lifted and it is deemed safe to gather together again. **HOWEVER, meals are still being delivered to individual's homes!** Please contact Project Now if you or someone you know could benefit from this service!

Their number is 309-788-6335 or you can email the director, Michelle Dyer, at mdyer@projectnow.org



CHECK OUT THE NEXT SEVERAL PAGES FOR THE MINISTRIES WE SUPPORT, AND FOR WAYS THAT YOU CAN GET PLUGGED IN PERSONALLY!



THE DIRECTOR'S DESK MARCH 2021

When Pregnancy Was Not Planned – Every Choice Has Loss

In this first quarter of 2021, God is sending profoundly more women and men to Pregnancy Resources in the midst of an unplanned pregnancy. These parents are



actively planning or seriously considering terminating pregnancy. Many of these moms & dads are married (or in a longterm, monogamous relationship) and already are parenting other small children. Financial stressors, employment uncertainty, relationship struggles, a missing or lacking emotional support network, and the current demands of parenthood are common reasons why these parents often find themselves seriously considering abortion. It's not uncommon to hear moms and dads in these complicated circumstances say, "abortion is my ONLY choice". Pregnancy Resources provides **medically accurate abortion education and options information to every client that comes through our doors for a pregnancy test or ultrasound.** We believe that knowledge is power, and every woman and man should make informed decisions regarding the pregnancy. We know that when parents understand what abortion is and when they see life on the ultrasound screen, they are much more likely to choose life for their pre-born child. We also acknowledge that every pregnancy decision involves loss:

- For the mom who continues the pregnancy and chooses to parent this child there is a loss of every possibility that existed before the pregnancy and the creation of this new human life occurred. Life has been protected, and hope remains.
- For the mom who continues the pregnancy and chooses to place this child in the arms of a loving forever family there is the loss of the daily experience of parenting this child. Life has been protected, and hope remains.
- For the mom who terminates the pregnancy with abortion the life of this pre-born child is lost. For the post abortive mother and father there can be emotional loss, spiritual struggle, and long-term trauma. But with Jesus, there is always hope, freedom, and forgiveness available for all.

Be **COURAGOUS AND MERCIFUL**. Don't let your sister or brother, your daughter or son, your neighbor, or your friend believe the lie that they have "no choice." Speak up for her/his sake and for the sake of the pre-born child. It is **compassionate** to recognize when moms and dads facing an unplanned pregnancy are in complicated and difficult situations. It is **merciful** to acknowledge that each pregnancy choice carries unique loss. It is **life changing** to be able to ask questions like "what is the loss you can live with when you look yourself in the mirror every day" or "what is the loss that protects this little human growing inside you, and best meets your needs right now"?

It is true: every choice involves loss, but life can still be protected and there can still be hope.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for the abortion-minded client who was seen this week at one of our Centers. She is facing many difficult circumstances. Pray that she will see the value of the life she is carrying and that she keeps her ultrasound appointment. Pray that she will see that an abortion will only add to the trauma of her already difficult situation.
- Pray for the woman who has called Pregnancy Resources twice for guidance. She has experienced a miscarriage and is struggling to process it.
- Pray for an abortion-minded client who left her ultrasound appointment undecided. Pray that she will accept a second ultrasound and that she will allow the father of the baby to attend that ultrasound. Pray for her discernment and for the father of the baby as he is excited for the pregnancy and wanting to carry and parent their child.
- Pray for a woman who ahs revealed an abortion from over 40 years ago and is still suffering from the after-effects.
 Pray that she will be open to seeking help through the post-abortion recovery group and that she will find hope and healing through Jesus.
- Pray for the post-abortion recovery group that is currently meeting. Pray that their time together would be fruitful and filled with hope.

PRAISES:

- Praise God for the many answered prayers that the Pregnancy Resources team has seen recently, both personally and professionally!
- Praise God for the ways that we are able to continue meeting the needs of the men and women who walk through our doors!
- Praise God for the blessing that was banquet. Praise Him for his continued provision for this ministry!
- Thank you for your continued prayers for Pregnancy Resources! Your faithfulness is such a blessing to us!

Thank you for praying!

~ Marissa J. Foss, Admin. Assistant

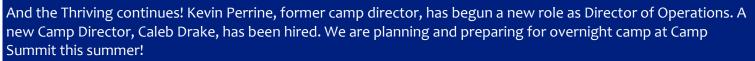


PRC 101 2021 Volunteer Training Dates: June 1-3 or October 5-7

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YOUTHHOPE APRIL 2021

2021 at YouthHope has begun like 2020 ended...Thriving! In 2020, God used us to bring hope to thousands of children, teens, and families. YouthHope staff began initiatives to meet the needs of the people we serve as the pandemic affected our community. A new online ministry was developed, educational support programs were implemented, and a food delivery outreach began. Two full time staff were added to our team. At Camp Summit, an extension to our dining area was completed and most importantly - 261 kids and teens were able to attend Camp Summit's Day Camp!



And, there's more. We anticipate having the new Creative Arts Center operational for summer programs!

YouthHope will continue bringing youth HOPE in our community. It's because of you, that the children, teens, and the families we serve will have opportunities to learn about God's immeasurable love for them, experience summer camp, and encounter our welcoming, caring, energetic, and Christ-loving staff. Thank you for being a significant part of YouthHope.

~ Mark Drake, Executive Director

To read the rest of the APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER click HERE

YouthHope has a NEW website! Visit it by clicking on the YH Logo to find ways that you can plug in and serve!

Questions? Want to help? Contact Hannah at (309) 762-4577 or email: hcarr@cfyouthhope.org

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for our students from kindergartens to seniors, who are feeling burdened, pressure to react, despair from the pandemic, and wanting for more. Lord, we need you! Protect our students, come dwell among us, and guide us!
- Please pray for a family of former students mourning the loss of their sister. Father God, wrap your arms around every person in this family, draw them close to you, and give them unbelievable peace. Use this tragic loss to change hearts and break generation chains.
- Lord, heal, refresh, and strengthen our staff! Father, please place a hedge of protection around each staff, their family, home, and vehicle. No plans of the enemy will prosper against us in Jesus' name!
- Father, we lift up family members dealing with illness and loss. We command the manifestation of healing so you receive the glory. They will be a living testimony of your power and goodness. Lord, bring peace, comfort, and joy to mourning family members.
- Please join us in praying for the staff for summer camp and in town programs. Lord, we need your help and trust you have passionate staff lined up to fill ALL staff openings! Connect us Lord!
- Lord, we ask for your wisdom for summer plans, new programs, and next school year. Help us with all you have before us, and bring a fresh anointing to everyone at YouthHope to be what you have created and called us to be. Lord, your will be done at YouthHope as it is in Heaven!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- We have returned to after school activities and evening/weekend programs since kids and teens back in school. Praise the Lord!
- We are seeing deeper engagement from the YH students and hunger to grow their faith! Use our programs Lord, and let this be just the beginning for these students!
- Overnight summer camps have been approved! Thank you Lord for going before us and making a way!
- God's provision has been amazing! We thank and praise Him for our Virtual Fundraiser, new vehicles, concrete/ building, and Creative Arts Center construction nearing completion! God is so good!
- We thank God for our newest staff: Karen Ambriz, Juan Valtierra, Caleb Drake, and Faith Anderson who are passionate about pursuing kids/teens for Christ!
- Thank you Father God for each and every staff and volunteer at YouthHope and the uniqueness each person brings. Here we are, use us!

Thank you so much for your prayers!! Please continue to lift up the YouthHope staff! We need your support, encouragement, and prayers! Thank you so much! God bless you!

In His Service, Hannah



ITEN & 2021 - WOODWORTH UPDATE

The picture to the right was taken in our backyard here in Northeast Georgia, where God has graciously provided a 3.5 acre plot of land for our family to steward. Over the past three years we have cultivated the land and planted organic gardens. In addition to the incredible food it provides for our family, gardening is my wife's passion. Behind those gates is her refuge. Soiled covered hands, and the joy of raising plants from seed to harvest brings her an immense amount of joy. It also demands a seemingly infinite amount of work.



Again and again I return to our garden as an apt metaphor for ministry- a healthy harvest demands a great deal of preparation and labor. In fact, the majority of time spent on a garden is dedicated to preparation. Months and months of saving seeds, preparing the soil, mending fences, and sprouting seedlings have to occur in order to achieve just a few months of eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

The past year has often felt a lot like that for ITEN. Months and months of behind the scenes labor in anticipation of the eventual fruit of returning to the field once again. With vaccines on the rise and COVID cases on the decline, it does appear that the worst of this pandemic is finally behind us. In light of this we look forward to getting back into the garden in 2021 to harvest more fruit. Read on to hear about our plans.



Albania: May 17-21

While lockdowns, curfews and COVID protocols still remain in place for Albania, I will be teaching my next course at ISTL remotely. Dozens of students will attend virtually and in-person to spend a week diving into a course on The Gospels. We anticipate an additional trip in 2021 where I will be able to introduce new EPC partners to ISTL in person.

ITEN Leadership Retreat

for our annual leadership retreat. This will be the first time that the three of us have seen each other in-person in over a year! It will be an incredible time of fellowship, prayer, and planning as we discern God's will for ITEN in the coming years. Please pray for us!

PRAYERS AND PRAISES:

- Our oldest son Luke has now graduated from Navy Bootcamp and has been moved to Coronado, CA for the next stage of his training with the special warfare cadets. There is still a long road until (and if) he completes it (there is a 85% dropout rate), so we are praying daily for his physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- God's continued provision for our needs as a family, as well as the needs of our partners.
- Our annual ITEN retreat (April 27-29)
- My next course (virtually) in Albania from May 17-21
- Wisdom, patience and insight as we raise our two other teenage sons (Andrew 16, Zachary 14)

Important Financial Update

First of all, let us say Thank You to everyone who responded so generously to our last call for additional support. For those that may have missed the first notice I wanted to simply send a reminder that World Outreach has offered a generous opportunity to new financial partners for our ministry that matches automatic, online donations dollar-for-dollar for 3 months beginning February 1. April is our final month to receive this unique benefit. It would be incredibly helpful if you could pass this message to others and encourage them to join our team. These are the details of the program:

"WO workers who have served at least 5 years on the field, and whose support accounts are in deficit may participate in a 3for-1 Matching Fund program. The purpose of this program is to encourage and assist workers to strengthen their support base. During the program, for every dollar of new monthly support set up at EPC in automatic, recurring, electronic giving, three dollars will be transferred into the worker's support account from the WO support pool (up to a maximum of \$4,000). If you or your church are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, simply click <u>HERE</u>, and help us fulfill our calling to serve the least and the lost. Thank You!



THE B.....'S

Serge Grace at the Fray

You hear so often from me (C.....) but we thought it would be good to hear from S.... too! This is how he spent his time Good Friday afternoon:

"We're gonna do something different, but we should still have fun." This was how a brief conversation with a Muslim contact ended as I was moments away from meeting, I thought, one on one for bubble tea and conversation. I got to our meeting place to find four men waiting for me. "A." waved and smiled and introduced me to the other men: a brother, a friend, and a "ringer". We ended up travelling a bit through the neighborhood to eat at a picnic table near street vendors. As all slowly got their food the conversation began.

For safety reasons it has been decided not to include photos full names, location, or link to their full update. If you would like to receive their regular updates via email, please contact the church office and Lisa will connect you with the them to be added to their email list.

For the next 90 minutes, I was asked about the validity of the Bible, (as always) the issue of the Trinity, why and how Jesus died, and much more. Throughout our walk to the street food and the ensuing discussion, I was silently praying for wisdom and clarification of the truth of the Lord. I was able to answer most all of their challenges directly, with one question that I wanted to look at further. For my part, I was able to share in bits and pieces the gospel message of God becoming flesh and taking our sin to become the perfect sacrifice. I also learned more from where "A." was coming from and ideas for future interactions. The conversation ended amicably and gave opening for more in the future.

Please pray for "A." as it feels very much like he is open to listening to the truth of God, even as he seeks to set me straight in faith. I feel the extra back up was to feel more confidence in his own faith tradition after meeting one on one. Join me in praying that God's truth takes hold as we continue to get together.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES:

- We are having an Asha service on Easter at 4pm! Pray that people will come, they will have open hearts to hear the Easter story, that we can run things smoothly with restrictions in place, and for good discussion time outside afterwards (in socially distant groups of 6).
- Continue to pray for "A" and for S.... as he interacts with "A" and others that have interest in discussion that S.... can speak the truth wisely and for it to reach hearts.
- As the UK opens up, and we start to remember what normal was, pray for us as we adjust to the shock of things like seeing the parks busy, or riding the tube again. Also pray that we can take opportunities to reach out to those around us, now that it is legal to do so. And, for the best ways to set up programming and outreach as we go forward.
- Pray for the Muslim world during Ramadan. And if you would like a more guided prayer time, check out this link <u>https://www.30daysprayer.com/</u> or this <u>https://www.pray4sylhetis.org/</u> (we know the people putting out the pray4sylhetis content, which will also be specific to the people group we are working with).
- Continue to pray for outreach to local teens through Girl's Club after school on Fridays, and lunch craft clubs in the schools. There is a lot of brokenness in this area pray these girls can be reached with the love of Jesus.
- L..... has a month to figure out university plans and her future. Some schools still haven't released financial aid info, which makes this decision more stressful. Pray things become clear and she has some good answers on what to do next.
- Please pray for our support situation, for God to bring people forward to be part of our support team. And many praises for those of you already on our team- we are so grateful for you!

Thanks for praying with us!

C....., for S.... and the kids

A praise about our support- after last month we had some existing supporters reach out with increases in support and gained a couple new supporters and we are at 88% of needed monthly support now! Thank you!!

And a prayer- we still do need to find some more support partners, so if you or someone you know is feeling led to offer support, or at least wants to hear more, please contact the church office at edgingtonepc@gmail.com or 309-795-1713 to find out how. Thank you so much.

The support we raise mainly goes to help us live and work here, but some is also going to ministry expenses- things like Bibles to hand out at book tables, or copies of the Easter story for children that each child coming to the Asha service on Easter will receive. **BIG SNOW YIELDS BIG EASTER** (There is MUCH more to this article than I have room to publish. Click <u>HERE</u> for the entire update)

Here's the cool thing that happened: ... The weather had been warming up just a bit at the end of March, and the extended forecast looked good for Easter day...our across-the-street neighbors told us that if we ever wanted to host an event outdoors, we could use their back patio and/or their garage rooftop deck. So, ... we've got a bright weather forecast and a nice decent sized outdoor meeting space and we've got EASTER.....Cathy and I decided to throw an Easter service and invite most of the people we've met. Keep in



mind, most of our new friends are in no way meaningfully connected to the Christian faith or the Christian church. This felt daring given the fact that the only GROUP EVENT we'd ever hosted up till this point was a Super Bowl party in February of 2020. I've hung out one-on-one with folks, Cathy's met people at her art gallery, we've constantly had people (a few at a time) over for porch dinners and hangouts (even through the winter), we've had summer holiday cookouts for smaller groups in our tiny front yard, and we've met people for outdoor dining (and indoor when allowed). Yet, this type of gathering would be a first! I was breaking from the typical game plan for church planting... but... hey... it's pandemic church planting, right?!?!?! ...It was a go-big-or-go-home moment. With only a week-and-a-half to go before Easter, we planned a full-blown Easter service, found a group of 4 great jazz musical artists in the city, and prepared a big luncheon feast after the worship gathering. I invited all our new friends and neighbors.

I was thinking it would be great if 5-10 responded. God surprised us in a BIG way. Including Cathy, Jeffrey Jr. (he was in town visiting), and I, we had 30 people show up for our Easter service!!! Over half the crowd were from other religious or non-religious backgrounds. It was a very eclectic group in many ways. The Spirit blessed the worship service. The music was powerful and super soulful. And, most of all, it was abundantly clear that Christ showed up as our honored guest. As my neighbor who hosted the event put it, "You could feel the spirit moving all over that roof deck!!" Afterward, several people got word to me regarding how people felt moved to consider more seriously the story of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead. One attendee pointed out something I had not seen. He said that while I was leading the worship service, he and his wife observed a young woman who made her way to the outdoor stairway of her apartment building next door and started taking bong hits while attentively watching our entire service. That was a new one for me! Another friend said that one of her apartment flat mates was so moved by the sound of the music that she walked out into the back alley and listened to the service in its entirety.

The passage God brought to mind in the aftermath of our Easter service was:

Psalm 126:[1] When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. [2] Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." [3] The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. (ESV)

God is and always has been a God who shows up in his timing and surprises us. This was like a dream we couldn't have imagined. God has done a great thing and we are glad!

Pray that the Lord will help us figure out where to go with this. We planned a one-off event and didn't expect this kind of response. We desperately need the Lord to show us what's next – to give us the grace to discern what he's up to and to dive in and be a part of it.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES:

- For the Lord to bless the follow-up to our Easter service. In the power of Christ's love, I want to meet people where they are in terms of responding to their honest questions and struggles.
- For wisdom regarding where we go with the Easter service momentum. Do we find somewhere else to meet outdoors for a series of gatherings? Are there enough people interested in starting a small group? What kind of social events should we host?
- Pray for a jazz event we're hoping to host at Cathy's gallery in May.
- For the Spirit of our Risen Christ to continue empowering us to joyfully persevere in Pandemic Church Planting. For Christ to fill us full of Faith, Hope, and Love as we do so. For God to strengthen our private lives of communion with Christ.
- For God to help us find times to experience His rest during the stress of planting a church and establishing an art gallery business.
-More prayer requests can be found <u>HERE</u>

Sending much love your way from Chicago,

Jeffrey Lancaster

Please consider hanging in there with us through continued prayer and financial support. To donate click <u>HERE</u>

Edgington Presbyterian Church Treasurer's Report March 2021

General Jahn Edgington Boughton Lauby	\$9 \$5 \$21	e ,018.69 ,844.84 ,691.02 ,910.09 ,667.22	\$ \$ \$	Receipts 20,025.36 \$77.59 160,431.21 127.25		sbursement 169,654.45 - -	Ba \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$	lance 80,389.60 9,922.43 5,691.02 182,341.30 21,794.47
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Ending Gen. checking bala Uncleared Transactions General checking Balance	<mark>\$</mark> \$ 9	6,799.07 <u>796.02</u> 6,003.05				onciled Bank / . checking	Асса \$	ounts 96,003.05
March 2021 GENERAL FUN Zach Hopkins salary Housing Allowance EPC (health) Fidelity (pension) Mileage Lisa Bowman Robin Preston Reytel AT&T MidAmerican Energy church Millenium Waste Ministry Designs (website) ABS (copier) Postmster EPC (resource material) Westminster Books (cont ed) Sec of State (NFP filing fee) Crawford Co (boiler) J Lancaster (mileage & hotel) Z Hopkins (presbytery expension sale of manse (transfer of funds		<u>NSES</u>		4,308.32 1,800.00 25.23 919.81 - 905.16 321.47 117.90 159.01 469.00 34.00 30.00 116.69 74.00 119.85 82.84 10.00 486.55 313.00 361.62 159,000.00		ngton 1	\$ \$ \$ \$	80,389.60 5,691.02 9,922.43 96,003.05
to Boughton Fund) TOTAL EXPENSES					:	\$169,654.45		
INCLUDED IN GENERAL FU Mission monies included in ge Assistance Fund				\$13,475.94 \$5 ,153. 4 6				

Edgington Presbyterian Church General Fund Profit & Loss March 2021

Edgington Presbyterian Church Boughton Fund Profit & Loss March 2021

	Mar 21		Mar 21
Ordinary Income/Expense Income		Ordinary Income/Expense Income	
Per Capita Contributions	160.00	Boughton - Donation	160,031.16
Flower Contributions	250.00	Interest Income - Boughton	400.05
Interest Income - General Fnd	12.66	Total Income	160,431.21
Loose Offering	185.00		100,401.21
Other Income	1,358.00	Net Ordinary Income	160,431.21
Pledges	18,059.70		
Total Income	20,025.36	Net Income	160,431.21
Expense			
Pastors housing allowance	1,800.00		
Operating Maintenance - General	638.45		
presbytery expense	361.62		
Resource materials	119.85		
Continuing Education	82.84	GET YOUR MAY COPY	OF
Miscellaneous	159,010.00		
Office Supplies		THE TABLETALK DEVOTION	JNAL
Copier	116.69		
Office Supplies - Other	30.00		\mathbf{K}
Total Office Supplies	146.69	НАУ	2021 \$3
Payroll Expenses			and the second
Custodian Payroll	321.47		
Pastor Salary	4,308.32		
Secretary Services	905.16		Negate N
Total Payroll Expenses	5,534.95		
Pension & Health Care	945.04		
Postage	74.00		
Pulpit Supply	313.00		
Utilities			\mathbb{X}
Gas & Electric - Church	469.00		
Telephone	159.01		
Total Utilities	628.01		
Total Expense	169,654.45		
Net Ordinary Income	-149,629.09	ANXIETY	
Net Income	-149,629.09	LOCATED ON A TABLE IN THE SANCT	UARY FOYFR

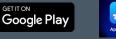
CURRENT SERMON SERIES



Pastor Zach is currently preaching a series titled "Searching for Satisfaction" on the book of Ecclesiastes. Please join us each week as we enter into God's presence and worship Him corporately through the preaching and teaching of His Word.

Sunday, May 2nd – Ecclesiastes 7:15-29Sunday, May 9th –Ecclesiastes 8:1-17Sunday, May 9th –Ecclesiastes 9:1-12Sunday, May 23rd –Sunday, May 23rd –Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:20Sunday, May 30th –Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

SCRIPTURE LINKS - Download the apps!





ESV.org is an online Bible reading tool created to help you read and engage with God's Word. While many features of the site are available without signing in, we invite you to <u>create a free</u> <u>account</u>, which makes it easy to save personal notes, highlight favorite verses, and start interactive reading plans.

(Click on the images to go to their websites)



Blue Letter Bible provides powerful tools for an in-depth study of God's Word through our free online reference library, with study tools that are grounded in the historical, conservative Christian faith. We view the Bible as central to our study resources. We intentionally designed the website to include study tools that are linked directly to Bible passages. Dig deep into the Word using commentaries,

encyclopedias, maps/images and much more. One of our most used tools is the Lexicon search, which gives users immediate access to the original Hebrew and Greek words.

READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR PASTOR

This Bible reading plan follows a five-day structure. I like this structure because the weekends can be used for catching up if necessary, but also because it fits well with my schedule. I invite you to read the Bible with me! The full plan is accessible **HERE**. I would love to hear that you're reading along and would certainty welcome any of your questions, comments, and observations.

Here is April's Reading Schedule:

Week 18 - 5/2 - 5/8

- <u>1 Sam 18-19; 1 Chr 3; Ps 59; Acts 13</u>
- <u>1 Sa 20; 1 Chr 4; Ps 56, 57, 142; Acts 14</u>
- <u>1 Sam 21-22; 1 Chr 5; Ps 52; Acts 15</u>
- <u>1 Sam 23-24; 1 Chr 6; Ps 54; Acts 16</u>
- <u>1 Sam 25; 1 Chr 7; Acts 17</u>

Week 19 – 5/9 - 5/15

- <u>1 Sam 26-27; 1 Chr 8; Acts 18</u>
- <u>1 Sam 28-29; 1 Chr 9; Acts 19</u>
- <u>1 Sam 30-31; 1 Chr 10; Acts 20</u>
- <u>2 Sam 1-2; 1 Chr 11; Ps 96, 106; Acts 21</u>
- <u>2 Sam 3-5; 1 Chr 12; Ps 122; Acts 22</u>

Week 20 – 5/16 - 5/22

- <u>2 Sam 6; 1 Chr 13; Psalm 60; Acts 23</u>
- <u>1 Chron 14-16; Acts 24</u>
- <u>2 Sam 7-8; 1 Chr 17; Ps 132; Acts 25</u>
- 2 Sam 9-10; 1 Chr 18-19; Ps 89; Acts 26
- <u>2 Sam 11-12; 1 Chr 20; Ps 51, 32; Acts 27</u>

Week 21 - 5/23 - 5/29

- <u>2 Samuel 13-14; Acts 28</u>
- <u>2 Sam 15-17; Psalms 3, 63; Romans 1</u>
- <u>2 Sam 18-20; Psalm 34; Romans 2</u>
- <u>2 Sam 21-23; Psalm 18; Romans 3</u>
- <u>2 Sam 24; 1 Chr 21; Romans 4</u>

Week 22 - 5/30 - 6/5

- <u>1 Chron 22-25; Psalm 78; Romans 5</u>
- <u>1 Kings 1; 1 Chr 26-28; Romans 6</u>
- <u>1 Kings 2; 1 Chr 29; Romans 7</u>
- <u>1 Kings 3; 2 Chr 1; Ps 42; Romans 8</u>
- <u>1 Kings 4; Prov 1-2; Psalm 43; Romans 9</u>

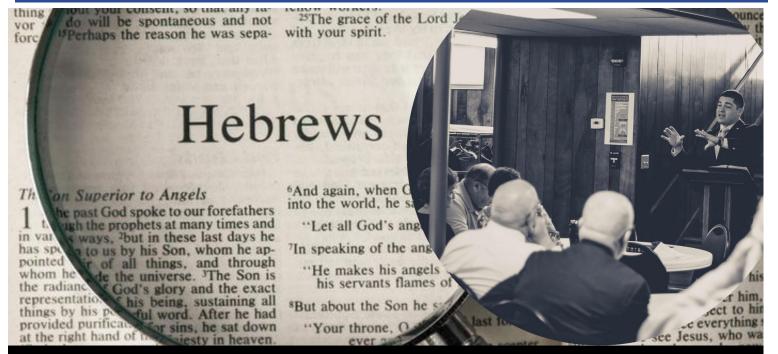
18

Pastor Zach is on Facebook Live every Sunday morning at 10am for our Lord's Day Worship Service .



If you are not already a member of our Facebook group, please click on the

image for the link. "Like" our page and request to join. We are pretty quick to respond. Make sure you are "following" our page and turn your notifications setting on if you would like to receive a notification when Pastor Zach begins to stream. We will post a worship guide each week in advance of the service.



Adult Sunday School is Back!

"CHRIST IS ALL: The Book of Hebrews"

Starting 9/13 ~ 9am-9:40am ~ Meeting in the Sanctuary ~ Livestream Avaialable

IN-PERSON SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Please join us at 9am every Lord's day!

If you have children, but are unable to attend, the children's lessons are posted on FB each week.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Every Sunday morning at 9am



GREAT COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS We use Great Commission Publications various curriculum based on each grade level.

- Toddler Hillary Terrill & Kortney Geirlus
- Pre-K 1st-2nd

3rd-5th

- Beth Flickinger - Katie Pearson
 - Kathy Stegmiller
- Junior High Tara Johnson & Deanna Parchert
- Senior High Brandee Neece



All of Scripture is the unfolding story of salvation and Jesus is its focus. We show how Jesus, revealed throughout the Bible, came to seek and save the lost.

We look forward to the privilege of caring for and teaching your children about Jesus each Sunday!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



Thursday, May 6th, 1pm

All women of the church are welcome! Pastor Zach will lead us in a Bible Study on a chapter of Psalms out of our book, "Sing a New Song" and our business meeting will follow.



We will meet in the basement of the church and observe the current social distancing guidelines. We will not have refreshments as we usually do to help comply with the recommendations.

Throughout the year, the PW hosts various events, which includes refreshments for special services, luncheons for special meetings and funerals. We hold a rummage and bake sale as a fundraiser every year, and sometimes a soup luncheon as well. We help financially support many projects throughout the church, as well as mission work locally, nationally, and abroad.

QUILTING

WARDADAA WAAAA GAAGAYYYYYYY A AAAAA SU AXAYYYYYY A AAAAA A

Thursday, May 20th, 9am

Please come and join us as we create, piece, and sew quilts to present to next year's graduating seniors, as well as Winnie's Place.

Even if you don't know how to sew, but can operate a pair of scissors and/or an iron, we would love to have you! If we can increase our production, we will be able to bless even more people in the community.

Please consider joining us! Hope to see you there!



UNITYPOINT FOOT CLINIC

The next foot clinic will be on Monday, June 21st. If you would like a medically professional pedicure appointment, please call the <u>church office at 309-795-1713</u>.

selcome



TO OUR NEWEST FAMILY MEMBERS!

(From right) Matthew & Jennifer, Lexi, Liam, and Emmi Youck, Colby Mueller, and Cassie Fuhr (not pictured).

We are so thankful to God for our newest members and look forward to seeing how God will weave them into the fabric of our ministries here at Edgington EPC!



2021 GRADUATES

We would like to recognize and celebrate all our 2021 students that are moving on to their next adventure!

Please keep them in prayer as they try to discern God's path for their lives.

8th Grade moving into High School:

Jacob Freyermuth

Jackson Koler

Reid Schelker

High School Graduates:

Colby Mueller Plans to attend Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, IA. Studying to earn Associate's Degree in Agricultural Business.

Kira Oleson Plans to attend Augustana College studying pre-med. She was also recruited to play volleyball and run track.

Maggie Pape Plans to join the Navy this summer.

Delaney Peterson Plans to attend Carl Sandburg College seeking a degree in business.

Sandon Schelker Plans to attend Black Hawk College and explore future careers. Interested in engineering, counseling, and the health/medical field. Also plans to continue working while in school.

Kunter Wisledt Will have completed the John Deere Manufacturing Welding course by graduation day, and plans to apply for employment at John Deere.

Logan Wisledt Will have completed the John Deere Manufacturing Welding course by graduation day, and plans to apply for employment at John Deere.

College/University Graduates:

Madison Bayne Graduating from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology of Law, Criminology and Deviance, and a Minor in Health Psychology. She plans to remain living in the Minneapolis/St Paul area, hoping to obtain a job with a municipality in that area as a Crime Analyst,

Daria Parcherl Graduating from Central College in Pella, Iowa with a degree in Business Management. She is currently seeking employment.

Carson Thomas Graduated from Western Illinois University in December of 2020 with a Major in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration, and Minor in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration. Currently working at Green Tree Brewery and part-time overseeing a three-year Parks and Recreation project in the City of Riverdale, IA.

MAY 2021	21	Mento A	Sunday School 9am Worship Service 10am		EEPC Phone: 309-795-1713 Email: edgingtonepc@gmail.com WEBSITE: www.edgingtonepc.org	ے 95-1713 دھgmail.com ingtonepc.org
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
25 B/P Checks	26	27 Session Mtg., 7pm	28	29	30	-
2 Food Pantry Sunday	3	4	5	6 National Day of Prayer PW Mtg., 1pm	7	Ø
9 Mother's Day	10	1	12 Trustees Mtg., 7pm	13	14	15
16 VBS Mtg., Noon Basement Reserved	17	18 Mission Comm. Mtg., 6:30pm	19 Newsletter Items Due	20 Quilting, 9am	21	22 Basement Reserved
23 Recognition of 2021 Graduates B/P Checks	24	25 Session Mtg., 7pm	26	27	28	29
30 RHS Graduation 2pm	31 Memorial Day	, -	2	3 PW Mtg., 1pm	4	5