Annual Report: Rev. Traci Smith, 2018

There are plenty of times in my life when I’m asked to spell the word Presbyterian -- when I’m registering my children at the pediatrician and need to put down my place of employment, or when I’m giving directions. P-R-E-S-B-Y-T-E-R-I-A-N. What does it mean to be Presbyterian, anyway? Why are you a member of Elmhurst **Presbyterian** Church?

Presbyterian comes from the root *presbyter*, which means elder. To be Presbyterian means to be ruled by both elders and ministers. In fact, sometimes elders are called “ruling elders” and ministers are called “teaching elders.” We work together, side by side, to lead. We are not an Episcopal (hierarchical) system, nor are we congregational (everyone leading together.) We are a blend. Here at EPC, we have two additional boards, the board of Deacons (the root word of deacon is diaconos, which means servant or minister.) and the board of Trustees (a trustee is one who is responsible for another’s property). Why all this talk about our leadership? Well, it’s the thing I love most about being a Presbyterian minister. I can guide and lead with my thoughts and ideas, but without the solid leadership of our boards and committees, we’re never going to move forward.

Feeling left out because you’re not a trustee, deacon, or session member? Don’t. Each of these boards runs programs or committees you can participate in. If you don’t know which program or committee is right for you, I’d encourage you to set up an appointment with me and we can talk about it. Send me an email or just go ahead and sign yourself up for a meeting at [www.calendly.com/traci-smith](http://www.calendly.com/traci-smith).

The majority of your 2018 I was not your pastor. I came on board in September. I spent most of those three months getting to know you and figuring out basic things like how to work the copier! Nevertheless, I feel happy and proud of a few things that I was able to do alongside our leadership:

* We had a great  book study around the topic of being an open and inclusive church. We studied the book “A Bigger Table” by John Pavlovitz
* We “filled the stable” during advent with needed items that we could give to our mission partners
* We reimagined a welcome table for members and visitors to see immediately upon entering the church. We are using it to highlight current events and draw visitors inside.
* We hired and trained a new fantastic nursery worker and continue to welcome more and more tiny visitors to our congregation.
* We redesigned the way we do some of our accounting and reporting in order to make our financials clearer and more transparent.

What is to come in 2019? Well, we’ll have to ask the Holy Spirit! I look forward to working together with our leadership and staff  to find and achieve common goals. Some things I’m thinking about:

* Spiritual and numerical growth and maturity
* Mission minded focus
* Inclusivity and outreach
* Celebrating our history

I am honored to be your pastor and thank God every day for sending our family here. EPC is absolutely overflowing with talent, a solid foundation, and many gifts. I enjoy 1 on 1 meetings more than I can say. Please call or email and set up a time to chat. I’d love it. Coffee and tea are optional!

Respectfully Submitted,

Traci Smith, Pastor