

# Edgecomb Community Church

## United Church of Christ

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Sunday, October 21, 2018

Twentieth-Second Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

Message: *Living in the Spirit of Generosity*

## Edgecomb Community Church Calendar

October 2018

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|---------------|--|
| Wed. Oct. 17  | <i>Celtic Prayer Service</i> at 5:30 p.m.  |
| Thur. Oct 18  | <b>Edgecomb Fire Department Open House</b> – 6:00 to 8:00 pm.                        |
| Sun. Oct. 21  | Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost – Worship at 9:30 am                            |
| Thur. Oct. 24 | Edgecomb Historical Society Meeting 7 pm Town Hall                                   |
| Sat. Oct. 27  | <b>Fall "Comfort Food" Supper</b> –supporting the Edgecomb Fire Department - 5:00 pm |
| Sun. Oct. 28  | Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost – Worship at 9:30 am                             |

**\*\*\* Rev. Kate's pastoral care office hours are Monday & Wednesday 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Bible Study is held every Thursday beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Edgecomb Community Church Lunch is held every Tuesday at noon. All are welcome

**There will be no Community Lunch held on Tuesday, November 20 & 27, 2018**

**The Turkey pot luck will be held in December**

**Edgecomb Community Thrift Shop** is open Tuesdays 9-1, Thursdays 1-4, and Saturdays 9-12 noon, as well as during coffee hour after worship on Sunday mornings.



**\*Special Announcement:** On Sunday, November 4 after worship during Coffee Hour, the youth will be selling their art work to raise funds for Heifer International.

Sunday school teacher, Rachel Henson said,

*"We are learning that we are lucky to have what we do have and that there is always someone less fortunate than us. We learned that Jesus said to give to the poor, and we learned how doing positive things for others creates a positive attitude inside us. Also, about caring and community while painting!"*

The framed, colorful, one-of-a-kind paintings, created while thinking of God's love for everyone, are being sold for \$5.00 each. The Sunday school youth hope to be able to send funds to help purchase either chickens, goats, a heifer or any number of other animals depending on the amount of funds they raise.

**Heifer International works with communities to increase income,  
improve child nutrition, care for the Earth,  
and ultimately end world hunger and poverty.**

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While on sabbatical I began the work of gathering the history of the Church. I thought I would share some of the information I found in this weekly newsletter. The following was written by our Church Historian, Ruth Bryant in 1960.



# History of the Congregational Society of Edgecomb

By Ruth Bryant

1960

## A. Early Days of the Church

Settlement of Edgecomb

Formation of the Society

Ministers Before 1800

## B. The Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

First Pastor

Article of Faith

Revivals

Building the Church

Group Connected with the Church

Christian Endeavor Society

Ladies Aid Society

## C. Recent Church History

Support of the Ministers

Federation with the Baptist Church

Union with Wiscasset

Summary

Edgecomb was first settled in permanent fashion in 1744, by Samuel Trask and others unknown. His claim was disputed in 1754 by three men from Boston, and a Boston lawyer offered his services free in defense of Samuel Trask's claims. After a time, the three speculators abandoned their false claims. The Lawyer's generosity was so greatly appreciated by the plantation that the name "Freetown" was adopted, and this name was used until 1774. In 1774 Freetown Plantation became a town, and was given the name of Edgecomb by the General Court of Massachusetts in honor of Lord Edgecomb, a friend of the colonies in the English Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

The Congregational Society was formed as early as 1783. No written official records are known to exist, but ancient town records, and a private diary of Moses Davis, Esq., one of its original members, are considered reliable sources of information.

At the time Edgecomb was incorporated, it was the duty of the towns to provide a religious teacher, and a place of worship. A frame for a meeting house was raised, apparently, in 1774. From town records it would appear that each year thereafter the

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<sup>1</sup> From a pamphlet compiled by the schools in 1934.

town was asked to build a meeting house. In 1791, Moses Davis was engaged to build it. It was finished in 1794---twenty years after the frame was first cut.<sup>2</sup>

The diary of Mr. Davis “indicated that when a certain religious society was delinquent in its payment for the work on the church, Moses Davis attached the schooner of the ruling elder to pay for the meeting house.”<sup>3</sup>

This building was later purchased by the Congregational Society. The earliest ministers are listed in a pamphlet written in 1870, by Rufus Sewall. The list starts with Rev. John Elliot, April 2, 1775. Others preached “occasionally”, and on July 28, 1793, Rev. Ezekiel Emerson of Georgetown, held a dedicatory service in the Meeting House -- - not officially finished until the following year.

## 2.

Until March 4, 1801, there had been no official minister. On that day, Benjamin Chapman, who had been preaching in town for the previous ten months, was installed as Pastor by an Ecclesiastical Council convened for that purpose. “So feeble had been the church for the first eighteen years of its existence, that on the day of Mr. Chapman’s installation the council considered it wise to ‘confirm’ its organization without ignoring the earlier origin eighteen years before.”<sup>4</sup>

Rev. Chapman died in 1804, and was succeeded by Samuel Sewall in 1805.

Meanwhile the Baptists, wishing to conduct their own form of worship services, organized their own society (1802), and built their own church.

The first important written church document is a record of an Ecclesiastical Council which convened Sept. 29, 1807, at the home of Capt. Samuel Patterson.<sup>i</sup>

“After taking into consideration the state of this Church and finding them destitute of Article of Faith and Covenant, the Council adopted and presented a Covenant and system of doctrines to which the Church consented and which they subscribed.”<sup>5</sup>

On Sept. 30, 1807, the council ordained Rev. Sewall as pastor and then adjourned. At this time, the Church consisted of five male and six female members.

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<sup>2</sup> The first Meeting House, now the Edgecomb Town Hall, was erected in 1794, and the Congregational Church held services there until around 1860. From that date until the erection of the present church building, services were held in the Central Hall on the second floor of the Eddy School. Source: (RB) National Register Information Request – letter to Earle G. Shettleworth from Alden C. Wilson January 20, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Fannie S. Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough* 1941.

<sup>4</sup> Clark, *History of Congregational Church in Maine*

<sup>5</sup> Sewall, the 1870 history of the Church

The Article of Faith and covenant were reviewed in 1858 and reworded, but otherwise accepted as originally stated. They are summarized as follows:

Article 1--- Belief in one omnipotent God.

Article 2---Old and New Testaments are inspired of God, and are the only perfect rule of religious faith.

Article 3---Man should love God supremely, and his neighbors as himself.

Article 4---Man became sinful by eating the forbidden fruit, and all men "are by nature destitute of holiness and under the dominion of sin."

Article 5---The death of Jesus made atonement for the world's sins, and prepared the way for salvation of the believer.

Article 6---No man will accept the proposals of the Gospel, unless renewed by the influence of the Holy Spirit; and being thus renewed, he will be pardoned and will be admitted to Heaven.

Article 7---None shall be admitted to this church, but those exhibiting evidence of repentance and faith. Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are sacraments for perpetual use in the church. Members who are heads of families, should bring all under their care for baptism, and rear them in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Article 8---There will be a day of judgement when all men will be sentenced according to their characters, and this sentence will be for eternity.

Abstinence from the use of Ardent Spirits was a duty of church members. Members were held accountable for unchurch like behavior by their fellow church members. Records show several were excommunicated for various reasons. Records show several were excommunicated for various reasons – slander, the "use of Ardent Spirits", heresy, etc.

Revivals and increases in membership were noted in 1818, and again in 1827. "Also, 1831, a powerful revival awakened the whole town, followed in 1836-37, by other precious seasons of grace, and many more in gatherings of numbers to the faithful."<sup>6</sup>

Twenty new members joined in 1841. "And in 1869, under the ministrations of the Rev. Joseph Loring, God appeared wonderfully to build up his Zion, and a wide-spread, deep and fundamental work of grace enlarged her borders and strengthened her stakes,

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<sup>6</sup> RB Sewall

so that it could be said that in the place of the fathers, were the children, showing that for a period of sixty one years, under the administration of God's holy ordinances by the church, seven seasons, with glorious and saving fruit, have been realized."<sup>7</sup>

In 1877 the Congregational Church building was started. For lacks of funds the work was suspended and it was not finished until 1881. It was dedicated February 15, 1882. The Rev. Charles Holyoke was acting pastor then. He resigned in 1891.

In order to meet the building debts, the parish voted in 1882, to sell pews. They were sold I installments, 1/5 down, and the balance in yearly payments, with interest. The price of the pews varied from \$25 to \$60. (The \$600 pews were just in front of the furnace register) The cost of the church was approximately \$3500.<sup>8</sup>

In 1885, the Congregational Society sold the Town House to Woodbridge Clifford for \$150. He moved it to its present location and sold it back to the town. Church meetings had been held for a time in the hall over the Eddy School – known as Central Hall.<sup>9</sup>

On May 5, 1888 the parish voted (p. 39) "that the assessors e authorized to box up the furnace under the church in some manner, that the heat may be sent up into the house."

Mention is made of a Christian Endeavor Society in the parish records of 1894, but it apparently kept not records of its own, so that its starting an ending dates are not known. From the memories of people who attended these meetings, it would appear that it functioned until the 1920's or 1930's at least.

The Maine Missionary Society was instrumental in helping this church pay its ministers from early in the 1800s until approximately seven years ago.

In 1908, the two churches in Edgecomb, Congregational and Baptist, voted to unite for a trial period of two years. The general principle of the basis of agreement, was proportional sharing of responsibilities: - Alternating ministers of the two denominations, joint meetings—using "their own contribution envelopes, and loose change in the contribution shall be equally divided between them." (p. 87)

In 1911, the Congregational Church of Edgecomb voted to unite with the Wiscasset Congregational Church, in support of a minister. This was the arrangement until 1919, when this church again federated with the Baptists. This federation lasted until 1944, when the Wiscasset pastor was again called. Wiscasset pastors continued to fill the Edgecomb Congregational pulpit for the next fourteen years.

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<sup>7</sup> RB Sewall

<sup>8</sup> \$3,500 in 1882 is equivalent in purchasing power of \$86,466.81 in 2018, a difference of \$82,966.81 over 136 years. Source: <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1882-dollars-in-2018?amount=3500>

<sup>9</sup> At the time of this writing the building is currently being used by the Edgecomb Green, part of the Lincoln County Eldercare Network.

In 1958, the minister then serving both towns, resigned from the Edgecomb Church. Since that time until the present (1960), the pulpit has been filled by Rev. Forrest Littlefield, a retired minister, and resident of the town.

The Congregational Society of Edgecomb has never been a very powerful church, or very rich materially. Very often the support of a pastor was a most pressing problem. Yet in the 175 years of its formal existence, it has always overcome its obstacles in some way, and perhaps has been strengthened by the necessity of meeting those very obstacles.

The last few years have seen financial progress which make the church self-supporting and able to acquire some structural improvements.

An oil burning furnace has been in operation now for two winters. This necessitated a furnace room connected to the church building. These projects were accomplished through the combined efforts of Church, Parish and community. A fund designated for an electric organ has been growing during the past few years, with the possibility of its installation in the very near future.

Although a Congregational Church, the rural setting has made it a church for many denominations. More liberal, perhaps, than its fore-fathers would have it, its basis politics have changed but little to conform to the times. Its power today is not in an aggressive policy, but in recognition of it by the community as a part of one larger organization founded on Christian faith and trust.<sup>10</sup>

- Ruth Bryant 1960

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<sup>10</sup> *History of the Congregational Society of Edgecomb* by Ruth J. Bryant, Paper 1960