



## ETGS MEMORANDUM

**To:** ETGS Members

**From:** ETGS Officers:  
Tony McClain, President  
David Carlone, Vice President  
J. Brad Stephenson, Secretary  
Seaira Stephenson, Treasurer  
Bob Gelinias, Webmaster

**Date:** February 5, 2024

**Subject:** ETGS Presentations

We appreciate the contributions of each member, and we are always eager to hear your ideas and concerns in support of the East Tennessee Geological Society (ETGS).

We have heard some disappointment in anticipation of the upcoming presentation on February 12, and we realize there may be some uneasiness about the material to be presented. In response, we want to explain the thought process behind our decision to hear from this speaker, who is a long-time ETGS member who has shared at least four presentations with us in the past.

ETGS officers are volunteers with limited time and resources. We rely on members and willing volunteers to share presentations. We do not actively seek presentations on particular topics or perspectives, including this month's.

When our speaker proposed this month's presentation, we recognized the potential for controversy. After a brief discussion among the officers, we agreed to proceed in good faith, as we always do, that our speaker will support the presentation with data and sound science. In the nearly five-decade history of ETGS, we are not aware of a situation where the society declined to hear a presentation based on the ideas or beliefs of its members or officers.

Our understanding of geology and all science advances through testing hypotheses that are sometimes controversial initially, such as the Earth is not flat, continents move, meteor impacts can change the course of life on a planetary scale, and humans can dramatically alter the Earth's atmosphere and climate. Controversial ideas do not always advance understanding, but avoiding controversy limits progress.

Following each presentation, members are encouraged to respectfully ask questions and challenge assumptions, methods, and conclusions. It is up to the speaker to defend the material presented and each audience member to evaluate the information.

As stated in the Wikipedia entry for [scientific method](#) (as of February 4, 2024):

The scientific method involves careful observation coupled with rigorous skepticism, because cognitive assumptions can distort the interpretation of the observation. Scientific inquiry includes creating a hypothesis through inductive reasoning, testing it through experiments and statistical analysis, and adjusting or discarding the hypothesis based on the results.