A Sabbath Season

In his highly acclaimed book, “Sabbath,” Wayne Muller tells us:

“Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is not just a day off, when we catch up on television or errands. It is the presence of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time to listen to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, or true. It is time consecrated with our attention, our mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel, writing in his classic, “The Sabbath,” suggests that while our culture is focused on space—often in the form of things—the practice of sabbath reminds us that worship is an “architecture of time.”

“The meaning of Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”

Of course, sabbath is a practice, a spiritual discipline, that has become almost obsolete in our fast-paced, accomplishment-oriented, “thing” centered culture. However, in taking sabbatical, our own pastor is setting an example for us to follow. So, while Pastor Randy is away, we will not only pray for him and his family, but also will use this opportunity to explore the meaning of Sabbath in our own lives as we seek to recover the deep listening and quiet forces that “sustain and heal us.”

Exploring the Practice of Sabbath

The Spiritual Life Committee invites you to participate in these opportunities as a way to begin to make space in your life for the practice of sabbath.

Sun., Aug. 5: Sabbath Mini-Retreat, from 8–10 am
Come away together for a time of prayer and quiet reflection as we prepare for worship and celebration of the Lord’s supper.

Tues., Aug. 7–28: Book Discussion, from 6–7 pm
Each Tuesday, we will read and discuss “The Sabbath,” by Abraham Joshua Heschel. While Heschel writes as a Jewish scholar, his understanding of Sabbath provides a context for us to begin to place the practice of sabbath within the structure of our own lives. We will continue in September with Wayne Muller’s book, “Sabbath.” Childcare will be available.

Sat., Oct. 13: Sabbath Retreat Day
Save the date for a Sabbath Retreat Day, led by nationally renowned author and speaker, Wayne Muller.
Pastoral Message

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

As I write this letter for Reaching Out, it is now just over 24 hours since Randy, Beth, Ian and Charlotte landed in New Zealand. Facebook updates confirmed their family’s safe arrival, and shared news of settling into their three-month home. As is to be expected, their first 24 hours in New Zealand was full of the kind of up front work that will allow them to rest in New Zealand—things like renting a car, buying school uniforms, and figuring out the Wi-Fi in their house.

As Randy and his family settle into this sabbatical time, we also are “settling in” to a new, temporary routine of church life without Randy immediately present. But, this time of “settling in” for us is not just a time of responding and adjusting to a sabbath time in our Pastor’s life. There also is an opportunity for each of us to settle into a space where, together, we can explore the biblical notion of Sabbath, and individually and collectively discern the potential for Sabbath to hold meaning in our lives.

For many of us, Sabbath is a word we’ve heard from the time we first learned the Ten Commandments in Church School. Yet it is a word that in reality takes on little meaning in our contemporary lives. Modern amenities, such as 24-hour grocery stores and smartphones, make sabbath more of a sought after hope than a daily, weekly, or even monthly reality. Expectation is ever before us: to be available, to be connected, to be busy. With tasks and responsibilities—and even opportunities—before us, we simply cannot stop. In his book, “Sabbath,” Wayne Muller writes: “In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest.”

My prayer is that we join Randy, Beth, Ian and Charlotte in the pursuit of recapturing this essential rhythm to life, that we might explore a biblical mandate so essential to wholeness that it was enjoyed by even God.

So, what does this look like?

While there are no prescriptive answers, there are a range of traditional practices that might help us open a space in our lives for holy rest—to “a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity.”

In the coming months, the Spiritual Life Committee will offer a range of opportunities at ELPC for us to engage in an exploration of these practices together. There will be two book groups that will meet—one in August and one in September—to read, study and discuss two contemporary books on Sabbath (see page 1). There will be opportunities for prayer (see the article about our grant through the Trust for Meditation Process on page 3), opportunities for retreat (see page 1), and opportunities for Spiritual Direction. Additionally, there will be opportunities to rest from the routine of your life through mission (see article about the Mission Trip to Mexico on page 4, and the Youth Mission Trip to Philadelphia on page 5), as well as through fellowship and worship together.

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Pastoral Message

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We are reminded that we are companions on this journey together, and we share the need for Sabbath-keeping in our lives.

So let us share this time together. Let us encourage one another in the reclamation of sabbath space in our lives as we continue to encourage one another in faith, hope and love. Let us share our insights that we might learn from one another—with joy, with creativity. And with gratitude, let us remember the Sabbath.

My Sabbath

By David Jennings Smith

My sabbath tradition has varied over the years. As a child, I was taught that the sabbath was a day of religious praise and involvement in church activity, in addition to a day of rest as God rested on the seventh day. I challenged this idea as I grew older after noticing how hard my parents were working to prepare a detailed and delicious Sunday dinner. The work began early in the morning with my father baking homemade rolls. My mother and I were involved in last-minute tidying up of the house; we always expected a friend or relative to drop in for a visit.

As a young adult, I ventured from my parents’ tradition to one more fulfilling to me—a little quieter and more reflective. At that time, Sundays were work days, as I worked as a church musician. It was happy work, as I loved what I was doing while being brought closer to God’s plan for my life. My summers were consumed with preparing for productions with Civic Light Opera, which didn’t afford me much time for the church experience. However, I praised God through hard work and sweat. The end result was a fine production and a thank-you-Lord “phew.”

Since moving to the Friendship area five years ago and retiring from the school system, the idea of a day of rest on Sunday has come into play again. On Sunday mornings, I take 15 minutes to sit in the yard, watch the sun rise, and enjoy my garden. A good deal of that time is spent watering and weeding, plucking and picking. It’s hard work, but fulfilling. Another chore is feeding the birds and squirrels in the neighborhood; it seems as though I have an aviary and nature conservancy in my yard. My dog Chocolate and I enjoy watching the birds flying and flitting from feeder to birdbath, from flower to veggie (they love lettuce).

God has blessed us with so much beauty here on Earth that, for me, helping with its upkeep is a way to praise and give thanks. It’s nice to feel that you’re assisting God with the work here on Earth, even in the smallest way. I’m fortunate as I have an added reward in praising God with my vocal talents as a church musician.

Wow! I possess a really fulfilling sabbath. Thank you, Lord!

Let us Pray for the Bush Family

While they are away on sabbatical, let’s surround Randy, Beth, Charlotte, and Ian with our prayers. This month, especially, let us hold in prayer:

• The weekend of August 4–6, when the family will fly to Queenstown, on the South Island, to do some sight-seeing and skiing;

• That contacts which Randy made with clergy and professors at Auckland University might be fruitful and lead to opportunities for study, theological conversation, and musical collaborations;

• That the kids are finding welcoming classmates at Remuera Intermediate;

• That the family has open minds to take in a different culture;

• That Beth’s family and Randy’s siblings are well and safe during this time of separation; and

• Finally, we pray for their dog Elphie, who is staying behind, and for Karen Fraser, who is taking care of Elphie.

ELPC Receives Trust for Meditation Process Grant

ELPC was recently awarded a grant from the Trust for Meditation Process to expand our Centering Prayer ministry, under the direction of the Spiritual Life Committee and the Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan. The grant will enable us to:

• Train persons as certified leaders of Centering Prayer through Contemplative Outreach,

• Offer retreats on Centering Prayer for ELPC officers and members, and

• Create quiet spaces for contemplative prayer.

It is with great joy and gratitude that we receive this grant. Look for more information as these programs take shape!
Exploring Faith Issues and the Death Penalty

On four Saturday evenings (Sept. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10, and Dec. 8), the Justice Committee will host a potluck dinner and a facilitated discussion of the various issues involved when people of faith consider the death penalty. Topics will include, but are not limited to: Legal Issues, Public Safety, Forgiveness, Justice, and Faith in Times of Crisis. Childcare will be provided.

Anyone interested in planning these classes should contact Carol Chonoska at 724.272.9722 or Vivienne Selia at 412.344.4148.

New Study Program: Just Eating

This fall, the Poverty Committee will offer a new study program called Just Eating. The curriculum will help us to better understand the relationship between our Christian heritage and food. We will examine:

- The health of our bodies,
- The access others have to food,
- The health of the earth, which our food choices influence, and
- The ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships.

We will study these issues in small groups in October and November, practicing our faith at the table during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving.

Look for more details in upcoming bulletins and on the Poverty Committee webpage. Members of the Poverty Committee will be available to answer questions during coffee hours in the McKelvey Room.

For more details, contact Mark DeWitt at spinyone@msn.com/412.363.0890, or Tom Kerr at kerr.te2@mac.com.

Mexico Mission Trip Opportunity

Wed., Oct. 3–10

In cooperation with Frontera de Cristo, PC(USA) Border Ministry in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico and Douglas, Ariz., participants will work in the Migrant Resource Center, assist on the desert migration trails, learn about Café Justo, and visit various Mexican maquilos.

This is an immersion experience for adults. The cost is $385/Person (excluding airfare). For more information, please call Michele Bossers at 412.303.9243 or the Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy at 412.441.3800 x30.

Retirement: Not an Ending, but a New Beginning by Dick Headley

Nearly four years ago, I closed my consulting practice and retired from my professional work. Retirement implies that we are at leisure, shedding routines and obligations that went with our paid work. Having more time to rest and relax is part of this picture. However, there were unanticipated surprises for me post-retirement—simple things, like my colleagues no longer calling me and not having my business card to affirm my identity. These were small but jarring disconnects. Overall, I lacked structure and purpose. What if I am not deemed useful anymore?

The good news is that times of uncertainty can produce opportunities to make desirable changes. I knew I did not want to view retirement as an extended “rest period” by emptying my life of the demands upon me. I realized the one constant, besides family and friends, was my relationship with God, my faith in God.

When I came to ELPC 10 years ago, I was determined to truly live my faith. With retirement, I have been able to invest more time and energy through service on Session, co-chairing the Mission Board, and chairing the Poverty Committee. Resting in the Lord has sustained and strengthened my reliance on the Holy Spirit as I seek ways to serve God both within our church and outside its walls. Living my faith has meant tutoring children at Sojourner House, taking calls for a suicide hotline, and mentoring a young man in South Africa through Infinite Family.

Now that I have left Session and no longer have leadership responsibilities on several church committees, it’s a sort of mini retirement. How will I use the extra time I have to serve the Lord? I am seeking God’s call with the help of Mary Lynn Callahan so that I may persevere in living my faith. So far, joining a mission trip and attending a retreat have emerged as possibilities. I have had an abundantly rich and blessed faith journey since coming to ELPC. Retirement has been a time of spiritual renewal while still putting my faith into action. I have learned that God wants our hands and our heart no matter what stage of life we may be in.

One Christian commentator contends that, “like creation, salvation begins, not by doing something but by resting in the perfect, finished work Jesus accomplished in His doing and dying...we can enjoy the blessings of salvation only by first resting in the completed righteousness Jesus has provided.” This is another of those wonderful paradoxes in our faith that I want to ponder further. Being retired assures me of having adequate time to do that very thing.
Youth Ministry

Sun., July 29–Aug. 4: Trinity Youth Conference
Trinity Youth Conference (TYC) is at Living Waters Camp and Conference Center in Schellsburg, Pa. Youth (who are at least 15 years of age and have completed grade 9) and college-age young adults will explore their faith through worship, small groups, recreation, workshops in a safe and loving camp environment.

Registration forms and deposits must be received by Thurs., July 26. Call Pastor Heather at 412.441.3800 x21 or visit www.trinityyouthconference.org for details.

Sun., Aug. 5–Aug. 11: Mission Trip to Philadelphia
Thirteen youth and five leaders from ELPC are participating in a Mission Trip to Philadelphia, hosted through the Center for Student Mission. Participants who have questions should call Wil Forrest at 412.260.2554.

Congratulations, Grads!
Join us in congratulating those from our faith family who have graduated from high school. Please keep them in your prayers as they prepare to take the next steps in their lives. We congratulate:
Camara Copeland
Camden Copeland
Benjamin Engelhardt
Schuyler French-Levine
Erich Harkema
Alexandra Hart
Joshua Lawrence
Rosey Lowe
Emmanuel Mazingi
Bethan Neely
Jordan Pollard
Lucas Sanders
Zoe Zelinski

Young Adult Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator

Fri., Aug. 3: First Friday at the TCCP (1459 Crane Ave., Greentree), at 7 pm
Won’t you be my neighbor? TRAIL goes inter-faith as our friends from the Turkish Cultural Center of Pittsburgh host us for an evening of fellowship, treats, and coffee. Bring a poem, song, reading, Scripture, or anything to share with the group (focused on the theme of being a good neighbor), as well as a dessert to share. Dinner is being provided by our hosts. Free childcare is available.

Sun., Aug. 12: Progressive Dinner and Discussion, beginning at 4:30 pm
For our second annual Progressive Dinner and Discussion, we will again rotate locations for different courses of our one unified meal. At each location, someone will host a discussion topic for the group. Meet at ELPC to travel together.

Presbyterian Women

Mary Alice Lightle, Moderator

Tues., Sept. 4: Dispatches to God’s Household: The General Epistles, at 10 am
The General Epistles (1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude) were meant to inspire and comfort the faithful in first century Asia Minor, and they continue to speak to us today as we seek to live in community as disciples of Christ. Join us in the Second Floor Parlor as we respond to God’s call to live as sisters and brothers, serving one another in truthfulness and love as member of God’s household.

Sat., Sept. 29: Fall Retreat for Women
All women are invited to a retreat at ELPC to enjoy worship, fellowship, and learning together. A member of the women’s guild from Balaka CCAP (Malawi) will be our guest. Registration will begin at 8:30 am; the retreat will conclude at 1:30 pm. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Pick up a brochure on the bulletin board outside the library.

Health Ministry

The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy,
Staff Representative

Tai Chi
Classes return on Tues., Sept. 11.
Yoga
Thursdays, from 7:15–8:45 pm
JourneyDance
Fri., Aug. 10, from 7–8 pm
For more information, contact Kate Carlson at kate@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x16.
Thank You for a Successful VCS!

During the last week of June, we celebrated the many ways in which God’s love flows through our lives by exploring Bible stories where God’s people encountered God through water. We sang God’s praises; watched our teenage volunteers act out Bible stories with joy (and humor!); made crafts with paint, chalk, paper, stones and shaving cream; played in the Gym, on the Play Yard and at Squaw Valley Park; prayed in different ways; and served others. We had a wonderful week of fellowship and fun!

VCS served 75 children, and was made possible by many volunteers and staff. The Christian Education Committee thanks everyone for their contributions. We thank:


We also would like to thank:

- All the volunteers who prepared the Play Yard: Mike Anderson, Diana Bloss, Richard Hiller, Frances Irvin, Keith Irvin, Jan Irvin, Lynne Irvin, Rachel Mackey, Chris Piccolo, Carmen and Ian Piccolo-Mackey.

- Elaine Bellin and Paragon Wholesale Foods Corp., for donating fresh fruit.

- The ELPC security staff, maintenance staff, administrative support staff and program staff for their hard work, support and flexibility.

- And, Target, for allowing our volunteers to park in its lot during the week.
What’s New at East Liberty Gardens?

ELPC is involved through the Neighbors mission committee with East Liberty Gardens, a 127-unit, Section 8 apartment complex. ELPC has representatives on the board of directors, which ensures that the tenants have safe, affordable housing, and focuses on building relationships with the families living there.

The biggest news at the Gardens is the planning process with the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) and their application for a Choice Neighborhood Grant. The grant application will be submitted in April 2013, and if awarded, it will allow for wonderful opportunities for the residents. HACP is working with the Gardens board and other organizations to develop a plan for revitalizing the neighborhood through new housing, support programs, and businesses.

It’s an exciting time!

New Businesses in Our Neighborhood

by Rebecca Maclean of the Neighbors Committee

Since we have to scramble for a good parking space when coming to ELPC these days (a sign that East Liberty’s strength as a regional destination is returning), why not patronize some new businesses while you’re here? We’ve seen an increased presence of national chains in the neighborhood, but the lifeblood of East Liberty is its locally owned businesses. Here are a few of my favorites:

- McKees Rocks native Kevin Sousa has several restaurants in the area, and more crazy-like-a-fox ideas in the works. I’m happy to patronize the renewed Station Street Hot Dog Shop (6290 Broad St., behind Target) for lunch with my kids. Beef dogs made to Sousa’s specifications, fresh-cut French fries, and stools to spin on while watching the trains go by make an inexpensive meal fun.
- Check out Zeke’s Coffee (6012 Penn Ave., near CVS) for a locally roasted pound of coffee (Zeke’s isn’t open Sundays, but is at the East Liberty Farmers Market on Mondays). Also visit Kazanda’s Café (5943 Penn Ave., next to the Kelly Strayhorn Theater), for some Haitian java, sandwiches, and atmosphere. Kazanda’s is open on Sundays.
- Relax with a massage, yoga class, or nutrition workshop at East End Eden Wellness Center (6101 Penn Ave., on the mezzanine level of the Liberty Building). A beautiful, calming space and skilled practitioners will melt your stress away. Sunday afternoon slots for massages are available.

Is there a business that you’d like to share? Let the Neighbors Committee know by emailing me at hera314@gmail.com or Emily Rosenthal at ejr116@gmail.com.
“As a diverse community of believers, we strive to follow God—the Creator who calls us, Jesus who teaches us, and the Spirit who empowers us. We show God’s unconditional love by providing a refuge for spiritual growth, ardently pursuing justice, and extending Christ’s radical hospitality to all.”

School Kits for Children
In August, Presbyterian Women will collect school kits for children around the world. Instructions for the kits are on the PW bulletin board outside the library. Please leave completed kits or articles for kits in the box in the church office. To make a monetary contribution, please make checks payable to “Presbyterian Women in East Liberty Presbyterian Church.” Monetary gifts will be used for additional kits or forwarded to Church World Service to help cover their costs of delivering kits where they are needed. Your support truly makes a difference in the lives of children and families the world over.

Summer Celebration of Service and Volunteers
Thurs., Aug. 23, from 5–8 pm
All who have served in our church and community this year are invited to the third annual Summer Celebration of Service and Volunteers, in the Garth.

Main dish and drinks will be provided, but you are invited to bring a side dish or a dessert to share. Stob by for a few minutes or stay the entire time!

To learn more about service opportunities, please visit CathedralOfHope.org/about/iSERVE.html.

Rally Day and Church Picnic
Please mark your calendars for Sun., Sept. 9, when we will resume our regular worship schedule and Christian Education classes. The Christian Education Committee will host a continental breakfast on the Second Floor to welcome you to your Church School classes.

Our Church Picnic will be held at ELPC on Sun., Sept. 16. Please keep an eye out for a special “Christian Education” edition of Reaching Out that will arrive in your mailboxes in late August. The issue will highlight our fall programming, introduce you to new staff and highlight our schedule for this fall.