

Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

May/June 2020

In This Issue...

This issue of *Reaching Out* is a little bit different than normal. Inside, you'll be able to read about where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. Keep an eye on **ELPC.church** for more updates as they become available. We appreciate your patience during this unprecedented time.

11 Youth Prepare for Confirmation

We celebrate the gifts, faith, questions, and compassion that are represented by the 11 youth who participated in Confirmation Class over the last eight months. Whether during an overnight at the church, a Sunday meeting after worship, or a Zoom gathering, these amazing young people have explored the foundational beliefs of our faith and discerned what they believe about God, the Church, and themselves.

Each youth has affirmed their desire to join ELPC as adult members and friends, and will be Confirmed this spring. Youth will appear before Session and be received as members during the Session meeting on May 19. Their Confirmation journey will be celebrated in our worship service on **Pentecost Sunday, May 31**.

We look forward to celebrating their presence among us when we are able to formally gather in person. Please hold these youth in your prayers, giving thanks to God that they are a part of ELPC and God's Church universal!



Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

May 17 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
May 24 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
May 31 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
June 7* Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
June 14 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
June 21 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
June 28 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

May 17 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
May 24 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
May 31 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
June 7* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
June 14 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
June 21 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
June 28 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan

How to Stream Services

While the church building remains closed to the public, we hope that you're able to worship with us online!

Our Sunday Journey and Sanctuary worship services are being livestreamed on YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom. Or, if you'd like to listen to the services via telephone, call **929.205.6099** and enter Meeting ID **188.135.194** when prompted (press # if asked for a personal ID). If you need assistance connecting to worship, call Sara Hackett at **412.673.2926**.

Each Wednesday, a specially selected, archived Taizé prayer service is being restreamed. Once the church building reopens, we hope to resume livestreaming our Taizé services.

For more information and direct links to the streams, visit **ELPC.church**.

East Liberty Presbyterian Church



116 South Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Call | 412.441.3800
Email | info@coh.net
Visit | ELPC.church

Staff Leadership

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Pastor

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Lead Engineer

Dr. Edward Alan Moore

Music Director and Organist

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Samantha Coggins

Intern, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Rev. Terri Pennybaker

Intern, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Where
We've
Been

As you are well aware, just about two months ago, church life and routines changed dramatically. Warnings about the coronavirus crisis were already affecting public behavior, as alarming information about the spread of COVID-19 filled the daily news.

On Sunday, March 15, ELPC held a small Sanctuary worship service—limiting those attending and spreading them out in the worship spaces. But by the next day, it became necessary to close the entire building; and such has been the reality for two months now.

Work has Continued in New Ways

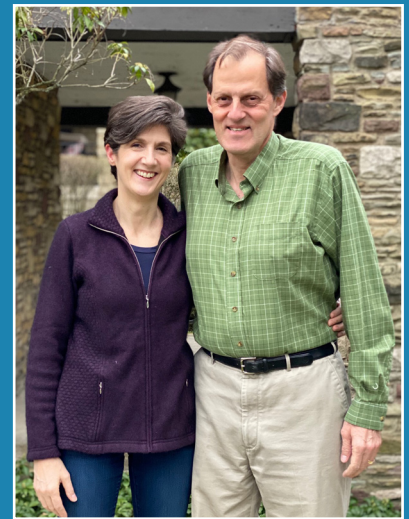
During this season of “stay at home” orders, several things happened. Pastor Randy returned early from his sabbatical in Spain and resumed his role as head of staff on Friday, March 20.

The ELPC Session began meeting twice a month to review the situation at hand and consider how best to maintain our church’s ministry and worship life, especially as it involved caring for those most vulnerable in our congregation.

The Personnel Committee made a commitment to continue paying all staff through the end of April—a decision that was recently extended to the end of May. As much of the staff as possible quickly adapted to working off-site, using online resources to answer emails, make conference calls, and participate in Zoom meetings.

Other essential operations have continued as well, including picking up mail from the post office, maintaining financial operations, and much more.

For all this good work by so many people, the pastoral staff is exceedingly thankful—as well as for the outpouring of support from our generous, creative congregation!



As we seek to support the most vulnerable among us,
you may donate directly to the following partner organizations:

ELPC

to assist finance and food insecure
members and neighbors

www.ELPC.church/donate

Casa San Jose

2116 Broadway Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15216

www.casasanjose.org

Hello Neighbor

6587 Hamilton Ave. #1E
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

www.helloneighbor.io

Please note in the memo line:
Covid-19 Response - ELPC

Worship Services Switch to Streaming

The combination of the building closure and the Holy Week/Easter season presented unique and daunting challenges for worship.

Thanks to creative and flexible worship leaders, musicians, and A/V engineers, ELPC was able to build on our current livestream capacity to provide worship service opportunities for as many people as possible.

Starting on Sunday, March 29, Pastor Randy, Dr. Ed Moore, our sound engineers Tim Benedict and Wayne Gaines, and various choir soloists provided Sanctuary worship service livestreams on Sundays. Pastor Heather led a Maundy Thursday service on Zoom, while Pastor Randy led a Good Friday service livestream. Pastor Patrice preached at Journey worship on Easter morning via Zoom, and Pastor Randy led a Sanctuary worship livestream on Facebook and YouTube featuring spoken word, music, and videos.

We have moved into a pattern now of offering two Sunday morning services on YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom: Journey worship at 8:45 am and Sanctuary worship at 11 am. Those without access to the internet can listen to the services by calling **929.205.6099** and enter Meeting ID **188.135.194** when prompted. A combination of information on our church website at **ELPC.church**, plus phone calls to shut-in and elderly members have been reasonably successful in getting this message out.



On Easter Sunday, April 12, Pastor Randy stood in the pulpit in an empty Sanctuary and preached to more than 440 livestream viewers.

Pastor Randy & Dr. Ed Check In

If you follow our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian](https://www.facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian), then you've likely noticed more posts from ELPC in your newsfeed. Each morning, Pastor Randy has been sharing daily meditations and photos from his recent sabbatical in Spain, like this photo of the Monastery of Pedralbes in Barcelona.



In the evenings, Dr. Ed has been posting musical reflections and videos of fun or meaningful performances.

If you're not on Facebook, you can view the posts at [ELPC.church/blog](https://www.elpc.church/blog). Under "Categories" on the left, click on "Daily Meditations" and "Musical Reflections." Check them out!

Pastors Offer Prayer Services

Beginning in April, Pastors Randy, Heather, and Patrice began offering brief prayer services on Zoom on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. These 15-minute sessions feature scripture readings, responsive prayer, and interactive dialogue.

If you'd like to take a break during lunch or start your morning together, visit [Zoom.com](https://www.zoom.us) or call **929.205.6099** and enter the Meeting ID# listed below.

Mondays and Thursdays | 12 pm
Zoom Meeting ID | 133.652.461

Tuesdays and Fridays | 8 am
Zoom Meeting ID | 293.707.645

Session Adopts Gun Violence Resolution

In February, the ELPC Session adopted a resolution from the Peace Committee addressing gun violence. The resolution followed the recommendations of the 219th General Assembly, titled "Gun Violence, Gospel Values," and actions of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

The central tenets of the resolution include:

- Banning military style weapons from the state, city, and county (except for use by government authorities);
- Adopting a maximum magazine size of 10; and
- Strengthening background checks for all gun sales, including sales at gun shows and over the internet.

The resolution also urged that church property be gun free, and that we communicate our opposition to the manufacture and sale of military style weapons to the American public.

Lastly, the resolution calls for the divestment of all church financial investments related to manufacturers of assault weapons, and directed our Centennial Fund Trustees to so act.

Where We Are

We discovered that the early deadline of our monthly *Reaching Out* newsletter meant that the information in the April issue was largely out-of-date and inaccurate due to the late March change of plans.

As we prepare this May/June issue, here is what we know about our current situation.

- We will be guided by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf as to when our building can be safely opened.
- We have made arrangements for a cleaning service to complete a thorough disinfecting of our large gathering areas in May.
- When we can safely resume some church operations in the building, it will be a staged process in which we will move from shortened hours/some staff while the building continues to be cleaned; then normal hours/some small functions with very limited public access; to a resumption of worship services still adhering to guidelines around safe distancing, masks, and general health restrictions.
- We will continue to use internet technology for many church functions as necessary, including worship service livestreams; Zoom meetings for officers and committees; Zoom options for Church School and Youth Ministry programs; and checking email remotely.
- Donations to ELPC can continue to be received through online giving options, electronic funds transfer, or mailing checks directly to the church address.

Introducing Our New Officers

At a meeting on April 28, the ELPC Session approved the examination, ordination and/or installation of the following incoming officers:

Deacons | George Clark, Carla Coles, Elaine Phillips, Jim Russ, Linda Sanders, Sharla Yates-Seif, and Charlotte Brake-Hoffman (youth)

Elders | Bill Buchanan, David Carl, Lynne Chadwick, Jan Irvin, Heather Lawrence, Laura Ristau, Tom Morton, and Sonia Degenholtz (youth)

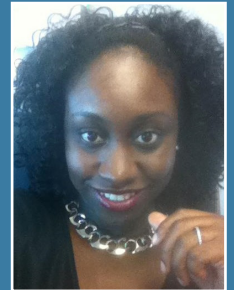
We also give thanks to the following members who have completed service as active elders and deacons:

Elders John Buckley, Stefani Danes, Isaac Degenholtz, Dee Flaherty, Kathy Glass-House, Charles Krimmel, and Kiara Rockymore; and **Deacons** Tucker Ferda, Richard Frederick, Kira Mukogosi, Tony Richardson-Eckes, Matt Stufft, and Antwone Wright.

Welcome Our New Staff

This year has brought about many changes to the ELPC staff, and in particular, our administrative staff. As each month brought about a new retirement, we also welcomed a new staff member. In February, we welcomed **Rachelle Calfee** (left) as our bookkeeper. Then in March, we welcomed **Megan Leisher** (middle) as the administrative assistant for Pastors Randy, Heather, and Patrice. Lastly, in April, we welcomed **Venetia Singletary** (right) as the administrative assistant for operations, who will assist our operations, facilities, and financial units.

Please welcome these wonderful additions to our staff!



ELPC People News

Our Blessings

- Congratulations to Cami and Jon Teacoach on the birth of their second son, **William Fitzpatrick Teacoach**.
- Congratulations to Joel and Beth Minnigh on the birth of their granddaughter, **Lucia Knox Minnigh**.

Our Thanks

- "On behalf of Allegheny Health Network Hospice, thank you for all the cloth face masks. They will make a huge difference to our field staff. Blessing to all who helped and organized."—Chaplain Tony Richardson-Eckes
- "Thank you to all those who have been praying for my mother, Mary, and sent cards after her death on April 6. You gave me great comfort!"—Doris A. Dick

Our Prayers

We offer our prayers and condolences to the family and friends of those who recently passed away:

- Debbie Hurrell's mother, Joan
- Seldon Whitaker
- Doris Dick's mother, Mary Dick
- Nancy Magee's mother
- Carmen Blanco's mother-in-law, Ofelia Rousseva
- Ryan Booher's grandmother, Helen Wright
- Albert Williams's cousin, Shurron Bell
- Kay Shissler and Marilyn Castle's sister, Linda Perry

Church School Opportunities

The ELPC Christian Education Committee is offering several Church School classes for learners of all ages and interests online via Zoom on Sunday mornings at 9:45 am.

As of early May, weekly class offerings include Journey with Scripture, Parenting Circle, and Soul Food, as well as a class for children.

Visit ELPC.church for more details on how to attend.

Focus On Your Spirit

In this time of uncertainty, isolation and fear, if you would like to meet with the Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan for spiritual direction (through Zoom or by phone), please send her an email at MaryLynn@coh.net to set up an appointment.

The ELPC Spiritual Life Committee also is offering an enneagram discussion group on Zoom, with plans to meet every three weeks. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan.

We are the Repairers of the Breach & Restorers of the Streets

Mission Work Continues

It seems that time currently is marked by **before** the onset of Covid-19 and the **after** that we are all anticipating. ELPC's Mission Ministry programs and activities preceded, continue, and will be the hallmark of ELPC's commitment to love God and neighbor, as we actively work to be "repairers of the breach and restorers of the streets to live in" (Isaiah 58:12).

Our commitment to our local community continues during this time of stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Here are some of the ways we're helping:

- Preparing and providing meals to the residents of East End Cooperative Ministry's Community House
- Sewing and handing out protective masks to medical professionals; mail deliverers; refuse collectors; neighbors on the streets of East Liberty, Larimer, and Garfield; and to families without the ability to acquire masks on their own
- Lifting up and celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day during worship, hosting a virtual book discussion of *To Speak for the Trees* by Diana Beresford-Kroeger, and advocating for sensible gun legislation
- Granting financial assistance to the Bukit Bail Fund (BukitBailFund.org) to support a revolving bail fund for people who are incarcerated in the Allegheny County Jail for minor violations
- Encouraging and granting financial assistance to Casa San José (CasaSanJose.org) and Hello Neighbor (HelloNeighbor.io) as both organizations seek to provide direct financial assistance to their refugee and immigrant clients living in Pittsburgh
- Completing the analysis and synthesis of ELPC's anti-systemic racism survey conducted earlier this year
- Mentoring families who are involved with Open Hand Ministries' Circles program and Hello Neighbor

The Mission Ahead

The Mission Board; Neighbors, Peace, and Justice Committees; and the committee ministry teams continue to meet, plan, and discern how God is calling us to continue being the church once the stay-at-home and social distancing orders are lifted. All mission ministry programs and activities will continue, and the following opportunities are anticipated to be reinstated or implemented:

- Continuing our book study and discussion of *White Awake* by Daniel Hill
- Continuing advocacy opportunities related to environmental justice, sensible gun legislation, and incarceration reform
- Relaunching the ELPC anti-systemic racism survey (tiny.cc/ELPCFSR)
- Providing financial assistance to ELPC and community members in need—including assisting with food and medication acquisition, rent/mortgage and utility payments, and other special needs
- Partnering with the County Health and Human Services, OHM's Circles program, Hello Neighbor, and Casa San José to mentor refugees, immigrant families, and families living with income insufficiency
- Reopening The Chapel Market
- Continuing to prepare and serve breakfast and dinner meals to the residents of EECM
- Collecting and donating reading materials to the Chaplains' Office of Allegheny County Jail; and investigating opportunities to work for justice reform
- Supporting Chenoa, José, and Leandro Stock-Claire in Peru, and the Rev. Paula Cooper in East Central Africa

If you are interested in volunteering or donating to support the members of our church and neighborhood, contact Pastor Patrice at PatriceFS@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x130.

Where We're Going

There are many things we have learned during this season of disruption and necessary change. We have learned that maintaining connection with congregation members is critical. We have learned that creative worship services that take advantage of available technology allow people to be part of our church life even when distance, mobility, family situations, or work schedules might not always let them gather in our building on Sunday mornings. And we have learned that Zoom meetings, social media posts, and defining membership beyond the geographic limits of Allegheny County will all be part of ELPC life for the foreseeable future.

We are excited to be in conversation with a large group of 24 people who participated in our early May Inquirers' Classes, and who will be voted on as new members and friends at the Session meeting on Tuesday, May 19.

We are grateful for the faithful work and ministry provided to ELPC by our recent seminary interns, **Samantha Coggins** and the **Rev. Terri Pennybaker**. We wish them well as they prepare for the next chapters in their vocational careers.

Later this summer, we will introduce you to our incoming seminary intern.

Youth are Still Doing Good



Doing Good Together (DG2!) is working on a service project with our friends at Rodef Shalom.

Youth in grades 4–12 can help by creating artwork and/or cards for the residents at the Jewish Association on Aging and Seneca Hills Village. The facilities are closed to visitors, but would LOVE to share some words of encouragement, drawings, or paintings with their residents.

To participate, create hard copies of artwork, scan/take a picture, and email it to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net by the end of May.

Showcase Your Talent

As Pentecost approaches, we give thanks for the many gifts that God has given to us. As a celebration of these gifts and our community, we will host a Talent Show via Zoom on **Saturday, May 23, 6:30 pm.**

RSVP to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net or **412.673.2926** by **Thursday, May 21**, to let her know whether you will be performing or tuning in to watch the show (or both!), and she will provide you with the Zoom link and password.

Things You Love Club

Imagine show and tell...but for high school students and young adults. We will gather (on Zoom until we can meet in person) to share something that we love or brought us joy or made us laugh or remind us of God's faithfulness. You could share a song, book, meme, or even a tomato plant!

Join us for an hour on Thursday nights, starting on June 4, 7:30 pm. The Zoom Meeting ID is **871.4795.0937**. Contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net or **412.673.2926** if you have any questions.

Middle School Mission Bingo

This summer, middle school students are invited to participate in Mission Bingo, a series of prompts and challenges to share God's love and care with our family, friends, neighbors, and world.

We will check in on **Sundays, June 14, June 28, July 12, and July 26** to share our stories.

If your middle schooler is interested in learning more, contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net or **412.673.2926**.

Your Input is Needed for Our Anti-Systemic Racism Survey

ELPC's Facing Systemic Racism Ministry Team is relaunching its anti-systemic racism survey for church members, friends, staff, and community members who did not have an opportunity to complete it earlier this year.

The survey takes 5–15 minutes to complete and may be accessed at tiny.cc/ELPCFSR or by scanning the QR code. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by **Sunday, May 31**.



Your responses will help us learn where our congregation stands on its journey to face systemic racism, and assist us as we work toward change over time.

Attend Our Next Spiritual Gathering

Everyone is invited to attend our LGBTQ Ministry's monthly spiritual gathering on **Saturday, May 16, 1 pm!** We will share meeting time and fellowship on Zoom. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike are welcome. Contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x118** for more details.



God created you.
God loves you.
Be yourself.

PW to Host Virtual Lunch

How are you surviving in the era of COVID-19? Many people have experienced a mix of positive and negative emotions—perhaps grace and gratitude amid fear and disorientation.

To help us stay connected, Presbyterian Women invite all women to a gathering on Zoom on **Tuesday, May 26, 12 pm.** Bring your own lunch and join in a time of sharing and listening.



**PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN**

For more information, please email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

All of us are in a place we did not expect, and it's safe to say we all have a level of stress caused by COVID-19, whether related to health concerns or financial issues—or both. Please do not hesitate to seek help and support during this difficult time. It doesn't matter if you've been diagnosed with a mental illness or not, reach out; be physically distant and socially close.

"We recognize that people living with mental illness face additional challenges dealing with COVID-19, as do their caregivers and loved ones."—NAMI

If you need more support, the ELPC Wholistic Wellness Ministry suggests visiting the

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) website at NAMI.org.

If you don't know where to start, call the NAMI Helpline at **800.950.6264**, or text "NAMI" to **741741** for confidential, free crisis counseling.

Hope Academy Offers Online Classes

Arts education is important in the lives of the young people who are enrolled in Hope Academy of Music and the Arts. While dance, theater, and music students are currently unable to attend classes in person, through Hope Academy @ Home, they are able to join their lessons and interact with their teaching artists and friends on Zoom.



Hope Academy student Jazmyn Montgomery and her mom participating in a Suzuki Cello group class on Zoom.

“...inviting all to join our diverse, inclusive family of faith, transcending boundaries of race, class, ability, culture, age, gender and sexual identity to become one in Christ.”

Need to Reach ELPC Staff?

Although our church building remains closed to the public, staff members are checking emails and voicemails. For a listing of contact information, see the Staff Leadership listing on page 3, or visit ELPC.church/contact.

Tune in to Our Cathedral Concert

Since we won't be able to gather in person for our final *Cathedral Concert* of the season, we are going online! Please join us on **Friday, May 22, 7:30 pm, LIVE** on Facebook and YouTube, to relive some of the best moments from our 2017 and 2018 concerts with the Brass Roots, conductor/trombonist Jim Nova, and organist Dr. Ed Moore.

We look forward to welcoming you back to future concerts in person, but hope you will enjoy this special online concert! Tune in live on Facebook at [Facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian](https://www.facebook.com/EastLibertyPresbyterian) or YouTube at tiny.cc/elpc-youtube.



Now Offering VCS @ Home

Given our inability to gather together for Vacation Church School (VCS) as usual this summer, ELPC is bringing VCS to YOU! Students enrolled in VCS will receive a box of activities, YouTube demonstrations, and maybe even opportunities to check in with friends and teachers remotely as we explore stories of people who have encountered Jesus in amazing ways in their own homes!

When we can gather in person once more, we will have a day-long celebration of God's ability to be with us wherever we are, and the grace that God's love unites us as a community even when we are physically apart.

Updated registration forms are available at ELPC.church.

Tipping Our Cap to the Grads

We know that the class of 2020 has not received the graduation celebration they were expecting. So, we would like to express our congratulations and celebrate the accomplishments of all the graduates in our faith family!

Please email Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net with the name, school, degree earned, and info about any future plans of any 2020 graduates in high school and beyond! Please get word to her by **Friday, June 5**.