

There's Still Time to Support Our Stewardship Campaign

Stewardship pledges for 2021 will still be received during the month of January. While the response to date has been generous, a slight overall decrease in giving has occurred. If you have not yet submitted a pledge or would like to make an extra gift for the coming year, you can do so online at **ELPC.church** or by contacting Rachelle Calfee, ELPC's bookkeeper, at **RachelleC@coh.net** or **412.441.3800** x134.

Together we can make sure that ELPC's light brightly shines in the new year!

MLK Day of Service Sock Collection

This year marks the 26th anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service (Jan. 18), celebrating the life and legacy of the civil rights leader. Observed each year on the third Monday in January as "a day on, not a day off," MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a national day of service to encourage all Americans to volunteer in their communities.

In observance of MLK Day, to fulfill the theme of "a day on, not a day off," and to live into being a PC(USA) Matthew 25 Church, ELPC is hosting a Drive-by Sock Collection on **Sun., Jan. 17**, 1–3:30 pm, to serve one of the needs of our vulnerable neighbors who are experiencing homelessness.

Typically, people living in homelessness spend their days walking in their community—and we all know and appreciate that when your feet are cold, your entire body is cold. Socks are the most requested items of clothing from ministries and organizations that serve individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

Please purchase warm socks in sizes for men, women, and children to be donated to local shelters.

This ministry opportunity is sponsored by the ELPC Mission Board, Neighbors Committee, and the Board of Deacons. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Patrice at **PatriceFS@coh.net**.

Livestream Services

Our services are being livestreamed on YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom. For more details, visit **ELPC.church**.

Sunday Services

*Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Turning Things Around

Jan. 3 No service

Jan. 10 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Jan. 17 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Jan. 24 Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt

Jan. 31 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Jan. 3* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Jan. 10 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Jan. 17 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Jan. 24 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Jan. 31 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm Rev. BJ Woodworth

Sanctuary worship services receive

544

combined average views through YouTube and Facebook.

87+

worshipers watch Journey worship on YouTube each Sunday. (Data for Facebook and Zoom is incomplete.)

130

people watch portions of our Taizé prayer service streams on average between Facebook and YouTube.

East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush

Pastor

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The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy
Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries
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The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries
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The Rev. BJ Woodworth

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Norma Meyer

Administrative Assistant for Taizé Prayer; and Worship, Music, and the Arts Norma@coh.net | x111

Kathryn Ophardt

Intern, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary kophardt@pts.edu

Venetia Singletary

Administrative Assistant for Operations VenetiaS@coh.net | x116

Pastoral Message

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



In this day and age of satellites able to read from outer space the date on a dime, or Google Maps seemingly able to show us any place in the world, there remains a large part of the planet that is unmapped. Author Deirdre Mask, who wrote *The Address Book*, suggests that about 70% of the world is insufficiently mapped, including parts of many cities with more than a million residents. Invariably, the unmapped areas are in the poorest sections of these cities. This problematic on many levels. Without good maps, how can police or ambulance drivers find their way to people

in need? Without good maps, how do public health officials know if everyone's been vaccinated during a pandemic? Without good maps, how do we know who our neighbors are and how they are surviving in our global village?

Mask quoted a Brazilian scientist who studied the public health risk from poisonous snake bites and observed "Where there are snakes, there are no statistics; and where there are statistics, there are no snakes." This means that problems are most effectively dealt with where there are maps, data, and statistics—but without such things, health crises abound.

How often have you been driving around Pittsburgh and you stumble onto a new route or neighborhood that prompts you to say, "I never knew this was here!" Our city is full of fascinating boroughs, small-town shopping districts, and strip malls that are hidden from view unless you happen to live nearby. We don't see these places because we are creatures of habit—prone to driving the same routes every day, whether going to work, shop, or check in with friends. The problem is that these same habits make us creatures of limited "sight" and over time can lead us not to "see" what is happening all around us.

Consider for a moment how the simple task of mapping and assigning addresses for people can literally change lives. Subhashis is an Indian social worker who assigned street addresses to Kolkata's slums so that residents there can apply for passports and open bank accounts. Sarah, a U.S. law student, works to bar employers from demanding a job applicant's home address since homeless employment seekers don't have one. And Benjamin, a disgruntled Floridian, shows up at his City Council meetings to complain about neighborhoods in his historically Black neighborhood still bearing the names of Confederate generals.

There's a reason Jesus said that God knows even the number of hairs on our heads, and no sparrow falls to the ground outside of God's knowledge. In a world where we selectively map our communities and selectively know our neighbors, God rejects such partial responses and knows us completely. Each back street, alley, and slum pathway is mapped and known to God, including all who live there. Each person hidden behind an overlooked door or forgotten apartment high-rise is seen and loved by God.

As a new year begins and a pandemic's curse will hopefully be thwarted by vaccines, may the medical challenge of reaching out to all people to fight COVID-19 be a parable also for the spiritual work before us. In 2021, may we go forth into the world, intentionally seeking the lost, the lonely, the unmapped, the neglected, and the forgotten. Even just a little light can shine a long way in such places of darkness.

Randy Fush.**

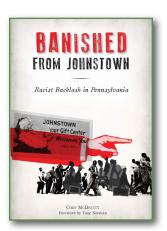
Mission Matters

The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries



Sun., Feb. 7: The Notorious Trial of Joe Thomas 12 pm Join the ELPC Mission Board and Facing Systemic Racism Ministry Team following Sanctuary worship, as Tony Norman and Steve Mellon, journalists at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, speak about their joint project, "The Notorious Trial of Joe Thomas." This is the story of events that took place here in Pittsburgh in 1922, regarding the treatment of a Black man accused of murdering a white woman. This project illustrates the injustice of our criminal justice system, which has mistreated persons of color for centuries—and sadly continues today.

Sun., Feb. 28: Banished from Johnstown | **Book Discussion** 9:45 am, 12 pm During the adult Church School hour and following Sanctuary worship, Cody McDevitt, author of *Banished from Johnstown: Racist Backlash in Pennsylvania*,



will lead two discussions on his book and detail one of the worst civil rights injustices in the history of Pennsylvania, which took place in 1923. In *Banished*, Cody sheds light on Johnstown's historical scandal that was swept under the rug until he uncovered the details in boxes at the Library in Congress.

This opportunity is sponsored by our Adult Church School classes and the Facing Systemic Racism Ministry Team. You are encouraged to read the book in preparation for the discussion.

To borrow a book or ask questions, contact Pastor Patrice at **PatriceFS@coh.net** or Gwen Puza at **gpuza9@gmail.com**.

Drive-by Book Collection for Allegheny County Jail



The ELPC Justice Committee thanks our faith family for its overwhelming response to our Drive-by Book Collection in December, which benefited people incarcerated at Allegheny County Jail. More than **25 boxes** of books were taken to the jail by Judith Mancini, our coordinator for the event.

Jesus states in Matthew 25, "I was in jail and you visited me."

We may not be able to physically visit the incarcerated, but your generous and faithful donations communicated to our incarcerated siblings that they are not forgotten. Thank you!

Session News

Although Session did not meet last month, they communicated electronically on the following business matters:

- Review of income and expense projections for the 2021 budget,
- End-of-year adjustments to our membership rolls, and
- Ongoing conversations about building safety in this COVID season.



Did you know we were blessed to welcome several large classes of new members and friends in 2020?

Thank You for Your Giving Tree Support

The ELPC Deacons extend a heart-felt thank you to everyone who supported the Christmas Giving Tree Ministry in December. We know that this year's Giving Tree was not as fun as in prior years. However, ELPC—as always—you stepped up, rose to the challenge, and faithfully purchased gift cards and made financial donations. Your generosity ensured that **96 children** in our community and congregation had a blessed and joyous Christmas.

We also want to thank Walnut Capital Management for an extremely generous donation to help us assist families who otherwise might have been financially unable to celebrate the holidays.

May God bless each of you as you continue to be a blessing.

Christian Education

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

Church School News & Notes

Church School classes will not meet on **Sun., Jan. 3**, unless noted otherwise.

Children | Preschool-Grade 5

We will gather on **Sun., Jan. 24**, 10 am, via Zoom so we can explore our January theme "Wonderfully Made." Register at **ELPC.church** to receive easy-to-do, at-home activities and all the supplies you'll need.

Middle School | Grades 6-8

We will meet on Sun., Jan. 17, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.

High School | Grades 9-12

We will meet on Sun., Jan. 24, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.

Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

"The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers, and enthrones the lowly in their place...plucks up the roots of nations, and plants the humble in their place."—Sirach 10:14–15

Our set of readings, titled *Word Hidden and Revealed – The Apocrypha and The Apocalypse*, continue in the new year. Each week, we reflect upon selections from these scriptures. The above wisdom text reflects a historical period when a succession of foreign powers ruled over Israel—the Macedonians, Ptolemies, and Seleucids (300s–180s BCE). Amidst the turmoil the author offers assurance that God will provide new leadership that lifts up the lowly. January's readings from the book of Revelation include individual messages to seven churches in Asia minor during a particularly dangerous time of Roman rule. As we lead and follow in 2021 may we move forward in the Spirit of Christ. Join us on the journey together!

Jan. 10: Psalm 3; Baruch 3:9–15,32–4:4; Revelation 3:1–22

Jan. 17: Psalm 120; Baruch 5:1–9; Revelation 4:1–11

Jan. 24: Psalm 10; Sirach 1:1–20; Revelation 5:1–14;

Jan. 31: Psalm 104:1,10–26; Sirach 10:12–18; Revelation 6:1–17

Parenting Circle

Facilitators: Trish Buben

January: The Life That Is Ours

We will continue discussing excerpts from Lauren Burdette's book, *This Life That Is Ours*, and how her insights connect to our unique perspectives and experiences of parenthood.

Seekers

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

Jan. 3: Sharing and Getting to Know Each Other Let's start the new year by spending time socializing and sharing. We'd love to see all of our class members!

Jan. 10: The Gnostic Gospels and The New Testament Gospel of John

Dr. Elaine Pagels, a professor of religion at Princeton University, speaks about her groundbreaking work on the Jesus in the canonical Gospels and the Jesus we meet in the Gospel of Thomas. Her work on the extra-canonical writings of ancient Christianity spurred a revolution in the field of New Testament studies, and brought diversity of early Christianity to vivid life in her book, *The Gnostic Gospels*.

Jan. 17: The Truth About The Book of Revelation

Dr. Elaine Pagels deconstructs the book of Revelation, discussing the historical significance and the meanings of the passages considering the times that the author lived in.

Jan. 24: Justice: Love's Love Language

Paul Seif will guide us in a discussion of Paul Tillich's seminal and entirely approachable book on community, politics, and ethics, titled *Love, Power, & Justice*. In it, Tillich states that justice is "the form in which and through which love performs its work." The book can be purchased online, used, from various websites for about \$3.

Paul Tillich (1886–1965) immigrated to the U.S. from Germany under the threat of imprisonment from the growing power of the Nazi party. According to Dr. Ron Stone, Tillich became one of "the last great public theologians."

Jan. 31: Rooted: A Spirituality of Place

Barbara Brown Taylor states: "Making contact with humus (whether it is country acreage or a pot garden on a windowsill) is balm for harried souls—a way of tapping into the dust from which we came and to which we shall go. There is mortality in this notion, but that is also—literally—grounding." We will watch a recent presentation by Brown Taylor, who is a *New York Times* best-selling author, teacher, and Episcopal priest.

Soul Food

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

Jan. 3: Christmas and Epiphany Sharing

We will gather together for an informal session of sharing.

Jan. 10-31: Falling Upward

We will continue discussing *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr, beginning with chapter 7. New participants are welcome, online or by phone. Contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at **hajdu625@comcast.net** for more details.

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Ed. & Youth Ministry

Sun., Jan. 10: Youth Mission Project | Letter Writing 12:30–1:30 pm A letter can make someone feel loved, whether it's a note to a friend, a message to someone in your church family, or a letter advocating for justice half way around the world. Youth in grades 6–12 will write letters to folks both in our church and through Amnesty International's *Write for Rights* campaign. RSVP to Sara so she can mail you supplies ahead of time.

Sun., Jan. 17: Tween Night | Cooking Class 5:30–6:30 pm

Tweens in grades 4–6 will gather on Zoom to make dinner for their families. We will be making an easy ricotta gnocchi and "dirt" for dessert.

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Our regular schedule resumes on **Wed., Jan. 13**. If you haven't already done so, register your kids at **ELPC.church** so that we can make sure you receive materials!

Young Adult Ministry

Kelli Booher, Interim Coordinator of Young Adult Ministries



Fri., Jan. 8: Virtual Game Night 7–9 pm This Game Night will begin with trivia followed by other games on the Jack Box platform. Everyone can play along on their own mobile devices by using a browser. Two devices do make it easier but you also can go between Zoom and browser. Grab your snacks and settle in for a night of fun!

Wed., Jan. 13: Do the "Write" Thing 8–9 pm

One Wednesday every month, we take a different approach to "writing," whether it is reflecting, drawing, meditation, visual art, social justice, or communicating to others. Whether you write, type, voice text, use communication symbols, or draw, please join us!

Mon., Jan. 18: Virtual 29th Annual MLK Celebration 1–3 pm

Peoria, Illinois, Public Employees for Community Concerns' 29th annual MLK Celebration is virtual this year. Hear Dr. Bernice King speak from 1–2 pm, and then YAMs may join our Zoom discussion from 2–3 pm. Ticket cost will be covered by Young Adult Ministry. Please RSVP to **KelliB@coh.net** to attend.

Connecting with YAMs

Contact Kelli Booher at **KelliB@coh.net** with any questions and be sure to check your emails for updates. Follow **@elpcyoungadults** on Facebook and Instagram!

Get YAM text updates, reminders, and other important info by texting "YAM" to **412.612.2594**. (Up to 6 msgs/month. Reply STOP to cancel, HELP for help. Msg & data rates may apply. Terms & privacy: slkt.io/affM)





From spring to summer, through fall, and now winter, our resilient youth have been active together. Whether baking cookies online, participating in Vacation Church School at home, getting club one sixteen visits, completing service projects, or learning virtually at Church School, they've made it work with smiles and laughs along the way!







Hope Academy offered online dance, theater, and music classes, as well as private lessons for the fall term, allowing students to focus on skill-building, individual coaching, special projects, and master classes.

Reimagining Our Taizé Prayer Service

Early feedback from our Spiritual Life Committee's online survey suggests a few thoughts about our Taizé prayer service as we move into 2021.

- 1. Posting old services is not effective at reaching our worshipers.
- 2. There is interest in doing some version of a live service on Wednesday nights.
- What is most meaningful to people about Taizé is the music and the overall atmosphere of silence, stillness, and quiet.

We are hopeful that until we can be back in the building together, we can offer a simpler, shorter, stripped down Taizé service that is still meaningful to people and offers a space of music, contemplation, worship, and prayer.

The Rev. BJ Woodworth will be working with our musicians to scheme about what that might look like! Keep your eyes and ears open for those details in January.

Email BJ at **BJW@coh.net** with comments, questions, or suggestions.

Spiritual Life

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

Spiritual Life Ministry Updates

• As winter arrives and we continue to live amidst the realities of this pandemic, I've sensed a need for us to have regular time and space to center down in God, be still, and pray with each other. Thank you to the 70+ people who took the time to fill out our online survey and give us your input into that idea before Christmas. You may still take the brief survey at tiny.cc/slc-survey.

The Spiritual Life Committee will meet in early January to look at the results. By mid-January, we hope to offer at least one, 20–30-minute session each week to be still, pray, and center down in God with one another. Details to come.

- Secondly, mark you calendars for another Virtual Retreat! This time, we will kick off the season of Lent from Fri.—Sat., Feb. 19–20. This 24-hour retreat will prepare us for the Lenten season through individual times of solitude, silence, and stillness, punctuated with times of communal prayer, meditation, and reflection. Email the Rev. BJ Woodworth at BJW@coh.net for details.
- Finally, save the date for the Center for Action and Contemplation's CONSPIRE 2021 Conference, from Fri.-Sun., Sept. 24–26. We are planning to host a live watch party. CONSPIRE 2021 will be a capstone experience uniting Richard Rohr's seven themes of alternative orthodoxy to create a gateway into practical and authentic contemplation—a way of life rooted in radical openness to God's loving presence. Learn more at cac.org/conspire-2021.

Virtual Advent Retreat Reflection

by Laura Ristau, ELPC member

I love Advent—the chance to step out of the hustle and bustle and have more of a bird's-eye view of the days and thoughts leading up to Christmas.

I especially like the hymns that speak of waiting and pondering and wondering—places I enjoy going, but find hard to reach in my busy life. Usually, I get caught up in deadlines, the social pressures, extra events, extra eating, extra, extra, extra...and sadly, my favorite season of Advent takes a back seat.

When the opportunity arose to take time away with like-minded folks from ELPC to focus on spirituality and the meaning of Advent, I was hooked!

The virtual retreat didn't disappoint. I hid my phone, focused on the content, found an unused corner of my house and retreated there to enjoy all my Advent favorites plus more activities provided for me—like movement, art projects, and creating a home altar.

I am relatively new to spiritual life activities, and each time I participate in one, I wonder why it took me so long to join in. I am filled with wonder and awe each time.









Presbyterian Women

PW Virtual Bible Study: Lamenting Life Mon., Jan. 4 7–8:30 pm | **Tues., Dec. 5** 10 am–12 pm
The practice of lament has the power to change us and our lives. Such change may be most evident when we lament lives filled with suffering and pain beyond our control. Job cursed the day he was born (Job 3). Yet, he persisted in his lament until God answered. Job has much to teach both lamenters and their companions.

Tues., Jan. 19: Sharing Lament *12–1 pm* All women are invited to practice lament.

For more details and Zoom information, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Fri., Jan. 8: Happy Hour 5–6 pm

At the end of a long week, come together with friends. Pour your favorite beverage, log on/call in to Zoom, and share in fellowship and fun for an hour. "See" you there!



Sat., Jan. 16: Day Retreat 9 am–7 pm Members and friends of ELPC's LGBTQ Ministry are invited to spend the day with our church family while we celebrate the new year through worship, discussion, creative activities, reflections, and fellowship on Zoom. This will be a fun and safe place to explore and to laugh. Please RSVP to Wil by **Sun., Jan. 10**.

If you have any questions or ideas, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x118.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.





Although 2020 presented some hurdles, we still found ways to safely get together at times. And yes, we miss all of you too!

ELPC People

If you have news to share, contact Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x122.

Good News

Congratulations to Michael Warren, who was awarded the *Dr. James E. Henderson* Prize from Duquesne University.



In addition to serving as our Journey music director, Michael is

a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program at Duquesne University.

Each year, the faculty chooses a candidate who best represents the qualities that Dr. Henderson displayed on a daily basis. Michael was chosen in recognition of his authentic leadership practice. Like Dr. Henderson, Michael sees educational leadership as ethical service for the good of others before self. He embodies the salience of self over role to lead as a real person with humility and grace.

Thanks

- "Thank you to the wonderful people of ELPC who sent cards and condolences after the recent death of my mother Dorothy Autore, who was a long-time ELPC member."
 - —Carol Hoehn
- Join us in expressing gratitude for a generous donation from Colleen Vermillion, which helped underwrite a significant portion of the costs for our new Chancel cross

Prayers

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

- Carol Hoehn's mother, Dorothy Autore
- Ruth Henderson's husband, Robert Henderson



www.ELPC.church



116 South Highland Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206









"As a diverse community of believers, we strive to follow God-the Creator who calls us, lesus 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

ELPC Building Closures

Christ's radical hospitality to all."

on New Year's Day, Fri., Jan. 1, and on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Mon., Jan. 18.

ELPC by the Numbers in 2020

Everyone knows that 2020 was filled with challenges, but we give thanks to God for the ways in which we were still able to learn, serve, worship, and grow together! Check out some highlights here and find some photos throughout this issue.

youth were confirmed in our first-ever Virtual Confirmation. And you guessed it...on Zoom!

people experienced our Virtual Advent Retreat.

Our YouTube channel received

views in 2020, and we gained 448 subscribers!

members, friends, and neighbors follow us on Facebook. That's 457 new friends in 2020!

The Giving Tree Ministry ensured

children in our congregation and community had a blessed and joyous Christmas.

children from

38 families

first-ever Vacation

Church School at Home program across at least 5

people subscribe to our three weekly email newsflashes with worship info, church news, and activities for kids.

Users visited our website at ELPC.church

more often, for a total of

folks log on to our Tuesday morning Zoom prayer services.

boxes of books were donated to Allegheny County Jail from our Drive-by Book Drive.

Three children, two adults, and one baby were baptized in person...with masks and at a safe distance!