

# **Celebrating the Gifts of Women**



On **Sun.**, **March 14**, we will celebrate Gifts of Women Sunday. Pastor Heather will preach at our Journey and Sanctuary worship services, on the subject of "When Women Tell Our Stories," and members of Presbyterian Women will serve as liturgists.

What can we learn when we hear women's voices—issuing lament, calling us to justice, offering thanksgiving, or interpreting the events of the world through the lens of a woman's unique experience?

Join us as we celebrate the gifts and voices of women in our world and faith tradition, and strive to open our spirits to the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the women in our midst. And also consider supporting Presbyterian Women's drive-by Diaper Drive this day. See page 6 for details.

# **Palm Sunday Processional**

Join us on **Palm Sunday, Sunday, March 28**, to participate in a special outdoor processional! Pick up your palm branches at ELPC from 1–2 pm, then process around the church (wearing masks and maintaining a safe distance), praising God with music and movement. Feel free to make banners or bring instruments to play as we shout "Hosanna" and worship God. Those who prefer to remain in their cars can pull up to pick up a palm branch, then process around the church in their vehicles. You also are invited to bring your painted rock (from the Lenten Devotional Bag), which will be placed in the Sanctuary for Easter Sunday.

Keep an eye on the weekly news flash for updated details.

# **Holy Week and Easter Services**

As we continue to worship remotely, we hope to provide creative virtual worship services during Holy Week and Easter. We anticipate providing times to remember Jesus' Last Supper, to hear again Jesus' final words from the cross, and to stand beside the women who witnessed the empty tomb and told of Jesus' Easter resurrection.

Watch for worship service details at ELPC.church and in our weekly worship news flash each Friday!

### **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: Grow Stronger

March 7\* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

March 14 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

March 21 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

March 28 Kathryn Ophardt

### Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

March 7\* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

March 14 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

March 21 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

March 28 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

### Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm Rev. B| Woodworth

### Navigating Through Our Lenten Journey

In mid-February, members and friends in our faith family participated in virtual Lenten Retreat as a personal and communal time of preparation as we began our journey into the desert with Jesus. Through Zoom meetings, embodied and spoken prayers and meditations, and time for solitude, we were able to consider belovedness and the temptations we face, and set our own intentions for the season.



### **East Liberty Presbyterian Church**

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

### **Staff Leadership**

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush

Pastor

RandyB@coh.net | x123

The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy
Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries
PatriceFS@coh.net | x130

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries
HeatherS@coh.net | x121

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Director of Spiritual Life Ministries
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#### Sara Hackett

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# **Pastoral Message**

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



In a recent issue of *Presbyterian Outlook*, the writer Johari Jabir told about a conversation with a beloved neighbor of his, a man simply known as Papa Lee. He was a quiet man, a tender of gardens, a teller of stories, a singer of spirituals. They were talking one day about the state of the world when Papa Lee looked over and said, "Son, there ain't but four kinds of people in the world: Those headed into a storm. Those in the midst of a storm. Those coming out of a storm. And then there's the fools that think they can avoid the storm."

All of us could likely name someone in each one of those categories right now—people whose lives are getting messy and complicated; friends struggling in the midst of problems; family members for whom things are slowly getting better; and then folks from all categories of life who somehow imagine they are immune from life's troubles. In fact, if we are honest with ourselves, we can remember times in our own lives when we fit each of these four categories—including being a fool and imagining no storm will ever cross our path.

March is always a month spent in the season of Lent—that time of reflection and repentance as we ponder our lives in light of the gospel witness of Jesus' slow walk to the cross on Calvary. Scripture says that Jesus "set his face toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). It is a clear depiction of someone who was heading into a storm, even as Jesus' teachings and healings ensured that every day also was spent in the midst of a religious storm. There is real comfort that comes from knowing that whatever storm we may face or try to ride out, Jesus himself also endured storms just a tempestuous and daunting. And since there's no way to go around storms, Jesus' example gives us the courage to persevere and set our face for a path through the storm.

But, to continue with Papa Lee's analogy, there is always a time in which we emerge out of storms. The same feet that carried Jesus into a city that would demand his crucifixion are the feet that Mary Magdalene grabbed in shock and joy as the resurrected Christ stepped forth from the dark grave. The one who was dead became the one alive once more. The heaviness of Lent gives way to the joy of Easter. In the famous words of Psalm 30, "weeping may last for an evening, but joy comes with the morning."

For the first three of Papa Lee's categories of life, there are words of scripture available to us: to be prepared, to persevere, to look to the horizon of hope set before us in Christ. To the last category, well, God's love and mercy is great enough even to be available to us fools who imagine we can dodge life's storms.

The good shepherd always seeks lost sheep. The loving parent waits patiently for the prodigals to come to their senses. And whatever storms descend upon us, God is near—calming the waves, holding us close, giving us the strength to take just one more step forward. Even in the stormy season of Lent, such is the amazing good news of our faith.

Randy Bush

# **Mission Matters**

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

#### Sun., March 28: One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

Scripture reminds us that God's people belong with those in need—releasing people from the bonds of injustice, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and welcoming those without shelter. And as Jesus instructs in Matthew 25, the Church is compelled to serve those who are thirsty, imprisoned, and ill.



Through the PC(USA) One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering, the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger, and Self-Development of People programs all work together to serve individuals and communities in need. In a world filled with disasters, hunger, and oppression, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and other life-sustaining resources. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, the work of these programs fit together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

The Mission Board invites you to prayerfully discern small changes you can make in your personal life to support and exhibit love for others as you are loved by God. Consider increasing your gift to the OGHS offering—especially considering the overwhelming challenges we experienced and witnessed in 2020—and feel how giving opens your heart to God's work in your life.

On **Palm Sunday, March 28**, we invite you to join Christians across the country in opening their hearts to tangibly witness to the abundant love of God through the OGHS offering. You may give using the envelope mailed to your home or by designating your gift to OGHS online at **ELPC.church/donate**.

# **ELPC Assists Neighbors in Need with Grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation**

ELPC has walked with the community throughout the years, doing our utmost to ensure people have shelter, food, utilities, clothes, and other necessities. Many of our neighbors continue to experience financial, housing, and food instability due to the loss of employment, reduced working hours, illness, unexpected expenses, or other residual effects of the pandemic and economic downturn.

We are thankful to announce that—as a result of the thoughtful effort of an ELPC member—we recently received a \$10,000 grant from the *Robert S. Waters Fund* of The Pittsburgh Foundation. The grant will enable ELPC to combat housing and food insecurity to distressed households in Pittsburgh, as well as to continue living fully into being a PC(USA) Matthew 25 church and eradicating systemic poverty, as we walk with and support the most vulnerable in our community.

If you are aware of individuals or families in need of financial assistance, have them contact Gerald McClendon, ELPC mission assistant, at **GeraldM@coh.net** or Pastor Patrice at **PatriceFS@coh.net**. We will do our best to assist them.



Thank you to all who donated socks in support of our MLK Day of Service Sock Collection! Through your gracious efforts, we were able to supply local shelters with more than **2,000 pairs of socks**—one of the most requested items by people living in homelessness.

### Meet Wayne Younger, OHM's New Executive Director

Wayne Younger was welcomed as Open Hand Ministries new executive director in September 2020, and he hit the ground running to lead OHM into the next chapter of serving the needs of people seeking just, affordable, and generational wealth-building homeownership in the East End.

The ELPC Mission Board invites you to a virtual coffee hour to meet Wayne on **Sun., March 21**, following Sanctuary worship for updates on OHM's programs, initiatives, and plans for 2021, as well as to learn how you can get involved.



# **Christian Education**

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

**Note:** Adult classes are held on Sundays, 9:45 am, via Zoom.

### Children | Preschool–Grade 5

This month, we will continue following along with our Lenten devotional theme "Finding Hope in the Desert." If you haven't signed up for Church School yet this year, you can register your child at **ELPC.church**. We also will gather on Zoom on **Sun., March 21**, 10 am, so we can explore the theme of "Finding Hope" together.

### Middle School | Grades 6–8

We will meet on Sun., March 21, 12:30 pm, via Zoom.

### High School | Grades 9–12

We will meet on Sun., March 28, via Zoom. Time TBD.

### **Journey with Scripture**

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

"Those who trust in God will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with God in love."

-Wisdom of Solomon 3:9

Our series, entitled *Word Hidden and Revealed – The Apocrypha and The Apocalypse*, continues during these Lenten times. We seek a truth and love of God that is not "in spite of." Not in spite of our alienation (sin), hurt, and deep fears. Rather we will look for a truth and love given at the very heart of our need, hurt, and ugliness. Isn't this a message of the cross and Christ? Through reflection on the scripture readings, we will ponder how these things can be made flesh in our lives. Join us on this journey.

**March 7:** Psalm 140; Judith 15:12–16:17; Revelation 10:1–11

**March 14:** Psalm 13; Wisdom of Solomon 1:1–18; 3:1–9; Revelation 11:1–19

**March 21:** Psalm 20; Wisdom of Solomon 6:12–25; Revelation 12:1–17

**March 28:** Psalm 134; Wisdom of Solomon 7:1–30; Revelation 13:1–18.

### **Parenting Circle**

Facilitator: Trish Buben

#### March: This Life That Is Ours

We will continue discussing excerpts from Lauren Burdette's book, *This Life That Is Ours*.

### March 14: Q&A with Lauren Burdette

Lauren Burdette will be with us for a question and answer session. See more details on page 8.

### **Seekers**

Faciltator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

# March 7: How Casa San José is Serving the Immigrants in Our Community

As an emergency response organizer at Casa San José, Laura Perkins responds to and does advocacy work regarding family separations in the Pittsburgh area. She will lead a discussion on how the pandemic and change in presidential administration have affected the immigrant community served by Casa San José.

### March 14: Into the Weeds

Kathryn Ophardt, our intern from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will lead an exploration of our relationship to nature, humanity, and God. Reflecting on the story of "The Fall from the Garden of Eden" in Genesis 3, we will consider how our interpretation of the story shapes our understanding of our present realities and experiences with nature.

#### March 21: Jesus and the Not-So-Triumphal Entry

How and why did Jesus enter Jerusalem for the final time, and what was the intended significance? *Answer:* It depends on which Gospel you read. In this study, we will take a close look at the four distinct presentations of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem in the canonical Gospels. Tucker Ferda, ELPC member and assistant professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will lead us as we examine what actually happened historically and how this event fits into the life of Jesus.

### **March 28: Jesus and the Temple Controversy**

Most historians agree that one of the most significant public events in the life of Jesus was his controversial action of "cleansing" the temple. But what was the intended meaning of this event? Was it an act of judgment? Protest? Restoration? Tucker Ferda will put the accounts of the Gospels in conversation with other non-canonical sources (especially Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls) in hopes to better understand what Jesus was doing and how this event figured into his execution by the Romans.

### **Soul Food**

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

### **March: Falling Upward**

We will continue and conclude our discussion of *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr, covering chapters 12 and 13, and the coda. Reading the book is not required, and new participants are always 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

To RSVP for an event, get Zoom information, or ask questions, please contact Sara Hackett at **SaraH@coh.net** or **412.441.3800 x120**.

### Sun., March 7: Youth Mission Project | JereBears 12:30–1:30 pm

Youth in grades 6–12 will gather on Zoom to make JereBears for Jeremiah's place. Don't know how to knit, crochet, or sew? No problem! We also need some no-sew blankets. RSVP to Sara to receive supplies ahead of time. Learn more at JeremiahsPlace.org/you-can-help/jerebears.

### Sat., March 13: Tween Night | T-Shirt Making 10 am

Tweens in grades 3–6 will gather on Zoom to make t-shirts. RSVP to Sara with your shirt size.

# **Young Adult Ministry**

Kelli Booher, Interim Coordinator of Young Adult Ministries

Contact Kelli Booher at **KelliB@coh.net** or **405.501.0711** to RSVP for an event or to ask questions. Get YAM text updates by texting "YAM" to **412.612.2594**.

### **YAM City Walks Begin**

Looking for an excuse to get out of the house? Join YAMs (Young Adult Ministry Members) across Pittsburgh for YAM City Walks! Grab your mask, walking shoes, eager spirit, and meet us in a different park each month. Contact Rebecca McGregor at mcgregorre8@gmail.com or 803.493.6394 for more information.

### Tuesdays in March: Evening Prayer 6:30-7 pm

Young Adults are invited to join a weekly prayer service led by our YAM friend, Rebecca Abbott, using the *Book of Common Worship*. You don't need your own copy; everything you need is provided. All you need to do is log onto Zoom and be open to where God is moving. Contact Kelli for the link.

### Fri., March 19: Tiny Campfire 7–9 pm

Gather around your screens and join us for storytelling, games, and s'mores. No mosquito repellent needed. RSVP to Kelli for this online camping experience and to receive your camping kit.

#### **Sat., March 27: Spring Series** | **Spiritual Fermentation** 6–8 pm

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, director of Spiritual Life Ministries, continues to lead us through May, with hopes of an in-person event in June. For centuries, beer has been a means for spiritual growth—from monks embracing the contemplative process of brewing "liquid bread" to the ways it has stimulated meaningful conversations when shared. Fermentation also provides a rich metaphor for the transformation into which the Spirit invites us. Come explore the connections among beer, monastic practice, and "spiritual fermentation." Each gathering will include a tasting of a particular beer style, a reflection on brewing and our spiritual lives, and a guided prayer practice.

The series is open to young adults, 18–40 years old. You must be 21+ to participate in the tasting and the cost is **\$5/person**. RSVP to Kelli by **Sun., March 21**.

### Kids' Zoom

On **Sun., March 28**, 10 am, kids in preschool–grade 5 are invited to join Pastor Heather, Ms. Sara, and several of our Church School teachers on Zoom for a time to connect with one another and learn about God.

For more details and the Zoom link, contact Sara Hackett at **SaraH@coh.net**.

### club one sixteen notes

This month, youth in grades 6–12 will continue our Lenten journey through the wilderness together by exploring what new things God is doing in our lives. Join us for discussion, food, games, activities, and more!

For more information, supplies, and Zoom links, contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

# ¿Hablas Español?

Are you interested in learning Spanish as a second language to be able to better communicate, know, and love our Spanish-speaking sisters and brothers?

If so, join us on Thursdays at 4 pm, beginning **Thurs.**, **March 4**, via Zoom at **tiny.cc/elpc-ssl-class**.

Together, we will explore vocabulary, grammar, and conversation skills, as well as consider language learning as a spiritual practice.

Classes are open for all ages and levels of Spanish skills.

### Drive-by Diaper Drive

One-third of families have trouble paying for diapers. Parents may miss work because they cannot provide a supply of disposable diapers for their children at day care. Lack of clean diapers can adversely affect a child's health and socialization.

Presbyterian Women will host a driveby Diaper Drive on **Sun., March 14**, 1:30–3 pm, at the half-circle driveway on Highland Ave. Disposable diapers (especially sizes 5 and 6) and baby wipes are requested.

If you prefer to make a monetary donation, make checks payable to "PW in ELPC" and write "Diaper Drive" in the memo line. Checks may be mailed to the church.

Questions? Email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.



# Weekday Prayer Opportunities

During the week, ELPC offers a variety of opportunities for you to take time to pray, meditate, and recharge. Please join us for these brief sessions!

### Contemplative Prayer

Tuesdays | 7:30–8:15 am

tiny.cc/contemplative-prayer (passcode centerdown)

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Tuesdays | 8–8:20 am

tiny.cc/intercessory-prayer

### Mindfulness Meditation

Thursdays: 7:30-8:15 am, 7-8 pm

tiny.cc/mindfulness-meditation (passcode mindful)

# **Presbyterian Women**

PW Virtual Bible Study: Creation Laments
Mon., March 1 7–8:30 pm | Tues., March 2 10 am–12 pm
In the 21st century, we understand that human activity
causes climate change. In ancient times, Isaiah recounted
how the "Earth lies polluted under its inhabitants" and
creation itself laments (Isaiah 24). Paul describes such
lament as "groaning" (Romans 8). Join us as we explore the
interconnectedness of all creation.



Tues., March 16: Sharing Lament 12–1 pm All women are invited to practice lament.

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

# **Spiritual Life**

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

### Being in God for the World

One of the things that excited me most about accepting the invitation to be the director of Spiritual Life Ministries at ELPC was to explore together how we can live more deeply and fully as people *IN* God, *FOR* the world. In my few months here, I have seen that ELPC is indeed "a diverse community of believers, who show God's unconditional love by providing refuge for spiritual growth, ardently pursuing justice, and extending Christ's radical hospitality to all." And I wonder... what is the relationship between our spiritual growth and our long-term ability to ardently pursue justice and extend radical hospitality to all? How does a mindfulness practice and contemplative prayer facilitate justice flowing down like living waters? How does spending time on a 24-hour retreat assist in dismantling systemic racism?

I do not have all the answers, but I know there is a connection between the inner and outer life, between abiding in the vine and fruit. I know that I see a paced rhythm in the busy and full life of Jesus as he regularly dismissed the crowds, withdrew to deserted places, and prayed. I know Jesus invited Martha to choose "the better part and sit at his feet and listen to what he was saying" amidst feeling alone and distracted by her many tasks. I know Dr. King, in his sermon titled "Transformed Non-Conformists," stated, "only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of this world in a humble and loving spirit."

With that aim in mind, I am excited to facilitate a retreat from March 5–6 with Pastor Patrice, the Deacons, Mission Team, and Facing Systemic Racism Task Force to rest, retreat, and explore some of these questions and connections in their lives and ministry.

Perhaps you too have a longing for this inner spiritual transformation. Or like Martha, you feel alone and distracted by all the work that is needed to ardently pursue justice and extend radical hospitality. If so, join us on Tuesdays, 7:30 am, for 30 minutes of **Contemplative Prayer**, or on Thursdays, 7:30 am and 7 pm, for 30 minutes of **Mindfulness Mediation**. Together, we will sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what he is saying to us and among us.

# **LGBTQ Ministry**

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Sun., March 14: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm

All allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike are invited to our next monthly Spiritual Gathering! We will share meeting time and fellowship together via Zoom. Contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x118 for more details or to attend.



### God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.



Pictured left to right: Carolyn Russ, Stephanie Creasy, and Isaac Smith.

# 66,956 Signatures

In early February, ELPC held a driveby Petition Signing event in support of the Alliance for Police Accountability's campaign to add two binding ballot questions on the May ballots for Allegheny County and Pittsburgh. The petitions sought to end solitary confinement in Allegheny County Jail and to ban "no-knock" warrants (Breonna's Law) in Pittsburgh.

The solitary confinement petition required 27,088 signatures from Allegheny County residents. It collected **45,076**. The Breonna's Law petition needed 12,476 signatures from City of Pittsburgh residents. It collected **21,880**.

Thank you to everyone who stopped by and/or mailed in a signed petition.

Production and printing of this issue of Reaching Out was completed prior to reviews by the Divisions of Elections and County Solicitor, but it appears that both questions will appear on the May ballots in Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh, respectively.

### **ELPC Session News**

At their recent meeting, the Session:

- Welcomed three new members and one friend,
- Heard an update on the work of the Mission Board,
- Continued to improve our Personnel handbook, and
- Made plans for a virtual retreat in mid-March.

### **ELPC People**

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

#### **Good News**

- Please join us in welcoming our new members Jason Lucarelli,
   Karen Overholt, and Jeffrey Raines; and friend Rebecca Serey.
- Congratulations to Barbara Griffin, who was recently named chair of the Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security.

#### **Thanks**

• Join us in giving thanks to **Nancy Wright**, who is serving on Pittsburgh
Presbytery's Finance and Property
Committee. Nancy's name was
accidently omitted from the "Lending a
Hand at Pittsburgh Presbytery" article
in the February issue of *Reaching Out*.

### **Prayers**

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

- Tim Benedict's aunt, Lois Jarvis
- Carol Bonner's aunt, Kitty Hunter
- Michele and Henk Bossers' friend, Larry
- Gretchen Chapman's father, Clarke
- Katie Haas-Conrad's uncle, Bill
- Tom Morton's uncle, Teddy
- Robin Schmeider's father, Pat Schmeider
- Carl and Jon Schoenberger's father, Paul Schoenberger



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"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 Christ's radical hospitality to all."

### **ELPC Building Closure**

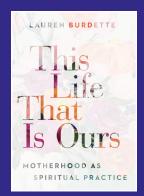
The ELPC building will be closed on Mon., April 5, in observance of Easter.

# It's Time to Spring Forward

It's that time of year again. Daylight Saving Time begins on Sun., March 14. Make sure to set your clocks forward by one hour. We'll see you bright and early for worship!

# This Life That Is Ours Q&A

Are you involved in parenting? If so, join our Parenting Circle Church School class on Sun., March 14, 9:30 am, for a special question and answer session with Lauren Burdette, author of This Life That Is Ours.



The book is a great resource for parents to "explore the ways they can encounter God within their parenting." The class has been reading and discussing her book during their weekly class time. Prior class attendance or reading is not required.

Burdette works as a spiritual director in Pittsburgh, and is a mother of three.

Email Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net for Zoom details.

# **Hope Academy Students Compete in Pittsburgh Public** Theater's Showcase of Finalists

In addition to displaying their acting prowess, Hope Academy students learned how to be directors and producers for Pittsburgh Public Theater's virtual 2021 Shakespeare Monologue and Scene Contest.

Twenty-seven Hope Academy students competed and three were selected for the Showcase of Finalists: Sidra **Bandy** as Ariel, for her monologue from *The Tempest*; as well as **Suraya Collins** as Juliet, and **Zora Rose** as the Nurse, for their scene from Romeo and Juliet. Results were not known at the time of printing this newsletter.

We are planning a virtual Shakespeare Festival on Sat., April 10, so that all of our students—and special guests—can present their work from all over the world.



Sidra Bandy

Suraya Collins

Zora Rose