

Welcoming You Back on Rally Day

On **Rally Day, Sun., Sept. 12**, our church family will gather once more to kick off our fall programming and regular worship schedule. We rejoice that after more than a year of virtual programming, we can resume a more traditional Sunday schedule. What can you expect this fall?

Church School Classes

- **Kids** | Children and tweens from pre-school through grade 5 will gather in person in the Courtyard each week. All participants will be masked. Please register your child online or in person at ELPC.
- **Youth** | Youth in grades 6–12 will meet in person each week— sometimes inside and sometimes outside. All students and teachers will be masked. Please register your youth online or in person at ELPC.
- Adults | All adult Church School classes will offer a hybrid format, so that you may participate in person or via Zoom. Reach out to your class facilitator, Sara Hackett, or Pastor Heather for details. Adult classes will follow ELPC's mask requirements, which are subject to change.

Worship Services

Stay informed about our worship services by visiting **ELPC.church**. Both Sunday services will continue to be livestreamed.

- **Journey** | For the first time since March 2020, we will gather together in the Social Hall on Sundays at 8:45 am. Our pastors are working to ensure that Journey worship remains interactive, even in a hybrid setting, so that our faith family can pray with—and for—one another.
- Sanctuary | Our traditional Sanctuary service will resume on Sundays at 11 am. And the Brass Roots will join us as our special music guests on Rally Day. For more information about September services, see the article to the right. And if you have young children, see the "Worshipping with Kids" article on page 5.

Confirmation Class to Begin Meeting

ELPC's is offering Confirmation Class for children and youth in grades 8 and up. Students who are interested in learning more about Confirmation Class, as well as their parents/caregivers, are invited to an informational meeting following Sanctuary worship on **Sun.**, **Sept. 26**, to discuss the meaning and purpose of Confirmation, review our schedule, and answer questions.

To RSVP for the initial information session and/or to receive a complete schedule, contact Pastor Heather or Sara Hackett.

Sunday Services

*Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Summer Worship | **10 am** Sept. 5* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Back to the Future

Sept. 12 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Sept. 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Sept. 26 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Sept. 12 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Sept. 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Sept. 26 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm Rev. BJ Woodworth

Worship in September

Much has happened over the past 18 months, and we are moving intentionally into the final months of 2021. Read on for September themes.

- On Rally Day, Sun., Sept. 12, our services will focus on the theme of "Lament and Hope," since the ongoing pandemic has disrupted so many aspects of our lives and we still seek God's grace for the losses we have all endured.
- On Sun., Sept. 19, we are planning to offer a Church Life Sampler following Sanctuary worship, so people can get reacquainted with our church's ministries and educational offerings.
- Then on **Sun.**, **Sept. 26**, we will celebrate the sacrament of baptism and recognize all the children, youth, and adults in our faith family who were baptized over the past two years.

So plan to be with us each Sunday as we continue to explore both in-person and remote worship options and put our faith and trust in the living God.

East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

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Pastoral Message

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



Back in the 1940s, John Gunther traveled all across America and published a bestseller called *Inside U.S.A.* He was a reporter with an eye for the unusual details that make places special. He shared this interesting tidbit about Nebraska: "Some early villages were so small that, for a time, each had only one church; Catholics and Protestants worshiped in the same room, with half the pews facing an altar at one end, half facing a pulpit at the other." I find that image very intriguing. Two groups of churchgoers all praying to the same God, but unable (or unwilling) to pray together, facing the same way, as a single congregation.

Humans, especially homo religiosus, are funny creatures. We build structures and put our denominational labels outside the front doors and too often tell ourselves that our prayers ascend more quickly, more directly, or more piously to God in heaven than prayers offered from churches down the road.

When I graduated from seminary, I served a Presbyterian parish in Zimbabwe for three years. It included a central church plus six preaching stations—farming outposts where I'd lead a worship service for the rural community once a month. To their credit, some of the farmers built a chapel, knowing that, depending on which Sunday of the month it was, it might host a Presbyterian pastor or a Dutch Reformed minister or an Episcopal priest or a Baptist preacher. We all used the same Bible and sometimes sang the same hymns or choruses. And by and large, the farmers would attend most Sundays, regardless of what denominational label might be affixed to that week's service. To me, that was a big improvement over what Gunther heard about in those early Nebraska communities.

I know of some Presbyterian churches today who share their worship space with totally different religious communities—not just with Methodists and Baptists, but with Jewish or Muslim congregations. It sometimes takes some architectural sensitivity and creative re-arrangement of furniture, but it is certainly one way to live out a faith that is open, generous, and radically hospitable.

Our congregation already has close ties and shared programs with Rodef Shalom and Temple Sinai synagogues, plus our connection with other East End churches through East End Cooperative Ministry and Open Hand Ministries. Currently, some of our elders are meeting with elders from Eastminster Presbyterian Church to explore the ways our ministries can respectfully and faithfully present the gospel of Christ for our East Liberty neighborhood.

During the upcoming weeks, as we endure the latest challenges from the pandemic, we will be returning to our fall worship and educational ministry schedule. Some of you will choose to connect with ELPC virtually through our livestream options. Some of you will be back inside the building, whether for services or classes or mission projects. We are not trying to create two different congregations (especially ones that face opposite directions in their faith life), but hoping to offer a range of ways all people can connect with God and one another. Let us be in prayer with our sister communities of faith around us, since every place of worship is dealing with the same challenges. And may we find ways to affirm the good news of Psalm 133: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

Randy Bush

Mission Matters

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

A Conversation on Critical Race Theory

Part of the role of the Facing Systemic Racism Committee is to address and inform the congregation on current issues regarding race. One of the "hot topics" right now is Critical Race Theory (CRT). This body of scholarship was formulated in the 1970s by Derrick Bell, a lawyer and professor, along with others. CRT attempts to understand why civil rights-era advances have stalled and/or reversed.

Recently, information and misinformation about CRT has become the subject of conversation on local and national news, and within K–12 and higher education settings. The misinformation about CRT has already impacted some school curricula and has the potential to impact student outcomes in the coming years.

To learn more about this situation, the Facing Systemic Racism Committee will hold a conversation (date to be determined) on CRT that will factually and objectively center on:

- Defining CRT: What is CRT and what is not CRT?
- Learning if CRT currently is part of the public school curriculum and whether it is changing the information provided to teachers and students.
- Determining the impact on parents, students, and school personnel of the ongoing CRT controversy.

We intend to include information from those who have studied CRT, as well as members of our congregation. Contact Megan Leisher at **MeganL@coh.net**, if you are an educator or parent who would like to be considered as a participant.

Seeking Spanish-Speaking Volunteers



Casa San José volunteers have begun a local chapter of Grannies Respond/Abuelas Responden—a national organization of volunteers that meet asylum seekers at bus stations as they travel from the U.S./Mexico border to their sponsors. Volunteers help asylum seekers with their tickets and give them water, snacks, food, diapers, and personal care items.

At the Pittsburgh Greyhound Bus Station, there are five daily busses that could potentially have asylum seekers on board. Most arrive at 12:45 am. They are usually family units consisting of parents and children, or single adults. None are unaccompanied minors. The Greyhound staff appreciates volunteer help as it saves them a lot of time. Volunteers typically meet outside the station from 12:15–1:15 am. This allows them to be available for 3 busses during that time. Volunteers who are fluent in Spanish are especially needed. You could volunteer any day of the week.

Contact Carol Chonoska at **carolchonoska@gmail.com** or **724.272.9722** for more information.

Environmental Book Club Studies Walden

The Environmental Team invites you to read Henry David Thoreau's classic nature book, *Walden*, and join a discussion on **Thurs.**, **Sept. 30**, 7 pm.

In 1845, philosopher and writer Thoreau built a tiny cabin in the woods near Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, where he lived alone and self-sufficient for two years. His observations and reflections became the basis of this book. It is an essay collection with the themes of:

- Nature as eternal guide and teacher;
- Living independently and breaking free from the expectations and conventions of traditional society;
- Minimalism or detaching ourselves from a goal-driven, materialistic worldview; and
- Self-improvement with a focus on meditation, and understanding our place in the universe.

Katherine Hackney will lead our discussion. For more information, or to tell us you are coming, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.

Act Now on Climate Change; it Matters

The newest report from the United Nations warns that climate change is rapidly accelerating, and countries around the world must take action as quickly as possible to avoid catastrophic environmental impacts.

Can an individual make a difference? The social sciences tell us that yes, we can. Our individual choices and influence on family and friends matter more than we think.

Many resources exist to help us reduce our carbon footprint, and the Environmental Team can help with the "how to." Contact Nancy Heastings at **nheastings@comcast.net** to get started.

Christian Education

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

Note: Adult classes meet in person and via Zoom on Sundays, 9:45 am.

Church School Offering to Support the Navajo Water Project

Every year, ELPC Church School students of all ages participate in an offering to support an organization whose work aligns with our church's mission. This year, we will be supporting the Navajo Water Project.



More than 150 years ago, the Navajo and many other tribes signed treaties with the federal government, giving up their land in exchange for funding of housing, infrastructure, and health care. But for decades, that hasn't happened.

The Navajo Water Project is a community-managed utility alternative that brings hot and cold running water to homes without access to water or sewer lines by installing off-grid water systems. But their impact doesn't stop there. They're also investing in septic systems, skilled job creation, and grants for individuals and communities who are solving their own water challenges through the Water is Life Fund. Learn more at NavajoWaterProject.org.

Our Church School offering will support the Navajo Water Project—so that we might address injustice and bring safe water to Navajo families. You can participate by donating in person (via cash or check) or online at **ELPC.church**, noting it's for the "Church School Offering/Navajo Water Project."

Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

"Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees"—Luke 3:9

We will start a new series on the P's and Q's of scripture. Each week, we will read and reflect on selections from the Hebrew scriptures, New Testament, or outside the Bible—including: selections from the 8th century BCE prophets with their call to justice among the nations; a collection of Jesus' sayings found only in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and posited as a prior gospel in itself; early letters from the apostle Paul to Christian communities; and selections from the Dead Sea Scrolls (at Qumran) from the Essene community, some of whom also lived at the time of Jesus. A Psalm provides our opening reflection. Join our journey.

Sept. 12: Psalm 117; Amos 1:1–5, 2:1–3; Luke 3: 7–22; Galatians 1:1–11

Sept. 19: Psalm 142; Amos 18:1–24; Matthew 4:1–13; Galatians 1:12–24

Sept. 26: Psalm 25:1–11; Amos 3:1–8; Luke 6:20–26; Galatians 2:1–10

Parenting Circle

Facilitator: Trish Buben

September: The Sandbox Revolution

This fall, we will be discussing *The Sandbox Revolution:* Raising Kids for a Just World. This collection of essays and discussion questions invites parents to call upon their collective wisdom to "wrestle with the questions, navigate the challenges, offer concrete practices, and remind parents of the sacredness of the works. Written by parents who also are writers, pastors, teachers, organizers, artists, gardeners, and activists, this anthology offers diverse experiences on topics that include education, money, anti-racism, resistance, spirituality, disability justice, and Earth care."

Soul Food

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members
This month, we will choose our next book, so that we can begin discussing it in October. New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at hajdu625@comcast.net.

Sept. 12: Welcoming, Re-gathering, and Planning Session

Sept. 19: Fellowship Session with Focused Discussion

Sept. 26: Reports from the CONSPIRE Conference

Seekers

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

Sept. 12: Discussing COVID and Left to Tell

All adults are welcome to join us in person or online! We will reflect on and discuss our COVID experiences. What did we learn? What might we want to change in our lives? What have we found to be more important than we realized before? Also, anyone who read *Left to Tell* during summer break can offer their feedback and impressions.

Sept. 19: Author of *Left To Tell* Talks about Forgiveness In 1994, Immaculee Ilibagiza survived the Rawanda genocide by hiding with seven other women in a 3x4-foot bathroom for 91 days. During this time, she learned about the brutal murders of her entire family, while maintaining her connection with God. In this video, she talks about learning to forgive the killers, as Jesus did.

Sept. 26: Richard Rohr on the Cosmic Christ

We will watch and discuss a video of Fr. Richard Rohr talking about the cosmic Christ.

Fr. Rohr is a Franciscan priest, internationally recognized author, spiritual leader, and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

club one sixteen resumes september 15

This year, kids in grades 1–12 are welcome to join us on Wednesdays from 4:30–6:30 pm. We will meet outside this fall, and so our theme for the year will be **inside out**. Through Bible study, art, recreation, and discussion, we will explore all the ways in which God shows up when our world is turned **inside out**.

Register online or at the church. Masks will be required for all participants.

Young Adult Ministry

Kelli Booher, Interim Coordinator of Young Adult Ministries

Wed., Sept. 22: YAMs @ Taizé 7-8:30 pm

Young adults will attend ELPC's Taizé prayer service together as a part of our fall series exploring Taizé (see article below). Following the service, you are welcome to gather with us outside for fellowship and reflection. Masks are required on ELPC grounds and we will follow other safety guidelines for entering/signing in.

Sat., Sept. 25: YAM & Happy Wanderers Road Trip

Young Adults and Happy Wanderers will take a relaxing fall drive to Hartville, Ohio, for lunch at Hartville Kitchen, followed by shopping at the Hartville Indoor and Outdoor Flea Market. There also are places to sit and catch up with each other, while enjoying the beautiful fall weather. We will leave from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary at 9 am, and return in the early evening.



You may drive yourself or carpool with others. You will need to RSVP and show proof of vaccination in order to ride in the church van. Seating is limited. Young adults should RSVP with Kelli Booher at KelliB@coh.net. Happy Wanderers should RSVP with Martha DeMartzi at 412.418.1602. If you need to be picked up at the church, please let Kelli or Martha know.

This event is subject to change, pending COVID case rates. If it is canceled, we will do our best to schedule a backup event, so please save the date.

YAM Fall Series | Exploring Taizé

All young adults are invited to join us on **Tues., Sept. 14 and 28**, 6:30–8 pm, as we begin our fall series to learn about, discuss, and attend Taizé prayer services. ELPC's Taizé service is based on a style of worship developed at the Taizé community in France in the 1940s by the late Brother Roger. Come explore as we collectively learn and discuss what Taizé is, its roots, and how we can implement it into the ways we practice our faith. We will use a variety of texts, stories, and images, and welcome a couple speakers. No prerequisites are needed. Come to one or come to all, just come as you are!

Worshipping with Kids

ELPC remains committed to being a welcoming congregation, inclusive of persons of all ages and stages of their faith life! While it does not yet seem safe to open our drop-in Nursery for children age 2 and younger, we are making the following accommodations so that families with young children will be more comfortable participating in our worship services together. What we will have includes:

- An expanded Kid's Corner with individually packaged materials designed for kids. Grab a worship kit that's labeled for your child's age range.
- Family-friendly spaces in worship. Do you have wiggly kids who need to move around during worship? Both the Social Hall and Sanctuary will have areas where your kids can spread out, sit on the floor, and move around during worship.
- Need a back-up plan? We know that sometimes it is best to give kids a break from the formal environment of worship. If you need to step out of the Sanctuary with your child, but want to remain connected to worship, you are welcome to go to the Narthex (just inside the Penn Avenue doors) or to the Garth Overlook Room. In each of these spaces, you will be able to see and hear worship on a monitor, and your kid can move around more freely under your direct supervision.

Contact Pastor Heather if you have questions about how you and your family might best plug into our worship and educational life this season! And check **ELPC.church** for the latest information on our worship services, Church School classes, and other fall programs.

Are You Interested in Learning Spanish?

Have you ever considered language learning as a spiritual practice? Are you interested in learning Spanish as a second language (SSL)? Come to our SSL information session on **Sun., Sept. 26**, 12:30 pm, via Zoom. This will be a new beginners class, where we can answer your questions and gather ideas of what you want to study together.

Learning a language isn't just about vocabulary and grammar. It's about learning a people, so I invite you to come to this information session and learn more about the unique perspective of the SSL class at ELPC.

Join us on Zoom at tiny.cc/ssl-info.

Intermediate SSL Class

Our intermediate SSL class will be begin meeting on **Thurs.**, **Sept. 9**, 4 pm, via Zoom. We're going to pick up where we left off, finishing up the present tense and preparing to learn the past paradigm.

If you already have some knowledge of Spanish, you are welcome to join this class as we continue to learn about ourselves, our neighbors, and God through the Spanish language!

Join us on Zoom at tiny.cc/elpc-ssl-class.

Save the Date for an Advent Retreat

The Spiritual Life Committee invites you to an Advent Retreat from Fri.—Sun., Nov. 19–21. Mark your calendars now and keep a look out for more information.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: What My Grandmothers Taught Me Tues., Sept. 7 *10 am–12 pm* | **Mon., Sept. 13** *7–8:30 pm*This year, we are studying Jesus' grandmothers, the women named in Matthew 1. Why are these women in this list?
What do their stories tell us about the coming Messiah?

Join us for our first lesson, "Family Trees," to explore these questions. Both sessions will meet on Zoom. For more information, email **PW.ELPC@gmail.com**.



Spiritual Life

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

"Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly"—Matthew 11:28–30

What speaks to you as you read these words? When might you set aside time to get away with God and rest, learn the unforced rhythms of grace, and live more freely and lightly?

The Spiritual Life Committee is excited to restart some regular times and spaces to practice together, and live into some unforced rhythms of grace. Read an overview of each offering below and visit **ELPC.church** for complete details.

- Contemplative Prayer | Mondays (starting Sept. 13), 7:30–8 am, via Zoom
- Cathedral Yoga | Wednesdays (starting Sept. 8), 6–7 pm, in the Sanctuary
- Taizé Prayer Service | Wednesdays, 7 pm, in the Chapel
- Mindfulness Meditation | Thursdays (starting Sept. 9), 8–8:30 am, via Zoom
- Enneagram Lunch Conversation | Third Mondays (starting Sept. 18), 12:30–1:30 pm, via Zoom
- **Journey Dance** | Third Fridays (starting Sept. 17), 7–8:30 pm, in the Sanctuary
- Individual Spiritual Direction | Contact Pastor BJ at BJW@coh.net to schedule an appointment.

2021 CONSPIRE Conference Simulcast

Over the weekend of **Sept. 24–26**, the Spiritual Life Committee invites you to a virtual simulcast of the Center for Action and Contemplation's CONSPIRE Conference, *Me/Us/the World: Living Inside God's Great Story*.

Join us in person for free at ELPC! Pastor BJ will stream the conference in the McKelvy Room. And lunch will be provided. Please register in advance at **ELPC.church**.



Stonewall Jackson Window Updates



Following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Sept. 12**, the Peace, Property, and Facing Systemic Racism Committees invite you to a conversation on the future of the stained-glass window depicting General Stonewall Jackson, located in our Sanctuary's East Transept. The window has been the subject of prayerful research by a Session-appointed task force, which is ready to share its findings with the congregation.

Our conversation will include a brief overview of how Confederate monuments and symbols have been used since the Civil War to help create a revisionist history that glorifies Confederates as cultural heroes, rather than the violent defenders of white supremacist ideology. More importantly, the task force will be seeking your input on how ELPC can meaningfully respond—with justice and faithfulness—to the display of this problematic symbol in our church.

Join us via Zoom at tiny.cc/stonewall-jackson. Or you may call 301.715.8592, and enter meeting ID 883 0027 9230 and passcode 444397 when prompted.

Join Us for a Garden Workday

If you are inspired by God's beautiful creation and like to play in the dirt, consider joining us for a workday in the Rain Garden on **Sat., Sept. 18**, 9 am–12 pm. Green thumbs are not required—just bring your energy, curiosity, and commitment to our community.



LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTO Ministry

Sun., Sept. 26: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm All LGBTQIA+ folks and allies are welcome to attend our next Spiritual Gathering.

For more details, please contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x118.

Café Justo Sales Resume

Stop by the coffee cart following Journey or Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Sept. 12**, to purchase a bag of Café Justo coffee. All varieties are available in ground and whole bean bags for \$10. If you are unable to pick



up your coffee in person, contact Ryan Booher at rabooherco@gmail.com.

Want to Show Your ELPC Pride?

Stop by Fellowship Time after Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Sept. 26**, to pick up an ELPC tie dye t-shirt from members of the LGBTQ Ministry for just \$10. The front says, "East Liberty Presbyterian Church" and the back says:



ELPC People

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

Good News

- Congratulations to those in our faith family who recently celebrated their baptism:
 - Grayson Breisinger, son of Raegan & Garrett Breisinger
 - Elena Grace Graham, daughter of Christina & Scott Graham
 - Zander & Zoe Panichella, son and daughter of Alissa & lames Panichella
 - Elisabeth Eleanor & Mathilde Clara Wittenstein, daughters of Emily & Nikolaus Wittenstein

Prayers

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

■ Betty Gore, mother of Rachelle Calfee



116 South Highland Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206







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"...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."

ELPC Building Updates

- For the most up-to-date information about ministries, mask policies, and building closures, visit **ELPC.church**.
- The ELPC building will be closed on Labor Day, Mon., Sept. 6.

Put Your Faith In Action by Serving Those In Need

We need volunteers to help us prepare and serve meals to residents at East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM.) Many hands make light work, and we need more hands! We're looking for ELPC members to help us prepare and serve:

Dinner

■ Thurs., Sept. 2 | 5:30 pm

■ **Thurs., Sept. 23** | 5:30 pm

- **Sun., Sept. 12** | 6:30 am
- Sun., Sept. 26 | 6:30 am

The need is great, the work is fun, and the fellowship is wonderful! If you're able to help, contact Becky Gloninger at 412.913.6070 or rag15@verizon.net.

Explore Our Church Life

ELPC's annual Church Life Sampler will be held following Sanctuary worship on Sun., Sept. 19, outdoors on Whitfield Street (weather permitting). Stop by to learn more about the various ministries that are a part of our church life together!

Every committee and ministry area at ELPC will be on hand to highlight fall programming and share how you can get involved! And a special treat will be provided by the Children and Family Ministry Team for you to enjoy on your way home.

Justice Committee to Host Clothing Drive for ACJ

As a Matthew 25 congregation, we are committed to supporting our siblings in Allegheny County Jail in a variety of ways, and we have been generous in response by collecting books, magazines, and toiletry items.

Now, we are seeking to provide dignity and clothing to those who are returning to our community. And you can help by donating sweatshirts and sweatpants for men and women in sizes



M, L, XL, and XXL (no solid red or orange, please).

You may purchase items and drop them off following Sanctuary worship on Sun., Sept. 12 or 26, at the Highland Avenue entrance, or at the drop box near the security desk during the week. You also may make a monetary donation, designated "Justice Committee-ACJ Sweats," and the Justice Committee will purchase items.

For more information, contact Judy Mancini at mancinijs@gmail.com.