

Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

January 2022

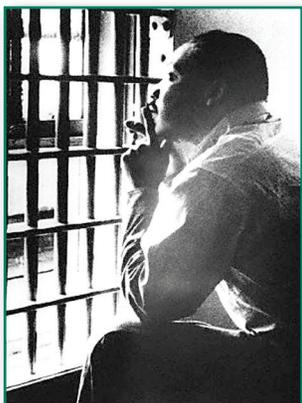
Get Ready for Winter Rally Day

Join us on **Winter Rally Day, Sun., Jan. 9**, 9:45–10:45, as Church School resumes for students of all ages!

- Children age 3–grade 5 will gather in Room 206 for a welcome from Pastor Heather, gathering songs, and a Bible story that we'll explore using the Godly Play curriculum. Children will then move to their own classrooms to respond to God's word.
- Our Pre-K class will move to Room 205, students in K–grade 4 will stay in Room 206, and grades 4–5 will move to Room 211, where parents or caregivers will pick them up after Church School at 10:45 am.
- Youth in grades 6–12 will meet in the Second Floor Parlor.
- Adult class details can be found on page 4.

Parents, please register your child(ren) now for Church School! Also, if your child has been vaccinated since you've completed your last registration form, please complete an updated form or send an email to Pastor Heather with your student's vaccination status.

A Letter from the Birmingham Jail



Martin Luther King, Jr., in Jefferson County Jail, Birmingham, Alabama, November 3, 1967

Fair use image

On April 16, 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

That statement is still true today.

During the Church School hour on **Sun., Jan. 30**, the Facing Systemic Racism Committee and the Faith Formation Board invite all adults and students in grade 6 and up to participate in a discussion of the Rev. Dr. King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*.

More information will be available soon, but please mark your calendars now and plan to join us—either in person or via Zoom.

Join via zoom at tiny.cc/MLK-letter or call **312.626.6799**. Enter meeting ID **874 9214 5751** and passcode **651698** when prompted.

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Continuing to...

- Jan. 2 No service
- Jan. 9 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
- Jan. 16 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
- Jan. 23 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
- Jan. 30 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

- Jan. 2* Rev. BJ Woodworth
- Jan. 9 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
- Jan. 16 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
- Jan. 23 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush
- Jan. 30 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Taizé Prayer Service

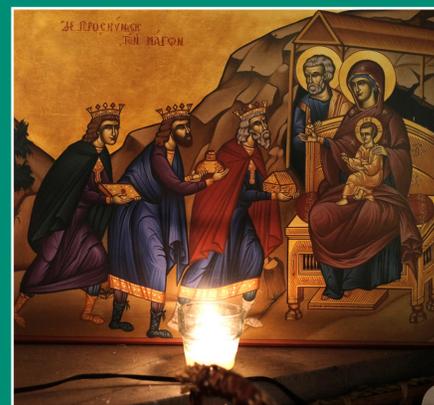
Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Taizé Christmas Music

Please plan on joining us for our Taizé prayer service on **Wed., Jan. 5**, 7 pm, for a celebration of the final day of the Christmas season.

Following our service, we'll have a 30-minute program of Christmas music performed by our Taizé musicians, Kathy Whittaker, piano; Charlie Anderson, flute; and guest Wendy Webb Kumer, flute.



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



Welcome to January 2022! There is so much energy around celebrating the holidays in the month of December that we often forget to extend the same sentiments to its successor, January. Sure, we say “Happy New Year,” but that comment often only has a shelf-life of a few days. Pretty quickly we find ourselves in the gray days of January. Maybe there’s some snow on the ground. But it’s basically back to school and back to work as usual.

The church calendar treats the month of January a bit differently. Early on, there is the day of Epiphany (January 6). This is a time to remember how Jesus was born, not just as the Jewish Messiah, but as the Savior of the world through his revelation (Epiphany) to the foreign magi after his birth. Next comes January 9, the Sunday in which we remember another revelation/epiphany when Jesus was baptized and God’s voice acknowledged him as the beloved Son. Our secular calendars next remind us of the powerful legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a national holiday (January 17) near to the date of his birth. There’s a common theme in these special days built around the promise that God is with us, revealing God’s will and purposes through God’s word, God’s Son, and prophetic voices from God’s modern-day disciples.

What is wonderful about these special January days is that they all speak to how God appears in surprising places right in our very midst. The magi, following a star from afar, arrived quietly in the hushed town of Bethlehem and left by a different route to avoid drawing attention to themselves. The baptism of Jesus did not happen in the busy city of Jerusalem or in the middle of a crowded public square, but along the banks of the Jordan River. And Martin Luther King, Jr. was only a young preacher 25 years old when he accepted the call to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and within a year, would be the leader of the hallmark Civil Rights action, the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

You may not think that amazing things can happen where you are—but aren’t there stars above you every night? Aren’t there rivers flowing not far from where you live? Aren’t the challenges faced in Montgomery still present in Pittsburgh and across America today? And isn’t the same God still revealing God’s will for this world through scripture, prophets old and new, and the risen Savior? Instead of thinking that God is missing from where you are, a January faith resolution would be to look with fresh eyes to see signs of God right here and now in this new year.

Maybe this takes a bit of imagination. That’s okay—human beings have great imaginations! James Joyce could write about Dublin from his desk in Paris. Willa Cather wrote her prairie novels in New York City. Mark Twain wrote Huckleberry Finn while in Hartford, Connecticut. Henri Rousseau was a painter of lush jungles although he spent his life as a French toll collector far from Africa. Your particular location is not a liability if your desire is to faithfully care for the entire world. And in the same way, the God who lovingly cares for the whole world is just as close to you as God is to everyone else. Epiphanies and revelations are happening all around us. Let that good news fill your heart as you hang up your 2022 calendar and turn to this amazing, wonderful first month of the new year!

Randy Bush

Mission Matters

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

Assistance Needed for Refugee Families

Thank you to all of the volunteers who made donations, shopped, set up apartments, and provided transportation for our refugee family from Sudan.

The ELPC Peace Committee also donated \$5,000 to AJAPO for five additional refugee families who recently arrived in Pittsburgh. With that money, we:

- Paid this month's rent,
- Paid for their state identifications, and
- Left a little extra to open bank accounts for each family.

These families truly arrive with nothing. On a recent, last-minute move-in with AJAPO, the worldly possessions of a family of four were a half-dozen suitcases, a few boxes of dishes and foodstuffs, and two old bicycles for the kids. As snow fell from the sky, the dad and son loaded almost all of this into a U-Haul van—in sandals. But try to imagine, if you can, that everyone was just so happy. Each heaving trip up a flight of stairs to a second-story apartment with that crammed, broken luggage was all smiles. It's cliché to say it's all relative, but I suppose it is; \$1,000 for this family is a small fortune in their modest start here in Pittsburgh. It's also cliché to say, "It means the whole world," but when you finally comprehend the scarcity of the moment, you realize it truly does. Thank you again.

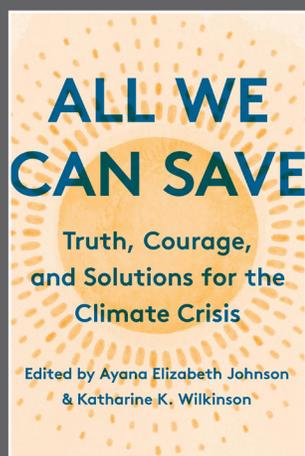
Donation Opportunities

ELPC is continuing to collect donations in support of its missions. We're in need of:

- **Furniture:** If you'd like to donate furniture, please call Sister Florence at **412.552.8837** to schedule a pickup, Monday–Friday, after 12 pm. Or, if you're able to drop off the furniture, you may do so on **Fri., Jan. 14**, in Brentwood.
- **Cash:** If you're able to make a monetary donation, you may do so at **ELPC.church/donate**. Include a note saying that the donation is for "Mission Board Refugee Assistance."

For more information, contact Eric Jester at Eric@new-burgh.com.

A New Take on Climate Change



The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee is reading a new book, titled *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*, edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson. This diverse collection of essays and a few poems are written by female activists, scientists, artists, architects, policymakers, and thinkers of various ages.

We invite you to read some or all of the book, and to join us to talk about your favorite parts on **Thurs., Feb. 10**, 7 pm, via Zoom. For more details or to RSVP, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.



Climate Change and the Green New Deal

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee invites you to a panel discussion on Climate Change and the Green New Deal following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Feb. 13**. Together, we will examine the issue of climate change, its implications for racial and economic justice, and how we can combat it by building a mass movement for a Green New Deal. Panelists include:



Patricia DeMarco, Ph.D.



Claire Cohen, M.D.



Helen Gerhardt

Join us in the Social Hall or via Zoom. Light refreshments will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.

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.

Children and Youth Classes

Parents, please see page 1 for information on classes for children and youth.

Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”—Hosea 6:6

This month’s readings include challenging texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran), the Prophet Hosea, Paul’s letter to the Galatians, and Q Sayings (from the gospels of Luke and Matthew).

Jan. 9: Psalm 151 (11QPs from Cave 11); Hosea 2:1–23; Galatians; Luke (Q)10:22–24 (Knowing God through Jesus, the Beatitude for the Eyes that See)

Jan. 16: Deliverance Psalm (11QPs); Hosea 3:1–4:6; Galatians 6:11–18; Luke (Q) 11:2b–4, 9–13 (The Lord’s Prayer, the Certainty of Answer to Prayer)

Jan. 23: Incantation (11QPs); Hosea 6:1–11; Galatians review; Luke (Q) 11:14–26 (Refuting the Beelzebul Accusation, The One Not With Me, The Return of the Unclean Spirit)

Parenting Circle

Facilitator: Trish Buben

January: *The Sandbox Revolution*

We will continue discussing *The Sandbox Revolution: Raising Kids for a Just World*. 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

January: *No Other Gods*

We will conclude our discussion of *No Other Gods: The Politics of the Ten Commandments*, by Ana Levy-Lyons. New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at hajdu625@comcast.net.

Jan. 9: Ninth Commandment

Jan. 16: Tenth Commandment

Jan. 23: Review of *No Other Gods* and Preview of Our Next Book

Seekers

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

Jan. 9: Razia Jan and Educating Girls in Afghanistan

Born in Afghanistan, Razia Jan moved to the U.S. in 1970. Following the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Razia worked as a humanitarian and received many awards, including being recognized as a 2012 CNN Top 10 Hero award recipient. After returning to her native Afghanistan, she founded the Zabuli Education Center, a private, K–12 school for girls in the outskirts of Kabul Province. Today, she is educating girls in the midst of the Taliban, meeting with them, and helping them see the importance of education.

We will watch a video of her and her work, as well as a video in which she addresses the current situation in Afghanistan with the Taliban.

Jan. 16 & 23: Religious Questions with Scholar Elaine Pagels

Over the next two weeks, we’ll hear from Elaine Pagels, an author, historian, and professor of Religion at Princeton University. She also is highly regarded for her extensive research into early Christianity and Gnosticism.

Jan. 16: *Why Religion?: A Personal Story* by Elaine Pagels

In her recent book, *Why Religion? A Personal Story*, Elaine Pagels speaks of creating meaning and dealing with guilt from the loss of her son and husband. We’ll watch a video of her discussing the book and have time for discussion.

Jan. 23: *The Origin of Satan* by Elaine Pagels

We’ll watch a video of Elaine Pagels giving a dramatic interpretation of Satan from her book, *The Origin of Satan*, on his role in the Christian tradition and how it led to anti-Semitism in the Christian church.

We’ll also hear Pagels draw from her knowledge of the Gnostic Gospels to suggest that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was Christ. The serpent said, “the day that you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be opened and you will know the difference between good and evil.”

Combined Adult Class on January 30

The Facing Systemic Racism Committee and the Faith Formation Board invite all adult Church School students to a combined class on **Sun., Jan. 30**, for a discussion of the *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. More details can be found on page 1.

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

Sun., Jan. 23: Snow Tubing at Boyce Park 1–3 pm



Youth in grades 6–12 are going snow tubing at Boyce Park! Students traveling in the church van are required to be vaccinated, but all students are welcome to participate in snow tubing. Those going in the van will meet at ELPC at noon in the Harambe Room for lunch before leaving. We will return to the church for pick up at 3:30 pm. RSVP to Sara Hackett by **Sun., Jan. 16**.

club one sixteen resumes Wednesday, January 12

Our regular schedule resumes on **Wed., Jan. 12**, 4:30–6 pm. All kids in grade 1 and up are welcome! To register a child (or update a registration), please visit ELPC.church.

Students in grades 7–12 will explore our theme, **get through it**. Using biblical stories, activities, and prayer, students will learn about perseverance, resilience, and hope through the lens of our faith.

Fulfillment and Appreciation



After leaving the Young Adult Ministry (YAM) Coordinator position in February 2020, I was more than honored to come back to help out during the pandemic. We definitely spent unique times together on Zoom, delivering kits of all kinds, and then gradually meeting in person.

Last month, we were able to attend Kennywood to see the Christmas lights, just like we did in 2019. Although we may never be back to where we were, we are all continuing to create community in this new normal.

Part of the new normal will be a new YAM Coordinator. I know that the spirit of the young adult community will welcome this person, and together, the ministry will keep fulfilling lives during this unique time of our 20s and 30s.

My time as the YAM Coordinator—twice—has been a gift. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

—Kelli Booher

Nursery News

ELPC leadership continues to monitor the level of local COVID-19 transmission and vaccination rates as we discern when we can most safely open our Nursery. Our hope is to have it available this spring.

Beginning in January, families are welcome to accompany their child (birth–age 2) to the Nursery to watch a livestream of our Sanctuary worship service on Sundays, 11 am.

For details, contact Pastor Heather.

Ministry to Our Youngest Children

We know that the past 22 months have been difficult for EVERYONE—and especially challenging for families with children, particularly those who are too young to be vaccinated.

Efforts to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 have made it difficult for us to be together and for our kids to make their first friends at church.

As we begin 2022, we want to find some intentional ways for parents and caregivers of young children and the kids they love to form meaningful connections within our church family.



Please join Pastor Heather in the Nursery during Church School on **Sun., Jan. 9**, 10–10:45 am, to talk about how we can support you and your family—and hopefully meet other families too! If you're not comfortable coming into the church, this session will be available on Zoom as well.

For more details and to RSVP, contact Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net.

Attend Our LGBTQ Ministry's Next Spiritual Gathering

All LGBTQIA+ folks and allies are welcome to attend our LGBTQ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Jan. 16.**

Join us in person or via Zoom. For more details, please contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x118.**



**God Created You.
God Loves You.
Be Yourself.**

Taizé Podcast Now Available

ELPC is now offering a weekly Taizé podcast. These 15-minute recordings offer a brief time of centering, music, a meditation, and a closing prayer.

Links to download or listen to the recordings can be found online at ELPC.church or in the *This Week in Worship* email news flash each Friday.

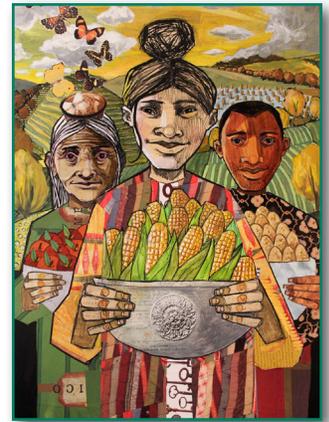
So, whether you are on a walk, in your car, eating lunch, unloading the dishwasher, folding laundry, or lying down for bed, we hope it will help create space for you to rest and connect with God and the depths of your own soul.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: What My Grandmothers Taught Me
Mon., Jan. 3 7–8:30 pm | Tues., Jan. 4 10 am–12 pm

The most vivid picture of “redemption” in the Bible may well be in Ruth, chapters 3 and 4. As near kin, Boaz reminds us that redemption is connected to relationship, working for the good of all. Ruth, as an outsider, reminds us that redemption extends beyond the family, even to traditional enemies.

Join us for our lesson, *Ruth and Redemption*. 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

Upcoming Spiritual Life Events

What are your hopes and dreams for your own spiritual life as you gaze toward 2022? Where is “spirit” welling up in your spirit? We need space, conditions, and intentions to progress along our spiritual journeys.

Theologian Henri Nouwen said that in the spiritual life, the word “discipline” means: “The effort to create some space in which God can act.” Similarly, author and spiritual director Ruth Hailey Barton says, “The soul-full (person) is faithful to the one thing she can do—create the conditions that set us up for an encounter with God in the places where we need it most.”

What spaces and conditions are you longing for and needing to set up an encounter with God? Here’s a preview of upcoming opportunities being offered by the ELPC Spiritual Life Committee:

■ **Sat., Jan. 29: Yoga Retreat 9 am–5 pm**

Start 2022 with a journey within at the first-ever Yoga Retreat at ELPC with Yamuna Morgenstern and Katrina Woodworth! We will begin the day with yoga, followed by moments for movement, reflection, meditation, and lunch. We also hope to offer the experience of “kirtan” (sacred call and response chanting in Sanskrit) and the labyrinth. We will end the day with a restorative yoga class to send you on your way with a divine sense of renewal. Join us regardless of your experience level. It promises to be a day for self-care!

Register by **Sun., Jan. 23**, with Norma Meyer at Norma@coh.net. The suggested donation is \$35–\$60 (includes lunch).

■ **Sat., Feb. 26: Forest Bathing time and location TBD**

Sandi Miller, trained guide and friend of ELPC, will guide us through a 60-minute practice of forest bathing. Through a series of guided invitations, we will slow down, awaken our senses, and nurture our relationship with nature.

■ **Fri.–Sun., March 18–20: Lenten Silent Retreat**

Join us at St. Emma’s Monastery in Greensburg for a weekend retreat in the middle of Lent, to rest, listen, be quiet, and be still in community with one another. More details are forthcoming, but mark your calendars now!

Reflections from Our Adventus Retreat

In December, 25 of us gathered on Zoom and a few at Crestfield Camp to ponder the gift of the luminous darkness of waiting, hoping, in the silence and solitude of the womb of Advent. Here are some reflections from retreatants.

"The 2020 Advent Retreat was a transformative experience for me in the bleak, cold winter of the pandemic. So, when another Advent Retreat was offered this year, I didn't hesitate to register. The chance to share the silence and liturgy, the mystery and meaning, and the light—as well as the God-filled darkness—of the season with a community of fellow travelers in faith was incredible. I am thankful for all who participated and the space and time that was provided for deep reflection and rejuvenation."

—Carol Mullen



*I rest beneath the still darkness.
I rest—beneath the still darkness.
Beneath the still darkness, I rest.
Within the still darkness, I rest.
Surrounded by, immersed in, the still darkness,
I rest.*

*In the still darkness, there is God.
Beneath, within, surrounded by the still darkness,
I find God.*

*Be still, and know that I am God.
In the still darkness, I am still. I rest.*

Rest. Breathe. Be still.

—Susan Wadsworth Booth

"The Advent Retreat was calming, and I appreciated being able to have choices about how to use my time. I liked the way it was organized; we had a plan and different things were included, like readings and questions to think about—even music and art."

—Coleman Lane

"The virtual Advent Retreat was healing food for the soul. It was a nice balance of on- and off-screen time with rich and thought-provoking readings to discuss, meditate on, and journal about. Even though it was virtual, I really felt as though I was on retreat and connected with my fellow retreat participants the whole time. I was alone in a room at home, but it felt like we were holding hands and walking side by side, gently supporting one another on our individual Advent journeys."

—Jessica Giannotta

*Walk in the Dark,
Luminous Dark
Walk in the shadows and treasure the night.
God's all around us, with all of his might
Sending Jesus, his gift to the world.*

—Linda S. Lane



ELPC People

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

Good News

Congratulations to ELPC member **Ashleigh Parker** who earned her Doctorate in Behavioral Health from Arizona State University in December.

Thanks

■ Thank you to all the ELPC members and friends who contributed more than \$3,000 to the Presbyterian Women Thank Offering. Your generosity will help fund real solutions in the areas of health, education, economic development, and the needs of women and children. May our gifts witness to promise of God's reign.

—Presbyterian Women

■ God gave the only begotten son. And the true meaning of Christmas is to give. Gift giving not only denotes our love for one another, it reflects God's love for each of us.

The ELPC Board of Deacons gives thanks for—and to—all the ELPC members and friends who supported the 2021 Christmas Giving Tree ministry. As a result of your generosity, **125 children and youth** received a gift and a \$25 gift card to help them celebrate the Christmas and holiday season. This vital community ministry is a success, because of you. Thank you.

—ELPC Board of Deacons

Prayers

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

- Todd Hoffman's father, Robert Hoffman
- Sharla Yates' grandmother, Phyllis Smith
- Polly McQueen's brother, Clay McQueen
- Steve Evrard's sister, Ann Wolbert
- Larry White's grandfather

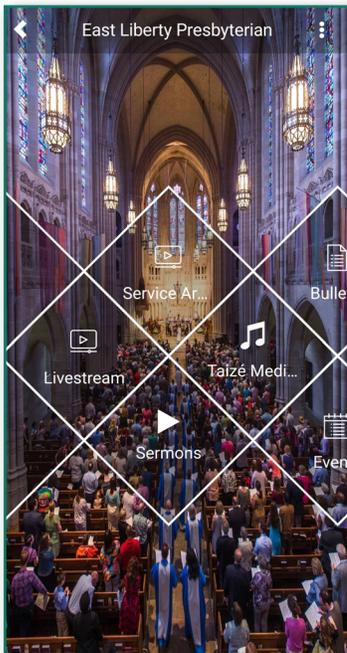
“...inviting all to join our diverse, inclusive family of faith, transcending boundaries of race, class, ability, culture, age, gender and sexual identity to become one in Christ.”

ELPC Building Updates

The ELPC building will be closed on **New Year's Day, Sat., Jan. 1**, and on **Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Mon., Jan. 17**.

ELPC is Launching an App

As we enter into a new year and return to semi-normal life and church programming, we're launching a mobile app to serve as a hub for all ELPC-related news, events, and digital offerings.



On the app, you'll be able to stream live and archived worship services and concerts, watch sermons, listen to our Taizé podcast, download bulletins, browse events, connect with our social media pages, read up-to-date news, and more.

The app will be available to download for free through the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store.

ELPC by the Numbers in 2021

32

new members and friends joined our faith family.

1,090

toiletry items were donated in support of people housed at Allegheny County Jail.

25,000

diapers and wipes were donated in support of the Presbyterian Women Diaper Drive, in addition to \$1,655 for more supplies.

750 lbs

of food were donated to EECM to support our food insecure neighbors.

125

children received a Christmas gift and a gift card through the Board of Deacons' Giving Tree Ministry.

The Board of Deacons assisted

79

families with their Thanksgiving meal.

15

baptisms were celebrated (13 children and 2 adults).

2,000

pairs of socks were donated in support of our MLK Day of Service Sock Collection.