

## Worshiping with Our Neighbors at Eastminster Presbyterian Church

Periodically over the past two years, the ELPC pastoral staff has gathered virtually with our colleagues from further down Highland Avenue at Eastminster Presbyterian Church. Although there are many connections between our two churches related to community mission and outreach programs, there has not been much fellowship—and it was decided the time was ripe to remedy this omission.



On **Sun., Feb. 13**, the first in a series of annual joint services is being planned. The worship service will combine the music leaders and choirs of our two churches, and utilize liturgists from both congregations. As a "pulpit swap," the Rev. Aaron Teter, newly installed co-pastor of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, will present the message.

The needs of East Liberty are too great for two significant faith communities, like Eastminster and ELPC, not to work together for the glory of God.

This joint service is planned to be a hybrid event with both in-person and livestream options for participation. Through our shared prayers, joyful songs of praise, and time of Christian fellowship, may we offer a common witness of Christian hope for these troubled times. Please plan to join us for this special Sunday service.

## **Congregational Meeting this Month**

The past two years have been quite challenging for all churches, including ours. By God's grace, we are fortunate to have navigated the pandemic and social justice crises with strength, patience, and fortitude.

On **Sun., Feb. 27**, 12:45 pm, we will convene for our annual Congregational Meeting. This is a time to reflect on the past year, receive reports and budget information, and elect officers to serve on our governing councils. It also is a time to consider the ways in which God is at work in our congregation's programmatic, educational, mission-oriented, and worship lives.

Arrangement are being made for a hybrid event. You are invited to attend the meeting in the Social Hall or on Zoom. Contact Megan Leisher at **MeganL@coh.net** or **412.441.3800 x122** for the Zoom details.

### **Sunday Services**

\*Celebration of the Lord's Supper

### Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Life WorkFeb. 6\*Rev. Dr. Randy BushFeb. 13Kathryn OphardtFeb. 20Rev. Heather SchoenewolfFeb. 27Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

#### Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Feb. 6\*Rev. Dr. Randy BushFeb. 13Rev. Aaron Teter

- Feb. 20 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
- Feb. 27 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

### **Taizé Prayer Service**

Wednesdays | 7 pm Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Taizé Podcast Now Available

If you are unable to come to our Taizé services in person, stream or download a 15-minute contemplative recording each week. Each podcast includes a brief time of centering, music, a meditation, and a closing prayer.

You can find a link to listen to the recordings at **ELPC.church**, in our *This Week in Worship* email news flash each Friday, or in our new app (see details on page 7).

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.

Thank you to our musicians (Jennifer, Kathy, Billy, Brother James, Charlie, Gerard, and Chris) and everyone else who helps create this sacred space (Katelyn, Kay, Wayne and John).

#### **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 and Minister of Taizé Prayer BJW@coh.net | x141

> > Kathryn Ophardt Seminary Intern kophardt@pts.edu

#### Linda Addlespurger

Director of Hope Academy HopeAcademyArts@gmail.com | x112

> **Debbie Banton** Facility Administrator DebbieB@coh.net | x131

#### Wil Forrest

Director of Church Operations, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry Wil@coh.net | x118

#### Sara Hackett

Coordinator of Christian Education and Youth Ministry SaraH@coh.net | x120

> Allen Miller Lead Engineer

**Dr. Edward Alan Moore** *Music Director and Organist* EdM@coh.net | x124

Rachelle Calfee RachelleC@coh.net | x134

Megan Leisher MeganL@coh.net | x122

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**Venetia Singletary** VenetiaS@coh.net | x116

## **Pastoral Message**

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



"I just can't make up my mind!" How often have you said those words or heard someone else say them to you? Difficult decisions can be small or large. It may involve picking an entrée from a restaurant menu, choosing a blouse or shirt from a store sales rack, or selecting two flavors for a double-dip ice cream cone. Or it may involve decisions about buying a new house, making the move to a new job, or saying "yes" to a marriage proposal. Some people are good at making quick decisions, even though their impetuousness may cause problems down the road. Others take forever to make up their mind, which means their over-cautiousness may result in missed opportunities.

If we have learned anything from the past two years of "Covid-reality," there is no perfect formula for making decisions. Sometimes you decide based on the best information available; other times you go with your "gut instincts." Researchers have documented that most people think they are using rational information to make up their minds, but that is not usually the case. Most people use some version of what is called "moral judgment." Moral judgments arise when we trust our emotions more than our brains. We consider a situation, not so much in terms of what is true or false, but rather in terms of what is good or bad, just or unjust. And usually we go a step further and ask, "Is it good or bad for me? Is it just or unjust for me?" Once we answer those questions, then our brains kick in and provide rationales for our decision. We decide in our guts and then use our brains to rationalize the decision.

We have seen this played out in the national debate about vaccinations against Covid, as well as in discussions around other controversial topics. We tell ourselves that if people simply hear the evidence, they will be convinced and get their shots. But disagreements around vaccines or gun control or climate change or critical race theory are seldom resolved by rational debate. They are emotional issues that cannot be "reasoned" away.

Fortunately, we have another resource available to us. Into the tension between emotional and rational approaches to decision-making, we are called to include a spiritual perspective. In the debate between what our head says and what our gut feels, we should include our heart and soul. In making any big decision, we should seek guidance from our faith, from scripture and the example of Christ. Instead of only asking "What is right?" or "What is right for me?" we should also ask "What is right according to God's plan and desires for the world?" Invariably, the spiritual approach slows down our decision-making, calls us to quiet reflection and prayer, and opens us up to options beyond what is right before our eyes. It can be humbling ("This decision is not just about me.") as well as affirming ("God loves me and wants what is best for me and others.").

As we move past the two-year anniversary of the pandemic and move into another season of Lent, look at how you make your decisions. Let your spirit join the conversation between your gut and your brain, and with prayer and thanksgiving, may your every decision going forward be faithful and true.

Randy Bush

# **Mission Matters**

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

**Sun., Feb. 6: Foundation of HOPE | Adult Diversion** 12:30–1:30 pm As a Matthew 25 congregation, ELPC is committed to supporting justice efforts in our community related to human safety and dignity. To learn more about some of these efforts, the Justice Committee invites you to a presentation on the Foundation of HOPE's Adult Diversion Program in Allegheny County following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Feb. 6**.

The HOPE Adult Diversion Program equips law enforcement with intervention approaches that are designed to redirect adults who are involved in low-level



offenses into the program and away from a criminal record, prosecution, and incarceration. Services include mental health support, substance use treatment and harm reduction support, medical treatment, housing, food assistance, and more.

We will be joined by Mica Williams, who serves as the director of the HOPE Adult Diversion Program. Mica will discuss their work in the community and opportunities for involvement by ELPC members.

Join us in person or over Zoom. Light snacks will be provided.

### Sessions on the Letter from the Birmingham Jail

In January, the Facing Systemic Racism Committee, Faith Formation Board, and Pastor Randy collaborated to present an introduction to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. If you were unable to participate, a video of the presentation is available by contacting Pastor Patrice.

The letter was written by Rev. Dr. King after he was arrested in Birmingham for violating Alabama's law against mass public demonstrations. The *Letter from Birmingham Jail* was Dr. King's response to eight white clergy, who criticized the movement led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in early 1963, which sought to bring national attention to the efforts of local black leaders



to desegregate public facilities in Birmingham, Alabama. The criticism from the white clergy was published in *The Birmingham News* and characterized the direct action strategy of the campaign as "unwise and untimely" and appealed "to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense." ("White Clergymen Urge Local Negroes to Withdraw from Demonstrations," Birmingham News, 13 April 1963.)

Rev. Dr. King's letter has important implications for us today, as people of God. Therefore, additional sessions and opportunities to discuss the *Letter from Birmingham Jail* will be scheduled for this spring. Contact Pastor Patrice for a copy of Rev. Dr. King's letter or visit **KingInstitute.Stanford.edu**.

We look forward to coming together to discuss this important communication from Dr. King. For additional information or to help plan these events, contact Michele Bossers at **michele2285@gmail.com**.

### **Session News**

At its recent meeting, the Session:

- Finalized the 2022 ELPC budget,
- Updated our COVID "Safer use guidelines,"
- Noted the hiring of Tina Lynch as a part-time HR Generalist,
- Called for the Congregational Meeting on Sun., Feb. 27, and
- Updated membership rolls and approved 2022 communion dates.

## The Refillery is Open

Good news! The Refillery, a zero-waste store, is now open for business in Squirrel Hill!

How does it work? You bring (or buy) empty containers to re-use and re-fill at the store with personal care products (soaps, lotions, shampoo, etc.) and home essentials (laundry detergent, dish soap, green cleaning products). You choose the amount you want and then pay by weight or volume. Result? You enjoy good-forthe-environment, local goods with zero waste!

Shop in person (1931 Murray Ave., 15217) or at **TheRefilleryPgh.com**. They deliver!



# **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**

Classes for youth in grades 6–12 will meet weekly. Check our website, news flashes, or with Ms. Sara to see if we will meet in person or over Zoom.

### Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

"I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love."—Hosea 11:4

We continue reading texts from the Prophet Hosea, the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran), and Q Sayings (from Luke and Matthew gospels). We also begin reading the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans.

**Feb. 6:** Hosea 7:3–12; Community Rule (1QS 1.1–1); Romans 1:1–17; Luke (Q)11:16, 27–32 (*Hearing and Keeping God's Word, The Sign of Jonah for This Generation, Something More Than Solomon and Jonah*)

**Feb. 13:** Hosea 8:1–14; Community Rule (1QS 3.13–21); Romans 1:18-2:16; Luke (Q) 11:33-35 (*The Light on the Lampstand, The Jaundiced Eye Darkens the Body's Light*)

**Feb. 20:** Hosea 2:1–23; Community Rule (1QS 8.1–16); Romans 2:17–3:20; Luke (Q) 11:39–51 (*Woes against the Pharisees, Woes against the Exegetes of the Law, Wisdom's Judgment on This Generation*)

**Feb. 27:** Hosea 10:13–11:11; Community Rule (1QS 9.3–11,12–17); Romans 3:21–4:12; Luke (Q) 12: 2–7 (*Proclaiming What Was Whispered, Not Fearing the Body's Death, More Precious Than Many Sparrows*)

### **Parenting Circle**

Facilitator: Trish Buben

#### February: 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

#### February: Wholehearted Faith

We will be discussing our next book, *Wholehearted Faith*, by the late Rachel Held Evans and her friend Jeff Chu. New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at **hajdu625@comcast.net**.

### Seekers

#### Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

# Feb. 6: From Africa to the Americas: Kongo-American Graves and African Diaspora Cultures

During the era of the transatlantic slave trade, the over 12.5 million enslaved Africans who were brought to the Americas also brought their beliefs, cultures, and religions with them. What elements of African cultures can we still find here in the Americas? This lecture looks at the cultural impact of Africans on the U.S., including language, food, and other practices, with a special focus on Kongo-American grave decorating practices in the U.S. South.

Presented by Dr. Yolanda Covington-Ward, chair and associate professor, Department of Africana Studies, University of Pittsburgh.

#### Feb. 13: What Really is Critical Race Theory?

Leigh Patel, professor of education foundations and affiliate faculty of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, will highlight some of the key principles of critical race theory, and how and why it has become a terrain for power struggles. She also will show how, without critical race theory, we would have fewer tools to make sense of these power struggles.

#### Feb. 20: The Divided Mind of the Black Church

We will watch a lecture by Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock, senior pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, which was the spiritual home of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the video, Rev. Dr. Warnock discusses the history and development of the Black church in the U.S., and how it differentiated itself from the white Christian church. He makes references to Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Rev. Howard Thurman, and Rev. Dr. King.

#### Feb. 27: Howard Thurman and Practices of Spirituality of Liberation

Rev. Dr. Asa Lee, president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and professor of Theological Formation for Ministry, will explore the teachings and practices of Rev. Howard Thurman in his book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. This pivotal text offers a working theology of liberation that went on to inspire Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the transformative work of civil rights in the 1960s.

## Should I Come to Church or Stay Home?

The landscape of life during this season of COVID continues to change! New variants of the virus continue to emerge, and CDC guidelines have shifted. This leaves many of us wondering if we should come to worship and learn in person, or engage in ministry remotely. While each person has different needs, risk factors, and hopes, we invite you to ask yourselves these questions prior to coming to any in-person gatherings at ELPC.

- Do you have any COVID symptoms? (cough, fever, shortness of breath, congestion, nausea, loss of taste or smell...)
- Have you been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID in the last five days?
- Have you tested positive for COVID in the last five days?
- Did you test positive for COVID more than five days ago, and still have symptoms?
- Has a member of your household tested positive for COVID within the last 10 days? (Remember, your "countdown" for quarantine starts at the end of their infectious period, not the beginning.)



If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, please stay home and join us remotely! This is one way we can all care for one another.

If you do not have access to the technology that would enable you to participate remotely, please call Megan Leisher at **412.441.3800 x122** and we will help you stay connected!

## Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests Available

Residential households in the U.S. can order free at-home tests from USPS.com.

## Ministry to Children and Youth

ELPC has been eager to resume in-person ministries to children and youth of all ages. However, given the highly infectious nature of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, plans to gather in the new year have been paused.

The production deadline for *Reaching Out* is several weeks before it hits your mailboxes, so the most current information about ministries to children and youth will be found in our weekly email news flashes and at **ELPC.church**.



Pastor Heather and Ms. Sara also will be sending personal emails to families at ELPC. If you are interested in receiving these notices, contact Megan Leisher at **MeganL@coh.net** to be added to the mailing list.

We are sorry for any inconvenience, but are grateful for the many ways we are able to connect together until we can safely gather in person again!

## Nursery News

The ELPC Nursery is open to families with little ones who may need to move around during worship. Services are being livestreamed in the space.

Since children under 2 cannot wear masks, please stay home if you or your child is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID or has come into contact with someone who has tested positive in the last 10 days.

For details, contact Pastor Heather.

## club one sixteen

Youth in grades 7–12 are meeting each Wednesday to continue exploring 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.

Plans may change, so contact Ms. Sara for information on whether we are meeting in person (4:30–6 pm) or via Zoom (5–6 pm).

We look forward to gathering again with children in grades 1–6 as soon as we are able to gather in person. Visit **ELPC.church** for updates.



### Taizé: A Personal Reflection and Invitation

By the Rev. BJ Woodworth

Taizé sung prayer creates space for people to learn and practice the prayer of the heart. Many of the desert fathers and mothers, along with thinkers and mystics in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, have described prayer as bringing our thinking down into our heart. In particular, through the rhythmical repetition of words, sung or spoken, it focuses us in our heart-the center of our spiritual lives. As Richard Rohr has accurately described, "chants and repetitive prayers are, in fact, a technology to help you stop thinking!"

I experience this personally and experientially. As I am go about my everyday activities—washing dishes, typing an email, folding laundry, or walking to work—a sung prayer might emerge in my inner being. It happens quite naturally, and yet unknowingly. Suddenly, I am singing, "Give peace to every heart, give peace, give peace..." or "Bless the Lord my soul." Sung prayer practiced over time, at Taizé, is becoming the prayer of my heart. Prayer is becoming, as Frederica Mathewes-Green says "effortless and spontaneous...that emanates from the core of your being, your heart. You discover that the Holy Spirit has been there, praying, all along. Then heart and soul, body and mind, memory and will, the very breath of life itself, everything that you have, and are, united in gratitude and joy, tuned like a violin string to [God]."

I often hear people say they wished they prayed more. Come to Taizé on Wednesdays, 7 pm, and experience a quiet, unhurried, contemplative, safe space to be still, rest, be refreshed, sing, and pray. And during the week, you just might find prayer bubbling up from within like a dearly loved melody.

# **Presbyterian Women**

#### PW Bible Study: What My Grandmothers Taught Me

**Tues., Feb. 1** 10 am–12 pm | **Mon., Feb. 7** 7–8:30 pm We know very little about Bathsheba. She is not named in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. Instead, as the "wife of Uriah," Bathsheba is defined by her relationship to a man. At first, it appears that she is silent and powerless, but when she steps onto the stage she finds her voice and exhibits an ability to influence kings. Bathsheba's story illustrates the corrupting influence of power as well as the support she, as a queen, can provide for her son's reign.



Join us for our lesson, *Bathsheba* (2 Samuel 11–12, 1 Kings 1:11–31, 1 Kings 2:13–25). 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

Sat., Feb. 26: Forest Bathing 11 am-12 pm

What is forest bathing? Well, it is not a nature walk or a fitness hike. It is a 60-minute, guided visit into the natural world, where we will slow down, awaken our senses, and nurture our relationship with nature. Through a series of invitations, we will find our own ways of connecting with nature as we relax into being present with the sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes of the woods. There's no rush and there's no right or wrong way to do it.



Join us in ELPC's Courtyard to explore the hidden beauty found within the space's architecture, plants, trees, and flowers—even amidst winter. We will have a fire for warming as we slowly reflect on the beauty of the natural world. We will sit a lot and move slowly, so dress appropriately and consider bringing a blanket.

RSVP to Pastor BJ by BJ Woodworth, by Wed., Feb. 23.

#### 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!



# **LGBTQ** Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

#### Sun., Feb. 20: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm

All LGBTQIA+ folks and allies are welcome to attend our LGBTQ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering to share food and fellowship. This month, we will meet online via Zoom (and maybe in person at the church). For more details, contact Wil Forrest at **Wil@coh.net** or **412.441.3800 x118**.



God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

Track List

(Taizé Meditation) September 20, 2021
(Taizé Meditation) September 27, 2021
(Taizé Meditation) November 3, 2021
(Taizé Meditation) November 10, 2021

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## **ELPC** People

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

#### **Good News**

Join us in welcoming our new members and friends: Mary Barr, Matt Battifarano & Meghan Bogema, Bethany Jean Bray & Tyler Bray, Anthony Brown, Lonnie Carey, Charles Davis, Heather Eng, Rebecca McGregor, and Emily Smerdell.

#### Thanks

Thank you, ELPC, for providing space and gifts for participants in Casa San José's English Second Language classes last fall. Participants who attended more than 70% of the 22 classes received certificates at a celebration in December.

—Casa San José

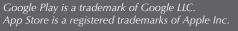
## Download Our New App

ELPC recently published a mobile app to serve as a hub for all ELPC-related news, events, and digital offerings. On the app, you can 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 is available for free on Google Play<sup>™</sup> and on the App Store<sup>®</sup>. Search for "East Liberty Presbyterian."







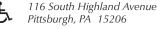


#### **Prayers**

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

- Gretchen Lewis
- Patrick Panebianco
- Hugh Vander Veer
- Dawn and Juliette Young on the passing of Garland McAdoo
- Alissa Panichella on the passing of her Uncle Tom





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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."

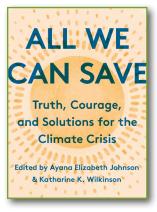
### **ELPC Building Updates**

The ELPC building will be closed on Presidents' Day, Mon., Feb. 21.

## **Church Tours Resume**

We are pleased to resume offering tours of ELPC! Join us to explore the Trinity Chapel on Sun., Feb. 6, and learn about the architecture of our Gothic Sanctuary and Romanesque Chapel on **Sun., Feb. 20**. Meet at the Highland Avenue entrance following Sanctuary worship.

## All We Can Save Book Discussion



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 Avana 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 it, and join us to talk about your favorite parts on Thurs., Feb. 10, 7 pm, via Zoom. For more details or to RSVP, please 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. 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 be provided about actions you can take.

Panelists include Patricia DeMarco, Ph.D.; Claire Cohen, M.D.; and Helen Gerhardt (pictured left to right).







Join us in person in the Social Hall or online at tiny.cc/green-new-deal. You also may call in by dialing 646.558.8656 and entering meeting ID 827 3760 9292 and passcode 755590 when prompted.