

Holy Week and Easter Services

Join us during Holy Week as we complete our Lenten journey, recalling the darkness and light of this church season.



Wed., April 13: Taizé Stations of the Cross

7 pm | Led by Pastor BJ

Thurs., April 14: Maundy Thursday (Communion)

7 pm | Led by Pastor Heather

Fri., April 15: Good Friday

7 pm | Led by Pastor Randy

Sat., April 16: Easter Vigil

7 pm | Led by Pastor BJ and Pastor Randy

Sun., April 17: Easter Sunday

8:45 am | Led by Pastor Patrice
11 am | Led by Pastor Randy

Are We a Social Club or Justice Seekers?

In his prophetic *Letter From Birmingham Jail*, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., expressed frustration with white moderates, including clergy who were critical of civil rights efforts. King likened their complacency to the outright hostility of white supremacists, writing, “Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” King asserted that the white church needed to take a principled stand or risk being “dismissed as an irrelevant social club.”

How and where does that same complacency and belief in “all things being done decently and in order” (a Biblical reference in chapter 8 of the PC(USA) *Book of Order*) resonate in the church today? When/how/why should we step out of our traditional white culture comfort zones to assure that we are indeed living out being a Matthew 25 church? What should we physically, culturally, and financially divest from in order to invest in a future that fully embraces all of our siblings who enter our building, those who are in our neighborhood and throughout our denomination? Those are big questions that demand our attention and our discernment.

Our very future is at stake. Let us continue the conversation on Zoom on **Sat., April 9**, 6 pm, with the third and final deep dive into King’s letter. We will be led by the Rev. Paul Roberts, co-pastor of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, and members of the ELPC Facing Systemic Racism Committee.

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord’s Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Body of Christ

April 3* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

April 10 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

April 17 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

April 24 Kathryn Ophardt

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

April 3* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

April 10 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

April 17 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

April 24 Kathryn Ophardt

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Pastor Randy to Guest Preach at St. James AME

Consider supporting an ecumenical worship service on **Good Friday**, April 15, 12–3 pm, at St. James AME Church (444 Lincoln Ave., 15206).

Pastor Randy will preach on the sixth word Jesus spoke from the cross, “It is finished,” during their special “Seven Last Words” service.

“When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”—
John 19:30

Join us for Worship on Marathon Sunday

With the return of the in-person Pittsburgh Marathon, ELPC will be offering a virtual worship service on **Sun., May 1**.

Please join our faith family on YouTube or Facebook for a worship service led by Pastor Randy.

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

Norma Meyer

Norma@coh.net | x111

Venetia Singletary

VenetiaS@coh.net | x116

Pastoral Message

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



A writer recently paraphrased Susan Sontag and said that “biography is the revenge of research upon the intellect.” What she meant is that biography takes a lived life—a human existence full of events both mundane and extraordinary—and turns it into “the life,” something described as a “coffin full of rattling facts and spectral suppositions, less an invitation to read than a handy, bulky excuse not to.”

Think of how many biographies line the shelves at libraries and bookstores; these weighty tomes that celebrate lives past, but do so in dense packages that few read any more. They are like “coffins full of rattling facts,” telling one version of a person’s history, but leaving so much unsaid and largely forgotten.

This imagery is something that has strong overtones to our Holy Week and Easter season. Jesus himself challenged the scribes and Pharisees of his day by calling them “white-washed sepulchres” full of the bones of the dead (Matthew 23:27). And from Good Friday through Easter Sunday, our focus is on a hilltop for crucifixions, as well as a cemetery of literal tombs, coffins, and rattling bones. We are never fully at ease exploring cemeteries, and this is evident when we overly intellectualize the last days of Jesus’ earthly life. We turn the richness of his life and ministry into something abstract and theological. We talk about ancient prophecies that had to be fulfilled and a Savior whose death was ordained as a payment for our sins, but we risk losing the human being that Jesus was.

We should never turn Jesus into a biographical subject—allowing research and theory to diminish the wonder of his lived life. Instead, our faith would have us fill in the blanks in Jesus’ gospel biographies. Faith would have us imagine times when Jesus laughed and smiled, when he listened intently or kept walking down a road even when physically exhausted. Faith would never let Jesus be a figure of “rattling facts or spectral suppositions.” He was a complex, amazing person whose life, healing graces, and sacrificial death far exceeds our ability to reduce him to a simple biography.

In the same way, the Jesus of Good Friday merges with the Christ of Easter to forever chase away the shadows of a bone-filled tomb and turn the page to a richer, deeper story of resurrection hope. It too surpasses the ability of our intellects. It too merits our full attention and humble acceptance. This Easter season, may Jesus Christ—the one who lived and loved, died and rose again—be more than a biographical figure confined to a dusty volume, but the risen Savior who calls you anew into the fullness and richness of Christian life.

Randy Bush

Mission Matters

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

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering | Sharing God's love

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God's people belong with those in need—releasing people from the bonds of injustice—and with the hungry—whom we are to welcome into our homes. And in Matthew 25, Jesus calls the church to be with those who are thirsty, imprisoned, and suffer illness.

The pandemic has stretched the church and all of us in many ways—but we are still very much...*here*. Although it was difficult at first, we have expanded our thinking and our doing in new and innovative ways to close the distance and be together, and we have continued to be God's people in worship and ministry, and walked with the most vulnerable in our community and world.



For more than 70 years, **One Great Hour of Sharing** (OGHS) has provided a way for us to share God's love with our neighbors through the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People programs. All three work in different ways to serve millions of people who lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, our support of these mission agencies provides people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

During Lent, we celebrate that God connects *with us* through Jesus' resurrection and connects *us with* "those who have least"—that's how Matthew 25 puts it—and that's what OGHS is all about. Connecting people who experience oppression, need, loss, or lack...*those* are the people with whom Jesus connected, and they are the people with whom we are invited to connect with today.

On **Palm Sunday, April 10**, the ELPC Mission Board challenges you to consider increasing your gift to the OGHS offering, and join Christians all over the country as they open their hearts to witness to the abundant love of God. For more information on how your gift helps people all over the world, and to offer prayers for the people and projects who receive this support, visit pcusa.org/oghs.

Environmental Book Club to Read *This Changes Everything*

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee invites you to read *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate* by Naomi Klein. Then, join the book club for a discussion on **Thurs., June 2**, 7 pm, led by Amanda DeWitt.

For more details, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.

ELPC is a Certified Earth Care Congregation

We are pleased to announce that ELPC is once again certified as an *Earth Care Congregation* by PC(USA)'s Presbyterian Hunger Program through February 2023. ELPC was first certified in 2020. This honor speaks to our commitment to take seriously God's charge to "till and keep" the garden.

To become an *Earth Care Congregation*, our church—through the work of our Environmental Team—affirmed an Earth Care Pledge to integrate environmental practices and thinking into our worship, education, facilities, and outreach.



PC(USA) created the *Earth Care Congregation* certification in 2010 to inspire churches to care for God's Earth in a holistic way, integrating Earth care into all aspects of their church life. The certification honors churches that make that commitment and encourages others to follow their example.

We are one of 292 churches in our denomination that dedicated ourselves to care for God's Earth this year. Our commitment—even in the midst of navigating limitations brought about by COVID—brings hope to our community and the world. Our Environmental Team hopes to inspire our members and others to intentionally respond to God's call to care for the Earth.

For more information on how to respond to God's call, 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 for children age 3 up through grade 5 are now meeting in person. Youth continue to meet in the Second Floor Parlor. Contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net for more details.

Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us."—Romans 8:18

The above is an apt verse for ending the season of Lent and celebrating Easter during the month of April. New every morning, God's word of hope is for all - the faith and love of Christ revealed to us. Many other readings are similarly encouraging in our selections entitled, *P's and Q's of Scripture*. They include the 8th century prophet Micah, the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran caves), the sayings of Jesus (Q sayings), and the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. We continue to reflect upon the cosmic and intimate proportions of salvation offered in Jesus Christ. Come join the journey!

April 3: Micah 4:6–5:1; Qumran (Cave 4) *Commentary on Nahum*; Romans 8:1–39; Luke (Q) 13:28–14:23

April 10: Micah 5:2–9; Qumran (Cave 4) *Vision of the Son of God*, 5:12–6:14; Romans 9:1–29; Luke (Q) 14:26–14:35

April 24: Micah 5:10–6:5; Qumran (Cave 1) *Book of Secrets*; Romans 9:30–10:21; Luke (Q) 16:13–18

Parenting Circle

Facilitator: Trish Buben

April: *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

New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at hajdu625@comcast.net.

April 3 and 10: *Wholehearted Faith*

We will conclude our discussion of *Wholehearted Faith*, by the late Rachel Held Evans and her friend Jeff Chu.

April 24: A New Set of Readings

Seekers

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

April 3: A Deep Dive into *Jesus and the Disinherited*

In our class on February 27, the Rev. Dr. Asa Lee introduced us to Howard Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Rev. Dr. Lee will join us again to lead a deeper discussion of the book.

The Rev. Dr. Lee currently serves as president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and professor of Theological Formation for Ministry.

April 10: Resurrection Spirituality

Is our spirituality rooted too much in the crucifixion and not enough in the resurrection? Are we too obsessed with sin and forgiveness, and not enough on Christ's presence and spirit working in and through us?

Join us as the Rev. Dr. Graham Standish leads an exploration of how the focus of the Gospels is really on the resurrection—on how God's way overcomes all obstacles—and you'll discover what this means for how you can live your life in a more vibrant way.

The Rev. Dr. Standish currently serves as executive director of Samaritan Counseling, Guidance, and Consulting in Sewickley. He is an adjunct professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a spiritual director and clergy coach, an author, and a former pastor.

April 24: Misquoting Jesus in the Bible

Bart Ehrman is chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was raised as an evangelical Christian. Now, he is known as a textual critic of Biblical manuscripts.

We will watch a video of Ehrman discussing his findings of how scribes made additions and deletions as they made subsequent copies of Biblical manuscripts, resulting in what we have in the Bible today.

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

Sun., April 3: Pickleball Tournament 12:15–3 pm

Youth in grades 6–12 are getting together following worship for lunch and pickleball. There will be trophies, but no experience is needed. Meet at ELPC at 12:15 pm. We will be back for pick up at 3 pm. RSVP by completing the online permission slip.

Fri., April 8: Tween Clay Night 5–7 pm

Youth in grades 4–6 are taking a trip to the clay studio at the Union Project. RSVP to Sara.

Thurs., April 14: Volunteering at World Vision 12–4:30 pm

Youth in grades 6–12 will spend an afternoon volunteering at World Vision. RSVP by completing the online permission slip.



Sat.–Sun., May 14–15: Mission Overnight

Youth in grades 8–12 are invited to a Mission Overnight! We will be serving in our community and spending the night camping at the church (in the Courtyard if the weather permits). Participation in the Mission Overnight is a requirement for attending our Summer Mission Trip to Memphis, Tennessee.

club one sixteen

Kids in grade 1–12 are invited to **club one sixteen**, ELPC's mid-week program for youth. We gather each Wednesday, 4:30–6:30 pm, for Bible Study, recreation, relaxation and dinner. Youth in grades 6 and up will be continuing to explore the theme of perseverance; and youth in grades 1–5 will explore a different Bible story each week.

Family Fun @ Liberty Green Playground

Families with kids of all ages are invited to gather at the Liberty Green playground following our Sanctuary worship service on **Sun., April 10**.

We lament that our in-person interactions have been so limited over the last two years during the pandemic. We hope that this will be an opportunity for parents and kids to meet in person and have fun together!

Cheese pizza, drinks, and snacks will be provided, but please let us know that you're coming so that we have enough to share.

To RSVP, please contact Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net.



PPT Awards Hope Academy's Adjoa Opoku-Dakwa First Place

More than 400 area students from 60+ schools competed in the preliminary rounds of Pittsburgh Public Theater's 28th Annual *Shakespeare Monologue & Scene Contest*. Participants submitted video performances of monologues and/or scenes they had chosen from the works of William Shakespeare. Teams of judges evaluated each participant, and the selected finalists competed in *The Showcase of Finalists* at the O'Reilly Theater on February 28.

Hope Academy submitted nine videos and we're pleased to announce that **Adjoa Opoku-Dakwa** earned first place for her Calpurnia monologue from *Julius Caesar*.

In addition, five other Hope Academy students received honorable mentions: **Mads Mocker** (Benedick from *Much Ado About Nothing*), **Chloe Baker** (Viola from *Twelfth Night*), **Bella Gonzales** (Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet*), **Zora Rose** (Phoebe from *As You Like It*) and **Shayla Esquivel** (Katherine from *Henry VIII*).



Photo by Michael Henninger

The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis

On March 24, our Lenten calendar, *Tread Lightly*, encouraged us to read about the situation for children around the globe. The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee is offering some more information.

A UNICEF report, titled *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis*, presents the Children's Climate Risk Index, which uses data to generate new global evidence on how many children are currently exposed to climate change-induced impacts, such as cyclones and heatwaves.



Approximately 1 billion children—nearly half of all children—live in one of the 33 countries classified as extremely high-risk for climate change impact. These children face a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks with high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services. And yet, these 33 countries are among those least responsible for creating the climate crisis, emitting just 9% of global CO2 emissions. In contrast, the 10 highest emitting countries—including the U.S.—account for nearly 70% of global emissions. We must do better for the future of the planet and these children, engage in environmental actions, and call on our leaders to write and support policies that reduce use of fossil fuels and CO2 emissions.

Read the full report at tiny.cc/child-rights-crisis.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: What My Grandmothers Taught Me
Mon., April 4 7–8:30 pm | Tues., April 5 10 am–12 pm

No other biblical woman has captured the imagination of the faithful as thoroughly as Mary. Because she understands the fears and grief of motherhood, she has been a sympathetic figure to women through the ages. Mary also is the model disciple for all followers of Jesus. She allowed God to work in her despite the risk and pointed others to faith in Jesus.

Join us for our lesson, *Mary in the Faith and Tradition of the Church* (Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–52; and John 2:5; 19:25–27). Both sessions will meet on Zoom. For more information, please email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.



Spiritual Life

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

Fri., April 8: Lenten JourneyDance 6:30–7:45 pm

Experience Lent in a unique way this year. Join Yamuna for her Lenten JourneyDance in the Chapel! Take a musical, dancing journey as we approach the end of Lent, with songs from *Godspell* among other songs, including “Guide me God,” “Song of the Pharaohs,” “Joyful Joyful,” and “Prayer of St. Francis.”

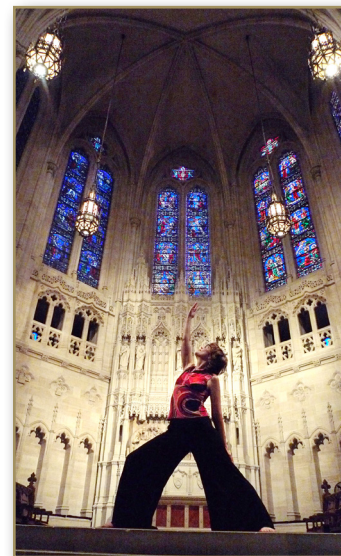
All ages and body types welcome. Wear comfortable clothes and come with an open heart to dance your Lenten journey. A donation from the heart is very much appreciated. Call or text Yamuna with any questions at **412.728.8645**.

Sat., April 30: Yoga, Pranayama, and Meditation Retreat 9 am–4 pm

Join Yamuna Morgenstern and Katrina Woodworth for a day of enjoying yoga in the Sanctuary and learning pranayama (yogic breathing techniques) to facilitate meditation, relaxation, and good health in your daily life. Take time for intentional rest and develop practices that nurture the opportunity to commune with the Divine. The day will include two yoga classes, pranayama instruction, time for reflection and group activity, meditation practices, and lunch.

The retreat will be limited to 15 people. The first yoga retreat filled up fast, so don't wait to reserve your spot!

Register on Eventbrite. The suggested donation is \$35–\$60 (lunch included). Contact BJ Woodworth at BJW@coh.net with questions.



Notes From Pastor Randy

Over the past weeks, I have shared the difficult news about my upcoming transition away from ELPC into a new chapter of ministry service. In the years approaching eventual retirement, I will be offering myself as an interim pastor for larger congregations seeking head of staff leadership in times of transition. These roles usually involve moderating Session, guiding the church through a Mission Study, and assisting them prepare the way for welcoming a new senior pastor (or co-pastors). As was shared in a letter and an email, I will be concluding my time at ELPC on Sun., May 15, and beginning work as interim pastor for Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church in Severna Park, Maryland, on June 1.



I want to express my heartfelt thanks to this congregation for the love, support, and nurture you have provided me and my family over the past 16 years. I am incredibly proud of the mission, education, spiritual life, and justice work of our church and for the countless lives ELPC touches on a regular basis. I am also grateful for the staff and pastoral colleagues here, all of whom will provide skilled and caring leadership in the months ahead. Our Session will communicate with you more fully in the coming weeks about the details related to the period of transition before us.

So let us be in prayer for one another, trusting that the good news of Easter includes a promise for each of us—that in Christ we can be confident that the God who has begun a good work in you will truly bring it to completion in the days ahead.

With love,

Randy Bush

Get Involved in Our LGBTQ Ministry



Join us at our LGBTQ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering following worship on **Sun., April 24**. All allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcome! We'll meet in person and online via Zoom.

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

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

Session News

The Session did not have official called meetings in March. However, they did meet twice to:

- Approve the proposal to repair and replace our main church elevator, working with Schindler Elevator Co.;
- Receive the news of Pastor Randy's transition from ministry at ELPC to interim ministry in Maryland;
- Have an extended discussion on the topic of reparations as an anti-racism faithful response; and
- Approve a new class of four members and friends.

Download Our App

Did you know ELPC has a mobile app? Download it today to stay connected and gain easy access to worship services, news, events, and much more!

The app is available for free on Google Play™ and on the App Store®. Search for "East Liberty Presbyterian."



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ELPC People

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

Prayers

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

- Jan Pressman's sister

“As a diverse community of believers, we strive to follow God—the Creator who calls us, Jesus 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.”

Building Closure

The ELPC building will be closed on **Easter Monday, April 18.**

ELPC Responds to the Crisis in Ukraine

On February 24, the world witnessed Russia invade and wage war on Ukraine. We’ve heard reports on the devastation, loss of life, and destruction; and witnessed the estimated 10 million (primarily women and children) who have or are fleeing to bordering countries for safety.



The ELPC Mission Ministry, Mission Board, and Mission Committees were moved with compassion and a desire to help, and on behalf of our congregation, reached out to the local St. Peter and St. Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Carnegie. Their priest, Fr. John, expressed a need for socks, particularly men’s socks to support the men who have remained.

Thanks to ELPC’s generosity and commitment to walk with people in need, we still had an abundance of socks collected as an act of service in recognition of our MLK Day of Service in 2021. Those socks are now enroute to Ukraine, along with a donation of \$5,000.

To explore ways that you may support our siblings in Ukraine: respond generously when we receive the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on **Palm Sunday, April 10**, reference the PC(USA) disaster relief-refugee support website at pma.pcusa.org, and watch for local volunteer opportunities in ELPC’s weekly communications.

Save the Date for VCS 2022

ELPC will be hosting Vacation Church School for children in pre-K (age 4 and potty-trained) through grade 5 (completed), during the week of **June 20–24**, 9 am–3 pm. Our theme will be *Passports to Peace*. This interactive curriculum encourages children to listen to and learn from people who are different, notice the needs of others and seek to help, work to keep everyone safe, and refuse to respond to conflict with violence.

Youth in grades 6–12 are invited to serve as volunteers, and adult volunteers of all ages will be needed to help ensure our program is a success!

Visit ELPC.church for the most current information, as well as registration forms for campers and volunteers.

