

# Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

June 2022

## Pentecost Offering to be Received



Dear Siblings in Christ,

God's vision for the world is that everyone finds their place in God's kin-dom—in God's household.

At Pentecost, we celebrate God's pouring out of the Holy Spirit so that everyone may hear and know a word of welcome. We are all connected in God's household—living, learning, and celebrating as the church...together.

In this season of new awakening, we particularly look to children, youth, and young adults for their

new thoughts, approaches, and questions. The psalmist reminds us that faith is established in our earliest years, saying, *"For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth."* (Psalm 71:5)

The youngest members of our household of faith and community need our support to reach their full potential in faith and life. We all have important roles to play in their journeys. And while we teach and lead, our recent confirmands' faith stories have encouraged and reminded us that the children shall lead us into new insights in how the Spirit of God is moving in and among us. Your gifts to the Pentecost Offering on **Sun., June 5**, will support ministries with children, youth, and young adults in our community, across the nation, and around the world.

The 40% local portion will support Casa San José's Campamento Sonrisa, a four-week camp, for Latino children and youth that helps them more deeply appreciate their cultural heritage. The remainder of our offering will be donated to the Presbyterian denomination to support youth and young adult programs—such as the Young Adult Volunteer Program, the Presbyterian Youth Triennium, and the Educate a Child, Transform the World Initiative.

During this Pentecost season, as we celebrate God's gift to the church of Spirit-led energy, intelligence, imagination, and love, we invite you to join us in celebrating our part in building lives of faith among our children, youth, and young adults. These younger members of the household of faith are not just the future of the church—they ARE the church.

## Sunday Services

*\*Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

### Journey Worship | 8:45 am

*Theme: One Foot Forward*

June 5\* Rev. BJ Woodworth

### Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

June 5\* Rev. BJ Woodworth

### Summer Worship | 10 am

June 12 Youth Sunday

Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

June 19 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

June 26 Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Taizé Prayer Service

### Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

*Wednesdays | 7 pm*

Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Summer Worship Schedule Begins June 12

We will begin our summer worship schedule on **Sun., June 12**, with one service at 10 am. We will continue to worship in the Sanctuary throughout June, but will move to the Courtyard beginning July 3 (weather permitting).

We hope that you will make worshiping with our faith family a consistent part of your summer!

## Celebrating the Gifts of Our Youth

Join us on **Youth Sunday, June 12**, 10 am, as we celebrate the Spirit's presence in our church through the leadership of our youth in worship. On this special Sunday, the liturgy will be written and led by ELPC youth, and graduating seniors will share a message with the congregation.

Any high school youth who want to help plan and/or lead worship that day should talk to Pastor Heather.

## East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

### Staff Leadership

#### **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  
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#### **Linda Addlespurger**

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#### **Wil Forrest**

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Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry  
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#### **Sara Hackett**

Coordinator of Christian Education  
and Youth Ministries  
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#### **Derail Holcomb**

Coordinator of Young Adult Ministry

#### **Allen Miller**

Lead Engineer

#### **Dr. Edward Alan Moore**

Music Director and Organist  
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#### **Rachelle Calfee**

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#### **Megan Leisher**

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#### **Norma Meyer**

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#### **Venetia Singletary**

VenetiaS@coh.net | x116

## Pastoral Message

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



*Where Have I Seen the Holy Spirit at Work?* Like the followers of Jesus, who were hiding on the day of Pentecost, I have seen the Holy Spirit at work and show up at times and in places that I least expected or anticipated. I have witnessed the Holy Spirit show up in sick rooms, when a doctor pronounced that a tumor was no longer present or a patient would fully recover. I have seen the Holy Spirit show up in places of grief, comforting and assuring a family that lost a loved one. I have witnessed the Holy Spirit move in desolate places, assuring people that all was not lost. And I have

witnessed the Holy Spirit show up in my own life when situations were beyond my control and God's grace was more than sufficient to guide, keep, open doors and hearts, and make ways out of no ways.

In this season at ELPC, many of us may think or feel that the Holy Spirit has left the building after almost three years of being separated by COVID and mask wearing; the continuation of hybrid meetings and virtual worship. Some of you may feel that the Holy Spirit has abandoned the building as Pastor Randy has been called to a sister church to provide pastoral leadership. However, beloved, the Prophet Isaiah reminds us that *"God is about to do a new thing; now it springs forth..."* On the day of Pentecost, the followers of Christ were cowering in fear, they felt abandoned, threatened, and powerless. They could not imagine, think, or sense the new thing that God was about to do, and just like that, God's new thing showed up!

I am so thankful that God does not leave us alone and the Holy Spirit shows up in people, places, and times where and when we least expect. The Holy Spirit shows up every day with the rising and setting of the sun; the Holy Spirit shows up in the laughter and smiles of young and old alike; the Holy Spirit shows up as we accompany people who have come to our city from war torn and dangerous countries, when we walk with a single parent preparing for homeownership or to further their education. The Holy Spirit shows up in soup kitchens, shelters, clothing banks, and at furniture and food collection sites. And the Holy Spirit is in places of worship, both grand and small.

I look forward to witnessing and participating in how the Holy Spirit shows up, moves, leads, and blesses our individuals and collective lives in this season of Pentecost and transition. And I imagine that by God's grace, we will all be in awe, come to know one another in new and diverse ways, and be transformed and empowered to **be** God's disciples in our church and the world. *"God is about to do a new thing; now it springs forth..."*

Blessings and peace always,



## Celebrating Pentecost Sunday

**Pentecost Sunday, June 5**, will be the last Sunday of our 2021–2022 Church School Year. On this day, we will:

- Give thanks for the musical leadership of Dr. Michael J. Warren, who has directed ELPC's Journey Praise Team for the last three years. Michael is relocating to Ohio as his wife begins medical school.
- Participate in our final Sunday of Church School before summer break.
- Receive three youth as members, and one youth as a friend at our Sanctuary worship service. These youth have participated in a year-long Confirmation Class, and have chosen to take a step forward in faith and deepen their engagement at ELPC. Excerpts from their *Statements of Faith* are included in this edition of the *Reaching Out*.

## Pastoral Message

*The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries*



*Where have I seen the Holy Spirit at Work?* I don't usually experience the Holy Spirit with the same fierce, shocking power as the disciples did on Pentecost. For me, I tend to experience the Holy Spirit in a surprising insight, a moment of truth, or the ability to stretch beyond my perceived capacity and be able to love well. I experience the Holy Spirit when I recognize that I am able to forgive a painful grudge away, pray according to another's need, or feel a courageous calm in the midst of a difficult situation.

This past year, I have felt the Holy Spirit kiss my cheek, when my five-year-old son kissed my tears away, reminding me (as we taught him), that love never dies. I have felt the Holy Spirit strengthen me when personal exhaustion and the needs of others ran deep. I have felt the Holy Spirit accompany me so that I could accompany those I love through the fear and grief and hope that is a part of death.

I notice the Holy Spirit (I think the Holy Spirit is ALWAYS with us—but that sometimes we tune the Spirit out!) when I am surprised by grace in any form changing a moment: from confusion to clarity; from discord to peace; from despair to hope.

In the next chapter of our shared ministry together, I give thanks that ELPC is a community through which I continually encounter the Holy Spirit: Through your prayers, questions, and enacted desire to do justice; through your MANY gifts and willingness to share those gifts; through your humor, wisdom and broad welcome... I praise God for the work of the Holy Spirit through you and upon you, and look forward to seeing how we experience the Holy Spirit in this next season together

*Pastor Heather*

"I believe in God as the creator and Jesus as my savior. This is one thing that I have always known, and I think will always know about my faith."

**Sam Bard**

## Connections Groups

ELPC Connections Groups are designed to foster small-group friendships in a large congregation.

All past members of Connections Groups and new people who are interested in joining us are invited to an afternoon of strawberry picking on **Sat., June 18**. Meet at noon at Soergel Orchards (2573 Brandt School Rd., Wexford, PA 15090).

To RSVP and coordinate car pooling, contact Elaine Phillips at [connectelpc@gmail.com](mailto:connectelpc@gmail.com).



"Genesis 28:5 states, 'I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' With these words I gain comfort because I know that God will not desert me no matter what."

**Annie Cowan**



## Thank You, Teachers!

We rejoice that after two years of learning remotely, we have gradually been able to serve persons of all ages every week through our Church School Ministry.

Classes have looked different this year. Since Rally Day in September, adults participated in classes using a “hybrid” format, unique to each class. Youth in grades 6–12 gathered outdoors through November 2021, remotely through winter, and in person, indoors since the end of February. It took awhile longer to welcome back young children, but we have been offering in-person classes since March.

What has remained the same through all of these changes is the engagement, love, faithfulness, creativity, commitment, and hope of our Church School teachers. So once more, we say: “THANK YOU” to all who have served! We praise God for our Church School teachers and facilitators, seeking God’s continued blessing upon them:

**Sherry Anderson, Damon Bethea, Lora Bethea, Bethany Bray, Trish Buben, Sandy Edgcombe, Jim Eng, Sara Hackett, Joe Hajdu, Carol Hoehn, Jan Irvin, Heather Lawrence, Nancy Magee, Jan Pressman, Gwen Puza, Paul Seif, Kay Shissler, Dorothea Ward, and Evelyn Welling.**

We also thank the many class members who facilitated discussion, shepherded us through new technology, and discerned class topics. We give thanks for the opportunity to partner with the Facing Systemic Racism Committee throughout the year, and for the work of our facility’s staff who coordinated some unconventional classroom setups (including a fire-pit in the play yard!) throughout the Church School year.

## Christian Education

*The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries*

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

### Children and Youth

Classes for children age 3 and 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](mailto:SaraH@coh.net) for more details.

### Journey with Scripture

*Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin*

**June 5:** We will reflect on this past year’s readings and look ahead to our plans for next year. We give thanks for our inspiring readings and the thoughtful engagement of our participants.

### Parenting Circle

*Facilitator: Trish Buben*

#### **June 5: *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.

### Seekers

*Facilitator: Gwen Puza*

#### **June 5: How Russians Are Reacting to Their Country’s Invasion of Ukraine**

Rev. John Burgess, a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, has lived three times in Russia, each time for one year. His research has focused on the renewal of the Russian Orthodox Church since the fall of communism.

Based on his personal contact with Christians in Russia, Rev. Burgess will speak about the range of ways in which Russian church members are opposing or supporting their country’s actions. We will discuss how this war is changing Russia and its churches.

Join us in person or contact Gwen Puza at [gpuza9@gmail.com](mailto:gpuza9@gmail.com) for Zoom details.



### Soul Food

*Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members*

#### **June 5: Fellowship Session**

Join us as we conclude the Church School year with a fellowship session and a preview of our plans for the fall and beyond.

New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at [hajdu625@comcast.net](mailto:hajdu625@comcast.net).

"God is always with me, and when I need help, God will give me strength and courage."

**Cody Conley**

## Children & Youth Ministry

*Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education & Youth Ministry*

### Sun.–Fri., July 10–15: Middle School Mission Trip

Students who have completed grades 6–8 are heading to Crestfield Camp in Slippery Rock for a week of mission work and fun! The cost is \$200 (scholarships are available). Register online at [ELPC.church](http://ELPC.church).

### Sat.–Sat., Aug. 6–13: High School Mission Trip

Students who have completed grades 8–12 will be traveling to Memphis, Tennessee, for our High School Mission Trip. We will be serving with Memphis Youth Mission. For information about the trip, trip requirements, and cost, talk to Sara Hackett. Register online at [ELPC.church](http://ELPC.church).

## Please Welcome Our New YAM Coordinator



Hey, ELPC Family

I am super excited to join you on the task of continuing to discover what God's mission is for our lives. My hope and prayer is to work diligently alongside our leaders and community members to see our Youth and Young Adult Ministry grow into a steady group of young people who are on fire for God! I desire to connect with others throughout the East Liberty and Greater Pittsburgh communities. This inclusive opportunity for fellowship with others in our church and community, regardless of their race or age,

helps others flourish and feel welcome each week!

Being a southerner, I love water. But, I still have trouble with the snow. On wintery days, I enjoy hot soup while watching a Netflix special in-doors. I also love traveling abroad and trying new foods. I believe in the power of self-care, so resting (I love naps) are vital, but when I am not working, I enjoy fun events like bowling/laser tag, hiking, and many others.

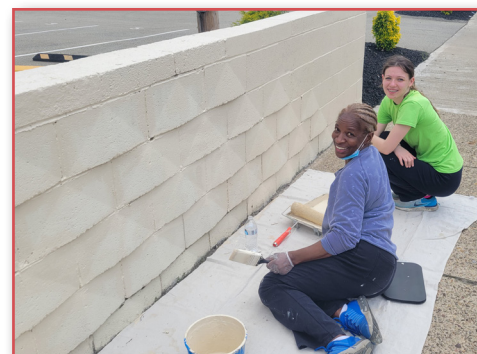
While we are in this new space of discernment, I ask each of you to pray with and for me. There is no prayer too small!

One moment at a time!

—Derail Holcomb

## Thank You for Serving

In May, 16 teens and adults helped paint at Vintage Senior Center as part of our Mission Overnight. Thank you for serving in our community!



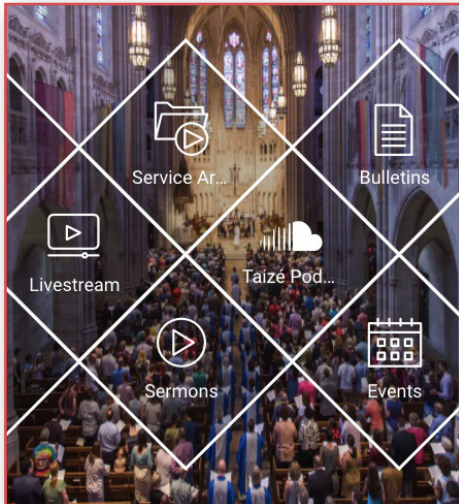
"God created Earth and everything on it. God is inside everyone and loves everyone equally."

**Travis Castle**



"The ardent faith I have observed in those around me has helped solidify my own and given me greater clarity about my role in the church and as a follower of Jesus."

**Sam Bard**



## 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."



Google Play is a trademark of Google LLC.  
App Store is a registered trademarks of Apple Inc.

"I believe that everyone was created in God's image. I believe that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity."

**Annie Cowan**

## LGBTQ Ministry

*Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry*

### Mark Your Calendar for Pittsburgh Pride | June 3–5

Each June, the LGBTQ Ministry takes a month off from regular spiritual gatherings so we can focus our time on participating in the many Pittsburgh Pride events. While there are a number of Prides with many events, we will soon be advertising march and booth information, which we will be supporting along with other inclusive churches.

Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcome and are needed. Contact Wil Forrest at **Wil@coh.net** or **412.441.3800 x118** for more details or to attend.



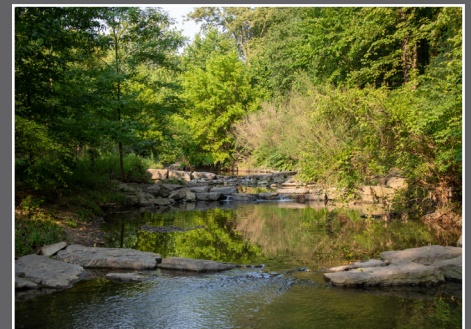
**God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.**

"I believe that God created the Universe and that God loves all people."

**Cody Conley**

## June Solstice Forest Bathing

Join us at Frick Park on **Sat., June 25**, 6–9 pm, for a time of June Solstice Forest Bathing and mark the beginning of summer, increased daylight, and warmth! If you are unfamiliar with forest bathing, it is simply mindfulness in nature as we bathe in the health-boosting benefits of the forest.



Guided by Sandi Miller, we'll enjoy a three-hour walk and experience a series of invitations to slow down, open our senses, and cultivate an embodied relationship between ourselves and the natural world. Throughout the walk, we'll have opportunities to share our experiences. We'll conclude with a cup of tea made from the forest.

There's no right or wrong way to practice Forest Bathing, so come as you are; it's all welcome in the forest. (We will be walking less than one mile, but there are some hills involved.)

Register with Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x111** by **Wed., June 22**. The event is limited to 12 people.

# An 11-Year Journey From Izalco to Pittsburgh



Gabriela “Gaby” Reyes first came through the doors of ELPC in fall 2018, when she heard that Casa San José and ELPC were offering afternoon ESL (English second language) classes. She could see the ELPC steeple from her apartment building in East Liberty, and Gaby and her sister Elizabeth were able to take a long lunch break from their cleaning jobs to attend the classes.

Neither of them had been able to attend much school in El Salvador, and they loved the learning environment that ELPC

member Linda Harrington and other teachers provided. On the one hand, learning English felt like an insurmountable goal, and on the other hand, seemingly insurmountable goals had not stopped the sisters before.

In 2010, their oldest sister had left her children with the sisters and grandparents to find work in the U.S. with the goal of getting them out of the daily violence and corruption that had taken over their town, Izalco. She applied for asylum and came to Pittsburgh where they had a distant family member. A year later, she was able to send money for Gaby and Elizabeth to come and bring her two children. Even though they hated to leave their grandparents and their home that looked up towards Izalco Volcano—known as the Lighthouse of Central America—life was increasingly dangerous, and the economic situation was tenuous.

Their journey took eight months. They boarded buses, trains (yes, the famous La Bestia), cars, and trucks, as well as walked. They crossed the border and were taken to a detention center, while Immigration determined whether or not they could await their asylum case in Pittsburgh. After four months of waiting in detention, they travelled to Pittsburgh to reunite with their sister. They quickly found work cleaning. And soon thereafter, Gaby married a man from her hometown who also was in Pittsburgh.



Five years later, Gaby was granted a green card (permanent residence)—and five years after that, she was allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship, which required her to pass an English test and the U.S. citizenship exam. Casa San José set her up with ELPC member John Benedict to help her prepare. She passed, and on April 29, Gaby—along with 35 others—were sworn in and granted U.S. citizenship.

Gaby’s journey took 11 years and more than \$15,000 in immigration legal fees. Her next goal and dream is to buy a

house and see her grandparents. Now her sons point to the ELPC steeple and know that is where their mom studied to become a U.S. citizen. She shares her story to encourage others that they too can become citizens.

Thank you to ELPC who has hosted ESL classes since 2018, and provides volunteer teachers, tutors, and childcare. New classes will start in September and volunteers are always needed.

“God has blessed me in my life by giving me a loving family, food, and shelter.”

**Travis Castle**

## ELPC People

If you have news to share, contact Megan Leisher at [MeganL@coh.net](mailto:MeganL@coh.net) or 412.441.3800 x122.

### Good News

- Congratulations to **Eleanor McCaskey**, daughter of Leslie and Brendan McCaskey, who recently celebrated her baptism.

### Thanks

- I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the many expressions of sympathy you have expressed upon the passing of my Dad in April. The prayers, concerns, and love you have shown to me and my family throughout his illness and death have been a source of comfort and strength during a difficult time. I thank God for you!  
—Pastor Heather

- Peta Harrigan Cole and Derek Harrigan thank you for the prayers and condolences after the passing of Peta’s brother and Derek’s uncle, Phillip Harrigan.

### Prayers

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

- Pastor Heather’s father, John Tunney
- ELPC staff member Jaszmier Branch’s father

*“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 **Saturday, June 18**, in observance of Juneteenth.

## Registration is Open for VCS

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 this summer’s program is a success!

Visit [ELPC.church](http://ELPC.church) for more information, as well as registration forms for campers and volunteers.



## VCS Volunteer Training

There is a training and orientation for all adult and youth volunteers on **Sun., June 19**, 11 am–2 pm, in the Social Hall. Lunch will be provided.

If you cannot attend this event, please email Megan Leisher at [MeganL@coh.net](mailto:MeganL@coh.net) so we can schedule an alternative time to get you all the information that you’ll need.



## Calling All Graduates

Are you graduating from high school, college, trade school, graduate school, etc. this spring?

We would like to celebrate these achievements together!

Submit your name, degree, and school attended to Megan Leisher by emailing [MeganL@coh.net](mailto:MeganL@coh.net) or calling **412.441.3800 x122**.