



Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

February 2023

Our Lenten Journey Begins

Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22**. It is a time when we reflect on not only our own mortality and sinfulness, but also on our need for a Savior.



To mark the start of this season, ELPC will offer two services, both of which will include the imposition of ashes.

Pastor Heather will lead a reflective time of word and prayer in the Chapel, 12 pm. Then at 7 pm, Pastor BJ will commemorate the start of Lent through the prayerful song and quiet meditation of Taizé.

Join us for this sacred time of ritual and reflection. And for more resources and practices to help you deepen your faith life throughout this Lenten season, visit ELPC.church and see our weekly bulletin announcements.

Congregational Meeting February 26



The past year has been one in which we have experienced many transitions, and we are still rebounding from the global pandemic, as are many worshipping communities. And, by God's grace, we are fortunate to have navigated the pandemic, an economic downturn, and transitions in pastoral leadership with strength, patience, and fortitude.

On **Sun., Feb. 26**, 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.

Arrangements are being made for a hybrid event. You are invited to attend the meeting in the Social Hall or on Zoom. If you choose the Zoom option, you must be on camera to vote.

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Being Beloved

Feb. 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Feb. 12 Rev. BJ Woodworth
Feb. 19 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
Feb. 26 Rev. Leeann Younger

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Feb. 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
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Feb. 19 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
Feb. 29 Rev. Leeann Younger

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Welcome Our Guest

On **Sun., Feb. 26**, we're pleased to welcome the Rev. Leeann Shaw Younger as our guest preacher for our Journey and Sanctuary services.



Rev. Younger is the lead pastor of Cityview Church in Pittsburgh's East Deutschtown/Spring Garden neighborhood. She co-founded

the Evangelical Covenant Church congregation in 2010 with her husband, Wayne. They are the parents of three young adult children, Shaw, Isaiah, and Kayla. Leeann has a breadth of vocational experiences in her background as a nonprofit executive leader, faith leader, and community leader for justice for marginalized neighbors.

She is in the process of completing a Master of Theological Studies with a focus on decolonizing church practice from Pacific School of Religion.

East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy

*Acting Co-Pastor and
Pastor for Mission Ministries*
PatriceFS@coh.net | x230

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

*Acting Co-Pastor and
Pastor for Educational Ministries*
HeatherS@coh.net | x221

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

*Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life,
Taizé, and Transitional Ministries*
BJW@coh.net | x241

Linda Addlespurger

Director of Hope Academy
info@HopeAcademyArts.com | x212

Wil Forrest

Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry
Wil@coh.net | x218

Sara Hackett

*Coordinator of Christian Education
and Youth Ministries*
SaraH@coh.net | x220

Derail Holcomb

Coordinator of Young Adult Ministry
DerailH@coh.net | x233

Dr. Edward Alan Moore

Music Director and Organist
EdM@coh.net | x224

Rochelle Owens

Director of Facilities
RochelleO@coh.net | x226

Jim Tinnemeyer

Director of Administration
JimT@coh.net | x239

Rachelle Calfee

RachelleC@coh.net | x234

Megan Leisher

MeganL@coh.net | x222

Norma Meyer

Norma@coh.net | x211

Venetia Singletary

VenetiaS@coh.net | x216

Pastoral Message

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life, Taizé, and Transitional Ministries



I've never been one of those people whose has a word for the year, but this year, I feel like a word was given to me: WONDER.

I'm sensing an invitation in 2023 to be curious about life and the world. I desire to cultivate a sense of awe and openness about each day and each moment with God, others, and the world around me. The invitation to wonder feels new, playful, open, creative, and even surprising.

In mid-December, as this word "wonder" began to deepen in me, I received a text from Pastor Heather and Pastor Patrice: *"Would you be willing to take on some extra work to help guide the transitional discernment work at our church?"*

Hmm... I wondered what this would look like. Without going into all the details, the Spirit had already been planting questions in me that made me excited, curious, and open to saying, "Yes!" I felt an invitation to help create space to wonder together about the transitions we are in. We have a new, innovative pastoral transition plan; we are forming a pastoral nominating committee; we have multiple new staff members and staff roles; and like every church in the U.S., we are wondering what church will be in this post-pandemic reality.

All this can seem daunting, disconcerting, disorienting, and filled with liminality. The Franciscan priest and contemplative Richard Rohr says that liminality is, *"when you have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. It is that graced time when we are not certain or in control, when something genuinely new can happen. It is the ultimate teachable space."*

I wonder what God is up to in this time of liminal transition at ELPC. I wonder what new thing God might invite us into in this season and the next. I wonder what tried and true realities we might need to lay down for the next chapter to emerge. I wonder what kind of inner and outer transformation God might want to form in us and through us. I wonder what God might teach us.

What are you wondering about at ELPC these days?

As we live into this transitional plan and search for permanent pastoral leadership, I hope and pray that each of us will stay open to this graced time of transformation and wonder with God—and one another—what new thing God desires to do in each of us and in the collective us of ELPC.

Mission Matters

*The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Mission Ministries*

Justice Committee Toiletries Drive for Allegheny County Jail

As a Matthew 25 congregation, we embrace and care for those in need—including the final phrase of the verse, noting, “...I was in prison and you came to me...” In response to this call, we are collaborating with the ACJ Chaplain’s Office to meet some of the current needs of inmates by collecting the following items:

- Body Wash
- Deodorant (men’s and women’s)
- Shampoo/Conditioner (including black hair care products)
- Lotion
- Toothpaste

Please note, we can only collect full-size toiletry items in plastic bottles or tubes. Pump mechanisms are prohibited.

Volunteers will be collecting items after Journey and Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Jan. 29** and **Feb. 5**. There also will be a drive-up collection outside of the Highland entrance on both days, 12–2:30 pm. Collection boxes also will be available by the Highland entrance during the week. Monetary donations may be made to ELPC “Hygiene collection.”

If you would like to help with the collections, please contact Judy Mancini at **412.299.6160** or mancinijs@gmail.com.

8 Billion People and Counting

As you may know, Earth’s population has just crossed the 8 billion mark. What do we make of this very large number of people? Do we succumb to worry about the capacity of the Earth to support humanity, and the old “population bomb” theories? Or do we appreciate the advances in health, nutrition, education, and rising out of poverty for many nations that have previously suffered much worse outcomes for their populations? The answer is nuanced.

As it turns out, two thirds of the Earth’s population already lives in countries where population growth has stabilized or is in decline. So, the modern advances have in fact produced outcomes that could be sustainable in the long run. But there is another side to the population question: are people consuming more resources than the Earth can sustain? And the answer here is an unequivocal yes.

Consider this statistic: total biomass of all living mammals is now 36% humans and 60% animals raised for human consumption. What does that leave for the remainder of the animal kingdom? 4%. And only several centuries ago, it used to be over 90%. Overall decline in biodiversity and the extinction of species is staggering, and it is undermining the ecological web of life on which we all depend. It is our critical, moral duty to think about how we live and how to reduce our consumption and impact on the environment, and act accordingly.

To learn more, the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee recommends listening to On Point’s podcast, titled [Earth’s growing population: ‘A Direct Affront to Our Own Survival](#) (Jan. 11, 2023).

ELPC’s Transitional Leadership Plan

In early January, the congregation received word that Session adopted a Transitional Leadership Plan to guide the congregation in the interim season until permanent pastoral leadership is identified. Pastors Patrice and Heather will continue to serve as Acting Co-Pastors, ensuring the smooth day-to-day operations of our church in this season, while Pastor BJ will assume additional responsibilities serving as a Covenant Pastor, guiding our congregation through the discernment work of an interim season.

Additionally, ELPC will engage a consultant to lead us in the congregational assessment tool and invite several guest preachers to bring some new insights from our pulpits.

For a link to the full congregational letter, visit [ELPC.church](https://www.elpc.church).

ELPC Elects PNC

At a special congregational meeting held on January 29, ELPC elected a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), charged with the important work of selecting permanent pastoral leadership for ELPC.

Read more about the members of our PNC on our website, and hold this group in your prayers as they undertake this important work on behalf of our family of faith.

Throughout this interim season, there will be many opportunities for ELPC members and friends to engage in a process of discernment and visioning for our future together.

Keep your eyes open for more updates in *Reaching Out*, bulletin announcements, newflashes and congregational letters.

Christian Education

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Educational Ministries

Note: Classes meet on Sundays, 9:45am.

Children and Youth

ELPC offers Church School classes for kids and youth from pre-K–grade 12. Class locations are listed below.

- Pre-K | Nursery
- K–Grade 3 | Room 206
- Grades 4–6 | Room 211
- Grades 7–12 | Second Floor Parlor

Journey with Scripture | Fellowship Room

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

“This is my beloved and this is my friend.”
—Song of Songs 5:16

This month, we’ll continue to read from the Psalms, the Song of Songs, and the Gospel of Mark, as well as begin reading Paul’s letter to the Philippians. All these readings offer transformative paths of steadfast love, faithfulness, and justice. They encourage us in the mutuality and friendship of God in Christ. Come join the journey!

Feb. 5: Psalm 17; Song of Songs 5:2–9; Mark 7:24–37

Feb. 12: Psalm 18:1–19; Song of Songs 5:10–6:3;
Mark 8:1–21

Feb. 19: Psalm 18:20–30; Song of Songs 6:4–13;
Mark 8:22–9:1

Feb. 26: Psalm 18:31–50; Song of Songs 7:1–9;
Philippians 1:1–11

Parenting Circle | Room 213

Facilitator: Trish Buben

February: Atlas of the Heart Discussion

This year, we’re reading *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience* by Brené Brown. In this *New York Times* bestseller, Brown writes, “If we want to find the way back to ourselves and one another, we need language and the grounded confidence to both tell our stories and be stewards of the stories that we hear. This is the framework for meaningful connection.”

Anyone involved in parenting is welcome to join us.

Seekers | Garth Overlook Room

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

Feb. 5: Root Doctors & Hoodoo Medicine in Black History
Stories of Hoodoo medicine, illnesses, and healing traditions abound in Black history. These stories communicate the knowledge and ancestral wisdom of Black people in poignant and powerful ways. In this video, Dr. Yvonne Chireau shares historical accounts of Hoodoo and rootworking as forms of traditional healing that were utilized to give meaning to bodily suffering for African American people with rituals, material formulations, and the skilled repertoire of practitioners in enslaved communities, and how these practices are continued today.

Feb. 12: Black History in Pittsburgh

This video from the Heinz History Channel discusses key Black history events and activists in the Pittsburgh area, primarily during the civil rights era.

Feb. 19: The Faith Of Abraham Lincoln

We’ll watch a video of author Stephen Mansfield speaking at First Baptist Church of Orlando about Abraham Lincoln’s richly textured spiritual life, and drawing from it a meaning to inspire Americans today.

Feb. 26: The Faith of George Washington

In this video, historian Rev. Dr. Peter Lillback argues that while many historians consider George Washington to be a Deist or only a nominal Christian, he was, in fact, a devoutly religious person. Lillback uses quotes from Washington’s writings and speeches to show Washington’s spirituality.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Lillback is an American theologian and historian, Presbyterian, and president and professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

February: Made for Goodness

We will continue discussing *Made for Goodness*, by Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho Tutu, covering chapters 4–7.

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

Make Connections

The ELPC Connections Group has two upcoming gatherings and all are welcome to attend!

On **Sat., Feb. 18**, 3 pm, we're going to see the play "American Menu" at New Horizons Theater at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in Homewood (7101 Hamilton Ave., 15208).



Please buy your own ticket (\$25) in advance at [OnTheStage.tickets](#). Following the play, we'll go to a nearby restaurant to eat and talk.

Then on **Sat., March 11**, 7–9 pm, we'll gather at Gretchen Chapman's house to play board games. You are welcome to bring a game or a snack to share!



Email connectelpc@gmail.com to RSVP to either or both events, or to ask questions. We look forward to connecting with you!

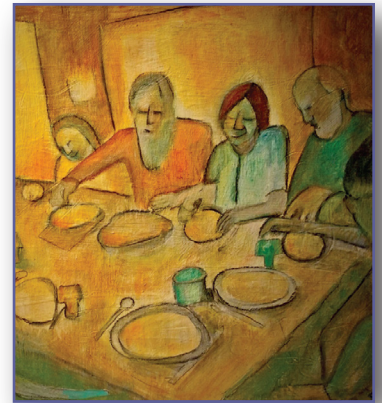
Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: Sabbath and Hospitality

Mon., Feb. 6 7–8:30 pm (Zoom only)

Tues., Feb. 7 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15) is clear: Sabbath is extended to all—your children, livestock, slaves, and foreigners among you. There is something in the nature of Sabbath that demands that it is to be shared.



Hospitality to strangers is valued in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Abraham's extravagant welcome of wayfarers (Genesis 18) is recalled by the writer of Hebrews who urges, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

The Greek word we translate as "hospitality" is "philoxenia"—love of foreigners. To this day, strangers in synagogue worship, especially on Shabbat or holidays, are invited to local people's homes for a meal.

We have much to discuss about hospitality to foreigners.

For more information and the Zoom link, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com. Those attending our Tuesday Bible Study at the Church are invited to bring a brown bag lunch. Beverages will be provided.

A Lenten Journey of Embracing the Wisdom of Our Ancestors, Bodies, and the Earth

"Decolonizing" is a popular buzzword in conversations about spirituality but what is it? What does it look like? Join other congregants on a Lenten journey focused on understanding the impact of colonization on our spiritual practice.

Together, let's consider ways to deepen our connection to God by learning to embrace the wisdom of our ancestors, our bodies, and the Earth itself.

Each Thursday during Lent (**Feb. 23–March 30**), 5:30–7 pm, the Rev. Leeann Shaw Younger will lead us as we explore a particular theme and discuss ways to implement new ideas or strengthen our spiritual practice throughout the week.



We cannot change the past, but we can rediscover what we lost and build a fuller, richer sense of the Divine in our midst.

A light dinner will be served. The suggested donation is \$25 for all six weeks. RSVP to Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x211** by **Sun., Feb. 19**.

Stewardship Campaign Continues

There's still time to support our 2023 Stewardship Campaign with a pledge during the month of February. While the response to date has been generous, a slight overall decrease in giving has occurred.

If you have not yet submitted a pledge or would like to make an extra gift for the coming year, you can do so online at [ELPC.church](https://www.elpc.church) or by contacting Rachelle Calfee, ELPC's bookkeeper, at RachelleC@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x234**.

Together, we can ensure that ELPC continues to show the ways in which "God is with us always," by spreading our love and promoting peace and justice in 2023.



LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

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

All are invited to the next monthly spiritual gathering of ELPC's LGBTQ Ministry. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcomed.

To ask questions or RSVP, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x218**.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

Staff Updates and New Faces

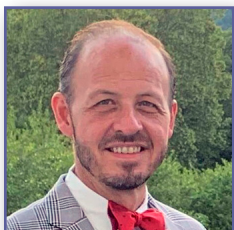
As of January 1, **Wil Forrest** has left his role as the Director of Church Operations and will focus solely on his ministry as the Coordinator of our LGBTQ Ministry. We remain grateful for the many ways that Wil's gifts have blessed our congregation, and pray for God's continued blessing upon him as he shepherds this important ministry.



We also are pleased to welcome **Rochelle Owens** (pictured top) and **Jim Tinnemeyer** (pictured bottom) to our ELPC staff. They will be serving in complementary roles, which will ensure the smooth operation of our church—Rochelle as our Director of Facilities and Jim as our Director of Administration.

Rochelle will work closely with the Property Committee, ensuring the care, safety, and faithful use of our building. Jim will work closely with the Finance and Human Resource Committees, creating policies and extending guidance to ensure the faithful stewarding of our financial resources and equity among our staff.

We are grateful for the many gifts they each bring to our congregation. Join us in welcoming Rochelle and Jim!



Session News

In January, ELPC Elders:

- Approved a Covenant Pastor agreement with Pastor BJ for interim transitional ministry,
- Approved to support Sixth Presbyterian Church's overture to Pittsburgh Presbytery to endorse and support Bethel AME Church's reparations campaign, and
- Approved ELPC's Annual Statistical Report for submission to the General Assembly.

Ellie's Pet Pantry

Following worship on **Sun., Feb. 19**, join us in the Good Samaritan Room to help bake and decorate dog treats for Ellie's Pet Pantry, a program at Humane Animal Rescue. We will be using peanut butter in the cookies. Lunch will be provided. RSVP to Sara at SaraH@coh.net.

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:

- Willa Dixon
- Becky Gloninger's mother, Dorothy Gloninger
- Michael J. Hoehn
Pray for his family: Carol Hoehn; their children Michael, Ben, and Laura; and grandchildren Caleb and Caiden Trabold, and Reagan Hoehn.
- Morris Jordan
- Travis Simpson-Hunt's Great Aunt Faye Burnett
- Dawn (Yamuna) Morgenstern'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 Closures

ELPC will be closed on
Presidents’ Day, Mon., Feb. 20.

VCS Registration is Open

ELPC’s 2023 Vacation Church School program will take place the week of **June 26–30**, 9 am–3 pm, for children in pre-K (age 4 and potty-trained) through grade 5 (completed).



Our theme this summer is *Changemakers Lab*, a place children will learn that everyone can make a difference in the world! Through five Bible stories, we’ll explore examples of people who experienced and brought about change in the world

around them. These people provide a model for asking hard questions, working together to solve problems, reaching across differences, caring for all people, and imagining a new world. Through worship and drama, Bible study, STEAM activities (science, technology, engineering, art, math), and active games, children are invited to see and experience the transforming love of God.

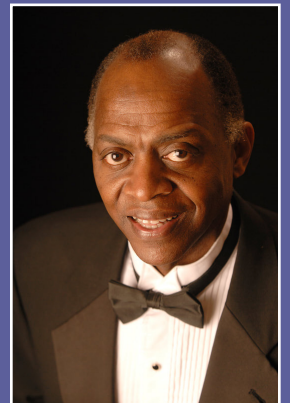
Youth in grades 6–12 are invited to serve as volunteers, and adult volunteers of all ages will be needed to help ensure our program is a success!

Visit ELPC.church for more details and registration forms for campers and volunteers.

Anthony Brown in Concert

ELPC’s *Cathedral Concerts* series will present *I Go On Singing: Paul Robeson’s Life in Word and Song* by Anthony Brown, baritone, on **Sun., March 5**, 3 pm.

I Go On Singing tells Paul Robeson’s story in his own words, using many first-hand accounts from his autobiography, *Here I Stand*. The multi-media musical documentary traces his humble beginnings as a preacher’s son in Princeton, New Jersey, to his international celebrity as an advocate for peace and justice.



The performance will bring music and history alive with equal parts documentary and live concert experience. Musical numbers range from spirituals to Broadway, and include Robeson’s original arrangements of favorites like “Wade in the Water,” “Ol’ Man River,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” “Water Boy,” and many others.

The concert is free, but a freewill offering will be received. Contact Dr. Ed at EdM@coh.net for details.