



Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

March 2023

Celebrating Gifts of Women Sunday



Adoration, Daniel Bonnell

March 8 is International Women's Day—a day to celebrate the gifts of women and to name the inequities experienced by women across the globe.

We will join this celebration and observance in worship on **Sun., March 5**. Pastor Heather will be preaching, and our worship will both celebrate the gifts of women in our church and beyond, and speak to our need to continue our work of gender justice.

Lenten Devotionals are Now Available



This Lent, ELPC's Faith Formation Board is excited to offer Salt Project's *Bless the Mess* devotional. Each week leading up to Easter has its own set of illustrated cards: each Sunday outlines a simple candlelight service, including a confession, words from scripture, a meditation, and a blessing; then there are five cards for each week that feature simple, engaging daily practices to try as we travel the road to the empty tomb.

From caring for God's creation to fighting for racial justice and equality, the devotional's themes and activities are both accessible and challenging. Conversation starters over tea, "things to remember," and concrete daily practices round out this resource, helping to ensure that this Lent, we connect with each other, work toward repairing God's world, and look ahead to the new life of Easter morning.

Lent is a journey of transformation—and transformative journeys can be messy. We will engage these devotionals in worship together, and through opportunities for community and conversation throughout Lent. Check the weekly bulletin announcements and news flashes for more details.

Devotionals are available at the church and online at tiny.cc/elpc-lent. To have a copy mailed to you, call Megan Leisher at 412.441.3800 x222.

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Being Human

March 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
March 12 Rev. Brian Wallace
March 19 Rev. BJ Woodworth
March 26 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

March 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
March 12 Rev. Brian Wallace
March 19 Rev. BJ Woodworth
March 26 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Worshiping with the Rev. Brian Wallace

On **Sun., March 12**, we're pleased to welcome the Rev. Brian Wallace as our guest preacher for our Journey and Sanctuary services.



Brian has served in ministry since 2003 and currently serves as Associate Minister and Acting Head of Staff of Pittsburgh Presbytery. In

this role, he resources and supports leaders and congregations throughout the Pittsburgh area.

He is passionate about seeing ministry leaders fulfill their God-given callings and has a special spot in his heart for middle and high school students. He is married to Renee, who is on staff at Crestfield Camp and Conference Center, and together, they have two kids in grades 8 and 9.

East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

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Pastoral Message

The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Mission Ministries



During the month of March, Pastors Heather, BJ, and I will be preaching on the theme of “Being Human.” There’s an old saying that says, “To err is human. To forgive is divine.” As I write this pastoral message, I must admit that last month, our collective failure to acknowledge Black History Month in the newsletter was an oversight. Yet, once our omission was discovered, initially, I decided that the omission was okay. However, as the month progressed, I felt ashamed that as a Black woman and descendant of African people, I did not ensure that we acknowledged and celebrated the historical and present-day accomplishments and contributions that my siblings of African descent who were formerly enslaved, died for.

You may ask, why was I initially okay with the omission? And my answer is simple and succinct, Black history is American history! I am offended that the shortest month in the year is designated to educate people about Black people who sacrificed, labored, and gave their lives to build this country. As I watched or heard Black history moments throughout the month, I realized that an opportunity to educate was missed. I realized that if the stories and history of Black or African American people go untold, then we continue to perpetuate the myth that Black people have not contributed to the economic, social, cultural, and political structures and institutions in this country. Everyone knows that the enslavement of African people is what made it possible for this country to be one of the wealthiest in the world.

I have grappled with the fact that being human means that I am not perfect, much less divine. I make mistakes. I forget things. I am opinionated. I can be stubborn. That’s our collective human condition. The Lenten season is a perfect time to honestly admit we are not perfect, to lament, and to divinely forgive ourselves for our actions/inactions, attitudes, and behaviors that do not represent who we are in the sight of God—Beloved.

In *Falling Upward*, Richard Rorh writes, “Most of us were taught that God would love us if and when we change. In fact, God loves you so that you can change. What empowers change, what makes you desirous of change is the experience of love. It is that inherent experience of love that becomes the engine of change.”

I have forgiven myself for not including an acknowledgment of Black History Month in the February newsletter. I forgive myself daily for not always behaving as beloved by God. And every day, I remind myself that because I am loved by God, I am already changed. In this Lenten season, I invite each of you to remind yourself of the same.

Blessings and love,

Mission Matters

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

Taking Action on Stronger Soot Pollution Standards

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently proposing to tighten regulations on soot—a mix of metals, organic chemicals, and acidic substances in particles that are so small, they can be inhaled deeply into our lungs and enter our bloodstreams. Emitted by power plants and the tailpipes of cars and trucks, soot's health burden falls most heavily on communities of color and the poor. Children; the elderly; and people with asthma, other respiratory, and heart conditions are particularly vulnerable.



Enacting the strongest limit could save 19,000 lives a year! We need to tell the EPA to develop the strongest possible soot standard to ensure clean air. Interfaith Power and Light, a faith-based environmental group, has a letter on soot that you can send to the EPA at tiny.cc/epa-letter.

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee invites you to act to protect our climate and our health, and advance environmental justice. Join us in the Garth Overlook Room following worship on **Sun., March 19**, to learn more and sign a petition. Assistance also will be available to help you submit a comment through the EPA website. Comments to the EPA are due by Tues., March 28.

Faith and Climate Action

People of faith are inspired to act on climate issues for a multitude of reasons.

- If your religious experience is strongly connected to the sanctity of God's creation, you will likely feel compelled to defend the natural world from the destruction that results from climate damage.
- If peacemaking is a primary expression of your faith, you may be alarmed at the various ways in which climate change is sowing conflict over scarce resources.
- If the alleviation of poverty is central to your faith, you may be concerned about how the poor are being hit the hardest by pollution and severe weather, yet have the fewest resources to cope with such obstacles.
- If overcoming racism is a core aspect of your faith journey, you need not look far to witness climate injustice, such as racial disparities in childhood asthma rates or the inequitable response to disaster that often occurs when communities of color are the primary victims.
- If your faith is driven by a passion to care for the next generation, nothing threatens our children's wellbeing more than an unstable climate.

Whatever your faith journey and motivation, climate change is our shared responsibility as people of faith.

Reparations: A Conversation with Bethel AME

Join Bethel AME Church from the Hill District in the ELPC Social Hall following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., March 12**, to hear about Bethel's ongoing journey toward restitution for the theft of their land and wealth.

Following a presentation by Bethel and partner churches, we will discuss the theological and ethical call to reparations, drawing from the book *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* by Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson.

A light lunch will be served, and the conversation will begin at 1 pm.

You also may join online via Zoom at tiny.cc/d7l4vz. Enter meeting ID **834 5725 3071** and passcode **257920**.

Malawi 2023: 33 Years of Partnership

After a hiatus necessitated by Covid, a delegation of the Pittsburgh Presbytery International Partnership will travel to Malawi March 8–23, worship, serve, and pray with our beloved partner churches in the Synod of Blantyre.

ELPC's own Eddie Willson, who serves as the moderator of the Presbytery International Partnership, will be joined on this journey by: Theodore Martin; Michael Stanton; Jamaal White, Jason Martin, Jr.; Carol Lasch; Daniele Ratleffe; Tyler Domske; Laniya Simmons-Brown; Theodore Towns; Elijah Stanton; and David Carver. Eddie also will travel to meet with our siblings in South Sudan for several days as well.

Please pray for safe travels, good health, and a time of joyous reconnection and communion for the Pittsburgh delegation and for our partners in Malawi and South Sudan.

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

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.”

—Song of Songs 8:6

For March, we continue to read from the Psalms and Philippians, finish the Song of Songs, and resume selected Hebrew Scriptures referencing “A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church” by Wilda Gafney. All these readings offer transformative paths of steadfast love, faithfulness, and justice for daily life. They encourage us in the mutuality and friendship of God in Christ. Come join the journey!

March 5: Psalm 19; Song of Songs 7:10–8:4; Philippians 1:12–26

March 12: Psalm 20; Song of Songs 8:5–14; Philippians 1:27–2:11

March 19: Psalm 21; Genesis 3:1–7; Philippians 2:12–18

March 26: Psalm 22:1–15; Genesis 3:8–21; Philippians 2:19–3:1a

Parenting Circle | Room 213

Facilitator: Trish Buben

March: 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

March: The Servant of the Lord

Scripture passages for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday of Holy Week are the four Servant Songs from Isaiah. They all deal with the Servant of the Lord, a mysterious figure whose mission involves not only the deliverance of Israel, but also the transformation of the world.

Christian readers have long seen the Servant of the Lord as foreshadowing Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:3; Acts 8:32–35; 1 Peter 2:22–25), an understanding that may well go back to Jesus himself. But this does not mean that the prophet’s words had no meaning for his own time or people—or that they do not address us as well. We will consider how we, too, are called to walk in the way of the servant of the Lord.

This month, the Rev. Dr. Steven S. Tuell will be with us, in person, for these considerations of Isaiah:

March 5: “The Way of Humility”—Isaiah 42:1–9

March 12: “The Way of Obedience”—Isaiah 49:1–7

March 19: “The Way of Discipleship”—Isaiah 50:4–11

March 26: “The Way of Suffering”—Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Bibles are needed and will be available, but feel free to bring your own.

The Rev. Dr. Steven S. Tuell is the James A. Kelso Professor emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS). He earned his doctorate in Hebrew Bible at Union Theological Seminary. Rev. Dr. Tuell is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, and he has written numerous books and articles on the Hebrew Bible, and recently completed a book, titled *The Prophets: Introducing Israel’s Prophetic Literature*.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

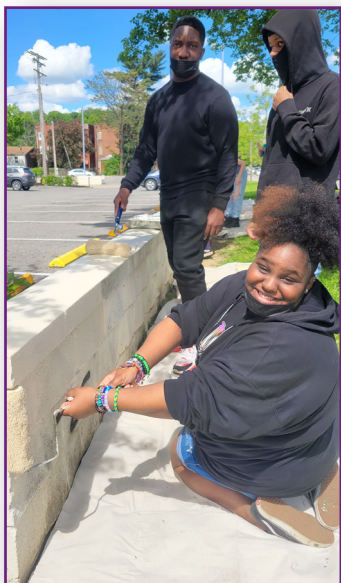
March: Made for Goodness

We will conclude discussing *Made for Goodness*, by Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho Tutu, covering chapters 8–11.

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

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry



Sat.–Sun., March 4–5: Spring Overnight Retreat

Hey, youth in grades 6–12! Did you love the 30–Hour Famine? Then you will LOVE our Spring Overnight Retreat. This year's theme is **Treasure Hunt**, and we'll meet Saturday, 5 pm, until Sunday, 10:45 am. Join us for an EPIC treasure hunt at ELPC where games, food, Bible Study, worship, and service are all a part of the adventure! Register online at ELPC.church.

Sat.–Sun., March 25–26: Tween Retreat

Youth in grades 4–6 are invited to join us at Crestfield Camp in Slippery Rock. We will meet at ELPC on Saturday, 8 am, and return on Sunday, 12 pm. Register online at ELPC.church.

Fri.–Sat., April 21–22: Mission Overnight

Youth in grades 8–12 are invited to join us for our Mission Overnight. Look for more information at ELPC.church.

For more information on youth events, please contact Sara at SaraH@coh.net.



Save the Dates for Our Summer Mission Trips

Middle School Mission Trip July 5–8

Youth in grades 6–8 will be heading to Crestfield Camp for summer camp fun and volunteer work in the Slippery Rock area. This four-day trip is a great way to experience how time away that is focused on loving God and loving others can help us grow in hope, faith, and love.

High School Mission Trip August 6–11

Youth in grades 8–12 will be serving with North Street Mission in Wooster, Ohio. We'll cook up breakfast every morning and volunteer with a variety of groups in the afternoon to learn what God is up to in the small town of Wooster, and how our faith might be strengthened by the good work happening there!

Participants in our High School Mission Trip must attend our Mission Overnight, April 21–22, and participate in three ELPC service projects throughout the year.



Youth Acolytes are Needed

We're looking for youth in grades 4–12 who would like help lead worship as acolytes!

There will be a training session for new acolytes and those who'd like a refresher following worship on **Sun., March 19**.

Talk to Sara Hackett to sign up.



Make Connections

The ELPC Connections Group invites you to Gretchen Chapman's house to play board games on **Sat., March 11**, 7–9 pm. 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.

April Fool's Paradise

Don't miss a wonderful way to spend April Fool's Day, **Sat., April 1**. Attend a yoga retreat, 9 am–2 pm, with Yamuna Morgenstern, which promises to nourish your body, mind, and spirit! The retreat will provide opportunities for yoga; pranayama (breath work for meditation); time for reflection where participants might walk the labyrinth, journal, or draw; a catered lunch together; and experiencing kirtan.

Kirtan is an ancient practice of call and response chanting in Sanskrit. It is both a meditative and uplifting, lively practice that connects you with your true self and the divine. A special guest and artist of kirtan, Devananda Moreau, will lead us. People who only wish to experience kirtan are welcome to attend from 1–2 pm, free of charge.



Please bring your own mat (or two), a yoga block if you have one, your own blanket for savasana and meditation and a water bottle.

Sports are limited to 15 participants. Register online at tiny.cc/yoga-retreat. The suggested donation is \$35–\$70, which includes lunch. Scholarships are available. For details, contact Pastor BJ at BJW@coh.net.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: Sabbath and Self Care
Mon., March 6 7–8:30 pm (Zoom only)
Tues., March 7 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

The woman who had a “disabling spirit” for 18 years (Luke 13:10–21) will be our guide as we explore “Sabbath and Self Care.” This unnamed woman teaches us the importance of simply being present. Jesus extends mercy to her in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and she is freed from her disability. She responds by glorifying God.

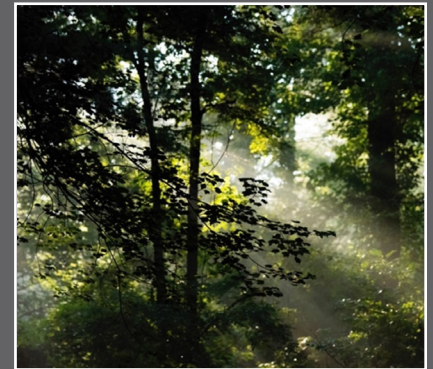


At the end of the day, “Sabbath” is about honoring God. Sabbath makes room for self-care and blesses it. This lesson is an opportunity for us to reorient ourselves, as Christians, toward God.

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.

Spring Solstice Forest Bathing

Join us at Dark Hollow Woods Park in Verona on **Sat., March 18**, 12–2 pm, for a peaceful Forest Bathing walk as we enjoy the magic at the beginning of spring. We will meander in the woods and look for signs of awakening life. Slowing down will give us a chance to notice the little changes popping up to signal the coming of warmer weather.



We are limited to 10 participants. Please RSVP to Sandi Miller at samellaannmiller@gmail.com by **Sun., March 12**.

Dress appropriately for the weather and bring an umbrella if rain is expected. The trail may be muddy in places. Parking is limited, so please carpool.

Dark Hollow Woods Park is located at Pennsylvania Ave. and Crystal Dr., Verona, PA 15147.

Attaining Resurrection Contemplative Retreat

Save the dates, **Fri.–Sun., May 5–7**, for an Exploring Resurrection Contemplative Retreat at the Villa Maria Retreat Center in Pulaski, Pennsylvania. Details forthcoming.

Pastoral Transition Update

At a Congregational Meeting on January 29, the ELPC congregation elected the following persons to serve on the Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC): (*top row, left to right*) Douglas Booth, William Buchanan, David Carl, Andrea DeVries, James Eng, (*bottom row, left to right*) Linda Lane, Rebecca McGregor, Polly McQueen, and Antwone Wright.



Please hold the PNC in your prayers as they are oriented to their important work on behalf of our church.



LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Sun., March 19: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm

All are invited to our LGBTQ Ministry's next monthly Spiritual Gathering to share conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcomed.

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

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

Save the Dates for the RCC Cabaret



RENAISSANCE
CITY CHOIR

The Renaissance City Choir (RCC) will hold its annual Cabaret at ELPC on:

Fri., March 24 | 7:30 pm

Sat., March 25 | 7:30 pm

Sun., March 26 | 2 pm

This year's show is ***Flying Free with RCC***, a fun combination of solos, ensembles, and full chorus with bird-themed music! Ticketing and more information will be available in March at RCCpittsburgh.com.

RCC is Western Pennsylvania's only LGBTQIA+ and ally choral organization, and rehearses and performs at ELPC.

Sunday Social Hour

The ELPC Session invites you to a Social Hour following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., March 19**.

All are welcome!

Session News

In February, ELPC's Session:

- Approved the 2023 budget,
- Voted to utilize the CAT Scan—a congregational assessment tool for churches in transition—as a part of our transition process, and
- Received a report and first read of a proposal from the Reparations Ministry Team.

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: **Maggie Buck; Kimberly McCoy-O'Donnell & Mark O'Donnell; and Collyn O'Donnell & Jameson O'Donnell**, and their children **Annie and William**.

Prayers

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

- Elmer Harkema's mother, Marion Joseph Harkema
- Peta Harrigan-Cole's uncle, Patrick Harrigan
- Jo Ellen Alleshire's brother-in-law
- Martha Mannix's mother

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

Spring Forward

Daylight Savings Time will begin on **Sun., March 12**. Remember to set your clocks forward by one hour.

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.

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.

