

Sundays at ELPC

On Sundays this month, we will celebrate various aspects of *Being Church Together*, during our Sanctuary services at 11 am.

- Although we will not meet on **Sun., May 7**, as the church is inaccessible because of the route of the Pittsburgh Marathon, ELPC is holding a retreat that weekend, sponsored by the Spiritual Life Committee (registration is closed).
- On **Sun., May 14**, those who were elected to serve as ELPC Elders and Deacons will be ordained and/or installed to ministry.
- On **Sun., May 21**, we will celebrate Youth Sunday—a service that will be planned and led by the youth of ELPC, and in which we will hear messages from our graduating Seniors.
- On **Sun., May 28**, we will celebrate Pentecost—when Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide and equip the Church universal for our ministry in Christ's name.

Please plan on joining us for these special services—and be sure to wear red on Pentecost!

Help Shape ELPC's Future

As part of our ongoing transition and discernment process at ELPC, we are engaging with and utilizing the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT), an online survey, to help the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and the Session gauge the strength, vitality, and trends in our church. The information gained from this assessment will be valuable in guiding us as we work together to set a course for the future of our congregation—including our search for new pastoral leadership.

All members, friends, and active participants in the life of our congregation are strongly encouraged to participate. The answers are anonymous to allow for your candid feedback. Please complete the survey by **Wed., May 31**, at surveymonkey.com/r/EASTLIBERTYPCPA.

If you need a paper copy of the survey, please contact the PNC. If you need computer support, laptops will be available after Sanctuary worship on Sun., May 14 & 21, for individuals who do not have ready access to a computer, have questions, or need assistance on the process.

Sincerely,

Doug Booth, Bill Buchanan, David Carl, Andrea DeVries, Jim Eng, Linda Lane, Rebecca McGregor, Polly McQueen, and Antwone Wright

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Being Redeemed

May 7 No Service

May 14* Rev. BJ Woodworth

May 21 Youth Sunday

May 28 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

May 7 No Service

May 14* Rev. BJ Woodworth

May 21 Youth Sunday

May 28 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

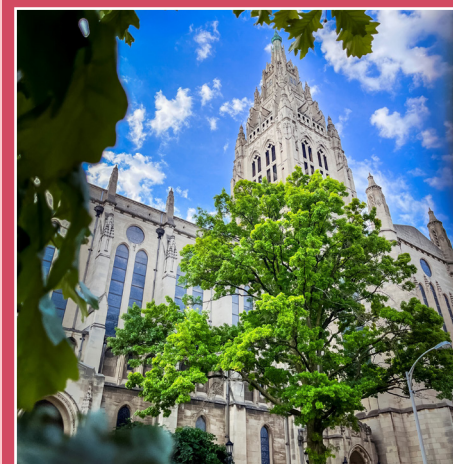
Rev. BJ Woodworth

Summer Worship Schedule Begins June 4

We will begin our summer worship schedule on **Sun., June 4**, with one Sunday service at 10 am. And we'll be heading outside to the Courtyard (weather permitting).

This early service will continue through Labor Day weekend, and will feature monthly communion and lively music.

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



East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

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The Rev. BJ Woodworth

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East Liberty
Presbyterian Church

www.ELPC.church

Pastoral Message

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life, Taizé, and Transitional Ministries



I love questions. Questions open us up, cause us to search and look deeper or wider than perhaps we would normally turn our gaze. They turn up the soil, they expand our horizons, and they open portals into new dimensions. Questions invite power sharing, honor the individual and are provocative and disarming. **Questions** send us on a **quest**. Jesus knew the transformative power of questions and utilized their incisive edges quite often. In fact, I've been told he asked at least, 325 questions, 236 of them were unique. "What do you want me to do for you?"

"What do you think?" "Who do you say that I am?" "Do you love me?" "Do you want to made well?" Which one of Jesus' questions is your favorite?

What questions are you asking in this season of your own life? What questions are you asking in this season of the life of East Liberty Presbyterian Church? How would you categorize the season of life that we are in? What do you long to see happen? What are you grieving, hoping for, and working towards? What part are you playing in helping live into the questions we are asking? How do you want to use your gifts, talents, and passions to envision and build the next chapter of ELPC?

Doubts are also a form of questions. Perhaps this is why I love Thomas? While Thomas never asked a direct question, he was present to his doubts, grief, wonderings, and curiosities, all implicit questions. Perhaps he wondered: why Jesus left them or how God could have let Jesus' death happen at all, or how it was possible that Jesus was physically alive or if the others were lying, among a myriad of other questions. Regardless, he stayed present to his doubts and questions in the context of his community. He kept seeking and asking. What about you? What doubts do you have? What do you need to "touch and see" so that God can help your unbelief about our current season?

Perhaps one of my all-time favorite quotes comes from the Ranier Marie Rilke, where he is offering advice to a young poet.

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

May God grant us the patience, creativity, and grace to live the questions of this season of our church and gradually live into their answers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "BJ Woodworth".

Mission Matters

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

Pride Month Opportunities

Join the ELPC Justice Committee for a **Pride History Presentation on Sun., May 28**, following Sanctuary worship. A light lunch will be provided. This presentation will be led by Jason Van Ness and will examine the LGBTQIA+ equal rights movement and Pride events over the past 50 years. The presentation will highlight key social and political events that have dovetailed with Pride events in the past, and considerations for organizing efforts moving forward. Following the presentation, there will be a panel discussion with LGBTQIA+ clergy in the Greater Pittsburgh region, who will discuss the future of Christianity and the LGBTQIA+ community.



Our congregation is a proud participant in LAMP (LGBTQIA+ Affirming Ministries of Pittsburgh), along with other affirming Presbyterian Churches in Pittsburgh. We are excited to again celebrate Pride in Pittsburgh.

While there are many Pride events sponsored by different groups and in different neighborhoods, the two Pride events LAMP will be participating in this year are:

- **Pittsburgh Pride March and Parade**, coordinated by QBurgh on behalf of Trans YOUning and the Pittsburgh Pride Group on **Sat., June 3**, in downtown and the North Shore.
- We also will participate in **People's Pride PGH March and Festival on Sun., June 25**, in Swissvale.

Keep a lookout for more details that will be posted near the Highland entrance monitor, including parade maps and times. Come out and celebrate while we share God's love with all of God's people!

Tending Our Neighborhood Trees



Once again, ELPC's Environmental Team of the Justice Committee and Tree Pittsburgh invite you to help us weed and mulch street trees on Penn Ave. in East Liberty on **Sat., June 3**, 9 am–12 pm. This is your chance to show some love for our human and leafy neighbors, and the fellowship makes it fun!

This year, in coordination with Sara Hackett, we plan to include young people. The minimum age is 10; anyone under 18 needs to have a parent or chaperone. We'll learn about trees and tree care from our Tree Pittsburgh expert, Jake Milofsky. Did you know trees cool temperatures, filter air pollution, and absorb storm water and CO₂? And they have been shown to have a calming effect on humans—have you ever noticed how you just feel better on a street with trees?

We will meet at the Whitfield side of ELPC. Dress for the weather in clothes you don't mind getting dirty, and don't forget sunscreen. Equipment, mulch, and work gloves will be provided, as well as drinking water and snacks.

Hope to see you there! Please RSVP for planning purposes by **Mon., May 29**, to Mary Barr at empirephobic@gmail.com.

It's Marathon Season

Open Hand Ministries (OHM), one of ELPC's mission organizations, reports that 39+ runners are registered to **RUN for a REASON** and support OHM during the Pittsburgh Marathon on **Sun., May 7!** Nine participants are from ELPC. Those with fleet feet are exercising, stretching, and practice-running so they are ready for **Marathon Day**. They have done their part. Now we are inviting you, members and friends, to support them as they raise needed funds for OHM.

One *REASON* they run is to repair historical gaps in home ownership between Black and white families in Pittsburgh. One *REASON* is because OHM-rehabbed homes are made of quality materials and workmanship, energy-efficient and beautiful. One *REASON* is because OHM builds a nurturing community and creates a successful path to financial independence. Just ask any runner what their *REASON* is—and support your favorites!

You can search for a name or donate directly to OHM by visiting tinyurl.com/Marathon-OHM-Page or scanning the QR code. Donations are accepted through Wed., May 31.



Want to do more? Mark your calendar now for the first weekend in May 2024 and register to run yourself! Thank you for your support.

Christian Education

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

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

No Classes on Marathon Sunday

There will be no Church School classes on **Sun., May 7**, due to the route of the Pittsburgh Marathon. Classes will resume for learners of all ages on **Sun., May 14**.

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: Jan Lyle Irvin and class members

“Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.”

—Isaiah 44:8

For May, we continue to read from the first book of the Psalms, the Gospel of Mark, and selected Hebrew Scriptures referencing *A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church* by Wilda Gafney. These readings offer transformative paths of steadfast love, faithfulness, and justice for daily life. They encourage us for a life of mutuality and the friendship of God in Christ. Come join the journey!

May 14: Psalm 25; Deuteronomy 28:58–68; Mark 9:2–13

May 21: Psalm 26; Deuteronomy 29:10–15; Mark 9:14–29

May 28: Psalm 27; Isaiah 44:1–8; Mark 9:30–50

Parenting Circle | Room 213

Facilitator: Trish Buben

April: 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; Contact: Sara Hackett

May 14: Call It Grace: Finding Meaning in a Fractured World

The Rev. Dr. Serene Jones is the first woman to be president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She occupies the Johnston Family Chair for Religion and Democracy. She is a past president of the American Academy of Religion, and was professor of Theology at the Divinity School at Yale University for 17 years.

In this video, she will discuss her latest book *Call It Grace: Finding Meaning in a Fractured World*.

May 21: Womanist Midrash (commentary):

A Reintroduction to Women of the Torah and of the Throne

This video is by womanist biblical scholar, the Rev. Wilda Gafney, Ph.D. She is a professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. She is the author of books, such as *A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church*, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to Women of the Torah and of the Throne*, *Daughters of Miriam: Women Prophets in Ancient Israel*; and co-editor of *The Peoples’ Bible* and *The Peoples’ Companion to the Bible*. She is an Episcopal priest canonically resident in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, a former Army chaplain, and congregational pastor in the AME Zion Church.

May 28: Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: Celtic Wisdom for Reawakening Our Souls (Part 1)

Dr. John Philip Newell is a Celtic teacher and author who calls the modern world to reawaken to the sacredness of Earth and every human being.

In this video, he discusses his latest book *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: Celtic Wisdom for Reawakening to What Our Souls Know and Healing the World*. He discusses “the ‘sacredness of the newborn’ as preferable to the doctrine of original sin; how we ‘forget who we are, made of God;’ and that ‘we need grace to restore us to the sacredness of our nature.’”

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

May 14, 21, & 28: Dancing in the Darkness

We will be discussing *Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times*, by Otis Moss III.

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

Wed., May 17: Family Picnic at club one sixteen

Join us for our last Wednesday of **club one sixteen** for the school year. Families are invited to join us that night for bowling, games, and a picnic dinner starting at 4:30 pm. We hope you can join us in celebrating a wonderful year together.

Sun., May 21: Youth Sunday

Youth have been busy planning worship for Youth Sunday, May 21, and we would love to have all our teens involved. Please join us at Church School on Sun., May 14, or reach out to Sara if you or your teen would like to participate in the planning or leading of Youth Sunday.

Sun., May 28: Family Church School on Pentecost

This is our third and final Sunday Church School class of the year for the WHOLE family. Together, we will learn about the church calendar and the colors of the church year with an emphasis on why we wear red on Pentecost. Come explore together how the Holy Spirit is on the move at Pentecost and throughout the year!

A Summer of Mission



Middle School Mission Trip | July 5–8

Youth in grades 6–8 are heading to Crestfield for summer camp fun in the evenings—like canoeing, swimming, and rock climbing—and will volunteer with a number of great organizations in the Slippery Rock area during the day. 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. Register online at [ELPC.church](https://www.elpc.church).



High School Mission Trip | August 6–11

Youth in grades 8–12 are serving with North Street Mission in Wooster, Ohio. Together, we'll serve 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 the High School summer mission trip must meet certain requirements, including participating in three service projects with ELPC throughout the year. Register online at [ELPC.church](https://www.elpc.church).

Explore ELPC

ELPC tours are back up and running! Interested in learning more about our church building? Join us in the Highland Lobby following Sanctuary worship on the following dates:

- Sun., May 14: Tower Tour
- Sun., May 28: Sanctuary/Chapel
- Sun., June 11: Tower Tour
- Sun., June 25: Hidden Places



Fridays in The Garden

On Good Friday, Jesus was buried in a garden. The first person to encounter the risen Christ was Mary Magdalene. At first, Mary thought Jesus was the gardener. What a beautiful mistake. But make no mistake, on **Fri., May 12**, 9 am–noon, the Environmental Team and Gardening Crew will meet for a workday in the Rain Garden. Join as you are able for a morning of weeding, mulching, and fellowship. The group plans to meet every second Friday, May–September.



The Rain Garden stretches along Penn and Whitfield Aves. and is a specially designed part of our church's landscape that collects the considerable runoff from our church's massive surface area and allows it to soak into the ground rather than flood the sewers and streets. The trees and shrubs were selected with care for this purpose. They also help to filter out the pollutants in runoff and provide habitat for songbirds and wildlife, especially important as green spaces have dwindled. ELPC received grant funding to install the rain garden, because of its benefits to the environment, but it's up to us to maintain it along with the rest of the church grounds.

If you are inspired by God's beautiful creation, join us for our second Friday workdays! Green thumbs are not required—just bring your energy, curiosity, and commitment to our church and community.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: Sabbath and Community

Mon., May 1 7–8:30 pm (Zoom only)

Tues., May 2 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

We conclude our bible study, Celebrating Sabbath, with an account of the first Christian community in Acts 2. Those first recipients of the Holy Spirit were “devout Jews from every nation under heaven.” Their community “had all things in common” and distributed the proceeds of the possessions “to all, as any had need.” Their daily activities included typical Sabbath activities—spending time together in the temple, breaking bread at home and eating their food with glad and generous hearts. They also spent their time in study, worship and prayer.

This first Christian community looks a lot like the “Reign of God” Jesus described and Dr. King's “beloved community.” In this community, we will learn to live together in our diversity, a rich tapestry of the many faces of the family of 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.



Greetings from the Women's Guild at Balaka CCAP

Good news from the Women's Guild at Balaka CCAP (Mvano)! The Guild—which cares for the orphans, among other ministries—continues to grow. This year, 32 women registered for the two-year class to become members.

Balaka CCAP, our Malawi sister church, also is growing, now with three prayer houses! They also have added an associate minister.

Balaka CCAP continues to pray for ELPC.

Consider How the Wildflowers Grow

Please make plans to join the Garden Crew on **Sat., May 20**, for our annual flower planting day at ELPC. Each spring, a group of dedicated members and friends refresh the Highland Ave. entrance with beautiful flowering plants, so it is vibrant and welcoming, and the Courtyard, so it is a lovely setting for summer weddings and worship. Green thumbs are not required—just bring your energy, curiosity, and a pair of work gloves to the Highland driveway around 9 am. Donuts and Garden Crew T-shirts will be provided.



If you're able to help, or would like to learn more, please email Don Breitbarth at donbreitbarth@gmail.com.

“Consider how the wildflowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.”—Luke 12:27

A Message from Your PNC

We have been hard at work in the first phase of our pastor search process. During this phase, we will be asking you as participants in this body of faith to help us discern who we are as a church community. To do this, we will be releasing the Congregation Assessment Tool, or CAT Scan. You will have opportunities later this spring to answer questions about what is important to you at ELPC. We will prayerfully use the information each of you share with us to recommend someone who can lead ELPC to grow as a Matthew 25 church. Be on the lookout for more information on the CAT Scan and how you can take part.

We are grateful for your continued prayers and support through this process and look forward to seeing the direction God is leading us through this period of transition.

Grace and Peace,

—Rebecca McGregor

ELPC Pastor Nominating Committee Members: Doug Booth, Bill Buchanan, David Carl, Andrea DeVries, Jim Eng, Linda Lane (Chair), Rebecca McGregor (Secretary), Polly McQueen, Antwone Wright

LGBTQIA+ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQIA+ Ministry



Sharing God's Love at Pittsburgh Pride

Look for a number of opportunities to reflect God's love to members of the LGBTQIA+ community as ELPC celebrates Pittsburgh Pride 2023. Details coming soon!

Sun., May 14: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm
Join us at our LGBTQ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering to share conversation and lunch! Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcome.

Contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x218**, for more details or if you would like to attend.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

The Chapel Market Expands Hours

The Chapel Market is now open on the first and third Tuesday of each month, 5–7 pm, as well as every Thursday, 10 am–12 pm.

Donations of spring and summer clothing, especially children's clothes are needed and can be left at the Highland Lobby, or dropped off at the Chapel Market during hours of operation.

Session News

At the April Session meeting:

- Newly elected officers were examined and approved for ordination and installation
- New members were received
- Motions were heard and acted on from the Property Committee; Worship, Music, and the Arts Committee; and the Facing Systemic Racism Committee's 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

Congratulations to ELPC member **Jason Van Ness** who received the 2023 *Leadership and Service Award* from the Graduate & Professional Student Government at the University of Pittsburgh.

Prayers

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

- Ruth Henderson
- Jeff Walaski
- Gretchen Chapmen's mother

"Blessed are those who die in the Lord, says the Spirit. They rest from their labors and their works follow them."

“...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.”

Building Closure

The ELPC building will be closed on **Memorial Day, Mon., May 29.**

ELPC Matters: The More You Know About Times, Cycles and Seasons of Transition

As we journey through this time of transition at ELPC, it is important to know that the changes and transitions we are going through are normal and even good and healthy. In fact, all organisms and organizations go through periods and cycles of life and death, fruitfulness, and dormancy—and even Jesus says death and letting go are necessary for new life to come. This is often difficult for humans and organizations who operate out of a more mechanistic mindset. So how can we navigate these seasons with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love amidst the change and feelings of instability? It is our hope and belief that this transition can propel us to revitalize, renew and redevelop for the hopeful and vibrant future at ELPC.

Join Pastor BJ on **Sun., April 30**, 9:45–10:45 am, in the Social Hall for a time of teaching, reflection, and conversation as we seek to navigate this time at ELPC together.

There's Still Time to Register for VCS

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.

Please register your child now, as spots are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

And we're looking for teens and adult volunteers to help make our program a success!

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