



Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

November 2023

2024 Stewardship Campaign

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”—Jeremiah 29:11

Guided by the profound words of the prophet Jeremiah, we are reminded in this transitional season that God has a plan for ELPC and for all who are served by the witness and work of our congregation. Even in this liminal time, we continue to offer a safe and inviting space

for all—for youth engaged in deep arts education and for siblings seeking asylum in the U.S. Friendships, community, and love are nurtured; worship remains dynamic; our mission ministries partner with organizations locally and abroad to meet health and housing needs for our neighbors...

You can help us respond to God’s call to make a positive difference in the lives of others. We give as an expression of our faith, an outpouring of our love, and a testament to our commitment to God’s plan.

On **Stewardship Sunday, Nov. 12**, you are invited to bring your pledge cards forward as an act of faith and hope during both services. We have a goal of 175 pledging units for 2024, and invite you to consider making a pledge in ANY amount. Your gift is a testament to the shared values of faith, hope, and compassion that guide ELPC—and our mission. If you already pledge, we ask that you prayerfully consider increasing your pledge as an investment in the ministry we share together as a family of faith.

Pledge cards are available at the church, online, or by reaching out to Rachelle Calfee at RachelleC@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x234**.

Food Drive for EECM Food Pantry

Many of our neighbors suffer from food insecurity and hunger. In response, the Neighbors Committee is asking everyone in the congregation to participate in a food drive to help stock the shelves at the EECM Food Pantry with plenty of non-perishable foods to distribute to those in our community who are in need. On **Stewardship Sunday, Nov. 12**, please bring your generous food donations along with your pledge card to worship. A list of suggested food items is below:

Breakfast Cereal • Brownie, Cake Mixes, & Toppings • Canned Fruits, Meats, & Vegetables • Cans of Tomato Paste/Sauce • Dried Beans • Instant Potatoes • Jello & Pudding Mixes • Mac & Cheese • Pancake Mix & Syrup • Pasta • Peanut Butter & Jelly • Prepared Sauces • Rice • Soups & Broth • Tuna Fish • Whole Grain Pastas

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord’s Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Seeking a Promised Future
Nov. 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Nov. 12 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
Nov. 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Nov. 26 Rev. BJ Woodworth

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Nov. 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Nov. 12 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
Nov. 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Nov. 26 Rev. BJ Woodworth

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm
Rev. BJ Woodworth

Attend Our Blue Christmas Service

During the holiday season, there is an expectation to be happy and filled with festive joy. Sadly, many people are struggling emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Through loss, heartache, sadness, or grief, some of us have trouble being in the holiday spirit.

ELPC’s Board of Deacons will host our annual Blue Christmas Service on **Fri., Dec. 8**, 7 pm. This special service offers comfort and healing in a time of darkness, and is intended to help people hold onto the nativity message of hope. Everyone is welcome to join us in the Chapel for a meditative time of prayer, reflection, and singing.



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
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The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life,
Taizé, and Transitional Ministries
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Linda Addlespurger

Director of Hope Academy
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Wil Forrest

Coordinator of LGBTQIA+ Ministry
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Sara Hackett

Director of Christian Education
and Youth Ministries
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Dr. Edward Alan Moore

Music Director and Organist
EdM@coh.net | x224

Jim Tinnemeyer

Director of Administration and Facilities
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Rachelle Calfee

RachelleC@coh.net | x234

Megan Leisher

MeganL@coh.net | x222

Norma Meyer

Norma@coh.net | x211



East Liberty
Presbyterian Church

www.ELPC.church

Pastoral Message

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life, Taizé, and Transitional Ministries



As I sit on my front porch and type this letter, I sense fall all around me: afternoon sunlight hitting my face and hands through the now sparse leaves of our river birch, maple leaves releasing like feathers dancing across the sky, crumbled leaves crunching under my feet, and the cooler crisp air wafting across my face. It all reminds me of the poem, *The Sacrament of Letting Go*, by Macrina (you can read it on page 3). Trees as they drop their colorful leaves can teach us to trust the seasons of our lives. They can tutor us in the sacrament

of letting go. They can help us trust and embrace the paschal mystery, of dying and rising. I love how the sunrise and sunset help the tree open to trust that *“her vulnerability; her dependence and need; her emptiness; her readiness to receive; were giving her a new kind of beauty.”*

As I have help lead in this time of transition at ELPC with the Pastoral Nominating Committee, the Session, and our staff, I have wondered what we might be being invited to let go of and surrender. What multi-colored leaves have provided nourishment and shade for ELPC for a time, but now need to fall to the ground and die, composting for something new to arise? I wonder what new life and beauty might emerge. It is difficult to let go, to surrender, to let beautiful and life-giving things go; it is hard to wait in vulnerability, dependence, need and emptiness, simply open to receive. And yet this is where I sense we are, and it is good!

As we gather in the coming month to talk about our various ministries, our budget, our areas of service as deacons and elders, our dreams and visions for the coming years of ELPC, I encourage us to ponder and wonder together what leaves are falling to the ground. Where might we hear an invitation to embrace the sacrament of letting go? How can we open ourselves to the sacrament of letting go? What branches are no longer producing fruit that the gardener might need to cut off? And what branches are producing fruit, but need to be pruned so that they will be even more fruitful (John 15:2)? How might God be inviting us to simply stand and wait for refilling? What does it feel like to stand in vulnerability and emptiness and receive the tenderness of the sunrise and sunset? I for one am excited about this season and sense in many of you an openness to change, renewal, and newness. Amidst the falling leaves, where do you sense the potential for new life emerging? Can you look at the falling leaves and see their beauty and give thanks for their life and at the same time imagine a future that is fresh, different, and even more fruitful than the past? I hope that as you walk past the almost barren trees this month that the Spirit will give you strength to stand in our own “vigil of trust” and prophetic imagination to see the new life emerging in our own sacrament of letting go in the life of ELPC. May it be so!

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*

Support the Holiday Giving Tree

It is that time of the year again for the Deacons annual Giving Tree Ministry. This is an excellent opportunity to assist families this Christmas season and provide children with gifts!

ELPC members, you have always been extremely generous supporting this important ministry. Sign up at tiny.cc/elpc-giving-tree for specific gift requests and to make financial donations to assist with the purchase of retail gift cards. Deacons will be available to assist and answer questions on **Sun., Nov. 19, Nov. 26, and Dec. 3**; and at Taizé on **Wed., Nov. 29**.

Gifts should be dropped off at the church no later than **Sun., Dec. 3**.

Pie Festival Returns November 19



Join us as we give thanks for our many blessings, with the return of our Pie Festival following worship on **Sun., Nov. 19**. Please sign up to bring a pie on the sign up sheet or contact Sarah Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

Sponsored by the Membership and Outreach Committee

ELPC Officer Nominations

The Nominating Committee is seeking your input in its discernment process for upcoming leadership opportunities. The congregation is invited to nominate members of ELPC for the offices of Elder, Deacon, and next year's Nominating Committee. The committee will prayerfully consider all recommendations as they prepare a slate for 3-year terms starting in 2024.

Guidelines for nominations and the nomination form can be accessed online at tiny.cc/elpc-nominations. Printed forms are available at the church.

Completed forms are due by **Sun., Nov. 12**. Please place forms in the offering plate or drop them in the Candidate Suggestion Form Drop Off Box located in the ELPC Mailroom near the security desk at the Highland Entrance.

Officers will be elected at the Congregational Meeting on **Sun., Feb. 25**.

Thank you!

Nominating Committee: Damon Bethea, Michele Bossers, Andrea DeVries, Jessica Gianotta, Bill Johnson, Josh Mattila, Jill Millard

The Sacrament of Letting Go

by Macrina Wiederkehr

Slowly
she celebrated the sacrament of
letting go.

First she surrendered her green,
then the orange, yellow, and red.
Finally she let go of her brown
Shedding her last leaf
She stood empty and silent,
stripped bare.
Leaning against the winter sky
She began her vigil of trust

Shedding her last leaf,
She watched its journey to
the ground.
She stood in silence
wearing the color of emptiness,
Her branches wondering,
How do you give shade with so
much gone?

And then,
the sacrament of waiting began.
The sunrise and sunset watched with
tenderness.
Clothing her with silhouettes
they kept her alive.

They helped her understand that
her vulnerability,
her dependence and need,
her emptiness,
her readiness to receive,
were giving her a new
kind of beauty.

Every morning and every evening
they stood in silence together
the sacrament of waiting!



Christian Education

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

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

Children & Youth

Our children and youth are deeply spiritual people with great theological questions. To foster these gifts and to help students learn the stories, vocabulary, and actions of the Christian life in a loving community, 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: Rev. Henk Bossers

Our class will explore the scripture passages that are represented in our Sanctuary's stained glass windows. The scripture will remain our primary focus as we engage in a discussion around its original and current representation in our windows.

Parenting Circle | Room 213

Facilitator: Trish Buben and other class members

November: Weekly Gatherings

Anyone involved in parenting is welcome to join us. We share experiences, resources, prayer, and scripture as we explore how our faith builds and nourishes our family lives, as well as nurtures our parent/child relationships.

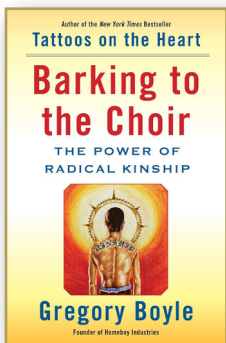
Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

November: Barking to the Choir

A discussion of chapters 6-9 of *Barking to the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship* by Fr. Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries.

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

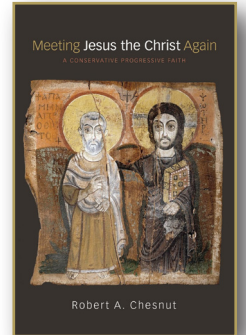


Seekers | Garth Overlook Room & Zoom

Facilitator: Gwen Puza, gpuza9@gmail.com

Nov. 5, 12, & 19: Meeting Jesus the Christ Again: A Conservative Progressive Faith

Pastor Emeritus Rev. Dr. Bob Chesnut was ELPC's senior pastor from 1988-2002. He was the founder of the Seekers class in 1994. In a five-week series, via Zoom, he will discuss his book *Meeting Jesus the Christ Again: A Conservative Progressive Faith*.



Christians have long been divided, but especially these days, over questions such as: Is Christianity basically about following Jesus or believing in his divinity and atoning death? Are we humans fundamentally creatures of original sin or original blessing? Is Jesus basically our teacher and guide or our Lord and Savior? Do only Christians get to heaven? Are Christians called only to individual morality or also to social justice? Dr. Chesnut's book helps us get to both/and rather than either/of thinking about these and other faith issues.

Nov. 5: Chapters 6-8

Nov. 12: Chapter 9-11

Nov. 19: Chapters 12-13, and Appendices A, B, and C

Nov. 26: Overcoming Toxic Fundamentalism

Before becoming one of the most influential Christian authors of our time, with over two dozen books exploring pain, doubt, grace, and hope, Philip Yancey spent years coming to terms with his strict fundamentalist upbringing. In this video interview, he explains how he overcame a crisis of faith, and his thoughts on the current evangelical church.



Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

Sat., Nov. 18: Tween Bowling 4–6 pm

Youth in grades 4–6 are gathering in ELPC's duckpin bowling alley to bowl and eat pizza. Friends are welcome! RSVP to SaraH@coh.net.



Sun., Nov. 19: Family Swim Event 12:30–2:30 pm

The Children and Family Ministry Team is hosting a swim party for families with young kids and elementary-age students at Shaler Elementary School (700 Scott Ave., Glenshaw, PA 15116). Pizza will be provided.

Please RSVP to Sara at SaraH@coh.net so that we can order enough food. If you need transportation from ELPC to the pool, please let Sara know.

Fall Retreat at Lamppost Farms



Our Confirmation Class will be participating in a fall retreat at Lamppost Farms in Columbiana, Ohio, **Sat.–Sun., Nov. 11–12**. And any youth in grades 7–12 who would like to hear and explore some of Jesus' stories about birds, and farmers, and growing grapes are welcome to attend.

Named after the lamppost in the *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lamppost Farm exists to provide meaningful learning opportunities by engaging in purposeful and productive work, contagious

relationships, and the celebration of "good ordinary food." Their goal is to use agriculture and its fruit to build individuals and groups in deeper relationship with themselves, one another, God, and God's creation. Whether raising and processing chickens; growing, making and canning salsa; milking the cow; or turning clay into a pizza oven; experiences at Lamppost Farm enable guests the chance to see with their eyes, hear with their ears, explore with their hands, and understand with their hearts.

Contact Sara at SaraH@coh.net for details. Learn more at LamppostFarm.com.



Mark Your Calendars for Our Christmas Pageant

Our annual Christmas Pageant will be on **Sun., Dec. 10**. Please plan on joining us for this special re-telling of Jesus' birth!

Practice for kids (birth through grade 8) will be on **Sat., Dec. 9, 9:30–11am**.

Young Adult Lunch

All young adults, age 18–30s, are invited to join us for lunch across the street from ELPC at Patron Mexican Grill following our Sanctuary worship service on **Sun., Nov. 5**.

Come to tell and hear stories, make friends, and suggest future young adult events. Friends are welcome!

Questions? Reach out to Sara Hackett at SaraH@con.net.



club one sixteen

Kids and youth in grades 1–12 are invited to **club one sixteen**, our midweek ministry. We gather each Wednesday, 4:30–7 pm, for Bible Study, games, art, & dinner together.

Note: We will not gather on **Wed., Nov. 22**.

For more information, email Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.



Session News

In October, the ELPC Session:

- Heard an update from the PNC as they prepare the Ministry Discernment Profile for ELPC.
- Reviewed ELPC's Year-to-Date financials and discussed plans for establishing the 2024 budget.
- Acted on a request from the Facing Systematic Racism Committee to disburse funds for the Joseph & Jean Kennedy Memorial Scholarship.
- Approved two baptism requests.

PW Thank Offering

Since 1888, Presbyterian Women (PW) have given a "special offering to the Lord" as a tangible expression of gratitude for their many blessings. The PW Thank Offering supports real solutions to needs in health, education, and economic development—especially among women and children.

During this season of Thanksgiving, you are invited to support the PW Thank Offering during worship on **Sun., Nov. 21**. Make checks payable to "Presbyterian Women in ELPC" and write "PW Thank Offering" in the memo line. For more information, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.



Last year's PW Thank Offering is funding seven projects, including Grounded Gardening in St. Louis, Missouri, which invites people with mental health variances to meet God through creation.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: A Bleeding Woman Encounters Christ
Mon., Nov. 6 7–8:30 pm (Zoom Only)

Tues., Nov. 7 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

"Daughter." That is how Jesus addressed the woman who had suffered hemorrhages for 12 years. The healing of this bleeding woman (Luke 8:43–48) is part of a trilogy of sacred encounters that includes the Gerasene demoniac and Jairus's daughter. All three lived on the periphery of Jewish-Galilean society. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." What a blessing!



Those attending in person on Tuesday are invited to bring a bagged lunch. For more information and the Zoom link, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

Register for Our Gratitude Retreat

As we approach Thanksgiving, look towards Advent, and ponder the end of 2023, it is a great time to take a weekend in community with others and slow down, reflect, pause, pray, and "forget not all of God's benefits."

Join us for a Gratitude Retreat at the Villa Maria Retreat Center in Pulaski, Pennsylvania, **Friday–Sunday, November 17–19**.



The retreat will flow in the simple rhythm of **Stop... Look... Go...** We will gather in prayer & reflection and then scatter for time alone and quiet, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Friday night, we will **STOP**, get quiet, be still, and build stop signs in our lives. On Saturday, we will **LOOK**, listen, smell, taste, and hear the richness, notice the connections, drink in the beauty, smell the goodness, and savor what is being graciously given to us in this moment or season of our life. Then on Sunday, we will **GO!** We will ponder what gratitude practices we want to incorporate into our lives so we may stay awake to God's goodness in our everyday, ordinary lives.

RSVP to Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x211** by **Sun., Nov. 5**.

Cost Options:

- Friday–Saturday | Shared Bath @ \$70
- Friday–Saturday | Private Bath @ \$110
- Friday–Sunday | Shared Bath @ \$85
- Friday–Sunday | Private Bath @ \$135

LGBTQIA+ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry



Sun., Nov. 12: Spiritual Gathering

You are invited to attend our LGBTQIA+ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering following our Sanctuary worship service. Join us and share lunch and conversation. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike are welcome!

Questions? Contact Wil Forrest at wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x218.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

News From Your PNC

Dear ELPC Members, Friends and Staff,

As of early October, we completed 12 Listening Sessions: six of them were with Church members, friends, and attendees that included over 50 participants. Two were with the staff, one with members of Session, two with the Sunday School teenagers, and one with our three pastors. We are in a review process to identify prominent trends that reflect the feelings of all who participated. We want to thank everyone who gave their time and honest feedback.

We attended a congregational meeting in September with Session and ELPC members to reflect on the key themes from the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) summary. We thank Session's task force for their work and are grateful for those members who attended the meeting and provided their thoughts.

The next step is huge. We will prayerfully review and consolidate the information from CAT surveys and Listening Sessions to complete the **Ministry Discernment Profile** (MDP). As Andrea mentioned in last month's update, this document will reflect ELPC's mission and vision, as well as what we are seeking in a new pastor. On October 3, Rev. Brian Wallace, associate minister for Emerging Ministries and Pittsburgh Presbytery's acting head of staff, met with our PNC to guide us in completing the profile. This is an intensive undertaking, and we expect (and hope) to complete the profile by January 2024. Once it is completed, we will forward it to our Session and to Presbytery representatives for approvals. Then we will post it online for all interested individuals to consider God's calling to our Church.

Additionally, Pittsburgh Presbytery has assigned us a liaison, Rev. Karen Rohrer, who will assist as needed and be our resource. She has attended two meetings with us (the PNC), and we are blessed to have her counsel and presence.

Stay tuned as we continue to work this fall and please keep our committee and our congregation in your prayers. We are honored and yet much humbled by carrying out such an important job on behalf of God's children at ELPC.

—Jim Eng

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

ELPC People

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

Good News

- Congratulations to **Nicole Marie Cataldo** and **Benjamin George Engelhardt** who were married on September 23.
- Congratulations to **Samantha** and **Amber Gavin** who were married on Saturday, October 14.
- Congratulations to **Pastor Patrice**, who will be honored as the *2023 Urban Hero*, "someone whose contributions have made an immense difference in our community," by the Center for Urban Biblical Ministry. She will be recognized at the Bridges to Brighter Futures Gala on Thurs., Dec. 14, 6:30 pm, at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Monroeville. Seats may be available at the table purchased by the Mission Board. Contact Megan at MeganL@coh.net. Individual tickets may be purchased at Gala.cubm.org.

Thanks

- **Beverly Harris-Schenz** is pleased to announce the publication of her book, *Living while Black: My Experience with Everyday Racism*. She is grateful for her ELPC family's encouragement and support.
- The Board of Deacons would like to thank Presbyterian Women, the Peace Committee, Tracey Almond, and all the members who contributed to our International Lunch on World Communion Sunday! Your generosity made the event a success.

Prayers

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

- Ida Joiner
- Jim Tinnemeyer, his wife Tracey, and their family on the passing of his father-in-law, Douglas Stefanko.

“...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

ELPC will be closed on **Fri., Nov. 10**, in observance of Veterans Day, and **Thurs.–Fri, Nov. 23–24**, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Tulip Planting and Fall Cleanup

Please join the Garden Crew on **Sat., Nov. 11**, for our final volunteer day of 2023. We will remove annual flowers from the Highland entrance, the Courtyard, and the children’s play yard. We also will plant spring tulips at the Highland entrance.

Green thumbs are not required, just bring a generous spirit and a pair of work gloves around 9 am. We will be finished before noon.

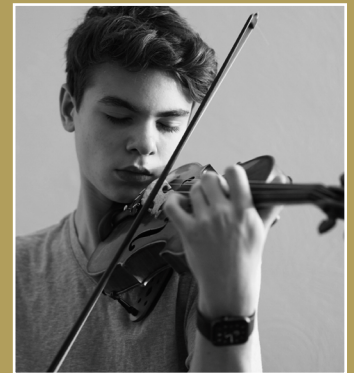
Free donuts and Garden Crew t-shirts for everyone!

Contact Don Breitbarth at donbreitbarth@gmail.com for more info.



Cody Conley to Perform at ELPC

ELPC’s *Cathedral Concerts* series will continue on **Sun., Nov. 12**, 3 pm, with a performance by rising violinist—and ELPC’s own—Cody Conley. The program will feature works by composers Johann Sebastian Bach, Jean Sibelius, and Niccolò Paganini. Pianist Grace Burns also will perform.



Inquirers’ Class

Are you interested in becoming part of our faith family? Join us at our Inquirers’ Class following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Nov. 12**, to learn about ELPC’s ministries and programs, as well as ways to be involved at ELPC and in our community. New members will be received during worship on **Sun., Nov. 26**.

To ask questions or RSVP, contact Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x122.