



New Year's Updates From Your PNC

The PNC is thrilled to announce that our Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) has been posted and is available for potential candidates to apply for our pastoral position. The MDP is accessible from the church's website for you to view and read. As you heard in Linda's update last month, the MDP reflects who we are as a church, along with the talents and skills needed in our next pastoral leader. If you know of anyone who is interested in serving in this position, direct them to our MDP and encourage them to apply.

As the new year begins, we are looking forward to reviewing application materials, watching sermons, and interviewing candidates. Each of these steps will move us closer to seeking out our new pastoral leader.

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



Stewardship Update

As of December 20, 2023, ELPC received 154 pledges, totaling \$499,448. Thank you for your generous pledges to date! We are excited that we have almost reached our goal of 175 pledging units, as support of our church's ministry is a call for ALL of us.

We are striving to raise \$655,000 in order to best support the ministries of our church. Will you consider pledging if you haven't already? Will you consider

increasing your pledge if you can? Will you consider volunteering your time and talent toward our shared ministry together? Any offering to God's glory will further the ministries of our church and our shared proclamation of the Good news of God's love in Christ!

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Back to the Beginning

Jan. 7* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 14 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 21 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 28 Rev. BJ Woodworth

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Jan. 7* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 14 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 21 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
Jan. 28 Rev. BJ Woodworth

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Save the Date: All-Church Retreat

ELPC's All-Church Retreat will take place **Fri.–Sun., May 3–5**, at Lutherlyn Camp in Prospect, Pennsylvania. Whether you join us for the whole weekend or for Saturday only, we will have delicious meals, time to rest in creation, and intentional community building activities so you can get to know old friends better and meet new friends too. Workshops and worship will be intergenerational.

Want to help us plan the details? Reach out to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net. Look for registration and details in February.



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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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
JimT@coh.net | x239

Rachelle Calfee

RachelleC@coh.net | x234

Megan Leisher

MeganL@coh.net | x222

Norma Meyer

Norma@coh.net | x211



Pastoral Message

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Educational Ministries



I am writing this on December 18, 7 days before Christmas and 14 days before we turn the page on the year 2023. I suspect that, like me, many of you are contemplating the year that is about to end and the year that is ahead. As a congregation, we have accomplished many things in 2023.

- More members have returned to worship post-Covid.
- We welcomed 23 new members and friends into our church family, and every Sunday, visitors regularly attend our worship services.
- We hired and welcomed Jim Tinnemeyer as Director of Administration and Facilities. Jim has been a godsend in all of his areas of responsibilities, including the completion of a comprehensive examination of the 2022 budget and presenting the findings to the congregation.
- The HR Committee, along with Jim and other staff, updated job descriptions for all staff and adjusted the majority of the staff's salaries to meet Pittsburgh's median income levels based on tenure, experience, education, and responsibilities.
- The PNC was formed, facilitated the completion of the Church Assessment Tool, conducted many listening sessions with our members, and completed the Ministry Discernment Profile.
- An intergenerational contingent of ELPC members volunteered at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's *Amen to Action* event, packaging soup for our food insecure neighbors; and, the Board of Deacons, with help from the congregation, provided Thanksgiving assistance to close to 80 families and Christmas gifts to close to 130 children in our community.
- Prayerfully, we have all grown spiritually—individually and corporately. Most importantly, even though we have experienced some bumps along the road and unexpected detours as we journeyed through 2023, God remained faithful!

Looking ahead, we anticipate many new experiences, opportunities, and even a few challenges in 2024. To name a few:

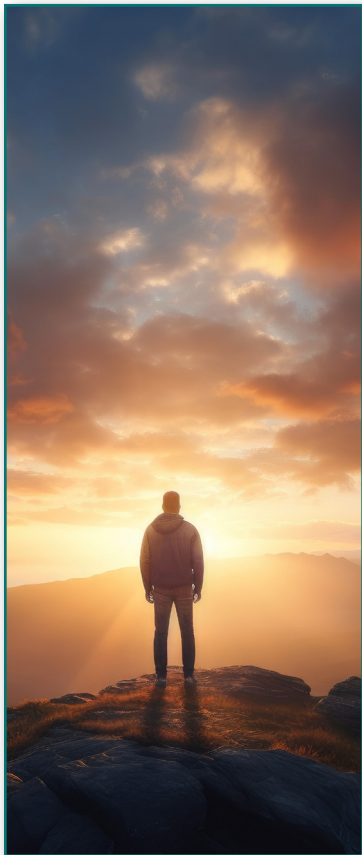
- The search for new pastoral leadership will commence.
- New opportunities for ministry will be explored by the Faith Formation Board, Christian Education, and Youth and Young Adult ministries, and an All-Church Retreat is scheduled for the first Sunday in May.
- The Mission Board and Mission Committees will explore new opportunities to walk with and accompany our neighbors.
- Many of the ministry programs we have offered and supported will continue and possibly be reimagined as Holy Spirit guides, and God will remain faithful!

Continued on page 3...

Pastoral Message Continued

As we metaphorically turn the page on 2023, to paraphrase Hal Borland, 2024 neither marks the end, nor is it an indication that something new has begun. The New Year is the assurance that life and time continue. And as the body of Christ, the New Year is an opportunity to continue to faithfully worship, serve, and trust God; an opportunity to continue to serve and love neighbor as we are loved; and an opportunity to sense what God is doing now and will do.

In closing, I want to re-share the poem, Patient Trust by Teilhard de Chardin, SJ. It may sound familiar because Pastor BJ has shared it with our community before.



*Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to do
something unknown, something new.*

*And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—and
that it may take a very long time.*

*And so, I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.*

*Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.*

*Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.*

*Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
And accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.*

May it be so...

Detlev L. Fowler-Pang

Session News

In December, the ELPC Session approved a budget for 2024. The budget will be received by the congregation at our Annual Meeting on **Sun., Feb. 25**. Annual reports and all meeting materials will be available in early February.

A Wintering Retreat

Join us for a time of rest and retreat, community and conversation, and play and prayer at the Villa Maria Retreat Center in Pulaski, Pennsylvania, **Fri.–Sun., Feb. 2–4**. Lean into the simple, slow, and still rhythms of winter. Our retreat schedule will flow naturally with morning, midday, and evening prayers that gather us together and scatter us in time alone; inviting us into community; and sending us into solitude, stillness, and silence. Costs:

- 1 Night: (Fri.–Sat. or Sat.–Sun.)
Shared Bath | \$70
- 1 Night: (Fri.–Sat. or Sat.–Sun.)
Private Bath | \$110
- 2 Nights (Fri.–Sun.)
Shared Bath | \$85
- 2 Nights (Fri.–Sun.)
Private Bath | \$135

RSVP to Norma Meyer at
412.441.3800 x211 by Sun., Jan. 21.



Consider invitation of winter in the words of Katherine May: “Plants and animals don’t fight the winter; they don’t pretend it’s not happening and attempt to carry on living the same lives that they lived in the summer. They prepare. They adapt. They perform extraordinary acts of metamorphosis to get them through. Winter is a time of withdrawing from the world, maximizing scant resources, carrying out acts of brutal efficiency and vanishing from sight, but that’s where the transformation occurs. Winter is not the death of the life cycle, but its crucible” (*Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*).

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

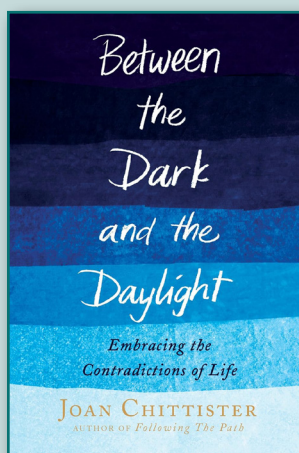
Facilitator: Trish Buben and other class members

January: Weekly Gatherings

A new year means new beginnings in Parenting Circle! We are going to transition to a weekly gathering to talk about raising children in our faith. This will be an informal time where we can chat, drink our coffee, and share snacks—all while talking about our experiences parenting. If you have any questions, please let Pastor Heather know.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members



Jan. 7: Getting Back Together

We will begin the new year with a re-gathering session.

Jan. 14, 21, & 28: Between the Dark and the Daylight

We will begin discussing our new book, *Between the Dark and the Daylight: Embracing the Contradictions of Life*, by Joan Chittister.

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

Seekers | Garth Overlook Room & Zoom

Facilitator: Gwen Puza, gpuza9@gmail.com

Jan. 7: Congressional Hearing on the Communist Party's Crackdown on Religion in China

This Congressional hearing by the Executive Commission on China will discuss persecution of religions in China. Over a million Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities, plus Tibetan Buddhists, were interned and many were forced to renounce their religious faith. Beijing has spent decades trying to control the Catholic Church. Catholic bishops will be chosen by local members of the Communist Party. Faithful Catholics who are part of an underground church are subject to arrest, torture, and disappearance.

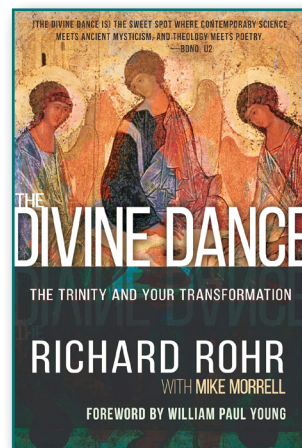
Jan. 14: The Loud Absence: Where is God Amidst Suffering and Evil?

In this video, mathematician, philosopher and Christian apologist John Lennox gives a remarkable discussion about finding God amidst suffering and evil.

Jan. 21 & 28: The Trinity as the Divine Dance

Rev. Dr. Bob Chesnut (ELPC Pastor, 1988-2002) will be with us, via Zoom, for two weeks, to discuss the Trinity, based on Richard Rohr's book, *Divine Dance*. Rev. Dr. Chesnut believes that "the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the very richest treasures of our Christian faith, but also one of the most neglected and misunderstood."

There are four books available at Carnegie Library, or you can buy used copies from Amazon for less than \$3 + shipping.



LGBTQIA+ Series | McKelvy Room

Facilitated by ELPC Pastors

Jan. 28: What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?

All are welcome at our first-ever LGBTQIA+ Ministry-hosted Christian Education hour on three consecutive Sundays in late Jan. 28-Feb. 11. Our topic will be examining what the Bible does and does not say about homosexuality. This series will be led by our pastors. We hope you can make it!

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry



Sun., Jan. 7: Snow Tubing

Tweens and teens are going snow tubing at Boyce Park from 12–3 pm. The cost is \$10, but scholarships are available. Lunch will be served at ELPC before heading to Boyce Park. RSVP online or to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

club one sixteen resumes january 7

Kids and youth in grades 1–12 are invited to **club one sixteen**, our midweek youth group ministry. We gather each Wednesday, 4:30–7 pm. We have three groups based on age and everyone gets dinner, games, meaningful Bible study and time to make friends. Come check it out!

Note: We will not gather on **Wed., Jan. 3.**

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

Confirmation Class

On **Sun., Jan. 14**, 12:15–3 pm, in the Second Floor Parlor, Confirmation Class will explore the Sacraments and worship.

Advent at ELPC

Enjoy some photos from our annual Christmas Pageant and the season of Advent at ELPC.



Family Bowling

Families with children and teens are invited to stay after Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Jan. 21**, for pizza and bowling, and games in the Gym. RSVP to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

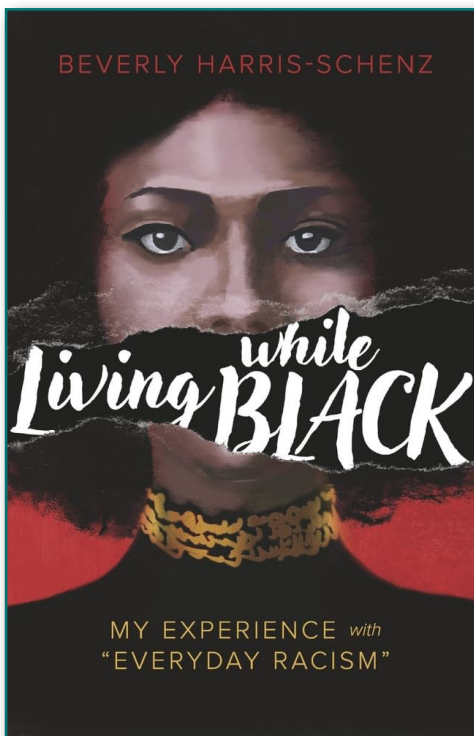
The ELPC Children and Families Ministry Team is hosting monthly events to foster a caring community for families, where kids and adults feel loved and empowered to explore their faith.

Living While Black Book Launch

The Facing Systemic Racism (FSR) Committee and the Faith Formation Board are co-sponsoring a book launch of Beverly Harris-Schenz's new book, *Living While Black: My Experience with Everyday Racism* on **Sun., Jan. 28**, 1:30–3:30 pm, in the Social Hall.

Beverly is a member of the congregation and active in the FSR Committee. She will present an "interactive reading" in which she will read personal stories from her book and engage the audience in a discussion of the issues presented.

All congregational members, their children, friends, and the general public are warmly invited.



Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: A Person with Leprosy

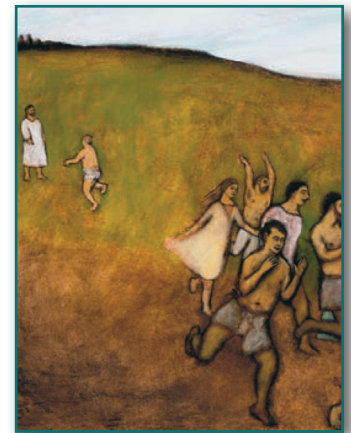
Tues., Jan. 2 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

Mon., Jan. 8 7–8:30 pm (Zoom Only)

Jesus healed ten people who suffered with leprosy (Luke 17:11-21). Only one, a Samaritan, returned to thank Jesus. This story of gratitude and faith is only recorded by Luke. To the Pharisees asking about the revelation of the Kingdom, Jesus declared, "The Kingdom of God is among you."

Those attending in person on Tuesday are invited to bring a bagged lunch. Beverages provided.

For more information and the Zoom link, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.



Environmental Book Study

For their next book study, the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee has selected two books written by two important women scientists. Read one or both and join the discussion on Zoom. For further information and the zoom link, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.

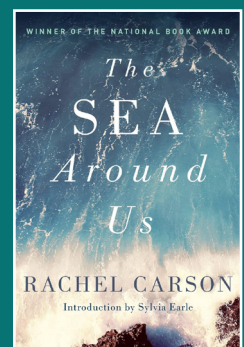
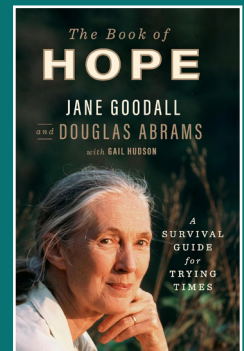
The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times

is a new book from Jane Goodall, the famous living naturalist. Looking at the headlines—a global pandemic, the worsening climate crisis, political upheaval—it can be hard to feel optimistic. And yet hope has never been more desperately needed. She states, "We are going through dark times. Hope is what enables us to keep going in the face of adversity. It is a stubborn determination to do all you can to make it work."

Jane focuses on her Four Reasons for Hope: The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit. *The Book of Hope* is a deeply personal conversation with Douglas Abrams, who also brought us the *The Book of Joy* (Dalai Lama). Our discussion will be led by Sally Jo Snyder.

The Sea Around Us (1951) by Rachel Carson, a marine biologist, is a gracefully written, meticulously researched work of nonfiction making the case for the primacy of the oceans, a plea that has gone unheeded.

She tells the history of our oceans, combining scientific insight and poetic prose as only she can, to take us from the creation of the oceans, through their role in shaping life on Earth, to what the future holds. Carson's book provides a timely reminder of both the fragility and the centrality of the ocean and the life that abounds within it. Anyone who loves the sea, or who is concerned about our natural environment, will want to read this classic work.



LGBTQIA+ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry



Sun., Jan. 14: 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. A Zoom option will be offered only if expressed need is shared with Wil prior to the Friday before the gathering. 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.

New LGBTQIA+ Church School Series

ELPC will offer a new LGBTQIA+ Church School series, Jan.28–Feb. 11, that explores what the Bible does and does not say about homosexuality. See page 4 for more details.

Advent at ELPC Continued



ELPC People

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

Good News

- Congratulations to those who recently celebrated their baptisms:
 - **Charlotte Joanne Stiller**, daughter of Ashley and Michelle Stiller
 - **Veda Rhodehamel**, daughter of Ashley Van Alen and Scott Rhodehamel
- Join us in welcoming our new members and friends:
 - **Carolyn Bigbee, Matt Dean & Natalie Robb, Arleigh Dickerson, Daniel & G. Geeg Eash, Emily Rose Griffith, Jennifer Karius, Jennifer Micelli, Sandra Palumbo, and Judith Shannon**

Thanks

- Jeff Parsons and his family wish to thank everyone who prayed and sent get well cards during his surgery and hospitalization. "Being a part of this congregation carried me through some difficult times, and I cannot express my gratitude enough."—Jeff
- Presbyterian Women thank ELPC members and friends for generously supporting the PW Thank Offering. Your gifts of **more than \$2,500** will help to support mission projects in the U.S. and around the world. Thank you!
- The ELPC Board of Deacons thanks you, ELPC members and friends, for supporting the 2023 Giving Tree Ministry. Your generosity enabled us to serve **130 children** this Christmas season. Every child received a gift and a \$30 gift card. Thank you ELPC!

Prayers

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

- Doug Ahlstedt
- Don Breitbarth's father
- Rachelle Calfee's granddaughter, Cheyenne Robinson

“...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

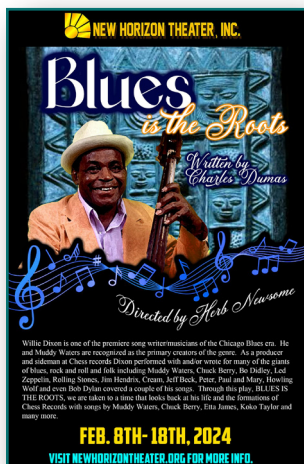
ELPC will be closed on **New Year’s Day, Mon., Jan. 1,** and on **Martin Luther King Day, Mon., Jan. 15.**

Connections @ Blues is the Roots

Join ELPC’s Connections Group on **Sat. Feb. 10, 7:30 pm,** for **Blues Is The Roots**, presented by New Horizon’s Theater, written by Charles Dumas, and directed by Herb Newsome. The performance will be in the Helen

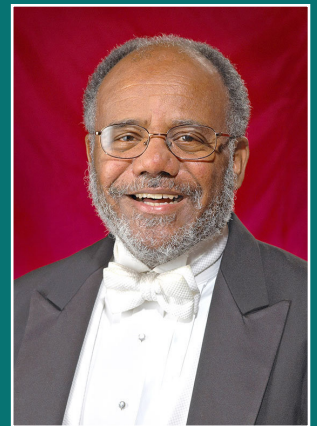
Wayne Rauh Rehearsal Hall at the O’Reilly Theater (621 Penn Ave.) downtown in the Cultural District.

Tickets are available online at newhorizontheater.org. Please buy your own ticket in advance. They cost \$35 general admission; \$30 for seniors and students. RSVP to connectelpc@gmail.com so we’ll know to look out for you. We also can organize dinner at a nearby restaurant before the show.



Singing Our History

ELPC’s *Cathedral Concerts* series will continue on **Sun., Feb. 25, 3 pm,** with **Singing Our History**—a special performance commemorating Black History Month with with Robert Ray’s timeless Gospel Mass and Women’s History Month with choral and solo works by women composers and arrangers.



The concert is free and open to the public.

Mark Your Calendars for VCS

Our annual Vacation Church School will be held the week of June 24–28. Whether you have a child in pre-K (age 4 and potty-trained) through grade 5 (completed) who would like to come as a camper, or you’re a youth or adult who would like to volunteer, make sure to mark your calendar now!