

# Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

May 2024

## Celebrating the Birthday of the Church

Pentecost is one of the most significant holidays on the church calendar. It is the day we celebrate the birthday of the church, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus' disciples and equipped his followers to worship and serve God as a new people. Many were baptized, and began to gather to study scripture, pray, and care for one another in new ways. Pentecost also provides an opportunity to recommit to the church's mission and ministry right here in our community and around the globe! It's a joyous occasion where we invite the Holy Spirit to guide us toward God's reign through our work together as a faith community.



### Confirmation Class

On **Pentecost Sunday, May 19**, we will celebrate this special day in worship by welcoming our Confirmation Class into full membership of our church and give thanks for the many and varied gifts of all within our congregation. We give thanks that the Holy Spirit calls us too, giving us gifts for service and inviting us to new expressions of our faith.

Confirmation Class and sponsors proudly displaying the bamboo toilet paper gifted to them by the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee, who came to share with students the work ELPC is doing to combat pollution and climate change, and highlight what we as individuals can do!

### Pentecost Offering

The Pentecost Offering, one of our denomination's four churchwide Special Offerings, supports ministries with children, youth, and young adults in our community, across the nation, and around our world. Remember, 40% of your gift remains in our church to support ministries with younger people in our community. This year, our 40% will help support the ELPC junior and senior high Mission Trip/pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. The remainder of the offering is forwarded to the denomination. So, please give generously when we receive the Pentecost Offering on **Pentecost Sunday, May 19**.



## Sunday Services

*\*Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

### Journey Worship | 8:45 am

*Theme: Courageous Community*

May 5 No service at ELPC

May 12 Rev. BJ Woodworth

May 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

May 26 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

### Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

May 5 No service at ELPC

May 12 Rev. BJ Woodworth

May 19 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

May 26 Youth Sunday

## Taizé Prayer Service

### Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

*Wednesdays | 7 pm*

Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Marathon Sunday

As a reminder, there will be no services or Church School at ELPC on **Sun., May 5**, due to the route of the Pittsburgh Marathon. We hope to see you at our All-Church Retreat **Fri.-Sun., May 3-5**, at Lutherlyn Camp in Prospect, Pennsylvania!

## Youth Sunday

On **Sun., May 26**, we will celebrate the gifts of our church's youth and recognize the accomplishments of our graduating seniors. Youth will create and lead our 11 am service, and Pastor Patrice will offer a charge to the students—and to all of us—as we grow in faith, hope, and love.

Youth who would like to help plan or lead worship should reach out to Sara Hackett by Mon., May 6. Graduating seniors are invited to give a senior message, and all youth are encouraged to participate.

## East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

### Staff Leadership

#### The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy

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#### The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

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## Pastoral Message

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life, Taizé, and Transitional Ministries



I was signing off a Zoom call a few weeks ago and a pastor friend of mine said, in John 20:19–23, when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors, he said four things to them:

*Peace be with you (twice).  
I am sending you.  
Receive the Holy Spirit.  
Forgive others' sins.*

The simplicity, relevance, and power of these words really struck me! No matter what time or season we find ourselves in, these words and their encouragement and empowerment are profound.

Peace be with you. Peace is perhaps the most pervasive desire of every person. Who among us does not long to experience a profound and abiding inner peace, Jesus breathes this upon us. Moreover, we are in an escalated time of war, conflict, violence, and death across the globe and are desperate for peace, ceasefires, and nonviolent solutions. According to Geneva Academy, there are more than 110 armed conflicts currently taking place throughout the world.

**Prayer:** *Jesus we receive your peace, help us to embody it and become peacemakers, that you may call us your children (Matthew 5:9).*

Having received Jesus' peace that surpasses understanding, he sends the disciples in the same manner and with the same mission, that Abba God sent and gave to him, to seek the least and the lost, to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free. We stand in a time of radical transition and even dismantling of what church is and will be. More than ever, we need to discover what it looks like to go and be church, as sent ones in the world, outside the church building.

**Prayer:** *Jesus, we hear you sending us, grant us the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love of your Spirit to respond and go be the church in the world.*

As one holy, catholic, and apostolic (literally the sent ones) church, we are invited to receive the Holy Spirit, our companion on this journey. She is our indwelling presence, pledge and guarantee, our peacemaker, groaning intercessor, teacher, and encourager; our "come-alongsider," gift bearer, comforter, and intuitive and attentive heart. What is more, while she is our faithful and reliable companion, there is no predicting her movement, direction, and fiery guidance, she is free like wind, fire, dove, breath and together we must seek to discern her comforting, guiding, directing, nudging, and leading us to bring peace to the world.

**Prayer:** *Most powerful Holy Spirit, come down upon us and subdue us. From heaven where the ordinary is made glorious and the glory seems ordinary, bathe with the brilliance of your light, like dew.*

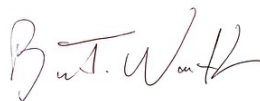
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# Pastoral Message Continued

Jesus final words, “If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” In this journey of welcoming peace and making it, being sent into the world, and receiving and following the Holy Spirit, we will make mistakes and we will hurt others in the process. What is more, Jesus said forgiveness—or the lack thereof—is potent. In offering it, it can bring freedom and release and if it is withheld it can bind and shackle us and others. We, like our Lord and brother Jesus, must forgive when others don’t know what they are doing and forgive 70 x 7! Forgiveness according to Walter Wangrin, is “a sort of divine absurdity. It is irrational, as the world reasons things and it is unwise... It is stepping outside the systems of law and into the world of mercy.”

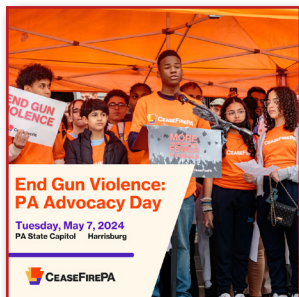
**Prayer:** *Jesus teach to forgive one another as you have forgiven us.*

Well, I hope this brief reflection on Jesus’ simple, relevant, and powerful words, encourage and inspire us at ELPC, and that we may continue to become resurrection people, welcoming peace and making it, being sent into the world, and receiving and following the Holy Spirit and forgiving one another. And—by the way—there is no guarantee that this little reflection may not appear in a sermon sometime this summer!



## Mission Matters

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



### End Gun Violence: PA Advocacy Day

Join hundreds of other concerned citizens in Harrisburg for the *End Gun Violence: PA Advocacy Day* on **Tues., May 7!** Arrangements will be made for you to meet with your legislators and then join the rally on the front steps of the Capitol. You will hear from survivors, medical personnel, students, school administrators, and others. For more information and to sign up, visit [bit.ly/4cCIQII](https://bit.ly/4cCIQII).

## 2024 Festival of Homiletics

ELPC will be one of the primary host sites for the 2024 Festival of Homiletics, **Mon.–Thurs., May 13–16**, along with Calvary Episcopal Church and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The 2024 Festival of Homiletics is an invitation for preachers and pastors to lean into a little self-love, to relearn ways to care for the craft of preaching, and to discover new habits to support the preaching life. We are thankful for an opportunity to host this national event. For more information, visit [FestivalOfHomiletics.com](https://FestivalOfHomiletics.com).

## A Brass & Organ Spectacular

The 13th season of ELPC's *Cathedral Concerts* series wraps up on **Fri., May 24, 7:30**, with a special concert featuring The Brass Roots, organist Dr. Edward Alan Moore, and conductor Daniel Nesta Curtis.

The concert will feature the premiere of a new piece for brass ensemble and organ by Pittsburgh composer Nancy Galbraith in honor of the 10-year anniversary of The Brass Roots in residence at ELPC.

The concert is free. For more details, contact Dr. Ed at [EdM@coh.net](mailto:EdM@coh.net).

## Session News

In April, the ELPC Session:

- Examined the new officers who will be ordained and installed to begin their terms in May.
- Approved a resolution to be considered by the Pittsburgh Presbytery on the Declaration on the Danger of Christian Nationalism.
- Approved the dissemination to the congregation two letters from Churches for Middle East Peace addressed to President Biden on the war in Gaza. The Peace Committee believes these letters state an excellent position on the war. The PC(USA) is a member of that organization and a signatory to the letters. With the support of the ELPC Session, the committee is sharing these letters with the congregation as an aid to our understanding of this terrible situation in the Middle East.
  - **Letter 1:** [tiny.cc/wh3uxz](https://tiny.cc/wh3uxz)
  - **Letter 2:** [tiny.cc/yh3uxz](https://tiny.cc/yh3uxz)
- Approved the baptism of Azzizi Davis, and the reception of six new members.

## Calling All Grads

We want to celebrate the graduates in our faith family! If someone in your family is graduating this year and if they have post graduate plans they want to share with our congregation, send the details to Gloria Knopp at [GloriaK@coh.net](mailto:GloriaK@coh.net).

## Spring Planting Day

Each spring, a group of dedicated members and friends refresh the Highland Avenue entrance with beautiful flowering plants, so it is vibrant and welcoming; the Courtyard, so it is a lovely setting for summer weddings and worship; and the Rain Garden, so it is accommodating to birds and butterflies alike.

This year, we are gathering on **Sat., May 4**, 9 am–1 pm. All are welcome to join us. Green thumbs are not required. Just bring your energy, curiosity, and a pair of work gloves to the Highland driveway around 9 am.

If you're interested in helping or have questions, please email Don Breitbarth at [donbreitbarth@gmail.com](mailto: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*

## Christian Education

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

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

### 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

*Facilitator: Rev. Henk Bossers*

Join us as we relate both the Psalms and the liturgical calendar's Gospel of Mark with the "Heavenly Hosts." The Scriptures will expand and deepen our understanding of our "Reformed, Ever Reforming" legacy.

### Seekers | Garth Overlook Room & Zoom

*Facilitator: Gwen Puza, [gpuza9@gmail.com](mailto:gpuza9@gmail.com)*

#### May 12: Presbyterian Political Theology

Professor and ELPC Elder Ron Stone, who drafted the 1983 Presbyterian policy on faith and politics, will discuss chapters 1 & 2 from his new book, *The Political Crisis and Christian Ethics*, on the foundations of Presbyterian policies on politics and President Obama's use of King and Niebuhr.

#### May 19: Christian Ethics and Social Policy

Ron Stone will continue the discussion of *The Political Crisis and Christian Ethics* with an emphasis on chapter 11, "Social Priorities of Prophetic Realism," including comments and discussion on racism, ecology, and economics.

#### May 26: Discussion of Election Issues

The discussion will revolve around remarks on chapter 15, "The Responsible Ruler." Many political philosophies and especially religious ones include reflections on the good ruler. Our ideals are real, as are the greed and sin which find homes in politics. Assuming our rulers are as sinful as we are, how can we relate ideals as St. Augustine did to our realities.

### Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

*Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members*

#### May 12 & 19: Between the Dark and the Daylight

We will discuss chapters 29–32 from our current book, *Between the Dark and the Daylight: Embracing the Contradictions of Life*, by Joan Chittester.

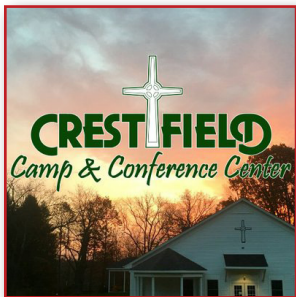
**May 26:** We will conclude this Church School year with a review and preview session, looking both back and ahead.

New participants are always welcome! For more information, please contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at [hajdu625@comcast.net](mailto:hajdu625@comcast.net).

# Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

## Mon.–Fri., July 22–26: Middle School Service Week at Crestfield



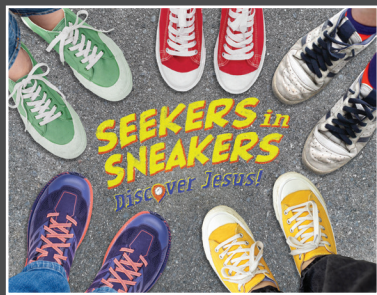
Youth in grades 6–8 are invited to Crestfield Camp for Service Adventure Camp, combining adventure with local missions and service opportunities. During the day, campers will be sent out to local non-profits to learn about and assist those agencies. Back at camp in the late afternoon, campers can chill at the pool or take a much needed FOB (flat on bunk). After dinner, there will be canoeing, ninja walling, archery, Big Friz, and more! Youth from multiple churches around Pittsburgh will be working and playing together this week. The cost is \$400; scholarships are available.

## Sun.–Fri., August 4–9: Mission Trip & Pilgrimage to Washington, D.C.

Students who have finished grade 7–12 are going to Washington, D.C., to stay at the Friends Place, a Quaker guest house and learning center just blocks from our Nation's Capitol. Friends Place offers opportunities for experiential education and civic engagement programs with a focus on how people-power creates justice, peace, a healthy planet, and a stronger democracy. We also will be visiting museums and monuments, the Presbyterian Office of Public Witness, and serving alongside agencies working for food justice in D.C. The cost for the week is \$450 dollars and scholarships are available.

## VCS Registration is Open

Vacation Church School at ELPC will be held June 24–28, 9 am–3 pm for children in pre-K (age 4 and potty-trained) through grade 5 (completed). Our theme this summer is **Seekers in Sneakers: Discover Jesus!** and children will use their investigative skills to discover Jesus and explore the stories of those who experienced and brought about change in the world around them after an encounter with Jesus. Spots are filling up fast, so don't delay, register today!



Geocaching activities will challenge children to dig into the Bible to find the way to Jesus. This journey of discovery has many twists and turns, so children will learn to ask questions, work with others, shine their light in the world, follow Jesus' example of serving others, and trust Jesus when things go wrong. Through worship and drama, Bible study, art, and science explorations, and active games, children are invited to follow the example and teachings of Jesus in every place and every part of life. So grab your water bottle, your Bible, and your friends, because this is going to be a great adventure!

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!

Campers and volunteers can register at [ELPC.church](http://ELPC.church).

## 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.

Our last day will be **Wed., May 8**.

For more information, email Sara Hackett at [SaraH@coh.net](mailto:SaraH@coh.net).



## Trinity Youth Conference

Trinity Youth Conference (TYC) is happening **Sun.–Sat., July 14–20**, this summer! TYC is a regional Presbyterian leadership conference for youth who have completed grade 9 through college-age students in Shellsburg, Pennsylvania. The week consists of meaningful workshops, camp games, relevant worship, and refreshingly honest small groups. TYC is planned and led by a youth planning team, including ELPC's own Rachel Ammon and Shayla Brigido this year. Rev. Erin Angeli, the associate pastor for Queer & Neighborhood Ministry at The Commonwealth Church of Oakland, is this year's worship leader. Information about the cost, workshops, registration, and schedule can be found online at [TrinityYouthConference.org](http://TrinityYouthConference.org). Talk to Sara Hackett for more information or scholarship opportunities.

## Attending to Wilderness

When we spend time immersed in nature, noticing, and attending to both the detail and grandeur of our outer world, we simultaneously notice and attend to our inner world.

Join us for a contemplative retreat on **Sat., June 1**, 9 am–4 pm, as we wander, reflect, explore, and share together at Jennings Environmental Center (2951 Prospect Rd., Slippery Rock, PA 16057).

There will be time in groups and in solitude, time for creative expression, prayer, and integrating what we discover within ourselves and our natural environment. Hiking options will be available for all skill levels—including a longer more challenging hike, a hike on short easy terrain, and a very mild, mostly stationary option.



We will be led by Megan Shelly, a spiritual director and the founder of bewilderpgh, where she designs and leads retreats and contemplative backpacking trips. You can learn more about her work at [bewilderpgh.com](http://bewilderpgh.com).

The cost is \$40. Beverages, snacks, and lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x211** by **Sun., May 19**.

## Presbyterian Women

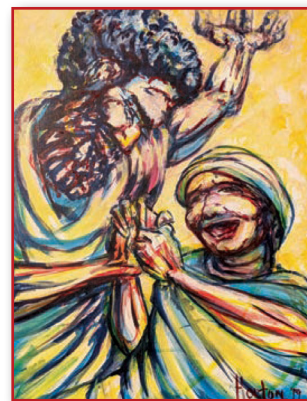
**PW Bible Study: Lydia Encounters Jesus in Worship**

**Mon., May 6** 7–8:30 pm (Zoom Only)

**Tues., May 7** 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

In Acts 9:36–43, Luke tells the story of Tabitha, a beloved disciple brought to life after prayer from the Apostle Peter.

She is the only woman in the New Testament to be honored as “disciple.” Tabitha is also known as Dorcas, suggesting her ministry of good works and charity extended to Jewish and Greek believers.



The early church grew and flourished because of the compassion and faith in Jesus Christ of women like Tabitha.

Those attending in person on Tuesday are invited to bring a bagged lunch and stay for fellowship after the lesson. Beverages provided. For more information and the Zoom link, email [PW.ELPC@gmail.com](mailto:PW.ELPC@gmail.com).

## Spiritual Life

*The Rev. BJ Woodworth*

*Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life, Taizé, and Transitional Ministries*

The Spiritual Life Committee continues to offer regular times and spaces to deepen our spiritual lives together, and live into some unforced rhythms of grace, listen to what people are saying:

**Contemplative Prayer** | Mondays, 7:30–8 am (until May 20)

*I am so grateful for this quiet, morning time that has provided me with space for reflection, inner joy, and community as we explore various guided contemplative practices and readings.*

**Online Prayer Service** | Tuesdays, 8–8:20 am

*Our Tuesday morning prayer time brings me to a special place where I feel not only our group's love, faith, and understanding, but I also sense God's presence with all of us in a deeply caring and helpful way. I have found a spiritual community of care and support that is infused with God's presence.*

**Meditation Hour** | Tuesdays, 6–7 pm

*The Tuesday Meditation Hour is a weekly opportunity to walk mindfully through the dusk-lit cathedral and enjoy your breath in the presence of spiritual community. We all need friends on the path and ultimately that is what this space provides for anyone who attends regularly.*

**Cathedral Yoga** | Wednesdays, 6–7 pm

*I so look forward to Wednesday night! Not only does it help me remain flexible and get some exercise, but it also enriches my spiritual life...and I really enjoy the architecture and stained-glass windows.*

**Taizé: Sung Prayer and Quiet Meditation** | Wednesdays 7–8 pm

*Taizé is uplifting, quiet, and joyful. It has given depth to our faith—so grateful for this service. It is my weekly journey to a 'thin space' between Heaven and Earth, God and me.*

## May PNC Updates

We have had a great response to our advertisements and postings for the Senior Pastor position at ELPC. The Pastoral Nominating Committee continues to meet, pray, and review candidates' resumé and statements of faith. We have begun interviewing candidates and have asked a few back for second interviews. As of mid-April, we have narrowed down the candidate list and now are preparing for in-person interviews and seeing and hearing these candidates preach in neutral pulpits. Please continue to pray for us.

This process has been a reflective and spiritual journey for me and I suspect for the rest of the committee as well. Reading and listening to each candidate's spiritual journey has been inspiring. Listening to their life stories was not only entertaining, but also at times heart-wrenching. All those whom we talked with are really good people.

Some of these candidates are not a fit for us, yet they have strong convictions, sound theology, and are filled with God's love and grace. They will serve congregations and our larger church effectively. I believe we have a good pool of candidates from which to choose, and I am filled with hope for our congregation and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

We will continue to do our work on your behalf diligently and with discernment, looking for the next leader for ELPC. Again, we ask for your prayers and patience.

—Bill Buchanan

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

## The Life Recovery Bible Collection Drive

Where in scripture does Jesus compare himself to a prisoner who received a visit? You can find the answer in Matthew 25:36, "I was in prison and you visited me."

If you're "playing" this round of Bible Jeopardy, you probably have a Bible nearby where you can look up the answer. This is not the case in the Allegheny County Jail, where Life Recovery Bibles (New Living Translation) are the most requested and in the shortest supply.

The Matthew 25 Steering Committee of Pittsburgh Presbytery is asking each church in the presbytery to bring at least one paperback Life Recovery Bible to the May 23 presbytery meeting at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for donation to the jail. Due to storage constraints in the County Jail Chaplain's office, we are requesting donations of \$17, the purchase price of the Bible. The Bibles and donations will be dedicated at the meeting.

The Bibles will support the Foundation of HOPE, an existing jail ministry which provides chaplaincy, pre-release and after care, as well as youth diversion programs. You may leave your donation of \$17 (checks made to the ACJ Chaplains Office), and Pastor Patrice will take them to the presbytery meeting.

To learn more about the Foundation of HOPE, contact the Rev. Charissa Howe at [Charissa.Howe@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Charissa.Howe@alleghenycounty.us) or 412.350.2302.

## ELPC People

*If you have news to share, contact Gloria Knopp at [GloriaK@coh.net](mailto:GloriaK@coh.net) or 412.441.3800 x222.*

### Good News

- Congratulations to **Owen Xavier Toro**, son of Cat and George Toro, who was baptized on April 7.
- Welcome back to **Gloria Knopp** as the Interim Administrative Assistant to the Pastors.

### Thanks

On behalf of the Lane family, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to our ELPC family, both the members and staff, for all the support and love we received during our recent bereavement. Gail Bowman was much loved by many, and while our loss is heartbreaking, we are also grateful for your prayers and all the help, which included—but was not limited to—Gail's Memorial Service and Repast, volunteers who set up, cleaned up, and reset the Social Hall, and for the dozens of cards we received. We feel truly blessed by all of your many acts of kindness!

—Linda and Coleman Lane

### Prayers

Condolences to family, friends, and staff of The Neighborhood Academy and The Mon-Valley Boys' Academy in the recent passing of the Rev. Thomas E. Johnson.

## Donation Requests for The Chapel Market

The Chapel Market is in need of full-sized toiletry items (men's and women's deodorant, toothpaste, body wash, shampoo, razors, toilet paper, lotion, etc.) in addition to spring and summer clothing for men, woman and children. Donations can be left at the Highland Lobby, or dropped off at the Chapel Market when open (first and third Tuesday of each month, 5–7 pm, or Thursdays from 10 am–12 pm).

*“...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.”*

## Pittsburgh Pride Informational Fellowship Time

Stop by the Fellowship Space after Sanctuary worship on **Sun., May 12**, to get a snack and all the info you need to know to participate in Pittsburgh Pride with others from ELPC.

## Attend Our LGBTQIA+ Ministry Spiritual Gathering

You are invited to attend our LGBTQIA+ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering on **Sun., May 12**, 1 pm, to share lunch and conversation. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike are welcome!

Contact Wil Forrest at [wil@coh.net](mailto:wil@coh.net) or **412.441.3800 x218** if you have questions or would like to attend via Zoom.



## Mark Your Calendars for Pittsburgh Pride Events

Our congregation is a proud participant in LAMP (LGBTQIA+ Affirming Ministries of Pittsburgh). We are excited to again celebrate Pride in Pittsburgh this summer as we seek to reflect God's love for all to local LGBTQIA+ people and allies. While there are many Pride events sponsored by different groups and in different neighborhoods around the area, LAMP will be participating in the Pittsburgh Pride March and Festival on **Sat., June 1**, in Downtown and Point State Park. We also will participate in People's Pride PGH March and Festival on **Sun., June 30**, in Wilkinsburg.

Keep a lookout for more info. Come out and celebrate while we share God's love with all of God's people!