

## August Updates From Your PNC

Dear ELPC Members, Friends, and Staff:

At the time of this writing, we have met with three call-seeker candidates (we have considered more than 60 candidates). These meetings occurred in-person over three separate weekends. We met with each minister for an in-depth conversation, we gave them a tour of our beautiful church building, we shared a few meals with each candidate and their spouse/partner, and we attended a sermon that they gave at a “neutral pulpit” church.

Our process continues as the committee meets in person to talk and listen to each other in the next step of discernment. We will do this prayerfully with deep thought and openness and we are blessed to have our Presbyterian liaison, the Rev. Dr. Karen Rohrer, to moderate our discussions.

This two-year process has been a meaningful and hopeful experience for each of us. We thank you for your patience and faith in us. Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

—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, and Karen Rohrer (Pittsburgh Presbytery).*

## Revisiting Our Week at VCS Together

In this issue of *Reaching Out*, you'll find photos of our week together at Vacation Church School. Take a look!



## Sunday Services

*\*Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

### Summer Worship | 10 am

Aug. 4\* Rev. BJ Woodworth

Aug. 11 Rev. Dr. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Aug. 18 Rev. Dr. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Aug. 25 Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

## Rally Day 2024

Plan on joining our faith family on **Rally Day, Sunday, September 8!**

Our two-service schedule resumes with Journey worship, 8:45 am, and Sanctuary worship, 11 am.

We also will celebrate with breakfast between our services, 9:45–10:45 am, in the Fellowship and Garth Overlook Rooms. We hope you will participate in this time of intergenerational fellowship.

And as a reminder, Adult Education Classes will begin on **Sunday, September 15.**

## ELPC Connections: Reservoir of Jazz

Join ELPC's Connections group for the free Reservoir of Jazz concert on **Sunday, August 11, 5–7 pm**, at Highland Park (by the fountain). Music will be provided by Hugo Cruz and Caminos. RSVP to [connectelpc@gmail.com](mailto:connectelpc@gmail.com).



## East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

### Staff Leadership

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# Pastoral Message

*The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf*

*Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Educational Ministries*



August holds a liminal season that often goes unnoticed. June is heralded for the close of a school year, graduations, and weddings; while September is known for the official start of the academic calendar.

But August is the month that holds the beauty of some of the warmest days of summer, with the cool nighttime temperatures starting to point to fall. August is the month when band camps start, college students move into dorms, and back-to-school preparations take place.

This August, we too anticipate a fall filled with new beginnings: the hope that the PNC will soon name a new Senior Pastor; the start of fall programming for children and youth that will look in some ways different and in some ways the same; Choir rehearsals starting back up in anticipation for the return to our Journey and Sanctuary worship services.

This August, we also look back with thanks to all that has marked these past few summer months:

- Graduations that have marked tremendous work and dedication of many of our members at all stages of their educational and professional journeys (see page 3).
- Week long programs for children and youth—like Vacation Church School, Mission Trips, and Trinity Youth Conference.
- Pride: Giving thanks for the diversity of God's creation, the wideness of God's love and our commitment to full inclusion by marching in two Pride parades and hosting a table with other faith communities during Pittsburgh's Pride celebration.
- August also marks the celebration of the 11th anniversary of ELPC's LGBTQIA+ Ministry! (see page 6).

As we finish up our summer vacations and plan for the season ahead, let us give thanks for the God of all time who is with us always.

*Pastor Heather*



# Mission Matters

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

## Fire Arm Violence: A Public Health Crisis

The ELPC Peace Committee is pleased to report that in response to the high prevalence of gun deaths, the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy declared firearm violence in America a public health crisis. His recommendations include:

- Requiring safe and secure firearm storage, including child access prevention laws;
- Implementing universal background checks and expanding purchaser licensing laws;
- Banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines for civilian use;
- Requiring safety testing or safety features like other consumer products;
- Implementing effective firearm removal policies when individuals are a danger to themselves or others; and
- Creating safer conditions in public places related to firearm use and carry.

We hope that we can all support the Surgeon General, and join with the Peace Committee in support of CeaseFirePA. And we encourage everyone to ask their state and federal representatives to support sensible gun legislation.

## Tips to Talk About Climate Change

Climate change is a global issue that affects us all—and it's crucial to have open and effective conversations about it with those around us. Whether it's with family, friends, or even strangers, discussing climate change can help raise awareness and inspire action. Here are 10 actions to guide these discussions from the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee:

1. **Personalize Your Message:** Tailor your conversation about climate change to align with the individual's values and worldviews.
2. **Make Climate Change Tangible:** Use real-world examples to make the facts about climate change more relatable. Tell your story.
3. **Emphasize Shared Concerns:** Highlight common concerns like the health of our children and communities, and the importance of clean air and water.
4. **Discuss Observable Changes:** Talk about the noticeable changes in seasonal weather patterns due to climate change.
5. **Highlight the Benefits of Action:** Discuss how actions can have multiple benefits, such as reducing air pollution and improving health.
6. **Show Empathy and Listen:** Allow room for differing opinions.
7. **Focus on Solutions and Personal Benefits:** Discuss solutions and how they can save money, create jobs, and protect our communities.
8. **Be an Influencer:** Share your personal actions—like installing solar panels or driving an electric vehicle—to inspire others.
9. **Provide Actionable Steps:** Have a list of "go-to things" people can do to combat climate change.
10. **Encourage Joining Groups:** Suggest that those who are deeply concerned about climate change join groups of like-minded people to share solutions and empower each other.

## Celebrating Graduates

Join us in celebrating those in our faith family who recently graduated.

**Rachael Ammon**, who graduated from Butler Area High School. She will be attending Robert Morris University in the fall, majoring in Strategic Communications.

**Charlotte Brake-Hoffman**, who graduated from Winchester Thurston, and will be attending Colby College in the fall.

**Cody Conley**, who graduated from Woodland Hills High School. He will be attending the Zukerman Program at the Manhattan School of Music in the fall, majoring in violin performance.

**Issac Degenholtz**, who graduated from University of Rochester with degrees in Political Science and Economics. He is moving to Washington, D.C., to start work as a data analyst.

**Adylade Krimmel**, who graduated from Case Western Reserve University with a degree in Art History and a minor in German.

**Christian Lewand**, who graduated from Central Catholic High School. He will be attending the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in Global Management and Spanish.

**Ramsey Lewand**, who graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in Natural Sciences. He will begin a four-year program at Pitt's School of Dental Medicine in August.

**Ash Mattila**, my child, graduated from Obama Academy June 13, 2025. They will be attending the University of Pittsburgh in the fall.

**Madison Morrissey**, who graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in Social Work.

**Josphat Griffin Mukogosi**, who graduated from New York University.

**Matteo Wilburn**, who graduated from Pittsburgh CAPA, and will attend the Frederick Honors College at University of Pittsburgh in the fall.

# Thank You, VCS Volunteers

Join us in giving thanks to the many you and adults who volunteered at our Vacation Church School program this year.

## Youth Volunteers:

Mabel Buben  
Maryonna Dixon  
Dylan George  
Owen George

Koire Jackson  
Kyle Kim  
Will Kuchera  
Evelyn Rogers

Maddie Schneider  
Aya Tetrault  
Ellia Willson  
Juliette Young

## Adult Volunteers:

Sherry Anderson  
Carmen Blanco  
Alex Brigido  
Shayla Brigido  
Trish Buben  
Jen Castle  
Marilyn Castle  
Carol Chonoska  
Betty Dell  
Doris Dick  
Dwayne Elliott  
Dylan Geibel

Barbara Griffin  
Peta Harringan-Cole  
Julian Herbert  
Carol Hoehn  
Heather Lawerence  
Linda May\*  
Ed Moore  
Jenny Newman\*  
Jan Pressman  
Taylor Reese  
Cherly Rhodes  
Gloria Richie

Paul Seif  
Mario Seneca  
Kay Shissler  
Tiffany Sudar  
Sara Torretti  
Jason Van Ness

*\*We were honored to partner with Sixth Presbyterian Church and their adult volunteers again this year.*

Lastly, we give a HUGE thanks to the facilities and hospitality staff, whose hard work made VCS possible by keeping our building clean, safe, and welcoming!





Rachael Ammon (left) and Shayla Brigido (center) were on the youth planning team for Trinity Youth Conference this summer. Their creativity, hard work, faithful leadership, and loving care for the camp community made for a beautiful week together. We give thanks for the kingdom work ELPC disciples are doing in the world!



## ELPC People

If you have news to share, contact Jen King at [JenniferK@coh.net](mailto:JenniferK@coh.net) or 412.441.3800 x222.

### Good News

Congratulations to those in our faith family who recently celebrated their baptism at ELPC:

- Henry Michael Curtice
- Emerson Rose Breisinger

### Prayers

Join us in offering prayers of healing to:

- Mary Anne Kirby, who recently had a surgical procedure.
- Pastor Heather's mother, who is having health struggles.

We offer prayers of comfort to:

- Martha DeMarzi on the passing of her friend, Ilene. Prayers to Martha and Ilene's family and friends.
- Shawna Templeton's mother, Donna Wilkes. Prayers to Shawna, Pat, and Finn Templeton.



## Celebrating 11 Years of ELPC's LGBTQIA+ Ministry

ELPC's LGBTQIA+ Ministry started in August 2013 with an exploratory meeting of ELPC members, and has met once or twice a month ever since then—even during the pandemic. The focus of the group has changed over the years, but at its core, it has always sought to create a safe space for LGBTQIA+ people to seek and share support on their walk of faith. Our LGBTQIA+ Ministry's Mission Statement, which was written by our members, states that:

*"We affirm and unite the shared identities of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex, asexual/ally and being people of faith through our intergenerational, safe and welcoming community of believers. We engage in Christian fellowship and spiritual growth, and support an inclusive faith community ardently seeking God together."*

Over the past 11 years, our LGBTQIA+ Ministry and its members have:



- Welcomed about 175 different individuals, with an average of 16 people at monthly Spiritual Gatherings.
- Accumulated 100 people on our email distribution list, and our Facebook group has over 150+ members.
- Created an intentional, welcoming, and safe space for LGBTQIA+ people of color, varying abilities/disabilities, ages, interests, etc.
- Hosted a membership including youth, senior citizens, and all ages in between.



- Seen two-thirds of the group as current ELPC members and friends, and the rest are new to our community because they sought to connect with this unique ministry.

- Every single month since we "came out" in August 2013, the ministry coordinator has been contacted by someone who needed resources and/or wanted to come out as LGBTQIA+. Most of these folks have not been current ELPC members, rather they are folks of faith from other communities that are seeking sanctuary.
- Valued participant sense of safety and created an earnest welcome. We devised a welcoming statement shared at the beginning of each meeting to reinforce this sense of safety and welcome.
- Since February 2014, have made available in our pews to our congregation and visitors bookmarks with an inclusiveness pledge, ministry information, and a rainbow ribbon attached as a consistent visible outward sign of welcome and inclusion. More than 1,000 have been taken over the years.
- In June 2014, we created our first batch of tie-dyed ELPC rainbow t-shirts. Besides the name of the church on the front, the back includes our unofficial motto: *God created you. God loves you. Be yourself.* More than 250 are currently being worn!
- Hosted over 150 inside-the-church gatherings, including monthly Spiritual Gatherings, business meetings, and educational sessions; as well as over 70 outside-the-church gatherings, including 18 day-long or over-night retreats and almost 30 various Pride events.



- Fostered many partnerships—including with the ELPC Justice Committee, ELPC Faith Formation Board, RCC, Judah Fellowship, Healing the Hurt Conference, Persad Center, SisTers PGH, People's Pride, Delta Foundation, Pittsburgh Pride, Pittsburgh Black Pride, Pittsburgh TransPride, Grove City College LGBTQ student group, Chatham University Multi-Faith Council, Department of Human Service LGBTQ Task Force, Pittsburgh LGBTQ Film Series, Circle of Faith, Pittsburgh Clergy Consortium, LAMP, More Light Presbyterians, Covenant Network, etc.

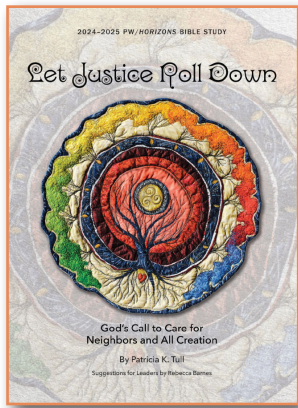
And we have only just begun!

You are invited to join us in our next decade of ministry. All are welcome at LGBTQIA+ Ministry events, whether you are looking for support or if you are looking to offer support. Our fellowship is for all! Contact Wil Forrest at [Wil@coh.net](mailto:Wil@coh.net) to learn more and to get involved.

# Presbyterian Women

## Get Ready for Our 2024–2025 Bible Study

Our upcoming Bible Study challenges us to practice Environmental Justice, which can make the world a safer, healthier, and more sustainable place for those affected by the climate crisis—especially those who live on the margins. It also engages people in the development and enforcement of environmental policies.



The title of our Bible study this year is: *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation.*

Learn more about this study from its author, the Rev. Dr. Patricia K Tull, in a video at [tiny.cc/pw-2024](https://tiny.cc/pw-2024). Rev. Dr. Tull is an ordained Presbyterian minister and an A. B. Rhodes Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary.

Our Bible Study begins on **Tuesday, September 3**, 10 am–12 pm (hybrid), and **Monday, September 9**, 7–8:30 pm (on Zoom). Presbyterian Women will be available after worship on Sundays, August 18 and 25, to answer questions. For more information, email [PW.ELPC@gmail.com](mailto:PW.ELPC@gmail.com).

## The Sacrament of Letting Go Retreat



*"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 sky she began her vigil of trust..."*

—Macrina Weiderkehr, *The Seasons of Your Heart*

Are you being invited into a vigil of trust? What is the green, orange, yellow, red and brown that you, individually, are being invited to shed? What is the green, orange, yellow, red and brown that we, collectively, need to shed?

Come "lean against the sky" during this contemplative retreat at the Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center in Pulaski, Pennsylvania, **Friday–Sunday, September 27–29**. Engage in a variety of forms of prayer through art, journaling, nature, and silent reflection. Make yourself available to a greater knowing, and discover the peace and divine wisdom that is already seeking you.

We will be led by Lynn Holden spiritual director, professional counselor, and founder of Cultivating Awareness. Learn more at [LynnHolden.com](https://LynnHolden.com).

RSVP to Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x211** by **Sunday, September 15**. The cost options are as follows:

- One Night: (Friday–Saturday or Saturday–Sunday) Shared Bath | \$70
- One Night: (Friday–Saturday or Saturday–Sunday) Private Bath | \$110
- Two Nights (Friday–Sunday) Shared Bath | \$85
- Two Nights (Friday–Sunday) Private Bath | \$135

## Get to Know Our LGBTQIA+ Ministry

All allies and LGBTQIA+ folks are invited to our LGBTQIA+ Ministry's Spiritual Gathering on **Sunday, August 18**, 11:30 am, to share lunch and conversation.

Questions? Contact Wil Forrest at [Wil@coh.net](mailto:Wil@coh.net) or **412.441.3800 x218** for more details or if you would like to attend. A Zoom option will be offered only if expressed need is shared with Wil prior to the Friday before the gathering.



## Celebrating Pittsburgh Disability Pride

Celebrate Pride with ELPC at Pittsburgh Disability Pride 2024. Come out to Schenley Plaza (4100 Forbes Ave. in Oakland) on **Saturday, August 24**, 11 am–4 pm, to visit our table. This event is for the whole community with live music, food trucks, arts, sensory friendly spaces, fun activities, and more! Celebrate in the streets while we share God's love with all God's people.



*“As a diverse community of believers, we strive to follow God—the Creator who calls us, Jesus who teaches us, and the Spirit who empowers us. We show God’s unconditional love by providing a refuge for spiritual growth, ardently pursuing justice, and extending Christ’s radical hospitality to all.”*

## Registration for Hope Academy’s Fall Term Opens August 1

Founded in 1999 to bring arts education to children and youth in our community, Hope Academy of Music and the Arts, offers a safe place where young people of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds can further their personal and artistic growth.

Registration for Hope Academy’s fall term opens on **Thursday, August 1**. Families with children or youth who are interested in taking classes this year should create a Family Portal account at [tiny.cc/ha-family-portal](http://tiny.cc/ha-family-portal) to receive important updates. Details on this year’s classes, private lessons, violin lessons, and scholarships, can be found at [sites.google.com/view/hopeacademy2024-2025/home](https://sites.google.com/view/hopeacademy2024-2025/home).



## OHM Workday

Join Open Hand Ministries (OHM) on **Saturday, August 3**, to help renovate their property in Garfield. Look for sign-up sheets in the narthex so we can provide OHM with a number of expected volunteers. Workdays are typically from 9 am–3 pm, but any time you can make it is appreciated. Lunch is provided.

Meet us at the job site or at ELPC to carpool. No renovation or construction skills are required. Reach out to Frank Bauerle at [frbauerle@yahoo.com](mailto:frbauerle@yahoo.com) for details.

## Church Tours Resume

Would you like to explore our beautiful and historic church building? Well, good news! A series of church tours are on the calendar. See below for info and dates.

- **Sunday, August 4: Tower Tour**
- **Sunday, August 11: Exterior Tour**
- **Sunday, August 25: Sanctuary & Chapel**
- **Sunday, September 15: Tower Tour**

If you’re interested on going on any of these tours, gather at the Highland entrance following worship.