

2024

Annual Report



**East Liberty
Presbyterian Church**

www.ELPC.church
116 South Highland Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412.441.3800

Prepared for the
Congregational Meeting
February 23, 2025



AGENDA

Sunday, February 23, 2025

OPENING PRAYER

RECOGNITION OF A QUORUM

A quorum is 10% of the active membership, plus the clerk of session and moderator. Only active members of ELPC have voice and vote at meetings of the congregation. In voting, persons must be present at the time of any vote.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL & CORPORATION MEETING

RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED:

Rev. Dr. Robert A. Chesnut, *Pastor Emeritus*
Mitchell Barutha, Gail Bowman, Valerie Dixon, Sonya-Marie Morley

RECOGNITION OF OFFICERS WHO RETIRED OR RESIGNED:

Retiring Elders: Ray Anthony, Carla Depperman
Retiring Deacons: Jo Ellen Aleshire, Yodit Betru, Amy Bialek, Dana Carl, Ellie Wilson (youth)

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In our Presbyterian polity, the Nominating Committee is responsible for bringing a slate of candidates for church office to the congregation for election. Nominations from the floor are allowed with the understanding that the person being nominated has agreed to serve and is aware of the responsibilities of the office.

Members of Nominating Committee for Class of 2025:

Michele Bossers, Gretchen Chapman (Board Deacons Rep), Jessica Giannotta, Barb Griffin (Session Rep), Bill Johnson, Josh Mattila, Stephen Simpson Hunt (Session Rep), Sarah Torretti

Presentation of nominees for the office of Deacon (Class of 2028):

Adelia Frye (1st term), Jennifer Liu Kopanic (1st term), Eric McCarty (1st term), Alexander Payton (1st term), Jeff Fritz (2nd term)

Presentation of nominee for office of Youth Deacon (Class of 2026 - serves one year):

Brady Conley

Presentation of nominees for the office of Elder (Class of 2028):

Doug Booth (1st term), Pepo Mazingi (1st term), Hollen Barmer (2nd term), Sandy Brake (2nd term), Carol Chonoska (2nd term), Stephen Simpson-Hunt (2nd term), Matt Stufft (2nd term)

Presentation of nominee for office of Youth Elder (Class of 2026 - serves one year):

Mabel Buben

Presentation of congregational nominee for Officer Nominating Committee (Class of 2028):

Lynne Chadwick, Liz Hopkins

Officer Nominating Committee: Michelle Bossers, Gretchen Chapman (Deacon Rep), Jessica Giannotta, Barbara Griffin (Session Rep), Bill Johnson, Josh Matilla, Stephen Simpson-Hunt (Session Rep), Sara Torretti

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE SLATE OF NOMINEES

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

2024 MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS AND COMPOSITION

BUDGET SUMMARY

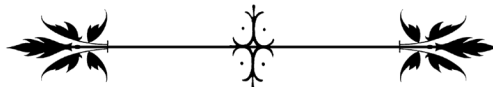
REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2025 Terms of Call for Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz:

Pastor – Effective Salary.....	\$121,625.00
(Salary.....	\$73,625.00)
(Housing.....	\$48,000.00)
Pastor-Professional Expense.....	\$ 2,000.00
Pastor-Study Leave	\$ 2,000.00
Pastor-Pension/Insurance (Board of Pensions)	\$42,623.00
(Pension 10%.....	\$12,163.00)
(Pastor Medical 16%.....	\$19,460.00)
(Added Family Medical	\$11,000.00)
Pastor-SECA (Self Employment Tax).....	\$ 9,304.00
Coaching Sessions.....	\$ 4,000.00
Study Leave (two weeks) and Vacation Time (four weeks) Mileage reimbursement @ \$0.70/mile	

MOTION TO RECEIVE THE 2024 REPORTS

MOTION TO ADJOURN



CENTENNIAL FUND

MEETING AS THE CORPORATION, EAST LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Centennial Fund was established in 1919 on the one hundredth anniversary of the Church to provide a financial endowment for the church and for the generations to follow. It is overseen by the Centennial Trustees — two elected by Session, two by the congregation, and two by the Trustees themselves.

It is important to note that the Centennial Fund is comprised of a number of sub-accounts. Some are restricted in use and others have been designated for specific purposes. The Centennial Fund currently provides about two-thirds of our church's annual operating budget.

The vast majority of the Fund's investments are in publicly traded securities with a target allocation of 70% in stocks (large cap, small cap and international equities) and 30% in bonds/fixed income investments and are managed by Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. The value of the Fund under management of Gallagher as of 12/31/2024 was \$26.1 million, up from \$24.6 million at the end of 2023.

In addition to the professionally managed portion of the Fund, the Centennial Trustees can allocate up to \$1 million for investment in local and/or worldwide opportunities pursuant to its Community Investment Criteria. Currently, the Fund has an active loan of \$250,000 with East Liberty Development, Inc. to support their housing rehabilitation efforts in the East End of Pittsburgh. The Centennial Fund Trustees extended that loan this past year for an additional five years.

Adding this loan to the Gallagher-managed portfolio, the Fund stood at \$26.3 million on 12/31/2023, an increase from the prior year end value of \$24.8 million. While this increase of 6% last year was respectable, the S&P 500 was up 25% in that same time period, and balanced equity/debt benchmarks were up 12.5% last year. The market performance of the endowment beat benchmarks by generating more than 13% in returns, but excess draws from the endowment to fund church operations continue to hamper the endowment's performance. In fact, the unrestricted funds of the endowment that can be used for church operations are now under \$1 million. As such, the Trustees are working with church staff and Session leadership to reconsider excess draw practices.

The Chair wishes to thank the Centennial Trustees for their dedicated service this past year.

— Bob Starzynski

Centennial Fund Trustees: Allison Seidel, Steve Massey, Kathy Callahan, Doris Dick, Gene Harris, Bob Starzynski (Chair)

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PASTOR'S MESSAGE



“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Change. You have experienced a good amount of change these last few years. Pastoral and staff transitions left many of you feeling lost and looking for God’s presence in more tangible ways. Even after my arrival as your senior pastor in November of 2024, transition in our country’s political landscape have caused us to collectively search deeper for the assurance of God’s love. We have experienced a good amount of change, and I imagine many of us are hoping for some semblance of stability. Is it possible to have a moment to breathe and experience joy for a little while?

One of life’s great ironies is that, while we often fear change, we continuously pray for transformation in some aspect of our lives. As human beings, we desire for growth to take place, especially in our interpersonal relationships and emotional maturity. We yearn to grow professionally in our careers. As children of God, we desire to grow in our spiritual formation. “Change my heart, oh God; make me more like you,” is a common refrain in our worship and prayer time. It would seem that change is inevitable.

When looking back on my life, I realize that some of the most meaningful and transformative moments came by way of unexpected change and life disruptions. Losing my grandfather suddenly to cancer, going through a terrible break-up with a past life partner, being victimized by the criminal actions of others—these experiences were traumatizing for me. Although these life disruptions caused much pain, they also provided profound opportunities for me to grow deeper in my humanity and spirituality.

As I read about all that God has done through the life of ELPC this last year, it is clear that even through turbulent change, you are continuing to grow in your humanity and your spirituality. You have not stopped loving God and loving people. Your energy has not waned.

As we look forward to what God will do in our community in 2025, I hope your desire for growth remains as strong as ever. I have a hunch that we will collectively grow even more in the coming year than we have in the past few years. The road ahead will not be easy; the road to God’s liberation never is. We will boldly share the good news. We will encounter disruptions and unexpected blessings. We will be more like Jesus.

For now, let’s rejoice and pray and give thanks. Amen.

Michael

Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz
Senior Pastor

During 2024 the Peace Committee engaged in the following activities:

- We had a petition signing event to members of the Pennsylvania legislature in support of improved gun laws.
- We continued our financial support for the Balaka, Malawi church community.
- We continued our support for the Forman Christian College in Pakistan.
- We continued our support of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Sudan.
- We supported CeaseFirePA in their efforts to achieve better gun laws in Pennsylvania.
- We supported the Women’s Center and Shelter.

The Peace Committee will continue to advocate on behalf of peace issues as they arise and endorse/participate with other peacemaking groups throughout the year. All are welcome to our meetings.

— Russ Walker

Peace Committee: Peta Harrigan Cole, Derek Harrigan, John Jordan, Pepo Mazingi, Gwen Puza, Kay Shissler, Ron Stone, Vivienne Selia, Russ Walker (chair), Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy (staff)



HOPE ACADEMY

2024 was a year of growth and transformation for Hope Academy, filled with meaningful transitions and new opportunities. After 23 years of dedicated service, Linda Addlespurger retired as director of Hope Academy, leaving behind a lasting legacy of love, diligence, and excellence. Her impact continues to inspire families, teaching artists, and students alike. We also celebrated the life and contributions of Linda's husband, Mitchell Barutha, a cherished member of the Hope Academy community whose talents in photography and documentation enriched our shared experiences.

While these transitions were at times difficult to navigate, we were thrilled to announce a wonderful new team to carry on the Hope Academy legacy. Anqwenique Kinsel, a former Hope Academy teaching artist, joined as interim director. Violist Gloria Wide serves as program assistant, Karly Threets supports as the financial administrative assistant, and Michael Chapman is working as development coordinator.

In 2024, Hope Academy served more than 200 students, ages 3 to 18, and remains the largest outreach program of the church.

We strive to make our offerings accessible for all by keeping costs affordable—an average of \$5 per hour for classes and \$40 per hour for private lessons. Scholarships were reserved for students from low-income families and/or those who identify as Black, African American, or Indigenous. These scholarships covered tuition costs, instruments, dance clothing and shoes, extra coaching for auditions, summer lessons and Suzuki Summer Camp, plus tickets to cultural events. We are proud to support our community's young people and ensure that every child has access to quality arts education, regardless of their financial circumstances. Over 80% of our students receive some type of financial assistance.

In accordance with the 2019 strategic plan, we continue to adjust our offerings to manage capacity and better serve our families. Given the many staff changes at both Hope Academy and partner organizations in 2024, decreasing the number of classes allowed us to maintain high-quality experiences for all our students.



Spring 2024 dance and theater offerings included eight weekly Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre dance classes, five levels of tap, four levels of jazz, and two levels of acting. For the fall term, we shifted away from tap and theater, focusing on six levels of ballet and jazz, creative movement for ages 3-5, and preparing our level 4 ballet dancers for pointe. Many of our students study across various artistic disciplines, and we structure our program to make it possible for

them to take dance, music classes, and private instrument lessons if they choose. Music offerings for 2024 included a Suzuki strings program for violin and cello, classical guitar and ukulele, a new String Explorers class for beginning string students, a free Hip Hop Orchestra ensemble in partnership with Guardians of Sound, and Sing and Dance classes with Shana Simmons Dance.

Program Staff:

- 1 Full-time program director
- 1 Part-time interim director
- 1 Part-time program assistant
- 1 Financial administrative assistant
- 1 Development coordinator
- 4 Accompanists
- 10 Music Program Teaching Artists
- 4 Dance Teaching Artists
- 8 Young Adult Mentors

Our ability to address the community problem of limited access to arts opportunities for youth due to financial constraints and school arts program cutbacks relies heavily on the partnerships we have developed with some of the city's finest artists and cultural organizations. These partnerships allow us to provide our students with access to high-quality programming and a diverse range of artistic experiences. The collaborations we have forged with these organizations have been essential to our success in fulfilling our mission of bringing the transformative power of the arts to young people, regardless of their background or circumstances.



We are grateful for the support of these outstanding organizations and look forward to continuing our partnerships as we work toward our shared goal of making arts education accessible to all: Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT), Shana Simmons Dance Company, Chamber Music Pittsburgh, Guardians of Sound, and Greater Pittsburgh Suzuki Institute Performance.

Performance and Event Highlights:

- February 25 – PBT Beauty and the Beast, Benedum Center
- April 10 – Ying Quartet Workshop and Collaborative Performance
- April 20 – Hip Hop Orchestra Performances at ELPC
- April 26 – Warhol Youth Invasion Hip Hop Orchestra Performance
- April 28 – Shana Simmons Dance Performance at ELPC
- May 11 and 12 – Spring Dance Performances at PBT Studios
- May 18 – Suzuki Spring Fling Workshop at ELPC

- August 5-9 – Greater Pittsburgh Suzuki Summer Camp
- October 20 – Greater Pittsburgh Suzuki Institute Birthday Bash Fundraiser
- November 14 to 16 – String Explorers + Ukulele Explorers Shareformance
- December 14 – PBT Dance Shareformance
- December 20 – PBT The Nutcracker, Benedum Center

For more information about Hope Academy and to register for classes, please visit the church's website.

— Anqwenique Kinsel

WORSHIP, MUSIC, ARTS

Worship, Music, and the Arts (WMA) supports programming and initiatives that aspire to make ELPC's worship services broadly engaging, accessible, inclusive, and dynamic for all attendees. In addition, we strive to identify and offer opportunities for congregants and community members to gather for events that celebrate music, the visual arts, and other forms of creative expression.

WMA meets the second Tuesday of every month from 7:30-9 pm. We meet primarily over Zoom with hybrid meetings happening quarterly. The group is co-chaired by Elders Carla Depperman and Carol Mullen.

In 2024, WMA embraced new opportunities to serve and contribute, including:

- Identifying ways to incorporate different art forms into worship services and/or church programming,
- Offering programs and activities to educate congregants and the public about our church building,
- Removing some physical barriers to full participation in our worship services, and,
- Celebrating milestones in the life of ELPC.



Lenten Wilderness Installation
WMA Committee member and Elder Mario Seneca created an interactive display in the Chancel that remained in place throughout Lent. Through the use of sackcloth, stones, sand, and other elements, the installation of the Lenten Wilderness prompted congregants to reflect on the spiritual journey of Lent. An artist's statement/guide accompanied the exhibit, and many visitors engaged with the work. We are excited to update and revisit the installation in 2025.



Let's Get Free Art Exhibit and Discussion

In partnership with the Justice Committee, WMA hosted an exhibit of artwork created by people who are currently or formerly incarcerated. The show, which ran at ELPC during September and October, was borrowed from the permanent collection of Let's Get Free: The Women and Trans Prisoner Defense Committee, a non-profit "working to end perpetual punishment...and shift to a culture of transformative justice." The exhibit culminated with a panel presentation exploring the experience of incarceration from multiple perspectives.

Resuming Church Tours

The program of Church Tours was reestablished officially in mid-July under the leadership of Jo Ellen Aleshire and a small group of experienced tour guides. The total of four tours, available to our congregants as well as to community groups, include Sanctuary/Chapel/Trinity Chapel, Tower Tour, Stained Glass (in depth), and Exterior Architecture. WMA believes that this effort is a great outreach and community connector to share the beauty of our ELPC cathedral as well as the message of Christianity that it represents. The schedule of tours will be announced periodically.

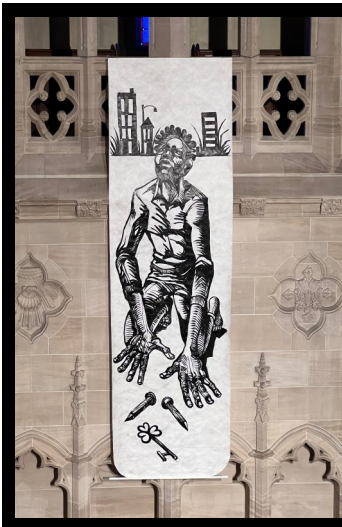
WORSHIP, MUSIC, ARTS *(cont.)*

Stained Glass Windows Project

The Task Force for exploring the making of our 217 sanctuary stained glass windows accessible on the ELPC website continued their multi-year effort. This would include the Biblical inspirations, history and contemporary meanings of the stories that the windows depict. During 2024 Task Force Co-chair Rev. Henk Bossers continued to lead the Sunday School class 'Journey with Scripture' with double focus on Psalms and the Christmas Story and the windows. This will continue in 2025 with focus on more Psalms and Luke's and John's Gospels and the windows. The Task Force will explore the costs and time requirements for all facets of the project and hopefully conclude the project on Christ the King Sunday, November 23, 2025. Those interested in volunteering with the project should contact either Co-chair, Henk Bossers or Elder Sandy Brake.

Celebrating Hope Academy and Linda Addlespurger

In October WMA proudly led ELPC's celebration of the 25th anniversary of Hope Academy, ELPC's program of music and arts education for community youth. The Sunday 11 am service and reception that followed also celebrated the 22 years of creative leadership of retiring Program Director Linda Addlespurger. Hope Academy instructors were involved in the music of the service while Pastor Patrice Fowler-Searcy paid special tribute to Linda and the mission of Hope Academy during her sermon.



Steve Prince Banners

During Black History Month and May's Festival of Homiletics, WMA sponsored the installation of two banners by artist/activist Steve Prince. The banners—borrowed from the collection of Dr. Ed Moore and displayed in the sanctuary—are part of a series titled "I know it was the Blood," created for the Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship and Music Conference at Montreat, NC. According to Prince, "The banners represent the fall of mankind to their knees, crying for God's help. God reminds us of the scripture and the everlasting water the Bible contains that will feed our spirit eternally. He reminds us that His sacrifice is the key that unlocks our salvation."



We welcome new ideas, input, and feedback. If you would like to join our committee, observe a meeting, or just learn more about us, please feel free to contact Carla (cdepperman@yahoo.com) or Carol (carolmullen.pgh@gmail.com).

— *Carla Depperman and Carol Mullen*

WINDOWS TASKFORCE

On May 17, 2023, Session approved the WMA request to form a Windows Task Force to explore making our 217 sanctuary-stained glass windows, their Biblical inspiration, history, and contemporary meanings accessible on the ELPC website by Christ the King Sunday 2025 (November 23, 2025).

To promote awareness of the Windows Task Force and begin to identify people interested in participating flyers were developed and distributed at the Extravaganza Sept 17.

In September 2023, Rev. Bossers began leading the "Journey with Scripture" Sunday School class to study the Psalms and through Advent the Christmas Story relating to the stained glass windows.

In September 2024, Rev. Bossers continued leading the "Journey with

Scripture" Sunday School Class. The double focus on the scriptures and windows will continue into 2024/25 with more Psalms and Mark's Gospel. Lectionary years "B" and "C" are in process. On January 5, 2025, the worship bulletin signified the "Journey with Scripture" with the following announcement. "Journey with Scripture (Highland RM+ Zoom) Join us as we relate to the year "C" liturgical calendar, which includes the Gospel of Luke and John. The Scriptures will expand and deepen our understanding of our 500-year, "Reformed, Ever Reforming" faith legacy and ELPC's 217 Sanctuary's stained-glass windows. Facilitated by Rev. Henk Bossers and other class members."

Plans for the year 2025 include:

- Provide continuing opportunities to increase awareness of our treasured windows.

- Make the 30 current window booklets available for those showing interest. Includes upgrading photographs.
- Summarize responses to the study and discussions of the windows.
- Identify resources to use for the website discussion of the individual windows.
- Recruit volunteers for the Task Force's project as needed.
- Explore the costs and time requirements for improved photography of the windows, clarifying secretarial work, committee responsibility, location for its maintenance, and determine the nature of webmaster support.
- To conclude the 217 Stained-Glass Task Force's work on November 23, 2025, on *Christ the King Sunday*.

— Co-chairs Rev. Henk Bossers and Sandy Brake



LGBTQIA+ MINISTRY

ELPCs Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Ally (LGBTQIA+) Ministry seeks to welcome self-identified LGBTQIA+ people of faith and their allies. This Ministry steadily draws a significant number of participants who are members of other churches or have no church affiliation but come to ELPC due to the acceptance and safety they feel as part of this Ministry. It is a place of connection and sanctuary for many. Our monthly spiritual gatherings drew an average of 17 participants in 2024 with about 26% of the participants this year being new to the ministry.

Some ministry highlights from 2024:

- Sponsored a three-part Church School class presented by our pastors addressing what the Bible does and does not say about homosexuality in January to February.
- Celebrated 11 years of this vibrant, evolving Ministry as of August.
- Our dedicated Advisory Group is comprised of 3-4 thoughtful, creative Ministry members who meet periodically to assess ministry goals and programmatic plans prayerfully and intentionally.
- In 2024 we hosted two retreats both at the home of Michele and Henk Bossers. The retreat themes focused on the important issues of renewal (August) and breath (December).
- In the summer, we supported ELPC's Justice Committee as they planned ELPC's Pride participation. ELPC marched in parades and shared a booth at People's Pride and at Pittsburgh Pride Revolution with other inclusive PC(USA) congregations. First Lady Dr. Jill Biden even stopped by our booth!
- For the first time ELPC had a table at August's Disability Pride Pittsburgh as we co-hosted with our siblings in Christ at Shadyside Presbyterian Church.



- We had on-going times of personal sharing and connection during different discussions related to the intersectionality of being LGBTQIA+ and being a person of faith at monthly spiritual gatherings.
- In 2024 we increased the frequency of our fellowship opportunities with more meals together both at one another's homes and at local restaurants. We also went to happy hours together a few times.
- LGBTQIA+ visibility was fostered by placing the newly updated rainbow ribbon bookmark in the pews with an inclusiveness pledge as well as making pronoun information and buttons available in the Narthex. We also wore and sold colorful tie-dyed Ministry t-shirts, presented a special prayer at worship for the annual National Trans Day of Remembrance, etc.
- We give heart-felt thanks for a grant was given to fully support the LGBTQIA+ Ministry these past two years!

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all the many members of our congregation who supported the LGBTQIA+ Ministry this year. I look forward to creatively serving the congregation, our community, and God in this new year and beyond.

— Wil Forrest, Coordinator

PROPERTY

The year 2024 was once again a busy year for the committee. During this year we began initial discussions in relation to the boiler system. We made a motion to do necessary repairs to the current system that also extended its life for several more years at a cost that allowed us to be good stewards of the church's finances.

Thanks to committee member Tom Morton for the purchase of blueprints on behalf of ELPC that were located at a local store for sale in Dormont. In our November meeting the committee was able to view these documents and a discussion will take place as to where those documents should be stored.



This year, as in many years, thanks to the coordination of Don Breitbarth and various members volunteering, the church grounds and landscaping have continued to be well maintained. The committee would like to extend a special thanks to Mike Anderson for his continued dedication to trash clean up in the rain garden as well as mowing the lawn. The committee would also like to extend thanks to Jim Tinnemeyer and Carol Chontos as well as the facilities staff for the continued upkeep and daily work on the building to ensure our space is open and welcoming.



As we look ahead to 2025 there's much work that will await to keep our church building a welcoming and inclusive space. We look ahead to some work needing done to the flooring in the Garth as well as some pointing work of the stone.

We know as our amazing Cathedral of Hope turns 90 this spring our tasks to maintain our building will continue to provide plenty of work ahead for our staff and committee.

We also want to give thanks for decades of service by former committee member Diana Armstrong. We all appreciate the time, effort, and dedication she has provided this committee and our congregation.

— *Matt Stufft and Eric Logan, co-chairs*

ELPC Property Committee: Matt Stufft and Eric Logan (co-chairs), Melia Chandler, Diana Armstrong, Don Breitbarth, Isaac Smith, Tom Morton, Nancy Wright

The 2024 goals for the Justice Committee were:

1. To represent ELPC in the LGBTQIA+ community by participating in local events.

ELPC participated in Three Pride events this year. We partnered with other Presbyterian Churches through LAMP (LGBTQIA+ Affirming Ministries of Pittsburgh) in witness to God’s abundant love for all God’s children by staffing a booth and marching in Pride March. We financially supported emergency housing through TransYOUning and Proud Haven. We celebrated Full Inclusion Sunday in October, bringing the Renaissance City Choir and ELPC choir together.

2. To provide support for the integration of refugees and immigrants in the Pittsburgh area.

The Justice Committee maintained a relationship with THRIVE, a North Hills ministry serving refugees in Pittsburgh with housing, jobs and family support in the community.

3. Improve and expand our support of those impacted by the criminal justice system.

4. To address systemically racist practices that erode the criminal justice system, such as the cash bail system, solitary confinement, and the death penalty.

We were excited to partner with the Worship, Music and Arts Committee and “Let’s Get Free” to host a month-long art exhibit focusing on mass incarceration called *Abolitionist Expressions*. The artwork itself was created while the artists were incarcerated. It consisted of photos, drawings and painted pieces. It gave our viewers an opportunity to relate to the artists on an intimate level and



think about them in a different perspective. Following the art exhibit, we invited a panel to speak to congregation members about their interactions with those who are incarcerated from the perspective of parent, chaplain, friend and advocate. We continue to support our relationships with Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (PADP) and National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT).

5. Develop environmental awareness and education in environmental stewardship of our earth; to network and engage with community organizations addressing environmental impact.

The Environmental Book Club read 5 books this year with an emphasis on variety: 2 classics on nature, fiction, justice – protecting people as well as the earth. In March we made a presentation to the Confirmation

Class and their sponsors about what motivates us to care for creation both at home and at ELPC. We shared what we have done at ELPC and plan to do to be good stewards. This event allowed us to engage the youth and hear their concerns. The annual worship service for Earth Day emphasized Environmental Justice/Environmental Racism.

6. To increase congregational participation and engagement in a variety of justice issues and stewardship of our earth.

Congregation members marched in the Juneteenth parade along with the Black Presbyterian Caucus and other members of Pittsburgh Presbytery. In mid-year we shifted our efforts to voting, following the recommendation of many environmental organizations we use for guidance. Our efforts included: education on values and issues, voter registration, checking status, candidate resources, handouts with voter information, getting out voter opportunities. We partnered with Voting is Power (VIP), League of Women Voters and Black Political Empowerment of Project (B-PEP).

Justice Committee: Mary Barr, Michele Bossers, Carol Chonoska (chair), Stephanie Creasy, Lucy de Barbaro, Geeg Eash, Katie Haas, Nancy Heastings, Frances Irvin, Eric Jester, Jen Karius, Alexandra Lynn, Judy Mancini, Carla Mercado, Carol Mullen, Vivienne Selia, Isaac Smith, Grace Taylor, Kay Shissler, Jason Van Ness



ADULT EDUCATION

Journey With Scripture Class

I am, as facilitator, always encouraged by the liturgical passage for Sunday School. Scripture keeps me alive and hopeful. Thus, as a facilitator, I am nurtured. Attendance is small. Two non-church members are the most faithful. Five members attend on Zoom or when in the building. I feel privileged to have the weekly opportunity to facilitate the “Journey with Scripture.” I am happy to bring in the Sanctuary windows when applicable, which is often. The 1935 building is incredibly Biblical in its message to the community. The building message is “Come and be Healed!” The legacy of “Reformed Theology; Reformed, Ever Reforming” is shouted from its architecture. We must be helping the building shout this “Good News” message in 2025.

— Rev. Dr. Henk Bossers

Seekers Class

The Seekers class has met continuously since 1993 (except for summer months). We have attendees and guest speakers both in-person and on Zoom. This past year, we began with two weeks of Zoom presentations by the founder of our Seekers class and Pastor Emeritus Rev. Dr. Bob Chesnut (he recently passed away, so we really value the time that we had with him online this year as he led our class by discussing the book *Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr). During the year, we watched several video presentations by Bishop John Spong, and by theologians Karen Armstrong, Marcus Borg, and Diana Butler Bass. We had presentations about “Politics and Christian Ethics” and a three week presentation about the history and beliefs of Christian Nationalism. We also learned about understanding Jesus by learning about Jewish beliefs and practices during Jesus’ time on earth.

— Gwen Puza

Soul Food Class

The Soul Food class meets in the Good Samaritan Room and on Zoom and averaged between 25 and 30 participants during 2024. We also had our annual covered dish social gathering at the Shaler Library in July. Joe Hajdu is the facilitator and many class members help each week with leadership. Our class generously supports a church school offering and our offering for January-May went to the Neighborhood Academy. Between September and December we received \$1722 for our current project, Casa San Jose. We use a contemplative format that includes small group discussions of spiritual texts and our personal experiences. The books we have discussed most recently were written by Joan Chittester and Barbara Brown Taylor.

— Rev. Joe Hajdu



In another year of transitions, East Liberty Presbyterian Church's elected elders worked to reflect the values, desires and ideals of our congregation on many fronts:

In the pulpit, Session helped the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as it homed in on a promising candidate for Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, and called a congregational meeting for Oct 6 that ended with the PNC's recommended nominee, Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz, receiving overwhelming approval.

On the opposite end, Session called two congregational meetings to dissolve the calls of two longtime Associate Pastors, first Rev. Heather Schoenewolf (*who left to become pastor at Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon*) in September and, in December, Rev. Dr. Patrice Fowler-Searcy (*who retired*). Their handprints over decades of work will forever remain indelibly imprinted into the mission and life of ELPC.

Finally, recognizing Pastor Diaz was arriving just as these two vital resources were leaving, Session approved extended duties for Covenant Associate Pastor BJ Woodworth. Added work isn't foreign to Pastor BJ; he previously stepped up to aid Pastors Patrice and Heather during the prolonged and delicate process of finding a new senior pastor and mending bruised feelings over the exodus of our previous one.

On the business front, thanks to the work of Elder/Finance Committee Chair Bryan Lawrence and particularly Director of Administration & Facilities Jim Tinnemeyer, Session approved a 2025 budget that further narrowed the gap between revenue and expenses, helping lower the excess draw taken from the church's endowment. The goal is to eventually end that excess draw.

Abetting their work were increases in the number, and average amount, of member pledges. With per-capita giving at ELPC below norms at other Presbyterian churches, the Stewardship Committee is looking at further ways to boost giving. It helps that ELPC membership is growing.

As part of an initiative to work more cooperatively and effectively, a Saturday retreat in May let Session members shape goals and priorities. In a similar vein, Elders Jan Irvin and Nancy Wright guided the creation of a handbook with guidelines to help Session and committees better understand and conduct duties for which they're charged.

As elected representatives of our Matthew 25 church, Session continued to support the work of the Facing Systemic Racism and Reparation Ministry Team as it keeps uncovering uncomfortable archives that extend the story of Nell, Poll and other likely family members enslaved by the Jacob Negley family, founders of ELPC.

Along with other Pittsburgh Presbytery members, Session also approved a resolution denouncing Christian Nationalism (it passed unanimously at Presbytery's May meeting) and agreed to a Peace Committee motion to share with the congregation a Holy Week letter to President Biden from the Churches for Middle East Peace condemning the Gaza war.

As it looks to 2025, Session expects this season of transitions to continue and looks to support in any way it can the call and ministries of a church dedicated to extending Christ's radical hospitality to all.

— Steve Massey, Clerk of Session

NEIGHBORS

The Neighbors Committee focuses on addressing the ministry needs of our immediate surrounding community. We work to assist our neighbors in need with food, housing and clothing. We also facilitate opportunities for our congregation to volunteer and serve our neighbors.

Neighbors Committee activities in 2024 included:

Chapel Market (a free clothing ministry accessed through the Whitfield Street Chapel entrance. Open year round every Thursday 10 am-Noon and two Tuesdays per month, 5-7 pm.)

- Gerald McClendon coordinates the ministry with about 40 volunteers who participate throughout the year
- On average about 35 community members shop at the market on a weekly basis. Over 900 people in total shopped at least once during 2024.
- New and gently used clothing primarily is provided by donations from congregation members. In early winter, we used some funds to buy clothing items to fill gaps in high demand items.
- Gerald coordinated three “Dress for Success” events helping over 30 ladies acquire clothing for job interviews and for work.
- Multiple service organizations utilize Chapel Market to assist their participants including AJAPO (refugee immigrant services), several emergency housing and abuse shelters for women, and EECM participants.

- Coordinated repainting of the Chapel Market areas by a group of United Steelworkers volunteers.

East End Cooperative Ministries (EECM)

- Stewardship Sunday (November 17) Food Drive for EECM Food Pantry was very successful.
- Food is also collected weekly in a collection box in the church entrance (ongoing).

Open Hand Ministries (OHM)

- ELPC is a founding church with a 16 year relationship with OHM. Over that time period 18 families have become first time home owners.
- The Mission Board budget provides financial support for ongoing operations.
- About 15 congregation members provided 2 meals for OHM TeamWorks Community Tuesday evening meetings.
- Conducted one workday at the Ardary Street house (rehabilitation) with 8 volunteers from ELPC.
- One ELPC member routinely attended Tuesday evening meetings.
- One ELPC member serves on the OHM Board of Directors as Secretary.
- One volunteer serves on the Fund Raising Committee and one serves on the Family Development Committee.
- Donated funds to assist families in need at Christmas.
- About 12 ELPC members participated (Marathon, Half-Marathon, Marathon Relay) in the Pittsburgh Marathon to raise money for OHM.

- Communicated the availability of the OHM Rehab house (Ardary St) to the congregation and the opportunity to become an OHM participant to the congregation via weekly and monthly communications.

Amen to Action

Coordinated ELPC participation in the “Amen to Action” annual event. About 30 ELPC members participated in this event on Nov 2 at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with about 250 participants from other congregations and organizations. 75,000 dry meals (macaroni and cheese) were prepared and packaged for distribution by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

Assistance to our Neighbors in Crisis

Gerald McClendon provided ongoing confidential one-on-one assistance to neighbors in need of help with utility problems, housing problems, and other crises.

Other

Financial funding in the Mission Board budget supports several organizations focused on neighborhood issues including ELDI, Open Hand Ministries, East End Thrift Store, East Liberty Family Health Center, and Garfield Community Farm).

Neighbors Committee: Frank Bauerle, Kristin Cummings, Bob Forloines (chair), Pat Krimmel, Cathleen Malmstrom, Jon Nelson, Collyn O’Donnell, Emily Rosenthal, Todd Hoffman (Deacon Liaison), Gerald McClendon (staff)

FACING SYSTEMIC RACISM

AND REPARATIONS MINISTRY TEAM

In 2024, the Facing Systemic Racism (FSR) Committee and the Reparations Ministry Team connected with community organizations and took the first steps toward reckoning with a troubling part of our church's history.

Throughout the year, members of both groups participated in the Pittsburgh Presbytery's Alliance for Honor and Repair and the Anti-Racism Transformational Team (ARTT). In listening sessions held by the Alliance over several months, our teams fellowshipped with, learned about, and helped document experiences of Black Presbyterian congregations. Our members also participated in the Crossroads "Animating Antiracist Ways of Being" workshop sponsored by ARTT.



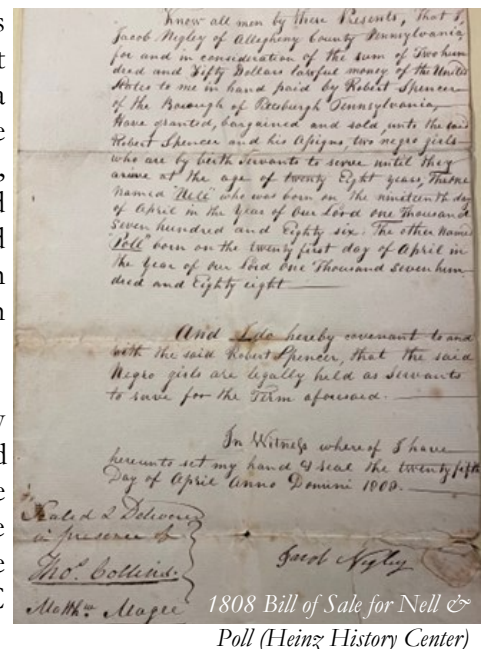
FSR and Reparations Ministry members participated in the February 2024 Henry Highland Garnet celebration with the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. In April, the Reparations Ministry Team hosted a talk by a Pitt professor on the topic of public apology and discussed ways public apology might relate to ELPC's reparations efforts. Members also participated in Bethel AME's ongoing reparations efforts and attended their Juneteenth worship service and celebration. Alongside members of other committees and the congregation at large, we marched with an ELPC banner in the Western Pennsylvania Juneteenth Homecoming Parade hosted by Stop the Violence Pittsburgh.

In June 2024, we began research to learn more about our church's involvement in slavery, one way ELPC has benefitted from the racist systems we seek to confront and dismantle. Many ELPCers will remember a recent presentation by Pitt professor Brock Bahler, which revealed that one of our most revered founders and donors enslaved and sold two women, Nell and Poll, in 1808. In our research, we have learned more about Nell and Poll's lives and that they were not the only people our founder enslaved and sold. In December, we began sharing our findings with committees in an effort to support reckoning with this difficult truth in all facets of church life: what must we do to restore truth, wealth, and power?

Looking ahead to 2025, we hope to continue and expand our community engagement, to provide an all-church educational program about Nell and Poll, and to work toward the establishment of an anti-racism policy for the church as dictated in the new Book of Order for the PC(USA). All this we do, in God's glory and love, to help each of us realize we cannot change the past, but we can work together toward a better, more loving future at ELPC and in the world.

FSR Committee: Lenore Williams (chair), Sherry Anderson, Michelle Bard, Hollen Barmer, Michele Bossers, Gretchen Chapman, Carol Chonoska, Jessica Giannotta, Kathy Glass, Beverly Harris-Schenz, Linda Lane, Jeff Parsons, Alex Payton, Vivienne Selia

Reparations Ministry: Michelle Bard, Hollen Barmer, Ryan Booher, Michele Bossers, Kathy Glass, Cynthia Jackson, Jonah Koetke, Alex Payton, Cynthia Peterson, Rebecca Serey, Lenore Williams



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS



Young Adult monthly gatherings have been organized by members of the committee this year. The Young Adult Ministry (YAM) has gathered for conversation and community building over jam & bagels and pizza & bowling. Anyone 18-40 is welcome to join.

In addition to our regular programs of Club 116 on Wednesdays, monthly tween gatherings, and the Continuing Education Scholarship sponsored by Presbyterian Women, the fall brought a new schedule for youth ministry here at ELPC. 7th-12th grade teens now meet for breakfast on Sundays at 9:45 am once a month, lunch and activities after church once a month, and weekly for dinner at Youth Group on Thursdays with Sixth Presbyterian Church.

Highlights of 2024 include our confirmation class of eight amazing students, a service and learning trip to Washington, DC to explore the intersection of faith and politics, and a really committed and caring group of volunteers who show up, plan lessons, play silly games, pray for students, and model what it means to follow Jesus with all our beauty, hurts, wisdom, love, giftedness, faults, and questions.

— Jason Van Ness, Mario Seneca
and Sara Hackett

CHILDREN & FAMILY

Some things changed and some remained the same in 2024. We still sang *Go Now In Peace* every day in closing worship at Vacation Church School in June with over 100 volunteers, teens, and kids.



The Christmas pageant told the Good News of Jesus' birth with the same joy and the same star costume.

We continue to create spaces where children can learn the stories of our faith and observe and participate in spiritual practices like prayer, stewardship, community, advocacy, service, generosity, and worship.

But after gathering with and listening to families over the summer, we recognized the need to make some scheduling changes. In September we shifted the Sunday School hour for kids so that it happens during the 11 am worship service. We added monthly family events that are being held before and after worship, to build community and to offer opportunities for intergenerational service.



Our nursery has been singing songs, telling stories and doing activities with the youngest members of our congregation. We are blessed to have many long-time teachers and volunteers still leading Sunday School AND to have a number of new volunteers sign up to help!



Alongside the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team, we co-hosted a celebration of Pastor Heather's ministry at ELPC. We said goodbye with grateful and sad hearts in September, when she left to follow God's call to be the pastor of Ben Avon Community Presbyterian Church.

In 2025, we are continuing to welcome families with radical hospitality, while providing kids and families a space for spiritual growth, opportunities to join in God's work of justice and time to be in community with each other.

— Trish Buben and Sara Hackett



MUSIC MINISTRY

Worship Highlights

- Journey Praise Team – Gerald Savage has been with us as Journey Music Director since Fall 2022. The Journey Praise Team rehearses on Thursdays and sings for the Journey Service from September to May. In addition, they led worship in the Garth several times throughout the summer months and for the Sanctuary Service the Sunday after Christmas.
- Chancel Choir – The Chancel Choir rehearses weekly from September through June and sings year-round for the 11 AM service and the 10 am service in the summer. Organist Ryan Croyle joined us several times throughout the year to play with the choir and The Brass Roots as well as substituting for Dr. Ed when he was away. The choir sang Robert Ray's *Gospel Mass* on the Cathedral Concert in February and once again provided lots of joyous music for Christmas in East Liberty.
- Handbell Choir – The ELPC Ringers rehearses weekly from September through May and ring during the 11 am service. A highlight of 2024 was attending the North Hills Handbell Festival at St. Paul's United Methodist Church on April 27.



- The Brass Roots have been with us for 11 years now, playing in worship 4 times throughout the year plus two concerts. A newly commissioned piece for brass ensemble and organ by Pittsburgh composer Nancy Galbraith was premiered at the concert on May 24 to commemorate 10 years of The Brass Roots at ELPC.
- Full Inclusion Sunday – The ELPC Chancel Choir was once again joined by members of The Renaissance City Choir on October 13. Alex Merthaler joined us as our guest pianist and we welcomed violinist, and new Hope Academy Teaching Artist, Omari I. Abdul-Alim, for our combined anthem *All of Me*.



- Reformation Sunday – Bagpiper Palmer Shonk returned for Reformation Sunday on October 27.
- Festival of Homiletics – ELPC was host to 6 worship services as part of the festival the week of May 13. Dr. Ed Moore played for all the services and worked with the festival liturgists and guest musicians to plan the services.

MUSIC MINISTRY *(cont.)*

Cathedral Concerts

Thanks to all the many volunteers who help greet and usher at the concerts and to Wayne Gaines and Tim Benedict for providing audio and visual support so we can stream the concerts on YouTube and Facebook. And a BIG thanks to Ian Faight for helping us get the word out online.

13th Season – second half



Sunday, February 25 – Singing Our History
The Chancel Choir, along with soloists and guest instrumentalists, commemorated Black History Month with Robert Ray's (1946-2022) timeless *Gospel Mass* and Women's History Month with solo works by women composers and arrangers.

Sunday, March 10 – Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh
The Mendelssohn Choir returned for their first post-Covid Cathedral Concert as they welcomed their new music director, Daniel Singer.



Friday, May 24 – A Brass and Organ Spectacular
The Brass Roots, conductor Daniel Nesta Curtis, and Dr. Ed Moore celebrated 10 years of The Brass Roots at ELPC with the premiere of *East Liberty Overture*, a new piece for brass ensemble, percussion, and organ by Pittsburgh composer Nancy Galbraith commissioned for the occasion.

14th Season – first half

Sunday, September 29 – Back to Broadway
Our 14th season of Cathedral Concerts kicked off with Back to Broadway. Dr. Ed Moore was at the piano along with singers Adrianna Cleveland, Todd Farwell, Delana Flowers, Tessa Morris, Gail Mosites, Denise Sheffey-Powell, Logan Williams, and Andrew Wilkinson for an afternoon of show tunes from past and present.



Friday, December 13 - Christmas in East Liberty
Our biggest event of the year that is an East Liberty Holiday Tradition! The Brass Roots, conductor Daniel Nesta Curtis, the ELPC Chancel Choir and Dr. Ed Moore, organist Ethan LaPlaca, and narrator Jim Cunningham from WQED-FM. 728 people attended in person with another 135 households watching online made this our biggest yet! A special treat this year was welcoming Pastor Michael who brought greetings for the season to all in attendance.

Thank you to all those who share their musical gifts in worship and to the parishioners who give us so much love and support throughout the year. Here is to a blessed and joyous 2025!

— Dr. Edward Alan Moore

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources Committee is thankful for the dedication and commitment that our staff demonstrates on a daily basis. We will continue to seek ways to equitably and compassionately nurture and care for our staff.

We are thankful for the work of our bookkeeper, Rachelle Cafee, and Administration & Facilities Director, Jim Tinnemeyer, for their financial oversight and diligence in fiscal responsibility. We continue to make changes to the 2024 budget to reflect our charge to accurately represent budgetary decisions.

Long overdue sabbaticals for Rev. Heather Schoenwolf and Rev. Dr. Patrice Fowler-Searcy were taken this year. Many thanks to Pastor Schoenwolf, Pastor Fowler-Searcy and Pastor BJ Woodworth for stepping in to take additional responsibilities during the times when one of the co-pastors were on sabbatical and during the month of July when both pastors were gone. We are thankful for this opportunity for rest and spiritual renewal for our pastors.

The Rev. Dr. Patrice Fowler-Searcy received her doctorate from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in May. Colleagues from the East Liberty Community spoke of their appreciation for her ministry and dedication to mission. Recognition and celebration of this milestone achievement was a highlight of our staff year. Congratulations Rev. Dr. Patrice!

In collaboration with the Director of Administration and Facilities, a review of the Employee Handbook was conducted. Job Descriptions and salaries were revised for Director of Christian Education, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and for our two Child Care workers. Evaluations were completed for all staff in May.

We had numerous staff changes over the course of the year. Megan Leisher left the position of Administrative Assistant in April. Thank you, Megan, for your dedication to our church community. We are grateful to former assistant, Gloria Knopp, for graciously filling in until we welcomed Jennifer King to this position in June. Jen is a tremendous resource to the rest of our

staff. Custodial services and staff are provided through Adecco on an as-needed basis.

Linda Addlespurger, Director of Hope Academy, retired after 25 years of leadership in July, with a celebration of her service in October. Anqwenique Kinsel was hired in October as Interim Director for Hope Academy and Michael Chapman was hired as Interim Development Coordinator. We welcome their talent and inspiration in this new chapter for Hope Academy.

Pastor Schoenewolf resigned as Acting Co-Pastor and Pastor for Educational Ministries at the end of September. The congregation celebrated and thanked Heather with stories and mementos at a special reception.

In November, Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz was called as Senior Pastor and Head of Staff and we look forward to shaping the future together.

Pastor Fowler-Searcy retired as Pastor for Mission Ministries at the end of December. The congregation celebrated and thanked Patrice with tributes and photos honoring her leadership and vision.

With high regard and gratitude we thank Lora and Jen for their leadership, dedication and persistence in strategically moving our Human Resources in equitable practices. They stepped down as co-chairs at the end of 2024.

As a committee, we have been intentional about offering our support and prayers to our pastors and our staff. We ask that our congregation also pray for them as they are ALL integral to the wellbeing of our church community.

— Carol Chonoska

Human Resources: Bill Buchanan (Interim co-chair 2025), Carol Chonoska (Interim co-chair 2025), Charma Dudley, Alan McIvor, Lora Bethea and Jen Hykes Willson (former co-chairs)

The Spiritual Life Committee is dedicated to creating spaces for church members, staff, and friends of ELPC to become aware of God's transformational action and presence in our lives and to share our resources, talents, gifts, and ministries with our community neighbors through spiritual practices that may be mutually enriched and renewed by our interaction with one another.

Woven through 2024 were offerings both familiar and new. Wednesday evenings continue to be as full and enriching as ever. Taizé and Cathedral Yoga remain anchors, fostering spiritual growth and well-being within ELPC as well as being entry points for our wider community in the East End. Monday morning Contemplative Prayer and Tuesday morning Prayer Group, both via Zoom, Tuesday evening meditation hour, facilitated by John Benedict, round out our weekly offerings. The Tuesday night mediation hour is both a place of peace and a surprising space of outreach and growth, as most of the participants are not connected with ELPC in any other ways.

In addition, Pastor BJ continues to lead members of ELPC in Spiritual Direction. Four retreats were offered in 2024. These retreats offer participants an opportunity to rest, to discern, and to better live into the people God is calling us to be. Two weekend retreats took place at Villa Maria Retreat Center, "Wintering" in February, facilitated by Pastor BJ, and "The Sacrament of Letting Go" held the last weekend in September, facilitated by Lynn Holden. In June, a day long retreat, "Tending the Wilderness Within", was held at the Jennings Environmental Center and facilitated by spiritual director and founder of Bewilder, Megan Shelly. Dawn Morgenstern led participants on a day long Yoga retreat in October that welcomed members and neighbors of ELPC to a day of practice and healing.



Our journey through the season of Lent began with the annual Taizé Ash Wednesday service. Thursday evenings were held as times of fellowship around a meal in the *Lenten Soup and Sustenance* series. The Social Hall stage was home to the Labyrinth from February 15-26. Capping off a fulfilling and reflective season was the *Taizé Stations of the Cross* and *Holy Saturday* service.

Valerie Kaur's *Revolutionary Love Tour* came to 1Hood Media on October 15. The Spiritual Life committee invited members to participate in an immersive evening of storytelling, music, song, ancestral wisdom and community building. On November 2nd, A Day with Cole Arthur Riley, founder of Black Liturgies and author of *This Here Flesh*, was held at 6th Presbyterian Church, where she spoke on dignity, justice, lament, and solidarity.

In November, The Spiritual Life Committee hosted what has become an annual event, The ELPC Pie Festival. The event coincided with Rev. Diaz's first Sunday at ELPC.

Spiritual Life Committee: Tim Engelhardt (chair), Shirley Fair, Sandi Miller, Dawn Morgenstern, Jeff Parsons, Reed Williams, Rev. BJ Woodworth (staff)

MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH

The New Year is an opportune time for ELPC members to look back and ponder their participation in 2024 while looking forward to 2025. As an analogy, rowers on the Allegheny River move forward by facing backward - a paradox. They fix their sights on landmarks in order to move along the winding river while keeping a graceful balance on the deep waters! O, come to the waters!

In 2024, Membership and Outreach Committee has worked to improve our ability to contact visitors. We planned and assisted with new member Inquirer classes including updates to the Inquirer's packet. Thanks to Patrice Searcy for her work with Inquirer's classes and facilitating new memberships. M&O facilitated new member recognitions including welcome SWAG bags. We held monthly social hours featuring church interest groups and committees. Beyond providing an opportunity for these groups to disseminate information about their focus, these social hours provided a time for all members and friends to connect with each other. ELPC members, friends, and visitors come from a wide geographical area. Social groups like the Happy Wanderers, Connections, and LGBTQIA+, are nested under the Committee. Through the year Martha DeMarzi led the Happy Wanderers on fun monthly trips such as the Heinz History Museum, Hartville OH, and Sommerset as well as a Christmas program at ELPC. Thanks to Ryan Booher for driving the church van. Many thanks to Gretchen Chapman who has provided leadership for the Connections group, including outings to a Highland Park Jazz concert, Fridays at Frick and pot luck lunches at ELPC. LGBTQIA+ had many activities through the year that are described elsewhere in this Annual Report. Advertising, the Reaching Out Newsletter, and website communications continue under the purview of Membership and Outreach Committee. We thank those who create the articles, manage information, and create attractive presentations, including Norma Meyer and Ian Faight. We said farewell to Megan Leisher, ELPC Administrative Assistant with appreciation for her work with the committee through the last few years. We then welcomed her replacement, Jennifer King, who quickly came up to speed and has been a great help to the Committee. Thanks to Gloria Knopp who filled in during the transition. We thank Rachelle Calfee, bookkeeper, for keeping M&O finances

straight and Jim Tinnemeyer for facilities setup. Many thanks to all the M&O Committee members who faithfully met and participated throughout the year.

For 2025 we warmly welcome Pastor Michael Diaz and look forward to working with him. We look forward to encouraging one another and helping ELPC to increase and deepen their multifaceted ministry in Christ's Church. That multifaceted ministry in Christ's church is aptly outlined in the PCUSA Book of Order which lists 12 ministries that all members of the church participate (1G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members – PCUSA Book of Order). The list provides direction – the landmarks – for our journey together in this winding shared ministry.

- Proclaim the good news in word and deed.
- Take part in the common life and worship of a congregation.
- Lift one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support.
- Study Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life.
- Support the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents.
- Demonstrate a new quality of life within and through the church.
- Respond to God's activity in the world through service to others.
- Live responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life.
- Work in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment
- Care for God's creation.
- Participate in the governing responsibilities of the church.
- Regularly review and evaluate the integrity of one's membership and consider ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

— Jan Irvin

M&O Committee: Nicholas Genger-Boeldt, Sonia Degenholtz, Martha DeMarzi, Andrea DeVries, Jan Lyle Irvin (chair), Pepo Mazingi, Elaine Phillips, Janet Pollard, Gwen Puza, Beth Urbatis, Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz (staff)

MISSION BOARD

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Jesus' words as depicted in the Gospel of Matthew are a blueprint of what the Mission Board worked towards in 2024. We remained committed to offering both spiritual and financial support to a range of organizations serving communities locally and around the world.

In 2024, the Mission Board continued to empower each of its subcommittees in each of their dedicated unique missions. The Justice Committee, Peace Committee, Neighbors Committee, and Facing Systemic Racism Committee (FSR) all demonstrated outstanding commitment and driving meaningful change throughout the year with the dedication of their members.



Together with representatives from Presbyterian Women and the Board of Deacons who are dedicated to helping women and families, the Mission Board recognizes the immense value of our subcommittee's work and encourages others with a shared passion for service to get involved. These committees are always open to new members, and the MB invites you to explore the detailed annual reports for each one below. If any of their initiatives resonate with you, feel free to contact the co-chair for information on upcoming meetings and ways to participate.

At the end of 2024 the Mission Board saw our staff support Dr. Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy retire. Pastor Patrice's imprint on ELPC and the especially the Mission Board and our Mission Subcommittees can not be understated. The guidance she provided us with her words and her actions showed us all how we can work to change our world around us. Even in her absence, however, make no mistake, Mission will continue to be the cornerstone of who we are as followers of Christ and who we are as a congregation at ELPC. The Mission Board asks for prayers and support as we enter this time of transition and ask that you become involved in the multitude of ways that our subcommittees have outlined.

Mission Board: Ryan Booher (Mission Board Chair, outgoing), Michele Bossers (Incoming Chair) and Lenore Williams (Facing Systemic Racism Co-Chairs), Bob Forloines (Neighbor Committee Chair), Russ Walker (Peace Committee Chair), Carol Chonoska (Justice Committee Chair), Peta Harrigan Cole (Presbyterian Women representative), Susan Wadsworth-Booth (Board of Deacons representative), Emily Rosenthal (At-large member)



USW volunteers who painted the Chapel Market

TOURS

A proposal was submitted to the members of the Worship, Music and Arts Committee on June 6, 2024 requesting that *Church Tours* be resumed after having been discontinued for several months.

These tours not only show the architectural beauty of our 1935 neo-Gothic church building but also serve as an outreach ministry. Most people joining the tours are visitors to the church.

From July 20, 2024 – November 10, 2024, ten (10) tours were led by our tour leaders with a total of ninety-four (94) people joining the tours.

The four types of tours offered in 2024:

- Sanctuary and Chapel – 5 tours
- Tower – 3 tours
- Stained Glass – 1 tour
- Exterior of Church - 1 tour

Tours are usually given following the 11 am Sunday Sanctuary worship services.

However, there were also two outside groups requesting Sanctuary and Chapel tours this year: our neighbors, the entire staff of the Kelly Strayhorn Theater, and the Religious Architectural Heritage Committee of Preservation Pittsburgh.

Much appreciation for our ELPC Church Tour guides:

Steve Evrard
Penn Hackney
Tom Morton
Tim VanFleet
Jo Ellen Aleshire

Church tours will be continuing in 2025.

— *Jo Ellen Aleshire*



In 2024, the Board of Deacons has continued to engage in many traditional roles and has expanded its efforts to provide outreach and service, especially to homebound members. Important areas of focus for the Deacons in 2024 included:

- Preparing and cleaning up for Communion at Journey and Sanctuary Services, including both Christmas Eve services
- Serving as Deacon on Duty at Sunday services
- Helping to coordinate the Giving Tree Ministry
- Serving two meals a year for residents at the North Side Common Ministries Shelter
- Visiting homebound members and providing other Congregational Care as needed
- Participating in the card ministry
- Financially supporting Thanksgiving Gift Baskets for families in need
- Coordinating the annual Blue Christmas service



The Giving Tree was again run from an online platform and was a very successful event. Over 100 children received gifts and or gift cards through the ministry.

Our home-bound ministry commitment continues, and individual Deacons minister to 13 members and friends through cards, phone calls, and monthly in-person visits.

The Blue Christmas service, a tradition which began in December 2018, continued in person this year and was very well-received and well-attended.

We have paused our Health and Wellness Ministry as we seek to refocus its efforts and activities for 2025-2026.

Due to scheduling issues, the 2024 International Meal was not held. We plan to hold it again in October 2025.

Attendance and participation on the Board remain strong. Using a hybrid format, most meetings are well-attended. We are excited about 2025 when we hope to welcome new members to the board, evaluate our budget needs and areas of service, and better align our actions with congressional and community needs at ELPC.

— *Drew Simpson, Moderator, Gretchen Chapman, Co-Moderator*

STEWARDSHIP/FINANCE

Finance

The Finance Committee oversaw a budget of \$2,636,574 in calendar year 2024. Actual revenue, including amounts drawn from the endowment, was \$2,552,934 and actual expenses were \$2,580,720. Our endowment produced a standard draw of \$1,395,472, which equaled 5.6% of the endowment based on a three-year rolling average. That amount, together with pledges and other gifts from the congregation, other income, and the excess draw from the endowment, resulted in total annual revenue of \$2,552,934. The amount by which our actual expenses exceeded our actual revenue (\$27,786) was paid for from cash-on-hand in the church's checking account.

Overall, in 2024:

- Our members included: Keith Irvin, Mario Seneca, Stephen Simpson-Hunt, Bryan Lawrence, Chris Martin, and Barbara Griffin joined us to head up Stewardship. Thanks to everyone in our committee for their hard work this past year.
- Congregational giving increased: We received \$717,734 in pledges, plate offerings and other recurring gifts, which represented a slight increase from last year's total of \$704,597.
- The excess draw: Of the \$359,152 excess draw approved by Session, only \$345,000 was actually used for operating expenses. (As noted in the footnotes to the Budget Summary, there was an additional \$100,000 that was withdrawn from the endowment in February 2024 to fund the church's commitment to reparations, money that was approved by Session in the fall of 2023, but which was not actually withdrawn from the endowment until 2024.)

The 2025 Budget — Session approved the 2025 budget at its December 2024 meeting. It reflects a decrease in the annual budget of over \$100,000 – from \$2,636,574 to \$2,529,197. In addition, the budgeted amount of the excess draw was reduced to \$223,582, thereby meeting the committee's goal of further reducing this amount each year.

Stewardship

The campaign for 2025 pledges began in October 2024 as we asked ELPC members and friends to consider how the fruits of the spirit have manifested themselves in their lives.

Leading up to Stewardship Sunday on November 17, 2024, members of the committee and the congregation presented *Minutes for Mission* at the 11 am worship service for three consecutive Sundays.

The Membership and Outreach Committee graciously hosted a post-worship fellowship time with stewardship information on November 10, 2024.



As of January 21, 2025, we received 171 pledges totaling \$554,727.92.

The stewardship campaign will continue its work throughout the year with information and inspiration on the importance of supporting ELPC's mission and ministries.

Stewardship Committee: Bill Buchanan, Bob Forloines, Barbara Griffin (chair), Katie Haas-Conrad, Bryan Lawrence, Alexander Payton, Jim Tinnemeyer (staff)



Presbyterian Women may be best known for its support of mission and work for justice and peace. Our purpose culminates with a commitment "...to build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom."

An Inclusive, Caring Community of Women

PW bible studies meet on the first Monday evening and the first Tuesday morning each month, September through May, and include a time of sharing and group prayer. Fourteen to eighteen people attend each study, approximately 30 each month. All are welcome. You don't have to be Presbyterian or live in the Pittsburgh area to participate.

Our 2024-2025 PW bible study, *Let Justice Roll Down: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation*, is a call to work for environmental justice. In addition to learning about ecological systems, we are exploring theological questions that point us to engage in solving the climate crisis. This study has inspired our PW to begin work on a "land acknowledgement" and evaluate potential giving opportunities that address the climate crisis.

In March 2024, our PW hosted Teri Ott for a Saturday gathering based on her book, *Necessary Risks: Challenges Privileged People Need to Face*. Rev Dr. Teri McDowell Ott is a pastor, writer and the Editor/Publisher of *Presbyterian Outlook*. On Sunday morning, Rev Ott preached "Choose Love," based on I Corinthians 13, and she led a combined adult ed class.

In the wake of the General Election, we organized an impromptu one hour zoom gathering to *Wrestle with Our Hopes and Fears*. We continued this occasional discussion on Sunday, January 19, when we considered *Where Do You Find Hope?*

Mission, Justice and Peace

We look to establish long term relationships with the organizations we support. We are especially interested in agencies that benefit women and children. Our PW supports the missions of Presbyterian Women at all levels--churchwide, in the Synod of and in Pittsburgh Presbytery.

- We are working to connect PW and the ELPC congregation with resources for "best practices" in Mission and Justice.
 - ◆ In 2024, we sponsored *Mission in the Margins: Lessons and Practices from the Global Church*, a conference of the World Mission Initiative at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.
 - ◆ We continue to support *Bread for the World*, an interdenominational organization urging U.S. decision makers to do all they can to pursue a world without hunger.
- We directly support several agencies that address human needs. These include East End Cooperative Ministries, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, East Liberty Family Health Care Center, the Neighborhood Academy and the Western PA Diaper Bank. In 2024, we began funding *Hello Neighbor*, a local agency dedicated to supporting recently resettled refugee and immigrant families.
- We are grateful to members and friends of ELPC who contributed more than \$2,800 to the 2024 PW Thank Offering.

Contact us at PW.ELPC@gmail.com for more information.

PW Coordinating Team: Mary Alice Lightle (Moderator), Elaine Phillips (Treasurer), Peta Harrigan Cole (Corresponding Secretary) and at-large members Sherry Anderson, Rev. Diana Harbison, and Sung Yoo

— *Mary Alice Lightle*

BUDGET SUMMARY

ACCOUNTS	BUDGET 2023	TOTAL ACTUAL 2023	BUDGET 2024	TOTAL ACTUAL 2024	BUDGET 2025
REVENUE					
Pledges	720,000	553,827	655,000	519,665	675,000
Pledges Prior Year	6,200	2,242	5,000	100	2,500
Plate Offerings	20,000	16,935	15,000	24,440	18,000
Recurring Gifts, Non-Pledged	150,000	131,592	125,000	173,529	170,000
Grants, Bequests, Memorials	51,000	3,985	28,500	24,349	9,000
Other Income	56,200	20,126	39,350	26,489	16,600
Standard Endowment Draw 5.6%	1,393,351	1,393,351	1,395,472	1,395,472	1,371,148
Trust Income	39,747	44,504	39,300	43,890	43,890
Excess Draw / Cash Flow	569,065	395,213	359,152	345,000	223,582
Total REVENUE	3,005,563	2,561,775	2,661,774	2,552,934	2,529,720
EXPENSES					
Administration	195,500	175,199	174,380	153,411	167,500
Adult Education	1,100	545	850	385	850
Children & Family Ministries	8,815	8,275	8,765	9,804	11,765
Deacons	5,855	4,891	5,000	2,432	4,500
Faith Formation Board	2,748	3,286	2,750	435	2,750
Facilities	447,150	492,589	414,450	447,021	414,450
Fellowship	7,950	50	2,400	10,668	2,700
Membership & Outreach	58,950	45,758	58,950	51,718	55,150
Mission	91,320	55,078	75,320	56,037	79,920
Mission Ministry	10,500	9,467	9,800	9,089	9,800
Opportunities	11,500	10,248	9,000	4,367	7,500
Personnel	2,124,773	1,711,795	1,733,585	1,707,656	1,629,278
Session	65,090	70,306	72,374	71,039	73,284
Spiritual Life	5,750	3,869	5,750	8,410	5,750
Stewardship	1,650	1,412	1,200	1,035	1,000
Taizé	4,500	2,619	4,000	2,739	4,000
Worship, Music & Arts	38,130	40,402	30,400	29,474	36,700
Youth & Young Adult Ministry	29,550	17,775	27,300	15,000	22,300
Total EXPENSES	3,022,739	2,653,564	2,636,574	2,580,720	2,529,197

OTHER 2024 FINANCIAL NOTES:

(1) In August 2023, ELPC sold its Manse and received \$853,316 as a return on its capital investment. In

February 2024 these funds were placed into the Endowment in a Restricted Account entitled "Manse Proceeds."

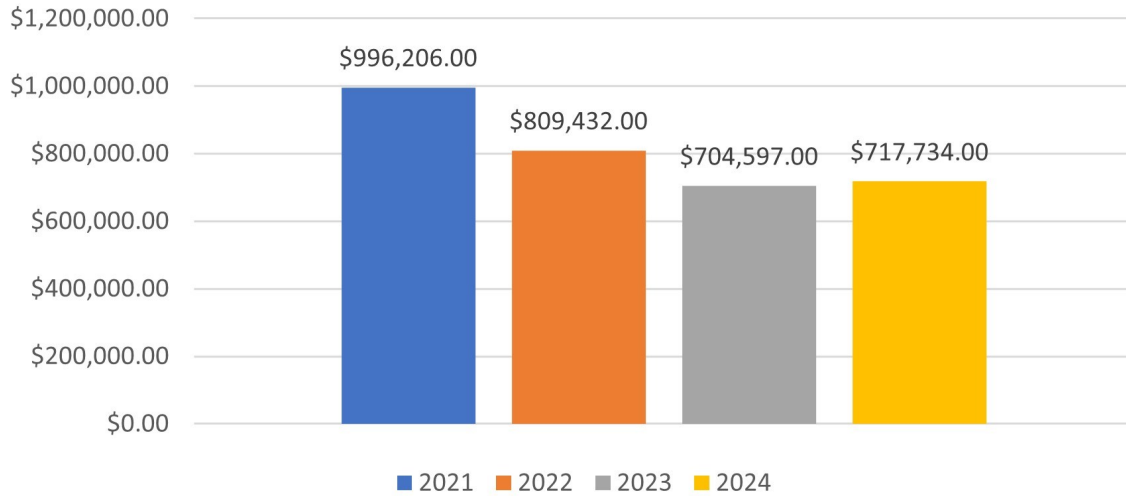
(2) In November 2023, the Session as part of its commitment to Facing Systemic Racism and reparations voted to withdraw from the endowment \$100,000 to fund the Joe and Jean Kennedy Scholarships of \$50,000 each at the Neighborhood Academy and the Pittsburgh Promise Advancing Educators of Color Program. In February 2024, these funds were withdrawn and sent to these respective non-profits. This \$100,000 withdrawal from the Endowment was in addition to the \$345,000 excess draw noted above.

(3) As of December 31, 2024, the amount of cash in the church's checking account was \$96,733.64

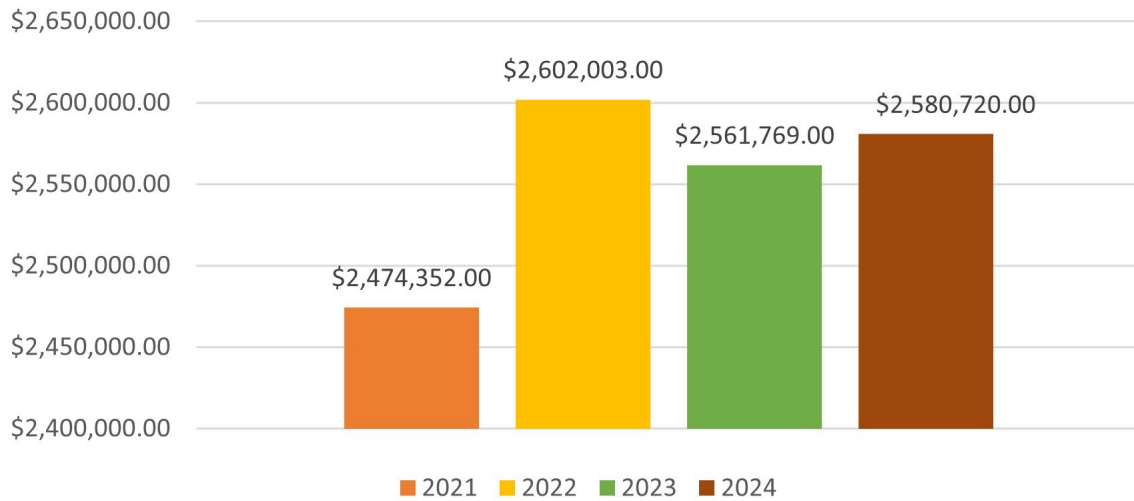
(4) As of December 31, 2024, the value of the Endowment was \$26,090,791.

PLEDGES/INCOME/EXPENSES

Pledges and Offerings (Actual) 2021-2024



Annual Expenditures (Actual) 2021-2024



ENDOWMENT INFORMATION

Endowment End of Year Value..... \$26, 090,791

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Active Membership (as of 12.31.23) 763

Gains for 2024:

Profession of Faith, Reaffirmation, Restoration 22
 Friends (*not included in total gains total*)..... 2
 Certificate of Transfer 5
Total Gains 27

Losses for 2024:

Certificate of Transfer 3
 Deaths..... 3
 Removed by Session (*joined another church, termination requested, no contact info*)..... 8
 Moved to Friend 0
Total Losses..... 14

TOTAL ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP 776

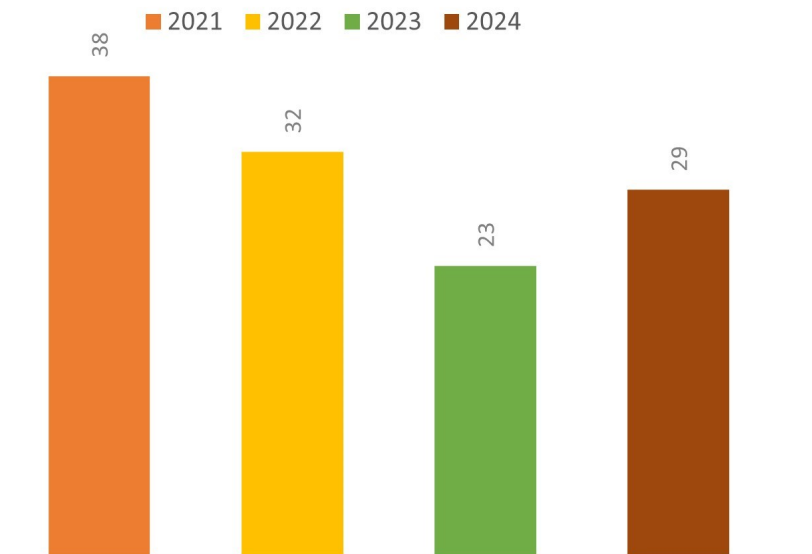
RACE OF ACTIVE MEMBERS

Asian/Pacific Islander/ South Asian	10
Black/African American/ African	134
Middle Eastern/North African	3
Hispanic/Latino/a	11
Native American/ Alaska Native/Indigenous	2
White	611
Multiracial	5

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVE MEMBERS

17 and under	9
18 to 25	35
26 to 40	164
41 to 55	174
56 to 70	200
Over 70	194

NEW MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND AFFILIATES 2021-2024



Members in 15206 113
 Members who identify as female 471
 Members who identify as male 301
 Non-Binary 4

2024 MEETING MINUTES

Sunday, February 25, 2024

In-person and on Zoom

Gathering: At 1 pm Pastor and co-Moderator Patrice Fowler-Searcy opened the meeting with prayer and Clerk of Session Steve Massey confirmed the presence of a quorum. After Pastor Patrice reviewed meeting rules, Session members shared/read the “Covenant of Presence” to encourage a respectful tone among those speaking at and attending the meeting.

Minutes: Elder Matt Stufft moved to approve the minutes from 2023 congregational meeting as corrected at the request of member Francis Irvin to add the word “and” to an approved motion she made at that meeting calling on all future year-end and budget reports to the congregation include in a single table all revenues from all sources, all expenses, etc. Elder Bill Buchanan seconded approval of the corrected minutes, which passed.

Recognition of members and others who passed in 2023: Pastor Patrice remembered the many members and friends who died in 2023.

Recognition of retiring officers: Pastor Patrice thanked and recognized Elders Nicholas Genger-Boldt, Tiffany Sudar and Jill Millard, and Deacons Peta Harrigan Cole and David Cowan who have completed their terms.

Officer Nominating Committee nominees: With no nominees from the floor, the congregation approved from the Nominating Committee the following as members of:

The Nominating Committee Class of 2024: Damon Bethea, Michelle Bossers, Andrea DeVries, Jessica Giannotta, Bill Johnson, Josh Mattila and Deacon rep Drew Simpson (Session will appoint its representative in May)

The Deacons Class of 2027: Karen Beasley (second 3-year term), Amy Bialek, Gretchen Chapman, Molly Davidson-Welling (second term), Drew Simpson (second term), Susan Wadsworth-Booth (second term)

The Youth Deacon Class of 2025: Eleanor Willson

The Elders Class of 2027: Trish Buben, Dee Flaherty, Robert Forloines (second 3-year term), Barbara Griffin, Bryan Lawrence, Jason Van Ness

The Nominating Committee Class of 2025: Sara Torretti

Summary of committee reports included in the 2023 Annual Report: Pastors and meeting co-moderators Patrice and Heather Schoenewolf provided a brief review of reports from committees under their direction, as did Pastor BJ Woodworth did regarding spiritual life and the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

The Facing Systemic Racism Committee also highlighted Session’s approval of a \$100,000 disbursement from the Centennial Fund to establish the Jean and Joe Kennedy Scholarship Fund for Black students pursuing a college education, named in memory of the longtime ELPC members who were educators and leaders of the church.

MEETING MINUTES *(cont.)*

With Pastor Heather taking over as co-moderator of the meeting, 2023 membership statistics (see January Session minutes) were referenced, showing a net gain of 11 to put total active membership at 763. Also shared were details of the \$2,636,574 2024 operating budget as approved by Session, and a Centennial Fund report putting the endowment's year-end 2023 assets at \$24.8 million, up \$2.3 million from 2022.

After committee representatives and church staff addressed congregants' questions arising from the reports, member David Carl moved to accept the reports, member Lenore Williams seconded and the motion was approved.

Report of the Human Resources Committee: With Pastors Heather and Patrice leaving the room and Pastor BJ stepping as moderator, the HR Committee presented and moved to approve the 2024 Terms of Call for Pastors Heather and Patrice as reviewed by Session and included in the 2024 budget approved by Session. After prolonged discussion and a request to vote by ballot, the motion carried 68 to 9. Pastors Heather and Patrice returned to resounding applause.

At 3:08 pm, a motion to adjourn passed unanimously and Pastor BJ closed the meeting with a prayer.

Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Moderator

Steve Massey, Clerk of Session

Rev. Heather Schoenewolf