

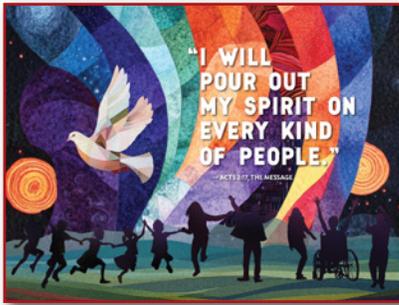


# Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

June 2025

## Dear ELPC Family and Friends,



The Pentecost Offering, one of our denomination's four, churchwide Special Offerings, supports ministries with children, youth, and young adults in our community, across the nation, and around our world. As you give to this important offering, remember that 40% of your gift remains in our church to support ministries with younger people in our community as we choose.

This year, we plan to use our 40% in support of Hope Academy of Music and the Arts. The Academy was established in 1999 at ELPC as a mission outreach to the community, and offers a safe and affordable opportunity for young people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds to explore, and develop their artistic gifts through the study of dance, music, and theater.

**HOPE**  
**ACADEMY**  
OF MUSIC AND THE ARTS

Working in partnership with many local organizations and teaching artists, Hope Academy has helped hundreds of children develop skills, confidence, and determination, and has given them the ability to share these artistic skills through personal, amateur, and professional outlets.

The remainder of your offering is forwarded to the denomination so that young adults can form a foundation for their lives through a year of service in the Young Adult Volunteer Program; youth can be among the 5,000-plus having mountaintop experiences in worship, play, and faith formation at events like the Presbyterian Youth Triennium; and children can receive support through the *Educate a Child, Transform the World* initiative.

During Pentecost season, as we celebrate God's many gifts to the church, I invite you to join me in celebrating our part in building lives of faith among our children, youth, and young adults. These members of our household of faith are not just the future of the church, they ARE the church—and they are God's gift to us. Thank you for all the ways that you give.

Yours in Christ,

Michele Bossers  
Chair, ELPC Mission Board

## Weekly Worship Schedule

Summer Worship  
Sundays | 10 am

Taizé Prayer Service  
Wednesdays | 7 pm

## Celebrating the Birth of the Church

Join us on **Pentecost Sunday, June 8**, as we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and birth of the church. Please wear festive red clothing to worship!



## Summer Sunday School for Kids

This summer, we are offering Sunday School for kids age 4–grade 3. Tweens are encouraged to join in our Summer worship service, but if they would like to help out with the younger kids' class, let Sara know.

Starting June 15, Summer Sunday School will have a different format and take place in Room 205. The Invitations to Play curriculum follows the lectionary texts we are using in worship and uses sensory and imaginative play materials to make space for the Holy Spirit to do its work of transformation. Together, we will make meaning of sacred texts and theological concepts through play!



**East Liberty  
Presbyterian Church**

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### Staff Leadership

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## Pastoral Message

*The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz, Senior Pastor*



*“When the Day of Pentecost had come...all were filled with the Holy Spirit.”—from Acts 2*

When I began journeying with ELPC six months ago, we were too busy in the holiday season to schedule an installation service. After I was officially received into the Pittsburgh Presbytery at the beginning of 2025, Lent was about to commence. I remember shrugging at the idea of an installation service. “There’s no time for an installation service,” I thought. “Do we really need one?” The

Pittsburgh Presbytery emphatically reminded me that we do indeed need one! After experiencing the Spirit at my installation service last month, I am grateful for the presbytery’s wisdom. *(See photos on the next page.)*

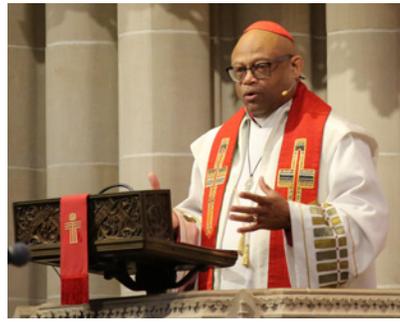
The Spirit was present throughout the service through your prayers, presence, joyful music, sacred laughter, and emotional tears. Thank you for showing up with your love as the Spirit showed up in powerful messages from Rev. Dr. Robert Griffin, Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins, and Rev. Sarah Robbins. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Ed Moore and ELPC’s music ministry who commissioned a special arrangement of one of my favorite hymns, *We Are the Church Alive*. Written in 1980 by Jack Hoggat-St. John and David Pelletier, the hymn was written by musicians from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a Christian denomination with a primary affirming outreach to LGBTQIA peoples.

*We are the Church Alive,  
Christ’s presence on this earth  
We give God’s Spirit body in  
The act of our new birth.  
As yielded open channels  
For God’s descending dove,  
We shout and sing, With joy we bring  
God’s all-inclusive love.*

As our choir sang those words—words that gave me hope when I first began living out my calling years ago, a flood of emotions poured over me. It wasn’t just a song, but a reminder that ELPC is not only a beautiful building with a historic past. We are called to be the church who is alive to the Spirit’s call, to one another, and to the work of love and justice in our neighborhood and beyond.

Now that we’ve made a holy covenant to journey with each other, to dream together, and to grow together, we turn our attention to Pentecost and the season of the Spirit. The Spirit of Pentecost blew into an upper room with wind and with understanding. People who had never spoken the same language suddenly found themselves comprehending one another’s deepest truths. That’s the Spirit we need now more than ever. We need the Holy Spirit who bridges gaps, disrupts indifference, and makes us bold enough to proclaim love to the world.

As we move into our summer worship schedule with one Sunday morning service at 10 am, I hope you’ll remember that the Spirit of God is not finished moving in our lives. The Spirit and the Church is yet alive.



Photos courtesy of Coleman Lane

Above photo courtesy of Linda Lane

## Session News

In May, Session received an update on Hope Academy's work and impact in the community.

With a recommendation from the Human Resources Committee, Session also appointed Ryan Booher, Gretchen Chapman, Carol Chonoska, Barbara Griffin, and Linda Lane to the Temporary Associate Pastor Selection Committee. We hope to have an associate pastor hired by September.

## Reckoning with ELPC's Tie to Enslavement

In 2022, our church family learned that one of our most revered founders and donors enslaved and sold two women, Nell and Poll, in the early 1800s. Over the past year, a small team of ELPCers has sought to learn more about these women and their lives. Who were they beyond the scant details in the dehumanizing 1808 bill of sale?

Join the Facing Systemic Racism Committee after worship on **Sunday, June 29**, for a presentation on what we have learned about Nell, Poll, and their family. We also will have time for discussion and reflection on what we must do to reckon with this part of our church's legacy. We'll gather in the Social Hall and a light lunch will be provided.

## Embodying the Spirit Retreat Reflection

by Polly McQueen

### Embodying the Spirit Retreat

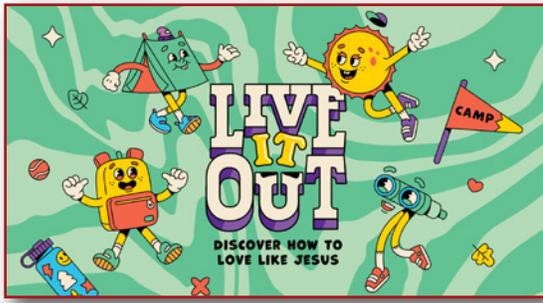
Over the first weekend of May, about 20 ELPC members and friends met an hour north of Pittsburgh at a quiet, woodsy place called the Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center—a perfect setting for rest and contemplation. Joanne Spence led us through prayer, a variety of breathing exercises, and discussion to a broader and deeper sense of our faith living within our bodies, reminding us that Christ, too, lives within us, and to treasure our bodies for this reason.

Besides morning, mid-day, and evening prayers and contemplative time, we created art (see some samples below!) under the guiding hand of Tim Englehardt and danced with Yamuna Morgenstern in the beautiful chapel of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. Some of us took slightly soggy walks in the woods, while others moved around the outdoor Labyrinth. We napped, we read books, and a few went swimming in an indoor pool, but, best of all, we got to know each other much better. This was a blessing.



Villa Maria is quite beautiful, with easy walking on the paths to the various buildings and with lovely woods around the campus. We stayed in a dormitory with the usual basic furniture, and our meals were in Annunciation Hall, a beautiful, light-filled space conducive to good conversation. We had a celebratory gathering Saturday evening with snacks and drinks we had brought; again, it was heart-warming to sit at a couple of round tables and talk with each other.

Consider joining us at our next ELPC retreat at Villa Maria, **Friday–Sunday, October 31–November 2**. Since it is Halloween, All Saints Day, and the Day of the Dead, we will be exploring the themes of the communion of the saints in life and death—embracing the grace of aging and dying.



## It's Time for VCS

ELPC's Vacation Church School will be held **Monday–Friday, June 23–27**, 9 am–3 pm. We are still looking for a few more volunteers, especially who can help in the afternoon with some fun kids! If you are interested, reach out to Sara Hackett or sign up at [tiny.cc/vcs](http://tiny.cc/vcs).

Can't help during the day, but still want to help? Save and drop off your paper grocery bags! Donate a side salad for volunteers' lunch. Pasta, lettuce, and fruit salads are all great! Help wash t-shirts and sheets! Pick them up at the church and bring them back clean! These need a fresh laundering before we use them in June. Mix up dough for dog treats. Kids are going to roll, cut, bake, and decorate!

Lastly, there will be a training session for all VCS youth and adult volunteers on **Sunday, June 22**, 11 am–2 pm. Lunch will be provided.

## Summer Opportunities for Youth

### July 20–25: Middle School Service Adventure Camp at Crestfield

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



### July 13–19: Trinity Youth Conference

Trinity Youth Conference is a regional Presbyterian conference for youth who have completed grade 9 through college-aged students in Shellsburg, Pennsylvania. The week consists of meaningful workshops, camp games, relevant worship, refreshingly honest small groups, and is planned and led by a youth planning team.

ELPC's own Shayla Brigido is a member of this

year's planning team. Information about cost, workshops, registration and schedule can be found online at [trinityyouthconference.com](http://trinityyouthconference.com).

### July 28–31: Presbyterian Youth Triennium

Teens who have completed grades 8–12 are invited to join over 1,000 Presbyterian teens from around the world as we worship, learn, fellowship, and play as a hopeful and joyful community of faith at the 2025 Presbyterian Youth Triennium in Louisville, Kentucky. The experience will be one of those life-shaping faith forming events that you will never forget! It will be *As If We Were Dreaming*.

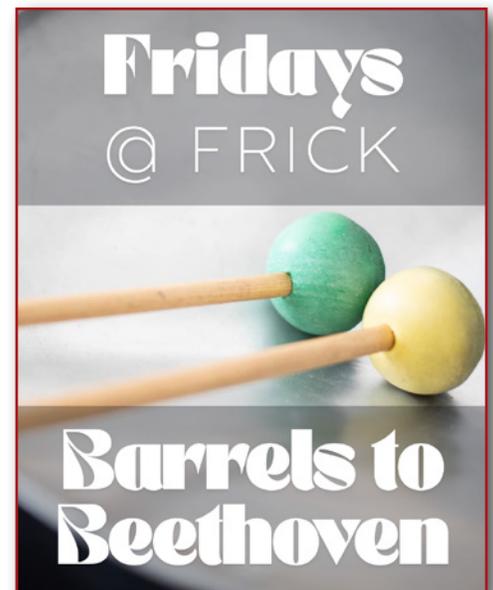


## Make a Connection

The ELPC Connections Groups Ministry invites everyone to attend the following summer events! Grab your blanket or chair and come join us for these *free* outdoor concerts! Bring a picnic meal for yourself or plan to buy food from the vendors on site. Relax and talk with other EPLC folks while we enjoy music.

### Friday, June 27: Fridays at Frick

Enjoy an evening of music across genres with a performance by Barrels to Beethoven, an education group dedicated to reaching audiences about steelpan. Grounds open at 5 pm; music starts at 6:30 pm and ends around 8 pm.



### Friday, July 25: Fridays at Frick

The Stemtecs Band will dazzle us with a vibrant mix of smooth and jazzy melodies. Grounds open at 5 pm; music starts at 6:30 pm and ends around 8 pm.

### Sunday, August 24: Reservoir of Jazz

Join us at the Highland Park Reservoir for a performance by Paul Cosentino's Boiler Maker Jazz Band. Music starts at 5 pm and ends at 7 pm.

RSVP to [connectelpc@gmail.com](mailto:connectelpc@gmail.com).

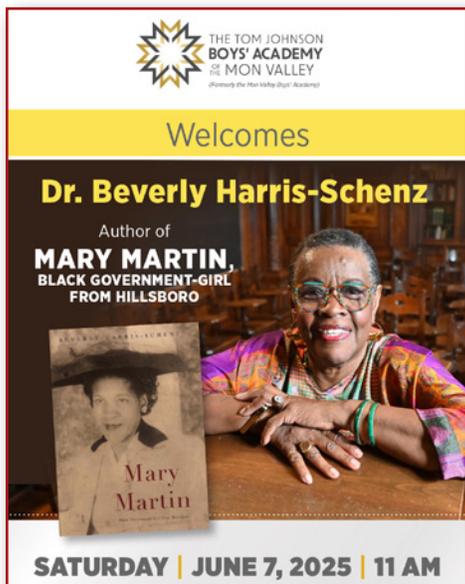
## Lending Support to South Sudan

Having earned its independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan is the youngest country in the world. It has been torn by civil war for nearly all of its brief history. Roughly 57% of its population needs food support, and aid from the U.S. government has been cut off. Water is scarce during the dry season in areas that are not located on the Nile River. The country has desperate needs.

To offer our support, the ELPC Peace Committee has contributed \$1,000 to the Presbyterian Church in Juba. This, and other support from the PC(USA), is in line with our mission as a Matthew 25 congregation.

## Beverly Harris-Schenz Book Sale

ELPC member, Dr. Beverly Harris-Schenz, has generously donated a books that will go up for sale on **Saturday, June 7**, 11 am, at the new offices of The Pittsburgh Foundation (912 Ft. Duquesne Blvd, Floor 10, 15222). Proceeds support scholarships for students of The Tom Johnson Boy's Academy of the Mon Valley.



THE TOM JOHNSON BOYS' ACADEMY OF THE MON VALLEY  
(Honoring the Mon Valley Boys' Academy)

Welcomes

**Dr. Beverly Harris-Schenz**  
Author of  
**MARY MARTIN,  
BLACK GOVERNMENT-GIRL  
FROM HILLSBORO**

**Mary Martin**

**SATURDAY | JUNE 7, 2025 | 11 AM**

## Alternative Transportation Challenge Recap

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee would like to thank all who participated in the Alternative Transportation Challenge on Sunday, May 18, to lower our transportation carbon footprint—by biking, walking, carpooling, using public transit, driving a hybrid or electric vehicle, or participating in an alternate challenge. Members were on hand with their electric and hybrid vehicles, along with a biking champion, to share information.

Of the 231 people completing the May 18 transportation survey, 54 changed the way they typically travel to ELPC, and 135 were already using one of these lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions methods. Travel methods used were: biking @ 19; walking @ 31; public transit @ 17; electric vehicle @ 13 people in 8 cars; hybrid vehicle @ 35 people in 18 cars; gas vehicle @ 116 people in 74 cars. In addition, 67 people completed an alternate challenge.

Without more detailed data about how every individual typically travels to ELPC, we were not able to calculate exact CO<sub>2</sub> emissions savings. We did calculate that compared to single-occupant gas cars, our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on May 18 were lower by about 3/4 ton of CO<sub>2</sub>, the equivalent of 76 gallons of gasoline burned, or 11 trees planted and grown for 10 years.



Please consider continuing these changes on Sundays and in your daily routines! If you are purchasing a car, consider an electric or hybrid vehicle. We can make an impact by working together to care for God's creation, and help reverse inequities caused by climate change.

## Neighborhood News!

Thank you to everyone who donated tools, gloves, seeds, and garden ornaments to our Neighbors Committee's Tool Drive on April 27. Garfield Community Farm was the grateful recipient of these, as well as tables and garden benches gifted by the Neighbors Committee.

Our Chapel Market dinner in May was a huge success! Thank you to ELPC staff for helping and Pastor Michael for greeting guests and offering grace! Twenty two ELPC volunteers served a delicious chicken dinner for our neighbors!

The next dinner will be on **Friday, June 13**. If you are interested in being added to the list of volunteers for this or future dinners, contact the Neighbors Committee: Heather Eng at [heng16@gmail.com](mailto:heng16@gmail.com) or Cathleen Malmstrom at [calmalm1@gmail.com](mailto:calmalm1@gmail.com).



## New Deacons & Elders

On Sundays, May 11 & 18, we ordained and installed a new class of deacons and elders. Please join us in congratulating:

### Deacons Ordained

- Brady Conley (youth)
- Alex Payton
- Deedee Frye
- Jennifer Liu Kopanic

### Elders Ordained

- Doug Booth
- Mabel Buben (youth)
- Pepo Mazingi

### Deacons Installed

- Jeff Fritz
- Eric McCarty

### Elders Installed

- Hollen Barmer
- Sandy Brake
- Carol Chonoska
- Stephen Simpson-Hunt
- Matt Stufft

## Come Out and Celebrate Pittsburgh Pride

ELPC is proud to support LAMP, LGBTQIA+ Affirming Ministries of Pittsburgh. And we are excited to again celebrate Pride in Pittsburgh this summer. While there are many Pride events sponsored by different groups and in different neighborhoods, the ONE big Pride event ELPC and LAMP will be participating in this year is Pittsburgh Pride March & Festival on **Sunday, June 1**. The March will begin at noon on Liberty Avenue and conclude at Allegheny Commons Park West, where the Festival will take place.

If you'd like to volunteer in our both, sign up at [tiny.cc/pgh-pride](https://tiny.cc/pgh-pride). We need both lay and pastoral volunteers! More details are available in the Highland Lobby. Come out and celebrate while we share God's love with all God's people!



## Our Next Spiritual Gathering is in July



Please join us at our next Spiritual Gathering on **Sunday, July 6**, 11:30 am, to share conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcomed.

Questions? Please contact Wil Forrest at [wil@coh.net](mailto:wil@coh.net) or **412.441.3800 x218**. A Zoom option will be offered only if expressed need is shared with Wil prior to the Friday before the gathering.

## ELPC People

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

### Good News

- Join us in welcoming our new members and friends who joined our faith family in May:

#### By adult baptism:

- Natalia Goldin
- Terry Hughes

#### By transfer or reaffirmation of faith:

- Brianna (Bri) Allison
- Daniel Justus Appadurai
- Mark Broscoe
- Jillian Malcolm
- Amanda Litzinger
- Sharon Suritsky

#### Re-affirming his baptism:

- Brian Ragu Rayne

- Since 2002, Peta Harrigan Cole has served as an Oasis Intergenerational Tutor, working one on one with an elementary school student in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, every week throughout the school year. Peta recently received a 20-year *Starfish Award* from Oasis Tutoring, a program of Literacy Pittsburgh. The Starfish award acknowledges that one person can make a difference, like the child picking up a stranded starfish on the beach and tossing it back into the ocean. Congratulations, Peta!

### Prayers

We offer our prayers of comfort to the family of ELPC friend Frederick W. Clothey, who passed away on May 18.

*"Blessed are those who die in the Lord, says the Spirit. They rest from their labors and their works follow them."*

*“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.”*

## Update Your Reaching Out Delivery Preference

ELPC is working to reduce our carbon footprint and shift to mostly electronic distribution of our *Reaching Out* newsletter. If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter in the mail, please reach out to Jen King by:



**Mail:** (attn: Jen)  
**Email:** [JenK@coh.net](mailto:JenK@coh.net)  
**Phone:** 412.441.3800 x222

Our July edition will only be sent to those who requested mailed copies, and emailed to all other subscribers. If you have a new or updated email

address, please contact Jen to ensure you receive it. A digital version of the newsletter is also always available on our website at [ELPC.church](http://ELPC.church).

## Building Closure

The ELPC building will be closed on **Thursday, June 19**, in honor of Juneteenth.

## Juneteenth Parade

ELPC has had a presence in the Juneteenth Parade and this year is no exception! Join us on **Saturday, June 21**, 10 am. If you would like to walk or ride in the church van, let us know (space is limited).

For information or to sign up, contact Lenore Williams at [LeeFabilli@aol.com](mailto:LeeFabilli@aol.com).

