

## Weekly Worship Schedule

Summer Worship

Sundays | 10 am

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

## ELPC Seeks a New Associate Pastor for Connection & Care

As you know, a process has begun to seek a new Associate Pastor for ELPC who will oversee connection and care, as well as serve as the liaison for the Board of Deacons and the Membership and Outreach Committee. Although the position is listed as a temporary Associate Pastor, the successful candidate could become an installed pastor later. The position description can be found at [elpc.church/careers](http://elpc.church/careers). Session appointed the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) who received their orientation in June.

After developing the Ministry Discernment Profile, the APNC posted the role on the Church Leadership (CLC) site and advertised the position widely. We have a number of applicants, and are continuing to accept applications. After reading the PDP (Personal Discernment Profile) for applicants and viewing sermons listed on their PDP, we have begun initial interviews. There is a poster on the bulletin board in the Baum Blvd exit hallway where you can see the process we are following.

Please hold your Committee up in prayer as we engage in this process of discernment on behalf of ELPC.

*Gretchen Chapman (Chair), Ryan Booher, Carol Chonoska, Barbara Griffin, and Linda Lane*

## Church Tours Continue

Join us this month for two opportunities to tour ELPC spaces.

We'll first gather on **Sunday, August 3**, for an in-depth tour of the stained glass in our Sanctuary and Chapel. Designed and created by eight Pittsburgh stained glass shops during the 1930s, the windows tell the history of Presbyterianism and our faith, as well as many Biblical stories, including the amazing depiction of Revelation in the balcony.

Then on **Sunday, August 17**, join us to learn more about the symbolism and architecture of ELPC's unique exterior.

If you'd like to participate in either tour, please gather in the Highland Lobby following worship. Registration is not required.

## Looking Back at VCS

Throughout this issue of *Reaching Out*, look for photos from our recent Vacation Church School program.





**East Liberty  
Presbyterian Church**

www.ELPC.church

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### Staff Leadership

**The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz**  
Senior Pastor and Head of Staff  
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**The Rev. BJ Woodworth**  
Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life,  
Taizé, and Transitional Ministries  
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**Wil Forrest**  
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**Sara Hackett**  
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and Youth Ministries  
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**Anqwenique Kinsel**  
Interim Director of Hope Academy  
of Music and the Arts  
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**Gerald McClendon**  
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**Dr. Edward Alan Moore**  
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**Jim Tinnemeyer**  
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**Rachelle Calfee**  
Bookkeeper  
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**Jen King**  
Administrative Assistant to the Pastors  
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**Norma Meyer**  
Administrative Assistant to Worship  
& Music and Communications  
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## Pastoral Message

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



**“See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness...”—Isaiah 43:19**

A few weeks ago, I found myself in the Arizona desert for a conference retreat. At 110 degrees, dry, and relentless, the heat was oppressive. And yet, I was surprisingly refreshed. Hugs from colleagues I hadn't seen in years, stories of how God is still moving in their lives, and shared laughter reminded me of the deep well of connection that sustains this calling. Even in the desert, there are moments of spiritual renewal.

During the retreat, my colleagues and I were invited to notice the succulents growing around the retreat center. Some were small and tucked away while others were bold, tall, and impossible to miss. Each one stood firm in the heat, thriving in harsh conditions. We were reminded that succulents survive because they've learned to store water, conserve energy, and bloom in their own time.

As I reflected, I thought of us here at ELPC. We, too, are learning to thrive in uncertain terrain and uncertain times. We stretch toward the light. We hold onto hope. We gather to protect what is sacred. With God's help, we aren't just surviving in an unjust world. We're blooming as well.

My time away reminded me how much I treasure the community we're building here in Pittsburgh and beyond. We speak spiritual truth and life and good news to a world that desperately needs it. How refreshing it is to be with people who face the hard questions and hold fast to God's grace, even in seasons when we feel parched!

This month, we get to extend God's grace and welcome to **Rev. Jessica McClure Archer**, the new General Minister of the Pittsburgh Presbytery. She will join us in worship on Sunday, August 17, and help give witness to the new thing God is doing in our midst.

Blessings,

## We Volunteered at VCS



## Taizé Meditations on the Sermon on the Mount

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., all regularly read and were significantly influenced by the Sermon on the Mount. It was a prominent text that they frequently returned to as a source of their activism amidst their own troubled times. On **Wednesdays through November 19** (just before Advent), Taizé will make its way through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel, as our key text for mediation each week. My hope is that it will ground all of us in the radical teachings of Jesus, as we seek to be salt and light in our own troubled times. Here is a bit about each leader and how the Sermon on the Mount inspired them.

- As a young man, Mahatma Gandhi discovered the Sermon on the Mount and found inspiration in the passage about turning the other cheek. He said, "it went right to my heart." He believed that this teaching had the power to comfort and bring joy to his soul. Gandhi incorporated the principles of non-violence and resistance to evil, which he saw reflected in the Sermon, into his philosophy of Satyagraha and his struggle for Indian independence.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer was deeply impacted by the Sermon on the Mount and considering it foundational to understanding what it means to be a Christian. He viewed the Sermon as a call to radical discipleship and insisted that its teachings should be obeyed literally in daily life.
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., frequently cited the Sermon on the Mount as a key influence on his non-violent approach to the Civil Rights Movement. He believed that the Sermon's message of love, particularly the instruction to love one's enemies, provided the moral and spiritual foundation for his activism.

May Jesus' words and God's Spirit inspire us as they did these three figures, though different contexts, backgrounds, and faiths. May we too recognize the profound wisdom and transformative power of the Sermon on the Mount and apply its teachings to our current times. I hope you will join us at our Taizé service on Wednesdays, 7–8 pm, this late summer and fall.



## Pittsburgh Comprehensive Plan Public Workshop

Pittsburgh is undergoing significant changes, and for the first time ever, our city is creating one comprehensive plan encompassing all 90 neighborhoods. This presents a unique opportunity for us to ensure that these changes benefit everyone. The plan needs your input!

On **Tuesday, August 19**, a public workshop will be held on the "State of a Just Pittsburgh"—our city's current conditions, our strengths and things we celebrate, our most urgent challenges and risks, and perhaps most importantly, the forces driving change in Pittsburgh over the next 5, 10, 25 years.

Register for the event at [pgh2050.com/upcomingevents](https://pgh2050.com/upcomingevents). The event is currently planned to be held at 5 Hot Metal St.

## We Made Crafts Together at VCS



# Mission Board Message Board | August 2025

*“As you did it unto the least of these, you did it unto me.”—Matthew 25:40*

Serving others, both locally and even throughout the world, is at the core of ELPC’s mission, and our Mission Board is always busy organizing and overseeing such work. This month, our Message Board provides updates from our various committees: Justice, Neighbors, Peace, and Facing Systemic Racism.

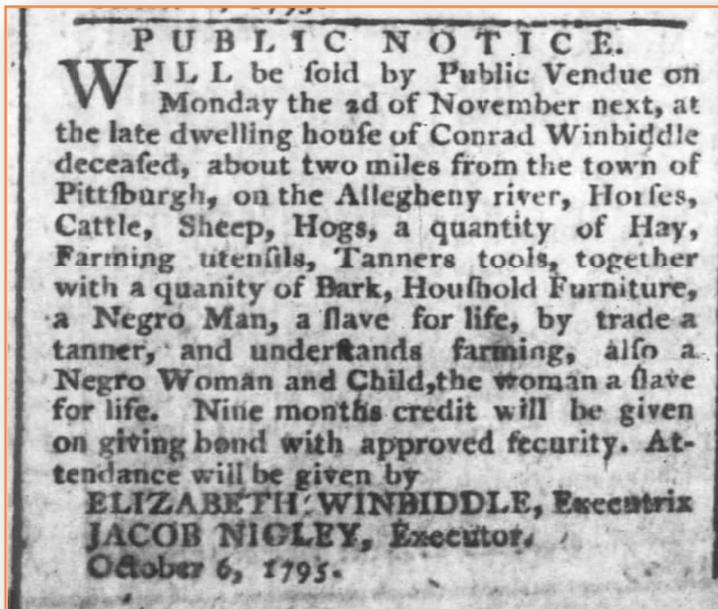
So read on! As always, there are many opportunities to join with others to support and serve in a wide variety of programs. Any of these committee chairs would be glad to hear from you!

## Facing Systemic Racism | Lenore Williams, Chair

As part of our church family, the Facing Systemic Racism (FSR) Committee continues to help open our hearts and minds to the past of ELPC and the brightness of the future of our congregation. The recent presentation, **Reckoning with ELPC’s Ties to Enslavement**, held on June 29, provided another opportunity to grow together in understanding, to admit truths about our past, and to think about how to shape our future. More than 125 people attended the presentation either in person or on Zoom.

If you were unable to join us, you may watch the recording at [youtube.com/watch?v=nDeqkVQhOh8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDeqkVQhOh8).

What has the story of Nell and Poll inspired you to do? How does it help to mold your vision of our church future? Watch for more details and join us on **Sunday, October 26**, as part of ELPC’s Mission Month, as we continue this journey.



Advertisement of “items” for sale, including Nell and Poll.



ELPC had a strong showing at Pittsburgh’s annual Juneteenth Parade on June 21!

## Justice Committee | Carol Chonoska, Chair

Empower yourself! You are enough! You can create change right where you are! You can be the voice of God’s Love!

To help to create a more equitable world for all, here are some simple things you can do:

- Sign up for notices from the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness to stay informed and to be a legislative advocate: [pcusa.org/about-pcusa/who-we-are/social-witness](https://www.pcusa.org/about-pcusa/who-we-are/social-witness)
- Support minority-owned businesses: [vibrantpittsburgh.org/explore-vibrant-pittsburgh](https://www.vibrantpittsburgh.org/explore-vibrant-pittsburgh)
- Support Black-owned businesses: [thesoulpitt.com/diversitydirectory](https://www.thesoulpitt.com/diversitydirectory)  
[visitpittsburgh.com/blog/black-owned-pittsburgh](https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/blog/black-owned-pittsburgh)
- Support immigrant-owned businesses: [publicsource.org/immigrant-owned-restaurants-pittsburgh-allegheny-county](https://www.publicsource.org/immigrant-owned-restaurants-pittsburgh-allegheny-county)  
[post-gazette.com/life/dining/2025/06/10/mcknight-road-restaurants-pittsburgh/stories/202506050075](https://www.post-gazette.com/life/dining/2025/06/10/mcknight-road-restaurants-pittsburgh/stories/202506050075)

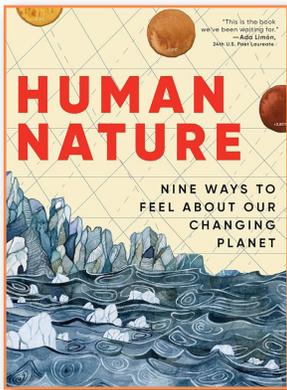
The Justice Committee also is concerned about **Encounters with ICE** (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). ICE activity has been reported in neighborhoods throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. ELPC’s partners at Casa San José have provided a few recommendations for anyone witnessing ICE agents—or those claiming to be ICE agents—behaving in questionable or concerning ways toward members of the immigrant community:

- You are allowed to ask the agents/officers for their ID.
- You are allowed to ask if the agent/officer has a warrant.
- You are allowed to record the interactions and should loudly tell the agents/officers involved that they are being recorded.

While you are not allowed to impede the agents/officers in their activities or get between the agents/officers and the person with whom they are interacting, bystanders—especially those who are born citizens of the U.S.—can be effective advocates.

If you see anyone in Pittsburgh or the surrounding area being held up by ICE agents, please call Casa San José's emergency number, 412.736.7167, so they can deploy a team of trained support personnel.

The **Environmental Team**, a subcommittee of Justice, has planned its next book study and will be reading *Human Nature: Nine Ways to Feel About Our Changing Planet* by Kate Marvel.



Marvel, an Earth scientist and theoretical physicist, provides a captivating exploration of climate change that uses nine different emotions to better understand the science, history, and future of our evolving planet. She has seen the world end before, sometimes several times a day, in the computer models she uses to study climate change, where it's easy to simulate rising temperatures, catastrophic outcomes, and bleak futures. But climate change isn't

just happening in those models. It's happening here. It's happening to us.

*Human Nature* is a deeply felt inquiry into our rapidly changing Earth. In each chapter, Marvel uses a different emotion to explore the science and stories behind climate change. As expected, there is anger, fear, and grief—but also wonder, hope, and love. The book is hopeful, heartbreaking, and surprisingly funny.

Our Book Study group will meet in the Highland Room and online on **Thursday, September 25**, 7 pm. For further information and the Zoom link, contact Nancy Heastings at [n.heastings@comcast.net](mailto:n.heastings@comcast.net).

### **Neighbors Committee | Cathleen Malmstrom, Chair**

The **Chapel Market**, a project of the Neighbors Committee, involves many ELPC members and friends, but some of us do not know much about its history or its current activity.

The Market is located in our church's original Wayfarer Chapel. When the church was designed during the Great Depression, the Chapel was intended to serve as a social ministry, but it didn't function as such until 1983, when ELPC began to provide a soup kitchen and emergency shelter for homeless men—both in the Chapel and adjacent spaces. The Church continued to provide these services until 2012, when East End Cooperative Ministries (EECM) took on that role.

A few years later, member Fran Wilson spearheaded the opening of the present Chapel Market as a free resource for the surrounding community. Primarily focused on clothing for men, women, and children, it also provides necessary basics like shampoo, toilet paper, and diapers. What we have available at any time is completely dependent on donations from the congregation, with modest financial support from ELPC. We currently have a rotating group of more than 20 loyal volunteers who serve 90–100 visitors each month!

The Chapel Market is one of ELPC's most appreciated programs, by both volunteers and the folks we serve. The reward of seeing a child happily wearing his new-to-him Spiderman t-shirt or a young woman excitedly selecting clothes for a job interview can't be overstated! And now, with the addition of our Chapel Market Dinners, we are continuing to find new ways to be of service.

To learn more or to volunteer in this ministry, please contact Gerald McClendon at [GeraldM@coh.net](mailto:GeraldM@coh.net) or Harold and Linda Deiss at [deisshl@consolidated.net](mailto:deisshl@consolidated.net).



*The refreshed Market was painted in 2024 by a generous team of volunteers from the United Steel Workers, who were doing community service as part of the USW Next Generation conference being held here.*

### **Peace Committee | Russ Walker, Chair**

The Peace Committee asks the congregation to continue to support the efforts of **CeaseFirePA** to achieve improved gun laws for Pennsylvania. Follow this link to register your support: [act.ceasefirepa.org/a/common-agenda](https://act.ceasefirepa.org/a/common-agenda).

For over 30 years, the Peace Committee, other ELPC members, and others from Pittsburgh Presbytery have traveled to the country of **Malawi** and have hosted an equal number of Malawians in our sister churches. The visits have involved relationship building, educational events, pastoral exchange, evangelism rallies, medical mission work, and building construction. The partnership has created deep personal friendships both overseas and within Pittsburgh Presbytery. In 2013, this partnership was expanded to include South Sudan and to become a tripartite partnership where each member can share fruit with each of its two neighbors.

This year, ELPC member Dr. Eddie Willson hopes to return to Malawi for his second visit. You can help Eddie raise the funds through this Go Fund Me link: [bit.ly/44xFoa3](https://bit.ly/44xFoa3).

## Make a Connection

The ELPC Connections Groups Ministry invites everyone to Highland Park Reservoir for a performance by Paul Cosentino's Boilermaker Jazz Band on **Sunday, August 24**. Music starts at 5 pm and ends at 7 pm.

Grab your blanket or chair and come join us for the *free* outdoor concert! 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.

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

## Connections Groups are Forming this Fall

ELPC is big; Connections Groups make it feel small.

Connections groups are small groups of about 10 people who meet about once per month for an event such as a potluck dinner, restaurant meal, trip to a museum or cat cafe, walk around the Reservoir, book discussion, board games...or something else. These groups allow us to get to know each other, build community, and practice radical hospitality. We'd love to have you join us!

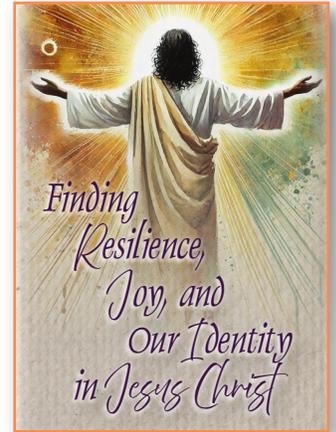
Please complete this online form at [tiny.cc/elpc-connections](http://tiny.cc/elpc-connections) by September 14.



## Presbyterian Women Bible Study

### Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ

In the face of adversity or chaos, resilient people survive and even thrive. Our 2025–2026 Bible Study explores Resilience and its intersection with Joy and Identity. The witness of Mary Magdalene, Mary “of a certain village,” and Jesus himself teaches us about resilience. Resilient people often experience Christian Joy, a Fruit of the Spirit, in the midst of difficult circumstances. Paul discusses this kind of Joy in his letter to the Philippians and examples are recounted in the Gospels. Our Identity, at its core, points to our humanity. As Christians, our Identity is in Jesus Christ. The Gospels assure us that we are God’s people, called to serve in God’s ministry of setting people free and assured that the Spirit of God will not abandon us.



Our Bible Study begins on **Tuesday, September 2**, 10 am–12 pm (hybrid), and **Monday, September 8**, 7–8:30 pm (on Zoom). Tuesday morning Bible Study will meet online and in the Fellowship Room. The in-person study will be followed by a potluck lunch. Please bring a dish to share; beverages will be provided.

Presbyterian Women will be available after worship on Sundays, August 17 and 24, to answer questions.

For more information, email [PW.ELPC@gmail.com](mailto:PW.ELPC@gmail.com).

## All Together Now! Music Festival

ELPC members Ted Cmarada and Susan Spangler have organized the *All Together Now! Music Festival* to benefit our immigrant community. The festival will be held **Thursday–Sunday, August 7–10**, at various venues around Pittsburgh.

All proceeds will go to the Collaborative for Immigrant Impact to help immigrants access legal services, housing, healthcare, education, English classes, career development, food assistance, and more, ensuring our immigrant neighbors have the opportunity to thrive. The Collaborative for Immigrant Impact is a network of 20, Pittsburgh-based organizations that serve as a critical safety net for more than 20,000 immigrants in our community.



The festival concludes on Sunday, August 10, 3 pm, with *An Afternoon of Storytelling and Multicultural Music and Dance* in the ELPC Sanctuary.

Visit [alltogetherpgh.com](http://alltogetherpgh.com) for a schedule of events and ticket prices, the listing of bands and artists, to purchase tickets and t-shirts, and to make a donation.

## Attend Our Next Spiritual Gathering

Please join us at our next Spiritual Gathering on **Sunday, August 10**, 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.



**God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.**

## Renaissance City Choir Comes Out with New Name for 40th Anniversary



Western Pennsylvania's only LGBTQIA+ and allies choral group proudly announces its new name: Pittsburgh Pride Choir. The choir has been a cornerstone of Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ cultural community since 1985.

The name change marks a new era—one that clearly reflects the group's identity and mission in a vibrant, visible, and proudly queer-forward way. The Pittsburgh Pride Choir is an artist in residence at ELPC, where they rehearse and perform.

The group's origins trace back to its founding as the Pittsburgh Gay Chorus in 1985. However, for safety and broader public acceptance, the name was changed in the same year to the Renaissance City Choir, referencing Pittsburgh's "Renaissance II" era. Over time, as the nickname "Renaissance City" faded from common usage, the choir's name became less clear to newer audiences and occasionally led to confusion about the choir's musical repertoire.

The Pittsburgh Pride Choir continues its mission to affirm and celebrate LGBTQIA+ identity through the unifying power of music.

To learn more, sign up for concert notices, or get involved, visit [pittsburghpridechoir.org](http://pittsburghpridechoir.org).

## ELPC People

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

### Prayers

We offer our prayers of comfort to the family and friends of ELPC member Patricia Valoon, who passed away on July 7 at the age of 88.

## We had Fun Together at VCS



*“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.”*

## ELPC Fire Safety Training and Drill

ELPC’s Safety & Security Advisory Committee (SSA) will be presenting a series of trainings over the next several months concerning important issues to create a safer church for us all.

Following worship on **Sunday, August 17**, all are invited to stay for a fire safety training and drill presented by our very own Isaiah Wilson, who is a fire safety professional. The congregation will be invited to stay in the Sanctuary after worship ends for this session.

Over the next few months, we will have trainings on first aid, Stop the Bleed, AED, CPR, and intruder threat. All these trainings will be attended by staff members and open to church leaders. Some, such as the fire safety/fire drill and intruder threat, will include sessions intended for all congregation members to attend.

We believe that part of being radically hospitable is keeping all who enter our building as safe as possible. We invite you to pray for us in our work and to keep an eye out for training sessions in coming months in which you can participate.

*The SSA Committee is Sandy Brake, Don Breitbarth, Lynne Chadwick, Carol Chonoska (Chair), Carol Chontos, Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz, Wil Forrest, Sara Hackett, Tom Morton, Rev. Jim Tinnemeyer, Isaiah Wilson, and Nancy Wright.*

## Registration is Open for Hope Academy’s Fall Term

Hope Academy of Music and the Arts is now accepting registrations and scholarship applications for the 2025 Fall Term. Learn more about our classes and private instrument lessons by scanning the QR code or visiting [tiny.cc/hope-academy](http://tiny.cc/hope-academy).

