

Weekly Worship Schedule

Summer Worship
Sundays | 10 am

Taizé Prayer Service
Wednesdays | 7 pm



Pastoral Message

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

Summer is here!

These last few weeks, we marched in the Pride Parade, walked in the Juneteenth Parade, and hosted honest conversations about ELPC's ties to slavery. We also ended the month with an exciting week of Vacation Church School. I cannot begin to describe how much I enjoyed the sounds of so many children learning and laughing on the church grounds all at once. Although I wish we could have Vacation Church School every week of the summer, I suspect Sara Hackett and our amazing volunteers might need a little time for rest and renewal!

I hope you're finding moments of renewal in these longer days, too. Renewal might look like a shaded porch conversation with a neighbor, a walk in the park, or a lingering cup of coffee with someone whose presence reminds you that God is near. Renewal is a necessity on this journey—especially as we prepare for what lies ahead.

All of these moments remind us of who we are and who we are becoming—a community committed to welcome, justice, learning, and care. That's why I'm excited to share an important step in our shared congregational life: we are officially accepting applications for our next Associate Pastor! This is more than a staffing update—it's an invitation to pray that God sends us the right person for this next season of ministry.

Earlier this year, our Human Resources Committee and the Pittsburgh Presbytery helped us discern whether we should search for an installed, interim, or temporary pastor. I preferred the temporary associate pastor model because it allows us to find the right person more quickly—within a year—while remaining flexible for the future. Session approved this plan in February. *Continued on page 3.*

Photos from VCS

Look for photos from our Vacation Church School program in this issue of *Reaching Out*.





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Summer Slowing

I received a card from an ELPC member, during my rotator cuff recovery and in it they shared the wisdom of Thomas Merton with me: “There are times we simply have to sit back for a while and do nothing.” Do nothing!?! This quote has been a gift, reminder, and a challenge. I have been surprised how difficult and disorienting it has been to be dis-abled from contributing to work, home, and regular life. Even in writing an article for Reaching Out, I was panicked. What will the church think if I am not offering any Spiritual Life activities to do this summer? This thought exposed an insidious internal belief: “My value and worth are rooted in what I’m able to produce and do.” This injury and recovery have not only revealed both my physical ableism, but also my inner ableism—I am what I do, contribute, and produce. This is not the Gospel, it is the American empire who honors, values, and rewards for those who are busy and produce efficiently—which perpetuates a culture of hurry, overwork, and hyper productivity. Amid this disorienting discovery, Spirit gently whispered a familiar scripture verse to me, “in returning and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength”—Isaiah 30:15. So, I wondered...what if this summer, as a prophetic act, and as a way of tending our own souls, we practiced *SLOWING* as a spiritual practice? A time to return and rest in God and receive salvation. A time to be quiet and trust with God as a demonstration of strength.

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, in her book, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, asks the following questions related to the contemplative spiritual discipline of “Slowing:”

- *Are you addicted to hurry, rush and adrenalin?*
- *What is it like for you to choose to do things slowly?*
- *When do you rely on caffeine to get through a tough part of the day?*
- *What is it like for you to eat slowly rather than snarfing down your food?*
- *How have deadlines, timelines, and bottom lines affected the pace of your life?*

Calhoun offers these “Slowing” practices, ways to learn to slow down and pay more attention to God’s presence:

- *Get enough rest.*
- *Practice speaking more slowly.*
- *Eat more slowly, paying attention to the taste and texture of the food you are eating.*
- *Sit longer at the table, or around the campfire.*
- *Plan buffer time between meetings with schedules.*
- *Take more pauses in the day, time to sit still, collect yourself, rest briefly, take a few long breaths, pray.*

Here are some breath prayers to try on this summer from Cole Arthur Riley.

INHALE: I deserve more than exhaustion.

EXHALE: I return home to myself.

INHALE: may I rest,

EXHALE: that I might dream.

INHALE: I’ve given enough.

EXHALE: I choose rest.

I hope you will join me this summer in an experiment in slowing, returning and rest, quietness, and trust.

Pastoral Message Continued

Together, the HR Committee and I looked closely at our current staffing needs and the feedback from last year's CAT Scan survey. As we considered whether the new Associate Pastor's focus should be related to *mission, Christian education, or volunteer ministries*, several clear priorities rose to the top:

- Reaching and integrating new people
- Attracting and connecting new families with children
- Developing friendships and nurturing community among our congregants
- Strengthening our warm, welcoming atmosphere
- Supporting and engaging our volunteers

Given these priorities, Session agreed to call a (Temporary) Associate Pastor for Connection & Care. This person will help people find connection and belonging in the life of our congregation. They will focus on welcoming guests, providing pastoral care, connecting volunteers to ministry opportunities, and building a vibrant congregational life. They also will serve as the staff liaison to the Deacon Board and the Membership and Outreach Committee.

In the months ahead, we will listen deeply—to one another, to our neighborhood, and to the Spirit's persistent call to be a community of justice, compassion, and radical welcome. I invite you to hold our search committee in your prayers, and to hold space in your own heart for what God is stirring in you, too.

May this summer be a season of trust and holy curiosity as we continue to follow the Spirit's lead together.

Blessings,



ELPC Seeks a New Associate Pastor

The process has started to seek a new Associate Pastor for ELPC who will oversee connection and care, and be the liaison for the Board of Deacons and for the Membership and Outreach Committee. Session has appointed a search committee—or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC)—that is busy developing a job posting known as a Ministry Discernment Profile. Although the position is listed as a temporary Associate Pastor, which allows a quicker process, the successful candidate could become an installed pastor at a later date. Please pray for the committee and for potential candidates who might consider applying.

Continued in the right column.

ELPC Seeks a New Associate Pastor Cont.

The APNC includes:

- **Gretchen Chapman** (Chair) has been an ELPC member for 8 years. She serves on the Board of Deacons, organizes the Connections Groups, and is a member of the Facing Systemic Racism Committee. Most Sundays, you can find her at our Journey service.
- **Dr. Linda Lane** has been a member of ELPC for 5 years. She has participated in Presbyterian Women, Soul Food Adult Church School and serves on the Facing Systemic Racism Committee. She served as the Chair of the Pastor Nominating Committee to identify our new senior pastor. Linda now serves on the Human Resources Committee.
- **Carol Chonoska** has been a member of ELPC for 23 years. She is on Session and the Mission Board. She currently serves as the Chair of the Justice Committee, Temporary Chair of the Human Resources Committee, and chair of the Safety & Security Advisory. She has served on the Board of Deacons and has participated in Facing Systemic Racism, Presbyterian Women, the LGBTQIA+ Spirituality Group, and Vacation Church School.
- **Barbara Griffin** has been a friend, then a member, of ELPC for over 20 years. She is currently serving as an Elder and chairs the Officer Nominating Committee and the Stewardship Committee.
- **Ryan Booher** has been a member of ELPC for 10 years. He has served as the Chair of the Mission Board and Co-Chair of the Nominating Committee in the past. He currently is a member of the Bell Choir and has worked with the Club 116 1–3 grade class for a number of years. He is affectionately known as “ELPC Coffee Guy,” serving as the liaison between ELPC and Café Justo. Ryan also is an honorary member of The Happy Wanderers.

A Mission Board Message Board

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

As a Matthew 25 church, ELPC is committed to following the call of Christ to provide food, drink, clothing, and other types of support to those in need, to welcome strangers, heal the sick, visit prisoners, and uphold justice. Following good Presbyterian tradition, many committees have been formed to carry out our mission, all of which are coordinated through our Mission Board: Justice Committee, Neighbors Committee, Peace Committee, and the Facing Systemic Racism Committee. Presbyterian Women also collaborates and coordinates its work with the Mission Board.

To focus on specific issues or activities (not actually to make things more complicated!), each committee has subcommittees, task forces, or informal groups that carry out the work of specific programs and projects of service.

The Mission Board, consisting of the chairs of each of our committees as well as a representative from the Board of Deacons and at-large members from the congregation, is tasked with facilitating communication, coordination, funding allocations, and support for the work of each committee. One of the challenges of mission work is that the needs of the community can be endless and overwhelming. The Board, often in coordination with neighborhood organizations, seeks to balance need, opportunity, resources, and priorities. Prayers and support from the congregation are always welcome!

You will learn much more about the work of each committee here and in future issues of *Reaching Out*. There are many exciting opportunities here at ELPC to join with others to support and serve in a wide variety of programs. One of the joys of volunteering is finding that we often gain more than we give!



Justice Committee | Carol Chonoska, Chair

The Justice Committee is looking for someone to take a leadership role in directing **immigrant support** activities. Given the current assault on our immigrant neighbors, we need someone who can evaluate and organize requests from our congregation and community for advocacy, volunteers, congregational education, and engagement. If this sounds like a calling you could answer, please contact carolchonoska@gmail.com.

The **Environmental Team** is a subcommittee of Justice. ELPC is fortunate to have quite a number of environmental champions. The Environmental Team thanks Gretchen Chapman for what she does and for sharing her story:

I made two small changes recently to live in a more environmentally sustainable manner. First, I signed up for a composting service. I use Zero Waste Wrangler, zerowastewrangler.com, although there are several such services. There are home pickup services, but I use the drop off service (\$120 per year), which allows me to drop off my compost at any of several drop-off bins, including those near Trader Joe's and the East End Food Coop. I've noticed that since I started doing this, the amount of trash I put out for pickup is less. My second change was to reduce the number of disposable plastic containers I purchase by buying milk in reusable glass bottles from the East End Food Coop (conveniently located near one of the compost drop-off bins). I pay a \$3 deposit for the bottle, which is refunded when I return it.

Peace Committee | Russ Walker, Chair

Gun violence is one of the primary focus points of the Peace Committee. We encourage the congregation to take action to **stop machine guns!**

Philadelphia police have recovered at least 57 guns equipped with switches to convert them to machine guns so far this year. Such weapons are suspected in the Fairmount Park mass shooting, which killed two and wounded nine on Memorial Day. House Bill 335 would prohibit the sale and possession of parts designed to accelerate the fire rate of a semiautomatic firearm to simulate the rate of fire of an automatic machine gun. It has passed the State House and had hearings in the Senate. We urge you to call, write, or email your State Senator encouraging him or her to support House Bill 335!

Facing Systemic Racism Committee | Lenore Williams, Chair

June was a busy month for the Facing Systemic Racism (FSR) Committee's important work both in the community and for our own congregation.

On June 21, members and friends represented ELPC in Pittsburgh's annual **Juneteenth** parade and celebration, riding in the church van and/or marching from Freedom Corner into downtown. This is an annual event for us. Thanks to all who participated—and please mark your calendars for next year!

On June 29, we are grateful to Hollen Barmer for her amazing research and presentation to us to continue our "Reckoning with ELPC's Ties 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?

Following Hollen's presentation on what we have learned about Nell, Poll, and their family, we also had time for discussion and reflection on what we must do to reckon with this part of our church's legacy. We are planning a further presentation and discussion in October as part of ELPC's Mission Month, so watch for details.

Neighbors Committee | Cathleen Malmstrom, Chair

ELPC's Neighbors Committee sees our role as not only assisting our neighbors but connecting with them. To this end, in May we had our inaugural **Chapel Market Dinner**, with about 50 guests and 22 amazing ELPC volunteers! A second dinner, with similar participation, was held June 13, and our plan is to continue these on a regular basis throughout the year. We'll continue to welcome more volunteers as we work to expand this and other programs to serve the surrounding community and fulfill ELPC's mission of reaching out!



One of ELPC's mission partners, Garfield Community Farms (GCF), works closely with the Neighbors Committee. At the end of April, we sponsored a **tool drive** for the farm, which was very successful! Thanks to everyone who contributed!

ELPC team,

What a blessing the tool drive was for us! We are so appreciative of you all organizing this. The tools and materials we received have increased our capacity for our various programming, as well as replaced some well-loved (i.e. old and worn out) materials. We've already benefited, and our faithful volunteers were as excited as us to see new gloves and pruners and more!

God is good. Thank you for your generous provisions. Please continue to hold GCF and the Garfield neighborhood in your prayers, particularly that God would work miraculous healing in the community.

To Him who is able to do all things!

—GCF Team



Fresh Air at VCS



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.

RSVP to connectelpc@gmail.com.

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.



Summer Opportunities for Youth

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.



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 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*.



Dancing Around at VCS



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 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.

ELPC Day Retreat for LGBTQIA+ Folks & Allies



Balancing self-care with care for our loved ones while reaching out to those in need in our community can be challenging, especially in these ever-changing and divisive times. Take a step away from your regular schedule and come together with others who are seeking this “care” balance as well.

Members of the ELPC community are invited to a day retreat, led by guest presenter, Debra Flint, and sponsored by ELPC’s Justice Committee and LGBTQIA+ Ministry for LGBTQIA+ folks and their allies.

Join us as on **Saturday, July 19**, 9 am–3 pm, at Harold’s Haunt in Millvale, a local queer establishment, for a day of exploration, laughter, reflection, creativity, and food—there is always food! Contact Wil Forrest or Carol Chonoska with questions.

Pride Marches On!



Thank you to the MANY ELPC folks who took to the streets to reflect God’s love for all people at Pittsburgh Pride on June 1.

Pride continues in neighborhoods all around Pittsburgh and at ELPC on **Saturday, July 26**, with Family Fun Day co-hosted by Pittsburgh Black Pride, ELPC’s Justice Committee, and ELPC’s LGBTQIA+ Ministry, as we share fellowship, food, and fun—including

a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, a talent show, bowling, face painting, jewelry making, and much more.

This is a free event open to the public from 12–4 pm. Come visit with current friends and make some new ones! All are welcome! Learn more at ELPC.church.

Session News

At its June meeting, Session:

- Approved the *Ministry Discernment Profile*, which is required in order to begin receiving applications for the new Associate Pastor position.
- Renewed Pastor BJ’s contract, which includes additional responsibilities through the end of 2025.

ELPC People

If you have news to share, contact Jen King at JenK@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x222.

Good News

- Congratulations to newlyweds **Carolyn Hough & Brandan Bogolin**, who were married by Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz on June 14.
- Congratulations to **Beatrice Croyle**, daughter of Kathleen & Ryan Croyle, who celebrated her baptism in June.
- Join us in welcoming our new members and friends who joined our faith family in June:

Members:

- Becky Boyer
- Molly Gunson
- Nate Kegel
- Robert (Dino) Rothrauff
- John Spiewak
- Dorothea Ward

Friend:

- Sarah Gilmer

Prayers

We offer our prayers of comfort to the family of former ELPC member, Ruth Kuschmierz who passed away on her 96th birthday, June 17.

“...inviting all to join our diverse, inclusive family of faith, transcending boundaries of race, class, ability, culture, age, gender and sexual identity to become one in Christ.”

Safety & Security Advisory Committee

For years now, ELPC leadership has been working on and revising our Emergency Response Plan with local first responders to evolve and address our changing environment and times in which we live. To further this effort and to better prepare our staff and congregation, the Safety & Security Advisory (SSA) Committee will be presenting a series of trainings over the next several months concerning important issues to create a safer church for us all.

We will have trainings on mental health, fire safety, 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 fire safety/fire drill and intruder threat, will include sessions intended for all congregation members to attend.

In addition to these trainings, the SSA Committee is working on enhancing safer, clearer egress paths and emergency communications systems around the church building. 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.

Making Friends at VCS

