



Reaching Out

newsletter of east liberty presbyterian church

September 2025

Fall Kickoff Sunday on September 7

Our fall schedule resumes on **Sunday, September 7**. Start the season with Communion, making new friends, and discovering ways to grow in faith!

- Journey worship is at 8:45 am in the Social Hall.
- Open gym and donuts for families with children 9:45–10:45 am.
- Adult Sunday School classes are held from 9:45–10:45 am.
- Children & Youth Sunday School (ages 4–grade 6) is held at 11:10 am.
- Teen Sunday School (grades 7–12) is held on the first and third Sundays of each month from 9:45–10:45 am.
- Sanctuary worship is at 11 am.

Visitor Sunday on September 14

What brings you to church on Sunday? It may be for divine inspiration after a challenging week, to find peace in our sacred space, or to connect with friends, new and old, within our congregation. We hope that all these reasons—and more—pull you in for worship and reflection.

On **Sunday, September 14**, we will celebrate Visitor Sunday. We encourage you to invite someone—a newcomer to Pittsburgh seeking community, a family member, a friend, or a neighbor, someone who may appreciate experiencing a moment of God's grace in our Cathedral of Hope. If you attend online, welcome a friend or relative to participate alongside you.

As part of Visitor Sunday, we will have joyful music, and our Membership & Outreach Committee will sponsor a Social Hour after the 11 am service. Visitors are encouraged to stop by our visitor table for a gift bag after either the Journey or Sanctuary service. A church tour will be available after the 11 am service as well.

Join Our Faith Family

Are you interested in learning more about what God is doing at ELPC? Maybe you're feeling the nudge to become an official member or friend of the church? Our next Inquirer's Class will be on **Sunday, September 28**, 12–1:30 pm. Lunch will be provided.

Please register online at tiny.cc/Inquirers.

Weekly Worship Schedule

Journey Worship Service

Sundays, | 8:45 am

Sanctuary Worship Service

Sundays, | 11 am

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Labyrinth Prayer Walk

Wednesdays | 10 am–7 pm

Thursdays | 10 am–7 pm

Start Your Week with Prayer & Reflection

Join us for our Monday Morning Contemplative Prayer sessions, starting **September 8**, 7:30 am. Together on Zoom, we will spend 20–30 minutes, quieting our souls, breathing, listening to and for that still small voice within through guided scripture meditation, silence, and music—all in community with others in our faith family.

Meeting ID: 959 8065 3992

Passcode: bestill

Praise, Sing, & Ring!

If you would like to learn more about any of our choirs, email Dr. Ed Moore at EdM@coh.net.

♪ **Journey Praise Team** sings at our Journey worship service on Sundays at 8:45 am. The choir rehearses on Thursdays, 5:30 pm.

♪ **Chancel Choir** sings at our Sanctuary worship service on Sundays at 11 am. The choir rehearses on Thursdays, 7 pm.

♪ **Handbell Choir** rings several times throughout the year at our Sanctuary worship service. The choir rehearses on Tuesdays, 6 pm, beginning **September 16**.



**East Liberty
Presbyterian Church**

www.ELPC.church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz
Senior Pastor and Head of Staff
MichaelD@coh.net | x223

The Rev. BJ Woodworth
*Covenant Pastor for Spiritual Life,
Taizé, and Transitional Ministries*
BJW@coh.net | x241

Wil Forrest
Coordinator of LGBTQIA+ Ministry
Wil@coh.net | x218

Sara Hackett
*Director of Christian Education
and Youth Ministries*
SaraH@coh.net | x220

Anqwenique Kinsel
*Director of Hope Academy
of Music and the Arts*
AnqweniqueK@coh.net

Gerald McClendon
Mission Ministry Coordinator
GeraldM@coh.net | x238

Dr. Edward Alan Moore
Director of Music and Arts
EdM@coh.net | x224

Jim Tinnemeyer
Director of Administration and Facilities
JimT@coh.net | x239

Rachelle Calfee
Bookkeeper
RachelleC@coh.net | x234

Jen King
Administrative Assistant to the Pastors
JenK@coh.net | x222

Norma Meyer
*Administrative Assistant to Worship
& Music and Communications*
Norma@coh.net | x211

Pastoral Message

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



“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God...”—Romans 8:28

This scripture has been my prayer and affirmation throughout this year. Amidst the fear, sadness, and anger I sometimes feel towards our current government for how they are treating the least of these, I am still holding onto hope that soon, in God’s time, all things will indeed work together for good.

This summer proved that truth in an unexpected way. Because of needed repairs, we were not able to worship outside in the Garth. Many of you missed the beauty of sunshine and birdsong as part of our Sunday mornings. Yet gathering in the sanctuary gave us a surprise blessing: our Sunday summer attendance grew by 30%! More people came for worship and connection, friendships deepened, and our activism increased. May we never forget that God often shows up in places we do not plan, in ways we do not expect. Now, THAT is good news!

As we move into fall, we will continue working together for good and discovering God’s blessings in surprising places. In the weeks ahead, we will be reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus today. How do we journey faithfully on the path God sets for us? How do we strengthen our community and never waver in fighting for love and justice in the world?

Our **Fall Kickoff Sunday** on September 7 will launch a new season of ministry. The Journey service begins at 8:45am, and our Sanctuary service begins at 11am. Then, we will celebrate **Visitor Sunday** on September 14. Please invite a friend or neighbor to experience the warmth of beloved community. We’ll have a few special gifts that day as well.

Siblings in Christ, let’s open our hearts to unexpected blessings, trusting that God is already at work for good in our lives and in our church.

Blessings,

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 a 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 together. We’d love to have you join us!

Sign up at tiny.cc/elpc-connections by September 14.

TAPNC Update for September

This past month has been an active time for the Temporary Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (TAPNC). We have been and continue to read the Personal Discernment Profiles (PDP) of both self-referred candidates and those who were matched to our position through the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) software. We each engage in an individual process of discernment based on the qualifications, experience, skills, and gifts of the candidates. This process is followed by our weekly meeting, where we take the time to listen to each other and make decisions regarding the next step for each candidate.

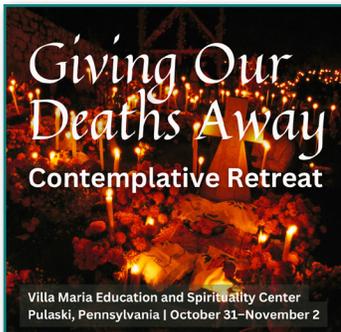
Those who we believe would be a strong match for ELPC, this Associate Pastor position, and a strong addition to our church leadership team, we contact to schedule an initial interview. Each candidate is asked to respond to the same set of questions, which focus on the areas of the position. We are continuing to interview at the time of this writing.

As a reminder, there is a TAPNC poster on the bulletin board off the Highland entrance on the wall of the Baum exit hall, where you may see the steps involved in the process and our progress thus far.

Please pray for our Committee as we take this journey on behalf of ELPC.

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

Contemplative Retreat: Giving Our Deaths Away



From **Friday–Sunday, October 31–November 2**, join us for a Spiritual Life retreat on Halloween, All Saints Day, and the Day of the Dead at the Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center in Pulaski, Pennsylvania. Amid our normal retreat rhythms of solitude and community, silence and conversation, stillness and activity, we will explore our mortality, our hopes and fears surrounding death, and what our tradition(s) have to say about death and eternal communion we have with saints and ancestors.

According to the Spanish mystic John of the Cross, we have three essential struggles in life: 1) To get our lives together, 2) To give our lives away, and 3) To give our deaths away.

What is asked of us in the first two struggles is more obvious and captured in the first half of life. But what does it mean to give our deaths away in the later parts of our life? How we approach death and dying leaves a legacy, a particular spirit, which either nurtures or haunts those left behind. If we die at peace with ourselves, loved ones, the world, and with God, then like Jesus, we will leave behind a spirit that nourishes, warms, consoles, and gives our loved one's sacred permission to be at peace. How do we do that? What are our stories, fears, concerns, and anxieties that inhibit us from giving our death away. Join us as we sit with these questions, listen to God and ourselves, and explore this on retreat in community with one another.

RSVP to Norma Meyer at **412.441.3800 x211** by **Sunday, October 19**. For information on costs, visit tiny.cc/giving-our-deaths-away. Scholarships are available. Contact Pastor BJ for details.

Cathedral Concerts Series Kicks Off its 15th Season

The *Cathedral Concerts* series at ELPC has announced its slate of concerts for the 2025–2026. The season begins in October with two exciting performances. For more information on each concert, please visit tiny.cc/cathedral-concerts.



Organ and Winds

On **Sunday, October 12**, 3 pm, Windfluence, a Pittsburgh-based professional woodwind quintet, will join organist Dr. Edward Alan Moore for a dazzling performance featuring the *Concerto for Organ and Wind Quintet* by Daniel Pinkham.



Fox Chapel High School Chorus & Orchestra

On Sunday, October 26, 3 pm, the Fox Chapel High School Chorus & Orchestra will perform in the ELPC Sanctuary. Led by Ben Murray, choral director, and Mairi Cooper, orchestra director, the concert will feature *Illuminare* for string orchestra, piano, and choir by Elaine Hagenberg.



Christian Education

Nursery for Kids up to Age 3

Our Nursery is now staffed on Sundays, 8:30 am–12:30 pm. Children sing songs, hear stories, and engage in play to learn about God's love.

Children Age 4–Grade 3

Children are invited to *Sunday School: Sacred Stories for Kids* after the Moments with our Children in the Sanctuary (11:10 am). Parents pick up their kids after worship in Room 206.

Using the Godly Play curriculum, kids hear, see, touch, and retell the sacred stories of our faith while asking “I wonder ...” questions and responding with art. Children also pray, sing, and share a simple snack.



Tweens in Grades 4–6

Youth are invited to *Sunday School: Sacred Stories for Tweens* after the Moments with our Children in the Sanctuary (11:10 am). Parents pick up their kids after worship in Room 207.

Tweens dig into Bible stories through games, conversations, crafts, drama, and teamwork to discover what these stories mean to them in today's world.



Teens in Grades 7–12

Teens meet on the first and third Sunday of each month, 9:45–10:45 am, in the Second Floor Parlor.

Journey with Scripture | Highland Room & Zoom

Facilitators: Rev. Henk Bossers and other class members | SaraH@coh.net

The Journey with Scripture class reads together various Scripture readings for that week in worship, whether from the lectionary or our pastor's choosing. These readings span across the entire Bible. The class uses a variety of methods of engaging the Scripture texts and is conversational in nature. Prior knowledge of the Scriptures is not necessary for participation.

Seekers | Garth Overlook Room & Zoom

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

September 7: Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza

Wrestling with the fallout of the war in Gaza on Jewish identity, political commentator Peter Beinart shared his personal reckoning with the moral reconstruction needed to build a future “that recognizes the infinite value of all human life.” Atalia Omer, professor of religion, conflict and peace studies, moderates this discussion at Notre Dame.

A frequent contributor to *The New York Times* and an MSNBC analyst, Beinart is a professor of journalism and political science at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. He also is the editor at large of *Jewish Currents*, and writes *The Beinart Notebook*, a weekly newsletter.

September 14: “Stones Cry Out” – The Story Of Palestinian Christians

An integral part of the fabric of Palestinian society, Palestinian Christians are often overlooked in discussions of the impact of Israeli occupation and the Gaza crisis. This award-winning 2013 video amplifies Palestinian Christians' voices and examines their history.

September 21: Israel / Palestine: The War That Cannot Be Seen

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been on-going since the mid-20th Century. This in-depth and eye-opening investigation into life in the West Bank shows how the Israeli settlers are waging a daily war on the Palestinians who remain. After years of violent resistance, a new generation of Palestinians has undertaken a new strategy – they are fighting back with video cameras rather than guns.

September 28: From North Korea to America Through Three Wars: A Nurse's Journey by Sung Yoo

ELPC member Sung Yoo will discuss her recent book, *From North Korea to America Through Three Wars: A Nurse's Journey*, which chronicles her experience living through World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam War, as well as her work as a nurse in South Korea, Vietnam, and the U.S.

She describes the three wars, insights she gained into nursing as a career, and her faith journey. Her books will be available for purchase.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members | hajdu625@comcast.net

September: We will begin discussing our new book, *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. New participants are always welcome!

Children & Youth Ministry

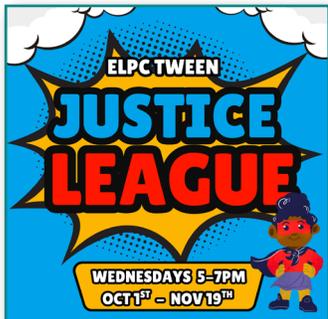
Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry



Youth Group Starts on Thursday, September 11

Together with youth in grades 7–12 from Sixth Presbyterian Church, we share dinner, pray, play, and explore faith through service projects, arts and crafts, conversations, silly games, and whatever else we dream up!

Register online at ELPC.church.



Join Our New Justice League

Youth in grades 3–6 and teen volunteers are invited to join our new Justice League! We will gather on **Wednesdays, October 1–November 19**, 5–7 pm, to eat dinner, look at what Jesus taught about love and justice, do a service project, and have fun together!

Questions? Please reach out to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

Join Our Children & Families Ministry Team

Following Sanctuary worship on **Sunday, September 28**, join the Children & Families Ministry Team in the Harambe Room to help plan and host our Advent resources and our annual Christmas Pageant.

Pizza and childcare will be provided. Reach out to Trish Buben, Session member and committee chair.

Young Adult Ministry



Monday, September 15: Young Adult Happy Hour

Kicking off at Pastor BJ's house in East Liberty and continuing on the third Monday of every month from 6–7:30 pm, join us for appetizers and drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks available). Details and RSVPs via evite. Contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net for the link.

Our Young Adult Ministry welcomes all adults post-high school through their 20s and 30s. We

are a community of students, professionals, married, single, partnered, with or without children—and from different races, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, backgrounds, and with varied beliefs. We join together to seek to better understand, to worship, and to serve the Holy. All people and questions are welcome. Seriously!

Children & Families

Open Gym with Coffee & Donuts

Parents and kids are welcome to hang out, drink coffee or juice, eat a donut, and play in the Gym on **Sunday, September 7**, 9:45–10:45 am.

We meet on the first Sunday of every month. If you want to meet other families or just love basketball or scooters, this is for you! This time also is perfect for parents of older teens (grades 7–12) who have Sunday School at the same time.



Monthly Family Events

As we begin our 2025–2026 program year, families are invited to join us following Sanctuary worship on the third Sunday of each month for a family friendly event!

On **Sunday, September 21**, we will gather together for a picnic and games in the Play Yard on Balm Blvd. We also will talk about upcoming events and other need-to-know information.

Sponsored by the Children and Families Ministry Team to foster a caring community of families at ELPC, where kids and adults feel loved and empowered to explore their faith. RSVPs are appreciated, but if you decide that day you can join us...PERFECT!

The next family event is Pizza and Bowling on Sunday, October 19.

Mission Board Message Board | September 2025

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

Neighbors Committee | Cathleen Malmstrom, Chair

Open Hand Ministries (OHM), a community partner with ELPC, is a remarkable resource to help people improve their financial wellness and achieve their financial goals. Becoming more financially well is not a one-hour workshop or an overnight miracle, of course—but OHM's programs are free of charge and provide ongoing support throughout a family's engagement.

Following Sanctuary worship on **Sunday, October 19**, 12:30–3 pm, the Rev. Wayne Younger, executive director, and Ms. Tamika Barrett, director of family development, will present an overview of OHM's approach in the Social Hall.

Tell your friends and family members, and invite them to come with you to this timely event!

The Neighbors Committee also hopes you will save the date for a wonderful volunteer opportunity—Saturday morning, November 15, 8 am–12 pm, for **Amen to Action** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. ELPC will join with more than 250 other volunteers from across 10 local congregations and nonprofits to pack 100,000 meals to be delivered to our neighbors in need across Allegheny County by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Register online at tiny.cc/amen-to-action.

Questions? Contact anyone on the Neighbors Committee or email rforloines@gmail.com.

Justice Committee | Carol Chonoska, Chair

The Justice Committee will be hosting an in-person meeting in Room 211 immediately after our 11 am worship service on **Sunday, September 28**. This would be a great opportunity to get to know other members and understand the issues we are working to address in the areas of criminal justice reform, immigrant support, environmental stewardship, full inclusion, and even some new initiatives. We encourage you to join our efforts.

For more information, contact Carol Chonoska at **724.272.9722** or carolchonoska@gmail.com.

Facing Systemic Racism | Lenore Williams, Chair

Following our presentation in June, where our congregation learned about the lives of Nell, Poll, Sam, Savara, Jack, Sukey, Isaac, Frank, Het, and Maria—the family enslaved and sold by two of our founders—the Reparations Ministry Team and Facing Systemic Racism Committee invite you to bear witness in a visit to the Heinz History Center Detre Library & Archives on **Saturday & Monday, September 6 & 8**, 10 am. We will view primary sources, including bills of sale for Nell and Poll, and the registry of births of babies to enslaved mothers. An archivist will be on hand to answer questions about the materials.

Viewing the documents can be a powerful experience and is a chance to bear witness as we begin to reckon with our church's tie to enslavement. Afterward, attendees are encouraged to visit the "From Slavery to Freedom" exhibit, which provides information relevant to enslavement, abolition, and the civil rights movement in Pittsburgh. Attendance is free, but space is limited.

Sign up at bit.ly/ELPC-HHC or call or text Hollen Barmer at **412.512.0786**.

Peace Committee | Russ Walker, Chair

The Peace Committee is supporting member Eddie Wilson's "Journey of Mutual Encouragement to Malawi." Since 2019, Eddie has served as chair for Pittsburgh Presbytery's International Partnership between Malawi, South Sudan, and Pittsburgh, and traveled to Malawi in both 2019 and 2023. Eddie had the honor of being hosted by our sister Church in Balaka, where he experienced indescribable hospitality.

"This year, I plan to travel with a small group to Malawi, where we will meet up with a delegation from South Sudan and walk side-by-side in faith with people living completely different experiences from our own," Eddie says. "To be clear, this is NOT a mission trip. We are very intentional about the fact that we are not going to Malawi to do anything for or to anyone. We are not anyone's great white hope. We see value in walking alongside believers from other countries, sharing some of our perspectives, and gaining some of theirs."



Eddie Wilson and Theo Towns from the Pittsburgh Presbytery delegation visiting with the church in Balaka.

To learn more about the partnership, please visit the International Partnership website at pghpip.org.

If you are interested in funding Eddie's trip, please visit gofund.me/ca331808. If you are interested in funding all nine pilgrims equally, visit tinyurl.com/5n7vab75.

Presbyterian Women Bible Study

Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ

Tuesday, September 2 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

Monday, September 8 7–8:30 pm (Zoom Only)



“Mary the Tower” is a model of resilience because of her relationship with Jesus. Jesus healed Mary of severe mental illness. She was among the women who travelled with Jesus and provided for Jesus and the disciples out of their own resources. She was among the women present at Jesus’ crucifixion. The next morning, Jesus appeared to her at the empty tomb, where she became the first person to receive the apostolic commission to “go and tell” others that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

We suppose that Mary was called Magdalene because her hometown was Magdala—but there was no such a town in Jesus’ time! More likely, “Magdalene” was a nickname or title from the Aramaic word magdala, meaning “Mary the Tower” or “Mary the Great.”

The primary texts for this lesson are John 20:11–18 and John 11:17–27. We also will explore recent women’s biblical scholarship, which has uncovered stories of Mary the Tower instructing the disciples and of Peter challenging Mary.

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.

Email PW.ELPC@gmail.com for more information and the Zoom link.

LGBTQIA+ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Our Next Spiritual Gathering

Please join us at our next Spiritual Gathering on **Sunday, September 7**, 12:30 pm, 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 People

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

Prayers

We offer our prayers of comfort to the family and friends of those who recently passed away.

- Laura Ristau and family on the passing of her sister, the Rev. Cathy Rieley-Goddard on August 8.
- Courtney McCrimmon and family on the passing of her father, Paul Rex Bray, the first week of August.
- Mario Seneca on the passing of his father, Anthony Jerome Seneca, on August 15.

Sing with the Pittsburgh Pride Choir

Rehearsals for the Pittsburgh Pride Choir’s (formerly the Renaissance City Choir, RCC) 2025 Fall Season & Holiday Concert begin on **Tuesday, September 9**.

Whether you’ve been performing for years or haven’t sung since high school choir, our “community that sings” is an opportunity to learn, grow, and challenge yourself while making beautiful music, lasting memories, and lifelong friends.



To learn more, sign up for concert notices, or get involved, please visit pittsburghpridechoir.org.

“...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.”

Confirmation Class Signups

ELPC offers a Confirmation Class every other year for youth in grades 8 and up—and this 2025–2026 school year is a Confirmation year!

Confirmation Class provides an opportunity for youth to explore what they believe about God, the world, and themselves to look for hope and justice in the life and teachings of Jesus, to build relationships with other youth and adult mentors, and to prayerfully consider if they are called to church membership at ELPC.

Throughout the Church School year, we meet to discuss the beliefs and practices that are central to the life of the church, as well as those which are integral to each of our personal faith journeys. We dive into various prayer practices, talk about the meaning of the sacraments, ponder the mystery of the Trinity, outline different theologies of atonement, learn what makes Presbyterians unique, learn about the justice work and ministries at ELPC, discover how our gifts can serve others, and more!

At the conclusion of Confirmation Class students may decide they want to become a member of ELPC—but even if they don't decide to officially join the church, the process is a meaningful journey.

If your kids have questions about God, faith, or Christianity, this is great time to ask them! Contact Sara Hackett if your youth is interested in Confirmation Class.

World Communion Sunday & International Lunch

On **World Communion Sunday, October 5**, the ELPC Board of Deacons and Peace Committee will be hosting “A Taste of Nations” International Lunch. Join us in the McKelvy Room after Sanctuary worship for a sample of global cuisine. There will be sign-up sheets at the Penn and Highland entrances for the congregation to indicate their donations representing their favorite ethnic dish.

For more information, contact Deacon Linda Sanders at LLsanders1200@gmail.com or Peta Harrigan Cole.

