



Pastoral Message

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

I have yet to experience a Pittsburgh fall season, and many of you promised me it will be magical. As the first leaves begin to turn, I find myself in joyful anticipation of seeing the city dressed in full autumn colors. The beauty of the changing season invites us to pause and notice the beauty of God's presence all around us.

Where do you notice God's beauty at work in your neighborhood, in worship, or even in your own heart? The leaves changing colors remind me that transformation is central to our spiritual journey. As some colors fade away, what seems like loss is actually a transition into something breathtaking. God is always at work turning endings into new beginnings and inviting us to join in God's renewing work.

Being open to God's transforming work is more than a spiritual posture; it is the heart of mission. Where is God already at work and transforming lives in East Liberty? Where is Christ calling us to join in healing, feeding, advocating, and welcoming? This month, our Mission Board will help us reflect on these questions and share ways we can participate in God's transformative work.

Radical inclusion, too, is a spiritual practice. It calls us to open our hearts wider, to see Christ's face in every neighbor, and to imagine a church where no one is on the margins. This October, we will recognize **World Communion Sunday on October 5 & Full Inclusion Sunday on October 12**. Special guests, including the **Pittsburgh Pride Choir**, will be with us in worship, reminding us that God's song is richer and more joyful when every voice is included.

As we enjoy the changing colors of the season, may we welcome God's renewing work around us and within us. And just like the trees, may our lives reflect the breathtaking beauty of transformation.

Blessings,

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

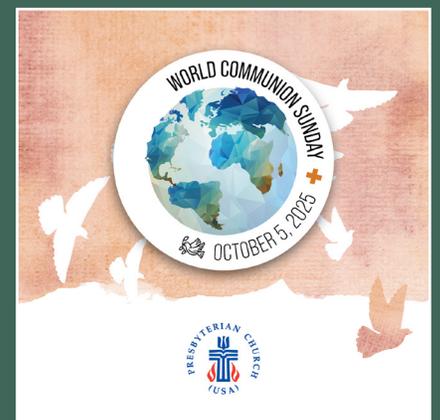
Wednesdays | 10 am–7 pm

Thursdays | 10 am–7 pm

World Communion Sunday & A Taste of Nations International Luncheon

On **World Communion Sunday, October 5**, the ELPC Board of Deacons will host "A Taste of Nations" International Luncheon. Join us in the Fellowship and McKelvy Rooms. 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 details, contact Deacon Linda Sanders or Peta Harrigan Cole or email info@coh.net.





info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

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Support the Peace & Global Witness Offering

By Michele Bossers (she/her) | Chair, ELPC Mission Board

We live in an era of uncertainty. The uncertainty of floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, climate change, political polarization, and more. The uncertainty of aggression through war, gun violence, human trafficking and international conflict. The uncertainty of employment, inflation, illness—the list goes on.

However, when I think about it, I guess humanity always has in one form or another. Long ago, the Psalmist wrote: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4, NRSV). Today, as a community of faith, we claim God’s promise—you are with me.

As your Chairperson of the Mission Board, I’m grateful for our participation in *A Season of Peace* culminating with our receiving the **Peace & Global Witness Offering on World Communion Sunday, October 5**. This offering draws Presbyterians together and provides education and exposure to siblings in Christ who work for peace every day. Your support of this offering helps encourage our church partners in as they struggle against the trauma of war. It helps congregations address the growing mental health crisis and the increase in the number of suicides in their communities. It provides resources for congregations seeking to address issues of gun violence in their communities.

This is why we give generously to the Peace & Global Witness Offering. We give because we know that every level of society needs Christ’s peace. From our congregation, where **we retain 25% of this Offering to support Hello Neighbor**, a nonprofit refugee settlement organization providing financial support, mentoring and household needs among other supports to refugees in the greater Pittsburgh area; to the region, where 25% is retained by mid councils to support peacemaking efforts with our neighboring congregations; and to the ends of the Earth, where the remaining 50% is used by the Interim Unified Agency to join the peacemaking efforts of church partners all over the globe. We join these monetary gifts with our prayers for peace and our work for justice.

You are invited to visit pcusa.org/peace-global to learn how your support of this offering helps peacemaking efforts both in the U.S. and around the world. As a community of faith, we want to deepen our commitment to peacemaking so that it becomes a visible and profound witness to our community. I challenge each of us to consider how we might increase our witness and our giving to the Peace & Global Witness Offering. I pray that the God of Peace might open the generosity in our hearts to join with Christians all over the country on **World Communion Sunday, October 5**, in response to the **Peace & Global Witness Offering**.

As Presbyterians, we claim Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace and pattern our lives in the compassion, kindness and grace that he shows us. God is with us. May we joyfully bring that peace to all those we care for, love, and serve.

October Update From Your TAPNC

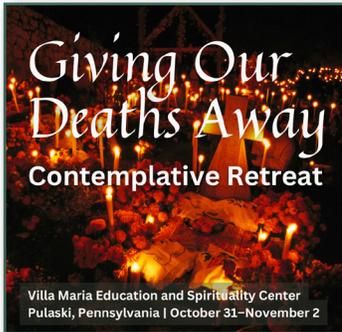
During September, the Temporary Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (TAPNC) conducted more first- and some second-round interviews with candidates who applied for our Temporary Associate Pastor for Care and Concern position. We continue to receive and review applications. We meet at least once per week to conduct interviews or to discern who among the gifted clergy, with whom we speak, we should continue to consider. We are seeking an individual who would best fit our needs as a church, and who also would gain personal fulfillment in this work, as this is their calling.

Again, 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. The place we are on the chart is as you see, the most important and must be done carefully.

We thank you for your support. Please continue to 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.

All-Church Potluck

“What if we heard the voice of God saying ‘How can you be lost when I am right here?’”

With those words from Pastor Michael’s sermon on September 14 ringing in our hurting hearts, we invite you to celebrate our *Connections* ministry’s 2025–2026 season kick-off with an All-Church Potluck following Sanctuary worship on **Sunday, October 19**, in the Good Samaritan Room!



Connections events build bonds, forge friendships, and create community that heals the disconnected, the fearful and the lost—including us—through monthly, small-group activities.

Jesus as shepherd rejoices when the lost—an unseen, unknown, or uncertain person—is found. *Connections*—a home meal, a concert, a hike, etc.—celebrates when we beloved folks find each other.

Jesus welcomed those accepted and rejected by society and so do we. That’s why we added an intentional LGBTQIA+ affinity group to affirm Pastor Michael’s words that “divine love always seeks us out.”

Even if you’ve yet to register for a *Connections* group, we’d love to get to know you at the All-Church Potluck. For planning purposes, please sign up at tiny.cc/connections-potluck.

Christ always had room at his table; so do we at ELPC!

Christian Education

Nursery for Kids up to Age 3

Our Nursery is 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

Join us to read together various Scripture readings, 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

October 5: Examining the Movement to Make Conversion Therapies Legal

Jason Van Ness—a licensed social worker and investigative journalist who focuses on the intersection of faith and politics—will lead a presentation on the specifics of the upcoming *Chiles v. Salazar* Supreme Court case, and examine whether state bans on conversion therapies for minors by licensed medical professionals are unconstitutional. The presentation also will review the rise of the Christian Right in the U.S., the influence of white Christian nationalism in public policy, the history of conversion therapy providers in the U.S., and implications of the case once a decision is handed down by the Supreme Court.

October 12: Healing Our Religious Wounds with Bishop John Shelby Spong

In this video from 2010, Bishop Spong talks about how we can understand our evolution in the light of our Christian faith, and how we can grow in our faith.

Bishop Spong was an activist, speaker, and author. He was an outspoken advocate for church reform. He died in 2021.

October 19: Palestine Solidarity: From Learning to Action

As we have watched the ongoing genocide in Gaza unfold for the last two years, many have asked, “How can I make difference?” Join Dr. Nino Testa for a discussion on the *Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions* movement that will help equip you with the tools necessary to support Palestinian liberation. Dr. Testa will present a brief history of the movement and share lessons he has learned organizing with Jewish Voice for Peace, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and the national People's Conference for Palestine in Detroit earlier this fall.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

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

October 5, 12, & 19: We will continue discussing *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. New participants are always welcome!

Joint Adult Class | Good Samaritan Room

October 26: Impactful Advocacy

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee will discuss how to make your advocacy meaningful and impactful. We will start with the “basis” or what our church says, and discuss a few Bible verses. The speakers will define a framework—Advocacy 101—including the current, most-effective tactics. There will be a speaker from a state organization that does considerable environmental advocacy. We will conclude with an ELPC friend, and a long-time member of several climate action groups, who will share his issue-related advocacy. There also will be opportunities for Q&A, and a resource table.

An activity is being planned—such as a letter writing campaign—after the class for those not attending our 11 am service.

Children & Youth Ministry

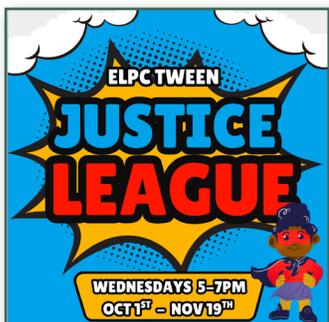
Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry



Youth Group

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!

We also are looking for teen volunteers who want to help!

For more information or to RSVP, reach out to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

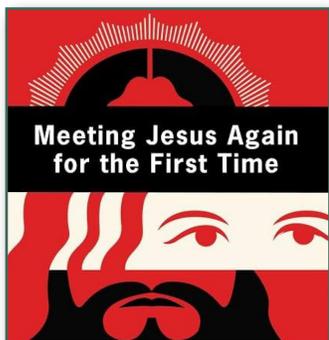
Parents, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* meets at the same time as Justice League. See the article below for details. You might want to participate in this class or Cathedral Yoga, 6–7 pm, while your kids are at Justice League.

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time

What if you could encounter Jesus with fresh eyes—free from assumptions, clichés, or familiarity?

This fall, join Pastors BJ and Michael on Wednesdays, **October 29–November 19**, 5:30–7 pm, for a four-week journey utilizing Marcus Borg's influential book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. Together, we'll explore Jesus as:

- **Spirit Person** | A man deeply connected to the sacred
- **Teacher of Wisdom** | Offering timeless guidance for life today
- **Social Prophet** | Challenging systems of injustice
- **Movement Founder** | Inspiring a community of transformation



Each session will blend teaching, scripture, conversation, and spiritual practices, creating space not just to learn about Jesus, but to experience his presence anew.

We'll share dinner together at 6:30 pm, and you're warmly invited to stay for our contemplative Taizé prayer service at 7 pm. Come curious. Come hungry. Come ready to meet Jesus again—for the first time!

To register, visit tiny.cc/meeting-jesus-again.

Youth Retreat

Calling all youth in grades 7–12! Save the dates, **December 5–7**, for our Youth Retreat at Crestfield Camp and Conference Center in Slippery Rock. More details will be available soon!

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, October 5**, 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.



Family Bowling

Families with children and teens are invited to stay after Sanctuary worship on **Sunday, October 19**, for pizza and duckpin bowling.

Mark your calendars for an art event on **Sunday, November 16**.

The Children and Families Ministry team hosts monthly family events 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 not required.

Mission Board Message Board | Mission Month, October 2025

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

Each October, we here at ELPC highlight the work of our Mission Board, its committees, and the ways in which other groups within our church (and our church as a whole!) come together to minister to our community, region, and world. Check out a whole month’s worth of great opportunities in which you can participate!

October 5: World Communion Sunday

Following our Sanctuary service, join us for an International Luncheon, sponsored by the Board of Deacons. Enjoy samples of foods from around the globe! (See page 1.)

October 12: Full Inclusion Sunday

This cooperative effort is led by the Justice Committee; our LGBTQIA+ Ministry Team; and the Worship, Music, and the Arts Committee.

October 19: Financial Wellness Event

The Financial Wellness Event has been postponed and will be rescheduled in 2026.

October 26: Environmental Advocacy Program

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee will host a program on Environmental Advocacy as a combined Adult Church School class. (See page 4.)

October 26: FSR Reparations Session

Following our Sanctuary service, the **Facing Systemic Racism Committee** will facilitate a **Reparations Session** that builds from the powerful telling of Nell and Poll’s story into meaningful next steps for ELPC. The event will combine reflection, shared learning, and community dialogue, while serving as a launch point for activating the Reparations Committee. Through storytelling, small-group discussions, and shared commitments, we aim to deepen our understanding of the legacy of racial injustice, explore frameworks of grief and repair, and collectively identify concrete actions our community can take toward justice and reconciliation. We will begin with light refreshments.

Other Mission Board Notes

The **Neighbors Committee** reminds you to mark your calendars for **Saturday, November 15**, 8 am–12 pm, for Amen to Action at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Along with more than 250 other volunteers from across 10 local congregations and nonprofits, we will pack 100,000 meals to be delivered to our neighbors in need across Allegheny County by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Register at tiny.cc/amen-to-action.



In 2012, the services ELPC had been providing for the homeless were taken over by **East End Cooperative Ministry** (EECM). Since that time, ELPC has continued to partner with EECM and our neighbors-in-need in many ways. We have teams of volunteers that serve breakfast to the residents, three or four Sundays every month, and other teams that regularly provide Thursday night dinners.



EAST END
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY

opportunity. transformation. hope.

Interested in joining an EECM meal team? Contact Jim Eng at jeng1224@gmail.com for breakfast teams or Cathleen Malmstrom at calmalm1@gmail.com for dinner teams.

And twice a year, we hold a **Food Drive**, with all donations going to EECM’s kitchen. It’s a joyful event, involving the entire congregation, with children bringing the bags of food to the altar and teens doing the sorting and delivery to EECM. And this November’s Food Drive will have something new and special—so watch for more details!



Finally, the **Justice Committee** and the entire **Mission Board** remind you that a weekly **Prayer Vigil** continues on Friday mornings, 8–9:30 am, in front of the ICE offices on the South Side (3000 Sidney St). These quiet gatherings of prayer, sharing, and song are led by various faith groups around the area as we stand in hope and faith together with our immigrant siblings.

Presbyterian Women Bible Study

Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ

Monday, October 6 7–8:30 pm (Zoom Only)

Tuesday, October 7 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)



In September, we discussed the public ministry of Mary Magdalene, “the Tower,” as told in John’s Gospel. Our October lesson is titled, *Mary “of a Certain Village,”* and we will talk about a disciple named Mary “who chose the good part” of learning from Jesus in this story in Luke 10:38–42!

This is a different pair of sisters named Mary and Martha—different time, different place, no brother Lazarus. Is this familiar story in Luke about sibling rivalry or is there a theological dispute underlying this story?

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, October 12, 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.

Thanks

- Congratulations to Meghan Bogema & Matthew Battifarano on the baptism of **Emilia Battifarano** on August 3.
- Congratulations to Christina & Scott Graham on the baptism of **Noah Graham** on August 31.

Prayers

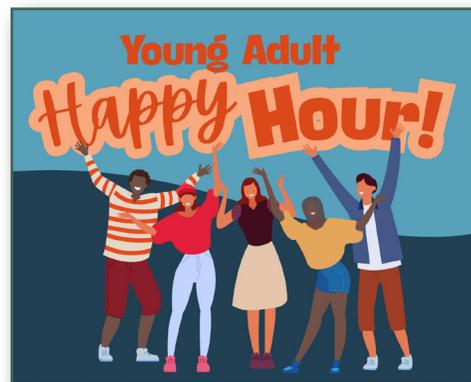
We offer our prayers of comfort to the family and friends of those who recently passed away.

- David Evans, an ELPC member since April 1958, who passed away on March 8.
- The Woolheater family, friends of Carol Chontos, on the sudden passing of their daughter Braelyn on September 21.

Young Adult Happy Hour Continues

Our next Young Adult Happy Hour takes place on **Monday, October 20, 6–7:30 pm**, at Michele and Henk Bossers’ home in Wilkinsburg. Stop by for appetizers and drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks are available). And plan on joining us on the third Monday of every month!

Details and RSVPs via evite. Contact Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net for more information.



“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.”

Cathedral Concerts are Tuning Up

The *Cathedral Concerts* series at ELPC has announced its slate of concerts for 2025–2026. The series’ 15th season begins in October with two exciting performances. For more information on each concert, please visit tiny.cc/cathedral-concerts.

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.



Then 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.

Both concerts are free, and also will be livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook.

ELPC Officer Nominating Committee Seeks Recommendations

The ELPC Officer Nominating Committee invites members of East Liberty Presbyterian Church to share their gifts—and to lift up the gifts of others—as the committee seeks nominees for the offices of Elder, Deacon, and next year’s Nominating Committee.

The Committee will prayerfully consider all recommendations submitted by the congregation as they prepare a slate for terms starting in 2026.

Guidelines and nomination forms are available in the church mailroom and on the church website at tiny.cc/elpc-nominations.

**ELPC Officer
Recommendations
Requested**