



Pastoral Message

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

"We observed the star at its rising and have come to pay the child homage."— Matthew 2:2

As we begin a new year together, I find myself returning to the image of a guiding light. In the Epiphany story, a star leads travelers not toward power or certainty, but toward God's presence revealed in

Christ. That same light continues to guide us, inviting us to move forward with trust, courage, and care.

At ELPC, we follow that light together in many ways: through worship and music, prayer and learning, care for one another, and love for our neighbors. We show up for questions and doubts, celebrations and concerns, joy and grief alike. We practice faith not by having everything figured out, but by choosing to journey together, attentive to where God may be leading us next.

I am deeply grateful for the way this shared commitment has been expressed through our stewardship. In November, we boldly set a goal of 226 pledges totaling \$700,000. As of December 29, we have received 200 pledges totaling \$703,967. As I've mentioned before, the generosity of this congregation is a powerful sign of trust in God's work among us. Because of your faithfulness, we are able to reduce our reliance on the endowment and continue serving boldly, responsibly, and with hope in the year ahead.

In 2026, may we keep our eyes on Christ, our hearts open to God's leading, and our steps grounded in love, as we continue following the light together.

In Christ,



MLK East Liberty Celebration

On **Monday, January 19**, 1–4 pm, join Pastor Michael and the Kelly Strayhorn Theater community in honoring the enduring vision of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., through *The Beloved Community*—a day of unity, reflection, and creative expression. This celebration includes local leaders, an art exhibition, and dynamic youth musical performances from community arts organizations. Tickets are available at kelly-strayhorn.org.

Weekly Worship Schedule

Journey Worship Service

Sundays | 8:45 am

There will be no Journey worship service on Sundays, January 4 or 11

Sanctuary Worship Service

Sundays | 11 am

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

There will be no Taizé prayer service on Wednesday, December 31.

ELPC Families are Hosting a Variety Show

Families with children and teens are hosting a Variety Show at Ivy Park Nursing and Rehabilitation Center on **Sunday, January 18!** Families are invited to eat lunch and coordinate tasks here at ELPC after worship in the First Floor Fellowship Room. We will leave ELPC at 1:15 pm to head over to Ivy Park to set up and welcome residents (you can ride in the church van or drive on your own). Come with a musical performance, joke, magic trick, story, art piece, dance or whatever you dream up to share with the residents! Sara will have some fun and easy things folks can help with if you forget your kazoo!

Please RSVP to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

There is a small parking lot at 5609 Fifth Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15232, and street parking behind the building.

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. The next family event is Dog Treat Baking on February 15.



East Liberty Presbyterian Church

www.ELPC.church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz

Senior Pastor and Head of Staff
MichaelD@coh.net | x223

Rev. Sarah Robbins

Covenant Pastor for Connection and Care
SarahR@coh.net | x221

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

Pray Always in All Ways: Classes & Retreat

Have you ever wondered what prayer is or if you even believe in prayer? Have you ever longed to pray more but struggled to know how? Whether you feel like a novice or practiced expert, we all need to practice prayer. There is no right or wrong way to pray, nor is there no one starting point or a finish line. There is only the continual showing up to practice prayer and allowing our deepest longings for God, others and the world to emerge.



Together, we will talk about our struggles and hopes with prayer and explore a wide variety of prayer forms, including body prayer, prayer beads, icons, silent, written fixed-hour prayer and prayer as simple awareness in life. It will be playful, inspiring, and interactive with lots of time to practice together.

There are two ways you can participate:

- Weekly Gatherings on Wednesdays, January 21 & 28, and February 4 & 11, 5:30–7 pm
Register for the classes at tinyurl.com/PrayAlwaysClasses2026.
- Weekend Retreat, Friday–Sunday, January 23–25
Register for the retreat at tinyurl.com/PrayAlwaysRetreat2026.

Cost Options:

- \$100 | One Night: Friday–Saturday or Saturday–Sunday with Private Room & Common Bath
- \$125 | One Night: Friday–Saturday or Saturday–Sunday with Private Room & Bath
- \$150 | Two Nights Friday–Sunday with Private Room & Common Bath
- \$175 | Two Nights Friday–Sunday with Private Room & Bath
- \$50 | Saturday Day

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Director of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

Youth Group

Youth in grades 7–12 gather together each week for dinner, games, God talk, community, laughter, prayer, and doing good. We would love to have you join us on Thursdays, 4:30–7 pm!

- Register online at [ELPC.church](https://www.ELPC.church). We will meet at ELPC on **January 8, 15, & 22**, and at Sixth Presbyterian Church on January 29.

Tween Bowling

On **Friday, January 9**, 5:30–7:30 pm, kids in grades 4–6 are invited to an evening of pizza and bowling in ELPC's duck pin bowling lanes. Friends are always welcome. Please RSVP to Sara Hackett.

Winter Break

There will be no youth Sunday School or adult Church School classes on **Sunday, January 4**. We will have extra activities in the Kids' Corner and are excited for kids to join us for Communion in worship that day. The Nursery will be staffed.

Classes for learners of all ages will resume their regular schedule on **Sunday, January 11**.

Christian Education

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

January 11: Four Experiences in the Life of Jesus Through the Eyes of a Native American

Steven Charleston is a retired American Episcopal bishop and academic. He is a member of the Choctaw Nation and a prolific writer, primarily on American theological, Indigenous, and cultural issues.

In this video, Steven Charleston shares how a Native American Christian can view four experiences in the life of Jesus.

January 18: Michelangelo's Faith Questioning During the Reformation

In this PBS video, Michelangelo and Raphael are rivals for Papal favor as both complete works in the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo explains how he does his work for the glory of God. Martin Luther's questioning of Papal excesses and Papal authority bring Michelangelo to question his beliefs about the Papacy, as Martin Luther's Reformation grows.

January 25: A Consideration of One-state, with Equality for Israelis & Palestinians

Palestinian lawyer Jonathan Kuttub recently spoke at Sixth Presbyterian Church in Squirrel Hill. In this video, he speaks about how he used to be a supporter of a two-state solution for Israel/Palestine, but sees now that a Palestinian state with no sovereignty or substance cannot deliver freedom or independence, and it is time to look beyond the "false mirage of the two-state solution." He now advocates for one-state, with equality for both Jews and Palestinians, so that they can live together in peace.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room & Zoom

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

January 11, 18, & 25: So You Want to Talk About Race

We will resume and continue our discussion of *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo. New participants are always welcome.

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, January 4**, 9:45–10:45 am. There will be no youth Sunday School, but we hope teens will join us for games.

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.

Sunday School for Children and Tweens

Children and tweens are invited to *Sunday School: Sacred Stories* after the Moments with our Children (11:10 am) during Sanctuary worship. Parents pick up their kids after worship.

Using the *Godly Play* curriculum, kids age 4–third grade will hear, see, touch, and retell the sacred stories of our faith, while asking "I wonder ..." questions and responding with art.

Tweens in grades 4–6 are working through a New Testament survey course, and dig into Bible stories through games, conversations, crafts, drama, and teamwork to discover what these stories mean to them in today's world.

Children, birth through age 3, hear stories of God's love, play, and sing songs in the Nursery, which is open during our Sunday worship services and Adult Church School classes.

Sunday School for Teens

Teens in grades 7–12 will meet on **Sunday, January 18**, 9:45–10:45 am, in the Second Floor Parlor.

Mission Board Message Board | January 2026

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

Expressing Gratitude!

In wrapping up 2025, the **Neighbors Committee** recognizes how much gratitude is owed to our congregation and our wider community!

The Committee wants to thank our generous donors, including:

- The Waters Foundation, which stepped up with a \$10,000 grant to support ELPC’s Neighborhood Assistance mission program;
- 4Imprint’s One by One program, which provided reusable bags for both the EECM Food Drive and the Chapel Market dinner Christmas gifts;
- Light of Life Rescue Mission, which gave us socks, towels, and toiletries to be included in the Chapel Market dinner gift bags; and
- All the members of the congregation who donated to Chapel Market, the EECM Food Drives, and the Garfield Farm Tool Drive.

We thank ELPC’s staff, always ready to assist us, especially the indispensable Gerald McClendon, and Bruce McNight, our Chapel Market dinner coffee master!

Thanks also to our awesome volunteers, whose numbers have increased this year, as have the tasks they’ve taken on:

- We had more than 1,200 visitors to the Chapel Market in 2025. We continue to support our refugee community with clothing through Hello Neighbor.
- In May, we began our monthly Chapel Market dinners, which have grown from 40 to 80 guests each month. Our teams of 10–20 cooks and 20–30 hosts prepared and served more than 600 meals in 2025.
- ELPC sent our largest team yet—37 people!— to participate in Amen to Action, helping to pack more than 75,000 meals to stock the Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

Finally, we’re grateful that our committee welcomed four new members in 2025: Heather Eng, Doug Booth, Bob Wiskermann and Eric McCarty!

Our committee’s mission is likely to grow in 2026. If you are interested in sharing our blessings with our neighbors, please consider joining us! To learn about opportunities, contact Cathleen Malmstrom at calmalm1@gmail.com.

Faith In Action: Advocacy Coaching

We learned at our October Adult Education presentation on Impactful Advocacy that individualized calls and emails to legislators are more impactful than form letters and emails. To facilitate such advocacy, the **Environmental Team of the Justice Committee** will offer two identical one-hour information sessions on Zoom on **Monday, January 12**, 7 pm, and **Wednesday, January 14**, 10 am. During these sessions, you will receive examples, tips, and resources. Think in advance about an issue or cause that is important to you. We will practice on a common issue.

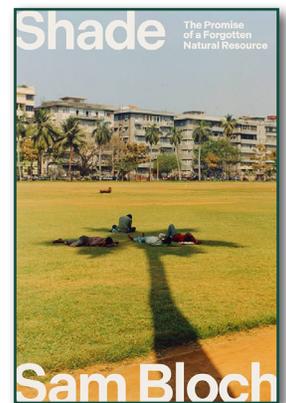
If you are interested, but did not attend our October presentation, you also can request the recording link.

Contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net to register and receive the Zoom link for one of the upcoming information sessions, or to request a link to the recording of the October presentation.

Environmental Team January Book Study

For its next book, the Environment Team of the Justice Committee has selected *Shade: the Promise of a Forgotten Natural Resource* by Sam Bloch. The discussion session will be held on **Thursday, January 22**, 7 pm, via Zoom.

In his new book, environmental journalist Sam Bloch encourages us to look to the past for solutions to our ever-warming urban areas as climate change creates heat waves that are more frequent, hotter and longer lasting. Bloch’s call for more shade in urban areas, with more trees in parks and residential areas and new ways to design public areas and buildings, comes as policy makers grapple with a growing crisis in heat-related illness and death.



For further information and the Zoom link, contact Nancy Heastings at n.heastings@comcast.net.

Chapel Market’s Winter Donation Requests

The Chapel Market is stocking up on winter clothes for our neighbors in need. Please consider donating clean, new or gently-used winter coats for toddlers to adults. They also need full-sized toiletry items. Leave donations in the Highland Lobby.

Presbyterian Women Bible Study

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

The Gift of the Woman Who Was Poor

Monday, January 5 7–8:30 pm (Online only)

Tuesday, January 6 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)



We continue our study of “Finding Joy” with the story of the woman who was poor, Mark 12:41-44. When she put her two copper coins into the temple treasury, Jesus lifted up her generosity. Two thousand years later, we still remember her. By her witness, we know that it is possible to give of ourselves to others, even during difficult times, and live in faith, hope—and yes, joy.

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.

Presbyterian Women’s Winter Retreat

All women are invited to an overnight Late Winter Retreat at Crestfield Camp. Join Presbyterian Women from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon, **March 6–7**, for community, learning, worship and relaxing. Pastor Sarah Robbins will lead us.

LGBTQIA+ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Our Next Spiritual Gathering

Please join us at our next Spiritual Gathering on **Sunday, January 4**, 12:30 pm, to share conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcomed.

Questions? Contact Wil Forrest at wil@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x218**.



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:

- LaVerne Davis and family on the passing of her mother, Eva Davis, on November 15.
- Tim Engelhard’s family on the passing of his grandfather, L J Futch, on November 19.
- Gina Anderson on the passing of her husband, Jeffrey Anderson, on November 21.
- Jon Nelson’s family on the passing of his cousin, Reji.

Young Adult Happy Hour Continues

Our next Young Adult Happy Hour takes place on **Monday, January 19**, 6–7:30 pm, at Russell Ludwig’s home in Friendship. 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.

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!



East Liberty
Presbyterian Church

www.ELPC.church

 116 South Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206



Search: EastLibertyPresbyterian

“...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.”

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Cody Conley in Concert

Our *Cathedral Concerts* series continues on **Sunday, January 4**, 3 pm, with a special performance by violinist Cody Conley! Cody will be joined by his friends, violinist Devin Arrington and pianist Grace Burns.

The concert will feature a new violin duo composed by Devin Arrington for Cody and Devin.

Join us in the Sanctuary or on YouTube or Facebook. The concert is free and open to all, so bring your family and friends! A freewill offering will be received.



Building Closures

ELPC will be closed for the New Year's holiday on **Wednesday, December 31 & Thursday, January 1.**

Confirmation Retreat at ELPC

On **Saturday, January 24**, 10 am–3 pm, our Confirmation Class, for youth in grades 8–9, will explore the Bible through conversations, games, art projects, and more...asking questions like, "What's in the Bible? Why don't Christians agree on what the Bible says? What does it mean that the Bible is the 'Word of God'?" Contact Sara Hackett with questions at SaraH@coh.net.

Active Intruder Safety Training

On **Saturday, February 7**, 1–4 pm, all ELPC friends, members, leaders, and staff are welcome to attend an important training session on how to remain safe if an intruder enters our church building. ELPC's Safety and Security Advisory Committee will be hosting a local safety officer, who will share information and answer questions.

Please pre-register by January 31 at tiny.cc/safety-training or by calling Jen King at **412.441.3800 x222**.