



EAST LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

116 South Highland Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206 412.441.3800 www.ELPC.church

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. (Strategic Vision mission statement, 2011)

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 17, 2026 • 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

“Help” is a prayer that is always answered. It doesn't matter how you pray — with your head bowed in silence, or crying out in grief, or dancing. — *Anne Lamott*

PRELUDE

“Prelude on Rhosymedre”

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Deborah Brake and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

Leader: From the Mount of Olives, the disciples watched a cloud carry their beloved.

People: We, too, gather to be carried — by God and by one another.

Leader: Why do we stand looking up?

People: The Spirit is moving among us.

Leader: Why do we wait in silence?

People: Because God speaks in the spaces we do not fill.

Leader: Come, beloved of God, into this upper room.

People: With open hands and patient hearts, let us worship.

* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #263

“All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!”

CORONATION

MOMENTS WITH OUR CHILDREN

Sara Hackett

Children of any age are welcome to come forward for Moments with our Children. Afterwards:

- *Children age 4-6th grade go to Sunday School: Sacred Stories. Parents pick up their kids after worship (age 4- 3rd grade in Room 206; grades 4-6 in Room 207). If this is your child's first time attending, please accompany your child upstairs and check in with the teachers.*
- *Children age 3 and younger can play, sing songs and hear stories in the nursery from 8:30 am-12:30 pm.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

Deborah Brake and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

Leader: Friends, before the Spirit came in fire, the disciples first had to learn how to wait. They had to release the Christ they could see in order to receive the Christ who would be with them always. We, too, are a people who struggle to let go. We cling to the familiar shape of God's nearness. We fill the silence rather than trust it. We grasp for things where God simply asks us to receive. Let us bring our holding-on into the light of God's mercy.

* Indicates where you may please rise in body or spirit.

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Deborah Brake and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

God of presence and absence, we confess that we are a people who fill rooms. We fill the silence with our worry. We fill the spaces in our lives where you are trying to meet us. Forgive us for the gaze that stays fixed on what is gone. Forgive us for the hands that will not open. Forgive us for the prayers we speak so quickly that we never hear your answer. Make us willing to wait together, for the gift we cannot give ourselves.

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Deborah Brake and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

Leader: People of God, divine mercy is always present.

People: **We are forgiven and never forgotten. Amen.**

HYMN OF RESPONSE #452

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”

OPEN THE EYES

READING

Deborah Brake and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

from *The Living Reminder* by Henry Nouwen

Jesus' closest friends listened to his words but... they did not understand. Although they saw and heard, smelled and touched him, they remained distant. Only later when Christ was gone could Christ's true Spirit reveal itself to them. In Christ's absence a new and more intimate presence became possible.

Many of our disappointments and frustrations in life are related to the fact that seeing and touching each other does not always create the closeness we seek. Physical presence not only invites but also blocks intimate communication; our bodies hide as much as they reveal.

One of the mysteries of life is that memory can often bring us closer to each other than can physical presence. A sustaining ministry requires the art of creative withdrawal so that in memory God's Spirit can manifest itself and lead to the full truth. Without this withdrawal, we are in danger of no longer being the way, but *in* the way. Although the ministry of presence is undoubtedly very meaningful, it always needs to be balanced by a ministry of absence.

Leader: May God bless the truth in these words.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 1:6-14

Tommy Caruso

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

* **HYMN #462**

“I Love to Tell the Story”

HANKEY

SERMON

“Are You in the Way?”

Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

INVITATION TO ANOINTING AND PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Are you in need of an affirmation that God is journeying with you? Do you desire for someone to pray alongside you? If so, please come forward, down the center aisle, as we sing. Volunteer prayer partners will be present to listen, intercede, anoint and hold you in God's love. You may also light a candle in prayer at the entrance to the Trinity Chapel.

HYMN #282

“Come Down, O Love Divine”

DOWN AMPNEY

HYMN #407

“Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers” NUN DANKET ALL' UND BRINGET HER'

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(in language/version closest to your heart)*

Rev. Dr. Diaz

The Lord's Prayer can be found on pg. 35 (English), on pg. 40 (Español), or on pg. 45 (한글) in the hymnal.

SHARING GOD'S PEACE

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Leader: La paz de Cristo esté con ustedes.

The peace of Christ be with you.

People: **Y también contigo.**

And also with you.

CHURCH NEWS & OFFERING INVITATION

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Please remember to write your name on your offering envelope.

You can also scan this QR code to give online or visit www.ELPC.church/donate.



OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“It Is Well with My Soul”

Spafford/Bliss

arr. Sorenson/Becker

text: Glory to God #840, v. 1, 3, 4

* **DOXOLOGY AT THE PRESENTATION #609**

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Praise God, in Jesus fully known:

Creator, Word and Spirit one.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

* **PRAYER OF DEDICATION** *(in unison)*

Tommy Caruso

Loving God, bless these gifts for the benefits they bring in the life of your people. Bless our lives that we may be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Amen.

* **RECESSIONAL HYMN #260**

“Alleluia! Sing to Jesus”

HYFRYDOL

* **CHARGE & BENEDICTION**

Rev. Dr. Diaz

POSTLUDE

“Fanfare”

William Mathias



As you pray these simple prayers, trace your finger on this circle in the palm of your hand, knowing God's presence surrounds what or who you are praying for.



**Encircling
Prayer**

God our Keeper, encircle
(name/place),

Keep protection near
and danger far

God of Courage, encircle
(name/place),

Keep hope within
and despair without

God of Light, encircle *(name/place),*

Keep light near
and darkness far

God of Comfort, encircle
(name/place),

Keep peace within
and anxiety without

Eternal Creator, Redeemer,
and Sustainer, shield
(name/place),
on every side

*Adapted from the
Celtic Book of Daily Prayer*

Notes regarding the music sung in today's service are available on our website —

<http://tiny.cc/elpcworshipnotes>

You can also scan this QR code to be directed to that info on our website.



Our full worship service is being livestreamed on Facebook and archived at www.ELPC.church. By being in attendance, you give permission for incidences where you appear within the video.

Assisted listening devices are available for our Sanctuary worship in the Ushers' Room. Please print your contact info and device number on the sign-out sheet if you need to use one.

Please silence all electronic devices before the service begins.

◆ PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz (he/him/él)
Liturgists: Deborah Brake
Tommy Caruso (gay/he/him/his)
Sara Hackett (she/her)
Samantha Brake-Hoffman
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him)
Director of Music and Arts
ELPC Chancel Choir
Omari Imhotep Abdul-Alim (he/him)
Violin
Kym Laret, *Soloist*
Beadle: Heather Eng
Crucifer: Travis Simpson-Hunt
Sound: Tim Benedict
Wayne Gaines

◆ WORSHIP FLOWERS

If you would like to sponsor flowers for our weekly worship service in honor or memory of a loved one, please visit tiny.cc/SundayFlowers, or call Norma (412.441.3800 x211).

◆ SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:45 am.....**Journey Worship (in the Chapel).** An interactive, energetic service for those seeking a fresh encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

11 am.....**Sanctuary Worship.** Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.

◆ WEEKDAY WORSHIP

Taizé: Prayerful Song and Quiet Meditation

Chants and periods of meditative silence modeled after the Taizé community in France. Rev. BJ Woodworth leads this service in the Chapel.

Wednesdays, 7 pm

◆ WEEKLY SPIRITUAL LIFE OFFERINGS

Contemplative Prayer on Mondays

Rev. BJ Woodworth will lead a time on Zoom of 30 minutes of communal silence and guided meditation on scripture. *Concludes tomorrow until Sept 14.*

Mondays, 7:30 to 8 am

Meeting ID: 959 8065 3992 • Passcode: bestill

Tuesday Morning Zoom Prayer Group

Join Steve Evrard on Zoom for a time of scripture readings, responsive prayer, and interactive dialogue.

Tuesdays, 8 to 8:30 am

Meeting ID: 896 9680 6662 • Passcode: 116

Meditation Hour

Join John Benedict, retired psychologist and practitioner of insight meditation, in the Chapel for an hour devoted to meditation, which includes an opening reading, silent sitting, and walking. All are welcome!

Tuesdays, 6-7 pm

Cathedral Yoga

Yamuna will lead yoga in-person in the Sanctuary.

Wednesdays, 6 to 7 pm (*before Taizé*)

WELCOME VISITORS!

We are grateful to have you join us for worship this morning and ask you to **sign your name in our red Friendship Books** in each pew.

If you're a first time visitor, please fill out a **NEW HERE** card found in the pew backs and give that card to a pastor at the Penn Ave or Highland Ave entrance to receive a gift in exchange for your filled out card. Our pastors will reach out to you for any prayer requests and to answer any questions you might have.

Attend an *Inquirers' Class* on **Sunday, June 14 after the 10 am worship service** to learn more about ELPC, Presbyterian theology, and to explore membership. Lunch will be provided. Please see one of the pastors after the service to attend.

Call the Church Office (412.441.3800), or visit the ELPC website at www.ELPC.church.

Sunday, 17 May 2026 – Seventh Sunday of Easter – Ascension of the Lord

Today is the seventh Sunday of the season of Easter. The season of Easter lasts seven weeks from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday on May 24.

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year/season-easter>

This past Thursday, May 14, was forty days after the Resurrection of the Lord (Easter Sunday), when we remember and celebrate the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. To read more about this day:

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year/ascension-lord>

Prelude

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was a leading English composer whose music was often influenced by folk music and songs. His prelude on the hymn tune *Rhosymedre* is from a set of three preludes for organ on Welsh hymn tunes.

Offertory Anthem

The author of *It Is Well with My Soul*, Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888), a successful Chicago lawyer and active Presbyterian layman, was about to sail to France for a vacation with his family, but he was detained at the last minute by business matters. His wife and four daughters went ahead as scheduled, with the understanding that he would join them shortly. At 2 a.m. on November 22, 1873, their ship, the *Ville du Havre*, was struck by the British ship *Loch Earn* and (according to newspaper accounts) sank in fifteen minutes, with the loss of 226 lives. Mrs. Spafford was among the eighty-seven survivors, but all four of their daughters were lost. When she finally reached land more than a week later, she sent her husband a telegram that began, "Saved alone." He immediately set off to join her in Paris, where she had gone with a clergyman friend who had also survived the collision. While at sea, somewhere near the site of the fatal accident, he is said by family tradition to have written this hymn. (Daw, Carl P. Jr.. *Glory to God: A Companion* (p. 802). (Function). Kindle Edition.)

The tune VILLE DU HAVRE was composed by Philip P. Bliss (1838-1876) in 1876 to accompany this text.

Postlude

William Mathias (1934-1992) was a renowned Welsh composer of choral, orchestral, and instrumental works. His *Fanfare* for organ was commissioned for the inaugural concert for the new organ at Memorial Hall, Barry, Wales in 1987.

TODAY AT ELPC

Welcome Visitors!

If you are joining us for the first time, we're glad you are here! Please fill out a **NEW HERE** card found in the pew backs and give that card to a pastor at the Penn Ave or Highland Ave entrance. You will receive a gift in exchange for your filled out card. Our pastors will reach out to you for any prayer requests and to answer any questions.

Shaping Our Future Gathering #2

Something holy happens when more than 80 people stay after worship to talk honestly about how God led us to this faith community. That is what we witnessed at our first gathering in April, where a room full of ELPC members and friends began our collective discernment work for the future.

Today from 12:15—1:45 pm in the Social Hall, we will dive into the next layer of the conversation, building on what we heard from one another in April. Lunch will be provided, and childcare is available in the ground floor bowling alley with Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net).

Throughout the summer, our ELPC Strategic Visioning Team will be working with Michelle Snyder from the Center for Healthy Churches to facilitate online listening sessions, in-person focus groups, and discussions with community partners.

The Arsenal Duo in Concert

At 3 pm today in the Sanctuary, the Arsenal Duo will perform a free *Cathedral Concert* featuring the premiere of a new organ/piano duet by Mary Beth Bennett and Gershwin's beloved *Rhapsody in Blue*. A freewill offering will be received. All are welcome!



Art Exhibit: Souls Shot

The Peace Committee is hosting an exhibit called *Souls Shot* in the Trustees' Room. It is an exhibit of portraits of gun violence victims. It will be there for a few weeks. Stop by. You will find it moving.



Contemplative Prayer on Mondays – Concludes May 18

Rev. BJ Woodworth leads a time on Zoom of 30 minutes of communal silence and guided meditation on scripture on Mondays from 7:30 to 8 am. Zoom info is: Meeting ID: 959 8065 3992; Passcode: bestill. Please note this prayer group will take their summer break after Monday, May 18, and will resume on Monday, Sept 14.

Young Adult Happy Hour – May 18

Young Adult Happy Hour (for adults post-high school through their 20s and 30s) continues on Monday, May 18 at Susan Wadsworth-Booth and Doug Booth's home in Wilkinsburg. Happening on the 3rd Monday of every month from 6-7:30 pm, join us for appetizers and drinks (both alcoholic and non-alcoholic). RSVP online for location details: <https://invite.social/jylgs8wxpq2sqlle>. *Our Young Adult Ministry welcomes all.*

Listening for God's Heartbeat – May 20

Attend the final class drawing upon John Philip Newell's book *Listening for the Heartbeat of God: Celtic Daily Prayer*. on Wednesday, May 20 from 5:30-6:30 pm (light dinner at 6:30 pm), Sign up at: tinyurl.com/gods-heartbeat-classes.

Environmental Book Study – May 21

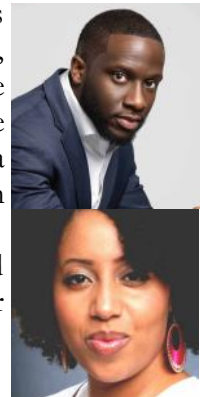
The next *Environmental Book Study* will be held on Thursday, May 21 at 7 pm on Zoom. The book selected for discussion is *The Burning Earth: An Environmental History of the Last 500 Years* by Sunil Amrith. As this book is longer than our other selections, we will read it over 2 sessions; the May 21 session will cover Part I – Seeds of Change (1200 – 1800).

For more info and the zoom link, contact Nancy Heastings (n.heastings@comcast.net).

Organist Nathaniel Gumbs in Concert – May 31

Co-sponsored with the Organ Artists Series of Pittsburgh, Dr. Gumbs, Director of Music at the Riverside Church in New York City, will be joined by soprano Olanna Miller for a concert in the ELPC Sanctuary on Sunday, May 31 at 3 pm.

ELPC members and friends should contact Dr. Ed Moore for complimentary tickets (EdM@coh.net).




**PENTECOST: CELEBRATING THE
BIRTH OF THE CHURCH**
*Join us on Pentecost Sunday, May 24,
as we celebrate the gift of the Holy
Spirit and birth of the church!*

- Wear festive red clothing to worship
- Join us for lunch and some family friendly and fun service projects.

RSVP to SaraH@coh.net



As a caring congregation of faith, we ask you to remember the following people in your prayers:

Christopher S, Collen I, Doris' cousin Jane, Greg C, Jackie W, Jeff, Kathy, Nan J and Katie P, Nancy W, Shayzen, Steve M's brother Bill, Ray Anthony, Bob Boucher and his daughter Amber, Carol and JoAnn Chonoska's friend Jimmy, Chris Markwell, and Fran Wilson.

Condolences to Andrea DeVries on her mother's passing. A memorial service will be at ELPC on Sat, May 23 at Noon.

Committee Meeting This Week

Session..... Tuesday, May 19 @ 7:00 pm

Tree Care and Equity in Pittsburgh – May 30

On Saturday, May 30 from 9 am-Noon, join the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee and our partner Tree Pittsburgh for weeding, mulching and watering at Garland Park in East Liberty (Broad St at N St Clair, 4 blocks from ELPC). Families are welcome. Registration is required for adults at www.mobilize.us/treepittsburgh/event/920776/, or by scanning this QR code.



Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian, and will sign up at the park (contact Sara at SaraH@coh.net). Transportation from ELPC is available by signing up with Nancy (n.heastings@comcast.net).

Youth Sunday – May 31

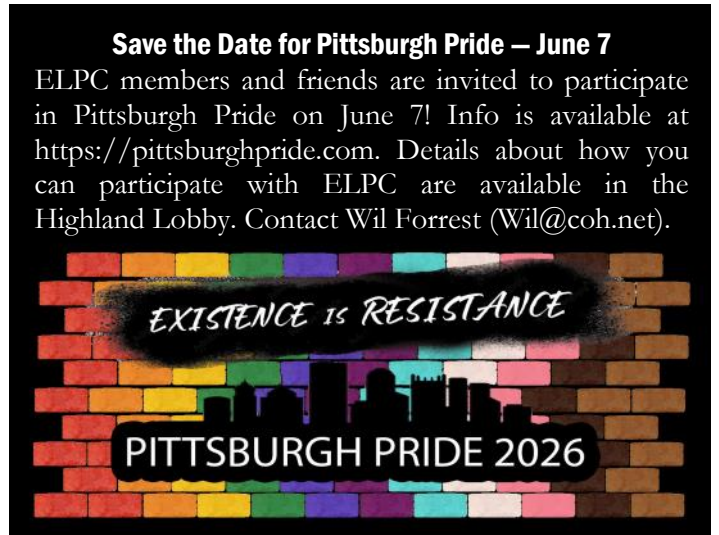
Youth Sunday will be celebrated during 11 am worship on Sunday, May 31. Youth who want to help plan or lead worship should reach out to Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net). Graduating high school seniors are invited to give a senior message and all youth in 7th-12th grade are encouraged to participate.

Church Tower Tour – May 31

Steve Evrard and Nate Stephens will guide a tour of the Tower on Sunday, May 31. Please pre-register at tiny.cc/towertour as this tour is limited to 20 participants. Participants must wear closed-toe shoes to join this tour. Pre-registered participants should gather in the Highland Lobby after the 11 am worship service for the tour.

Sing the Durufle Requiem with the Chancel Choir – Rehearsal on June 4

The ELPC Chancel Choir, Dr. Ed Moore, and organist Jon Tyillian will be presenting the *Requiem* by Maurice Durufle on Friday, Nov 6. An introductory read-through rehearsal will be Thursday, June 4 at 7 pm. If you are interested in singing with the choir for this event, please contact Dr. Ed Moore (EdM@coh.net) for more info about the rehearsal schedule and other details.



Save the Date for Pittsburgh Pride – June 7

ELPC members and friends are invited to participate in Pittsburgh Pride on June 7! Info is available at <https://pittsburghpride.com>. Details about how you can participate with ELPC are available in the Highland Lobby. Contact Wil Forrest (Wil@coh.net).

Register for Vacation Church School

ELPC will have Vacation Church School from Monday to Friday, June 22–26 from 9 am–3 pm, for children in pre-K (age 4 and pottytrained) through grade 5 (completed).

Our theme this summer is *Kids Connect*, where children wake up those neurons, get those synapses flowing, and jump on the wavelength of God's love! Each day includes worship and drama, Bible study, art and science explorations, brain-building challenges, and active games.

Registration forms are available on our website: ELPC.church.

Calling All Graduates

Are you graduating from high school, college, trade school, graduate school, etc. this spring? We would like to celebrate these achievements together! Submit your name, degree, and school attended to Jen King (JenK@coh.net).

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES	May 24
<i>Adult classes are held from 9:45-10:45 am in the rooms indicated:</i>	
Journey with Scripture – Highland Room + Zoom	
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. Henk Bossers and other class members facilitate the class	
Seekers – Garth Overlook Room + Zoom	
"Christians in an Age of Empire" video by Marcus Borg. Facilitated by Gwen Puza	
Soul Food – Good Samaritan Room + Zoom	
A review discussion of <i>How We Learn to Be Brave</i> by Bishop Mariann Budde. Facilitated by Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members	