

As Fall arrives and our schedules fill up with many necessary and unnecessary engagements, where are you finding space to breathe? Are you finding time to walk in Creation and be present with the Spirit blowing in the leaves?

In "How I go to the Woods," Mary Oliver writes:

Ordinarily I go to the woods alone, with not a single friend, for they are all smilers and talkers and therefore unsuitable. I don't really want to be witnessed talking to the catbirds or hugging the old black oak tree. I have my ways of praying, as you no doubt have yours. Besides, when I am alone, I can become invisible. I can sit on the top of a dune as motionless as an uprise of weeds, until the foxes run by unconcerned. I can hear the almost unheard sound of the roses singing. If you have ever gone to the woods with me, I must love you very much.



For me, it's in moments like these that I experience the Spirit. In the woods, alone, letting the Creation sing God's praises in its own way. This is Good News. This is union with God's presence in the world. Because God is already present all around us. God is already active in the world. But we often can't see God moving in our busy lives. Sometimes, it takes slowing down, separating ourselves, in order to see what is καλός – good, beautiful, excellent, handsome, valuable, virtuous, and praiseworthy.

What do we do when we experience things such as these? Mary Oliver also writes:

Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

That's evangelism.

We share the good, beautiful, and excellent things we experience with others, not because we have a strategy for new membership, but because we have heard God speak in the beauty of a Chrysanthemum, in the falling of the leaves, in the children dressed as Barbie, Paw Patrol, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles who come to our door for sugary treats.

Evangelism is naming the beauty and love we experience out loud, naming God's presence in all things. We share these things out loud because God's love and beauty cannot be privately contained inside ourselves or our buildings when we live with neighbors in need and a hurting world. God's Good News is meant to transform and transcend. The church is meant to be a beacon of Christ's grace, justice, freedom, and love.

So go into the woods—or wherever you find peace and restoration. Go seek awareness of God's presence in all that exists. And report back. Share the times you experience healing or beauty with others. Because often we make "evangelism" into something scary or coercive, when in reality, all Jesus wants us to do is help others see the beauty, too.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Jason



120 East Swissvale Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15218
www.fpcedgewood.org
412-241-4613



*Believing we are
called together
by God's love
through Jesus Christ,
our mission as the
First Presbyterian Church
of Edgewood
is to love God,
to love each other,
and to love our neighbors.*

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Pastor

Rev. Jason Dauer

pastorjason@fpcedgewood.org

Office & Cleaning Manager

Judy Mysels

office@fpcedgewood.org

Building Manager

Rob Mysels

building@fpcedgewood.org

Minister of Music

Shaun Cloonan

music@fpcedgewood.org

Pianist

Sunny Sakai

sunny@fpcedgewood.org



October 2023 Worship Schedule

Join us Sunday mornings at 11:00AM in the Sanctuary for worship. Services are live-streamed on Facebook and then posted to YouTube within a day and shared via email to the congregation.



October 1:

World Communion Sunday; Fifth Sunday in the Season of Creation. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper together! (Is. 25:1-9; Phil. 4:1-9; Mt. 22:1-14)

Wednesday, October 4:

Blessing of the Animals in honor of Francis of Assisi; We will have hot dogs for humans on the Side Lawn.

October 8:

Celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day
(Is. 5:1-7; Phil. 3:4-14; Mt. 21:33-46)

October 15:

World Food Day; Worship Ensemble returns for Emerging Worship
(Is. 25:1-9; Phil. 4:1-9; Mt. 22:1-14)

October 22:

United Nations Day (Is. 45:1-7; 1 Thess. 1:1-10; Mt. 22:15-22)

October 29:

Reformation Sunday. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper together!
(Lev. 19:1-2, 15-18; 1 Thess. 2:1-8; Mt. 22:34-46)



FOCUS
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Tuesday Book Club

The weekly discussion group is reading "People of the Book" by Geraldine Brooks. If you would like to join, they meet at 10:00AM on Tuesdays at the home of Rhonda Apossos, 361 Maple Avenue, Edgewood.

Wednesday Zoom Bible Study

Wednesday Night Bible Study, 7:30PM led by Elder Tim Hoffman via Zoom. If interested, contact Tim, hoffmantl@hotmail.com
No passcode is necessary. <https://pitt.zoom.us/j/6670286724>

Sunday School

Youth Sunday School, during Worship, resumed on September 10. Please let us know if you have a child interested in Sunday School.

Blessing of the Animals: Wednesday, October 4, 6PM

Walking in the way of St. Francis, a visionary lover of all creation, Pastor Jason will hold a service of the Blessing the Animals who come his way. He will be on the side lawn (weather permitting) from **6:00-7:00PM on Wednesday, October 4**, which is the traditional feast day observed for St. Francis of Assisi. All creatures great and small – and their guardians – are welcome.



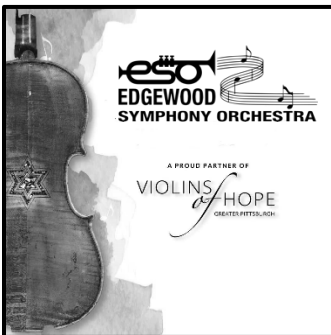
The service will open with a brief liturgy and prayer, then each pet will be blessed individually. Hot dogs will be served to the humans and treats will be given to the pets. Please invite your friends, families, and neighbors to this blessing ceremony.



Pittsburgh East CROP Walk: October 8

On Sunday, October 8, the Pittsburgh East community will celebrate its 46th year of walking to end hunger one step at a time. The oldest walk in the country, is sponsored by Church World Service (www.churchworldservice.org). 25% of what we raise is returned as grants to East End Common Ministries

and Wilksburg Community Ministry. FPCE will participate in this event with walkers Judy and Mariah Mysels and Rhonda Apossos, who aim to raise over \$800. If anyone else would like to join our small group of walkers, let Rhonda or Judy know. We gather at the South Avenue United Methodist Church at 1:00 to prepare for the 10K loop through Squirrel Hill and back. The walk distance is 6.2 miles. You can participate by either walking or sponsoring FPCE walkers. You can also go to the FPCE team website to donate: <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2023/team/first-presbyterian-church-of-edgerwood>



ESO presents "Songs of the Soul" October 14

The Edgewood Symphony Orchestra is proud to be a partner with Violins of Hope for our concert on October 14, 2023, at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh. The ESO will present pieces rarely heard in Pittsburgh, written by Jewish composers from the 20th Century, including Viktor Ullmann, Lucas Richman, Mikhail Gnesin, Mieczyslaw Weinberg, Julius Chajes, and Erich Korngold. Cellist Aron Zelkowicz will be the featured soloist. Tickets and more information is available on our website www.edgewoodsymphony.org.

FPCE to Host Treble Choral Festival October 29

Belle Voci, an adult community treble (soprano, alto) choral ensemble, will be hosting a Treble Choral Festival at the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood on Sunday, October 29th at 3:00pm. The intergenerational festival, established in 2007 by the University of Pittsburgh Women's Choral Ensemble, was created to bring soprano and alto singers of all ages together to celebrate the beauty of voices in the upper range.

In addition to Belle Voci, featured in the concert will be ensembles from Penn Hills High School, the Pittsburgh Girls Choir, the University of Pittsburgh Treble Choral Ensemble, and possibly one more college/university choir. The groups will sing individually and as a massed choir.

A suggested \$5.00 cash donation will be collected at the door.



MUSIC *Ministry*

"There's no place like home..."

I couldn't imagine how true those words would feel after the past month or so. The week we returned to classes, I woke up at 3:30am to find a crashed and abandoned car in the corner of the garage at my house! The police and fire chief deemed the area unsafe and so I started a 3-week tour of not living at home. A week at a friend's house and 2 in an extended stay hotel, all while beginning a new teaching assignment at school (6th grade chorus was added to my schedule at the middle school, which I haven't taught in over 10 years!). You can imagine how great it was to get the structural engineer report saying the house was now structurally sound to live in while the process of rebuilding, permits, and construction begins. There's no place like home!

There's no
Place
like
HOME 

Those words are also true for our choir. It's been a few years since we've been in our "home" - the choir room - for rehearsals. We closed the doors in early March 2020 and haven't been back until this September. Our choir members have new folders, new cubbies for their things, and a whole new system to keep us and our sheet music organized! We've begun Sunday morning rehearsals at 9:30 again, and are participating in our worship with beautiful anthems. Thank you to all of our singers for joining us to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Your fellowship and faithfulness are also part of what it means for there to be no place like home!

This month, we have one of my favorite days of the church year - World Communion Sunday - on October 1. We'll sing songs from many different parts of the world during our service, and share in the Lord's Supper with siblings around the globe.

Also in October will be the return of our Worship Ensemble for our first Emerging Worship service since May. Guitar, bass, percussion, keyboard, and vocals will enhance our time of proclaiming God's Word. If you're part of the ensemble, I look forward to seeing you at 9:30 on the morning of October 15 in the sanctuary.

Rounding out the month will be the Treble Choral Festival. Several years ago, we hosted this festival, bringing in several Soprano-Alto/Treble/Women's choirs from area high schools, colleges, and community choirs. The festival returns this year with the community choir Belle Voci sponsoring it. More details are in a separate article, but all are welcome to the performance the afternoon of October 29.

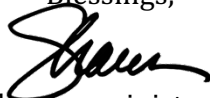
Due to the timing of the newsletter when all of my "home" events were taking place, I missed writing an article for last month and as a result didn't get to thank everyone who was able to come and hear our Summer Singers performance. We had over 100 singers performing for nearly 200 audience members on the evening of August 12. Thanks to Session for approving the use of the sanctuary, WPSD for letting us use both of their parking lots, Vocal Confluence for letting us use their choral risers, Judy & Rob for making sure the sanctuary was clean and comfortable for the audience, and any of you who were able to attend.

A personal commercial for those interested: Voces Solis, the parent organization that runs Summer Singers, is the chamber choir I regularly perform in. Our next concert takes place on October 7-8, and is titled "To Paradise," featuring ethereal music evocative of the night sky and the endless possibility of what lies beyond. Saturday night will be held in the prayer garden at Christ United Methodist Church in Bethel Park at 7:00pm. Sunday afternoon is at Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church at 4:30pm.

Finally, looking ahead to our holiday season at FPCE, we'll be hosting concerts of the Edgewood Symphony Orchestra, Vocal Confluence, and Steranka Flute Studio. I have also tentatively lined up members of the EastShore Chorale and Vocal Confluence to provide some music at Edgewood Light Up Night on December 2.

We might not be somewhere over the rainbow, but with all that we have going on in our little community church, I hope folks think about FPCE when they say "there's no place like home!" I sure know I do.

Blessings,



Shaun Cloonan, minister of music

WH Foundation Trunk or Treat

It's BA-AACK! And better than ever! Once again, H.U.G.S. — the volunteer and community outreach arm of the Woodland Hills Foundation — is proud to announce the RETURN of Trunk or Treat! On Saturday,



October 14th at Woodland Hills High School, Woodland Hills teachers, staff, parents, community groups, businesses and more will come together to create lasting fun and memories for our students!

Groups will come together in our school's parking lot, deck out their trunks with Halloween decorations in the theme of their choice, dress up in their most Spooktacular costumes, and hand out treats to our students as they travel from car to car, collecting candy at each stop.

During our last Trunk or Treat in 2022, over 80 groups signed up to serve as "Trunk Hosts", making ours one of the biggest, safest, most fun Trunk or Treats in our region. In fact, over 2,000 children and their guardians were in attendance and we're anticipating even more in 2023.

FPCE will participate this year by hosting a Mr. Rogers-themed car, and we need CANDY DONATIONS! There is a box at the side entrance to the church for you to drop off bags of candy. We're expected to have enough to distribute to over 800 kids, so the next time you're out at the store, grab an extra bag or 2 of candy to help us fill our trunk! No homemade treats are being accepted.

Session Notes

At the September 2023 Session meeting, the following items were approved:

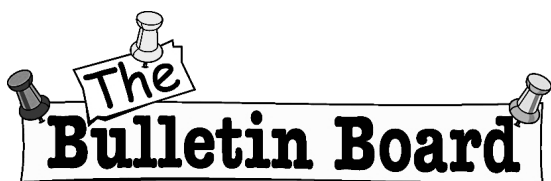
- A letter of transfer for Nancy Cunningham to Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church
- The use of the Sanctuary on November 4, 1-4PM for the Edgewood Foundation's Art Show
- Liz Held be Charter Organization Representative (in perpetuity) to vote on the scout council.
- The Memorial Service Policy



WCM Help Needed October 7

Wilkinsburg Community Ministry needs volunteers on Saturday October 7 from 9-1AM for a morning of deep cleaning. We'll provide gloves and cleaning supplies in addition to coffee. Please let us know you are coming by calling or emailing the office: 412-241-8072 / melissa@wcm15221.org. Any questions can also be directed to Melissa.

Sarah Steranka, our resident flute teacher, is currently accepting new students for the 2023-2024 school year! Lessons are offered at First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood on weekdays from 2:00-6:30. Email Sarah directly to ask about a FREE trial lesson! sterankaflutestudio@gmail.com



Sharing the Joys & Concerns of the FPCE Family

- Many thanks to Ruth Miller and Rhonda Apossos in organizing the Anniversary Luncheon on Sept. 10.
- Kudos to Jim Segedy and crew for another successful Community Dinner on Sept. 5.
- Thank you to Pastor Jason, Tyler McGuigan and Judy Mysels who represented FPCE at the Edgewood Foundation's Newcomer's Reception for new residents of the borough.

A Letter to Pittsburgh Presbytery from Rev. Brian Wallace
Associate Minister for Emerging Ministries & Acting Head of Staff
Thursday, September 21, 2023



A Shared Vision that Unites Us?

Dear Friends-

When we first received the results of the Landscape study, I knew to pay special attention to the “drivers of satisfaction.” In the realm of Holy Cow Consulting’s assessment, drivers of satisfaction are those areas where, if improvements can be made, overall satisfaction will increase. At the congregational level, its things like “A friendly atmosphere prevails among the members of our church” or “Persons who serve as leaders in our church are representative of the membership.” The drivers of satisfaction aren’t a statement of how true something currently is, but rather what is most important to those currently involved in the life of a congregation or Presbytery. When I opened the Landscape report and came to that section, I was struck by the #1 driver of satisfaction: “Our Presbytery leadership has done a good job of developing a shared vision that unites us.”

I’ll admit, I rolled my eyes a bit. In theory, I like things like mission statements and vision statements. But it seems to me so often, a lot of work gets put into developing a mission and vision statement, and then the statements just end up getting entered into the minutes and never really utilized again. Plus, and here’s my confession: when we started this leadership transition, I *may* have said out loud, “We’re not going to waste our time writing statements that aren’t going to make a difference, and no one will ever read.” Plus, and here’s another confession: the phrase “unites us” felt like a gut punch. Is there anything that unites our 120+ congregations, 300 ministers, and over 20000 members? Needless to say, I kept looking down the list at the next drivers, hoping to find something that was more practical and felt more doable.

With that as a background, it may surprise you to find out that last Tuesday, after a six-month process, the Executive Committee approved new purpose and strategy statements for Pittsburgh Presbytery. And here they are: *Pittsburgh Presbytery is a covenant community of Jesus Christ that exists to assist and support the witness of our congregations and members as we actively participate in the mission of the Triune God in the world.*

To accomplish this, Pittsburgh Presbytery, through our commissions, staff, and ministry teams:

- *Gathers church leaders and connects them for shared ministry and mutual benefit.*
- *Resources them through grants and collaborative sharing.*
- *Advises and assists them through challenges and transitions.*
- *Cultivates an environment that encourages them to innovate and experiment with new forms of ministry.*
- *Equips and encourages them as they proclaim the good news of Christ in word and deed.*

One of the most important lessons I’ve learned about mission and vision statements is that they are indeed time-bound. An organization’s mission and vision can and should change over time as they respond to the world in which they are called. And so, one thing I want to be very clear on is that adopting these two new statements is in no way a judgment on the previous work done by the good and faithful people of our Presbytery in previous times and situations. In fact, astute observers will note that there are some similarities to our previous mission and vision statements and even some language that was carried over word for word. But you may also notice that there are some substantial and important differences as well.

This all leads me to my third confession of the day: As I guided the process that led to the development of these statements, I found myself getting excited and optimistic. While I don’t think these statements are some silver bullets that will unite us all into one happy family and turn our churches around overnight, I am optimistic that despite our differences, there’s quite a bit that unites the members and congregations of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

At our Presbytery meeting next week, as part of my report, I’ll be providing a more extensive background on the process by which these statements were discerned and developed. But that presentation will be somewhat time-limited (As much as I might enjoy it, an hour-and-a-half long report from me probably isn’t what most people are most looking forward to). And so, I’m excited to host an opportunity before the Presbytery meeting to get the full report, next Tuesday, September 26th at 4:00 pm via Zoom. At this time, I am going to cover the following:

- A brief look at the history of the Presbytery’s mission and vision.
- An explanation of why, for a host of reasons, we needed to update our mission and vision statements – and why the vocabulary has shifted to purpose and strategy.
- An overview of the process, including the information we gathered and the other individuals we talked to.
- An explanation of why certain elements are phrased the way they are and an initial take on how this may shift the work of the Presbyter moving forward.

I’ll also be sharing some information from my latest project. I’ve analyzed every congregation in our Presbytery that has completed Holy Cow Consulting’s CAT Scan in the last ten years and compared their results. The congregations range from urban to suburban/rural, our most theologically conservative to our most theologically progressive congregations,

and from our mid-size congregations up to some of our largest. All told, 13 congregations and 2100 survey are included in my analysis. And, I've discovered some really interesting things. Here are a few hints:

- Irrespective of size, location, or theological perspective, the items identified as the most important priorities for these congregations are very similar.
- An interest in socially minded causes is driven not by theology as much as geography.
- Despite significant theological differences (our congregations ranged from the 9th to the 96th percentile in theological perspective), the priorities identified by our congregations align closely with the historical emphases of the Reformed tradition.

I'll also provide some time at the end for question and answer. If you're interested in attending, [please RSVP here](#). If you're interested but unable to join next Tuesday, we'll be recording it and posting it on our website.

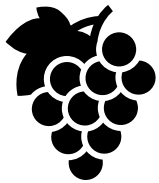
Last Tuesday, as I was sitting down preparing for the Executive Committee meeting, I sort of laughed to myself. If you want to make Jesus laugh, tell him your plans, or so the saying goes. So much for "We're not going to waste our time on statements," I thought, as I sat staring at the completed work in front of me. No, we didn't find a genie in a bottle that'll change all our fortunes. But what we found, or what I hope we found, are some spirit-inspired ideas that might help us focus on what is most important for our congregations and members in the season of ministry in which we find ourselves.

In Christ,

Brian Wallace

October 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 World Communion 9:30 Choir (S) 11:00 Worship (S) 12:00 Fellowship 12:00 Mission & Outreach Mtgs.	2 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:30 Scouts (SR) 7:00 VC (S)	3 10:00 Book Club 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 ESO (S)	4 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:00 Blessing of the Animals (SL)	5 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 MilePost6 (B) 7:00 SAA (L)	6 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 8:30 AA (SR)	7 9:00 WCM Clean-up (WCM) 8:00 AA (SR)
8 9:30 Choir (S) 11:00 Worship (S) 12:00 Fellowship Finance & Property Mtgs. 1:30 CROP Walk (SAUMC)	9 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:30 Scouts (SR) 7:00 VC (S)	10 10:00 Book Club 7:00 ESO (S)	11 7:30 Bible Study (zoom)	12 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 MilePost6 (B) 7:00 SAA (L)	13 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 8:30 AA (SR)	14 2:00 Trunk or Treat (WHHS) 7:30 ESO (JCC) 8:00 AA (SR)
15 9:30 Worship Ens. 11:00 Worship (S) 12:00 Fellowship 12:15 Worship & C.E. Comm. Mtgs.	16 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:30 Scouts (SR) 7:00 VC (S)	17 10:00 Book Club 7:00 ESO (S) 7:00 Session (L)	18 7:30 Bible Study (zoom)	19 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 Milepost6 (B) 7:00 SAA (L)	20 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 8:30 AA (SR)	21 8:00 AA (SR)
22 9:30 Choir (CR) 11:00 Worship (S) 12:00 Fellowship	23 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:30 Scouts (SR) 7:00 VC (S)	24 10:00 Book Club 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 ESO (S)	25 7:30 Bible Study (zoom)	26 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 Milepost6 (B) 7:00 SAA (L)	27 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 8:30 AA (SR)	28 8:00 AA (SR)
29 9:30 Choir (CR) 11:00 Worship (S) 12:00 Fellowship Deacon Mtg 1:00 Choral Fest. 3:00 Concert	30 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 6:30 Scouts (SR) 7:00 VC (S)	31 10:00 Book Club 2-6:30 Flute (CE) 7:00 ESO (S)	Locations: Book Club – Apossos Home AA – Social Room Vocal Confluence & ESO – Sanctuary Milepost6 – Basement Band Room Fellowship – Gathering Place Choir – Choir Room Flute Lessons – C.E. Office SAA, Session – Lounge Ensemble, Worship – Sanctuary Scouts – Scout or Social Room Bible Study – Zoom Pet Blessing – Side Lawn			



World Communion Sunday
October 1

Pet Blessing
October 4



CROP Walk
October 8