

Join us on Our Journey through Advent



Over the four Sundays of Advent, we will sing the simple hymn, *While We Are Waiting, Come*. It was written in 1986 and its chorus is nine little words: “Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.” It reminds us of important truths—that Jesus is our Lord and Redeemer, and that his name (Emmanuel) means “God with us.”

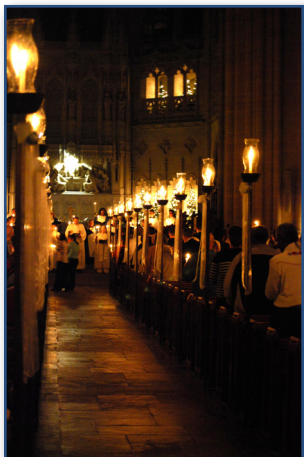
Therefore, as we live our lives and await a future shaped by God’s providential care, we also pray, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Come, be with us and bring your realm into our world so that we may truly

live in hope, peace, love, and joy. Those four categories will guide our worship each Sunday during Advent.

So join us for services, say a prayer as you light an Advent candle each week, and sing the simple melody to the song of this Advent season *While We Are Waiting, Come*.

Christmas Eve Services

One year ago, our Christmas Eve services were entirely online. This year, we continue to live into our hybrid worship model and will be offering our two traditional services on **Christmas Eve, Fri., Dec. 24**—both as in-person and livestream worship experiences.



Our Friends & Family service will be held at 5 pm, led by Pastor Heather, and will feature many of the families in our congregation. Our traditional Candlelight service will begin at 10 pm, preceded by 30 minutes of special prelude music, and will include The Brass Roots, soloists, and the Adult Choir—along with special readings and lighting of candles while we sing *Silent Night*. Both services also will include the sacrament of communion.

The good news of Christ’s birth is a highlight of the church year. Join us in-person or online as we re-tell the wonderfully familiar story, sing much beloved Christmas carols, and rejoice in our Savior’s birth anew this year!

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord’s Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Advent-ageous

Dec. 5* Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Dec. 12 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Dec. 19 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy

Dec. 26 No service

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Dec. 5* Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Dec. 12 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Dec. 19 Rev. Dr. Randy Bush

Dec. 26 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Taizé Prayer Service

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

The Perspective Pageant

Since the angels first announced that Mary would be the mother of God’s special son, the good news of Jesus’ birth has been told by countless voices in a wide range of expressions.

Through narration, scripture, costumes, song, and art, the children and youth of ELPC will lead us in a hybrid retelling of this joyful story at the center of our faith.

Some narrators and actors will be leading us “live” in the Sanctuary, while other actors will be joining us virtually. But, it doesn’t matter where we are—*ALL* will tell this important story. *YOU* can view this production in person at ELPC or watch the pageant on **Sun., Dec. 12**, 10 am, via Zoom. Contact Megan Leisher MeganL@coh.net for the Zoom link.



East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

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Pastoral Message

The Rev. Dr. Randall K. Bush, Pastor



Let's raise a toast to the "ordinary"! Having gone through months of what have been extraordinary events, there is something special about the plain ol' ordinary. Routines that don't change that much from day to day: Stretches and yoga exercises in the morning; a hot cup of coffee or tea in a favorite mug; a familiar bus ride or a trustworthy car (that really needs to be vacuumed someday) whose motor always turns over. A weekly phone call to a friend or family member; a football game on the weekend; a book waiting for us on the nightstand. Another day well-lived even if, from all appearances, nothing out of the ordinary happened.

The past months have stripped us of a sense of the routine and ordinary. That is why it is high time we reclaimed the mundane, the expected and comfortable as something meriting our grateful attention. There is no need to try and make the upcoming holiday season something "over the top." It's okay to have the month of December be fairly ordinary. Put up some decorations or a tree, if that's your habit. Shop a bit, wrap packages, have the occasional mug of cocoa or watch a Christmas movie. Give yourself permission to have an ordinary holiday season this year.

Don't forget—there was a lot that was ordinary that first Christmas long ago. The coming Messiah was born to a young woman after the manner of all births. The young family had limited funds and had to make do with whatever ordinary choices were at hand, such as a cattle shed and some straw in a manger. They relied on the hospitality of others. They had no finery or positions of power; for all intents and purposes, they were just an ordinary pilgrim family forced to come to Bethlehem for a bothersome government census. Yet in that ordinary series of events, there was something wonderful present.

And the season of Advent that precedes Christmas also reminds us to focus on the ordinary—for in simple things like lighting candles and offering our prayers to the God of both today and tomorrow, we discover how to live as people of hope, peace, joy and love. Advent reminds us that whatever unfolds as God's plans for us will break forth amidst the ordinary and mundane. Marilynne Robinson put this idea quite well: "That most moments were substantially the same did not detract at all from the possibility that the next moment might be utterly different. And so the ordinary demanded unblinking attention. Any tedious hour might be the last of its kind." (Housekeeping, p. 166)

May you give the coming Advent and Christmas seasons your "unblinking attention," especially in the ordinariness of the days ahead. For into this ordinary world, God's providential plans always unfold, Christ the Savior is born and lived and rose again, and the Holy Spirit still reveals new possibilities.

Randy Bush

Mission Matters

The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries



Upcoming Mission Opportunities with OHM

Join us for volunteer days with Open Hand Ministries on **Sat., Dec. 4**, and **Jan 8**. Experience great fellowship while serving (socially distanced) alongside others who are making a difference in our community by rehabbing houses into homes.

For more details or to RSVP, contact Cheryl Lowitzer at clowitz@openhandpittsburgh.org.

COP26 | What You Need to Know

The United Nations recently held its 2021 Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland. Here are some takeaways from the ELPC Environmental Team on the climate negotiations that were discussed.

- The COP26 summit made some positive progress, with commitments to curb methane emissions, end public financing for coal fired plants, end deforestation, and increase climate financing for developing countries.
- There is an expectation for greater private financial engagement. Climate action can—and will—make a difference.
- From 2010 to 2021, governments have put in place policies that will lower annual emissions by 15% in 2030, compared to what would have happened without these policies.
- Emissions continue to grow. Greater progress is needed, and strategies must be developed to overcome obstacles.
- As climate experts, U.N. officials, and our young people tell us, the world has to wake up to the scale of the disruption if CO2 emissions—mostly from burning fossil fuels—are not cut further.



In closing, here is a key finding from the **Emissions Gap Report 2021** published by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Climate action so far has been characterized by weak promises, not many yet delivered. The newly updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs), or pledges, under the Paris Agreement only take 7.5% off predicted 2030 emissions, compared to the previous round of commitments.

Reductions of 30% are needed to get on track to limit global warming to 2°C and 55% for 1.5°C.

Session News

At its recent meeting, the Session:

- Discussed and approved the 2022 Annual Budget;
- Heard updates from the Property, Worship, and Mission committees; and
- Continues to explore a joint service with Eastminster Presbyterian Church, likely to be held in January 2022.

Christmas Joy Offering

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wonders of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And every year, the story of God's incredible gift to us is told and interpreted by individuals whom God has called in various times and places. These incredible people sometimes find themselves in need.

The Christmas Joy Offering is received to support some of our leaders by providing financial assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need, supporting the development and education of future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges that are equipping communities of color for leadership roles in the church and world.

On **Sun., Dec. 18**, ELPC will receive the Christmas Joy Offering. The Mission Board invites you to give generously and continue to pray for our church leaders.



A gift opens doors.

—PROVERBS 10:16

Christian Education

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

Note: Adult classes meet in person and via Zoom on Sundays, 9:45 am.

Church School Class Notes

There will be no Church School classes on **Sun., Dec. 12, 26, or Jan. 2**. Classes for people of all ages will resume on **Sun., Jan. 9**.

Journey with Scripture

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."—Galatians 5:14

Our focus on the *P's and Q's of Scripture* continues with readings from the Psalms, the prophets, Paul's letters, and Q sayings (from the gospels of Luke and Matthew).

Dec. 5: Psalm 101; Amos 9:11–15; Luke (Q) 10:2–9 (Workers for the Harvest, Sheep among Wolves, No provisions, What to do in Houses and Towns); Galatians 5:2–12

Dec. 19: Psalm 39; Hosea 1:1–11; Luke (Q) 10:10–21 (Response to a Town's Rejection, Woes against Galilean Towns, Whoever Takes You In Takes Me In); Galatians 5:13–24

Parenting Circle

Facilitator: Trish Buben

December: The Sandbox Revolution

We will continue discussing *The Sandbox Revolution: Raising Kids for a Just World*. Written by parents who also are writers, pastors, teachers, organizers, artists, gardeners, and activists, this anthology offers diverse experiences on topics that include education, money, anti-racism, resistance, spirituality, disability justice, and Earth care."

Seekers

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

The Ethics in Context of Paul Tillich

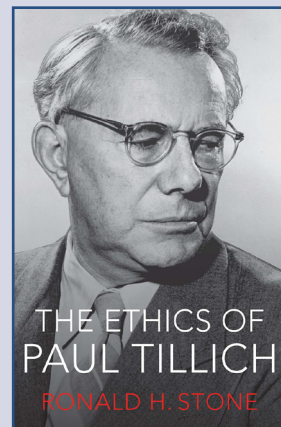
This month, ELPC Elder Ron Stone will continue and conclude our series based on his new book, *The Ethics of Paul Tillich*. Join us as we learn why Tillich's ethic is a model for how much Christian theology needs to rediscover its ethic and social relevance

Dec. 5: Mature Christian Ethics

We will discuss Paul Tillich's formula for mature Christian ethics—living in the void and Christian realism.

Dec. 19: Discussion on a Tillich Sermon and Q&A Session

We will discuss one of Tillich's sermons, titled *You are Accepted*. The sermon will be provided in advance. Class members also will be able to ask questions about this series.



Soul Food

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

Dec. 5: No Other Gods

We will discuss the Eighth Commandment with *No Other Gods: The Politics of the Ten Commandments*, by Ana Levy-Lyons. New participants are always welcome! For details, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at hajdu625@comcast.net.

Dec. 19: Advent and Christmas Reflections

Hope Academy Students Using Art to Inspire their Performances

If you visit the Carnegie Museum of Art, you may run into Hope Academy students, who are finding inspiration for their original monologues, dances, and songs.

This yearlong project is made possible through a program that gives teens (13–18 years old) free memberships to Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Science Center, and The Andy Warhol Museum.

To find out more about the new Carnegie Museum of Art Teen Membership program, visit CMOA.org.



Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education & Youth Ministry

Sun., Dec. 5: Christmas Shopping and Pizza 12–2:30 pm

Youth in grades 6–12 will meet at ELPC to do some online shopping for Christmas gifts for kids who are in foster care this holiday season. We also will be eating pizza. RSVP to Sara.

Sun., Dec. 19: Confirmation Class 12:30–3:30 pm

Our Confirmation Class will meet in the Second Floor Parlor to discuss *Discipleship: Worship and the Word of God*—how participation in worship and exploring scripture helps us follow Jesus. For more details, contact Pastor Heather.

Thurs., Dec. 23: Christmas Caroling 5–7 pm

Youth in grades 6–12 are welcome to join us for Christmas Caroling around the Highland Park neighborhood with the Young Adults. RSVP to Sara for details about where we will be meeting.

club one sixteen

Note: We will not meet on Wed., Dec. 22, Dec. 29, or Jan. 5.

Youth in grades 6–12 are welcome to join us each Wednesday, 4:30–6:30 pm. Our theme for the year is **inside out**. Through Bible study, art, recreation, and discussion, we're exploring all the ways in which God shows up when our world is turned **inside out**. Register online or at the church. Masks are required.

Guatemalan Project Remembered



You are invited to view a small display of photographs and read an overview of the Sister Parish Program, which ELPC sponsored from 1992–2004. It is located on the bookshelf in the Garth Overlook Room.

At that time, civil war had occurred in Central America and it was advantageous for small communities there to have international friends...hence "Sister Parish" partnerships.

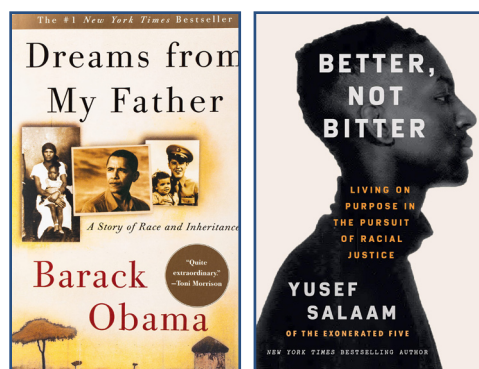
Five different delegations of ELPC members traveled to San Francisco El Alto, Guatemala, to spend a few days sharing the lives of people in the small, Catholic community. In return three delegations from the village came to Pittsburgh to visit with us. As Christians, we all shared our lives and our faith with one another.

This program started under the Rev. Dr. Robert Chesnut, ELPC pastor emeritus, with strong leadership from his wife Jan Chesnut. The display was assembled to honor a mission relationship that some current ELPC members vividly remember and cherish.

New Books to Read

Please check out the new books donated to our church library by the Rev. Cynthia and the Rev. Dr. Jared Jackson in memory of beloved Judge Justin Johnson. Titles include *Dreams from my Father* by Barack Obama (adapted for young adults) and *Better, not Bitter* by Yusef Salaam, as well as a number of picture books, including *My Voice is a Trumpet*, *The ABCs of Black History*, *Islandborn*, *Peace, If Dominican Were a Color*, *Dancing Hands*, and *Change Sings*.

The books can be found in the Garth Overlook Room and in the Kid's Corners in the Sanctuary and Social Hall.



Shop for Gifts with Ten Thousand Villages

Join us for a fundraising sale in partnership with Ten Thousand Villages. Browse this year's catalog online at [Ten-Thousand-Villages-Pittsburgh-Square.Site](https://www.ten-thousand-villages-pittsburgh-square.site).

There will be an in-person shopping event at ELPC on **Sun., Dec. 12**.



Church Tours Resume

Join us following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Dec. 12** or **26**, for a tour of ELPC's Gothic Sanctuary and Romanesque Chapel. The tours will highlight church history, architectural contrasts, as well as explore the Narthex, Trinity Chapel, and Chancel. Meet at the Highland Lobby following worship.

Taizé Meditations Now Available

By the Rev. BJ Woodworth

Since I arrived at ELPC, I have heard so many people say, "I used to come to Taizé." And they continue with beautiful descriptions of how Taizé provided for them, "rest, quiet and stillness, centeredness, a place to simply be, connection with God," and on and on.

I am humbled and grateful to collaborate with our amazing musicians (Jennifer, Billy, Brother James, Kathy, Charlie, Gerard, and Chris), as well as Katelyn Winters, Wayne Gaines, and Kay Shissler to create a beautiful, hospitable, open, and prayerful space every week!

As a way to share that gift, we are now offering a weekly Taizé Meditation. This 15-minute slice of Taizé is aimed at creating a similar space for you amid your day. It includes a brief time of centering, music, a meditation, and a closing prayer. So, whether you are on a walk, in your car, eating lunch, unloading the dishwasher, folding laundry, walking your child, or lying down to bed, we hope it will help create space for you to rest and connect with God and the depths of your own soul.

Links to download or listen to the recordings can be found online at ELPC.church or in the *This Week in Worship* email news flash each Friday.

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: What My Grandmothers Taught Me
Mon., Dec. 6 7–8:30 pm | **Tues., Dec. 7** 10 am–12 pm

The first two chapters of Ruth are an intimate woman's story. Naomi and her Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, are all widows, separated from their families. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi overcomes ethnic boundaries. Naomi even calls Ruth, "daughter." Ruth demonstrates hesed—the steadfast love of the Lord that never ceases—at work in ways that challenge us to explore how we might widen our circles to include those in need of loyal friendship.



Join us for our lesson, *Ruth and Loyal Love*. Both sessions will meet on Zoom. For more information, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

December Yoga & Centering Prayer

The ELPC Spiritual Life Committee is excited to offer Yoga and Centering Prayer on Mondays and Wednesdays, 8–9 am, with Katrina Woodworth. This month's readings before meditation are taken from *Honest Advent: Awakening to the Wonder of God-with-Us Then, Here, and Now* by Scott Erickson. The suggested donation is \$0-\$15. Register online at tiny.cc/yoga-and-prayer.

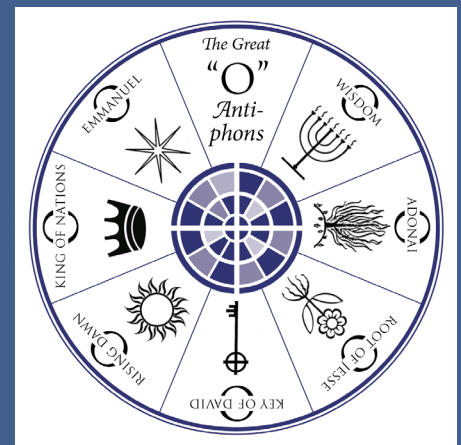
The "O Antiphons," an Ancient Tradition

Join us at our Taizé prayer service on **Wed., Dec. 22**, 7 pm, to prepare for the final days of Advent and the anticipation of Christmas. We will have a special Taizé service that combines scripture readings, singing of the "O Antiphons," and silence to welcome the Christ Child.

An antiphon is a prayer said or sung during worship, especially in connection with the Psalms and Canticles. The "O Antiphons" are so named because each prayer begins with "O."

While the author of the seven "O Antiphons" is anonymous, we know that they were being used by Christians by the ninth century. Traditionally, the seven "O Antiphons" are said or sung on each day from December 17–23. They are a magnificent theology that uses rich biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming of Christ. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

Please join us for this special service!



LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Sun., Dec. 19: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm

All LGBTQIA+ folks and allies are welcome to attend our LGBTQ Ministry's next Spiritual Gathering—in person or via Zoom. For more details, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x118.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.



Dear ELPC Employees,

It is very clear that your hearts are in your work. Your dedication to ELPC is highlighted by how you have navigated this past year—you have been creative, willingly uncomfortable, thoughtful and resilient. We are so appreciative of your perspectives and your willingness to challenge and support each other and the ELPC community.

We recognize that this year has not been easy. Thank you for being committed to the congregation and ELPC's mission. Thank you for continuing to show up through it all. You are one of the most essential pieces of the ELPC community, and we have unceasing appreciation for you and what you do.

With gratitude,

—ELPC Human Resources Committee

THANK
YOU

To the ELPC Community,

We encourage you to personally show your appreciation of any employee who has supported you in any way over the past year. The ELPC staff is the reason that we have been able to provide a healthy and supportive space during this time. We are thankful for the 2021 return of programming and hope that the congregation joins us in communicating our gratitude.

ELPC People

If you have news to share, contact Megan Leisher at MeganL@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x122.

Good News

Congratulations to Pastor Patrice who received the *Bridge Builder* award at the 2021 YWCA Greater Pittsburgh Equity Awards in November.



Thanks

- On Stewardship Sunday, Nov. 7, We collected and donated **750 pounds** of non-perishable food to East End Cooperative Ministry to feed our food insecure neighbors. Your contributions helped us tangibly embody being a Matthew 25 congregation. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity!
—ELPC Neighbors Committee
- The ELPC Board of Deacons, through their annual holiday assistance budget and ELPC members' generosity, provided gift cards to **79 families** to assist with their Thanksgiving meal. Also, one family received assistance to purchase a kitchen appliance through the ELPC Mission Ministry.
Thank you, ELPC, for giving and caring for our neighbors.

Prayers

We offer our prayers and condolences to the family and friends of those who recently passed away:

- Judge Justin M. Johnson
- Nancy Leshner, who had two of her daughters pass away this year
- Karen Fraser's brother, Bob

“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.”

ELPC Building Updates

The ELPC building will be closed for **Christmas on Sat., Dec. 25,** and **Mon., Dec. 27.**

Hanging of the Greens

The ELPC Worship, Music, and the Arts Committee invites you to help decorate ELPC for the season of Advent and Christmas following Sanctuary worship on **Sun., Dec. 5.**

Blue Christmas Service

On **Sat., Dec. 18,** 6 pm, the ELPC Deacons invite you to set aside the decorations and other holiday trappings, to join us for a special Taizé service to acknowledge the pain and struggle that can come alongside the season’s joy. This year’s Blue Christmas service will include candlelight, chants, thoughtful readings, and meditative silence—a time to look past the darkness of winter and toward the promise of Christmas, comfort, and hope.



If you’re unable to join us in person, the service also will be livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook.

Christmas in East Liberty

Cathedral Concerts return with *Christmas in East Liberty*, on **Fri., Dec. 17,** 7:30 pm. This highly anticipated concert and East Liberty tradition will feature The Brass Roots and conductor Daniel Curtis, the ELPC Chancel Choir and conductor Dr. Edward Alan Moore, and organist Ethan LaPlaca. Hear holiday favorites and the premiere of two newly commissioned pieces: *Carol Fantasia* by Mary Beth Bennett and *Spiritual Suite* by Marcus Grant.



Photo © Kevin King

Join us in the Sanctuary or virtually on YouTube or Facebook. The concert is *free* for all to enjoy, but a freewill offering will be accepted.

If you’d like to sing in the choir, email Dr. Ed at EdM@coh.net.