



Christmas Eve Services

The season of Advent and Christmas is a time of joy and celebration. And this year, we are thankful to be able to celebrate the good news of Christ's birth together. Join us in person or virtually for our Christmas Eve services on **Sat., Dec. 24**:

- **Friends & Family Service | 4 pm**
Led by Pastor Heather
- **Candlelight Service | 10 pm**
Led by Pastor Patrice

Join Us for Our Christmas Pageant: Back to Go Forward

During the Christmas season, we hold together a past story of God's love incarnate with the present moment of our day—and our call to follow the Prince of Peace. Even in scripture, the message of Jesus' birth invites us to do some "time traveling"—through the words of many prophets, the anointing of an unlikely king, a family tree filled with surprising characters, the appearance of angels, and a long journey to Bethlehem.



On **Sun., Dec. 18**, 10 am, kids of all ages will guide us in a re-telling of this special story that transcends time and space, so that we might see that the babe born in a Bethlehem manger is also God-with-Us, too. Once more, our script has been written by the Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt.

Pageant rehearsal will be held on **Sat., Dec. 17**, 9:30–11 am. Children should arrive between 9:30–10 am, and go to their Church School classrooms to put on their costumes. Middle school youth should arrive at 9:30 am, and report to the Sanctuary to practice their speaking parts.

All participants should arrive by 9:30 am, on Sun., Dec. 18, to get costumes on and prepare for the pageant.

Sunday Services

**Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

Journey Worship | 8:45 am

Theme: Wait for it

Dec. 4* Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
 Dec. 11 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
 Dec. 18 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
 Dec. 25 No service
 Jan. 1 No service

Sanctuary Worship | 11 am

Dec. 4* Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
 Dec. 11 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf
 Dec. 18 Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy
 Dec. 25 Rev. BJ Woodworth
 Jan. 1 Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Taizé Prayer Service

Prayerful Song & Quiet Meditation

Wednesdays | 7 pm

Rev. BJ Woodworth

Blue Christmas Service

The ELPC Deacons invite you to set aside the decorations and other holiday trappings, to join us for a special Taizé service on **Fri., Dec. 9**, 7 pm, to acknowledge the pain and struggle that can come alongside the season's joy.

Led by the Rev. Henk Bossers, this year's Blue Christmas service will offer a time to look past the darkness of winter and toward the promise of the holiday, and will include candlelight chants, thoughtful readings, and more.



East Liberty Presbyterian Church

info@coh.net | 412.441.3800

Staff Leadership

The Rev. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy

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The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf

Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries
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Pastoral Message

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



If you didn't already know, you may have suspected that I spent the first, almost 50 years of my life worshipping, being shaped by, and formed in Baptist theology and traditions. I absolutely loved—and continue to love—the vibrant, emotive, and spirit-filled worship in the Baptist church. I have fond memories of the Christmas seasons of my childhood and youth. Although we did not celebrate Advent, the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas were filled with preparing and waiting. There were Bible verses and Christmas pageant parts to memorize,

Christmas hymns to practice and perfect, and sermons were preached culminating on the Sunday before Christmas with a rousing and reassuring sermon on the miraculous birth of the Christ-child.

I also have fond memories of adults applauding after my Christmas recitation was flawlessly delivered (okay, sometimes there was coaching from my mom in the front pew); singing Christmas hymns and songs that I absolutely adore—"Silent Night", "O Holy Night," and "Go, Tell it on the Mountain"—and I loved, loved, loved receiving the bag of oranges, apples, nuts, and candy given to all the children (adults too) on Christmas Sunday. Those were the sweetest oranges and apples I have ever eaten! The preparation, waiting, simplicity, and complexities of my childhood Christmas memories envelop me like a warm, comfortable, and assuring blanket—even as I write this letter.

In *God is in the Manger*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The Advent season is a season of waiting, but our whole life is an Advent season, that is, a season of waiting for the last Advent, for the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth."

We are always in a state of waiting, for something personally, professionally, and as the body of Christ. Over the last three years, we waited to return to in-person worship and work; waited to gather for celebrations and to break bread with family and friends; waited to see peoples' faces, bright smiles, and expressions; and waited to feel "normal." And, as a community of faith, we are currently waiting for God to reveal our next senior pastor.

And as we wait, may we not be lulled into complacency or indifference. I am reminded by my childhood memories that waiting is not static, it is dynamic, energetic, and committed. There are a number of ways to actively prepare this Advent season: purchase a gift or two for a child on the Deacons' Giving Tree lists; attend the Blue Christmas service on **Fri., Dec. 9**, and a Cathedral Concert; download or pick up a copy of the Faith Formation Board's Advent Devotional; help a neighbor, friend, or a stranger; prepare a meal for a homebound member or friend; attend the children's Christmas Pageant on **Sun., Dec. 18**; support a third-world artisan by making a purchase at the Deacons' ELPC Ten Thousand Villages shopping days on **Sat. & Sun., Dec. 17 & 18**. And pray! Pray for our community of faith—our staff, leadership, and one another—and pray for our church ministries and community.

Bonhoeffer wrote, "The Advent season is a season of waiting, but our whole life is an Advent." I pray that we anticipate and await the Advent of the Christ child every day, actively, vibrantly, enthusiastically, not just in this season.

Advent blessings and love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy".

Mission Matters

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

Weekday Neighborhood Mission Opportunity with Open Hand Ministries



Wednesday house rehab workdays are back at OHM! Do you or someone you know have free time during the day on Wednesdays? Do you have work from home flexibility that you would love to augment with the chance to dig into some weekly manual labor? Are you and/or some of your friends retired?

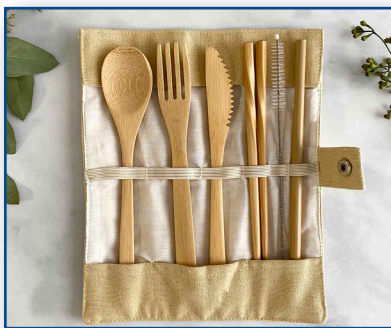
Then we would love to get to know you better, working alongside you at our weekly Wednesday workdays! Anyone is welcome on Wednesdays, 9 am–3 pm. Pizza or salads are provided for lunch.

For more information contact Tim Raufer, director of OHM Construction Services, **412.999.4267** or traufer@openhandpittsburgh.org.

Mindfulness and the Environment

We probably all agree that the practice of mindfulness—of paying attention to everyday details and actions, and looking more deeply and lovingly at the world around us—is a good thing.

Mindfulness and Earth Care have many intersections. Maybe it is a small act of saving leftover food, so that this precious resource that many hands worked on is not wasted. Or resisting buying something we do not really need, because our Earth does only have limited capacity to support us. In your mind's eye, you can try to imagine a pile of disposable plastic utensils, plates, table clothes, etc.—used once and discarded over the years.



How big is that pile for you? What are the unpaid costs of producing that plastic, of polluting our water and air?

As a small act of mindfulness and Earth Care, we could switch to reusable items instead of disposable. For example, substitute disposable utensils with a neat and light bamboo set that is handy in the car, purse, or backpack to use anytime. They make lovely Christmas presents, too!

For more examples of these products, please visit TheSisterCollective.com or EarthHero.com. Similar products also can be found at Whole Foods, Fresh Thyme, and East End Food Co-op.

For more information or to ask questions, contact the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee.

Session News

At the November meeting of Session, ELPC Elders:

- Heard a report and recommendation of the Reparations Ministry Team, to be voted on at their next meeting;
- Acted to approve the baptisms of two infants, the Communion dates for 2023, and to apply for the Employment Retention Credit Program; and
- Heard a report from the Budget and Stewardship Committee and Mission Board.

Ten Thousand Villages Shopping

Help support the ELPC Deacons' holiday outreach ministries by shopping at Ten Thousand Villages on **Sat. Dec. 17**, 11 am–2 pm, and **Sun., Dec. 18**, 12:15–2 pm. You can come to ELPC to shop, or go online to purchase items.

Contact Dave Cowan at DavidACowan@gmail.com or Pastor Patrice at PatriceFS@coh.net or **412.441.3800 x230**.



Christian Education

Note: Classes meet on Sundays, 9:45am.

The Rev. Heather Schoenewolf, Associate Pastor for Educational Ministries

Children and Youth

ELPC offers Church School classes for kids and youth from pre-K–grade 12. Class locations are listed below.

- Pre-K | Nursery
- K–Grade 3 | Room 206
- Grades 4–6 | Room 211
- Grades 7–12 | Second Floor Parlor

Journey with Scripture | Fellowship Room

Facilitators: Lora Bethea and Jan Lyle Irvin

*How long, O God? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?*

*How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?*—Psalm 13:1–2

In our Journey with Scripture class, participants read and reflect upon three scriptures that span across the Bible. Yet, in a sense, it is God who reads us through the scriptures. This month, we continue reading from Book 1 of the Psalms and the gospel of Mark, as well as begin reading from the Song of Songs for Advent. All these texts offer transformative paths to steadfast love, faithfulness, and justice. Come join the journey!

Dec. 4: Psalm 12; Song of Songs 1:7–2:7; Mark 6:1–6a

Dec. 11: Psalm 13; Song of Songs 2:8–17; Mark 6:6b–29

Parenting Circle | Room 213

Facilitator: Trish Buben

December: Atlas of the Heart Discussion

This year, we're reading *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience* by Brené Brown. In this *New York Times* bestseller, Brown writes, "If we want to find the way back to ourselves and one another, we need language and the grounded confidence to both tell our stories and be stewards of the stories that we hear. This is the framework for meaningful connection."

Anyone involved in parenting is welcome to join us.

Seekers | Garth Overlook Room

Facilitator: Gwen Puza | gpuza9@gmail.com

Dec. 4 & 11: The Birth of Christ Then and Now

We know the story of Jesus' birth, but the incarnation is about more than just his birth. The Bible tells us that Christ was a presence even before his life on Earth, and that he remains a presence now. The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish will lead us in person as we explore the incarnation and what it means for the world, for us, and for daily life.

Dec. 4: We'll explore the idea that Christ is incarnate in Jesus, the world, and us.

Dec. 11: We'll explore how to nurture an incarnational spirituality.

The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish is executive director of Samaritan Counseling, Guidance, Consulting based in Sewickley. He is the author of eight books on spirituality and congregational transformation, an adjunct professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a spiritual director and clergy coach, and for 22 years was pastor of an innovative church that pioneered in a spiritual approach to church.

Soul Food | Good Samaritan Room

Facilitators: Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

December: Fierce Love Review and Advent Reflections

Join our class this month! New participants are welcome! For more information, contact the Rev. Joe Hajdu at hajdu625@comcast.net.

Dec. 4: We will have a review discussion on our book, *Fierce Love*, by the Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, and preview our next book, *Made for Goodness*, by Desmond Tutu and his daughter Mpho.

Dec. 11: We will reflect on Advent and Christmas using narratives from all four gospels.

Church School Winter Break

There will be no Church School classes on **Sun., Dec. 18, 25, or Jan. 1**, so that we all may enjoy the Christmas Pageant and holiday season.

Children & Youth Ministry

Sara Hackett, Coordinator of Christian Education & Youth Ministry



Sun., Dec. 4: Middle School Target Shopping
Youth in grades 6–8 will be practicing for our Christmas Pageant during Church School.

Then after worship, we'll meet for lunch in the Harambe Room, 12:15 pm, before walking over to Target to do some gift shopping for kids in our neighborhood.

Sun., Dec. 4: Tween Gift Making Sunday 4–6 pm

Youth in grades 4–6 are invited to enjoy pizza and make Christmas Gifts for family and friends (there are some folks from church who would LOVE to get a homemade gift too). If they are working on a sewing, jewelry, or art project they are welcome to bring that with them, but there will be a variety of craft supplies and projects here too. Friends are welcome! Please RSVP to Sara Hackett at SaraH@coh.net.

Fri.–Sun., Dec. 9–11: Winter Retreat at Crestfield Camp

Youth in grades 6–12 are going on retreat to Crestfield Camp in Slippery Rock to find out what's NEXT! Two separate tracks—one for middle schoolers (led by Ed Sutter) and one for high school students (led by Mike Haddox)—will explore questions related to our spiritual journey and the steps we are taking towards our future. Register at ELPC.church. The retreat costs \$115; scholarships are available.

Young Adult Ministry

Derail Holcomb, Coordinator of Young Adult Ministries

We have so much to be thankful for this year. God continues to see our church and this ministry through the liminal space we find ourselves in. While here, let us continue to do God's work within the community.

Sun., Dec. 4: Walking Football 12:15 pm

During December, the YAMs will participate in walking football. Join us in the ELPC Gym and engage in community with us! Pizza and wings will be provided.



Thurs., Dec. 8: Progressive Dinner 6 pm

All YAMs are welcome to join us for a progressive dinner. We'll have dinner at the church and then use the church van to drive to homes of several different volunteers. We'll have conversations centered on intergenerational discussions. And we'll answer questions related to: The Prophets' Candle (What is God waiting for?), symbolizing hope (What are we hopeful for with the season of Advent?); the Bethlehem Candle (What does Christ coming really mean to us?), symbolizing faith. Virtual options will be available.

Reach out to DerailH@coh.net if you have any questions.

club one sixteen

Note: We will not meet on **Wed., Dec. 21** or **28**.

Kids in grade 1–12 are invited to **club one sixteen**, ELPC's mid-week program for youth. We gather each Wednesday, 4:30–6:30 pm, for Bible Study, recreation, relaxation, and dinner together.

Wanted: Elder and Deacon Nominations

ELPC is looking for servant-leaders who can guide our congregation into our next era of ministry!

The Officer Nominating Committee needs your suggestions to identify a diverse set of candidates for Elder, Deacon, and Centennial Fund, as well as the next Nominating Committee. We are looking to assemble a leadership slate that encompasses a wide mix of talents and perspectives, ensuring continued leadership, renewal, and growth for our congregation.

We also want to ensure our committees are composed of both new and long-time members—balancing experience with fresh ideas and energy.

Please prayerfully consider whether you or someone you know can contribute to the leadership of our congregation. Officers will be elected at the Congregational Meeting in February, with terms beginning in May 2023.

Submit names to Nominating Committee Co-chairs Andrea DeVries at andrea.devries74@gmail.com and Jill Millard at millardjill@yahoo.com by **Tues., Dec. 13**.

Make Connections at Phipps Conservatory

The ELPC Connections Group will be visiting Phipps' *Holiday Magic! Winter Flower Show and Light Garden* on **Sat., Jan. 7**, 3:30 pm. After walking through the exhibit, we will go to a nearby restaurant to eat and talk.

Please buy your ticket in advance and gather at the front entrance at 3:30 pm. Tickets can be purchased online starting **Mon, Dec. 12**. The cost is \$24 for adults, \$14 for children, \$22 for seniors and students, and free if you are a member. We have a few free tickets available for those who would like one.

RSVP to connectelpc@gmail.com.



Attend the Holiday Open House at the Cathedral of Learning

The Nationality Rooms and Intercultural Exchange Programs 31st Holiday Open House will return on **Sun., Dec. 4**, 12–4 pm, in the Cathedral of Learning Commons, as well as in the Nationality and Heritage Rooms, at the University of Pittsburgh.

The event is free and open to the public. There will be music and dance performances from various nationalities, and food and gift items will be available for purchase. The Commons area and all of the Nationality Rooms will be decorated for the holiday!

Presbyterian Women

PW Bible Study: Sabbath and Surrender

Mon., Dec. 5 7–8:30 pm (Zoom only)

Tues., Dec. 6 10 am–12 pm (Hybrid)

For those of us who feel like we never have enough, the “manna” story (Exodus 16) is a perfect parable. The story emphasizes to only gather as much as we need for one day and to not gather on the Sabbath. The manna story is a call to trust God to provide for our needs and to surrender our unhealthy striving for more wealth, more stuff, and more success. It is a call to recognize when it is time to say “Enough.”

The Tuesday Bible Study at ELPC will be followed by a brown bag lunch.

For more information and the Zoom link, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.



Spiritual Life

The Rev. BJ Woodworth, Director of Spiritual Life Ministries

Intentionally Waiting in Advent

As we enter this season of Advent and await the celebration of Jesus' birth—and as the days get darker and colder, and we await the first day of winter—and as we stand amidst the season of transitional waiting at ELPC, what are you waiting for, hoping for, longing for in your life and in our world?

Whatever it is you are waiting for, we want to encourage you to enter this liminal and threshold space purposefully and expectant. We invite you to enter this season with Zachariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, and all of creation to what Richard Rohr calls, “*God's waiting room, where we are taught openness and patience as we come to expect an appointment with the divine Doctor.*”

The Spiritual Life Committee invites you to take advantage of our opportunities in the season of Advent, to be present to your hopes and longings, be still with God and your siblings quietly expectant with all you are waiting for during Advent.

■ **Contemplative Prayer | Mondays, 7:30 am** (on Zoom)

Begin your week in community with others, meditating and reflecting on various Advent passages of scripture, poems, and reflections.

■ **Cathedral Yoga | Wednesdays, 6 pm**

Take a mid-week pause to be present to all you're holding in your body and join Yamuna Morgenstern for a time of gentle yoga.

■ **Taizé: Sung Prayer and Quiet Meditation | Wednesdays, 7 pm**

In the middle of your week, join us for a time of prayerful song and quiet meditation, as we dwell in Mary's Magnificat (also called Canticle of Mary or Ode of the Theotokos) from Luke 1, all four weeks of Advent.

Let's join together this Advent in our waiting and may we find the strength, courage, and hope to be in the waiting of this season, “as one awaits the birth of a child or as one awaits the fulfillment of their destiny” (Psalm 130:5).



LGBTQ Ministry

Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQ Ministry

Sun., Dec. 11: Spiritual Gathering 12:30 pm
All allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike are invited to our next monthly spiritual gathering.

To ask questions or RSVP, contact Wil Forrest at Wil@coh.net or 412.441.3800 x218.

God Created You. God Loves You. Be Yourself.

Holiday Greetings & Gay Happy Meetings: Renaissance City Choir's 2022 Holiday Concert

Renaissance City Choir (RCC), Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ chorus, is thrilled to invite you to their first in-person holiday concert since 2019: *Holiday Greetings & Gay Happy Meetings*.

Join RCC's 100-voice choir in the ELPC Sanctuary on **Sat., Dec. 3**, 7:30 pm. In addition to fun holiday favorites with RCC's signature twist, we'll be joined by special guests Vocal Confluence, Pittsburgh's all-voice barbershop chorus.

Tickets are \$25 (\$10 for students) and are available at rccpittsburgh.com. Can't be there in person? Livestream tickets also are available, so you can join in the joy from the comfort of home!

Masks are required. A sign language interpreter is provided. Please contact accessibility@rccpittsburgh.com with any access concerns.

PITTSBURGH'S LGBTQIA+ CHORUS PRESENTS

RENAISSANCE CITY CHOIR

HOLIDAY GREETINGS & Gay Happy Meetings

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3 @ 7:30PM

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS VOCAL CONFLUENCE

EAST LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
TICKETS: WWW.RCCPITTSBURGH.COM

LIVE STREAM PRESENTED BY LAW OFFICES OF KATHLEEN D. SCHNEIDER Attorney at Law

ROAD works here. A ALLEGHENY COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL Arts lead and clear pennsylvania COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

RENAISSANCE CITY CHOIR AFFIRMS AND CELEBRATES LGBTQIA+ IDENTITY THROUGH THE UNIFYING POWER OF MUSIC.

ELPC People

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

Good News

- Join us in celebrating the baptism of **Ruth Toro**, daughter of Catherine and George Toro
- Please welcome our new members
 - **Michelle & Randy Hebert**
 - **Rick & Teri Malmstrom**
 - **Emily Snoek**

Prayers

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

- Amy Bialek's aunt, Barbara Braidic
- Josh DiLuzio
- Cathleen Malmstrom's brother, Dwight Malmstrom
- Vivienne Selia's friend, Peg Wilson

Writing for Human Rights

Join Amnesty International Pittsburgh and many other inspiring Pittsburgh rights groups and community leaders for their annual Write-for-Rights event on **Thurs., Dec. 8**, 6:30 pm, at Calvary Episcopal Church.

During the event you can contribute to writing letters on important human rights cases of our time.

Stop in and stay as long as you can. Write letters. Talk to other activists. Check out information tables about local groups working in Pittsburgh on local, national, and international issues. There also will be a candle-lighting ceremony at about 7:15 pm.

Case information, letter writing materials, and light refreshments will be provided. Attendees are encouraged to wear face coverings.

Learn more at AmnestyPGH.org.

“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.”

Building Closures

ELPC will be closed on **Mon. & Tues., Dec. 26 & 27**, in observance of **Christmas**.

Advent Devotionals Now Available

During the season of Advent, the Faith Formation board invites you to prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth by engaging different spiritual practices of “waiting.”



When we wait with intention, as did our ancestors in faith, we can be more attentive to the presence of God in our midst and the call of God to that which is to come.

The Faith Formation Board has created an Advent Calendar for our church family, rich with opportunities to

actively engage persons of all ages in this practice of waiting. The calendar will point you toward ministries available at ELPC and invite you to practices you can honor at home.

Printed copies are available at the church, or you may download an electronic copy at ELPC.church.

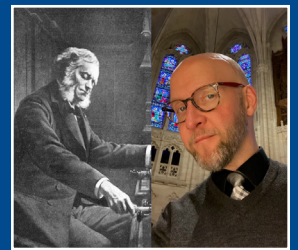
Music Notes for December

ELPC’s *Cathedral Concerts* series will present two concerts this month!

César Franck:

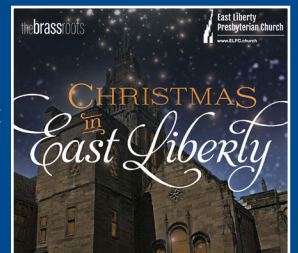
The Three Chorales

On **Sat., Dec. 10**, 4 pm, ELPC organist Dr. Edward Alan Moore will perform works by César Franck, commemorating the 200th anniversary of Franck’s birth.



Christmas in East Liberty

Join us for our holiday tradition! The Brass Roots, ELPC Chancel Choir, organist Dr. Edward Alan Moore, and conductor Daniel Nesta Curtis will be performing Christmas in East Liberty on **Fri., Dec. 16**, 7:30 pm.



The concerts are free, but freewill offerings will be received. Join us in the Sanctuary or live on YouTube or Facebook.

Contact Dr. Ed at EdM@coh.net for more details.