



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)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 24, 2023 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

Joy is when you suddenly discover that God exists in such a powerful way that you almost lose your own self-fascination.
— Walter Bruggemann

PRELUDE

HYMN #105

“People, Look East”

BESANÇON

HYMN #129

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

ES IST EIN' ROS'

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

The Rev. BJ Woodworth

* SHARING GOD'S PEACE

The Rev. Woodworth

Leader: La paz de Cristo esté con ustedes.

The peace of Christ be with you.

People: Y también contigo.

And also with you.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Hannah Moon and Kevin Lee

Leader: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars. By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them.

People: Today we light four candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens. We name this candle Hope. *(first candle is lit)* We name this candle Peace. *(second candle is lit)* We name this candle Joy. *(third candle is lit)* We name this candle Love. *(fourth candle is lit)*

Leader: We too are on a journey, and we do not always know the way. But we chart our path by the star of love. Even when sharp words rattle in our ears, and our hearts sit cold and numb, we set our face steadily towards the light.

People: Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of love this day, help us to become the signs of love that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of **the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven's love. Amen.**

* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #347

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

PICARDY



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

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CALL TO CONFESSION

Hannah Moon and Kevin Lee

Leader: Friends and siblings in Christ, we know that God loves us for God sent his Son to take on flesh, be precariously nurtured in the womb of Mary and their care amidst tumultuous times. God sees us, knows, and understands us. So let us take a moment in prayer together to be open and honest with a God whose mercy endures from generation to generation. We will first pray together, and then in silence.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Hannah Moon and Kevin Lee

Faithful God, we know that you are always there to guide us, yet we often make plans without listening to you and discover that our human agendas can drown out our ability to hear your will for us. We repent of these faults and turn to you in love. Forgive our offenses and pardon our sins, that our lives may magnify your holy name forever. Amen.

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Hannah Moon and Kevin Lee

Leader: Siblings, by the faith of Christ, our sins are forgiven. Blessed be the God of our salvation, whose mercy is everlasting. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel!

People: En Jesucristo tenemos perdón. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
¡Alaben a Dios! Praise God!

SUNG RESPONSE HYMN #92

"While We Are Waiting, Come"

WAITING

HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7

Kevin Lee

MOMENTS WITH OUR CHILDREN

Sara Hackett

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

There is no Extended Session offered this morning. The nursery is open for play to young children who are accompanied by their parents/caregivers during worship; the service is livestreamed into that space.

* HYMN #144

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

CRANHAM

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

The Rev. Woodworth

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 2:1-20

The Rev. Woodworth

SERMON

"Good News of GREAT Joy!"

The Rev. Woodworth

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Rev. Woodworth

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

OFFERING INVITATION

The Rev. Woodworth

We offer our gifts in response to God's love, and the grace of Jesus Christ, which we seek to make known through the ministries of this congregation.

You are invited to use the QR code to the right if you would like to make a donation in support of ELPC. A donation box is also available in the Sanctuary.



December 24 • 4th Sunday of Advent

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

OFFERTORY HYMN #109

“Blest Be the God of Israel”

MERLE’S TUNE

* HYMN AT THE PRESENTATION #143 (verse 4)

REGENT SQUARE

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory”

* PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & DEDICATION

The Rev. Woodworth
Kevin Moon

Leader:	El Señor esté con ustedes.	The Lord be with you.
People:	Y también contigo.	And also with you.
Leader:	Levantemos nuestros corazones.	Lift up your hearts.
People:	Lo tenemos levantado al Señor.	We lift them up to the Lord.
Leader:	Demos gracias al Señor nuestro Dios.	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People:	Es justo dar gracias y alabanzas a Dios.	It is right to give God thanks and praise.
Leader:	Holy God, your love is magnified in the gift of your Son, whom you so freely share with us. Bless these gifts that we offer to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry and your coming reign of justice and peace, in Christ name.	
People:	Amén.	Amen.

LITANY TO LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

The Rev. Woodworth

Leader:	Jesus said, “Put your trust in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. (<i>John 12:36, 46</i>)
People:	Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. For we were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Let us live as children of light. (<i>Romans 13:12; Eph. 5:8</i>)
Leader:	Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your God.” (<i>Matt. 5:14-16</i>)
People:	Let us spend ourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, that our light will rise in the darkness, and our night will become like the noonday. (<i>Isa. 58:10</i>)

* CLOSING HYMN #134

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

* CHARGE & BENEDICTION

The Rev. Woodworth

POSTLUDE

“Toccata on Antioch”

Craig Phillips
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*



As part of ELPC's mission to extend radical hospitality to all, our full worship service is now being livestreamed on Facebook and archived at www.ELPC.church.

This notice is to inform you that by being in attendance, you give permission for incidences where you appear within the video. Should you have any questions, please see one of our pastors.

Please silence all electronic devices before the service begins.

◆ PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Preaching: The Rev. BJ Woodworth
Liturgists: Sara Hackett
Kevin Lee
Hannah Moon
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore
Organist/Music Director
Members of the ELPC Chancel Choir
Beadle: Heather Eng
Crucifer: Mario Seneca
Sound: Tim Benedict
Wayne Gaines

◆ SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP

Coffee and water are available in the Balaka Room.

◆ WORSHIP FLOWERS

The poinsettia plants in the Sanctuary are in loving memory of the Honorable Andrew W. Mellon and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Beatty Mellon.

If you would like to sponsor flowers for our weekly worship service in honor or memory of a loved one, contact Frances Wilson (wilson.franr@gmail.com). The cost is \$200. *Our beautiful arrangements are provided by Bloom Brigade (www.bloombrigade.com).*

◆ SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:45 am.....No Journey Worship.
This service will resume on Jan 7, 2024.

11 am.....Sanctuary Worship. Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.
Dec 31 — The Rev. Henk Bossers preaching.

◆ 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

Note: No service will be held on Dec 27.

Prayer Room (*in Highland Ave hallway*)

Come to sit and pray in silence. Come to experience the quiet in the midst of the wonderful busyness.

Available everyday

◆ WEEKLY SPIRITUAL LIFE OFFERINGS

Contemplative Prayer

Rev. BJ Woodworth will lead a time on Zoom of 30 minutes of communal silence and guided meditation on scripture. We will meditate on the Psalms, using the translation *Psalms for Praying* by Nan C. Merrill.

Mondays, 7:30 to 8 am

Meeting ID: 959 8065 3992

Passcode: bestill

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*)

Note: No yoga will be held on Dec 27.

WELCOME VISITORS!

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

To learn more about our programs, church activities and volunteer services, we invite you to also:

Pick up a copy of our newsletter, the *Reaching Out*, either in the Narthex or at the Hospitality Desk near the Highland Avenue doors.

Attend an *Inquirers' Class* to learn more about ELPC, Presbyterian theology, and to explore membership. Please contact Megan Leisher for more info (MeganL@coh.net).

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

Christmas Eve Services

(in-person and online)



You are welcome to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child with us again at 4 pm and / or 10 pm on this very blessed Christmas Eve!

The Brass Roots will join us at 9:30 pm to play special music.

4 PM
Family Service

Pastor Heather

COMMUNION

10 PM
Candlelight

Pastor Patrice

COMMUNION

TODAY AT ELPC

Today's Deacons-On-Duty (DOD)

Every Sunday, a DOD (*Deacon-on-Duty*) is available to assist with any emergencies that may occur during our services. The *Sanctuary* service DOD is Jeff Fritz.



No Club One Sixteen — Dec 27

Kids and youth in grades 1–12 are invited to club one sixteen, which gathers each Wednesday from 4:30–7 pm for Bible Study, games, art, and dinner together. Please note they will not gather on Wednesday, Dec 27. For more info, contact Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net).

Church Tour — Dec 31

Tim VanFleet will guide a *Hidden Places* tour on Sunday, Dec 31. Please gather in the Highland Lobby after the 11 am service to participate. All are welcome!

PW Bible Study: Sacred Encounters — Jan 2 and 8

Please join Presbyterian Women for their Bible Study on Tuesday, Jan 2 from 10 am-Noon (hybrid), or on Monday, Jan 8 from 7-8:30 pm (Zoom only). Those attending Tuesday morning are invited to bring a bagged lunch and stay for fellowship after the lesson. For more info and the Zoom link, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

LGBTQIA+ Ministry Gathering — Jan 14

You are invited to the monthly spiritual gathering of ELPC's LGBTQIA+ Ministry at 12:30 pm on Sunday, Jan 14 to share conversation and lunch. Contact Wil Forrest, LGBTQIA+ Ministry Coordinator, to attend or for more info (Wil@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x218).

Adult Education Series — Begins Jan 28

All are welcome to the first-ever LGBTQIA+ Ministry-hosted Adult Education hour on three consecutive Sundays on Jan 28, Feb 4 and 11. The topic will be examining what the Bible does and does not have to say about homosexuality. This series will be led by our pastors and will be in the McKelvy Room.

Contemplative Prayer — Mondays

Please join Pastor BJ Woodworth on Zoom (Meeting ID: 959 8065 3992; Passcode: bestill) for Monday morning *Contemplative Prayer* from 7:30-8 am for 30 minutes of communal silence and guided meditation on scripture.

Meditation Hour — Tuesdays

The Spiritual Life Committee invites you to join John Benedict in the Chapel each Tuesday from 6-7 pm for an hour devoted to meditation. John is a retired psychologist and a long time student and practitioner of insight meditation. No experience necessary, and all are welcome!



No Taizé or
Cathedral Yoga

on
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27



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

David Carl, Rev. Dr. Bob Chesnut,
Doris Dick's sister-in-law Kerry, Karen Fraser,
Peta Harrigan-Cole's brother Tony, Pam Kimmel,
Sondra MacArtney, and Pepo Mazingi's son Emmanuel.

Condolences to Don Breitbarth on his father's passing.

Condolences to Rachelle Calfee on her granddaughter's passing.

Condolences to Gil Hickman on his brother's passing.

A Note of Gratitude....

My family and I wish to thank everyone who prayed and sent get well cards during my surgery and hospitalization. Being a part of this congregation carried me through some difficult times, and I cannot express my gratitude enough.

— Jeff Parsons



NO Committee Meetings This Week

The church building will be closed on Monday, Dec 25 and Tuesday, Dec 26 for the Christmas holiday.

For more info about how to join a meeting, please contact Megan Leisher (MeganL@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x222).



All Church Retreat

May 3 to 5, 2024

ELPC's All Church Retreat will be at Lutherlyn Camp (Prospect, PA). Whether you join us for the whole weekend or for Saturday only, we will have delicious meals, time to rest in creation, and intentional community building activities.

Workshops and worship will be intergenerational.

Registration and details will be available in February.

Contact Sara Hackett
(SaraH@coh.net)

Chapel Market

Hours and Donation Requests

The *Chapel Market* is now open on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 5-7 pm, in addition to being open every Thursday from 10 am—Noon.



The *Chapel Market* is in need of toiletry items, including bar soap, tooth brushes and paste, lotion, shampoo, toilet paper, etc., in addition to cold-weather clothing for men, woman and children.

Donations can be left at the Highland Lobby, or dropped off at the *Chapel Market* when open.

A Wintering Retreat — Feb 2 to 4

Join us for a time of rest and retreat, community and conversation and play and prayer from Feb 2-4 at Villa Maria Retreat Center. Lean into the simple, slow, and still rhythms of winter. The retreat schedule will flow naturally with morning, midday and evening prayers that gather us together and scatter us in time alone, inviting us into community and sending us into solitude, stillness, and silence.

Consider the gift and invitation of winter in the words of Katherine May: *Plants and animals don't fight the winter; they don't pretend it's not happening and attempt to carry on living the same lives that they lived in the summer. They prepare. They adapt. They perform extraordinary acts of metamorphosis to get them through. Winter is a time of withdrawing from the world, maximizing scant resources, carrying out acts of brutal efficiency and vanishing from sight; but that's where the transformation occurs. Winter is not the death of the life cycle, but its crucible.* (taken from *"Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times"*) RSVP to Norma by Jan 21 (412.441.3800 x211).

Cost options:

1. One Night (Fri-Sat or Sat-Sun) Shared Bath | \$70
2. One Night (Fri-Sat or Sat-Sun) Private Bath | \$110
3. Two Nights (Fri-Sun) Shared Bath | \$85
4. Two Nights (Fri-Sun) Private Bath | \$135

Visit us online at
www.ELPC.church

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

*There will be no Church School classes on
Sundays, Dec 24 or 31.*