



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)

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Joy

DECEMBER 15, 2024
11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP



Wilderness Blossom by Lauren Wright Pittman

TIME OF PREPARATION

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.

— Alan Watts

PRELUDE

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

Craig Phillips
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz

* 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.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Sally Jo Snyder

Leader: Shout for joy, all the earth and with gladness, let us worship the Lord.

People: God knows our frailness and vulnerabilities. God still chooses us.

Leader: Just as Joseph received good news in a dream, may we receive a holy message that redeems.

People: God knows our pain and our joy. God still chooses us.

Leader: Let every child of God prepare to receive and give thanks.

People: We give thanks. God still chooses us.

* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #88 (vs. 1-4)

VENI EMMANUEL

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

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 will go to Sunday School: Sacred Stories. Parents will pick up their kids after worship (age 4-3rd grade in Room 206; grades 4-6 in Room 207).
- Children age 3 and younger can play, sing songs and hear stories in the nursery from 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

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

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ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY

Vinod and Medhansh Reddy

Leader: Too often, we think joy is something big. A brass band or a parade can certainly bring us joy. We can also feel joy in a hug or the squeeze of hand. We can see joy in a smile or hear it in laughter. It can be found in the sun rising, rain falling, and a dog's tail wagging. May God help us to not overlook the simple joys that peak into our lives daily. This week in our Advent journey, open our eyes to the joy that surrounds us. Amen.

The pink candle is lit.

People: May this light remind us of the many sources of joy in our lives. May divine joy not only draw us closer to one another, but closer to God. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Snyder

Leader: It only takes a second to form an impression of a stranger. It only takes a second to look at someone and determine a stereotype about who they are. It is not hard to imagine why we might need to slow down, pause, and reflect. We reflect on the decisions that we've made this past week and ask for God's mercy to be in all of them. And without fail, God wiggles God's self into the cracks of our lives, and we are made better for it. Let us now turn to God in prayerful confession.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Snyder

Leader: God of mercy, a million times a day we have the opportunity to be gracious and assume the best in others.

People: Forgive us for forgetting that grace and mercy are in our spiritual DNA.

Leader: We could choose a better way, but so often we allow fears and insecurities to take the wheel.

People: Forgive us for allowing comparison and critique to guide us.

Leader: Through what we have done and what we have left undone, we have not shown love with our whole heart.

People: Give us the courage and the wisdom to choose a better way. Amen.

TIME OF SILENT PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE & FORGIVENESS

Rev. Snyder

Leader: Friends, no matter how many times we make mistakes or lose our way, God finds us and forgives.

People: En Jesucristo tenemos perdón.
¡Gracias a Dios!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God!

SUNG RESPONSE HYMN #91 (sing 3x) "Come, Come Emmanuel"

COME, COME EMMANUEL

READING

Words from Lauren Wright Pittman

Rev. Snyder

Have you ever looked through a kaleidoscope? A kaleidoscope doesn't expose your eye to anything that isn't there. It takes what is in view, and with light and mirrors, creates a new, dynamic, luminous image. The overlapping, novel perspectives, light, and movement transform mundane and even unappealing subjects into vibrantly dancing masterpieces. I think it's possible that when we face difficult seasons that seem unending, if we immerse ourselves in the light of the voices of prophets, move to a new vantage point, and try new perspectives, we just might be able to see the wilderness bloom. Please don't get me wrong; there are certainly seasons of disappointment, devastation, and grief in this life, but we need not make our homes there. *May God bless the hearing of these words. Amen.*

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS & FRIEND

Members: Peter Belechak, Carol Burgman, Jayme Burgman, Elizabeth Jeffries, Mark Jeffries

LuVenia Jones, Alex Payton, Marijayne Peer, Nathan Pope, Mary Schrott, Lashawn Watkins

Friend: Paulette Silver

Dec 15 • Third Sunday of Advent

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

* HYMN (see insert)

“A Better Way”

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 1:18-25

Rev. Dr. Diaz

SERMON

“We can Choose a Better Way”

Rev. Dr. Diaz

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THE LORD’S PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy

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

Rev. Dr. Fowler-Searcy

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.



OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“Love Has Come”

French Carol
text from Glory to God hymnal #110

* DOXOLOGY AT THE PRESENTATION #607

OLD HUNDREDTH



Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Christ, all creatures here below;
praise Ho-ly Spir-it ev-er-more; praise Tri-une God, whom we a-dore. A-men.

* PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & DEDICATION

Rev. Dr. Diaz
Rev. Dr. Fowler-Searcy

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 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: God of all goodness, fill us with gratitude overflowing that we may share life and love in praise to you. Receive all that we offer and magnify our gifts, so that all will know the hope, peace, joy and love you offer to us in Christ Jesus.

People: Amén!

Amen!

* RECESSIONAL HYMN #88 (vs. 5-7)

VENI EMMANUEL

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

* CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Diaz

POSTLUDE

“The King Shall Come”

David N. Johnson
Tune from Kentucky Harmony, 1816
Dr. 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: Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz (he/him)
 Liturgists: Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy
 Sara Hackett
 Vinod and Medhansh Reddy
 Rev. Sally Jo Snyder
 Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him),
Organist / Music Director
 ELPC Chancel Choir
 Acolytes: Michael and Parker Simpson-Hunt
 Beadle: Laura Ristau
 Crucifer: Tim Engelhardt
 Sound: Tim Benedict
 Wayne Gaines

◆ WORSHIP FLOWERS

Please see today's bulletin insert for a listing of those who sponsored a Christmas poinsettia.

If you would like to sponsor flowers for our weekly worship service in honor or memory of a loved one, contact Norma (412.441.3800 x211). The cost is \$250 a Sunday.

◆ SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP

Coffee and water are available in the Balaka Room.

◆ SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:45 am Journey Worship. An interactive, energetic service for those seeking a fresh encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
Dec 22 — The Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy preaching.

11 am Sanctuary Worship. Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.
Dec 22 — The Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy preaching. A congregational meeting will follow this service in the Sanctuary.

◆ 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

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 on Mondays

Rev. BJ Woodworth will lead a time on Zoom of 30 minutes of communal silence and guided meditation on scripture.

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

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 see one of the pastors to attend, or contact Jen King for info on future classes (JenK@coh.net).

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

TODAY AT ELPC

LGBTQIA+ Ministry's Spiritual Gathering

You are invited to attend the LGBTQIA+ Ministry's spiritual gathering today at 12:30 pm. Join us to share lunch and conversation. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcome! Contact Wil Forrest (Wil@coh.net).

Jam with the YAMs

If you're 18–40 years old, join members of our *Young Adult Ministry* (YAMs) after today's 11 am worship service for pizza and bowling in ELPC's 1930s duck pin bowling alley. Old friends and new visitors are equally welcome to attend! RSVP to Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net).

Advent Devotionals Available

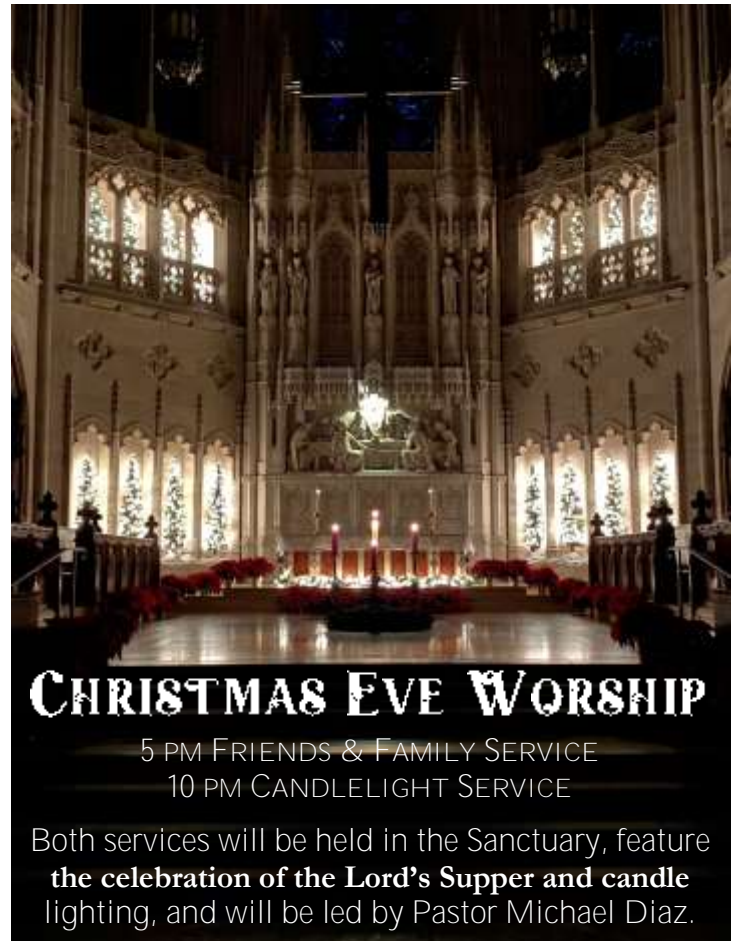
Advent devotionals which include visual art, written reflections, poems, hymns, and journaling prompts are available around the church for your use during the season.

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 *Journey service* DOD is Gretchen Chapman.

The *Sanctuary service* DOD is Jo Ellen Aleshire. She is seated in the East Transept (Highland Ave entrance).



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

5 PM FRIENDS & FAMILY SERVICE

10 PM CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Both services will be held in the Sanctuary, feature **the celebration of the Lord's Supper and candle lighting**, and will be led by Pastor Michael Diaz.



PASTOR PATRICE'S *Retirement Celebration*

Join us for worship on
Sunday, Dec 22

to celebrate The Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy's 28 years of ministry at ELPC. Pastor Patrice will preach at the 8:45 am Journey service and at the 11 am Sanctuary service. We will also be lighting the Advent candle representing love, so please show Pastor Patrice your love for all that God has done through her in our community. Bring your gifts, prayers, and well-wishes as we collectively bless Pastor Patrice in her retirement.

At a special meeting on Sunday, Dec 8, Session approved a motion to call a Congregational Meeting following 11 am worship on Sunday, Dec 22 to act on Pastor Patrice's request to retire and dissolve her call as ELPC's Acting Co-Pastor and Associate Pastor for Mission, effective Dec 31.

Offering Envelopes

If you receive offering envelopes in the mail and do not want them anymore, please contact Jen King to be taken off the mailing list (JenK@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x222).

Stewardship Reminder

It's not too late to pledge your gifts in support of the mission and ministries of ELPC for 2025. Your pledges help the stewards of ELPC's finances prepare for the upcoming budget year. Pledge cards are available at the church, online, or contact Rachelle Calfee (RachelleC@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x234).

Christmas Joy Offering Received — Dec 22

We will receive the *Christmas Joy Offering* on Sunday, Dec 22 at all worship services. May you give generously in thanksgiving to God for the most perfect gift of all, the gift of Jesus Christ.





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

Betty Dell's niece Ann,
Pepo and Francine Mazingi's son Emmanuel,
Dwayne Parker,
Rhonda Perroz, and
Lisa Petrilli.

Condolences to Martha DeMarzi on her cousin's passing.

Committee Meetings This Week

Session..... Tuesday, Dec 17 @ 7:00 pm

Neighbors..... Wednesday, Dec 18 @ 6:00 pm

For more info about how to join a meeting, please contact
Jen King (JenK@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x222).

Wrestling with Our Hopes and Fears – Jan 19

You are invited to *Wrestle with Our Hopes and Fears* in a community of faith on Sunday, Jan 19 from 3-4 pm on Zoom. That Sunday is the eve not only of the Inauguration of Donald Trump as President but also Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Day.

The Zoom gathering will be hosted by Presbyterian Women. You do not need to be Presbyterian or a woman to participate! We hope you will find comfort in these uncertain times.

Many thanks to all who participated in PW's impromptu Zoom gathering on Nov 10, when we began to *wrestle with our hopes and fears*. For more info, please email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

Tuesday Morning Zoom Prayer Group

ELPC offers an online prayer group each Tuesday morning from 8-8:30 am, hosted by ELPC member Steve Evrard. These 20-minute sessions feature scripture readings, responsive prayer, and interactive dialogue. All are welcome at this opportunity for fellowship and prayer. The Zoom Meeting ID is 896 9680 6662 (passcode is 116), or you may call in by dialing 929.205.6099.

Donations for Chapel Market

The Chapel Market is in need of winter clothing (**especially men's**) and full-sized toiletries items (soap, body wash, toothpaste, toilet paper, toothbrushes, lotion etc.) Donations can be left at the Highland Lobby, or dropped off at the Chapel Market when open (on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 5–7 pm, or Thursdays from 10 am–12 pm).

If you would like to volunteer in the Chapel Market, please contact Gerald McClendon (GeraldM@coh.net).

In our

COMMUNITY



Urge President Biden to Close Guantánamo Bay

President Biden has said in the past that he wants to close the detention center at Guantánamo Bay. These next few weeks are the last chance the Biden Administration has to fulfill its pledge to work toward a lawful solution for the men still held at Guantánamo Bay. Join the *National Religious Campaign Against Torture* in calling on the Administration to take action before the end of this term to transfer these men to countries that will respect their human rights. For more info, please visit tiny.cc/nrcat-letters.

Strengthen Your Finances with Open Hand Ministries

Are you considering homeownership but are worried about affordability? Are you struggling to maintain financial discipline in light of the increased cost of living? If you answered yes, you are not alone. To find how the Open Hand Ministries community can help you reach your financial goals, contact Wayne Younger (office@openhandpittsburgh.org; 412.924.1409).

Gatherings for Kids – Wednesdays and Thursdays

- Club 116: Kids in grades 1–6 are invited to our midweek ministry on Wednesdays from 4:30–6:30 pm for Bible study, crafts, games, and dinner. (*not Dec 18, 25*)
- Youth Group: Kids in grades 7-12 meet Thursdays from 4:30–7 pm. Together with Sixth Presbyterian Church, we share dinner, pray, play, and explore faith.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ADULTS

Dec 22 ♦ 9:45 to 10:45 am

Journey with Scripture (Highland Rm+Zoom) – Relate the Psalms and the liturgical calendar's Gospel of Mark with the *Heavenly Hosts*, facilitated by Rev. Henk Bossers and other class members

Seekers (Garth Overlook Rm+Zoom) – “The Core of Our Religious Traditions” video by Karen Armstrong, facilitated by Gwen Puza

Soul Food (Good Samaritan Rm+Zoom) – “Reflections on the Incarnation and Christmas with the Gospel Narratives” led by The Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

*There will be no youth Sunday School
or adult Church School classes
on Sundays, Dec 29 or Jan 5.*

Classes for learners of all ages will resume on Sunday, Jan 12.