



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)

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS DECEMBER 29, 2024 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

It is not over, this birthing. There are always newer skies into which God can throw stars. When we begin to think that we can predict the Advent of God, that we can box the Christ in a stable in **Bethlehem**, that’s just the time that God will be born in a place we can’t imagine and won’t believe. Those who wait for God watch with their hearts and not their eyes, listening, always listening for angel words. — *“It’s Not Over” by Ann Weems*

PRELUDE / ADVENT & CHRIST CANDLE LIGHTING

Journey Praise Team

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz

* SHARING GOD’S PEACE

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Leader: La paz de Cristo esté con ustedes.
People: Y también contigo.

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Caroline Hough

Leader: I have good news!
People: I have good news!
Leader: Christ is born!
People: Christ is born!
Leader: Joy is alive!
People: Joy is alive!
Leader: God is here.
People: God is here.
Leader: Thanks be to God.
People: Thanks be to God.
Leader: Amen.
People: Amen.

* OPENING HYMN #133 (*music in bulletin*)

ADESTE FIDELIS

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

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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RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Caroline Hough

Leader: On a day like today we may want to skip the prayer of confession because today is a day for joy. Why should we pause to think and talk about the ways we as humans mess things up? I get that argument. However, I also believe that the joy of this day is even more joyful when we are honest about who we are. We humans tend to be messy, scattered, and full of doubt at times. Knowing that Jesus was born in a manger for us, and that Jesus loves and forgives us, is even better news. So let us confess together to God, knowing that the honest truth of our lives only makes this good news better.

Holy God, too often we feel as if change is hopeless. The problems of this world feel too big, the path forward is unclear, and we are not confident that we can truly make a difference. We give up hope. *(The candle of hope is extinguished)* Together we pray:

People: Forgive us for extinguishing hope.

Leader: Holy God, too often we believe that peace is a thing of fairy tales. Our spirits are anxious. Our bodies are weary. Our world is fractured. Instead of praying for peace—both in ourselves and in our society—we assume that peace is no longer on the table. We give it up. *(The candle of peace is extinguished)* Together we pray:

People: Forgive us for extinguishing peace.

Leader: Holy God, too often we paint joy as naive—a luxury reserved for children and pets. We forget that you ate with friends, that you went to weddings, that you laughed and rested and hiked mountains. We forget that you knew joy, and that you want joy for us in this fractured world. Forgive us for turning away from your light. *(The candle of joy is extinguished)* Together we pray:

People: Forgive us for extinguishing joy.

Leader: Holy God, too often we treat love like a vending machine. We put some coins in and assume that we'll get something back. However, in our wiser moments, we know that love is not meant for keeping score. Love is meant to overflow, to spill out to our neighbors, to transform our world. Forgive us for holding love so tightly. *(The candle of love is extinguished)* Together we pray:

People: Forgive us for extinguishing love.

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Rev. Jim Tinnemeyer

Leader: Family of faith, sin separates us from things like hope, peace, and joy. Sin wiggles its way between us and love, both love of neighbor and love of self. Fortunately for us, God had something else in mind. God sent God's only son to this world so that we could see another way. So, friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we turn our back on hope, or extinguish peace, or snuff out joy—no matter how many times we let love burn out—God continues to light our way.

(The candles of hope, peace, joy and love are re-lit from the Christ candle.)

The good news of this day—the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love of this day—exists for you.

People: We are forgiven. We are seen. We are loved. Thanks be to God! Amen.

SUNG RESPONSE HYMN #544 *(music in bulletin; sing 3x)*

BLESS THE LORD

“Bless the Lord”

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

FIRST READING

Words from Judith Jones

Rev. Tinnemeyer

The prologue to John makes it clear that God created and loves this material world and the material beings who live in it, and that God took on material form in order to redeem it and us. God became incarnate in Jesus, but Jesus—though uniquely God’s child and God’s incarnate Word—makes it possible for all of us to become God’s children who embody God’s word. Through Christ, our ordinary human lives can become places where God’s glory shines. The Word became flesh to bring us all into God’s family. The Word became flesh to help us see every human life as a temple of the Holy One. The Word became flesh so that witnesses could point to person after person throughout history and say, that’s God at work, right there!

POETIC READING OF JOHN 1:1-5

Rev. Dr. Diaz
Caroline Hough

In the beginning,
way back in that beginning,
was the Word.
And the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
Jesus was in the beginning with God.
In other words, we cannot say
that love was born in a stable that day,
for love was born when the horizon was drawn.
It was born in the dark, long before dawn.
Love was born with the very first sea
and when God breathed life into you and me.
Long before Magi
or shepherds or dreams,
long before sheep or angels that sing,
love was here—
building a way,
then and now,
and on Christmas day.
For all things came into being through him,
and without him, not one thing came into being.
And what has come into being in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.
And so Jesus shined.
Like a light in the dark,
or a star in the sky,
Jesus journeyed into this world
and opened our eyes,
shining a light on social divides
and loving the scars we try to hide.
He lit up this world like it’s never seen,
the light of all people,
Emmanuel.

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.
Hatred did not overcome it.
Fear did not overcome it.
Greed did not overcome it.
A light shines in the darkness.
Envy did not overcome it.
Doubt did not overcome it.
Scarcity did not overcome it.
A light shines in the darkness.
Death did not overcome it.
Sickness did not overcome it.
Grief did not overcome it.
For he was in the beginning with God,
way back, a long, long time ago,
before the stars,
before the day,
before the rivers were carved out of clay.
And what has come into being in him was life.
So we cannot begin with Magis and sheep,
for this story begins at the brink—
of creation and light,
of you and me,
of beloved and love,
of being set free.
For in the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God,
and that light shines in the darkness.
It always has, and it always will.
That is where our story begins—
with love for creation,
from beginning to end. Amen.

Dec 29 • First Sunday of Christmas

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“O Holy Night”

Adrianna Cleveland, *soloist*
David Jennings-Smith, *soloist*

SERMON

“God Dwells with Us”

Rev. Dr. Diaz

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THE LORD’S PRAYER

Rev. Tinnemeyer

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. Tinnemeyer

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

“My Favorite Things”

Journey Praise Team

* DOXOLOGY AT THE PRESENTATION #607

OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise Christ, all crea-tures here be - low;
 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. Tinnemeyer

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. Amen.	

* RECESSIONAL HYMN (*lyrics in bulletin*) “This Little Light of Mine”

* CHARGE & BENECTION

Rev. Dr. Diaz

POSTLUDE

Journey Praise Team

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/él)
Liturgists: Rev. Jim Tinnemeyer
Sara Hackett
Caroline Hough
Musicians: Journey Praise Team
Dr. Gerald Savage, *Journey Music Director*
Adrianna Cleveland, *soloist*
David Jennings-Smith, *soloist*
Beadle: Rev. Joe Hajdu
Crucifer: Mario Seneca
Sound: Tim Benedict
Wayne Gaines

◆ WORSHIP FLOWERS

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. Our beautiful arrangements are provided by Bloom Brigade (www.bloombrigade.com).

◆ 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.
Jan 5 — Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz preaching.

11 am.....Sanctuary Worship. Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.
Jan 5 — Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz 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

*No service (and no Cathedral Yoga)
on Wednesday, Jan 1.*

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

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.

#133 — O Come, All Ye Faithful

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant; O come
 2 True God from true God, Light from light e - ter - nal, born
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels; sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; sing,
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing; Je -

ye; O come ye to Beth - le - hem! Come, and be - hold him,
 of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes; ver - y God, be -
 all ye cit - i - zens of heaven a - bove! Glo - ry to God, all
 sus, to thee be all glo - ry given; Word of the Fa - ther,

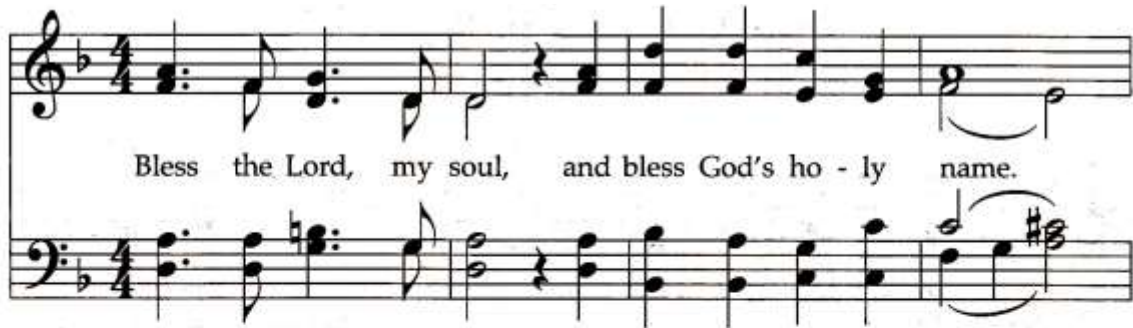
Refrain

born the King of an - gels!
 got - ten, not cre - at - ed! O come, let us a - dore him; O come, let
 glo - ry in the high - est!
 now in flesh ap - pear - ing!

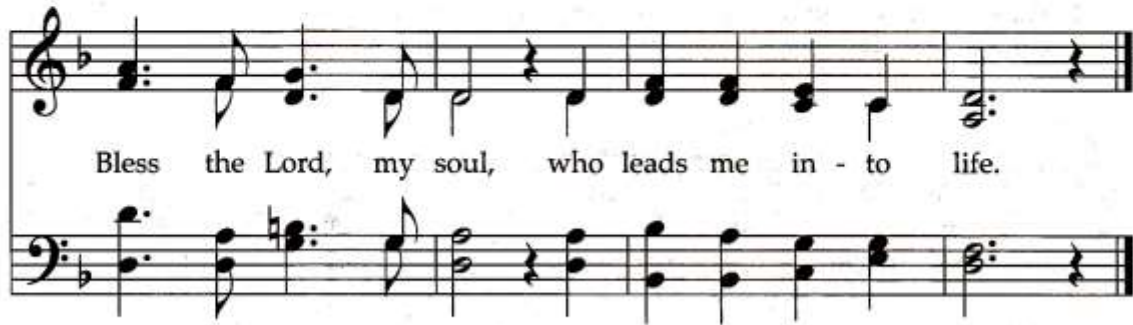
us a - dore him; O come, let us a - dore him, Christ, the Lord!

From its Roman Catholic origins, this 18th-century hymn has spread to worldwide use by many denominations in both Latin and vernacular versions. Once popular with a wide range of hymn texts, this tune is now firmly associated with this Christmas text from which it is named.

#544 — Bless the Lord (*sing 3 times*)



Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's ho - ly name.



Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me in - to life.

This refrain based on Psalm 103:1 is meant for repeated singing. To "bless God's holy name" (which could not be spoken by observant Jews) is a reminder to be grateful even for what we cannot comprehend, trusting that God's providence will show us "the path of life" (Psalm 16:11).

This Little Light Of Mine

This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine

Every where I go
I'm gonna let it shine
Every where I go
I'm gonna let it shine
Every where I go
I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine

All around the world
I'm gonna let it shine
All around the world
I'm gonna let it shine
All around the world
I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine

This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine

Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine
Let it shine

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ELPC HAPPENINGS

No Taizé or Cathedral Yoga — Jan 1
Please note there will be no Taizé service and no Cathedral Yoga on Wednesday, Jan 1. Both will resume on Wednesday, Jan 8, 2025. Please check our website for any other program changes for the holidays.



Cody Conley and Friends — Jan 5

ELPC's own Cody Conley is home from school for Christmas break and will be presenting concert in the sanctuary with some of his friends on Sunday, Jan 5 at 1pm. Featured on the program will be piano quintets by Schumann and Dohnyani. Piano quintets are compositions for string quartet with piano. The concert is free and open to the public.

Open Gym with Coffee and Donuts — Jan 5

Parents and kids are welcome to hang out, drink coffee or juice, eat a donut, and play in the ELPC Gym on the first Sunday of every month from 9:45–10:45 am. The next gathering is Jan 5. If you want to meet other parents or just love basketball or scooters—this is for you! Contact Sara Hackett for info (SaraH@coh.net).

PW Bible Study — Jan 6 and 7

Presbyterian Women's 2024-2025 Bible Study *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters: Air Justice* will meet on Monday, Jan 6 from 7–8:30 pm (on Zoom), and on Tuesday, Jan 7 from 10 am–Noon (on Zoom and in Fellowship Room). There will be a potluck lunch after Tuesday's Bible Study. Please bring a dish to share; beverages will be provided. For more info, email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

Children & Families Volunteer Event — Jan 12

Families with children and teens are hosting an afternoon of bingo and crafts at Shadyside Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation on Sunday, Jan 12. We'll eat lunch and coordinate tasks here at ELPC after worship and then go to Shadyside Nursing to set up and welcome residents from 2–3 pm. RSVP to Sara (SaraH@coh.net).

LGBTQIA+ Ministry's Spiritual Gathering — Jan 19

You are invited to attend the LGBTQIA+ Ministry's spiritual gathering on Sunday, Jan 19 after the 11 am worship service. Join us to share lunch and conversation. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcome! Contact Wil Forrest to attend (Wil@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x218).



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! Email PW.ELPC@gmail.com.

Teen Snowtubing at Boyce Park — Jan 19

Youth in grades 7–12 are going snowtubing at Boyce Park on Sunday, Jan 19 from 12–3:15 pm. The cost is \$10, but scholarships are available. Lunch will be served at ELPC before heading to Boyce Park. RSVP online or to Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net).



Tween Mini Golf — Jan 26

On Sunday, Jan 26 from 12:30–2 pm, all tweens are invited to help create a mini golf course around the church and then play a round. Bonus points if you get a hole in one in the bell tower! Friends are welcome and lunch will be served. Please RSVP to Sara (SaraH@coh.net).

Cathedral Concert: St. Olaf Choir — Feb 9

The highly acclaimed St. Olaf Choir will perform in the ELPC Sanctuary on Sunday, Feb 9 at 7:30 pm. The choir is hailed as one of the nation's premier a cappella ensembles and is renowned for its artistry and beauty of sound.



This is a ticketed event and will not be livestreamed. Discounted tickets are available for ELPC members and friends. Contact Dr. Ed Moore (EdM@coh.net).

HAPPY NEW YEAR!





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

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

Condolences to Betty Dell and family on her niece's passing.

No Committee Meetings This Week

Environmental Team Book Study – Feb 20

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee invites you to read *The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration* by Jake Bittle, and then join a book discussion on Thursday, Feb 20 at 7 pm on Zoom.

Even as climate change dominates the headlines, many of us still think about it in the future tense—we imagine that as global warming worsens over the coming decades, millions of people will scatter around the world, fleeing **famine and rising seas**. What we often don't realize is that the consequences of climate change are already visible, right here in the U.S. In communities across the country, climate disasters are pushing thousands of people away from their homes.

Jake Bittle, a journalist who covers climate change and energy, gives us a human-based narrative of national scope. Stories of fires, excessive rain, scorched farmland, etc.

For more info and the Zoom link, contact Nancy Heastings (n.heastings@comcast.net).

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).

Tuesday Morning Zoom Prayer Group

ELPC offers an online prayer group each Tuesday morning from 8-8:30 am, hosted by ELPC member Steve Evrad. 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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ADULTS

There will be no youth Sunday School or adult Church School classes next Sunday, Jan 5.

In our

COMMUNITY



Listening Sessions to Black Members of Pittsburgh Presbytery – Jan 27 and 28, Feb 3

The *Alliance for Honor and Repair* has been charged by Pittsburgh Presbytery to engage in a thorough review of the experience of our historically Black congregations through history and to offer recommendations on actions of repair or reparations.

This past year the Alliance has been hosting listening sessions at our historically Black churches to hear the stories and experiences of their members. Sessions have happened at Bidwell, Grace Memorial, Bethesda, and Valley View. But not all Black members of Pittsburgh Presbytery go to these churches and some members of those communities have moved on to other churches in the Presbytery.

With that in mind, an invitation is extended to the Black members of Pittsburgh Presbytery to tell their stories to the Alliance. Sessions will be held on Jan 27 and 28, and Feb 3 at 6:30 pm over Zoom. If you have a story to tell or would like to share your experience as a Black member of Pittsburgh Presbytery please sign up for a time by Friday, Jan 24 at <https://tinyurl.com/Alliance4HonorRepair>. Learn more at: honorandrepair.com.

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. Please visit tiny.cc/nrcat-letters.

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).