



# 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

# Love

DECEMBER 22, 2024  
11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP



*The Golden Cradle by Carmelle Beaugelin*

### TIME OF PREPARATION

Holy and loving God, whose Spirit rested on Joseph, calling him to parenthood, and on Mary, preparing her for motherhood and birth – now, by your Spirit, call and prepare us for our relationships, our work, and our ministry that we also may say, ‘Your will be done in us,’ to the glory of Jesus Christ, now and always.  
— Brian Wren

### PRELUDE

“Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 599”  
*(Savior of the Nations, Come)*  
“He Is Born”

Johann Sebastian Bach  
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*  
arr. Lloyd Larson  
ELPC Ringers

### 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

Bill Johnson

Leader: Hear the call of God knocking on the door of your heart.  
People: We are eager and anxious. God is here!  
Leader: When Mary was pregnant and afraid, Elizabeth welcomed her with an open door.  
People: Love always welcomes us with open arms. God is here!  
Leader: Our spirits rejoice as we receive the Good News.  
People: We see God in each other. God is here!

### \* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #100 “My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout”

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

### 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

Todd Hoffman, Debbie Brake  
Charlotte and Samantha Brake-Hoffman

Leader: Howard Thurman reminds us that, “Our only responsibility is to love. Whether we are loved back. Whether love becomes productive in ways we can measure, this, is not our business.” Today, we light the candle of love as a reminder that from the very first generation, God has surrounded us with love. May this good news not only weave deeper connections between neighbors but shape our actions and allow us to see God more clearly.

*The fourth candle is lit.*

People: In a lonely world, let this light shine brightly. From generation to generation, we are **held in God’s love. Amen.**

CALL TO CONFESSION

Bill Johnson

Leader: One of the greatest gifts and challenges of faith is that we cannot be Christian alone. We need one another. We need one another to grow. We need one another to love. And we need one another to see God more clearly. Let us now turn to God in prayerful confession.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Bill Johnson

Leader: God, though we have heard Mary’s song of blessing for the lowly, we ask for your mercy.

People: Forgive us for seeking security in pride, power, and possessions.

Leader: We know the story of your redemptive love and continue to ignore the cost of following Jesus.

People: Forgive us for sinning against our neighbor through what we have done and left undone.

Leader: As we seek liberation, we acknowledge our own culpability as agents of oppression.

People: Gracious God, forgive us for our wrongs. We want to see you when we see our neighbor. Amen.

TIME OF SILENT PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S GRACE & FORGIVENESS

Bill Johnson

Leader: Friends, God chooses not to condemn us. So rest in this good news: you are saved by grace.

People: En Jesucristo tenemos perdón. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  
¡Gracias a Dios! Thanks be to God!

HANDBELL ANTHEM

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

arr. Lloyd Larson

READING

Words from Dr. Christine J. Hong

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Elizabeth greets Mary on the threshold, not only of her door but the threshold of something new in Mary’s life and for the world. Mary is met by her cousin who greets her with welcome, anticipation, and a powerful blessing. So rich was the blessing that the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leapt up and greeted Mary and the baby in Mary’s womb. Any fear Mary had was met with the contagious courage of Elizabeth, courage enough for them both. They were one another’s spiritual mid-wives – birthing together transformation, grounded in one another’s courage and steadfastness. They wondered together in liminal space, on the threshold of a new world. And through their spiritual and relational partnership, Mary and Elizabeth framed the path of partnership for their children too.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 John 3:1-3 (*Inclusive Language Bible Translation*)

Bill Johnson

\* HYMN #110

“Love Has Come”

BRING A TORCH

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 1:39-58

NT page 78  
Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy

SERMON

“We See God in Each Other”

Rev. Dr. Fowler-Searcy

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

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Diaz

*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. Diaz

*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

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

Bruce Neswick

Text: Theodore Baker and Harriet Spaeth

*Lo how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung. It came a blossom bright, amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the rose I have in mind. With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior, when half spent was the night.*

*O Flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air, dispel in glorious splendor the darkness everywhere. True one, yet very God, from sin and death now save us, and share our every load.*

\* DOXOLOGY AT THE PRESENTATION #607

OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise Christ, all creatures here below.  
Praise Holy Spirit evermore. Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

\* 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 #140

“Once in Royal David's City”

IRBY

\* CHARGE & BLESSING

Rev. Dr. Fowler-Searcy

*Please be seated for a brief*

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

*to dissolve Pastor Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy's call as ELPC's Acting Co-Pastor and Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries, effective December 31.*

POSTLUDE

“Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 661”  
(Savior of the Nations, Come)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
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](http://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. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy  
Liturgists: Rev. Dr. Michael A. Diaz (he/him/él)  
Sara Hackett  
Todd Hoffman and Debbie Brake  
Charlotte and Samantha  
Brake-Hoffman  
Bill Johnson  
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him),  
*Organist / Music Director*  
ELPC Chancel Choir  
ELPC Ringers  
Acolytes: Duncan McCrimmon  
Nate Willson  
Beadle: Heather Eng  
Crucifer: Linda Davis  
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](http://www.bloombrigade.com)).

◆ SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP

Please join us in the Social Hall after the *Congregational Meeting for a reception in honor of Pastor Patrice's* retirement. All are welcome!

◆ SUNDAY WORSHIP

*There will be no Journey service on Sunday, Dec 29.*

11 am Sanctuary Worship. Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.  
*Dec 29 — Rev. Dr. Michael A. 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 Wednesdays, Dec 25 and 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](mailto:JenK@coh.net)).

Call the Church Office (412.441.3800), or visit the ELPC website at [www.ELPC.church](http://www.ELPC.church).

## TODAY AT ELPC

### Congregational Meeting

There will be a *Congregational Meeting* in the Sanctuary immediately following today's 11 am service 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.

### Pastor Patrice's Retirement Reception

Please join us in the Social Hall after the *Congregational Meeting* for a reception to celebrate The Rev. Dr. Patrice L. Fowler-Searcy's 28 years of ministry at ELPC. Please show Pastor Patrice your love for all that God has done through her in our community.



### Christmas Joy Offering Received

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

### 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 Drew Simpson. He is seated in the East Transept (Highland Ave entrance).



### No Taizé or Cathedral

Yoga — Dec 25 and Jan 1

Please note there will be no Taizé service and no Cathedral Yoga on Wednesdays, Dec 25 and Jan 1. Both will resume on Wednesday, Jan 8, 2025. Please check our website for any other program changes for the holidays.



### 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.

### 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).



## 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.



*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.*

No Committee Meetings This Week

**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 2:30–2 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).

**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).

## 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



**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](http://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](http://tiny.cc/nrcat-letters).



NEW JOURNEY ZOOM ID

*Please use the NEW*

*Journey Worship Service Zoom ID/  
link below to worship with us  
online at 8:45 am on Sundays:*

Meeting ID: 824 2903 4526

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82429034526>

## SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ADULTS

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