



# 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)*

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## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 21, 2025 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

### TIME OF PREPARATION

*Divine love liberates. This love does not wait for perfection; it remembers, forgives, and sets us free to serve without fear.*

### PRELUDE

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

arr. Hart Morris  
ELPC Ringers

### WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Sarah Robbins and Rev. BJ Woodworth

*Everyone in worship today is encouraged to please sign your name in the red Friendship Books that are in each pew. Doing so will help ELPC maintain a pastoral connection with all who worship with us. Thank you!*

### ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Courtney, Duncan and Evie McCrimmon

**Leader:** The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times and in a thousand ways. Its impact cannot be contained in any one perspective. But who is telling the story changes how we hear it, how we imagine it, how we experience it.

**People:** **We light the candle of hope because hope creates a path for a new, unknown story to unfold.**

*(The first candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** Peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us.

**People:** **As we light the candle of peace, may we always be attentive.**

*(The second candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** Joy sustains us in the midst of uncertainty.

**People:** **We light the candle of joy.**

*(The third candle is lit.)*

**Leader:** Imagine what you once thought was impossible coming to fruition: Elizabeth’s partner never believing they would be parents, holding their infant son, John.

As Zechariah holds John, he experiences an unexpected joy that leads to love.

**People:** **A love that reclaims and reorients all who are present toward the possibilities of God.**

**Leader:** A love that makes the most difficult of situations bearable and all things seem possible.

A love that invites a lifelong, generation-transcending commitment to mercy, justice, and peace.

**People:** **Today, we also light the candle of love because love makes the impossible possible.**

*(The fourth candle is lit.)*

### \* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #105

BESANCON

“People, Look East”

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

*Continued on next page...*

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

**OPENING PRAYER**

Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz

**HANDBELL ANTHEM**

arr. Lloyd Larson

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**

**HYMN #110**

“Love Has Come”

MERLE’S TUNE

Love has come: a light in the darkness!  
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies. See, all  
Heaven has come to proclaim it; hear how their song of  
joy arises: Love! Love! Born unto you, a  
Savior! Love! Love! Glory to God in high.

**HYMN #135**

“There’s a Star in the East (Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow)”

FOLLOW

There’s a star in the East on Christmas morn;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;  
It will lead to the place where the Christ was born;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
Follow, follow;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
Follow the Star of Bethlehem;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

If you take good heed to the angel’s words;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;  
You’ll forget your flocks, you’ll forget your herds;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
Follow, follow;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.  
Follow the Star of Bethlehem;  
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

**HYMN #145**

“What Child is This?”

GREENSLEEVES

What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh, Come, one and all to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.

**BLESSING FOR PAGEANT PARTICIPANTS**

Rev. Robbins

**INVITATION TO ANOINTING AND PRAYER**

Rev. Dr. Diaz

Are you in need of an affirmation that God is journeying with you? Do you desire for someone to pray alongside you? If so, please come forward, down the center aisle, as we sing. Volunteer prayer partners will be present to listen, intercede, anoint and hold you in God’s love. You may also visit one of our prayer stations and light a candle in prayer at the entrance to Trinity Chapel.

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

### HYMNS DURING PRAYER/ANOINTING

**HYMN #83**

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

STUTT GART

**HYMN #92**

“While We Are Waiting, Come”

WAITING (CASON)

**THE LORD’S PRAYER** (*in language/version closest to your heart*)

Rev. Woodworth

*The Lord’s Prayer can be found on pg. 35 (English), on pg. 40 (Español), or on pg. 45 (ᄒᆞᆫᆯᆫᆯ) in the hymnal.*

### SHARING GOD’S PEACE

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.**

### OFFERING INVITATION

*Please remember to write your name on your offering envelope.*

*You can also scan this QR code to give online or visit [www.ELPC.church](http://www.ELPC.church)/donate.*

*In addition to our regular offering, we are receiving a special Christmas Joy offering today to help retired and former church workers in the Presbyterian Church (USA).*



Rev. Robbins

### OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

Christina Rossetti/Gustav Holst

### \* 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 DEDICATION

Rev. Robbins and Rev. Woodworth

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, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. When we trust you with our resources, the kin-dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. **Amen.**

### \* RECESSIONAL HYMN #93

TRURO

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

### \* BENEDICTION

Rev. Woodworth

### POSTLUDE

“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

Edwin C. Johnson



Notes regarding the music sung in today's service are available on our website —

<http://tiny.cc/elpcworshipnotes>

Our full worship service is being livestreamed on Facebook and archived at [www.ELPC.church](http://www.ELPC.church). By being in attendance, you give permission for incidences where you appear within the video.

Assisted listening devices are available for our Sanctuary worship in the Ushers' Room. Please print your contact info and device number on the sign-out sheet if you need to use one.

Please silence all electronic devices before the service begins.

#### ♦ PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz (he/him/él)  
Liturgists: Rev. BJ Woodworth (he/him)  
Rev. Sarah Robbins (she/they)  
Sara Hackett (she/her)  
Courtney, Duncan, Evie McCrimmon  
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him)  
*Director of Music and Arts*  
ELPC Chancel Choir  
ELPC Ringers  
Beadle: Laura Ristau  
Crucifer: Linda Davis  
Sound: Bobby Jarsulic and Wayne Gaines

#### ♦ WORSHIP FLOWERS

The flowers today are in honor of the 70th wedding anniversary of Rev. Stewart and Jeannette Lawrence, from Bryan and Heather Lawrence, Michael and Anna, Ben and Susannah and Joshua.

#### ♦ SUNDAY WORSHIP

*There will be no 8:45 Journey services on Sunday Dec 28, Jan 4, or Jan 11.*

11 am.....**Sanctuary Worship.** Our largest service with a multi-cultural congregation and music from organ, piano and choir.

#### ♦ 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 Dec 24 or Dec 31*)

##### **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

##### **Cathedral Yoga**

On winter break until Wed Jan 7 at 6pm.

##### **Journey Dance**

Enjoy an evening of healthy, energizing, funky and divine dancing on the 3rd Friday of every month

## WELCOME VISITORS!

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

If you're a first time visitor, please fill out a **NEW HERE** card found in the pew backs and give that card to a pastor at the Penn Ave or Highland Ave entrance to receive a gift in exchange for your filled out card. Our pastors will reach out to you for any prayer requests and to answer any questions you might have.

Attend an *Inquirers' Class* **Sunday, Feb 1** after

**the 11 am worship service** to learn more about ELPC, Presbyterian theology, and to explore membership. Please sign up at [elpc.church/visit-us/becoming-a-member](http://elpc.church/visit-us/becoming-a-member), or contact Jen King, administrative assistant to the pastors (JenK@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x222).

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

## TODAY AT ELPC

### Welcome Visitors!

If you are joining us for the first time, we're glad you are here! Please fill out a **NEW HERE** card found in the pew backs and give that card to a pastor at the Penn Ave or Highland Ave entrance. You will receive a gift in exchange for your filled out card. Our pastors will reach out to you for any prayer requests and to answer any questions.

### Christmas Pageant – TODAY Dec 21

We will enjoy a special re-telling of the Christmas story on Sunday, Dec 21 as part of the 11 am Sanctuary worship service. Following the pageant, all are invited to enjoy a hot chocolate reception in the Fellowship Room!

### Christmas Joy Offering Received – TODAY Dec 21

The *Christmas Joy Offering* will be received at both worship services on Sunday, Dec 21. May you give generously in thanksgiving to God for the most perfect gift of all, the gift of Jesus Christ.

### Advent Devotional Materials Available

Pick up your Advent devotional *The Will to Dream* in the Narthex or the Highland Lobby. The weekly readings, reflections, and coloring pages connect and build with each week's worship. Families with kids can pick up an Advent Calendar Bag that contains all the supplies you'll need for easy ways to dream together as you practice *Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love* this Advent season.



### 2026 Stewardship Update

As of Dec 19, we have received 193 pledges totaling \$676,897. Help us reach our goal of 226 pledges totaling \$700,000 by making your pledge today at [www.ELPC.church/pledge](http://www.ELPC.church/pledge).

### Holiday Scheduling

Please note there will be no Taizé service and no Cathedral Yoga on Wed Dec 24 and Dec 31. Also the 8:45 Journey service will not be held Sundays Dec 28, Jan 4, and Jan 11.

### Building Closures

To give our staff a much deserved rest after this busy season, the church building will be closed on the following days: Thurs Dec 25, Fri Dec 26, Wed Dec 31, & Thurs Jan 1.

### LGBTQIA+ Ministry Spiritual Gathering- January 4

All are invited to the next monthly spiritual gathering of ELPC's LGBTQIA+ Ministry on Sunday, January 4 at 12:30pm when we will share conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks alike welcomed. Contact Wil Forrest, LGBTQIA+ Ministry Coordinator, at [wil@coh.net](mailto:wil@coh.net) or 412-441-3800 X218 for more details or if you would like to attend. God created you. God loves you. Be yourself.

### Cathedral Concert- Jan 4 at 3pm

Cody Conley (on violin), Devin Arrington (on violin), and Grace Burns (on piano) will be performing in the sanctuary, featuring a new violin duo composed by Devin Arrington for Cody and Devin.

### PW Bible Study- Jan 5 & 6

Presbyterian Women's bible study will meet on Monday, Jan 5 from 7-8:30 pm (online only), and on Tuesday, Jan 6 from 10 am-Noon (hybrid) in the Fellowship Room. Tuesday's study will be followed by a potluck lunch. Please bring a dish to share; beverages will be provided. Email [PW.ELPC@gmail.com](mailto:PW.ELPC@gmail.com) for more info and the Zoom link.

## PRAY ALWAYS IN ALL WAYS



ELPC Spiritual Pathways

*Have you ever wondered what prayer is or if you even believe in prayer? Have you ever longed to pray more but struggled to know how? Together we will talk about our struggles and hopes with prayer and explore a wide variety of prayer forms, including body prayer, prayer beads, icons, silence, written fixed-hour prayer and prayer as simple awareness in life. It will be playful, inspiring, interactive with lots of time to practice together.*

### WEEKLY GATHERINGS

Wednesdays, Jan 21, 28, Feb 4 and 11  
at ELPC from 5:30-7 pm

Register online at  
[https://tinyurl.com/  
PrayAlwaysClasses2026](https://tinyurl.com/PrayAlwaysClasses2026)



### WEEKEND RETREAT

Fri, Jan 23 at 6 pm to Sun, Jan 25 at 11 am  
at Villa Maria Retreat Center

Register online by Jan 11  
[https://tinyurl.com/  
PrayAlwaysRetreat2026](https://tinyurl.com/PrayAlwaysRetreat2026)





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

Regina Anderson, Syden D.'s niece and mom, Mary E., James G., Cathie Hajdu, Kate Lindholm's cousin Michael, Polly M's friend Justine, Marti Moore, Jon Nelson's cousin Rayna and aunt Helen, John N's wife Nancy L, Rhonda Perroz, Linda S., Jeff W's friends Nichole and Jen; Cheryl; Finn.

*Condolences to **Jon Nelson** on his cousin's passing.*

*Condolences to **Michele Bossers' sister Nedra** on the loss of her husband.*

**NO Committee Meetings This Week**

*For info to join a meeting, contact Jen King ([JenK@coh.net](mailto:JenK@coh.net)).*

**There will be NO Church School classes on:  
Sundays, Dec 28 or Jan 4.**

**Classes for learners of all ages will resume their regular schedule on Sunday, Jan 11.**

**Environmental Team's New Book Study – Jan 22**

The Environmental Team of the Justice Committee is reading *Shade: the Promise of a Forgotten Natural Resource* by Sam Bloch. Read along and join us for a discussion on Thursday, Jan 22 at 7 pm on Zoom.



**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**

**5 PM FRIENDS & FAMILY SERVICE**

**10 PM CANDLELIGHT SERVICE** (*music begins at 9:30 pm*)

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

In our

**COMMUNITY**



**Help Your Neighbors During Tax Season!**

Low/moderate income taxpayers can receive free tax preparation at Free Tax Prep sites throughout the Pittsburgh area. You can help our neighbors receive vital refund money by becoming a free tax prep volunteer. We provide extensive training and tax preparation software. Join ELPC member Lynne Chadwick at the Homewood YMCA or volunteer at one of the other 20+ sites in the area. To sign up for shifts and training, go to <https://tinyurl.com/FreeTaxPrep-JustHarvest>. Contact Lynne with questions ([LynneNChadwick@gmail.com](mailto:LynneNChadwick@gmail.com)). If you make less than approximately \$50,000 per year (individual) or \$70,000 (family), you are eligible to have your taxes prepared for free. Call 211 in January to schedule a slot to have your taxes prepared.

**Sewing Donations for Casa San Jose**

The Casa San Jose Sewing Circle plans to start up again after Christmas. They are seeking donations of fabric of all kinds, sewing supplies, portable sewing machines and especially a cutting board. Please contact Paris Samboy ([paris@casasanjose.org](mailto:paris@casasanjose.org); 412.287.7817).

**Domestic Violence Hotline**

Domestic violence is a heartbreaking reality that affects families and communities—including people within faith communities. If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, you are not alone. God's love does not include violence. We encourage anyone in need of support to speak confidentially with a pastor or trusted leader, or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800.799.7233

**INQUIRERS CLASS**

**Sunday, Feb 1st, 2026 after 11 am worship**

For those wondering about becoming a member or friend of ELPC, or just want to learn more about Presbyterian theology, sign up to attend our next *Inquirers' Class* after the 11 am service on Sunday, Feb 1st, 2026 in the McKelvy

Room (large room by the elevator in the Highland Ave hallway) Lunch will be provided.

Register online using this QR code, or visit [elpc.church/visit-us/becoming-a-member](http://elpc.church/visit-us/becoming-a-member).



*Please contact Jen King for more info:*

**[JenK@coh.net](mailto:JenK@coh.net)  
412.441.3800 x222**

# WORD UNSCRAMBLE

Today, we learn about the birth of John the Baptist and a prophecy from his father, Zechariah. Unscramble these words to understand more about this miraculous birth and profound prophecy.

C H A I Z H R A E

C E E P A

L E I S A R

V O L E

H D C L I

R V I O S A

P I I T S R

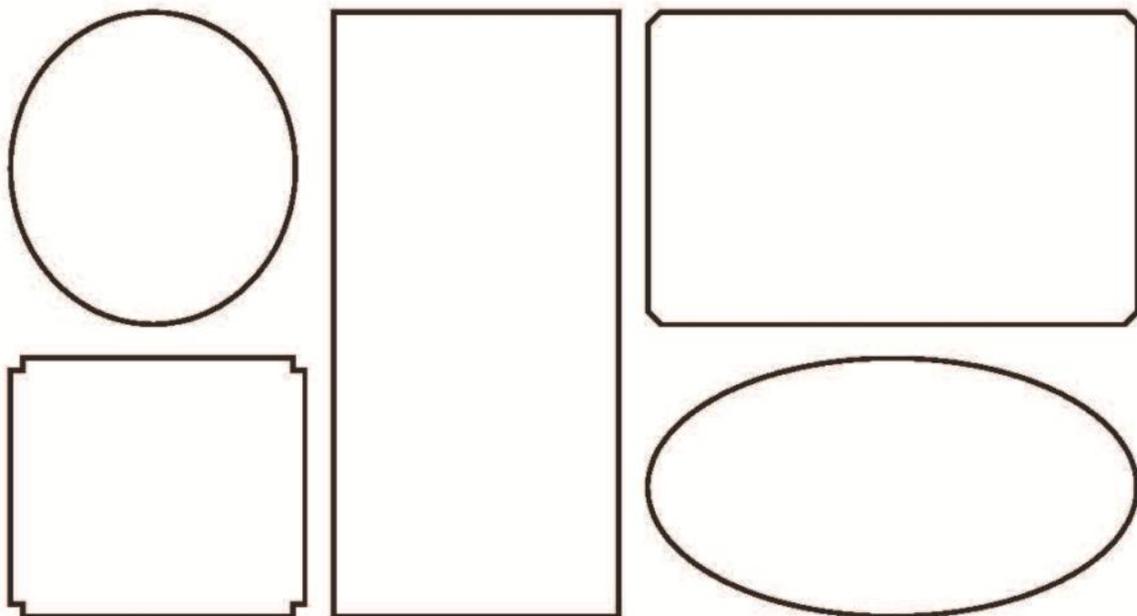
H P P E O T R

J O C I E E R

Y M C R E

## DRAW IT!

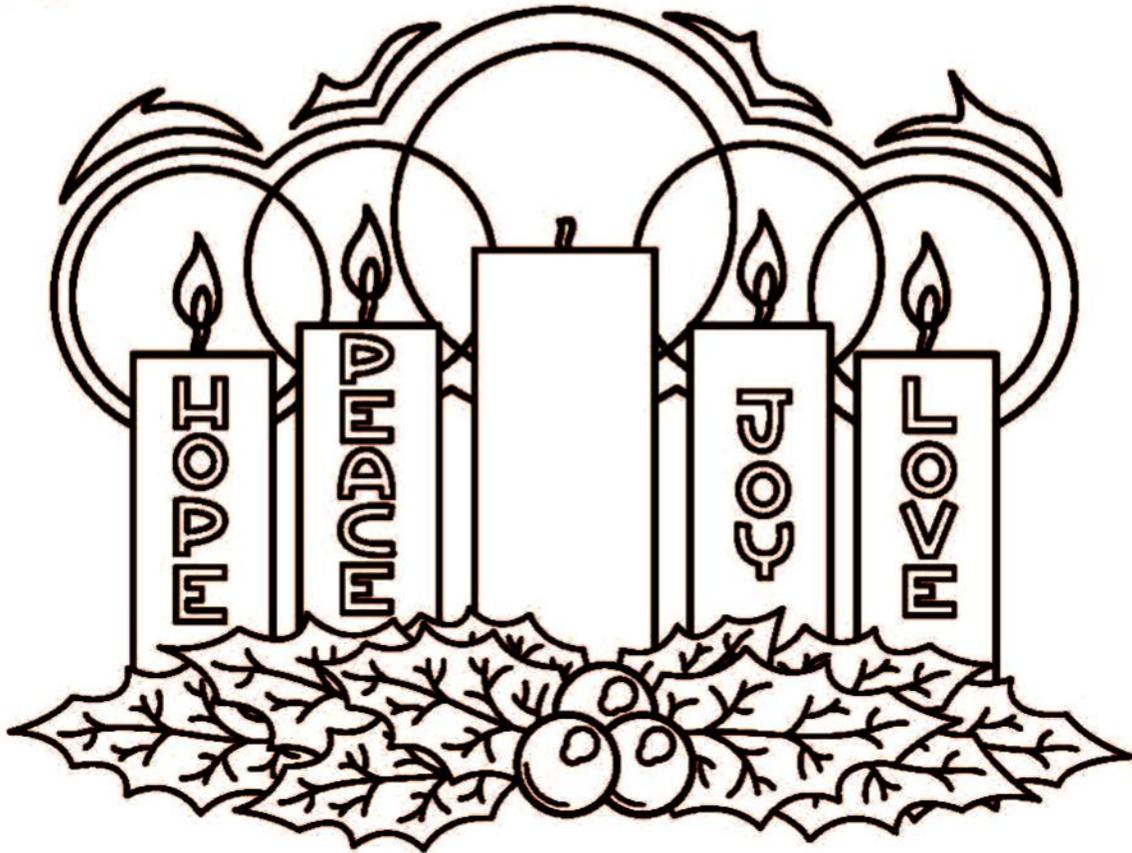
In this fourth week of Advent, our theme is love. How many mini pictures can you draw in this space that represent love? Draw them below.



Interactive Worship Bulletin for All Ages

# COLOR THE CANDLES

We mark each week of Advent by lighting a candle. Color the Advent candles we lit today.



## WORDS TO CARRY

Write down three words from worship you will carry with you this week.