



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)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 7, 2025 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

John the Baptizer prepares the way, not with decorations or sentiment, but with fierce honesty and deep integrity. His life bears witness to what it means to make room for God—not by building walls, but by clearing paths.

PRELUDE

“Partita on Winchester New”
Chorale-Meditation-Bicinium-Aria-Trio

Bruce Neswick
based on Glory to God #96
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz, Rev. Sarah Robbins

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

Molly, Andrew, Sydney, Calvin Swagler, Maralyn Smith

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.

(Light the first candle)

Leader: Close your eyes for a moment. What we often see this side of history in paintings or nativities is a peaceful still life of the blessed family, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. Imagine visiting the newborn infant.

(Pause)

Open your eyes. Babies are not always quiet. If something is wrong or they need attention, they cry out regardless of what anyone else is saying or doing. Those around the baby must choose to respond to their cries.

People: The same is true for injustice. When needs go unmet or injustice occurs, the cries of those affected rise in hopes of being heard by those nearby.

Leader: A cry is a call for peace. Peace in an unfed belly, peace for safety and security, peace to be clean and have dignity. The infant Jesus broke the silence, crying out to bring peace to the world. Jesus, like Malachi, John, and other prophets before him, calls us in the loudest of cries to peace.

People: Today, we also light the candle of peace because peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us.

(Light the second candle)

* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #756

“O God of Every Nation”

LLANGLOFFAN

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

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

MOMENTS WITH OUR CHILDREN

Rev. Robbins

Children of any age are welcome to come forward for Moments with our Children. Afterwards, children age 4-6th grade go to Sunday School. Pick up kids after worship (age 4- 3rd grade-Rm 206; grades 4-6-Rm 207). Children age 3 and younger can play in the nursery from 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Barbara Griffin

Leader: Hearing John's exhortation to repent, let us invite into our hearts the refining fire of God's Spirit, trusting that God will hear us, forgive us, and refine us.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Barbara Griffin

God of peace, we confess the ways that we maintain "peacefulness" at the expense of seeking justice for our neighbors. We turn away from human suffering to maintain false contentment in our own hearts. We settle for compromises that harm the vulnerable, rather than risk discomfort or loss. We ask to be soothed rather than stirred up. Make us a holy and risk-taking people. Forgive and inspire us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Barbara Griffin

Leader: Friends, God pours out mercy.

People: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and forever claimed as beloved of God. Amen.**

HYMN OF RESPONSE #92 (*verse 2 only, sing 2 times*)

WAITING

"While We Are Waiting, Come"

READING

from "The Will to Dream"

Barbara Griffin

On the second Sunday of Advent, the call to peace takes us beyond sentimentality and into the wilderness with John the Baptist. His voice, echoing through the desert, is not calm—it is disruptive. His call to repentance doesn't seek personal guilt but communal transformation. He confronts systems and identities that have grown comfortable with power. And in doing so, he exposes the thin peace of empire—a peace dependent on domination, silence, and stability for the few. The Gospel of Matthew, shaped in the wake of the Roman destruction of the temple, understands this all too well. Empire offers peace that pacifies, not peace that liberates. In contrast, John proclaims that real peace demands preparation: a reorientation of hearts, systems, and society. It is not passive or polite, but forged in the fire of truth-telling, refined by the Spirit, and rooted in a kin-dom vision of restored relationship.

Leader: May God bless the truth in these words.

People: **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 3:1-12 (*Inclusive Bible*)

Rev. Robbins

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

* **HYMN #163**

"Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice"

ABERYSTWYTH

SERMON

"Prophetic Peace"

Rev. Dr. Diaz

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

SHARING GOD'S PEACE

Rev. Robbins

Leader: Where two or three of us are gathered, the prophetic Spirit is among us, inspiring our imagination and creating peace in our midst. Greet your fellow travelers now with the peace of Christ, and let these small doses of repair and reconciliation ripple out into a world in need of transformation.

La paz de Cristo esté con ustedes.

The peace of Christ be with you.

People: **Y también contigo.**

And also with you.

OFFERING INVITATION

Rev. Robbins

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/donate.



* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“My Lord, What a Mornin’”

H.T. Burleigh

Albert Blackwell

My Lord, what a mornin', my Lord, what a mornin'. Oh, my Lord, what a mornin', when the stars begin to fall. Done quit all my worldly ways, joined that heavenly band. My Lord, what a mornin', my Lord, what a mornin'. Oh, my Lord, what a mornin', when the stars begin to fall.

* 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.

— THE LORD’S SUPPER —

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Rev. Robbins

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Rev. Dr. Diaz, Rev. Robbins

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.

Sanctus:



1. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, _____
2. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. _____



— heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (in the language or version closest to your heart)

Rev. Dr. Diaz, Rev. Robbins

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Rev. Dr. Diaz, Rev. Robbins

Memorial Acclamation:



Christ has died; Christ is ris - en; Christ will come a - gain.



Christ has died; Christ is ris - en; Christ will come a - gain.

SHARING BREAD & CUP

Rev. Dr. Diaz, Rev. Robbins

The communion elements are gluten-free bread and grape juice. The congregation is invited to come forward by using the center aisle to the communion servers where each may receive the bread and the cup, then returning to their seats via the side aisles. Those seated in the East Transept (the section near the Highland Entrance) will be directed by an usher to the walkway between the front and back section and will file in behind those in the first row of the back section. Those not able to come forward will be served in their seats. Please raise your hand and/or make eye contact with the roaming Communion server.

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

COMMUNION HYMNS

#555 (sing 3x)

“O Lamb of God”

LAND OF REST

#96

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

WINCHESTER NEW

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (in unison)

Rev. Robbins

Creator of all good things, you have fed us with the bread of life and cup of blessing, small in their presentation yet magnificent in our holy imagination. May peace accompany us on our journeys. Amen.

* RECESSIONAL HYMN #106

“Prepare the Way, O Zion”

BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

* CHARGE & BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Diaz

POSTLUDE

“Partita on Winchester New – Toccata”

Bruce Neswick
based on Glory to God #96

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. 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. Sarah Robbins (she/they)
Barbara Griffin
Molly, Andrew, Sydney, Calvin Swagler
Maralyn Smith
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him)
Director of Music and Arts
ELPC Chancel Choir
Beadles: Jo Ellen Aleshire, Heather Eng
Crucifer: Tim Engelhardt
Sound: Tim Benedict, Wayne Gaines

◆ SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:45 am **Journey Worship.** An interactive, energetic service for those seeking a fresh encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
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

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

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* to learn more about ELPC, Presbyterian theology, and to explore membership. Please see one of the pastors to attend, or contact Jen King for more info on future classes (JenK@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x222).

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

Sunday, 7 December 2025 – Second Sunday of Advent

The season of Advent also marks the beginning of a new liturgical year in the church calendar. Our liturgical calendar is organized into three yearly cycles, labelled A, B, and C. Today is the beginning of year A. <https://pcusa.org/theology-and-worship/advent>

Advent means *coming* or *arrival*. During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ's coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. In its historical origins, the season of Advent was patterned after the season of Lent, a six-week period of penitence and preparation for Easter. Similarly, the four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for communal discernment and personal examination, as the church prepares to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord and looks with hope for Christ's return.

Prelude/Postlude

Bruce Neswick's *Partita on Winchester New* is based on the hymn tune of the same name. The partita was composed in 2000 for the 90th anniversary of the District of Columbia Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

The tune WINCHESTER NEW is named for the city of Winchester, England. It is the home to Winchester Cathedral, built between 1079 and 1532. This tune is found twice in our *Glory to God* hymnal at #42 and 96. We are singing #96, *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*, as our second communion hymn this morning. The text was originally written in Latin in the 18th century and translated into English in the 17th century.

The tune is named WINCHESTER NEW to distinguish it from the tune WINCHESTER OLD, found in *Glory to God* at #25, 117, and 329.

Offertory Anthem

Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949) was born in Erie, PA and was a well-known singer. At the National Conservatory in New York City, he studied with, and probably taught spirituals to, Antonin Dvorák. Burleigh was one of the most prolific arrangers of spirituals in the first half of the 20th century. *My Lord, What a Morning* looks ahead to the "end times"—not with apprehension, but with a sense of longing for an end to worldly suffering.

Communion Responses

The acclamation *Holy, Holy, Holy*, traditionally known as the *Sanctus*, represents one of the oldest layers in the liturgy for the Lord's Supper, because it is rooted in a text from pre-Christian Scripture. It is drawn from Isaiah 6:3, the song of the seraphim in the prophet Isaiah's vision of the throne of God surrounded by six-winged, ministering angels. This passage is echoed in Revelation 4:8.

The tune Land of Rest is an American folk melody first appeared in *The Christian's Harp*, published in Pittsburgh in 1836. It was harmonized by Annabel Morris Buchanan (1888-1983) in *Folk Hymns of America*, published in New York in 1938.

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 you might have.

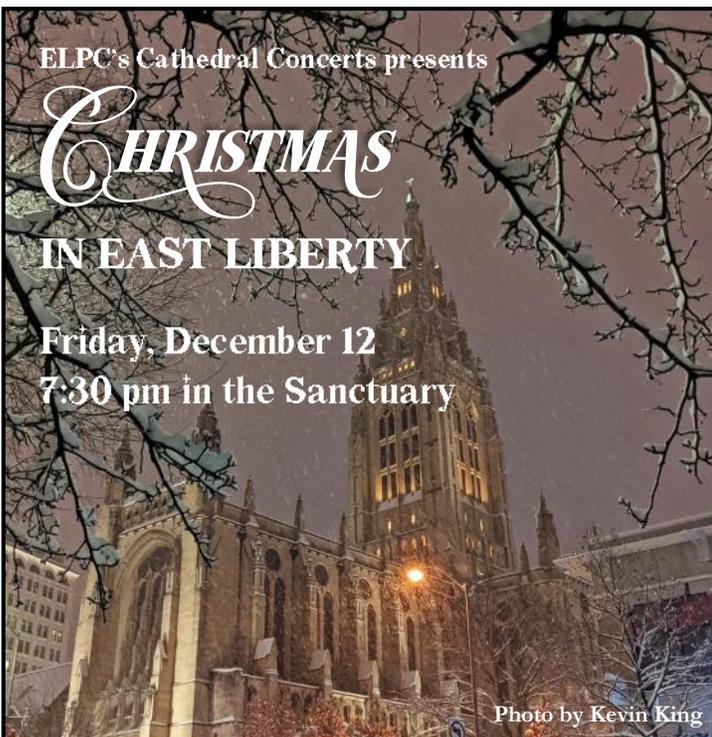
Support the Holiday Giving Tree

The Deacons' annual *Giving Tree* ministry is an opportunity to assist families this Christmas season and provide children with gifts! Gifts and donations are due today, but you can still make a financial donation online at tiny.cc/elpc-giving-tree (or by scanning this QR code) to assist with the purchase of retail gift cards.



Advent Devotional Materials Now 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.



Blue Christmas Service

Friday, Dec 19
7 pm

This service will include candlelight, chants, thoughtful readings and meditative silence, and a time for comfort and hope.

Chapel Market Needs Winter Coats and Toiletry Items

The Chapel Market is stocking up on winter clothes for our neighbors in need. Please consider donating clean, new or gently-used winter coats for toddlers to adults. They also need full-sized toiletry items. Please leave donations in the Highland lobby.

Tween Event: Gift Making – Dec 13

All 3rd-6th graders are invited to come and make a variety of Christmas gifts on Saturday, Dec 13 from 1-3 pm that you can give to your family and neighbors. Contact Sara Hackett for more info (SaraH@coh.net).

PA Against the Death Penalty Postcard Campaign – Dec 14

Join the effort to pass legislation that will finally abolish the death penalty in Pennsylvania! On Sunday, Dec 14 after the 11 am worship service, come to the Garth Overlook Room to sign postcards that will be delivered to the Harrisburg offices of the Governor, Attorney General, District Attorney, State representatives and Senators. Contact Vivienne Selia for info (vselia@comcast.net).

LGBTQIA+ Ministry Spiritual Gathering – Dec 14

All are invited to the next monthly spiritual gathering of the LGBTQIA+ Ministry at 12:30 pm on Sunday, Dec 14 for conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks welcome! Contact Wil Forrest, LGBTQIA+ Ministry Coordinator, to attend (Wil@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x218).

Young Adult Happy Hour – Dec 15

Young Adults (in their 20s, 30s and 40s) are invited to the *Young Adult Happy Hour* at Andrea Devries' home in Highland Park on Monday, Dec 15 from 6-7:30 pm. Stop by for appetizers and drinks (both alcoholic and non). For details and to RSVP, contact Sara (SaraH@coh.net).

Christmas Pageant – Dec 21

Join us for a special re-telling of the Christmas story on Sunday, Dec 21 as part of the 11 am Sanctuary worship service. Kids are needed to help tell the story! We're looking for actors, sheep, stars, narrators, musicians, and set designers! Contact Sara Hackett (SaraH@coh.net). *There will be a dress rehearsal on Saturday, Dec 20 at 9:30 am.*



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

- an elderly neighbor,
- Lola, Mark and Sarah and Hunter and Ben,
- Rachel, Danica and Ayla, Vivienne’s friend Ashley,
- Regina Anderson, Jeff Andrews,
- Syden D.’s niece and mom,
- Loren Forrest, Cathie Hajdu,
- Kate Lindholm’s cousin Michael, Gwen McNabb,
- Marti Moore, Jon Nelson’s cousin Rayna and aunt Helen,
- Rhonda Perroz, Janet Pollard, Grace Taylor,
- Jeff W.’s friends Nichole and Jen, and Nancy Wright.

*Condolences to **Tim Engelhardt** on his grandfather’s passing.*

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

Committee Meetings This Week

Justice Monday, Dec 8 @ 5:30 pm

Deacons Tuesday, Dec 9 @ 7:00 pm

Worship, Music & Arts..... Tuesday, Dec 9 @ 7:30 pm

Purchase a Christmas Poinsettia – Orders Due Dec 16

If you want to purchase a poinsettia for \$11 to decorate our worship spaces, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/PoinsettiaOrder2025> to place and pay for your order. You can take your purchased plants home after the 10 pm Christmas Eve service. Orders are due Tuesday, Dec 16.

If you do not wish to pay for your order with a credit card, fill out an order form in the Highland Lobby and return it to Norma in the church office.



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.

In our

COMMUNITY



Make the Yuletide Gay Celebration – Dec 8

Join Sixth Presbyterian Church (1688 Murray Ave, 15217) on Monday, Dec 8 at 7 pm for *Make the Yuletide Gay*, filled with holiday cheer, LGBTQ+ pride, and plenty of joyful moments, featuring three award-winning songwriters for a night of holiday classics, original music, storytelling, comfort, and joy. The 2025 International Folk Music Artist of the Year award winner Crys Matthews is joined by genre-defying artist/activist Heather Mae and shame-slaying singer-songwriter drag queen Flamy Grant for a show like no other. Purchase tickets at www.eventbrite.com/e/make-the-yuletide-gay-tickets-1852512919009.

Amnesty International Write-a-thon – Dec 10

Join the Pittsburgh Chapter of Amnesty International for our annual *Write-a-thon and Human Rights Festival* on Wednesday, Dec 10 from 6-8:30 pm at Rodef Shalom (4905 Fifth Ave, 15213). There will be letter writing, information about Pittsburgh human rights groups, and a moving candlelight ceremony. Come for the whole evening or 5 minutes. Light refreshments will be provided.

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).

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

December 14

– Adults –

Adult classes are held from 9:45-10:45 am in the rooms indicated:

Journey with Scripture – Highland Room + Zoom

Facilitated by Rev. Henk Bossers

Seekers – Garth Overlook Room + Zoom

“Incarnation: When God Becomes Small.” Facilitated by Gwen Puza

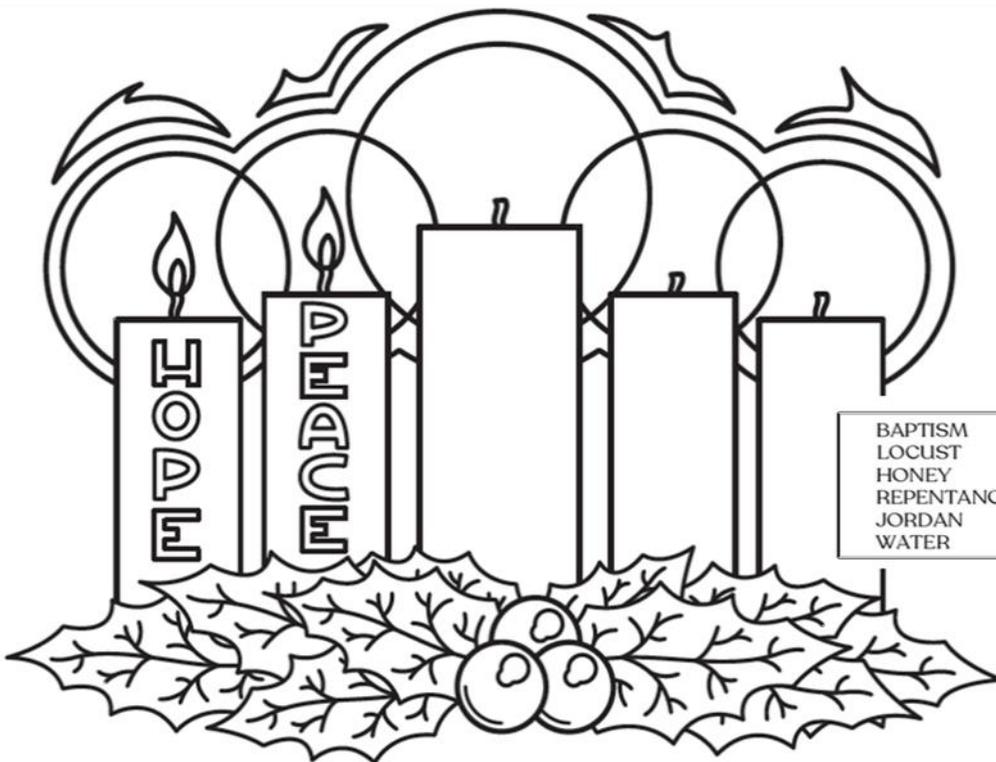
Soul Food – Good Samaritan Room + Zoom

Continuing discussion of *Season’s Greetings* by Ruth Boling, our book for Advent and Christmas. Facilitated by Rev. Joe Hajdu and other class members

WORD SEARCH

John the Baptist emerges from our text with an important proclamation. Find as many words about John and his liberating message as you can below.

K I N G D O M O V Y S R V U B
R E T A W J L T P P V M L Y J
S K M K A D M Y I O W J O E E
E W J S G S M R T W Y J C N S
R J L P I N I I N M G E U O U
I E U T A T T W E R B R S H S
F R P D I F V I C X U U T A X
S A R E E V Z L I U N S R R R
B O N S N A D D T Z O A A I R
J Q U A K T A E S J T L V L N
H K V N P E A R U P H E H N K
P T M D C Z S N J J R M T J W
N H E A T R L E C W V Q U F Z
C M E L D A T S Q E E E R Y N
W P V S C Q K S Q X F Q T I Q



BAPTISM
LOCUST
HONEY
REPENTANCE
JORDAN
WATER

SPIRIT
FIRE
WILDERNESS
RIVER
PEACE
JESUS

SANDALS
JUSTICE
KINGDOM
TRUTH
JERUSALEM
JUDEA



Many people in the Bible, including those we read about during Advent, have dreamed of a better future. What are your dreams, both big and small?

WORDS TO CARRY

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