



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 DECEMBER 14, 2025 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

Joy is the gift of love: It makes the labor an end in itself. I believe laboring in joy is the meaning of life. May we look up at that night sky. May we let joy in. For we will be someone’s ancestors one day. If we do this right, they will inherit not our fear, but bravery born of joy. — *Valarie Kaur*

PRELUDE

“Savior of the Nations, Come”
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Craig Phillips
Craig Phillips
Dr. Edward Alan Moore, *organ*

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz 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

Gary Marzolf and Dave Swatzler

Leader: The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times and in a thousand ways.

People: 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.

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

Light the first candle

Leader: We light the candle of peace because peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us.

Light the second candle

Leader: Imagine two cousins embracing and sharing life-changing news with one another. One, an older woman, who knew the physical risks of bearing a child late in life. The other, a not-yet-married woman, who was aware of the social stigmas in her society. Yet each chose joy over fear. Imagine the pure joy of this wonderful occasion.

Pause

Leader: When Elizabeth shares her surprising news with Mary, her joy doubles upon hearing that Mary is also pregnant. The two women sing of joy as they sense, literally, in their bodies that change is coming.

People: A joy of defiance that good news perseveres even in the most difficult of circumstances. From Isaiah to Mary and Elizabeth, from biblical times to the present, joy can be found. Joy is not a denial of harm that is happening; it is a refusal to let injustice define all reality.

Continued on next page...

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

Leader: A joy that moves from personal experience to communal transformation in the song that Elizabeth and Mary proclaimed, and we proclaim today. A joy our world needs to experience this season, not to hide from what is wrong, but to strengthen God's people to bear a world that is not right.

People: **Today, we also light the candle of joy because joy sustains us in the midst of uncertainty.**
Light the third (rose) candle

* **PROCESSIONAL HYMN #88** (*verses 1-4 only*)

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 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

Jim and Heather Eng

Leader: Friends, we pause each week to confess because we know that God meets us not with judgment but with mercy. So let us open our lives to God—naming what is broken, so that we might be made whole. We do this together in a unison prayer and then in a moment of silent confession.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Jim and Heather Eng

God of joy, you created this world for joy and flourishing. We confess that we construct barriers to protect our happiness, even at the expense of others. We fill ourselves with good things, taking no heed of those who are left empty. We ignore oppression when it benefits our interests. We dismiss the brokenhearted when we feel inconvenienced. We crave power over liberation. Remember us in compassion and come to our aid. Tear down our dividing walls. Scatter our pride and reawaken the imagination of our hearts. Lead us again in the work of repair and restoration.

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Jim and Heather Eng

Leader: God clothes you in salvation and covers you in righteousness. Rejoice and take heart.

People: **In grace, we are forgiven, through the saving love of Jesus Christ. Amen!**

HYMN OF RESPONSE #646

“Sing Out, My Soul”

MAGNIFICAT

Sing three times. First time in unison. Second and third times in canon.

Lectern side starts and pulpit side follows as led by the choir.

READING

from Dr. Barbara Holmes

Rev. Dr. Diaz

We are born with an inner fire. I believe that this fire is the God within. It is an unquenchable, divine fire. It warms us, encourages us, and occasionally asks us to dance. Suppose that at the entrance to heaven there is a scale—not a scale to weigh good and bad deeds—but a scale to measure joy. Suppose our passage into the next life will not be determined by the number of souls saved, sermons preached, or holiness pursued. Just joy. We've become very somber Christians in a very somber age. It's not that we don't have things to be concerned about. There are wars, natural disasters, deficits, broken relationships and viruses. But in the midst of this, we're called to joy by a joyful God and a joyful Savior. Hierarchies have always been afraid of a dancing, joyful Jesus. They're not so worried about the institutional Christ, but they fear this living, singing Jesus who can boogie... all the way to Gethsemane... No matter the circumstances, we're called to joy.

Leader: May God bless the truth in these words.

People: **Amen.**

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

CHORAL ANTHEM "A New Magnificat" Carolyn Jennings
Text adapted from *The Song of Hannah*, 1 Samuel 2, *The Song of Mary*, Luke 1

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 1:39-55 (*Inclusive Bible*) Rev. Woodworth
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON "Leaping for Joy" Rev. Woodworth

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THE LORD'S PRAYER (*in language/version closest to your heart*) Rev. Sarah Robbins
The Lord's Prayer can be found on pg. 35 (English), on pg. 40 (Español), or on pg. 45 (Ἑβραῖοι) in the hymnal.

SHARING GOD'S PEACE Rev. Robbins
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 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.



OFFERTORY SOLO "Joyous Christmas" Johnny Marks

* **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. Dr. Diaz and 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.**
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. We believe 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 #88** (*verses 5-7 only*) VENI EMMANUEL
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

* **CHARGE & BLESSING** Rev. Woodworth

* **POSTLUDE** "The King Shall Come" David N. Johnson
Tune from *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816



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. BJ Woodworth (he/him)
Liturgists: Rev. Dr. Michael Diaz (he/him/él)
Rev. Sarah Robbins (she/they)
Sara Hackett (she/her)
Jim and Heather Eng
Gary Marzolf and Dave Swatzler
Musicians: Dr. Edward Alan Moore (he/him)
Director of Music and Arts
ELPC Chancel Choir
Adrianna Cleveland, *Soloist (Mary)*
Kym Laret, *Soloist (Hannah)*
Denise Sheffey-Powell, *Soloist*
Beadle: Liz Hopkins
Crucifer: Mario Seneca
Sound: Tim Benedict and Wayne Gaines

◆ WORSHIP FLOWERS

Please contact Mario Seneca if you would like to purchase flowers for our worship service in honor or memory of a loved one (seneca459@hotmail.com).

◆ 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
(No service on 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

Yamuna will lead yoga in-person in the Sanctuary.

Wednesdays, 6 to 7 pm (*before Taizé*)

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, 14 December 2025 – Third 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.

The Advent candle lit this morning is rose/pink colored instead of the purple lit on the other three Sundays of Advent. This candle represents JOY. In some traditions this Sunday is referred to as Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday. The name comes from Philippians 4:4, *Rejoice (Gaudete) in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*

Prelude

Craig Phillips (b. 1961) is Director of Music at All Saints' Church, Beverly Hills and a graduate of the Eastman School of Music.

Processional/Recessional Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel is a translation of the Latin *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*. The text of the hymn is drawn from the *O Antiphons*, a series of antiphons (responsories/responses) to be sung in the week preceding Christmas. Each antiphon references a name of Christ (Wisdom, Lord, Root, Dayspring) from scripture.

Choral Anthem

A New Magnificat - Carolyn Jennings

Text adapted from *The Song of Hannah*, 1 Samuel 2 and *The Song of Mary*, Luke 1

Carolyn Jennings (b. 1936) is a Professor Emerita of Music at St. Olaf College. Her husband, Kenneth Jennings (1925-2015), was the long-time conductor of the St. Olaf Choir.

Postlude

The Advent hymn *The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns* is based on the hymn tune CONSOLATION, which dates from 1812. The tune is referred to with the name MORNING SONG in some hymnals. David Johnson (1922-1987) was an American organist who taught at several colleges and universities, including St. Olaf College, Syracuse University, and Arizona State University.

Church Events and Announcements

December 14, 2025 • 3rd Sunday of Advent

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.

PA Against the Death Penalty Postcard Campaign

Join the effort to pass legislation that will finally abolish the death penalty in Pennsylvania! After today's 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

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

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.

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).

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 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. Following the pageant, all are invited to enjoy a hot chocolate reception in the Fellowship Room!

Kids are needed to help tell the story as 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.

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>

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 at
<https://tinyurl.com/PrayAlwaysRetreat2026>



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

an elderly neighbor,
Vivienne's friend Ashley, Regina Anderson,
Jeff Andrews, Michele B.'s brother-in-law Carl,
Syden D.'s niece and mom, Loren Forrest, Cathie Hajdu,
Nancy Levine, Kate Lindholm's cousin Michael,
Marti Moore, Jon Nelson's cousin Rayna and aunt Helen,
Rhonda Perroz, 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

Session..... Tuesday, Dec 16 @ 7:00 pm

Neighbors..... Wednesday, Dec 17 @ 6:00 pm

For info to join a meeting, contact Jen King (JenK@cob.net).

Christmas Joy Offering Received – Dec 21

The *Christmas Joy Offering* will be received at both worship services on Sunday, Dec 21. Thank you for your generosity!



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



A Hip Hop Remix of Handel's Messiah – Dec 19 and 20

Join Pastor Michael and other Pittsburgh faith leaders as they help narrate the production of *We the Messiah*, a Hip Hop remix and social justice reimagining of Handel's *Messiah*. This theatrical concert is a crescendo call for collective action and an instrumental invitation to awaken the Messiah that lives in us all. ELPC community members contributed to the project earlier this fall through activism conversations that helped shape the community-voices component of the production. Performances are at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater (Penn Ave) on Friday, Dec 19 at 7:30 pm, and Saturday, Dec 20 at 3 pm and 7:30 pm. *Tickets are free, but please register at kelly-strayhorn.org.*

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.

In his new book, environmental journalist Sam Bloch encourages us to look to the past for solutions to our ever-warming urban areas as climate change creates heat waves that are more frequent, hotter and longer lasting. Bloch's call for more shade in urban areas, with more trees in parks and residential areas and new ways to design public areas and buildings, comes as policy makers grapple with a growing crisis in heat-related illness and death. Contact Nancy Heastings (n.heastings@comcast.net) for Zoom.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

December 21

– 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

“Marcus Borg on Jesus in the 1st and the 21st Centuries.” Facilitated by Gwen Puza

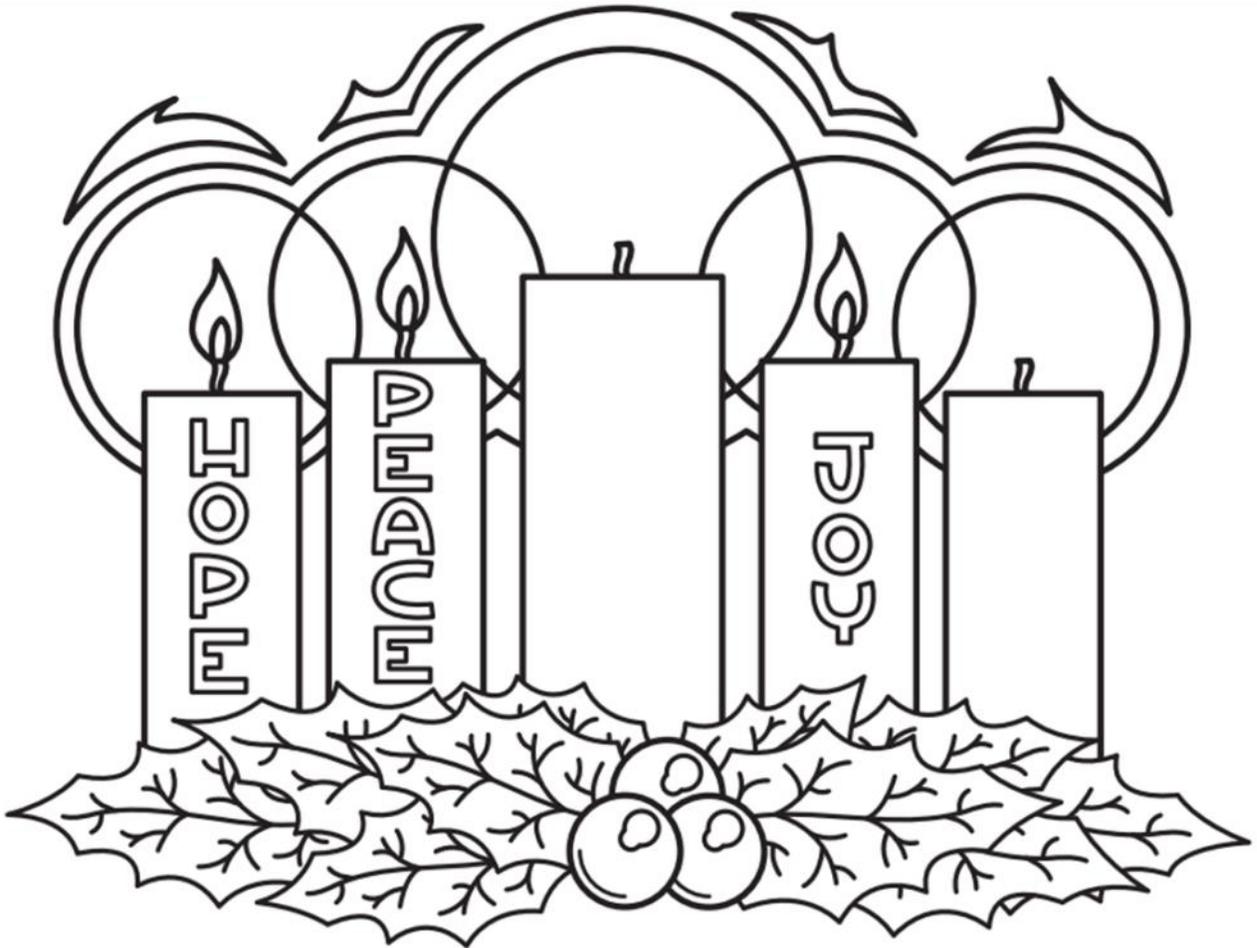
Soul Food – Good Samaritan Room + Zoom

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

**There will be NO adult 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.

Interactive Worship Bulletin for All Ages



TALLY UP

Circle up to three words from this list and tally how many times each is said during worship today:

MARY

BLESSED

ELIZABETH

HOLY SPIRIT

JOY

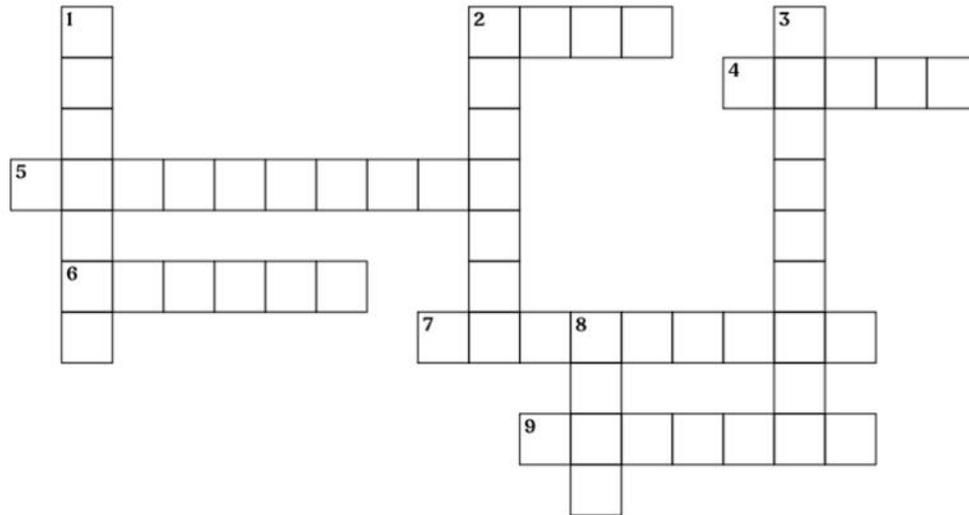
JESUS

MAGNIFICAT

SING

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Mary and Elizabeth's encounter of joy is profound! Read the clues below to solve the crossword puzzle and learn more about this meaningful meetup and the joy these women exuded. If you get stuck, feel free to ask a neighbor for help!



DOWN

1. Whose descendants does Mary make mention of?
2. One idea that Mary speaks about in her song that means the fair and equitable treatment of all people.
3. Something you do to commemorate feeling joyful, like at a birthday or other holidays.
8. Another name for God that means "sacred."

ACROSS

2. What child leaped inside the womb?
4. What attribute of God is for those "who fear him?"
5. What is another name for Mary's song of praise?
6. The liturgical season we are in.
7. Whose house did Mary enter?
9. What is the first thing that Elizabeth said to Mary "with a loud cry?"

WORDS TO CARRY

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