



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 AFTER CHRISTMAS DECEMBER 28, 2025 — 11 AM SANCTUARY WORSHIP

TIME OF PREPARATION

The birth of Jesus brings a harsh end to a Herodian (King Herod) reality that seemed ordained forever, and it created a new historical situation for marginal people that none in their despair could have anticipated.
— from “The Prophetic Imagination” by Walter Brueggeman

PRELUDE

Variations on “In Dulci Jubilo”

Denis Bédard
Ryan Croyle, organ

WELCOME & CHURCH NEWS

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!

Rev. Sarah Robbins

CHRISTMAS CANDLE LIGHTING

Gregory Olverson

Leader: Jesus is born!

People: Emmanuel! God is with us!

Leader: So what is different? For Mary and Joseph, everything changed. They were parents now, tasked with caring for a fragile infant. But we aren’t witnesses to the actual birth; rather, we are celebrating a momentous event.

We live this side of the crucifixion and resurrection, and through the Holy Spirit, God is with us every day.

With the new year upon us, take a moment and name for yourself the injustices, difficulties, and systemic changes that harm our community and world.

People: Naming what is wrong is a sacred task of the church known as lament. We can’t work toward making things right if we don’t understand and name what is wrong. Struggles, however, are not the only reality. Blessings are also present and deserve attention.

Leader: Like the candles of Advent, blessings brighten when gathered and displayed for all to see.
(Lighting of all the candles and the Christ candle)

As we approach a new year, we remember the blessings that have taken place over the past year and ones we anticipate for the coming year.

People: Emmanuel, God-with-us, thank you for being present when life unravels and for giving us the strength to keep going toward your blessings.

* PROCESSIONAL HYMN #143

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory”

REGENT SQUARE

MOMENTS WITH OUR CHILDREN

Paul Seif

Children of any age are welcome to come forward for Moments with our Children, then remain in worship afterwards.

Children age 3 and younger can play in the nursery from 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

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

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CALL & PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Carla Depperman

Leader: Longing to see God's promised salvation, we confess our sins and pray for peace in our hearts.

People: **God of the covenant, you inspire all people to sing your praises and to proclaim your justice. We confess that we make judgments about which voices are worthy. We ignore the witness of those whose narratives make us uncomfortable or skeptical. We favor the voices of majority populations. We privilege ideas that reinforce our own opinions and validate our own experiences.**

Leader: Make us better listeners, ready to encounter your messages and your presence in all people.

People: **We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

TIME OF SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Carla Depperman

Leader: God remains faithful and steadfast, drawing near to us with boundless forgiveness. You are redeemed and you are loved, in the name of Jesus Christ.

People: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen!**

HYMN OF RESPONSE #140 (*vs. 1, 4*) "Once in Royal David's City"

IRBY

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:21-32 (*Inclusive Bible*)

Carla Depperman

When the eighth day arrived for the child's circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived. When the day came for them to be purified, as laid down by the Law of Moses, the couple took Jesus up to Jerusalem and presented him to God. For it's written in the Law of our God, "Every firstborn heir is to be consecrated to God." They likewise came to offer in sacrifice "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accord with the dictate of the Law of our God. Now there lived in Jerusalem a man named Simeon. He was devout and just, anticipating the consolation of Israel, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. She had revealed to Simeon that he wouldn't see death until he had seen the Messiah of God. Prompted by her, Simeon came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child to perform the customary rituals of the Law, he took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Now, O God, you can dismiss your servant in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the peoples to see—a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."

Leader: May God bless the truth in these words.

People: **Amen.**

HYMN #147

"The First Nowell"

THE FIRST NOWELL

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:33-40 (*Inclusive Bible*)

Rev. Robbins

As the child's mother and father stood there marveling at the things that were being said, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, the mother, "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that is rejected, so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare. And a sword will pierce your heart as well." There was a woman named Anna, the daughter of Phannuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was also a prophet. She had lived a long life, seven years with her husband, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple, worshipping day and night, fasting and praying. Coming up at that moment, she gave thanks to God and talked about the child to all who anticipated the deliverance of Jerusalem. When the couple had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the Law of God, they returned to Galilee and their own town of Nazareth. The child grew in size and strength. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was with him.

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

"Sacred Unveiling"

Rev. Robbins

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

* Indicates where you may rise in body or spirit.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER *(in language/version closest to your heart)* Rev. Robbins

Leader: God of generations, we know that in the temple, at the table, elders speak from sacred experience. In the classroom, at the park, children enact the realities they imagine. On the canvas, in the wilderness, at the bus stop, your people share their dreams for a world healed and made whole.

People: **Holy One, we pray in gratitude for deep faith, courageous wisdom, and enduring hope.**

Leader: When we are tempted to listen to the loudest, to trust the strongest, to give our attention to those who buy and sell it, call us back to you, and to those whose witness points to you. Remind us that your revolution chooses prophets we might not expect to deliver good news we couldn't have dreamed up.

People: **Holy One, we pray in gratitude for deep faith, courageous wisdom, and enduring hope.**

Leder: Make us attentive to each other's needs, curious about each other's visions. In each other's cries of pain and proclamations of blessing, may we hear your heart for our world.

People: **Holy One, we pray in gratitude for deep faith, courageous wisdom, and enduring hope.**

Leader: Hear us now as we pray the prayer Christ taught us saying... *Our Father/Mother/Creator...*

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 Carla Depperman

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 CAROL SING

#146 *(vs. 1 and 3)* "Gentle Mary Laid Her Child" TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

#132 *(vs. 1 and 3)* "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" IN DULCI JUBILO

* **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 Carla Depperman

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 #134** "Joy to the World" ANTIOCH

* **CHARGE & BENEDICTION** Rev. Robbins

POSTLUDE "Fanfare on 'Mendelssohn'" Gordon Young
Ryan Croyle, *organ*

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. Sarah Robbins (she/they)
Liturgists: Carla Depperman
Gregory Olverson
Paul Seif
Musicians: Ryan Croyle, *Guest Organist*
Cantors: Adrianna Cleveland, Todd Farwell
David Jennings-Smith, Kym Laret
Robin Thompson
Beadle: Tim Engelhardt
Crucifer: Jan Herzer
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. (No service on Jan 4 nor Jan 11)** 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 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*)

(no Cathedral Yoga on Dec 31)

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* on **Sunday, Feb 1 after the 11 am worship service in the McKelvy Room** 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.

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.



LGBTQIA+ Ministry Spiritual Gathering – Jan 4

All are invited to the monthly spiritual gathering of the LGBTQIA+ Ministry at 12:30 pm on Sunday, Jan 4 for conversation and lunch. Allies and LGBTQIA+ folks welcome! Contact Wil Forrest, LGBTQIA+ Ministry Coordinator, to attend (Wil@coh.net; 412.441.3800 x218).

Cody Conley & Friends Cathedral Concert – Jan 4

The *Cathedral Concerts* series at ELPC continues on Sunday, Jan 4 at 3 pm with a performance by Cody Conley on violin, Devin Arrington on violin, and Grace Burns on piano, featuring a new violin duo composed by Devin Arrington for Cody and Devin. The concert is free and open to all. Invite your family and friends! A freewill offering will be received. For more details, visit tiny.cc/cathedral-concerts.

Open Gym with Coffee & Donuts – Jan 4

Parents and kids are welcome to hang out, drink coffee or juice, eat a donut, and play in the Gym on Sunday, Jan 4 from 9:45–10:45 am. There will be no youth Sunday School, but we hope teens will join us for games. Contact Sara Hackett for more info (SaraH@coh.net).

PW Bible Study – Jan 5 and 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 for more info and the Zoom link.

Faith In Action – Advocacy Coaching – Jan 12 and 14

We learned at the October Adult Education presentation on Impactful Advocacy that individualized calls and emails to legislators are more impactful than form letters and emails. To facilitate such advocacy, the Environmental Team of the Justice Committee will offer two identical one hour information sessions on Zoom on Monday, Jan 12 at 7 pm, and Wednesday, Jan 14 at 10 am. During these sessions, you will receive examples, tips, and resources. Think in advance about an issue or cause that is important to you. We will practice on a common issue. You can also request the recording link to the October presentation.

Contact Nancy Heastings (n.heastings@comcast.net) to register and receive the Zoom link for one of the January information sessions, or to request a link to the recording of the October presentation.

Sunday School for Teens – Jan 18

Teens will meet on Sunday, Jan 18 from 9:45–10:45 am in the 2nd floor Parlor.

Young Adult Happy Hour – Jan 19

Young Adults (in their 20s, 30s and 40s) are invited to the *Young Adult Happy Hour* at the home of Russell Ludwig on Monday, Jan 19 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).

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:

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; and 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

Holiday Scheduling and Building Closures

On Wednesday, Dec 31, there will be

NO Taizé service, nor Cathedral Yoga at ELPC

The church building will be closed on Wednesday, Dec 31, and Thursday, Jan 1

Active Intruder Safety Training – Feb 7

All ELPC friends, members, leaders and staff are welcome to attend an important training session on Saturday, Feb 7 from 1-4 pm to learn about how to remain safe if an intruder enters the building. ELPC's Safety and Security Advisory Committee will be hosting a local safety officer who will share helpful information and answer our questions. More info and an RSVP request will come in January 2026.

Presbyterian Women's Winter Retreat – March 6 to 7

All women are invited to an overnight *Late Winter Retreat* at Crestfield Camp by Presbyterian Women from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon, March 6–7, for community, learning, led by Pastor Sarah Robbins.



**INQUIRERS CLASS
Sunday, Feb 1
after 11 am worship**

Attend an *Inquirers' Class* on Sunday, Feb 1 after the 11 am Sanctuary worship service in the McKelvy Room.

Learn more about ELPC, Presbyterian theology, and to explore membership. Lunch will be provided.

Register online using this QR code, visit elpc.church/visit-us/becoming-a-member, or see one of the Pastors.



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).

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.

Please Support

Hope Academy of Music & the Arts



Hope Academy of Music and the Arts, an after-school and Saturday arts ministry of ELPC, provides high-quality music and dance education to students ages 3–19. *Please scan this QR code and make a donation today to invest in the creative future of the youth in our community.*



SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Resumes Jan 11

There will be **NO** adult Church School classes on: **Sunday, Jan 4.**

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