

# Newsletter

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ELMHURST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## PASTOR'S + CORNER

REV. TRACI SMITH



Dear EPC Members and Friends,

*This year we will be celebrating Advent and Christmas at home more than ever before. This newsletter details some of our plans as a community, but this is also the year to spend some time creating a holy Advent at home. Here are some ideas for you.*

### *Set an Advent Intention*

*Spiritual practice is not just "accidental." If your Advent season is to be a time where connection, family time, and spiritual practice are the focus, it will happen because you and your family have made it a priority. This is not easy, and it goes against the tide of culture. Before the hustle and bustle of the season, take a few moments to set an Advent intention. What would you like the season to look like? Would you like to intentionally limit the number of outside invitations you accept as a family in order to have peace and less rush? Would you like to set aside one day of the week for family time? Maybe you would like to be guided by an Advent word like peace, joy, hope or love. Get the whole family in on the discussion, as age and maturity level allow. If you choose, write down your intention in a journal or somewhere the whole family can see it.*

### *Create a Sacred Space*

*Advent and Christmas is a time for decorating and making space. As you prepare your home for Christmas, consider setting apart a sacred space that will be devoted to some of the prayers and practices in this book. The sacred space can be a small table, set apart for this book, some of the prayers inside, written on slips of paper, your Advent calendar, or any of the other symbols you create as you work through the practices of this book. Perhaps you will add some candles or sacred objects from your own family. However you create the space, your family will know that it is set apart for spiritual practice. If you have the space, add a chair where family members can come and sit for a few minutes of peace and quiet during the season.*

### *A Prayer for Advent*

*We pause and think about what we want this season to be:*

*a season of hope,  
a season of peace,  
a season of joy,  
a season of love,  
a season of family togetherness,  
a season of reflection.*

*God, please help us find meaning and purpose in this season,  
and may we fill our days with gratitude*

## INSIDE

PAGE 2  
Upcoming Events

PAGE 3  
Family Ministry

PAGE 4  
Music News

PAGE 5  
EPC Happenings

PAGES 6 & 7  
Stewardship News

PAGE 8  
November Events



## YOU CAN HELP!

WE'LL BE DELIVERING FREE CINNAMON ROLLS AND MILK TO AN APARTMENT COMPLEX IN BENSENVILLE TO SPREAD CHRISTMAS CHEER AND MEET OUR NEIGHBORS

### YOU CAN HELP BY

1. WORKING AT THE DISTRIBUTION (SEE PASTOR TRACI OR JEN GORDON)
2. DONATING MONEY FOR MILK
3. PRAYING FOR THE EVENT!

# UPCOMING» EVENTS

## HAPPENING IN DECEMBER »»»

1-25

**FILL THE STABLE** Help us fill the stable with needed items for the community. Please see page 7 of our newsletter for all the details.

5

### CINNAMON ROLL DROP OFF | 12PM—2PM

Help us reach out to our Bensenville neighbors with the gift of cinnamon rolls and milk and Christmas cheer! Pastor Traci and Jennifer Gordon have details on how you can participate!

20

### CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Gather with your church family to celebrate Thanksgiving. Have paper, pencil, scissors and tape on hand for a very special activity.



24

### CHRISTMAS EVE WALK-THROUGH EXPERIENCE | 4:30—6:30 PM

Gather with your church family to celebrate Thanksgiving. Have paper, pencil, scissors and tape on hand for a very special activity. Our on demand worship service is also available on our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/elmhurstpresbyterianchurch](http://www.youtube.com/elmhurstpresbyterianchurch)

*Spiritual Practice Spotlight: Lighting Candles*

This Advent, light one candle for peace, two candles for hope, three candles for joy, and four candles for love. You can do this on your own, whenever you wish, or you can join our Sunday morning Zoom meetings at 11:30. We will light our candles together!

## POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS

*From Paula Reckley -- Read on for info on Poinsettias this year Poinsettias to decorate our sanctuary this Christmas? Paula says..."Let's consider a Plan B....please take a moment to visualize..." Drive through red and white Poinsettias pick-up in our church circle drive... Wrapped in plastic to protect from cold.. delivered to your car (accompanied with an optional cup of hot cider!) on Saturday, Dec.19 th . from 10:00-noon.*

*Logistics  
\*Mail a check to the church, to me at 180 Eggleston Ave OR drop in my mailbox.*

*\*Cost is \$15 per poinsettia... specify red or white and jot down who you would like to dedicate your thoughtfulness to...*

*To the memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
On honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
To the glory of God \_\_\_\_\_*

*Please see Paula Reckley with any questions about poinsettias.*

# CHRISTMAS NEWS

## sharing with the community FILL THE STABLE



To honor the Holy Family during Advent, help EPC fill the stable with things our community needs. We're collecting items for a variety of different organizations in our community including Elmhurst Yorkfield Food Pantry, DuPage PADS, DuPage Senior Citizens Council and more! Drop your items off in our brand new stable outside the church in the circle drive.

### Items needed are:

- Canned Soup (no tomato)
- Word & Crossword Puzzle Books
- Batteries
- Soft Chew Granola Bars
- Pens
- Small Journals
- Packs of Diapers
- Specialty Teas
- Gift Cards to Wal-Mart, Mariano's & Jewel

We're also collecting Toys for Erie House and PADS children. For that project, please see the individual lists (from E-Notes or by contacting Pam Fuesz or Diana Rieske).





PARK BEHIND THE CHURCH AND FOLLOW THE  
SIGNS TO THE CIRCLE DRIVE!

# Christmas Eve Walk-Through Experience

Open from 4:30-6:30

Come by EPC on Christmas Eve and follow the directions as  
you walk through the stations at the circle drive. The  
luminaries will light up our corner and remind us of the light  
of Christ. We will also have a special Christmas Eve service on  
our YouTube channel:  
[youtube.com/elmhurstpresbyterianchurch](https://www.youtube.com/elmhurstpresbyterianchurch)

Safe, Distanced, Joyful, Holy



BY EMILY CULELLA, DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

## GRATITUDE IN UNCERTAINTY

*On one of my favorite Christmas favorites, "A Christmas Carol" Charles Dickens writes of Scrooge, after his transformation, "[D]it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man possessed the knowledge." This year, we're going to be celebrating our traditions differently. We'll be lighting our candles on Zoom and maybe opening presents that way too. There won't be fancy dinners out or in-person holiday parties for work.*

*Maybe things will be less merry. Maybe they'll be smaller. This year, we're going to have to discover how to keep Christmas well, when the traditions we've relied on to usher in the season have been changed or taken from us.*

*As a church, we'll be lighting the Advent wreath every Sunday at 11:30 during our coffee hour and holding an outdoor Christmas Eve Walk Through event, to celebrate one of our holiest days of the year safely and within our own families. We'll also be lighting up the corner with our luminaries, sending the message to our community that Jesus' light shines, even when we have to be apart from one another.*

*Wishing you the best Advent and Christmas season, that you can keep and keep well!*

Emily Culella



Lighting Up our Corner!

Would you like to help light up our corner on Christmas Eve? If so, please get in touch with Emily Culella or Pastor Traci about how you could help with our luminary project!



BY SUSAN SMENTEK, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

*Caroling, caroling now we go  
Christmas bells are ringing!  
Caroling, caroling through the snow  
Christmas bells are ringing!  
Joyous voices sweet and clear  
Sing the sad of heart to cheer,  
Ding, dong, ding, dong,  
Christmas bells are ringing!*

*Alfred S. Burt, an American jazz musician, is famous for composing Christmas carols. He wrote carols to carry on the family tradition, started by his father, Episcopal church rector, Bates G. Burt, of including original Christmas carols on the family Christmas card. Burt eventually married and moved to Hollywood in pursuit of his music career. The Christmas card list grew from 50 to 450 people. Still, his carols remained unknown outside the Burt's growing mailing list. Until 1952, when he finished writing the music to Come, Dear Children during a rehearsal with the Blue Keys vocal group. He asked them to sing it so he could make sure the harmonies worked; they liked it so much that they asked Burt if they could sing it at a Christmas party. It proved to be a hit among the party guests, and served to introduce Burt's carols to Hollywood.*

*Caroling, Caroling is one of Burt's most beloved carols. This year, caroling through the snow with friends seems highly unlikely. At a time of year when the EPC musicians are usually running from one performance to the next, they are staying closer to home! Thanks to technology at church and at home, there will be carols a-plenty during our online Worship services.*

*Keith Baumann has been working extremely hard on getting the new video and audio system up and running at EPC. There have been many technical challenges to tackle, but he has just completed his first successful test recording and is happy to announce that we will be using the new equipment to record readings and sermons for Advent and Christmas Eve. He would also like to acknowledge Rob Kopecky for all his support and help with this immense project.*

*Gayle Bisesi will continue to contribute via recording from her home studio. Look forward to seeing more members of the Bisesi family sharing their musical talents with us this month! Paul Heinz, pianist, is wisely using this time to mix a new album and, finish his basement.*

*I will appear in a virtual concert with The Lakeside Singers, Let the Merry Bells Keep Ringing!, available to access at [www.lakesidesingers.com](http://www.lakesidesingers.com). For the price of one ticket-per-internet-connection, the concert will be viewable from December 12 through the end of the year. All of the video portions that I had to record new for this concert were done in and around EPC. Make your season bright with a mix of classical, gospel, pop and fun music!*



*Thank you to those who helped make the stable for our "Fill the Stable" initiative this year: Ray Lee, Tom Turek, John Lu, and Alan West! The stable was designed beautifully to come apart if needed for future years. It's practical and functional and reminds us of Christ's birth!*

