



ELMHURST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2020

# Newsletter

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ELMHURST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## PASTOR'S + CORNER

REV. TRACI SMITH



Dear EPC Members and Friends,

By now, I hope that you've received our "Generosity 2021" stewardship appeal from Doug Fitzgerald on behalf of the Board of Trustees. The letter looks back on 2020 (what a year!) and forward to 2021 (how can we even plan, in the middle of all that is happening right now?) Doug did a masterful job helping us reflect with gratitude on the past year. Scripture tells us to give thanks in all circumstances. And so, we as Christians must give thanks, even in a global pandemic. As we breathe through our masks and sanitize our door knobs, we give thanks. As we wash our hands and read the news, we give thanks.

As we look toward the future, we give thanks. This past year, in the midst of some exceedingly harsh and scary times in our world, we were able to end the year without digging into our reserves nearly as much as we thought we might need to. This is, in large part, due to generous giving from members who have faith in our ministry and mission and know that God has good things in store for us as a community.

So I pause, and say thank you to each and every person who donated to EPC in 2020. Every check made a difference. Every Simple Give transaction made a difference. The gifts brought forward in 2020 were not merely financial, either. Some of you brought cans of soup or cases of almond milk to our food drive. Those gifts were given to people in need. Some of you wrote cards or letters or made phone calls to our homebound members. Some of you cooked soup for members of our congregation who needed a good meal. For each of these gifts, I give thanks.

The gifts that have been given in 2020 made me ask myself What is God calling us toward in 2021? Given the lack of certainty about our physical presence in the sanctuary, what are we called to do? What is the Spirit whispering in our ear. The answer, I believe, is simple. Give.

Hear these words from Luke chapter 6, "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." In other words, we get back what we put out into the world. To whom much has been given, much is required.

We have tremendous resources at EPC. A large (paid off! no debt!) building. Full and part time staff. Financial reserves. We are called to use all of these, responsibly. We are not called to keep these things to ourselves. If we can't gather shoulder to shoulder for worship, this will be a sad challenge. But it will not stop us. We will say "thank you" to God for the gifts we've been given, and we'll share those gifts with those who need them the most. In all things, give thanks.

Happy November,  
Pastor Traci

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# UPCOMING» EVENTS

## HAPPENING IN NOVEMBER »»»

1-30

**THIRTY DAYS THANKFUL** Follow along with the booklet “30 Days Thankful, or follow us on social media (Facebook and Instagram). Each day there is a prompt for something you can be thankful for.

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### **ALL SAINTS DAY | COMMUNION 11:30**

Please join us on Zoom at 11:30 am for a very special communion service. We will also be receiving two new members, Art and Suzanne Pitz, into our church community.

### **EPC THANKSGIVING ZOOM | 7PM**

25

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



### **FIRST DAY OF ADVENT | 11:30 AM**

29

The Advent season begins. Join us on Zoom to light the first candle. (See sidebar for more information)

## GET YOUR ADVENT CANDLES READY

During the four weeks of Advent (November 29, December 6, December 13, and December 20) we'll be lighting our Advent candles together at home at the beginning of our 11:30 fellowship time. All you need is an Advent wreath with four candles. You may have an Advent wreath at home to use. If you don't, all you need are four candles and a plate to put them on. We have the plates and candles all ready for you to go at church. Please pick up at your convenience or email the church office at [epc@elmhurstchurch.org](mailto:epc@elmhurstchurch.org) for a drop off! Live far away? Tell us you want to participate and we'll mail you an Advent wreath kit. Let's all celebrate in the lighting of the Advent candles together.

### **Spiritual Practice Spotlight: Gratitude**

Gratitude can be a shallow and rote practice. It can also be transformative to our Spiritual health and wellbeing. The difference, in my opinion, has to do with how much time and depth we're willing to give it. Go beyond saying one thing on Thanksgiving day. Make gratitude a daily (or weekly) practice. Try to make it as specific as possible, too. Rather than simply thanking God for family, think about specific members of your family and what they mean to you. Gratitude is an especially useful practice in challenging times.

## GRATITUDE IN UNCERTAINTY

As we head into the winter and the days get shorter, our home becomes a place of light in a cold world.

This will be especially true this year. Our homes have become work spaces, movie theaters, parks, gyms, and everything else we can cram into them, to try and tough out this year.

The separation between home and everywhere else feels slim. But carving out gratitude and space within the uncertainty is a gift to ourselves and the world. While everything feels tenuous and uncertain, holding onto the tangible things we are grateful for can feel like an anchor.

This year, I'm so thankful for a yard, for an outdoor space for my kids, for walls that keep out the rain, for a roof that works.

I'm thankful for bike trails, and warm clothes, and my husband. I'm thankful for folding chairs that help us gather outside, my sons, and ear muffs.

**Helping kids express what they're thankful for also helps them to express what they need help with, what hurts, and the complex emotions they are feeling that may not even have a name.**

**Gratitude can name them for us.**

I'm thankful for the changing seasons. These certainties, as the world swirls, feel like little true stories. They help us to stay grounded and firm in the waves and they help the kids around us to, as well.

This year, I'm also thankful for this community. We are doing church in a new way that none of us have ever done. And you have been patient and willing.

What a blessing you are to me and to this church!

As we look forward to the holidays, let's hold space for what is true now, for the small things that we forget and for the big things that keep us going.

## We need your milk jugs

Help us light our corner of Elmhurst by bringing in your clean plastic milk jugs to be made into luminaries. We need 100 to ring our church and create a Silent Night for our neighborhood.



## Ready for your close up?



We need readers for our virtual Christmas Pageant! I'll provide the costumes and the script, you read it on a Zoom call!

Tell Pastor Traci or Emily if you want to be a part of the greatest story ever told and we'll get you ready for Bethlehem.

## Advent Music: Songs for the Season of Waiting in Hope

In a typical year, Advent is the liturgical season when we prepare for the coming of the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Musically, we call upon hymns like *People, Look East!* and, *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*. Songs that remind us, during normally busy times filled with parties, fundraisers and, holiday events, that we are indeed, waiting in anticipation.

However, this is not a typical year. It's 2020. We have been waiting. Waiting for a treatment, waiting for a cure, waiting for a vaccine for COVID-19, and, waiting for a return to normal. This year, we will focus on using music to help us wait in hope.

Both ancient and contemporary songs will be featured in our online Worship services during Advent. On her 2016 recording, *Light of the World*, Lauren Daigle sings, "The world waits for a miracle, the heart longs for a little bit of hope, o come, o come, Emmanuel". Daigle wrote the song in 2013, over Skype with Paul Mabury and Paul Duncan. She told *Billboard* magazine, "I was sitting there in Louisiana and Paul was in Nashville. As the writing process progressed, I was thinking about the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments in the Bible, when God was silent for 400 years.

There was stillness in the world, people were searching. I wonder how that longing was for people living then. As I think about those many years of silence, I think of the cry of a baby. We put these stories in a parallel



position in the lyrics, connecting to our music and hoping for an ultimate connection with people, through God."

A favorite Advent hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, has roots over 1,200 years old. A fun fact about this hymn is that the verses correspond to different names for Christ, inspired by His various attributes described in the Bible.

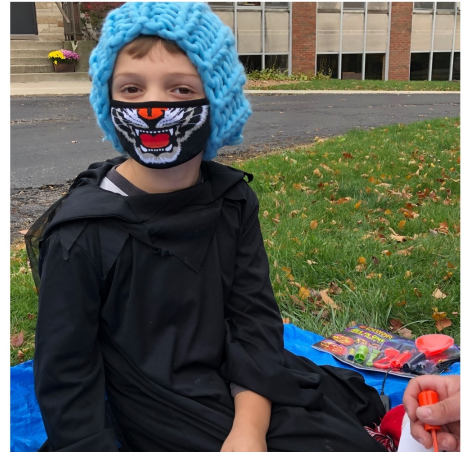
If you recite all seven verses, in Latin, the attributes are: **S**apientia (Wisdom), **A**donai (Lord), **R**adix Jesse (Root of Jesse), **C**lavis David (Key of David), **O**riens (Dayspring), **R**ex Gentium (King of Nations) and, **E**manuel (God with us). Then, if you take the first letter of the Latin attributes, in reverse order, you'll spell: **ERO CRAS**. Which translates into English as: **Tomorrow, I will come.**

**Four HUNDRED years of waiting. That might help us view this one year, 2020, in a different light.**



# HAPPENINGS EPC

We gathered on Sunday, October 25 to carve pumpkins, drink cider, and celebrate fall together. Though it was different from crowded years past, we still had a great time!



# STEWARDSHIP NEWS

## AN EXCERPT FROM OUR STEWARDSHIP LETTER...

By Doug Fitzgerald

### *In Many Ways Being Outside Is A Return To The Beginning*

In its earliest days, “church” didn’t refer to a building. It meant a community of faith. A group of people who often met outside, and who had to work around the seasons (and the Romans) to find places to get together. What brought them together was a common faith and focus.

As we look ahead to 2021, uncertainty remains. Vaccine? All clear for gathering? Continued distancing? On-line services?

In many ways we’re back to those earliest days. EPC is less about the building and more about what we can do together as an innovative, adaptable community of faith.

That’s why we’ve challenged the budget team to be as aggressive as possible in looking beyond the walls of our building. **The new year will be centered around outreach.** We want to step up our Mission budget more than any other category. In fact, we’re challenging our budgeting team to see if they can double, or even triple, our Mission support for next year.

And now we’re asking for your help. We need your pledge to know how much we can commit to mission outreach in 2021.

*Whether you plan to mail or drop off your giving envelopes — or whether you offer your gifts online through Simple Give, please return your envelope. Knowing how you plan to support EPC in 2021 helps us quickly and confidentially plan for 2021.*

We’re also so grateful for the many talents that our members share — whether it is toiling in the garden, hunkering down over the church’s accounts, doing repair projects, regularly contacting one another, or others.

Together, let’s continue to make EPC a caring, sharing, loving community of faith.

In gratitude,

Doug Fitzgerald

For the Board of Trustees

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## EACH DOLLAR MAKES A DIFFERENCE.



# STEWARDSHIP NEWS

## 2020 IN PICTURES



## HOW TO PLEDGE

- » Return your pledge card in the envelope you received in the mail
- » Fill out the form online at <http://elmhurstchurch.org/serving/stewardship-pledges/>
- » Email the main office at [epc@elmhurstchurch.org](mailto:epc@elmhurstchurch.org)



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