



9 AM Contemporary Service • Sunday, December 14, 2025

Order of Worship

Countdown to Worship

Welcome

Rev. Jim Porter

Invitation to Worship

Jane Larsen

Leader: Today, we focus on Joy. Not just the jingling, external kind of joy, but the kind of joy that settles in the soul, filling our hearts, quietly reminding us: God has chosen us too.

All: Come, let us worship the living God with a joy that runs deep!

Worship Songs - ***“O Come Let Us Adore Him (Every Generation)”***
“Go Tell It On The Mountain”

Greeting One Another in Christian Love

(Before you sit down, please turn and greet your neighbor. Also, please take a moment to sign the Friendship Pad located at the end of each pew and pass it along to the person next to you. Thanks!)

Advent Candle Lighting – JOY!

The Ripley Family

Reader 1: Today marks the Third Sunday of Advent, as we light the candle of Joy. Not a joy that depends on circumstances or fades like holiday glitter—but a deep, lasting joy that settles into the soul.

Reader 2: This is the joy of Mary, who sang with confidence: *“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”* Her joy pulsed in her heart—even in uncertainty—because she knew God had chosen her.

Reader 1: This is the joy that carries Christ’s light into the world—a joy that sticks, and a joy that shines.

(Light the first, second, and third candles.)

All: Holy God, fill us with a joy that glows in the dark. Teach us to rejoice from the depths of our souls, because you are with us and you have chosen us too. Amen.

Message to the Children

Wayne Potter

(Children are invited to come forward at this time for the children’s message.)

Scripture Reading – Luke 1:26-38

Sermon

“A Joy that Touches our Heart and Soul”

Rev. Jim Porter

Responsive Song - ***“The First Noel”***

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Giving Back to God

- Our Offering- Your gifts honor God and help provide financial support of the ministries and mission of this church.
- Our Service- Get connected! Fill out a Connection Card to get more involved in the life and ministries of the church.
- Our Prayers- How can we help you in prayer today? Fill out a prayer card and let us know.
Please place your financial gift, Connection Card, or Prayer Card in the Offering Box in the narthex.

Closing Song – “Jingle Bells”

Charge and Benediction

Leader: Go into the world with the quiet, steady joy that Mary knew —
a joy rooted not in the circumstances of life but in God’s faithful presence.
Let your soul magnify the Lord in your words and actions,
let your spirit rejoice in God your Savior in all aspects of life,
and may your life shine with the deep joy of Christ that cannot be dimmed.

*For anyone desiring special prayers today, Mel Matchett will be at the front of the sanctuary to pray for you.
Please come forward after the service.*

Postlude

Worship Concludes – Service Begins!

Thank you. Special thanks to our ushers: Shelia Conrad & Lorraine Berak, our snack volunteer: Bonnie Johnson, and our coffee volunteer: Bonnie Johnson.



10:30 AM Traditional Service • Sunday, December 14, 2025

Order of Worship

Countdown to Worship

Prelude – “Gospel Magnificat” by Drennan

Welcome

Rev. Jim Porter

Invitation and Centering Words

Today, we focus on Joy. Not just the jingling, external kind of joy, but the kind of joy that settles in the soul, filling our hearts, quietly reminding us: God has chosen us too.

Ring of the Historic Church Bell

Call to Worship

Doug White

Leader: Let our souls magnify the Lord.

People: Let our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.

Leader: God looks with favor on the humble, and lifts up the lowly.

People: Holy is God's name!

All: Come, let us worship the living God with a joy that runs deep!

Opening Prayer

Doug White

All: God of unexpected joy, You come to us in quiet moments, in whispered promises, in unnoticed mercy, and joy begins to rise. Awaken in us the hidden joy of Your presence. May our souls, like Mary's, magnify Your name. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

Opening Hymn 121 – *“O Little Town of Bethlehem”*

Advent Candle Lighting – JOY!

Phyllis Staley, Sandra Sinclair, and Sandi Gray

Reader 1: Today marks the Third Sunday of Advent, as we light the candle of Joy. Not a joy that depends on circumstances or fades like holiday glitter—but a deep, lasting joy that settles into the soul.

Reader 2: This is the joy of Mary, who sang with confidence: *“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”* Her joy pulsed in her heart—even in uncertainty—because she knew God had chosen her.

Reader 3: This is the joy that carries Christ’s light into the world—a joy that sticks, and a joy that shines.

(Light the first, second, and third candles.)

All: Holy God, fill us with a joy that glows in the dark. Teach us to rejoice from the depths of our souls, because you are with us and you have chosen us too. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Doug White

All: God of Joy and Love, too often our joy has been shallow—dependent on circumstances, borrowed from distractions, and easily worn thin. Forgive us when we overlook the joy that pulses quietly beneath the surface of our lives—the joy of being loved, chosen, and called by You. Restore to us the joy of our salvation. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

(Please pause for prayers of silent meditation)

Assurance of Pardon

Doug White

Leader: Hear this good news: God sees you. God chooses you. Just as Mary discovered, your life matters because God has drawn near. In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven, loved, and called.

All: Thanks be to God!

Passing of the Peace

Doug White

Leader: In the Spirit of deep joy and gracious love, may the peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

(Also, please take a moment to sign the Friendship Pad at the end of the pew and pass it along to those sitting beside you.)

Anthem – *“Glorious Light”* arr. by Shackley

Scripture Reading – Luke 1:26-38

Sermon

“A Joy that Touches our Heart and Soul”

Rev. Jim Porter

Responsive Hymn 118 – *“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks”*

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Giving Back to God

- Our Offering- Your gifts honor God and help provide financial support of the ministries and mission of this church.
- Our Service- Get connected! Fill out a Connection Card to get more involved in the life and ministries of the church.
- Our Prayers- How can we help you in prayer today? Fill out a prayer card and let us know.
Please place your financial gift, Connection Card, or Prayer Card in the Offering Box in the narthex.

Doxology – ***“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”***

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Offering Prayer

All: God of joy and generosity, we give not out of obligation, but out of joy—a joy that flows from recognizing Your presence in our lives. Take these gifts, and use them to bring light, hope, and joy to this world You love. Amen.

Closing Hymn 134 – ***“Joy to the World”***

Charge and Benediction

Leader: Go into the world with the quiet, steady joy that Mary knew —
a joy rooted not in the circumstances of life but in God’s faithful presence.
Let your soul magnify the Lord in your words and actions,
let your spirit rejoice in God your Savior in all aspects of life,
and may your life shine with the deep joy of Christ that cannot be dimmed.

Benediction Response – ***“Let There Be Peace On Earth”***

For anyone desiring special prayers today, Ken Kohlman will be at the front of the sanctuary to pray for you. Please come forward after the service.

Postlude

Worship Concludes – Service Begins!

Thank you. Special thanks to our ushers: Dave Nussdorfer & Rick Welsh, our snack volunteer: Pam Coleman, and our coffee volunteer: Bonnie Johnson.

Thank you for your generous support! Your gifts help sustain the ministries and mission of our church. You can give by mail (404 Spruce St., Elk Rapids, MI 49629), online at www.erfpc.org (click “Giving”), or by contacting Treasurer Mike Husby at finmanager@erfpc.org. Thank you!

Nursery – Qualified caregivers welcome infants and children during the service.

Advent Series & Dinner – Mondays 12/15 at 5:30PM

There is still one more evening in our Advent Series! The birth of Jesus is an exciting time of the year. It is a time of renewal, love and hope. During Advent take a "sabbatical" every Monday night Dec 8 and 15 by joining fellow members in a discussion of the love and hope Christmas brings each year. There is a meal at 5:30 each night followed by a 15 minute video by Max Lucado and concluding with discussion ending no later than 7:30. If you can only make it to one or two that is okay. Each lesson is independent of the previous one. Please sign up in the narthex so we have enough food for everyone. We hope to see you on Monday!

Special Christmas Services this Advent Season – Join us this Advent season for these special services:

- ❖ Sunday, December 21 One Service at 10:30AM – Christmas Pageant & Worship Service
Plus, Luncheon Honoring Wayne and Marcy Potter, immediately following worship
- ❖ Monday, December 22 Longest Night Service at 7:00 PM
- ❖ Wednesday, December 24 5:00 PM Contemporary Christmas Eve Service
7:00 PM Traditional Christmas Eve Service
Candle lighting at both services
- ❖ Sunday, December 28 One Service at 10:30AM – Celebrating the Birth of Christ with
Christmas Gospel Music

Plan to attend and invite your friends and family, and celebrate the season with us!

Join Us for Advent Candle Lighting! Each Sunday morning in Advent, a family, group, or individual lights the candles on our Advent Wreath and shares a short devotional from Pastor Jim. It's a wonderful way to be part of our worship—kids are more than welcome to join in! **Stop by the Activity Center to sign up for a Sunday that works for you.**

Memorial Plants – Reserve Your Plant Today, December 14

Christmas is a time to honor loved ones with a \$10.00 donation for a poinsettia plant to decorate the church sanctuary. The names of those you wish to remember will be in the Christmas Eve bulletin. To reserve your poinsettia, fill out the form at the Activity Center and return it with your donation to the box by Sunday, December 14.

Christmas Pageant – One 10:30AM Service on December 21

The Christmas Pageant is next Sunday, December 21 and everyone is invited! We'll have One 10:30 a.m. service featuring the pageant, and all children and youth are welcome to participate – there are walk-in roles available. If you have any questions, please contact Tara DenHerder at 231-590-5346.

Special Luncheon Honoring Wayne & Marcy Potter – Sunday, December 21

Join us for a special luncheon immediately following the Christmas Pageant as we celebrate and thank Wayne Potter for his 13 years of faithful service as our Director of Youth and Family Life Ministries—and honor Marcy, whose support and involvement have been a meaningful part of this ministry journey. A wrapped box will be available in the Narthex for those who wish to offer the Potters a monetary gift of appreciation; checks may be made out directly to Wayne.

Everyone is invited to stay for lunch as we share food, fellowship, and heartfelt memories with Wayne and Marcy. Let's come together to bless them as they step into their next chapter!

The Longest Night Service – Monday, December 22 at 7:00 PM

You are invited to a quiet service called Longest Night: Christmas in a Time of Loss on Monday, December 22 at 7:00 p.m. This gathering is especially for those who are finding it hard to navigate the holidays. There are so many reasons the season can feel heavier—grief or illness, anxiety or estrangement, financial stress, or simply the exhaustion of trying to hold it all together. Sometimes, the brightness of the season only deepens the ache. If that's where you find yourself, you are not alone. Come for a gentle, low-key time of worship, a quiet space held within the peace of the Christmas story and the deep hope it still offers.

Christmas Eve Services at 5:00 & 7:00 PM

Join us on Christmas Eve, December 24 at 5:00 p.m. for a Contemporary Service, and 7:00 p.m. for a Traditional Service in person or online. Candle lighting will be included in both services and nursery will be available. Invite your friends and family and celebrate Christmas Eve with us!

ONE Service at 10:30AM on Sunday, December 28

Join us on the last Sunday of the year, Sunday, December 28 for ONE Service at 10:30 a.m. Wayne Potter, our Director of Youth & Family Life Ministries, will be sharing the message on his last Sunday with us, and Cheryl Knight, our Music Director, has planned a great selection of gospel music to celebrate the Birth of Christ. End your year by worshipping with us!

Stewardship 2026: Grace, Gratitude & Generosity

Thank you, thank you, thank you! The Stewardship Ministry Team and Board of Trustees are grateful to all of you who have turned in your pledge cards and joined us in supporting the work and mission of First Pres for 2026. We also give thanks for the overflowing barrel (it was emptied more than once) for our first "sock drive" and are excited to bring these to Safe Harbor to show our love in a tangible way to neighbors in need as the cold weather begins to arrive.

Each and every pledge is important for our ability to plan our work for 2026. If you haven't already yet completed your pledge card, there is still time to do so and place it in the collection box or send it to the office addressed to Mike Husby, Treasurer. Pledge cards are available in the Narthex or can be requested from the office.

Let us take to heart Paul's words: "Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means." (2 Corinthians 8:11)

A Special Message from Our Treasurer

We have currently received **79 pledges** for 2026, which is over **31 fewer than last year**. Thank you to all the members who have already filled out their 2026 pledge forms.

For those who have not yet had the opportunity, please remember that if circumstances do not allow you to make a pledge for 2026, **a simple note to that effect is extremely helpful**. It assists us in our planning and, more importantly, lets us know that you are still part of our church family.

We remain committed to following the path of Jesus in 2026, and **your support makes this work possible**. Thank you, Mike Husby, Treasurer

2025 Annual Reports Due Friday, January 9 —Ministry Teams and Group Chairpersons: It's time to begin preparing your Annual Report summarizing your 2025 activities. Please keep your report to one page, format it as a Word document, and email it to the church office (info@erfpc.org) by Friday, January 9, 2026. For questions, contact Ellen in the church office (231-264-8167).

Share Your Gifts in Worship! Do you enjoy singing, playing an instrument, or offering special music? Or are you more comfortable behind the scenes with tech and AV? We're looking for people to join our worship and tech teams! If you're interested or want to learn more, contact Kyle Ripley at 616-888-9788 or ksripley@gmail.com.

Resources for Grief Care — Stephen Ministry offers one-on-one support and grief resources, including pamphlets and a display in the narthex. Information on local counseling options is also available. To meet with a Stephen Minister, please contact the office or a Stephen Minister directly.

LIVING ON - GENERAL LOSS GROUPS

The focus of Living On support groups is to express feelings and experiences related to the loss of a loved one in a supportive, caring, and non-judgmental environment. Grief and loss topics are addressed as they arise, depending on the interests of those attending the group.

1st Tuesday of the month 📅

6pm - 7pm
RSVP with Cindy Palmer
248-334-1323 • cpalmer@hom.org

2nd Tuesday of the month 📅

6pm - 7:15pm
Hospice of Michigan office
989 Spaulding Ave. SE, Ada
RSVP with Ryan Miller
616-356-5228 • rymiller@hom.org

1st Wednesday of the month 📅

5:30pm - 6:30pm
Hospice of Michigan office
199 Long Rapids Rd., Alpena
RSVP with Stacy Malenfant
989-358-4295 • smalenfa@hom.org

2nd Wednesday of the month 📅

11am - 12pm
Hospice of Michigan office
830 S. Otsego Ave. Gaylord
RSVP with Tavia Mulholland
989-705-2603 • tmulholland@hom.org

2nd Wednesday of the month 📅

1pm - 2:30pm
Hospice of Michigan office
932 N. Mitchell St., Cadillac
RSVP with Will Gasper
231-444-3350 • wgasper@hom.org

4th Tuesday of the month 📅

10:30am - 11:30am
RSVP with Meredith Hartmann
734-709-3088
mhartmann@arborhospice.org

Alzheimer's & Dementia Caregiver Support Group – 3rd Friday of Each Month at 2PM

For those caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia. Share support, encouragement, and guidance in a welcoming environment. The group meets on the 3rd Friday of each month from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Please contact facilitator Kathy Dork at 248-568-4651 if you'd like to attend or if you have questions.

Community Cupboard — Village Market Community Cash starts September 1st and runs through May 31st. Save your receipts and drop them in the church donation box (lower left corner of the mail boxes in the Narthex) or mail them to PO Box 572, Elk Rapids, MI 49629. Those receipts help us purchase up to 3 months of food for our families. Thank you!

Thanks to feedback from a recent client survey, the Elk Rapids Community Cupboard is expanding its hours to ensure greater accessibility. It will now be open every other Saturday from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., starting November 22. These new hours are in addition to existing hours every other week on Tuesdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. and Fridays from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Visit elkrapidscommunitycupboard.com or call Pam Coleman at 847-445-8239 for more information.

This Week's Activities

Sun. 12/14

9:00 a Contemporary Service
10:00 a Sunday School & Youth – LH
10:30 a Traditional Service
11:45 a Pageant Rehearsal

Mon. 12/15

5:30 p Advent Series & Dinner

Tues. 12/16

Wed. 12/17

3:00 p Service at Autumn House
6:30 p Praise Team Practice

Thurs. 12/18

7:30 a Men's Bible Study

Fri. 12/19

10:30 a Choir Rehearsal – FH
1:00 p Holiday Fun – FH
2:00 p Alz. Support Group

Discover Your Gifts! Take our quick Volunteer Accelerator Survey to find where you can best



serve. Scan the QR code or use the link: volunteeraccelerator.ministryarchitects.com/ERFPC/survey.html
Thanks for your willingness to help out!