



One 10:30 AM Service • Sunday, December 21, 2025

Order of Worship

Countdown to Worship

Welcome

Rev. Jim Porter

Invitation to Worship

Adaline Peck

Leader: Rejoice and be glad! God is at work in our midst even while we wait
and hope and pray for God's peace to come upon the earth.

All: Come, let us worship the living God!

Worship Songs - ***"What Child is This?"***
"Away in a Manger"
"King of Kings"

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 – LOVE

Nate & Kelly Peck
Adaline, Kady, & Fynn

Reader 1: On this final Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of **Love**. Love that does not stand at a
distance, but draws near—into the mess and wonder of being human.

Reader 2: Emmanuel means *God with us*. Not just for us. Not merely above us. But **with** us—in our
pain, in our joy, in our ordinary days.

Reader 1: Love shows up. Love stays. Love has a name: Jesus.

(Light all four candles.)

**All: God of Love, draw near to us. Help us draw near to one another. May your love take
root in us, take shape through us, and shine into the world. Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Nate & Kelly Peck
Adaline, Kady, & Fynn

All: God of love and joy, thank you for your presence in our lives.

During this time of worship, draw us closer to you and to one another.

May we grow in our love for you and for our neighbor.

May we lay aside our worries, trusting that you hear what lies in our hearts.

**May we dwell in your peace and be guided by the One who came into the world so long
ago and promises to come into our lives today--- your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.**

In His name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 9:6-7

Polly Conrad

Children's Pageant

Directed by Tara DenHerder

"You're Here" by Francesca Battistelli

"Joy To The World"

Responsive Song - ***“Little Drummer Boy”***

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer

Rev. Jim Porter

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 – ***“Joy To The World”***

Charge and Blessing

Leader: In the coming week what does God call us to do?

**People: We are called to: Introduce Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him;
deepen the faith and commitment of those who already know Him;
and demonstrate Christ’s way of love in service to the world.**

For anyone desiring special prayers today, Jan Burns 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: Gary & Jan Burns, Don Reynolds, and Kevin Hoch, our snack volunteer, and our coffee volunteer: Judy Matchett.

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.

Special Luncheon Honoring Wayne & Marcy Potter – Following the Service Today

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!

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

- ❖ 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!

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!

Season 5 of The Chosen is on its way! We'll be starting that series on Monday evenings beginning January 5th for 8 weeks. Mark your calendar now for Monday evenings. Books and more information will be available soon.

Peace, Joy, and the Gift of Generosity

What word do you use most often during the Christmas season? Joy? Peace? What about "gift?" From the moment we carve the Thanksgiving turkey or even before, we run around frantically looking for the perfect gift for our loved ones. On Christmas Eve, children can hardly sleep, wondering what treasures wait beneath the tree.

The tie between giving and Christmas dates back to the nativity story. In 2 Corinthians 9:15, Paul calls Jesus God's "indescribable gift." God gave the greatest gift in history, inspiring us to reflect on His generosity not just during the holidays but year-round.

If you've already made your pledge, we're deeply grateful. Your generosity helps First Pres plan for the upcoming year and will touch countless lives through worship, mission and outreach, adult and youth programs, and so much more. If you haven't had a chance to make your pledge yet, we invite you to prayerfully consider doing so during this meaningful season. Every pledge, no matter the size, helps us step boldly into God's vision for the future.

Together, we can make a lasting impact near and far. Thank you for your faithfulness, your prayers, and your generosity. May this season fill your home and your heart with peace, joy, and the light of Christ.

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.

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.

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!



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

This Week's Activities

Sun. 12/21

10:30 a One 10:30AM Pageant
11:30 a Special Luncheon Honoring
Wayne & Marcy Potter

Mon. 12/22

7:00 p The Longest Night Service

Tues. 12/23

Wed. 12/24 – Christmas Eve

5:00 p Contemporary Family Service
7:00 p Traditional Service

Thurs. 12/25 – Christmas Day
Church Office Closed

Fri. 12/26 – Church Office Closed

10:30 a Choir Rehearsal – FH