

Eastminster Eagle

Volume 42, Issue 12

December 2025

Dear Members and Friends,

We continue our newsletter series on different parts of our worship service. We have covered the Call to Worship and Confession and Pardon. For December we are going to look at the Prayer for Illumination. It seems appropriate for the darkest month of the year and for a season centered around Advent candles and Christmas lights.

The first known Prayer for Illumination was written in the 4th Century AD by John Chrysostom, the archbishop of Constantinople. Here it is:

“Illumine my heart, O Master who lovest mankind, with the pure light of Thy divine knowledge. Open Thou the eyes of my mind to the understanding of Thy Gospel teachings. Implant also in me a love for Thy blessed commandments. Grant me the grace to overcome all my carnal desires, so that I may enter more completely into a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well pleasing to Thee; for Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee do we ascribe glory, together with Thine all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit; now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Jesus is the Light of the World and his Word illuminates us. In the Prayer for Illumination, we call upon the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies to receive God’s Word through scripture so that we might live in the light instead of darkness. You have heard people say, “let’s shed some light on the situation.” It means new information is offered to give us greater understanding and clarification of what is happening and what we should do. Scripture is God’s way of shedding light on our situation.

We can no more understand scripture without the help of the Holy Spirit than we can read in the dark. We need spiritual light to see with our spiritual eyes instead of our fleshly eyes that cannot penetrate God’s words. And that is why we pray before we read scriptures on Sunday morning.

I urge you to pray a Prayer for Illumination whenever you approach the reading of Scripture. The light will shine for you, and the greater miracle is that in time the light will shine THROUGH you. In the way you live your life informed by Scripture illumined by the Spirit, the light of Christ will shine in the darkness of the world and others will be able to see as well.

Light your light shine!

Pastor Paul

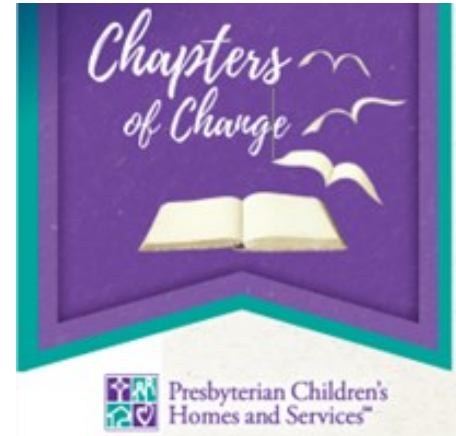
Eastminster was once again well represented at the annual Presbyterian Children's Homes and ServicesSM (PCHAS) fundraising luncheon held on November 6th at the Double Tree Hotel at Lincoln Center. The theme for this year's luncheon was **"Chapters of Change."**

Nine ladies represented Eastminster – Denise, Christine B., Jo, Vicki Lynn, Philis, Melanie L., Judy, Melanie T., and Patience.

Our Leadership Gift of \$500.00, in addition to those received that day at our table, and an additional amount from offerings contributed through Eastminster, enabled PCHAS to not only meet their goal of \$150,000 this year, but to exceed it by \$50,000 for a total to date of \$200,000 and still counting!

Our hosts always present such a lovely luncheon – full house, beautiful room and tables, delicious meal, great service, and speakers that are so inspiring.

Thank you to all those who attended and gave so generously and those of you who contributed in the pew or on-line. In true Eastminster fashion, we stepped up again this year for such a worthy ministry and aided PCHAS in meeting their goals.





“PIGGY BANK”

Please remember that we have a “piggy bank” for Christ in Asia donations. This helps in purchasing Bibles in the native languages of India. Each Bible is only \$5. You can find the bank on the narthex table on Sunday mornings, or in the conference room on Wednesdays during Bible study. What a blessing to be able to purchase Bibles for \$5 and change lives!

OH, LOOK! HOW PRETTY!

How would you like to enjoy your morning coffee while looking at the Rose Window on your mug? Coffee mugs with our sanctuary’s beautiful Rose Window have been purchased, to be included in our first-time visitor’s bags, but we have enough to share!

You can view the mug on the narthex table on Sunday. If you wish to own one, you can make a donation for the mug. It’s worthy of a good donation!

Let Judy Moreland or Bruce Turner know





I'm so grateful to all who have offered to be liturgists. Scripture readers and Advent candlelighters for the Seasons of Advent and Christmas. HUGE THANKS to the choir for their continued dedication to bringing and supporting music for the scriptures and worship.

I wrote the following last year but felt the message from Dr. Powery was worth revisiting.

Since the sanctuary was completed, it has been our tradition to light candles at the beginning of each Advent Sunday, as well as on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The first candle represents Hope. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we reflect on the love of God that Jesus emphasized in His teachings and the hope for His return, bringing God's love for all humanity. We also hold onto hope that God's Spirit will transform the hearts of those who harbor hate, anger, and bitterness. We hope for peace and goodwill to prevail in the world, and I hope that it flourishes within each of us.

A few years ago, I wrote about the spiritual "Gotta Whisper, Gotta Shout," which prompted me to look inward and ask myself, "Have I shared as I should?" This recalls another spiritual we sing every year, either as a congregation or performed by the choir on our behalf: "Go Tell It on the Mountain," found as #136 in our Glory to God hymnal. I must admit that, aside from grasping its surface meaning, I hadn't paid close attention to what the text genuinely calls us to do. However, my perspective shifted during an online seminar about using spirituals in worship. The presenter read some lines from the devotional book **Rise Up Shepherd: Advent Reflections on the Spirituals** by Rev. Dr. Luke A. Powery, the dean of Duke University Chapel and an esteemed professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School, known for his excellence in preaching.

From now on, singing the spiritual should remind us of the message Dr. Powery emphasizes in his book: "Go Tell It on the Mountain," which calls us to share God's love as demonstrated through Jesus. It's not just about singing the words during worship; we are called to put those words into action. This involves helping the poor, supporting the homeless, comforting those who have lost loved ones or jobs, assisting the mentally ill, and being a positive voice for those in need. There are countless opportunities to share God's message of hope and love through both Jesus's story and our own experiences. .

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Fred's Notes Continued from page 4

We can go somewhere and never say one word. Or we can speak but never go. Witnessing the birth of Jesus requires both –going and telling, acting and speaking— because Jesus requires our whole being, not just a part but our bodies and voices, the fullness of who we are. Let his coming come to you in such a way today that you can't help but be filled with the energy to go and tell some good news in a world full of bad news." (Dr. Powery)

Let us pray: *Coming God, come into my life that I may receive the joy of going and telling the good news of your birth in the world. Amen.*

P.S. The choir is working on Advent and Christmas Music. If you have attended our Lessons and Carols service before or haven't, join us on Sunday, Dec 21. We hear the scriptures of Advent and Christmas; We sing carols, songs, and anthems. Melody and the choir are joined this year by Jackie Akin, Flute; Robert Gonzales, Violin; Avery McVey, Percussion; Sean Turner, bass; and Carlos Vargas, Cello

DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICES

December 7 – 2nd Sunday of Advent (PEACE) Celebration of The Lord's Supper

Sermon: "Peace Is Coming"

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

December 14 – 3rd Sunday of Advent (JOY)

Sermon: "Joy Is Coming"

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:2-11

December 21 – 4th Sunday of Advent (LOVE)

Sermon: "Love Is Coming"

Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

December 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (7:00 p.m.) Sermon: "Heaven Has Arrived"

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

December 28 – 1st Sunday of Christmas

Guest Preacher

CHURCH MISSION

Embrace the Word

- By accepting God's unconditional love.
Let us remember that God proved His love for us through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.
Let us acknowledge that God is faithful to us, and in response, let us give Him first place in our lives.
- By living in a faithful relationship with God's living Word, Jesus Christ.
Let us learn to be still and listen for God's direction for our lives.
Let us strive toward the discipline of daily prayer and thanksgiving.
- By studying God's written Word, the Bible.
Let us endeavor to be faithful in daily Bible reading.
Let us listen respectfully and share ideas in a relational group.
Let us seek spiritual nourishment from weekly participation in Church School and other occasions for both personal and group Bible study.
Let us further broaden our understanding of God's Word through other programs such as Presbyterian Women, seasonal Bible studies and Vacation Church School.
Let us open ourselves to opportunities beyond our church doors offered by our Cluster, Presbytery and Synod and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Celebrate the Word

- By worshiping God as an accepting church family.
Let us take joy through weekly participation in corporate worship and Christian nurture.
Let us celebrate the sacraments of baptism and holy communion with renewed thoughtfulness.
Let us be receptive to varied styles of worship in praise and music.
- By welcoming all to fellowship.
Let us invite all we encounter to share in the activities of our congregation.
Let us extend friendly greetings to our guests and members, not forgetting our children and youth.
Let us offer continuing encouragement to our guests and members through greetings, calls, notes and visits.
- By giving joyfully of our time, talents and blessings.
Let us be generous in sharing our diverse God-given talents and gifts in the work of the church.
Let us gratefully count our blessings and return our tithes and offerings to God.

Reflect the Word

- By striving to live a life guided by the Holy Spirit.
Let us look for God in everyone we encounter.
Let us live and work together in harmony and peace.
Let us appreciate God's creation and be good stewards of our environment.
Let us be loving, kind and respectful in all we do and say.
- By being God's hands and feet in mission fields, near and far.
Let us reach out with compassion to help relieve suffering by involvement with agencies that provide food, clothing, shelter and other necessities to those in crisis.
Let us support programs that promote self-respect and self-sufficiency through education, counseling, job training and life skills enrichment.
Let us sustain Presbyterian efforts in the fields of disaster relief, elder care and children's services.
- By sharing the message of God's grace.
Let us not be afraid to offer our personal witness to God's life-changing love.
Let us trust God to use everyone creatively, recognizing music, art, drama and dance as meaningful ways of telling the story.
Let us support the establishment of new churches and congregations with our prayers and our resources.
Let us train and equip leaders to serve the church.

Christmas is Coming!

Christmas will be here before you know it, and the Outreach Committee has been busy planning a special project for the season.

This year we're going to focus on the women of Oxford House in Eastminster's immediate neighborhood. While the scope of this project may be small, we see the potential for a BIG impact.

The project will involve setting up really whiz-bang gift baskets of personal items that will make the ladies feel cozy, pampered, and loved. These will be given at a special "High Tea" that we hope will provide an experience that is both out-of-the-ordinary and meaningful for everyone involved.

The event is still in its planning stages, and more details will come as we get closer to Advent. Contact Judy Moreland or Charlotte Turner if you have questions (or cool ideas) for making this happen.

Outreach Committee

Church Wide Gathering

Save the date, January 10, 2026. We will be holding a church wide gathering at Springhill Retreat Center from noon – 6:00 p.m. The purpose of this gathering is to unpack, discern and understand our church's Mission Statement. Embrace the Word, Celebrate the Word and Reflect the Word. You are invited to join us at Springhill Retreat Center at noon. We will have snacks for the afternoon and end with a meal of soups and salad. More information will be coming soon with additional information regarding the Mission Statement. We will spend the day in small groups looking at the Mission Statement and ensuring that what we are planning for the church is in alignment with the Mission Statement. Watch the bulletin and future newsletter articles with more information regarding our Mission Statement.

Intergenerational Christmas

We will have an intergenerational Christmas Program, Sunday, December 14th at 6:00 p.m. You are invited to come for a potluck meal at 5:00 p.m. for this day. Watch the bulletin for sign up for the Potluck meal.

Back in October, as part of the Outreach Committee neighborhood farming initiative, several members of the congregation went for a walk and hung bags on the doorknobs of houses close to the church. Those bags included a postcard inviting our neighbors to worship with us, and the bags included a couple of batteries with a reminder to replace the old ones in their smoke detectors with the new batteries. We delivered to 87 homes in the neighborhood.



About a week later, we received an email from one of the families, thanking us for the batteries.

The message read:

Subject: Batteries

Guys, this past Sunday, after we came from church, we were greatly surprised by your gift of two new batteries for our fire alarm unit. We want to let you know how much we appreciate that sweet gesture of yours. But our biggest surprise was that we had not changed those batteries for over 15 years. WOW! We almost fainted. That means you probably not only gave us that gift, but perhaps saved our lives as well.

We just can't find words to appreciate your gesture, but rest assured that's something we won't forget for the rest of our lives. May the Lord richly bless your lives and your ministry.

Sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. A. Rodriguez

—God at work in and around Eastminster!



Pastor	Rev. Dr. Paul Burns
Director of Music	Fred P. Watkins
Organist	Melody S. Davis
Administrative Assistant	Cathy Schingle
Hostess/Housekeeper	Minerva Hernandez
Child Care Provider	Betty Crabtree
Audio/Visual Technician	Sean Turner

Chandra Anderson
 Melody Davis
 Philis Knox
 Dick Knox
 Kathy Kreger
 Michele Pappas
 Bruce Turner
 Patience Uche
 Darlene West



FRESH WIND, FRESH FIRE

What happens when God's Spirit invades the hearts of His people? Recently, a small group of Eastminster members completed a study of the book "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire" by Jim Cymbala. For an hour every Wednesday after regular Bible Study, we discussed a chapter and prayed together. It is the story of a broken-down church in one of America's toughest neighborhoods, the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church, and what God can do whenever people get serious about prayer. The true stories in the book are both amazing and heart-warming, as well as awe inspiring. The study group became excited about what God can and will do when our church becomes a more intentionally prayerful church. Knowing that prayer is the hope of our church moving forward, we need to listen as the Holy Spirit

guides us, and trust that God is both listening and guiding us as we step out of our comfort zones. We can all find hope in prayer!

Beginning in January, on Wednesdays at noon, our church bells will toll, inviting church members and our community to come in for weekly prayer time. We will be gathering at the Chancel in front of the sanctuary. Our prayers will be going up for our church, our community, our city, our country, the world, and all personal prayers which we bring in our needs.

We hope (and pray) that you will join us, but if you cannot join us in person, set an alarm to remind you to pray with us at noon that Wednesday! God bless us all!



Eastminster has been intentionally growing its online presence on social media with a sharp focus on moving our visibility up in search engines such as Google. Another place to grow our online footprint is the review site Yelp. If you are looking for what others are saying about an organization you might want to visit or do business with Yelp, it's a great place to look.

Here's a challenge to all of you reading this newsletter: visit Yelp and write a review of Eastminster. It's pretty easy to write a review, if you never have before, and it will help us do what we are called to do: make disciples of all nations.

Here's the website address: [EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - Updated November 2025 - 6550 Samuell Blvd, Dallas, Texas - Religious Organizations - Phone Number - Yelp](#)



Here's the Eastminster Munch Bunch on November 9th at B.J.'s at Town East Mall

We had 18 join us, not counting Santa Claus – shown with Ethan and Mackenzie – Jan Anderson's grandchildren.

Glad that Evelyn, Toni, Blair, Bryston, David, Reggie, and Vicki Gayle joined most of the "regulars."

Hope you will consider our next outing – After the holidays! And we are open to your suggestions of restaurants .





DECEMBER

Birthdays & Anniversaries

BIRTHDAYS

Diane Uche 12/2
 Melanie Litle 12/10
 Sue Bender 12/14
 Denise Bennett 12/15
 Christine Blair 12/15
 Fred Watkins 12/16
 Sean Talley
 Ian Kelleher 12/31

ANNIVERSARIES

Bill and Melody Davis 12/22
 Blair and Cindy Garrett 12/29

November Session Highlights

At the November 16 Stated Meeting, the Session

- Enjoyed a meal provided by Tom and Michele Pappas.
- Received Eli Campbell into membership by reaffirmation of faith.
- Heard a report from the Treasurer that we are still in the black for the year. She also noted that this is the last week for St. Peter's Anglican Church to rent our chapel, which will affect the previously-reported budgeted income.
- Approved restarting talks with the United African Presbyterian Church regarding their potentially leasing space in our building.
- Noted that the All-Church Retreat will be held on January 10, 2026, at Springhill Retreat Center.
- Approved the transition from a monthly newsletter to a weekly edition.
- Heard a report from Darlene West on the Presbytery meeting.
- Approved the creation of a designated-by-Session fund, 3735, as the Jeri Turner Memorial Fund.

THE PLEASANT GROVE FOOD PANTRY

The Pantry receives food shipments on Monday and Tuesday of each week. The volunteers stock the shelves. The guests fill out a form and register and keep registrations on file. Our Darlene West handles registrations. Once their registration has been accepted and verified, the guest then goes shopping with a volunteer to try to put together a box of needs for a family of four for a week.

Many of the volunteers are Eastminster members: Wayne Maples, Jacob Whitley, Melissa Whitley, Michele Pappas, Darlene West, Evelyn Parker, Janice Bell, and others.

Wayne Maples is the treasurer. Michele is on the Board as well. Additionally, Reggie Major has been asked and has agreed to serve on the Board starting January 1, 2026.

The Pantry is a critical part of the “care” network in East Dallas / Pleasant Grove. Just last month the Pantry received a \$75,000 donation from the Pleasant Grove Kiwanis Club. They also received a \$5,000 grant at the beginning of November. The importance of the food pantry was highlighted during the government shutdown. Even though the worst of the SNAP loss impact had not completely cycled through, the Pantry “served: numbers were starting to move up significantly.

The Pantry is uniquely placed and uniquely suited to fulfill Jesus’s assignment for us: to feed the hungry. Because it is off campus, we at Eastminster don’t always recognize how critical our work there is to the neighborhoods. Yet our members have served and continue to serve many, many hours, all unselfishly.

We will have three members on the Board. The Pantry needs more volunteers and more money. There are a number of social services they could offer beyond the food pantry function, but need more help and money to provide those services.

Please take time to familiarize yourself with the Pleasant Grove Food Pantry. Talk to our members that volunteer, go visit, go work once or twice, learn about the food needs of the Pleasant Grove neighborhoods (1 in 8 people in the United States receive SNAP benefits and are “nutritionally challenged.”).

They can always use more volunteers and more donations. I am so proud of Michele and all the other volunteers (not just the ones from Eastminster). On the days she volunteers, she comes home exhausted. I’m sure the other volunteers do too. Let’s keep their profile elevated here at Eastminster. Let’s think of ways to help. Let’s think of ways to say thanks. Let’s thank God for the Pleasant Grove Food Pantry and the people that make it happen week after week.