

EAST PLAINS UNITED CHURCH
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025

Gathering in Community

Carol Singing

Introit

Peace Greeting: May Christ's peace fill you with joy during this season of hope. May signs of God's love bring peace and serenity to you, as you await the birth of light.

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Opening Hymn

People, Look East

VU: 9

Territorial Acknowledgement

Grace Boogers

We acknowledge that we are worshipping on the ancestral land of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Mississaugas of the Credit. As we continue our Advent journey, we remember everything the birth of Jesus means for all people, and for the world. As we focus upon hope, peace, joy, and love, may we live lives that move gently in creation. Through our listening and our learning, we strive to be people of reconciliation.

Announcements

Reverend Jan

Words of Welcome

Theme Introduction

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Brenda McMaster and
Judy Jefferson

Candle Lighting Hymn

Hope Is a Star (all 4 verses)

VU: 7

Call to Worship

In our watching and our waiting

Come, Lord Jesus!

In our hopes and in our fears

Come, Lord Jesus!

In our homes and in our world

Come, Lord Jesus!

Come, Lord Jesus. Bless us and surprise us as we look forward to your birthday.

Come let us worship together!

Opening Prayer

God our Creator, God of Surprises,

**shaping the sea, the stars, and the planets,
gather us into your circle of love.**

God our Redeemer, Icon of Caring,

**gurgling, crying, a Bethlehem babe,
gather us into your circle of love.**

God our Inspirer, the Breather of Life,

**flickering, dancing, like light in the dark,
gather us into your circle of love.**

Great God, Three-in-One, Great God, One-in-Three,

gather us into your circle of love.

Hold us like Mary holding her child,

sweeping us gently up into your arms.

Hold us like Joseph now holding his bride,

breaking traditions to stand by his love.

Hold us like shepherds now saving their lambs.

Protect us from danger and dread.

Hold us, your children, secure in your care.

Hold us, your children, secure in your care.

Amen

Hymn Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary
(sung several times)

(MV: 18)

Seeking to Grow Spiritually

Prayer for Illumination

Grace Boogers

God of Grace, you become flesh and come to live among us. You make us new in a million ways each day. You are never hesitant to become small and vulnerable, fitting into each heart, each life. May your Word fit into our hearts this day, and may it grow until it is born anew in our lives, ready to make us whole once more. As we hear the message spoken through the prophets of old through dreams and visions of the faithful, God, grant us grace and peace through Christ, that we may know that God is with us.

Amen

Hebrew Testament Reading

New Revised Standard Version

Isaiah 7: 10-16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."
¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ Then Isaiah [\[a\]](#) said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. [\[b\]](#) ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Gospel Reading

New Revised Standard Version

Matthew 1: 18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah^[a] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son,^[b] and he named him Jesus.

**May God bless this reading of the Holy Word to our insight
and our understanding. Thanks be to God. Amen**

Gift of Music

Sam Vacca and the East Plains Choir

Message

The Face of Love

Reverend Jan

Hymn Love Is the Touch MV: 89

Service of Communion

Hymn to Begin Communion We Gather Here VU: 469

Communion (please follow the insert in your Bulletin)

Hymn Following Communion For the Bread Which You
Have Broken VU: 470

Responding in Care

Minute For Mission Linda Kennedy

Invitation to the Offering

Doxology For the Gift of Creation VU: 538

Offering Prayer

**O come to us, Emmanuel, and make our giving holy.
For what is here is freely given,
with hope, and joy, and love.
Let our small gifts join with others
so that our world may become
your dream of peace.**

Amen

Closing Hymn O, Ancient Love VU: 17

Commissioning

Benediction

Three-fold Amen

Postlude

Worship Resources: *Gathering Magazine*

Advent/Christmas/Epiphany, 2025-2026 Year A (page 11, 27-31);
Abingdon Worship Annual 2025 (pages 290-294); *Feasting On the Word: Year A, Volume 1*, (pages 74- 97); *Texts For Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV – Year A* (pages 28-36);
Shine On, Star of Bethlehem: A Worship Resource For Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan. Used with Permission.

EAST PLAINS UNITED CHURCH AFFIRM STATEMENT

We celebrate the richness of our community when we have diversity in age, ability, gender identity, racial/cultural backgrounds, economics, class, sexual orientation, and family configurations fully participating in all aspects of the life and work at East Plains United Church. We commit to continuing education to promote understanding and create a safe environment for all.

Jan's Journal



This Sunday is the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. The focus of worship is “Love”. This theme does not refer to romantic love, but rather the self-giving love which is modelled for us by God and Jesus.

Communion for Advent and Christmas will be part of worship this Sunday.

The Christmas Eve skit is beginning to take shape! Thank you to those who stayed after worship last Sunday, to rehearse and brain-storm. There will be another rehearsal following worship this Sunday. More actors are welcome, if you feel inclined to join “The East Plains Players.”

In January, The Lunch and Lectionary Group will take a break from following the Lectionary and will read and discuss a book titled *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* by Amy – Jill Levine. I have some extra books, if you are interested in joining the discussion. The cost of the book is \$22.05. The Lunch and Lectionary Group meets on Zoom on Thursdays between 12:30 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Advent is flying by! Here is the current Calendar of upcoming events:

Advent and Christmas Calendar

Carol Singing – Please plan to arrive in time to be seated in the sanctuary by **10:20 a.m.** and have your requests ready!

December 21st – Fourth Sunday in Advent with Communion

December 24th – Christmas Eve Service at 7 p.m.

December 28th – First Sunday after Christmas

Please invite family, friends and neighbours to join you in attending the Christmas Eve service at East Plains!

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and good health and happiness in 2026!

As always, I am available to discuss any of the information written in this “Journal.”

You can reach me at: revjanmcc@gmail.com or on my cell phone: 905-630-8202.

Blessings,
Pastor Jan