The Epistle

Focus on Worship: Advent

Now the waiting begins.

Actually, according to retail timelines, we've been waiting for more than a month for Christmas already. According to the church calendar year, however, the first Sunday of Advent (Dec. 2) begins our official wait for Christmas.

You will notice that the Scripture readings during the four Sundays in Advent are focused on the future time, not just on Jesus' birth—that's because the Season of Advent also reminds us that we are waiting for God's future to unfold. We are waiting for Christ to appear to everyone on earth so that everyone will bow before him, recognize him as Lord of the universe, and he will end evil and heal all of creation with his judgement. We need this reminder that we're waiting for the restoration of the whole universe because so much of the world and so much of our lives often feel like a broken mess.

May you be encouraged this month by God's Word—God is bringing about the new birth of all of creation, and you get to be part of it. Come to the Live Nativity on Dec. 15 so that your journey through Advent can be encouraging, uplifting, and hopeful.

Pastor Emily Beckering

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VALLEY INTERFAITH DONATION ITEM OF THE MONTH

December's item for the Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center is **canned fruit**. Thank you for your generosity!

Report from previous months:

In October, you gave **65 jars** of peanut butter and jelly.

The collection of chicken noodle soup for the Christmas baskets has far surpassed our goal at **190 cans**. Wow!!

Blessing of City Manger Scene

ALMS Christian Church is leading the blessing of Reading City Creche on Friday December 7, 2018 at 6 pm, on the corner of Benson and Reading. This is a chance to witness to our neighbors alongside our brothers and sisters. You could go straight from caroling at the manger scene to a hot meal and performance of *The Christmas Express* at 7!

Lessons and Carols Canceled This Year

Due to the fact that not enough musicians were available for Lessons and Carols, we have decided to cancel it for this year.

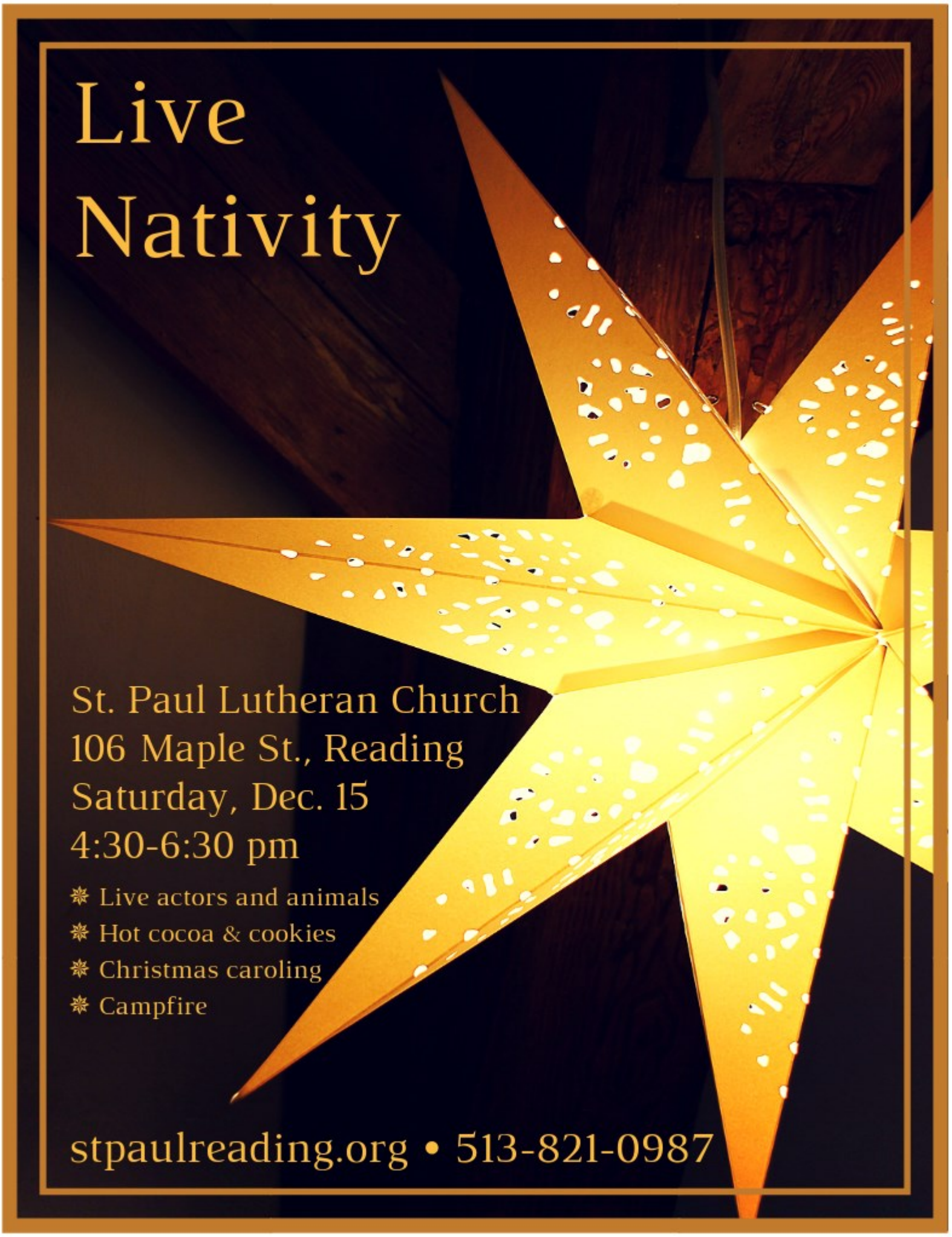
If you get joy from making music to worship God, please volunteer your vocal or instrumental gifts by telling our Music Director, Barry Prince, so that we may continue to provide joyful music ministries.

Live Nativity

All are welcome to come to a Live Nativity here at St. Paul's on December 15th from 4:30-6:30. Come hear the story Jesus' birth. There will be live animals to pet, caroling, pizza, hot chocolate, cookies, and a fire pit to keep you warm. There is a sign up sheet in the narthex if you're interested in being an actor for the nativity or to volunteer. See Diana Hawkins for the arrival time. If participating isn't of interest to you, then please do consider fellowshipping with us during this wonderful time of year.

Please share this poster *(see facing page)* with your friends, family, and across all social media to help spread the wonderful story of Christmas. We look forward to seeing you!

Nov. 17: Family Night participants brought forward items representing things they were thankful for. We are thankful for all of you!


Live
Nativity
St. Paul Lutheran Church
106 Maple St., Reading
Saturday, Dec. 15
4:30-6:30 pm
Live actors and animals
Hot cocoa & cookies
Christmas caroling
Campfire
stpaulreading.org • 513-821-0987

OWLS ACTIVITY

We plan to support the St. Paul Players in their production of *The Christmas Express* by attending on Sunday, December 9, after the worship service. If you have not yet made reservations, please make them soon and join us on that afternoon.

DORCAS CIRCLE

The ladies will meet on our usual day in December – the 19th – at the usual time – 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. We may even listen to some Christmas songs while we work. We hope to see you then.

Family Night

November's Family Night was such a blast for participants that we're doing it again in December. This month, however, it is a "Family Afternoon"—everyone, and especially families with young children and middle-school aged children are invited to attend the family event on Saturday, December 8. We will attend *The Christmas Express* matinee performance. Following the play and the visit with Santa Claus, we'll bake cookies to the tune of Christmas music! The cookies will be delivered by our Communion Ministers and Pastor to homebound members, and extras can be taken home by all who wish!

Celebrations in December

2 Alanna Cathcart

3 Larry Huber

8 Freda Faulkner

13 Olivia Lohmeier, Amy Flege Lorenz, Sarah Papin

14 Rachel Dean

15 Donny Cathcart

16 Ruth Lohmeier

17 Heather Segar

18 Linda Lawson, Robert Portmann, Jr.

19 Louise Barry

21 Barbara Moorhouse, Debra Roell

23 Chelsea King

27 Jean Nolte, Shaun Seals

27 Eric & Susan Bardes

28 Henry Beckering

30 Jason Hirt

31 Rhonda Kreiner

Our Life Together

For emergency pastoral care, please call Pastor Emily Beckering, 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, call Penny Huber, 513-931-6420. To remove people from the list, contact the office.

We pray for **Mary and her granddaughter Kyra** (friend of Paul Pieper); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Cristy Anaker** (Freda's granddaughter); **Bostyn** (relative of Mintons); **Debbie Brooks** (friend of Elinor Schieman); **Jodie Calhoun; Christian; Kathy Curless; George Demetriades** (Portmanns' friend); **Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Jeremy Doan** (Jean Winkle's grandson); **Jerry Doan** (Jean Winkle's son-in-law); **Rita Edwards; Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Jason Garcia** (Mayhughs' nephew); **Jim Forst; Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **Jason Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's nephew); **Pat Hagstrom** (Millers' and Replogles' friend); **Hannah; Bill Harris and Cheryl Harris** (relatives of Donald Harris); **Matthew Harrison** (Seals' neighbor); **Ed Hirt; Doug Hibbeler** (Elinor Schieman's nephew); **Jessie** (friend of Olivia Lohmeier); **Jay King** (son of Jamie King, who cleans the church); **Carolyn Koehl; Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Richard Lane** (Elinor Schieman's nephew); **Linda** (friend of Faith Pirrmann); **Maria** (Lohmeiers' friend); **Jack Marvin** (Kathy Crosby's friend); **Al Merkle** (Portmanns' friend); **Doris Minton** (former member, friend of Erbecks); **Barbara and Jack Moorhouse; Jean Nolte; David Oaks** (Freda's son-in-law); **Pete, Zac, and Andrew Padolipa** (Wagners' friends); **Eric Papin; Don Pflieger** (Kings' brother-in-law); **Linda Perin** (Moorhouses' cousin); **Paul Pieper; Faith Pirrmann; Nick Pirrmann; Barbara Politoski** (Cindy Sieckman's cousin); **James Savory** (Jean Winkle's great-grandson); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills' cousin); **the Selke/Fletcher family** (family friends of Pirrmanns); **Keith Shupe** (father of Kelly Shupe); **Elaine Sieckman** (Cindy Sieckman's mother-in-law); **Kim Sieckman; Jason Simpson** (Freda Faulkner's grandnephew); **Scott Songer; Judy Songer** (friends of Jean Winkle); **Rosemary Spaeth** (friend of Elinor Schieman); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans' grandson); **Jack Spelman; Britney Jean Teems** (Jean Winkle's granddaughter); **Randy Thaman** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Richard Thompson** (friend of Marie Calhoun); **Sharon and Fred Vogel** (John Kerlin's friends); **Jane Weatherford** (Donald Harris's mother); **Susan Winkle** (Jean Winkle's daughter-in-law); **Zach** (friend of Kings).

We pray for those with ongoing health concerns who are unable to come to church every week: **Bernice Baglien, Dottie Bangert, Louise Barry, Carol Leonard, Jack and Barbara Moorhouse, Jean Nolte, Heather Segar.**

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords' neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman's grandson); **Jared Forst** (Jim and Loretta's grandson); **John Garbrecht** (Carolyn Koehl's nephew); **Beau Glenn** (Karen Koehl's son-in-law); **Kylie Hahn** (Gretta Hahn's granddaughter); **Donald Hosea** (Karen Koehl's son); **Samuel McLoughlin** (friend of Cindy Sieckman); **Scott Minton** (Doris Minton's son); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey; Mack Thompson** (Freda Faulkner's grandson); **Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

From the Presiding Bishop: "In the Wilderness"

Reprint information was granted by Living Lutheran magazine for this article as it first appeared in the Nov. 2018 issue of Living Lutheran.

In the Hebrew Bible the book of Numbers is called "In the Wilderness." It starts with great hope. God delivered God's people from Egypt, from bitter slavery, grinding toil and infanticide. What a delivery! The entire people—ancients, infants and everyone in between—escaped from one of the world's superpowers, walked dry-shod through the sea and went on a 40-year journey to the land the Lord had promised them.

Beginnings are filled with expectation. There is excitement and a sense that everything is possible. Think about the first day of school, a vacation, new job, one's honeymoon or the first day of a child's life. It was no different for the Israelites. The first chapters recount the enumeration of the tribes of Israel—hence the title, Numbers. This description is of the mustering of the people as they strode into the future. This was the beginning of an adventure! This part ends with God commanding Moses to make two silver trumpets. The entire journey would be heralded by the clear ringing of silver trumpets.

In the beginning it was possible to disregard the fact that they were setting off into the wilderness. But it caught up to them. We know how that goes—halfway through the road trip, the school year, the job, the marriage or life with a baby and the traits that were at first endearingly quirky just become annoying. On epic family cross-country vacations, the landscape becomes monotonous. The food is no longer novel but noxious. Life before, at least in memories that have become trip-jaded, was bliss.

It was no different for the pilgrims in the wilderness. By Chapter 11 things have started to go downhill. In band camp we called this "Whiney Wednesday." The people were sick of manna. In their defense, there are probably a limited number of manna recipes. They remembered the "cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic" (Numbers 11:5). They remembered the fish they used to eat in Egypt "for nothing." For nothing? Bondage and oppression were nothing? The people began to protest. They clamored for meat. They stood at the doors of their tents and wailed.

Moses had enough. "Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? … Where am I to get meat for all this people? … I am not able to carry this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once" (Numbers 11:11 -15). Wow, and I thought I had bad days at work.

(Continued on page 7)

From the Presiding Bishop: "In the Wilderness"

(Continued from page 6)

To all this God answers: "Is the Lord's power limited? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not" (Numbers 11:23).

Sometimes, when things are the most difficult, or the way forward is thwarted, or hearing someone blithely remind us that God is faithful, it seems like the equivalent of offering "thoughts and prayers" to those living through a devastating tragedy. But for those who live because this promise is not trite but true, for whom it is water in a dry land, a rock in sinking sand, this is the solid promise of life in God.

From being people of the promise until that promise is realized is hard work. In the moment, or the day, or the decade, it is difficult to see that God is moving us. Some give up. Remarkably, some who are most ground down by the journey hang on.

This year we elected six new bishops—all of them women, one Latina and the first two African Americans. Guided by the Spirit, the people of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod elected Patricia Davenport and the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin elected Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld. It took 31 years—not quite 40. What didn't seem possible a generation ago is reality in our church. We are becoming a generation not quite arrived at the promised land but seeing God declaring, "Now you will see if my word will come true for you or not."

The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton

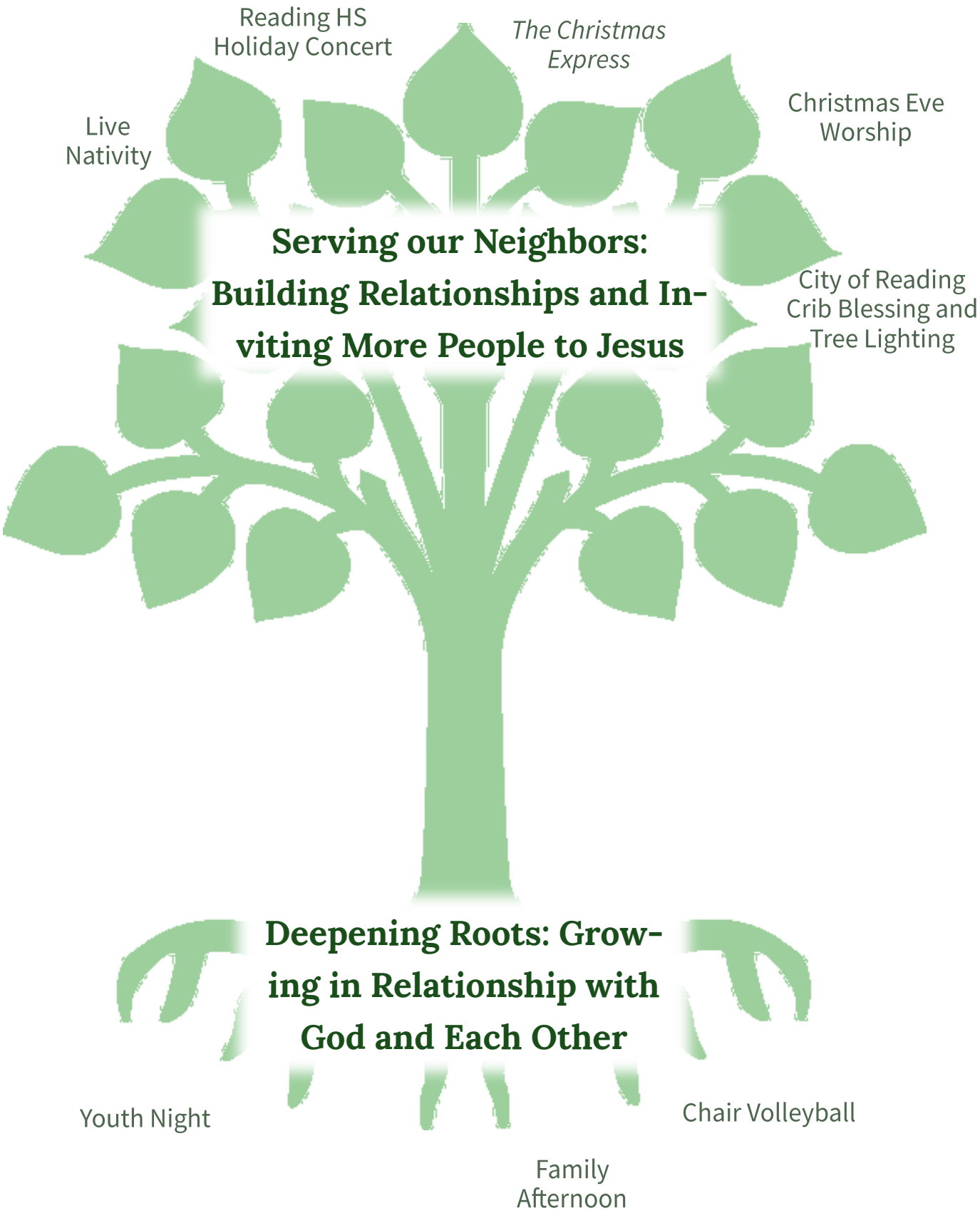
Free Band Concert Dec. 9

The New Horizons and Sycamore Community Bands present a free concert of Christmas/holiday and other concert band music on Dec. 9 at 2:30 pm, at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church (10345 Montgomery Road, Montgomery, OH). All are invited to come. Extra parking is available across Pfeiffer Rd. at the medical offices, if church parking lot is filled. Carolyn Koehl and Jack Wagner are both members of the band!

Operation Christmas Child Update

Thanks to everyone who gave their gifts of toys, supplies, money, and work for the Operation Christmas Child project this year. We will be shipping **86 shoeboxes** around the world! Special thanks to Loretta Forst, who gift-wrapped many of the boxes.

Sowing, Reaping, Rebirth, and Joy This Month



Cindy & Carroll Mayhugh Present

St. Paul Players Production

THE CHRISTMAS EXPRESS

BY PAT COOK

Dinner and a Show

Saturdays, December 1 & 8 at 1:00 pm, Sundays, December 2 & 9 at 1:00 pm

A nursery for very young children will be available at each matinee.

Friday December 7th at 7:00 pm

$10.00 a ticket

Children 12 and under Free, when accompanied by a ticketed adult

On Saturdays and Sundays, and a visit from Santa follows after the matinee shows.

Reservations by 513-426-6504, by email. stpaulplayers@gmail.com

Or visit our Website at www.stplaulplayers.com

St. Paul Lutheran Church 106 Maple St. Reading Ohio. 45215

December Sunday School Leaders		
Class	Teacher	Assistant
Ages 3-7	Sarah Papin	Kim Coulehan
Ages 8-11	Nancy Erbeck	Jim Sturgill
Jr./Sr. High	Donald Harris	John Cathcart

December Worship Assistants Schedule	
Month-Long Ministries	**Bulletins:** Penny Huber and Jean Winkle **Greeters:** Ron & Shirley Harbaugh **Altar Guild:** *Linens:* Nancy Erbeck; *Setup and Cleanup:* Janet King **Counter:** Ron Harbaugh
December 2 1 Advent	**Assisting Minister:** Carroll Mayhugh **Lesson Reader:** Kathy Hirt **Acolyte:** Katie Sturgill **Communion Minister:** Elinor Schieman **Nursery:** Shirley Lathrop, Maggie McDowell **Activity Time:** Penny Huber, Bess Sturgill
December 9 2 Advent	**Assisting Minister:** Terry McDowell **Lesson Reader:** Sherry Bronner **Acolyte:** Alanna Cathcart **Communion Ministers:** Ron & Shirley Harbaugh **Nursery:** Bridget Cathcart, Bess Sturgill **Activity Time:** Linda Lawson, Maggie McDowell
December 16 3 Advent (10:30 am)	**Assisting Minister:** Donald Harris **Lesson Readers:** Steve Headley and Matthew Lawson **Acolyte:** Patrick Cathcart **Communion Minister:** Chelsea King **Nursery:** Shirley Harbaugh, Joyce McDowell **Activity Time:** John Cathcart, Maggie McDowell

December Worship Assistants Schedule (cont'd)	
Month-Long Ministries	**Bulletins:** Penny Huber and Jean Winkle **Greeters:** Ron & Shirley Harbaugh **Altar Guild:** *Linens:* Nancy Erbeck; *Setup and Cleanup:* Janet King **Counter:** Ron Harbaugh
December 23 4 Advent	**Assisting Minister:** Leandra Hawkins **Lesson Reader:** Sherry Bronner **Acolyte:** Katie Sturgill **Book Bearer:** Bea Sturgill
December 24 Christmas Eve	**Assisting Minister:** Doug Lohmeier **Lesson Reader:** Carroll Mayhugh **Acolyte:** Maggie McDowell **Book Bearer:** Bea Sturgill
December 30 1 Christmas	**Assisting Minister:** Carroll Mayhugh **Lesson Reader:** Kathy Crosby **Acolyte:** Donny Cathcart **Book Bearer:** Alanna Cathcart

More Family Night fun!

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

As a community of Christian believers, we are called by God to use the many gifts He has given us, within the church and the community, so others may come to know Him.

Stewardship in December

DECEMBER: As we remember Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room in the inn, we are reminded that Stewardship is welcoming Christ in every aspect of our lives.

BODY: Chair Volleyball, Dec. 11

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: The St. Paul Players present *The Christmas Express,* Dec. 1, 2, 7-9

SPIRIT/FAITH: Christmas Eve

RELATIONSHIPS: Blessing of Reading City Creche with Reading Council of Churches, Dec. 7

ENVIRONMENT/GOSPEL: The Live Nativity, Dec. 15

MIND: Revelation Bible Study (Sundays at 9:15, Mondays at 7 pm, Tuesdays at 11:15 am)

St. Paul Lutheran Church
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Website:
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