

# THE SPECTRUM

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL-REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH

DECEMBER  
2023

Liturgies  
8:00 and 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School  
Confirmation  
9:30 a.m.

Adult Forum  
9:10 a.m.

Nursery  
Kids with Parents  
10:15 a.m.

Livestream video via  
SPR's FB page or look  
in your e-mail on  
Sunday mornings.

Visit us on the web!  
[www.stpaulref.org](http://www.stpaulref.org)

St. Paul-Reformation is  
a congregation of the  
Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in  
America (ELCA).

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The Spectrum items, articles  
and columns need to be to  
the Parish Office by the 12th  
of the month. The Spec-  
trum goes to print on the  
15th and this date is hard  
and fast. Articles received  
after the 12th may or may  
not be included. ter.

CHRISTMAS EDITION!



## christmas at st. paul-reformation

**Sunday, December 24, The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

🕯️ [One liturgy at 10:30 a.m.](#)

**Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve**

🕯️ [4:00 p.m. Instant Christmas Pageant](#)

🕯️ [10:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist with Schola](#)

**Monday, December 25, Christmas Day**

🕯️ [10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir, Brass, and organ](#)

**Sunday, December 31, The First Sunday of Christmas**

🕯️ [One liturgy at 10:30 a.m.](#)

**Friday, January 4, The Vigil of The Epiphany**

🕯️ [Epiphany reception in Tidemann Hall, 6:00 p.m.; Eucharist at 7 p.m.](#)

**BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS** column, the machinery of “Christmas, Incorporated” will be in full swing, much of it designed to pull at our heart strings in ways that have nothing to do with the birth of Christ. At the same time, the city of Bethlehem finds itself (yet again) at the center of international politics as the Israel and Hamas find themselves at war in a place that the world refers to as “holy.” “Peace” is an elusive goal, and for all that we have progressed since that “silent night” two thousand years ago, it seems that we are right back at the start: conflict, war, international anxiety, terrorism, and death surround the manger while amidst it all—so say Christian people—the “Prince of Peace” is born. This year, more than others in recent memory, should cause us to ask some questions about what “peace” even is, and how it comes about. The song of the angels (“...and peace on earth to those whom God favors”) is particularly necessary this year.

The city of Bethlehem exists—today—in the Palestinian West Bank. It is home to the “Church of the Nativity,” “the shepherds’ field,” and a gift shop on every corner that will sell you olive-wood nativity sets to take home. The Church (reportedly built over the site of Jesus’ birth...amazing that it was found!) was built first in the 300’s by the Emperor Constantine, and then rebuilt in the 500’s under the Emperor Justinian. For 1700 years, this place has been a site of pilgrimage for Christians from all over the world who have come to pray and enter the mystery of Christmas in the warm desert sun. Most peculiar of all, the door to the church is particularly small: it is called the “Door of Humility,” and stands just over four feet high and two feet wide. You have to crouch down to get into the church itself, stepping back in time not only to Christmas, but to a time when political powers used the site as a buttress to

their own power. The door was reduced to this size to keep people from driving their horses and cattle into the church, and—yes—to keep military powers out. The church has served (over millennia) as a place where Christians, Jews, and Arabs all have found shelter within its safe walls as they have sought protection from the storms that rage outside. Each group has used the church as a prop; each group has hidden there from danger; each group has embraced and hated others from this place of supposed peace.



*“...might this little door have something to teach us about how we approach the manger....?”*

But back to the door, which requires that we bend down to enter; it requires a certain humility to enter (hence its name). This Christmas, might this little door have something to teach us about how we approach the manger, and—in a larger sense—how we approach the storms that rage outside it?

As war rages in the Holy Land, I wonder if part of our Christian vocation might be to tend the door. Not to shut it, or even to open it (that is God’s job), but simply to help others and ourselves bend over in humility to find a place of refuge, or a place of safety, or a place to regain their strength. The truth is that so much of the last years have been exhausting: pandemics, crumbling nations, and now more war. Our job is to usher people *in* to the church to find peace, and to usher them *out* in order to—with God’s help—build it. Either way, both those who are tired and those who are strong will need to crouch down to go through this door of humility to do the work ahead of them, with gentleness, with firmness, and with hope.

Hope is hard to hold on to these days, but Christmas is a reminder that it originates in God, not in us. If not, why would God have come crashing into a world that was a complete mess

**Pastor, continued on next page...**

**Pastor, continued...**

(just like now); there *must* be something in God's view that is worth saving. Somehow, this tattered mess of a thing still possesses the image of the holy, and if God can hope enough to come among us as the child of Bethlehem, then we have no business giving up the ghost to despair. Hope, compassion, understanding, justice, understanding: all of them begin by stepping across the threshold of the door (whichever way we might be going) to seek peace.

Please pray for the Holy Land in these days, and especially this Christmas, for victims of terror and war who find themselves unwitting casualties in bigger games between powerful people and broken histories. Somewhere there, there is a mother and a father and their newborn trying to get through a door of some kind, having to bend over in order to hold on to hope and dignity and strength.

Pray for our Jewish neighbors.

Pray for our Muslim neighbors.

Pray for Christians in the Holy Land.

Pray for the city of Bethlehem.

Pray for those who lead nations.

Pray for the Church: that it may direct us toward the doors of humility and teach us how to bend over, most especially when we try to go through standing up and proud. No one gets through the door that way. Only bent over, and only in search of finding the song that the shepherds heard: "...and on earth, peace..."

May you and the world be blessed as we celebrate his birth.

+Peace, Pr. Patrick H. Shebeck

**FROM THE CANTOR****Christmas Caroling and****Meal Delivery**

This year carolers and the SPR Meals Ministry are again teaming up to offer singing delivery of home cooking to our shut-ins. Meet in the lower auditorium **around 10:30 a.m. on Saturday December 16**, and when the meals are ready, small

groups will depart to spread holiday cheer. The more singers we have, the fewer locations each team will need to visit. This is not about dazzling musical performance, but about hospitality and goodwill and spreading the love of God through food and togetherness. Children and youth would be most welcome to help out! Please RSVP to Sister Stacie by December 13.

**MUSIC FOR FLUTE AND ORGAN:  
CHRISTMAS EDITION!**

**Thursday, December 7, 12:10 p.m.**

**Friday, December 8, 7:00 pm**

Come hear Advent and Christmas favorites and enjoy some sweet treats with our own Sr. Stacie Lightner, Donna Hryniewicki and Marty Kline. Freewill monetary donations go to support music at SPR, and bring food items for the Hallie Q. Brown Food Pantry.

**MEAL PACKING AT FEED MY  
STARVING CHILDREN**

**Thursday, December 7, 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.** Come pack nutritious meals for those in need at their Eagan location (990 Loan Oak Rd) 15 slots available – please RSVP to Sister Stacie by December 4. Or you can sign up on their website, [fmcs.org](http://fmcs.org). Click the "Volunteer" link under the "Get Involved" menu and put XWN6KV in the "Looking for a Specific Group" box. Minimum age to volunteer is 5 years old, so kids are welcome! (I know it's a school night, but all the weekend times were booked up already at the beginning of November!) There's a certain ratio of kids to adults required based on age, so when signing up minors, please let us know the ages so we can abide by the guidelines. Also, if there is interest, we could go out for dinner before the event – just let Sister Stacie know if you'd like to join.

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100 Oxford St N St. Paul, MN 55104

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## SAINT NICHOLAS ON DECEMBER 10

An SPR tradition, we invite all SPR children of whatever age to welcome St. Nicholas on Sunday, Dec 10 as he makes his annual visit and helps prepare

us for Christmas. Don't forget to put your shoes in the narthex on the way in. Other St. Nicholas activities and crafts will be available for kiddos.

## THE GIVING TREE +

SPR's annual Christmas "Giving Tree" is up and ready to make a difference in this world! This year, you can take an "ornament" home with you off the tree. Each ornament has some kind of project or agricultural gift that the Lutheran World Federation will make on your behalf in developing nations through the ELCA's "Good Gifts" program. Rather than give your loved ones another pair of socks...how about giving a flock of geese on their behalf? Even better: a flock of chickens, or a cow, or a micro-loan to a woman-owned business! The choice is yours but the impact will be large. We hope you will join us as we "pay it forward." Thank you!

## CHRISTMASTIDE MUSICIANS

Volunteer musicians of all ages are invited to offer music during our prelude time for the Christmas Eve 4:00 p.m. service or the 10:30 a.m. service on Christmas 1 (December 31). Don't know what to play or sing? Sister Stacie can help you find something appropriate for your level. Not ready for a solo? Sister Stacie can help create an ensemble. Make a joyful noise to the newborn king!

**TREES UP!** + Please join us on **Thursday December 14 at 6:30 p.m.** as we put up SPR's Christmas Trees. Bring some wine or individually wrapped cheese/snacks to share, and be ready to sing a few Christmas carols!

**HANGING OF THE GREENS** + We will gather for the Hanging of the Greens on Saturday, December 23 at 11:30 a.m. Many hands make light work, and helping get things together makes such a difference for our Christmas worship. Please join us!

**BETTY SCHMIDT IS 99!** + SPR's oldest and wisest member—Betty Schmidt—turns ninety-nine on Christmas Day. Please join us as we flood her with birthday cards to celebrate her. Cards can be sent to:

Betty Schmidt  
The Gardens At Episcopal Homes  
1860 University Avenue West  
Saint Paul, MN 55104

## BIRTHDAYS

02 Landis Osano, Lee Stupica  
04 Chloe Proctor  
08 Marge Charmoli  
10 Scott Hanson, Jameson Weber  
16 August Maki  
18 Karen Allard  
20 Teresa Ortiz  
21 Deanna Sande  
23 Kristen Damberg  
25 Betty Schmidt  
31 Diane Brennan, Matthew Webster, Oulia Yang

## ANNIVERSARIES

02 Karen and Scott Hanson  
18 Alyn Bedford and Bill Convery  
27 Kathy and Chris Thomforde

## WOWZERS! GENEROUS HEARTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

By the end of the year, SPR will have donated over \$15,000 to the Hallie Q. Brown Foodshelf and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. This is the largest amount we have been able to contribute in sometime. Thank you to all who have given—it's making a difference in the city...for good.

## ADVENT CONCERT AND TEA WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13 AT NOON

Come hear the glorious sounds of the Central High School Chamber Choir, whose music making will warm your heart and fill you with hope for the future! Come for the music, stay for the treats. A light reception follows.

## ELIZABETHAN SYNGERS "CAROLS FOR CHRISTMASTYME"

What is better than some wonderful Christmas music? Almost nothing! Join us on Sat. Dec. 9, 5:00 p.m. for this Christmas concert. \$16 at the door or online: [www.theelizabethansyngers.com](http://www.theelizabethansyngers.com).

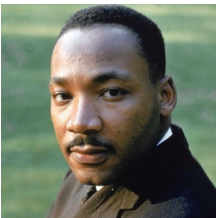
## JANUARY HAPPENINGS

### VIGIL OF THE EPIPHANY -

*Friday January 5, 7:00 p.m.; reception at 6:00 p.m.*

### BAPTISM OF OUR LORD—JANUARY 7

### COMMEMORATION OF MLK JAN 14



### MLK BREAKFAST— JANUARY 15 8:00 A.M. BOTH IN PERSON AND ONLINE

Tickets must be purchased to attend at the Convention Center or to receive link to view the event. There will be no satellite in person locations. The Keynote Speaker is yet to be announced. Link to the registration webpage will be in the weekly email.

### ANNUAL MEETING Q & A

*During Adult Forum at 9:10 a.m. in Tidemann Hall on Sunday January 21*

### ANNUAL MEETING DATE

The Annual Meeting will be held on **Sunday January 28 immediately following the 10:30 a.m. via Zoom only.**

**COUNCIL CORNER** + The Parish Council met in regular session (in-person) on Tuesday, November 14, and heard/took action on the following matters:

- The roof over Tidemann Hall has been completed. The next step is to receive bids/information on repair of the interior. This will happen in the New Year.
- Finances are on track for what was budgeted. We remain right on track to produce the projected deficit by the end of the year, and—though some expenses are up—so are some income streams.
- The Parish Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28 via Zoom. This will allow all members—no matter where they are—to participate.
- The Endowment Committee and the Finance Committee will meet in December. The latter will develop the parish budget.
- Sr. Stacie and Pr. Patrick have both begun the processes to go on sabbatical. This is dependent upon successful grant applications to the Lilly Foundation, and will begin—at the earliest—in the fall of 2024.
- SPR has donated over \$15,000 to the Hallie Q. Brown Foodshelf, which is the most we have given in many years. Thank you to all who have donated.
- As of printing, pledges continue to come in for our 2023 Stewardship Campaign. To date, \$328,446 has been pledged from 74 giving units. We expect more to come in, and the Parish Council will be following up with members who have not yet pledged.
- Discussion on cleaning the Parish rolls regarding members who have neither communed nor contributed (as per the Parish Constitution).

The Parish Council meets again for a brief meeting and Christmas celebration on Tuesday, December 12.

## DECEMBER MINISTRY SCHEDULE

Thank you to all the volunteers who help make the 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning services “run.”

### December 5 First Sunday of Advent

Joe Voss, Amy Rouillard, *Asst. Ministers*  
Linda Dahlen, Cynthia Peyton, *Lectors*  
Lu Beckman, *Acolyte*  
Chris Lyman, *Cantor*  
Deanna Sande, Laura Stuart, Lay’Ani Stuart,  
Tom Webb, *Greeters/Ushers*  
Linda Dahlen, John Johnson, *Coffee/Treats*

### December 10, Second Sunday of Advent

Victoria Smith, Joe Voss, *Asst. Ministers*  
Sandy Iverson, Peter Huckfeldt, *Lectors*  
Open, *Acolyte*  
Jim Bowen, *Cantor*  
Dorcas Adedigba, Kristen Benson, Joe Herbert,  
Margaret Schuster *Greeters/Ushers*  
Open, Margaret Schuster, *Coffee/Treats*

### December 17, Third Sunday of Advent

Jessa Anderson-Reitz, Luke Hanson, *Asst. Ministers*  
Tom Webb, Marilyn Harder, *Lectors*  
Juan Ramirez, *Acolyte*  
Dawn Klesk, *Cantor*  
Anthony Hedlund, Hilary Hund,  
Deanna Sande, Joe Voss *Greeters/Ushers*  
Marilyn Harder, Tom Webb, *Coffee/Treats*

### December 24, Fourth Sunday of Advent

Bonnie Olson, Margaret Schuster, *Asst. Ministers*  
Carla Hagen, Mya Wagner, *Lectors*  
Open, *Acolyte*  
Chris Lyman, *Cantor*  
Tim and Sandy Iverson, Eldora Pearson,  
Jan Swenson *Greeters/Ushers*  
Carla Hagen, Teresa Ortiz, *Coffee/Treats*

**ADULT FORUM** is on Sunday at 9:10 a.m. in Tidemann Hall. We have an incredible line up of speakers, and this is a “gem” of St. Paul-Ref’s life together. Join us to learn, discern and discuss.



### December 3 Tonya Brownlow

Emma Norton Services is a Twin-Cities based organization that serves women who have experience homelessness as they transition to stable housing. Tonya Brownlow will lead our discussion of needs, mistakes, and learnings in serving this community.

**December 10 (Tentative): Hallie Q. Brown Update** + SPR has given over \$15,000 to HQB this year (yay!); join us as we hear about what is taking place at HQB, and how together we are serving our neighbors in need.



### January Study: Questions for Jesus:

#### Studies in Mark

+ For all of January, we will engage “Questions for Jesus: Studies in Mark.” Why this? Because Mark is our “tour guide” for the next year of Gospel readings. An overview of this earliest Gospel will enrich your hearing of it for the coming year, and this study is particularly aimed toward asking—with Mark—some difficult questions about how we follow Jesus. Learner guides are free...come as often or as little as you like, and no experience is required!

## HAVE YOU RETURNED YOUR 2024 PLEDGE CARD?

If not, not to worry! There are two ways you can do it:

- 1.) Return the **pledge form**/paper pledge card via the mail;
- 2.) **Make your commitment online** using the link in the Friday e-mail, via our website, or on SPR’s Facebook Page. *Thank you in advance!*

**QUILTING for Charity** Join us on **Saturday December 2 10:00 a.m.** You can sew, arrange blocks, iron, tie layers together, cut fabric! Work on your own projects. Join in on the fun! Bring a snack to share. Coffee provided. Contact Gwen Peyton at [gwenpeyton5@gmail.com](mailto:gwenpeyton5@gmail.com).

**MEALS MINISTRY!**

Once a month, SPR members help each other by preparing and delivering meals for members who may find it challenging to always have a home-cooked meal. Meals cooked in the church kitchen at **9:00 a.m. on Saturday December 16.** Volunteers needed; if you can chop, cook, package, measure or just like to socialize, please join us. The alley door will be open. Your contributions for this ministry are greatly appreciated. For more information please contact Gwen Peyton, [gwenpeyton5@gmail.com](mailto:gwenpeyton5@gmail.com).



- Reorganize garage so ceramic ceiling tiles can be stored in the garage.
- Change analog clocks, hang quilts, put up Christmas giving tree in Narthex.
- Put up outside vinyl Christmas signs.
- Craftacular: Hang lights in east alcove, put together lamps and connect to power for Craftacular vendor. Clear and return items to and from closets. Remove tables and chairs from lower auditorium and west side classroom so custodial service could sweep and mop floors..

**Staff:** Discussion with Tuesday Crew regarding lights and tables /chairs for Craftacular; and placement of ceramic roof tiles in the garage

Thanks to all who volunteer to keep this building and spaces inside in condition to use and rent out.

**HANDEL'S MESSIAH: SPR GROUP OUTING**

Join us on Sunday, December 17, 2:00 p.m.



On Sunday, December 17, SPR will take a trip to the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul to hear the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra present Handel's *Messiah*. Ten tickets have been reserved and they will go fast...so, be sure you sign up in the Narthex starting November 19. Tickets are \$33.00. You can also purchase them online at [www.stpaulref.org](http://www.stpaulref.org).

**The Breakfast Club** **BREAKFAST CLUB** + Join us Sunday December 3 at the Louisiana Café on Selby Ave after the second service. All are

welcome to join this time of fellowship, good conversation and food. No agenda: just fellowship!

**BUILDING UPDATE** + The Tuesday Crew and others continue working on multiple repair, improvement projects.

**Projects: Winterize:** Put sand and salt buckets, shovels and chippers by all outside doors. Cover outside of A/C unit in the Conservatory. Clear leaves from outside elevator vestibule multiple times. Close off Laurel side steps.

**BIBLE MATTERS**  
Please join us **on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.** via **Zoom** for this time of study, fellowship, and learning as we look forward to the coming week's lectionary texts.  
**No Bible Matters on December 13 and 27.**

**DONATE TO SPR USING YOUR SMARTPHONE!** *A great way to donate whether you are at church or out and about!* Now you can give from anywhere in the world! It's fast, easy, and secure. Search your app-finder for **"GivePlusChurch,"** download it, click "sign up," and follow the instructions. You can donate to either the Good Samaritan Fund or the Parish General fund (in addition to your regular pledge). Give it a try! **Thanks to all who are using this quick and easy way to donate!**



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**ST. PAUL-REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
I N T H E C I T Y F O R G O O D

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A decorative border made of holly leaves and red berries, arranged in a circular wreath shape. The leaves are green with serrated edges, and the berries are small and round. The wreath is set against a light beige background.

**SPR'S ADVENT TEA**  
*with the St. Paul Central  
Chamber Singers*

Join us for a festive concert of Christmas music,  
followed by a reception and fellowship.

**WEDNESDAY  
DECEMBER 13 at  
12:00 noon**