



# The Epistle

## Genesis: New Beginnings



Sister Maria in the Sound of Music sings in the iconic “Do Re Mi,” “Let’s start at the very beginning; a very good place to start. When you read, you begin with ABC. When you sing, you begin with Do-Re-Mi.”

As we approach the start of a new year, it’s a perfect time to reflect on the beginning of creation and of God’s people.

When people set out to read the Bible, they often start at the beginning, with Genesis. It is a good place to start, to hear the beginning of creation, God’s hopes and intentions for that creation.

We might compare the Book of Genesis to reading the obituaries or marriage announcements in a newspaper or to Ancestry.com app on your smartphone. In part, because there are long lists of genealogy such as Genesis 5:3-5: “After Adam lived 130 years he fathered a son like himself and named

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## Genesis: New Beginnings

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him Shet. After Shet was born, Adam lived another 800 years and had both sons and daughters. In all, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died. Who begat who, who wed who, how many years they lived.”

We read the obituaries/marriages/births in the newspaper to see if we know people there, because if we know them, then it affects our lives. We read the book of Genesis because what we learn about the beginning of creation, the beginning of God’s called people, and the patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob affects how we understand ourselves, the history of the world, and how we understand God.

We use ancestry.com to know those who come before us so that we know ourselves. Were my ancestors Irish or Norwegian? Were they bakers and butchers or do I descend from Queen Elizabeth I? We may much prefer to be a descendant of a great king rather than a thief. Genesis tells us we are descendants of tricksters, liars, failures as well as brave, honest, and patient people, and God took care of them all.

Genesis tells us who we come from and who we are. It tells us the way of life that

leads to true life. We read Genesis to know God: Almighty God is someone who would create a world, and entrust us to be its caretakers, and turn from destroying us with a flood, and choose to work through one family to bless all families, a God who walks among us, a God whose vision for us is a life lived in intimate relationship with Him in the safety and beauty of a garden, and yet when we choose to leave, marks us like Cain and gives us a new blessing. Genesis is the story of how God keeps promises and is always at work for the flourishing of His people and all of creation.

If you find yourself needing a new personal beginning, then the Book of Genesis is a good place to do your devotions this month. It is also a good place in which we as the church need to dwell. Abraham was sent to a foreign land, required to leave everything and everyone he knew, and he waited 25 years from the time he first received the promise of descendants to the time when Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old, but God kept all of His promises to Abraham and Sarah.

The Church finds itself in a foreign land where not everyone knows about Jesus and where sometimes Christians are

# Genesis: New Beginnings

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treated with suspicion and hate. But God has called, gathered, and sent us in our baptisms through the Holy Spirit so that all people might be blessed by the good news of Jesus Christ. Just as God was faithful to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Hagar, Ishmael, and Joseph, so, too, will God be faithful to His promises to the Church. God is working through the ministry of St. Paul's so that all people might receive the promised land: Jesus Christ our Lord.

A blessed New Year in Christ Jesus our Lord,  
Pastor Emily Beckering

## Zoom Details for Annual Meeting

### Annual Congregational Meeting

**Jan 28, 2024 11:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

*Click here to join via your computer or smartphone:*

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83721653646?  
pwd=ZWWhUMjlpK0NjTjNiWGd4bWgvOE1ldz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83721653646?pwd=ZWWhUMjlpK0NjTjNiWGd4bWgvOE1ldz09)

**Meeting ID:** 837 2165 3646

**Passcode:** 470889

*Dial any of these numbers to join via touch-tone phone, and enter the meeting ID and password when prompted:*

- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
- +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

## ANNUAL MEETING JANUARY 28

Our annual meeting will immediately follow worship on Sunday, January 28th. Please see the Zoom invitation at left, and the attendance guidelines on pages 4-5, if you wish to attend virtually.

Committees, please be sure to send your annual reports to the church office by January 15 to provide time for assembling the annual report.

## Annual Meeting—Guidelines for Attending Remotely

- 1) **Login time.** Login will be available starting at 11:30 am, Sunday, January 28.
- 2) **Signing in and out.** Members shall identify themselves as required to sign into the Internet meeting service and shall maintain Internet and audio access throughout the meeting whenever present, but shall sign out in the chat room upon any departure before adjournment. After signing in the member shall mute the connection and only unmute when recognized. The Recording Secretary will log all connections and disconnections validating that the person(s) joining are voting members of the congregation. This log will become part of the official record of the meeting (minutes).
- 3) **Technical requirements and malfunctions.** Each member is responsible for his or her audio and Internet connections; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.
- 4) **Forced disconnections.** The Chair may cause or direct the disconnection or muting of a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting. The Chair's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any member, shall be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes.
- 5) **Assignment of the floor.** To seek recognition by the Chair, a member shall request recognition via the chat room. The member shall include his or her name and the reason they request recognition. The Meeting Coordinator shall monitor the chat room and relay recognition requests to the Chair in the order received.
- 6) **Interrupting a member.** A member who intends to make a motion or request that under the rules may interrupt a speaker shall use the chat room for so indicating and shall thereafter wait a reasonable time for the Chair's instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice.
- 7) **Motions submitted in writing.** A member intending to make a motion, to offer an amendment shall, before or after being recognized, post the motion in writing to meetings@stpaulreading.org, the subject line shall include the member's name

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## Annual Meeting—Guidelines for Attending Remotely

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and subject of the motion or amendment. The Meeting Coordinator shall share the contents of the motion or amendment to the screen when requested by the Chair.

- 8) **Voting.** For votes not requiring a written ballot, members shall vote by voice (in-person only), using the chat room or the “raise hand” feature, at the discretion of the Chair. For a voice, chat room, or count of hands vote the Chair shall determine the outcome or the need for a roll call. The count shall be maintained by the Recording Secretary.
- 9) **Roll Call Votes.** For votes requiring a roll call the Recording Secretary shall call the roll of all the members present and tally the results.
- 10) **Written or secret ballot.** For votes requiring a written or secret ballot, the President will announce the deadline for submission during the meeting. members may vote as follows:
  - a. Members present in-person will be provided with a ballot and may fill it in and submit it immediately or return it as directed by the chair. Members present via Zoom may mail in their ballot to the church office by the date specified by the chair during the meeting.
  - b. Completed ballots must include the printed and signed name of the voting member and/or the member’s giving envelope number. Electronic ballots must include member’s name and a valid email address for confirmation, this will suffice as the confirming signature. Any ballots not properly signed will not be counted.
  - c. For the Quarterly meeting, only ballots from members listed as present in-person or online for the meeting will be counted. Absentee ballots, i.e., ballots from members not present, are only allowed for election of Church Council and will only be counted for election of Church Council.
- 11) **Adjournment.** The Chair shall entertain a motion to adjourn when requested. The motion must be seconded and voted on by the hand raise method in person or online, the Meeting Coordinator shall report to the Chair the count.

## From the Presiding Bishop: Our Real and Truest Hope



*This article was originally published in the December 2023 issue of Living Lutheran magazine.*

There is a curse of unknown provenance that

says, “May you live in interesting times.”

In November we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, counting our blessings and giving thanks for the bounty of the land. It’s a time for families to gather and renew the bonds between generations. It’s a holiday open to all people of faith and of none. Except for Native Americans, who observe the fourth Thursday in November as a National Day of Mourning. The arrival of European settlers and the story of hospitality at Plymouth didn’t result in peaceful coexistence but was another event in the long history of death, broken treaties and the systematic attempt to erase Native culture and religion.

Advent and Christmas come in December. It’s a time of hope and expectation. My stepmother-in-law once created a

Christmas card featuring a photo of all the grandchildren over the caption “Christmas is for Children.” Yet this Christmas there will be hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian children already killed, and more in harm’s way. Armenian children, Sudanese children, Ukrainian children, children in our own communities and schools are caught in the violence and death that we grown-ups are unable to end.

We live in interesting times. Complex, fraught, deadly. Everything comes at us too fast and is too intense. At the same time, we go about doing all the unremarkable tasks of daily life. We go to work. Clean house and shovel the walk. We go to the grocery. We check emails. We pay bills. We keep on going. These seemingly quotidian things actually hold us together as we try to make sense of everything that is going on around us.

In her 1969 hit “Is That All There Is,” Peggy Lee presents a nihilistic view of life. Home, relationships, life—there’s nothing more to see. Move on. When she was a little girl, she watched her house burn down and reflected, “Is that all there is?” When she fell in love and that love was everything and the relationship ended,

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## Celebrations in January



4 Erin Detzen

10 Rick Hedges

14 Michelle Flege Hollon

18 Jeff Ford, Chris Geiger

21 Sherry Bronner,  
Janet King

23 Kathryn Keith, Ali Truax

24 Christian Lohmeier

28 Mathea Harbaugh

29 Chandler Clemmons

30 Jamie Hirt, Robyn Reed

## Support St. Paul at Kroger!

*Did you know that St. Paul benefits from the Kroger Community Rewards Program? Just follow the directions below to increase your church offering at no cost to yourself!*

### **One-time step: Link your Kroger Plus Card to St. Paul.**

- Visit [kroger.com/account/communityrewards](https://www.kroger.com/account/communityrewards) and log in with your Kroger account. (Kroger customer service can help with this.)
- Search for “St. Paul Lutheran Church” or organization number TG880.
- Click the ENROLL button under St. Paul’s name & address.
- After this, each purchase with your Plus card will generate donations to St. Paul!

*Unfortunately St. Paul no longer receives rewards from Amazon, as the Amazon Smile program has been discontinued.*

## **GATHER CINCY MEETING AT ST. PAUL IN JANUARY**

The Gather Cincinnati young adults group will hold their January worship service and dinner meeting at St. Paul, on January 14 at 4 pm. All young adults in the Cincinnati area who are interested in the Lutheran church are welcome!

## From the Presiding Bishop: Our Real and Truest Hope

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she reflected, “Is that all there is?” When she comes to the end of her life she reflects, “Is that all there is?”

These “interesting” times can push us into the same frame of mind. Juxtaposed with the relentless pressure to be merry, to sing “Joy to the World,” to proclaim and to hear proclaimed that the year of the Lord’s favor is at hand, we look at the world, at life and the death around us and might say, “What’s the point?”

Immanuel Kant, an 18th-century German philosopher, argued that the goal of humanity is to achieve perfect happiness and virtue. He believed that an afterlife must be assumed to exist in order for this to be possible, and that God must be presumed to exist to provide for this. In short, we will never get this done in our time or in our human struggles no matter how noble. But God, the Lord of infinite possibility, holds out a life and future of promise. We say no and put a dead stop to the limits of life in this world. God says yes and draws us beyond our imposed limits into God’s limitless realm of love and justice.

How has God made this known? How do we receive this? God does not shy away

from our rebellion and the devastation that follows in its wake. God is not untouched by the murder of innocents throughout all the ages. Rachel weeping for her children. The massacre of the Innocents. The Shoah. Gun violence in Chicago and in communities and schools across the United States. Lord have mercy.

But here’s the thing—into this world that God so loves, into our rebellion that brings about unspeakable cruelty, into our casual unthinking actions that hurt others, God has chosen to be incarnate in Jesus. This is the incredible promise of Christmas and realized at Easter. This is not a god far off. This is God with us, a God who would die rather than lose a single one of us. A God who would go to hell and back to bring us back into God’s loving embrace.

This is our real and truest hope.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton



# St. Paul Lutheran Church

FH = fellowship hall

S = sanctuary

N = narthex

L = library

US = upstairs

O = outside

## Mission Statement

Growing a Christian community where each is valued, accepted, and loved.

513-821-0987 | [mail@stpaulreading.org](mailto:mail@stpaulreading.org)

# January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Dec. 31 1 Christmas</b> **No Sunday School / Adult Forum** 10:30 am Worship (S)	January 1	2	3 2:30 pm Bible Study (N/Z)	4	5	6 11:30 am Church reserved for cleaning
<b>7 Feast</b> 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) (US) 9 am Adult Forum (FH) 10:30 am Worship (S) After Worship: Evangelism Committee (L)	8	9	10 2:30 pm Bible Study (N/Z)	11 6 pm Confirmation Class	12	13
<b>14 Feast</b> 9 am Intergenerational Sunday School 10:30 am Worship (S) After worship: New Members' Class (L) 4 pm Gather Cincy Worship Service & Dinner (S/FH)	15 **Annual Reports due from committees** 7 pm Council Meeting (N)	16	17 2:30 pm Bible Study (N/Z)	18	19	20 11:30 am Church reserved for cleaning
<b>21 Feast</b> 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) (US) 9 am Adult Forum (FH) 10:30 am Worship (S)	22 **Epistle Articles Due**	23	24 2:30 pm Bible Study (N/Z)	25 6 pm Confirmation Class	26	27
<b>28 Feast</b> 9 am Sunday School (ages 3-18) (US) 9 am Adult Forum (FH) 10:30 am Worship (S) After worship: Annual Congregational Meeting (S)	29	30	31 2:30 pm Bible Study (N/Z)	February 1	February 2	February 3 11:30 am Church reserved for cleaning

## Our Life Together

To reach Pastor directly, please call the pastoral line at 513-760-5884.

If you have requests for the Prayer Chain, or to remove a person from the list, please contact the office at 513-821-0987 or [mail@stpaulreading.org](mailto:mail@stpaulreading.org).

We pray for **Samantha Asbrock** (Marie Calhoun's friend); **Berkeley** (Carol Curless's great-grandson); **Jeannie Allen** (Faith Eckerle's friend); **Teresa Bell** (former member); **Chrissi Bergt** (Kate Wollenburg's cousin); **Stephen Black** (Kim Coulehan's nephew); **Nancy Boone** (Gary Gries' sister); **Brett** (Kings' step-nephew); **Natalie Burroughs**; **Jodie Calhoun**; **Casey** (Cindy Sieckman's niece); **John Cathcart**; **Christy** (Terri DeAngelis' daughter); **Pat Coldiron**; **Sandy Cordes**; **Kathy Curless**; **David** (Cindy Sieckman's cousin); **Rebecka DeLeon** (daughter of Holly Ford's co-worker); **Katie Demopoulos** (Diana Hawkins's niece); **Sara Eble** (Portmanns' friend); **Jane Erbeck**; **Nancy Erbeck**; **Larry Faulkner** (Freda's son); **Justin Feldman** (Bess Sturgill's father); **Cindy Flege**; **Lee Frank** (Barbara Moorhouse's niece's husband); **Darrell Frasure** (St. Paul neighbor); **Jeanne Fuller**; **Clara Garcia** (Cindy Mayhugh's sister); **Lena Gibson** (Pirrmanns' stepsister); **Nathaniel Gibson** (Les Eckerle's step-nephew); **Janie Grandy** (in-law of DeAngelis-Willet family); **Don Grau Jr.**; **Jim Hammerling** (Portmanns' son-in-law); **Ron Harbaugh**;

**Chrissy Harris**; **Sandy Hatcher** (Linda Holt's sister); **Headley/Lawson family**; **Elain Heskamp**; **Ed Hirt**; **Andrew Horton**; **Penny and Larry Huber**; **Ellen Hunter** (Jeni Cathcart's grandmother); **Kate** (granddaughter of Dennis King's friend); **Mike Keefe** (Millers' neighbor); **Ken and Kathy Keith** (Kris Keith's dad and step-mom); **Chelsea King**; **Dennis King**; **Jackie King**; **Janet King**; **Earl (Buddy) King** (Dennis's brother); **Marilyn Kline** (Cindy Sieckman's neighbor); **Loretta Kombrink** (Marilyn Portmann's aunt); **Tom and Mike Kozee and family** (friends of Faith Eckerle); **Kelsee Lainhart** (friend of Kings); **Nelson Langefeld**; **Yvonne Lowery** (St. Paul Players); **Brad Majewski**; **Carroll Mayhugh Sr.** (Carroll Mayhugh's father); **Cindy Mayhugh**; **Jessica Mayhugh & family** (Mayhughs' niece-in-law); **Samantha Mersch** (Mayhughs' daughter, Sarah Papin's sister); **Linda Miller**; **Mary Mills** (St. Paul Players); **Jessica Mink** (Donald Harris's cousin); **Barbara Moorhouse**; **Charlie Myers** (Coulehans' family friend); **Ann Ohr** (Barbara Moorhouse's cousin); **Eric Papin**; **LaCartha Pate** (Jeanne Wagner's friend); **Linda Perin** (Moorhouses' cousin); **Nick Pirrmann**; **Bob Price** (Kings' friend); **Barry Prince**; **Everett Prudhomme** (Beckerings' nephew); **Denise Rankin**; **Cynthia Reed**; **Dick Replogle** (Linda Miller's brother); **Christopher Rolfes** (Anne's son); **Mike and Judy Ryan** (friends of the Kings); **Sara and**

## Our Life Together

**Evan** (Barbara Moorhouse’s cousins); **Scott Schadel** (friend of McDowell’s); **Shawn Schnetzer** (Sturgills’ cousin); **Shannon and Dane** (friends of Riddle family); **Knox Shepherd** (grandson of Pr. Vicki Garber); **Kate Sheridan** (Kings’ family friend); **Kim Sieckman; Dave Speed** (Hirts’ friend); **Crosley Spelman** (Spelmans’ grandson); **Kathy Spelman and family** (Joyce’s sister-in-law); **Michael Steele** (Mayhugh’s nephew); **Frank Sturgill** (Jim’s dad); **Geri Toland** (Carole Replogle’s neighbor); **Sharon Touchton** (Portmanns’ friend); **Lish Trasser** (friend of DeAngelis-Willet family); **Treasure** (Les Eckler’s cousin); **Ralph Turner** (friend of Dennis King); **Jeanne Wagner; Melinda Wakefield** (Sherry Bronner’s friend); **Pr. George Wilch; Leslie Willet; Kate Wollenburg and family; Judy Young** (Janet King’s sister); **Mike Zecchini** (Betsch’s brother-in-law); **Barb Zeh** (Jeni Cathcart’s mom).

We pray for those with ongoing health concerns who are unable to come to church every week: **Betty Kline, Shirley Lathrop, Barbara Moorhouse.**

At the death of: **Betty Hoffman, Jean Nolte, Gayle Underwood** (Kris Keith’s mom).

We pray for our armed forces members: **Graham Barton** (Fords’ neighbor); **Paul Cordes** (Elinor Schieman’s grandson); **Victoria Derry** (Elinor Schieman’s great-granddaughter); **Jared Forst** (Loretta’s grandson); **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** (Becky Betsch’s brother); **Jobeth Ramirez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Joshua Rodriguez** (friend of Karen Koehl); **Trent Schwegman** (cousin to the Erbecks and Fords); **Dustin Silvey; Alex Wisecup** (son of Nadine and Barry Wisecup).

## January Ministry Schedule

Date	Feast / Fast	Assisting Minister	Livestreamer
Jan. 7	Baptism of Jesus	Addy Kruse	Ellie Lammers
Jan. 14	2 Epiphany	Chet Laine	Carroll Mayhugh
Jan. 21	3 Epiphany	Carroll Mayhugh	Noah Moorhouse
Jan. 28	4 Epiphany	Noah Moorhouse	Becky Betsch

**St. Paul  
Lutheran Church**

***Mission  
Statement:***

Growing a Christian  
community where  
each is valued, ac-  
cepted, and loved.

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING**

**Jan. 28 after worship  
In-person and on Zoom**

**St. Paul  
Lutheran Church**

106 Maple St.  
Reading, OH 45215

*Phone:* 513-821-0987

*E-mail:*

[mail@stpaulreading.org](mailto:mail@stpaulreading.org)

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

