



# St. Paul's Epistles



St. Paul's Celebrates, Declares, and Demonstrates the Love of God in Jesus Christ to Sarver and Beyond.

## *A Christmas Letter from Prison*

In April of 1943, Lutheran Pastor and Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was arrested for his vocal opposition to the Nazi Regime. Placed in Tegel prison, he and 700 fellow inmates were treated horrendously irrespective of trials and verdicts. The men were underfed and verbally harassed, and frequently the warden refused to turn the lights on, thus adding to the dark and depressive spirit of the place. Bonhoeffer was assigned to a cell surrounded by prisoners awaiting execution. He writes about often being kept awake at night by the clanking chains of the cots as the unsettled, condemned men tossed and turned.

In December of that year, after a failed attempt at release, Bonhoeffer was facing the prospect of his first of two Christmases he would spend sequestered from his family, friends, and fiancé. The following is a letter that the 37-year-old wrote to his parents that first Christmas apart. I share it with you because it offers much need encouragement and perspective for us as we enter a strange Christmas season that may be plagued with upended plans and disappointments. May his words speak to you as they spoke to me (Note: I have italicized the parts I found most poignant).

“Dear Parents,

Above all, you must not think that I will let myself sink into depression during this lonely Christmas. It will take its own special place in a series of very different Christmases that I have celebrated in Spain, in America, in England, and I want in later years to be able to think back on these days not with shame but with a special pride. That is the only thing that no one can take from me.

I don't need to tell you how great my longing for freedom and for all of you is. But you have for so many decades provided us with Christmases so incomparably beautiful, that the grateful memories of them are strong enough to outshine even a dark Christmas. *It's not until such times as these that we realize what it means to possess a past and a spiritual inheritance independent of changes of time and circumstance. The consciousness of being borne up by a spiritual tradition that goes back for centuries gives one a feeling of confidence and security in the face of all passing strains and stresses...*

From a Christian point of view, a Christmas in a prison cell is no special problem. *It will probably be celebrated here in this house more sincerely and with more meaning than outside where the holiday is observed in name only.* Misery, poverty, loneliness, helplessness, and guilt mean something entirely different in the eyes of God than in the judgment of men.

That God turns directly toward the place where men are careful to turn away; that Christ was born in a stable because he found no room in the Inn—a prisoner grasps that better than someone else. For him it really is a joyous message, and because he believes it, he knows that he has been placed in the Christian fellowship that breaks all the bounds of time and space; and the months in prison lose their importance.

On Christmas Eve I will be thinking of all of you very much, and I would very much like for you to believe that I will have a few beautiful hours and my troubles will certainly not overcome me... *It's only when one thinks of the terrible times that so many people in Berlin have been through lately (Fire bombings from Allied forces) that one realizes how much we have to be thankful for. No doubt it will be a very quiet Christmas everywhere, and the children will remember it for a long time to come. But it may perhaps bring home to some people for the first time what Christmas really is...*

Your Dietrich”

Out of an abundance of caution and a desire to ensure the safety of those worshiping with us, we are:

- 1) Adding a third service to our Christmas Eve schedule.

Services are now at **1pm, 3pm, and 7pm.**

- 2) Asking you to *register* yourself and your family so we can stay within 50% of our occupancy. If you are planning to attend one of our Christmas Eve services go to [www.stpaulssarver.com/christmaseve](http://www.stpaulssarver.com/christmaseve) and fill out the form or call the church office.
- 3) Asking that you *mask for the duration of the service* as social distancing may be more difficult due to crowding.

Finally, for more information on our Christmas Eve Service and COVID-19 precautions please go to [www.stpaulssarver.com/christmaseve](http://www.stpaulssarver.com/christmaseve).



2021 Offering  
Envelopes are now  
available.

**There is still time to turn  
in your Commitment Card  
for 2021**

**Ladies Guild**

We will not be meeting in  
December. Our next meeting  
will be on January 19th at  
9:30am. See you then!

# GIFT

## Generations In Faith Together

“Advent Nights”  
Sundays December 6-20  
6:00pm

## Annual Congregation Meeting

January 17 immediately  
following the worship service

*In the case of inclement weather the  
meeting will be moved to Jan. 24*

### Poinsettia Order Form

Deadline for orders is *Sunday, December 6*

Please make checks payable to **St. Paul's**.

Place in the offering plate in an envelope labeled  
“Poinsettias”

Size	Price	Color (circle)	# of plants
6"	\$6	Red, White, Pink, Marble	
8"	\$10	Red, White, Pink, Marble	
		Total # of plants:	
		Total amount: \$	
Name:			
Given to the glory of God			
Given in Memory of			
Given in Honor of			



### Family Christmas Tree

Beginning December 6 there will be a Christmas tree located near the entrance of the church. We are asking each family to bring in a decoration/s to hang on the tree to represent your family. Please label them with your name. You may pick them up after Christmas. Let's see how many ornaments we can fit on the tree!



## DECEMBER

Birthdays

12/2 Clair Jones  
Diane Jones  
12/5 Sarah Reyer  
12/6 Monie Diller  
12/9 Allison Barnett  
12/11 Trent Craighton  
12/13 Don Diller  
Bev Miller  
Marvin Smith  
12/16 Morgan Kaminski  
12/17 Dakota Gannon  
12/18 Bruce Cooper  
12/19 Keith Hudak  
12/24 Tracy Young  
12/28 Carolyn Szebalskie  
12/29 Gabriella Lang  
12/20 Jessica Donatelli

## JANUARY

Birthdays

1/1 Joanne oy  
1/2 Hal Callithen, Jr.  
Destin McCorkle  
1/3 Hannah Speer  
1/7 Karen Dietrich  
1/9 Melissa Beechey  
Emily Donatelli  
1/9 Bryon McKinne  
1/11 Nancy Hill  
Cole Lux  
1/13 Jennifer Jones  
Amy Penn  
1/15 Barb Gaydos  
1/16 Max Conglose  
Katie Rettig  
1/17 Allison Pavlick  
1/22 Ashley Orzechowski  
1/23 Grant Buttery  
1/25 Amber Schneider  
1/26 Roseanne McCollough  
Patty Muir  
1/28 Olivia Boyer

### The Lighthouse Foundation's Christmas Toy Shoppe

Please bring your new, unwrapped Christmas Presents to the church by Friday, December 11. If you are unable to make it to the church to drop off your gift and would like someone to pick it up at your home (you can leave it on your doorstep) call the church office.

Offering Breakdown for Month of November			
Category	November Total Received	YTD Received	Annual Budget
General	10,738.17	115,325.56	
Loose	634.00	2,448.80	
Flowers	90.00	470.50	
Advent	10.00	10.00	
Other	72.00	9,477.31	
<b>Total Current</b>	<b>11,544.17</b>	<b>127,732.11</b>	<b>170,334.00</b>
<b>Benevolence</b>	<b>831.57</b>	<b>8,424.58</b>	<b>12,000.00</b>
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>12,375.74</b>	<b>136,456.69</b>	<b>182,334.00</b>
<b>New Building</b>	<b>1,515.00</b>	<b>28,240.20</b>	

	Needed	Received
General	13,422.92	10,738.17
Benevolence	846.16	634.00
Building	3,296.48	1,515.00



### Luther's Corner

"If it is true that the child born of the virgin is mine, then I have no angry God and I must know and feel that there is nothing but laughter and joy in the heart of the Father and no sadness in my heart." —Martin Luther's Sermon on the Afternoon of Christmas Day 1530