



Shepherd
OF THE PRAIRIE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Caring For All God's Children

Congregational Newsletter February 2014

SOTP Statement of Purpose

"We care for God's children of all ages by growing disciples who make disciples."

NEW MEMBER GATHERING THIS MONTH

Have you been worshipping with us here at Shepherd of the Prairie for a while now and think you would like to learn more about our church or think you might be interested in becoming a member? A wonderful way to start the New Year would be to join us at the New Member Gathering we will be hosting on **Sunday, February 9 from 3:00-5:30 p.m.** This will be an



opportunity for you to find out more about the life and ministry of our church and to give prayerful consideration to whether or not you want to enter into formal membership in the SOTP family. Those who desire to become members will be welcomed during the worship services on the following Sunday, February 16. Please call the church office to let us know if you will be participating with us and if you will need child care during the gathering.

FIRST COMMUNION INSTRUCTION FOR 5TH GRADERS



First Communion instruction for 5th graders will be held from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. on the following Saturdays: March 8, 15, 29 and April 5.

Students will receive their First Communion on Sunday, April 6 at the worship service of the families choosing either 9 or 10:45 a.m.

Please call the church office at (847)669-9448 to register your child.

A Note From Pastor Mark

Dear Christian Friends,

Wow!!! It has been a long while when I have not written in the February newsletter regarding plans for the season of Lent. This year Easter is so late (April 20) and Lent does not begin until Ash Wednesday, March 5. So let's use the longer Epiphany Season to see what new surprises God may have in store for us in life and ministry.

"You know you have been taught 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to try to get even with a person who has done something to you. When someone slaps your right cheek, turn and let that person slap your other cheek."

— Matthew 5:38-39

This is the text for the Last Sunday in Epiphany... Sometimes we're proud of ourselves for getting back at someone, or some entity or organization, that has "done us wrong." But Jesus tells us that there is another way.

Jesus reminds his followers of the original meaning of this law. It's about the penalty being equal to the crime. If you lose your eye, you cannot demand that the guilty person pay with their life. In the court of law in Jesus' time, the most the penalty can be is equal to the crime.

Over time, this law has been turned into a way to get revenge. Instead of a court of law acting judiciously, we take matters into our own hands. And here Jesus tells us to do just the opposite of our internal jerk-

reaction. Jesus tells us that if we are slapped, we should turn the other cheek, and give the shirt off our back, and walk the extra mile.

Most of these examples pertained to the law of the times. But what can they mean for us today? As you think over your own life experiences, how much time have you spent plotting revenge? How did that feel? What were the results? Do you still spend time musing on these wrongs today? If so, revenge really didn't work, did it?

Is the way that Jesus describes a better way for us? Living in real love and forgiveness seems so very hard! In this world so full of sin and greed, we are bound to get hurt. We are bound to find ourselves in

turmoil. How do we respond?

When we love others without limits, we begin to love like God. And that can lead us to a forgiveness we never thought we could achieve.

Consider the phrase, "killing someone with kindness." When you're kind to other people, especially in unexpected circumstances, they might begin to look at you differently. And they might begin to change their ways, toward you and others.

These reminders throughout Matthew 5 tell us why Jesus is sent to guide us. The Old Testament is filled with rules for lawful living. It's overwhelming to consider remembering and following them all, down to the letter.

What does the Law point us to? Our hope...Jesus.

- I want to live Jesus' way.
- I don't want to retaliate.
- I want to turn the other cheek, give to those who are in need, walk the extra mile and love like God loves me.
- I fail every day, and every day I try again, asking God for strength and hope.

Take time during this longer Epiphany Season to ponder these things and put into practice what our Lord encourages in the 5th Chapter of Matthew.

I'll see you on the way

Pastor Mark

Pastor Bill's Adult Education

Beginning on January 19, we inaugurated a new series for adult education titled, "Church History Made Easy." And while I'm always a bit cautious about complicated things being "made easy", the title does point to the fact that history is a lot more than just names and dates. History is story--God's story and our story. It's the story of God's people down through the ages, people who are, in fact, a part of our family of faith. People God has used to advance Christ's gospel of grace, mercy, and peace.

adult
CHRISTIAN
education

During the month of February we'll explore that part of our history that begins in the second century, and continues through the 14th century. Who were those people and what were those events that have shaped our lives of faith even today? So much of who we are as the church, and so much of what we believe and how we live out our beliefs, were shaped by the faithful saints of God who lived long ago.

So come join us--even if you haven't thus far. **We meet every Sunday at both 9:00 and 10:30, on Tuesday evenings at 7:00, on Wednesday mornings at 11:00, and on Wednesday evenings at 6:30.** Five (5!) opportunities to grow in your faith! And you don't even need to be consistent. Feel free to move from one class to another each week as your schedule allows. We look forward to having YOU with us!

Blessings,

Pastor Bill

Youth Culture News

Teenage Faith

Brett loved God. . . as a child. Then, according to his concerned parents, Brett became a teenager and his interest in spiritual things seemed to fade. What was happening to Brett?

Armed with a newfound ability to think, evaluate, and solve problems, teenagers oftentimes begin to question the values and beliefs they have previously accepted. They will take what you have painstakingly and faithfully handed down to them and put it to the test.

The questioning attitude of a teenage child who has been raised and instructed in the faith can be the most challenging and disheartening aspect of parenting for Christian parents. I know several parents who have weathered this storm to watch their children grow up with a faith that has become their own. In fact, many of them have embraced the storm knowing that in the long run, their child will be better for having gone through the difficulty. When I ask them how they got through it, they consistently offer these simple and valuable suggestions to parents who are still facing this challenge:

Be diligent in teaching young children by precept and example. Talk about your faith. Spend time together learning to understand God's Word. By doing so you will help your children build a strong foundation.

Don't be upset when your children start to ask questions. Rejecting the faith of your childhood is very different from asking honest questions and expressing doubt. A teen's struggle to find answers is a step on the road to spiritual growth.

- Encourage your teen to be a vital part of your church. Teens benefit from interaction with older Christians who in the context of a loving relationship, freely share with vulnerability and honesty the Godly wisdom that comes with advanced years and spiritual maturity.
- Openly share your own doubts and struggles. Teenagers value authenticity and vulnerability in parents and other adults. Sharing our doubts with our children allows them to see us in our full humanity and dependence on God.
- Never, ever forget that spiritual growth is a process. If you are a Christian parent, your level of faith, spiritual maturity, and understanding is not the same as when you were a teenager. You've gone through a long process of growth that is still continuing.
- Remember that spiritual maturity is born out of struggle. God always redeems horrible situations to bring His good out of our rebellious bad.
- Never stop praying for your kids. We can never be successful in force-feeding faith to our kids. We can only teach them and answer their questions. The rest is in God's hands.

Youth Culture News

TRENDS

E-Cigarettes

The number of new-fangled smoke shops popping up in small towns across the country is striking. Not tobacco shops, but rather establishments selling electronic smoking devices. These little battery-powered devices that are not yet regulated by the federal government are gaining popularity among children and teens who mistakenly see them as a safe alternative to cigarettes. The aerosol puffs in e-cigarettes typically contain nicotine, and fruit, mint, or chocolate flavorings. In a new study released by the CDC, about seven percent of students in grades six through twelve report trying an e-cigarette at least once. About two percent say they have used an e-cigarette in the last month. That's more than double the number from the year before. This a trend worth watching. Parents, warn your curious children and teens about the dangers of all nicotine and tobacco products. Challenge them to care for the God-given gift of their bodies.



Latest Research

Daring Abuse

The American Psychological Association recently issued a warning regarding a growing problem in our teenage population. Research is showing that more than a third of teenage guys and girls say they've been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused in their dating relationships. In addition, similar numbers of

both guys and girls say that they've perpetrated some type of dating abuse.

There are numerous cultural forces converging that have set the table for dating abuse. We've lost

our moral compass. We think only of ourselves and increasingly see others not as people, but as objects to use. God's wonderful plan for His gift of sexuality has been lost and we lack sexual boundaries and respect. The good news is that the Gospel speaks to all of these realities. If we hope to help our kids clearly discern between right and wrong in a way that results in deep respect for others, we must teach them what it means to glorify God in every square inch of life.

QUICK STATS

There are 22 million Americans who need treatment for substance abuse disorders. (Office of National Drug Control Policy)

The percentage of American children and adolescents ages 8-17 who have high blood pressure climbed 27% over the last 13 years. (National Institutes of Health)

JOIN OUR TEAM—OFFICE MANAGER JOB POSTING

SUMMARY: The Office Manager will assist to maintain successful day to day operations in the Shepherd of the Prairie Church Office. This position will serve to create and maintain an environment of welcoming and professionalism while greeting all visitors. The Office Manager will be fully responsible for office functions including communication and supply management, filing, document preparation, and assisting with financial transactions.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following. Other duties may be assigned as needed.

Primary Responsibilities

1. Coordinate and manage telephone and electronic communication functions including answering, forwarding, messaging and follow-up communication as appropriate.
2. Order and closely monitor office supplies including those utilized by paid staff.
3. Work with Pastor and Office and Technology Manager to maintain highly organized office filing system and current contact lists for all congregation members.
4. Facilitate and complete final preparation of bulletins for Worship services and monthly newsletter and coordinate volunteer assistants as needed.
5. Serve as first point of contact to all visitors to Shepherd of the Prairie Church Office and maintain a welcoming and orderly office environment.
6. Coordinate and complete all office postage needs including transport to post office as needed.
7. Work with Church Treasurer, Technology Manager and Pastor to handle and expedite confidential financial transactions including incoming bills, payroll, journal transactions, taxes and tracking of financial giving.
8. Uphold the mission and values of Shepherd of the Prairie.

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Qualifications, Skills and Gifts

- Strong organizational skills
- Proficient in office computer skills including Microsoft Word, EXCEL
- Working knowledge of Microsoft Publisher very helpful
- Skilled in office support functions including filing, postage, office supply management and office financial processes
- Highly competent in telephone and electronic communication skills
- Excellent interpersonal skills including ability to work with volunteers
- Experience with document printing, design and lay-out

Skills and Experience

This person must possess strong abilities in office support functions and organization to aid in the successful operation of a busy and vibrant church office. The candidate must be highly competent in communication skills and have the ability to create a welcoming office environment while greeting visitors. Proficiency in office computer skills is required.

Interested? Send your resume to jobs@sotpmail.com

"THIS WEEK IN AGRIBUSINESS"

Shepherd of the Prairie was featured on national TV last month with an hour-long Christmas show, "***This Week in AgriBusiness***," hosted by Orion Samuelson and Max Armstrong. For more than 20 years, Orion and Max have originated their Christmas edition from churches in ten states and this year, the music program at SOTP was in the spotlight with selections by the children and adult choirs along with the handbell choirs. It was a terrific show with awesome performances. We have just posted a professional copy of the TV show on our Web site, so if you have not seen the show in December, or if you want to view it again, be sure to visit our Web site. We are also preparing DVDs of the show and they will be available in the near future for a nominal fee.

BOOK CHATTERS



Book Chatters in January had a spirited discussion about Marcus Zusak's "***The Book Thief***" with assessments ranging from "I loved it" to "I hated it." In other words, a perfect session with lots of give and take and questions.

When the group meets at **1:00 p.m. on February 19**, we will be taking up Mitch Albom's newest book, "***Your First Phone Call from Heaven.***" Albom has written six previous best sellers,

each inspirational and easy to read. His first, Tuesdays with Morrie was made into a movie for TV. Albom is a multi-faceted fellow -- classically trained pianist who plays in a band that includes Amy Tan and Stephen King; sports reporter then columnist for the Detroit Free Press, talk show host on WJR radio out of Detroit -- who writes spirited, uplifting books.

We have a group of about eight or nine steady chatters, but the table is always big enough to welcome several more. This would be a good book and a good time for you to join us and get acquainted. See you the 19th!

COFFEE HOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Please check out the calendar when you grab your cup of coffee on Sunday morning and see if there is a Sunday you might share some goodies and your time to volunteer during the coffee hour. Perhaps you have a special event (birthday, anniversary, etc.) you'd like to celebrate. It isn't hard to do, and even easier if you find a friend to do it with you! Coffee is always set up the night before. Call Carol Waxenberg if you have any questions. 815-529-1805.



PRAIRIE POINT QUILTERS NEWS

On the behalf of the Prairie Point Quilters, we'd like to report that through the generosity of the SOTP congregation we were able to raise \$170.20 with our Fall "Quarters 4 Quilts" campaign! This exceeded our expectations and we are both grateful and blessed. The proceeds will be used to purchase batting and other quilting materials. Thanks so much for your generosity.

Also, Elaine Brody and Ruby Haerle have passed the baton to us for the 2014 PPQ. Thanks to Elaine and Ruby for great leadership.

—Dotty Lucia and Harriet Thompson

MISSION TEAM NEWS

The Mission Team thanks everyone for their generous giving. Here are some examples:

- **Thanksgiving Offering:** \$500 to Grafton Food Pantry, \$500 to Northern Illinois Food Bank
- **Christmas Offering:** \$1581.95 to Turning Point, \$1582 to Home of the Sparrow, \$1582 to Pioneer Center for Human Services
- **Jewel Stamps:** \$800 worth of dishes purchased with stamps for Exodus Welcome to America collections
- **PADS Winter Supplies:** An overflowing box of Kleenex, chap stick and toiletries taken to PADS for the homeless. Scarves from our confirmands
- **Christmas Giving Tree:** Gifts for 56 adults, 46 children, 4 infants given to Grafton Food Pantry

PADS Winter Supplies

This is an extra severe winter, and our homeless sisters and brothers need our help. Continue to bring supplies and place them in the special box in Crossroads. Needed are individual **Kleenex packets, chap stick, and travel size toiletries**. The 4th Sunday of each winter month, SOTP assists at serving a meal for PADS at Bethany Lutheran Church in Crystal Lake. If you can help, contact Becky Hennessy or Jill Brown.

Exodus Welcome to America Collection

On Ash Wednesday we will begin collecting household goods for our next refugee family. We will not need dishes or pots and pans. Watch for the sign in Crossroads and bulletin announcements to find out what is needed.

2014 ENVELOPES

Due to the cost of mailing, any 2014 envelopes that haven't been picked up will be available during Church business hours at the office. You may also be able to get them on the weekend by contacting Ralph Wehnes.

SIMPLY GIVING MEDALLIONS

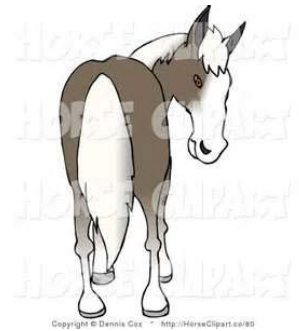
If you are enrolled in the "Simply Giving" EFT program, you may want to use a Medallion to put in the offering plate. They are on the Usher's table. If you are not enrolled and want information regarding "Simply Giving, contact Ralph Wehnes at 224-569-2808.

NEW MEMBERS & NAME TAGS

This month we will be welcoming new members. All new members are asked to wear name tags so we can get to know them. It would be a big help if more of our members would also wear their name tags. If you have lost yours or need a new one, there is a form available on the ledge at the "Welcome Center."

STEWARDSHIP TALES

A new beginning like that offered with each new day, but for a whole year. So now is the time to get out a calendar and to block out the year ahead, week by week, month by month, season upon season. What activities do you plan to do this year? What things would you like to accomplish? Have anything to wrap up this year? Maybe something to start? That is what the new year is about-a time to begin, a time to finish, a time to look forward, a time to recall, a time to seek, a time to fund, a time for all of to be all that we are and all that God created us to be. From the viewpoint of both the Church and the secular world, we will now be in a New Year of Grace. For the Church, New Year's came on the first Sunday in Advent, and for the world it came on January 1st. With God there is no time-He is eternal, without beginning and without ending-a thousand years in His sight is but a moment past. We, however live in time, the time given to by God, the Creator of time. Time is given to us to live in, and for and through God. Time is made holy (or unholy) by how we use it, either to the glory of God, or to the Glory of ourselves, as we are known to God.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



30 years of
Feeding Our Hungry Neighbors
1983 - 2013

You like the experience the joy of giving and receiving gifts, right?. On **Saturday, February 8** you will again have the opportunity to experience the joy of receiving by giving. On that day, the Mission Committee has committed 30 people to volunteer at the **Northern Illinois Food Bank from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.** Over 80 of you have graciously participated in one or more of our previous five trips to NIFB. With all of those who have previously participated, I think you will find agreement that while, a little physically tired, we left on an emotional high. Please strongly consider joining us! We are always interested in introducing new participants to NIFB. I think you will be amazed. If you have participated previously, please consider signing up again. For you snowbirds, sorry, but it looks like you will have to wait until next time. Anyone 8 years of age or older are welcome. Email me at sorensensid@comcast or call (224) 858-4168 or call the church office. Once everyone has signed up we will work out the transportation details.

FOOD PANTRY

Items needed this month for the Grafton Food Pantry:

**Deodorant, Dish Soap, Toothpaste, Meals in a box,
Pasta Noodles, Condiments, Coffee**

Thank you so very much for all you do.

LITTLE LAMBS EARLY LEARNING REGISTRATION

Little Lambs Early Learning Program is now accepting registrations for the 2014-2015 school year. Our program is Bible-story-based and includes developmentally appropriate structured time (craft, music, calendar, learning activities, etc.), as well as free play. We have programs for children ages 2 - 4 by September 1, 2013. Children do not need to be potty trained. Our class sizes are small (not more than 10 children in the 1 day classes or 12 in the 2 day class). Classes meet from 9:00 a.m. until noon. Our classes are open to members and non-members of SOTP. For more information, availability, and tuition/registration fees, please contact Jill Gillming at littlelambs@sotpmail.com.

A NOTE FROM OUR PROPERTY TEAM



Clean Up Time? You betcha!

Our Church building is starting to look very "used". One of the things we all can do is clean up any mess or items on the floor. Lately there have been more things on the floor, items left that should be thrown away, and other things that have been used that need to be put away.

Please try to do your part.. Also a reminder, food and beverages are not allowed in the Sanctuary.

Thanks so much for your extra efforts.

—SOTP Property Team

February Volunteer Schedules

ALTAR GUILD—FEBRUARY

- **Saturday 5:00 p.m.**
Becky Tuzik & volunteers
- **Sunday 9:00 a.m. (setup) and 10:45 a.m. (re-set)**
Joanne Klinger, Judie Symbal & Sue Wehnes
- **Sunday 10:45 a.m. (take-down)**
February 2..... Sandy Hupert & Marlene Boehler
February 5..... (Ash Wednesday) - Sue Wehnes & Judie Symbal
February 9..... Jan & Don Koerner
February 16 Merrily Burkland & Barb Beaudette
February 23 Sandy Hupert & Marlene Boehler

I continue to encourage our members to become a member of Altar Guild. If you have interest in serving please contact Sue Wehnes at (224) 569-2808. On-the-job training is available.

COMMUNION BREAD BAKERS FOR FEBRUARY

Sundays

February 2 Barbara Krmpotich

February 9 Michele Miller

February 16 Joanne Klinger

February 23 Michelle Saletta

Saturdays

February 1, 8, 15 Brandi Lorenzo

February 22, March 1, 8 Pat Fiorese

If you are interested in baking bread for Communion or have any questions about this ministry, please contact Pat Fiorese at (847)687-9164 or email a3ptkicker@sbcglobal.net.

Financial News

LOAN BALANCE

SOTP Loan Balance \$921,896
Pay off date August 2020

OPERATING BUDGET YEAR TO DATE AS OF 12/31/2013

Budget	YTD Actual	YTD
General Fund Income:	\$484,903.95	\$515,356.00
General Fund Expenses:	\$484,903.95	\$515,356.00
Net Income:	\$0	\$0

General Fund Notes: SOTP was able to finish the year with a balanced budget and also fund our provisional savings. We ended the year in a strong financial position as we enter the new year.

BUILDING FUND YEAR-TO-DATE AS OF 12/31/2013

Building Fund Donations: \$250,608.70
Loan Principal Payments: \$142,200.03
Loan Interest Payments: \$35,561.97
Principal Only Payments: \$113,600.00
Total Building Expenses: \$291,362.00

The total funds spent on principal and interest in 2013 exceeded the total building fund contributions as we received donations in 2012 that were spent in 2013. We were able to reduce our loan balance to \$921,896.32 which is a tremendous accomplishment.

February Birthdays

- 1 Barbara Hoch,
Gavin Falbisaner
- 2..... Noel Lemke, Ivan Suski
- 3..... Steve Barnard
- 4..... Brigitte Pelka, Ryan Gartzke
- 5..... Abby Gillming
- 6..... Albert Guerrieri, Sydney
Patel, William Trudeau
- 7..... Maximus Reed
- 9..... Susan Blotch, Michelle
Saletta, Conner Gillming,
Jordan DeBolt
- 10 ... Mark Kowalski,
Joshua Symbal
- 11 ... Annika McNeal
- 12 ... Pat Schmidt, Grace Boster,
Addison Buesing
- 13 ... Zoe Dowell
- 14 ... Donald Kruto
- 15 ... Silvia Forsythe,
Elizabeth Raines
- 16 ... Alexa Piskule
- 17 ... Gail Barnard, Chuck
Petersen, Donna Kelly,
Bud Hansen
- 18 ... Kim Kowalski, Kari Arndt
- 19 ... Nanette Ridgway, Linda Jahr,
Ralph Scalise, Gregg Gillming
- 20 ... Carol Kalbas, Halie Gartzke
- 21 ... Patty Driscoll-Shaw
- 22 ... Heidi Dunfrund,
Russell Lundstrom,
Mary Arneson
- 24 ... Rebecca DiVenere
- 25 ... Justin Anderson,
Raquel Lemke
- 26 ... Don Petelle, Tim Papka,
Kaitlyn Guttenberg
- 27 ... Alan Busch, Nicole Flanagan,
Charlie Powe
- 28 ... Mary Trodahl, Joan Rice,
George Bull, Matt Konie,
Jason Bloomfield

Staff and Contacts

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Marlene Boehler
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Michael Waal
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Jill Gillming
Little Lambs

Sandy Martin
Cherub Choir

Michael Waal
Blessings Choir

Denise James
Joy Ringers

Michael Parmele
Sunday School Director

Sue Wehnes, Renae Greene
Contributions Secretaries

Tammy Uteg
Music Librarian

Congregation Council
Bob McDuffee, *President*
Kathy McGuine, *Vice President*
Mike McCann, *Secretary*
Devin Burg, *Treasurer*

Adam Adams
Amy Brittain
Theresa Molgren
Larry Newbanks
Wayne Schmidt