



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

Congregational Newsletter February 2015

SOTP Statement of Purpose

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

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? Please join us at the

New Member Gathering on Sunday,

February 8, 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 15. 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.



Lenten Midweek Worship

Date	Worship	Topic
Feb. 18 (<i>Ash Wednesday</i>)	12 Noon & 7:00 p.m.	<i>"A Question of Cost"</i>
February 25	6:00 p.m. Soup and 7:00 p.m. Worship	<i>"A Question of Priorities"</i>
March 4		<i>"A Question of Conviction"</i>
March 11		<i>"A Question of Innocence"</i>
March 18		<i>"A Question of Sacrifice"</i>
March 25		<i>"A Question of Authority"</i>
April 2 (<i>Maundy Thursday</i>)	7:00 p.m. Worship	<i>"A Question of Faithfulness"</i>
April 3 (<i>Good Friday</i>)	Children's Service, 10:00 a.m. & Regular Service 7:00 p.m.	<i>"Tenebrae"</i>

Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran Church
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Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.-noon, Mon-Fri

A Note From Pastor Mark

Dear Christian Friends,

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18. I hope you will join us for worship on Wednesdays

Our theme for midweek worship will be Questioned for Christ. Each service focuses on figures from the story of the Passion of Christ who are questioned concerning their relationship to Jesus Christ. The service for Ash Wednesday is called “A Question of Cost” and includes an interrogation of the “money men” in the story of Christ—Zacchaeus, Matthew and Judas. Readings from Scripture, a children’s message, a drama followed by a message and thematic hymns ask the question “What is the cost of following Christ?”

Our theme for worship on the weekends will be “Showered by Grace.” We are going back to the basics and taking time each week to remember our baptism and the promises made or made on behalf of another (your children).

Water is essential to all of life. Most of our body weight is water. If we become dehydrated, not having enough water in our body, we become sick and may die. If we exercise, roll in the dirt, or mow the yard on a hot

day, we may not smell too good. So “showering in grace” may be a good thing. Taking time to give thanks for the essentials is a good thing.

Take some time to reflect on water as you’ve experienced it. Think about experiences with thunderstorms, snowstorms, ice storms, foggy weather, fishing on a lake, walking on the ice covering a lake, spring flooding, fresh water from a spring, polluted water, water in the basement, etc. Take time to remember and then think about your reaction to water in the various situations you recall.

What were your memories? Were you ever afraid of water? Were you ever so thirsty for water that you cried when water finally touched your lips? Were you ever injured because you slipped on water in the form of ice? Have you ever seen wilted flowering plants perk up after a rain storm? Take time to share your experiences with someone.

Water is essential for life, yet water, in some situations, can threaten life. In the biblical account of Genesis, Noah experienced a flood that destroyed. He heeded God’s warning and prepared so he could survive the devastation. And God promised Noah never to use water again to destroy the

earth. The rainbow, a natural phenomenon of light reflected in raindrops, is declared to be the sign of this covenant. After the experience of a massive flooding of water, “God said to Noah, ‘this (the rainbow) is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth’” (Genesis 9:17). This is known as the first covenant between God and the earth.

So, in Christian faith there is a new covenant. “Baptism...now saves you,” according to I Peter 3:21a. Baptism, which uses water, is the new covenant that functions like the ark Noah built while God waited patiently. Baptism saves you through the suffering of Christ “for sins once for all... in order to bring you to God” (I Peter 3:18a).

So a little refresher (no pun intended). Is drinking water essential to our daily life? Yes. ✓

Is water also essential for the existence of all life? Yes. ✓

Was Noah’s ark that he built at the command of God essential to the salvation of Noah and his family from the great flood? Yes. ✓

Is Christian baptism not also essential to our salvation as it brings us to God? Yes. ✓

There you have it.

Showered by Grace in Christ, we are refreshed in the water of God’s promise.

I’ll look forward to worshipping with you and your family through our Lenten journey.

Pastor Mark

FIRST COMMUNION CLASSES

First Communion Classes begin on **Saturday, February 21, from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.** First Communion instruction for 5th graders will be held from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. on the following Saturdays: February 21, 28 & March 14. Students will receive their First Communion on Sunday, March 15 at the worship service of the families’ choosing, either 9:00 or 10:45 a.m.

Please call the church office at (847) 669-9448 or e-mail Michelle@sotpmail.com to register your child.

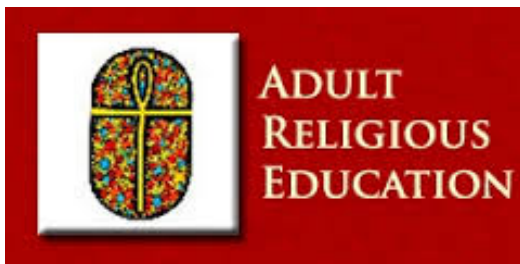
Pastor Bill's Adult Education News

During the month of February, we will conclude our study of the gospel-filled words of Isaiah 40-55. We'll be hearing about this God who makes and keeps promises, about the unlikely choice that God uses to set his people free, and about the

servant of God who is called to be both a light to the nations and the suffering servant. This will all serve as an introduction to our adult study during Lent. Beginning the last Sunday of the month, the First Sunday in Lent, we'll be using a **video series titled "The Path to the Cross."** This path begins long before the coming of Jesus, so we invite you to join us on your Lenten journey. During the six weeks of Lent the video series will be shown twice each week: on **Sunday** mornings at 10:30 and on Wednesday mornings at 11:00. Wednesday evening will include our Lenten supper and midweek worship. Come and see!

Blessings,

Pastor Bill



SAVE THE DATE!



Shepherd of the Prairie will honor **Pastor Mark's 25th anniversary of his ordination on July 12**, with an open house **from 1:00-4:00 p.m.**, at the Huntley Park District's Cosman Center. Please mark your calendars for this very special celebration. More information and an official invitation will be forthcoming.

NAME BADGES

On February 8, SOTP will have a New Member Class. It's a help to visitors and potential new members to meet other members. One easy way to make all comfortable is to wear your name tag. If you have misplaced your name tag, you can order a new one at the "Welcome Center" in the Narthex/Crossroads. It also helps Pastor Mark with names as our members number over 1000.



Ministry Musings

Happy Valentine's Day! This is a month dedicated to love and with it we celebrate the love of God in Christ.

A few weeks ago, Michelle received a call in the office from a man from Ohio named Tim.

At Christmas time he and his family had been looking around the programming for a Christmas program. They came upon the SOTP program from last year on "This Week in Agribusiness." They had seen and enjoyed it last year, so they decided to watch it again. He and his family were so impressed with the program he decided to "Google" SOTP to find out more about the church.

He was impressed by the music program from the "little one all the way up to the adults". He said the passion, enthusiasm and talent was enjoyed tremendously by his family. They could feel the joy of Christmas through our music and were blessed by it. They have friends in the Chicago area and if they come to visit they will be out to visit us here at SOTP because we seem like such an incredible church!

Wow! How amazing it is to watch the Spirit move in our music ministry like that! How many others were touched by the Spirit through the ministry of music and the media of TV? It just shows how God can use all things for his work. Whether our ministry is big and exciting like a musical TV show or as simple as helping a neighbor by taking out their trash cans in this cold weather (I have a young neighbor woman who has offered to do that for me as an area of her ministry), all are used by God to bring his kingdom here on earth! So go and minister in the places and ways God has called you to, sharing his love in the process!

God bless you in your journey in ministry!

Donna Kelly

Lay Ministry/New Member Coordinator

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Come share the love. We will be joining in a Valentine's Pot Luck on Sunday, February 15, right after the late worship service.

In the spirit of love please bring whatever you love to bake, make or eat to share. Drinks and table service will be provided.

See you then!!



WELCOME TO AMERICA

COMING SOON TO A CROSS ROADS AREA NEAR YOU!

In the past many people have thought of Lent as a time to give things **UP**. But this Lent how about giving things **TO**? Starting Ash Wednesday there will once again be a TALL signup sheet in the crossroads area for items needed for a refugee family's first month's basic food supplies and apartment basics (note: not furniture): sheets, towels, alarm clock radio, stamps, toothbrushes etc.

See if you can donate any (new or gently used) items on the "WELCOME TO AMERICA" sign up. More detailed information will on the board. Opportunity may also be available for delivery and set up of all these items. Any questions please contact Sandy at sandyhupert@gmail.com, phone 224-569-6041 or any mission team member.

"...in as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brothers you have done it to me."

— *Matthew 25:40*

LITTLE LAMBS EARLY LEARNING REGISTRATION

We are now accepting registrations for the 2015-2016 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, 2015. Children do not need to be potty trained. Our class sizes are small (not more than 10 children in the 1 day classes on Wednesdays or 12 in the 2 day classes on Tuesday and Thursday). 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, see our "Registration" page on our website www.sotp.org or contact Jill Gillming at LittleLambs@sotpmail.com.

FOOD PANTRY

The Mission of Grafton Food Pantry: "... to strive to improve the lives of our friends and neighbors in need by providing food items and education on nutrition and smart shopping. We treat every individual with respect, privacy and dignity on their journey to becoming independent of our services. We are committed to educate and bring our community together in the fight to end hunger."

GRAFTON
FOOD PANTRY



SOTP is committed to the Grafton Food Pantry program. Food items needed this month: Cereal, Toilet paper, Dish soap, Laundry soap, Canned fruit, Shampoo

STEWARDSHIP TALES



The decision to give is seldom made by sitting down with a pencil and paper. The decision to give has very little to do with a mathematical formula. The decision to give is really a matter of putting your life into perspective. It is a matter of putting first things first. More often than not, the decision to give is made by praying with an open heart. Then, we can realize, that God comes first in our lives, and that He is at the center of our lives. We must understand that our possessions, our money, even our

lives, are not ours. They are a gift from God. Once we realize this, giving to God makes perfect sense. No one can talk you into really believing this. Worship, prayer, and some mature Christian thought are the paths that sooner or later will lead you right into the heart of this inescapable truth. Once we have established the right relationship to God, giving comes easy. Then we will understand our responsibility to manage all of our time, our money, and our talents, as gifts from God. If God comes first in our lives, then giving to God should also come first. The person who says; "after I pay my bills I can't afford to give," may be telling the truth. But they have made a grave error. They have put the cart before the horse. None of can afford to give with what's left. Putting first things first means giving first and managing the rest of our income in a way by which we will still pay all our bills. This may be easier than we think. Giving is a spiritual adventure. It is an act preformed for God and with God. The sooner we put our lives into perspective, the sooner we will know the happiness that comes from making the decision to give.

YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

From The Word...

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses shares God's plan for who was to teach God's truths to succeeding generations and how they were to be taught: "These

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children."

—Deuteronomy 6:6&7

commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV).

God's who are parents who have God's commandments written on their hearts and gladly love God with their whole being. They are parents who prayerfully endeavor with God's help and by God's grace to integrate

their faith into every nook and cranny of their lives. God, in his perfect wisdom and plan, has chosen to do his work through the family. He began with a family in Genesis and continues to use the family as the primary arena for bringing people to himself. God's how for imparting these truths to our children is by a diligent commitment to teach and model wholehearted and single-minded devotion to God twenty-four hours a day. When his truths become the central overriding interest and purpose in our lives, teaching them to our children will happen almost unconsciously.

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

"One of the most exciting features of college life is the opportunity it affords to read great books, think great thoughts, and join in the great conversation of human civilization. Intellectual growth is not inconsistent with Christian faith!"

Dr. Jay Green, a professor of history at Covenant College, as part of an interview about academics and faith

—byFaith
December 16, 2014



YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

Trends YIK YAK

Officials at a growing number of colleges are dealing with difficulties created by the number of students who are using the social media app called Yik Yak. The app, similar to

Twitter, allows users to post anonymous comments – called Yaks - about people, places, and things within a ten mile radius. Because the poster is able to hide behind the shield of anonymity, the comments can be mean.

This is what social media experts call the “disinhibition effect.” In other words, we lose our inhibitions and say things we wouldn’t otherwise say if our identities were known. Students’ postings on Yik Yak can be demeaning, bigoted, and extremely hurtful. As a result, colleges are banning Yik Yak. This story serves to remind us that we need to train our kids to set up their own social media boundaries so that external boundaries don’t have to be imposed. If we teach them to use social media to the glory of God, they will then treat others with dignity and respect.



Latest Research Sugar Consumption and Memory

Advances in research science are many times helpful in allowing us to see just how complex God has made our bodies, while giving us insights in how to best steward the health of our bodies to His glory. Some recent findings from researchers at the University of Southern California are worthy of

our attention as they relate to the health of our children and teens. Their research is showing a connection between sugar consumption and memory problems. Studies on adolescent rats given

sugar infused drinks like soda, show that there are cognitive effects related to impaired learning and memory. With our children, teens, and young adults consuming sweetened drinks more than any other age group, the study has experts concerned that there might be similar effects on the vulnerable developing brains of our kids. Parents, it’s important that we teach our kids how to best steward and promote the continued health of their God-given bodies. A change in diet could be wise.

QUICK STATS

- *More than 90% of American high school students are chronically sleep-deprived. (Preventing Chronic Disease)*
- *Adolescents who had sexted were more than seven times more likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse than their non-sexting peers. (University of Texas)*

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Coffee Fellowship: changes are in the wind...

We need help in the kitchen on Sunday morning for Coffee Fellowship! Watch the Friday Flourish and Sunday Announcements for the opportunity to sign up to help with managing the kitchen on Sunday mornings. The more we have signed up, the easier it will be for everyone. This does NOT involve baking or making the coffee, only serving and cleaning up. It really is a very easy task. We will still have the sign up for bringing goodies, and you may wish to bring goodies on the day you serve, but that is your choice. Questions? Call or e-mail Carol Waxenberg at 815-529-1805 or cwaxenberg48@gmail.com.

PRAIRIE CRAFTERS

The next meeting for the Prairie Crafters will be held on February 5. There will be a second meeting this month on February 19 to work on items for the Spring Bazaar. If you have the following items, please bring them to the meeting: Glue gun, scissors, spring colored rick rack, buttons, spring acrylic paint, spring cookie cutters, and/or spring medium size flowers.

Everyone is welcome and needed to help us get ready for our Spring Bazaar that will be held the second and third weekends in March.

WELCA—MARY/MARTHA



Note: the Mary Martha circle WILL NOT MEET in the month of February.
See you in March!

MISSION TEAM NEWS

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOOD BANK

FREE! Now that the Christmas sales and bargains have ended the Mission Committee is offering a deal for you that will be hard to pass up. For just a couple of hours of your time you will be rewarded with the feeling you had at Christmas time when you experienced joy someone received when they opened their present from you. The good news is that after giving this gift there will be no credit card bill.

This gift giving all happens if you sign up to help at the NIFB on Saturday, February 14, from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. On that day the Mission Committee has committed 40 volunteers to help repackage food. This will be the 9th trip to NIFB from SOTP over the last couple of years and what a rewarding experience it has been. If you have not participated in the past, please consider signing up. Those of you who have gone in the past know the feeling. The only requirement is that you have to be at least 8 years old. Family participation is strongly encouraged. A final list is needed by February 4, so don't delay.

Call Sid Sorensen at 224-858-4168 or email sorensensid@comcast.net

SCHOOL TUTORING PROGRAM

DO YOU HAVE A STRONG MATH & SCIENCE BACKGROUND?

Are you waiting to find your way to contribute at SOTP?

Some of our kids here could really be blessed with your time & talent.

We have a few tutors and a few students. However, we have a couple of students that need more advanced math and science tutoring and could really use your help.

We are in need of tutors for **Geometry, Algebra, Spanish & Chemistry.**

Please contact Athena Hart or the church office for more information.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Simply Giving (aka EFT)



Many people now are paying things on line with "electronic funds transfer" commonly called EFT . It's easy and convenient. We have an option available at SOTP, called **Simply Giving**. You can arrange to have your Church offering transferred from your checking or savings account electronically to SOTP. It can be done weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, or quarterly. If you miss a service or two, you will not need to catch up. It saves writing checks, and is easier for our counters. If you are interested, contact the Church office for more details. We presently have 57 households enrolled.

2015 Envelopes

All 2015 envelopes that were not picked up by the end of January are available for pick up at the Church office.

Building Fund Update for February, 2015

Loan Balance	\$674,429.00
Estimated Payoff Date	September, 2019

2014 Treasurer's Financial Reports

Financial update provided by Jim Henley.

Building Fund:

1. We started 2014 with a loan balance of \$921,896.32, and ended the year with a balance of \$687,915.39 this resulted in a total principal reduction of \$233,980.93 for 2014.
2. Additional principal reductions were made throughout the year while maintaining a minimum of 4 full monthly payments in reserve.
3. While our focus has been to pay this loan down as soon as feasible. Perhaps now, we should review expansion plans to further our Church's ministry efforts.

General Fund:

Balance Sheet:

4. We ended 2014 with a strong cash position. We have \$44,385.81 in unrestricted funds, \$52,997.21 in Restricted Funds, and \$68,461.09 in our Reserve Accounts.
5. We finished 2014 with operating income exceeding operating expenses by \$10,480.89. We applied this surplus to our reserve accounts which are dedicated reserves for unexpected expenses. After accounting for the designation of the reserve accounts, our 2014 reflects a balanced budget.

Treasurer's Report (Income Statement):

6. Our Income Statement shows \$532,815.16 which reflects an increase in total income compared to \$484,903.95 collected in 2013. The finance team made a change in how we manage prepaid pledges in 2013 that impacted this total income number by approximately \$15,566.60 and Building Fund \$6,533.40. Prepaid pledges will be held as a liability on the balance sheet for the year end reports, and then moved to income in the year it was intended.
7. Expenses for the year were over budget. The primary cause for this was the extreme snow events we had in 2014 and an equipment rental not accurately budgeted for the full year. Our positive Difference for the year allowed us to add an additional \$10,480.89 to our Provision accounts after we had fully funded the budgeted \$9,500.00 for 2014.
8. You may notice there are several individual categories that may have ended the year under budget, and others that were over budget. We continued to work on procedures to improve the accuracy of placing expenses in the proper categories. We have to congratulate our ministry team leaders, our staff, and Pastor Mark for managing and controlling the expenses in a faithful fiduciary capacity. The Finance Committee was extremely diligent in questioning all expense categories and income projections.

FEBRUARY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULES

ALTAR GUILD

Saturday 5:00 p.m. Becky Tuzik & Gail Quam

Sunday 9:00 a.m. (*setup & take-down*)

February (all) Ann Lehmann & Judie Symbal

Sunday 10:45 a.m. (*take-down*)

February 1 Sandy Hupert & Barb Beaudette

February 8 Pam & Darren Walloch

February 15 Merrily Burkland & Marlene Boehler

February 22 Jan & Don Koerner

GREETERS

Saturday 5:00 p.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Feb. 7	Kay O'Shannon
Feb. 14	Kay O'Shannon
Feb. 21	Lois Kenyon
Feb. 28	

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Feb. 1	P.J. & Ron Knudsen
Feb. 8	Evelyn Gniot
Feb. 15	Sara Solem
Feb. 22	Barb Niemec

Sunday 10:45a.m. Bob & Caroline Malm

COMMUNION BREAD BAKERS

Saturday

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Feb. 7	Elaine Neukirch
Feb. 14	Kerry Miller
Feb. 21	Kerry Miller
Feb. 28	Kerry Miller

Sunday

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Feb. 1	Joann Klinger
Feb. 8	Pam Perrott
Feb. 5	Jacque Stashwick
Feb. 22	Pam Fender

COUNTERS

Warren Brody, Donna Turner, Cal Meyer

February Birthdays

Date

- 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 Brian Harvat, Maximus Reed
9 Susan Blotch, Michelle Saletta,
Conner Gillming, Jordan DeBolt
10 Mark Kowalski, Joshua Symbal
11 Annika McNeal, Zachery Serpe
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, Vernon Hansen
18 Kim Kowalski, Karin Arndt
19 Nanette Ridgway, Linda Jahr,
Ralph Scalise, Gregory Gillming
20 Carol Kalbas, Halie Gartzke
21 Patty Driscoll-Shaw
22 Heidi Dunfrund, Russell Lundstrom,
Mary Arneson, Shannon Ross
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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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*

Jim Henley, *Treasurer*

Adam Adams

Marlene Boehler

Amy Brittain

Larry Newbanks

Wayne Schmidt