



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

Congregational Newsletter January 2014

SOTP Statement of Purpose

“We care for God’s children of all ages by growing disciples who make disciples.”

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING DATE

The Church Council of Shepherd of the Prairie has set the date for the Annual Meeting of the Church. The date will be **Sunday, January 26 immediately following the 10:45 a.m. worship service**. All confirmed members of the church are encouraged to participate in this very important meeting of the church. Annual Reports will be available for you to pick up on Sunday, January 12.



CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

Important Dates in January

Jan. 1.... New Year’s Day, Church
Office Closed
Jan. 2.... Prairie Crafters
Jan 5..... Food Pantry Collection
Jan. 7.... Prairie Points Quilters
Jan. 8.... Men’s Fellowship Breakfast
Jan. 9.... Prayer Shawls

Jan. 11.... Leadership Meeting
Jan. 13.... Ministry Meeting Night
Jan. 14.... Ushers Meeting
Jan. 15.... Book Chatters
Jan. 16.... Mary Martha Bible Study
Jan. 19.... Adult Education Resumes
Jan. 26.... Merry Widows, PADS

A Note From Pastor Mark

Dear Christian Friends,

The Gospel of John is my favorite of the all the Gospels and has an interesting beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."

God has always been in control and always will be, no matter what we see happening in our world today.

John was sent to testify to the light, this light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it.

The light John speaks of has many facets: Jesus is the light of the world. His truth lights the way for people to live in peace and joy. Living in the light is a life filled with joy and Godly direction when we submit our lives to Jesus. It is the light that reveals truth to us as we read the Bible. It can be the sudden understanding in a situation that gives us clear leading and direction.

God wants us to have an abundant life. God will meet all

our needs, and give us the gifts we need to function and prosper. But we also live in a world filled with darkness and temptations. It is evident that there is a battle between darkness and light, good and evil, going on all around us. As believers we are in the midst of this struggle.

God knows this and God knows us. God understands that although we try, sometimes we simply fail and sin. When we do, our Lord does not wash his hands of us, but holds them out to lift us up. When we make sinful choices we do damage to ourselves and our regrets can run deep.

We have a New Year ahead of us. Our God is a God of understanding and second chances. God sends the light into our lives to reveal truths to us. Let us allow God to do a work in us to begin a fresh new year.

See you in worship,

Pastor Mark

ADULT EDUCATION HOLIDAY BREAK

Adult classes will not meet from **Sunday, December 22 through Wednesday, January 15**. New classes will begin on Sunday, January 19.

LITTLE LAMBS

The Little Lambs program would like to say a big THANK YOU to Shepherd of the Prairie!!! We are lucky to have a program that is so highly supported by the SOTP congregation. As a thank you, Little Lambs has purchased 2 Lambs on behalf of Shepherd of the Prairie from Heifer International!!!

The 2014-2015 school registration will be starting in early February. We will be offering the same classes as this year. If you know anyone interested please contact Jill Gillming at littlelambs@sotpmail.com.

2013 YEAR END GIVING STATEMENTS

We are going to send out the 2013 Giving Statements before the end of January. Please watch for this email with subject of "SOTP Giving Statement 2013". The sender will be dennis@sotpmail.com. If you are unable to print your copy, contact Sue Wehnes at (224)569-2808.

USHERS MEETING

There will be an Ushers Meeting on **Tuesday, January 14**. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

FOOD PANTRY

Items needed this month for the Grafton Food Pantry:

shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, salad dressings, mustard, coffee.

Thank you so very much for all you do.



DISORDERED EATING and the INFLUENCE of MOMS

This is a challenge to the mothers who are reading. If you know anything at all about today’s youth culture, you are aware that your daughters are facing tremendous body image pressure. As a result, all kinds of disordered eating have reached epidemic proportions among children and teens. If you’ve watched television or scanned the magazine covers you have a pretty good idea where much of this body image pressure comes from. But what many moms forget is that they can be a source of body image pressure as well. Every mother out there has been hammered by the body image pressure present in our culture. Consequently, your own words and example can actually fuel the same pressures in your daughters. In fact, experts at the Mayo Clinic are now saying that Moms are probably the most important influence on a daughter’s body image. Mom, where do you find your identity? By finding your identity in Christ, you will help your kids to do the same.

Youth Culture Hot Quote:

Tech shouldn’t replace normal kid activities, but it’s not the enemy either. Children will look to their parents to see how it’s done. It’s important to take some time,



whether it’s a block on the weekend or an hour every night, to just really unplug and focus on the family.

Randi Zuckerberg, the author of *Dot Complicated: Untangling Our Wired Lives*, former Facebook executive, and brother of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg; *New York Daily News*, November 5, 2013.

Top Ten

Digital Activities of Teen Internet Users:

1. Sent/received a text message
2. Played mobile/online games
3. Sent an e-mail
4. Used online social networking site
5. Used online instant messenger
6. Posted photo or posted/received comments on Instagram
7. Sent/received messages on Twitter
8. Sent/received messages on Snapchat
9. Post/blog on Tumblr
10. Posted on YouTube

YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

TRENDS

Molly

You need to be aware of a drug trend that's sweeping through youth culture. In the past, we've issued warnings about Ecstasy, a designer drug that's usually associated with the club and concert scene. Now, a newer and more pure form of Ecstasy known as "Molly", is making its way into youth culture. Sadly, there have



been deaths and a growing number of emergency room visits due to the toxicity of this illicit drug. The name Molly is short for molecule. Molly is a crystallized and powdered form of Ecstasy that is used for its euphoric, empathetic, and sensory effects. This purer form of Ecstasy sells for thirty to fifty dollars in capsule, pill, or powder form. While they deny it, pop artists Madonna and Miley Cyrus have been accused of including veiled references to Molly in their music. Parents, talk about this and other dangerous drug trends with your kids. Encourage them to glorify God by living drug-free.

LATEST RESEARCH

Online Pictures and Peer Pressure

Remember the old phrase "monkey see, monkey do?" It brings to mind the power of peer pressure, and the power of parental example. In terms of peer pressure, the desire to fit in

reaches its peak during the adolescent years. It should come as no surprise that in the age of social media new research from the University of Southern California claims that

teens are so impressionable that they can be influenced by what they see their friends doing online. In other words, those kids who see their friends drinking and smoking in pictures posted online are more likely to do the same thing themselves. But we can't forget that parental example can be an even more powerful influence in a young person's life. Your curious and impulsive kids will no doubt see peer examples that tempt them to join in. As parents, we must be diligent in our efforts to point our kids to God-honoring behaviors through our words and our example. Don't forget, your kids are watching!

QUICK STATS

64% of teenagers ages 13 to 17 report having access to a smartphone this year, up from 43% the previous year. (*Family Online Safety Institute*)

Among adults ages 25-29, just 4.9 million, or 23.3%, moved in the 12 months ending March 2013, the lowest level since 1963. (*U.S. Census Bureau*)

ADULT EDUCATION

Genealogy. What do you know about your ancestors? Our daughter has always been interested in her family history, but just recently our son has expressed a desire to know where he came from. Who are those people who gave him life? Where are they buried? What stories do we know that we could tell him?

So, this past October, off we went to Iowa to explore the places and people that have helped to shape his life.

What do you know about your family history? Or, for our purposes here at church, what do you know about your spiritual family? Not just those folks who are members of Shepherd of the Prairie, but your wider church family--those who've helped you become who you are as a Christian?

Our church family is over 2000 years old! Who are those people, what are those events, that have made up the church? How have they made a difference in the world? Who are the heroes of the faith? And who have been the scoundrels? (Because, after all, when we start poking around our own family histories, it doesn't take long before we discover a horse thief or two!)

Beginning in 2014, we'll explore this history of our church family. Via DVD presentations by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, a professor of church history, we'll go back to the beginning, and in 12 weeks, cover 20 centuries of our family--6 sessions now, and 6 later in the year. Following each 30-minute presentation, we'll have an opportunity for discussion and questions. Participant books will be available but aren't required for being in the class.

This new study will be available five times each week! **Sunday mornings at 9:00 and 10:30**, **Tuesday evenings at 7:00**, and **twice on Wednesday--at 11:00 in the morning, and 6:30 in the evening.**

So plan on joining us! We begin on **Sunday, January 19.**

WELCA:W4:WOMEN WHO WORK WONDERS!

SOTP's Prairie Point Quilters and WELCA gave generously to Home of the Sparrow following their annual Christmas Party. Six quilts and cards of \$326.00 were received when WELCA Officers Donna Sorensen and Barbara Pagano presented the gifts recently. Home of the Sparrow, on behalf of the women and children we serve, thanks you for your generous donation. Your support enables us to fulfill our mission of empowering individuals and families to eliminate homelessness, joblessness, and hunger by teaching self-reliance, independence, and self-discipline. We are deeply grateful for your contribution to our mission.

Mary Martha Friendship Circle News: Women are invited to gather on **Thursday, January, 16**, at 1 p.m. at the church for Bible study. Abigail and Mary (of Mary and Martha) are the women we will encounter in *Abigail, A Calm Strategist* can be found in the December/January issue of the *Gather Magazine*. We will study women who are acting in calm, careful ways in situations that are risky or uncomfortable. Abigail needs to quickly make a plan to save her family and Mary chooses to sit at the feet of Jesus at the risk of not being accepted by him or her sister. There are times when we are called on to act in calm, purposeful ways. The stories come from *1 Samuel 25:1-42* and *Luke 10:25-42*. Join this group of ladies and feel a warm welcome of fellowship while studying God's Word.

Dates to Put on Your Calendar: A New Year, a New Calendar! WELCA's Annual Retreat on **April 5**, Mother-Daughter Fashion Review/ Banquet on **June 14**, and Installation of Officers on **June 14**.



BOOK CHATTERS

Book Chatters will meet at the church at **1 p.m. on Wednesday, January 15**. The book we will discuss is *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. The Wall Street Journal calls it "One of the most highly anticipated young-adult books in years." I am not sure just why it is listed as "young-adult," because at my tender young age I am finding it fascinating and beautifully written for folks of all ages. That being said, as a not-so-young adult, I feel that while reading, I am at an exhibit of either Monet or Van Gogh art -- examining one of either painter's masterpieces where he completed scenes by using lots of vibrant little dabs. Zusak paints with equally careful little strokes, developing characters with painstaking care. A special effect is that the author chose Death as his narrator. Before you get all horror stricken and turned off by that idea (as I almost did), let me warn you that Zusak's Death as narrator is a remarkable mixture of cynicism, realism, morality, tenderness, and wit.

No matter what your age, please read the book (before you see the new movie that is just out) and join us in our discussion on January 15.



**BOOK
CHATTERS**

WELCA'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TEA

The Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, held their annual Christmas Party "A Cup of Christmas Tea" on Sunday, December 8. Women were warmly welcomed with a corsage and a cup of punch. An array of Christmas greens, lights, color and fresh falling snow welcomed everyone into the Crossroads for an afternoon of prepared Tea goodies. A warm welcome was given by Barbara Pagano after which Mary Trodahl read *A Cup of Christmas Tea*, a memoir of Christmas long ago. Carol Waxenberg distributed slips of conversational starters designed for us to tell our long ago story of Christmas memories. Following the Tea, ladies gathered in the sanctuary for Carol Waxenberg's original inspirational story, *The Innkeeper's Wife*. Gift cards and six quilts were collected as our offering to Home of the Sparrow, a women's and children's shelter of transitional living for McHenry County. A special thank you to the Committees of Many Hands who made this afternoon a very special event.



MISSION TEAM

The Stubbs Family, the missionaries we help support in Tanzania, have a note about visiting our church in their blog under "Home Assignment, Aug.15, 2015". They mention visiting us on August 13 and giving a great program after correcting for going to McHenry by mistake. They also enjoyed the ice cream after their presentation! Be sure to check out their website at www.Stubbsmission.info.



A LETTER FROM ONE OF OUR SERVICEMEN – 2ND CLASS AIRMAN MATTHEW HOPPENSTEADT

Dear Shepherd of the Prairie,

I'm writing this letter to inform you of how much my family and I appreciate your continued support throughout the past few years. Being in the military can be very stressful at times, but knowing we have support from individuals and groups like yourselves keeps us going and staying strong for our country. I can't thank you enough for doing as small a thing as sending me holiday cards throughout the year, as well as to many other military members.

I am 27 years old and happily married for 3.5 years to my wife, Megan. We recently had a beautiful baby girl on May 31, 2013 named Skylar Rose. We're looking into her baptism, at your church, in the near future. It's been hard picking a date lately, as I have been traveling a lot recently. We recently moved from LA to TN back in July as I switched to supporting the Army at Fort Campbell.

I'm still forecasting weather as my job, but I'm getting to do a lot of Army training that the typical Air Force member doesn't get to do.

Thank you again so much for what you all do. Myself and the rest of the military members you support are blessed to have you watching over us.

God Bless,
Matthew F. Hoppensteadt

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

Because New Year's day is January 1, the Men's Fellowship Breakfast will meet on **Wednesday, January 8**, at Sammy's Restaurant at 9:00 a.m. Sammy's is located on Route 47 in Huntley just north of the train tracks. All men of SOTP are welcome to attend.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

In a couple of days you will probably experience the joy of giving and receiving gifts. 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 - 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.



30 years of
Feeding Our Hungry Neighbors
1983 - 2013

2014 ENVELOPES

Please make sure your name and number on the box agree with the numbers on the envelopes. Here are some helpful hints regarding the use of envelopes:

- ◆ You only need to write one check if you are trying to catch up or paying multiple items.
- ◆ You only need to use 1 envelope if you are trying to catch up.
- ◆ Please don't tape or staple your envelope shut.
- ◆ Try to use your envelope all the time, it saves the counters time.
- ◆ Please specify on the envelope how your offering should be applied.

THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS

As of the end of November, Shepherd of the Prairie has received \$8,017.00 from Thrivent Financial to apply to our loan principal.

WORSHIP GREETERS FOR JANUARY

Saturday 5:00 services

January 4	Stevie Massei
January 11	Kay O'Shanna
January 18	Lois Kenyon
January 25	Kay O'Shanna

Sunday - 9:00 service

January 5	Chris and Mary Trodahl
January 12	Sid & Donna Sorenson
January 19	Warren and Elaine Brody
January 26	Ron & PJ Knudsen

All Sunday 10:45 service - Bob & Carolyn Malm

ALTAR GUILD—JANUARY

* **Sunday 9:00 a.m.:** Marilyn Schnake & Ann Lehman

* **Sunday 10:45 a.m.:**

January 5 Sandy Hupert & Marlene Boehler

January 12 Linda Jahr & Donna Schnepff

January 19 Merrily Burkland & Barb Beaudette

January 26 Jan & Don Koerner

* **Saturday evening 5:00 p.m.** Becky Tuzik & volunteers

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.

OFFERING COUNTERS FOR JANUARY



- ◆ Ralph Wehnes
- ◆ Mary Trodahl
- ◆ Warren Brody

COMMUNION BREAD BAKERS FOR JANUARY

January 5—Lisa Adams

January 12—Sally Schuett

January 19—Sandy Martin

January 26—Beth Wintersteen

Saturdays

January 4—Randi Dawson

January 11, 18, 25,—Donna Brown

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.

2014 PLEDGE UPDATE

As of December 9, we have received the following estimate of giving responses:

General Fund—218 pledges for \$434,534.00
Building Fund—171 pledges for \$207,720.00

OPERATING BUDGET YEAR TO DATE AS OF 11/30/2013

<u>Budget</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD</u>
General Fund Income:	\$435,551.15	\$472,417.00
General Fund Expenses:	\$434,763.08	\$472,417.00
Net Income:	\$788.07	\$0

General Fund Notes: Through November, operating revenue exceeded expenses. Expenses are under budget primarily due to the vacancy in our Lay Ministry Coordinator for most of the year. We are hopeful that with increased giving in December, SOTP will be able to finish the year with a balanced budget and also fund our provisional savings

BUILDING FUND YEAR-TO-DATE AS OF 11/30/2013

Building Fund Income:	\$223,324.06
Loan Principal Payments:	\$131,076.25
Loan Interest Payments:	\$ 33,011.73
Principal Only Payments:	\$ 45,000.00
Total Building Expenses:	\$209,087.98
Net Income:	\$ 14,236.08

SOTP MORTGAGE

Great news! The Prairie Crafters gave \$6,269.50 and we were able to add \$62,330.50 for a total of \$68,600.00 to be applied to our mortgage principal in December. That brings our loan balance down to \$932,992.67. Through the generosity of our congregation, the loan principal has been cut in half in four years. At this rate our loan could be paid off in 2018. Keep the contributions coming and the next hot topic at church will be "Expansion".

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Evan Reincke, Ava Allison
 3 Vik Bekeris, Phil Casablanca,
 Jessica Panella,
 Gretchen Rossman
 4 Mark Miley
 5 Sandy Petersen
 6 Nel Quam, Elaine Neukirch,
 Denis Minutillo,
 Jacqueline Petersen
 8 Liss Kundich, Elizabeth Rojas
 9 George Sebastian, Aidan Conway,
 Michael Parmele
 11 Bob Broz
 12 Jack Trevino
 14 Evelyn Olbrich, Robert Petersen,
 Larry Newbanks, Kurtis Arndt
 15 Dinah Lindsey
 16 Nancy Zunker, Steve Conway
 17 Rick Behm, Emilie Ulmer,
 Christian Kasal
 18 Joan Smith, Steven Brown,
 Connor Martin
 19 Jeff McNeal, McKenzie Fulcer,
 Elliott Burg
 20 Loretta Brindell, Pam Luedtke,
 Tim Torkelson, Daniel Hibbeler
 21 Shannon Mejdrich
 22 Tracy Blanchard, Melody
 Emery, Katie Torkelson,
 Shayne Piskule, Hailey Trudeau
 25 Claudia Morgan,
 Kevin Hennessey
 27 Marilyn Schnake
 28 Audrey Schmidt, Bradley James
 29 Matthew Vitner, Justin Prather,
 Brayden Riebock
 30 Patrick Fleener

Our Vision:
**“Caring for God’s Children of All Ages
 By Growing Disciples Who Make
 Disciples”**

10805 Main Street, Huntley, IL 60142
 Office Phone: 847-669-9448
 Fax: 847-669-9455
 Office Hours: 8:00 a. m.-noon, Mon-Fri

Pastor Mark Boster
 847-515-2713 (Home)
 pastormark@sotpmail.com

Pastor Bill Waxenberg
 Director of Adult Education
 pastorbill@sotpmail.com

Greg Dowell
 Youth and Family Ministries Coordinator
 greg@sotpmail.com

Jane McMullen
 Director of Music & Worship
 jane@ssotpmail.com

Dennis Lilla
 Technology Support Manager
 dennis@sotpmail.com

Donna Kelly
 Lay Ministry/New Member Coordinator
 donna@sotpmail.com

Judy Spencer
 Office Manager
 judy@sotpmail.com

Michael Waal
 Organist/Piano Accompanist
 michael@sotpmail.com

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 Secretary

Tammy Uteg
 Music Librarian

Congregation Council
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