



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

**Congregational
Newsletter**
December 2014

SOTP Statement of Purpose

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

YOU'RE INVITED TO A
Birthday Party
FOR JESUS!

Saturday, December 6th
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

SHEPHERD OF THE PRAIRIE

Enjoy lunch, games, crafts, caroling, and a silly story!
And bring a pair of gloves as your gift!

HOLIDAY SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

November 23 & 30 No Sunday School (Thanksgiving break)

December 7, 14 & 21 Normal Sunday School Sessions

December 28 No Sunday School

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,
Christmas Blessings to you All!

There are some great Christmas scenes in the movies. You think of ***It's A Wonderful Life***, with George Bailey running through the snow, waving his arms around, broke and happy as a clam. Or there's that marvelous moment in ***A Christmas Story*** (which is shown for 24 straight hours on TBS every year) where the dogs break into the house, steal the holiday turkey, and the whole family goes out for Chinese!

But my favorite (and since I'm an old softie I get a catch in my throat each time I see it) comes in the cartoon where Charlie Brown cries aloud for someone to tell him what Christmas is all about, and Linus takes center stage and recites the story from the Gospel of Luke by heart. How's that for Christmas?

You can talk and dream about how important it is to have a white Christmas (and I kind of like it myself...maybe not so cold), but the real question is whether we're going to have a Jesus Christmas. The gifts, the music, the tree, the decorations, the big dinner, the fruitcake and all the other things

that make this such a fun time are good things. But they all must point, in one way or the other, to the one

thing: Jesus. Just like the angels, we come "to bring good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. As Linus and God's Word would remind us "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Now that's a scene worth remembering.

I hope to see you all at either the **4:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.**

Christmas Eve service! Our Adult and Children's Choirs, Bell Choirs and Handbell Choirs will be playing. We also will offer a special **"Love is Born!"** service that will begin at **12:00 a.m.** (Midnight). This will be a simple service of carols for those who wish to stay up late and welcome in Christmas morning. The Lord's Supper will be offered at both the 6:00 p.m. and the 12:00 a.m. service.

See you there as we celebrate the birth of our Lord!

Pastor Mark

Pastor Bill's Adult Education News



Religious Education

Our adult education classes will not meet during the month of December. However, watch the Sunday bulletin and the January newsletter for information about upcoming classes in 2015. Until then, have a most blessed Advent and Christmas!

Blessings,

Pastor Bill

Shepherd of the Prairie's Annual Christmas Stress Reducer Program



**Stress Reducer
tips for the
holiday season**



Here's a great idea: how about making a donation to SOTP instead of spending on cards and postage sending Christmas cards to congregation members? We've used this program for the past few years and it was always a huge success. If you would like to participate in this program, please use our **Christmas Stress Relief Form:**

(<http://www.sotp.org/Vwdforms/CSR/CSR-2015.aspx>)

or send an email to admin@sotpmail.com. We'll publish the list of participants in our special Christmas bulletin.

YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

From The Word...

In the fifth chapter of the book of James, the “heart” is mentioned twice. The first mention is about the “heart” of the rich (v. 5). These are the people who have spent their lives focusing on themselves. Rather than

“Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

—James 5:8

living justly and generously in relation to others, they have focused on laying up treasures for themselves. By living lives of luxurious self-indulgence, they have spent their time “fattening” their “hearts” . . . which is a lifestyle which leads to ruin. A few verses later (v. 8), James tells readers the secret to spiritual growth, endurance during suffering, and the steadfastness that leads to eternal life.

Specifically, he tells us to “establish” our hearts. The word he uses means “to strengthen, to make firm, and to render constant.” What is commanded is an active pursuit of and adherence to faith in the midst of life’s difficulties, temptations, and trials. In other words, we are to actively study God’s Word, pray, engage in regular fellowship with other believers, and pursue all avenues to spiritual growth. Life in today’s world is fast-paced and confusing. Not only does our culture issue challenges to us as parents, but it’s throwing all kinds of destructive messages at our kids. Who will we follow? Who will they follow? Parents, establish your hearts. Then, encourage and help your kids to do the same!

YOUTH CULTURE HOT QUOTE

“It’s like giving the keys to the car, only they’re much younger. And unlike a car, which you can drive to any part of town, on the Internet, a cellphone can really take you anywhere. So you have to hope that from the moment they can log on that you’ve done enough to raise them well so they’re not looking for the wrong thing in the wrong places.”

Director Jason Reitman, speaking about parenting in an era of the Internet and social media, LNP, October 19, 2014



YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

Trends Dirty Sprite

Recently, we've been encountering reports of a troubling drug abuse trend making its way around the country through the teen population. Teenagers are now experimenting with a drug cocktail that is made by mixing sprite, candy, and prescription medications including things like cough syrup with codeine, or crushed pain killer pills. In the teen population, this dangerous new mixture goes by names like Dirty Sprite, Lean, Purple Drank, and Sizzurp.

Behavioral Specialists in North Carolina have reported high usage rates, with almost a third of children screened having tried the mixture. Medical professionals warn that the side effects of drinking this cocktail include hallucinations, rage, psychosis, and even death. Because teenagers are developmentally at a place where they feel invincible and invulnerable, they are especially prone to try drugs, thinking nothing can happen to them. Parents, pray for your kids, and warn them about this dangerous trend.



Latest Research Brain Development and Impulse Control

Temple University Professor Dr. Laurence Steinberg has been researching the teenage brain for a long time. He recently released a new book, **Age of Opportunity**, to help us understand just what's going on in the teen brain. Steinberg says that when kids are around fifteen or sixteen years old, many brain cells in the prefrontal cortex die off while others are created. New connections form among these cells. As this happens, a variety of cognitive abilities, including advanced reasoning,

abstract thinking, and self-consciousness rapidly expand. But there are other connections in the brain that take a bit longer to develop. Specifically, these are the connections that control decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation. Steinberg's research points to the wonder, beauty, and complexity of God's design for our bodies. In addition, it reminds us that we need to be patient with our kids as they grow and develop. They may look like adults, but they're not.

QUICK STATS

- *To raise a child born in 2013 to the age of 18, it will now cost a middle-income couple just over \$245,000. (U.S. Department of Agriculture)*
- *More than 4 out of 10 boys in middle school and high school tend to regularly exercise with the goal of increasing muscle mass. Almost 40% use protein supplements, and almost 6% admit to experimenting with steroids. (Pediatrics)*

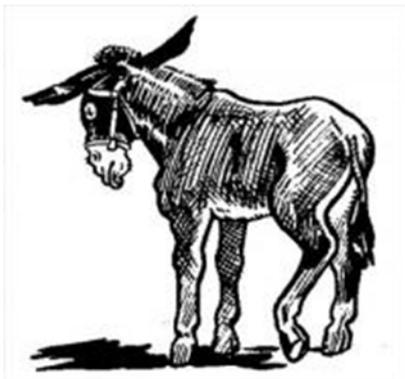
YOUTH CULTURE NEWS

Family Meals and Cyberbullying

It's always a good thing when those things we know to be intuitively true are reinforced by research. And, with so many families skipping family dinners and eating on the run because of busy schedules, it's a good thing that research is now reinforcing our belief that there are benefits to sharing a family meal. Canadian researchers are saying that the social contact, support, and communication experienced during family meals are not only good for a teenager's mental health, but they help tackle the problem of cyber-bullying. Researchers have discovered a connection between shared family meals and a lower incidence of mental health issues in those teens who have been cyberbullied. God created the family as the place for a child to be born, loved, and nurtured. Love and nurture comes through time and effort. Are you eating together as a family on a regular basis? Doing so is an effective step at building the resilience your child needs to handle life's pressures.

STEWARDSHIP TALES

Too often we fail to understand that Christian instruction about money is one of the best opportunities we have to teach our children about God's love for us, and His ownership of all things. The way we use money is the extension of our personal characteristics. In a real sense, money embodies much of that which we are. By teaching our children the Christian use of money, by affording them control of money and the need to make decisions about money, we also confront them with the meaning of discipleship and Christian Stewardship. Perhaps the real significance of giving is what it does to the steward. What matters to God is not the gift, but the giver. Stewardship is God's invitation to a way of life. It helps us to overcome our selfishness and love of things. What we do with what we have been given is a sign to God and to the world of the depth and meaning our commitment.



MARY/MARTHA



WELCA - MARY MARTHA will meet Thursday, December 11 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

We will be studying Session 3 from the November issue of the **Gather** magazine: **Transformation Takes Time**. Going over the Exodus deliverance story we will understand how God uses both signs to show his power to Pharaoh and to strengthen the faith of Moses and the Israelites. We will see that growth in faith so often takes time.

FOOD PANTRY

SOTP is committed to the Grafton Food Pantry program, which meets the needs of families and individuals who do not have the means to purchase food and other essential items. Food items needed this month:

- Baking for Christmas needs such as -sugar, flour, oil, cookie candy sprinkles.
- Cereal, detergent, bleach, salad dressing, canned spaghetti



Food Pantry Donations Needed

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

We can't thank our congregation enough for your amazing support of Operation Christmas Child. SOTP surpassed last year's record and filled over 200 shoe boxes for children in need! Thank you to those who filled boxes, purchased items to put in boxes, donated money for items and shipping, and prayed for the children who would receive the packages. We couldn't have done it without you. With your help, we are showing God's love and making Christmas special for children in need around the world.



MISSION TEAM NEWS

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

To continue our making a difference in God's world, SOTP will divide equally the Christmas offerings between these three charities:

Turning Point Women's Shelter in McHenry County:

A domestic violence agency with a mission to confront violence against women and children.

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

Responding to the Gospel, LSSI brings healing, justice and wholeness to people and communities through a variety of services.

Home of the Sparrow:

Provides hope, opportunity and support that empowers women and children as they journey from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

MISSIONARY SUPPORT

The mission team has been alerted to a financial need of Ted and Jane Scheuermann, missionaries in Ethiopia. Ted and Jane are friends of Kathy Pizarro, a member here at SOTP.

Ted runs a Christian based company providing employment for college grads in Ethiopia (the unemployment rate for these grads is 60% or more). In addition, Ted meets with his employees, learning about their circumstances and supports them anyway he can. Jane is head of the English Department and teaches at a local school.

Ted and Jane believe in the truism "It is better to teach a person to fish than to just give him a fish." God bless them in their mission. We donated \$250.00 in the name of SOTP to their continuing work.

On a similar note, the Stubbs family, the missionaries we help support, have begun their 9th year in Tanzania (they originally only planned to stay one year). The Lord works in mysterious ways! The gift they give is music and music is so important in the culture and Christian worship in Tanzania. As Randy has posted on the website "on any given Sunday if you want to find a church, all you need to do is step out onto the savanna and start walking in the direction of the singing and you will find a church."

May the Lord bless and watch over the Stubbs, Scheuermanns and all the missionaries as they spread word and love throughout the world. Check our the Stubb's website at www.Stubbsmission.info

FINANCIAL NEWS

Treasurer's Report

Operating Budget Year-to-Date as of October 31, 2014:

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget
General Fund Income:	\$ 437,948.61	\$ 429,450.00
General Fund Expenses:	\$ 428,585.23	\$ 429,430.00
Net Income:	\$ 9,363.38	\$ 20.00

General Fund Notes: Through October, operating revenues exceed expenses. Member contributions continue to exceed budget. Expenses are over budget in the categories headed Facilities, and Office Expenses - Equipment Rental and Web/Software Expenses. Facilities Lawncare/Snow Removal is in excess of budget because of the number of snow events we have had this fiscal year and mulch expense. Overall General Fund Income exceeds Expenses to Budget YTD \$9,363.38 prior to funding Provision Accounts. We appreciate the restraint staff and mission teams have shown in their spending in the various expense categories.

Building Fund Year-to-Date as of October 31, 2014:

Building Fund Begin Balance 10/01/2014:	\$ 60,255.25
Debt Reduction Donations	\$ 20,004.75
Building Fund Donations:	\$178,967.06
Mission Plus Interest Income	\$ 379.49
Prepaid Building Fund Donations 2013:	\$ 6,533.40

Loan Principal Payments:	\$ 103,809.56
Loan Interest Payments:	\$ 19,356.44
Principal Only Payments:	\$ 27,449.77
Total Building Fund Expenses:	\$ 150,615.77

Ending Fund Balance: \$ 115,524.18

Net Income: \$ 55,268.93

The October month end building loan balance is \$790,736.99 Thank you for your faithful giving as we continue to cover our mission operational costs and funding our building loan obligation.

Jim Henley
SOTP Treasurer

BUILDING FUND UPDATE FOR DECEMBER, 2014

Loan Balance\$779,020.54
 Estimated Payoff DateMay, 2020

FINANCIAL RECORDS

Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran Church only keeps financial records on members and non-members that have envelopes assigned. If you are not a member and want envelopes, contact the Church office.

DECEMBER VOLUNTEER SCHEDULES

ALTAR GUILD

Saturday 5:00 p.m. Becky Tuzik, Tom and Darlene Polzin

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

December 7	Sue Wehnes & Caryl Fabian
December 14	Judie Symbal & Joanne Klinger
December 21	Adele Wogstad & Dee Pedersen
December 28	Ann Lehman & Marilyn Schnake

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

December 7	Sandy Hupert & Marlene Boehler
December 14	Pam & Darren Walloch
December 21	Merrily Burkland & Barb Beaudette
Christmas Eve	Sue Wehnes
December 28	Jan & Don Koerner

GREETERS

Saturday 5:00 p.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteer</u>
Dec. 6	Stevie Massei
Dec. 13	Lois Kenyon
Dec. 20	Stevie Massei
Dec. 27	Becky Tuzik

Sunday 9:00 a.m.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Dec. 7	Mary Trodahl & Terry Halpin
Dec. 14	John Arneson & Terry Halpin
Dec. 21	Elaine Brody & Terry Halpin
Dec. 28	Evelyn Gniot & Terry Halpin

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

COMMUNION BREAD BAKERS

Saturday

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Dec. 6	Jeanne Henley
Dec. 13, 20, 27	
.....	Brandi Lorenzo
	(<i>will put in freezer</i>)

Sunday

<u>Date</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
Dec. 7	Elizabeth Wintersteen
Dec. 14	Barb Krmpotich
Dec. 21	Jeff & Kristi Cordle
Dec. 28	Jill Brown

Christmas Eve: 6:00 p.m.,....Joan Rice Midnight.....Michele Miller

COUNTERS

Warren Brody, Ralph Wehnes, Jim Rice

2015 OFFERING ENVELOPES

By December 1ST, the 2015 Offering Envelopes will be available for pick up in the Narthex/Crossroads. After you pick up your envelopes, please don't use them until after January 1, 2015. If you want to use offering envelopes in 2015 and you don't find a box of envelopes with your name, please call the Church office 847-669-9448, or call Ralph Wehnes at 224-569-2808.

December Birthdays

Date

- 1 Jacob Guttenburg
- 2 William Chapman,
Mark Frendreis, Tess Miller
- 3 Marlene Tresp, Tim McMullen,
Mike Ulmer
- 4 Nathan Sova
- 5 Raquel Hess, Jackson Moretti
- 6 Amanda Stenson, Noelle Lukes
- 7 Daniel Black
- 8 Mike Maraviglia,
Hallie Guttenburg
- 9 Donna Schnepff, Jim Lindquist
- 10 Dave Kosmen, Sophie Dowell
- 12 Ericka Berti, Megan Juergensen
- 13 Devin Burg
- 14 Patricia Lidbury
- 15 Katie Desiato, Macy Luedtke
- 16 Pat Fiorese
- 17 Richard Stashwick,
Martha Bergman,
Nancy Ramirez, Seth Boster,
Katie Ostrem, Shane McGuine
- 18 Ella Trudeau
- 19 Susan Mattiucci, Emma Johnson
- 20 Enrique Rojas, Jack Bloomfield
- 21 Tristan Mathiesen
- 22 Chuck Little, Andrew Raistrick
- 23 Deanna Moore,
William Waxenberg,
Daniel Wills
- 23 Alexandra Adams
- 24 Mary Ann Wiek,
Carol Goodhue
- 25 Jim Henley, Jake Satalino
- 26 Darlene Polzin,
Matthew Ostrem,
Chelsea Greene
- 27 Carol Lilla, Darrel Thompson,
Amy Johnson, Shelby Kowalski,
Hannah Retzlaff
- 28 Jim Carr, Patricia Mallow,
Annette Boster, Mike McCann,
Taylor Wade
- 29 Robert Weldon, Chuck Lamb
- 30 Michael Grabs
- 31 P.J. Knudsen, Pat Milford

Staff and Contacts

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Michelle Rankin

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Michael Waal

Organist/Piano Accompanist
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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