



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

December 2013 Updates

Children's Christmas Pageant

Please join us on Sunday, Dec. 15 during worship for the Annual Children's Christmas Pageant as Marty and Ramona, a Bible-times couple, lead the way on a journey to Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth. They'll cross paths with some familiar people, a musical caravan, harmonic angels, and shepherds with their flock of inspiring sheep. Come discover the true Star of Bethlehem- Jesus!

Annual Budget Meeting

There will be another congregational meeting on Sunday, Dec. 15 after worship to discuss and vote on the 2014 budget. All confirmed members are asked to attend.
Childcare will be available in the nursery.

Come Caroling with the Choir!

The choir will be caroling at Mark Twain Manor Nursing Home in Bridgeton on Saturday, Dec. 21 at 3:00 p.m. This is a family friendly event open to all ages. Invite a friend or relative to join you and spread some holiday cheer with the SOTH Choir. See Jim Urnes for more information.

Christmas Eve Service

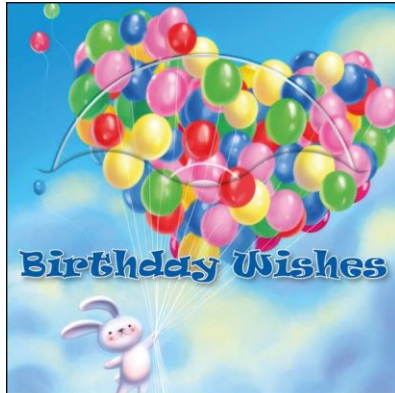
Plan to join us for the Christmas Eve Service on Dec. 24 at 8:00 p.m. This family-friendly candle-light service will include crèche building, carols, and Holy Communion. If you would like to help during the service, please sign up on the clipboard or contact Pastor Kristen.
The service will be followed by holiday foods and fellowship.

Additional Nursery Attendants Needed!

We have been blessed with an abundance of young children who are not yet old enough for Sunday School. Therefore, we would like to staff the Nursery during the Sunday School time, so that those parents are free to teach or attend faith formation classes. Looking for adults 18 and older, or high school students looking for community service hours (who also like kids!)

Special Thanks

Thanks to all who have pitched in to make this a wonderful holiday season: your generous gifts to the CHM Toy Room and for the holiday food baskets, decorating of the church, purchasing poinsettias to make the sanctuary & fellowship area festive, helping and participating in the pageant, assisting with snow shoveling and salting-it is all noticed and greatly appreciated!



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Barb Daab	5
Suah Tokpa	7
Kathy Sieker	7
Ann Smith	7
Stein Hunter	12
Paul Urnes	12
Lady Kasperski	14
Dale Travis	14
Jessica Hogbin	22
Gary Johnson	25
Darwumah Tokpa	30

DECEMBER - Anniversaries

Tony & Tina Chumbley	4
Jim & Ann Sanderson	17

Upcoming January Events:

- Baby shower for Kristen & Pete Hiltner on Saturday, Jan. 25. See Linda Ritter for details.
- Save the Date: Annual Meeting, Sunday, January 26, 2014, after worship.

A Letter from the Pastor...

A Mother's Thanks

It's not easy, as a parent or a grandparent, to bring a child to church with you. Even if you've been to church your whole life, the first time you step into a church building with an infant or toddler you are taking a big risk. That's why I want to thank you, my sisters and brothers at Shepherd of the Hills, for your love and care for the children of our congregation!

In Daryn's first call congregation - years before he and I had children of our own - there was a little 18 month old boy in the congregation who was a joy to behold. Daryn and I would joke that he body-surfed his way through the congregation during worship. He wandered around and danced and was gathered into the arms of his church family. Daryn and I knew that was special in a congregation and something we greatly appreciated.

The sad fact is most churches are not safe places for parents with young children. You expose yourself to criticism as a parent for the behavior of your child, with the added burden of knowing that unless your child is a natural "sitter", the worship service itself will prove to be a challenge. So when I see a parent or grandparent with their young child walk into the church, the first thing I want to do is congratulate them for making it this far - out of the house, into the car and into the church building! And I think if they made it that far, then it is our calling as the community of Christ to make sure they and their child feel welcomed, honored, and loved.

One of the ways we do that at SOTH is to provide opportunities for young people to be trained to serve in a leadership position. Church is far less boring for kids (and for adults!) when they have a role to play! I firmly believe that our time of worship is *not* a performance for God that somehow requires perfection. I want worship to be experienced as a family gathering - a weekly reunion of sorts - where we gather with relatives to tell family stories, share a meal, sing together, and seek healing and restoration for whatever has become broken in our relationships with God and with one another.

The life of faith is something that is caught, much more than it is taught. And the more young people can participate in the stories, the meal, the song, and the positive relationships, the more the community of faith and its proclamation, and rituals will take root deep into their hearts and lives.

We now have the wonderful "problem" of having more young people wanting to light candles than we have candles to light! They will not do it perfectly every time - maybe they won't do it perfectly *any* of the time. But that's not what's important in this situation. What's important is that they're doing it!! And just like that that cute little boy from Daryn's first call is now, more than likely, old enough to be in high school, our young people at SOTH will not stay young forever. And the relationship we form with them now will have a great impact on the relationship they continue to have, with Shepherd of the Hills, as well as with God.

Participating in worship - having a role to play - makes a difference to young people. And I think it makes a difference to the congregation as well, when young people are a part of worship. Of course, making a difference often means experiencing change. And change - whether good or bad - is hard. So I want to thank you - as your pastor and as a mother - for the patience, support, love, and care that you have shown to the many children of Shepherd of the Hills, who truly love coming to church. Thanks be to God!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Kristen