

**PASTOR’S PEN**

Dear Friends and Members of Sychar,

I was recently asked the following question “What is the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit?”

The key passage for the sake of this discussion is Matthew 12:31-32:

“*And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”*

The background to this passage is the Pharisees believe that Jesus is performing healing miracles through a demon, rather than the Holy Spirit. Jesus is seeking to correct the Pharisees’ misunderstandings regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in these verses.

A few thoughts stand out about this passage.

1. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is a unique sin that is different than violating the Second Commandment warning against taking the Lord’s name in vain. Jesus also draws a distinction within this passage against those who speak ill of him. For example, when Saul was the great persecutor of Christ’s first followers, this is a different type of sin than blaspheming the Holy Spirit.
2. We can begin to find the answer to this question of blasphemy the Holy Spirit in Luther’s *Small Catechism* where he describes the Holy Spirit’s work as such:

*“The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and kept me in true faith.”*

**To understand that the Holy Spirit is the creator of faith is the key to this question**. **The simplest answer to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is unbelief the one unforgivable sin**.

1. There is always a pastoral angle with questions like this one. People will often worry if they have possibly committed this sin. I believe the definition of this sin goes way beyond uttering a word of frustration against God in a difficult moment. **Blaspheme of the Holy Spirit is an act of actively seeking to impede the work of the one who creates faith.** Demons would be guilty of Blaspheming the Holy Spirit through trying to confuse the believer.
2. This brings up the question of “If God saves, then who damns?” Lutherans believe in what’s called single predestination. We as Lutherans believe that the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus is for the entire world (John 3:16). God wants all people to come to salvation (1 Timothy 2:4). Salvation is purely God’s doing through the Means of Grace given through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments (Titus 3:5-7). **As to the question of why some do not believe, we dare not attempt to answer this question. We acknowledge that one’s un-forgiveness has nothing to do with God’s mercy, but rather with one’s own internal spiritual condition.**

If you have a question about the Scriptures or the Lutheran faith, please don’t hesitate to contact me for submission in a future *Scroll.*

**Pastor Stew’s Office Hours**

Tuesday: 8am – 12pm

Wednesday: 10am – 12pm

Thursday: 1pm – 5pm

Or By Appointment

Best Wishes,

Pastor Stew

**From the council president**

Happy New Year everyone! Let’s hope this year will be prosperous, faithful and enjoyable for everyone. As I write this article it looks like the weather may be on the upswing for a while. We are all hopeful that this winter will not copy last winter, though a little more snow would help out cross country skiing and snowmobiling.

I mentioned last month that the board of operations is starting the year out setting up some projects that need doing. They have reported that the electrician we need to put in the new electrical control panel will be available in February. This comes as great news, for we have a lot of patch jobs in place that will not last forever. It seems every month another item fails and needs to be replaced or fixed. We now have a problem with our dimmer mechanism that appears to be needing replacement and the cost has yet to be determined. And then they have the leaky pipe problem between the woman’s and men’s restrooms. That should be getting under way yet in January. So, you see we do now need the building maintenance fund to keep going for the building as beautiful as it is, has some old parts that need replacing.

Last month I thank those individuals who put up the Christmas decorations and this month I would like to thank those who took down the Christmas decorations. They were Rey & Margaret Grothe, Jon & Chris Mattila, Dean Zeitz and me, nice job everyone.

Finally, as you know we are still in need of a Vice-President & Council Secretary. Anyone interested please let Krysty or myself know. Also, the Council is still meeting at 1:00 P.M. on the second Thursday of the month. So far the council members do like it rather than the night time meetings. And one last item, some have mentioned the lack of a snow shoveling sign-up sheet, that is because we have enlisted the janitor to take care of that except for the possible week end that he would not be around. Enjoy the winter everyone.

God Bless,

Merle McDonald, Council President

**The people of Sychar**

**Who we are**

The person next to you in the pew on Sunday may be your closest friend or someone you don’t know. Perhaps you taught their children in school or Sunday school or are a neighbor, a past or present co-worker or a business associate. This series: Who We Are, attempts to better acquaint you with your brothers and sisters in Christ, through sketches of the lives of our Sychar family members.

ROGER AND LOIS MICKELSON

Almost any day during the summer and fall you can find Roger at the church. He may have found something in need of repair or is checking on a recent project or mowing grass. He devotes numerous hours there whether officially on the Board of Operations or not. Prior to working in maintenance at Reserve Mining he was a mechanic at a Studebaker garage. Roger grew up on a farm at Elbow Lake, Minnesota, where he learned many skills including driving by running a tractor.

Lois is from the same area. They met at a roller rink in 1948. She received an associate degree in teaching from St. Cloud State College and taught one year after she and Roger were married in 1950.

Marlys and Gerry Anderson (Roger’s sister and brother-in-law) were living in Silver Bay and told Roger that maintenance men were needed at Reserve. Mickelsons moved to Silver Bay in 1956, first living in a cabin in Beaver Bay. Lois became a substitute second grade teacher, later began classes at UMD receiving her full teaching degree in 1969. Being one of the newer teachers, she was switched between Two Harbors and Silver Bay schools.

Roger and Lois joined Sychar with friends shortly after moving to Silver Bay. It was the day the corner stone was laid for the first part of the church. Roger has served on the Board of Operations several times; Lois taught Sunday School and Bible School.

For twenty-five years Mickelsons have spent winters in Arizona where they busy themselves with activities in their park and at the church where they attend.

Lois has always liked to read. Her favorite books as a girl were ANNE OF GREEN GABLES series. When a bus trip to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island was advertised, she knew she wanted to visit the location relating to the books. In preparation for the trip, she reread the entire series. In all the traveling they have done, to most states, Europe and Hawaii, Lois enjoyed that trip as the most special. “Well, maybe next to our trip to Norway”.

SUSAN KIERNAN

After losing her husband in 2000, Susan moved back to Silver Bay to be close to her mother. She grew up in Beaver Bay, attended Campton School and Kelly High. She married in 1962. Her husband worked for Hunkin-Arundel-Dixon as a painter. The couple moved on to Michigan where he helped paint the Mackinaw Bridge. They had a hobby farm, at one time owning 33 horses and ponies. For 15 years, Susan was housekeeping supervisor at a casino hotel in Sault Ste. Marie, a job she liked very much.

Susan was baptized, confirmed and married at Sychar. She feels it is truly her church home and attends regularly.

Some of her winter vacation times have been spent in Arizona and Texas, where a son lives. Susan likes to walk and read and enjoys playing Bingo where games are available. A grandson lives with her and provides company when he is not on the road at his job.

To most folks Oreo is a cookie, but to Susan Oreo, her dog, is her friend and protector.

**BOARD OF WORSHIP NOTES**

**AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN DECEMBER: 57**

 **Christmas Eve Service: 108**

**THE WELL:** December: Salvation Army - $293.95

 January: Pastor Transito Ministries

 February: Food Shelf

**Because of the favorable response to our recent Christmas Eve and Lessons and Carols services, we will plan similar services for next year.**

**We don’t know what Santa’s elves do after Christmas, but the Board of Worship does appreciate the Sychar volunteers who removed and put away all of the Christmas decorations. (Rumor has it that it was Margaret & Rey Grothe, Chris & Jon Mattila, Merle McDonald and Dean Zeitz.) Thanks so much!**

**A sign that winter won’t last forever – mark your calendars for Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Our service will be in the Sanctuary at 7pm, with communion at the communion rail and imposition of ashes.**

**Our first Wednesday evening soup supper will be hosted by the Board of Worship on February 25th. The following hosts will be:**

 **March 4th – Board of Finance**

 **March 11th – Board of Operations & Board of Public Relations**

 **March 18th – Little Fishes**

 **March 25th – SLCW Board**

**Suggested time: Supper at 6:15pm and service at 7pm. These may be adjusted to fit our Little Fishes and Confirmation schedules, so keep tuned!**

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Bauman, Secretary- Board of Worship

**SLCW News**

Hurray! Our new furniture is in the parlor and it is beautiful. The two couches and chairs match perfectly with the carpets and blend well with the other furniture. Thanks again to our excellent committee that chose the furniture and to Fred Mismash and family who paid for it from the Nancy Mismash memorial fund. As mentioned before, the old couches were moved to the youth lounge and the old chairs were sold to someone in the community through the Silver Bay Sell and Swap.

We had our Winter Wonderland party on January 16th and those who attended had a fun time reading Ole and Lena jokes from books supplied by Esther Olson. Thanks to her and to Mary for the lovely seasonal decorations. We hoped to have more in attendance but a good time was had by those who came.

At our last board meeting, we decided to start a mission project and donate $50 a month to the following organizations:

 January – Rescue Squad

 February – Silver Bay Fire Department

 March – Silver Bay Food Shelf

 April – Seafarer’s Mission in Duluth

 May – LCMC Disaster Fund

 June – Lutheran Social Services

 July – DAC of Lake County

 August – North Shore Area Partners

 September – Union Gospel Mission

 October – Operation Christmas Child

 November – Salvation Army

 December – Mission Circle Family

CIRCLE 6 serves in February

**Prayers for the sheep**

*The Families of Lois Kind and Gordon Volness;* Guss Krake, Carol Johnson, Phil Amundson, Lorraine Hendrickson, Joe Fredrickson, Karl Jevning, Chris Strande, Herman Blasing, Sheri Stephensen, Diann Hodson, Shirley Hanner, Linda Stegmeir, Jill & Wayne Hansen, Myrna Benoit, Deb MacMillian, Arnold Overby, Lyla Grace Santos, Gary Garlie, Don Hedin, Shirley Moschet, Pat LeBlanc, Angela Cook, Jake Anderson, Faith Gose, Roger Gale, Dave Huseby, Betty & Bob Oslund, Pam (Haldorson) Christiansen, Donna Dorrow, Larry Shanno, Cindy Milne, Betty Rabold, Lenore (Fralich) Skoglund, Brad Schlatter, Kathy Jo (Stephensen) Benzick, Pastor Robin Bjella, The Church of the Living Water and Pastor Transito; law enforcement, fire & ambulance personnel; & our military service men (Army: Lucas & Megan Milne; Navy: Kris Topp; Air Force: Sam Andrus) and women.

**MEMORIAL GIFTS RECEIVED**

December 2014

In Memory of: Given By:

Vern Haugstad Fred Mismash

Anne Stegmeir Judy & Dan Waxlax

**Thank you**

A BIG THANK YOU to Elanor Fralich, Marge Schnorr, and Annette Wiskow for choosing the beautiful new furniture for the parlor. Thanks, too, to Fred Mismash for designating money from Nancy’s Memorial Fund, and to SLCW and other designated memorials to cover the cost. It looks so welcoming and comfortable!!!

# February Birthdays

21 Andrew LaBerge

24 Leroy Wiskow

25 Phillip Houle

 Sandy McDonald

27 Amber Dow

 Rey Grothe

 Dick Stern

1. 3 Irene Schlatter
2. Carolyn Houle
3. Lois Tibbetts-Durkee
4. 4 Don Hedin
5. 12 Lawrence Eide
6. Red Nordin
7. 14 Kelsie Johnson
8. 16 Marna Ambuehl
9. **Announcements**
10. **FOOD SHELF**
11. Fill the box in the Narthex for your neighbors. **Needs: Canned soups. Canned tomatoes, kidney beans, pork and beans, hot and cold cereal, canned chili and spaghetti, 8 oz. tomato sauce.** Please, no baby food, no home canned, outdated or opened items. Questions - call Jenny at 226-4444.
12. **HIPPA Privacy and Security**
13. Due to HIPPA Privacy and Security rules it is no longer customary for the hospitals to inform churches of patients and their status. If you or a loved one is in the hospital and would like a pastoral visit please contact Pastor Stew or the church office as soon as possible.
14. **Address Changes**
15. If you move, please let the church office and the Board of Public Relations know. The church number is 226-4424. You can reach Marie Kaiser at 226-4196 or email: mekaiser812@gmail.com.
16. The Post Office will not forward your Scroll. If you are aware of friends and neighbors who leave for the winter, please remind them to change their addresses or notify us to be sure that the Sychar News reaches them.
17. Thanks for your help and cooperation.
18. **Annual Spaghetti Dinner to Benefit the Poor**
19. On Wednesday, February 11th from 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. at the Kelley High School Cafeteria. Advanced tickets available. Tickets: Adult $6, Students (5-12yrs) $4, Child less than 5 $2. Sponsored by St. Mary’s Religious Education. Take outs available – Tickets also sold at the door.
20. **PASTOR STEW**
21. If you should need to contact Pastor Stew you can call him on his cell phone (651) 207-3939 or at home (218) 226-3491 or at the office (218) 226-4424.

# January Flowers

Feb 1st – Given in honor of Irene Schlatter’s Birthday.

1. Feb 8th – Given by Bernie Young in memory of Judy.
2. Feb 15th – Given by Peg Johnson in memory of Willard.
3. Feb 22nd – Still Available.

### Acolytes

### Altar Guild

Carla Jackson

Ruth Gubrud

Feb 1st Sylvia Davey

 Lily Lewis

Feb 8th Hunter Monson

Feb 15th Gunnar Frahm

Feb 18th Jarred LaBerge

Feb 22nd Zachary Lewis

**God’s Country**

Submitted by: Marie Kaiser

A man in Topeka, Kansas decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco and started working east from there.

Going to a very large church, he began taking photographs and making notes.

He spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign, which read "Calls: $10,000 a minute."

Seeking out the pastor he asked about the phone and the sign. The pastor answered that this golden phone is, in fact, a direct line to heaven and if he pays the price he can talk directly to GOD.

The man thanked the pastor and continued on his way. As he continued to visit churches in Seattle, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, Oklahoma City, and around the United States, he found more phones, with the same sign, and the same answer from each pastor.

Finally, he arrived in Minnesota, upon entering a church in Tower, Minnesota behold - he saw the usual golden telephone. But THIS time, the sign read "Calls: 35 cents."

Fascinated, he asked to talk to the pastor, "Reverend, I have been in cities & towns all across the country and in each church I have found this golden telephone and have been told it is a direct line to Heaven and that I could talk to GOD, but in the other churches the cost was $10,000 a minute. Your sign reads only 35 cents a call.

Why?"

(I love this part... We love Minnesota)

The pastor, smiling benignly, replied, "Son, you're in Minnesota now. You're in God's Country - It's a local call."

American by Birth - A Minnesotan by the Grace of God.

**“4 Worms In Church”**

Submitted by: Jon Mattila

**Four worms and a lesson to be learned!!!!**

**A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.**

**Four worms were placed into four separate jars.**

**The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.**

**The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke.**

**The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup.**

**The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.**

**At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:**

**The first worm in alcohol: Dead.**

**The second worm in cigarette smoke: Dead.**

**Third worm in chocolate syrup: Dead**.

**Fourth worm in good clean soil: Alive.**

**So the Minister asked the congregation,**

**"What did you learn from this demonstration?"**

**Maxine was sitting in the back, quickly raised her hand and said:**

**"As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"**

**That pretty much ended the service!**