

**PASTOR’S PEN**

Dear Friends and Members of Sychar,

The True Story of the Twelve Days of Christmas

One of the most popular Christmas songs is “The Twelve Days of Christmas” what makes this song so interesting is its origins[[1]](#footnote-1).

A popular story is that the song arose in England in the period between the death of “Bloody” Queen Mary 1 (1558) until the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1829. During this period, Catholics were prohibited from practicing their faith by threat of execution. So the legend goes that Roman Catholics composed a song with two levels of meaning (plain and hidden). The plain meaning would be known to the public, whereas the hidden meanings would only be known to members of the Catholic church along with a catchy tune so children could learn the Catholic faith.

“*The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.*

*Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.*

*Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.*

*The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.*

*The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law.... the first five books of the Old Testament.*

*The six geese 'a-laying stood for the six days of creation.*

*Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit –*

*Prophesy Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.*

*The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.*

*Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit -- Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control.*

*The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.*

*The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.*

*The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed*.”

This legend incorporates actual history regarding Catholic persecution in England with historical speculation as a way to compose a compelling narrative.

Skepticism exists about this story for a few reasons. The biggest reasons why Henry VIII broke from the Roman Catholic Church; were not over any of the hidden meanings which supposedly exist in this song. A song of hidden meaning which contains no reference declaring loyalty to the Pope nor the banned English practice of Penance seems to fail the smell test. There is nothing contained in this song that should cause any sort of division between Catholics and Fellow Christians. This fails to mention perhaps an even more important point how milk maidens can help a child remember the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount.

The historical evidence supporting the religious meaning of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” is weak. A Catholic Priest and Researcher in the 1990’s named Father Hal Stockert claimed to find these meanings in a series of letters written from Irish Priests to their order’s monastery in France supposedly written during this era of persecution. Stockert claimed that the documents were destroyed in a basement flood.

It is very possible that Stockert got “The Twelve Days of Christmas” confused with another song meant to teach the Christian faith in “In Those Twelve Days” which dates in 1625 assigning meaning to each of the Twelve Days of Christmas in a very similar version to the legendary version of this song.

The exact origins of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” has been hypothesized as having to do with a family game that was often played around the Holidays involving memory skills that perhaps developed within the 1700’s.

“The Twelve Days of Christmas” is in all probability a secular song that deals with many of the images of the Holidays in gifts, dancing, and music. The one noteworthy thing is the song’s obsession with birds. For example, the fourth day of Christmas contains the gift of four “collie” birds, not four calling birds. “Collie” literally means black, so four black birds. Five “golden rings” has been debated with early drawings seeming to indicate that this is a reference to jewelry but in keeping with the theme of the first seven gifts “golden rings” could also be a reference to “ring”-necked birds such as Pheasants.

What we do know about the origins of this song is that it is a reference to Christmas being a twelve day season from December 25th (Birth of Jesus) to January 6th (Epiphany- Visit of Wise Men). The Church traditionally held a feast day on each of the Twelve Days to commemorate a Saint or an event connected with the Christmas season. The Twelve Days though should not be understood as a literal description of the time-frame between Jesus’ birth and the wise men’s visit. The wise men’s visit probably occurred two to three years after Jesus’ birth. An example of this can be seen in Matthew 2:11 which describes Jesus as a “child” rather than an “infant” upon the wise men’s visit. This is noteworthy since they are different words in the original Greek.

The point of this reflection is to remind us that we do a disservice this holiday season if we attempt to overly spiritualize every aspect of it. If “The Twelve Days of Christmas” has little to do with religion, this doesn’t mean that we can’t enjoy it similarly to other songs such as “Jingle Bells”, “White Christmas” “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” or “Santa Clause is Coming to Town”

Having fun and being silly is not a bad thing if this is what “The Twelve Days of Christmas” meant to communicate. God put people into our lives whose company, we shall hopefully enjoy as we celebrate the birth of Our Lord and Savior this Holiday season. Amen

**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**

Hope everyone is enjoying the brief December warm up for as we all know November was really cold and miserable. Christmas is almost on us and I’m sure everybody is planning ahead for that wonderful holiday to spend with family, enjoy Christmas dinner, and then there are the presents, most everyone enjoys that. I would like to take this moment to wish everyone a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

This month the Council held their monthly meeting at 1 P.M. rather than at 7 P.M. The reason behind this is we have no Council Secretary and most all council representatives are retired. Krysty has graciously been taken the minutes for us at the expense of her family time and having to come to the church at night. Council members present all thought an afternoon meeting made more sense and easier on the church secretary. We intend to keep the afternoon meeting unless there is an objection or special request for a night meeting. This may even be some incentive for someone or two people to volunteer to fill the Council Secretary or/and Vice President offices, which are **STILL** vacant.

Operations reported that after the Christmas holidays they will begin to fix the water problem (leaking) in the woman’s restroom. Right now there is a temporary fix in place and it seems to be working very nicely for the present time. We are also waiting on the new church electrical panel to be put in. It has been ordered, we just need the electrician to get the time to come in and get it replaced.

I would like to take a moment to thank all who came out to do the church Christmas decorating. The decorators were Jon & Chris Mattila, Reynold & Margaret Grothe, Dan & Judy Waxlax, Deborah Johnson, Kathy Toland, Mary Bauman, Pastor Stew, Connie Wanderi, and Merle McDonald. We started with a wonderful chili dinner and some great desserts put together by Kathy, Mary and Marion Shamblin. Hope I got everyone and if I didn’t, I’m sorry, but a great job was done by all who were there. We thank you all.

Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year to All,

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.

REYNOLD AND MARGARET GROTHE

Margaret recently retired from Altar Guild after 20 years of recruiting participants and training acolytes. Members since shortly after moving to Silver Bay in 1957, they were first invited by Mabel Jacobson, who had once been Rey’s Sunday School teacher.

The Grothes are from Thief River Falls in western Minnesota. During his high school years, Rey’s family moved to California for a year. He found Minnesota schooling had put him far ahead of the California students. He later attended vocational school where he learned mechanical skills. After working on a brother’s farm for a while, he joined the Navy serving from 1940-1954. After military service, he worked as a carpenter on the Sioux Line Railroad.

Meanwhile, Margaret graduated from high school and went to work as a telephone operator. Rey and Margaret met at a dance and were married in 1957. He had started at Reserve in 1956 after a friend told him of available jobs. The couple’s first home was an un-insulated cabin in the trailer court. For a time, Margaret worked as a teacher’s aide. When Reserve closed, Grothes found work in Minneapolis as caretaker/maintenance providers at an apartment building for three years and same for a group of condos for seven years.

Before and after their time in Minneapolis, they were janitors at Sychar. Grothes have been involved in many other activities at the church. Rey served several times on the Board of Operations, ushered and now works the sound system on Sunday mornings. Besides her long years on Altar Guild, Margaret has worked with Mission Circle, Boards of Worship, Public Relations, and Education and managed the Memorial Fund for many years.

Margaret’s skill at crocheting is evident by the lovely afghans covering their living room chairs. She knits, as well. She meets with a coffee group several times a week.

In the past, Rey did some very intricate wood working. Several pieces grace the windows of their sun room. He plays pool at Mary Mac center weekly. Grothes greatly enjoy visiting and spending time with their family.

HAROLD KOEPP

The youngest of nine children on a farm in Barron, Wisconsin, Harold was fatherless at the age of nine. Shortly afterward, his mother suffered a stroke and was bedridden. One of his sisters became her caregiver. The farm passed to Harold’s oldest brother, who after a few years, went off to work elsewhere, leaving young Harold to care for the cattle. After doing that for a while, Harold moved on to live with a sister and work at a filling station.

He was drafted and rejected for a “bad heart” in a physical where the physician did not listen to his heart. He went on to work in construction in Chetek. It was at an appropriately named Loveland Corner where Harold met Mona, a teacher, who became his wife. They were married in 1953.

In 1956, Harold began work in Silver Bay. He lived in the barracks for a year until a house became available, allowing Mona to join him. He started in production, later moved to mechanical maintenance for the remainder of his years at Reserve.

Harold was raised in a Missouri Synod church, Mona, ELCA. It was her choice to join Sychar. His term on the Board of Operations was during the time of roof leaks after the new addition.

With any more “new parts”—he has two hip replacements and a knee—we can call Harold a bionic man.

In times past, Harold had a camper and did a lot of hunting and fishing, mostly in Wisconsin. Now he spends his time reading, listening to “his kind” of music, and has afternoon coffee with the neighbors. Regardless of walking difficulty, he mows the lawn.

Alone since Mona died in 1996, Harold likes to be home in the late evening to receive the nightly phone call from his daughter.

**BOARD OF WORSHIP NOTES**

**AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN NOVEMBER: 59**

**THE WELL:** November: Food Shelf - $161.94

December: Salvation Army

January: Pastor Transito Ministries

We hope you found seasonal inspiration from the Advent wreath, banners and Christmas decorations you saw everywhere in the church. Thank you to the Altar guild and volunteers who donated their time and energy to decorate – we had fun, too! (Come next year and find out for yourself!)

Thanks to all who donated poinsettias to fill the chancel with color.

Mark your calendars for a China Service Ventures fund raiser – pancakes – after the Worship Service on Sunday, January 25, 2015.

Board of Worship wishes you all a blessed Christmas and New Year! See you in church!

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Bauman, Secretary- Board of Worship

**SLCW News**

The Fall Festival was a fun affair. As usual the lefse was all sold and we also had Scandinavian cookies and lots of homemade candies and baked goods. Many thanks go to Shirley Van House for preparing the delicious lunch which was served by CIRCLE 3. After expenses we took in $2,070.60.

The drapes in the parlor were washed and rehung by Annette and LeRoy Wiskow. Thanks to them also.

Our furniture committee consisting of Annette Wiskow, Eleanor Fralich and Majorie Schnorr chose our new couches and 2 new chairs. They should be delivered January 7th. We will be getting rid of 2 couches in the youth lounge and replace them with the old ones in the parlor. If anyone is interested in the pink chairs, contact Kathy Toland.

All ladies are invited to Winter Wonderland coffee party on January 16th at 2pm. It’s just a fun time to get together in a long, cold month. Feel free to wear a winter hat or scarf.

A new Krum kaka iron was purchase from the Nancy Mismash memorial fund. Nancy was our chief Krum kaka maker and always brought her own maker from home. Thanks to Fred for getting it for us.

CIRCLE 5 serves in January.



**Prayers for the sheep**

*The Families of Vern Haugstad;* 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, Lois Kind, The Church of the Living Water and Pastor Transito; law enforcement, fire & ambulance personnel; & our military service men (Army: Lucas Milne, Navy: Kris Topp)

**Mission Circle**

The Mission Circle ladies enjoyed a morning of fun and laughter after they savored in lunch at the new Northwoods café. They wish to thank everyone for their donations for the Christmas family, which were delivered to Social Services.

Also thanks for the scarfs, hats and mittens which were taken to Kelley Elementary for the students there.

Thanks everyone and come join us in January.

**Senior Moments**

Submitted by: Renee Frahm

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor fitted him with a hearing aid that allowed him to hear 100%. The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor who said, 'Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.' The gentleman replied, 'Oh, I haven't told my family yet.. I just sit around and listen to their conversation. I've changed my Will three times!'

A man was telling his neighbour, 'I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art.. It's perfect.' 'Really,' answered the neighbour.. 'What kind is it?'  'Twelve thirty..'

Couple in their nineties were having problems remembering things.

During a check-up, the doctor tells them that they're physically okay, but they might want to start writing things to help them remember. Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. 'Want anything while I'm in the kitchen?' he asks.

'Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?'

'Sure..'

'Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?' she asks.

'No, I can remember it.'

'Well, I'd like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so as not to forget it?'   
He says, 'I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.'

'I'd also like whipped cream. I'm certain you'll forget that, write it down?' she asks.

Irritated, he says, 'I don't need to write it down, I can remember!

Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream - I got it,

for goodness sake!'  Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment.  'Where's my toast?'

**January Birthdays**

17 Kent Shamblin

18 Wendy Johnson

Jacqui Larson

23 Marlene Overby

Annette Wiskow

25 Fred Mismash

26 Brandon Dow

27 Bertha Savonen

29 Diane Dilley

Denise Zeitz

30 Lorraine Nelson

1. 1 Donna Knaffla
2. Lisa Skoglund
3. 3 Addie Bakke
4. 4 Mitch Dow
5. 6 Eleanor Larson
6. 10 Betty Evjen
7. Corinne Hangartner
8. Carol Houle
9. 11 Nikki Babbitt

14 Werner Talus

Deven Van House

1. 

**January Flowers**

Jan 4th – Still Available.

1. Jan 11th – Given by Wayne & Michele Fenstad in honor of Werner Talus’s 90th Birthday!
2. Jan 18th – Still Available.
3. Jan 25th – Still Available.

**Acolytes**

### Altar Guild

Sandy McDonald

Margaret Grothe

Jan 4th Brandon Dow

Tim Perfetto

Jan 11th Hunter Dow

Jan 18th Brandon Dow

Nick Perfetto

Jan 25th Hunter Dow

**Announcements**

**FOOD SHELF**

The holidays are here! Your gift to the food shelf, whether monetary or groceries, will help us to ensure that others have a brighter holiday season. Thank you for adding the food shelf to your Christmas shopping list. Blessed Christmas and a very Happy New Year from the food shelf board and volunteers.

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.

**HIPPA Privacy and Security**

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.

**Address Changes**

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](mailto:mekaiser812@gmail.com).

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.

Thanks for your help and cooperation.

**2015 Office Hours**

The office will be open Monday (9am-5pm), Wednesday (9am – 5pm) and Thursday (8am – Noon).

**PASTOR STEW**

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.

1. The research for this article comes from an article written on snopes.com entitled “The Twelve Days of Christmas”. This article was written in response to a 1998 e-mail circulating. My article is merely a summary of this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)