

The

SERENDIPITY

August, 2013

Joy in the Journey . . .

You and your family are cordially invited to attend the 140th anniversary of St. John's United Church of Christ located in Bluffton, Ohio. The date of the event will be

Sunday, September 15

Beginning with worship at 10:30 a.m.

A catered meal will be served immediately following the worship service in Oppermann Hall.

Come and join family and friends as the congregation reminisces over the past and looks forward to the future. More information will be forthcoming.

ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

A family rooted in Christ, growing in grace, and living in love.

223 West College Avenue

Bluffton, OH 45817

419-358-5641

Rev. Carol Clements (330-204-0802)



Another thought
passed through my
head . . .

THE MOST IMPORTANT BODY PART

My mother used to ask me, "What is the most important body part?" Through the years, I would take a guess at what I thought was the correct answer. When I was younger, I thought sound was very important to us as humans, so I said, "My ears, Mommy." She said, "No, many people are deaf, but you keep thinking about it and I will ask you again soon."

Several years passed before she asked me again. Since making my first attempt, I had contemplated the correct answer. This time I told her, "Mommy, sight is very important to everybody, so it must be our eyes." She looked at me and told me, "You are learning fast, but the answer is not yet correct because there are many people who are blind."

Stumped again, I continued my quest for knowledge and, over the years, Mother asked me a few more times and always her answer was, "No, but you are getting smarter every year, my child."

Then, last year, my grandpa died. Everybody was hurt. Everybody was crying. Even my father cried. I remember that especially because it was only the second time I saw him cry. My mom looked at me when it was our turn to say our final good-bye to grandpa. She asked me, "Do you know what is the most important body part yet, my dear?" I was shocked when she asked me this right now. I always thought this was a game between her and me.

She saw the confusion on my face and told me, "This question is very important. It shows that you have really lived in your life. For every body part you mentioned to me in the past, I have told you you were wrong, and I have given you an example why, but today is the day you will need to learn this important lesson. She looked down at me as only a mother can. I saw her eyes well up with tears.

She said, "My dear, the most important body part is your shoulder."

I asked her, "Is it because it holds up your head?" She replied, "No, it is because it can hold the head of a friend of a loved one when they cry. Everybody needs a shoulder to cry on sometime in life, my dear. I only hope that you have enough love and friends that you will always have a shoulder to cry on when you need it."

Then and there I knew the most important body part is not a selfish one. It is sympathetic to the pain of others. People will forget what you said; people will forget what you did, but people will *NEVER* forget how you made them *FEEL*.

*"Comfort, comfort my people says your God.
(Isaiah 40:1)*



And you thought they only supplied food . . . WRONG!

If you thought the Bluffton Area Food Pantry only distributed food to those in our area needing assistance, you probably need to know these facts!

The Bluffton Food Pantry is just one of three entities under the umbrella of the Bluffton Community Assistance Corporation. The food pantry, the community assistance program, and the transient assistance program are all under the direction of a board of directors chaired by Sam Diller. The co-directors of the food pantry are also board members (Jami Crawfis and Sarah Shank).

The food pantry is available to any person(s) in need of food assistance in the Bluffton Area School District. Approximately 30-50 items are given to each family each month depending on the amount of food available. The third Saturday of every month from 9 a.m. until noon is the day and time food is distributed and, as you may know, the food pantry is housed right here at St. John's.

Large food drives were held by the Bluffton post office; Community Market; Boys Scouts; the elementary, middle, and high schools; area churches; Dollar General; Greg's Pharmacy; the Dough Hook; Nails by Joan; the Curling Iron; high school student senate and Latin Club; Ebenezer MOPS; the Bluffton University Men's baseball team.

The SHANNON service club sorted and shelved food items after the large food drives. The baseball team cleaned the shelves and checked all dates on food in the pantry. The Bluffton Baptist



Church donated a large freezer this past year; Morris Groman donated boxes and painted the pantry floor; and St. John's provided an outside light and assembly of additional shelving. Gift certificates to the Etc. Shop and the book store also were received.

Many volunteers give many hours raising funds and shopping for needed items. Bread is donated from a Findlay baker and the Schutz potato farm has donated potatoes. Moser Eggs provides us with a discount on the purchase of eggs. Despite all of the food drives, food still must be purchased to meet the needs of the many who come for food assistance.

An average of 38-55 families is served each month. There were 57 families adopted for Christmas this year. Gift certificates were distributed for Thanksgiving and Easter. Food items are delivered to the homebound.

(Continued on next page)



(Bluffton Community Assistance Corporation continued)

The Bluffton Police Department is in charge of the people who pass through the area and are in need of assistance. People can receive a \$5 gift certificate from McDonald's, a \$25 gas voucher at the Shell station on Route 103, and lodging at the Fairway Lodge or transportation to the Lima or Findlay shelters if an officer is available to get them there. Minor car repairs can also be made.

The third entity is the assistance program under the direction of the food pantry co-directors and the board members. From this fund, utility bills can be paid (not always the whole bill and only on a one-time basis). Other needs might include glasses, gas, medication, work uniforms or boots, and other needs as they arise.

A person who is a member in good standing of an area church and who lives outside Allen County may receive assistance of food or other bills on the recommendation of their individual pastor.

So, if you are planning to donate money via a check, you can make it "payable" in the following manner:

- Checks should be made payable to "Bluffton Community Assistance Corporation" or BCAC.
- On the "memo line" of the check, you may specify where you want the money to go: the food pantry, the assistance fund, or the transient fund.

- If the memo line is left blank, the money will automatically be placed in the overall fund that can be used for any of the three areas.

What can I do to help? Donate, donate, donate—food or money, because the needs of the area are many. Volunteer to shop for food for the pantry, stock shelves, deliver food to the homebound. Call Jami at 419-236-2944 or Sarah at 419-358-0223.

Questions? Ask Ed Yeager or Pastor Carol for additional clarification of this wonderful and most worthwhile project in which the people of St. John's have such an integral part.



Manna for the many . . .

*Why do we share our abundance with others?
Because we are required to do so . . .*

“Mercy to the needy (poor) is a loan to God, and God pays back those loans in full.” (Proverbs 19:17)

Thank You!

From the Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio for our church's donation of \$100 to their General Fund.



After the Baptism of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That preacher said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys!"



AUGUST CELEBRATIONS

- 8/2 Mary Coletta
8/5 Nancy Yeager
8/6 Julia Gable
8/8 Sam Reichenbach
8/9 Brandt Young
8/12 **France Scoles
100 years young!**
8/13 *Dottie and Gene Long
8/16 *Jack and Carol Fields
8/19 Maxine McCafferty
8/22 Joyce Badertscher
8/26 Randy Cox
8/28 Carl Scoles
Judy Reichenbach
8/29 Steve Kindle
Adam Everett
8/30 Mary Ann Jordan
8/31 George McCune

**Best wishes to all!
Enjoy your day . . .**

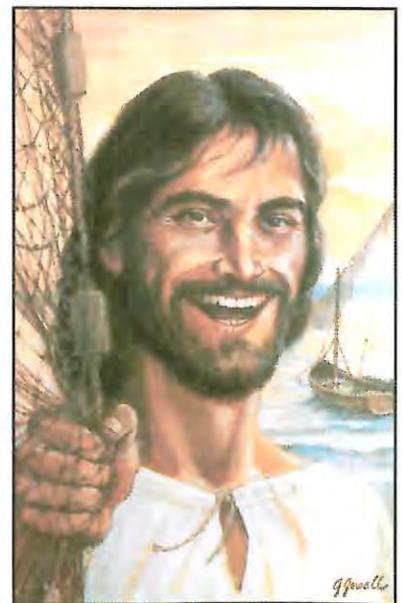


A PRAYER REQUESTING JOY

(A don't-take-it-all-so-seriously prayer)

Give us a sense of humor, Lord, and also things to laugh about. Give us the grace to take a joke against ourselves and to see the funny side of the things we do. Save us from annoyance, bad temper, and resentment against our friends. Help us to laugh even in the face of trouble. Fill our minds with the love of Jesus; for his name's sake.

-A. G. Bullivant



The Risen Christ by the Sea

INDEPENDENCE OVERRATED!

It might have been humorous if it hadn't hurt so much. One moment I was on my front porch—the next I was lying flat on my side, wedged between a bush and the house. In a split second, my 13-pound puppy had taken off after a bird yanking me off my feet

All it took was one ill-timed moment of distraction to transform me from a strong,

reasonably healthy adult to a helpless, badly bruised victim of misfortune.

Unable to move, I was pondering my dilemma when a strong hand reached down. My neighbor had rushed to my aid. Embarrassed but grateful, I accepted his help.

I'm not as independent or self-sufficient as I'd like to think I am. We were created to need and be needed. That isn't a bad thing!



Back to School Prayer

*We thank you for the fragrance of a new box of crayons, Lord,
The rainbow in each perfect row;
Thank you for each bundle of snowy white notebook paper,
Awaiting fresh possibilities.
May they remind us that you make all things new and bless us with abundance.
Thank you for this ruler; for every eraser that tops every pencil.
May they help us remember to measure our blessings,
But never your boundless love for us;
To allow for the making of mistakes as a normal part of human learning.
As we lay out our new clothes for these first days of school,
Help us remember to put on Christ each day, too,
And to "clothe the naked" as He asked us.
But mostly, God, help us remember
that Jesus is always our best and most devoted teacher—
That we never outgrow all his lessons on how you want us to live and to love.*

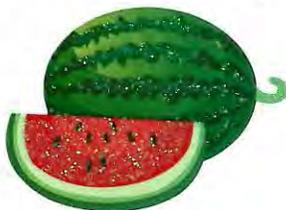
By HomeFaith editor Mary Lynn Hendrickson

Bluffton schools begin August 26. Please pray for a successful, healthy, and safe year for our students, faculty, and administration.



August Events . . .

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| THURSDAY (1) | COMMUNITY DINNER AT SENIOR CENTER (6 P.M.) |
| SUNDAY (4) | COMMUNION SERVED DURING WORSHIP |
| MONDAY (5) | ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE MEETS |
| TUESDAY (6) | LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.) |
| WEDNESDAY (7) | MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.) |
| THURSDAY (8) | CONSISTORY MEETS (7 P.M.) |
| SUNDAY (11) | BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MEETS AFTER
WORSHIP |
| TUESDAY (13) | WOMEN MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.) |
| WEDNESDAY (14) | MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.) |
| THURSDAY (15) | COMMUNITY DINNER AT SENIOR CENTER (6 P.M.) |
| SUNDAY (18) | WORSHIP AT BUCKEYE PARK (10 A.M.) |
| TUESDAY (20) | WOMEN MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.) |
| WEDNESDAY (21) | MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.) |
| TUESDAY (27) | LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
SOUP KITCHEN
TOPS (6 P.M.) |
| WEDNESDAY (28) | MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.)
CHOIR PRACTICE (7 P.M.) |



Faith & Leadership

Like 11,006 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Reflection: [Future of Denominations](#) »



Andrea Palpant Dilley: Change wisely, dude



A young writer has some advice for church leaders trying desperately to attract and retain young people: change carefully and wisely. What young people say they want in their 20s is not necessarily what they want 10 years later.

When I came back to church after a faith crisis in my early 20s, the first one I attended regularly was a place called Praxis. It was the kind of church where the young, hip pastor hoisted an infant into his arms and said with sincerity, "Dude, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

The entire service had an air of informality. We sat in folding chairs, sang rock-anthem praise and took clergy-free, buffet-style communion. Once a month, the pastor would point to a table at the back of the open-rafter sanctuary and invite us to "serve ourselves" if we felt so compelled.

For two years, my husband and I attended Praxis while he did graduate work at Arizona State University and I worked as a documentary producer. As someone who had defected from the church at age 23, I thought it was the perfect place for me: a young, urban church located four blocks from Casey Moore's Irish Pub, an unchurchy church with a mix of sacred tradition and secular trend.

I'm not the first person ever to go low-church, and Praxis isn't the first institution to pursue that hard-to-get demographic: young people. Across America today, thousands of clergy and congregations -- even entire denominations -- are running scared, desperately trying to convince their youth that faith and church are culturally relevant, forward-looking and alive.

For some, the instinct is to radically alter the old model: out with the organ, in with the Fender. But as someone who left the mainstream church and eventually returned, I'd like to offer a word of advice to those who are so inclined: Don't. Or at least proceed with caution. Change carefully; change wisely, with thoughtfulness and deliberation. What young people say we want in our 20s is not necessarily what we want 10 years later.

Churches, of course, are right to worry. They've been losing young people like me for years. [A study](#) released last fall by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found that not just liberal mainline Protestants but also more conservative

evangelical and "born-again" Protestants are abandoning their religious attachments. Our complaints against the church know no bounds: We don't like the politics. We want authenticity and openness. We demand a particular worship aesthetic.

Churches often leap to meet these demands, and yet the arc of my own story suggests that chasing after the most recent trend may not be the answer. As [I've written elsewhere](#), I was raised in a small Presbyterian congregation but left and later returned to the church for reasons too complex to summarize here.

When I slipped back in, I wanted what my own parents had wanted in their hippie youth back in the 1970s: an anti-institutional church that looked less like a church and more like a coffee house. But after two years at Praxis, the coffee tasted thin.

I felt homeless in heart. I missed intergenerational community. I missed hymns and historicity, sacraments and old aesthetics. I missed the rich polity -- even the irritation -- of Presbytery.

In 2007, when my husband and I moved from Arizona to Austin, Texas, and went in search of a church, we skipped the nondenominationalists and went straight to the traditionalists. We found an Anglican church where every Sunday morning we now watch clergy process up the aisle wearing white vestments and carrying a 6-foot cross.

We take communion from an ordained priest who holds a chalice of blood-red wine and lays a hand of blessing on our children. We sing the Lord's Prayer and recite from the Book of Common Prayer -- in which not once in 1,001 pages does the word "dude" ever appear.

In my 20s, liturgy seemed rote, but now in my 30s, it reminds me that I'm part of an institution much larger and older than myself. As the poet Czeslaw Milosz said, "The sacred exists and is stronger than all our rebellions."

Both my doubt and my faith, and even my ongoing frustrations with the church itself, are part of a tradition that started before I was born and will continue after I die. I rest in the assurance that I have something to lean against, something to resist and, more importantly, something that resists me.

Critics might say I'm an anomaly. My story, they would say, isn't typical of most young people.

But that's not the point. I can't alter statistics or trends. I can't tell congregations or their pastors what they need to change, if anything. I can't speak to church marketing or survival strategy, nor can I enter the fraught (and important) theological debate between liberalism and conservatism, which drives some of the attrition of young people.

What I offer instead is a word of encouragement that reminds the church to take the long view.

For more traditional congregations that struggle to keep youth in the pews, take heart. The old model isn't necessarily lost. Praxis and churches like it have a place -- they draw people who would otherwise never set foot in church, people who have a legitimate contemporary aesthetic that appreciates informality and mainstream music. But your church has a place, too.

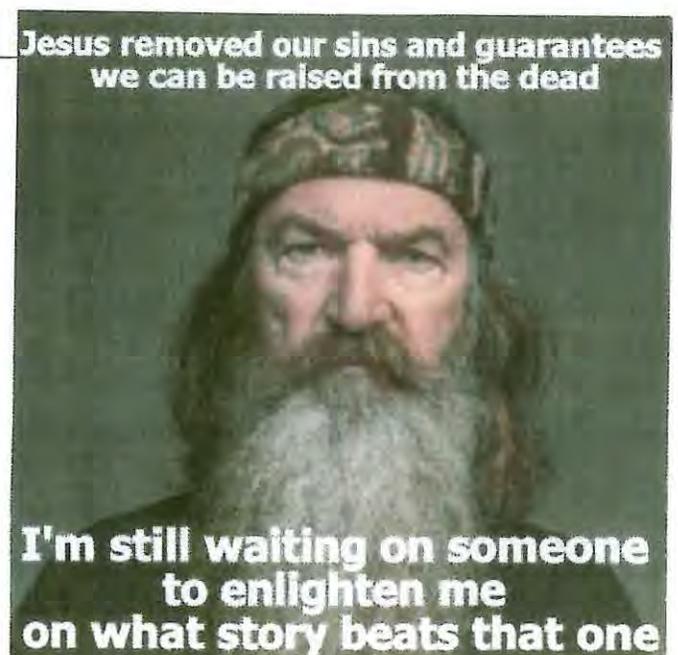
Consider the changes that people go through between age 22 and 32. Consider that some of us in time renew our appreciation for the strengths of a traditional church: historically informed hierarchy that claims accountability at multiple levels, historically informed teaching that leans on theological complexity, and liturgically informed worship that takes a high view of the sacraments and draws on hymns from centuries past.

Some of us *want* to walk into a cathedral space that reminds us of the small place we inhabit in the great arc of salvation history. We want to meet the Unmoved Mover in an unmoved sanctuary.

So as you change -- or as change is imposed upon you -- keep your historic identity and your ecclesial soul. Fight the urge for perpetual reinvention, and don't watch the roll book for young adults.

Even so, your church (and your denomination) might die. My generation and those following might take it apart, brick by brick, absence by absence.

But the next generation might rebuild it. They might unearth the altar, the chalice and the vestments and find them not medieval but enduring. They might uncover the Book of Common Prayer and find it anything but common.



Blessing of the Toilet Paper

Dwight Lee Wolter

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." - Matthew 5:7

There is an old adage that says, "Meet people where they are" - meaning, for example, that instead of telling needful people what you will offer, ask them what they need. What the staff of our local domestic violence shelter said they needed is toilet paper. Toilet paper? I want to offer help with domestic violence and I am asked to offer toilet paper?

People rarely want to talk about women and children fleeing the parent or partner they love because they are being beaten or otherwise abused. People rarely talk about toilet paper either. The challenge is to get the conversation going and the help flowing.

Some people were getting tired of me walking into the pulpit several Sundays in a row with a roll of toilet paper under my arm and going into a spiel about domestic violence—until a young woman of the church startled the congregation with a testimony that she once needed a domestic violence shelter. It didn't provide toilet paper. The women had to provide their own. It was expensive and often stolen, so she kept the precious toilet paper with her always.

If we can say, "bless you!" when someone sneezes and bless hot dogs at a barbeque and call it grace—then we can bless our offering of a most basic need in a desperate situation. And so I offered a blessing of the toilet paper to an enthusiastic response from the congregation.

The hundreds of rolls of donated toilet paper took their rightful place with the pulpit, font, lectern and offering baskets. The director of the domestic violence shelter, in church to receive the offering, said the money not spend on toilet paper would be spent on counseling for children living at the shelter. The journey from hell to help, from apathy to mercy can begin anywhere, with anything, and at any time. How about with you? How about now?

Prayer

Thank you, God, for every gift offered and received, no matter how seemingly silly or inconsequential, or grand and monumental we perceive it to be.



About the Author

Dwight Lee Wolter is the author of *Forgiving Our Parents*, *Freedom Through Forgiving* (a workbook), and *Forgiving Our Grownup Children*. He is pastor of the Congregational Church of Patchogue on Long Island, New York.

A child's book report on Old & New Testaments

(Pastor Dale Schoening of the Bussey (IA) UMC passed on the following "A Child's Book Report on the Bible" by an unknown author. It appeared in the newsletter of the Church of the Damascus Road, which serves the inmate population of the men's correctional facilities at Fort Dodge and Rockwell City, IA.)

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. The Bible says, "The Lord thy God is one," but I think He must be a lot older than that. Anyway, God said, "Give me a light!" and someone did. Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve. Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet. Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden. Not sure what they were driven in, though, because they didn't have cars.

Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel. Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something.

One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but

one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast. Jacob had a son named Joseph who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Heston.

Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent 10 plagues on Pharaoh's people. These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable.

God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti.

Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments. These include don't lie, cheat, smoke, or covet your neighbor's stuff. Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more, Humor thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua, who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell

over on the town.

After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore. There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

Jesus is the star of the New Testament. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn, too, because my mom is always saying to me, "Close the door! Were you born in a barn?" It would be nice to say "yes.")

Jesus had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount. But all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead.

Anyway, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again.

He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum.

His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

You are more than....

your past
your financial situation
your job
your personality
your triumphs
your failures

You are a child of God.

John 1:12

Dare to reach into the darkness, to pull someone into the light.

Remember strong people not only stand up for themselves, they stand up for others too.





VBS HAPPY HERDERS

