

The

SERENDIPITY

March - 2014

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)



March 17

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CHURCH OF CHRIST**
Bluffton, OH 45817
419-358-5641

WEB PAGE:
www.blufftonstjohns.com.

E-MAIL ADDRESS:
www.stjohnucc@embarqmail.com

Rev. Carol Clements
330-204-0802
StJohnPstr@aol.com

SECRETARY

Sue Hardwick

ORGANISTS

Sue Hardwick and
Barbara Plaughter

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Dr. Crystal Sellers Battle

SOUND TECHNICIAN

Blaine Bauman

CONSISTORY

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Steve Kindle

Dan Fleming

Deacons

Jason Cox

Becky Cox

David Herr

Matt Jordan

Roger Scoles

Bob Stahl

Treasurer

Ed Yeager

Financial Secretary

Blaine Bauman



It's been a
"ruff" winter!

KUDOS! To the congregation for your wonderful support of the 2013 budget! We have supported mission both locally and globally, were 5-for-5 in our offerings to the United Church of Christ and Our Church's Wider Mission, supported our seminaries, gave generously to many other causes and projects, and we still had enough for ourselves. We can congratulate ourselves on our stewardship, but we cannot rest on our laurels.

The winter weather has taken its toll on our beginning-of-the-year finances because attendances have been so low in worship, so we are asking for your help in keeping our budget in balance. If you have not been here, please remember to return the offering envelopes for the weeks that you have not been here. Just because we are homebound due to the weather does not mean we have nothing to be thankful for.

How much should we give? Perhaps the following story will help a bit. A pastor asked a parishioner to serve as financial chair of the church. The man, manager of a grain elevator, agreed on two conditions. No report would be due for a year, and no one would ask any questions during the year.

At the end of the year, he made his report. He had paid off the church debt of \$200,000. He had redecorated the church and sent \$1000 to missions. In addition, \$5000 was left over in the checking account. "How did you do all of this?" asked the pastor and the shocked congregation.

Quietly he answered, "You people all bring your grain to my elevator. As you did business with me, I simply withheld ten percent and gave it to the church. You never missed it!"

Shall we go and do likewise? Stay safe . . .

Pastor Carol

**TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN FAITH.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THE
WHOLE STAIRCASE
JUST TAKE THE FIRST STEP.**

-MARTIN LUTHUR KING JR.

MARCH SCHEDULE AT ST. JOHN'S

- 3/2 Communion served during worship
- 3/3 Cabinet meeting (7 p.m.)
- 3/4 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
- 3/5 Men meet at Arby's for breakfast (8:30 a.m.)
Ash Wednesday service in the sanctuary (7 p.m.)
- 3/6 Community dinner at the Senior Center (6 p.m.)
- 3/9 **TURN CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR**
Second Sunday potluck luncheon
- 3/11 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
Lenten Bible study (7 p.m.) – upstairs Sunday School room
- 3/12 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir practice (7 p.m.)
- 3/13 Consistory (7 p.m.)
- 3/16 Board of Christian Education meeting after worship
- 3/18 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
Bluffton Elementary School walker day
TOPS (6 p.m.)
Lenten Bible study (7 p.m.)
- 3/19 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir practice (7 p.m.)
- 3/20 Community dinner at the Senior Center (6 p.m.)
- 3/25 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
Our Daily Bread soup kitchen (10 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
Lenten Bible study (7 p.m.)
- 3/26 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)

*LUCK of
the Irish*



PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTING . . .

Whenever your kids are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God's omnipotence did not extend to God's kids. After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve, and the first thing God said to them was, "Don't!"

"Don't what?" Adam replied.

"Don't eat the forbidden fruit," God said.

"Forbidden fruit? We got forbidden fruit? Hey, Eve! We got forbidden fruit!"

"No way!"

"Yes WAY!"

"Don't eat that fruit," said God again.

"Why?"

"Because I am your Creator and I said so!" said God, wondering why God didn't stop after making the elephants. A few minutes later, God saw the kids having a fruit break, and God was angry.

"Didn't I tell you not to eat that fruit?" the first parent asked.

"Uh huh," Adam replied.

"Then why did you do it?" God said.

"I don't know," answered Eve.

"She started it!" yelled Adam.

"Did not!"

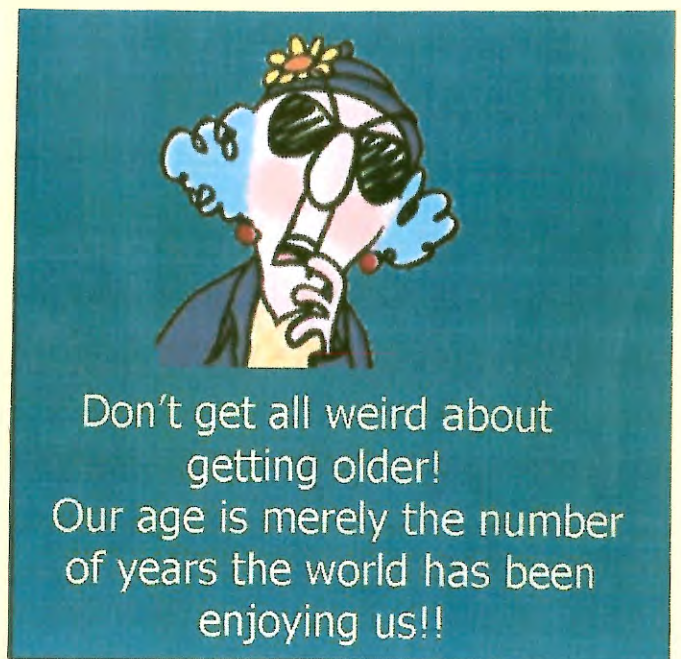
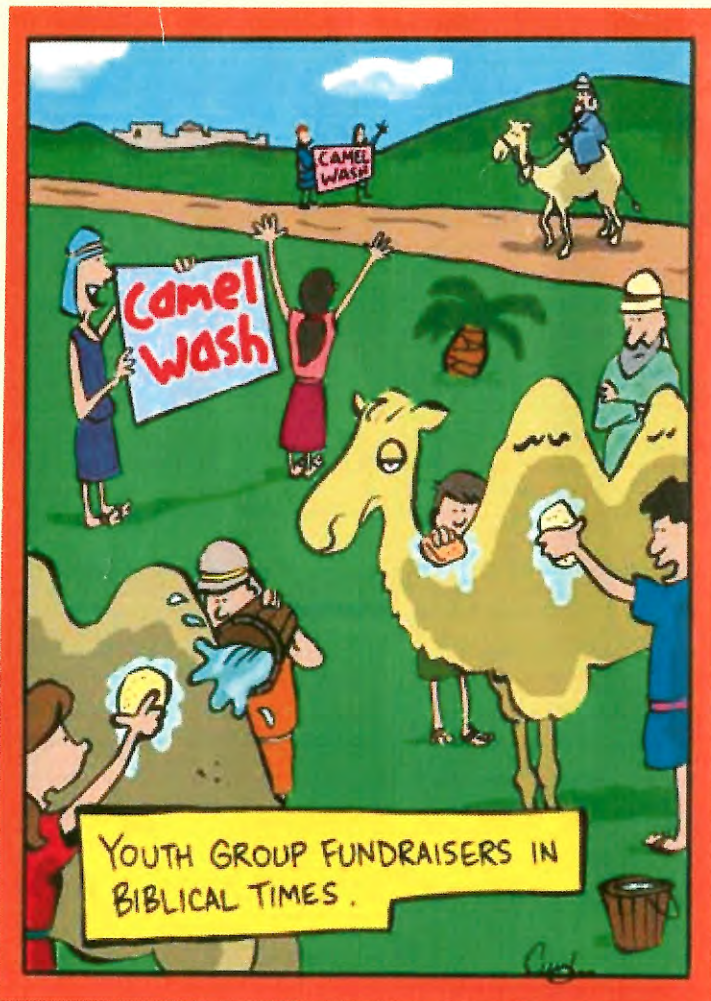
"Did so!"

"DID so!"

"Did NOT!"

Having had it with the two of

them, God's punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own. Thus the pattern was set, and it has never changed. There is, however, reassurance in this story. If you have persistently and lovingly tried to give them wisdom and they haven't taken it, don't be so hard on yourself. If God had trouble handling children, what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you?



Dear God, I want to
take a minute not to
ask for anything, but
simply to say thank
you for all I have!



LENTEN WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Lent is the time in the Christian year when we reflect on where we have been and where we need to go. The following services and studies are available to help you in your Lenten journey :

- March 5 - Ash Wednesday service in the sanctuary (7 p.m.)
- Bible study each Tuesday evening beginning March 11 and continuing until April 15 (7 p.m.)
- April 15 - Maundy Thursday service in the sanctuary (7 p.m.)
- April 20 - Easter breakfast (9 a.m.)
- April 20 - Easter worship service (10:30 a.m.)
-

THE WORDS HE SAVED FOR LAST . . .

Final Words from the Cross is the name of the Bible Study for Lent which will be held each Tuesday night starting on March 11, at 7 p.m. This is a video series written by Adam Hamilton. He provides a fresh insight into Jesus' final words at the cross through the perspective of those who witnessed the crucifixion. Then, he moves beyond the cross to Jesus' words to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and to those who were witnesses to the Resurrection.

Be sure to join us . . .

An Irish Blessing . . .

May the blessing of the rain
be on you—
the soft sweet rain.
May it fall upon your spirit
so that all the little flowers
may spring up,
and shed their sweetness
on the air.
May the blessing of the
great rains be on you,
may they beat upon your
spirit
and wash it fair and clean,
and leave there many a
shining pool
where the blue of heaven
shines,
and sometimes a star.



It's a Chapeau Show

... coming to Oppermann Hall on Sunday, April 6, beginning at 2 p.m. All the women of St. John's plus any invited friends or relatives are invited to wear your favorite hat—casual, funny, formal—for an afternoon of fun and fellowship. Save the date; it will be here faster than you think! More information will be forthcoming! Start looking for the “best of show” hat now!



YUMMY!

Many requests for these two recipes were received after last month's second Sunday potluck. You don't know what you are missing (and we miss you)—soooooo—make an effort to attend the next one on March 9 so you can taste the goodies, too! The first recipe comes to us from Nancy Yeager and the second from Connie Kempf. Keep reading those recipe magazines, ladies! Thanks for sharing . . .

Ham/Swiss Hawaiian Hot Sliders

2 packages Hawaiian Rolls (Wheat or regular)
1 lb. ham, turkey, combination (your choice of meat)
1 lb. Swiss, farmers, provolone cheese (or your choice)
Cut the tops off the rolls and place both packages of the bottom of the rolls in a greased 9x13 pan. Layer the cheese and meats over the bottoms.

Mix together: $\frac{3}{4}$ c. butter, 2 T. Dijon mustard, 2 T. Worcestershire sauce, 2 T. minced onions, and 1-2 T. poppy seeds (opt). Bring to a boil and pour a small amount over the layered rolls, meat, and cheese. Place the tops of the rolls over the layers in the pan and pour the remaining butter mixture overall. Cover and refrigerate 4-8 hours, or overnight. Remove from the refrigerator an hour before putting them in the oven. To heat, cover the slider sandwiches with foil and bake approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ hour at 350*. Cut and serve.



Surprise Fruit Salad

1-1/2 cups
1 - 20 oz. can
1 - 15 oz. can
1 - 16 oz tub
1/2 jar

San Giorgio Acine di Pepe (a pasta)
Pineapple chunks
Mandarin oranges
Cool Whip
Maraschino cherrier (opt)

Drain all the fruit, but save the pineapple juice. In a small pan, combine the pineapple juice, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar, 1 T. of flour, and 1 beaten egg. Cook until thickened, stirring often. Remove from burner and let cool.

While the fruit pudding mixture is cooking, prepare the pasta as directed on the box (do not overcook). When pasta is done, rinse with cold water and drain thoroughly. When the fruit pudding is completely cool, mix with the pasta, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

The next morning, add the fruit (this should have been refrigerated also) to the mixture and then fold in the coolwhip. If you want, you can add the drained cherries last or serve them on the side (in case someone doesn't care for them).

This will make a large amount of salad.



2014 COMMITTEE FORMATION:

Attached is the list of committees for 2013. As you can see, there will be changes to some of these committees in 2014. I would hope that all of you continue to serve on the committee you chose in 2013. If I do not receive the below form from you, I will assume you plan to continue serving into 2014. If you are not presently on any committee and wish to serve on any committee(s) in 2014, please fill out the below form. If you are on a committee and would like to be added to other committee(s), also fill out the below form. If for some reason you are unable to continue serving on any committee, just indicate at the bottom of this form. I would ask that you turn these forms in by Sunday, March 9, 2014(either give them to me personally or drop them in the offering plate).

Thank You –
Jennifer Bracy

Name: _____

I wish to serve on the following committees (put an "x" on the committee(s) you wish to serve):

- _____ Audit, Budget and Finance
- _____ Banner
- _____ Evangelism
- _____ Flowers and Vestments
- _____ Funeral
- _____ Hospitality
- _____ Memorial
- _____ Mission
- _____ Music and Worship
- _____ Properties (Church and Outside Premises)

_____ Please withdraw my name from the following committee(s):

AUDIT, BUDGET, FINANCE

*Mark Badertscher
Blaine Bauman
Jenny Bracy
Jason Cox
David Herr
Connie Kempf
Steve Kindle
Ed Yeager

BANNER

Carolyn Gillam
*Carol Groman
Mary Ann Jordan
Sara McCune
Shirley Rock

EVANGELISM

Duane Bollenbacher
Jenny Bracy
*Pam Everett
Bob Everett
Carolyn Gillam
Carol Groman
Connie Kempf
Sara McCune
Arliss Plaughter

FLOWERS AND VESTMENTS

Linda Benroth
*Nancy Yeager

FUNERAL

*Sue Amstutz
Linda Benroth
Carolyn Gillam
Mary Ann Jordan
Connie Kempf
Donna Kidd
Penny Kindle
*Donna Warren
Nancy Yeager

HOSPITALITY

Linda Benroth
Jenny Bracy
Mary Coletta
Becky Cox
Carolyn Gillam
Carol Groman
Mary Ann Jordan
*Connie Kempf
Penny Kindle
Sara McCune
Donna Warren
Nancy Yeager



MEMORIAL

Joyce Badertscher
Jenny Bracy
*Becky Cox
Mary Coletta
David Herr
Mary Ann Jordan
Connie Kempf
Penny Kindle
Steve Kindle

MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Crystal Sellers Battle
Blaine Bauman
Jenny Bracy
Mary Colletta
Sue Hardwick
Richard Jordan
Barbara Plaughter
*Nancy Yeager



PROPERTY

Tom Benroth
Morris Groman
Randy Cox
Jason Cox
Matt Jordan
Arliss Plaughter
Lonnie Warren
Ed Yeager





Cell Phones on the Altar

Lillian Daniel

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." - Proverbs 16:3

On the Sunday before Labor Day, we invite our congregation to bring symbols of their work to the altar to be blessed. People put up lap top computers, resumes, shovels, notebooks, mops and boots. And all that sits behind the communion table, set up for the feast.

But not everybody plans ahead. So I invited people who hadn't remembered to bring anything to come forward and leave the workplace symbols they carried with them anyway. Yes, I did it. I asked them to give me their cell phones.

You could feel a great awkwardness. Only a few people walked forward and placed their phones at the front of the church. "Don't be scared, we'll give them back to you at the end of the service!" I promised. A few more came forward. "Pastor Seth and I are pretty trustworthy. We won't let anyone take them. Besides, you can keep an eye on them from the pews for the next hour."

It generated a lot of discussion at coffee hour. People talked about being unwilling to part with their phones. Others talked about what it felt like to let the phone go, both the freedom and the anxiety of it. It was hard for people to hand over and ask God to bless the very tools that sometimes take more of our time than they save.

Whenever you find yourself unwilling to part with something, ask God to bless it and to bless you as well. Letting go is a great cure for clutching. But if you can't let go, don't worry. Just try loosening your grip a little. God can work with that too.

Prayer

God, reveal to me what things I cling to and all the reasons why. Amen.



*God proves his
love for us in
that while we
still were sinners
Christ died for us.*

ROMANS 5:8, NRSV

What did you think when you read the above heading?

We take God's love for granted, but do we really think about those words?

March 5 is **ASH WEDNESDAY**. What will you be doing that evening? Coming to worship? or staying home watching your TV?

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. It is a time for each of us to review our relationship with God and others. Is there something each of us can do to make it more meaningful?

Pastor Carol has chosen *The Lord's Prayer for Lent*, written by Gundermann, as a daily devotional for us here at St. John's United Church of Christ. This would give us a starting point at improving our prayer life.

Devotionals are designed to help us see scripture and others' understandings of scriptures differently. You might even find yourself looking at other passages to gain a new perspective of your Christian heritage.

It's said that to form a new habit it must be repeated regularly for two weeks. There are six weeks in Lent, so we have a good chance/opportunity to make daily devotions a habit.

If it weren't for the Still Speaking Daily Devotions I receive on my computer, it would be easy to forget to have them. It is easy to get involved in events and other activities that seem important at the time, and to neglect the other devotionals I try to use.

I find those words at the top of this page, very comforting. We are all sinners, but Christ came to us as a human being to show us the love God has for everyone. Christ made the ultimate sacrifice and conquered all our sins. Lent is a time for us to renew and re-dedicate our lives to Christ our Savior.

Pastor Don

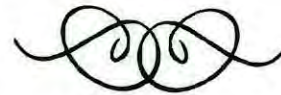
Interim Pastor, Immanuel UCC, Kettlersville

*Faith
family
friends*

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone for the cards, prayers, food, and phone calls during our recent illnesses and recovery. Your kindness was very uplifting. God bless you all!

Mary Alice and Rolland Dodge



The Beatitudes for Seniors

Blessed are they who understand my faltering steps and palsied hand.

Blessed are they who know my ears today must strain to catch the words they say.

Blessed are they who see that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

Blessed are they who looked away when coffee spilled on the table today.

Blessed are they with cheery smiles who stop to chat for a little while.

Blessed are they who never say, "You've told that story twice today."

Blessed are they who know the ways to bring back yesterdays.

Blessed are they who make it known that I'm loved, respected and not alone.

Blessed are they who know I'm at a lost to find the strength to carry my cross.

Blessed are they who ease the days on my journey home in loving ways.

--Timothy Merrill



Stuff . . .

Christian Education Mission Giving for 2014

- ✓ Half of the Sunday School money collected will go to the Samaritan House and the other half will be used for a local mission family.
- ✓ Half of the birthday money collected will be used for Pilgrim Hills (UCC camp) and one half will go to Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen.

DURING MARCH, THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE WILL BE COLLECTING COOKIES FOR THE BLUFFTON FOOD PANTRY. Why cookies when there are so many other nutritious items we could be bringing in? Right now, there are plenty of staples (fruits, vegetables, meats) available for food pantry participants, but what they would like occasionally are some “goodies” for the kids. We are going to treat them this month. Please—no homemade cookies allowed. Thanks for being generous!

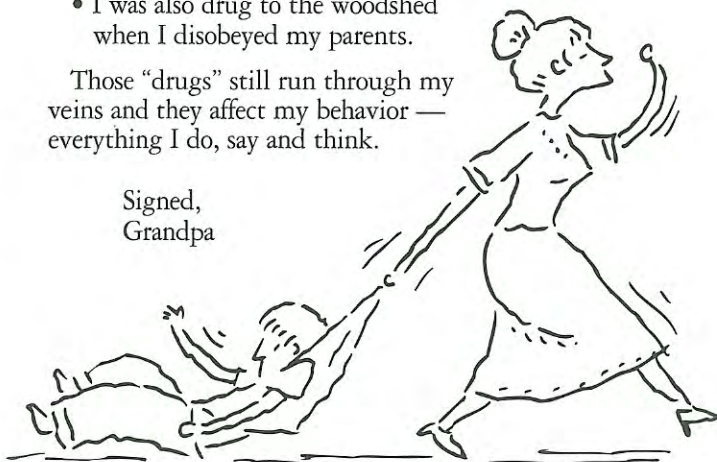
Grandpa's “drug” problem

My generation just might have been lucky. I had a “drug” problem when I was young, but I turned out all right anyway.

- I was drug to church.
- I was drug to family reunions.
- I was drug out of bed in the early morning.
- I was drug by the ears when I was disrespectful.
- I was also drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.

Those “drugs” still run through my veins and they affect my behavior — everything I do, say and think.

Signed,
Grandpa



BIRTHDAYS AND
ANNIVERSARIES
BEING
CELEBRATED THIS
MONTH

3/4	Melvena Lewis
3/7	Taylor Cox
3/12	Pat Herr
3/13	Pam Everett
3/16	Kristen Everett *Bob and Pam Everett
3/24	Larry Battle

Congrats, one and all!

Thank you from
Heidelberg University
for our gift of \$50 for
the unrestricted
scholarship fund.

It is amazing how quickly kids learn to drive a car, yet are unable to understand the lawnmower, dishwasher or vacuum cleaner.

someecards
user card

