

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)

S serves others

A accepts all

I integrates heart and soul

N neutralizes fear, recognizes joy

T teaches God's word

J joins with Jesus on the journey

O offers support and love on our faith journeys

H holds out hope to all

N nurtures those in need

S shepherds friends and strangers

September, 2013

SERENDIPITY

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

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I think I have a
thought here . . .

You know how I feel about animals, particularly my girl Annie, but this story says a lot, and I like the advice. I have even taken some of it in my lifetime. Enjoy . . .

Being a veterinarian, I had been called to examine a 10-year-old Irish wolfhound named Belker. The dog's owners, Ron and Lisa and their little boy Shane, were all very attached to Belker, and they were hoping for a miracle.

I examined Belker and found he was dying of cancer. I told the family we couldn't do anything for Belker, and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure for the old dog in their home.

As we made arrangements, Ron and Lisa told me they thought it would be good for 6-year-old Shane to observe. They felt as though Shane might learn something from the experience. The next day, I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker's family surrounded him. Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time, that I wondered if he understood what was going on. Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away.

The little boy seemed to accept Belker's transition without any difficulty or confusion. We sat together for a while after Belker's death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal's lives are shorter than human lives.

Shane who had been listening, quietly piped up, "I know why." Startled, we all turned to him. What came out of his mouth next stunned me. I'd never heard a more comforting explanation. It has changed the way I try and live.

He said, "People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life—like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right?" The young boy continued. "Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long." Live simply. Love generously, care deeply.

(continued on next page)

Remember, if a dog was the teacher, you would learn things like:

- When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
- Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joy ride.
- Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.
- Take naps.
- Stretch before rising.
- Run, romp, and play daily.
- Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
- Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
- On warm days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
- When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
- Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
- Be loyal.
- Never pretend to be something you're not.
- If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.
- When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle them gently.



TYPOS IN THE CHURCH BULLETIN

The choir will meet at the Larsen home for fun and sinning.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It is a good chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands!

Don't let worry kill you—let the church help!

The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.

Tonight, the sermon will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

The agenda was adopted, the minutes were approved, and the financial secretary gave a grief report.

Next Sunday is the family hayride and bonfire at the Fowlers. Bring your own hot dogs and guns.



PARADE OF THE FLOWERS

By Mary Ann Jordan

On July 30, a group of ladies (the breakfast group) met and toured gardens at five residences: Bruce Augsburger, Jenni Snider, Barbara McClurg, Beverly Ricker, and Sarah McCune.



We all marveled at the beauty of God's creations that these folks built on! There were so many different ways these gardens were crafted.



Following lunch at The Lunch Box in Pandora, Morris Groman gave us a tour of the VOSH "workshop" (Volunteer Optometrists in Service to Humanity) housed in the Pandora United Methodist Church. We were all amazed at the setup and the work involved in preparing the donated eye glasses for distribution to the needy in foreign lands.



The Tuesday morning breakfasts are a wonderful way to get to know each other, have fun, plan activities, and add extra prayers for those who need an extra boost.



Please feel free—all ladies involved in our church—to join the group on Tuesdays at Arby's at 9 a.m. This is an open, all inclusive, welcoming group. There are no dues collected, no committees, and no attendance counting—just folks working and doing for other folks. Won't you join us?

Thank You!

... To whoever donated the smaller pots and pans in the kitchen. They will be put to good use!

... From Church World Service for \$60 donated for additional blankets.

... From the Ohio Conference Outdoor Ministries for our gifts of \$133 and \$199.05 to the general fund of the camps.



autumn



**CHECK OUT THE NEW
PHONE NUMBERS/
ADDRESSES OF ST.
JOHN'S MEMBERS . . .**

Sara Benson
402 Greeding Street
Bluffton, OH 45817
567-226-1125

Don Burris
(No current E-mail address)

Jason and Heather Cox
8390 Swaney Road
Bluffton, OH 45817

Matthew and Amy Jordan
7333 Bentley Road
Bluffton, OH 45817

Donna Kidd
101 Magnolia Lane
Bluffton, OH 45817
dkidd2@neo.rr.com

Melvina Lewis
419-358-7576

Betty Moser
Cell: 419-296-1482

Bethany Theis
419-369-4786 or
419-358-0500



**SPECIAL WISHES GO OUT
THIS MONTH TO . . .**

9/3 - Becky Cox
9/9 - *Jim and Sue Amstutz
9/10 - Marsha Givens
9/16 - Margaret Carr
 *Richard and Mary Ann Jordan
9/19 - Jack Fields
9/24 - Sara Benson
9/28 - Ed Yeager
9/30 - Bethany Theis

**Happy Birthday and Happy
Anniversary to one and All!**



DEAR GOD,
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART,
I WANT TO THANK YOU
FOR BEING THERE FOR ME,
NEVER LEAVING ME....
AND ALWAYS LOVING ME.

I need GOD
in every
single moment
of my life.



There is a familiar song from the movie *State Fair* that was very popular when I was a teenager. One of the songs came to mind as we traveled with our grandchildren these past months comes from that movie.

Seeing and hearing about all the area county fairs, and of course the Ohio State Fair, you might think the song I'm referring to is *Hi Ho, Come to the Fair*. You'd be wrong. I'm thinking of these words: from Rogers and Hammerstein's *Oh What a Beautiful Morning* and the words "*The corn is as high as an elephant's eye, and it looks like it's climbing right up to the sky.*"

One of our vacations took us across Indiana, Illinois, and into Iowa. The corn there was v-e-r-y tall [at least 7-8 feet tall]. The fields long along the road measured 1.2 miles or just a bit less. The fields were primarily flat to gently rolling. How far back they extended I don't know. Every day of this trip was comfortable temperatures with daily beautiful days of sun. That's when this song came to mind.

On Saturday we went with our son and his family to a downtown Dubuque Farmer's Market. All types of produce, baked goods and other farm products were available. What a harvest from God's great earth! The true harvest time is yet to come later in the Fall.

From Manners and Customs of Bible Lands - CHAPTER 15 - SOME SPECIAL EVENTS OF DOMESTIC FESTIVITY - Harvest Home

In the Orient, the harvest time is always a time of great festivity. To the Jews of Bible days, it was also a time of great joy. The prophet said, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest" (*Isa. 9:3*). The law provided two feasts that were harvest festivals (*Exod. 23:16*). The first of these was called at one time The Feast of the Harvest, and later named The Feast of Pentecost.

This feast was celebrated after the grain harvest. It was designated to express thanksgiving to God for the harvest that had been gathered. It was a time of rest from labor (*Exod. 34:21*). Also it was a time of feasting (*Exod. 23:16*). The second of these feasts was sometimes called The Feast of Ingathering, being held after all the grain, fruit, wine, and oil had been gathered in. It, too, was a time of thanksgiving and joy over the harvest. It was also called the Feast of Tabernacles (*Lev. 23:39-43*), because they dwelt in booths to remind them of the wilderness days of the past.'

CHAPTER 19 - GROWING AND HARVESTING GRAIN - Rain And The Maturing Of The Crops

The Palestine grainfields are largely dependent upon the rain that falls, for their fruitfulness. No rain falls in the land from May to September. *The former rain*, spoken of in Scripture, falls in the latter part of October or the first part of November usually. It is this rain that is the signal for the farmer to begin his ploughing and plant his seed. The Bible also speaks of the *latter rain*, which ordinarily falls in March and April, and it is this rain that is of so much value in maturing the barley and the wheat crops. The *heavy winter rains* come the latter part of December and during January and February. The prophecy of Joel mentions all three of these kinds of rain: "And he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (*Joel 2:23*). The word rain here means heavy, gushing rain that falls in winter months, and the rainy season starts with the former rain in the fall, and ends with the *latter* rain in the spring. Barley harvest is usually in April and May, and the wheat harvest in May and June. Thus we see that Jeremiah was quite correct in his order of seasons in relation to the harvest time.

We have been blessed this season with God's perfect timing for the growth and abundance of foods from God's good earth.

As the harvest continues, let us remember, we planted the seed, God watered the earth and caused the seed to grow with the sun's warmth and mature into food for us to share and to use.

Have a happy harvest buffet, and remember who caused the harvest to bear fruit.

Pastor Don, retired

8/21/2013

Greetings! To whom it may concern,

Just a quick note to give you an update on the Bluffton Community food pantry needs.

Over the last few months and as enrollment in the program has increased, we have needed to buy groceries on a regular basis. Therefore, we have come up with a list of needs as a way for the church community to know what those needs are. We had 51 families come through the pantry on August 17th.

We have come up with a list of like items that your church may at any time want to collect for the pantry.

- Tuna/ condiments like mayonnaise, relish, ketchup, mustard, etc.
- Toiletries like shampoo and health and beauty items
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Spaghetti sauce and noodles
- Paper products like Toilet paper, Kleenex, and paper towels
- Cured meats like hotdogs, bacon and ham.

Bread is donated pretty much every month and we try to have eggs and hamburger available every month also. We have even purchased milk. We try to think of things that go together such as milk with cereal and spaghetti with sauce.

We also had our first back pack program where people in the community donated backpacks and supplies to those who signed up for the program! We ended up giving away over 26 backpacks this month! The etcetra shop donated \$10 vouchers for every family this month too!

The items listed above are just the things that we are low on right now. We just purchased cereal, fruit, and canned ravioli for the next several months thanks to the community service!

September 21st is the next pantry day.

Thank you for considering these needs and for your continued prayers as we serve the needs of our community.

Please let us know what items your church will be donating and reply to all on the list so we know what we will need to purchase for next month.

Warm regards,

Sarah Shank and Jami Crawfis

Co-directors of the Bluffton Community Assistance Corporation



**“Throw”
your weight
behind this
project . . .**

As part of our 140th anniversary celebration, a throw blanket will be created with a picture of St. John’s woven into it. If you would like to order one and you haven’t as yet signed up for one at church, please send a check for \$45 to the church and we will make sure you will get one of these lovely blankets as a keepsake.



Blessing of the laptops and backpacks will take place on Sunday, September 22, during the worship service. Bring your school supplies and computers and have them blessed for a successful and safe school year.





COME FLY WITH 'OUR' FLOCK

It was about eleven o'clock on a cold, moonless October night when the geese landed on the small pond near our house. They had no respect for the neighbors... no thought for the other tenants. They were like noisy conventioners returning from a night on the town—talking, laughing, recounting outrageous tales of their exploits of the day gone by...

By Dennis Fowler, Otego, New York

THEY KEPT us awake till midnight. Then, finally, after a few squabbles over sleeping space, the geese tucked their heads beneath their wings and slept. One or two stayed awake, of course, alert for night predators.

Come the dawn, the geese roused, stretched, fed, then rested more. The small redwood house beside the pond meant nothing to them...they couldn't see me or my wife

behind the window glass, studying their elegant grace from our live-in goose blind. They fed, rested, preened, sun-bathed, slept in shifts and generally lazed about, acting every bit like tourists at the beach.

As I was taking pictures, I noticed that one member of the flock had a bright yellow collar resting on his shoulders. Against the dignified gray, black and white of his plumage, it was as jarring as a garish yellow bow tie with a tuxedo.

The collar had inch-high letters and numbers—YBP1P3—plainly designed to be seen and read from a distance. Whether or not he knew it, that goose was obviously part of a migration study—a statistic in the making.

The flock hung around most of the day. From time to time, one goose would rise on his hindquarters, stretch his wings and beat them as though testing their strength and readiness.

Finally, at about five o'clock, on a signal invisible and inaudible to us, the geese took wing—rising into the air with a burst of energy and a flurry of spray that left our pond ruffled with waves.

Turning south and getting in formation to resume their long migration, they climbed slowly to their cruising altitude and were soon out of sight. The pond settled back to its demeanor, as though Mother Nature was carefully remaking

the bed to get ready for the next transients.

That was the last we saw of the flock. But we'll be flying along on their travels (in our imaginations, at least) from now on, due to what we learned the next morning.

That collared goose stirred our interest, so we phoned the Wildlife Resources Center in Delmar, New York. We learned that thousands of geese in the Atlantic Flyway are

banded to track their migrating and nesting patterns. Our sighting was exactly what researchers were hoping for.

In exchange for our report—that goose number YBP1P3 was part of a flock that had stopped at a small pond just north of the headwaters of the Susquehanna River—we were promised updates on the travels of "our" flock.

Sure enough, a few months later we received a computer printout indicating they'd spent the winter at 39 degrees, 10 minutes north latitude, 75 degrees, 30 minutes west longitude—a few miles north of Dover, Delaware, according to my atlas. My wife and I couldn't help but wonder whose sleep they disturbed on the first night there...

I don't know if we'll be lucky enough to see "our" flock again. A slight change in the winds might alter their course—perhaps push them on to Otsego Lake.

Eventually, we know, YBP1P3 will return to the flock's nesting grounds in Canada with his mate. And every fall, he'll pass over us again, repeating a pattern his ancestors established long before ours set foot on this landscape.

Perhaps someday as I'm splitting firewood I'll look up and see him flying past, without realizing it. Maybe someday *you'll* spot old YBP1P3 and smile in recognition.

If you do, say "hi" for us...and wish him bon voyage! 

SUNDAY (1) COMMUNION SERVED (WORSHIP AT 10 A.M.)

TUESDAY (3) LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.)
BIBLE STUDY (7 P.M.)

WEDNESDAY (4) MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.)
CHOIR PRACTICE (7 P.M.)

THURSDAY (5) COMMUNITY DINNER AT SENIOR CENTER (6 P.M.)

SUNDAY (8)

FALL SCHEDULE STARTS:

SUNDAY SCHOOL (9:30 A.M.)

WORSHIP (10:30 A.M.)

CHOIR SINGS

CHRISTIAN ED. MEETING AFTER WORSHIP

HARVEST

TUESDAY (10) LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.)
BIBLE STUDY (7 P.M.)

WEDNESDAY (11) MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.)
CHOIR PRACTICE (7 P.M.)

THURSDAY (12) LACOMEDIA (MEET AT CHURCH - 9 A.M.)

FRIDAY (13) WALK DAY AT BLUFFTON ELEMENTARY

SUNDAY (15)

ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY

TUESDAY (17) LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.)
BIBLE STUDY (7 P.M.)

WEDNESDAY (18) MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.)
CHOIR PRACTICE (7 P.M.)

THURSDAY (19) COMMUNITY DINNER AT SENIOR CENTER (6.P.M.)
CONSISTORY (7 P.M.)

SUNDAY (22) CHOIR SINGS

TUESDAY (24) SOUP KITCHEN
LADIES MEET AT ARBY'S (9 A.M.)
TOPS (6 P.M.)

WEDNESDAY (25) MEN MEET AT ARBY'S (8:30 A.M.)
CHOIR PRACTICE (7 P.M.)



autumn

Why Millennials are Leaving the Church

By Rachel Held Evans, Special to CNN

At 32, I barely qualify as a millennial. I wrote my first essay with a pen and paper, but by the time I graduated from college, I owned a cell phone and used Google as a verb.

I still remember the home phone numbers of my old high school friends, but don't ask me to recite my husband's without checking my contacts first.

I own mix tapes that include selections from Nirvana and Pearl Jam, but I've never planned a trip without Travelocity.

Despite having one foot in Generation X, I tend to identify most strongly with the attitudes and the ethos of the millennial generation, and because of this, I'm often asked to speak to my fellow evangelical leaders about why millennials are leaving the church.

Armed with the latest surveys, along with personal testimonies from friends and readers, I explain how young adults perceive evangelical Christianity to be too political, too exclusive, old-fashioned, unconcerned with social justice and hostile to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

I point to research that shows young evangelicals often feel they have to choose between their intellectual integrity and their faith, between science and Christianity, between compassion and holiness.

I talked about how the evangelical obsession with sex can make Christian living seem like little more than sticking to a list of rules, and how millennials long for faith communities in which they are safe asking tough questions and wrestling with doubt.

Invariably, after I've finished my presentation and opened the floor to questions, a pastor raises his hand and says, "So what you're saying is we need hipper worship bands. ..."

And I proceed to bang my head against the podium.

Time and again, the assumption among Christian leaders, and evangelical leaders in particular, is that the key to drawing twenty-somethings back to church is simply to make a few style updates—edgier music, more casual services, a coffee shop in the fellowship hall, a pastor who wears skinny jeans, an updated Web site that includes online giving.

But here's the thing: Having been advertised to our whole lives, we millennials have highly sensitive BS meters, and we're not easily impressed with consumerism or performances.

In fact, I would argue that church-as-performance is just one more thing driving us away from the church, and evangelicalism in particular.

Many of us, myself included, are finding ourselves increasingly drawn to high church traditions—Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Episcopal Church, etc.—precisely because the ancient forms of liturgy seem so unpretentious, so unconcerned with being “cool,” and we find that refreshingly authentic.

What millennials really want from the church is not a change in style but a change in substance.

We want an end to the culture wars. We want a truce between science and faith. We want to be known for what we stand for, not what we are against.

We want to ask questions that don't have predetermined answers.

We want churches that emphasize an allegiance to the kingdom of God over an allegiance to a single political party or a single nation.

We want our LGBT friends to feel truly welcome in our faith communities.

We want to be challenged to live lives of holiness, not only when it comes to sex, but also when it comes to living simply, caring for the poor and oppressed, pursuing reconciliation, engaging in creation care and becoming peacemakers.

You can't hand us a latte and then go about business as usual and expect us to stick around. We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church because we don't find Jesus there.

Like every generation before ours and every generation after, deep down, we long for Jesus.

Now these trends are obviously true not only for millennials but also for many folks from other generations. Whenever I write about this topic, I hear from forty-somethings and grandmothers, Generation Xers and retirees, who send me messages in all caps that read “ME TOO!” So I don't want to portray the divide as wider than it is.

But I would encourage church leaders eager to win millennials back to sit down and really talk with them about what they're looking for and what they would like to contribute to a faith community.

Their answers might surprise you.

Rachel Held Evans is the author of “Evolving in Monkey Town” and “A Year of Biblical Womanhood.” She blogs at rachelheldevans.com. The views expressed in this column belong to Rachel Held Evans.

DOES THE SHOE FIT?



 Stillspeaking Daily Devotional

Sorry, That's Not My Gift

Tony Robinson

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed." - 1 Corinthians 12:1

I'm having second thoughts on spiritual gifts.

For a time now, we've been saying - I've been saying - that folks need to discern their particular gifts and be supported in exercising those gifts. We have done gift discernment inventories. We have offered gift discernment workshops.

And sometimes that's been terrific. Some people have named a gift they hadn't recognized and claimed a ministry that had their name written all over it. Hallelujah!

But sometimes this has gone sideways. As in, the dishes need to be washed. The trash wants taking out. The notes for the meeting need to be taken and distributed. Or someone has to ask people for a pledge for next year's budget.

And people say, "Sorry - not my gift."

Sometimes there's stuff that just needs to be done. Sometimes - well, really, all the time - there are mundane things that need to happen so the group, family, church, etc. can function. Someone has to show up to unlock the door. Someone has to take the food donations to the food bank. Someone has to count the offering.

Sometimes, in fact, it may even be good for us to do stuff - service - that has no glory in it, that isn't really fulfilling for us. We do it because it needs to be done. We serve, whether the task at hand is exactly our thing or not. And maybe we even forget about ourselves while we're doing it - which may, in the end, be at least part of the point of service in the first place.

Prayer

God, grant me grace so to lose myself in service to you that I may be truly found. Amen.

**140 YEARS
AND STILL ON
THE MOVE!**

PLEASE try to make reservations for our 140th anniversary on **Sunday, September 15**, beginning with worship at **10:30 a.m.** and the dinner afterwards. You can sign up on the sheet at the back of the sanctuary or you can call the church office at **419-358-5641** and indicate your choice of entrees—chicken or baked steak. Also, please encourage other guests (children, other relatives) who may be planning to join us to register if possible. This will be a wonderful celebration of worship, music, and fellowship. Come and see folks you may have not seen for a long time as the family of St. John's joins together for

*JOY IN THE
JOURNEY!*

Ponder this . . .

“O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them they gather it up; when you open your hands, they’re filled with good things.”

Read Psalm 104 in its entirety. Be inspired by the psalmist’s long recitation of God’s majestic works of creation. After thinking about your favorite works of creation, create your own prayer or psalm of thanksgiving using this refrain: ***“O God, how manifold are your works, in wisdom you have made them all.”***

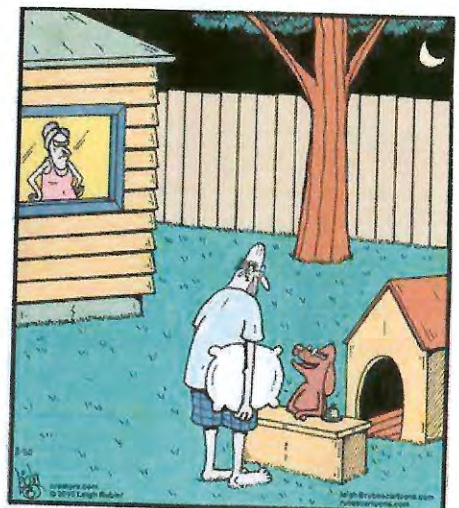
Heavenly Father,

You know every decision I need to make and every challenge I face. Please forgive me for the times that I try to figure this life out on my own. I need You. I need Your Holy Spirit to give me strength, wisdom, and direction. *AMEN*



**The highest form
of wisdom
is kindness**

~The Talmud



“Welcome back, sir. Are you planning on being our guest for one night only, or will this be your usual extended stay?”

Family

Summer Fun

By Mary Ann Jordan

If you were unable to attend the outdoor worship service on August 18, you missed a very meaningful service. The weather was beautiful, the park quiet, and the worship special in the outdoor setting.

Thanks to Pastor Carol for planning the unique service.

There was also plenty to eat following worship!



Friends



