

The

SERENDIPITY

January/February - 2014

ST. JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

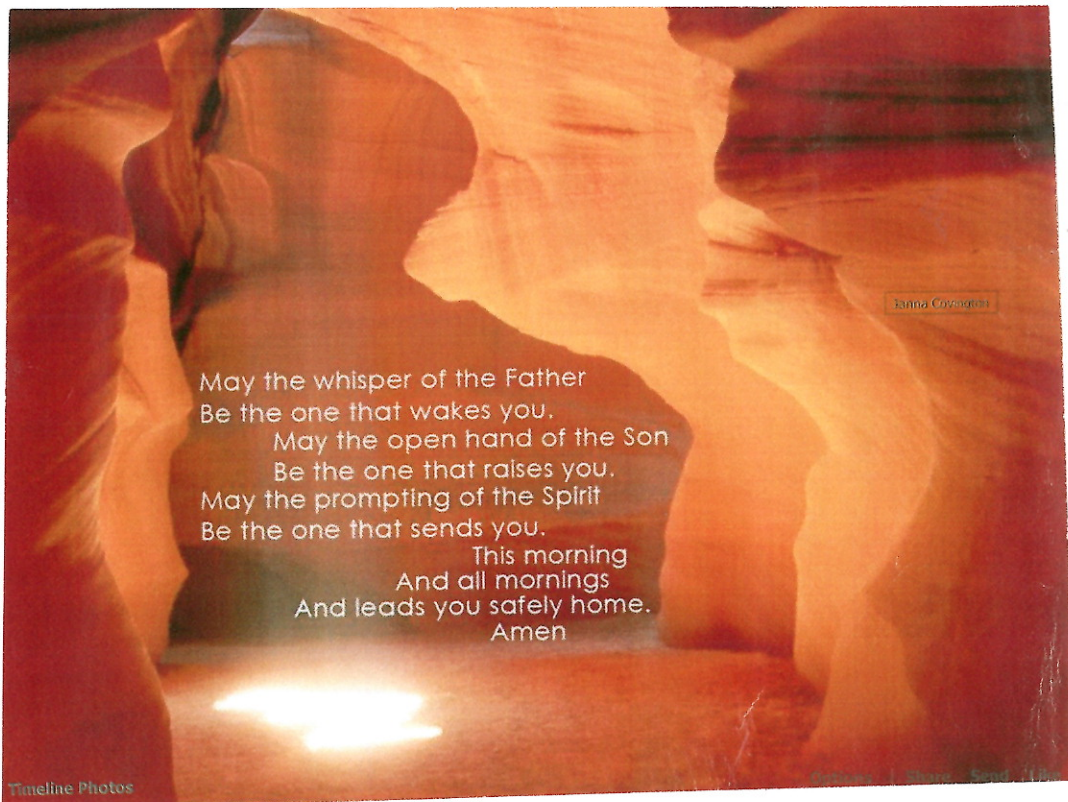
A family rooted in Christ, growing in grace, and living in love.

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Bluffton, OH 45817

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Rev. Carol Clements (330-204-0802)



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CHURCH OF CHRIST**
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Sue Hardwick and
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Jenny Bracy (President)

Nancy Yeager (V.P.)

Steve Kindle

Dan Fleming

Deacons

Jason Cox

Becky Cox

Bob Stahl

David Herr

Matt Jordan

Roger Scoles

Treasurer

Ed Yeager

Financial Secretary

Blaine Bauman



*"Make it happen
this year!"*

Though even thinking about the subject of time may be a bit uncomfortable and disconcerting for us, it is not a bad idea, especially at the beginning of a new year.

As we look back into 2013, we look at a block of time. We see 12 months; 52 weeks; 365 days; 8760 hours; 525,600 minutes; 31,536,000 seconds—and all are a gift from God! We have done nothing to deserve it, earn it, or purchase it. Like the air we breathe, time comes to us as a part of life.

But the gift of time is not ours alone. It is given equally to each person—rich or poor, educated or uneducated, strong or weak. Every man, woman, and child has the same exact 24 hours; 1440 minute; and 86,400 seconds every day.

Another important thing about time is that you cannot stop it. There is no way to slow it down, turn it off, or adjust it. Time marches on. In addition, you cannot bring back time; once it is gone, it is gone. Yesterday is forever lost.

If yesterday is lost, tomorrow is uncertain. We may look ahead at a full year's block of time, but we really have no guarantee that we will experience any part of it.

Time is obviously one of our most precious possessions. We can waste it, worry over it, spend it on ourselves, or, as good stewards, we can invest it in building up the kingdom of God.

This new year is full of time. As the seconds tick away, will you be tossing time out the window, or will you make every minute count?

I will be offering some challenges for you by next month. I hope you will pray over them and see where the Spirit might lead you. Keep warm!

Pastor Carol



January



Stillspeaking Daily Devotional

More Wine

Matt Laney

"Jesus and his disciples had been invited to a wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They are out of wine.'" - John 2:2-3

Being a pastor means you must occasionally endure good natured barbs from church members about our supposed ability to walk on water, feed thousands from a Happy Meal and turn water into wine; the good stuff mind you, Cheval Blanc 1947 not Yellowtail 2013.

But hear me on this: dishing up astounding, lavish abundance is the call of every Christian, not just pastors. It's what you signed up for.

The God of Jesus Christ just isn't the stern and stingy sort. Jesus reveals a God of reckless generosity. A God who's like a manager paying a full day's wage for one hour of work; a God who's like a father welcoming a train-wreck-of-a-son home with a ring, a new suit and a kickin' party; a God who's like a sower heedlessly hurling seed anywhere and everywhere in complete disregard of soil quality.

And if we have encountered God's lavish, abundant love in Jesus, we are called to respond in kind: Like foreign wise men who lay high-end luxury gifts before a newborn pauper-king; like the tax collector who gave away half his income; like Mary, who anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume while the disciples sat around grumbling about a waste of money.

How will you be reckless and extravagantly generous today? Will you give someone an hour of your time and attention to just listen? Will you treat a perfect stranger to lunch? Will you bump up your pledge to the church in a big way? Will you sell your belongings, or at least the 75% you don't need or use, and give to the poor?

If you do you may find yourself walking on water with Jesus, stuffed to bursting with love and intoxicated with abundant life.

Prayer

Generous and gracious God, help me to remember that you call me to abundant life, not to a life of abundance.



RENEWING OUR FAITH

Yes! The year 2014 has arrived. What are you going to do about it? Make the same usual resolutions: diet, exercise, not eat as much and lose weight?

Instead, pray this prayer written by Betty Scott Stam:

“Lord, I give up all my own plans and purposes, all my own desires and hopes, and accept your will for my life, my all utterly to you, to be yours forever. Fill me and seal me with your Holy Spirit. Use me as you will, and work out your will in my life at any cost, now and forever. Amen.”

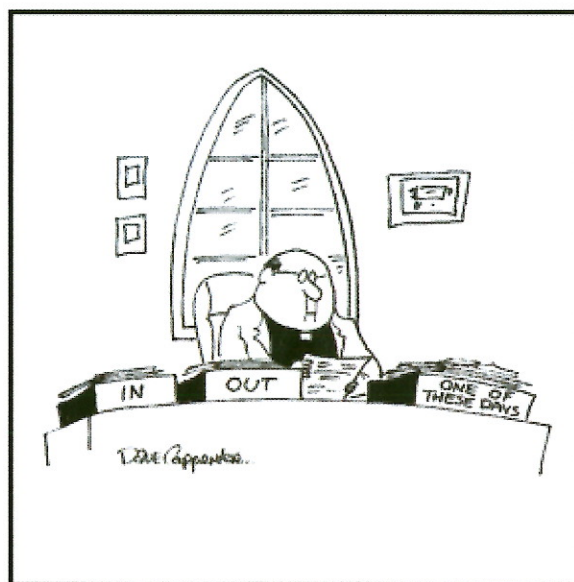
How about some of these Resolutions written by Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758). He wrote 70 and read them every week for 35 years until his death:

- ❖ To live with all my might while I do live.
- ❖ To study scriptures . . . steadily, constantly and frequently.

- ❖ Never lose a moment of time.
- ❖ Never to do anything which I should despise or think meanly of another.
- ❖ Never do anything out of revenge.
- ❖ To let there be something of benevolence in all that I speak.
- ❖ Never do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life.

++++
With cold weather upon us, here are some suggestions of “How to keep warm in church” . . .

1. Rush to the front of the church to avoid the drafts at the rear.
2. Invite your neighbors and friends to sit 10 persons to a pew.
3. Seat yourself near the pulpit – much hot air is emitted from that area.
4. Fuss and fume when you don’t like what the preacher says.
5. Wear thermal underwear (in the appropriate liturgical color).
6. Wait for an unfamiliar hymn - - -and then watch the sparks fly!
7. Let the Holy Spirit fill you, it will warm your heart and body.



++++
Teach the wise, and they will be wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn more. Proverbs 9:9

Pastor Don, Interim Pastor

JANUARY'S SCHEDULE AT ST. JOHN'S

- 1/20 Elders' meeting (7 p.m.)
1/21 Ladies meet at Jeanne's Kitchen (9 a.m.)
Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen (10 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
1/22 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir practice (7 p.m.)



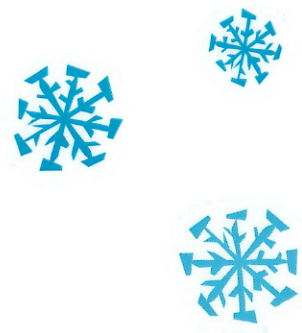
Brrrrr...

FEBRUARY'S SCHEDULE AT ST. JOHN'S

- 2/2 Communion served during worship
2/4 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
2/5 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir Practice (7 p.m.)
2/6 Community dinner at the Senior Center (6 p.m.)
2/9 Second Sunday potluck
2/11 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
2/12 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir practice (7 p.m.)
2/13 Consistory (7 p.m.)
2/15 Food Pantry distribution (9 a.m. – noon)
2/16 Christian Education Committee meets after worship
2/18 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
2/19 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
Choir (7 p.m.)
2/20 Community dinner at the Senior Center (6 p.m.)
2/25 Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
TOPS (6 p.m.)
2/26 Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)

KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Count your BLESSINGS, not your heartaches



Thanks a Bunch!



Dear friends,
Thank you so very much for thinking of me with the Christmas stocking. The gifts inside were very appreciated, especially the ornament with the church picture. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday. I wish you all good health and blessings in 2014.

Dorothy Conrad

I want to thank everyone for their prayers and cards in this difficult time of my son Don's death.

Betty Moser

Thank you for the red Christmas stocking with an orange in the toe! Also, thanks for the other included gifts, especially the framed photo of St. John's UCC. A great gift appreciated.

Frances Scoles

Dear friends in Christ,
"My cup runneth over with love and joy" after the fellowship extended to us residents of Mennonite Memorial Home this past Tuesday evening. As I look at my Christmas stocking filled with gifts, I have a big smile knowing the Christian love extended to us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Kathleen Mikkelsen

I thank your for stopping by to see me. I also thank you for the stocking and goodies. Hope to see you in the future. Thanks!

George McCune

St. John's UCC,
I just want to say thank you, not only for the gift card you gave me, but also for welcoming me into the church the past few years. It means the world to me knowing I have a church that I have been considering home. I love working and seeing all of you, and I look forward to the semester ahead.

Julie Court

Thank you for all of your thoughts and prayers and also the meals and cards I received for my recent surgery. Everything was much appreciated.

Jenny Bracy

Dear Friends,
Thank you for your contribution of \$150 to the West Ohio Food Bank. This money will be used to bring in 3750 pounds of food that will make 2929 meals and feed 81 families of four for three days.

Gary Bright, CEO

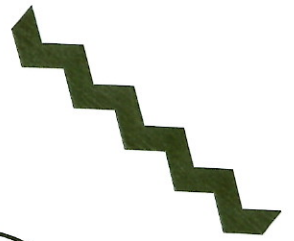
Dear God,
I need You today. I acknowledge I cannot do all. I depend on You to help me get where I need to go. Help me not to get discouraged. I know Your ways are perfect. Bless me with more faith and hope. Amen



Starting ASAP in this new year, write good things that happen to you on little pieces of paper.

- Surprise gifts
- Accomplished goals
- The beauty of nature
- "LOL" moments
- Memories worth saving
- Daily blessings

Then, on December 31, open the jar and read all the amazing things that happened to you in 2014!



BLESSINGS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO

1/1	Linda Fleming
1/3	Maynard Badertscher
1/4	Eileen Basinger
1/6	Carol Groman
1/8	Bethany Nye
1/11	Barbara Plaughter
1/15	Arliss Plaughter
1/20	*Ron and Sharlee Badertscher
1/21	Connie Kempf
1/22	Dan Fleming
1/31	Betty Main Wilbur Bracy
2/3	David Herr
2/4	Deb Bollenbacher
2/5	Jason Cox
2/8	Larry Kemp
2/9	Russell Scoles
2/17	*Sam and Diana Reichenbach

HAPPY
birthday



WHY DO WE HAVE ELDERS IN THE CHURCH?

(What's the big deal, anyway?)

The position of Elder in the church today has its roots in the office of Elder in the early church. Elders gave oversight to the ongoing life, work, and ministry of the local church. This was in contrast to the apostles, who were missionaries going out from the church. Today, Elders join the pastor in helping the local church know the faith, determine its ministry, and organize and discipline its life.

*“And after they had appointed Elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.”
(Acts 14:23)*

“So I exhort the Elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:1b-3)

In the Christian church, the role of Elders was a tradition carried over from the Old Testament period but modified to fit Christian needs. Moses consulted with the Elders before implementing any plans. Elders were significant political and religious leaders during the time of the judges and kings in the Old Testament. When Jesus spoke of the governing group called the Sanhedrin, he was speaking of the Elders. Jesus' disciples were familiar with the Council

of Elders of the temple who were responsible for the temple's business, the charities of the community, and the carrying out of Mosaic Law. Christian Elders followed this model of Elders in the Jewish temple, but added teaching and pastoral responsibilities.

The New Testament understanding of Elders and the early church practice related to the Elders led to various roles in the churches that formed the United Church of Christ. In the ***Evangelical*** tradition, Elders relieved pastors from temporal affairs so that they could center on preaching. The duties of Deacons and Elders were closely related and included the functions of church manager, director, overseer, and administrator. Elders were to see that doctrine and piety of living were maintained, and members lived properly. The Elder was an experienced or wise member of the church who was an example for others.

In the ***Reformed*** tradition, Elders assisted and supported the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church. They served as examples to others and watched over the spiritual interests of the church, maintained order in the church, visited the sick, and edified and consoled all members. They provided the elements for communion and aided in their distribution.

As you can see, the church has a long history of Elders assisting the pastor in many facets of the pastor's ministry. We now have 20 people from the St. John's congregation who are in health care facilities or who are considered home-bound. This number is far too many for the pastor to visit and offer communion on as regular a schedule as she would like.

(continued on next page)

(Why Do We Have Elders? continued)

With this thought in mind, Pastor Carol has asked those Elders (who are willing) to offer home communions so folks can receive Holy Communion on a more regular basis. **THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PASTOR IS NEVER GOING TO VISIT YOU OR OFFER YOU COMMUNION AGAIN!**

Rest assured that she will be visiting each of you as in the past. This is just another way of reaching out to folks to let them know how important they are to the congregation and that we care and are wanting to constantly keep them in our thoughts, prayers, and functions of the church.

Administrative responsibilities, additional services/Bible studies at the area care facilities, increased covenantal responsibilities on both the local, association, and conference levels take many hours that were before devoted to congregational concerns.

Sharing the responsibilities of the pastor with the Elders is just another tool to help the congregation function more smoothly with more of the dictates of the church being shared.

So . . . if you receive a call from one of the Elders, please welcome them into your home, talk with them, and be proud and pleased that our church is taking steps to include everyone in the life of the church as much as possible.

Thanks to all of you for your support in the past as well in this new year.

A SUCCESSFUL THIRD SUNDAY MISSION PROJECT ACCOMPLISHED!

Thanks to all you folks who gave so generously to our food pantry third Sunday mission project sponsored by the Board of Christian Education. The Amount of \$902.19 was collected, and \$767.12 was spent. Pastor Carol and Penny Kindle shopped for the food. Pastor Carol talked with the director of the food pantry, and it was her observation that folks received what they needed, but not necessarily what they wanted. Like all of us, if there is a choice of purchasing more nutritious food for dinner or snacks for afterward, the snacks go by the wayside. Since this was extra money, we thought we would allow them some of the luxuries we take for granted. Therefore, we purchased coffee, margarine, cookies, Pop Tarts, breakfast bars, crunch-n-munch, and each family also received a large can of beef. Thanks for putting a smile on a lot of faces this month!

With the money that is left, I told Katie Badertscher that, if the family that we helped at Christmas time is still in need, we had additional money to help them. She called and said that by the end of January, their gas was to be shut off, so we will have enough money to help them with that bill as well.



Inside me lives
a skinny woman
crying to get out
But I can usually
shut her up
with cookies.



Today's housekeeping tip:
Always keep several get well
cards on the mantel.
That way, if unexpected
guests arrive, they'll think
you've been sick
and unable to clean.

When my arms can't
reach people who are
close to my heart...

I
always
hug them
with my
prayers.



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from the negatives and if things
don't turn out,
Just take
another
shot.



**TO ADMIT THAT
YOU WERE WRONG
IS TO DECLARE THAT
YOU ARE
WISER NOW
THAN YOU
WERE BEFORE.**