

*"If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God,
then we will be a nation gone under."*

--Ronald Reagan

July, 2101



SERENDIPITY

**St. John's United Church of Christ
223 West College Avenue
Bluffton, OH 45817
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BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED!

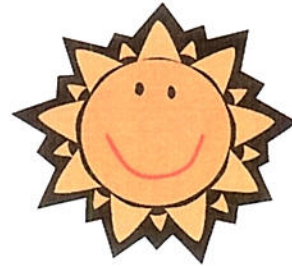
There once was a stonecutter who became disenchanted with his life as a stonecutter. One day, he came upon a merchant, and he was awestruck by all the marvelous goods the man had for sale. "I wish I were a merchant!" said the stonecutter and, quite amazingly, his wish was granted.



Not long afterward, he saw a parade pass his little shop. Seeing a prince dressed in splendor such as he had never before seen, he said, "I wish I were a prince!" and, once again, his wish was granted.



But it wasn't too many days later that he stepped outside and felt the discomfort of the hot summer sun beating down on his head. "Even a prince cannot stay cool in the sun," he said. "I wish I were the sun!" This wish, too, was granted.



He was happy being the sun until, one day, a cloud came between him and the earth. "That cloud overshadowed me," he said. "I wish I were a cloud!" Again, his wish was granted and he was happy—until he

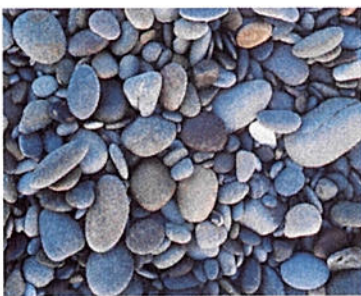


came to a mountain which he could not rise above. "This mountain is greater than I," he said. "I wish I

were a mountain!" As a tall and mighty mountain, he looked down on the affairs of humans and felt that he was finally happy.



One day, though, a stonecutter climbed up his side and chipped away at rock, and there was nothing he could do about it. "That little man is more powerful than I," the mountain said. "I wish I were a stonecutter!"



So, the circle was completed, and now the stonecutter knew that he would always be happy just being himself. He would never dress like a

prince, shine like the sun, or rise as tall as a mountain, but he was happy to be who he was.

A sure way to unhappiness is to compare yourself with others. Like someone aptly said, "The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence, but it still has to be mowed!" You are who you are with gifts and talents to share, and that is to be celebrated!

" . . . For I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little and know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty, and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

(Philippians 4:11b-13)

*Bloom where you are planted!
Have a wonderful and memory-
filled summer - and be safe!*

Pastor Carol



YES! We have a celebration coming up this month. A national holiday that celebrates our Independence from the mother country,

A lot has happened in the years that followed. Think back to when you were a child and what you took for granted then in terms of daily living. There were department stores "downtown" that specialized in certain types of merchandise - Grocery stores sold only food items. Drug stores were where you went for medicine and prescriptions and sometimes there was a soda fountain in the store to get a Coca Cola or root beer, maybe a real soda with ice cream or a tin roof sundae.

Travel on that first July 4 was mainly on horseback, so there was no chance of going to the beach (unless you lived near one you could walk to).

We stayed pretty much at home or visited family in town or on the farm for our picnic celebration. Stores were mostly closed for the whole day, so you had to provide your own entertainment. Of course radio and TV were still something that had not been invented yet.

In the evening were fireworks set off by your family and lasted until you ran out of them. Spectacular displays were almost nonexistent.

I remember walking up to the top of the 23rd street hill, one of the streets in Harrisburg, Pa, to watch them set off fireworks at the highest point in town, Reservoir Park. We ooh'd and ahh'd as the "rockets" went up, at intervals, and exploded above the park into one or two bursts of different types. We would count the number of booms, waiting for the last **Big boom**. It lasted about 10-15 minutes.

It seems we have lost that kind of feeling of enjoyment. If the fireworks show, today, don't last at least half an hour it was not worth our time and viewing.

I remember events at the church being based on our Christian heritage along with our nation's heritages. It was a time of really being proud of who we were and who we are.

We were reminded that our country, the United States of America, was founded on the principles of religious freedoms.

No, I wouldn't want to go back to all the inconveniences of life then, but I wish that some of them still were a real part of our 4th of July celebrations today. We have made progress, but we have also forgotten the importance of remembering our heritage.

On the money we carry in our pockets are the words "IN GOD WE TRUST" Do we really?

Remember, and have a safe and family oriented holiday.

Pastor Don, Retired
Serendipity July 2012



A very wonderful and special country

What a country this is! To my way of thinking, there is nothing like it anywhere in the world. I have visited many beautiful lands, but upon returning to the United States, there is always the feeling that Almighty God carved out here a very wonderful and special country. ...

We need to recount the stories of the great souls America has produced and who produced America. We need to tell and retell these stories beginning with the Pilgrim Fathers. Bibles under their arms, setting forth in little ships across a stormy sea, driven not by the winds that raged the Atlantic and caught the sails of their little boats, but by the mighty conviction that as sons of God no one could make slaves of them. ...

Something within drove them across trackless wastes to an inhospitable shore, where unhampered by the tutocracy of men, they could worship God in all the dignity of free men.

We, too, need that spirit of freedom in our hearts. We need to recover the cleanness and manhood and power and might of the United States in our minds. We must reemphasize morality, decency and honesty. We need more of God and more of Jesus Christ. Deeply rooted in the American tradition are the sovereignty of God and the sacredness of human personality. Upon these two pillars rests American freedom.

—Dr. Norman Vincent Peale from his sermon "I Pledge Allegiance"

Fate of the revolutionaries

We call them heroes. The British called them traitors. Many of them turned out to be martyrs. Here is what happened to some of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence:

- Five were captured and tortured as traitors.
- Nine joined the revolutionary army, fought and died.
- Eight men had property looted by the British army or by vandals.
- One signer's home was taken over by a British general. The owner, Thomas Nelson Jr., asked General Washington to burn the home down. The general did.
- The home of Francis Lewis was destroyed and his wife put in jail. She died shortly thereafter.
- Three men had their fields and mills destroyed.

In one way or another, all of the men paid a dear price as a result of their rebellion. Still they were faithful to the pledge they made on July 4, 1776:

"We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

JULY CELEBRATIONS!

- 7/1 – *Duane and Deb Bollenbacher
7/2 – Valli Burris
7/3 – *Morris and Carol Groman
Kathleen Mikkelson
7/7 – Jason Kindle
7/8 – Ramona Hauenstein
7/16 – Mary Alice Dodge
7/18 – *Blaine and Sue Bauman
7/19 – Ann Nye
7/21 – Erma Augsburg
7/25 – Dorothy Balmer
*Randy and Becky Cox
7/27 – Tom Benroth
7/31 – Bob Everett
Shirley Rock



A driver's prayer

O Lord, into my hands you have entrusted an instrument of great power. Give me the grace to drive it with care for the lives that are my responsibility, and with thoughtfulness for all who share the roads. If I

am careless, make me watchful, if I am rushed, give me patience, and in all things give me self-control. Amen.



A note from Bob . . .

Dear Friends,

It is important for men to remember that as women grow older it becomes harder for them to maintain the same quality of housekeeping as they did when they were younger. When men notice this, they should try not to yell. Let me relate how I handle the situation. When I got laid off from my consulting job and took "early retirement" in January, it became necessary for Nancy to get a full-time job, both for extra income and for health insurance benefits that we need. She was a trained medical transcriptionist when we met twenty-eight years ago and was fortunate to land a job at a local transcription house.

It was shortly after she started working at this job that I noticed that she was beginning to show her age. I usually get home from fishing or hunting about the same time she gets home from work. Although she knows how hungry I am, she almost always says that she has to rest for half an hour or so before she starts supper. I try not to yell at her when this happens. Instead, I tell her to take her time. I understand that she is not as young as she used to be. I just tell her to wake me when she finally does get supper on the table.

She used to wash and dry the dishes as soon as we finished eating. It is now not unusual for them to sit on the table for several hours after supper. I do what I can by reminding her several times each evening that they aren't cleaning themselves. I know she appreciates this, as it does seem to help her get them done before she goes to bed.

Our washer and dryer are in the basement. When she was younger, Nancy used to be able to go up and down the stairs all day and not get tired. Now that she is older she seems to get tired so much more quickly. Sometimes she says she just can't make another trip down those steps. I don't make a big issue of this. As long as she finishes up the laundry the next evening I am willing to overlook it. Not only that, but unless I need something ironed to wear to Monday's lodge meeting or to Wednesday's or Saturday's poker club or to Tuesday's or Thursday's bowling or something like that, I will tell her to wait until the next evening to do the ironing.

This gives her a little more time to do some of those odds and ends things like shampooing the dog, vacuuming, or dusting. Also, if I have had a really good day fishing, this allows her to gut and scale the fish at a more leisurely pace.

Nancy is starting to complain a little occasionally. Not often, mind you, but just enough for me to notice. For example, she will say that it is difficult for her to find time to pay the monthly bills during her lunch hour. In spite of her complaining, I continue to offer encouragement. I tell her to stretch it out over two or even three days. That way she won't have to rush so much. I also remind her that missing lunch completely now and then wouldn't hurt her any, if you know what I mean.

When doing simple jobs she seems to think she needs more rest periods than she used to have to take. A couple of weeks ago she said she had to take a break when she was only half finished mowing the yard. I overlook comments like these because I realize it's just age talking. In fact, I try to not embarrass her when she needs these little extra rest breaks. I tell her to fix herself a nice, big, cold glass of freshly squeezed lemonade and just sit for a while. I tell her that as long as she is making one for herself, she may as well make one for me and take her break by the hammock so she can talk with me until I fall asleep.

(Continued on next page)

I could go on and on, but I think you know where I'm coming from. I know that I probably look like a saint in the way I support Nancy on a daily basis! I'm not saying that the ability to show this much consideration is easy. Many men will find it difficult. Some will find it impossible. No one knows better than I do how frustrating women can become as they get older. My purpose in writing this is simply to suggest that you make the effort. I realize that achieving the exemplary level of showing consideration I have attained is out of reach for the average man. However guys, even if you just yell at your wife a little less often because of this article, I will consider that writing it was worthwhile.

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*(As a matter of interest, Bob's funeral was on Saturday, June 15.  
Nancy was acquitted Monday, June 17.)*

## BEHIND THE DOOR

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was leaving the room after paying a visit and said, "Doctor, I'm afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side." Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You call yourself a Christian man, doc, and yet you don't know what's on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door, and on the other side of the door came a sound of scratching and whining. As he opened the door, his dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here and, when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. Now, I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know that my Master is there, and that is enough. When the door opens, I shall pass through with no fear, but with exceeding gladness.



## A NOTE FROM OUR FRIEND MORRIS

Thank you to the congregation of St. John's for voting to install air conditioning in the sanctuary!

For about 40 years, I have climbed the bell tower ladders, spring and fall, to open and close the covers atop the ladders, which I have to squeeze through. When a person reaches the top of the upper 18 foot ladder, it is necessary to hold onto the ladder with one hand and push up and slide over the 30-inch wooden cover with the other hand. Thankfully, I never fell. (Carol has not wanted me to climb the ladders for several years, but I have not listened).

The top cover needs to be opened in summer so the electric fan can exhaust the heat without blowing out the windows. The cover is needed above the top ladder in winter so that melted snow does not come down and stain the banners stored in the lower room of the belfry.

The sanctuary windows (and storm windows) also have been most difficult to open each Sunday during the summer. Even I cannot open three of the seven side windows. With my height, I can open four of the windows with some difficulty. Shorter people cannot get enough leverage to open and prop up the windows.

Thanks again . . .

## **DEVOTION OF THE MONTH**

(From the book The Way of Grace)

Read John 1:1-18. These opening verses are called the prologue to John's Gospel. In it, John shows us where Christ's own sacred journey began ("In the beginning . . .") and names a person (John the Baptist) who went before Jesus to prepare the way for him,

Prayerfully read John's prologue. Meditate on the mystery of who Jesus is, how his journey began, and why he came into the world.

Reread John 1:1-18. Take time to consider questions about the mystery of your own life and the beginning of your journey of faith. Who are you and how did your faith journey begin? What is the purpose of your life?

You may want to write a prologue about your own journey through life that opens with the words, "In the beginning . . ."

Offer thanks for who you are. Pray for grace to fulfill your life's purpose

## **Why? Why? Why?**

- . . . do we press hard open a remote control when we know the batteries are getting weak?
- . . . do banks charge a fee due to insufficient funds when they already know you're broke?
- . . . is it that when someone tells you that there are one billion stars in the universe, you believe them; but if they tell you there is wet paint, you have to touch it to check?
- . . . did Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?
- . . . did some cruel person put an "s" in the word "lisp?"
- . . . is it that no matter what color bubble bath you use, the bubbles are always white?
- . . . how did those dead bugs get into your light fixture?
- . . . in the winter do we try to keep the house as warm as it was in the summer when we complained about the heat?
- . . . is it that you never hear any father-in-law jokes?
- . . . is it that statistics on sanity say that one out of every four persons is suffering from some sort of mental illness. Think of your three best friends. If they're OK, then it's you!

**Give God what is right—  
not what is left!**



## PRAYER CONCERNS

- All those in the military
- Mary K. Chamberlain
- Cathy Cripe (undergoing kidney surgery on July 27)
- Maynard and Joyce Badertscher
- Mary Alice Dodge (recovering from knee surgery)
- Carolyn Gillam (soon to undergo thyroid surgery)
- Linda Benroth (recovering from breathing issues)
- All those traveling on vacation
- Robert McCluggage (soon to undergo heart surgery)
- Toby Powell (electrocuted)
- Others known and unknown to us that need God's healing in their lives

*Everyday God's presence  
is with you. God's  
thoughts of you are  
countless, and God's love  
for you is perfect.*



## Mucho Gracias



From Heidelberg University for a gift to the scholarship fund.

"I would like to thank everybody for your cards, prayers, and concerns when I had my recent surgery."  
Sincerely,  
Eileen Basinger

### Shut the door on yesterday . . .

I've shut the door on yesterday, its sorrows and mistakes; I've locked within its gloomy walls past failures and heartbreaks.

And now I throw the key away to seek another room, and furnish it with hope and smiles and every springtime bloom.

No thought shall enter this abode that has a hint of pain, and every malice and distrust shall never therein reign.

I've shut the door on yesterday and thrown the key away— tomorrow holds no doubt for me since I have found today.

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### Not much is going on!

- July 12 - Consistory
- July 15 - Begin decorating church for VBS after worship
- July 17 - Ladies' breakfast at Pastor Carol's home
- July 18 - Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
- July 19 - Community dinner at Sr. Center
- July 22-26 - VBS here at St. John's
- July 24 - Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)
- July 23 - Men meet at Arby's (8:30 a.m.)
- July 29 - Community worship service at Bluffton Presbyterian (9 a.m.)
- July 31 - Ladies meet at Arby's (9 a.m.)

### Coming soon—

- August 5 - Ice cream social (4 - 6 p.m.)
- August 19 - Church picnic at Buckeye Park

## PUNS OR PUNISHMENT?

NASA recently sent a number of Holsteins into orbit for experimental purposes. They called it the herd shot round the world.

Two boll weevils grew up in South Carolina. One took off to Hollywood and became a rich star. The other stayed in Carolina and never amounted to much and, naturally, he became known as the lesser of two weevils.

A 3-legged dog walks into an old west saloon, slides up to the bar and announces, "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw."

A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and met in the lobby where they were discussing their recent victories in chess tournaments. The hotel manager came out of the office after an hour and asked them to disperse. He couldn't stand chess nuts boasting in an open foyer.

A group of friars opened a florist shop to help with their belfry payments. Everyone liked to buy flowers from the Men of God, so their business flourished. A rival florist became upset that his business was suffering because people felt compelled to buy from the Friars. He asked the Friars to cut back hours or close down. The Friars refused. The florist went to them and begged some more but, again, they refused. The florist then hired Hugh McTaggart, the biggest, meanest thug in town to go to the Friars' shop, beat them up, destroy their flowers, and trash their shop. He told them if they didn't close down, he would be back. Well, totally terrified, the Friars closed up shop and hid in their rooms. This proved that Hugh, and only Hugh, can

prevent florist friars.

A woman had twin sons and put them up for adoption. One goes to an Egyptian family and is named "Ahmal." The other is sent to a Spanish family and is named "Juan." Years later, Juan sends his birth mother a picture of himself. On receiving the picture, she tells her husband she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. He replies, "They're twins for Pete's sake; if you've seen Juan, you've see Ahmal!"



## WHY DOES THE PASTOR WEAR A ROBE AND THAT LONG SCARF AROUND HER NECK?

The practice of a Protestant clergy person wearing a robe is more prevalent today than in former years. Robes signify humility in leading an orderly and dignified worship service. When they are used, it is thought that the attention of the worshipers is more easily focused on the religious message con-



veyed by the words spoken or sung, and the feelings which are associated with the public service of worshiped are naturally sustained by their use. The stole signifies the Church has approved ordination of the clergy person wearing it, and it also marks the sacredness of the sacraments. It gives visible evidence of

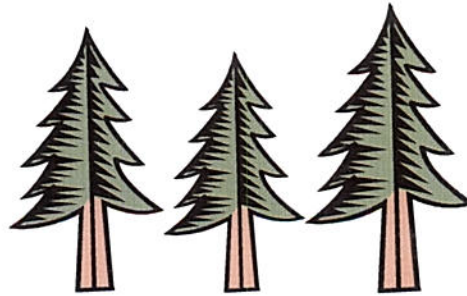
theological training and ordination, and symbolizes the yoke of obedience to the Master (Matthew 11:29-30).

## COMMUNITY WORSHIP SERVICE

It's time to again worship with all of our Bluffton friends and neighbors! The Bluffton Area Ministerial Association will sponsor this event to be held on Sunday, July 29, beginning at 9 a.m. The theme will be "For the Beauty of the Earth" and we will continue the VBS theme from the previous week.

This year, there will be only one offering taken, and that will be for the community food pantry. Please hold your individual offerings to St. John's until the following week.

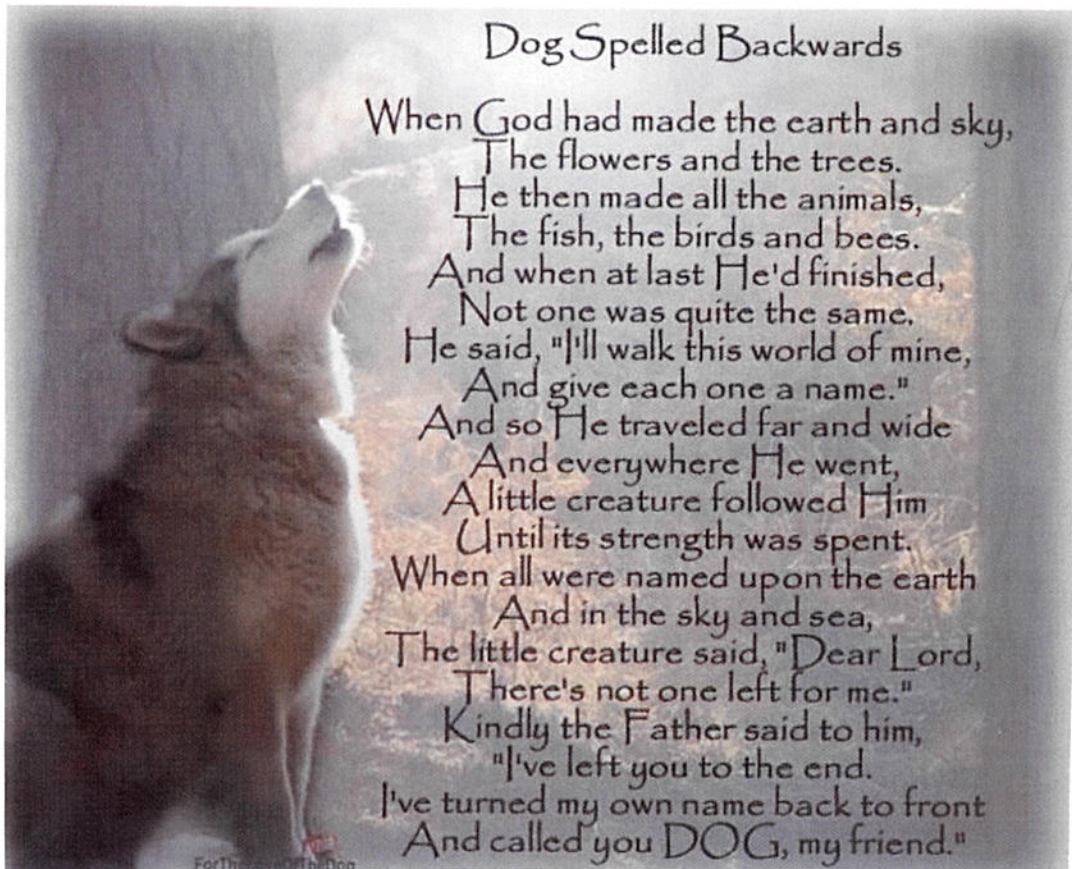
The usual snack of grapes and muffins will be offered, so bring some if you are able. All extra grapes and



muffins will be donated to Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. Also, be sure to bring your lawn chair.

We have never been rained out—but should it be raining, the service will be held in the middle school cafetorium.

Music, fellowship, worship, wonderful hymns as we raise our voices to God in singing praise to the God of Creation-- And God saw that it was good . . . it was very good.



He was just a little boy on a week's first day.  
 Wandering home from Bible school and dawdling  
 on the way.  
 He scuffed his shoes into the grass; he even found a  
 caterpillar.  
 He found a fluffy milkweed pod, and blew out all the  
 "filler."  
 A bird's nest in a tree overhead, so wisely placed up  
 so high,  
 Was just another wonder that caught his eager eye.  
 A neighbor watched his zigzag course, and hailed  
 him from the lawn;  
 Asked him where he'd been that day and what was  
 going on.  
 "I've been to Bible School," he said and turned a  
 piece of sod.  
 He picked up a wiggly worm replying, "I've learned a  
 lot about God."  
 "M'm, very fine way," the neighbor said, "for a boy to  
 spend his time.  
 "If you'll tell me where God is, I'll give you a brand  
 new dime."  
 Quick as a flash the answer came nor were his  
 accents faint.  
 "I'll give you a dollar, Mister, if you can tell me  
 where God ain't!"

*Life without God is like an unsharpened  
 pencil—it has no point!*



Thank you . . .

To the congregation of  
 St. John's –

Thank you for the  
 unconditional support  
 and love you have always  
 offered in my growth and  
 for the devotional  
Graduate book.

Wherever my life takes  
 me, your sanctuary will  
 always be my home.

Love, Taylor (Cox)

From the United Church  
 of Christ for our gift of  
 \$205 for blankets for  
 Wider Church Ministries.

### CARE CRITTERS

Sitting on the radiator in  
 the sanctuary, you will find  
 an assembly of "critters" that  
 are to be taken and given to  
 those persons who are ill,  
 grieving, a new neighbor, or  
 who just need a little "pick-  
 me-up." They are a good  
 way to show the love and  
 concern of the folks here at  
 St. John's as well as  
 introducing yourself to new  
 neighbors in a spirit of  
 caring. Please feel free to  
 take the critters and use  
 them as the Spirit moves  
 you.