

The Bethany Letter

SUNDAY ~ DECEMBER 19, 2010

VOLUME 2010

ISSUE NO. 42

The Rev. Stephen Gehlert, Senior Minister

The Rev. Mark Steiner, Visitation Minister

GOD GETS "PARTICULAR!"

Last Sunday we heard the familiar story of the angel Gabriel's visit to a young Jewish woman named Mary:

Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most high, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

This has been called the "scandal of particularity" – the decision by God to come into the world in a particular child, born of a particular woman, in a particular time and place. The "scandal" is that the God who created the universe and is great beyond our knowing, should choose to be so "limited" as to be present with us in a particular person, time, and place. Yet this is precisely the wondrous good news of Christmas. God chooses to come to us, to be born among us, in order to walk with us in Jesus Christ.

The whole story of the Old Testament shows us the nature of this God, who journeys with a difficult, stubborn people, setting them free from oppression, sustaining them in the wilderness, giving them a law to guide them, settling them in a new land, sharing in their lives, struggling with them through recurring bouts of disobedience and rebellion. Here too, we see a God who not only travels with God's people, but also never gives up on them.

And God is not content simply to travel with a small and stubborn band. God wants to embrace the whole world with love. God is intent not only on journeying with us, but literally entering into this creation. Christmas proclaims that God has done this through the birth of one small infant.

The incarnation proclaims that God not only enters into human flesh, but experiences the worst life has to offer. God knows first hand, the suffering of the refugee, the homeless one, and the victim of prejudice. God knows the impact of news of grave illness and death, the end of a marriage or termination of employment. Our God is one who walks with us in all of our struggles and grief.

Many of us face burdens and disappointments in life. May this Christmas be more than a brief escape from thinking about such things. May it be a time of renewed trust in the God who has come to us to share those burdens and disappointments. May it awaken in us a renewed gratitude that God has chosen to be "with us." May it empower us to live with the joy and hope of people who know that they are not alone.

This Jesus, this "God with us" asks us each day to walk with Him...whatever our circumstances. May we decide to accept the invitation and share with our divine companion all the sorrows and joys of our lives. May we also decide that we will embrace all of the disciples that come walking with Jesus.

With Advent Gratitude and Hope,

All are welcome to our Christmas Eve worship services!



Friday – December 24th, Christmas Eve

7:30 p.m. Family Worship Service and Children's Pageant ~

The Mystery of Simon Shepherd

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship Service

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



Family Sunday – December 26th

8:30 a.m. Family Worship Service / Christmas Carol Sing / Baptism

9:15 a.m. Church School for Adults, College Age and Children

10:30 a.m. Family Worship Service / Christmas Carol Sing

11:30 a.m. Coffee Hour

...but 87 times he said, "Follow Me!"

The work of the Holy Spirit within and among us has resulted in a very positive response to "Follow Me," our stewardship program for this year. As of December 15th we have received 168 estimate of giving cards totaling \$293,470. This is very hopeful sign for funding Bethany's ministry and mission in 2011. Of course, the final outcome depends on the response of every Bethany member. If you haven't returned an estimate of giving card, please prayerfully consider your reasons for gratitude and how you are being called to "follow Jesus" in your financial support for his work here at Bethany. If you have made your estimate, we thank you, and ask for your prayers for the continued guidance of God's Spirit in all of our hearts in this process.



Consistory Members Elected

Following the 10:30 worship on December 5th a congregational meeting took place and a slate of nominees, recommended by Spiritual Council and approved by Consistory for terms beginning in 2011, was shared with the congregation for their approval. The congregation cast a unanimous ballot for the following:

Elders: Pat Cochran, Bill Leas
Deacons: John Dix, Sue Gaskill,
Lenore Luginbill, Bob Pletzer

Bethany Offering Envelopes

Your boxed envelopes are available for pick-up. Help defray the cost of mailing your box, or perhaps that of a neighbor or friend, and pick up envelopes located in the hallway outside of the Social Hall. Money saved on postage is another step toward good stewardship of our funds. Thank you.

Christmas Greetings



From the Staff of Bethany!

We who work on your behalf at Bethany want to express our gratitude for the blessing of serving with you in the ministry of our church. We are grateful for the care and support you offer one another and us and the many ways you give time and energy to the ministry we share. May God bless all of you with love, joy, and peace this Christmas!

With Grateful Hearts, Bart Clemente, Carol Clemente, Steve Gehlert, Sue Jensen, Barb McCrady, Beth McDevitt, Sue Parker, Carolyn Shroyer, and Carol Wood.

Confirmation – the coming weeks

December 18,	10:00 am	Help with Bethany Kitchen
December 24,	7:30 pm	Lead Christmas Eve Liturgy
January 2,	11:30 am	Class with Pastor Steve
January 9,	11:30 am	Mentor Meal & Discussion



Youth Fellowship – what's ahead

December 19, 6:30 pm Ice Skating/Christmas Party



Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 19th No rehearsal

Thursday, December 23rd FINAL DRESS RHRSL.
in Sanctuary (snack/lunch) 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24TH Pageant people meet at
6:00 p.m. in sanctuary - Service @ 7:30 p.m.

Welcoming Our Young People Home!

On November 28th a number of Bethany's college-age young adults gathered during the Sunday school hour for their own class. They enjoyed their time together and will gather again over the Christmas - New Year holiday. *They'd like to welcome more Bethany friends to join them.* Here's the basic information:

Dates: **December 19 & 26, January 2 & 9?**

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Pastor Mark's office (in the office hallway)

Food: Yes! Breakfast items will be provided!

Questions: Keith McDevitt at 330-388-0920 or

keithmm@bgsu.edu.

P.S. If you'd like to help us provide a breakfast treat for these returning young people, contact Pastor Steve: 330-923-5277 or pastor@bethany.ald.net.



You can change a life!

The need is constant. The gratification is instant!

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Sheraton Suites Akron/Cuyahoga Falls Blood Drive
1989 Front Cuyahoga Falls

Thursday, **December 23rd** 7 AM to 7PM

Appointments are strongly encouraged for this blood drive. Redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-GIVE LIFE to schedule yours today!

INFO RMATION TO KEEP YOU UP-TO-DATE

☞ The church office will close at 12:00 PM Friday, **December 24th**.

☞ Year-end Contributions ... must be postmarked by **December 31st** to be included on your 2010 statement.

☞ The church office will be **CLOSED** **December 27th, 28th**, and again on **January 3, 2011**.

☞ *The Bethany Letter* will NOT BE MAILED the next two weeks. It will continue on a weekly basis beginning **January 9, 2011**.

Mark your Calendar!



Bethany Night at Donato's

Wednesday ~ December 29th
5:00 to 8:00 p.m.



Get your blood pressure checked here!

The first Sunday of each month, Bethany's volunteer nurses, Linda Goodwin and Holly Keenan, offer blood pressure tests during social hour. If you are interested in having your BP checked look for them **January 2, 2011**.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE

IN THE CHURCH OFFICE BY

→ **JANUARY 9, 2011.**

**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE,
GET THEM IN ON TIME. Thanks!**

Recycling Bonus Week!

January 10-14, 2011



**River Valley Paper Company
will add an additional \$15 per
ton to our regular pickup during the
above week.**

**Wednesday Morning Bible Study
Resumes January 12, 2011 9:00 am**

Acme Receipts!

A Chance to Help YF!

Over the years Bethany members have provided important support for our Youth Ministry by collecting Acme Receipts. You can help us again this year! Please save and turn in receipts **dated September 25th – February 19th**. Collection boxes are at all the entrances. The YF is grateful for your support!

New Orleans Mission Trip

The date is **February 25th-March 6, 2011**. Many have expressed interest and now it is time to commit. Mark your calendar and contact Brad Bebout to secure your spot.



A Mission Moment

A service that was started some 10 years ago is being revitalized at Bethany. Ed Frederick has offered to coordinate the effort known as “We Can Do It” - where small jobs around the home can be undertaken for members of the Bethany family. The emphasis here is on “small,” which could include such jobs as replacing a switch, fixing a handrail, or nailing down some loose boards on a porch step or porch itself. If you have questions about the size of the job or the need for help, call Ed Frederick at 330/342-4167.

GIFTS OF THE HEART



The Mission Committee selected twelve of the mission projects Bethany supports. You can use this list to give a gift in someone’s name or as a special Christmas donation you would like to make. You may want to write a card and tell the person this gift was given by you in their name. Return your list and check at the Mission table in the Social Hall, the offering plate or the church office.

Needed: Used Refrigerator(s)

The refrigerator in the Lounge kitchen has stopped working. It’s very handy to have one there for events in the lounge. If you have a small (no more than 30 inches wide) refrigerator that you’d be willing to donate, it would be much appreciated. Also, the refrigerator in the rental house is on its last legs. If you have one you’d be willing to donate (larger is OK) that would also be a great help! Just e-mail cwood@bethany.ald.net or call 330-923-5277.



Another Need: Bethany’s organist, Sue Parker, is in need of a freestanding gas stove.

Change of Address:

Steve and Megan Ferda (Nick, Ben & Josh)
4504 Plumwood Ct
Stow, Ohio 44224

Please remember in your prayers...



- † David Dietz, Akron City Hospital
- † Karen Butler, Traditions

† “Special prayers” to Bethany members who are unable to worship with us Sunday mornings. Please keep them in your prayers and keep in touch with a call or a card.

Thank you

Dear Bethany Family,

Thank you so much for the visits by Pastor Steve and Rev. Mark Steiner, the many phone calls, cards, food, prayers and altar flowers. It is nice to be a part of such a great church family. *God bless all of you, Jan Edwards*

Thanks to everyone who recycled packing material this year! Merry Christmas! Love,
Deb and Adam Ocepek

**Calendar for additions to ~ or ~ changes to the
2010 monthly calendar mailed to you.
December 20th to January 2nd**

- 12/20 7:15p Scout Overnight (Gym, Lounge)
 12/21 9:00a Staff Meeting
 NO Newsletter until 1/9/11
 12/22 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 7:00p Committee Night (if you are meeting)
 12/23 9:00a **PAGEANT DRESS REHEARSAL -12:30p**
 (snack/lunch)
 7:15p Chancel Choir Practice

- 12/24 Christmas Eve** ←
 6:00p Pageant people arrive
 7:30p **Christmas Eve Service,
 Children's Christmas Pageant**
 11:00p **Candlelight Service**

12/25 Merry Christmas

Family Sunday-December 26, 2010

- † **Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.**
 † **Children remain in worship**

- 8:30a Worship, Christmas Carol Sing / Baptism
 9:15a Church School for All Ages
 10:30a Worship/ Christmas Carol Sing
 11:30a Coffee Hour

- 12/27 Office Closed
 12/28 Office Closed
 12/29 5:00p **Bethany Night at Donato's -8:00p**
 12/30
 12/31

Happy New Year!

01/01/11

Sunday ~ January 2, 2011

- † **Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.**
 † **Epiphany Sunday**
 8:30a Worship (Communion)
 9:15a Church School for All Ages
 10:30a Worship/ Children's S.S./ Communion
 11:30a Coffee Hour
 11:30a Bethany Nurse BP check
 11:30a Confirmand Meal/Class

- 01/03 Office Closed**
 01/04 10:00a Newsletter Deadline
 7:30p Kerygma
 01/05 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 7:30p Spiritual Council
 01/06 7:30p Chancel Choir Practice
01/09 ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE TODAY

Names of **Sunday Volunteers** are published **AHEAD OF THE SCHEDULED** Sunday as a kindly *reminder* and early *thank you!*



Volunteers for Christmas Eve, December 24th

- 7:30p Ushers: T. Hermann, M. Jensen, L. Short, J. Smith,
 A. McVan, B. Pletzer
 11:00p Ushers: C. Hofmann, F. Read, M. Spring,
 J. Seymour, N. Buck, H. Koudela

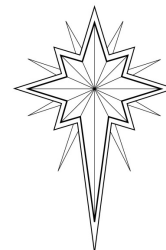
Volunteers for December 26th

- Greeters: R.&C. Pletzer / S.&M. Ferda
 Special Music: Bell Choir / Children's Choirs
 Nursery: B. Lees, A. Thompson, J. Smith, K. Dugan,
 D. Shroyer
 Ushers: R.&S. Holle, H. Walker, S. Truby, S. Ward,
 K. Fratz, J. Nielson, A. McVan
 Van Driver: S. Gaskill
 Visitor Outlook: N. Zeller



Volunteers for January 2nd

- Greeters:
 Lay Reader: J. Seymour
 Special Music: Story & Song / Chancel Choir
 Nursery: S. Ward, K. Keenan, N. Zeller, J. Dugan,
 A. Zeller
 Ushers: L. Luginbill, B. Charton, J. Grazulis, J. Seymour,
 A. McVan, K. Fratz, B. Pletzer, C. McGraw,
 N. Buck, H. Koudela, H. Bowman, M. Jensen
 Van Driver: B. Read
 Visitor Outlook: H. Bedillion



**Christmas 2010 Gifts from the Heart Shopping List
Bethany United Church of Christ Mission Committee**

Gifts from the Heart is an opportunity to give a gift, in honor of a friend or relative, to a variety of local and international self-help projects. Use the list below to select your gifts.

AMOUNT

BACK BAY MISSION: This UCC mission to the community, located in Biloxi, MS, suffered severe damage from Hurricane Katrina. Your gift will help with the rebuilding and repairs. \$20 / \$25 /30 for reconstruction of facilities.

BETHANY KITCHEN: A free meal is provided in the Bethany Social Hall for those in need of nourishment and social interaction the third Saturday of each month. \$10 / \$15 / \$20 will help purchase food.

CHAPEL HILL HOMES: This United Church Homes retirement community in Canal Fulton helps add life to years for its senior residents. \$10 / \$15 / \$20 for the Life Enrichment Fund.

ESPERANZA: For the past several years, members of Bethany have traveled to Tijuana, Mexico to assist local residents with the building of homes. Your gift will help with the expenses of this trip and the costs of building materials.
\$10 / \$20 / \$30 will assist with expenses.

FAITH IN ACTION: To help our neighbors maintain their independence through trained volunteers from the Interfaith community with the support of service organizations. \$10 /\$20 /\$30 helps to fund this vital ministry.

GOOD NEIGHBORS: This ecumenical outreach program provides food, clothing and utility assistance to those in need in our community. Bethany helps with donations of gently used clothing, food and volunteer help.
\$10 / \$20 / \$25 helps provide fresh food vouchers and utility assistance.

HAZLE SCHOLARSHIP FUND: A fund was established to benefit graduating high school seniors. \$10/ \$20 /\$25 provides funding to help our youth.

FAMILY PROMISE/IHN: Bethany provides leadership and serves as a host congregation for this ecumenical program, which provides housing, and support for families. \$10 /\$20 /\$30 helps to fund this vital ministry.

PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND: Provides funds that Pastor Steve may use to provide emergency assistance to those in need, both within the congregation and in the community. \$10/\$20/\$25 provides gasoline or food vouchers

SOUTH STREET MINISTRIES: This inner-city ministry reaches out to the children in the Summit Lake neighborhood with tutoring and mentoring programs. \$10/ \$20 / \$25 provides funding for this ministry

UCC CAMPS: Templed Hills and Pilgrim Hills Camps provide camping and retreat facilities for children, youth and adults. Your gift helps with camp programs and upkeep. \$10 /\$20 /\$30 helps to fund this mission.

WILLIARD UCC FOOD PANTRY: This church is located in downtown Akron and provides important outreach in the community, including assistance through a food pantry. \$10 / \$15 / \$20 will help fund this program

OTHER: Indicate here what mission you would like to make a donation to.

YOUR NAME: _____

GRAND TOTAL: _____

Please make your check payable to Bethany United Church of Christ (all gifts may be included on one check). All gifts on this list are tax deductible as charitable contributions and will appear on your statement. Please return your list and check/cash at the Mission table in the Social Hall, the offering plate or the church office. Thanks for your support of our Bethany missions.