

Advent: What's Already There for Us!

Last Sunday began the season of Advent. While the basic Advent theme of preparation for the coming of Christ is challenging enough for us, the apocalyptic language of the scriptures for the first Sunday can be downright confusing. In light of that sense of challenge and confusion, I found a story and reflection by Pastor Tom Long to be very insightful and helpful. I hope you will, too.

Sam, a minister friend of mine at a downtown church, planned one evening to go out to eat with his wife to celebrate their anniversary. His wife met him at the church, and the two of them headed out to the parking lot to take the car to the restaurant.

But when they got outside they encountered a crisis. An elderly woman, a desperate look on her face, was kneeling on the sidewalk beside a man, her husband as it turns out, who was lying on his back in pain clutching his chest. My friend's wife ran quickly back into the church to call an ambulance, and my friend leaned over to comfort the man. "We've called for some help and they will be here soon . . .," he began, but the man interrupted him.

"Charlie, forgive me," the man said.

"I'm not Charlie," my friend said. "My name is Sam." What Sam did not know until later is that Charlie was the man's son, and years before the man had, in a rage over something, disowned Charlie, and the two had not spoken in years.

The man looked up at Sam and reached out and touched his hand. "Charlie, please, forgive me!"

"Just relax," Sam said. "Somebody will be here soon to get you to the hospital."

But the man suddenly clutched in terrible pain, and it was now clear that he would not make it to the hospital. With his last gasping energy he pulled on Sam's arm and begged, "Charlie, please, forgive me."

Sam followed his faithful instinct, reached out and put his hand on the man's forehead as a blessing and said, "I do forgive you. I do forgive you." Those were the last words the man ever heard in this life.

Later, when he learned what the circumstances were, Sam wondered if he had done the right thing. "I am not his son. The relationship was still broken. What right did I have to grant forgiveness," Sam wondered.

Then it came to him that his whole ministry was about this, that the whole Christian faith is about this.

We have been given in Christ a restoration and a reconciliation that is already true, already whole, and we are beckoned from God's fullness to live into God's future and toward what has already been given as a gift.

May God help us live into the restored and reconciled future that is already there, waiting for us. May God help us receive the gift which Advent promises.

With Advent Hope,

Steve



Bethany's Advent - Christmas Season 2011



Advent is a very special season of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Jesus Christ. This season is to remember the birth of Jesus as well as to anticipate his second coming. We offer several special opportunities in the coming weeks to prepare for Christ's coming and celebrate his birth. Please join us!

Sunday – December 4th – *Second Sunday of Advent*

- 8:30 a.m. Communion Worship Service
- 9:15 a.m. Church School for Children and Adults
- 10:30 a.m. Worship Service / Children's Sunday School / Congregational Meeting
- 4:30 p.m. Summit Bell Concert w/ Bethany Bell Choir

Sunday – December 11th - *Third Sunday of Advent*

- 8:30 a.m. Healing & Reconciliation Worship Service / 7th Day
- 9:15 a.m. Church School for Children and Adults
- 10:30 a.m. Worship Service, Chancel Choir, Bell Choir

Saturday – December 17 Sunday – *Bethany Kitchen Christmas Meal*

- 11:30 a.m. Guests from the community will be served a special dinner (to 1:00)

December 18th ~ *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

- 8:30 a.m. Fellowship Worship Service
- 9:15 a.m. Church School for Children and Adults
- 10:30 a.m. Worship Service / Chancel Choir Cantata ~ *Winter's Grace*
- 5:30 p.m. The annual **ALL church "Christmas Caroling"** night!
All are invited to join us for a fun evening of caroling, fellowship & cookies!



Saturday - December 24th, Christmas Eve

- 7:30 p.m. Bethany Family Worship Service & Children's Pageant ~ *Miracle at Midnight*
- 11:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship Service

Merry Christmas!

Sunday – December 25th, Christmas Day

- 10:30 a.m. Bethany Family Worship Service / Christmas Carol Sing
- 6:00 p.m. We begin a week of hosting guests from the Family Promise network



“For the Joy!”

On Dedication Sunday we got off to a wonderful start with our stewardship program for 2012. We focused on the joy we find in giving our time, talent and treasure “for the joy” of our God. We’re encouraged by the response today; we have received 149 Estimates of Giving, totaling \$284,402. Of course, the final outcome depends on those who’ve not yet made an Estimate of Giving. If you haven’t you can do it at any time. If you can’t find the card that was mailed to you, they are available in the pews, or call the church office at 330-923-5277. We hope everyone will keep the continued response in their prayers.

Youth



12/04	4:30p	Summit Bell Concert/Advent Talk
12/11	6:30p	Ice Skating
12/18	5:30p	Christmas Caroling
12/29	5:00p	Family Promise Meal

2011

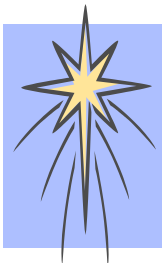


2012

12/04	11:30a	Class and Meal
12/17	10:00a	Bethany Kitchen (help)
12/18	11:30a	Mentor Meal and Talk

Sunday ~ December 4th
4:30 pm / Social Hall

SUMMIT BELLS, a bronze level handbell choir, will perform a Christmas Concert in our social hall at 4:30 p.m. Bethany’s Memory Bell Choir will join them for one piece; they are hosting the event with a reception following.



Miracle at Midnight
Rehearsal-Saturday, December 10th
9:00-11:30 am
Sanctuary – Snack provided

Help Good Neighbors...

December 11	Box of Cereal
December 18	Noodles or Pasta
December 25	Jar of Jelly



Happy Birthday to...

Glenn Leiter

December 15th

201 Holl Road, NE #308, N. Canton 44720



Cantata: A musical composition, often using a sacred text comprising recitatives, arias, and choruses.

The Bethany Chancel Choir is having their Christmas Cantata on Sunday, December 18th during the 10:30 a.m. worship service. We hope that everyone will attend the service to hear our beautiful Cantata, “Winter’s Grace.”

COME ONE



COME ALL!!!!

To the “All Church Caroling Party” on Sunday, December 18th. Meet at the Church at 5:30 PM. After caroling to Bethany’s shut-ins the Choir welcomes everyone back to the church for cookies and hot chocolate.



Host Week

Our next Family Promise/IHN Host week is **December 25 – January 1** Please consider volunteering to help this week and contact one of our team leaders: Carol Clemente – meal preparation, Carolyn B. Hofmann – overnight and Frank Read – van drivers. Thanks to our many volunteers who help make this week possible.



Christmas Poinsettias



Please help celebrate the Christmas season with a beautiful poinsettia for the altar. The cost is \$12.00 for each plant. The deadline for ordering is **Sunday, December 18th**. The poinsettias will be on the altar December 18, 24, and 25. The Ministry Committee will deliver the plants to those on our *Remembrance List* December 26th. The poinsettias can only be delivered to those on the list. Thank you for your help.

I would like to DONATE _____ plant(s) for the sanctuary @ \$12.00 each.

Total \$ _____ Check enclosed

In Memory/Honor of



Esperanza

Mark your Calendario!

The **Esperanza Mission Trip for 2012** has been scheduled. We will be going **February 18th thru February 25th** to help build simple casas in the Tijuana area. There is something for everyone to participate in. Any questions please call Mr. Bill Leas at 330-673-3389. He has the answers!

Bethany Kitchen



We had a really special Thanksgiving Day! Bethany Kitchen is so grateful to have a congregation who supports our mission project. The donation of turkeys and funds made our Thanksgiving dinner one of the best in town. A special thanks to all the volunteers who spent many hours preparing the dinner and serving the meal. Our guests were overwhelmed with the smiling faces and pleasant atmosphere provided by the volunteers. Many thanks!!



The church office will be **CLOSED**
December 26th, 27th
and again on
January 2, 2012

A church newsletter will **NOT** be published on Sunday, January 1, 2012. TBL will continue on a weekly basis with the January 8th issue (deadline 10:00 a.m. Tuesdays). *Please plan accordingly.*

Year-end Contributions ...

... must be postmarked by **December 31st** to be included in your 2011 contributions.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE
IN THE CHURCH OFFICE BY
JANUARY 15th ~ 2012
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, GET THEM IN
ON TIME. Thanks!



The Bethany Bunch

(Children's Sunday School)

We are busy and having fun as we move into the holiday season with our 1st through 4th grade classes. The older children are continuing to learn their Bibles with Harry Cool. Kathy Keenan is finding fun crafts to do and all of the kids are working hard preparing for our Christmas Eve pageant, which we are sure will be the entertaining production we have all come to expect.



gift cards

Bethany now offers the opportunity to order and purchase gift cards for a huge variety of businesses as a fundraiser for Bethany. We hope that every month we'll have more and more people participating in this easy way to support our church. We invite you to take a look at the gift card order form on the table in the social hall. You can place an order with a check and your cards will be here for you the following Sunday. Try it; you'll like it!

Please remember in your prayers...

- † Ron Shultz, Akron General
- † Ken Cleary, Akron City
- † Sally Mellott, Home
- † Ted Housley, Traditions
- † Barbara Sunyecz, Select Specialty Hospital



† ***In Sympathy...***

We extend our Christian sympathy and our prayers to the family of Bethany member, Olive Devine who passed away November 15th.

We extend our Christian sympathy and our prayers to the family of Bethany member Donald Haflinger who passed away November 18th.



Annual Meeting Thanks

Family Promise/IHN held their annual meeting at Bethany this week with a crowd of 80 in attendance. Pastor Steve opened the event with a prayer and Kathy Keenan and her crew provided a delicious meal that everyone enjoyed. Thanks to the members who made this event possible: Harry Cool, Karen Fratz, Sue & George Jensen, Susan & John Mancinelli. Martha Peyak, Zach Read, and Becky Wachovec. Special thanks to Kathy Keenan for taking on this project and for all her planning and preparation to make it a special evening. Thanks to Pat McDevitt for his continued support of this mission by serving on the Board of Family Promise as the Treasurer.

Pamela Betty, the Executive Director of Family Promise/IHN, reported the 2011 stats:

- 3,497 nights of shelter, 10,491 meals and over 7,000 snacks
- 29 families including 67 children – 2011 total – 109 people
- This is a 77 percent increase in service over 2010
- 2011 average length of stay – 34 nights
- 92 percent success rate including 24 families exiting into secured housing.
- 83 percent have participated in the Going Home/Staying Home program, returning for additional services at least one time post emergency shelter stay.
- 192 families served since we opened 7 years ago including 724 people. Of this total, 413 were children.
- 11,232 volunteer hours since January 1, 2011

What Do Stephen Ministers Do?

Ever Thought about Becoming a Stephen Minister? Bethany will be training a class of Stephen Ministers after the first of the year. Stephen Ministers work alongside our pastors to care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support to people who are going through a difficult time, such as divorce, grief, hospitalization, unemployment, terminal illness, relocation, chronic illness, or loneliness. If you have gifts for caring, encouragement and listening, please begin to prayerfully consider whether you might want to be part of this exciting ministry. If you think you might be interested, talk with one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: Tammy Jensen.

Thanks for the Gift

A Beautiful Church for Advent & Christmas!

The church has been decorated for the Advent -Christmas season. The results – Sanctuary, Social Hall, Exterior – are absolutely stunning. Thanks to Martha Peyak and her crew for giving their time and talent in this busy time of year to do an important job for all of us. Our worship and fellowship times will be blessed by what you have done and we are all very grateful.



Advent Celebration: Thanks!

Thanks to the Christian Education Committee for helping begin a new church year by hosting a delightful celebration for the first Sunday of Advent. We appreciated the “take home” materials about the meaning of Advent and the tradition of the Advent wreath. It was also great for those who enjoy crafts to have a chance to make a manger. Thanks, too, for preparing a tasty lunch for everyone. It was great to share all this together on this special Sunday and so we say, THANK YOU!

Bake Sale Thanks

A big thank you to all who bought the delicious baked goods at the Chancel Choir bake sale. After the choir’s tithes, we made over \$550 for the music ministry of our church. We truly appreciate your support. Chancel Choir

Bethany Friends,

Thank you for all your many kindnesses during my surgery. I appreciate all your thoughts, prayers and well wishes. Special thank you to Pastor Steve for his visits and care and to Carolyn Hofmann for bringing me the altar flowers.

See you soon, Gail Cool

A great big “thank you” to all who gave up their time and energy to rake the leaves from my lawn to the street on a cold, nasty day. Your kindness meant so much to me. I wish I could have provided hot chocolate but I didn’t know you were coming. God Bless you all. *My sincere appreciation, Joan Porter*

**Calendar - additions to ~ or ~ changes to the
2011 monthly calendar mailed to you.**

(as of 12/01) **December 5th to December 18th**

- 12/05 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 12/06 9:00a Staff Meeting
 10:00a Newsletter Deadline
 7:30p Kerygma
 12/07 9:00a Bible Study (CE)
 12/08 7:15p Chancel Choir Practice
 12/09 Choir Christmas Party
 12/10 9:00a Pageant Rhysl. (Sanc.)/ snack provided 11:30a
 8:00a (SH) Rsrvd. All day

Sunday ~ December 11, 2011

- † Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.
 † Third Sunday of Advent

- 8:30a Worship**
 9:15a Church School for All
10:30a Worship/ Children's Sunday School
 11:30a Social Hour Host: 5th & 6th Grade Class
 2:00p (SH) Rsrvd. 5:30p
 6:30p YF – ice skating

- 12/12 9:30a Prayer Shawl Ministry
 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 12/13 9:00a Staff Meeting
 10:00a Newsletter Deadline
 7:15p Finance Committee Meeting
 12/14 9:00a Bible Study (CE)
 7:30p Consistory
 12/15 7:15p Chancel Choir Practice
 12/16
 12/17 9:00a Pageant Dress Rhysl. (Sanc.) 12:30p
 Snack/lunch
 10:00a Confirmands help at Kitchen
 11:30a Bethany Kitchen
 1:00p Chancel Choir Practice (Sanc.)

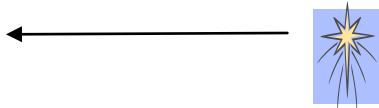
Sunday ~ December 18, 2011

- † Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.
 † Fourth Sunday of Advent

- 8:30a Worship**
 9:15a Church School for Children and Adults
10:30a Worship/ Children's Sunday School/ Cantata
 11:30a Social Hour Host: Property Committee
 11:30a Confirmands, Mentors - Meal/Meeting
 5:30p All Church Christmas Caroling 🎵

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

If you are unable to volunteer the day you are scheduled please remember to... **... and then**
...Find someone to take your place
...Call the church office so we may make the necessary changes on our schedules



Volunteers for December 11th

- Advent Candle Lighters: 8:30 P.& J. Dukarich
 10:30 M.&K. Fenn
 Greeters: M.&T. Jensen / Karen Fratz
 Lay Reader: Kim Fratz
 Nursery: J. Salsbury, A. Thompson, H. Bedillion,
 J. Tasker, J. McClellan
 Special Music: / Chancel Choir, Bell Choir
 Ushers: J.&S. Mancinelli, H. Walker, S. Truby, S. Ward,
 N. Buck, M. Jensen, J. Sammons
 Van Driver: B. Read

December Display Cases...

- Case A-1 Christmas Programs
 Case A-2 Ministry



Altar Flowers given in November by...

- 11/06 Ernie Albert & Cheryl Philips** in memory of Marie Albert and family
11/13 Carolyn B. Hofmann in memory of parents, Helen and Gus Hofmann and in memory of nephew, Todd Hofmann
11/20 Sharon Ward in memory of parents;
Marcia Spring in honor of Donna Bidwell's birthday.

Volunteers for December 18th

- Advent Candle Lighters: 8:30 / 10:30 L.&J. Rorrer
 Greeters: B.&L. Read / J. Charton
 Lay Reader: J. Edwards
 Nursery: L. Weiss, S. Ward, S. Keenan, B. Read, J. Bebout
 Special Music: 7thDay / Cantata
 Ushers: R.&S. Holle, B. Charton, M. Seguin, M. Seymour,
 K. Fratz, M. Spring, J. Bebout,
 Van Driver: F. Read

Bethany's Missions for Christmas 2011

How YOU can support our Missions

THE GIVING TREE – December 4 is the last week to select gift tags from the tree.

This benefits sixteen families at H.M. Life Opportunities and the families of Family Promise/IHN. The tree is decorated with gift tags at the coffee table in the Social Hall and the gifts are due back to Bethany by December 11.

Family Promise/IHN is an emergency shelter for homeless families and HM Life Opportunities provides transitional housing to families up to two years. Several of our Family Promise guests have gone to live at HM Life.

The Giving Tree contains gift tags for certificates to area businesses for our Family Promise/IHN families when they move into their new homes. It also has tags for requested gift items from members of sixteen families from HM Life that we have committed to support for the holidays.

If you would like to provide for one of the gifts requested but don't want to do the shopping, the Mission Committee will shop for you. Look for members of the Mission Committee at the coffee table in the Social Hall on Sunday, December 4.

How the Giving Tree Works:

- † Take a tag from the Giving Tree in the social hall.
- † Record your name and number of the tag on the list provided.
- † Buy the item on the tag. If it is for a gift certificate to Marc's or Acme, get whatever amount that works for your budget. We are encouraging members to buy the gift certificates through our program here at Bethany.
- † Bring the gift back to the social hall **unwrapped** by December 11.

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. Please return your list and check at the Mission table in the Social Hall, the offering plate or the church office by December 31.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

We are collecting nonperishable food items for Good Neighbors for Christmas. Items can be placed in the back of the sanctuary or in the social hall on the table marked for Good Neighbors. Good Neighbors is not accepting clothing donations at the time.

Christmas 2011 ~ 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.

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: Temple 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:

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____

Envelope # _____ Check Amount: \$ _____

Office use: PD/ DEPOSIT _____