

# The Bethany Letter

SUNDAY ~ JANUARY 9, 2011

VOLUME 2011

ISSUE NO. 1

The Rev. Stephen Gehlert, Senior Minister

The Rev. Mark Steiner, Visitation Minister

---

## *The Word Made Flesh: Love and Truth*

The way our services fall during Christmastide and Epiphany this year, there wasn't a sermon on the opening words from the Gospel of John: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." So I'd like to share a few thoughts about them in this article.

John's message is that the Word of God, what God wants to say to us, what God wants us to know, what God wants us to be, took on human flesh and lived among us.

The Word that became flesh brings a message of Love. That message says that we are all precious and beloved by God. It says that nothing we have done or can do can end that love. It offers forgiveness and reconciliation to all who turn from wrong to receive it.

The Love which is offered to us by the Word made flesh, Jesus the Christ, is unconditional, but that doesn't mean it comes easy. To those who receive it, it also brings responsibility, responsibility to share it. Because it is a message of love for all people, by implication we cannot truly receive it, if we think it is only for ourselves, or those like us. We, like God, must be willing to share that love with those who are difficult for us, simply because they've lived in opposition to us, or because they've hurt or wronged us in some way. If we truly want to receive what God seeks to give us in Christ at Christmas we have to want to receive this calling and the strength to live it as a gift, and want to put it to use.

The Word that became flesh also brings a message of Truth. The message, which is shared not only in Jesus' words but also in his life, says what is real and what gives life and what is false and brings death. It says that we can have true life, now and for eternity. It also says that true life is very different from what most of the world expects. It says that it's not about lifting ourselves up or getting ahead. In fact, it says it's just the opposite; it's about humbling ourselves, dying to ourselves, so that we can live for God and others.

John's Gospel describes the Truth which is offered to us by the Word made flesh, as a light that is the light of all people, a light that shines in the darkness that the darkness cannot overcome. Those upon whom this light shines always find that it illuminates things that they'd rather keep hidden, in the dark. That means it forces us to make a choice. We can follow the natural impulse to want to deny it, to want to hide it, and try to stay "in the dark," so we don't have to face more unpleasantness about ourselves. Or, we can acknowledge the darkness in us that we wish we could have kept hidden, turn from it, receive forgiveness, and seek to live a new way. But we have to decide. We can't do both.

What God speaks to us in Jesus, the child of Bethlehem, the Word made flesh, is Love and Truth. Love and Truth are beautiful words. They are beautiful but not easy words. Both hold the promise of our becoming more of what God created us to be and what Jesus fully was – the Image of God. But in order for that promise to be fulfilled much of what is false and deadly in our lives must be revealed, acknowledged, owned, and renounced. The good news of Christmas is that the Word has come among us to show us who we are as God's children and to tell us what to do to fulfill that identity. What good news it is that God cares enough to do this! What good news it is that we can truly change and become more like what we see in Jesus.

May God help us to receive that good gift!

*With hope that God's Word of Truth and Love may be spoken in all we do in this New Year,*

† *The rosebuds on the altar Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, were in honor of the baptisms of Julia Eve Urasek and Tyler Daniel Urasek. Julia and Tyler are the children of Timothy and Tamara Urasek and the grandchildren of Brad and Suzanne Roach.*



† *The rosebud on the altar Sunday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, was in honor of the baptism of Devin Michael Pietrowski. Devin is the son of Sean T. And Kara E. Pietrowski*

## Building Use Policy Changes - 2011

Beginning this New Year, the Church office and Consistory have taken a look at our building use policies and have made a few revisions.

1. To help with building expenses (utilities) we are instituting a fee of \$50 for members to secure the use of the Social Hall for a social event or other use. A building use checklist is to be completed and turned in to the office. If the custodians find that everything is in order, the renting party may receive \$25 of their fee returned to them.
2. Building Use Request forms have been simplified.
3. To help with questions about the use of the social hall and/or kitchen space, we have put together a notebook with information that we hope will be helpful. This notebook will be kept in the kitchen and covers information such as seating capacity of the hall, operation of the dishwasher, disposal of garbage, location of supplies etc.
4. A comprehensive "Building Use Policy" can be found in the front of this notebook.
5. Feel free to make suggestions of information that should be in this information notebook if you note something that is not covered or have an idea of something that would be helpful.

Thank you.

The Bethany Office – 330-923-5277

**Prayer shawls** are a means to extend our love and prayers to persons who may be homebound, ill or perhaps a way to share a special joy such as a birth or birthday milestone. Bethany's Prayer Shawl group meets the second Monday of each month. If you are interested in this ministry please join them at 9:30 a.m. in the lounge.



## **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**



## **Bethany Kitchen**

**Saturday, January 15<sup>th</sup> 11:30 a.m.**

Bethany Kitchen provides a free luncheon for those in the community who need a meal. Help is always needed for food preparation, serving and cleaning up. **All are welcome to join us and enjoy food and fellowship.**

## **Special Night with New Trinity – January 16**

For years we've gathered with our friends from New Trinity on the eve of the Martin Luther King holiday for a "Just Peace Concert." Something special is in the works this year, too. Watch for more information in the coming week!

**OFFICE CLOSED**

**MONDAY, JANUARY 17<sup>TH</sup>**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

## Annual Meeting and Dinner – January 23



The Annual Meeting and Dinner is a wonderful way for our faith family to celebrate God's blessings in the past year and consider how God is calling us to serve in the coming year. For this year, Consistory has decided to try a new format starting at ...

**10:30 am** with a simple, brief, Family Worship Service; the annual meeting will immediately follow the service in the Sanctuary (child-care provided by Youth Fellowship); followed by dinner, served in the Social Hall. We hope that this will be a more efficient use of time that will enable more of us to share in the meeting.

## SUPER BOWL SUB SALE!



There is no sub like a Bethany "YF SUPER BOWL SUB!" Order yours after worship starting Sunday ~ January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Cost is \$4.00 and "WOW" that is a deal! Having a bowl party? Order a dozen! Oh, you don't have to watch the super bowl to order one, two or three. You can order on your attendance card January 30<sup>th</sup> if you want.

Pick up is ~ when else ~

**Super Bowl Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>**  
after BOTH worship services.

## 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 25<sup>th</sup> – February 19<sup>th</sup>. Collection boxes are at all the entrances. The YF is grateful for your support!

## Need a ride to Worship?

There is one waiting for YOU! Just call the office at 330-923-5277 before 4:00 p.m. Friday and we will arrange for you to be picked up. Worried that something might happen to keep you from attending? Don't worry! You will be given the name and phone number of this week's driver so, if need be, you can cancel at the last minute. We do hope you will call.

## 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.

## River Valley Paper Company Fun Facts!

Did you know? Incinerating 10,000 tons of waste creates 1 job, landfilling the same amount creates 6 jobs and recycling the same 10,000 tons creates 36 jobs.

Bethany's recycled paper for 11/1 to 11/30 has had the following environmental impact. Saved:

25.07 trees  
4.42 cubic yards of landfill  
10,321.50 gallons of water  
6,045.45 kilowatts of electricity

## Hospice of the Western Reserve

provides palliative end-of-life care, caregiver support and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio. *Touch a life ...* become a hospice volunteer. The next Volunteer Education Series: Tuesdays and Thursdays February 10 through March 3, 2011, 6-9:00 p.m. 150 Springside Dr., Fairlawn. To register or for more information, call Joan Ibbett at 216/970-6201. [hospicewr.org](http://hospicewr.org)

## *Because of What We've Been Given... a Suggested Resolution for the New Year...*

In this season when we celebrate God's greatest gift to us – love made real, enfleshed, in Jesus the child of Bethlehem, we're called to make a worthy response – a response beyond songs and praises. We're called to join Mary and Joseph in not only welcoming the gift of life and love that Jesus brings, but do our best to nurture and protect from all the powers that would seek to resist or destroy it in our own lives and relationships. One way we can do that is by making a commitment to gather with other believers to learn and grow in faith - together. We need to discipline ourselves to learn and grow in faith so that we can truly discern God's gift of love (as opposed to our favorite opinions and values) so that we can welcome and nurture all he seeks to give in our lives. We need to do it *together* because he called us together, so that we might be his visible presence, doing his work, in the world.

**Every Sunday**, through our many adult classes, Bethany offers a variety of opportunities to share this sacred purpose. They include:

- † **The Bible Discoveries Class** (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, off the elevator)
- † **Lounge Class** (Lounge)
- † **Perspectives Class** (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Quilters Room, next to women's restroom)
- † **Seasons of the Spirit Class** (lower level, back side)
- † **Women's Class** (lower level, front side, next to choir room)

*All of these classes are eager to welcome you. Why not visit some soon and see if you don't find your faith blessed and growing?*

## *Bethany Kitchen Thank you!*

The December 18<sup>th</sup> Bethany Kitchen had one of the best turnouts of the year. We served 98 people and grilled 35 hot dogs for the young people rehearsing for the Christmas pageant. Thanks to volunteers: Harry Cool, Kathy Keenan, Martha Peyak, Carole and Bob Pletzer, Mary Joe Trail, Amanda Keenan, Debbie Schreiber, Cheryl McGraw, Pastor Steve Gehlert, Lou Atleson, Greg, Debbie, Kevin and Grace Fratz, Nancy Buck and Lynette Sheppard. Also, a sincere thanks to the Confirmands and mentors for the outstanding job they did. You are always welcome. Special thanks to Debbie Hunsicker and Tracy Knapp for making the delicious cakes and cupcakes. *Harvey Koudela*

## *Christmas Pageant Thanks*

Thanks to everyone who came to our last *Bethany Night at Donatos*. Though it was the Wednesday between the Christmas and New Year's holidays, and attendance was lower than normal, it still was a great success - raising \$165! We will tithe 10% to the Bethany general fund, 10% to Youth Fellowship, and the remaining 80% will go to support our Youth Mission Trip. *With Gratitude & Best Wishes for a Happy New Year, Youth Fellowship*

## *Bethany Gifts at Christmas*

Thanks for all of your food donations for the Good Neighbors collection and thanks to Pat Cochran for making the delivery to Good Neighbors. Our Bethany members were very generous to those less fortunate during the Christmas Season. Here is the breakdown for Gifts of the Heart. These gifts were made by twenty-five of our Bethany families.

Back Bay Mission \$90, Bethany Kitchen \$455, Chapel Hill Homes \$80, Esperanza \$65, Good Neighbors \$276, Hazle Scholarship Fund \$40, Family Promise/IHN \$270, Pastor's Discretionary \$885, South Street \$55, UCC camps \$60, Willard Food Pantry \$120, for a total of \$2,396.

All eighty gift tags were taken from the Giving Tree. Fifty gifts were donated for HM Life Opportunities and gift cards totaling \$1,200 were donated for Family Promise/IHN families. Thanks for your support of missions by donating these gifts.

*Please remember in your prayers...*

- † **Shelley Alexander**, Akron General
- † **Nancy Zucco**, Bath Manor
- † **Corey Nielson**, home
- † **Bobbie Berie**, Akron City
- † **David Dietz**, home
- † **Karen Butler**, Traditions



**Calendar for additions to ~ or ~ changes to the  
 2010 monthly calendar mailed to you.  
 January 10<sup>th</sup> to January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- 1/10 9:30a Prayer Shawl Ministry
- 7:30p Stewardship
- 1/11 9:00a Staff Meeting
- 10:00a Newsletter Deadline
- 7:15p Finance Committee
- 1/12 9:00a Bible Study (CE)
- 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
- 7:30p Consistory
- 1/13 7:30p Chancel Choir Practice
- 1/14
- 1/15 11:30a Bethany Kitchen

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...**

**Find someone to take your place ... and then call the church office so we may make the necessary changes on our schedules**

## Sunday ~ January 16, 2011

† **Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.**

- 8:30a Worship (Fellowship)
- 9:15a Church School for All Ages
- 10:30a Worship/ Children's Sunday School
- 11:30a Social Hour Host: Kerygma
- TBA Just Peace Event

### Volunteers for January 16<sup>th</sup>

- Greeters: S. Bebout / R.&S. Holle
- Lay Reader: A. Cool
- Special Music: 7thDay / Chancel Choir
- Nursery: H. Bedillion, T. Jensen, M. Ferda, S. Keenan, T. Robinson
- Ushers: T. Hermann, F. Read, M.&R. Bowmaster, L. Short, J. Smith, J. Nielson, R. Berie
- Van Driver: S. Gaskill
- Visitor Outlook: S. Ward

- 1/17 OFFICE CLOSED (M. Luther King, Jr. Day)
- 1/18 NO Staff Meeting
- 7:30p Kerygma
- 1/19 8:00a Men's Breakfast
- 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
- 1/20 7:30p Chancel Choir Practice
- 1/21 8:00a Social Hall Rsrvd. 5:00p
- 1/22

**Super Bowl Sub Sale  
 Order yours Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>**

## Annual Meeting & Dinner

**Family Sunday ~**

**January 23, 2011**

† **Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.**

† **ORDER YOUR SUPER BOWL SUB!**

- 8:30a Worship (Traditional)
- 9:15a Church School for All Ages
- 10:30a Worship/ Children's Sunday School
- 11:15a Annual Meeting (YF Childcare available)
- 12:15p Annual Dinner

### Volunteers for January 23<sup>rd</sup>

- Greeters: P. Peyak / Duane Shroyer Family
- Special Music: Bell Choir / Children's Choirs
- Nursery: P. Cochran, T. Ocepek, S. Ferda, B. Read, K. Renner
- Ushers: C. Hofmann, H. Walker, S. Truby, S. Ward, N. Buck, H. Koudela, Z. Read, K. Fratz
- Van Driver: C. Jones
- Visitor Outlook: M. Crichton

# Christmas Flowers

Ernie Albert, in memory of family

Donna Bidwell & Marcia Spring, in memory of Jim Bidwell and Barbara Bidwell

Ralph & Mary Bowmaster, in memory of loved ones

Charlie, Pat, Steven & Willow, in memory of Charles S. Boyett, son and brother

The Caiolas & Withrows, in memory of George Caiola, husband, father, grandfather

Phyllis Casper & Family, in memory of Jack Casper

Bob & Jan Charton in memory of parents

Michael & Heather Cochran, Ben & Becky Skinner, in memory of our grandparents

Marty Crichton, in memory of husband Jack

Helen Davis, in memory of Harold Davis

Michelle, Chris & Madison Mae Davis, Bret, Kim & Brandon Moore, in memory of Mae and Harry Moore

Gary & Carol Eiber, in memory of our loved ones

Shirley Ende-Saxe, in memory of Madeline McQuown

Mark & Susan Gaskill, in memory of Dick and Margie Gaskill

Ann Gerlinger, in memory of husband Theodore Valentine Gerlinger

Warren & Mary Jo Graves, in memory of loved ones

Dick & Phyllis Haft, in memory of loved ones

Becky & Tim Hermann, in honor of Lloyd Bigelow's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday

Ronald & Ruth Hibbard, in honor of Sally Aguirre

Carolyn B. Hofmann, in memory of parents Helen & Gus Hofmann & nephew Todd Hofmann

In memory of friends Dorothy Rea and Esther Ferner

In honor of the Mission Co. members for their dedication & who help so many

In honor of our many Bethany IHN/Family Promise volunteers who take time to help with our host week and show compassion to our families.

Jim, Sue, Kristy & Steve Jacobson, in memory of Carolyn Jacobson

Kathe Kirstein, in memory of Fritz Kirstein and Marilyn Chadwell

Lenora Luginbill & Family, in memory of Chuck Luginbill

Sarah Mellott, in honor of my children and grandchildren

Bob & Martha Peyak, in memory of Robert & Matt Leising and Robert Peyak

The Pietrowski family, in memory of Lucile McBride & Dolores Pietrowski

Nancy & Robert Ractliffe, in loving memory of Grace & Leroy Brumbaugh and Phyllis & Augustus Ractliffe

Frank & Nancy Read, in loving memory of our parents and siblings

Marilyn Rowe, in memory of loved ones

Lynette Sheppard & Jorja Evans, in memory of our father & mother George & Ethel Haigh

Clyde Sheppard, Dian Harbach & Sue Angelo, in memory of mother Beth Oyler

Linda Smith, in memory of Kenneth Smith and Mr & Mrs W.T. Lynn

Marcia Spring, in honor of Donna Bidwell

Mary Joe Trail, in memory of Ralph Trail

Edna Truby, in memory of Peggy McVan