

The Bethany Letter

SUNDAY ~ NOVEMBER 21, 2010

VOLUME 2010

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The Rev. Stephen Gehlert, Senior Minister

The Rev. Mark Steiner, Visitation Minister

The Challenge of Thanks-Giving

Sunday Worship attendance has been declining in North America for over two decades. Our culture's insistence on measuring the worth of everything in terms of "what does it do for me," means that many fail to find worth in an activity which is done to give thanks and praise to someone else (even if that someone else is the source of all life and every blessing).

Decline in attendance at Thanksgiving services has been even greater. Though the hymn "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," may still be sung, fewer and fewer are thankful enough to leave their homes to gather together to do it. So, few congregations are able to still offer their own Thanksgiving service; the ones that are done are ecumenical, community-wide services, where a few thankful souls from the congregations around town come together.

Sadly, this decreasing commitment to a discipline of gathering to give God weekly thanks and praise, as well as to celebrate and give thanks for God's abundant gifts on a special day, says how much cultural values of independence and self-sufficiency have taken hold, even in the Christian community.

That's why, as we prepare for the coming holiday, I'd like to share these words from Bible scholar and theologian Walter Brueggemann,

Thanksgiving is a contradiction of the values of a market economy that imagines we are self-made and can be self-sufficient. When we give thanks, we commit an act of defiance against the seductions of our society.

True thanks-giving is an acknowledgement that what matters most in life is not something we "got," "made," or "earned" ourselves; but rather has been given to us as a gift. In today's world, that's a humbling admission, but it's one we need to make. We need to make it because it's true. We need to make it because its truth puts us in the proper stance before God, one of humble, faithful gratitude.

Brueggemann says that faithful gratitude means that we believe that the God who has given good gifts has more good gifts to give. This frees us from the anxious striving required by a belief that we have to "make" ourselves. This also frees us to be generous, rather than selfish, for if we can trust in a God who continues to give good gifts; we can also come to learn that the gifts we receive are meant to be shared, not hoarded for ourselves.

Thanksgiving comes around every year. Perhaps it's come to seem very trivial and ordinary. But it's not. True thanks-giving frees us to see both ourselves and others, as God would have us see. And it frees us to believe and to act more, as God would have us act. There is much at stake with this holy day. May God help us remember its significance and respond with faithful gratitude.

With Thanks-Giving Hope,

Youth Fellowship – *what's ahead*

Nov. 21 Rake & Run 11:30a
Nov. 28 Advent Sharing (L) 11:30a



Confirmation – *the coming weeks*

November 21 11:30a Rake & Run
December 5 11:30a Class



A special way for you to reflect and give thanks for God's blessings as

we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday is to join us Wednesday **November 24th** at 7:30 p.m. for our Thanksgiving Eve Communion worship service.

(Childcare provided)

Regarding our weekly newsletter...

The office will be closed Thursday, **November 25th** and Friday, **November 26th** for the Thanksgiving holiday. Therefore, *The Bethany Letter* will not be published Sunday, November 28th.

Next TBL December 5th.

Vivian Lingo's winter address until March 2011 (Son's home):
7601 Briarwood Dr.
Crestwood, KY 40014



Advent

 is a season of spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ (Christmas) and of looking forward to the future reign of Christ. Eschatological expectation rather than personal penitence is the central theme of the season. Advent is a preparation for rather than a celebration of Christmas, so Advent hymns should be sung instead of Christmas carols. The first Sunday of Advent is not the beginning of the Christmas season. The Christmas celebration begins on Christmas Eve and continues for the next "twelve days of Christmas." Purple is normally Advent's liturgical color, associated both with the sovereignty of Christ and with penitence. Deep Blue is also sometimes used to distinguish the season from Lent. As the color of the night sky, Blue symbolizes Christ who in one ancient Advent song is called the "Dayspring" or source of day. As the color associated with Mary, Blue also reminds us that during Advent the church waits with Mary for the birth of Jesus.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Bethany U.C.C. will usher in the Advent Season on **Family Sunday, November 28** during the 10:30 service with a traditional 'Hanging of the Greens'. This Family Sunday service will be held in the Social Hall rather than the sanctuary. As symbols of Christmas are explained through song and prose, the Social Hall will be decorated. Committees, adult and children's Sunday school classes, and youth and bell choirs will participate. Please plan on joining in as we begin our preparation for the Christ child.



Host Week

Our next Family Promise/IHN Host week is **November 28 – December 5**. Please consider volunteering to help this week and contact one of our team leaders: Carol Clemente - meal preparation, Carolyn B. Hofmann - overnight and family center volunteers, and Frank Read - van drivers. Thanks to our many volunteers who help make this week possible.

Endowment Fund Request Deadline

November 30th is the deadline
for committees to submit Endowment
fund requests for 2011 grants!

Bethany Buckeyes

The Bethany Buckeyes is an informal group of men and women who are at least 50 years old. We meet the first Friday of every month and celebrate with food, games and laughter. Our next meeting will be **December 3rd** at 6 o'clock. Remember to call in your reservations to the church office, 330-923-5277, or mark your Sunday attendance card.



Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Saturday, December 4th 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

For **EVERYONE** in Sanctuary,
snacks provided

Congregational Meeting

December 5th



There will be a brief congregational meeting in the sanctuary immediately after the 10:30 worship service on December 5. The purpose of the meeting will be to elect members for Consistory with terms beginning in 2011.

Bethany Nurse BP Check

The first Sunday of each month, Bethany's volunteer nurses, Linda Goodwin and Holly Keenan, offer blood pressure tests during social hour.



River Valley Paper Fun Facts!

Nationwide, paper and cardboard account for 41% of all municipal solid waste—that's close to half of all of the garbage generated in the US!

10/1 to 10/31 our recycled paper has saved:

19.77 trees
3.49 cubic yards of landfill
8,141 gallons of water
4,768 kilowatts of electricity

Need a ride to Worship?

There is one waiting for YOU! Just call the office at 330-923-5277 **before 4:00 p.m. on 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.

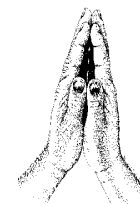
Acme Receipts!

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!

Please remember in your prayers...

- † David Dietz, Akron City Hospital
- † Evelyn Vance, Hospice Chapel Hill
- † Karen Butler, Traditions





To the Youth Fellowship/Committee

as well as other confirmands, children, and parents, for a great first Sunday of Rake & Run. In spite of an early rain that made the leaves more difficult to rake, we did the church grounds, the 12th Street property and seven other yards. Thanks, also, to Donah Gehlert and Carolyn Hofmann for preparing supper for the group.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Dedication Sunday was an exciting day of inspiration, thanksgiving, and celebration at Bethany. The Stewardship Committee wishes to extend sincere thanks to all who helped make this day so special. Our job was to organize and prepare for the Sundays in advance as well as the day itself. Stewardship members contributed in various ways, through coordinating, preaching, writing, announcing, purchasing, delivering, hosting, and in general guiding the process. As members of Bethany, YOU all contributed in so many ways. We're so blessed to have the help of those who cooked and served (many from Williard Church, recruited so that all our own members could enjoy the day together), and those who decorated, set up, picked up, cleaned up, and pitched in to help in other ways on Dedication Sunday. The three Witnessing Stewards who spoke so sincerely about their personal relationship with the church, and those who shared their experiences on Celebration of Congregational Life Sunday were inspiring to all who attended. We're so thankful that so many of our members were present to share this day together, and hear Bryan Sirchio's preaching and music. He is so full of the Spirit; it shines right through, and it was contagious! As we wait to hear final totals for our financial support commitment for next year, the numbers are looking good at this point. Thanks to everyone who made an estimate of giving for Bethany's work on this day. All of us present were certainly blessed in so many ways. Thanks to ALL and God Bless! The Stewardship Committee: Mary Seymour, Beth McDevitt, Pam Novak, Oz Hibbard, John Dix, Howard Edwards, Debra Ocepek, Pastor Steve Gehlert

To the Stewardship Committee ...

- ...for planning two special events with Bryan Sirchio.
- ♥ A concert on Saturday night that was a joy and inspiration to Bethany members, their friends, and our neighbors.
- ♥ A wonderful Dedication Sunday program (which actually began several weeks before with the sharing of our Witnessing Stewards – Sarah Melvin and Marcia Spring - and the speakers in the Celebration of Congregational Life - Mary Lane Clark, Megan Ferda, Taylor Giffin, Beth Lees, Bob Pletzer, Glenn Smith, and Ed Zeller) in which Bryan, the Chancel and 7th Day Choirs, and Witnessing Steward John Dix wove together a powerful witness about God's abundant blessing, our reasons for gratitude, and the expression of our gratitude through generously sharing those blessings for God's work in the world.



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 **Friday, December 17th**. The poinsettias will be on the altar December 19, 24, and 26. 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

Donor(s) _____

**Calendar for additions to ~ or ~ changes to the
2010 monthly calendar mailed to you.
November 22nd to December 5th**

- 11/22 9:00a Quilters
 11/23 9:00a Staff Meeting
 No newsletter this week
 11/24 5:00p J. Probeck Memorial Service
 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 7:30p Thanksgiving Communion Service
 (w/childcare)
 11/25 *Happy Thanksgiving!* Office Closed.
 11/26 Office Closed
 5:30p Novak Rehearsal
 11/27 9:00a Advent Decorating 12:00p
 5:30p Novak Wedding



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

Volunteers Thanksgiving Eve Communion Service

Ushers: T. Hermann, B. Charton, Harvey Koudela,
K. Fratz, L. Sheppard, S. Mancinelli

Family Sunday ~ November 28, 2010

† **Nursery Available 9:15 to 11:30 a.m.**
 † **1st Sunday of Advent & FAMILY PROMISE HOST WEEK**

- 8:30a Worship** (Communion)
 9:15a Church School for All Ages
10:30a Worship in Social Hall (children remain in worship)
 No Pageant Rehearsal
 11:30a Social Hour: C.E. Hosts
 11:30a YF – Advent Sharing (L)
 6:00p Family Promise Meal (SH)



Volunteers for November 28th

Cup Washer: C. Eberhardt
 Greeters: The Boling Family / S. A. & M. Keenan
 Special Music: Bell Choir/ Children's Choirs
 Nursery: J. Boling, S. Ward, N. Zeller, J. Dugan,
 J. Sammons
 Ushers: J. Mancinelli, M. Jensen, S. Truby, S. Ward,
 S. Holle, M. Spring, L. Short, J. Smith, A. McVan,
 N. Buck, B. Pletzer, C. McGraw
 Van Driver: E. Frederick
 Visitor Outlook: R. Schreiber

- 11/29 9:00a Quilters
 6:00p Family Promise Meal (SH)
 11/30 9:00a Staff Meeting
 10:00a Newsletter Deadline
 6:00p Family Promise Meal (SH)

December...

- 12/01 9:00a Bible Study (CE)
 6:00p Family Promise (SH)
 7:00p Bell Choir Practice
 7:30p Spiritual Council
 12/02 6:00p Family Promise Meal (L)
 7:15p Chancel Choir Practice
 12/03 6:00p Family Promise Meal (L)
 6:00p Buckeyes (SH)
 12/04 9:00a Pageant Rhrl. Sanctuary
 6:00p Family Promise Meal (SH)

Sunday ~ December 5, 2010

† **Nursery Available (see above) 2nd Sunday of Advent**

- 8:30a Worship** (Communion)
 9:15a Church School for All Ages
10:30a Worship/ Children's Sunday School/
 (Pageant Rehearsal, 2nd hr. S.School)
 ... **Congregational Meeting**
 11:30a Social Hour Host: Endowment Fund
 11:30a Bethany Nurse BP Check
 11:30a 7thDay Practice
 11:30a Confirmand Meal/Class

★ **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



Volunteers for December 5, 2010

Cup Washing: A. Zeller
 Greeters: n/a
 Lay Reader: R. Tromp
 Special Music: Story and Song / Chancel Choir
 Nursery: M. Peyak, T. Jensen, A. Lorentz, E. Zeller,
 R. Read
 Ushers: n/a
 Van Driver: L. Goodwin
 Visitor Outlook: K. Wurgler

Bethany's Missions for Christmas 2010

How YOU can support our missions!

THE GIVING TREE – Begins November 21



This will benefit fourteen families at H.M. Life Opportunities and the families of Family Promise/IHN. The tree will be decorated with gift tags at the coffee table in the Social Hall beginning November 21 and the gifts are due back to Bethany by December 13.

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 IHN guests have gone to live at HM Life.

The Giving Tree will contain gift tags for certificates to area businesses for our Family Promise/IHN families when they move into their new homes. It will also have tags for requested gift items from members of fourteen 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 beginning on November 21 and each Sunday through December 5.

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 Marcs or Acme, get whatever amount 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 13.

GIFTS OF THE HEART - Begins November 21



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.

GOOD NEIGHBORS – through December 19



We are collecting items for Good Neighbors for Thanksgiving and Christmas through December 19. We will make a delivery before Thanksgiving and another before 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 would prefer to not have clothing donations at the time. If you have clothing you would like to donate, please hold on to it until January. Thanks.

- ☆ Gift certificates to Giant Eagle or Acme to give to the families for a turkey or ham. We are encouraging members to buy the gift certificates through our program here at Bethany.
- ☆ Non perishable food items
- ☆ Paper products such as tissue, toilet tissue, and paper towels
- ☆ Household cleaning products
- ☆ Personal products such as deodorant and toothpaste
- ☆ Diapers
- ☆ Blanket

STEWARDSHIP COVENANT - 2010

Jesus Says, *Follow Me*, Calling Us...

- **To trust him** – because his love, grace, and abundant blessing are all we need for life.
- **To obey him** – because in serving him, rather than ourselves, we find true, eternal life.
- **To learn from him** – because his way of self-giving love is Truth and Life!
- **To become like him** – so, together, we can be his body, his living presence in the world.

When Jesus Says, *Follow Me*, He Means With Everything...

- **Our time** – because in living every day as gift of God, Jesus showed us that we don't lose time but rather gain "life" when we give the gift of our time.
- **Our talents** – because in using his many talents for God and others, rather than to lift himself up, Jesus showed us that we find joy and meaning in sharing these gifts for others.
- **Our treasure** – because in teaching that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Jesus showed us how to put our hearts right with God - put our treasure right first!

Hearing Jesus Call to *Follow Me*

We urge every Bethany member respond to Jesus' call to *Follow Me* by seeking to trust, obey, and learn from his way of self-giving, so that, through our shared giving, our church can more fully be his presence in the world. We trust that in committing ourselves to give gladly and generously of our time, talent, and treasure, God will work through us for good, and we will continue to know God's abundant blessing. So with gratitude, hope, and joy we invite you to join us in covenanting with God and each other to:

- Make a commitment to share in Dedication Sunday worship on November 14.
- "Follow Jesus" in looking for God's blessings and living with gratitude and generosity.
- Pray about how to express our gratitude by following Jesus with time, talent, and treasure.

In considering your specific gift we urge you to:

- Make an Estimate of Giving.
- Consider your estimate in terms of percentage of income.
- Seek to increase your estimate by one percent of your income.
- Make tithing your ultimate giving goal.

We hope and pray that the whole Bethany family will join us in this covenant.

The Stewardship Committee