

The Epistle

St. John UCC, 409 Park Avenue, PO Box 156, Bolivar, Ohio 44612

FRIENDSHIP • MISSION • SPIRITUALITY October 2021

Dear members and friends of St. John UCC,

Recently I received the following letter from Nayiri Karjian, Living Water Association Minister. She is a person of deep faith and wisdom and when she says or writes something, I try to pay attention because there is always something to learn from her. This letter is certainly a discussion starter, as well as a scary picture of the church so many of us worship in each week. I hope as you read it, you will consider the ramifications of her words and the challenge that we all face in the institutional church. I welcome your feedback as well as your ideas how we at St. John UCC might respond to it. As always, I am available for pastoral care or home visits and am only a phone call or text away. My wife and I are looking forward to joining many of you at our hayride this Sunday at Dale Duerr's farm at 3:00pm. I've only seen pictures of hayrides in the past and am looking forward to experiencing one for myself.

Pastor Jeff

The Church, Dying?

The church is dying. We hear this. We know this. We feel this every Sunday when many of our sanctuaries remain partly empty.

But, I am not sure that this is the complete truth. I am not sure that it is the *Church* that's dying. I believe it is the *Traditional Institutional Church* that is dying. I know this because I keep experiencing church in unexpected places and I hear others sharing similar experiences.

Before the church became an institution, it was a gathering of people who followed Jesus who were called the people of the Way. Faith was about walking the way, treading the path, trusting the Risen One, and doing the ministry of healing and restoration. Over time, the church became an institution, and as a result, changed form. It started preserving itself, conserving its resources, safeguarding its boundaries, all for its own sake, eventually becoming a place of gathering for comfort, assurance, and ease for its members.

That is where, I believe, we typically find ourselves today. Preservation and conservation is what the institution has done best, comfort and ease is what many have sought most from the church. Sadly, preservation and conservation, comfort and ease alone have never been conducive to growth. When conservation is the goal, churches turn to depositories without a living ministry.

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When comfort is the goal, growth is hard to come by as we become set in our ways. In a universe where all things living change form, preservation and comfort cannot be the church's only directive goal.

What if we did not protect the institution, but walked the Way, so church is experienced and community is discovered? What if we did not preserve its resources so stringently for ourselves alone, but shared them generously, so God's love is experienced, Jesus' healing grace is encountered, and lives are changed?

What if we were not only concerned about our own comfort and ease, but tackling the tough issues of our day and provide a place for conversation and dialogue? What if we gathered, including the stranger, to hear and learn from one another, and worked together for the good and healing of all? What if we did not worry about our church buildings, but opened their doors wide so they can be used as gathering places where Love and hospitality are shared, Grace experienced, especially by those on the margins of society? What if we did not seek comfort and ease alone but explored and experimented, imagined and dreamed, and churched (yes, as a verb) in new ways of gathering in Jesus' name?

It is exhausting and debilitating to work so hard for an institution that is dying. Pastors and congregations are tired and drained. Surely, God does not want us exhausted, spending our energy and gifts on working for that which is dying. I believe God wants us to work for that which has life, breath, spirit and possibility. I believe God is doing a new thing, rebirthing the church, changing its form, creating something new, for that is who God is and what God does. So why not help God out?

I am not suggesting working harder. We're too exhausted for that. I am suggesting working smarter, with direction and purpose, uncovering the heart. Revealing the simple core and the essentials, stripping the institutional layers that have drowned the heart, explored possibilities we have not dared imagine before. When we do the simple, the essential, our hearts are warmed, our lives are enriched, and we enrich the lives of others. Then, I am convinced, we will discover that the Church will never die because Church is a living body, a verb, an act of gathering in Jesus' name to heal, mend and restore the world to what God intended it to be. And that's the simple essential.

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October 2021						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Country Breakfast 8:00am-11:00am
3 Communion Hayride @ Dale Duerr's Farm 3:00pm Cam McCoy Luke McCoy	4	5	6	7	8 Bob Ely Chuck Fenstermaker	9 Barb Norman Lynn Rootring
10 Guest Pastor Rev. Dr. John States	11 Clothes Closet 9:00am-12:00pm	12 Set up Basement Sale/Donation Drop off 2:00pm- 6:00pm	13	14 Consistory Meeting 6:30pm	15 Basement Sale 9:00am-5:00pm	16 Basement Sale 9:00am-2:00pm Clothes Closet 9:00am-1:00pm Deisy Felgenhauer
17	18	19	20	21	22 Basement Sale 9:00am-5:00pm	23 Basement Sale 9:00am-2:00pm
24	25 Clothes Closet 9:00am-12:00pm	26 Epistle Items Due	27	28	29	30
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PRAYER LIST/CARD MINISTRY



Every week, our prayer list is updated to the best of our ability. Please notify the office if you have any additions, deletions or suggestions! Remember the shut-ins and those on the prayer list. "Thinking of you" cards, a note, or a telephone call means so much. Contact the church office if you need addresses or phone numbers.

Please remember the following in your prayers:

All frontline/healthcare workers,

Nila Baad, Bob and Joyclin Ely, Pam Farnsworth, Mario Fernando Galindo, Barb Goldsmith, Shirley Holdsworth, Missy Jones, Holly Myers, George Rootring, John and Wanda Stucky, Crystal Weaver

ALL YOU CAN EAT COUNTRY BREAKFAST

Saturday October 2nd from 8:00am-11:00am is the next country breakfast. There will be scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, breakfast bakes, grits, fruit, sweets, biscuits and sausage gravy, pancakes, juice and coffee. Cost: \$7.00 ages 11 and up, \$3.00 ages 6 to 10, Under 6 – Free. Please join us!



HAYRIDE/WIENER ROAST



On October 3rd, the church is having a Hayride/Wiener Roast at Dale Duerr's farm. This is an event for all members and friends of St. John UCC. Please bring a covered dish to share and your own chairs. We will be playing cornhole (bring your boards if you have them), and decorating pumpkins. There will be lots of fun and fellowship and we hope to have a big turnout. The event will start at 3:00PM.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

We would like to know who would be interested in attending an adult Sunday school class this year. If you have any interest, please let a member of the Christian Education committee know, or call/email the church office. The members of the committee are: Beth Carpenter, Gretchen Deubner, Kaley Hamilton, Becky Miller, Chris Stevenson and Becky Wolf.



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BASEMENT SALE

There will be a Basement Sale held at the church in October. It will be open on Fri. Oct. 15th and 22nd from 9:00am-5:00pm, and Sat. Oct. 16th and 23rd from 9:00am-2:00pm. All proceeds from this sale will benefit the Tusky Valley Affordable Christmas Project. You can drop off donations on Tuesday, October 12th from 2:00pm-6:00pm. To set up a different time for drop off, please call Chris Stevenson or the church office.



CLOTHES CLOSET



All seven of our regular workers were able to help during September. We had dollar-a-bag sales on both open days in September. We do this to reduce our inventory of warm weather clothes before putting the winter clothing on the racks and shelves. We had 16 customers who bought a total of 54 bags of clothing! Our receipts of just over ninety dollars included some single items that were sold for half price and sales made on a day

the Closet was not open. We also had a generous twenty dollar donation.

The Clothes Closet "committee" discussed donations to community projects for the year. We decided to make fifty dollar donations to each church on the food pantry participation list. We will ask that the donation be used for a local community mission project. We will also be looking into a donation to a Tusky Valley School project.

We will be open on Saturday October 16th during the church rummage sale. We hope that some of you who cannot come on a Monday will stop by to help and see how we operate. On Wednesday, October 6th at 9 a.m. we will be meeting to remove the rest of the summer clothing and put out the winter clothes. Some of the summer things will be stored for next year and the rest will be donated elsewhere.

Our next open dates will be Mondays, October 11 and 25 and Saturday October 16. Remember we always have coffee and usually cookies or other treats. In October we will have hot mulled cider.

DONATION NEEDED

We are in need of a microwave. If anyone has one they would like to donate, please let us know. It will be placed in the parlor.



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THANK YOU

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to all of those at St. John who helped with the service and meal for the recent passing of our mother, Jeanne Nalley. A special thank you to Pastor Jeff for the lovely service and to the kitchen committee for graciously providing us with a meal afterwards.



Many thanks and blessings to all, -The Jeanne Nalley Family

Dear Friends at St. John UCC,

Thank you so much for your donation. Your generosity is appreciated. It is through the support of the community that we are able to service the needs of the homeless. Thank you for helping us to help others. –Friends of the Homeless

CONSISTORY MEETING SUMMARY

Consistory and Pastor Jeff met on August 12th. Pastor continues to catch up on visitations. Pastor and staff reviews have been completed. The hayride is being planned for October at Dale Duerr's farm. Rally Day is scheduled for September 12th. We will have special music that day. New business included selling/donating the extra pews in the social hall. A new toilet is needed in the restroom by the social hall. A donation has been received to make the purchase. Gutters are clogged. We are getting an estimate to clean/cover them. Basement Sale will be held Oct. 15, 16, 21 and 22 to benefit the TV Affordable Christmas Project. Several repairs need made around the church and the building and grounds committee will be contacted to make them.

FINANCIAL REPORT – AUGUST 2021

<u>August Income</u>				<u>Year-to-Date</u>
8/01/2021	\$ 1,177.00	Income	\$ 5,343.00	\$ 54,931.15
8/08/2021	\$ 442.00	Expenses	<u>\$(6,307.25)</u>	<u>\$(48,981.19)</u>
8/15/2021	\$ 852.00			
8/22/2021	\$ 750.00			
<u>8/29/2021</u>	<u>\$ 2,122.00</u>			
Total	\$ 5,343.00	Total	-\$ 964.25	+\$ 5,949.96

If you would like further details, please feel free to contact the church office.