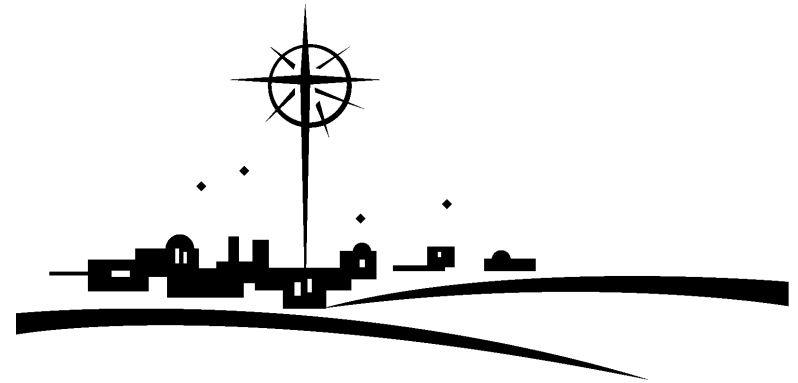


# *The Grapevine*



**"HE WILL REIGN...  
AND OF HIS  
KINGDOM  
THERE WILL BE  
NO END!"**

**LUKE 1:33, NRSV**

*South Haven United Church of Christ  
415 Northfield Road, Bedford, Ohio 44146*

*Church Phone: (440) 232-4711*

*Website: [www.southhavenucc.org](http://www.southhavenucc.org)*

*Email address: [southhavenchurch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:southhavenchurch@sbcglobal.net)*

*Alive With Joy!*

*South Haven United Church of Christ  
415 Northfield Road  
Bedford, Ohio 44146  
Rev. Terry Bartlett*

*December 2011/January 2012*

*First Class*



## **Bartlett's Quotations**

One of the Christmas stories I like is a story that I have know as "The Story of the Birds." It might be called by other titles, but this is the one I am familiar with. Here's the readers digest version:

A farmer looks out his window one cold snowy night in December and sees a flock of birds scrounging around, unsuccessfully, in the deepening snow for food. The night is

cold and the farmer is afraid the birds have lost their way in their flight south and might freeze to death in the cold. So he opens the door to the barn where they will have some protection from the wind and cold, but the birds keep pecking in the snow. The farmer then tries to shoo them into the barn, yet the birds just scatter and flutter back down to the snow. Next the farmer leaves a trail of birdseed up to the opening of the barn, they follow the trail of birdseed, but go no further. As the night is getting colder, the farmer becomes more and more frustrated and afraid the birds won't make it and he thinks to himself, "If I could only become a bird, I could led them to safety." At that moment, the clock strikes midnight, the chimes ring out and it is Christmas morning!

The gospel of John reminds us that the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. This is our Advent faith. That God comes to be one of us in the birth of Jesus to show us the way to safety, salvation, and new life.

May you experience anew the light of God's hope, peace, joy and love this Christmas season. May Emanuel, God with us, be a light in your darkness during Christmas and throughout the New Year.

Merry Christmas from your South Haven staff.

Terry      Betty      Ed      Ruth      Judie      Carol      Jane



### **December**

#### **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

Sandy & Robert Rivera      12-21

#### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

Linda Balcer	12-02
John Parker	12-03
Mary Houghton	12-04
Jay Balcer	12-14
Marcy Dory	12-18
Karen Gschwind	12-20
Ashley Johnson	12-21
Makeda Black	12-25
Alexander Johnson	12-26

### **January**

Virginia Tevis	1-12
Barbara Charney	1-15
Camilla Lundy	1-17
Debbie Thomas	1-18
Cindy Stelmak	1-28
Wayne Rhine	1-28
Jason Schaeffer	1-31



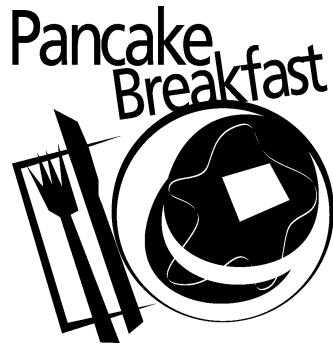
## ***New Renters***

If you see the lights on in the sanctuary on the second Friday of each month don't be alarmed. We have a new renter, The Lighthouse International Ministries who will hold a worship service beginning in January. We are glad to welcome them and be able to share our facility.



## ***December Fundraising and Recycling News***

We are going to continue our Christmas Card Fundraiser again this year. Bring one card to share with our church family and donate the cost of your stamps and cards to the church. Put your donation in the marked envelope and place it in the offering plate any Sunday in December. Place your card in the basket near the tree in the lobby and it will be hung on the tree for all to see.



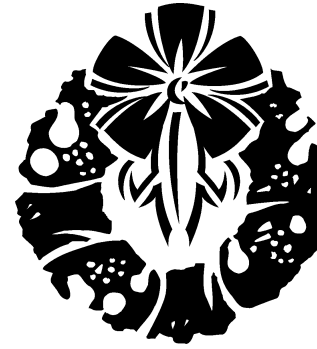
A big "Thank You" to everyone who came to the pancake breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus, also known as Joe and Betty Barr, either to eat or to work or to do both. Debbie Thomas was a great organizer of the children's shop and craft activities. Lisa Prentice and her kitchen team served a delicious breakfast. The pancake batter and syrup were donated by the Smucker Co. More information about the breakfast will be in the next Grapevine.

In October the church received a check for \$18.27 from AbiBow Paper Recycling Co. We have decided to switch to River Valley Paper Co. which is supposed to pay a higher amount per ton. The new bins have arrived and are in the same location.

Thanks to Tom Flynn for taking 14 pounds of aluminum cans and 41 pounds of steel cans to Bedford Metal Recycling Co. in October. We received \$11.00.

Please continue to recycle paper, cans, inkjet cartridges, and used cell phones. The church and the earth thank you!

*Carol Tevis  
Chairperson*



## ***Moderator's Moment***

I feel like a broken record as I say it every year, but I can hardly believe that Christmas is less than a month away. We've already shared the first Sunday of Advent, and the remaining December weeks will fly by. Terry has planned a special Advent sermon theme titled "Making Room," and I hope everyone who is part of our South Haven family will make a special effort to join in worship on Sunday mornings.

I'm particularly looking forward to two pre-Christmas events coming up soon. Our December 3<sup>rd</sup> Pancake Breakfast with Santa promises to be a fun time for adults and kids alike. (I don't know about you, but just watching the excitement children feel during the Christmas season jump starts my own holiday excitement!) Come for all-you-can-eat pancakes, and bring the children for photos with Santa, story time with Mrs. Santa, crafts, and a Snowflake Shop, where children can (with the help of Santa's adult elves) purchase low-cost items as gifts for their family and friends.

Then on Friday evening, December 16<sup>th</sup>, join us in our sanctuary for what has become an annual Christmas tradition. Choir members and soloists from the First Baptist Church of Bedford will be with us, and together we'll present a concert featuring individual and combined choirs, our bell choir, small groups, and an organ solo. Following the concert we'll gather upstairs for refreshments and fellowship. We'll be seeking volunteers who are willing to bake some finger desserts for this event, so please contact Karolyn Mitchell or me if you are able to help.

Also, if you'd like to take advantage of an easy way to share Christmas greetings with your church family, place your Christmas card to South Haven on the tree in the corner lobby. It will be available there for everyone to enjoy, and you can place the money you saved on additional cards and postage in the envelope provided. Your contribution will be an extra Christmas gift to the church.

We're all so very busy this time of year, but, as Terry's Advent theme reminds us, we need to make room in our lives for the anticipation and wonder of these weeks leading up to the birth of the Christ Child. Even if we don't finish the decorating, the gift buying, the card sending, or the cookie baking that seem so important, Christmas will come anyway. And no one will notice the things that didn't get done because the gift itself will – again – be so wondrous. I wish each of you a beautiful and spirit-filled Christmas season.

*Ruth*



## Christmas Concert

featuring  
South Haven choir, bell choir,  
and soloists  
and  
Choir and soloists from the  
First Baptist Church

Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>  
7:30 p.m.  
in South Haven's sanctuary

Join us for music, food, and  
fellowship to celebrate the season!

## I Am Silent . . . and Expectant

How silently,  
How silently  
The wondrous gift is given.

I would be silent now,  
Lord,  
And expectant . . .  
That I may receive  
the gift I need,  
so I may become  
the gifts others need.

By Ted Loder



## A BIG Mission: 1 Thank You

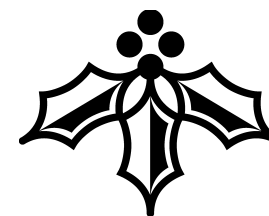
Thank you 1 and all for your generous participation in Mission: 1! ALL GOALS WERE EXCEEDED... both at South Haven and across the United Church of Christ. On Nov. 28 the fourth and final goal, East Africa famine relief, was exceeded!

Goal – Items of healthy food:	1,000,000	1,438,124
Includes from South Haven:		514 and counting!

Goal – Neighbors in Need hunger:	\$111,111	\$119,584
Goal – East Africa famine relief:	\$111,111	\$113,271

South Haven goal for Neighbors in Need: \$1,111...  
surpassed at \$1,502 received Nov. 20.

Goal – Letters to Congress:	11,111	37,443
Includes from South Haven:		38



In addition to our letters, Doris Powell joined a delegation from the UCC national offices to U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown's office on November 1. Later that day, this announcement was made:

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-ME) introduced legislation today to support family farms, expand farming businesses, create rural jobs, and invest in local and regional food economies. *The Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act* is a comprehensive package of reforms that would help Ohio farmers and ranchers by addressing production, aggregation, marketing and distribution needs. The bill would also prioritize consumer access to healthy, fresh food with support for technology and direct sales.

Thank YOU for this generous outpouring to feed the hungry and confront food-related injustice.



## Stewardship Message

### Too Good To Be True Giving

*“By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn will break upon us.” Luke 1:78*

These words come from the amazing poem known as the Benedictus, the blessing of Zechariah on his surprising gift-son, John (the Baptist). Zechariah is one of those minor characters in the birth narratives of Jesus, often lost in the shuffle of shepherds and magi that populate our Christmas pageants. Yet Zechariah gives us a great gift for Advent: the gift of the skeptic.

When an angel told Zechariah that his middle-aged wife Elizabeth would have a baby, he didn't believe it. All his life this man had been faithfully serving God; clearly he was a sincere believer. He held onto his faith through the years of their infertility and who knows how many other problems in their lives. But when an angel promises something “too good to be true,” the skeptic in Zechariah comes out and he rejects the God he has relied on when things have been truly bad.

This Christmas let us be about giving to the world in ways that are too good to be true. Let the skeptics see that love is more powerful than anyone expects it to be. Let us, in the image of God, give of ourselves in life-transforming ways beyond presents under the tree, just like Zechariah and Elizabeth and John. Nothing about God is ever too good to be true! Merry Christmas.

*Rochelle A. Stackhouse is the Senior Minister of The Church of the Redeemer, United Church of Christ, New Haven Connecticut.*

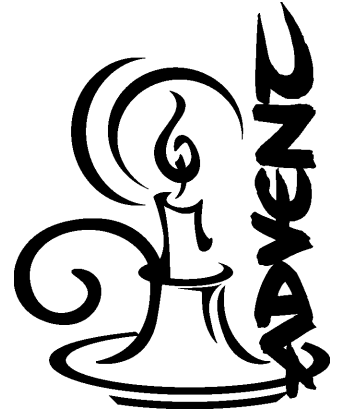


This resource is a free service and is made possible by your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission.



## Advent & Christmas Schedule

Sunday, December 4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent: JOY! “Making Do” 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Worship
Sunday, December 11	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent: HOPE! Youth Sunday 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Worship Christmas Caroling after worship
Tuesday, December 13	7:00pm Worship Committee
Wednesday, Dec. 14	“Lights Out for Hunger” Community program to turn you Christmas lights off that evening and donate your savings to benefit 2 local Hunger Centers, Southeast Clergy and Messiah International
Friday, December 16	8:00pm Christmas Choir Concert at South Haven with First Baptist Church, Choir/Handbells & Special Music
Sunday, December 18	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent: LOVE! “Making Up/Making Time” 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Worship
Monday, December 19	7:30pm Council Meeting
Saturday, December 24	7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Sunday, December 25	Christmas Day 10:30am Service of Carols, Story & Communion (no Sunday School)
Sunday, January 1	New Year's Day 10:30am Worship (no Sunday School)



## Finance Highlights for October

Total Income: \$6,796.36  
Total Expenses: \$6,982.00  
Net Deficit: \$185.64

From July through October, the cumulative deficit is \$2,055.19. Although this is a reason for concern, it is really close to the budgeted year-to-date anticipated amount, \$2,024.28 deficit. We need to keep in mind that we passed a deficit budget for the 2011 - 2012 year. This means that, even if we are right on the budget, we will be in deficit. If you have questions, please contact Judie Quin.



## Let the Children Come

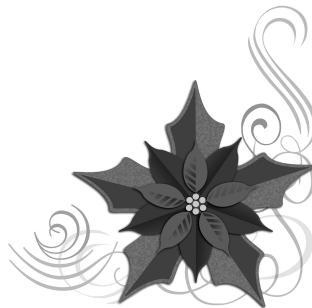
"I will never forget that family," said the woman who manages donations to her town's emergency aid pantry. "The sadness keeps me going despite our challenges." Talking passionately about the pantry's Christmas give-away of toys and gifts, she shared what had happened some years ago. A neighborhood parent was so despondent over financial difficulties that suicide seemed better than facing Christmas morning with nothing to give – and so on Christmas morning a child was parentless. "I never want another parent to feel that way," she said.

The practice of Christmas gift-giving can be life-affirming and spiritually fulfilling or it can be a habit that depletes our souls. Consider another story, told by Bishop Kenneth L. Carder of The United Methodist Church about John Wesley, the eighteenth century Methodist leader.

A poor girl who visited Wesley one winter day looked cold and hungry. "You seem half starved," he said. "Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?" When she said that was all she had, Wesley put his hand in his pocket and found he had scarcely any money left, having just purchased some framed pictures for his rooms. He later wrote of this incident with sarcasm:

"It immediately struck me, will not thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures of the blood of this poor maid?'"

This Christmas let us reach out to the children all around us, and especially those living in poverty. "Let the little children come to me... for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Luke 18:16)



## Seeking God's Vision

*When he [Barnabas] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to God with steadfast purpose. Acts 11:23*



I recently explored Bethlehem with a friend who lived there before the construction of the 30 foot concrete wall that snakes through the city. Back then, people generally moved freely to and from Jerusalem, just a few miles to the north. Tourists flooded the city not just at Christmas time, but year round. Farmers tended the orchards and fields that had sustained them for centuries.

Today, the separation wall and its system of permits and identification cards generally exclude Bethlehem residents from crossing to Jerusalem, and discourage visitors from entering. The wall creates a very different landscape. The main road into town is blocked by the wall, so the neighborhood which used to welcome visitors driving in from Jerusalem now resembles a ghost town. As we followed the wall around and between homes and closed-up shops we tried to imagine how it might feel to live in this neighborhood today.

On my way home from my volunteer work at the Palestinian Lutheran schools one day, as I crossed the checkpoint to return to Jerusalem (a privilege of holding a US passport), I feared that I have little hope to offer our students, who have experienced so much trauma and humiliation. Who am I to tell them there is a better future ahead? I felt ashamed that I could not even visualize Bethlehem without the wall. In that moment, I asked God to show me a vision of Bethlehem freed from the wall. I had come to the realization that I couldn't do it myself – I did not have the answer.

Later that same week, I saw the vision I had asked for. Many visions, in fact: paintings, collages, comics, and quotes painted on the wall. The graffiti is the work of both local and international artists. One mural pictures people opening the wall by pulling down a giant zipper; my favorite portrays the giant panels of the wall falling toward the viewer, with a clear view of Jerusalem on the other side, and a ladder to heaven revealing God's love to the people. It is the work of the faithful in this conflicted land who seek God's vision above all the cruelties imposed by human hands and dollars.

We pray together, as in the old Irish hymn, "Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me save that thou art." Please, God, reveal to us the potential you see in your creation. You are what matters – we want to witness your truth in this messed up world. Your powerful vision of peace has the last word.

*Rev. Emily Goldthwaite Fries is an ordained minister of the UCC who has volunteered through Global Ministries to accompany our partners of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.*

*(Revised from the Disciples Peace Fellowship blog, Shalom Vision <http://www.dpfweb.org/dpf-blog/>)*