

The Beacon—September 2025



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The pictures of the sunflowers are the subject of my September article. You see, there were several sunflowers that grew unintended in the corner garden of the parsonage. They were tall and amazingly beautiful — and I only planted a little pot of small sunflowers. But they grew and grew. And then it was winter. And they died — so I pulled the stalks out.

And then it was spring! What do you think happened? A few strange looking plants began to grow — and they grew and grew. But where did they come from? It seems there were many sunflower seeds that had fallen into the ground in my unintentional sunflower patch. And they came back — tall and strong and beautiful. Determination and strength of will prevailed.

And then it was winter — and they died — and again, I pulled them out figuring they'd grow again like the previous year. But no...nothing grew back.

Except this stalk that grew sideways out of the ground and across the sidewalk, then leaves formed, and then - wonder of wonders - a sunflower bloomed on this unlikely plant. It couldn't remain tall and upright given the shape of the stalk so — it just grew sideways. And then more sunflowers bloomed and it sank lower onto the sidewalk but did it give up? Not a chance. Those flowers bloomed toward the sun. And even when they ended up laying on the sidewalk still attached to the stalk which was still in the ground, they continued to bloom. And they are still blooming, still across the sidewalk, and still an inspiration. Thus this Beacon article on the Unlikely Sunflower Plant.

So now it's September and a time to be looking ahead to fall days and new activities and times of strength and standing tall and times of feeling like laying sideways across the sidewalk. But here's the thing — I want us to be like this sunflower plant. I want us to rejoice when we are standing tall. But I want us to also rejoice when we find ourselves laying across the sidewalk — when we think of this tenacious little sunflower plant — persevering despite the odds. Rejoice when WE persevere despite the odds. When we lift our faces to the sun and the Son and continue to grow and rejoice...to persevere. With God guiding us, we can grow across the sidewalk and keep on growing and thriving and surviving.

OK — so maybe this is a stretch but I rejoice every time I step over the plant and smile at it's growth and tenacity and perseverance. So — come visit my amazing plant and be determined to grow as we move into the newness of fall.

Blessings,
Pastor Margaret



**St. John's mission...to live the love and grace of God
through redeeming faith in Jesus the Christ
by seeking justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God.**

Making Music



The definition of Songbird is a bird that utters a succession of musical notes. Well St. John's Songbirds, small in number but mighty in praise, utter a lot of musical notes! We sing the melody line only for most of our pieces right now. However, if we were to get a few more people we might just be able to sing some harmony as well. Each Wednesday night from 6:30 to 7:30ish we get together to practice and have fun. We sing with joy and love to praise God in whatever way we can. We only sing once a month for the Sunday Service, usually the first Sunday of each month, however Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Lent/Easter we sing more frequently. Won't you please consider joining us?!

The St. John's Handbells ring with joy! About 10 years ago St. John's church purchased a 3 octave set of handbells and we began the journey to explore how to ring and perform with them. Today we have 6 regular ringers and 2 that join us when they can during the school year. Wouldn't it be nice to hear more bells ring? With more ringers? And more joyful bell music? We have a lot of bells that are being neglected because there just aren't enough hands to ring them. If you're worried that you don't read music that's not a problem! If you can count we can show you what notes to ring. Every one of us circles the notes on their music so they know what notes to play. And our leader counts aloud during practices (and sometimes during performances) to keep us together! It's really not that difficult,—honest. Practices begin at 7:30 and go until about 8:30 when we put the bells to bed! Won't you please consider joining us?!

Thank you,

Lynn Grear, Music Director
The Singers and Ringers of St. John's

Special thanks from...



Dear St. John's U.C.C.,
on behalf of everyone at E.O.F. & Christy's Corner Cafe we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to your church family for your recent-most generous gift. Your support is both appreciated & truly impactful. Your commitment to our foundation is a true reflection of your faith in action.
With sincere gratitude,
E.O.F. Board of Directors

Prayers / Parish Record

Daily Prayer Requests

God hears our prayers and so we encourage you to lift the following people to God in prayer daily. You may want to remove this page and keep it with your daily devotions.

Hospitalized:

Nursing Home/Rehab — Mary Sue James, Al Amstutz, Nancy Weidner, Zoe Moore

At Home — Joanne Busdeker, Carlton Giesler, Doris Klaustermeyer, Cindy Calhoun, Jerry Haar, Heidi Holub, Lois Rader, Dustin Schmidt, Catherine Aldrich (Sue Applegate's friend), Joanne Price, Sherry Sherman (Pastor Tim's wife), McKinley Blausey, Jamie Irwin (Lois Rader's granddaughter), Dave Mate (friend of Paul Holewinski) and Debra Mate (Dave Mate's sister), Bob Hensel, Betty Walker, Don and Helen Hollis (friends of Bill Verbryke), Ken Moore, Melody Haar, Jerry and Dolores Beck, Janet Ottney, Rosemary Acha, Paul Holewinski, Marvin Kates, Tracy Crone, Rachael (neighbor of Sue Applegate), Shawn Meager, Becky Truman, Jennifer and Joe Shamy, Amanda Downey, Sandra Shaffer, Jane Kruse, Russ Krumnow, Jim Krumnow, Jim and Jane Garner, Amy M, Lois Pelly, Jenny Northup, Loren Sampson, Jeanette Tangeman, Jeff and Nancy Wegman, Tom and Sharon Crozier

Service Men & Women: Kyle Babka, Dr. Samuel L. Preston III, Captain Benjamin Wideman

September Anniversaries

Jerry & Dolores Beck	9/23
Richard & Barb Bruntz	9/08
Craig & Barb Smith	9/05
Terry & Christine Barnhouse	9/21
Duane & Sue Lohr	9/13
Scott & Sharon Giesler	9/16
John & Lisa Fork	9/29
Richard & Jeanne Zolman	9/06
Duane & Sharon Arndt	9/03
Eric & Jackie Amstutz	9/21
Kurt & Julie Amstutz	9/11
Tyler & Brandi Cunningham	9/06
Nolan & Katherine Tracy	9/25

September Birthdays

Dennis Klaustermeyer	9/01
William Verbryke	9/02
Melody Haar	9/04
Glenn Truman	9/05
John Ottney	9/06
Kim Danes	9/07
Daniel Laity	9/07
Michael Clinker	9/08
Dick Nolte	9/09
Sharon Giesler	9/09
Jenny Otney	9/14
Paige Helmke	9/14
Maxwell Barr	9/14
David Cook	9/15
Bob Elkins	9/16
Kaleb Kuhlman	9/16
Duane Lohr	9/17
David Roepke	9/17
Tyler Little	9/18
Peggy Krumnow	9/20
Dawn Wilburn	9/21
Sharon Virtue	9/21
Alois Amstutz	9/22
Morgan Little	9/22
Alyssa Baechle	9/22
Mariah Baechle	9/22
Jared Applegate	9/22
Tyler Cunningham	9/23
Margaret Mills	9/24
Susan Cole	9/26
Linda Valasek	9/28
Bryan Blausey	9/28
Jacob Amstutz	9/28





Church Council Meeting

June 1, 2025

Those in attendance: Dick Kuhlman, Ron

Busdeker, Pastor Margaret, Brian & Heidi Holub

Pastor Shared an Opening Prayer

April Council Meeting Minutes: reviewed, Ron moved to accept and Dick seconded.

Treasurer's Report: Ron reported the General Fund was at \$15,349 through 4/30/25. All Education Grant loans have been repaid. Dick moved to accept, Heidi seconded.

Then we discussed the state of the General Fund and how giving is down approximately \$21K comparing 23/24 to 24/25. We're going to go back to publishing the weekly offering in the bulletin again and see if that helps drive some more incoming funds. Pastor Margaret to write an informative article for the July Beacon explaining giving and where the money goes.

Deacon's Report:

April – 43 in person & 35 sharing communion

May – 48 in person & 36 sharing communion

Trustee's Report: Dick mentioned the painting for the interior walls on the Rice Street entrance side has begun. The painter is working on our inside project on rainy days when he cannot work on his other project which is an exterior project. Should be all done in the next few weeks. Denny Stinebaugh removed the overgrown blue spruce out front. The next project is to look at the removal of the junipers along the windows on the Clinton St side.

Pastor's Report: Margaret mentioned the directory is still a work in progress. With Katie leaving, we need ideas on how to get this done. Pastor also

mentioned there are still issues with people using the church driveway as a shortcut to get from Rice St to Clinton St or vice-versa. We need a solution because someone is going to get hurt. Once in-stance, a person saw the cones and still proceeded by driving through the parsonage lawn to get through.

President's Report: Brian wanted to thank everyone that stayed to join us and donate towards Lotts Creek with the Potato Bar fundraiser. Thank you for your generosity!

SPRC: meeting for 6/4/25 to discuss the open Office Administrator position

NEW BUSINESS

Loose Offerings:

July = Strengthen the Church

August = Cherry Street Mission

OLD BUSINESS

Videographer: Still a work in progress. Evan is working with Paul to help streamline things to make it easier for anyone else that may have to fill in should Paul be unavailable. Tyler Little mentioned he'd be willing to help on Sundays as well with this if needed.

Meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer



Office Notes

*****COUNCIL MEETING** will take place on September 7 at 7:00pm in the Conference Room at St. John's UCC.***



“OFFICE HOURS” at Christy's will continue on Thursdays from 9 to noon. All are welcome at the round table just inside the front door. You'll see Pastor Margaret's sign.

PASTOR ON THE PORCH will continue on Thursday evenings through September, weather permitting. We will gather from 7:00 until dark. Feel free to come and sit for awhile.

HOME COMMUNION: If you would like Pastor Margaret to bring communion to your home, please contact the church at 419-862-3511 or email mills-m92445@gmail.com or text 440-487-2549. We will set up a time close to the first Sunday of the month when we celebrate communion in the worship service.



SPECIAL MUSIC: Anyone interested in providing Special Music for our summer services, please contact Lynn at 419-680-6196. We always welcome special music — anytime of the year, but especially during the summer! Thanks!

CALLING ALL GARDENERS: What can you do with all of your surplus garden produce this summer? Donate it to the Elmore Food Pantry! Help families obtain fresh produce this growing season! We are open the second Friday of each month from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm and are located at Grace Lutheran Church, 19225 Witty Rd., Elmore. Call ahead to drop-off your fresh produce on the second Thursday of each month Grace Lutheran Church (419.862.3630) or Pat Shaffer (419.351.0150).



SONGBIRDS AND BELLS rehearse every Wednesday night - Songbirds from 6:30-7:30 and Handbells from 7:30-8:30. Please consider participating in one or both. See you there!

HONOR WORKERS will have their first fall meeting on Tuesday, September 9 at 6:30 at the church. Then we will visit Jennifer Peeler across the street to see her flowers, herbs, and bees. We will finish with dessert and a program called “Bee Surprised” in the Fellowship Hall.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS The Annual Chicken ‘N’ Biscuit Dinner Drive-Thru is on Saturday, October 18, 2025 from 4:00-6:00pm. It will be \$12/person.

We need 9” PIES (apple, pumpkin, cherry). Please sign up – sheet coming soon.



AA MEETING is every Thursday evening from 7:00 - 8:00. We are so glad to have them meet in our Fellowship Hall.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING MEAL: Tom Wilhart, pastor at the Church of God in Elmore, is retiring at the end of the year. The Community Meal on Thanksgiving day has been a mission and ministry of love created by the Church of God many years ago. The community volunteers to make it happen. There is a need for a vision for the future. We might have a volunteer to oversee this adventure but all ideas are welcome. What are your thoughts?

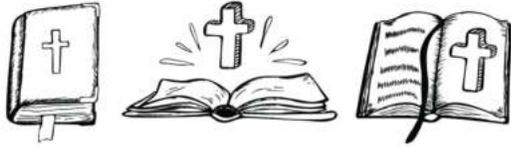
SEPTEMBER 14TH - RALLY DAY, WELCOME BACK SUNDAY, BLESSING OF THE BACK-PACKS, FELLOWSHIP HOUR: Anything I missed? Come and bring friends as we begin our fall programming with a big WELCOME BACK!

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS will be October 12. Bring them to church, or bring a picture and we'll bless your pets. We obviously will be outside.



Office Notes Continued...

MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY will resume on September 8 at 7pm in the Council Room. We will begin with Philippians.



ELMORE FOOD PANTRY In September, St. John's will be collecting canned tuna. Other food or pantry items may be given, but this is the particular request from the Pantry for St. John's to give this month. There are baskets on both the Clinton and Rice Street landings where you may drop off your donations each month. The Food Pantry will be distributing food pantry items the second Friday of each month from 9:00 am to noon at Grace Lutheran.

HONOR WORKERS

The Honor Workers have a great program put together this year! From "Bee-ing Surprised" to Fire Safety, tours of Rutherford B. Hayes Museum to Barn Quilt Tours, to a 50's & 60's Jive, the Honor Workers are keeping busy and spreading their faith and love!

TOGETHER IN PRAYER If you would like Pastor Margaret to lift up a prayer concern or announcement in the Sunday morning worship service, please email millsm92445@gmail.com or text 440-487-2549 or call the church at 419-862-3511.

MONTHLY BEACON We have been sending a Beacon sporadically, as you know. We also tried sending a Beacon quarterly, then every two months — but many of you have expressed a desire to have us create one monthly again. So we will begin with this September Beacon. The reason? With information going out every several months, things would come up in between and we'd have to send out another announcement. So it just makes sense to send one each month. But you can help. Please send ideas for what you appreciate most in the Beacon...just know that Pastor Margaret doesn't do recipes. Thanks for suggestions and ideas. We will continue to send electronically with several print copies on the back counter in the sanctuary.

NEIGHBORS IN NEED OFFERING: There are four special offerings in the United Church of Christ taken at various times of the year. Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, One Great Hour of Sharing, and the Christmas Fund. With our giving to Our Church's Wider Mission, we give to all five offerings

of the UCC becoming a Five for Five congregation. These offerings support various ministries within the UCC including disaster relief, refugee assistance, church growth, and assistance for retired clergy/authorized ministers. In October, we will support the Neighbors in Need offering which supports the UCC ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States including support for the Council for American Indian Ministry, advocacy efforts, direct service projects and grants. Neighbors in Need grants are also annually awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. More details will be in the October Beacon.

WHY DO I GIVE?

For many years, I led stewardship and giving workshops for local churches in the association where I served as staff for Youth, Faith Formation, Stewardship and Church in the World. It was a joy to watch congregations and individuals come to recognize that giving isn't to raise money to meet the budget, or even to pay the bills — giving is because God has blessed us with so much that we can do nothing less than give back. So I give to my church in gratitude, not because the church has needs but because I need to give. I thank you for your continued giving out of a sense of gratitude and spirituality.



NWOA WISE RESOLUTION

WISE, UCC Mental Health Network:

Welcoming - Inclusive - Supportive - Engaged. - At the Annual Meeting of the Northwest Ohio Association of the Heartland Conference of the UCC, we heard about the initiative for the association and each local church to become a WISE association and church. The association voted the resolution printed in the Beacon. I will contact Rev. Fred Coulter, the chair of the team working on this, for a presentation to us in the near future. Among the information that will be shared as we move forward is this: "It is a process to encourage congregations (and associations and conferences) to become more welcoming and supportive of those living with mental health challenges and their families. It is providing safe space for spiritual support." I would like us to consider being a WISE congregation. The resolution is below:

Northwest Ohio Association United Church of Christ

Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged (WISE) Resolution



In the United Church of Christ, we affirm that no matter who you are and no matter where you are or have been on life's journey, you are welcome. This affirmation is rooted in love when Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love another." (John 13:34-35)

The Northwest Ohio Association (NWOA) has chosen to live out this commandment by becoming a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged (WISE) association. We will establish covenantal relationships with God and individual churches within the Northwest Ohio Association, as well as with each other and ourselves.

Therefore, the NWOA agrees to live out this call of accepting all of God's beloved children by entering into a WISE covenant:

WHEREAS, the NWOA resolved to be Welcoming to people with mental health challenges to reduce the stigma that has made them feel unwelcome in the past.

WHEREAS, the NWOA resolves to be Inclusive to people with mental health challenges to ensure they fit into all association events and activities.

WHEREAS, the NWOA resolved to be Supportive of people with mental health challenges to recognize that everyone needs help at some time in their life.

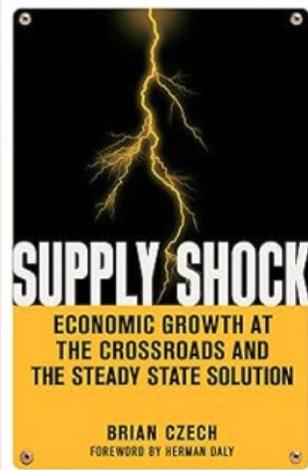
WHEREAS, the NWOA resolved to be Engaged with people who have mental health challenges to learn more from them and how they can be active participants in the beloved community.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NWOA will become a WISE Association in all activities from April 26, 2025 forward.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NWOA will offer resources and support to congregations who choose to become WISE churches.



Brian Czech

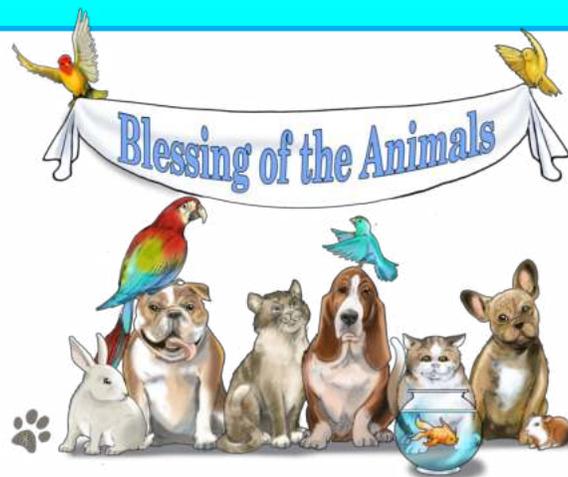


YOU ARE ALL INVITED:
Wed. Sep. 10 @ 7:30 PM ET

Register at:
factsustain.org/distinguished

Supply Shock by Brian Czech leaves no doubt that the biggest idea of the 20th century – economic growth – has become the biggest problem of the 21st. Required reading for anyone concerned about the world our children and grandchildren will inherit, this landmark work lays a solid foundation for a new economic model, perhaps in time for preventing global catastrophes; certainly in time for lessening the damages.

[Register for this September 10th Zoom Event!](#)



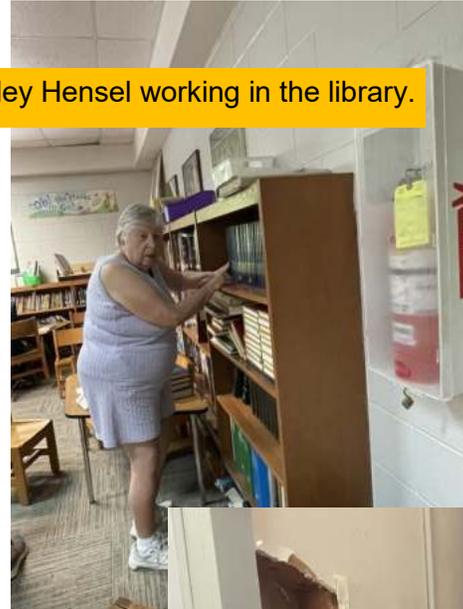
Remember to bring your pets or a picture of your pets to church on October 8th for a special blessing!

KENTUCKY MISSION TRIP 2025

This year our Kentucky trip was very different. It was sad without Alice but her son, Ron, is the new director of Lotts Creek Community School and while he has big shoes to fill, he is doing a fantastic job. It was also different because we didn't go into the hollers to work in a home. That is one of the best parts of our week down there as we not only get to provide needed repairs and work that they need, we get to know the families and create relationships we return to each year. But with the loss of Alice and with Ron being so very new, there wasn't time for them to discover homes related to the school that needed us. So some of us worked in the library, others washed walls in the school in preparation for painting, others did yard work, some did maintenance in the dorms, others helped in the food pantry, while others cleaned out a storage room in the old school. Tim and others worked on Alice's home — now Ron's home. While there were things to be done, it wasn't the same not being in homes in the hollers. As you know, the school is one of the last public/private settlement schools in the country. It exists to provide a community school for the children and youth of the hollers surrounding Lotts Creek. If not for this school, they would be bussed to a consolidated school nearly an hour from their homes. Lotts Creek School has outstanding sports teams, a quality education that provides the basics to attend colleges — nearly 90% of the graduates attend college, many returning to work with their own communities in education and health care. The school is the center of community assistance with the food pantry and social work programs. Without Alice, they are in a time of transition but the new principal is a graduate of Cordia (Lotts Creek) and has a family tie to Ron and Alice, and a dedication to the education of these mountain children and youth. It is our privilege to be a part of their "family" each year. So stay tuned for next year's dates and let us know if you want to join the mission.



ABOVE: Abbey Holub organizing books in the library.

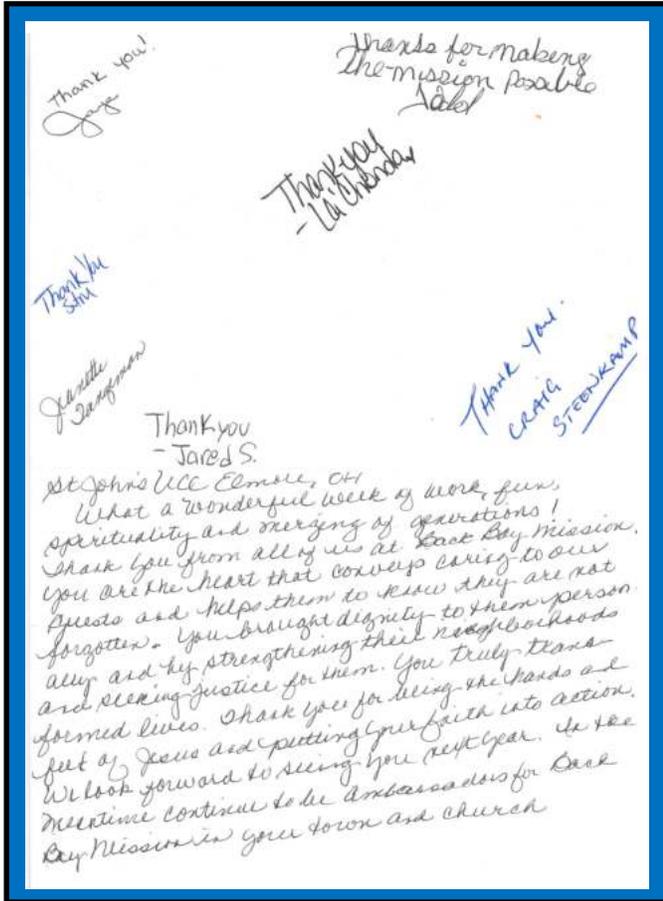


Shirley Hensel working in the library.

BELOW: Brian and Abbey Holub at Hoe Down Island.



Katie Applegate repairing drywall in the dorm.



BACK BAY MISSION CONTINUES TRANSFORMING LIVES IN SEPTEMBER:

Back Bay Mission is a mission of the United Church of Christ in Biloxi, Mississippi. Shirley Hensel, Belinda Lentz and I have participated in the mission with the folks from the Congregational Church of South Dartmouth, MA and St. Paul's UCC in Oak Harbor. The mission has been operating in Biloxi for 100 years with a new UCC congregation starting up this year in the Micah Center. As the time gets closer for us to travel to Biloxi again, I'll share more of what we'll be doing through the week. As you may remember, their theme is the Micah text we sing every week — to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We feed the hungry, work on homes, and other ways we follow both Micah and the teachings of Jesus to transform lives in the area near the Back Bay of Biloxi.

For this Beacon, however, I'd like to share the story of Rev. James Pennington, the Executive Director of Back Bay Mission. James has become a friend and an inspiration during our times there. He was honored with the President's Citizen of the Year Award from the Biloxi Chapter of the NAACP at their Annual Freedom Fund Banquet. "This award, given in recognition of exemplifying the spirit of Biloxi, is a true testament to James' tireless dedication to justice and community through his work at Back Bay Mission. Our deepest thanks to the Biloxi NAACP for this honor. It is both humbling and inspiring to see James' leadership and BBM's mission recognized in such a meaningful way."

Rev. Pennington writes, "This award does not belong to me alone; it belongs to all of us who believe that justice, equity, and human dignity are worth the struggle, worth the late nights, worth the risk, worth the tears."

If others would like to join us on the trip to Biloxi from April 26 - May 2, 2026, please let Pastor Margaret know.



Treasurer's Report

Treasurer's Report—May 1 - July 31, 2025



General Fund	
Balance as of May 1, 2025	\$ 13,594.12
Offerings	\$ 27,901.00
Expenses	\$ 39,351.87
Balance as of July 31, 2025	\$ 2,143.30

** Loose offerings for May were given to Disaster Relief*

*** Average attendance for Sundays in May=*

May/June/July Weekly Offering

May 4, 2025:	\$1,890.00
May 11, 2025:	\$2,515.00
May 18, 2025:	\$3,050.00
May 25, 2025:	\$1,265.00
June 1, 2025:	\$2,270.00
June 8, 2025:	\$1,215.00
June 15, 2025:	\$3,085.00
June 22, 2025:	\$1,481.00
June 29, 2025:	\$1,065.00
July 6, 2025:	\$3,725.00
July 13, 2025:	\$1,210.00
July 20, 2025:	\$3,005.00
July 27, 2025:	\$2,125.00

** Loose offerings for May were given to Elmore Food Pantry*

September 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 LABOR DAY	2	3 6:30 Songbirds 7:30 Bells	4	5	6
7 10:00 Worship Communion 7pm Council Meeting	8 7pm Bible Study	9	10 6:30 Songbirds 7:30 Bells	11 9am: Christy's 7pm: Pastor on the Porch 7pm: AA	12	13
14 10:00 Worship Rally Day/Welcome Back Blessing of the Backpacks 11:15 Fellowship Hour	15 7pm Bible Study	16	17 6:30 Songbirds 7:30 Bells	18 9am: Christy's 7pm: Pastor on the Porch 7pm: AA	19	20
21 10:00 Worship POTLUCK! 	22 7pm Bible Study	23	24 6:30 Songbirds 7:30 Bells	25 9am: Christy's 7pm: Pastor on the Porch 7pm: AA	26 9am-5:45pm Heartland Conf. Annual Mtg. Ohio Wesleyan U.	27
28 10:00 Worship 11:15 Fellowship Hour	29 7pm Bible Study	30				

THIS MONTH WE GATHER TOGETHER TO WORSHIP

in the sanctuary at 10:00 am

Fellowship Hour are held on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

*Thank You to all who are continuing their contributions to St. John's.
Church services can be found on [YouTube](#) and [St. John's Facebook page](#).*

Hard copies of the September Beacon are available by the side door of the Clinton Street entrance.

Potluck Celebration for Pastor Margaret's 80th Birthday!



Pastor Margaret's 80th Birthday Celebration Potluck!

WHEN: September 21, 2025 after Sunday Service

WHERE: Fellowship Hall

SERVING: Chicken Sandwiches, Cake, Ice Cream,
Drinks (table service provided)





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Administrative Assistant:

Erica Baker

Music Director:

Lynn Grear



THE BEACON

-Shining God's Light Where All Are Welcome-