

The Messenger

NEW COVENANT

COMMUNITY CHURCH

A WEST AKRON NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

The Pastor's Page

August
2023

CATS OR DOGS?

Are you a cat person or a dog person? This is a question that is popular on first dates as you're getting to know your (maybe) soon-to-be significant other. On the surface, this question seems harmless, but as I've started to think about this question as of late, I'm realizing the deep theological implications this question holds. I say this because, the other day, a comic popped up on my Facebook page with two slides. In the first slide was a dog, saying, "They feed me, give me a home, and love me unconditionally. They must be God." In the other slide was a cat, saying, "They feed me, give me a home, and love me unconditionally. I must be God." Admittedly, this is a humorous sentiment, but it also raises an interesting question worth our pondering as God's Children: What is our perception of ourselves in regard to those things that have been given to us, whether it be talents, health, life, financial riches, or anything else? Additionally, how quick are we to give thanks to God for the things we have, or are we faster to say or think things like "I deserve this"?

Admittedly, this is taking the initial question in a whole different direction than it is initially intended (I realize that), but it is nonetheless important for us to reconsider this question weekly, if not daily. In the case of my reinterpretation, a "dog person" would be a person who would be grateful for everything they have received, able to see God's hand at work in all things. Good things happen, and they are quick to thank God for said blessing.



The Pastor's Page can't

When bad things happen, they are able to see it as a necessary part of life, thanking God for Their presence and guidance during those times of trial we all face. While there may be some approaching of God for the meeting of wants and/or needs, those requests are balanced (if not outweighed) by those praises for what has been so graciously given already. In other words, a dog person is one who, out of an abundance of humility, is able to relate everything back to God.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, then, is the “cat person.” This type of person has very little focus on God save when it really matters most. They view their talents as of their own making. The good that happens to them is the fruits of their own labor whereas the bad, if not being some form of divine retribution, is the consequences of their own poor decisions. If this person approaches God, it is out of desire for having their own wants and needs met. They want something good to befall them, and thus pray for God to shower them with good luck, fortune, power, etc. When something bad happens, they pray to God only to scold God for intervening in what they may perceive as being their own good work. In such prayers, the focus remains on the pray-er, with very little (if any) acknowledgement of past or present blessings. In short, everything relates back to the self and God is just a player in enhancing/exalting that self. God is therefore lost to one’s own ego.

So, with these two definitions in mind, we return then to that initial question. Granted, no person is perfectly to one side or the other (as is the case in all things). We all have our moments of being dog people, of turning to God in the good and the bad, knowing that God is present in all things and in all life’s circumstances. These are often brought on by being reminded of our calling through Christ and the Bible to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). However, due to Sin’s hold on humanity and our inability to truly break away from that nature inside us all, we all have our days where we are cat people, too. We congratulate ourselves for a job well done, pat ourselves on the back, and feel deserving of honor, praise, glory (whatever word you choose) from others. This exalted view of our selves, though, gets in the way of our being able to see God’s hand in those circumstances. Nonetheless, we have this eternal struggle within ourselves between our “dog” and “cat” sides; a fight that God will see us through if we only let Them, but one we cannot hope to win if we choose to fight this battle alone. Thus, it’s worth asking ourselves each day: Which are you; a cat person or a dog person, and is that who you want to be?

- Pastor Brad



The President's Post

Greetings everyone,

What a treat and a joy it is to be in worship on Sunday morning with our brand-spanking new minister leading us in worship. I like Brad's theme, the Ten Commandments, for his first 11 weeks; I like his vibrant and colorful vestments; and I like the way he steps down into the congregation to hear, rejoice, and pray for the things both joyful and concerning to us.

It was delightful to hear that Ben Heischman got married last month. Congratulations to Ken and Heidi.

We are in the high production phase of our Mission Garden. Bev masterminds our watering, weeding, harvesting of vegetables and Betsy arranges to get it delivered Saturday mornings to Gennesaret. And aren't the flowers, shrubs, and trees that Tim plants, trims, and waters spectacular this year?

I'm reading Alister McGrath's Christianity's Dangerous Idea, which reviews in 478 pages the past, present, and future of Protestantism. Being well-versed Protestants, consider, please, the following statement, "The historical origins and intellectual foundations of Protestantism are such that diversity and tensions have been essential aspects of its identity from the beginning." Do we have diversity, and do we have tension?

All the best,
Nancy Clem,
Board President

MISSION GARDEN UPDATE

The harvest from the mission garden continues to grow more colorful each week. Last month, Bev was pulling mostly collards and green beans. But, the harvest on July 28th had:

- 12 Beets
- 12 Garlic
- 6 Yellow Squash
- 1 Bag Green Beans
- 7 Tomatoes
- 2 bags Collards

Thank you Mission Garden Committee for all your hard work.



**Ohio Special Election
August 8, 2023**

**The office will be
closed Tuesday, for
the election.
Don't forget to vote.**





LET'S LUNCH AT LEO'S

Ladies and gentlemen are invited to come do lunch at *Leo's Italian Social (Harvester Room)*

2251 Front St., Cuyahoga Falls

Next Friday, August 11th

11:30 a.m.

Plans for this started as a ladies' lunch, but it is now a get-together so Mary Lindsay can see everyone. Mary turned **97** in May, but did not want a big deal at church. She is now okay with seeing everyone at lunch somewhere else. If you would like to attend, please sign up this Sunday. A sign-up sheet will be on the hall table. Reservations need to be made early next week. If you have any questions, or won't be able to sign up on Sunday, please call Joan or Nancy W.

Parking is available in a garage across the street and down slightly from the restaurant. It is free for 2 hours.

COFFEE HOUR

No coffee hour this Sunday, but we begin again on September 3. That Sunday is taken, and there will be no coffee hour on October 1 because of the installation service of Pastor Brad in the afternoon, along with a reception after the service in Fellowship Hall.

However, we still need people to sign up for November and December.

We will discuss next year's Coffee Hour later this year.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service for Marjorie Alice Hazlett Case is set for Thursday, August 10, at 11:30 a.m., at Billow FAIRLAWN Chapel, 85 N Miller Rd.

Marge was 101 years old, when she passed away peacefully on July 29, 2023.

There will be no calling hours. A private inurnment will be at Rose Hill Burial Park.

In Marge's memory, in lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to [Humane Society of Summit County](http://www.summithumane.org), 7996 Darrow Rd. Ste 30, Twinsburg, OH. 44087.

(www.summithumane.org)

Here is the link to [Marge's obituary](#).



NCCC DIRECTORY

We have most of our information/changes needed for the. 2023 Directory. The time has come to put this together.

Any corrections, please let Reesá know.

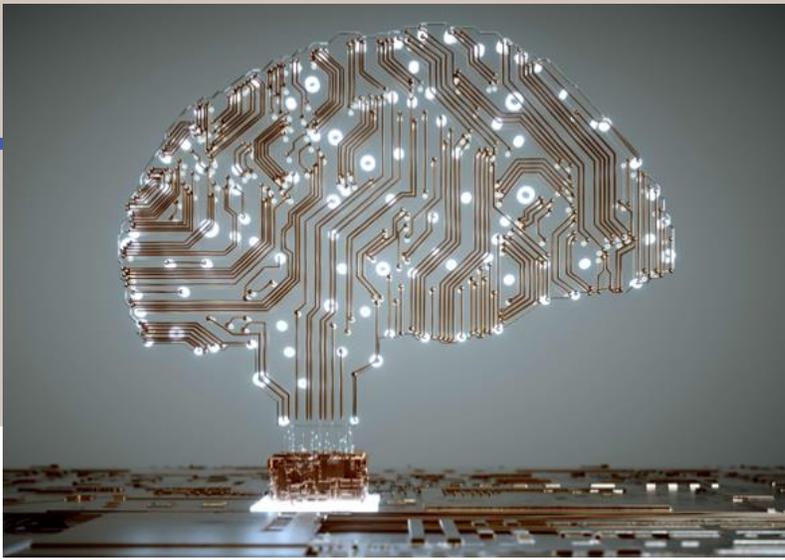
MINUTE FOR MISSION

Your Mission committee met recently and it was decided that we would poll the congregation concerning Christmas basket distribution in December. We would like to hear from all of you as to coming together once again to deliver baskets in person or continuing the Acme card distribution by mail. You will have the chance to vote and make comments, if desired, on Sunday, August 20. There will be a paper ballot in the bulletin that Sunday, so please come to church and vote!!!

Thank you

- Margie Frlich

THE CHURCH & AI



While leading technologists such as Bill Gates and Elon Musk warn of its dangers, and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman asks for regulation of "superintelligent" artificial intelligences, the promises of artificial intelligence (AI) are just too good to be ignored. Leaders in medicine, finance, education, and marketing continue to explore the applicability of machine intelligence to their disciplines.

But, is artificial intelligence "forbidden fruit" or does it bring anything of value to the church and its mission? See what you think. Jackie Roth used the following prayer at the July governing board meeting as part of a devotion centered on Mark 12:28 -34. It was written by the natural language processing AI tool ChatGPT.

Loving God with All Our Being - A Prayer
Compassionate and loving God,

We gather before You, inspired by the teachings of Jesus to love You with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. We recognize that Your love knows no boundaries and that You call us to embody that love in our lives. In humble reverence, we offer this prayer:

Loving God, with all our heart, we open ourselves to Your divine love. May our hearts overflow with compassion, acceptance, and understanding, mirroring the boundless love You extend to us. Break down the walls that divide us, replacing prejudice and fear with love and unity. Teach us to love deeply, even

when it is difficult, and help us to see the beauty and worth in every person we encounter.

Loving God, with all our soul, we acknowledge that You have breathed life into us. Awaken our souls to the wonders of Your creation and the sacredness of each moment. Guide us to appreciate the diversity and interconnectedness of all living beings. May our souls find solace in Your presence and be moved to acts of kindness, gratitude, and mindfulness.

Loving God, with all our strength, we dedicate ourselves to pursuing justice and righteousness. Empower us to stand against oppression, discrimination, and injustice. Fill us with courage and resilience to advocate for those who are marginalized and voiceless. Let our strength be a force for positive change, working towards a world where all are treated with dignity, respect, and equality.

Loving God, with all our mind, we seek wisdom and understanding. Ignite our intellects with curiosity and a hunger for truth. Help us challenge harmful beliefs and embrace an open-minded faith. May our minds be vessels of knowledge, guided by Your wisdom and discernment. Grant us the capacity to learn and grow, as we deepen our understanding of Your ways.

Loving God, we thank You for the teachings of Jesus, who embodied love in its purest form. May his example guide us as we strive to love You and our neighbors as ourselves. Grant us the grace to live out this love in our actions, words, and intentions. May our lives be a testament to Your all-encompassing love and may we bring light and hope to a world in need.

In the name of Jesus, who taught us to love unconditionally, we pray.

Amen.

GET INVOLVED



Under the [Akron Area Interfaith Council's](#) Spiritual Life Committee, a proposal has been offered to identify how the interfaith community can align with presumptive Mayor Shammus Malik's various proposals for Akron. His proposals include:

- Safer Together—a comprehensive approach to public safety that builds trust and includes effective models of policing;
- Living Together—decisive action to address the decades-long health and housing crisis;
- Working Together—a plan for strengthening downtown and business areas and removing barriers that keep people from working.

Round River has worked with the Malik team, and the hope is that their relationship will help us ensure the alignment of priorities, so we can be apart of the process as the [Malak transition team](#) focuses on the best way to achieve its goals. Fortunately, that part of the process includes reaching out to the religious community for input. At this time, Malik plans to attend a portion of the event. Finally, [Round River](#) would also produce a concluding report suitable for sharing with the administration, local media, and participating congregations.

Sue Lacy, President of Round River, will be the presenter. Her fee is \$2500, which will be paid by AAIC, and through donations from individuals and participating congregations.

Tom Bodie, the Spiritual Life Committee Chair, is working on this project along with other members of AAIC. In September, the design team will meet with the consulting firm to develop the program and train leaders. The main event with the table leaders, etc. will occur in October. In November, the final report will be delivered. The October date and the venue location have not been determined.

As the plans come together, congregations will be informed as to what is needed and how we can participate. On a side note, this reminds me somewhat of the On the Table discussions we had several years ago hosted by the Akron Community Foundation. I believe Bath Church was the location for the table discussions since a large inside space was needed for the event. Hope we can get some of our members to participate.

The Social Justice and Peace Committee reported on several more events that we can participate in in August, in connection with stopping gun violence. Moms Demand Action lists the August selections. Many of these activities include writing notes/postcards to the victims of gun violence. Locations are throughout the Akron area. Their next event, [a survivor network meeting](#), will be held August 8th, at Lawton Street Community Center.

AAIC's September 5th meeting will be at the [Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank](#) beginning at noon. We'll have a pizza lunch first before the meeting. Then after the meeting we will have an opportunity to volunteer at the foodbank from 1:30-3:30 p.m. If anyone is interested this volunteer opportunity, please join us. The foodbank is located at 350 Opportunity Pkwy.