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## TWO BIRDS (PART 1 OF 3)

### THE FIRST BIRD

“The Church is dying.” “(Mainline) Christianity is dying.” “Christians are becoming the minority.” How many of you have heard one of these statements (or something along similar lines) within the last year? How many of you have thought or said these or something similar in the last year? How about the last month? Admittedly, the landscape for Mainline Christianity doesn’t really look all that good. Long-standing churches that have been there for decades, maybe even centuries, are starting to close their doors due to lack of funding. Congregations that once flourished now struggle to fill even a few of the pews on a Sunday morning, let alone run all their programs. Where once the Church was gaining new members like crazy, now, we are hemorrhaging members from both ends as older members enter “the Church Triumphant” and as the younger generations leave the Church for one reason or another. Where once there were enough pastors to fill every pulpit in our great nation, and whereas being a pastor



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was once a competitive field with great financial stability, now we as pastors might as well be put on the “endangered species list,” as there are now less pastors available to fill pulpits than there are pulpits to fill, and pastors struggle far more than they used to at

making ends meet. In short, it would seem that the Fat Lady has begun her Swan Song for the Church, and there isn’t a heart that isn’t aching or a dry eye in the house. However, I would argue that this mentality is wrong.

We as Christians (especially Mainline Protestants) look at the current landscape and all we see is death and despair. However, we need to remember that the current times are not the only time the Church has faced a “life-altering event.” In fact, the church has faced a “life-altering event” *(Two Birds continued on page 2)*

*(Two Birds continued from page 1)*

roughly every 500 years (give or take). The Church was born roughly 40 C.E., but as “the new thing,” early Christians faced unimaginable struggles with persecution, condemnation, and the like. Fast forward to around 500 C.E., and what we have is the institution of a unified “papacy,” a system that brought together previously-divided nations, each of whom had their own papacy and religious leaders before that point. Imagine the difficulty that must have posed not only for leaders to bring together their people “under one roof,” but for the people to afford such power and authority to one set of leaders. Then, around 1000 C.E., there was the Great Schism, which was the final and formal separation of the Eastern Church (Orthodoxy) from the Western Church (Catholicism), an event that surely would have had a sense of “death” to those witnessing such a split. Then, in the 1500’s, yet another massive schism happened, this time in the form of the Protestant Reformation, and again, we can imagine the stress this split must have invoked in the hearts of many. Now, here we are in the early 2000’s, roughly 500 years later, and again, we find the landscape to be, in a word, “chaotic.” However, let me be clear about something: “Chaos” does not equate to “Death.”

The Church is going through a very “chaotic” period as it faces what appears to be another “life-altering event” in its life, I’ve no doubt of that. As such, we can speculate about what that “new thing” that will come out of it will be, but who among us can know what God is up to behind the scenes? However, should we

choose to believe that God is even now still at work behind the scenes, and should we continue to believe that God works in and through every one of us to make Their Will be done, then very truly we reap a two-fold benefit. On the one hand, such belief reassures us that this, too, shall pass; that this also is part of God’s plan, just like Jesus’ death was part of that plan. On the other, it charges us to think about how even we are playing a role in



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that plan, whether or not we realize it, and what we should be doing in response. To quickly clarify what I just said, yes, there is a right answer to what we should be doing, and I’ll get to that in part 3 of this miniseries. However, this situation is but one metaphorical bird. As the old saying hints, there is a second bird (next month’s article) whose solution lies in the same stone (July’s newsletter article). For now, though, I leave you with this question: How are you doing God’s Will in your life right now?

*Pastor Brad*



## *From the President's Pen*

### *With Much Gratitude*

Many thanks to members of this congregation for stepping up and encouraging others in so many ways.

First, thanks to John Sezna for spearheading the drive to obtain more money to offset what was needed to take out of existing funds for a new boiler, (actually, two smaller boilers). Several of us, including me, were not too crazy about asking people for more money for this project when we could have taken everything out of the bank. However, John prevailed, and we now have a few additional dollars in the bank. Replacement of the boiler had been in our thoughts since we moved into the building some 12 years ago, and we were able to postpone this for as long as possible.

Secondly, a huge thank you to members, families of members, and friends who gave generously to this year's especially important Hunger Walk. As of this writing, the total is over \$4,000! Proud of you for stepping up.

Thirdly, of course all of you have contributed to our other causes—One Great Hour of Sharing, disaster relief, canned goods for the Lenten Drive, book

fairs, the Pentecost offering, and freewill offerings at Fellowship meals.

Turning from the monetary, to what you actually do on the volunteer side. You assist with coffee hours, work on both outside and inside chores (Tim Meyer is a tireless volunteer with outside chores), chair committees like Fellowship which requires much effort, volunteer at Gennesaret, and at FIT activities, book fairs, and with other chores, large and small.

Lastly, I want to thank Marty Pastor's friend who has given us many goodies to use for coffee hours. Stay tuned for what we plan on doing with all the food items we have stored for coffee hours. Since coffee hours for the summer months will only occur on the first Sunday of the month beginning in June, a "take home some items, but give a few dollars to the cause", will occur after the service on June 1<sup>st</sup> in Fellowship Hall.

In closing, you have volunteered when asked and gone out of your way to contribute to the functioning of the church. For that, I heartily thank you.

May God bless our small and generous congregation.

*Nancy W.*

Governing Board President

Unfortunately, the need to give has continued to grow. Climate change has been tied to bigger, more frequent natural disasters. Cuts to government programs and higher prices at the grocery store has led to a greater need for food assistance. Meanwhile, despite the fact that our membership rolls have decreased, the amount you've given has increased. Here are the numbers.

NCCC Giving	2023	2024	2025
One Great Hour	\$ 575	\$ 435	\$ 680
Hunger Walk	\$2940	\$3705	\$4915





## AAIC NEWS

Obviously, the big news is the Hunger Walk on May 4<sup>th</sup>. We have received publicity in various online publications for this event.

There is no May meeting. It would come too close to the Hunger Walk, and many in the group are also winding up the Weaving Project that began in early April. Looking forward to seeing the finished product since, by all accounts, it has been a successful project.

A Leadership Team meeting is scheduled for May 6<sup>th</sup> to go over the slate of officers to be voted on in June and to prepare for the June 1<sup>st</sup> meeting at Trinity United Church of Christ, 915 N. Main St. This building is currently being turned into a Community Center, although a congregation still worships there on Sundays. An interfaith supper is being planned for this event. It will start at 5:30 p.m.

The group continues to monitor what's happening with our immigrant neighbors in the North Hill area. Several have been deported without due process.

Several of us attended The Akron Roundtable program on April 17<sup>th</sup>, which featured Madhu Sharma, Executive Director of the International Institute, and Farad Sethna, an immigration attorney. Both stressed that our government is violating due process laws in regard to deporting immigrants, and that we, as citizens of the Akron area, need to put

pressure on our congressional representatives. However, how to push these representatives is a real problem now. An ending comment, mentioned during the roundtable, was that

stated when Congress says that opening the floodgates for immigrants will cause problems, that this statement is really an excuse for doing nothing. People are scared. The situation, of course, is changing daily.

- Nancy W.



## **B.Y.O.B. (BQ)**

Fellowship Committee has some exciting events coming your way that we will discuss at our next meeting May 13<sup>th</sup>. Some possible events we will be discussing are a "bring your own BBQ" and game night combo in June, a freewill sale of all the wonderful goodies we have set aside for Coffee Hour (also in June), and possibly a ballgame to root for our Rubber Ducks in August. If you are interested in having your voice heard, whether to discuss one of these events or to bring an idea of your own, please join us May 13<sup>th</sup> here at the church.



## **Upcoming Meetings**

Governing Board  
Tuesday, May 27  
6:00 p.m.

Worship Committee  
Monday, May 5<sup>th</sup>  
4:30 p.m.

Fellowship Committee  
Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>  
1:30 p.m.

Finance Committee  
Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 a.m.

## **The View from Ukraine**

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, help us welcome Rev. Kolya Koretski, a pastor from Ukraine, who will lead Sunday Service, then join us for a potluck lunch in Fellowship Hall. During that time, he'll share more of his story, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions. Please sign up to bring a dish.





## MITZVAH DAY WEEKEND

JUNE 7 & 8

Mitzvah Day weekend is approaching! The opportunities for helping and learning are many, varied, and fun. You can access the 2025 list of projects and sign up for anything that might interest you. Cathy King and Nancy Williams can help you register online. Brochures are on the hall table. Cathy, Nancy, and Ken have signed up for the Saturday morning (9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Akron Canton Regional Foodbank Project to help box food. It is family-friendly but limited to participants ages 8 and above. Perhaps you would like to join us.

Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, also offers not only projects, but an opportunity to attend the following important event from 3:30 - 5:00:

***Always Climbing Panel Discussion*** – How to Cope with Violence – High school students from Always Climbing Project will lead a powerful and timely discussion focused on violence and policing. The 90-minute session will begin with a 45-minute, student-led panel, guided by Bryce Harris, the executive director of Always Climbing. Teens will share personal insights, experiences, and perspectives. The second half will transition into roundtable discussions. Panelists and audience members will participate in small groups to dive deeper into the conversation, answer questions, and explore actionable ideas for change in their communities.

The weekend ends with a feast of Swenson's burgers, side dishes, salads, and desserts in the Temple Israel social hall at 5 PM. for all participants. Donations for "pick up" types of desserts like cookies or brownies are welcomed.



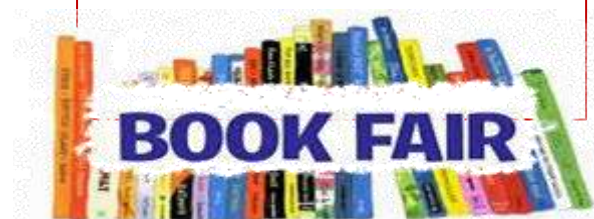
## GENNESARET

Please see Betsy Davis if you can help with food distribution at Gennesaret. NCCC has a long-standing commitment to serve those in need on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.



## MISSION MATTERS

Thanks to Jaci Chetelat's continued efforts, the Portage Path Book Fair will happen Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are needed. The sign-up sheet is in the hall along with a small fraction of the thank you notes we received from Case CLC students, faculty, and staff.



We will be updating the church directory in the coming weeks! If you have any corrections to submit, please do so ASAP!

Thanks!

Jenn

Spring is in the Air! Spring symbolizes new beginnings and the cycle of life, making it a wonderful time for cleaning, organizing, and enjoying the beauty of nature and fellowship; and our first Mission Service Project is right around the corner.

The purpose of the Mission Service Projects is to give members of Eastminster churches--large, small, and in between--the opportunity to make a difference in the name of Jesus Christ outside the four walls of a church facility.

The first mission service project is set for Saturday, May 17, at the Justin T. Rogers Hospice Care Center in Akron, Ohio, where we will spruce up the property for spring and make it more inviting for its residents. Time is 9-4 with lunch at noon (provided by the Resource Committee). Volunteers are encouraged to stay all day but welcome volunteers who are only able to attend half a day. Youth are also welcome to join us! Not into outdoor yard work? No problem, inside help (sitting & standing) is also available!

We currently have 11 of our churches signed up and ready to work, but, of course, welcome more to join us. Anyone interested in helping out, please contact Dan Schomer or Diane Eliser.

For the churches that have already signed up, an email will be sent to the Team Leaders (person of contact) in early May with details regarding May 17.



Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>,  
you can find some  
Bloomin' Good Deals at  
Westminster Presbyterian  
Church's  
Perennials & Garage Sale!  
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
While you shop, enjoy a tasty all-  
beef gourmet hot dog, plus  
optional sides. This event is  
sponsored by the Celtic  
Gardeners and the Discipleship  
Committee of Westminster.







The Pentecost Offering helps guide young people in Christian formation from their earliest years to young adulthood.

**40%** of the Pentecost Offering stays with this congregation to develop and support programs for young people in our own church and community.

**25%** supports Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs) serving around the world.

**25%** supports Ministries with Youth.

**10%** is devoted to children at-risk to improve education and provide safe havens.





## IMMIGRATION: WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON IN NE OHIO?

**AAIC** The Akron Area Interfaith Council is hosting a panel discussion to help prepare interfaith community leaders on how to respond to our immigrant families and friends. The event free will be held:

Tuesday May 27, 2025

6:00 PM

Church of Our Savior Episcopal Church  
471 Crosby St., Akron  
(Light supper included)

### Panelists:

*Deb Kline* has over 38 years of experience as a national community organizer and activist on issues affecting both low-income and labor communities. She successfully organized efforts to pass two federal laws, numerous state laws, and major reforms in the current national child support system. Currently, she serves as the Director of Cleveland Jobs with Justice (CJJ), a coalition of labor, faith, and community organizations joining together for worker justice. Under her leadership for the past 18 years, immigration reform and protecting undocumented workers and their families has been one of CJJ's main areas of work.

*Brian Hoffman* grew up in Northeast Ohio and earned his J.D. from The Ohio State University. He worked in private immigration practice for several years before helping to launch a series of successful pro bono projects, which helped women and children who were seeking asylum while being held on a 55-acre detention camp in Texas. In 2020, he founded The Ohio Center for Strategic Immigration Litigation & Outreach (OCSILiO - pronounced "auxilio"). The nonprofit provides free legal services to people in immigration custody throughout Ohio. Over the years, Brian has been

featured in local and national media outlets and has discussed a variety of legal issues involving immigrants.

*Steve Volk* is Professor of History Emeritus at Oberlin College, where he taught Latin American history for more than 30 years. He also served as research director and executive director of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA). He has worked on immigration issues for more than 20 years, both as an academic and an activist. In 2011, the Carnegie Foundation named him Professor of the Year for the Advancement of Teaching and in 2001 the Chilean government recognized his efforts to restore democracy to that country. He serves on the board of Oberlin Community Supporting Immigrants (OCSI), which provides education and aid to the immigrant community in Oberlin and Lorain County.

*Tania Nemer* has extensive experience in immigration law and has served as an Immigration Judge with the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR). In this role, she presided over asylum and immigration relief hearings. Prior to this, she worked as a magistrate in Summit Co. Probate Court and Akron Municipal Court. She has received multiple awards, including the "Rising Star" honor from Ohio Super Lawyers and the Nettie Cronise Lutes Award from the Ohio State Bar Association.

This invitation should not be widely shared. Seats are limited. Please register early at [forms.gle/HQI2UFWS](https://forms.gle/HQI2UFWS). If you have any questions, please contact email them to [akronaaic@gmail.com](mailto:akronaaic@gmail.com) or [kress3545@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kress3545@sbcglobal.net).