

## Keith's Korner

### Relationship with God

The most invigorating thing for me as a Pastor is when someone asks me a question about faith rather than church business or a building issue. Recently someone sent me this email:



"I'm presently reading Donald Miller's 'Searching for God Knows What' which is a series of essays on the relational aspect of Christianity. He argues that modern Christianity has moved towards trying to condense the Christian message to an intellectually easy formula for the purpose of conveying the Gospel to the unconverted; that one can't easily summarize in common language the relational aspect of Christianity, especially the relationship with a living, present Jesus. I find much of what he argues to be agreeable but I have been pausing as I examine my own relationship with Christ. As you know, a conscience contact with a Higher Power is part of the 12 Step programs and is something I've been working at for many years. However, I sometimes feel like my ability to have a conscience contact with God is on the level of having an 'imaginary friend.' That is not to say I don't have faith that God exists but

I sometimes (in my more cynical moments) question how tangible that relationship can be. There have been times when I have, inexplicably, felt very close to God but these times have not been consistent and have been more extraordinary than common. My question is, what is your perception of a relationship with God? Is this something you struggle with? (Actually, that is two questions). I'd be very curious to get your insights."

My answer: "Yes, I too have struggled with the relational aspects of our faith. However, I think too often our understanding of a 'personal relationship with Jesus Christ' (to use a very Evangelical-ish way of putting it) leaves us with the assumption that our relationship with God is somehow about feeling good all the time instead of a real, daily, working interaction with our Creator-God. In other words, a relationship of any kind always ebbs and flows. Thus, why do we think that our relationship with God would be any different?"

I'm sure your relationship with your wife is one that has its ups and downs and that there are times you feel closer to her than others.

*continued on page 2*

### VISION STATEMENT

"We risk to extend the extravagant welcome of Jesus by creating accessibility, pursuing spiritual formation, and engaging with the broader community. We will fulfill this vision by providing discipleship training, enhancing our building, growing our resources, and developing our staff." This statement is our vision for SJUCC over the next five years, 2006 through 2010.

Possibly even times when you wonder if you have a relationship with her at all. I think that is the same with our relationship with God. And, just as we have to 'work' at our relationships with one another we also have to 'work' at our relationship with God. Our relational connection with God demands a conscience effort on our part. To communicate, listen and speak (prayer, meditation, Bible study/reading, etc.) with God just as we would with others (conversation, counseling, alone time, activities that bring us closer, intimacy, etc.).

A daily walk with God is very important just

as it is with our spouse, children and friends. This is why small discipleship groups in the church are so important. Sunday morning corporate worship just isn't enough to keep us in contact with God daily. In the same way that 12-steps groups meet daily, meeting with and being accountable with a small group to practice our faith and stay connected and in 'relationship' with God is very important. Christianity is not a spiritual path that is done alone."

— *Pastor Keith*

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## **Thank You!**

Deep gratitude is expressed to all who responded with record-breaking generosity to the Christmas Fund. The Pension Boards received \$1,573,000 in contributions to the Christmas Fund appeal. This total not only surpassed our goal for the year, but also set a new record for the total amount received during one year.

St. John collected \$688.00. The Christmas Fund provides financial aid to retired and active ministers and their surviving spouses and children who face financial demands, a ministry carried out by the Pension Boards.

If you have questions about the four mission offerings of the United Church of Christ (One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors In Need, Christmas Fund) contact Sandy Ruck, chair of the Justice, Peace, Mission & Stewardship Committee (JPMS) or visit <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm/special-support.html>.

## **NAACP Invites St. John**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is holding its 99th convention in Cincinnati July 12<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>. The Church Council has voted unanimously to support the NAACP with a donation to its Special Contribution Fund. Pastor Keith will be attending the Religious Leadership Breakfast on Monday, July 14, at 8:00 a.m. at Duke Energy Convention Center. Tickets are \$50 per person. The Church Council invites you to join Pastor Keith and help fill a table of 10 to represent our congregation. Contact Pastor Keith at (859) 261-2066 or [Pastor@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Pastor@StJohnChurch.net) to reserve your seat. July 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline. Visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org) for more information and events throughout the week that you are invited to attend.

### **Pastor Keith's Suggestions for Summer Reading**

*"Thank God for Evolution!"*

*How the Marriage of Science and Religion will Transform Your Life and Our World*

By United Church of Christ clergyman,  
Michael Dowd

*"The Gospel of Inclusion"*

*Reaching Beyond Religious Fundamentalism to the True Love of God*

By Bishop Carlton Pearson (seeking Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ)

*"The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible"*

By A. J. Jacobs

(You won't be able to put this one down.)

All of these are available free at your local Library!

### **"Bellevue Goes to Hollywood"**

This year's variety show on Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> will feature music from the movies and a spaghetti dinner. Dinner will be served at 5:00p.m., and the show will start at 6:30p.m. We are looking for volunteers to help with all aspects of the show. If you are interested, contact Stephanie Young at VS@StJohnChurch.net.

### **All Church Picnic**

Mark your calendars now for the All Church Picnic on Sunday, September 21, following morning worship.

### **MEMORIAL FUND**

**In Memory of:**

**Al Arbogast**

Sandy Guckiean, Chancel Choir members,  
Robert Moreland

**Bob Ries**

Lorraine Arthur, Melissa Artopoeus, Rita Auteri, Gregory & Lou Ann Brauch, Bonnie Carr, Chancel Choir members, Brenda Fauber, Daniel Graves & Dawn, Sandy Guckiean, Sandy Kerlin, Shirley & George Koopman, Gloria Lauder, Gerry Limbach, Jeanette Ludwig, Eugene & Carole Lukian, Greg Mathein, Margaret A. Miller, Robert Moreland, Stephen Phillips, Bob & Peggy Piccola, Esther Ries, Sandy Ruck, Randy Share, Ed & Carol Stitt, Robert & Vera Stuck, Tom & Marlene Vossmeier, Kenneth & Betty Williams, Mark &

Angela Wormald

**Jeff Reynolds**

Rita & Bob Auteri, Randy Share

**Jeff Lowe's father, brother & sister**

Jeff Lowe

**Ginny Kelley's father**

Sandy Guckiean

### **To Everyone at St John Church,**

Thank you for all of your prayers, beautiful cards and kind support during the brief illness and loss of my father, Al Arbogast. They have been a comfort to Allison and me and we are truly grateful to be a part of such a wonderful church family. — *Sincerely, Tim Arbogast*

### **Youth & Adult Bible Study**

Sundays at 9:00 a.m. in Room 102. The study will focus on the texts that Pastor Keith and others will be preaching.



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Bellevue, KY 41073

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**SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 10:30 A.M.**

Holy Communion First Sunday of Each Month

**STAFF**

The Rev. Mr. Keith M. Haithcock, Pastor & Teacher

Mr. Brad Caldwell, Director of Music

Ms. Shirley Koopman, Administrative Assistant to the Pastor

**OFFICE PHONE & 24-HOUR VOICE MAIL:** (859) 261-2066

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Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. To subscribe or cancel, contact [Shirley@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Shirley@StJohnChurch.net) or call (859) 261-2066.

**DESIGN & LAYOUT:** Jennifer Miles

**Address Service Requested**

**Why a Sabbatical?**

In Mark 6:31 we read the following words: "Jesus said, 'Come off by yourselves; let's take a break and get a little rest.' For there was constant coming and going. They didn't even have time to eat." These words remind us that our Pastor is constantly on call for everyone else's needs and often ignores his own.

The Ohio Conference Guidelines suggest a "...sabbatical leave for clergy for the purpose of spiritual and/or intellectual enrichment. This should be possible after three years of full-time service (one month is earned after three years, two months after four years, to a maximum of three months after five years.)"

Our current terms of call provide a one-month sabbatical leave after every three years of service. 2008 is the year for our Pastor's sabbatical. Pastor Keith is currently in his

tenth year of service at St. John Church. He will be taking his sabbatical the month of October. As agreed upon, St. John Church underwrites the cost of supply pastoral services during that month. This year, Ken Rose, our Seminary Intern, will cover for Pastor Keith while he is gone with the assistance of other local United Church of Christ pastors. The Pastor pays the cost of the sabbatical; however, this year an anonymous donor has given \$1,500 to help defray the cost.

There will be upcoming information on the exact location and focus of the sabbatical. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the Pastoral Relations Committee (Allison Arbogast, Brenda Fauber, or Robert Moreland).