

Empathy prompts donation

PANTAGRAPH STAFF

BLOOMINGTON — Devon Ready of Ellsworth, who turns 11 years old Sept. 16, already understands the importance of health.

Born with a rare heart condition, Devon survived open-heart surgeries at age 4 months and 4 years. She's doing fine today but must avoid strenuous physical activity, said her father, Jeff.

Her experiences have given

her a great empathy for other people, her father said. "She's always our helper around the house," he said.

So when she heard about Locks of Love, she decided to donate her hair.

No one could remember when Devon had her last hair cut but she guessed it was about three years ago. She wanted it cut before starting fifth grade at Tri-Valley Middle School on Aug. 22 but held off until Aug. 21 so she

could donate as much hair as possible. By then, it was down to her waist.

On Aug. 21, cosmetologist Cindy Walden at Fox & Hounds Hair Studio cut 11½ inches from Devon's hair as her father, her sister Taylor, 13, and friends looked on.

Asked about her donation, the soft-spoken Devon just smiled. But her father said they feel good knowing that it will help one child battling cancer.

FROM THE PULPIT

View church members as 'family'

By Brad Bryant

FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

"I don't need a church to be a Christian." This is a common statement, but I would suggest that it's not a true reflection of the Christianity that Christ himself teaches.

To understand Christ's teachings, we can refer to the scriptures: written records that preserve portions of His teachings and life among us. In the New Testament record, Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was. He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:29-30) This commandment is one that IS under the control of each individual: making your commitment on a personal level — between you and God.

Christ then continued, sharing the second greatest commandment, "The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:31) Many people today haven't met their neighbors, much less know their names, habits, strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Loving one another requires knowing each other, choosing to be together and learning to get along. Trying to live a Christian life "by yourself" cheats you of the relationship opportunities that daily life presents: to encounter other people, and grow through that experience.

Genesis 2:20-22 describes the need for partnership. Adam needed a "helper" in the Garden of Eden, and in response, God created Eve to be his partner.

Our need for partnership, friendship, companionship and relationship hasn't changed! We each need to have other people to interact with, to help us grow into the kind of loving, serving Christians we're created to be.

Jesus even prayed for the unity that can be created, as we come together with a common focus: "My prayer is ... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." (John 17:20,21) We can't be "one" without being together, growing into a relationship, learning to be of "one heart, and one mind" and to living together in righteousness.

So, since Christ's church is called to be the body of Christ on the earth, we should "start there," among people who have chosen to be Christ's followers. It is in this "family" that we should be able to explore the skills and habits, necessary within ourselves, to develop healthy relationships. Are people in churches perfect? No way! Church is a place for sinners — people who've fallen short of the plan God has for each of us. However, it is within the Christ-centered church that we should be free to:

- ▶ Experiment with our relationships;
- ▶ Be forgiven when we mess up;
- ▶ Learn to forgive when others disappoint us;
- ▶ Learn to be patient;
- ▶ And work together through the challenges of intentional relationship building.

Note that Christ did not say "tolerate" each other, or "ignore" each other when you're upset. Love requires relationship — it requires "being together," and intentionally rebuilding rela-

tionships when they get strained or broken — reconciliation! If this is the second-most important lesson for us to learn, then we each need to choose to be with other people, and in that "being together" we can learn how to truly love others.

Jesus offers us a "new commandment:" "Love one another; as I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

Upon this foundation of unconditional love through Jesus Christ, all other ministries and gifts of helping and service are built. The worldwide Community of Christ invites you to join with us, as we respond to the divine calling, to "become a people ... who see violence but proclaim peace, who feel conflict yet extend the hand of reconciliation, who encounter broken spirits and find pathways for healing." As we work toward this goal, we have the promise from Christ: "Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division and deceit."

Your friends and neighbors, members of the Community of Christ here in the Bloomington area, invite you to join us on our journey with Christ, toward his kingdom of love, healing and blessings.

Bryant is pastor of Community of Christ, Bloomington.

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805 S. Cottage 452-6622

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Tim Schrag, Pastor www.normalmennonite.com

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

ReligionC

Saturday — Annual community wiener roast at 5:30 p.m. in the church yard at Rucker Chapel Church, rural Wapella. In case of rain, meal will be in church basement. Families are asked to bring wieners, buns, covered dish and table service. Coffee will be available. Lawn chairs needed.

Saturday-Sunday — Free concert by Happy Fun Time, an improv comedy troupe from Minneapolis, Minn., at 7 p.m. at Advent Lutheran Church, 1211 S. Main St., Morton. There will be a potluck at 5:30 p.m. The group will appear at the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services on Sunday and provide a workshop for the Sunday school at 9:15 a.m. For information call (309) 266-5883.

Sunday — The 125th anniversary celebration at St. John's Lutheran Church, Washburn, ends with a 10 a.m. service. The Rev. Peter Glock will speak. A catered dinner will be served at noon. At a 3 p.m. service, Raymond Hartwig, secretary of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, will be guest speaker, with music by former members, John and Cheryl Stauch.

Sunday — The Rev. Len and Dee Salvig of Garden Prairie will be ministering at 10 a.m. at First Assembly of God, 925 N. Route 47, Gibson City. He will be preaching on current events, focusing on Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein. Call the church at (217) 784-8673.

Sunday — Annual ice cream social from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Joseph Church of Colfax, hosted by the Altar and Rosary

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