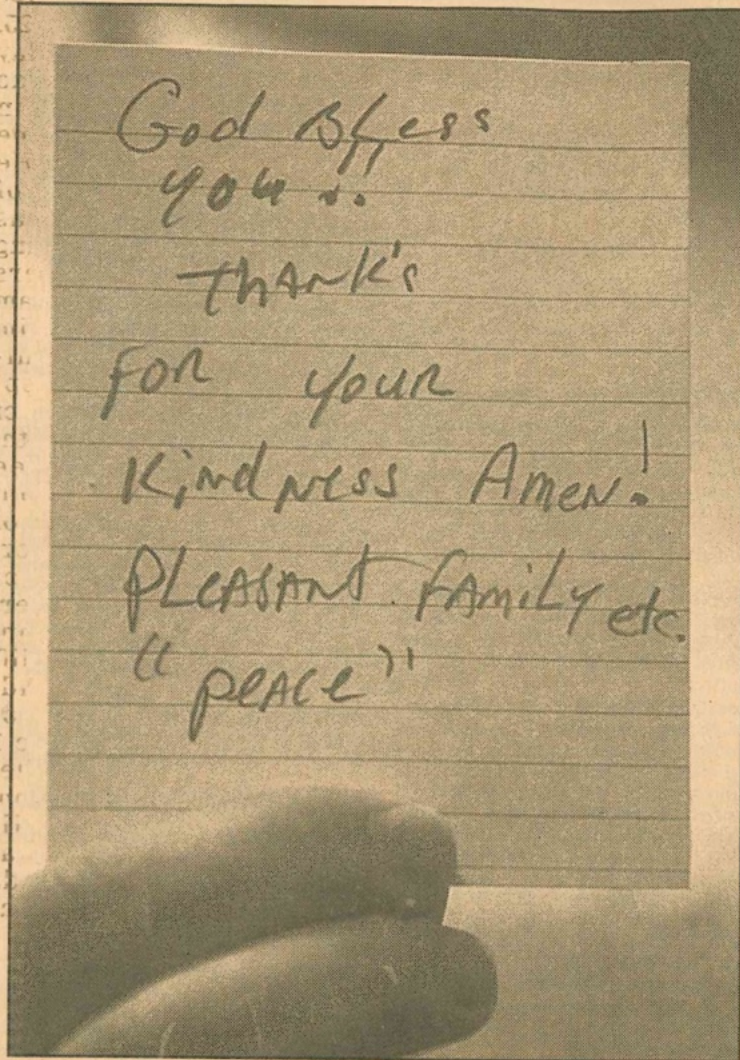
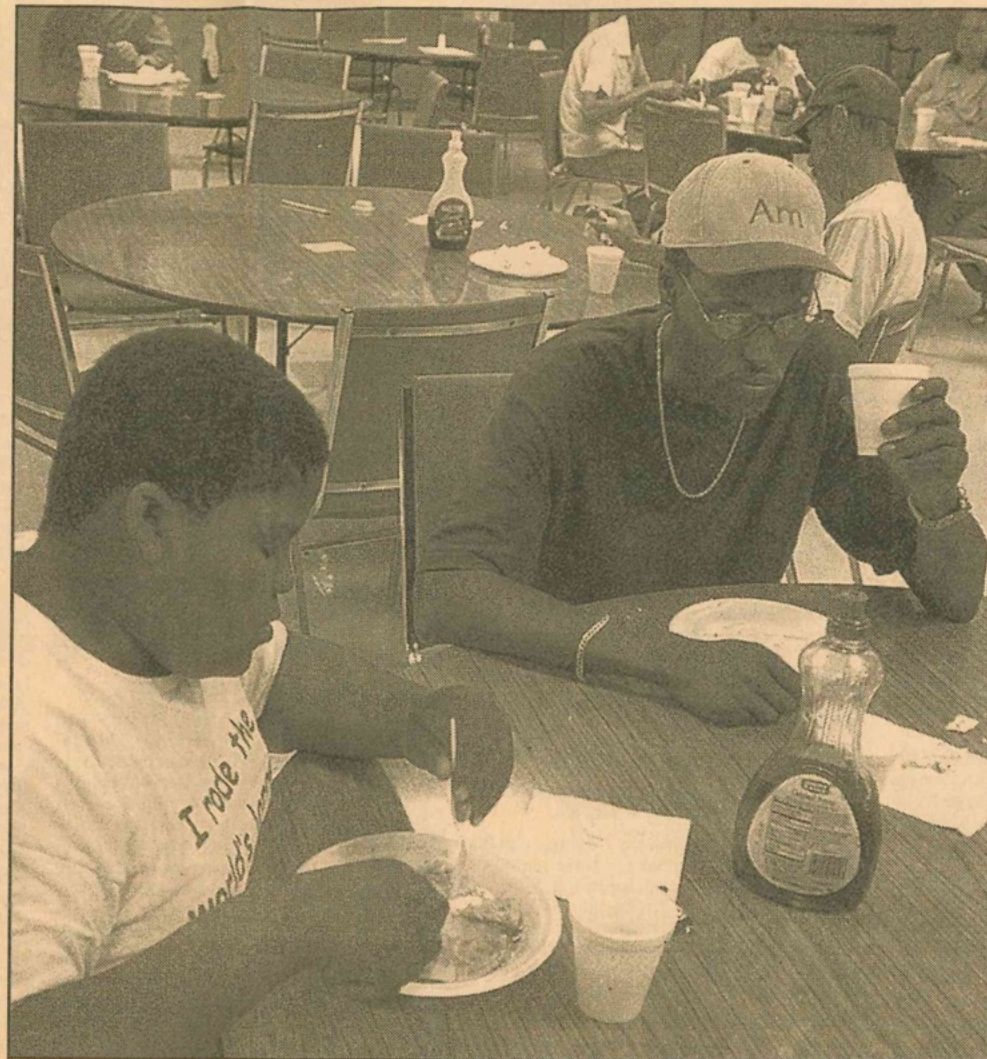


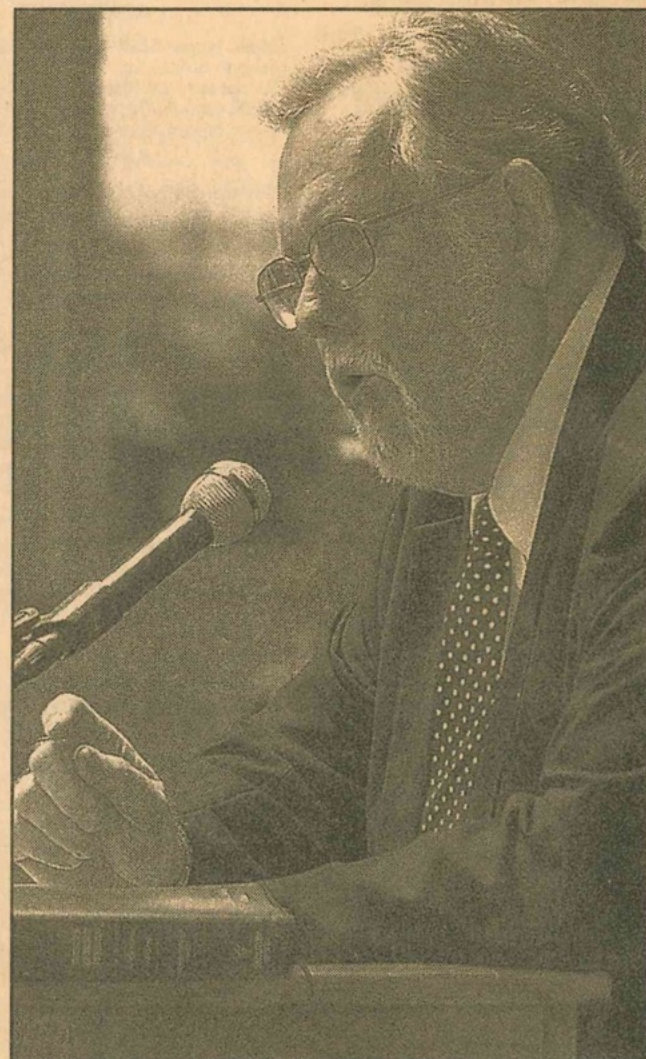
## RELIGION



■ **THANK YOU.** Someone left a note for the breakfast crew.



■ **DIG IN.** Louis Scott Sr. of California has breakfast with his son, Louis Scott Jr. of Canton, in the fellowship hall at Church of the Savior United Methodist.



■ **SHARING THE WORD.** The Rev. Robert Buckley, pastor of Church of the Savior United Methodist, greets with the breakfast crowd.

# 'Oatmeal Ministry' dishes up breakfast

## Church serves bacon and eggs every Sunday morning

By DAVID LEWELLEN  
Repository staff writer

CANTON — It's officially called "Oatmeal Ministry," but the smell of bacon hangs in the air on Sunday mornings outside Church of the Savior United Methodist.

The downtown church serves between 100 and 200 breakfasts between 6:30 and 9 a.m. every Sunday, no questions asked. But the volunteers know their regulars.

Sharon Good and Creola Elder began the program about 12 years ago, when Maryanne Dunn Olmstead, the homeless woman who died recently, showed up for the church's morning social hour. "The next week, she brought friends, and it kind of blossomed," Good said. "We've lost some of them; we've seen some get married, some join the church."

**Emily Clark, a senior** at McKinley High School, added, "And some find jobs and get on their feet. It's like a really big extended family."

"Everyone joined in with bringing new ideas, improving it," Elder said. "It's helped us; we've learned to give around here. It's helped me grow as a person. ... It's like Cheers. They know to come here, and everybody knows their name; they're welcome. I hope they get a spiritual

feeling as well."

Katie Payne, Clark's grandmother, rapidly and expertly cracks eggs into a large bowl.

When she's emptied a tray of 36, she goes to work with a whisk, stirring in a splash of milk and a liberal shake of salt and pepper. Five or ten minutes in an electric skillet, with an occasional stir, and the batch is ready.

**It was her idea**, more than 10 years ago, to offer a more substantial breakfast than instant oatmeal, and she volunteered to do the eggs. "I don't like to do them ahead of time, because then they get black, and we like them fresh," Payne said. "I make them with pure butter, whole milk, salt and pepper. They are good." On a typical Sunday, she'll go through 45 to 60 dozen eggs.

The eight or 10 volunteers all know their jobs, but Good said, "This is the only group in the church that doesn't have a committee. It just runs on its own."

Twelve people arrive in a group, causing a flurry of activity in the kitchen, as the volunteers take orders and prepare plates of eggs, bacon, toast, pop-up waffles, orange juice and coffee. "You want your regular?" Clark asks. "Toast with no butter and half eggs?"

**"I don't know all** their names, but they each have their own personality," Payne said. "There's one young man who goes straight to the piano and plays. It's unbelievable ... It's so sad to see young people when they've gotten on the wrong track."

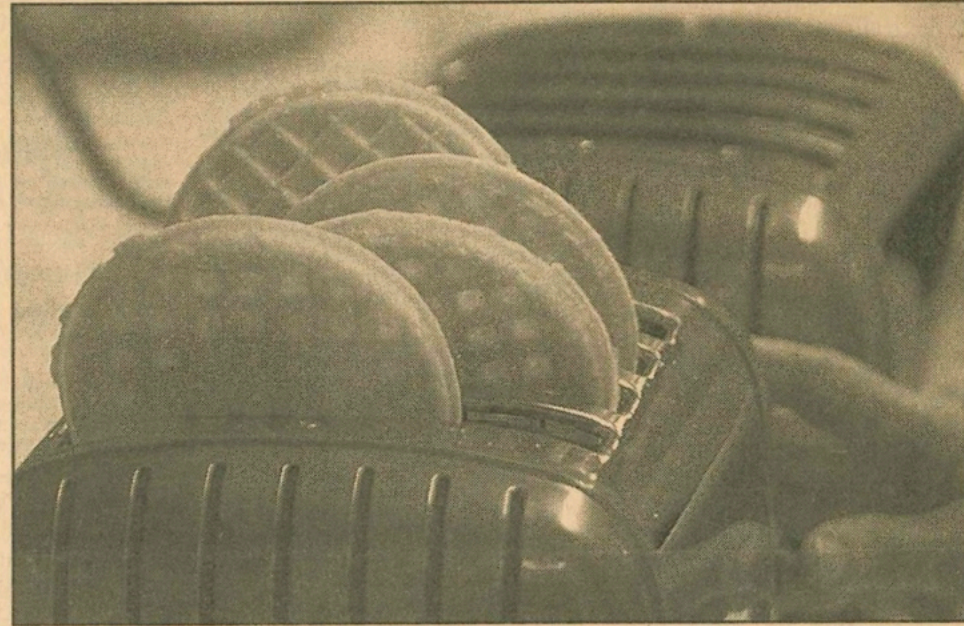
Sometimes the breakfasters get something extra, like hats and gloves at Christmas, or candy at Easter. On this particular Sunday, Payne said, "I had the urge to give them a candy bar," so every tray has a Halloween-size treat added.

The church's pastor, the Rev. Robert Buckley, does a very brief, very informal worship service during the breakfast and takes prayer requests. "We pray for them and listen to their stories," he said, and offer help with their needs when possible. "I'm in the pulpit at 10:30 talking to people, but here I get to interact."

**An hour or so later**, Roy and Jan Brown sing hymns, take more prayer requests, and give a short testimony to a new crowd.

The breakfasters get exposure to religion "without shoving it down their throat," Elder said. "We don't want them to feel intimidated."

"The food's excellent. I want to thank the people who provide it"



■ **POP.** Waffles are prepared for breakfast at Church of the Savior United Methodist.

*Repository photos by Michael S. Balash*

said Robert, a middle-aged man on disability. "It's very friendly. It's like a meeting ground for a lot of people."

"I don't eat breakfast as a rule, except on Sundays," said Richard, who is on disability. "It's a pretty nice place."

"Why I started coming here is because the people are real friend-

ly," said Joseph Dunn. "They're mostly white, but they see you and you feel comfortable. That's why I come back. I go to service, too. I've met people that way."

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■ **EGGS UP.** Emily Clark spoons eggs on a plate as Paul Toalston waits to carry it to the dining room at Church of the Savior United Methodist at 120 Cleveland Ave. SW in Canton. The church serves a free breakfast every Sunday morning to anyone who needs a hot meal.