

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **PUPPETS IN THE PARK? ON SUNDAY?**

Yes, indeed! As part of the July 4<sup>th</sup> River Rec Festival, Sunday has been set aside as “Gospel Day.” This year, for the first time, puppet ministry teams will join the gospel and contemporary singing groups, and are scheduled to perform from Noon until 1:00 PM at the river front stage. One such team is The Pathway Puppets, a team started about 9 month ago as part of the outreach ministry of Pathway Community Church.

The Pathway Puppets will present “This Land is Your Land” as part of *Puppets in the Park*. Songs and skits highlight the diversity of life across the United States and the need to take responsibility for keeping it free. One featured skit includes Sheriff Star, Deputy and Granny at a town meeting called to combat the sneaky advances of “The Deceiver”. Another skit features Isadore, a cagey Cajun fisherman who shares fishy treasures and wisdom from the sea.

Regular team members include Ben Mollohan (10), Laura Epling (9), and D. J. Faro (11). Together, these young puppeteers have taken on roles as diverse as time-traveling shepherds, Roman soldiers, tough-talking sheriffs and spunky grandmas, with an occasional fur-faced monster thrown in for variety. From time to time, more junior puppeteers ages 3-8 years old perform. Adults are also involved in team ministry as devotion leaders, directors, puppeteers, script writers and prop makers. Cathy Clark and Diane Mollohan are co-directors, while Chuck Clark steps in with technical expertise in theater and sound.

The Pathway Puppets are a regular part of the Pathway Community Church ministries. They perform at *Kids’ Time* activity nights held the first and third Wednesday at the Bossard Library. Kids visiting the library are welcome to come in and enjoy the games, interactive Bible story, craft and refreshments. At the end, one or more members of the Pathway Puppets perform a short skit to emphasize the theme of the evening’s activities.

Church puppet ministries are an effective way to teach children and adults about Biblical ways to deal with difficult situations. In explaining why, Cathy Clark said, “It is amazing what you can do with puppets. They can get away with saying things that people would never dare say, and they can do the most outrageous things imaginable! Although people laugh, I think they get the message.”

Puppet ministry offers a chance for people of all ages to grow spiritually, both as members of the audience, and as members of the cast and crew of puppet performances. Diane Mollohan provides a weekly devotion at the beginning of the practice. Learning how to keep a sharp eye out on how to help the other team members, paying attention to the directors, being patient and being encouraging with each other, are all ways of living out what the Bible devotions teach in words. “This way, we are ministering to each other for weeks before we ever hold a performance to minister to our audience.”

After the devotion, Clark uses the balance of the weekly practice time to build puppetry skills. During the first year of the team’s existence, team members have been learning the basics of puppetry. These include lip synching, entrances and exits, believable movement, and eye contact between the puppets and the audience. In addition, team members are learning teamwork skills as they assemble and disassemble the stage and make the puppets react to each other during a skit or song. The team is just beginning to use arm rods to make gestures. “It’s amazing to me how dedicated these kids are,” Clark stated. “Each one purchased his or her own puppet for home practice. Over the past nine months, I have seen the puppets really come to life!”

Granny Pearl and other puppets also appear from time to time at regular Sunday worship, when the Pathway Community Church meets at the Ariel Theater in Gallipolis. The pastor, Thom Mollohan, may be familiar to some as a regular contributor of “A Hunger for More” in Friday’s *Gallipolis Daily Tribune*. For more information about the puppet ministry or about Pathway Community Church, call 446-7943 or go to [www.pathwaygallipolis.com](http://www.pathwaygallipolis.com). You can also email [info@pathwaygallipolis.com](mailto:info@pathwaygallipolis.com).