

Leadership Within—Jon Butler, Co-Lay Leader

-Jan L. Talbott

Jon's parents were his biggest influence. When he was growing up, his Dad was a night owl like Jon and they would stay up late watching television together. He taught Jon to drive one afternoon, out of the blue, at the fairgrounds. His Dad was spontaneous, fun and loved music – and he passed these traits to Jon. His mother, an English and Latin teacher, would share her experiences in Chicago and her childhood on her farm in Harrison county. She instilled in him the power of language, the joys of serving and of a good cup of coffee. His parents met at Muskingum College.

Jon's Mom was twenty-six when Jon's brother, David was born. She was thirty-nine when Jon arrived on the scene. A welcome surprise she assured him. His mother told him it kept her young! Jon said it was like being an only child. When Jon began kindergarten, his brother started at Ohio Northern for his Pharmacy degree.

To sum it up, Jon is the end product of being raised in a house that embraced bachelor's degrees and UAW membership. Jon likes Mitch Albom's quote, "all our accomplishments are built on our father's and mother's stories."

In elementary school, Jon missed morning recess all of third grade so he could finish his arithmetic. He overcame this aversion to homework and his third grade teacher, and learned to do his math. As a junior in high school he took four math and science classes, and dropped all his music classes to do so. That changed his focus and allowed him to enter Ohio Northern and earn an engineering degree. I found it interesting that during college he hitchhiked to Florida four times and Keith Burley was a classmate of his at ONU, but they didn't know each other then.



Jon enjoying the view during the Montana work mission.



Jon & new friend from the Montana work mission.

Jon developed leadership skills at a young age. From gathering up local kids to play baseball as a young child, to being elected student government president, he has a way that folks want to join him. Jason Frazer used to tell me that all the youth (and adults) wanted to be in the mission group that Jon led because they had the most fun.

Jon started joining mission trips because Drew and Colby wanted to go on ASP trips. Mission trips remind him of scout camp at Camp Lakota in Defiance, where he met great friends and made memories. Scout and work camps both involved service, working hard, living together and overcoming obstacles. He also served on work camps to New Orleans and to Montana. He stated, "Mission trips can move us to become more engaged in our church work and prayer life."

Jon believes in the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer. According to Jon, "If you are going to pray, might as well go for a home run." Jon values the uniqueness that God has given each of us ... we're fearfully and wonderfully made. "God's given each of us special gifts, skills, talents and it's important that we recognize it in ourselves. It's equally important to recognize it in others and to acknowledge their gifts, to help serve each other and to grow."



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Y.S.O.P. Mission Trip to Washington, D.C.

Leadership Within— Jon Butler, Co-Lay Leader *continued*

Blessings influence Jon's positive outlook. Anyone that knows Jon, knows he is an upbeat, positive person. Jesse Ryals and Denise Marikis have influenced him more recently. When his brother passed away Denise helped Jon give his brother's eulogy in an authentic way. Jesse reminded him that we have a great big God and if we're going to pray, we should pray for big miracles.

Tough times have shaped him too: he has been divorced; he and Debbie lost three parents in nine months; his brother passed away in 2016. He has found that from harder times he grew and depended more on God. According to Jon, "being vulnerable is fertile ground for growing our faith." And he knows that "beyond all of this we have the promise of eternal life. Jesus died for us. God is looking out for us all the time."

Jon and Debbie have been married for twenty-six years. They met on the ski slopes of West Virginia and developed their long distance relationship on the rivers of Virginia and beaches of North Carolina. He had fun helping raise Drew and Colby. The boys were nine and six when he and Debbie were married and set up quarters in Pleasantview Acres next to the Stringfellows. There is an interesting dirt bike experience that either Jon or Shane Stringfellow would gladly share with you if you need a good laugh.

Jon enjoyed watching Drew and Colby play ball as they grew and he and Debbie have great memories of this time in their lives. He taught Colby to drive on the interstate by telling him where to turn on a Saturday until he turned into Jacobs Field! He and the boys skied in Colorado and once Jon took them on an educational tour of Coors brewery.

Jon worked at Cooper Bessemer, Rolls Royce Energy and Siemens Energy in product development, sales and marketing, service and contracts. He recently retired from Siemens and he enjoys his new freedom! Jon finds peace in drinking morning coffee with Debbie on their screened porch, in taking walks and bike rides, in talking and listening to people and in driving down the road with the radio playing. Jon is grateful for his health, his family and all the blessings that we take for granted. Jon said, "Being grateful is good for you."

In Jon's role as Co-Lay Leader, he also serves on Church Council, Nominations & Leadership Development and Staff-Parish Relations Committee. He and Debbie both serve on the Visitation and Hospitality Teams. You will find Jon around the church volunteering during the Community Meals, assisting with funeral meals, serving as Liturgist and Lay Reader, wherever he is needed he is always willing to lend a hand. 1984 was our lucky year - the year Jon joined Gay Street United Methodist Church!



Debbie & Jon