

The *Pillar*

Brecksville United Church of Christ

December 2013



*Loving, Serving, and Accepting All People
with God's Life-Changing Power*



**PASTOR'S
PONDERINGS...**

...Why Advent...?.

Pastor Dave

December 1st marks the start of Advent, the beginning of a new Church Year. Advent is a time of hoping, waiting, and joyful anticipation, as we prepare to

celebrate anew the birth of Jesus Christ. In a society that tends to worship speed and instant gratification, the Church's call to patiently wait and watch can seem a bit strange. And in these fast-paced days of hectic holiday overload, the Church's message to slow-down and keep things simple, seems simply unrealistic. One good way for you and me to stay centered in this culturally-chaotic season, is to remember what it is for which we are waiting and watching: God's Living, Loving Presence among us.

With the birth of Jesus Christ, the Holy One touches the world in a simple, yet spectacular way - reminding us that there is no place or time on earth that is beyond God's care and influence. Advent helps us to be patient, and to recognize the Holy Presence even among the haste and hassle of this busy time of year. It reminds

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us that the Holy One meets us wherever we go, even in those places and people we might least expect. In the stores, on the streets, throughout our communities, there are multitudes of people who you and I can meet and greet with Christ' calming peace. And when you and I interact with others in ways that are kind and patient, we humbly do our part to help transform this time of hustle and bustle, into a season of genuine joy and peace.

As our society increasingly assails us with the message that Christmas is really about *stuff* [preferably big and expensive stuff - and lots of it], Advent helps us to focus on the genuine meaning. That's why I believe it's a good and healthy practice for you and me to observe and engage in the Season of Advent. By focusing on Advent in our homes and in our Church Home, we can filter-out some of that constant clamoring for buying more stuff to stuff our stockings. With our eyes, ears, and hearts tuned to anticipate the true gift of Christmas - Divine Love embodied in Jesus Christ - we can prepare ourselves to better receive and appreciate that precious gift.

It's not always easy to keep our focus on Advent, or on the true meaning of Christmas. A couple things that we can do, as individuals or as families, is to delve into our wonderful BUCC Advent Devotional Booklet. These reflections from our members may be brief, but they contain tremendous food for thought. We can also participate in our weekly worship celebrations, our Choir's Christmas Cantata, Christmas Caroling to our homebound members, and our

delightful Children's Pageant. This entire Advent Season offers us some wonderful activities here at BUCC, culminating with our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. I hope that each of you will take advantage of the many good things offered here throughout this Holy Season; and that your holidays may be filled with Holy Days of Peace, Joy and Love.

With you in Christ's Service
Pastor Dave

If you would like to have a pastoral visit in your home, or simply need to talk, please call Pastor Dave at the church office [440-526-4364] or at home [440-546-1193]. He will be glad to meet with you.



From the Ministries of BUCC



NEWS FROM OCWM

Last month, a shipment of food and clothing, and items not included in food stamps (toiletries, dental

supplies, and school supplies) were delivered to Community Corner. Also, a generous donation of kitchen supplies was included. Community Corner estimates the value of donated items (\$250 in this case). But the important value is not the dollar value, but the nutritional value and health value. Lately, the food donations

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have been increasing, and thanks go to those who have been anonymously donating needed items. Low income families have been adversely effected by the cutback in food items.

At the Christmas eve service, at 10 PM on Tuesday, December 24th, the Christmas Fund offering (formerly known as Veterans of the Cross) will be received. This offering helps meet the needs of retired and low-income clergy and lay employees of the UCC. The fund works throughout the year, not just during the Christmas season. Dollars given to the Christmas Fund go directly to those who have served or who serve the church, especially in moments of critical need. Also included are health premium supplementation and prescription medication coverage.



FACILITIES MINISTRY

The Facilities
Ministry needs your
help! Since our
recent roofing

project, the church's attic is in even more need of cleaning and organization. BUT BEFORE THAT HAPPENS, we need ALL ministries and/or individuals who have anything stored in the attic, to please label by the New Year those items you wish to have saved. Otherwise, when we do schedule our attic clean-up, non-labeled items will be pitched or recycled.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Jane Cribbs, Facilities

Notes and Asides



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who helped make our Hindu Dance Program on Nov. 10 a huge success -- our greeters, ushers, counters, food providers, hall set-up and clean-up volunteers, servers, and especially Sue Stenzel, who coordinated a wonderful reception that was enjoyed thoroughly by all.



On Sunday December 15 at our 10 a.m. service, BUCC's adult choir will present *Once in Royal David's City*, this year's Christmas cantata. The cantata features a wide assortment of traditional and contemporary music telling the ancient story of Jesus' birth to the Virgin Mary in a humble stable some two thousand years ago. The choir will be joined by seasonal singers, narrators, and instrumentalists. Commemorate and celebrate the miracle of Christmas with us on Dec. 15 at our annual cantata presentation. Bring a friend!



HERE WE COME A' CAROLING!

On Sunday, December 15th at 2:00 pm, our youth, children, and adults will meet at the church to go

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caroling to our homebound members. This is a great opportunity to sing some of our favorite Christmas carols while bringing a special Christmas greeting to those members who cannot regularly join us for worship. We will return to the church around 4:00 to warm ourselves with some hot chocolate and other goodies.



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Please join us directly after worship on Sunday, December 8 for our congregational meeting, in which we will present the proposed budget and review the slate of ministry members for 2014. This should take 15 minutes and your attendance is appreciated. If you have any additional items to discuss, please contact Pastor Dave or Diane Gressley.



**SHARE IN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT OF
GIVING!**

Our annual Christmas Adopt-a-Family project will have a new name this year: Adopt-an-Individual. We hope the whole congregation will reach out generously as they always have. Some of the items that would be appreciated are: queen-sized sheet sets (flannel or regular), bath towel sets, kitchen towels and dishcloths, gift cards for stores such as T J Maxx, Kohl's, Target, etc, and of course the always welcome checks to BUCC [noted "Adopt-an-Individual"] ,or cash with the same notation on the envelope.



HUNGER MEAL

On Sunday, December 1, BUCC is providing a hunger meal to those who come for the meal to

Bethany UCC. The menu will be simple but filling. Eight to twelve persons will be needed to set up, prepare and serve the meal, and clean up. We expect about 50 meals will be served. Two shifts are anticipated - 2:30 to 5 PM, and 4 to 6 PM. In addition to "doing unto the least of these", this is a great fellowship time.



Happy, Happy December Birthdays to the following BUCC Members! Please share in their joy and wish them a Happy Birthday!

December 4:	Brian Rees Jon Thompson
December 6:	Kevin Smith Jacob VanDuyne
December 12:	Betty Einhart

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December 13: Grace Hunt
Michael VanDuyne
December 14: Chase Hoppel
December 17: Shannon West
December 19: David Durkit
December 20: Genny Constanzo
Naomi Klonowski
December 21: Bob Chandler
December 24: Tony Cunningham
December 25: Linda Kriynovich
December 28: Dan Stewart
December 29: Amy Coyer-
Westerberg

If you have a December Birthday and are not included above, please contact the church office so we can add you to the BUCC Birthday List!



FOOD PANTRY

Small Canned Hams, Canned Sweet & White Potatoes, Cranberry Sauce, Canned Mixed Vegetables, Pie Crust Mix, Canned Pumpkin, etc.



DOUG LIGHTBODY is now receiving rehabilitation services through Mentis Ohio, located in Stow. The address is Mentis Ohio, 3625 Marsh Road, Stow, OH.

44224. Doug would gladly welcome your cards and words of encouragement, as well as a short visit in the evening or on weekends. Directions to Mentis Rehab are available in the Church Office.



Did you know that BUCC does not own all of the land under its parking lot? The City of Brecksville owns a 50x250 piece adjacent to the school. This is the subject to a long term three-way agreement between our church, the city and the school that gives BUCC use of the City land during non-school hours and the school, plus another equally sized BUCC area, during school hours. This agreement is not part of our rental arrangement with the Central School and will continue in effect after they vacate our education wing.



ENCORE

Life's Many Surprising Gifts
[Text -II Thessalonians 2:1-3;
13-17]

Originally Presented November
17, 2013
Pastor Dave Shackles

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Listen to the exuberant tone that Saint Paul uses in his letter to the Thessalonian Church: "We are glad to use our time thanking God for you, our good friends - so loved by God! Think of it: you are included in God's plan of redemption.... You are invited to live in the Spirit... May Jesus himself and God our Creator, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart within you, invigorate your work, and enliven your speech!"

Paul's words certainly reveal an enlivened spirit of joy and thanksgiving! What may surprise you, however, is that Paul's upbeat attitude about God's surprising and helpful gifts, arises from his own personal hardships. In his second letter to the Corinthian Church, Paul describes some of these:

"Five times I received from the Jewish authorities thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea...in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from nonbelievers...hungry and thirsty, often cold and exposed to the elements.... However, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, and persecution for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

It's difficult to fathom how someone who endures so many dreadful experiences, can remain so

remarkably positive. Let's be honest, sometimes you and I get cranky if our computer crashes, or the driver in front of us is going too slowly. Yet Paul, who endures tremendous struggles and hardships in his efforts to spread the Good News of Christ, *continues* to be pleasantly surprised by God's good and gracious gifts.

This morning I want to look at how Paul's relationship with Jesus Christ empowers and inspires him to remain positive and faithful in the good times and the bad; in times of plenty and in times of need - because, let's face it, as individuals and as a congregation, our lives are made up of good times and bad; times of smooth sailing, and times when nothing seems to go right. Yet in all of our life situations, our relationship with Jesus Christ can also make a profound difference in how you and I handle them. For Paul, there seem to be two fundamental ways in which his connection to Jesus Christ enhances his ability to cope with whatever life brings. The first, is the *example* that Jesus sets for him. The second, is the amazing sense of *community* that Paul experiences as a follower of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, we see a marvelous example of how fully life can be lived when one trusts in Divine love and abundance. Jesus himself has no home, no property, virtually no material possessions; yet his life is rich and full beyond measure. And remarkably, for one who appears to have nothing, Jesus is able to consistently meet the essential needs of every person he encounters! Maybe that's because, at the deepest level, what every person truly needs

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is love and acceptance, forgiveness and inclusion.

In Jesus' mind and heart, there is absolutely no scarcity of these basic qualities; because he recognizes that these qualities are at the heart - and are the heart - of the Divine Source of Life. Therefore, Jesus is able to freely convey love, acceptance, and forgiveness, regardless of the circumstances surrounding him. His undying trust in the abundance of Divine grace even allows him to love and forgive those who reject him and seek to take his life. Ultimately he surrenders his life - trusting that even through his *death* - the essence of Divine goodness and blessing will arise and spread and be greatly multiplied.

I think when you and I look at the lives of those who genuinely follow the way of Jesus Christ, we realize that this is true. And when we ourselves respond to life's ups, or downs, with a Christ-like understanding of God's abundant love and grace, we discover that we, too, can do amazing things through Christ who strengthens us. And I cannot over-emphasize the importance of that word **us!**

If you or I try to do things on our own, we often come up short. When we try to handle life's many complexities and problems without the support of *community*, we tend to be overwhelmed. Fortunately, you and I don't have to go it alone, because we are "us!" As members and friends of Brecksville United Church of Christ - as members of the worldwide Body of

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Christ - we truly do accomplish many remarkable things that we could never do alone.

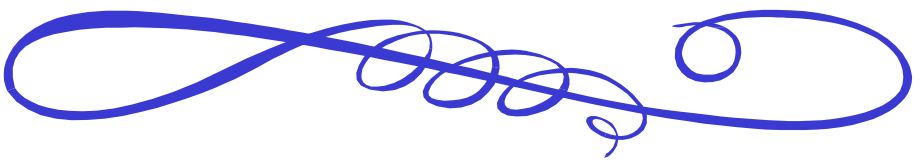
Together, we provide food and clothing, help and hospitality for those in need; as well as encouragement, prayer and support for one another in our times of need. As a community of faith, we offer opportunities to worship, learn and grow - and occasions to work and play and celebrate. As a church that is open and affirming of all people, we provide an authentic sanctuary for those who society, and even other faith-groups, tend to ignore or push aside. We effectively share our resources to enhance the lives of people locally, and around the world. We also share great food and fellowship right here, today. [Something we'll be doing really soon, if the preacher doesn't get too long-winded!]

So in conclusion.... We truly are people who have been blessed with many surprising gifts: The gift of Christ's example of Divine love and grace;

The gift of the abundance of life that Jesus shows us and shares with us;

The gift of knowing that the time and talents and energy that we offer, truly makes a positive difference in this world.

And last, but certainly not least, the gift of one another, and this wonderful Faith Community that we share.



BUCC Calendar December 2013

Sunday, December 1

10:00am Worship and Church
School

New Members

11:00am Fellowship Hour
*Hunger Meal-

Bethany*

5:30pm Percussion

Monday, December 2

Tuesday, December 3

7:00pm Membership

Wednesday, December 4

6:00am Early Birds

Thursday, December 5

1:00pm Bible Study
5:30pm Joyful Noise
7:00pm Seasonal Choir
8:00pm Choir

Friday, December 6

Saturday, December 7

Sunday, December 8

10:00am Worship and Church
School

11:00am Fellowship Hour
5:30pm Percussion

Monday, December 9

Tuesday, December 10

Wed, December 11

6:00am Early Birds
7:00pm Council

Thursday, December 12

1:00pm Bible Study
5:30pm Joyful Noise
7-9pm Cantata Practice

Friday, December 13

Saturday, December 14

10-11:30am Cantata Run-Thru

Sunday, December 15

10:00am Worship and Church
School

Cantata

11:00am Fellowship Hour
5:30pm Youth Perc.
6:00pm Youth Ministry
PILLAR DEADLINE

Monday, December 16

Tuesday, December 17

Wednesday, December 18

6:00am Early Birds

Thursday, December 19

1:00pm Bible Study
5:30-6:30pm - Pageant
Dress Rehearsal

Friday, December 20

Saturday, December 21

AM Pageant Run-thru *if
needed* Time TBA

Sunday, December 22

10:00am Worship and Church
School

Pageant

11:00am Fellowship Hour

Monday, December 23

Tuesday, December 24

10:00pm Worship Service
9pm Choir
10pm Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service

Wednesday, December 25 Christmas Day

Thursday, December 26

1:00pm Bible Study

Friday, December 27

Saturday, December 28

Sunday, December 29

10:00am Worship and Church
School

11:00am Coffee Hour

Monday, December 30

Tuesday, December 31

Participants in Worship

DECEMBER 1, 2013

Lay Reader: Evie Novak
Head Usher: Beth Oravec
Ushers: Dorie Gabor, Linda Krinyovich, Fred Pesek, Beth Rehling
Acolyte: Ian Stewart
Peace Candle: Lily Hunt
Sound: David Bernard
Commons Grtr: Ruth Morris
Narthex Grtr: Ann Kelly
Flowers: Hanging Greens
Nursery: Val Duffy
Counters: Nancy Stella, Kathy Pastor
Servers: Joy Garapic, Joanne Cook
Clean-up: Jane & Cliff Cribbs
Snacks: Bridget Sproul & Susan Snyder

DECEMBER 8, 2013

Lay Reader: Jim Duffy
Head Usher: Jon Thompson
Ushers: Joe & Betsey Wilson, Drew Wilson, Beth Oravec
Acolyte: Carrie Coyer-Westerberg
Peace Candle: Amy Coyer-Westerberg
Sound: Max Roha
Commons Grtr: Betty Gifford
Narthex Grtr: Joanne Cook
Flowers: Jan Renovetz
Nursery: Robin Coyer-Westerberg
Counters: Jim Kaul, Carole Snider
Servers: Darlene, Emily & Celia Kelly
Clean-up: Jon Thompson & Jan Renovetz
Snacks: Pat Bailey & Kate Klonowski

DECEMBER 15, 2013 CANTATA

Head Usher: Max Roha
Ushers: Matt Wolberg, Sam Koch, Sue Maier, David Ritchey
Acolyte: Naomi Klonowski
Peace Candle: Arthur Oravec
Sound: Chad Sproul
Commons Grtr: Ann Kelly
Narthex Grtr: Dorie Gabor
Flowers: POINSETTIAS
Nursery: Shauna Bigelow
Counters: Donn Whyte, Anna Mary Fisher

Servers: Sue Stenzel & Dottie Farwell
Clean-up: Kathy & David Pastor
Snacks: Marge Culver & Ruthie Thorpe

DECEMBER 22, 2013 PAGEANT

Head Usher: Evie Novak
Ushers: Wes Novak, Joanne Cook, David & Kathy Pastor
Acolyte: Ben Rehling
Peace Candle: Ryan Stewart
Sound: Kevin Smith
Commons Grtr: Marge Culver
Narthex Grtr: Fred Pesek
Flowers: POINSETTIAS
Nursery: Jane Cribbs
Counters: Dassie Matsuoka, Bruce McCain
Servers: Carole & George Snider & Dottie Farwell
Clean-up: Chad & Bridget Sproul
Snacks: Diane Gressley & Marilyn Wrights

DECEMBER 24, 2013 10pm

Lay Reader: Ed Lusk
Head Usher: Bob Chandler
Ushers: Diane Gressley, Caroline Chandler, Chad Sproul, Max Roha
Commons Grtr: Jim & Betty Kaul
Counters: Kathy Pastor & George Snider
Sound: David Pastor

DECEMBER 29, 2013

Lay Reader: Cliff Cribbs
Head Usher: Jill Zedan
Ushers: Spencer Whyte, David Wilson, Bob Chandler, Zach Novak
Acolyte: Lindsey Maier
Peace Candle: Indira Bigelow
Sound: Mike Westerberg
Commons Grtr: Pat Bailey
Narthex Grtr: Kathy Smith
Flowers: Ruthie Thorpe
Nursery: Peg Duffy
Counters: David Pastor, Dassie Matuoska
Servers: Caroline Chandler & Robin Coyer-Westerberg
Clean-up: Bob Chandler & Pat Bailey

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Snacks: Lenore Harris & Jill Zedan

The Pillar

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FIRST CLASS

